

Some Political and Cultural Implications of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius of Loyola

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Abstract: As one of the great spiritual classics of early modern Catholicism, the *Spiritual Exercises* is a generative text of political as well as theological discourse, shaping early modern as well as contemporary culture. This paper aims, firstly, to identify key features which will help us appreciate the way in which the *Spiritual Exercises* are significant for our social and cultural agency and can serve as a theological-spiritual hermeneutic for judging political and cultural systems. Secondly, it will suggest that while the Exercises are intended for the conversion and liberation of our freedom, they also intend that this freedom be placed at the disposal of God's salvific purpose. The paper focuses on two sites: (a) the Principle and Foundation which represents the recovery of "the self" and the ordering of our freedom, and (b) the Two Standards where the discernment of spirits serves to unmask the strategies of Evil. Discernment is an act of faith. Choosing and surrendering to the incomprehensible wisdom of the Cross (to be "thought worthless and a fool for Christ") follows the resurrection into a Christological freedom that is realized in obedience and abandonment to the Divine salvific will. It is an operant freedom in history which has redemptive power. The whole dynamic of the Exercises is a profound, transformational journey "in" history. To be transformed is to be sent into the world again as a companion of Christ

to create a new space, a new possibility within history. In this sense, the paper seeks to develop Hugo Rahner’s insight that Ignatius offers us an apostolic mysticism which is not without political and cultural implications.

Keywords: apostolic, Christ, cross, discernment, freedom, history, Ignatius, Principle and Foundation, redemptive, Spiritual Exercises, Two Standards

Introduction: The Significance of a Text

We do not normally think of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius as a political text. Yet Quentin Skinner, a Cambridge historian of political ideas, usefully and insightfully reminds us that key political texts are also interventions in the politics of their time. They have a “performativity” which makes them generative texts in political discourse long after their composition.¹ We can see this with seminal secular texts like Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx or Hegel. The principal scriptural texts of Judeo-Christianity have remained a constant source of political as well as theological discourse, shaping

¹ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics. Volume 1: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge Core, 2002). For Skinner’s defence of his method, cf. Chapter 6, and for an insightful examination of the way through texts’ vocabulary and rhetoric change, cf. Chapter 10. Both have implications for the way we come to understand our “use” and understanding of the *Spiritual Exercises*. For a brief but indicative survey of the construction of Ignatian Spirituality, cf. John W. O’Malley SJ & Timothy W. O’Brien SJ, “The Twentieth-Century Construction of Ignatian Spirituality: A Sketch,” *Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits* 52, no. 3 (Autumn 2020).

ancient as well as contemporary culture.² The text of the *Spiritual Exercises* ranks as one of the great classics among the spiritual texts of early modern Catholicism, but it is not a politically innocent text. Although it develops from the primary experience of Ignatius at Manresa, it is also marked by the different religio-political circumstances of his time which influenced its language and constructions. It is not difficult to find traces of this in the formulation of the “Call of the King” and the Two Standards. Not only do these draw upon scriptural eschatological imagery, but they are also clearly marked by memory of the medieval courtly heraldic ideal and the crusades against the “infidel” to recover Spain for Christianity. The more subtle religious and ecclesiastical “political” dimension of the text is Ignatius’ careful and persistent attention to anything which might support the charge of Illuminism.³ There is also the latter introduction of the “Rules for Thinking with the Church” and perhaps the most radical premise of all: “that God deals directly with the human person” which, in the highly charged situation of a growing Protestant Reformation, could be interpreted as dispensing with priests

² Cf. N.T Wright’s essay on Paul and Empire in *The Blackwell Companion to Paul*, ed. Stephen Westerhold (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2011). Cf. also: Krister Stendahl and Richard A. Horsley, *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl* (Harrisburg, PA: Bloomsbury Collections, Trinity Press International, 2000).

³ Cf. Moshe Sluhovsky, “St. Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises* and Their Contribution to Modern Introspective Subjectivity,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 99, no. 4 (2013). Sluhovsky argues that Ignatius introduced a number of technical changes to the late medieval tradition of undertaking spiritual exercises, which significantly widened the retreatant’s control over his or her spiritual growth and the access of the laity to spiritual exercises and introspective techniques. However, this “democratizing impulse” also ignited questions among conservative theologians who saw resemblances between Ignatius’s *Spiritual Exercises* and *Alumbradismo*. This led to a dramatic curtailment of the Exercises’ “democratic” potential in the last years of the sixteenth century.

and the sacramental mediation of the Church. Whatever one’s judgment about Dominique Bertrand’s method of “sociodoxie,” his work makes a very powerful case for the “politique” of Ignatius and the early Society.⁴ Ignatius certainly understood the social and political world in which he lived. The Exercises are neither a neutral nor a purely private spiritual text.⁵ They actively work to re-order desires and values leading to the experience of the *Contemplatio*.⁶ They contain a powerful vision of the world as a *theatrum gloria Dei*. The text itself aims at the transformation of human agency and, therefore, it aims to significantly shape political and social agency as well. In more recent times, the work of Ignacio Ellacuría, especially his notes on the historico-politico dimension of the *Spiritual Exercises*, brings this dimension of the Exercises to the fore.⁷

⁴ D. Bertrand, *La Politique de Saint Ignace de Loyola: L'analyse Sociale* (Paris: Éditions Du Cerf, 1985), 640 ff. For the political and theological disputes while Ignatius and the companions were students in Paris and how they sought to navigate them, cf. Philippe Lécrivain, *Paris au Temps d'Ignace de Loyola (1528-1535)* (Paris: Editions Facultés Jésuites de Paris, 2006). Also useful for context, cf. Quintín Aldea Vaquero, *Ignacio de Loyola en la Gran Crisis del Siglo XVI: Congreso Internacional de Historia, Madrid, 19-21 Noviembre de 1991*, Bilbao: Colección Manresa, 11, Santander, 1993.

⁵ This is carefully mapped in the second part of Bertrand’s work: “Une Lecture Active de La Société: Le VIF des Relations,” pp.127 ff.

⁶ *Contemplación para Alcanzar Amor*. Sp Ex §230-237. It is the concluding and summative contemplation of the Exercises and many commentators regard it as the definitive disposition of Ignatian mysticism and vision of a God-filled reality.

⁷ Cf. Ignacio Ellacuría, “A Latin American Reading of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius,” *Spiritus* 10, no. 2 (2010): 205–42 (trans. by J. Matthew Ashley). Cf. also Ashley’s article on the translation in the same issue of *Spiritus*: “A Contemplative under the Standard of Christ.” Also, Oscar Arango Alzate and Orlando Solano Pinzón: “La Espiritualidad en Ignacio Ellacuría,” *Theologica Xaveriana* 66, no. 181 (2016): 123-145. For a useful introduction to the philosophical and theological thought of Ellacuría, cf. Kevin F. Burke, *The Ground Beneath the Cross: The Theology of Ignacio Ellacuría* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2000), esp.

The intention of this paper is not to undertake a comprehensive exploration of the text of the *Spiritual Exercises* and its political implications. The aim is twofold: firstly, to identify key features which will help us appreciate the way in which the *Spiritual Exercises* are significant for our social and cultural agency and can serve as a theological-spiritual hermeneutic for judging political and cultural systems. Secondly, it will suggest that we do the Exercises a disservice if we confine them purely to the growth of an individual spiritual subject. They certainly are intended for the conversion and liberation of our freedom, but they also intend that this freedom is placed at the disposal of God's salvific purpose. In so far as the Exercises always direct us to an encounter with a God "working in all things," they do not allow us to flee from the world. Rather, they encourage us to become active apostles of Christ and his kingdom within it. The Exercises do not propose any particular political or social system, but offer us a way of discerning the principles and values that should guide our actions and the means that best serve us and our neighbor to attain our ends.

The two "sites" of the text of the Exercises which I think can most directly and economically illustrate my thesis are (a) the *Principle and Foundation* which represents the recovery of "the self" and the ordering of our freedom, and (b) the Two Standards and the unmasking of the strategies of Evil. I shall argue that they cannot be separated from the Cross (Third Week) which grounds the counter-strategy of a redeemed, cruciform freedom. What distinguishes this

Chapter 3, pp.85ff and Chapter 4 on theological method. Cf. also Andrew Prevot, "Ignatian Spirituality, Political Effectiveness, and Spiritual Discernment: Dean Brackley's Account of Liberation Theology," *Political Theology: The Journal of Christian Socialism* 18, no. 4 (2017): pp. 309–324.

from the freedom recovered through the grace of the crucified Christ in the First Week is that it is the expression of Christological freedom realized in obedience and abandonment to the Divine salvific will. It is an operant freedom in history which has redemptive power. In the course of our exploration of each of these dimensions, I will also indicate where I believe they have contemporary political and social significance. In this sense, I seek to confirm and develop Hugo Rahner’s insight that Ignatius offers us an apostolic mysticism.⁸

1: *The Principle and Foundation*: Recovery of “Self” and the Gift of Discerning Freedom

Although the *Principle and Foundation* (PF) came to be formulated later in the evolution of the Exercises, there is no doubt that it is central to their whole dynamic.⁹ Not only does it act as a fundamental orientation and measure of freedom at the beginning, but it is also part of the purification of desire expressed in the preparatory prayer of every exercise. Indeed, the formula that “all my intentions, actions and operations may be ordered purely to the praise and reverence of the Divine Majesty” is a prayer which describes a whole life.¹⁰ They constitute a doxological action realized in our purified and

⁸ Hugo Rahner, *The Spirituality of Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Francis John Smith SJ (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1953).

⁹ Santiago Arzubialde SJ, *Ejercicios espirituales de S. Ignacio: Historia y análisis*, coll. Manresa; second edition (Santander: Sal Terrae, 2009), cf. 111-124.

¹⁰ Sp Ex §46. Cf. The clarifying note for “acciones” and “operaciones” in *Ignacio de Loyola: Ejercicios Espirituales: Introcción, texto, notas, y vocabulario*, ed. Cadido de Dalmases SJ (Santander: Sal Terrae, 1987). Cf. also *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana* (2 vols.), ed. José García de Castro et al. (Bilbao: Mensajero/Sal Terrae, 2007. Cf. vol 2: 1490-1497; 1377-1378).

liberated freedom expressed in and through the service of humanity and of creation. They capture the soteriological doxology of Christ's person and life which the graced life of the Holy Spirit realized in us.¹¹

Three important features of the PF are relevant for our discussion: firstly, the human subject is set within a relationship to God which defines the origin and telos of a human life. It is a relationship in which all other goods are relativised in the light of this supreme good: "to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his (sic) soul." Secondly, the PF establishes the criterion by which we can judge our proper use of these goods "in so far as they help" towards our end. This is also the measure of our freedom in relation to all created things and to God. Thirdly, the PF effectively maps the drama of our personal history which can also be expanded to frame all human history. In this respect, Ignatius condenses into a principle the drama of human freedom identified by Augustine as the relationship between *uti* (use) and *frui* (enjoyment).¹² Although its form is almost syllogistic, the PF is far from being a rationalist or voluntarist charter. If anything, it sets out the whole purpose of the Exercises upon which the exercitant is about to embark. It marks a central locus in grasping the subtle interplay between human nature and God's salvific will at work, not only in each individual, but within the sweep of history itself.

¹¹ Cf. Ignacio Ellacuría, "A Latin American Reading of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius," *Spiritus* 10, no. 2 (2010): 212, who argues against the spiritualist, voluntarist and materialist reading to ground the PF in the salvific work of Christ.

¹² For one of Augustine's most succinct treatments, cf. his homilies on I John, esp. Second Homily §7-14. Cf. also the still helpful discussion in John Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine*, first edition: 1938, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 104-110.

As formulated and presented, the PF serves to interrogate the understanding we have of our freedom and how it is exercised. It also alerts us to the intimate relationship between the self and freedom. It pushes us to a deeper reflection of the desires which motivate us and direct our agency, both the desires we might rationally and publicly profess as well as those that are not so readily (or willingly) recognized. The PF presents us with a challenging clarity: if we truly desire the end proposed, we will enter into the school of the Exercises. We will allow ourselves to be taught by God in order to receive the gift of a loving freedom to serve in whatever state we are called. This is a freedom which Ignatius regards as “indifference.” It is not a neutrality or a lack of commitment; rather, it is a readiness for whatever might be asked of us, which is to God’s glory and the help of our neighbor. This “indifference” or freedom is the condition for discerning.¹³

The PF is a universal principle in the sense that it is operative whatever our circumstances, status, or abilities. The freedom which it puts before us is “*sola dei gloria*” and this will relativize all political and social claims to which we may be either attracted or subject. It places them in a new framework of value.

It would be a mistake to think that the PF proposes a purely instrumental “use” of created things – even human beings. Rather, as with Augustine, it is inviting us to attend to their proper “use,” which entails an appreciation of their own intrinsic value. It is a refusal to idealize or fetishize them as sources of our lasting happiness, our

¹³ For a brief treatment of this important and often misunderstood disposition, cf. *Diccionario*, 1495–1496 §6. Also, cf. the entry with bibliography of useful commentaries, “Indiferencia,” *Diccionario*, 1015–1021. The freedom which is ready for service already presupposes that we love Christ and are willing to choose whatever state of life or way of living that will be of greater service to him. “Indifference” already presupposes this real “affective commitment.”

“*fruition*,” which constitutes an instrumentalizing approach. The world is given in the sense of “being there” and in the sense of gift. To inhabit it and use it well is to live conscious of our relational dependence, which refuses to make it into some sort of “god” or exploit its “givenness” as a resource to which and for which we have no responsibilities. Our epistemological, moral and spiritual task is to see and respond to it in its own proper order. This entails an obligation to understand, respect and value the created order as something in its own right, possessing its own telos and value which cannot be reduced to our need or use. *Gaudium et Spes* captures this well when it says, “For by the very circumstance of their having been created, all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order.”¹⁴ Creation has its own intrinsic goodness and this imposes obligations upon us; we have a moral relationship to all created things.¹⁵ When we consider the role creation plays in the *Spiritual Exercises*, especially in the First Week (§55) and the *Contemplatio* (§230), we see it has a soteriological purpose. If creation is the enduring witness of God’s providential love for us, witnessing to this love even while we continue to reject it through our sinfulness, then, in some way, creation participates in our destiny. Creation remains an enduring reason for an outpouring of our gratitude. Gratitude is both an affective relationship as well as a moral one in which a gift is recognized, received and cherished, not only because of the giver but

¹⁴ §36. This is part of an argument for the proper autonomy of scientific investigation on the one hand, and the harmony between science and faith on the other.

¹⁵ In this regard, our care of creation is to imitate the Creator, which extends beyond a narrow sense of stewardship as conservation and preservation. For a fuller discussion, cf. Willis Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008).

also for itself. Gratitude is the characteristic mark of someone who lives in the right disposition of all created things; it is a sign of a redeemed relationship towards God, neighbor and creation. If we live in the grace of gratitude, we cannot exploit or instrumentalize another. In this context, gratitude is more than thankfulness. It is the dynamic dilation of one’s whole self in openness to creation and its Creator. It heightens our awareness of our relationality, which takes active expression in generosity: the disposition of the self to the care and service of the other. When the soul is flooded with gratitude, not only is it more open to God, but it is disposed to the Divine will. Gratitude points us towards the sanctifying dimension of mission which every Christian has with regard to creation.¹⁶ Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the ecological implications of this vision contained within the *Spiritual Exercises*, we can begin to see the radical personal, political and economic outcomes that such a vision will entail.

If the PF locates us as an active self within a nexus of dynamic and intersecting relationships, its sparse, succinct “scholastic” language can easily hide its multidimensionality and the process of “conversion” and transformation that it describes. All these dimensions will come into play as the PF unfolds throughout the dynamic of the Exercises. Our relationship with God and with others which takes place with the whole created order of the finite can conceal the deeper dynamic which marks all our relationships.

¹⁶ “Stewardship” has now become a contested term in ecological discourse. Within scripture, stewardship is not domination or subjection but the ways in which humans are called upon to imitate the Divine stewardship of care. Cf. James Hanvey, “Laudato Si’ and the Renewal of Theologies of Creation,” *Heythrop Journal* 59, no. 6 (2018): 1022–1035.

Although the central axis of mediation is always the individual's personal relationship of encounter with Christ, this dynamic in which and through which our lives are played out takes place in the transcendent reality of the salvific activity of the Triune life and the imminent realities of our "now" or our "situatedness." In the course of the Exercises, the self becomes transparent to itself in the course of loving God which, for Ignatius, is always expressed in the desire for ever greater service. It is the movement which St Paul articulates in I Cor 13:12 and it is both noetic and affective. The Exercises do not know a Cartesian self or self-knowledge. It is always a self-in-relation. This, too, has its own characteristic knowledge, for the self knows itself in so much as it knows how much it is in need of redemption. Hence, the deeper this awareness, the more we see that we cannot separate ourselves from Christ: the knowledge of self will depend on our knowledge of Christ. In knowing Christ, we cannot separate the cognitive from the affective. As in John's Gospel, knowledge of Christ comes through love. Indeed, the more we love Christ, the more we know him and our world through his love. Here, the Exercises lead us into the central mystery of revelation: all Christian gnosis comes by way of the Cross. "Conversion," which is the process by which we appropriate this "gnosis," is a recovery and reordering or reconstruction (conversion) of the self. Just as there is no distinction in Christ between his person and his mission, so the Exercises gradually re-form us in the grace of this Christ-like integrity. Hence, we will experience a desire to participate in his mission of establishing the Kingdom of God. The "self" that emerges from the Exercises has discovered that "to praise, reverence and serve" are not only active verbs that apply at the individual level, but they encompass the whole Divine purpose of "working the redemption of the human race" (§107).

The relationship with all created things, established in the PF, is disclosed as mission. We come to see that the way of our salvation, and becoming more completely who we are, must be through Christ and the service of others; through working for the salvation of the other, we enact the freedom of our graced self. It is now possible to see that the whole dynamic of the PF, which leads us into the mystery of Christ and whose end cannot be realized without him, will have significant cultural and political consequences in practice.

The Political Implications of the PF

Firstly, if we genuinely love Christ and seek our own salvation, we cannot avoid history or society. Indeed, we are firmly located in and committed to the salvific good of all creation. We are reconstituted in Christ as soteriological agents: an agency which is worked out in the unpredictability of “times, places, circumstances.” For this reason, “discernment” is integral to our graced freedom and agency.

Secondly, location of the self in both transcendent and the temporal relationships with all created things means that St Ignatius recovers two vital dimensions for our understanding of the human person and his or her agency. In this respect, the Exercises represent an authentic Christian anthropology in which the person lives in a relational transcendence to God which is foundational for the imminent relationship with all other things.¹⁷ It holds our relationship with

¹⁷ It is important to understand that these are not opposing relationships. There is a certain dynamic mutuality without collapsing one into the other. Ultimately, they disclose the character of finitude which is disclosed in the absolute and irreducible transcendence of God. In this sense, there is a certain

human society and creation in their most dynamic and creative order, while providing a barrier to any reductionism. Where humans are understood purely in material terms, not only is their moral responsibility to all created things compromised, but they themselves are exposed to instrumentalization. Value becomes determined by use and utility; in turn, this becomes subject to political, economic and social power, now liberated from any responsibility to “the human.”

The most egregious examples of this can be seen with slavery and the politico-social creation of classes and castes, which then subsequently determine access to legal protection and rights. Narratives are developed to legitimate these creations and de-humanize those placed in the categories. We can see this happening in history, especially through the power dynamics of colonization and empire, but it continues today with the Rohingyas, Yazidis, Uyghurs, indigenous peoples, and Tribals.

Instrumentalization and reductionism can also take place within societies where particular “identities”—sexual, social, economic, cultural—can be re-narrated so as to degrade value and make violence or policies of elimination appear necessary and virtuous. Neither the State nor the law (national or international) have the stability to be keepers of the human soul, for neither have any intrinsic commitment to transcendence. Yet, this transcendence, which grounds the non-reducibility of the human person and their freedom, can still be seen

“Chalcedonian” analogy. It is only in their relationship that we can grasp them. However, the transcendent does not simply find expression in relation to God, but also in relation to all created things. They represent “the other,” which cannot be absorbed but stands as the condition and point of our own particularity on the one hand and opens up the space “beyond” us on the other. This means that “the other,” even when an apparent threat, is integral to our own identity and becoming.

even in the secular world, or where God is not explicitly acknowledged and may even be denied. It is exercised as conscience, which is recognized through the respect that is given to it even when it is seen as dangerous or inconvenient.

For the Ignatian Exercises, the ultimate guarantor of humanity is the absoluteness of God. Christianity not only maintains the absolute transcendence of trinitarian monotheism but, with the Incarnation of Christ, it refuses to allow this to be used to diminish or degrade the value of the human person. God’s decision to create that which is not God and, even more radically, to be involved in the history of creation opens up the uniqueness of the Judeo-Christian faith. It embeds human freedom in the Divine freedom and preserves the experience of God as liberator not oppressor. This radical freedom of God—which is God’s own aseity and transcendence—ultimately subverts any attempts to turn God into a product of the State or the dominant power group. The whole testimony of both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament is a witness to this. The PF is a condensed statement of this history in which it is grounded. In stating the transcendent purpose of the human person, it relativizes all other claims. It also reminds us that we belong to God and are of infinite value to God, a value which is realized and secured in Christ. This transcendent value and, indeed, the transcendent destiny of our whole self (material, spiritual, historical) is realized in Christ’s resurrection. For this reason, we should understand the “telos” described in the PF as containing an eschatology.

The Gift of Finite Freedom for Transcendence

The absoluteness of God and our transcendent destiny is not a hidden strategy for a theocratic state. That would be just as oppressive

and idolatrous as any secular absolutism. There are two dimensions to God's absoluteness, which makes it more than a religious assertion of Divinity. If it were only this then, politically and socially, it would become another power game within a secular order. Firstly, in Christian terms, God's absolute transcendence marks the boundary between the finite and infinite. It ensures that "God" can never be confused with the created order and, therefore, can never be made into an idol. Idols are not a self-creation; they are always the "product of human hands."¹⁸ If God's absoluteness marks the irreducible nature of the finite precisely as finite, it does not necessarily pose a barrier to it. Indeed, the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation maintains the opposite. Chalcedon's insight into the relation between the two natures in Christ is a paradigm for the way in which the finite (human) is realized in its relationship to the Divine.¹⁹

Secondly, if the "telos" of the person is God and participation in the Divine life, then God has bestowed an inestimable value upon the person. This is not dependent in any way upon his or her capacity, gifts, status or physical form. Moreover, each one has a unique vocation to God as their end, which cannot be assimilated to historical achievements or recognition. If God is the absolute of a person's life, then, as we have seen, all other claims are relativized. Consequently,

¹⁸ In this sense, Ps. 135, vv. 16–18 speaks for the whole of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

¹⁹ Cf. Karl Rahner, *Ignatius of Loyola*, ed. Paul Imhof; trans. Rosaleen Ockenden (London: Collins, 1979), 13-15. For Rahner, the Exercises are about the disclosure of God's freedom, which disposes our lives precisely through the recovery of our own freedom in Christ. The interplay of finite and infinite freedoms is also explored by Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Theo-drama: Theological Dramatic Theory. Vol. 1: Prolegomena*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1988). B/4. Cf. also: *Theo-drama: Theological Dramatic Theory. Vol. 2, The Dramatis Personae: Man in God, B/II*.

the order expressed in the PF ensures the proper ordering of relations between the person and the community, the community and the State.²⁰ Yet, this is not the assertion of an absolute individuality which risks confusing itself with God’s absoluteness. The PF encapsulates the radical nature of the person’s transcendent value, but it also articulates their dependence: first upon God and then upon the community and the whole of creation. As we have seen, this relational inter-dependency is the mark of finitude.²¹ It not only characterizes our freedom but entails responsibilities; we are responsible for the good of the other and assisting their movement towards God. In this, it opens the way to the primary insight of the Christian tradition on the primacy of “charity.”

Responsible Freedom for Others

To exercise this responsibility ensures that I cannot instrumentalize the other to fulfil my own desires or will. This

²⁰ From within the Protestant world, there is the important example of the prophetic *Barmer Theologische Erklärung* (1934), a document adopted by Protestant Christians in Nazi Germany who opposed the *Deutsche Christen*, which they regarded as making the Church subservient to the Nazi state. It also entails the rejection of any form of racism. On this question, cf. the impact of the Barmen Kairos Theologians: *The Kairos Document: A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa*, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, British Council of Churches, 1986). Cf. also Robert A. Cathey, “What Can the Barmen Declaration Teach Us Today?” in *Currents in Theology and Mission* 36, no. 2 (2009). For a review of the complexities facing the Catholic position, cf. Frank J. Coppa, “Pope Pius XI’s ‘Encyclical’ *Humani Generis Unitas* Against Racism and Anti-Semitism and the ‘Silence’ of Pope Pius XII,” *A Journal of Church and State* 40, no. 4 (1998): 775-95. Also cf. Frank J. Coppa, *Politics and the Papacy in the Modern World* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008), esp. chapters 6-8.

²¹ For a recent exploration of inter-dependency, cf. Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (London: Duckworth, 2009).

responsibility also lies with the community and the State. In ways appropriate to each, there is a commitment to respect the intrinsic transcendent value of each person, whatever their status or condition. Equally, there is also a commitment to provide those resources necessary for each person to realize their dignity and “mission” for the greater good. When the person acts in accord with their constitution in seeking God, they are living the genuine good within them. If the good is self-diffusive (*bonum diffusivum sui*), the person will also want to share and create this good. This is another dimension of our agency, especially when that goodness is elevated by grace.

It is in this context that we can understand how discernment is a necessary practice for spiritual growth and must become a habitual practice in the exercise of our freedom, especially in our relationships and their growth in goodness. The “redemption” or “healing” of freedom in the Exercises will also act as a critique of the dominant contemporary equation of freedom with autonomy.²²

Autonomy as the unrestricted and independent exercise of personal will has become deeply embedded in our western culture. When accepted as an absolute value which underpins “freedom of choice,” the exercise of agency and therefore of political status, it can be double-edged. On the one hand, it can be instrumentalizing and, on the other, it can leave us open to exploitation. It undermines the responsibilities of interdependencies and mutual relationalities. Only God can have the absolute freedom that autonomy sets as the human goal. To be finite is to recognize our interdependent relationality. To

²² For an extensive discussion of the relationship between freedom and discernment within the theology of liberation and doxology, cf. Andrew L. Prevot, *Thinking Prayer: Theology and Spirituality amid the Crises of Modernity* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame UP, 2015): esp. chapter 5.

attempt to circumvent it can result in a profound alienation and a distortion of our social realities. As the alternative to this, the PF and the Exercises which follow firmly locate us within the finite. However, we come to understand that this does not diminish or restrict us. Rather, it becomes the realm in which we encounter our capacity for self-transcendence and the responsibilities we have to the other. Here, the finite becomes the condition of realising our potential for freedom which not only serves our own flourishing but is generative of community. In other words, the PF envisages us exercising our freedom in love and gratitude towards God and all created things. Dependency is not seen as a restriction of our freedom but the condition of its perfection (cf. *Contemplatio*). This understanding of freedom and the way in which identity and purpose is expressed in its exercise becomes a source of our liberation from the false (idolatrous) entanglements. It is also the perspective from which we can unmask them. It will now be clear that this understanding of freedom has wide implications for all of our social, political and economic systems, especially when they purport to be the cause, guarantors, and means of our autonomy, represented by their apparent ability to offer infinite capacity for choice.²³ The recent thesis advanced by Eugene McCarragher makes a thoughtful and persuasive case for the way in which capitalism has become the “religion” of modernity, and a similar genealogy could be developed for other economic systems.²⁴

²³ Cf. Joseph Veale, *Manifold Gifts: Ignatian Essays on Spirituality* (Oxford: Way Books, 2006). All of these essays are worth reading but, for this point, cf. 169–170.

²⁴ Cf. Eugene McCarragher, *The Enchantments of Mammon: How Capitalism Became the Religion of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2019). Cf. also Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1944; and Tim Rogan, *The Moral Economists: R.H.*

However, what emerges from our experience of living the dynamic of the PF is that the finite is the realm in which we encounter the call or pull of transcendence, which is the essence of our own journey of self-realization. Yet, there is something more which we could not have seen had we relied on its deistic logic alone. The “finite” is precisely the ground in which God in Christ has chosen to meet us. In doing so, God has guaranteed the finite creation and its capacity to mediate, to be the theater of grace. The resurrection of Christ will confirm this and open up a new understanding of the finite for us.

Carrying the Memory of the “Who” in the Human

It is now possible to see how the Exercises contain a theological anthropology which does not remain at a theoretical level. It becomes a way of living and acting in the world. Every political, economic and social system contains its own anthropology. Policies, structures and decisions express values; implicitly or explicitly they put forward a vision of the human “telos,” whether that is expressed in the pursuit of happiness and self-fulfilment or as service to the greater destiny of the State or the system. Such anthropologies do not necessarily lack an

Tawney, Karl Polanyi, E.P. Thompson, and the Critique of Capitalism (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2017). For a cultural critique, cf. Isabel Capeloa Gil and Helena Gonçalves Da Silva, *The Cultural Life of Money* (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2015). Echoing Tawney, cf. Benjamin M. Friedman, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (New York: Knopf, 2021). Like Tawney, Friedman approaches his subject from a Protestant (and mainly American) perspective which distorts his argument. He seems largely ignorant of Catholic Social Thought, especially the work of Heinrich Pesch and the social encyclicals. Cf. the work of Stefano Zamagni and Luigino Bruni on economies of altruism and reciprocity. Also cf. the encyclical of Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), which substantially advances Catholic magisterial thinking on economic systems and values. Cf. Daniel K. Finn, *The True Wealth of Nations: Catholic Social Thought and Economic Life* (New York; Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010).

understanding of the interplay of immanence and transcendence. In fact, they can convert it to their own ends. John Updike once famously described America as “a vast conspiracy to make you happy.”²⁵ The conspiracy, however, goes wider and deeper than America. It is the fundamental strategy for an unredeemed political and economic system. When harnessing religion to serve their own ends or when rejecting it, a soteriological claim lies within all secular systems. In an essay entitled “The Future of Catholicism,” Jean Luc Marion identifies a crisis in the post-Cartesian construction of the self. Even though Kant is able to establish “man” (sic) as an end in himself, Marion points out the implication of this humanist principle: “By a paradoxical but inevitable reversal, this means today that everything that can claim to serve man as a final goal immediately justifies itself; man himself can become a means for man, understood as an end—state violence, biological manipulation, attacks on life *in utero*, and so on, maintain their supposed legitimacy by claiming to serve man, as an end in himself, at the risk of reducing very concrete men to the rank of simple means.”²⁶ Marion concedes that we can think of “man” as his own final goal, but this does not answer the question of “who” such a person is. He argues that one of the functions of the Church is to provide the resources for answering this question, without which the “humanum” is always in danger. The Church’s mission is “to show that God alone can give man the freedom to go back—first—to man himself, by giving him the freedom to resemble nothing less than God

²⁵ *The New Yorker*, August 19th 1972: “How to Love America and Leave it at the Same Time.”

²⁶ Jean-Luc Marion, *Believing in Order to See: On the Rationality of Revelation and the Irrationality of Some Believers* (New York: Fordham UP, 2017): 79

himself.”²⁷ What Marion sees as the future of Catholicism is, in fact, its theological anthropology, which can both resist a destructive self-idolization and propose a re-ordering of our relations through the recognition that we are nothing but what we have received.²⁸

As we have seen, the Exercises not only offer such a theological anthropology, but they show us a way of living it. Ultimately, this is more significant than establishing a philosophical or theological vision of humanity, no matter how coherent or appealing. If the vision cannot be realized in history, it remains another noble edifice of human reason. It may hold a vision of Christ but, if it is not incarnated into history, the reality and practice of daily life, it will remain only an aesthetic hypothetical construct. Jesus Christ is not only a historical figure; he is a living presence in history, of which he is the Lord. History is the place of encounter, transformation and transfiguration. This is why the whole dynamic of the Exercises is a profound, transformational journey “in” history into which we are now sent as servant and companion of Christ who is already active within it.²⁹ The Christian life and the Christian community not only articulate this reality, but they present it in the court of human reason. By living it, they create a new space, a new possibility within history. This possibility can only be real and sustained by the gift of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Church is not a self-founding or self-sustaining community. If that is weakness before the world, it is also a subversion of worldly powers. When the Church lives from the gift of the Holy Spirit and the presence of the Risen Lord, she and her

²⁷ Ibid, p. 81.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 84.

²⁹ Cf. The dynamic of the Fourth Week and the *Contemplatio ad Amorem* §230 ff.

members are also empowered to live that freedom which the PF describes. Such a graced freedom which takes up the cause of the other, their dignity and hope will always be a challenge to ideology whatever form it takes or security it offers. This will be as true for religious ideologies as it is for secular and atheist ones.³⁰ The Christian life and the community of faith, the Church, which sustains it, is a space of creative hope in which humanity comes to know its destiny and is empowered to live it.

If the graced experience of the Spiritual Exercises opens up this “new possibility,” they also place us at the heart of the drama and require us to exercise the gift of freedom that we have been given. The Exercises confront us with the ultimate reality of choice: are we for Christ or not? They do not allow us the luxury of neutrality. This, too, is part of their theo-political character.

II: The Two Standards and the Unmasking of the Strategies of Evil

The centrality of the Two Standards and Three Modes of Humility in the dynamic process of the Exercises is well recognized. They are also at the core of the primitive version of the Exercises, indicating their foundational nature in Ignatius’ own experience at Manresa and subsequently forming the core of the shape of the

³⁰ Cf. Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry, *Taking America Back for God* (New York: Oxford UP, 2020), especially the concluding chapter, 151 ff. The analysis offered of Christian nationalism as a type of ideology is also effective for all religions which have been conscripted into nationalist politics. The other dimension of this is “Political Religions” apart from the seminal work of Eric Voeglin, *Die politischen Religionen* (Wien: Bermann-Fischer Verlag, 1938); cf. Emilio Gentile, *Le Religioni della politica: Fra democrazie e totalitarismi*, (ET) *Politics as Religion*. Princeton, NJ; Oxford: Princeton UP, 2006. It is not possible within the scope of this essay to enter into how the Exercises, indeed, Christian revelation, can critique this phenomenon which is not just a modern one.

Exercises which emerge from it.³¹ While they are certainly there to school the process of discernment and frame the election, they concentrate and encapsulate the whole dynamic of the Exercises. They also become the principal tools for the life of service to which we are called. Here, we can briefly set out its key elements.

1: Knowing and Living Christ

We have already seen how the Exercises place us within the drama of history. If one of the principal graces of the First Week is the knowledge of how sin and evil can entangle us, the subsequent weeks then take us into a profound and personal knowledge of how God acts to redeem us and the world. This brings us to our “second conversion”: the person and knowledge of Christ and his mission.

We have already encountered Christ in our “first conversion”: knowledge of the abyss of sin in the world, both personal and cosmic, and our encounter with the crucified Christ who is also our redemption (§53). Only in the experience and knowledge of the First Week can we enter into the second conversion of the Second and Third Weeks, which is the way of the crucified Christ. For Ignatius, understanding or knowledge is never purely an intellectual enlightenment. It is a deeper and more complete “knowing” which engages the affect or the heart, which is a sort of attunement to the person and way of Christ. In this way, our knowing becomes praxis. For Ignatius, there is a complementarity between the activity of our reason and our affective or experiential knowledge. We can see this movement set out in the

³¹ For the background to the “three classes of men” (Ex § 149-157), cf. Arzubialde, 401–416, and also Andreas Falkner SJ, “Nota sobre los Binarios” in Juan Plazaola SJ, ed. *Las Fuentes De Los Ejercicios Espirituales de San Ignacio: Actas de Simposio Internacional*, Bilbao: Ediciones Mensajero, 1998.

governing petition of the Second Week. It is formulated in the two verbs: *conocer* and *imitar*—to know and to imitate. In their respective ways, they are both conditioned by “*interno*.”³² Through the contemplations of the Second Week, we are drawn into an experiential knowledge. “*Imitar*” is an integral part of this knowing. Christ is more than an “exemplar” to be imitated. Rather, the knowledge which is given is a participative knowledge; it entails the Pauline “Christ lives in me.”³³ Here, we see that one of the fruits of the Exercises is a profound epistemological healing and expansion: “to see all things in Christ.”³⁴ Formally, this is the indwelling activity of the Holy Spirit in the exercitant through the growth and reordering of the energies of desire and love. To be drawn into this ever deeper “*conocimiento interno*” of Christ is to be drawn into the whole salvific economy of the Incarnation, its personal and historical unfolding. Not only is this

³² For a fuller exploration, cf. Arzubialde, *Ejercicios*, 347–354. For useful, informative, concise studies, cf. *Dicc.* Vol. 1, 400-408. Still useful: cf. also, Ig. Iparraguirre, *Vocabulario*. The entry in the *Diccionario* for “*Imitar*” comes under “*imitación de Cristo*” (cf. Vol I, 994–100). This gives a useful summary of the tradition with which Ignatius would have been familiar in the devotional movements and teachings. However, it does not deal with the epistemological significance of “*imitar*” and the critical role it plays in the Two Standards.

³³ Cf. The Exercises on the application of the senses. These types of exercises of the senses are certainly part of the spiritual tradition before Ignatius. They become an important part of deepening the experiential knowledge of Christ. However, in the Exercises, they are also part of the school of apostolic service. They serve to renew, sensitize and educate the faculties so that they are now not only open to the world in the normal way, but are open to it as the realm of God’s activity and Christ’s presence. The whole object of the interior knowledge which we seek is to become aware of, and alert to the presence of Christ the way someone deeply and truly in love “knows” and is alert and sensitive to the one whom they love, even able to anticipate their needs and thoughts.

³⁴ We can see these at play in the three ways of making the election, §175-188. The second and third ways of making an election refer respectively to reason and affect. They should also be read with the “parable” of the three classes of men in mind §150-157.

experienced in the concrete life of Christ but, as the *Contemplatio* indicates, it is the ever-present activity of the Divine Triune love sustaining, redeeming and sanctifying throughout history, past, present and future. Whatever state of life we choose, following him cannot be done in any way. It can only be effective through a total commitment to Christ. To be clear, it will entail entering into the cruciform reality of his person – his mission *ad extra*, which is grounded *ad intra* in his obedience as Son to the Father and sealed through the Holy Spirit, “the Lord and Giver of Life.” The position of The Two Standards and Three Modes of Humility within the Second Week is important if this transformation is to be realized.

2: The Eschatological Drama of the Kingdom

The Two Standards and the Three Modes concentrate and summarize the whole mission of Christ. They correctly understand it as one that is universal and eschatological. If the experience of the First week shows us that the goal of the *Principle and Foundation* is actually impossible without the salvific grace of the crucified Lord, then discernment, to be effectively exercised, must have this knowledge. To read the world and history without the crucified and Risen Christ risks making it an exercise in theistic gnosis or atheistic self-construction: knowledge which may need experience and insight but not an encounter with the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Hermeneutic of History

At first glance, the presentation of the Two Standards can appear to have the same parabolic character as The Call of the Earthly King

(§91ff) but I think they stand in a different genre.³⁵ Although it presents us with a vivid imaginary scene, the imagery of the Two Standards is deeply rooted in scripture and tradition. They open for us the way in which the advent of Christ unmasks the activity of evil and its strategies. They locate or relocate us within the immediacy of the battle for the Kingdom. Anyone who wishes to know and follow Christ will find themselves in a real conflict with the forces named in Ephesians as “powers and principalities.”³⁶ We cannot forget the knowledge of the First Week concerning the cosmic and supernatural “history” of sin and evil.³⁷ As the gospels make clear, Christ is the unavoidable moment of decision, the moment of “crisis” which always has a historical and existential reality. To treat the imagery of the Two Standards as some anachronistic device derived from the piety of a previous age that needs to be “demythologized” risks de-historicising the reality of the Kingdom in conflict with evil. In doing so, we

³⁵ Cf. Arzubialde, *Ejercicios*, cf. who sees it as a parable p.395.

³⁶ Eph. 6:12. Karl Barth’s *Rechtfertigung und Recht* (1938) was one of the pioneering works in this area; *Church and State*, trans. Ronald Howe (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1939). As noted by Marva J. Dawn, Barth’s work was preceded by the works of Johann Christoph Blumhardt and Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt. See Marva J. Dawn, *Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacling of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001): pp. 1-5; and Johann Christoph Blumhardt’s biography, as narrated by Friedrich Zuendel: *The Awakenings: One Man’s Battle with Darkness* (Farmington, PA: Plough Publishing House, 1999). For influential contemporary studies, cf. Markus Barth, *The Broken Wall: A Study of Ephesians* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1959); and G.H.C. MacGregor, “Principalities and Powers: The Cosmic Background of Paul’s Thought” in *New Testament Studies* 1, no. 1 (1954): 17-28; and Martyn, J. Louis, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997). An important study for Catholic theology is Heinrich Schlier, *Principalities and Powers in the New Testament* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961).

³⁷ We should note that, in doing so, they recapitulate the “history” of sin in the First Week, and they run through the same dimension: cosmic/supernatural to existential and personal. In this sense, “history” is not simply a temporal category measured only in human terms.

remove it from the realm of history to the purely personal and dis-incarnate realm of the “spiritual.” As Karl Barth argues: “To say ‘Jesus’ is necessarily to say ‘history,’ his history, the history in which he is what he is and does what he does. In this history, we know God, and we know evil and their relationship the one to the other—but only from this source and in this way.”³⁸

In locating us, the Two Standards also become a school in which we learn the practical and necessary “*discretion*,” the knowledge we need to serve Christ and stay true to him. This is essentially an apostolic wisdom. Not only is it ordered to our own personal growth in Christ, it is about mission. Indeed, this is what we find in the way in which the synoptic gospels present the inauguration of Jesus’ mission under the power of the Holy Spirit. After his baptism, he is immediately engaged in the trial or temptations of the “Enemy.” So, too, the Two Standards inaugurate and shape our response to the call of Christ and the unfolding of the Christian mission. Indeed, any mission which does not understand itself in terms of this eschatological drama will find it difficult to understand itself and its choices. In the Two Standards, the Exercises give us a “weapon” to be wielded in Christ’s service for the salvation of souls. They also show us that the only “weapon” is that of the cross.³⁹

Discernment and the Choice of the Cross

In this context, we can see how the drama of the Two Standards is the presupposition of the discernment of spirits. It takes up the cosmic and supernatural history of sin in the First Week and now gives

³⁸ “Jesus is the Victor” in *Church Dogmatics* IV: 69. §3. The whole discussion is instructive for the Two Standards.

³⁹ Hugo Rahner, *The Spirituality of St Ignatius of Loyola*, 95.

it particular focus in the eschatological drama of another “kingdom” opposed to that of Christ. The kingdom of Satan exercises power through fear, terror, deception, and violence (§140).⁴⁰ It also has its “apostles” and servants; it parallels the contemplation of the Incarnation, for it too envisages the whole world (§141).⁴¹ Just as the temptations of Christ are all socio-political and religious possibilities within “this” world, so the Two Standards offer us a hermeneutic for the concrete realities of our own history, circumstances and choices. In whatever guise evil presents itself, there is an active hatred of human freedom which it seeks to destroy with entrapments (nets and chains) and seductions: coveting wealth; vain honor; pride (§142). We can see that the effect of these is threefold:

⁴⁰ Cf. also the Rules for the discernment of Spirit in the First and Second Weeks. For a significant modern treatment of this dynamic under the “mécanisme victimaire,” cf. René Girard, *I See Satan Fall like Lightning*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001). Girard’s whole book and his analysis of the mechanism of mimetic imitation and the role it plays in the cycles of violence, broken by the Cross, could act as a commentary on the Two Standards.

⁴¹ “Satan” by Xavier Léon-Dufour in the *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (French: *Vocabulaire de Théologie Biblique*, 1967). The Christian must choose between Christ and Satan: 2. Cor. 6:14. He loves to disguise himself: traps, deceits, wiles, maneuvers (2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11; 1 Tim. 3:7, 6:9). The angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). The Apocalypse from 12 onwards offers a sort of synthesis of biblical teaching on the adversary against whom human nature has to struggle. The NT thinks of the devil in terms of a power struggle: power at work among specifically human and social realities. It seeks to describe that which is intimately connected to the exercise of human freedom in the empirical world yet recognizes that there is a “plus factor” that the choices of individual human freedom cannot explain. In this context the language of personification is not only appropriate but necessary. Is it possible, then, that the New Testament’s language about the demonic is true in ways that are important for us to relearn? Does the language say what needs saying in a way no other language can?

1: To destroy human freedom by false knowledge and illusion, especially the illusion.

2: To draw people into the world, which is itself transitory and cannot ultimately fulfil them. This becomes a distortion of the *Principle and Foundation* because we cease to use created things well. Not only do we destroy our own freedom, but we have a purely instrumental approach which destroys the very good that we seek.

3: Pride is ultimately the illusion of our own power and self-sufficiency. It not only rejects God but, because it sees God as a rival, it seeks to destroy God and faith in Christ, God's salvific and liberating love. As this is impossible, it will try to destroy the *imago dei* in each of us, especially as God has chosen us as the object of the Divine Love. Pride must always exercise its power as violence in one form or another. This is precisely what we see enacted in the figure of Lucifer. Although the dynamics of evil are presented in personal terms, there is a social and cultural dimension which, in the Two Standards, we come to realize is always an active and immanent power. It creates a toxic universe which is hostile not only to human flourishing but to the life of all that God has created and blessed as good.

In the presentation of Christ, the true leader, we have the exact counter-values and God's *modus operandi*: humility. Here, we gain critical knowledge of the way in which God works: we are not coerced or terrified into subjection. Grace never usurps our freedom but creates new possibilities for it to be realized in service of God's good purposes. There are no limits to the Kingdom which Christ envisages. His power is demonstrated not through violence, but through sacrificial

loving service: in poverty (spiritual and actual), suffering humiliation and contempt and, finally, in humility. This is the way of the Cross but, in accepting it, the Christian servant of Christ the King must also become the servant of his salvific mission. We can now see that discernment not only takes place within the horizon of the eschatological drama of the Kingdom, but it is also verified in the way of the Cross. It is a profoundly theological act: an act of faith and surrender to the incomprehensible wisdom of a crucified and risen Christ.⁴² As such, it also has its own eschatological character for choosing to be “thought worthless and a fool for Christ”—*de ser estimado por vano y loco por Cristo* (§167)—is a realization of the Kingdom. In this way, all acts of discernment must always be measured in terms of the extent to which they advance the Kingdom. In some way and at some level, they will be counter-intuitive to the values and wisdom of the world. It will not be sufficient to ensure that any decision or course of action simply resists the traps of the enemy; it will have to positively express the values and means that God’s salvific wisdom disclosed in Christ.

We can now appreciate how discernment is grounded in this cruciform knowledge and presupposes it. The “rightness” of discerned decisions cannot be measured by the normal criteria of success but, rather, in the way we are open to the sovereignty of Christ in our lives and in our works. Only this will truly serve the Kingdom. In this way, discernment is not just an instrument, but a test of our desires and our values; it draws us into the mystery of the Divine economy.

⁴² Cf. 1 Cor. 1:18ff. For an excellent treatment of this theme, cf. Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009).

The Wisdom of the Cross in the Two Standards

One of the major features of contemporary theology is the recovery of the theology of the Cross.⁴³ Although Augustine does not have the same preoccupation with a revisionary metaphysics, in a brief but significant treatment in his *De Trinitate*, he draws out the radical significance of God's choice of the cross. In many ways, it is the same implicit "logic" of the Two Standards and it can offer a challenging consideration for the use of violence in social transformation. In Book XIII of the *De Trinitate*, Augustine asks why God does not use His power to counter Satan but chooses the powerlessness and degradation of the cross?⁴⁴ His answer is simple and profound: to do so would entail God using the same strategies as Satan to overcome Satan. Instead of breaking the "economy of evil," God would remain trapped in it, because God would be recognizing its logic. This is the way the world thinks, and it must inevitably perpetuate the cycle of violence and destructive power.

For Augustine, God chooses to triumph "*by the power of God's righteousness*" rather than by raw power itself. Of course, to those

⁴³ The recovery of Luther's theology of the Cross combined with the conceptualization of *Aufhebung* gave European contemporary systematic theology the tools and the need to re-think the theology in terms of kenosis, especially following the experience of a century of war and the Atomic Bomb. This can be seen in the work of Jürgen Moltmann and Eberhard Jüngel as well as in Hans Urs Von Balthasar and J.B. Metz. It can also be seen in Liberation Theology, most notably in the work of Leonardo Boff and Jon Sobrino. It is present, too, in early pioneering Protestant thinkers, such as Karl Barth and P.T. Forsyth.

⁴⁴ *De Trin.* Book XIII. Chapter 13 ff. Cf. also Book IV. 12–13: here, reflecting on the Magi, Augustine "anticipates" the Two Standards. He argues that we should seek to return to our homeland (heaven) by another way, "which the humble king has taught and which the proud king, the adversary of that humble king, cannot block." Augustine also traces the strategies of deceit which characterize the devil.

who are not illuminated by the Cross, it will seem like the folly of an impotent dream. They will remain within the fatal logic of “Satan” and continue to have faith in their own liberating powers of violence. Discernment, which understands itself within the eschatological drama of the Two Standards, can only be a radical act of faith in Christ and that his way is the only way that can save.⁴⁵

Augustine presents us with a challenging insight into the ways in which our decisions and actions must also break out of the logic of a fallen world. This is the work of discernment that we come to learn in the school of the Exercises, especially deepened and consolidated in the Third Week when we enter into the depth of Christ’s passion and crucifixion and its subtle education of our solidarity with Him and all the victims of political and religious power. Yet, it is only by our complete surrender to God and the Divine “way of proceeding” that we can receive the mission which comes with the Fourth Week where we learn from the Risen Christ how to be true ministers of consolation in a suffering and broken world. It is the ministry of reconciliation which is grounded in the work of Christ and eschews all violent means to achieve its end. The reconciled peace of the Risen Christ, the true “shalom” of the Kingdom’s sabbath can only be brought about when we are abandoned to God’s foolishness and step into its unfathomable darkness, the ultimate act of faith.

⁴⁵ Cf. below and the discussion of René Girard. Cf. also Raymund Schwager, *Jesus in the Drama of Salvation: Toward a Biblical Doctrine of Redemption* (New York: Crossroad, 1999): esp. 182ff.: “The Transformation of Evil,” which Schwager develops from Girard.

3: Some Observations

Even in the light of these preliminary remarks on some of the principal elements of the Exercises, we can begin to sense the extent of their implications in the socio-political field. In conclusion, it may be helpful for a deeper, more comprehensive and critical examination of the central thesis of this paper to make three final observations.

a: Epistemology of the Two Standards

As we have seen, neither The Two Standards nor the Three Modes can be thought of as operating purely within privatized interior spirituality. They are set within the struggle for the Kingdom and it is within the realm of our existence and history that they are lived out. It is a real participation in the immanent work of Christ “laboring and working” in the reality of each circumstance or moment. Both the Two Standards and the Three modes necessarily contain an epistemology. The full importance of those verbs we have discussed, *conocer* and *imitar*, realize their full significance: we have entered into “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16). This is a continuation and deepening of our conversion. At its core is the freedom to enter into an ever deeper self-offering of the “*suscipe*” (§234). This self-offering is the core of his “apostolic mysticism” and the touchstone of mission.

b) Discernment as the Transvaluation of Values

In this context, we can see that discernment is more than a “tool.” It is itself an “apostolic moment.” We cannot ignore the exigencies of the situation or the pressing realities of human finitude. On the contrary, these are precisely the realities in which the incarnation requires us to acknowledge the limitations with which we must deal.

Yet, as the PF has taught us in grasping the way in which finitude discloses transcendence, when placed within the horizon of the Fourth Week, these very limitations can become the contingent opportunities to realize the Kingdom. Even so, given our weaknesses and the unfinished business of history, we cannot seek to meet our need for security in the systems and institutions of the world. Even when well established and ordered, they will surely be tokens of the Kingdom, but they can be no more than this. Discernment is always an act of surrender to God in faith.

At another level, when the values of the Standard of Christ are the operant ones in discernment, there is a transvaluation of the counter values of the world. There is a redemptive power in this. Discernment is radical practice when we allow ourselves to be poor, despised and humble with Christ. When these become the active values realized in our decisions, especially when they are about apostolic works and institutions, the Kingdom comes into view. This will always present a threat to the established order and to our own securities. What then would it mean if we could develop our social, economic and educational policies guided by these values: those that would prioritize the needs (spiritual, social and material) of the contemporary “*anawim*,” the powerless and marginalized, the economically and culturally deprived?

c: The Two Standards and End of Violence

Finally, it could be argued that the greatest transvaluation of values is the ending of the cycle of violence in all its forms. René Girard’s theory of mimetic violence can serve to underline the relevance of The Two Standards in this regard, not only on the

spiritual-theological plane but also in the field of politics. For Girard, societies are founded on primal acts of sacrificial violence (the scapegoat). This violence is rooted in the power of mimetic desire which inscribes violence into social structures.⁴⁶ In describing the ways in which these operate in relations, Girard is able to recover the ancient Biblical reality of “Satan” who “signifies rivalistic contagion,” up to and including the single victim mechanism.⁴⁷

For Girard, modern exegetes, not recognizing the mimetic cycle, have the impression that since the word “Satan” means so many different things, it no longer means anything: “This impression is deceptive... Far from being too absurd to deserve our attention, this Gospel theme contains incomparable knowledge of human conflict and societies that are generated by the violent resolution of conflict...”⁴⁸ The cycle is broken by the cross, which refuses to enter into it. Here, we can see the social and political significance of Augustine’s insight into the alternative way of the cross, which the Two Standards encapsulate. What Christianity is able to do through its own counter-mimetic mechanism (*imitar*) is to heal this violence. It can restore peace through “absorbing the violence” and performing those reconciliations which are deliberate counter-strategies to it. The Two

⁴⁶ For a probing analysis and exposition of Girard’s mimetic theory, cf. James Allison, *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin through Easter Eyes* (New York: Crossroads, 1998).

⁴⁷ Cf. René Girard, *Je Vois Satan Tomber Comme L’éclair* (Paris: Grasset, 1999); ET *I See Satan Fall like Lightning* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001). Reference is to the English translation. Satan and the strategies of mimetic violence which he symbolizes may be located either in the entire process or in one of its stages.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 43. The whole of the third chapter is on Satan and the Satanic strategies at play in society. It could be seen as a fruitful exposition of the Two Standards.

Standards provide us with a *praxis of reconciliation*, which refuses violence and the sacrifice of victims. In this sense, we are drawn into the redemptive work of the Cross as a political and social reality. This gives us a way of understanding the Church’s mission in the world. It is a mission which belongs to every Christian life. The mark of its liberating power lies in the action of martyrdom. The prayer to imitate Christ in poverty, being despised and in humility bears marks of martyrdom, both in the sense of “witness” and also in suffering social, political, economic and spiritual violence, if not actual physical violence, whilst also refusing to return it. As a “praxis,” it provides an exodus from the mimetic structures of death. As a “praxis,” the violence of the enemy and the anti-kingdom will always be directed against it. This, too, is an eschatological reality.

In an impassioned and provocative penultimate chapter in *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, Girard inveighs against the usurping ideology of “victimization,” which he sees as an ideological form of neo-paganism.⁴⁹ In fact, as Girard observes (but does not develop), Christianity is neither the religion nor practice of this ideology. The crucified is also the Risen Christ. If this were not the case, the cycle would remain a tragic one: “The Gospel theory of Satan uncovers a secret that neither ancient nor modern anthropologies have ever discovered. Violence in archaic religion is a temporary remedy. The sickness is not really cured and always recurs in the end.”⁵⁰ Catharsis is not redemption. The power that triumphs over mimetic violence lies in the resurrection, which comes through the action and gift of the Holy Spirit: “The Resurrection is not only a miracle, a prodigious

⁴⁹ Ibid, 181; whole chapter: 170-181.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 183.

transgression of natural laws. It is the spectacular sign of the entrance into the world of a power superior to violent contagion.”⁵¹ Although Girard is primarily concerned to develop an anthropology, this conclusion provides an important direction for our understanding of the Exercises. He can help us appreciate that the Fourth Week is not only part of a narrative but is actually that from which the salvific power of Christianity is derived.

Firstly, the resurrection always ensures that the way of the crucified Christ as a redemptive and not a tragic way is always a grace. It is a gift that we must seek and it does not lie in our power: “if your most holy majesty wishes to choose and receive me into this life and state” (§98). As such, it cannot be achieved through a series of practices in which we only imitate, in the sense of playing a part. The same would be true for the gift of discernment. It cannot be effective if it is converted into a formulaic practice. It can only be sought as a grace which first requires an interior surrender to let Christ “indwell.” This, as I have argued, needs our willingness to be re-located in the eschatological drama of the Kingdom as a quotidian reality.

Secondly, the importance and indispensable requirement of the Fourth Week is too often treated in a perfunctory way and rarely discussed in the context of discernment. If the reality of the Risen Lord and the abiding gift of the Holy Spirit is not our habitual dwelling, becoming the effective horizon of our understanding, then, notwithstanding all our good intentions and noble desires, we will remain always prone “to feel his death but not his victory.” Without the Fourth Week, we cannot fully understand the reality of the Kingdom and the true purpose of Christian mission; we cannot be

⁵¹ Ibid, 189.

Christ’s apostles. To know and imitate Christ, to have that deep interior knowledge of him, is not an exercise in remembering or imaginative reconstruction of a First-Century Palestinian Jewish Messiah. It is precisely to know and imitate the Risen Christ, the one who is immanent and active in our lives and in our histories. This is the Christ that cannot be made the subject of any State or political party. It is the Christ to whom all nations, parties and movements must ultimately come and under whose cross they will be judged.

In a reflection given in Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben challenged the Church to recover its messianic vocation. Failure to do so, according to Agamben, risks it being swept away like every other government and worldly institution.⁵² Even from this selective exploration of the *Spiritual Exercises*, we can see that the Church is not without resources to propose Christ and the Kingdom to humanity. Although its mission must always be renewed, the indwelling life of the Holy Spirit in the lives of men and women is the guarantee that its mission can never be lost or absorbed, either by coercion or by seduction, into the projects of worldly powers.

⁵² *La Chiesa e Il Regno* (Rome: Nottetempo, 2007): 18; ET: *The Church and the Kingdom*, trans. Giorgio Agamben and Leland de la Durantaye (London: Seagull, 2012).

[摘要] 作為早期現代天主教博大的靈修經典之一，聖依納爵的《神操》是政治和神學話語的衍生文本，塑造了早期現代和當代文化。本文旨在首先確定有助於我們了解神操如何對我們的社會和文化施為具有重要意義的關鍵特徵，並可以作為判斷政治和文化體系的神學-靈修解釋法。其次，它將表明，雖然這些神操旨在轉化和解放我們的自由，但它們也旨在將這種自由置於天主的救贖目的中。本文重點關注文本兩部分：（a）〈原則和基礎〉，即代表「自我」的恢復和如何整理我們的自由，以及（b）〈兩旗默想〉，即神類的辨別有助於揭露邪惡的策略。辨別是一種信仰的行動。選擇並臣服於十字架那難以理解的智慧（「被認為是毫無價值的，為基督而成為愚妄的人」），然後隨著復活進入基督（性質）的自由，這種自由是在服從和投身神聖的救贖旨意中實現的。這是在歷史中具有救贖力量的一種操作性的自由。整個神操的動態是一次「在」歷史中深刻的、具變革性的旅程。被轉化就是作為基督的夥伴再次被派到世界上，為創造歷史中一個新的空間，新的可能性。從這個意義上說，本文試圖發展胡戈·拉納（Hugo Rahner）的見解，即依納爵為我們提供了一種使徒神秘主義，而這種神秘主義並非沒有政治和文化含義。

關鍵詞：使徒，基督，十字架，辨別，自由，歷史，依納爵，原則與基礎，救贖，神操，兩旗默想