

## **The Way of the Faithful: Exploring the Dynamics of Desire Using the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola**

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**Abstract:** The paper examines the dynamics of desire which underpin the series of meditations and contemplations that form the four “Weeks” of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola. It places these within the basic tension between love and fear. It recognizes these four stages of spiritual development as a process of becoming more human when one moves from the acceptance of being loved, while conscious of one’s conscription within the forces of destruction, to being so transformed by that love that one lives in ways which renews a broken creation. This paper removes that dynamic from the traditional language of a mediaeval Catholicism, in which Ignatius scripted his insights, to a contemporary rhetoric appropriate for use in other spiritual traditions. This accessibility also broadens the analysis of such conversion from the individual so that it can be applied also to communities, institutions and cultures.

**Keywords:** desire, discernment, spiritual journey, mutuality

I was happy  
until I met you  
now I know  
I was unhappy  
until I met you

## Preface

Anne Carson, the Canadian poet and classicist, writes about the peculiar ecstasy of love and about the difficulty of writing about love which she sees as a translation. Love, she says, asks the question: “What is it that love dares the self to do?” And she answers, “Love dares the self to leave the self behind, to enter into poverty.”<sup>1</sup> This undoing of self by moving through self to find a more authentic self, Anne Carson following Simone Weil, calls “decreation,” and she notes of this process “to undo the self one must move through the self, to the very inside of its definition.”<sup>2</sup> In this she follows the mystical tradition of introversion as a stage of the spiritual journey to enter into a contemplative stance towards reality.<sup>3</sup> This engages us with the world in ways that transform both it and ourselves. The dynamics of an engaged desire with the divine manifested as love is not restricted to the mystic or to the poet, but is, I would claim, a characteristic of becoming human. Maximus the Confessor (ca. 580-

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<sup>1</sup> Anne Carson, *Decreation: Poetry, Essays, Opera* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 162.

<sup>2</sup> Anne Carson, *Decreation*, 175, 179.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Thus, for instance, Gregory the Great in his homily on Ezechiel, 2, v. quoted in *An Anthology of Christian Mysticism*, 2nd ed., ed., Harvey D. Egan, S.J. (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1991, 1996), 109., writes, “And so the first step is that it collect itself within itself (recollection); the second, that to consider what its nature is so collected (introversion); the third, that it rise above itself and yield itself to the intent contemplation of its invisible Maker (contemplation).”

662) writes: Perfect love does not split up the one nature of men on the basis of their various dispositions...it loves all men equally.... [I]t manifests the fruits of love equally for all.<sup>4</sup>

Humans made in the image and likeness of God are created to love. They find their fulfillment in love. The difficulty of talking about love is that we must translate that experience of *ek-stasis*, of going beyond oneself, in language which in itself acts as a rearview mirror. In retrospect, it gives us some traces of the reality we incarnate, but it does not tell us where we are now or what we are entering into. We can offer only approximations. Rather than saying of what we endure,

That is not what I meant at all.

That is not it, at all.<sup>5</sup>

instead we can offer, like the later Eliot,

Hints followed by guesses; and the rest

Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.

The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.<sup>6</sup>

I have a confession.<sup>7</sup> I fell in love. Or to be more precise, I am falling in love and it keeps changing my life. I seem to have entered an adventure of meeting God, not as a philosophical abstraction, or a theological notion for investigation but as a real live relationship that engages every aspect of myself

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<sup>4</sup> Maximus the Confessor, "The Four Hundred Chapters on Love: First Century, # 71" in *An Anthology of Christian Mysticism*, 2nd. ed., ed., Harvey D. Egan, S.J., (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press), 127-8.

<sup>5</sup> T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," ll.98-99, in <https://poets.org/poem/love-song-j-alfred-prufrock>

<sup>6</sup> T.S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages," section 5, ll. 112-115 in <http://www.davidgorman.com/4Quartets/>

<sup>7</sup> This is a deliberately chosen rhetorical stance in keeping with the prophetic nature of desire in the Exercises, which is deeply personal and intimate and public.

and shapes all the relationships I have with others. On that path I encountered others whom I was concerned with, and cared for, and I discovered, in their allowing me to enter their worlds, a more accepting sense of self that opened me further to a deeper and more real relationship with Mystery. That embrace transforms me and opens me further to others, to the world and to creation. In living thus exposed I find myself even more drawn into the life of the Trinity as a *Loving* actively and passionately devoted to Life and to all of creation. It is a journey beyond the limits of my present imagination and, as Martin Buber has pointed out, “All journeys have secret destinations of which the traveler is unaware.”<sup>8</sup>

I am discovering that every act of love, however simple, or complex, is a revelation of that journey to the fullness of humanity as love. It arises from and points back to that *Loving*. This has not been an easy path. I have been challenged or seduced, enchanted or repelled, by the encounters on the path. There are aspects of my life, some bewildering, that emerge and cause distress. There are others that surprise and leave me in a state of wonder and delight. And then there are those I just had to wait patiently and attentively with to see what emerges without indulging in compulsions or leaping to pre-determined conclusions.

It is one thing to have these experiences, and another to understand them in the immediate context of our lives. But it is quite another thing to place them within the constantly changing relationship we have with God, and in the light of God’s desire for us. Being in love leads us to recognize ourselves in ways we had not expected, and it leads us to live our lives in ways that allow us to share what has been given to us with the rest of creation of which we are an intimate part. Then we seek to recognize others the ways we have been

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<sup>8</sup> Martin Buber in <https://www.voices-visions.org/content/poster/collection-poster-martin-buber-yarom-varidimon/>

recognized, and desire to allow them to recognize themselves in similar ways. Love creates lovers, and the love that has loved us into being shows us we are loveable and capable of loving others in such a way that they too become loving and loveable. Love, quite simply, plots our lives.

St. Ignatius of Loyola discovered this in his own life. His *Spiritual Exercises* is a manifestation of that gift he received and shared with others, presented in the cultural narratives of his time. We cannot return naively to that time and to those narratives but we can undertake to explore how the human dynamics he confessionally explored of encountering grace can be appropriated for our times. This study is one such investigation. It undertakes to examine the dynamics of desire which underpin the discernments of each of the Four Stages of the spiritual journey Ignatius maps out in the Exercises. It plots a movement from the first stage of a self-enclosed security to the final stage of a creativity which builds community across the divisions of otherness and alienation. With each stage there is a growing recognition of what it means to be in love.

In contrast to the contemporary interpretations of the Exercises in terms of psychological well-being, social and ecological concerns, the present examination works from the question: what is happening to us, personally, socially, and culturally, when we are attentive to these Exercises in themselves, rather than to the uses we can put them to from a particular ideological perspective. It would hold that to be human<sup>9</sup> is to be attentive first to the Mystery we call God, and that such attentiveness determines how we deal with the concerns we have. Even more than our attentiveness to Mystery is that Mystery's attentiveness to us in a love relationship which constantly calls us

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<sup>9</sup> I hold to be human is to be engaged relationally on a personal, social, cultural, ecological and cosmic levels and so the stages of intimacy with God need to be considered in these dimensions of conversion as eschatology.

beyond our socially created conceptions of self. Being attentive we learn to recognize ourselves, and thus others and all of creation, as God recognizes us to be, an interrelated community. The creativity to which our growing intimacy with God invites us moves us beyond our self-enclosed worlds and concerns to build up that community of love where no one and nothing is denied the fullness of life. To be human is to walk that path of faithfulness.

At each stage of the path the concerns and tensions in our desiring the fullness of life differ from those of the other stages. Ignatius deals with this by positing pre-conversion and post-conversion rules for discernment and these are respectively the Rules of the First Week and those of the Second and following Weeks. He notes that his observations in this matter are not comprehensive. His First Week rules are “for understanding to some extent the different movements produced in the soul” (*Spiritual Exercises*, 313; henceforth cited as *Sp Ex*, followed by the paragraph number). Yet the dynamics of desire in the Second through Fourth Weeks of the Exercises differ from each other. They need a refinement of the more general rules Ignatius gives to help one recognize the deceptions of what is inimical to our human nature.

Both before and after conversion we may be oriented to God and to others by the very nature of our creature-hood, but we may also find ourselves unable to fulfill or even recognize that orientation because of sin. Conversion is an ongoing process. Compromised by sin, we have not attained an appropriate sense of right relationship with God, others, or even with our very selves, but we can still desire it. That desire shapes our intentions and opens us up to be approached by God who desires for us the fullness of life. As that mutuality becomes more incarnate in our lives, we discover our awareness of how to live life becomes more comprehensively human. The questions and concerns we may previously have had now change. This best manifests itself in our times of prayer when we are more conscious of our desire to be in a

relationship with God and more open to God's desire to be in a more intimate relationship with us. But that awareness also operates in the dailyness of our lives. As we become more intimate with God we start to discover the boundaries between prayer and the rest of the day disappears, such that the day and all in it moves to prayer not as a pious devotion but as an attentiveness which informs all we do. At any rate the material for prayer comes from the events in our daily life. All of this is to say our daily life manifests our spiritual life.

St. Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises*, which draws attention to how we live our lives daily, asks us to consider how and where we place ourselves as a preparation for prayer and how and where we find ourselves in the prayer itself. He suggests that before we pray we ask God for the grace "that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to the service and praise of His Divine Majesty" (*Sp Ex 46*). He asks that we consciously dispose ourselves towards God in our intentions, experiences, and habits. In doing this we acknowledge our awareness—not that we have a desire for God, but more radically that we are created as the desire for God. Ignatius sees us created as the orientation towards God though we may not be conscious of this most of the time. Even less so is our awareness of the spiritual space we inhabit at all times. That space he describes as being in the presence of "God Our Lord, and of the Angels and Saints who intercede for me." (*Sp Ex 232*) For Ignatius, to have the awareness of who we are—as the desire for God—and of where we are—surrounded and interpenetrated by that unceasing activity of God's love and in the company of all the forces of God, manifested in the Angels and Saints—is to be a "contemplative in action." This is not to be caught up in some otherworldly transport of ecstasy but actually to live one's life most truly in the here and now experiencing its conflicting attractions both outside of oneself and within one's very own self. Our attention is often caught up by those conflicting attractions—one usually more dominant than others—which

draw us either one way or another and distract us from our rootedness and from living more fully our true nature.

### **We are Defined by Relationships**

We tend to see our lives within immediate needs or within the social constructions of job, ethnicity, gender, and creed. These pattern our lives and they distract us from the deeper patterning manifest in our call to God and to God's desire for us. Immediate concerns are important and we ignore them at our peril but they are contained in the deeper patterns of our ongoing relationship with God. These deeper patterns actually shape the way we live those more immediate concerns. Both sets of patterns influence each other and it requires deliberate forms of self-consciousness for us to discern which to be more attentive to in particular instances. Underlying this challenge are the questions of how we read, and understand ourselves, and of why we recognize our lives in that particular way. We may have a commonsense literacy about how things are and about the ways in which we make our way through this life. We may even have, given its emphasis in our culture, somewhat technical, psychological ways of understanding ourselves. And, whether we like it or not, since we are social beings, we also understand ourselves in the ways we interact with family, friends, those around us, our various groups, and within the places and times we find ourselves. As these change, we change, and our sense of immediacy changes. But underlying these relationships, and the way these relationships value the Mystery we call God, there is always the abiding primal relationship we have with that Mystery. At times that primal relationship is supported by others and by our own self-understanding, and at other times that primal relationship find itself in opposition to what those other relationships offer. We find ourselves caught in these conflicting relationships and so need to discern what to do.



Our discernments are also complicated by the fact that we have an ambivalence to our primary relationship with God—we are both attracted to and hesitant towards such an intimacy—and by the conflicting emotions we also have towards all of our subsequent relationships. This happens even within the different dimensions of our own personality. It would be wonderful if things could be simpler, but they are not. In all of this we are faced with the complexity of negotiating what is truly desirable, what is truly possible, and what is to be done.

### **Relationships are Manifest through Desire**

Ignatius asks that we pray for a felt intimacy with God, out of which flows love, which manifests itself in service to that God (*Sp Ex* 104). The dynamics of desire which lead to apostolic discernment are rooted in a lived intimacy with God, self-consciously manifest in a loving service to creation. Thus it seems before we discern, both in the sense of what we should do, but also in how we should read the contexts in which we live, there is the need to develop that intimacy with God which is our primary relationship. If that does not happen, we misread all of our contexts, both sacred and secular. It is not as if that intimacy is not offered to us already. The power of that love affirms what is good in us and celebrates what gives life so we can rejoice in what is present to us now. That love comforts and consoles us in our brokenness when we are trapped in ways beyond our control. It also calls us beyond ourselves in ways that offer us a fuller life and which leads on to the fullness of life. In all of this that love surrounds us, enters into our narratives, and journeys with us.

### **The Dynamics of Desire**

This essay explores that journey through our lives and time. It does not restrict itself to the dramatic moments of rites of passage or extraordinary spiritual experiences—important as they are—but examines more the

dynamics of graced desire present in our ordinary and everyday lives. It looks at how we negotiate in the commonplace the tensions between the desire for deeper spiritual intimacy and the desire, for whatever reason, which urges us to flee from that intimacy.

St. Ignatius in the very center of his *Spiritual Exercises* has a meditation he calls The Two Standards (*Sp Ex* 136). Using a military metaphor, he describes the battle present in every human being at every moment of life between the Standard of Satan and the Standard of Christ. Ignatius depicts Satan, surrounded by horrors, and inspiring fear and terror, sending out his minions to entrap people out of that fear and terror to protect themselves by provoking them to covet riches, of any sort, so that they may more easily win the honor of the world and then, self-assured, be trapped in an overweening pride which leads them to more and more acts of self-enclosure. This dynamic operates not only with individuals but also with institutions, cultures, and nations. Christ, on the other hand, attracts with his life peoples to move beyond their self-enclosed worlds<sup>10</sup> and he missions those who follow him to go to the whole world recommending a life of the highest spiritual poverty—which so goes against the values of a world deceived by Satan—where they are led to the state of radical dependence on the Father called humility.

For most of us this dynamic tension plays out often quite unconsciously in our daily lives. Our riches do not have to be financial but can be anything we regard as our gifts, be they intellectual, physical, social, or even spiritual. These generally arouse admiration among people. People with such giftedness often regard the social responses to those gifts as their due and live out of those responses in ways that inflame their selfishness. But if we choose to see our gifts as just that, gifts and not intrinsic to our identity, we discover that being human is the acceptance of our radical poverty of spirit. It is not deceived by

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Matthew 14:15-29.

the ways of the world and often stands in opposition to those ways. It relies instead on that spiritual intimacy offered by God as a way of living this life given to us all. Such a radical dependence on the Divine Providence, which has brought us into being and supports, maintains, and corrects our sense of identity, however, does not leave us irresponsible, passively accepting everything that comes along as if from God. We need to discern, and to ask ourselves if what is appealing to us comes from God or not, and is it helpful in building up the Kingdom.

### **Our Life is a Journey between Conflicting Desires**

While the tension between narcissism and self-transcendence occurs at every moment of our life, it is helpful to ask how these are experienced and understood in the different stages of our journey to the fullness of life. How are riches, honor, pride, and their opposites, poverty, humiliations, humility, experienced when one is turned away from God? How are they experienced when one realizes one is trapped in sin but still loved by God and so turns to God? How are those tendencies realized when one tries to dispose oneself to become a follower of Christ? How do they manifest themselves when as a follower of Christ we enter with him into his passion and death? What is our awareness of them as we accept and live the gift of the resurrection?

Just as I am constantly changing in my acceptance of God's love for me, the more I allow myself to be opened by that love, the more does my sense of self change, and so too also do the dynamics of discernment by which I understand both my traps and my liberation to love. In fact the face of, and the call to love change as I journey into spiritual maturity. We build on what comes before, for without those previous stages we cannot maintain the structures of attention to be present to who we are now and to what we are called at a particular time. Similarly we cannot use earlier forms of discernment for later stages of the spiritual journey. The present is built on the

past, but is different from that past. Moreover, we also need to know that the future also shapes our present. In fact a realistic understanding of the present encompasses both past and future.

Often we start our spiritual journey long before we even realize we are on that journey. It is only years later when we look back on our past and reflect on it that we realize where some of the beginnings of that journey had its roots. It could have happened in our lifetime. It could have happened before within the dynamics of our family relations. We might even have some moments of quiet certainty that we were born for this journey, and even born into this journey. It is written in the prophet Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations" (1:5). Each of us was born into the spiritual journey we are now on. We may go even further and say humanity, and all of creation, of which we are an integral part, has been brought into being for this journey. Creation needs the Creator, and the Creator loves this creation. Whatever dreadful distortions evil advocates and produces, it cannot deny, though it can frustrate, the deepest desire of creation to be in right relationship with the Creator. Here we do not intend to explore an ontology of evil. We note its presence and its effects in our history, our world, and in ourselves. We also note the power of God, in God's own time, to overcome evil and transform it into good so that the time will come as Paul says in his letter to the Corinthians, when "In Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the first-fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father" (I Cor 15:22-24).

In this cosmic journey extending through time and space, where do we fit in, and how can we contribute to the recapitulation of all things in Christ who returns them to the Father? We realize that this journey started before we were born and will continue even after the dissolution of our physical bodies as

we know them now. Ultimately, we come from God, we return to God, and the path given us is of God. But in this life and where we are now, how do we walk that path which open up in our daily lives and is present at every moment of that life? For those in religious traditions there are the cultic rituals—sacraments, meditation groups, spiritual direction—which offer life and guidance. But how are we to deal with the busyness of everyday life?

It is not as if we have to start from scratch. We are socialized into the constructions of belief. We apply the plot of belief to our lives. Here we are not talking about the abstractions of belief but what we actually do believe. These are the actual routes we take as we walk through our cities mapped out by dogma. The dynamics of desire drive that plot. They determine whether we move closer to salvation or not. They construct the imagined world of that journey. The belief systems we are educated into inform us both theoretically and practically how to seek and maintain a relationship with God. The various manuals and catechisms of our particular traditions offer us guidelines and norms for behavior and for belonging. We learn what to believe and how to believe in order to be saved. How we negotiate that episteme in the practicalities of actual living is another matter.<sup>11</sup> The tactics we actually live by are shaped by what we have personally found useful and, by the exigencies of a post-modern conscience, suspicious of those controlling institutions and their legislations which map out our moral and spiritual life. Those tactics are how we discern, even though we might say we do not discern. But discernment is more than a compass. The dynamics of desire direct our lives.

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, English translation by Stephen Rendell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). General Introduction, xix, accessed January 12, 2017.

<https://chisineu.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/certeau-michel-de-the-practice-of-everyday-life.pdf>. De Certeau makes the distinction between strategies, by which a world is ordered culturally through legal, educational, religious norms, and tactics through which individuals or social groups negotiate practically those strategies.

In practice the conflicting voices, within us and outside of us, telling us what to do and how to do it, negotiate among themselves in the site we call our lives. As such it is good to have an example of how these operate. For this we turn to someone who lived at a time when an established world was breaking down and the new world of modernity not yet fully born. We turn to Ignatius of Loyola.

### **St. Ignatius' Life: a Journey of Refining Desire**

St. Ignatius (1491-1556) lived in a time just like ours. Traditional ways of living in Western Europe were being challenged by scientific discoveries which changed the way people imagined reality to be, by explorations which brought to light, and contact with, new peoples, civilizations and countries, by the influx of Islam in Western Culture, by the conflicts in the Christian tradition, by corruption and dissension within the Catholic church, by suspicion of institutional authority, by the struggle for power in the political world, and by such diseases as the bubonic plague and cholera which cut across culture, class, and religion. What was one to do in the midst of such deep, rapid and sweeping changes? How was one to live, find meaning and security, and a sense of belonging in ways that affirmed and celebrated life?

When the world as we know it breaks down, and we are offered conflicting ways of reading reality, we tend to withdraw into ourselves to find a path that gives life. Ignatius thought that that path could be discovered by making the self the center of the universe. The young Ignatius was vain, aggressive, venal, and concerned only with making a name for himself in the world. But all his attempts despite his charm, intelligence, and energy, came to nothing. He was frustrated and actually was badly wounded in a small war and went home to recover. His illness was the beginning of his conversion and, in the course of his life after that, he moved from being driven by pride to becoming an apostle of Christ in the world. The shift lay in the understanding

of what it means to be a self. By becoming attentive to himself he discovered that the self was a tension of conflicting desires, some leading to a pleasure which soon left one dissatisfied, others to a sense of contentment which remained. Ignatius' life was to follow that second path. Such a following was not easy or simple. The desires he had to be a simple Jerusalem pilgrim, then of being an itinerant preacher, then of returning to Jerusalem again with his companions after his studies, all of which were good in themselves, were frustrated. His desires encountered the emerging desires of God for him and he ended up against his own spontaneous inclinations as the founder and the first general of the Society of Jesus, stationed in Rome.

That radical shift from self to service is a spiritual journey and Ignatius' spiritual journey is best seen in the *Spiritual Exercises*, based on his own experiences, which he created to help others discover the presence of God in their lives. In that relationship, through growing attentiveness, they discover a unique path of growing spiritual intimacy which allowed them to work as companions of Christ in making the world a place of community and creativity.

Now this journey is graded. One reaches higher levels of intimacy only by successfully establishing and maintaining lower levels of attentiveness. The journey starts off with a desire to know God more clearly, to love him more deeply, and to follow him more closely. We first feel this as a dissatisfaction with our present lives and all our flirtations to ease this unhappiness, without losing anything we already cherish do not bring us closer to an abiding sense of joy. So we set out.

### **Stages in the Journey of Desire to Greater Spiritual Intimacy**

Even though it was written later, Ignatius inserts what is called the Principle and Foundation at the beginning of the Exercises and it is usually given as a consideration before the work of the First Week. The strategy of its

rhetoric sets up a tension between the humanity of a committed relationship to God and one's existential state. It brings out the tensions between what we believe and how we actually live.

It brings to consciousness the dynamics of desire in our daily lives and leads us into the work of the First Week where we discover how we are loved in spite of being trapped by the disorders which circumvent a full response to that love. That work carries us through our anxieties which we must face, and beyond the limiting ways we see ourselves, God and the world. What we discover at this level are the traps that bind us, often quite unconsciously, but we also discover, deeper and more pervasive than those traps, a love which constantly loves us into being.

When we accept this we are ready for the second stage of the journey which teaches us how to live out of that newly discovered and deeper love. The tasks we accomplish here carry us to a profound intimacy with God out of which flows love and, out of that love, to the work of building up the Kingdom of God. Here we become companions of the Christ learning what it means to be human as we journey with him to His Father. We let the living relationship with Jesus rather than a previously imprinted cultural and intellectual understanding of truth, our own biases, be the basis of our discernments.

In that journey of living as mystery with Mystery, we reach the third stage of spiritual intimacy. There we follow behind Jesus as he enters into his passion opening a human path through suffering and death to the Father. He gives up worldly power and enters in this vulnerability to a state of emptiness. We too, as we travel deeper into a relationship with Mystery, give up power and enter self-consciously into radical states of vulnerability and emptiness totally dependent upon that Mystery Jesus calls Father. In this state we are opened to ways of being in the world which we have previously excluded. We are moved beyond our ghettoized sensibilities, with its power plays, reaching towards an inclusivity which embraces all of creation.



On that path the Father brings the humanity of his beloved Son to a new life and new creation called resurrection. So too does the Father bring us who remain simply present to Jesus in his journey into emptiness to the next stage of spiritual intimacy. In this fourth stage we move beyond a secularized reading of emptiness as social passivity to seeing it as the ground of creativity. Imbued with the Spirit we see that it reveals a new creation emerging out of the brokenness of the world. There we become living words of the Father and invited to work with Him and his Son, together with the community of those who, throughout the ages, build and maintain the Kingdom of God in this world. Like Christ we become the witness of the compassionate mercy of the Father in our world and time.

This level carries us deeper into the world and we experience at this new stage of awareness even more clearly the traps and disorders of the world we are asked to live in. We are asked to be as Christ has been for us in that first stage of spiritual intimacy. We are asked to recognize the world in ways that it does not recognize itself. We recognize that it cries out to be more loving and compassionate as it was created to be. We become present to its pain and, like the Christ on the cross, conspire with the Father to transform its misery. Thus the journey continues. Spiritual intimacy is a spiral which carries us deeper into union with God, and at the same time deeper into the miseries of a disordered creation.

When we look at this spiritual journey we see ourselves caught first in the tensions between closed and scripted worlds, maintained by fear, and an openness which we now have access to, as we become aware of our rootedness in God. When we accept and start to live out of that rootedness, we find ourselves in a tension between reading that rootedness from the categories of an understanding seeking faith and a deeply personal relationship with God which goes beyond such definitions but which casts light on them. This is a faith which sees the need for, and the limitations of, any conceptual forms of

understanding. We discover living in such Mystery gives us power, for now we are not trapped by the constructions of the world. Now we start to realize even more deeply the dynamics of spiritual desire moving us beyond the temptation to substitute one manifestation of power to control our reality for the next. We do not have to replace another's projection of how the world is to be with our own. We may be tempted here by our fear to do just that. But if we choose otherwise and patiently and humbly wait on the Father, something else happens. We actually discover that our growing intimacy with God carries us, within our own lives and elsewhere, to the spaces of the marginalized, the alienated, the broken and the forgotten. We find ourselves among the *anawim*, with those who do not have power in the world.

We move beyond the seductions of power to establish a world as we would like it, to an emptiness which can hold without manipulation all it encounters. Such a holding is not a resignation to the ways of the world—as occurs in the despair we acknowledge in the discernments of the First Week. The expression of our intentionality has been changed. Now we know and have a spiritual intimacy with God. We have learnt to trust that intimacy. We wait in that intimacy even as we experience the horrors a disordered creation inflicts upon us in our vulnerability. It is the witness of martyrdom. We are made and become empty. Out of that emptiness comes the power of the Divine Desire who desires the world to be made into a community of mutual giving and receiving.

Living that emptiness carries us to that fourth stage. Yet, we discover ourselves at this stage still tugged between fear and love. On the one hand there is a form of complacency which, though not of the world, goes along with the world, holding that God comes to us, and all we have to do is wait. This is a passivity which is content to contemplate God. On the other hand we find ourselves called to a creativity which actively seeks to make the world, and

wounded creation, a home respectful and caring for all. This is contemplation in action.

Such a journey from security to creativity evokes a spirituality of risk. We are constantly being called and led beyond ourselves in a passionate love affair with God. This engages us with the world in ways that transform both it and ourselves. On that journey to be sure we suffer, but we also find in it life, peace, joy, and companions who celebrate the life we are now looking for. And, interestingly enough, we find this path not in esoteric practices or in the mansions of high mysticism but in the everyday lives we lead. When we become attentive to our lives, we discover the path we walk is one which allows us to become more and more intimate with God and creation.

### **Fear versus Love**

What this journey reveals is that the dynamics of narcissism move from fear, through self-justifying ideologies and into ghettos where the like-minded, confusing conformity with unity, dwell in states of complicity which accept and promote the status quo. On the other hand the dynamics of self-transcendence move us from the awe of discovering we are loved to learning how to live in such a love which carries us beyond our known selves, and the conscriptions of a fallen creation, to a creativity which engages that world to transform it.

As in Ignatius' "Two Standards" meditation of riches against poverty, honor against humiliations, and pride against humility, these two dynamics in each stage of the spiritual journey parallel each other

<b>FEAR</b>	<b>LOVE</b>
Security	Rootedness
Ideology	Mystery
Power	Emptiness
Status Quo	Creativity

As one moves through life, we notice that each stage builds on the previous stage, and that the consolations of each earlier stage lead us into the disorders of the subsequent level of attentiveness. Thus, being rooted allows us to explore the ways in which we are caught in ideologies. As we are taught to overcome those traps we find ourselves moving more and more into Mystery. Living in that Mystery we discover the traps of power. When we walk the path of the Passion, we discover ourselves leaving behind the forms of power which trap us. We become vulnerable and emptied. Living our daily lives in emptiness, we are tempted to be uninvolved in the worlds we live it. But the passion of the Spirit inflames us to be creative with what is given us in our worlds. Thus the energies liberated by consolations carry us to those places that cry out for conversion, and which are felt as desolation.

We note here that as we open ourselves to God that consolation leads to desolation, and desolation leads to consolation. In that journey the embrace of love slowly heals and repairs our damaged spirit and gives it the heart both to celebrate life as it is given, and also go to those damaged and isolated areas of our desires to bring them to light and integration. Desolation is merely our awareness of our isolation and alienation. It is the nature of love to seek out and to save what is lost. So the drive to God that causes us to nourish, affirm and celebrate life, also causes us to be present to what is life-destroying, and to aid in its transformation. Thus consolation leads to desolation, and desolation leads to subsequent consolation. Thus Ignatius observes that when one is in desolation, one should “dispose himself for the coming consolation.” (*Sp Ex 7*) Similarly, Ignatius also points out, “When one enjoys consolation, let him consider how he will conduct himself during the time of ensuing desolation, and store up a supply of strength as defense against that day.” (*Sp Ex 323*)

This essay explores the specific consolations and desolations and their sequencing as it occurs in the practices of our daily life. While historical, cultural, social, and political forces shape our lives and provide us with the

structures which inform what we do, it is what we actually do in the day-to-day busyness of living which manifest how and where we are in our spiritual journey. Our topic is the discernments of an everyday life and the forces those discernments encounter as one becomes attentive to one's life. Our reading of those dynamics is based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

### **The *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius**

In those Exercises Ignatius asks us to pray for different graces as we go through the different stages of our spiritual growth. Thus as one goes through the first stage of that journey, one prays for shame, confusion, sorrow and horror. In the second stage one prays for an intimacy which connects one to the Father in a loving service that shows one is a companion of the Christ. At the third stage one prays for a different sense of shame and sorrow being present to Christ's passion and suffering as the beloved suffers. In the fourth stage we pray to experience joy as we share Christ's resurrection and work in this world.

Ignatius sets the request for such graces within the prayerful context of dwelling in God's love and stemming from the desire to live the whole of one's life devoted to the praise, reverence and service of God. In the Ignatian Exercises the affectivity of consolation and desolation from which one discerns is experienced within the closed context of that prayer. The particular exercises are precise experiments within a controlled context. But is it possible to use Ignatius' insights within the broader realm of daily life? To be able to do this one must first see how the tension between narcissism and self-transcendence works out dynamically in each stage of the Exercises, and secondly whether the movement from one level of attentiveness to the next in the Exercises is similar to the one found in the spiritual path of our daily lives.

In the first instance there is the interaction between one's narcissism and the love of God which roots the self and calls it beyond its present sense of

self. The dimensions of that self which, conscripted by self-interest, and looking for ways to establish itself more comfortably in its present state of being, would struggle against the path offered by what is “Other” to it. What is at stake here is the world-view out of which the self operates. We live in our imagined worlds as if they are real. This “organization of reality,” which displaces reality as it is, is embraced by a Divine love always actively seeking to liberate the self from the illusions it has negotiated to make a home for itself. Each of us is caught in such a tension at every stage of our lives in prayer and out of it. Then the embrace of Love the Other offers us brings to light what is repressed, or ignored, or devalued. Such revelations, until they are accepted on an existential level, threaten us, not only because they are potentially dangerous to an already established life-style, but also because they are feared and the unknown quality they possess causes anxiety in us.

In this context we first experience the love of God for us in terms of fear which, as it is unpacked, manifests itself first in a sense of confusion as the conflicting narratives of our desire for God and our self-preservation engage each other. As we start to realize how we are trapped and how we co-operate with that disorder, we move to a sense of shame at this realization.<sup>12</sup> When we grow towards a liberation from that disorder, we move to a horror not only at what we have done, but also at the soul-destroying patterns behind our behavior, and at the ways in which the world seduces and enthralls us.<sup>13</sup> In all of this the dynamics of fear operate. First there is the fear that keeps us trapped in socialized patterns of behavior which give us security but not spiritual intimacy. This fear is often so much a part of our lives that we do not regard it even as fear, and mis-name it as particular habits of inattention. This fear comes from a distorted relationship with God and results in misinformed

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Sp Ex* 50

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Sp Ex* 63

notions of how God operates. Fear, if not contained, or defused, increases our spiritual blindness. It keeps us frozen in a contractual relationship with our image of God that becomes even more legalistic.

Fear on that level is partly overcome when we discover, through prayer and meditation, and being truly attentive to our being in the world, that loved by the reality of God liberates us from such traps. We can do this by looking prayerfully at our present life and our histories. There we discover our vulnerability and the fact that we have not been destroyed in spite of the forces of disorder in and around us. But we still have to discover how to live lives of greater integrity. The habits of our culture and our past have indoctrinated us into forms of thinking, and behaving, in ways that misunderstands the Mystery which invites us to a fuller life beyond the ideologies we plot our lives with. At this second level of fear we are caught up in the tension between ideology and intimacy. The work of the spirit upon us and in us is to transform the narratives we live out of from closed and broken myths to an open myth<sup>14</sup>. There we trust not maps or theologies or just the symbolic world of our tradition but, more deeply, the lived relationship we have developed with the Mystery we call, in the Christian dispensation, "Father."

Here we use the same word that the human Christ addresses the Mystery which roots him. In living in the same relationship that the humanity of Christ has with the Father we are thus able to follow the Christ as he enters into His Passion and Death in his human journey to the Father. The tension we now experience in this vulnerability is between the power exercised by adhering to that symbolic world of an enclosed community, which sees otherness as destructive, and the emptiness we embrace as we go beyond the norms of such community to ever greater forms of inclusivity.

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<sup>14</sup> See Monty Williams, "Ignatius' Incarnation Contemplation and The Stories We Live By: The Nash Memorial Lecture 2010." Campion College, University of Regina, 2010.

At this stage we can either define ourselves by the norms of the community we belong to or by our lived relationship with the “Father” for whom nothing or no one is excluded. Living out this call of self-transcendence to be empty, we are faced with the choice in our everyday lives between a complacency which accepts what is given as a path to God, and a creativity which seeks to transform the world to a more human place for all aspects of creation. Made in the image and likeness of God we are invited to be creative as God is creative.

The way of faithfulness carries us from limiting forms of security to a life of creativity where we help contribute in whatever way we can to the ongoing creativity of the Father. That journey carries us back ever deeper into our lived contexts to establish right relationships within created reality. Our growth to humanity occurs in the way we continue to negotiate the tension between fear and love. Fear keeps us trapped in limitation; love exposes us to the Mystery which calls us beyond our known world and our ways of understanding, living, and transforming that known world.

### **The Spiritual Journey**

What has just been described is a reading of the dynamics of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Those exercises move through four different stages of spiritual development. Each one builds on the graces received on the previous level. The first level deconstructs the imaginative world we live in so that we experience the love of God breaking through the traps which limit our affectivity. The second level seeks to transform the way we live by bringing the stories we live in into contact with the gospel stories of the Christ. The Christ enters into our existential narratives and transforms them so we can now live out of a deepening personal intimacy with him. Such an intimacy carries us to the third stage of spiritual development where we follow the Christ through his passion and death. At this level we are carried



beyond the borders of our imagined worlds into a state of emptiness and total abandonment to Divine Providence. Out of that emptiness comes an experience of resurrection which gives us the grace to be creative in our fallen world to build up the Kingdom. So changed we return to the world of the first stage, at a deeper level, to continue the transformation of the world. Embracing what is presented to us as alienated we share what we have been given in that spiritual journey to create a growing network of interrelationships.

In this journey we are always putting away limited ways of recognizing ourselves, others, and even God, so that we become more loving and more alive. There is always the tendency to stop or withdraw from this pilgrimage. Working against the dynamics of self-transcendence are the dynamics of narcissism manifest as fear. The "otherness," which we experience as unknown and in contrast to who we think we are, and to the world as it is explained to us, fills us with fear. How we suppose that unknown to act constrains us. It is shaped by our fear.

### **The Nature of Fear**

We are educated into fear. Fears are socially constructed and made meaningful within cultural-historical contexts. As we grow into a culture we are shaped by its attitudes, its values and its presumptions, its stereotypes, patterns of behavior, ideas and beliefs. Within that broader context there are the family dynamics and narratives we are born into, and appropriate. Even more personally there are also our own individual mythologies shaped by our reflections and understandings of what we have experienced. Our understanding of our identity is shaped by these factors and while they might provide us with a basis of self-understanding, they also limit our understanding. Our fears maintain our conformity within approved norms and standards even when those factors take from us avenues of growth, self-

acceptance and trust.<sup>15</sup> Indeed as a primary emotion socializing fear manifests itself in the experience of anxiety, shame, regret, abjection, denial, repression, and overcompensation. Such fear threatens us about imagined consequences and we have personal and social histories confirm for us that those fears are valid. Fear provides us with incentives to conform by limiting our attentiveness.

By focusing on what is proscribed by such authority we restrict our openness to experience and limit the range of that experience. We then interpret that already limited data according to an acceptable hermeneutics, and respond in ways that reinforce our truncated world views. What we hold as natural is in fact constructed. For many of us, though, fear is not experienced as fear. It has become so habitual that we consider it normal as it pervades everything we see, say, or do. We live in a culture of fear, consciously and unconsciously. Even mass media, in general, with its emphasis on violence and its advertisements, with its appeals to the created deficiencies in their targets, contribute to this pervasive background against which one struggles to be human.

Fear misdirects one into what it means to be human. It limits our awareness of the contexts out of which we live, and it inhibits the processing of the data we receive from those contexts so we come to wrong conclusions and make bad decisions. It robs us of our freedom by paralyzing us so we become sick, avoid risk, and remain trapped in closed or broken myths. Fear subjugates the Christian virtues of compassion, hospitality, generosity, openness, wonder, wisdom, and patience, to a neurotic self-interest. This creates havoc because the order it seeks to establish and maintain is itself

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<sup>15</sup> Barry Glassner, "The Construction of Fear," *Qualitative Sociology* 22, no.4 (December 1999): 301–309.

disordered. If that fear is not contained or deconstructed, it spreads to cover more and more areas of our life until we find ourselves trapped in compulsions and obsessions. Rather than progressing along the spiritual path, we tend to be caught in resentments, and our histories become repetitive. It is as if a gear keeps slipping and so we are doomed to repeat patterns of behavior which we accept as natural and normal. Unless we practice a self-discipline informed by a deep sense of being loved, and a deep belief in our ability to love in return, our compulsions become obsessions which lead to addictions and we end up being possessed.

But in the context of accepting we are loved and are capable of loving, we can start recognizing and separating ourselves from the fear that has so dominated our lives in so many different ways and at so many different levels. There are stages of disengagement. We can start by recognizing our disorder through its effects on ourselves and others. What has been repressed manifests itself, quite unconsciously in our attitudes and behavior. Fear is actually a form of self-disclosure. It reveals to others our orientation to life. Because we are vulnerable, we see life as a series of threats without the humanizing dynamics of trusting relationships. Fear which interprets experience in terms of aggression uses violence to maintain its limited vision of order. That violence is found in the ways we maintain our security without accepting that deeper rootedness of being held in God's love. It rationalizes its stance by world-views which absorb God into systems of belief that limit God's freedom and God's ongoing merciful care for all of creation beyond the Law. It protects its vulnerability by developing and operating out of positions of power. These seek to control what they do not understand by destroying or conscripting this "otherness." In its pragmatism fear maintains the status quo it is comfortable with, even though that stifles creativity and the building of communities where difference is welcomed and celebrated.

### **The Nature of Love**

Love transforms the fear by embracing the memory which maintains that fear and the conditions which caused it. Love transforms the interpretation of the memory and releases it from its status as a closed myth. Opening to love allows us to recognize our fears for what they are. Often this is not instantaneous and dramatic. Slowly love brings the fear to consciousness in a different way. What had been previously repressed or ignored is liberated into suppression. As it rises even further up to awareness, it becomes a concretely realized oppression which translates into depression, as one realizes how complicit one is in what denies life. As one struggles to deal with this, the depression is turned outwards and becomes anger, and this is transformed into anxiety. Such anxiety reveals the vulnerability of the human condition in circumstances beyond its control. But even there, as one opens more and more to love, that anxiety becomes awe when one realizes one is looked after, even in spite of oneself. Then the power of the closed myth is broken.

The responses to the traumas which fix our identity through memory into a sense of self are repeated in daily life. Love allows those traumas to emerge into self-consciousness, and love dissolves the anxieties created by those traumas. When that happens spiritual growth occurs. We no longer feel trapped by that past. We see it in a different context. We experience ourselves differently. Fear gets transformed into awe. Both the fear and the awe are the responses of a person to forces beyond one's control. Fear sees those forces and conditions as inimical to one's perceived well-being; awe sees those forces and conditions as held in God's compassionate Mercy whose ways are not our ways, and whose thoughts are not our thoughts. Our God desires for us the fullness of life beyond our imaginings. Fear and awe might exhibit the same bodily sensations, but their dynamics are quite different. Fear traps us in closed myths and resignation; awe engenders hope and new life. While a single fearful incident can trigger a significant Pavlovian conditioning not

forgotten over an adult lifespan, the work of love can erase, or neutralize the effects of that negative experience. In time its meaning is transformed into something positive and life affirming. The threat of non-being that triggers fear is real in as much as the imagined world we live in is real. Entering into the areas of one's fear often seems like forms of dying. It is only when we have had personal lived experiences of such deaths, in one form or another, that we discover such deaths are not the end of our life, but doors to a new and fuller life. Then we move from one imagined world to another, more life-giving and human. We do not move to nothingness. Living in a way committed to God translates fear into awe. It is the response we feel when we discover what we thought would be a life-destroying experience actually carried us to one which affirms life in ways beyond our imagining. The awe is not because we have triumphed over death because we know we did not have it within us to do so. Rather, it comes because there is an agency—we are happy to confess it as a personal God—who is able to rescue us from our disorders, is willing to do so, and in this instance has actually done so.

We can fear God because we have a wrong notion of God and see God as judgmental and punitive. We can fear God because we attribute to God the destructive consequences of a disordered creation. Here we fail to see God as loving us and caring for us even when we are complicit in destructive behaviors. We can fear God because as we walk the spiritual path we are transformed, and the unknown which calls us beyond ourselves triggers a fear we attach to God. We fear making a mistake in our judgments because we do not have all the facts to make informed choices. We can fear God because God's ways are mysterious and God's freedom in dealing with us as creatures reveal our absolute dependence on God in a world beset by evil over which we have little control. We can fear God because we are still trapped by sin even as we walk towards a deeper relationship with God and to freedom. We fear God because when we turn in on ourselves and consider our sinfulness, we expect

to be punished and we fear that punishment. We forget God's love for us even as we sin, and the fact of that love coming to us to liberate us from sin.<sup>16</sup> The tension between our narcissism and our transcendence engenders in us an ambiguity for we are torn in two directions about the nature of God. Such an ambiguity with its lack of clarity engenders fear.

We know from the scriptures that perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:16, 18), and that God does not give us a spirit of cowardice but one of power, of love, and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). We also know God aids us against the crippling effects of fear, as when Jesus eases the terror of the disciples caught in a storm at sea (Mark 4:35-41), or when he holds onto Peter who had become afraid while walking on the water towards him (Matthew 14:22-33). It is the same Jesus who advises us not to be anxious about our lives (Matthew 6:25-34), and he is the one who calms the fears of the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5:1-20). But the scriptures also tell us "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him (Psalm 103:11) and the Acts of the Apostles has the observation that "the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers (Acts 9:31). There are the distinctions between servile fear and filial fear. The first is the fear of punishment; the second the fear of offending someone one loves. The latter is touched with reverence, but as St. Ignatius points out in his Exercises,

Though the zealous service of God our Lord out of pure love should be esteemed above all, we ought also to praise highly the fear of the Divine Majesty. For not only filial fear but also servile fear is pious and very holy..., [I]t is very helpful for rising from mortal sin, and once this is accomplished, one may easily advance to filial fear. (*Sp Ex* 370)

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<sup>16</sup> Romans 5:8

A growing intimacy with God can start off with impure motives—such as the fear of punishment—but as that intimacy develops, the fear changes to one of not wanting to offend the Beloved. As the relationship develops, fear is turned into awe. The original impulse—the orientation to the Other—is still there but now, acknowledged in a new context of being loved and of being saved by that love, it is experienced and understood differently. Fear limits our attention by focusing and restricting it to imagined consequences and so we react to projections rather than to the reality offered us by a primary relationship to God. To give up those projections is long and difficult work. We cannot deal with our fear adequately through the despair of recklessness or by the paralysis of presumption. The courage required comes only from lived relationships which foster love.

Love deconstructs fear by allowing a context broader than an enclosed self-interest to inform the facts of one's life. Such a stepping out of one's security feels like a death. It is the dark night of the senses when the world we experience, as a system of belief, cannot make sense of how we find ourselves at this stage. The walls we put up to maintain our false sense of self erode and we are left with a sense of confusion. Whatever had educated us to the way we now think, feel, and respond, cannot withstand the erotic impulse of the divine which desires every part of us. Because our past histories cannot help us make sense of what is happening to us now, this dissolution feels like a depression and, until we finally give in to that desire of God, we struggle to maintain the world we know and accept.

There are in the spiritual life boundaries to be crossed. They demarcate stages in our growth in spiritual intimacy. The draw of God's desire for us brings us to one such stage here and once we cross that divide we are carried inexorably to those spaces where we are helpless in a state of dissolution until we arrive at a new level of awareness when we see we have not been

destroyed but transformed. What is eradicated in that process is the power fear has over us in the area of a particular security.

Freed from that, we develop a felt wariness to what had previously enthralled us and an instinct about the way we can be still conscripted into those earlier forms of behavior. Overall, the experience has given us the felt sense of being trapped, the felt sense of the agony of being released from those traps, and the felt sense of a new life being offered and accepted. Those felt senses help us to discern on a spontaneous level what to do when we encounter new situations which may trigger in us the same traps we have experienced before. The experience has educated us. We feel it in our bodies. Those feelings are values learnt and refined to spontaneity. We are educated into reading what we experience through the values we incarnate. We can say: God does not give us answers; God gives us experiences and those experiences shape us and the way we read reality. On the spiritual path our experiences educate us to a path which leads either to God or away from God.

We could choose a path which leads away from a growing intimacy with God because of fear. Giving into that fear and living out of it may give us the illusion of safety and security. But because we do not accept the deeper calling to a rootedness in spiritual intimacy with God, we find ourselves living, as the gospel tells us, on inadequate foundations which are destroyed in times of crisis (Matthew 7: 24-27). The power of fear traps us in the illusion which suggests its defenses against vulnerability are effective. Fear promotes a willingness to accept a certain flawed understanding and representation of what offers security. Such disorder favours certain forms of order, and ignores more comprehensive forms of ordering which, from its limited perspective, it sees as disordered.<sup>17</sup> Other alternatives are overlooked because fear paralyses

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Michel Serres, *Genesis*, trans. Genevieve James & James Nielson (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995). “To say disorder is to say one is both



and limits attention. Fear, in this way, becomes a tool for manipulation, motivation, and control. We are coerced in acquiescence, and not only are our spiritual, social, political and existential liberties eroded by such tactics, but we can become so accustomed to such a way of living that the habitual becomes the familiar, and then the familiar is taken as the index of reality and of truth.

Our attention is always caught between our constructed worlds and the activity of God within and surrounding those constructed worlds. What is life-giving is affirmed; what does not give life finds itself in tension with the desire God has for us, and which we experience as the call to the fullness of life. We live these opposing tensions as a radical unresolvable ambiguity present at every moment of one's life, and we experience it as anxiety.

Living vulnerably manifests itself in anxiety. Although it can frighten us and freeze us in forms of despair, it can also shake us from our conditioned and habitual responses to existential decisions by making us more aware that we exist in a world of choices and consequences. Anxiety increases our self-awareness and sense of personal responsibility. It raises the question of trust. Do we make our decisions on our own, or in a conscious relationship with God?

At each stage on the path of spiritual intimacy we are caught up in the tension between fear and love. St. Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises* uses the tropes of mediaeval spirituality which defines that path as purgative and illuminative. (*Sp Ex* 10) Building upon, incorporating and transcending these is what patristic and mediaeval spirituality calls the unitive way. In the purgative way we are cleansed from the biases which focus us on self-gratification; so cleansed, in the illuminative way we learn to see reality as God sees it; while in

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unwilling and unable to conceive it. It isn't an anti-order, perhaps it is a more exquisite order still, one our banal stupidity cannot imagine, stiff as a board as it is, to conceive, since it is still given over to concepts—to order." (p.109)

the unitive way we become united with God and live reality as companions of God seeing things as God sees them. One concern with this taxonomy is that it suggests a chronology of response to God's intervention in our lives. But the truth is we are never out of the purgative way; we are constantly being illuminated even as we are trapped in destructive behaviors, and our union with God is not essentially once and for all, but suffers the fickleness of our humanity which, as St. Paul tells us, "makes me do not the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing." (Romans 7:19)

### **The Tensions in Becoming Human**

What can be helpful in discernment is understanding the level of dialectical tensions we are caught in in the different areas of our lives, all of which are created by God for a relationship with God. In different areas we may have different responses. In some we are committed loving people; in others our neuroses limit our affectivity and healthy relationships with others, the world, and God. When we are trapped we find ourselves compelled. There is an urgency which removed our detachment and limits our attentiveness in the situation we find ourselves in. When we indulge our compulsions, they become stronger and more demanding. They become obsessions and they limit our range of interests. Addictions do not just limit our range of interests, however. They become the sole focus of our interests. Everything we do, we do to satisfy a particular need. The addiction controls our life and finally takes possession of us. Possession destroys our humanity. It removes the remnants of whatever free will we had left as addicts. It seeks to eradicate the expressed commitment to God which even an addict might hold on to.

But there is an opposing dynamic to this drive to destruction. Because of a lived relationship with God, one can be disciplined enough not to be trapped by one's compulsive tendencies. One can become so committed to

that relationship that one values everything else in the light of that relationship. This allows us to make choices which build up the relationship and to live out of those choices in lives of service which manifests the Kingdom and liberate us into greater and greater lives of freedom. Freedom here is not to be understood as individual license, or as social liberty, but as a lived intimate relationship with God which allows us to discover what it means to be human.

It is possible to juxtapose these opposing dynamics of fear and self-transcendence as they operate in our lives and of which we are conscious when we find ourselves in situations of vulnerability.

A person is defined through –

	<b>act</b>	<b>habit</b>	<b>orientation</b>	<b>identity</b>
<b>fear</b> in the form of	compulsion	obsession	addiction	possession
<b>vs</b>	vs	vs	vs	vs
<b>love</b> in the form of	indifference	passion	freedom	emptiness

Living authentically does not destroy fear, but it allows one not to be trapped by fear. Fear constrains us in closed and broken myths which indicate the reality we experience is unchangeable. The compassionate mercy of God however says that creation is not complete. We are still being formed, and the creativity of God is such that every evil, such as death, will be transformed into resurrection. The stories we live out of and incarnate are not finished products. Those stories form the basis of our perceptions, our actions and our discernment. The plots which drive those stories operate from a basic tension

between fear and love. That tension is manifest in the operations of our daily life, often hidden and unacknowledged, but more overtly present when we find ourselves in crisis and vulnerable.

**Basic Tensions in Human Life**

<b>Fear</b> .....		<b>Love</b>	
dynamics of fear	Effects	Effects	dynamics of love
anxiety	security	rootedness	awe
suspicion	clarity	mystery	wonder
aggression	power	emptiness	vulnerability
despair	status quo	creativity	hope

This schema is based on what goes on in the Four Weeks of the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius. That 16th-century text is a manual for ordering one’s life to become more disposed to God. It is based on St. Ignatius’ own experiences of the evolution of his conversion. There he moved from being defined solely by his own needs, and the prevailing secular norms of his culture, to living out a spiritual intimacy with God which manifested itself concretely in his forming the Catholic Jesuit religious order noted for its creativity.

These Exercises offer us a way of looking critically and lovingly at ourselves, and offer us choices how we wish to be present to our world. The illusions we accept as ourselves are taken away in the First Week. We find our true life in the Second Week. In the Third Week this life is exposed to what borders this life, the test of death. In the Fourth Week we are liberated from the power of death for the service of the Divine Mystery. Our spiritual journey through the Exercises calls us always to be moving beyond ourselves and ever

deeper into the love of God. In order to do this we are constantly drawn from the worlds we have imagined and into a life as imagined by the mystery of the God we describe as Compassionate Mercy. This journey never ends. As we journey through the Fourth Week, we discover that we are not carried to a mythic paradise freed from the world. We find ourselves once again at a deeper level in the realities of the First Week, where we have to discover even more deeply how we are loved. There is no end to God's love, and no end to our journeying ever deeper into that love and to the community created by that love.

Here we are interested in another thing. We are trying to unpack the dynamics of desire, manifested in the ongoing relationship between humanity and God, in a language which respects the insights of St. Ignatius as he presents them in the Exercises. We should note we are not adapting or translating the Exercises to fit contemporary concerns such as feminism or ecology, or contemporary social interests. Rather we provide a contemporary narrative which links the particular exercises within each stage in a developmental unity and also links each of the four stages of the Exercises in an evolving way of faithfulness. In doing this we find a way of extending the mission of the Exercises beyond even a Catholic and Christian context to include, without detriment to their own religious truths, "infidels and heretics."<sup>18</sup> It is possible to do this if one sees the Exercises as following the emerging dynamics of desire common to every human being and community seeking the fullness of life.

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<sup>18</sup> J. Nadal, "Exercises for Infidels, Heretics and Sinners," *The Way* 43, no. 1 (2004): 43-50. Nadal writes, "this is my belief: for all of these our Exercises can be accommodated, even for infidels, if we draw on the principles of the law of nature in the teaching of Paul (Romans 1 and Acts 17—the speech to the people on the Areopagus). Positively, they need only to be persuaded that they are being carried towards God." (p. 46)

**[摘要]** 這文章檢視了渴望的動態，這些動態作為基礎，構成了依納爵《神操》四「週」內一系列的沈思和默觀。文章把這些置於愛與恐懼的基本張力中。它認為這四個靈修發展階段是一個使人變得更加人性化的過程：從一個人接受被愛開始，同時意識到自己受破壞性的力量所束縛，以至被那愛徹底改變，繼而選擇一種更新那破碎了的受造界的生活方式。本文將這種動態從中世紀天主教的傳統語言中，即依納爵用以編寫他的洞見的語言，轉為適用於其他靈修傳統的當代修辭。這種可及性還擴大了這種皈依的分析，使其可以應用於個人，以至社區、機構及文化。

**關鍵詞：**慾望，分辨，靈修之旅，相互