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The *Exercises*: Ignatian Approach to Moral Decision*

ANTONIO LAMBINO, S.J.

Annotation number 18 of the *Spiritual Exercises* indicates:

...If the director sees that the exercitant has little aptitude, or little natural ability or that he is one from whom little fruit could be expected, it is better to give him some of the easier exercises...without going further into the matter of the election nor into any other exercises beyond those of the first week, especially when greater profit may be gained with others...¹

This direction is repeated in the directory attributed to St. Ignatius, where it is suggested that exercitants who do not show much fervor or desire to advance toward the choice of a state of life should not be given the second week of the *Exercises*.² The *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus confirm the same instruction: the complete *Exercises* are not to be given save to exceptional (*raras*) persons or those who want to make a choice of a state of life; the *Exercises* in their entirety are to be given only to those from whom notable results for

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¹ *Ejercicios Espirituales de San Ignacio de Loyola*. Texto autografo. n. 18. Engl. trans. *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. Trans. Anthony Mottola. New York Image Books, 1964. p. 42.

² *Monumenta Ignatiana II, Exercitia Spiritualia et Directoria*. p. 780.

the glory of God can be expected.³ In a letter to Fulvio Androzzi, Ignatius states that the *Exercises* as they are meant to be given (*per darli esattamente*) demand capable and suitable exercitants if one is to go beyond the first week.⁴

To understand why the full *Exercises* are meant only for persons of promise, it is enough to take a look at the second week and see there to what heights of generosity the exercitant aspires to climb. In the meditation on the Kingdom he makes an offering "of greater moment" to our Lord, saying:

... It is my wish and desire, and my deliberate choice, provided only that it be for thy greater service and praise, to imitate Thee in bearing all injuries, all evils, and all poverty both physical and spiritual, if Thy most Sacred Majesty should will to choose me for such a life and state.⁵

The same spirit of unreserved generosity is manifest in the meditation on the Two Standards and in the considerations on the Three Classes of Men and the Three Modes of Humility.⁶ The little note that Ignatius appends to the fourth day of the second week confirms the same point: if the exercitant senses that he is not indifferent to poverty or riches, he is to beg our Lord and plead to be chosen to actual poverty provided that it be for the service of His Divine Goodness.⁷

Clearly, then, the appropriate subject of the *Exercises* is the man who brings with him a heart desirous of doing great things for the Lord. Ignatius has in mind a person who is capable of a noble act of generosity. We are not dealing with an exercitant who is deciding for or against God and his own salvation.⁸ We have here a man who is trying to find his personal vocation according to God's will. There is question

³ *Constitutiones Societatis Iesu* IV 8 E (n. 409); VII 4 F (n. 649). Engl. trans. *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*. Trans. George E. Ganss. St. Louis. The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970. pp. 203; 283.

⁴ *Mon. Ign.*, XII, *Epistolae et Instructiones*, pp. 141-142.

⁵ *Ejercicios*, n. 98; *Spir. Ex.*, p. 68.

⁶ *Ibid.*, nn. 147, 152, 167; pp. 77, 78, 82.

⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 157; pp. 78-79.

⁸ William A. Van Roo, "Law of the Spirit and Written Law in the Spirituality of St. Ignatius," *Gregorianum* 37 (1956) 424.

of an election of service in forgetfulness of self.⁹ The exercitant faces a decision which, in truth, challenges his entire personal history, a decision which can change his life radically (in the manner of a "conversion," if one will).

Moral theology makes a distinction between human acts that are moral in the full and proper sense of the term and acts that are moral only in an analogous sense.¹⁰ This distinction should be understood in the context of the ideas of fundamental liberty and fundamental option. This we shall try to do presently, indicating in the meantime, that the Election to be made in the *Exercises* yields an aspect that falls properly under the consideration of moral theology.

THE FULLY MORAL ACT

The application of the categories of fundamental liberty and fundamental option has led to deeper insights on the meaning of the human act. Traditionally, the presence of the elements of conscious awareness and freedom of choice was too readily assumed to satisfy the requirements of the *actus perfecte humanus*.¹¹ Thus, all human acts, both those which proceeded from the depths of personhood and those which hardly involved any significant commitment were more or less placed on the same level, save only for the varying degrees of nobility or gravity (as the case may be) of the "matter" of the moral act. For example, a white lie and perjury would differ in seriousness chiefly *propter materiam*. But a renewed understanding of the person-as-subject reveals that the difference stems from a more profound basis.

Liberty is first of all the power of spontaneous self-donation by a person to another person before it is choice, election, judgment or free will.¹² From this perspective, Pierre

⁹ Joseph de Guibert. *The Jesuits, Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice*. Trans. William J. Young. Chicago. Loyola University Press. 1964. p. 127.

¹⁰ Josef Fuchs, *Esiste Una Morale Cristiana?* Roma. Herder. Brescia. Morcelliana. 1970. pp. 122; 127-130.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

¹² Pierre Fransen, "Pour une psychologie de la grâce divine," *Lumen Vitae* 12 (1957) 214.

Fransen analyzes what he calls the two "forms" of liberty involved in the human act. There is what everyone knows from common experience as liberty of choice; this comes into play in the multitude of decisions made in everyday living. Then there is, more profoundly, another dimension of liberty underlying the numerous choices of free will made in the course of one's personal history; this is called fundamental or transcendental liberty. This second aspect of liberty cannot be understood except in terms of the spiritual subject, the person who is free. Here the question is what does a person make of himself in the use of his liberty, rather than what use does he make of his various acts of free will? A person's self-actuation in freedom is greater than any single act of free choice as such, and more than the sum-total of all his free choices taken together. Fundamental liberty underlies and penetrates each particular act of free will without being identified with any of them.¹³ Not that the person exists as a pure possibility of freedom, ever in readiness at any particular moment to realize himself in fundamental liberty. The person as he exists is always person-actuated-in-liberty, with a fundamental option in and through which he expresses his selfhood in the face of the Absolute, without whom personhood is, in the final analysis, inexplicable.¹⁴ This fundamental option is not one particular, categorial act more important than all the others and preceding them in time. It is rather a basic orientation of one's life which is incarnated and implied in the various concrete acts of free choice. The fundamental option is a profound and total engagement by which the person expresses his entire self and all that he wishes to become in the world and before God.¹⁵ The person's fundamental option may take the form of opening out in self-donation to the Other, or of closing in upon oneself in rejection of the Other. The meaning of fundamental option as the actuation of fundamental liberty can best be understood, therefore, in the context of the relationship of love between

¹³ Fuchs, *Esiste*, p. 118.

¹⁴ J. B. Metz, "Befindlichkeit" in *Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche* II. Freiburg im Breisgau. 1958. pp. 102-104.

¹⁵ Fransen, "Pour une psychologie," p. 215.

two persons.¹⁶ In this case, the person's self-actuation in fundamental liberty is either the response of love to the invitation of the Absolute or the response of selfishness in the establishment of oneself as the center of reality. Whichever basic orientation is assumed in the course of a human life, this fundamental option becomes the "vital form" of one's personal morality, the "determining pole" for personal values and for one's world of affectivity.¹⁷ The person's self-realization in fundamental liberty is a total act of engagement, although this is never accomplished in one particular, categorial act. This is because the person, as spiritual subject open to the Absolute, can never actuate himself categorically in the mode of object.¹⁸ The fundamental option can, however, be intensified or diminished through its interaction with the daily acts of free choice (and even, in accordance with the possibilities of personal liberty, be reversed in the contrary orientation).¹⁹

The two forms or aspects of liberty do not exist separately. Fundamental option is unthinkable if it is not continually being actualized in a series of particular acts which constitute the stuff of an individual's life. There is a continual interaction between particular, categorial acts and the fundamental option from which these acts derive their unity and interiority.²⁰ In other words, the various concrete acts of free choice are a constitutive element of the person's self-actuation in fundamental liberty. At the same time, they are a sign of this self-actuation in the sense that they are *per se* an expression of the fundamental option and proceed from it. The particular acts of free choice are said to proceed *per se* from the fundamental option because it could happen that a superficial, insignificant act may hardly involve any commitment or personal engagement. Only when a particular, categorial act (say, of justice, mercy or fidelity) is an expression of a person's self-actuation in fundamental liberty, can we speak of a moral act

¹⁶ M. Flick and Z. Alszegehy, "L'opzione fondamentale della vita morale e la grazia," *Gregorianum* 41 (1960) 595-597.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 603.

¹⁸ Fuchs, *Esiste*, p. 123.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 120; 126-129.

²⁰ Fransen, "Pour une psychologie," p. 215.

in the full and proper sense of the term. It is the person's self-actuation in relation to the Absolute (understanding that this self-realization is expressed in acts of free choice) which truly constitutes the moral value of the human act. Actions are moral to the extent and degree that they incarnate the person's fundamental option. Insofar as a human act is not expressive of this basic personal orientation, it is moral only in an analogous sense.²¹

The Election facing the person who makes the *Exercises* envisions a choice which proceeds from the depths of the person's self-disposition in fundamental liberty. The exercitant reaches for a decision that will put him under the standard of Christ "first, in the most perfect spiritual poverty, and should it please His Divine Majesty to choose me, also in actual poverty; secondly in bearing reproaches and offenses, thus imitating Him more perfectly . . ." ²² The exercitant is to aspire to be in the third mode of humility by choosing (granted that the praise and glory of God are equally served) "poverty with Christ poor rather than riches, in order to be more like Christ our Lord . . . reproaches with Christ thus suffering rather than honor . . ." ²³ What the exercitant desires (the *id quod volo*) in the second week can only be counted among those demands of the Gospel which only they can hear who have ears to hear. A choice is proposed which, for the generosity it requires, can so radically change a person's life that it will never be the same again. No doubt hundreds of people in the course of the history of retreats, have made the colloquies, petitions and resolutions of the second week without really understanding what was demanded of them. But that only brings out more clearly the seriousness of the Ignatian instruction that the complete *Exercises* are meant only for persons from whom notable fruit can be expected.

The Election proposed in the *Exercises* may be considered as a moral action (in the full and proper sense of the term) which puts to the test the exercitant's fundamental option.

²¹ Fuchs, *Esiste*, pp. 122-124.

²² *Ejercicios*, n. 147; *Spir. Ex.*, p. 77.

²³ *Ibid.*, n. 167; p. 82.

For although the person's self-actuation in fundamental liberty is never fully expressed in a particular, categorial act, nevertheless there are what one might call "privileged" personal decisions which singularly deepen or intensify the fundamental option. A crucial and particularly difficult personal choice which requires an honest taking-stock of one's basic attitude and orientation would be such a privileged action.²⁴ Jean Mouroux speaks of acts which are "creative."²⁵ These are acts which put into question the total orientation of existence and the meaning of life. These actions touch the very roots of liberty, the spiritual depths of the person. A creative act must be taken as no less than a conversion since it involves either a complete break with the past, or a decisive deepening or intensification of an orientation, or a radical purification (or, in the opposite case, perversion). A creative action decisively influences a personal destiny.

THE SECOND OCCASION FOR MAKING AN ELECTION

The object of the Election proposed in the *Exercises* is, therefore, one of considerable significance. It involves an act of liberty proceeding from the centre of the spiritual subject. If any human act would properly be called "personal," this is one. We are concerned here with a moment in the moral life of a person when the Absolute addresses his unique individual freedom. The vital decision to be taken is the exercitant's response to the call addressed to his personal centre. One might say that the relationship between moral action and the confession of Christian faith is here illuminated. If Christian revelation is understood primarily as encounter with the Transcendent Other who changes the life and destiny of the other partner in the encounter, moral action shows itself to be a constitutive element in the confession of faith.²⁶ Moral action is not so much a proof of faith as an intrinsic element of it.

²⁴ Flick—Alszeghy, "L'opzione fondamentale," p. 600.

²⁵ Jean Mouroux, *La liberté chrétienne*. Paris. Aubier, Editions Montaigne. 1966. p. 74.

²⁶ Bernard-Dominique Dupuy, "The Constitutive Nature of Ethics in the Confession of the Christian Faith," *Concilium* vol. I no. 6 (Jan. 1970) 71-74.

A privileged instance in an individual's moral history such as we are concerned with in the Election, might thus be seen as a special moment in the life of faith—and, consequently, of grace.

It would take us far afield to go into a discussion of the relationship between nature and grace, explaining how grace is not an impersonal supernatural entity, but a personal encounter with Him who is the source of all personhood. That must be presupposed here.²⁷ It is enough to note that in the Election Ignatius gives us what one might call an existential description of the very personal moment of grace. Now, in any real personal communion the two participants must be taken seriously. Neither can delimit *a priori* the other's demand or response. It belongs to the person in his inalienable liberty to "surprise" the partner in dialogue.

That God can deal directly with the exercitant is presupposed in the *Exercises*. Any other understanding would empty them of all meaning. The one who gives the *Exercises* is warned not to influence the exercitant to choose one state of life rather than another because "it is much better and more fitting in seeking the Divine Will, that our Lord and Savior should communicate Himself to the devout soul..."; the director "should allow the Creator to work directly with the creature, and the creature with its Creator and God."²⁸ "In order that the Creator and Lord may work more surely in His creature" the exercitant, if he has any inordinate attachments, should "ask the contrary of God our Lord."²⁹ The exercitant is to beg to be received under the standard of Christ our Lord.³⁰

²⁷ Cf. Juan Alfaro, "La gracia del Cristo y del Cristiano en el Nuevo Testamento," *Gregorianum* 52 (1971) 27-64; Peter Fransen, *Divine Grace and Man*. New York. Desclée Co. 1962. pp. 43-92; *The New Life of Grace*. Trans. G. Dupont. London. Geoffrey Chapman. 1969. pp. 87-104. Karl Rahner, "Grace" in *Sacramentum Mundi* II. New York. Herder and Herder. 1968. pp. 415-422; "Nature and Grace," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. IV. London. Darton, Longman & Todd. 1966. pp. 165-188.

²⁸ *Ejercicios*, n. 15; *Spir. Ex.*, pp. 40-41.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, n. 16; p. 41.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 147; p. 77.

The second prelude to the meditation on the Three Classes of Men would have the exercitant imagine himself in the presence of God our Lord that he "may desire and know what is most pleasing to His Divine Goodness."³¹ If the exercitant desires to attain the third mode of humility, "he should implore our Lord to be pleased to choose him."³² To seek to discover the Divine Will regarding the disposition of one's life is the purpose of the *Exercises*.³³

The question arises, consequently, of how one is to recognize the concrete intention of God in one's life. It is a moment when the person is faced with a moral decision of primary significance. A Christian capable of generosity stands before the choice of a state of life or a radical reform thereof. In any case, there is a possible call to a new and more intimate following of Christ.³⁴ It is at this point, most especially, that the value of Ignatius' method can be appreciated.

The following would perhaps be an accurate description of the usual approach to a moral choice of the kind we have been explaining: the individual employs his rational powers to discover the proper relationship between the general principles of ethics and faith on the one hand, and his particular concrete situation on the other; he invokes the assistance of God who "enlightens" and "moves" his mind and will to arrive at the proper moral decision. God's assistance is more or less understood to be an illumination and strengthening of the rational powers which then proceed more readily to make the right choice, the will of God here and now. In any case, the object or content of the decision is reached through the analysis (aided by grace) of general principles and the particular situation.

Ignatius' approach, on the other hand, implies that the person faced with such a vital decision cannot fully know the concrete intention of God for his life simply by prayerful

³¹ *Ibid.*, n. 151; p. 78.

³² *Ibid.*, n. 168; p. 82.

³³ *Ibid.*, n. 1; p. 37.

³⁴ Hugo Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*. Trans. M. Barry. London. Geoffrey Chapman, 1968. pp. 142-144.

recourse to the principles of reason and faith plus analysis of the situation.³⁴ In the Election to be made God can make known to the exercitant some definite will of His over and above what is shown by the Christian use of reason. The object of decision can be known only through the discernment that is described in the *Exercises*.

Some preliminary observations may be made in support of this. First, the absence of any spiritual movement or disturbance from various spirits, is taken to be a suspicious sign as far as the exercitant is concerned.³⁶ But this would not be so if the object of the election is to be arrived at simply through the process of reasoning, for in this case the less disturbance the better. Secondly, it is considered more important for the one giving the *Exercises* to be informed of the movements awakened by different spirits than to be informed of the personal thoughts of the exercitant.³⁷ If it were simply through individual reflection that the will of God is to be discovered, then the personal thoughts of the one making the *Exercises* would not be relegated to second place. Finally, the exercitant offers to follow Christ in poverty if his most Sacred Majesty should will to choose him for such a life and state.³⁸ There is no question, then, of a decision that one arrives at on his own first, and which he asks God to confirm later.

Ignatius indicates three occasions or "times" when the Election could be rightly made:³⁹

The first occasion is when God our Lord moves and attracts the will so that the devout soul, without question and desire to question, follows what has been manifested to it. St. Paul and St. Matthew did this when they followed Christ our Lord.

³⁴ Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church*. Freiburg: Herder; London: Burns & Oates, 1964. pp. 142-144. This part of our exposition (indeed, a much larger part of it) relies heavily on Karl Rahner's book.

³⁶ *Ejercicios*, n. 6; *Spir. Ex.*, p. 38.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 17; p. 41.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, n. 98; p. 68.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, nn. 175-178; pp. 84-85.

The second occasion is present when one has developed a clear understanding and knowledge through the experience of consolations and desolations and the discernment of diverse spirits.

The third is in a time of tranquillity. Here one considers first for what purpose man is born, which is to praise God our Lord and to save his soul. Since he desires to attain this end, he chooses some life or state within the bounds of the church that will help him in the service of God our Lord and the salvation of his soul. I said "a time of tranquillity," when the soul is not agitated by diverse spirits, and is freely and calmly making use of its natural powers.

And then follow two sets of directions on how to make the choice on the third occasion "if a choice has not been made on the first or second occasion." As the text of the *Exercises* stands, there is no precedence accorded to the third occasion. If anything, it would seem that the first or second occasion are given the position of privilege. As a matter of fact, in the directory attributed to Ignatius, it is written that "among the three modes of making an election, if God does not move the exercitant in the first, one must insist on the second in order to discover his vocation through the experience of consolations and desolations...when no decision is taken according to the second mode, or if in the judgment of the one giving the *Exercises* it does not seem advisable to follow the second, let the third mode be followed..."⁴⁰

In the course of history (for reasons outside the scope of our investigation to trace) the third occasion for making the Election came to be regarded as the normal and ordinary way for the exercitant to follow. This will be seen later to have been a backward step in the understanding and use of the *Exercises*. It is to Karl Rahner's credit to have shown convincingly that the second occasion is the preferred and normal way (taking the first occasion to be an extraordinary case) for the exercitant to arrive at the vital decision of the Election.

CONSOLATION WITHOUT PREVIOUS CAUSE

If the Election is made according to the second method, i.e., through the experience of consolations and desolations,

⁴⁰ *Mon. Ign., II, Exercitia Spiritualia et Directoria*, p. 781.

Ignatius provides certain rules for the discernment of the diverse interior movements experienced by the exercitant. For Ignatius, the whole point is to recognize where (or, more exactly, from whom) the interior movement came. It is by discovering the source of the impulse (independent of the moral evaluation of the object or action to which the impulse prompts) that one can discern whether the movement is leading to God's will or not.⁴¹ In other words, the moral worth of the spiritual motion is not to be decided by the object or action to which it is urging, but rather by the origin of the motion. The important thing is not to judge the interior movement by its fruits, but to trace exactly how it arose to see if it is God who speaks.

Despite all difficulties and uncertainties involved in the discernment of spirits, there is for Ignatius a stirring or movement of the spirit which can only come from God.⁴² It is a divine motion which carries with it its own fundamental evidence and certainty. It is a self-validating experience of spiritual consolation whose divine origin is incontrovertible. This is described in the second rule for discernment proper to the second week:

It belongs to God alone to give consolation to the soul without previous cause (*sin causa precedente*), for it belongs to the Creator to enter into the soul, to leave it, and to act upon it, drawing it wholly to the love of His Divine Majesty. I say without previous cause, that is, without any previous perception or knowledge of any object (*sin ningun previo sentimiento o conocimiento de algun objeto*) from which such consolation might come to the soul through its own acts of intellect and will.⁴³

It is of central importance to understand exactly what this rule means, because it constitutes a kind of first principle from which all the other rules derive their intelligibility and application.⁴⁴ What does Ignatius mean by this "consolation without previous cause?"

⁴¹ Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, p. 118.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.

⁴³ *Ejercicios*, n. 330; *Spir. Ex.*, p. 133.

⁴⁴ Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, p. 130.

First, let us see what Ignatius means by consolation:

I call it consolation when the soul is aroused by an interior movement which causes it to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord, and consequently can love no created thing on the face of the earth for its own sake, but only in the Creator of all things. . . . I call consolation any increase of faith, hope, and charity and any interior joy that calls and attracts to heavenly things, and to the salvation of one's soul, inspiring it with peace and quiet in Christ our Lord.⁴⁵

The good or evil spirit, each for different purposes, can console "with cause."⁴⁶ And contrary to what a superficial reading might suggest, this "cause" of the consolation cannot mean a preceding series of thoughts or feelings coming before the experience of consolation. If that were so, it would reduce the possibility of intervention on the part of a created spirit to the moment immediately after waking from deep sleep. For it is common knowledge from psychology that in all other cases there is always an already flowing stream of thought and feeling more or less appropriate for giving rise to one inner experience or another. The "cause" then must mean the objective ground for consolation, the perception or experiencing of a value that gives rise to the consolation. The consolation itself is to be distinguished from the object that is its motive and ground. The inner experience of peace and quiet comes from the apprehension (by the spiritual faculties) of the object which is present before the consolation and continues to be apprehended in the actual experience of consolation. The "cause" is the consoling object present in the consolation itself.⁴⁷ It is an object of the intentional order, a conceptual object, that is meant.

The "consolation without previous cause," therefore, does not refer at all to any suddenness of the experience or to God's coming or going entirely at will; it means the experience of consolation without any conceptual object. This is not to say an objectless, unconscious experience but an experience of the transcendence of the mind and will, the emergence into aware-

⁴⁵ *Ejercicios*, n. 316; *Spir. Ex.*, pp. 129-130.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, n. 331; p. 133.

⁴⁷ Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, pp. 132-133.

ness of the free transcendence of the spiritual subject.⁴⁸ In every human act man has an implicit consciousness of God as transcendent horizon, but this consciousness does not ordinarily emerge into express awareness. Consolation without cause arises when, from God's free initiative, man experiences this consciousness as explicit.⁴⁹ It is the experience of the pure dynamism of the mind and will in positive affirmation and receptivity of the very Source of consolation. God himself, without mediation of any conceptual representation, is experienced. This is a non-conceptual mode of perception analogous to the concomitant self-awareness of the spiritual subject in act. The consolation is the drawing of the whole person into the love of God, "for it belongs to the Creator to enter into the soul, to leave it, and to act upon it, drawing it wholly to the love of His Divine Majesty." It can be shown that such an experience does not necessarily have to belong to the order of high mysticism.⁵⁰

The conscious (non-conceptual) experience of fundamental liberty ties in, as one might expect, with the experience of transcendence involved in the consolation without cause. There cannot, of course, be a categorial-objective consciousness of fundamental liberty as there can be of particular acts of free choice. That doesn't mean, however, that fundamental liberty is outside of all consciousness, for there is a more original and more profound consciousness of the person present-to-himself, a non-reflex transcendental consciousness of the spiritual subject in his self-actuation.⁵¹ All this suggests that the experience of the basic consolation in the Ignatian sense is, in the last analysis, an experience of liberty, the liberty of the person fulfilled in the hour of grace. To this idea we shall return later.

In any case, the consolation without cause that Ignatius describes is self-evident and self-validating. For evidence is

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 134-156.

⁴⁹ Avery Dulles, "Finding God's Will," *Woodstock Letters* 94 (1965) 146-147.

⁵⁰ Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, pp. 145-147.

⁵¹ Fuchs, *Esiste*, pp. 131-134.

relevant only when there is a conceptual object from which doubt or uncertainty or error can derive. There is, however, no question of that being present in the experience under discussion. No conceptual reference to God is involved, but only the direct awareness in experience of Him who gives such concepts their real meaning.⁵² It must now be explained how the experience of this consolation is the first and basic principle in discernment.

CONVERSION OF AFFECTIVITY

In the experience of consolation which is purely of divine origin, there takes place an actualization of the person's fundamental attitude, a profound sense of his innermost religious orientation. To put Ignatius' idea in more complicated language: the spiritual subject is wholly drawn to the Absolute who is the transcendent horizon of all conscious acts. And in this experience, the person "finds himself."

It is to be noted that this experience takes place in the context of continual contemplation on the mysteries of the life of Christ. One might say that the exercitant is engaged in an unrelenting attempt to invite the divine experience. The second week of the *Exercises* is prefaced by the meditation on the Kingdom of Christ, and in the very first prelude the exercitant is instructed to "see in his imagination the synagogues, villages, and towns where Jesus preached."⁵³ The next exercise is a contemplation on the Incarnation, followed in turn by another contemplation on the birth of Jesus.⁵⁴ After which a repetition of both contemplations is indicated, "always making note of some of the more important parts in which one has found some understanding, consolation, or desolation."⁵⁵ The fourth exercise is another repetition of the first two contemplations.⁵⁶ Next comes the application of the five senses to the same con-

⁵² Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, pp. 148-149.

⁵³ *Ejercicios*, n. 91; *Spir. Ex.*, p. 67.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, nn. 101, 110; pp. 69-71.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, n. 118, p. 71.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, n. 120; p. 72.

templations.⁵⁷ One could go on at length illustrating the same point; for example, that for the entire second week of the *Exercises*, from the second to the twelfth day, Ignatius prescribes contemplations on the events of the life of Christ, thus making the meditations on the Two Standards, the Three Classes of Men and the Three Modes of Humility look like insertions (granted that they take up more printed space) to explain the goal of the contemplations.⁵⁸ It is only after the exercitant has immersed himself in contemplation of the person and activity of Christ that the decisive phase which is the Election is introduced.⁵⁹ One might recall, too, that the third week which immediately follows is entirely devoted to contemplating the Passion.

It is a conversion of affectivity that Ignatius is seeking. In the *Exercises* the role of affectivity is rather emphasized, which is not surprising, especially if it is true that the love of God addresses itself principally to the person's affectivity.⁶⁰ Again, one must guard against the tendency straightway to identify affectivity with soft sentiment or pure emotion. A reaction of the whole man (who is more, after all, than pure intellect and will) is meant. It is not a cold response but the response of a person on fire, as it were, with love. If one prefers the language of Scholasticism, affectivity is the reaction of the rational appetite of man to its proper object.⁶¹ In the experience of discernment the exercitant directs his attention and faculties to the love of God which both precedes and accompanies all movements of the soul.⁶² He does this by contemplating the mysteries of the life of Christ, and in the affective identification that is forged, there emerges a man in

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 121; p. 72.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, nn. 132-168; pp. 74-82.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, n. 169; p. 82.

⁶⁰ Georges Cruchon, "La conversion de l'affectivité comme condition de la rencontre intime avec Dieu," *Primus Cursus Internationalis Exercitiorum Spiritualium in Hodierna Luce Ecclesiae* vol. I. Ed. C. Espinosa. Roma. 1968. lect. 19, pp. 1-4.

⁶¹ Jean Mouroux, *L'expérience chrétienne*. Paris. Aubier. Editions Montaigne. 1952. pp. 248-249.

⁶² Hugo Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 146.

love who desires to choose whatever Christ himself has chosen. This is why the man of the third mode of humility desires and chooses (supposing that the praise and glory of God are equally served) "poverty with Christ poor rather than riches, in order to be more like Christ our Lord." One can now understand better why the autograph directory insists that, as far as possible, the person who is to make the Election must have reached the third degree of humility, or, at least, the second⁶³ (which is no mean requirement, considering that here the individual would not—for the sake of all creation or of saving his life—think of committing a single venial sin). The same directory gives the instruction that the exercitant who has not arrived at even the second degree of humility should not undertake the Election, and should better take time to engage in other exercises until he has made his own the attitude of the man of the second mode of humility.⁶⁴ In other words, the moral choice that is the Election is to be made by the person who has gained affective identification with Christ.

In passing, one must say that Avery Dulles, in his otherwise perceptive article on Rahner's view of the Ignatian Election, rather misses the point when he faults Rahner with having failed to accentuate the Christological dimension of the Election.⁶⁵ The point is, precisely, that the fundamental experience of purely divine consolation occurs as affective identification with Christ, and that this grace-given experience inserts itself in the context of prayerful contemplation on the mysteries of the life of Christ. Affective connaturality with Christ (more on this later) brings out the Christological dimension better and more decisively than, say, frequent references to the Gospels in the course of analyzing the dynamics of the Election. As Rahner explains in another connection,⁶⁶ the Christian experience of transcendence comes at those moments when a person, in generous self-renunciation and readiness to share the chalice

⁶³ *Mon. Ign.*, II, *Exercitia Spir. et Directoria*, p. 781.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Avery Dulles, "Finding God's Will," p. 151

⁶⁶ Karl Rahner, "Über die Erfahrung der Gnade," *Geist und Leben* 27 (1954) 460-462.

of Christ, is attracted to poverty, humility and suffering which were the very things Christ himself embraced. This is the hour of grace when the Christian knows that the Spirit of Christ is near.

CONCRETE INDIVIDUAL KNOWLEDGE

In what manner is the grace-given experience of transcendence (i.e., consolation without previous cause) a criterion for making the Election? At the actual moment of the experience there is, of course, no question of making the choice. It has been shown that at the time of the experience the person is taken up wholly into the love of God, and it hardly needs saying that the object of the Election willed by God is not then revealed directly from above (at least, as long as it is the second occasion that is involved). It is the time after the experience of consolation of purely divine origin when Ignatius intends the Election to be undertaken. The innermost fundamental attitude actualized in the experience of transcendence is confronted with the possible object of the Election, and the purpose is to see whether the two are in harmony⁶⁷, whether the exercitant's hypothetical choice of the object is congruent with that pure openness to God experienced as affective identification with Christ. The coherence or non-coherence between pure openness to God and the will to the object of the Election can be discerned from the spiritual motions which follow, i.e., consolation or desolation. This experience of consolation or desolation is, obviously, no longer the experience of transcendence, but, probably, a combination between the original divine consolation and a personal attitude adopted toward a created good which is under consideration as an object of choice.⁶⁸ Ignatius describes the experience in the eighth rule for discernment pertaining to the second week:

When consolation is without preceding cause, although there is no deception in it, since it proceeds only from God our Lord. . . the spiritual person to whom God gives such consolation ought still to consider it with great vigilance and attention. He should carefully distinguish the

⁶⁷ Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, p. 158.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

exact time of such consolation from the time that follows it, during which time the soul continues in fervor and feels the divine favor and the aftereffects of the consolation which has passed. Often in this latter period the soul makes various plans and resolutions which are not inspired directly by God our Lord. They may be the result of its own reflections, in accordance with its own habits, and the consequence of its own concepts or judgments, and they may come either from the good spirit or the evil one. . . .⁶⁹

Consolation would be a sign of congruence between the intended object of Election and the person's fundamental innermost attitude. Thus, peace, tranquillity, quiet and spiritual delight would signify that the object of decision corresponds to God's will embraced in total self-donation. On the other hand, disquiet, disturbance, sharpness and tumult would indicate non-coherence between the object of decision and pure receptivity to God.⁷⁰ The movement of the spirits within the soul is thus a sort of transparency through which the exercitant in affective identification with Christ perceives what is in harmony with the heart of Jesus.⁷¹ As Jerome Nadal puts it, the exercitant "apprehends the will of God as though through a tangible indication of the divine will."⁷²

It is of utmost importance for understanding Ignatius' intention to realize that the proper object of the Election is discovered through the spiritual movements of consolation or desolation (the second method), not through deliberate evaluation or discursive conceptual thought. We have already seen that for Ignatius the motion of spirits experienced by the exercitant is more important than his deliberate reflections as far as the Election is concerned.⁷³ One cannot say, either, that the second method of making the election is only a more exalted way of arriving at the same object of decision. As Rahner argues, when an object can be known *per se* by a definite mode of cognition, the self-same object cannot be known by another mode of cognition specifically different from the first.⁷⁴ This

⁶⁹ *Ejercicios*, n. 336; *Spir. Ex.*, p. 134.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, nn. 333-335; pp. 133-134.

⁷¹ Hugo Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 146.

⁷² *Monumenta Natalis*, IV, p. 844.

⁷³ *Ejercicios*, n. 17; *Spir. Ex.*, p. 41.

⁷⁴ Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, pp. 106-108.

means that the object of Election known through the discernment of spirits cannot be known such as it fully is through discursive reasoning aided by the general principles of ethics and faith. The object of moral choice with which Ignatius is concerned is, therefore, of such a nature that it cannot be apprehended in any other way than by God's addressing the individual directly in some way. The object of Election has to do with the particular will of God addressed to the individual as individual.⁷⁵ The decision has to bear on the unique vocation of the concrete person by virtue of his positive individuality; we have to do here with the unique and singular as willed by God.⁷⁶ Faced with a moral choice (in the full and proper sense of the term) decisively important for his Christian life, the individual is to arrive at the object of choice through the experience of a highly personal influence of God. God has made the individual the person he alone is. At the moment when the person is confronted with the possibility of actuating his fundamental innermost attitude by an act of self-donation, the transcendent Source of personhood draws near.

CONNATURALITY

The second method of Election is, in effect, a mode of knowledge by connaturality. St. Thomas refers to this mode as one way of arriving at a right judgment.⁷⁷ The other way is by the correct use of reason. He who knows by connaturality has a certain congruence or sympathy (*compassio*) with that which is known. In matters pertaining to man's relationship with God, connaturality is born of charity which unites a person with God.⁷⁸ In the encyclical *Humani Generis* (which has ordinarily been cited, perhaps obsessively, in connection with monogenism and original sin), there is an appeal made to the teaching of St. Thomas. Arguing against a certain philosophy which takes account only of the intellect and neglects affectivity, Pius XII recalls the Thomistic teaching on connaturality. The encyclical observes that the higher values of the moral

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁷⁶ Avery Dulles, "Finding God's Will," pp. 142-143.

⁷⁷ *Summa Theologiae*, 2a 2ae, q. 45, a. 2.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

order can only be perceived to the extent that the person experiences in his heart a certain affective connaturality with those same values.⁷⁹

The recognition of moral value is basically pre-conceptual, i.e., precedes rational explicitation, is more characteristically intuitive rather than deductive, and goes by way of inclination.⁸⁰ That is not the same as saying that one comes to the knowledge of moral values irrationally. For the instinctive inclinations or tendencies involved in knowledge by connaturality are rooted in the human person who is rational. The biological and emotional dynamisms of man find a point of convergence with his rational nature and are assumed and integrated into the sphere of reason; these inclinations and tendencies "receive the form and the irradiations of reason."⁸¹ The person, then, perceives moral values by way of an inclination that has its roots in human rationality. But the process is not one of logical connections and syllogisms. Moral value is perceived by its conformity with a radical inclination expressive of the person as he really is.

In the Ignatian Election the exercitant's affective identification with Christ constitutes that connaturality by which he perceives the object of choice willed by God. When the object of decision is confronted with the fundamental divine consolation, the subsequent motions of the heart are indications of the compatibility or non-compatibility of a crucial moral choice with the real personal centre of the individual who has made Christ's preferences his own. The act of discernment not only puts before the exercitant the truth proposed for meditation but also makes the exercitant accomplish the truth in himself.⁸² The accomplishment of the truth takes place in the choice, through connaturality, of the moral action willed uniquely for this individual by God.

⁷⁹ Denzinger 2324. This section has been omitted in the new edition.

⁸⁰ Jacques Maritain, *Neuf leçons sur les notions premières de la philosophie morale*. Paris. Chez Pierre Tequi. 1949. pp. 47-49.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

⁸² Jean Laplace, "L'expérience du discernement dans les Exercices Spirituels de saint Ignace," *Christus* 4 (1954) 29.

CHRISTIAN INTENTIONALITY

Affectivity, which is basically the reaction of the rational appetite to its proper object, takes the form of spiritual motions which incline this way or that, depending on the orientation of one's personal centre and on the object which impinges. In the total moral context an object of decision is always charged with affective values which provoke contrary movements of love or aggression, generosity or egoism, joy or sadness. The act of liberty is, in great part, a reaction to affectivity.⁸³ These takes place in the course of one's personal history an interaction between liberty and affectivity. Affectivity prepares and accompanies the development of personal liberty. It is the mark of the person who has "grown in grace and wisdom" that liberty has made connatural to him the affective inclinations of love, desire, pleasure, delectation for Christian values. Liberty is crowned by connaturality which establishes in the heart a supreme and decisive love and pleasure greater than the limitations of the individual as such.⁸⁴ Between fundamental liberty and the particular categorial acts of free election there lies connaturality which inclines more to one possibility of choice rather than to another. And there does not exist an act of choice which is not supported by a *complaisance*, a radical inclination.⁸⁵ Affective identification with Christ is a grace whereby the Christian comes to accept the divine operation as his own pleasure, his own preference, his own love.⁸⁶

The *Spiritual Exercises* are an education in Christian liberty—liberty understood as the power to realize oneself; liberty as the personal engagement by which one possesses, develops and achieves oneself in self-donation to God; liberty as the accomplishment of one's personal vocation.⁸⁷ As Karl Rahner observes,⁸⁸ it is quite significant that Ignatius, way back in his own time, put liberty before the three powers of the soul in his well-known prayer, the *Suscipe Domine*: "Take, O

⁸³ Jean Mouroux, *L'expérience chrétienne*, pp. 256-257.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 278, 287.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

⁸⁶ Pierre Rousselot, "La grâce d'après saint Jean et d'après saint Paul," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 26 (1936) p. 101.

⁸⁷ Jean Mouroux, *La liberté chrétienne*, pp. 58, 65, 68.

⁸⁸ Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, p. 84.

Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. . . ."⁸⁹

The level of moral life surveyed in the *Exercises* is that of the man of "Christian intentionality," the man with the fundamental Christian resolution to accept and to return love for love in his relationship with God. In Christian intentionality the person's actual decision for Christ and the Father becomes consciously incarnated in his moral choices, especially the most vital.⁹⁰

St. Thomas speaks of two elements of the law of the Gospel, i.e., the New Law.⁹¹ The primary element involves whatever disposes the person to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit; the secondary element comprises whatever pertains to the application of this grace. Due perhaps to a static conception of grace (as an infused supernatural entity), the first and more important element of the New Law has received scant attention from moralists. The result has been a poorer understanding of the meaning of the fully moral act. For it is precisely on the level of fundamental liberty (which lies at the springs of moral action in the full and proper sense of the term) that the possibility of human transcendence and, therefore, the meeting-ground between grace and moral action is to be found. The person's self-realization in fundamental liberty touches the primary element of the New Law which is the grace of the Holy Spirit. For nothing disposes more to the very personal experience of grace than that self-donation in love which was Jesus' own response to the initiative of the Father. This is Christian liberty, the perfection of all moral striving. And it is the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In these days when Christianity is breaking away from "the ethics of what is allowed and what is not allowed," moral theology must speak more about the New Man for whom the promptings of the Spirit are the true norm of moral decision. About this matter, Ignatius of Loyola has much to say that is of great value.

⁸⁹ *Ejercicios*, n. 234; *Spir. Ex.*, p. 104.

⁹⁰ Fuchs, *Esiste*, pp. 17-19.

⁹¹ *Sum. Theol.*, Ia 2ae, p. 106, a.1.