

THE DYNAMIC OF THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

By JOSEPH VEALE

THERE WAS a time when people spoke of the logic of the Exercises. That way of speaking was even then, I think, felt to be defective, as though a submissive subject who gave himself over to them must be persuaded to capitulate to their argument. It is more common now to speak of their dynamic. The term, borrowed from mechanics and physics, has been found useful in many other disciplines, from medicine and law to psychology and biology. The metaphor is used here to suggest organic growth. I take it to mean the way in which the factors or parts in their relationship and interaction make for movement and growth.

It is true that there is some power in the way St Ignatius put the Exercises together. But they are less like a machine or a logical construction than a living organism. It is interesting to submit the text of the Exercises to a verbal analysis, to show the textual interconnections, the repetition of key words and especially of the characteristic ignatian doublets (like *sentir y gustar* and so many others), the same themes recurring in different contexts, the way one part prepares for a later one, the way a later part was anticipated in an earlier. That is fairly easily done with a little time and diligence and, in the spirit of the second annotation, all the better for having done it for oneself. It is a necessary exercise for anyone who wants to master the Exercises. But somehow, valuable as that is, it does not elicit the dynamic inherent in the process and experience.

Let us suppose, instead, that we were to look less at the objective factors, at their sequence and relationship, and look rather at the person and his experience. That in no way takes from the fact that St Ignatius considered it to be important to submit one's mind and heart to the christian truths, to truth, or better, to the christian mysteries, to begin with humility by using the understanding to penetrate the gospel reality, to assimilate and appropriate it. But that is not the whole story.

Levels of desire

The Exercises are a way to find God and, in finding him to find his will. St Ignatius states plainly from the outset that to find God's will one must first be free (Exx 21, 1). The full Exercises are for those who 'desire to progress as much as possible' (Exx 20). Adaptations or selections of different Exercises are to be given to those whose desire falls short of that (Exx 18, 19, 17). Spiritual Exercises of whatever kind presuppose the presence of desire.

This condition of desire can exist at many levels. It may already be deep and explicit: 'I want God, but I don't know how'; 'I've tried and been frustrated and cannot find the way'. It can be present in a thousand guises, all the way to an implicit longing that is expressed, it may be, in words like: 'I am uneasy, restless and unsatisfied'; 'I wish I could find peace of mind and peace of soul'; 'I don't really know what I want, but it may have something to do with religion.' It may simply be a barely expressed longing to find meaning. And all this masking a real desire for God.

If you like, you could say that all that St Ignatius is doing is taking a person where he is, patiently staying with him and listening to him while he may as yet be some way from being ready to begin, slowly uncovering the layers of debris that cover the frail shoot of desire, disclosing (or better, enabling the person to disclose to himself) the underlying desire. The underlying desire for what? For God? For Christ? For, perhaps, something he would only call goodness?

Then, when he is ready, inviting him to make 'some exercises in accordance with the degree of progress made and adapted to the needs of a soul so moved' (Exx 17). Then he would focus one by one on the members or moments or articulations of the 'natural' growth of faith and grace. He would suggest the exterior conditions and the interior climate that he had found from experience to favour that growth (Exx 73-90). And as the desire begins to grow, harnessing it to further growth, always with a view to the end.

So, one element of the dynamic of the Exercises is to bring into a fruitful and powerful conjunction the obscurely desired and as yet unknown finality and the person's desire for it.

To say all that is to attend to the human side of a process of growth that is entirely the work of the Spirit. What we can do is 'to make some suggestions' (*Const* 414), and 'entirely to trust' in 'the gentle arrangement of Divine Providence' who 'requires co-operation from his creatures' (*Const* 134).

Magis

St Ignatius would recognize as the reality at the heart of the Exercises the statement of St Thomas:

The greater the love the greater the desire.
And desire in some sort prepares and opens the one who desires
to receive the one who is desired.

(S.T., I, q 12)

This desire is implanted by the Holy Spirit, is the Holy Spirit desiring in us. It is part of the basic gift of faith. It is good to remind ourselves that the desire is, somehow and somewhere and however distorted in its expression, present in all men and women.²

'The greater the love the greater the desire'. Those comparatives, *maior*, *maius*, *magis*, are everywhere present in St Ignatius. St Thomas's statement calls to mind at once the twentieth annotation (Exx 20). Here, as in so many places in St Ignatius's letters and Constitutions, you have an expression of the dynamic of faith, of the interplay of the human and the divine that gives force and propulsion, movement and growth, of the spontaneous need of the human heart to reach forward and to be moved beyond itself to God.

It will be very profitable for one who is to make the Exercises to enter upon them with magnanimity and generosity towards his Creator and Lord and to offer him his entire will and freedom, so that his Divine Majesty may dispose of him and all he has according to his most holy will (Exx 15).

The fifteenth annotation is one of the small number of preliminary notes that St Ignatius wished to be given to someone before embarking on the Exercises (Exx 15). It says less about an act of the cold will than about a disposition of the whole person, a level of desire.

Principle and Foundation

When the exercitant is given the Principle and Foundation and asked to ruminate on it for a day or two, the one who is giving the Exercises will be wondering about the exercitant's response to it. It is a kind of touchstone that reveals in some way how far he is likely to go or to grow. The dry and laconic text is wholly free from emotional resonance and I think intentionally so. It contains

in its brevity and dryness all that later unfolds. It is less like the foundation of a building than a seed of life, a principle of force, of movement and growth.

This principle of growth is not, of course, in the text or in the words but in the reality that the text expresses. If you like, the Principle and Foundation is like an X-ray that discloses to the exercitant the desire that is already present, perhaps explicitly, perhaps latently, perhaps strongly and consciously, perhaps obscurely and delicately. Naturally to an exercitant who has some fairly mature experience of life and some realistic sense of himself, it begins to disclose, too, the ambiguity of his desires, the darkness in his heart, his moral impotence, the feelings that can surge in revolt or revulsion. He is not free. He can desire to be. God wants him to be.

First Week

So we may expect to find him moved by the Spirit to desire to be free, to be purified, to be healed, to repent. It is the same dynamic as that of the gospel, of those who encounter Christ: 'Repent and believe the gospel'. He is invited to enter into a prayer that is an intimate conversation with Christ on the cross, who is present from the first words of the Exercises and who will be his Way to the end of the Exercises and beyond. Christ is at once the object of his desire and the only way to satisfy it. In the triple colloquy of the First Week the exercitant begs for light to see all that has been a burden in the past and a hindrance upon his freedom, all that clogged and distorted the relationship of love between him and Christ, all that constrains or inhibits his freedom to love. He begs to be enabled to see the particular disorder that is the root of his sins, that will accompany him in his living and that no power of his will eradicate. The more he knows about human nature and about himself, the more he will be made aware that there are undiagnosed imprisonments, unfreedoms he does not know; he will have to learn to wait in freedom for the time when God sees that he is able to be aware of them, to face them and, perhaps, to be obedient to God's will that they remain. There will never be a time when he will not need to surrender his weakness to the weakness and power of Christ who took all our illnesses upon himself and by whose wounds we are healed.

The gift of such graces as these contains within itself a force that moves the person onward in desire. When it is given, it is an

experience of relief and release, of consolation in the presence of goodness and mercy. It begins a little to disclose the true God, the Father of Jesus, who loves unconditionally. It begins to destroy all the false images of God, the broken reflections of a person's egoism, all those attractive or dismaying masks that we construct for God so that we may hide him and hide ourselves from him.

The gift of consolation that is the fruit of the First Week of the Exercises is also an enlivening discovery of the conditions that will continue to be necessary if we are to maintain our freedom and to grow in it: 'to act against their own sensuality, against their carnal and worldly love' (Exx 97). The term self-abnegation, without which the Exercises and the ignatian Constitutions remain meaningless, is destined to be meaningless and may be harmful, if it is not experienced here as an intrinsic requirement of love, as a determination to be free, as a precondition of growth in desire.

What is to be done?

The questions that St Ignatius suggests in the colloquy before Christ on the cross: What have I done . . .? What am I doing . . .? What ought I to do . . .? (Exx 53) are a powerful element in the dynamic of growth in faith and desire. They find their source of growth in gratitude. The active and generous elements in St Ignatius's temperament, the practical sense of being engaged in an enterprise of moment, were taken up and taken into, purified and reinforced by, his mystical experiences at Manresa. The Exercises are for those who have those dispositions even in some small degree. 'Yes, but what is to be done?' is never far from the forefront of St Ignatius's mind. These questions are the practical articulations of desire. They are as dynamic as the level of love and desire that prompts them, as powerful as the degree of openness to, of surrender to, the power of the Spirit who is at work.

It can be seen how all this is, step by step, one thing at a time, all the time, pointing towards decision, or to what St Ignatius will call the Election. It points to the personal discovery of all that is implicit in the highest degree of spiritual freedom. As the exercitant is moved forward into the Second Week, the indifference of the Principle and Foundation begins to disclose itself as a freedom to desire to respond to the call of Christ, to be contemplatively identified with him and with his work, 'should your most holy Majesty be so gracious as to choose and receive me to such a life' (Exx 98). Might it be . . .? If only I could . . .? It is part of the

experience of this dynamic that such a gift is given, not contrived, can be desired and received but not grasped. It is not at our command. It is a contemplative gift. In every hour of prayer in the Exercises, desire experiences petition as a need.

The dynamic within each hour

Within that overall dynamic there are other subordinate dynamics at work. As the exercitant begins the Second Week, there is a dynamic within each hour and a similar dynamic within each day.

Within each hour there is a movement from asking at the beginning for 'what I want and desire' to colloquy. Every hour of prayer in the Exercises begins with a time of quietness in which the body is engaged and where the exercitant allows himself to 'become aware of how God my Lord is beholding me' (Exx 75). Nothing could more clearly remind us of the necessary perspective of all prayer, of the sovereign freedom and initiative of God in the entire life of grace and faith, of God's desire on our behalf. The exercitant begs at the beginning of every hour that his whole being 'may be ordered purely to the service and praise of the Divine Majesty' (Exx 46).

This general expression of his desire moves to a particular and concrete petition. In the Second Week 'This is to ask for what I want and desire. Here it will be to ask for an interior knowledge of the Lord who is made man for me, that I may love him more and follow him' (Exx 104). This petition focusses and specifies the original and growing desire. Its force, its efficacy in disposing us to receive what God so desires freely to give, is as strong as the underlying desire. To the extent that it is real, it will be realistic. The exercitant is brought to ask himself before God: What do I really want? How much do I want it? How really do I want it?

It can be objected that this imposes on the exercitant a prayer for something that in his deepest self he may not want. Who is St Ignatius, who is a director, to suppose that this particular exercitant ought to want this? Will not this move him into alienation, confusion and conflict? The objection is a good one if it brings inexperienced directors to ask themselves what they are doing. In fact it can be truly said that these focussed petitions are all implicit in the gift of faith, that they are the 'natural' articulations of the original gift of the Spirit. A person who experiences within himself no desire at any level of the Spirit for these specific gifts should not be making the full Exercises. An experienced

director will encourage an exercitant to come to his own expression of what he really wants. If the exercitant is as mature as the full Exercises require, he will know without being told that we may not lie to God.

The dynamic of lectio divina

The movement from 'asking for what I want' to the colloquy can be seen more clearly by recognizing the affinity of ignatian contemplation with the movement of the *lectio divina*.

The four steps of the *lectio divina* are like a ladder, a metaphor of long standing in the tradition, and a ladder is a simple instrument to accomplish the dynamic of getting off the ground. *Lectio* corresponds with 'calling to mind the history' (Exx 102) of the particular mystery in Jesus's life in ignatian contemplation. *Meditatio* corresponds with what St Ignatius in this Second Week calls contemplation. *Oratio*, in which one asks or begs for or desires what has been seen as good or needed or desirable, is the same as the ignatian colloquy. In the monastic tradition that was held to be as far as we can go, aided indeed by grace, in seeking God. *Contemplatio* is something that is simply given and cannot be acquired or induced; the corresponding term in St Ignatius is consolation.

The terminology is of small importance. What is important is to recognize that reading is with a view to meditation, that meditation is with a view to prayer, that prayer is with a view to that openness to God or readiness for his gift that disposes the spirit to receive what God freely desires to give. In the same way the preliminaries in ignatian contemplation are with a view to prayer, to colloquy, to speaking 'as a friend speaks with a friend' (Exx 54). The ignatian pedagogy of contemplation is desired to help the one who is praying to discern when and where to be still, to be able to receive: 'at point where I find what I desire, there I will remain in repose, without being anxious to go forward until I have been satisfied' (Exx 76; cf Exx 199).

From the beginning the exercitant has been helped to trust his own desires, to come to recognize them in truth, to express them in an exchange that is direct, intimate and personal. The 'asking for what I desire' at the beginning, expressed by St Ignatius in the general and familiar language of the faith, becomes, through the movement experienced in the hour of prayer and in the light of what has happened, in the light, too, of the exercitant's personal

history, experience and self-awareness, an exchange that becomes more and more concrete, particular and personal.

The dynamic within each day

There is, besides, a dynamic inherent in each day of the Exercises. There are five hours of prayer, beginning during the night. In the Second Week the first hour is a contemplation of, for example, the Three Persons beholding the earth and all mankind and the moment of the incarnation. On the same day the second hour is a contemplation of the Lord's birth. The third and fourth hours are 'repetitions' of these contemplations, in which the exercitant returns, less diffusely and more simply, to 'dwell where I have sensed greater consolation or desolation or greater spiritual savour' (Exx 62). This is a movement from what is wider and more detailed to what is simpler, more focussed, less busy. The day is like a cone that narrows through the day to *lectio divina*.

The day follows what might be called the natural development of prayer. It is the ignatian way or pedagogy by which the whole person is helped to dispose himself to be led towards contemplation. It is a movement from something human and childlike, a being present in faith and imagination to the place, the actions, the event, the persons, a being absorbed in and being absorbed into, an assimilation of and a being assimilated to, the concrete and human reality of the gospel happenings that are sacramental of the divine reality and compassion.

The ignatian day ends with an exercise that St Ignatius calls 'applying the senses', what in the tradition are known as the interior or spiritual senses. This prayer, when it is possible, since it is hard to see how it can be made in desolation, is a further simplifying and focussing of the Spirit at a deep level. When the soul is quiet and recollected, it returns again to where it found itself invited to dwell (Exx 227), in a desire to be simply present to the mystery.

During the course of the Exercises, the day can be seen as a movement towards the gospel event, towards Jesus in his relationship with the Father and with those who responded to him in love or hesitation or refusal. The whole person is engaged in looking and listening, not only to what the persons say but to 'what they might say' (Exx 123). All that is a preparing or disposing of oneself in desire to be drawn through the event into the mystery and, beyond the mystery, perhaps, into the silence and dynamism of

the Divinity, the divine *dunamis*, the still and powerful inter-relationship of Father, Word and Spirit.

Reflection and repetition

What seem to be original in St Ignatius are the repetitions and what has come to be called the review of prayer, in which after each hour of prayer the exercitant reflects upon what has happened during the hour. It is made with a view to the repetitions. Both are essential factors in the dynamic of the Exercises. The review is of course, or at least soon becomes, a prayerful exercise in discerning where the Creator and Lord in person is communicating himself to the devout soul in quest of the divine will (Exx 15) and where, in ignatian language, movements may come from the good spirit or from the bad spirit or from one's own activity (Exx 2, 32, 331, 336). This attitude of discernment is itself dynamic. It asks: Where is God's power at work? Where is God's love attracting and drawing me? It looks to decision, to resolution, to action.

'What ought I to do for Christ?' (Exx 53). 'Eternal Lord of all things . . . it is my earnest desire and my deliberate choice . . . to imitate Thee . . . should thy most holy Majesty be so gracious as to choose and receive me to such a state and way of life' (Exx 98). The discerning movement of the review of prayer, in its attention and sensitivity to the movements of the spirits, presupposes the exercitant's desire to be entirely available in freedom to God in the dynamic of grace, in the interplay of desolation and consolation, of resistance and surrender, in which the exercitant is both exercising and being exercised.

Relationships

This points to another element in the dynamic, to a series of relationships. There is first the paramount relationship of the exercitant with God, the free, initiating, sustaining and active relationship of God with the soul and the exercitant's intimate response. Secondly, there is the relationship of the director with God and of God with him; this seeking to find God in sensitivity to his will is the first duty of a director. Finally, there is the relationship of the director and the exercitant in the Spirit, in which incomprehensibly God works to accomplish his designs. The director in some sense represents the believing community, the whole Christ, the tradition, and is borne up by the faith of the Church, since 'between Christ our Lord the bridegroom and the

Church his bride there is the same Spirit that governs and guides . . . because by the one Spirit who gave the ten commandments our Holy Mother Church is ruled and governed' (Exx 365).

This relationship of the director and the exercitant is based on a trust that is freely given (and therefore can be withheld), in which the director reverences the sovereign freedom of God and the sacredness of the exercitant's freedom (Exx 22). It is in this trusting exchange that the movements of consolation or desolation and what seemed to occasion them, noticed by the exercitant in his reflection on his prayer and returned to in the repetitions, are articulated as best they can, looked at and reflected on, and cautiously interpreted, that is, discerned. The director discerns and tries to help the exercitant to learn to discern the significance of the movements: All the while the director is privileged to be present to and to keep in mind the whole process of growth, the movement of the dynamic as it unfolds in this particular exercitant, often in unpredictable ways, the hopes, the courage, the stumblings, the fears, the searchings, the resistances, the failings of heart, the waverings and recoveries, that mark the painful strugblings of desire.

Two standards

Behind all that are always present the questions: Where is this pointing to? Where is it leading? Is there some action or decision or change that God is drawing to? What may be the next step of effective growth in desire? To what degree of closeness to Christ does 'Thy most holy Majesty wish to choose and receive me?' (Exx 98).

St Ignatius takes it for granted that, as God continues to elicit and strengthen the heart's desire, the exercitant will be drawn towards some decision that will affect his living. Such a decision, if it is 'from above, that is, from the love of God' (Exx 184), will be conformed to the pattern of Christ. 'Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am' (Jn 17, 24; cf. 12, 26; 1 Jn 2, 6).

The way forward, however, is beset with possibilities of illusion. The aspirations of an exercitant may be beyond what God is desiring for him. Or his deeper and subtler attachments may induce him to cling to what is familiar and safe and he will experience fear of the measure of closeness to Christ to which the Father is calling him. Or he may simply shirk decision at all. Either

his fears or his unpurified desires may lead him to misinterpret what God is inviting him to. At this point the considerations of the Two Standards and the Three Classes have their place.

Why are they placed here and what is their place in the dynamic of the Exercises? 'We will begin, all the while contemplating his life, to explore and ask in what kind of life Christ desires us to serve his Divine Majesty' (Exx 135). The more there is at stake for the building of the Father's kingdom, the more the exercitant will experience the turbulence of conflicting emotions, the onset of fear, the ambiguity of his desires, the alternations of light and darkness, of desolation and consolation. Soon he will be contemplating Jesus in his struggle in the desert temptations. When desire is drawn towards concrete decision, there are many ways in which we can be turned from the Way. So, 'as some introduction to this . . . we will look at the intention of Christ our Lord and in contrast at the intention of the enemy of our human nature' (Exx 135).

Enemy of our human nature

There is no question here of a choice between the standard of Satan and the standard of Christ, between obvious good and obvious evil. What is in question is the way in which a generous person, in seeking the good, can be led to choose the less good. More, he can be deflected from the values of Christ and misled into choosing what is opposed to the gospel. 'It is concerning good things', says St John of the Cross, 'that the soul must ever have the greatest misgivings, for evil things bear their own testimony with them'.³

The exercitant, recalling from the experience of the First Week the darkness in his heart, asking here for 'what he wants and desires', begs for light, asks that his spirit may be clarified and illumined by the Spirit of Jesus. He ponders the universal and total designs of the enemy: 'no province, no place, no state of life, no individual is overlooked' (Exx 141). Not the holiest is immune. The enemy is envious of freedom; he casts nets and chains. He tempts people in seeking the good 'to desire riches . . . that they may the more easily come to the empty honour of the world and then to great pride' (Exx 142). Everything that is not God can become the object of the heart's desire, 'riches'. What looks selfless, idealistic and noble needs scrutiny. We can cling out of fear to things that are small and trivial or exalted and spiritual. The more spiritual and patently good they are the more easily we can make

them a substitute for the living God. The holier, seemingly, the object, the more we are in danger of idolizing it. There is no spontaneous desire of the human heart that does not need to be purified, especially the desire for God. The source cannot purify itself. It must turn its gaze continually to Christ until he becomes the source.

The way of our Creator and Lord

The way of Jesus in the gospel is to submit himself entirely to the loving will of the Father. By contrast with the way of the enemy, Jesus is 'lovely and gracious' and 'chooses so many persons, apostles, disciples and sends them through the whole world to spread his holy teaching through all states and conditions of men'. He sends 'his servants and friends to help all by attracting them' to desire to be like him in his poverty and rejection, for from this desire comes humility (Exx 146). If we desire him, we desire his way. To desire him is to choose the way. Only a constant and loving contemplation of the light of the world can penetrate the darkneses that lurk in the thickets of our desires.

'All the while continuing to contemplate his life'. Godly decisions are not made by turning to ourselves but by keeping our contemplative focus on Christ. If God desires to make his will known, the discernment will probably take place in the day by day contemplation of Christ in the mysteries of his earthly life. It is in those hours of being with him that the movements of consolation and desolation will occur. The exercitant is moving, as it were, on two paths that run parallel; on one he begins to seek to know God's call or task; on the other he is immersed in Jesus in his ministry. What God may desire for him may at first be experienced as painful and fearful. At times this path may come close to what is given him to perceive of Jesus's way. At other times it may diverge and be experienced as desolation. These two paths, or perhaps these two themes, will, if it is what God desires, come into alignment or harmony with one another and perhaps into contemplative identity. 'In this way my life will be united with his life, his way'. There may remain at a surface level some sense of pain or fear. But at a deeper level of the spirit there will be a sense of rightness or wholeness. Should that sense of rightness and wholeness persist, it would indicate what St Ignatius means by 'confirmation', especially if it remains in the absence of sensible consolation.

Three Classes

The prayer of the Two Standards is for illumination of the judgment. The prayer of the Three Classes looks to the will. What we ask for and desire is 'grace to choose what is more for the glory of the Divine Majesty' (Exx 152). The consideration tests the reality of our desires. If we truly desire the end, we choose the means. Our desires remain illusory so long as we refuse to embody them in concrete choice.

The first class of men confront us with the ways in which we postpone and evade decision. 'The hour of death comes and they have not taken the means' (Exx 153). The second class, too, desire to be free, but they also desire what is a burden upon their freedom. They want and do not want. They want to be free of the burden, 'but in such a way that they retain what they are attached to, so that God is to come to what they desire' (Exx 154). 'Such persons do not go directly to God, but want God to conform wholly to their ill-ordered attachments. Consequently, they make of the end a means and of the means an end' (Exx 169). What we protest we mean and what we do are often out of phase. Our own designs masquerade as God's glory.

The third class, too, desire to be free. They do not presume that what they feel to be more difficult is what God desires for them. 'They desire neither to retain nor to relinquish . . . they seek only to will and not will as God our Lord inspires them . . . Meanwhile, they will want to conduct themselves as though in their heart (*en affecto*) they had left' what they are clinging to. 'As a result, the desire to be better able to serve God our Lord will be the cause of their keeping or relinquishing' (Exx 155).

The fact that St Ignatius wants the exercitant to pray the triple colloquy and to continue to do so during the coming days is a sign that this degree of freedom, this deeper purification of our desires, is not something we can acquire of ourselves, but is a contemplative gift. We dispose ourselves to receive it only by desiring to be placed with Jesus.

The indifference of the Principle and Foundation (Exx 23) begins to reveal itself as a freedom to desire to be identified with Christ who is poor and on the cross, a desire which is ready to enter into the consequences of doing his work and sharing his lot, 'since he is the way that leads men to life' (*Const* 101). Desire wants to be free. It wants to be unburdened of the wayward and illusory desires that impede and mislead it.

Degrees of freedom

To make a choice that is 'sound and good' (Exx 178) requires as a least disposition the grace of the second degree of humility, which is the gift of indifference.⁴ Here St Ignatius introduces a deeper degree of freedom, the desire to be drawn into closer conformity with Jesus: 'to desire and choose poverty with Christ poor . . . insults with Christ laden with them . . . in order to be really more like Christ our Lord . . . to desire to be looked on as worthless and a fool for Christ, who first was held to be that . . .' (Exx 167). And to desire that even when 'the praise and glory of the Divine Majesty would be equally served' by an easier way.

St Ignatius does not propose this for prayer, but to be pondered upon from time to time during the day. 'It will be very useful to consider and to give one's attention to the three degrees of humility before entering upon' the process of discernment and decision. One ponders this in order that 'the heart may be moved to love the true teaching of Christ our Lord' (*para hombre afectarse*) (Exx 164). He says it will help very much to pray the triple colloquy *if one desires* to attain 'this third humility' (Exx 168).

St Ignatius could not make it plainer that this is something we cannot grasp by willing it. We can desire to be given it. 'If one desires'. Here he is not proposing a programme for behaviour. He is speaking of a climate of the heart, an attitude that expresses itself in desire. He is inviting the exercitant to see if perhaps at some deep level of faith he finds it has been given him so to love Christ, to have the desire to be enabled so to desire.

To be given such a gift is to be free with the freedom of Christ to be entirely available to the Father. In the presence of such a disposition the Father can make his will known. It is the point towards which tends the dynamic of faith and grace. It is not something exotic or alien to the desire of the heart for God, but is intrinsic to the movement of all things towards their fulfilment in Christ. One cannot be more free than this to choose what is according to the mind of Christ. Beyond this one is now ready to be drawn by the Father into the experience of Christ in his passion and resurrection, to grieve with him in his grief (Exx 203) and 'to rejoice in our Creator and Redeemer' (Exx 229).

From exercise to receptivity

In a person who in truth desires to be entirely open to God and to the designs of his love, the dynamic of grace and faith, especially

during the Second Week of the Exercises, often tends to appear more and more as a movement from the exercitant's self-exercising, his own active responding to God's initial gift, towards a greater receptivity and passivity. It may be that this is experienced within a single hour of prayer or within the movement of the day. Something of it may be expected within the dynamic of the Exercises as a whole. This is so not because of anything special to the Exercises but because in a person who is striving to be wholly faithful to the intrinsic dynamism of his desire, that is how God works, 'labouring for me' and 'desiring to give himself to me as far as he can' (Exx 236, 234).

It becomes clear that it is God who is the giver of growth, the energizer of the process, the one who first lovingly gives the spontaneous desire of the human heart for himself, who caringly invites and entices it into the open and watches over its unfolding, who himself strengthens it through the pain and darkness, the hesitations and the taking heart, the struggles and surrenders, the angers and fears, the alternations of repugnance and joy. The dynamism of the Exercises is not the Exercises, though they have been a powerful instrument in preparing and disposing the heart, but God and his wise understanding of the heart he has created for himself. That is the objective reality. Subjectively it is experienced as that pure consolation that can only be his gift, the gift of himself (Exx 316, 330, 331, 336).

The dynamic beyond the Exercises

If we may be allowed to say that the fourth point of the Contemplation to Attain Love is an appropriate expression of the disposition of one who has completed the Exercises, it is interesting to note that its last word is *etcetera* (Exx 237).

This points towards the continuing dynamic that has been brought to light and become familiar in the experience of making the Exercises. The Exercises are a point of departure. The seeds of the particular gifts of grace given in the course of the experience will burgeon in the living of daily life, in obedience to the pain and joy of living, in a refusal to be protected against the instructive experience of life, above all in the call to be spent in serving others. The discovered dynamic of desire is the disclosure of God present in all the details of his providence and in a man's inner fidelity to the movement and attraction of the Spirit, in a sensitive discernment of all reality.

The dynamic of the Exercises comes not from a cunning selection and ordering of a sequence of exercises and their inter-relationship. Those serve and are subordinate to the normal way of the human spirit and its desire in faith and grace. Their force for growth comes primarily from the dynamic interplay between God initiating and man responding, between man exercising himself and striving and God responding, between a man's activity and God waiting and illuminating, inviting and freeing, allowing the pain of desolation for our maturing and consoling, between the human and the divine. It is a dynamic interplay of two freedoms, the sovereign freedom of God and the imperfect, crippled, blind, aspiring freedom of the human spirit: God wrestling with Jacob and Jacob with God.

NOTES

¹ Numbers such as (*Const* 414) etc. refer to paragraphs in the ignatian Constitutions.

² Interested readers might like to consult Egan, Harvey D.: 'Christian apophatic and kataphatic mysticisms', *Theological Studies*, Vol 39 (1978), pp 418 f.

³ *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, III, 37.

⁴ 'Care is to be taken during the elections (which ought to be made with entire resignation of the will, and, if it is possible, with a disposition that is close to the third degree of humility) that the exercitant prefer, should God be equally served, those things that are more conformed to the counsels and example of Christ. Someone who lacked that indifference of the second degree of humility should not make the election'.

MHSJ, 76, Doc 1, 17, the first of the 'autograph' directories.