

THE WAY

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IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY FOR A WORLD IN FLUX



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In the years since Pope Francis was elected in 2013, Austen Ivereigh has become one of the foremost expositors of his thought writing in English. Here he presents his conviction that the Pope’s outlook ‘offers a captivating recovery of the radically pastoral direction set by the Second Vatican Council’

What the Future Holds: Current Issues for the Next Generation 25–31*Helen Berry*

Helen Berry has worked for two decades with young people in higher education. Her contribution to the St Beuno’s conference singled out a number of specific issues of particular concern to the young, analyzing them in the context of the kind of fear that, she believes, characterizes the present era.

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Robert Doud is a regular contributor to *The Way*. He responds to our ‘world in flux’ by suggesting that traditional Roman Catholic moral teaching is compatible with a ‘process’ perspective which emphasizes the importance of relationship and of fidelity to commitments.

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Our complex world presents challenges when we have to make decisions, particularly collective decisions. John Moffatt here suggests five ideas for thinking about why this should be so, in the hope that by understanding the potential obstacles more fully, we can refine the discernment process needed.

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Large-scale immigration is a characteristic of our 'world in flux', and is often viewed primarily as a problem in need of solution. Using the example of Mexicans seeking work in the United States, James Menkhaus considers how three insights derived from the Spiritual Exercises might promote a more just response to this situation.

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In his mediation on the Two Standards in the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius explores two dynamics operating in the world, one promoting evil and the other good. Nikolaas Sintobin traces their effects on possible approaches to leadership through interior monologue.

FOR AUTHORS

The Way warmly invites readers to submit articles with a view to publication. They should normally be about 4,000 words long, and be in keeping with the journal's aims. The Editor is always ready to discuss possible ideas.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Autobiography</i>	'Reminiscences (Autobiography)', in <i>Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings</i> , translated by Philip Endean and Joseph A. Munitiz (London: Penguin, 1996)
<i>Constitutions</i>	in <i>The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms</i> (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996)
<i>Diary</i>	'The Spiritual Diary', in <i>Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings</i> , translated by Philip Endean and Joseph A. Munitiz (London: Penguin, 1996)
<i>Dir</i>	<i>On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599</i> , translated and edited by Martin E. Palmer (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996)
<i>Exx</i>	<i>The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius</i> , translated by George E. Ganss (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992)
<i>Jesuit Life and Mission Today</i>	<i>Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees and Accompanying Documents of the 31st – 35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus</i> (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009)
<i>MHSJ</i>	Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu, 157 volumes (Madrid and Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1898–)

FOREWORD

One of the driving forces behind the rediscovery in the English-speaking world of Ignatian spirituality in the 1970s and 1980s was the annual conference held in St Beuno's, the Jesuit-run spirituality centre in North Wales. The papers presented there were frequently published in The Way and its supplements. Currently St Beuno's is reviving this tradition, and the 2018 special issue of The Way presents material from their most recent conference. Entitled 'Ignatian Spirituality for a World in Flux', it was held in December last year, and drew a mixture of participants interested in the contemporary application of the Spiritual Exercises, both in theory and practice. Most of the main papers given at the conference are offered here, together with presentations based on a number of the accompanying workshops. There are also essays written in response to the theme of the conference from some of The Way's regular contributors. The current director of St Beuno's, Fr Roger Dawson SJ, introduces the conference programme in more detail.

FOR CENTURIES there has been a tragic and notorious division between theology and spirituality, to the detriment of both. When I took over as director of St Beuno's Ignatian Spirituality Centre in 2014, one of the strands of the work that I was keen to develop was the intellectual side of spirituality, including theological reflection and also drawing on any other academic discipline that could inform or nourish that work. To this end we have welcomed a number of visiting scholars to St Beuno's, who have been able to use its quiet atmosphere of recollection and tranquil location to pursue their own studies, as well as giving a weekly seminar to the team on an area of their knowledge and expertise.

The St Beuno's Conference was one part of this intellectual strand. When I was a novice I remember people talking in reverential tones about this conference, which took place each January over the New Year. From what I gleaned it was a select gathering of spiritual directors together with psychiatrists and psychologists who would discuss and discern around matters to do with the sacred art of spiritual direction. It was an 'invitation only' event, and the implication was that you would be very lucky to get an invitation. Over the years the conference slipped from view, and I was never invited ('No hard feelings, Mr Bond'); as far as I can ascertain the last one took place in 2006.

Given that there had been no conference for over a decade, there was little institutional memory of what it had been or what it should be, and this allowed us something of a blank sheet. To be honest, there was a certain amount of ‘just do it’ in order to get it restarted, as I was aware of the tendency for some Jesuit initiatives never to get off the ground because we think we have not given enough time to reflection or discernment.

‘Ignatian Spirituality for a World in Flux’ was the title and theme that we chose, one that emerged from the changing state of international and national affairs: the 2016 Brexit vote; the surprise election of Donald Trump later that year and its consequences; a 2017 general election in Britain that led to weak minority government struggling to deal with the withdrawal from the European Union in a country that is more divided than at any time most of us can remember; a rising China; a resurgent Russia; a belligerent North Korea bent on acquiring more nuclear weapons; and a Middle East that continues to be in flames. That the ‘old order’ is passing—not just in flux but in crisis—is obvious: the neo-liberal consensus that has dominated politics for the last thirty years is collapsing and what will replace it is not at all obvious.

And then there is Pope Francis. The Church, too, is in flux, as Francis tries to implement far-reaching reforms to address problems within it: clericalism, careerism, the Vatican’s finances, an obsession with matters that have little to do with the major challenges most people face, ‘spiritual worldliness’—all these and more have come in for criticism from this surprising Jesuit Pope. Both the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* and his encyclical *Laudato Si’* have outlined his thought, provided an analysis of our situation, set an agenda and been a source of inspiration and hope to many. His spiritual stature and sheer humanity have given him a moral authority that few other world figures can match. In the Church, Ignatian spirituality and discernment have a more prominent profile perhaps than ever before.

A crisis is a situation in which things cannot remain the same; the *status quo ante* is not an option. Theologically, *krisis* is a moment of decision or choice. Is it possible that Ignatian spirituality might have something to say to our contemporary situation of crisis or have something to offer? That was the bold and presumptuous idea behind our title, and my own conviction remains that a spirituality which cannot say something useful or be of use in facing such a situation is worthless. Any spirituality has to deal with the best of life and the worst of human nature: otherwise it becomes a mere palliative or anaesthetic.

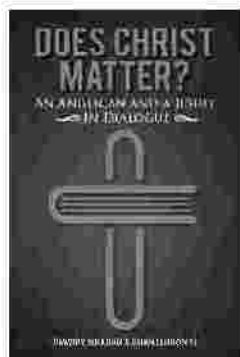
The conference was planned and organized with Beuno's team members Sr Naomi Hamilton CJ and Tim McEvoy, along with the rest of the team and staff. We invited a range of speakers, some with expertise and knowledge about Ignatian spirituality and theology, others who were able to give context to the situation and offer ways of understanding or responding to it. Additionally, there was a series of workshops and talks for smaller groups.

In keeping with the tradition, the participants and delegates were all invited, but this invitation was extended widely: to the St Beuno's guest directors, to all Jesuits in the Province and our co-workers, to other Ignatian congregations, to the St Beuno's outreach team in the Wrexham diocese, to those working in spirituality in the Irish Province and the Low Countries Region. In addition to the St Beuno's team, we had over forty attending the conference.

These are very different times from even those of a few years ago, and it is not at all clear how the current crisis will be resolved or what will emerge. Living in the Anthropocene, with climate change and nuclear weapons, the stakes are high, and there is no guarantee in the short term of a happy ending. Few of us are impressed by the stature or even stability of most of our present leaders, but the Church, the Society of Jesus and Ignatian spirituality can at least be part of shaping the future for which we hope, and avoiding the one we fear. The St Beuno's Conference certainly did not provide the solutions, but it did leave us a little more hopeful.

Paul Nicholson SJ
Editor

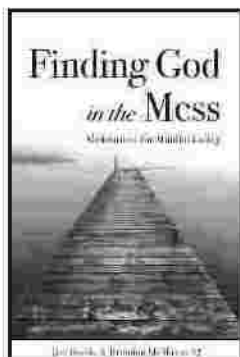
Roger Dawson SJ



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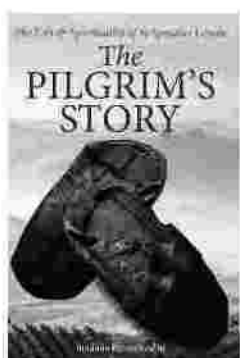
A lifelong friendship lived against the background of the Northern Ireland troubles underpins the narrative. Starting with a fresh look at Christ's life and teaching in the Gospels, asking critically about its relevance to today's world, the authors then engage in a critique of their own churches against the standard set by the Gospels.



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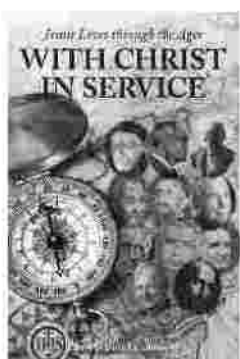
It is essential to believe that there is something positive in everything, that God is in it somewhere, and that we can get through with help. These beautifully illustrated meditations may be used by readers as a daily prayer source and are also ideal for parish and school use.



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TO DISCERN AND REFORM

The ‘Francis Option’ for Evangelizing a World in Flux

Austen Ivereigh

MATURED BY decades of experience in pastoral mission in Argentina and invigorated by the Latin American Church’s signs-of-the-times discernment at the great meeting of Aparecida in 2007, Pope Francis’s vision of how to evangelize a world dominated by globalised technocracy is now—through *Evangelii Gaudium*, his November 2013 apostolic exhortation, and through the priorities of the current pontificate more generally—the definitive source for the universal Church. This vision offers a captivating recovery of the radically pastoral direction set by the Second Vatican Council, read through a specifically Argentinean understanding of that Council after Medellín.¹ It includes, naturally, the option for the poor and an emphasis on Jesus’ proclamation of God’s Kingdom, but with a distinctive and strongly anti-clericalist faith in the piety and culture of the ordinary, faithful people.

The Francis Option

Because it represents the irruption into the universal Roman Catholic Church of the ‘continental mission’ of Latin America (which contains almost half the world’s Catholic population), barring a radical change of direction at the next conclave, it is reasonable to suppose that this will remain the evangelizing template for this generation: *Evangelii Gaudium*, as Francis has himself said, is the *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of our time.² We will call it, for shorthand purposes, the ‘Francis Option’, not because the Pope is some kind of luminary imposing an idiosyncratic vision—indeed, Francis has been very careful not to confuse the universal magisterium with a particular theological school—but because he is the one most identified with articulating it and encouraging it.

¹ The Second Episcopal Conference of Latin America (1968) at Medellín.

² Pope Francis, with Antonio Spadaro, *Open to God: Open to the World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 108.

But for all that it marks a bold new direction in the Church's evangelization of the contemporary world, one that flows directly out of the Second Vatican Council, it would be naïve to claim that the 'Francis Option' is the only one available. At least two neo-conservative rivals have proved attractive to young and not-so-young Catholics who feel beleaguered by modernity.

One, which we might call, after the Russian president, the 'Putin Option'—although Matteo Salvini in Italy and Donald Trump in the United States would also be contenders to give it a name—seeks to press the Christian Church in general, and Rome in particular, into the service of an authoritarian nationalist project of remoralisation, using the coercive power of the state to reassert the collective over the individual, and to protect 'western Christian civilisation' by, among other things, closing its borders to Muslim migrants. Cardinal Raymond Burke and his followers have expressed admiration for the ideas of Steve Bannon, founder of the right-wing Breitbart News website. Bannon is involved in crafting a training programme for future Catholic leaders organized by the Rome-based Dignitatis Humanae Institute presided over by Burke.³



Pope Francis and Cardinal Burke at the Vatican in 2014

³ See Mark Hosenball, 'Steve Bannon Drafting Curriculum for Right-Wing Catholic Institute in Italy', *Reuters* (14 September 2018), at <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-eu-politics-bannon-catholics/steve-bannon-drafting-curriculum-for-right-wing-catholic-institute-in-italy-idUKKCNI1U17C>.

Far more seductive than the blatantly ideological and political ‘Putin Option’ is the neo-Donatist, neo-Jansenist vision of Rod Dreher, a widely read American conservative writer and blogger who converted from Catholicism to Russian Orthodoxy in frustration at the clerical sex-abuse crisis. The ‘Benedict’ in the title of his much-discussed 2017 book, *The Benedict Option*, refers not to Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI (although Dreher professes admiration for his oft-cited, if apocryphal, forecast of a future ‘smaller, purer Church’) but St Benedict of Nursia, founder of Western monasticism, whose *Rule*, according to Dreher, ‘played a powerful role in preserving Christian culture throughout the so-called Dark Ages’.⁴ Dreher has been criticized for his view of Benedictine monks as medieval preservers and conservators rather than rural evangelizers, and of the *Rule* as a reaction to the collapse of the Roman empire rather than an adaptation of the cenobitic tradition to new historical circumstances.⁵ But what interests us here is his view of contemporary modernity, which is remarkably similar to Pope Francis’s.

Both Dreher and Francis agree—in line with Benedict XVI, and with the forecast in Romano Guardini’s 1950 *The End of the Modern World*—that Christendom is over and irrecoverable, and that it is futile and counter-productive to invest energy and resources in unwinnable political battles that only reinforce the idea of Christianity as a set of ethical precepts that the Church seeks to impose via the state. Francis sees the technology-driven forces of globalised postmodernity dissolving the bonds of belonging, sweeping away institutions and turning us into consuming individuals obsessed with gratification and increasingly divorced from our cultural and religious roots. In such a society, as he put it in Santiago de Chile in January 2018, ‘points of reference that people use to build themselves individually and socially are disappearing’, such that ‘the new meeting place today is the “cloud”, characterized by instability since everything evaporates and thus loses consistency’.⁶

Yet where Dreher advocates a strategy of resistance and retreat into what he calls ‘stable communities of faith’, little islands ‘of sanctity

⁴ Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Sentinel, 2017), 4.

⁵ See Andreas Gonçalves Lind, ‘Qual è il compito dei cristiani nella società di oggi? “Opzione Benedetto” ed eresia donatista’, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 4022 (20 January 2018), 105–115.

⁶ See my report on Pope Francis’s address to the Pontifical Catholic University in Santiago de Chile, ‘In Chile, Apocalyptic Pope Gives Catholic Universities a Mission’, *Cruce* (18 January 2018). Rod Dreher quoted my report the next day to defend himself against Lind’s article in *La Civiltà Cattolica* accusing him of pessimism: Rod Dreher, ‘The *Civiltà Cattolica* Smear’, *The American Conservative* (24 January 2018).

and stability amid the high tide of liquid modernity', Francis, drawing on the vision of Vatican II mediated through the Latin American pastoral experience of the people of God, calls for something far more radical: the rebirth of a new Christian culture from below through a communal experience of an encounter with the God of mercy.⁷ Where Dreher withdraws in order to gain strength from separation, Francis seeks to be revived by a renewed encounter with Christ in his people. For Francis, the liquidity out there is a reason not to raise the drawbridge but to build bridges, launch life-rafts and rebuild from those who have lost most.

Both the 'Benedict Option' and the 'Francis Option' are contemporary responses to a time of change and tribulation, not just in the world but also in the Church: liquidity and relativism in the first, institutional failure and corruption (the sex-abuse cover-up and so on) in the second. But the spirits behind each reaction are very different. Dreher's response involves a strict separation from and hostility towards the first, and a tightening of discipline in the case of the second. Unsurprisingly, he has been supportive of Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò's crusade of purification, backing the former nuncio's call for Pope Francis to resign over alleged failures to act against what Viganò claims is a 'homosexual current' among the bishops.⁸

Francis, on the other hand, sees in the tribulation and ferment of the Church an opportunity for patient conversion through a renewed humble and joyful dependence on God's mercy. It involves not a radical purgation of sinners but a firm condemnation of spiritual worldliness and other forms of corruption. His familiarity with the Spiritual Exercises and long life-experience of apostolic bodies facing such tribulations have taught him that scandals often bring in their wake polarisation and mutual recrimination, blame and scapegoating, crusades of purification and the desire to divide people into good and bad. At such times we are tempted to lament and condemn, rather than discern and reform. The temptation in times of tribulation—as result of the rapid exculturation of Christianity or scandal—is to focus on the threats rather than on Christ, like St Peter leaving the boat and being terrified by the waves.

⁷ Dreher, *Benedict Option*, 50, 54. The phrase 'liquid modernity' was coined by the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman to describe the breakdown of structure and stability in the present phase of the modern age: 'the falling apart, the friability, the brittleness, the transience, the until-further-noticeness of human bonds and networks' (*Liquid Modernity* [London: Polity, 2000], 14).

⁸ See 'Testimony by His Excellency Carlo Maria Viganò, Titular Archbishop of Ulpiana, Apostolic Nuncio', at <https://www.lifesitenews.com/all/date/2018/08/25#article-former-us-nuncio-pope-francis-knew-of-mccarricks-misdeeds-repealed-sanction>, accessed 13 September 2018.

We accuse others rather than ourselves; and instead of seeing the spiritual forces at work we focus on ethics and ideas rather than the truth that is a person. In this way we end up offering truth at the expense of charity, or charity at the expense of truth.

These insights appear in a series of writings of Bergoglio's from the late 1980s, when he experienced such tribulations at first hand.⁹ He has been drawing on these insights, even referencing the 1980s texts, this year, in responding to the tribulation provoked by the abuse crisis in Chile and in the United States. But in a larger sense, he has been drawing on them for years, in calling the Church to a 'pastoral and missionary conversion' in order to evangelize our contemporary age of liquidity.¹⁰

Argentina and Aparecida

Francis's evangelizing vision was forged, above all, in three places. The first was the Colegio Máximo at San Miguel, in Buenos Aires province, where Jorge Mario Bergoglio spent most of his Jesuit life: first in the 1960s as a student and scholastic; then in the 1970s and early 1980s as novice master, provincial and finally rector of the college. It was in this final phase of his Colegio Máximo experience, between 1980 and 1985, that he was the first pastor of the parish he founded in the area contiguous to the college, known as Patriarca San José. In the fifty-odd years since the college's foundation in the 1930s, in what was then empty *pampa*, hundreds of thousands of migrants from the interior of the country and neighbouring nations had settled in the area, which had evolved over time into a working-class conurbation. Each weekend, Bergoglio would send out the dozens of Jesuit students at the college to organize and evangelize this young, mostly poor, community, visiting house by house, blessing homes, saying prayers with those inside, inviting children to catechesis, discovering where there was suffering and need, and connecting these with others who had time and resources to give. The experience was crucial both for the people of San Miguel and the Jesuits who served them.¹¹

⁹ Above all three texts: *Sobre la acusación de sí mismo* (Madrid: Claretiana, 1984); Prólogo, in Lorenzo Ricci and Juan Roothan, *Las Cartas de la tribulación* (Buenos Aires: Diego de Torres, 1987); and 'Silencio y palabra', in *Reflexiones en esperanza* (Buenos Aires: Universidad del Salvador, 1992). See also Diego Fares, 'Contro lo spirito del "Accanimento"', *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 4029 (5 May 2018), volume 2, 216–230.

¹⁰ *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 25.

¹¹ I describe the effect on both in Austen Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope* (London: Allen and Unwin, 2015), chapter 5.

Today, Patriarca San José is run by Rafael Velasco. The parish embraces around 40,000 people in seven *barrios*, five of which have churches with Sunday Mass and other liturgies, social projects and catechesis. In Bergoglio's day 'Rafa' was among the Jesuit students fanning out across the *barrios*; these days, now that the Colegio is no longer training vast numbers of Jesuits, the parish missions are carried out each year by the young people who are part of the parish's Ignatian youth movement. But both the method and the experience are similar: they go from house to house, knocking on doors, sitting and praying with people, learning about their lives and their challenges. Afterwards, they reflect on the experience, their hearts full of names and faces, and stories of what they had heard and witnessed among some very poor people, most of whom did not come to church but could tell how God had been at work in their lives. One of the young people, filled with emotion, told me: 'misionando, fuimos misionados': 'in going out on mission, we were missioned to'. They had learnt the insight expressed by Cardinal Bergoglio in 2011: 'God is present in, encourages, and is an active protagonist in the life of His people'.¹²

The second place crucial to Francis's missionary and evangelizing vision was the city of Buenos Aires, where in the 1990s, as auxiliary bishop, he was the regional vicar of Flores, a lower middle-class area of the city with a number of sanctuaries and shrines, where he applied many of the lessons from San Miguel. From 1998 until what he calls his 'change of diocese' in 2013, he was archbishop of the diocese that includes the central urban area of Buenos Aires, within the boundaries of the original city, with close to 3 million people. But in reality his canvas was far bigger: his was one of eleven dioceses of the so-called Buenos Aires region, essentially an urban sprawl of around 13 million, of whom perhaps 85 per cent are Catholics. Under Bergoglio's guidance, the dioceses worked closely together in a common urban pastoral mission that sought to implement the vision of Aparecida.

The shrine in Brazil where the Latin American episcopal council (CELAM) met for its historic continental gathering in May 2007 is the third locus of our story. It was the first time in 25 years that the Latin American Church had met en bloc to define its collective continental mission. Bergoglio was not just a key contributor to the discernment

¹² Jorge Mario Bergoglio, *Prólogo, Dios en la ciudad* (Buenos Aires: San Pablo, 2011), 5.



© Jesuit Curia

An urban archbishop: Cardinal Bergoglio riding the Buenos Aires metro in 2008

process before and during the meeting but, as its redactor-in-chief, was the architect, together with his team of Argentine theologians, of the concluding document, to the point where it is impossible in practice to separate Bergoglio and the experience of Buenos Aires from the Aparecida document, especially its section 10.6 (nn. 509–518) on the *pastoral urbana*.¹³

The early paragraphs of that section acknowledge the profound shifts that have taken place in society, displacing Christianity as the primary creator of culture; but, rather than lamenting that shift, they go on to note that the Church was born precisely in such a context of urban pluralism, of which it made use to grow. What is preventing the Church from growing now, Aparecida observes, is an attitude of fear and defensiveness that locks us into a sense of powerlessness and impotence. The Church needs to adopt instead ‘the gaze of faith’, to see that ‘God lives in the city’ (n.514), and to embrace a change in mindsets and habits that is now needed to go out to meet and contemplate God in the lives of the people, through the proclamation of the Word, celebration of the Liturgy, fraternal service to the poor and so on.

The section ends with a series of concrete proposals for what it calls a new urban ministry, as well as for the mindsets and attitudes that such

¹³ See Fifth Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, *Concluding Document*, available at <https://www.celam.org/aparecida/Ingles.pdf>.

a ministry demands (nn.517–518). These include a spirituality of mercy and gratuity, a focus on the peripheries of exclusion and marginality, and a new missionary approach that makes use of home visits, social media and a ‘constant closeness’ to people in their daily, concrete realities. As well as a number of practical and logistical considerations—such as the need for interdiocesan cooperation to enable the city to be seen as single community—Aparecida’s ‘urban pastoral’ placed particular emphasis on the need to offer the ‘full beauty that is God’ (n.518) in the Church’s proclamation.

Referring to Paul VI’s great 1975 document on evangelization, Francis has often described Aparecida as the *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Latin America. From 2007 to 2013, Bergoglio and the other bishops of the Buenos Aires region sought to implement its insights, holding each year a joint congress of the eleven dioceses to develop new methods and visions to meet the challenge of evangelizing in a context of plurality and liquidity. This annual congress, known as PUBA, Pastoral Urbana de Buenos Aires, brought together 400 so-called pastoral agents—bishops, priests, religious and lay people—to share their grace-filled experiences of evangelizing the city.

This experience flowed into Bergoglio’s brief speech to the cardinals prior to the conclave, in which he imagined Jesus not on the outside knocking to be let in, but on the inside, asking to be let out; and in which he portrayed the Church as paralyzed by introversion, reflecting its own light rather than Christ’s, becoming sick and self-referential, bent over like the woman in Luke 13:10. He then presented a picture of an evangelizing Church which puts Christ at its centre, and which goes out of itself to the peripheries, to places of need and suffering. The next Pope, Bergoglio told the cardinals, should help the Church to be a fruitful mother who lives from the joy of evangelizing.¹⁴

This journey from crippled paralytic turned in on herself to fruitful mother, joyfully evangelizing, is summed up in the Aparecida phrase ‘pastoral and missionary conversion’. It is what lies at the heart of *Evangelii Gaudium*. To the question posed, and poorly answered, by the 2012 synod on the New Evangelization—how do we evangelize contemporary modernity?—Francis responded not just with the vision of Aparecida but

¹⁴ Bergoglio’s speech was initially published in the magazine of the diocese of Havana, *Palabras Nuevas*. An English translation can be found at <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1350484bdc4.html?eng=y>, accessed 14 September 2018.

also with the experience of Buenos Aires, reformulated in the universal categories of the global Church. Francis took Aparecida, the new *Evangelii Nuntiandi* for Latin America, and in *Evangelii Gaudium* created a new *Evangelii Nuntiandi* for the universal Church of our times.

Mission in Response to a Change of Era

At the time, Aparecida was by far the most sophisticated signs-of-the-times discernment happening in the Church anywhere in the world. In many studies and meetings prior to the May 2007 general conference, CELAM showed how the forces of technocracy and globalisation were sweeping away the weak sense of belonging of cultural Christianity, while bringing a new pluralism—together with new forms of social and economic exclusion alongside ever greater concentrations of wealth.¹⁵ Drawing on studies and meetings led by the man who is now cardinal archbishop of Mexico City, Carlos Aguiar Retes, Aparecida would frame this shift in terms of a change of era—*un cambio de época*—in which the new turbulence was bringing opportunities and advantages for the well educated and mobile, but whose overall effect was to produce great anguish, because it was dissolving the bonds of belonging.

CELAM witnessed rising inequality, the decline of states, mass migrations, ecological disaster, neo-Darwinist worship of power, technocracy and other features of our age. It concluded that the option for the poor demanded that the Latin American Church stand with those crucified by the new global economy, embracing not only those who were materially poor but also victims of exclusion and solitude in its many new forms—the migrants, the elderly, prisoners and victims of people-trafficking, for example. The document saw in the new context of cultural and religious pluralism a moment not to try to recover legal and state privileges for the Church, but to work to build unity out of a reconciled diversity in dialogue and shared witness.

But, above all, Aparecida discerned the implications of this change of era for evangelization. Its conclusion was that the transmission belts were broken, and the Church now had to ‘go out’ in order to evangelize. The dissolution of the bonds of belonging—displacement, uprooting, desocialisation and so on—was sweeping away the traditional mechanisms

¹⁵ Carlos Aguiar Retes, *Globalización y nueva evangelización en América Latina y el Caribe. Reflexiones del CELAM 1999–2003* (Bogotá: CELAM, 2003).

of faith transmission, at the same time as the cultural support for Christianity was disappearing (n.37). Thus, as Aparecida puts it,

... a Catholic faith reduced to mere baggage, to a collection of rules and prohibitions, to fragmented devotional practices, to selective and partial adherence to the truths of the faith, to occasional participation in some sacraments, to the repetition of doctrinal principles, to bland or nervous moralizing, that does not convert the life of the baptized would not withstand the trials of time. (n.12)

**Not to
lament and
condemn, but
to discern
and reform**

Unlike the reaction of so many church leaders and commentators in Europe and North America, Aparecida's response to the new liquidity was not to lament and condemn, but to discern and reform. Rather than asking, *how can we best resist or reject this?* the questions were, *What is the Holy Spirit calling us to do? What changes must we make?* The way these questions were answered was also significant. Aparecida saw in the change of era an invitation to return to the 'attitude that planted the faith in the beginnings of the Church', as Cardinal Bergoglio put it to catechists a year afterwards.¹⁶ The Catholic faith of the future, the document stressed, would depend on a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and experience of God's transforming mercy, just as in the first era of Christianity. The challenge to the Church was how to enable this *encuentro fundante de nuestra fe*,¹⁷ this foundational faith experience, namely 'a personal and community encounter with Jesus Christ that raises up disciples and missionaries' (n.11).

The third point was what now had to change. The key idea at Aparecida was that mission should be not so much an activity or a programme as a way of being that was both 'permanent' and 'paradigmatic'. Nor was mission just *ad extra*, but *ad intra* at the same time: in going out on mission, the Church too is converted and evangelized: *misionando, es misionada*. Concretely, Cardinal Bergoglio told his priests that to enable the foundational experience of encounter with Jesus Christ would require spiritual, pastoral and also institutional reforms to make the Church

¹⁶ 'Carta del cardenal Jorge Mario Bergoglio a los catequistas' (21 August 2008), at http://aica.org/aica/documentos_files/Obispos_Argentinos/Bergoglio/2008/2008_08_21.html, accessed 26 September 2018.

¹⁷ Jorge Mario Bergoglio, 'La misión de los discípulos al servicio de la vida plena', in *En tus ojos está mi palabra. Homilias y discursos de Buenos Aires, 1999–2013*, edited by Antonio Spadaro (Madrid: Claretianas, 2018), 853–854.

visibly present as ‘a mother who reaches out, a welcoming home, a constant school of missionary communion’.¹⁸

The collapse of the traditional distinction between Christian countries and mission territories is a key insight of *Evangelii Gaudium*. As Christoph Théobald observes in his *Urgences pastorales*, the document of Vatican II that best applies to the Church today in the West is the one that was written then with Africa and Asia in mind, *Ad Gentes*, which notes how ‘circumstances are sometimes such that, for the time being, there is no possibility of expounding the Gospel directly and forthwith ...’ (n.6).¹⁹ If the Church is not missionary in such a context, it cannot evangelize; and if it does not evangelize, it ceases to be. This is the point of Francis’s famous words from *Evangelii Gaudium*:

I dream of a ‘missionary option’, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation (n.27).

It is easy to miss the sting at the end there. To evangelize is to raise up missionary disciples, not seduce adherents. To seek to fill up empty pews and restore market share from rival Churches is not evangelization but proselytization; it is to put the institution in the centre, rather than Christ, and at the same time to leave it untouched, unconverted. This is spiritual worldliness, a form of sacrilege, that only perpetuates the Church’s paralysis. Nor is evangelization about increasing our power and capacity, as if it were a matter of our own efforts. In Asunción, Paraguay, in July 2015, Francis noted:

How many times do we see evangelization as involving any number of strategies, tactics, maneuvers, techniques, as if we could convert people on the basis of our own arguments. Today the Lord says to us quite clearly: in the mentality of the Gospel, you do not convince people with arguments, strategies or tactics. You convince them by learning how to welcome them.²⁰

¹⁸ See Bergoglio’s addresses as cardinal in *En tus ojos está mi palabra*, especially ‘Volver a las raíces de la fe: la misión como propuesta y desafío’ (2008), ‘El mensaje de Aparecida a los presbíteros’ (2008) and ‘La misión de los discípulos al servicio de la vida plena’ (2009); *Concluding Document*, n.370.

¹⁹ Christoph Théobald, *Urgences pastorales du moment présent: pour une pédagogie de la réforme* (Paris: Bayard, 2017), 429–462.

²⁰ Pope Francis, homily, holy Mass at Campo Grande, 2 July 2015, available at https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150712_paraguay-omelia-nu-guazu.html.

Or again, to Catholic Action in 2017:

Let reality dictate times and places, and let the Holy Spirit guide you. He is the inner teacher who illumines our work once we are free of preconceptions and conditionings. We learn how to evangelize by evangelizing, just as we learn how to pray by praying, provided we have a good disposition.²¹

If Pelagianism is one temptation that keeps us from evangelizing, turning us into worldly proselytizers, the other temptation, perhaps the greater, is a form of Gnosticism—presenting Catholicism as a kind of ethical system, a moral code. This has been the besetting temptation for the Catholic Church, especially in Europe and North America, faced with the post-1968 tide of secularism and relativism. The temptation, again, is to fail to discern and reform, and instead to respond with an ethical or truth defence, resulting in what Massimo Borghesi, in the final chapter of *The Mind of Pope Francis*, calls ‘the moralistic drift that characterizes Catholicism in era of globalization’.²² (The original Italian, *deviazione etica*, is easier to connect to Francis’s critique in *Evangelii Gaudium* of *eticismo sin bondad*, or ‘heartless moralism’).²³

Borghesi points out that Benedict XVI shared this discernment of where contemporary Catholicism had gone wrong, which is why, right at the start of his first (2005) encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, he boldly asserts that ‘being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction’ (n. 1). This insight is quoted in the Aparecida document and again in *Evangelii Gaudium*, where Francis says that he never tires of repeating these words, ‘which take us to the very heart of the Gospel’ (n. 7).²⁴ It also reappears in *Placuit Deo*, the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith document against Pelagianism and Gnosticism, suggesting a concern that runs through both pontificates.²⁵

²¹ Pope Francis, ‘To Participants in the International Forum of Catholic Action’, Synod Hall, 27 April 2017, available at http://m2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/april/documents/papa-francesco_20170427_congresso-azione-cattolica.html.

²² Massimo Borghesi, *The Mind of Pope Francis: Jorge Mario Bergoglio's Intellectual Journey*, translated by Barry Hudock (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2018), 289.

²³ *Eticismo sin bondad* is badly rendered in the official English translation of *Evangelii Gaudium* as ‘ethical systems bereft of kindness’. But Francis is not referring to ‘systems’ so much as the reduction of the Christian offer to an ethical idea.

²⁴ *Concluding Document*, n. 12; *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 8.

²⁵ *Placuit Deo*, n. 8, available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20180222_placuit-deo_en.html.

The absolute truth, Francis has said, is the love of God for us in Jesus Christ. The truth is a relationship; when we evangelize, we communicate that relationship—Jesus' 'Abba' relationship with the Father.²⁶ To reduce the Christian offer to some kind of knowledge, ethical or spiritual—a particular temptation for educated Catholics—is the 'gnostic illusion' of which Francis warns in the second chapter of *Gaudete et Exsultate*. In offering what is true and good, the key is to integrate the third transcendental: beauty. Only the beauty of God can attract; and the beauty of God is God's gratuity and mercy. The *encuentro fundante*, as Aparecida puts it, is that experience; as Francis told the Brazilian bishops in July 2013, recalling Aparecida, 'Mission is born precisely from this divine allure, by this amazement born of encounter'. Thus, the Church loses people when it imports a rationality that is alien to them, forgetting the 'grammar of simplicity'.²⁷ The beauty of God is the experience of God's grace and mercy, incarnate in the person of Christ, available to all, and more easily available to the poor.

Thus a major obstacle to evangelization is that, too often, the Church reverses the order of its proclamation, forgetting that we become good because we are loved, rather than being loved for being good. In a 2004 talk on the anniversary of John Paul II's *Veritatis Splendor*, Bergoglio highlights a part of that great encyclical that its advocates often ignore, namely that Jesus does not simply give us a moral code or a series of rules and rituals by which to live. Rather, the love to which Christ calls us is impossible by our own efforts, but only 'by virtue of a gift received', as John Paul II puts it: that is, God's grace. Quoting the Polish Pope quoting St Augustine, Bergoglio notes how it is not the keeping of the commandments that earns God's love but the other way round: God's mercy and love enable us to be moral and holy, merciful and loving also.²⁸ (He made this point more simply in a retreat he gave in 2012.²⁹) The Gospel does not tell us if the adulterous woman whom Jesus forgave in John 8 returned to her sinful, promiscuous life, but you could be sure

²⁶ Pope Francis, 'Lettera a chi non crede. Papa Francesco risponde al giornalista Eugenio Scalfari', *La Repubblica* (2 September 2013).

²⁷ Pope Francis, address to the bishops of Brazil on World Youth Day, 28 July 2013, available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130727_gmg-episcopato-brasile.html.

²⁸ Jorge Mario Bergoglio, 'Es posible ser santos', in *En tus ojos es mi palabra*, 406–413.

²⁹ A DVD of this retreat is available from Caritas Argentina; see <https://www.caritasbas.org.ar/web/archivos/489>, accessed 1 October 2018.



that she did not, ‘because whoever encounters such great mercy cannot depart from the law—that’s what follows’.)

Hence Francis is critical in *Evangelii Gaudium* of ‘doctrines that are more philosophical than evangelical’ (n.165), and of those who speak more of law than grace, more of the Church than Christ, or who imply that Christianity is a form of stoicism or self-denial. Before all else, he tells us, the gospel invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us, to see God in others and to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others. And he warns, starkly, that ‘if this invitation does not radiate forcefully and attractively, the edifice of the Church’s moral teaching risks becoming a house of cards, and this is our greatest risk’ (n.39).

In his 2004 homily, Bergoglio asked whether it was because Christianity was so often reduced to a lofty precept in Western nations that contemporary humanity had succumbed to relativism. For if morality is a kind of judicial code, imposed from the outside, rather than a free response of the heart to the experience of God’s mercy, it becomes an ideology which is then vulnerable to manipulation in service of political or other interests, as has happened too often in the US culture wars. In that context, relativism becomes an assertion of freedom, an affirmation of autonomy against an ideological imposition. Secularism, in short, is the child of our ethicism—and ironically opens the way to a recovery of the gratuity of the Christian offer. Therefore the dechristianization of culture and law—so often blamed by the bishops and cardinals at the 2012 synod about the new evangelization as the reason for the Church shrinking—cannot be an excuse for the Church’s failure to evangelize; as Francis points out in *Evangelii Gaudium*, God has found a way of binding Godself to every people in every age (n.113).

This is why, unlike the Benedict Option, the Francis Option does not waste time condemning or lamenting secularisation, even while acknowledging its dire cultural and social consequences, especially for the poorest. For secularism is also an invitation to discern and reform, to recall that Christianity spread first not by attachment to power but through the compelling experience of God's mercy—and can spread again, not by seeking to recover the lost hegemonies in the law and culture of Christendom, but by going out to encounter God at work in God's holy people. 'In all the baptized, from first to last, the sanctifying power of the Spirit is at work, impelling us to evangelization', Francis says in *Evangelii Gaudium* (n.119). 'The people of God is holy thanks to this anointing, which makes it infallible *in credendo*'—and called to be missionary disciples. The Church's failure is not the result of secularism, but rather of withdrawing, faced with secularism, from the People of God. An abusive Church, as Francis told the Jesuits in Ireland, is 'a Church that is elitist and clericalist, unable to be near to the people of God'.³⁰

Bergoglio once told his catechists in Buenos Aires that Aparecida's great insight was to see that worst danger to the Church came not from without but from within, 'from the eternal and subtle temptation of enclosing ourselves and putting on armour [*abroquelarnos*] in order to be protected and secure'.³¹ The word he deploys there, *abroquelamiento*, is the same one he used in April 2018 in a letter to Chile's bishops calling them to Rome to discuss the clerical sex-abuse crisis. There, he wrote that at times of tribulation, when we are 'frightened and armour-plated in our comfortable "winter palaces", the love of God comes out to meet us and purifies our intentions so we can love as free, mature and critical men'.³²

This is a powerful description both of a fearful, defensive Church that does not evangelize ('armour-plated in our comfortable "winter palaces"') and of what rescues the Church from its paralysis: God's offer to us in our tribulation and failure. 'A wounded Church does not make herself the center of things, does not believe that she is perfect, but puts at the center

³⁰ Pope Francis, 'It Is Not Enough to Turn the Page. Life Must Be Given Anew', *La Civiltà Cattolica* (13 September 2018), at <https://laciviltacattolica.com/it-is-not-enough-to-turn-the-page-life-must-be-given-anew/>.

³¹ Jorge Mario Bergoglio, 'Él llama a cada una por su nombre y las hace salir', in *En tus ojos es mi palabra*, 691–696.

³² Pope Francis, 'Letter to the Bishops of Chile, Following Archbishop Scicluna's Report', *Zenit* (12 April 2018), available at <https://zenit.org/articles/pope-francis-letter-to-the-bishops-of-chile-following-archbishop-scicunas-report/>.

the one who can heal those wounds, whose name is Jesus Christ', Francis told Chile's bishops in January.

To know both Peter disheartened and Peter transfigured is an invitation to pass from being a Church of the unhappy and disheartened to a Church that serves all those people who are unhappy and disheartened in our midst.³³

Like St Peter, transformed from disciple into apostle by God's forgiveness of his betrayal, only in God's mercy can we experience the missionary and pastoral conversion capable of turning the Church into a fruitful mother. As in our lives, our moments of defeat are opportunities for conversion and growth. But first we have to learn not to lament and condemn, but rather to discern and reform.

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³³ Pope Francis, address to priests, consecrated men and women, and seminarians, Santiago Cathedral, 16 January 2018, available at https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/january/documents/papa-francesco_20180116_cile-santiago-religiosi.html. More or less the same words are repeated in each of his three subsequent 'Chile missives': the first, to Chile's bishops after receiving Archbishop Scicluna's report, on 8 April; the second, on the first day of their emergency summit with him in Rome, on 15 May (which was private but leaked); and the third, his letter to the People of God in Chile of 31 May. See Austen Ivereigh, 'Discernment in a Time of Tribulation: Pope Francis and the Church in Chile', *Thinking Faith* (8 May 2018).

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

Current Issues for the Next Generation

Helen Berry

I AM NEITHER a Roman Catholic nor familiar with many of the debates within the Catholic Church about how to address the problems of the contemporary world. My perspective is that of a layperson who has worked for two decades with young people in higher education. I am also an academic researcher, engaged in the new and exciting world of international collaboration between science, social science, creative practice and the humanities, particularly in the areas of social justice and climate change. I was confirmed into the Church of England, but have found a home for many years in the Metropolitan Community Church, an ecumenical Christian movement which strives to build inclusive worship for all, including members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

However I have not chosen to write about issues such as gay rights or gender identity here. I do not believe that what will be relatively short-lived debates about whether Christianity ought to accept love in all its forms—and the glorious diversity among manifestations of human gender and sexuality—to be the most important issues facing the coming generations. Their capacity for love and acceptance usually outpaces those of us who have become more set in our views about the order of the world.

But, interestingly, these matters were raised without my prompting after I gave the talk on which this article is based. The many religious present wanted to speak about the pastoral concerns they are now facing among young people—concerns which centre on issues of gender and sexual identity. Could I interpret for them, for example, what it means for someone to identify as neither male nor female? What did the language of ‘gender fluidity’ mean, and what prayerful responses might those within the Church give to such issues?

Amid these questions asked by the conference delegates about the pastoral issues they encounter (and which they raised in good faith and honesty), I sometimes felt that what they were articulating were their

own fears of an unknown world and incomprehension about the next generation. But recourse to a strict and narrow definition of ‘the law’ in response to the fears of a passing generation will not win hearts and minds among the young, nor keep a Christ-centred Church alive for the social, technological and environmental challenges of the twenty-first century.

In preparing for this discussion, my spiritual discernment also prompted me to talk about *fear*—or rather, about the things that I observe make young people afraid. Fear has been felt at all times and in all cultures and places, but we are living through an era that is *characterized* in many respects by fear. Much of this springs from a sense of uncertainty—that the social and political order as we thought we knew it is disappearing, and that even young people no longer recognise the world in which they grew up.

In Britain, the uncertainties about what leaving the European Union will mean have exposed and provoked dangerous levels of division in both public and private life. Political discourse has become increasingly polarised. All over the world (most tragically latterly in Myanmar) a new form of populism has stirred up primitive hatreds of others—immigrants, foreigners, minorities and vulnerable people. Violent anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, misogyny and homophobia have found new means of expression on the streets and in social media. In the West, we have the spectacle of President Donald Trump, a monstrous demagogue whose power is sustained by the deliberate spreading of ‘fake news’.

Around the world, oligarchs and extremist leaders consolidate their power using the same methods as Trump: vilifying scapegoats, imagining

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A monstrous demagogue: Donald Trump

enemies, stirring up hatred of those who disagree with their own particular brand of self-righteous narrow-mindedness. Individual historical parallels are imprecise, but over the centuries we have seen fear manipulated in similar ways to suppress and dehumanise others with catastrophic human consequences. In such times, there emerge leaders who use opportunism to consolidate power. Sometimes this has been done in the name of religion. Certainly, wherever fear is used as a political weapon, lust for secular power is close behind.

In today's political climate, amid so much fear and so much uncertainty, I believe there are some issues pressing and important enough to unite us in common as children of God, experiencing and living through our shared humanity. I recognise that, as someone who grew up in the 1980s, I cannot speak first-hand about the experiences of today's young people from their own perspective. Born in the same year as the Apollo moon landing, I am from 'Generation X', not 'Generation Snowflake', as today's struggling under-25s have sometimes unfairly been labelled. But perhaps there is a role for bridging and interpretation, for an effort at dialogue across the generations. I propose that the three most urgent issues to preoccupy the generations born in the twenty-first century will be climate change, mental health and privacy.

Living in the Anthropocene

Pope Francis has already discerned the immediacy and significance of the first of these pressing issues for humankind. In his remarkable encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Francis sets out a comprehensive diagnosis of the scale and significance of the environmental consequences resulting from humanity's catastrophic failure to treasure this earth and pass on to future generations a care for the planet that is our only means of shared and sustainable life.

His pronouncements resonate deeply with the idea of the *Anthropocene* ('era of mankind'), a term coined by the Nobel prize-winning atmospheric scientist Paul Crutzen in 2002 to express the observation that human agency and intervention have bio-engineered earth's systems to such an extent that they have initiated a new geological era. Although the term is not uncontroversial, it has been widely accepted in scientific circles (most notably in Britain by the Royal Geological Society and Royal Geographical Society) and has informed policy-making at important international summits on climate change, including the 21st Conference of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which resulted in the Paris Agreement in December 2015.

The Anthropocene is ‘good to think with’ (to quote the anthropologist Clifford Geertz) since it gives a sense of the unprecedented scale of the challenges humanity faces. It also raises a whole series of religious, moral and ethical questions about the purpose of human existence as *Homo economicus* and *Homo consumens*.¹ These questions are articulated by the leading environmental theologian Celia Deane Drummond in an essay on the meaning of the Anthropocene, where she observes that this new era ‘with its specter of the ultimate end of humanity, can lead to very diverse ethical responses, from resignation through to revolutionary political action’.² If our purpose as individuals is merely economic function, and if our role is to consume, how is the planet to survive under the conditions of the Anthropocene? We are conducting an experiment with the planet’s systems—its water, air, and earth that sustain life—for which there is no precedent. As Christian Schwägerl captures it succinctly, ‘the earth itself becomes one giant biospheric experiment, but without any emergency exits’.³

In the face of climate change, young people are particularly aware of the consequences of doing too little, too late—for their own generation and those to come. They have a passion for change and activism on issues such as plastic pollution of the oceans, our continued dependence on fossil fuels and the rapacious exploitation of the world’s natural resources for commercial gain. What actions are we taking to galvanize their passion, to further the ends of *Laudato Si’* as a manifesto for passing on a world in which human life—all life—is sustainable?

Consumerism, Anxiety and Well-Being

The second issue that I see as of pressing and immediate concern to the coming generations is mental health. How do young people in the West cope with the mounting pressures that they encounter from family breakdown, debt, high youth unemployment and an uncertain political future? Today’s under-25s are the first generation in the past 150 years in

¹ The term ‘*Homo economicus*’ was coined in the late nineteenth century to refer to the subject of economics as one who always acts in his or her own self-interest. ‘*Homo consumens*’ was popularised by Erich Fromm, though the expression is older: ‘*Homo consumens* is the man whose main goal is not primarily to own things, but to consume more and more ...’: *On Disobedience and Other Essays* (New York: Seabury, 1981), 32.

² Celia Deane Drummond, ‘Rivers at the End of the End of Nature: Ethical Trajectories of the Anthropocene Grand Narrative’, in *Rivers of the Anthropocene*, edited by Jason M. Kelly and others (Oakland: U. of California P, 2018), 55–62, here 58.

³ Christian Schwägerl, *The Anthropocene and How It Shapes Our Planet*, translated by Lucy Renner Jones (Santa Fe: Synergetic, 2014), 20.

the developed world to face a lower standard of living and poorer life expectancy than their parents.

Western society teaches us to be consumers above all, to measure everything against our untrammelled right to choose from a seemingly unlimited range of possibilities. In an increasingly secular society, without the consolation of religious faith, young people are left to find meaning in this exercise of consumer choice. Dating apps promise instant gratification through selecting from images of thousands of potential partners rather than finding a relationship face to face. In the realm of education, students are expected to evaluate their 'learning experiences' in schools and higher education, and to make constant (expensive) choices. Medical care is entrusted to the purchasing power of competing teams of health professionals and the profit motives of drug companies providing 'services' to people who are becoming increasingly suspicious of 'experts'.

As the Harvard philosopher Michael Sandel has proposed, we have witnessed the unrestrained application of the values of the market to aspects of life previously regarded as inherent social 'goods': 'The reach of markets, and market-oriented thinking, into aspects of life traditionally governed by nonmarket norms is one of the most significant developments of our time'.⁴ The prospect of endless choice has not, however, made the present generation happier, but more anxious. As the famous 'jam pot' experiment shows, when people are faced with multiple options, they can become paralyzed by the inability to choose between them,



⁴ Michael Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (London: Penguin, 2012), 7.

and are less satisfied with the outcome.⁵ A similar phenomenon is observed in Barry Schwartz's book *The Paradox of Choice*, which explores the trajectory by which increasing choice, at first beneficial, starts to become burdensome and can eventually lead 'to bad decisions, to anxiety, stress, and dissatisfaction—even to clinical depression'.⁶

The complex and diverse set of problems loosely termed 'mental health issues'—a catch-all expression that inadequately describes a range of short- and long-term conditions ranging from anxiety and panic attacks to psychosis and personality disorders—has no single cause and the prevalence of such problems in modern society cannot be explained as a function of the rise of consumerism alone. Some argue that they have always been present, but seem to be increasing because people are more willing to talk about them now. Whatever the explanation, there has been a sharp rise in everything from mild to severe problems among the young presented at doctors' surgeries, student well-being offices and other places offering help and advice.⁷ The range of medication routinely prescribed for these problems has become normalised as part of youth culture—from Ritalin (intended to treat ADHD, but taken by high-performing students to improve 'focus' and academic success) to Xanax, the new prescription-strength recreational anti-anxiety drug of choice.

What stability and refuge can the Church provide to comfort and heal young people, in body, mind and spirit? What does Ignatian spirituality have to say about mental health? What spaces can be opened up to young minds free from the constant demands of competition, assessment and indebtedness? What might it mean to them to be given the opportunity to worship, to sit in adoration of their Creator and to be open to the beauty of the created world without the pressure of having to pay for or evaluate the experience? What might it mean to know the consolation of laying down their burdens and receiving in return a glimpse of absolute love, acceptance and spiritual freedom?

Data, Connectedness and Dignity

Never in human history has it been possible to scrutinise so many people at the same time with such minute attention to their everyday lives. Algorithms and embedded technologies enable corporations, governments,

⁵ See Sheena S. Iyengar and Mark R. Lepper, 'When Choice Is Demotivating: Can One Desire Too Much of a Good Thing?', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79/6 (2000), 995–1006.

⁶ Barry Schwartz, *The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 3.

⁷ See Jessie Earle, *Children and Young People's Mental Health* (London: British Medical Association, 2016).

institutions and whoever else wishes to purchase this information to find out where we are, what we eat, how we spend time and money, whom we know and what our preferences are, and to examine our social circles, reading habits, hobbies, travel patterns, income and expenditure, energy consumption, family and friendship networks, biographical details, biometric data, health records, insurance and legal infractions (whether of a trivial or serious nature). ‘Big data’ are being gathered about us every second of our waking lives—and, if we have fitbits or other such devices, while we are asleep too.

‘Data analytics’ is an emergent field of interest for organizations that ultimately wish to control our lives—not only predicting but shaping our future actions on the basis of the information gathered about us. Sometimes, when it seems to save us money, work or time, this may seem relatively benign and even offer a degree of social and environmental benefit. But what are the ethics of trying to predict our likelihood of suffering from chronic disease even before we are born, or of employers grabbing our personal data to curb ‘risky’ behaviour such as a sedentary lifestyle or a cheeseburger habit (*we had to lose Bob in Accounts—he was headed for a heart attack*)?

Those who are too young to remember the pre-internet era are mystified to be asked how much time they spend offline: they are never ‘offline’ and the prospect of being disconnected from technology fills many with terror. If you think I am exaggerating, ask them what they would do if they lost their mobile phones or the internet went down. Like consumerism, information technology offers them the promise of meaning, but at the price of their privacy, at risk not only from ‘big data’ but also from cyberbullies and internet trolls. *Switch it off*, we may say, but for many youngsters this would bring about an almost existential crisis of isolation. What spaces of privacy and dignity might the Church offer young people, away from the social media that define many of their lives? What would happen if, instead of terror, they discovered through silent prayer a deep journey into God that became the best, most thrilling journey of all?

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CATHOLIC MORALITY AND PROCESS MORALITY

Robert E. Doud

THE MORAL THEOLOGY of the Roman Catholic Church has changed since the Second Vatican Council. On the one hand, it has deepened its roots in the Gospels, the New Testament, the Fathers of the Church and in certain aspects of the theology of St Thomas Aquinas. On the other hand, it has been enhanced by a modern cognisance of liberal democracy, secularity, freedom of conscience, equality, diversity, and biology, sociology, psychology, ecology and science in general. Moral awareness and Catholic moral theology are not static and monolithic; they are alive, organic and interrelated.

The categories of change and experience have become very important ones in Catholic theology. The moral awareness of the Church has grown through time and history under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit. The political thought of the Enlightenment and the continuing social experiment of democracy have shaped the moral awareness of Catholics, just as reform and recovery after the Babylonian captivity influenced that of the Israelites of the Old Testament. Our moral awareness grows as we experience the guidance of God in history. This is true, not only of the ancient Old Testament People of God, but also of today's People of God.

Consequently the Roman Catholic Church will be better served and will articulate its mission more clearly when it expresses its identity from a *process* perspective. The perennial moral vision of the Catholic Church is compatible with such a view; indeed, it has within its tradition elements of scripture and philosophy that are consistent with the process perspective and invite further explication from that point of view. Such a perspective, which takes account of change and is not menaced by its apparent vicissitudes in relation to tradition, is also a relational, personalist and interpersonal one.¹ It is based on relationship with God

¹ As I understand it, personalism grew up parallel to existentialism, which was more of an atheistic movement. Personalism was basically Catholic, and I associate it with Emmanuel Mounier, Paul Tournier,

and with our neighbours, including our enemies. It grows through history as an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus Christ. Creativity in and fidelity to this relationship is essential.

Human Nature, Commitment and Covenant

The best way to understand process morality, especially if we do so with attention to the cosmological categories of Alfred North Whitehead,² is as a super-relationship with God, who initiates and invites other relationships of all kinds. As Christians, we experience our relationship with God as modelled and focused upon, and mediated by, our relationship with the human Jesus. Beyond this, the relational pattern is also carried over into our relationship with the human community. Concern for our neighbours, social justice and cosmic compassion are all relational and processive. Human beings, as is discernible from the Old Testament onwards, have grown in their moral awareness and in their sense of civilised behaviour over time. Their sense of God has matured from a champion war-god who favoured only one chosen people to a loving creator of all people and a fellow-sufferer who understands them. Human moral self-awareness has grown concomitantly.

During the time when the book of Joshua was written, God's chosen people really thought that God was leading them to slay large groups of their neighbours as they swept into the Promised Land (Joshua 6: 16–17). God's giving them the Promised Land meant to them that they had general licence, and indeed literal divine directives, to kill innocent people because they belonged to other tribes. In the time of the return from captivity in Babylon, Ezra felt directed by God to order all the non-Israelite wives of Jews to be divorced (Ezra 10:10–12). No Jew or Christian today, we might hope, could accept such a command as coming from the mouth of God. Times change, and what people think of as the will of God and as the word of God changes as well.

As the People of God have developed their moral awareness through history, becoming ever more discerning and continually refining their experience, they have changed their minds about what God is telling them to do. Abraham thought he was doing the will of God when he raised

Jacques Maritain and Dietrich von Hilderbrand. Pope John Paul II, also a philosopher, called himself a personalist. Personalism stressed the dignity of persons, particularly the workers and the poor in society. It also stressed political freedom and the need for all in society to work together for the common good.

² See Robert E. Doud, 'Ignatian Spirituality and Whitehead', *The Way*, 48/3 (July 2009), 47–60.



Joshua Commanding the Sun to Stand Still upon Gibeon, by John Martin, 1816

his arm, knife in hand, to slay Isaac (Genesis 22: 2–8). The angel stayed the arm, hand and will of Abraham, and thence came the understanding—a legitimate breakthrough for its time—that human sacrifice was no longer required by God, if not yet that it was rebarbative in the sight of God. The change was not in God's will; the change had come in human awareness of what is appropriate in the worship of God.

Thus human nature has changed over the centuries. And our awareness of what our own human nature is like has also changed. This changing self-awareness has in turn changed human nature itself. The process view of human nature sees it as a progressive accumulation of such changes over time. Since human beings have freedom, our choices have helped to determine what we are in the common nature that supports us as persons and as distinct communities.

Human nature is analogous to a *commitment*. A commitment is a series of choices, a cumulative process of moment-by-moment decision-making.³ As human beings, each of us is a unique blend of self-determining decisions, progressively sedimented into our personalities over time. The notion of commitment is a metaphysical category as well as a moral category. Commitment is the metaphysical glue that holds us together as persons and binds us to other commitments, that is, to other persons.

³ See Robert E. Doud, 'The Mystery of Commitment and the Commitment to Mystery', *The Way*, 57/2 (April 2018), 65–74.

As commitments, persons are relational and intersubjective. We are made up of the moral and metaphysical bonds we establish with our fellow human beings, and with our natural environments and societies at large. Human nature, writ large, so to speak, is analogous to the commitment that each of us is in our own metaphysical constitution.

Fidelity to commitments in a universe of radical change is the moral situation of all of us. It is not a matter of clinging to what is static or artificially permanent; it is a matter of evolving constantly in our moral and metaphysical dimensions, of actively receiving the spirit of enthusiastic renewal in the present moment. Fidelity to promises made in the past is a destructive burden if it is not also a loving and joyful assent to the work of fulfilment in the present.

The reality of *covenant* grows in this spirit of creative fidelity. In the Bible it is an experience of constant renewal: God and the prophets call the people back, again and again, to the covenant and they repent and return. Fully understood, the covenant is the reality that defines God's people and gives them their identity. The covenant is freely offered to the people out of God's beneficence, and it is freely accepted by those who understand themselves as belonging to the one God.

The theology of *continuous conversion* is consistent with the process view of ethics. As Church and as individuals, Catholics are called to continuous conversion, that is, to turning away from sin and towards God and neighbour in loving relationship. Every moment of existence contains an instigation from God and an invitation to ever-deepening relationship. Thus God creates us anew in every moment, gives us a new heart (Ezekiel 36:26), and offers us the freedom to move away from sin and negative living and towards grace and positive living. On the level of the Church, too, we are invited to move ever closer to God, and away from negative allurements and ensnarements. The tradition of the Church must also be enlightened by present experience and carried forward in this spirit of creative fidelity.

The Church and Tradition

Paul Tillich has written brilliantly about having the 'courage to be' in the moral life.⁴ We need the courage really to *be* the Church, not just to bear the burden and shackles of whatever the Church was in the past. We

⁴ See Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1952).

need the courage to make decisions for renewal and to discard baggage that is unnecessary as we move into the future. The Holy Spirit is guiding us as a Church, but we need to find the courage to follow that guidance. Our knowledge of the prophets tells us that the Spirit does not always speak through old structures and institutions, but often through new voices and new visions as well.

Fidelity to tradition involves understanding tradition. Tradition is not the bearing forward of a complete deposit of faith as an unalterable monolith that grows in weight upon our shoulders as we go through the centuries. Tradition also consists in pruning, discarding and discerning as no longer necessary elements that may have served a purpose in the past, but now prevent us from responding to new instigations, new invitations, the new *kairos* and new opportunities for *metanoia*. Tradition is the life of the Church. It is an intricate pattern of many commitments, as Christians—Catholics and others—weave themselves into a textile of goodwill and mutual service. At length, this pattern is inextricable and indiscernible from the pattern of the life of Christ. Tradition (with a capital ‘T’) is also the system of beliefs and truths that are part of the constitution of the Church and are passed on through the ages with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Church has the lasting guarantee from Christ that, with the Holy Spirit, it will never stray from the truth of this Tradition. Tradition is not static, however, but is always growing in deeper explication of what is always implicit in it. Realisations and explanations become clearer as the Church lives on in service to Christ.

***Fidelity to
tradition
involves
understanding
tradition***

The eucharist is the paramount example of Tradition. Eucharist involves the passing on of the Body of the Lord from generation to generation, to ever-new people, speaking ever-new languages, with preachers addressing ever-new situations. The reality of eucharist is that of passing on what we have received. Out of fidelity to what the eucharist is in a perennial way, we make alterations to its presentation in how we pass it on, in order to facilitate that very passing on, and the possibility of its taking ever deeper root in our community and history. If we filter out the reality and importance of the changes in every new phase of this process, we lose our ability to appreciate fully the realities of Tradition and eucharist. Eucharist is a process, like Tradition, conversion, personal moral growth and the Church itself.

Tradition is not to be confused with the many traditions (lower case ‘t’) arising from various cultures, and different times and places in

the history of the Church. None of these traditions is a necessary part of the Church's constitution, but they serve to enable and enhance the sign-value of the Church as it communicates its ever accumulating and self-winnowing deposit of faith. Traditions (lower case 't') will often be pruned away in service of better expressions of Tradition in the history of the Church.

Making Mistakes

An aspect of Church teaching that inhibits our understanding of the Church in its growth and development through history is the persistent idea that the Church has never been wrong. The Church in fact has been wrong in some important ways, even if not blatantly erroneous in its moral teaching. It only very slowly came to condemn slavery and then, later on, capital punishment.⁵ In more recent times Pope Paul VI condemned all warfare as morally wrong.

Fidelity requires honesty, self-assessment, recognising mistakes, and admitting them. Healthy and functional fidelity cannot be based on self-delusion and self-deception. Not being able to admit to being mistaken makes a way of life out of self-delusion and self-deception. To admit, for example, that the requirement of celibacy and complete chastity for priesthood is no longer functional or desirable would be to admit a mistake. The Church has held on to the celibacy requirement for too long, and now there is a chronic and systemic shortage of priests. Not to be able to recognise a problem is never to be able to fix the problem. The Church would rather deny itself the services of an adequate number of priests than make a change that hearkens to the new needs of a new time.

The chief problem in the Church today is one of self-awareness. The Church, in fact, is a living and organic tradition that reads the signs of the times, adapts, reassesses its priorities, discerns new directions and envisions new possibilities. The problem lies with self-awareness or self-conception. The Church, even in the postmodern world, conceives of itself as a deposit of pure, changeless doctrine and practice that remains substantially the same throughout the ages. Nothing it says about

⁵ See John Francis Maxwell, *Slavery and the Catholic Church* (Chichester: Barry Rose, 1975); E. Christian Brugger, *Capital Punishment and Roman Catholic Moral Tradition*, 2nd edn (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame P, 2014).

itself in the present is allowed to contradict or contravene what it has said about itself in the past. In practice the Church changes, but in theory and its self-awareness, the Church does not change.

This climate of misoneism is based on fear. Courage is the virtue that makes us face our fears and so courage, along with honesty, is what the Church needs. There is a fear that something essential will be lost if changes are made. Rather than gain the benefit offered by the possibility of change, the Church will do without that benefit rather than lose something—even if it is not always sure what the something actually is—that is essential. Trust in the Holy Spirit might rather say that, if we temporarily discard something essential, eventually we will realise our mistake and go back to it again. Fear of making a mistake paralyzes the Church, and so it has never developed a theory or theology that allows it—always a human institution as well as a divine one—to admit that it has done so.

There is no tradition without interpretation. There is no preservation of truth without transformation of truth. With great concern for continuity and consistency, truth grows in our judgments, applications and adjustments. At one time and in a certain context, it might have been correct to say ‘outside the Church there is no salvation’. But it would be a mistake not to alter or reinterpret this doctrine, or even to cancel it out altogether, in a later time as it becomes obvious that God’s grace works through other religions, be they Judaism, Buddhism, Islam or denominations of Protestantism. It is arrogant, uncharitable and incorrect to say in today’s context that ‘outside the Church there is no salvation’.

Moral awareness grows through experience. In the 1950s, I dare say most Catholics in the United States felt there was something wrong with being Protestant. To be Protestant was to suffer from an aberration in religious perception and perhaps in morals as well. Certainly, any Protestant who voiced a criticism of Catholics was viewed as doing something very bad. The sins of the great reformers of the sixteenth century were visited upon modern Protestants, as persisting in errors that would very likely cost them their salvation. We were to pray for Protestants, but not with them in their churches and assemblies.

By the 1960s all that had changed. The bulk of the Catholic population had a new acceptance of their Protestant neighbours and co-workers. Friendships and honest discussions between Protestants and Catholics were frequent. Catholics respected the piety of Protestants, envied their knowledge of the Bible and were far less disturbed than before about

intermarriage between Protestants and Catholics. Catholics attended Protestant weddings and funerals, and, following Vatican II, invitations went back and forth between congregations. This was not the result of a pernicious relativism or lax indifferentism; it showed respect for the consciences of other Christians. Catholics also understood that others saw the Catholic faith as in some ways too restrictive in the present, as having been corrupt in former time, and perhaps as destined to become more like Protestantism in the future. Indeed, many Catholics felt the same way about Catholicism as their Protestant friends did.

Is this a corrupting form of relativism, or is it a sign of the times, when we are invited by God to see others and ourselves within a wider frame of reference? The Holy Spirit is inviting us to trust in the experience of goodness and holiness as we experience it in others—not only Protestants, but Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, atheists and all people of good will. Most Catholics would by now agree that the grace of God does not work exclusively through the Roman Catholic Church. For most it is not the tragedy that it used to seem when someone leaves the Catholic Church and joins another, or when a Catholic marries a non-Catholic. We do not feel that if our missionaries fail to baptize non-Christians, that those people will go to hell.

We are not afraid of relativism because we are confident that human relationships are vehicles of divine grace, and that when and where we enter into relationships of friendship and commitment, God is there in the midst of them. The Catholic Church does not have a monopoly on grace, but we have the task of recognising and fostering relational graces wherever we see and experience them in human living. Authentic existence has replaced formulaic sanctity as a goal for living as a Catholic. Catholicism has at last come into its own precisely as *catholic*—as universal—as living in respect of all that is good and holy in humanity as such. We no longer have to feel, quite defensively, that we are better than everybody else.

Authority, Sin and Conscience

In the Roman Catholic Church, there will always be a tension—a necessary and irresolvable tension—between the rules to be kept and our relationship with the Christ who loves sinners. Christ is both judge of hearts and forgiver of sins. But Catholic morality transcends a casuistical or minimalist moral code and calls us to the Beatitudes and beyond. The

importance of moral growth, continuous conversion and an ever-increasing love of God and neighbour are the criteria of Christian morality. Still, where particular moral directives and infractions of the law are concerned, there is a gnawing need among the faithful to know what is right and what is wrong.

A fair characterization of Catholic moral theology from the Council of Trent to the Second Vatican Council would be that of a code of rules that could be applied by priests in judging penitents in the confessional. Such judgment seldom included an actual assessment of how the individual soul stood in relationship to God. Indeed, the God of the confessional was widely conceived of as a strict Jehovah whose demand of justice had to be appeased on every count of sin.

But it is important to understand that it is not rules or commandments that are at the heart of our morality. The ultimate law by which we live is the law of Christ. The phrase 'law of Christ' itself is a paradox. In New Testament Christianity, the person of Jesus Christ replaces the Torah or law of God of the Old Testament. The centre of our morality is not a code or set of rules, even though the biblical rules are still important to us. At the centre is a person—Jesus Christ—who is both divine and human. The humanity of Christ is the supreme sacrament that makes present the divinity of God. His person and his two natures are the basis of Catholic spirituality and morality.



Christ and the Adulteress, by Alessandro Varotari, early seventeenth century

The moral rules and stipulations, all based in the Bible, flow together to shape and give articulation to the relationships we have with Christ and with one another. The relationships themselves are more important than the rules that shape and guide them. Infractions of the rules are sins, but sin is to be understood in a relational context. Sin is not only the transgression of a law; it is the breaking or straining of the covenant, which is that super-relationship between God, each person and all other people.

The reason that most Catholics go to confession less frequently since the Second Vatican Council is therefore not necessarily one of moral laxity. What appears to many 'traditional' Catholics to be moral laxity on the part of Vatican II Catholics may rather be a more comfortable relationship with God resulting from a processive and personalist moral vision. It is also to be noticed that sensitivity to human relationships, valuing the poor and concern for social justice issues have increased among Catholics since Vatican II. We have become a kinder, gentler, more inclusive people than we were before.

The Catholic vision of reality is christological, incarnational and universal in scope. It is also biblical, traditional and papal. The contemporary Catholic is at times embarrassed by the papal aspect of Catholic identity. It often seems that this coincides with a non-processive view in which stipulations are handed down and directives in faith and morals are made from above for all Catholics to follow. The Pope and the Vatican seem to be the institutions that hold the Church back from making progress in some areas. The Church is always discerning the difference between making progress and maintaining unity.

The Catholic Church believes that the Holy Spirit speaks and inspires in the Church at all levels, and that God can speak to the Church as well from places that are not officially part of the Church. Even so, there are certain matters in which it is necessary to have a single voice, and that single voice is the papacy or Petrine office, as based in the Catholic understanding of the New Testament. Even if a Catholic dissents from a moral teaching of the Church, he or she gives serious religious regard to that teaching and to its source.

But the last court of appeal for the Catholic is his or her conscience. There is an obligation to inform that conscience as well as possible, but the ultimate judgment about the rightness or wrongness of an action belongs to the individual conscience itself. This is why, for example, a

Catholic in a secular democracy may be in favour of laws that allow abortion. Abortion is wrong according to Catholic teaching, but it is also wrong for Catholics to think that they can or must legislate away the decision-making right of many who are not Catholics. There are differences between embryos, foetuses and babies, and reasonable people can differ in their opinions about the morality of abortion.

The Catholic conscience operates in a space where it balances authority and tradition with freedom and novelty. Novelty and complexity are part of all moral decisions. The moral situation is always one that has never occurred before in exactly the same way, and there are multiple factors of moral importance in it that need to be weighed and taken into account. Morality is seldom a matter of just obeying a rule. Decisions must be made in such a way as to respect rules, even if not always literally to keep them. The authority of the Church is subordinate to our discipleship of Christ, which is a loving-learning relationship of fidelity.

The Vision of Accepting God's Vision

Moral process welcomes change rather than being afraid of it and values experience even when that experience and the learning it brings threaten our need for control and our need never to be wrong about anything. Experience is experimental and yet, well and trustingly discerned, it reveals the direction in which God's Spirit leads us. In the process view, there is no life and no action that does not grow out of the rich fund of well-discerned experience. Theology is based on tradition, which is the growth of the Church through time and history. The moral awareness of the Church and the sense of its own identity have developed historically. Process takes account of the progressive, at times perhaps recessive, and always historical emergence of the Church, an institution that is frail and human as well as glorious and divine. Our own lives and our own growing awareness of self mirror the growth of the Church, including change and development in the moral teaching of the Church.

By now we have built up a moral vision for Catholicism. The present-day self-understanding of the Catholic is inclusive of all our fellow human beings. No individual or group is thought of as evil or marked for exclusion and avoidance. The grace of God brings the best out of everybody. Catholicism humbly accepts the reality that its structures,

including the papacy and the episcopate, are specifically intended by God for the benefit not only of Catholics but of all humanity. This does not mean that Catholics are eager to foist their organization and their specifically Catholic values upon non-Catholics. It means that they accept their charge to make the grace of God as visible as they can, and to recognise that grace in all the diverse places where it may arise.

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FIVE CHALLENGES TO DISCERNING THE GOOD IN A COMPLEX WORLD

John Moffatt

THOUGH I DO NOT give the Spiritual Exercises myself, I have undergone them many times and I also have a long-standing interest in unlegislated¹ or creative moral reasoning—which is what much of our daily moral reasoning is actually like. In thinking about both together, two things in particular stand out: the relationship between the spiritual and the rational in the ‘third time of election’ (Exx 177–187); and the obstacles that can arise to good decision-making, particularly when the decisions in question are collective rather than personal. This latter seems particularly important since the sorts of life-changing decisions that Ignatius envisages include reforming the running of one’s life and one’s household, which clearly has a significant impact on the lives of others. Similarly, we modern users of the Exercises generally find that our most urgent questions for discernment, whether in our personal or public lives, are never just about us.

The third time of election clearly takes place in the atmosphere of a dialogue with God and a sensitivity to the movement of the Spirit. I ask God to ‘move my will’ and to ‘put into my mind’ (Exx 180) what needs to be done—always under the giant overarching premise of the Ignatian practical syllogism to do what is for God’s greater service and praise, and the salvation of my soul. After the reasoning is done, the decision is offered to God for confirmation. Nevertheless this is a ‘tranquil time’. The soul is not moved by various spirits and has the free and calm use of ‘its natural faculties’ (Exx 177). All that is required is the disinterestedness that will allow reason to work freely.

When it comes to the detail, the principle of Ignatian utility comes into play. I ‘consider and reason out’ (Exx 181) the advantages and

¹ Perhaps ‘translegislative’ would be a better term, though it doesn’t exist yet.

benefits of each alternative—understood always within the parameters of the main premise: the praise of God and the good of my soul. When I have looked at the two sides, I try and see which way ‘reason more inclines’. The important thing here is to note ‘the greater motion arising from reason’, and not to let the decision be unbalanced by ‘inclinations of sensuality’ (Exx 182).²

It is this last phrase that points us towards some modern difficulties. It is not as clear to many of us now as it might have been in the past that the boundaries between reason and inclinations of sensuality are easily drawn. This is already noticeable when decisions affect our own personal happiness and well-being, but they become acute when they affect the happiness or well-being of others around us. What do we do when our moral reasoning says one thing, but group interests say another? In Britain many members of Parliament faced a painful conflict during the vote on joining the Iraq war between their personal opposition to war and their perception of the national interest. Similar tensions can be found on committees and in boardrooms, where individuals can find themselves caught up in a collective decision that runs counter to their personal ethical preferences.

I would like to offer five, often interrelated, ideas for partial explanations of what makes decision-making, and particularly collective decision-making, so difficult. In so doing I invite the reader to consider and challenge those explanations, and, where they seem to have some plausibility, to ask what they mean for reason and detachment, and how they engage with the sacred space of discernment offered by the Exercises.

1. The Master and His Emissary

Iain McGilchrist, a psychiatrist and former English literature scholar, produced his thought-provoking book of this title in 2009.³ It represents the fruits of a careful twenty-year study of the relationship between neurology and cognition in our two-lobe brains, and of the way each lobe interacts with the other in constructing the world that we experience. His main thesis is theologically neutral, though it has some interesting implications for religion, particularly in making sense of the oft-felt gap between religion as experience and religion as doctrine. Here we are

² The translation of Michael Ivens captures this expression, *mocion razional v sensual*, better than that of Ganss used elsewhere. See *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2004).

³ Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2012).

interested in its implications for our reasoning processes, and, *a fortiori*, for our moral reasoning.

McGilchrist sets out to challenge what was once a standard evolutionary understanding of brain development according to which one lobe (usually the right) has a more primitive form of cognition and is less articulate, while the other (usually the left) is more capable of reasoning and analysis, holds most of our language and is therefore the more evolved bit of our selves. McGilchrist aims to turn this understanding on its head and show that actually we interpret the world best and most successfully when the different modes of attention characteristic of each lobe are deployed in harmony, with the left lobe (the talky one) *subordinate* to the right (the silent one). Hence the title of the book, borrowed from a parable that he attributes to Nietzsche, in which a wise master sends out emissaries to the different corners of the kingdom, where he himself cannot go, to find facts, report back and, where necessary, make local decisions.

The two halves of our brains are connected by a layer of tissue. But this functions more often than not to shut out the workings of one or the other, depending on the nature of the activity in which we are engaged. If we are doing a focused, analytic, wordy, goal-directed activity, we need the left lobe at work. When we need to be present to whatever is actually there and open to surprises in the immediacy of experience, we are in right-brain mode. I believe (though McGilchrist does not use this example) that a certain well-known selective attention test illustrates the way the two lobes interfere with one another's modes of cognition.⁴

Research with stroke patients who have damage to one or other of the lobes enables a more detailed profile of the relation between the two halves to be constructed. When the left lobe is damaged, the capacity to see the world aright remains. The patient is still able to create holistic representations of the visible world, with the relationships between part and whole intact. However when the right lobe is damaged, these representations are distorted, becoming atomised and serialised. The elements of the visual field are present, but their relations to one another are lost. What is more, though the right lobe continues to know of the left lobe's existence, the reverse is not true. Our left selves can continue as if they were the only lobe in town. Here again, the parable comes into play

⁴ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjG698U2Mvo>, and Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons, *The Invisible Gorilla* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010).



as a cautionary tale. In the end, the emissaries decide that they can do without the master and overthrow him, but without his wisdom the kingdom falls apart.

This is illustrated more prosaically in the porcupine syllogism, given to people under three conditions: with both lobes functioning, with the left lobe suppressed and with right lobe suppressed. You need to ignore the fact that there are actually porcupines that climb trees, a fact that was not known to be true by any of the participants.

1. All monkeys climb trees.
2. The porcupine is a monkey.
3. The porcupine climbs trees.

In the first two cases, the participants admire the logic but point out that porcupines are not monkeys and do not climb trees. Revealingly, however, when the left lobe is on its own, the response is a vague sense that something is amiss, but an inability to find any fault with the conclusion.⁵

McGilchrist goes on to develop a cultural thesis about the unchecked domination of the left self in interpreting the world and decision-making. The part of us that is in control of the only facts it can see compels us with the only logic that it finds valid. It diminishes our capacity to see what is really before us, desiccates our world of colour, depth and compassion, and gives us a confidence in our projects that is impervious to the voice of experience.

So here is the complication for us in our decision-making. Are we open to seeing round the corners of the possibilities before us? Are we allowing ourselves to see the whole picture—or are we blinded by the illusionary power of our own logic? But then, on the other hand, in the parable the master does need the emissaries, because they can go to places that he cannot. Does our reasoning sometimes need to take us

⁵ See McGilchrist, *Master and His Emissary*, 192–193, citing V. L. Deglin and M. Kinsbourne, 'Divergent Thinking Styles of the Hemispheres: How Syllogisms Are Solved during Transitory Hemispheric Suppression', *Brain and Cognition*, 31 (1996), 285–307.

beyond the comfortable richness of the immediate world, into a colder space where we can learn to see new things? We shall return to this from another angle when we look at idea five.

2. Evolutionary Anthropology and Tabloid Induction

‘Migrants Rush to Get Our Jobs’ appeared as a *Daily Express* headline in 2012.⁶ The nature of headlines makes this statement ambiguous in ways that are rhetorically useful. Without any direct deception on the part of the editor, readers can, if they wish, read this as a general statement about what migrants do: *(all) migrants are rushing to get (all) our jobs*. The article then pieces together the experience of a jobcentre outside Derby, where the staff were, at the time of writing, being overwhelmed by over 200 applications a day, largely from Eastern Europeans. The headline is drawn from comments by campaigners claiming that foreigners are ‘taking jobs’ from native Britons, supported by government statistics showing a rise of 49,000 foreigners and a fall of 46,000 native British in jobs over the previous year. There are a number of questions that could helpfully be asked in the spirit of disciplined inquiry, but more interesting here is why these fragmentary pieces of information should successfully reinforce the opening generalisation in the minds of many readers, as they clearly do.

This form of ‘tabloid induction’—reasoning from sparse detail to a wide-ranging conclusion—may partly arise from our eagerness to have our pre-existing beliefs and fears reinforced. This is, indeed, true of us all, whatever papers we read. But it may also derive from something much deeper in our evolutionary history, which has been explored by the evolutionary anthropologist Pascal Boyer in his book *Religion Explained*.⁷ For our purposes here, his idea may go some way to explaining how tabloid induction gets into our heads in the first place, and suggest new ways of understanding what overcoming our ‘inclinations of sensuality’ might mean.

Boyer is setting out to explain why the idea that there is divine agency present in the momentary events of life continues to be compelling for so many people, and why it has so successfully resisted the explanatory power of modern science. He argues that this is because the attribution of agency to otherwise inexplicable events around us has, throughout our species history, given us a survival advantage.

⁶ Anil Dawar, ‘Migrants Rush to Get Our Jobs’, *Daily Express* (11 October 2012).

⁷ Pascal Boyer, *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought* (New York: Vintage, 2002).

We can illustrate this with a thought experiment. We place in the jungle three hominids, two of whom (Solo and Uno) are inclined (by genetic accident) to formulate a general rule on the basis of one experience, and one of whom (Galileo) requires a steady stream of evidence before he will commit himself to belief in a general rule. On their first day's walk together, they hear a rustle in the bushes. Unconcerned, they walk on. Then a lion leaps out and attacks and eats Solo. Uno and Galileo escape. The next day Uno and Galileo go walking again; again they hear a rustle in the bushes. Uno says, 'there is something there'. Galileo says, 'we do not know that'. Uno runs away, Galileo stays and watches. Nothing happens. On the third day's walk, when they hear the rustle, Uno says again, 'there is something there' and runs. Galileo starts to tell him the evidence is ambiguous but, before he can finish, he is eaten by the lion.

For Boyer, such evolutionary thought experiments offer an explanation of why we have an inbuilt tendency to see agency in isolated events, and thus why religious belief is so resistant to evidence-based arguments. But for us they might also suggest more generally why we have a broad tendency to reflex induction—particularly about those things and people that may be of benefit or harm to us—on the basis of two or three experiences. So a few well-chosen stories about bananas and beer glasses are enough to establish a deeply held belief about how Europeans are, and help to create enemies of the people from Emmanuel Goldstein to judges who uphold a parliamentary vote.⁸ Perhaps such reflexes should be numbered among our sensual inclinations.

Perhaps, too, this explains why McGilchrist's master needs the emissaries. He needs a Galileo to go out and discover the range of truths behind the rustles in order to see beyond his own reflex understanding to the way the world really is.

3. The Counter-Intuitive Mr Smith⁹

The classical ethical imperatives that come to us through the Jewish, Christian and Hellenistic traditions centre on persons and the immediate

⁸ Emmanuel Goldstein is the primary, Trotsky-like 'enemy of the people' in George Orwell's 1984. The judges who ruled that Britain could not leave the European Union without a parliamentary vote were called 'enemies of the people' in a controversial *Daily Mail* article (3 November 2016).

⁹ See Adam Smith, *An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations: A Selected Edition*, edited by Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford: OUP, 2008).

circle of their relationships, from the courage with which you fight for your city to the compassion that you show for the beggar at your door. Narratives illustrating wise governance, in the sphere beyond the personal, tend to focus on anecdotes about a ruler's personal qualities and his or her treatment of individuals—often somewhat selective—or the general prosperity of the people during that monarch's reign, without clear hints of how that came about. Thus Ignatius' well-to-do retreatant has to consider,

... how large a house and how many persons in it one ought to maintain, how one ought to direct and govern its members, and how to teach them by word and example how much they ought to assign for the house and household, and how much for the poor and other good works. (Exx 189)

If you have power and money, you have a duty to find ways of helping those who are weak and penurious. If you want to do something especially dramatic, you sell everything you have and give it to the poor. Except that, paradoxically, a dramatic act of extreme selflessness may end up not being in the best long-term interest of your economic dependants. There is a modern school of ethical reflection that recommends to those who want to help others that they get the highest-paid job possible and then give 90 per cent of the salary to charity.¹⁰

The simple, personal relationship of sharing what you have with the person who happens not to have it becomes suddenly complex and strangely impersonal when one starts to reflect on where wealth comes from and how it is best and most fairly distributed. Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* presents a powerful and disturbing picture of a 'natural law' of commerce. His model still has a fundamental effect on the decision-making of anyone involved in running an operation where the flow of money impacts on people's lives. For classical Christian ethics it is especially challenging, because it suggests, counter-intuitively, that the pursuit of self-interested gain can bring greater long-term benefits to those in need than personal acts of selfless generosity.

Smith's thesis is that only if a market is genuinely free can goods and labour find their 'natural' price. Only then will owners of capital receive

¹⁰ See, for example, Peter Unger, *Living High and Letting Die: Our Illusions of Innocence* (Oxford: OUP, 1996); Peter Singer, *The Most Good You Can Do: How Effective Altruism Is Changing Ideas about Living Ethically* (New Haven: Yale, 2015).

their natural rent, and buyers pay for goods according to the natural value. For Smith, corn and labour are the two things that ground the 'natural price' in concrete reality. Attempts to control markets in favour of those who have capital or those who provide labour end up distorting the market and disadvantaging the buyer. Only in the free interplay of buyer, labourer and producer, with everyone acting in their own best interests is the natural balance, and the most equitable distribution, achieved. For even the greediest and most rapacious owners (Smith is quite capable of scathing moral judgments about members of the entrepreneurial class) because they cannot physically consume everything themselves, in spite of themselves benefit those around them. Though Smith is actually much more nuanced than some of those who claim his ideas for their own (he insists again and again in discussion of wages and working conditions on what 'common humanity' requires), he still has a sunny belief in an invisible hand that functions like a Stoic deity guiding all things in a good direction, however repellent the motivation and behaviour of individuals may be.

The promise

was that when the glass was full, it would overflow,

benefitting the

poor. But what

happens instead is that

when the glass is full, it

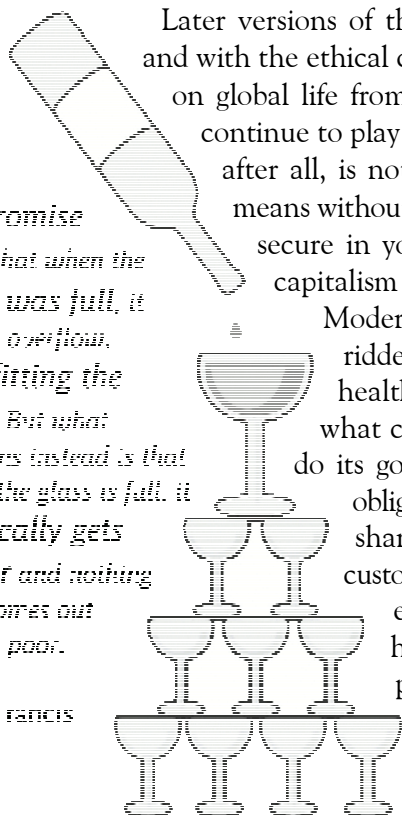
magically gets

bigger and nothing

ever comes out

for the poor.

Pope Francis



Later versions of this creed, bolstered by sophisticated maths and with the ethical caveats removed, have had a massive impact on global life from the final decades of the last century and continue to play well with many of today's plutocrats. What, after all, is not to like about pursuing wealth by all legal means without concern for personal ethical considerations, secure in your conscience because your self-interested capitalism is working for the common good?

Modern free-market purism demanded that debt-ridden countries dismantle their education and healthcare systems in order to cut costs and allow what capital there was (wherever it came from) to do its good work freely. Meanwhile, the only moral obligation on company executives was to maximise shareholder profit, at whatever cost to worker, customer or environment. The trust in an idealized efficiency in the face of the evidence of real human misery makes this way of thinking a perfect candidate for one of McGilchrist's left-brain emissaries gone rogue.

Several global upheavals later, more thoughtful and humane versions of market

economics are now emerging from the shadows.¹¹ And, given that our ethical reasoning does often take us beyond the duties of our own household and demand that we engage with the complex systems that govern people's lives, we need to take note. Work for political change or for social equity or for saving the planet has to use economic models that engage with the realities of human motivation—and, *a fortiori*, the 'inclinations of sensuality'.¹² We may find that even in the midst of the Exercises we need to take some account of Smith's insights about the counter-intuitive relations between human self-interest, economic activity and common benefit.

4. Right Reasoning, from Objectionables to Admirables

Derek Parfit's *On What Matters* discusses a rational ethics of choice in the modern analytic tradition.¹³ He writes in conversation with the works of Henry Sidgwick, a Cambridge ethicist who produced a monumental taxonomy of ethics in the nineteenth century, and of Immanuel Kant, who tried to establish both a metaphysics for morality and general principles for making moral choices (famously, the three different versions of the 'categorical imperative'). He also gives significant room for critical discussion with contemporary moral philosophers in the course of the book.

In the first volume, Parfit develops an approach to the ethics of choice that is based on reasons (rather than desires) and that aims to unite the best insights of utilitarianism, with its other-centred imperative of disinterestedly maximising happiness, and Kant's 'transcendental respect' for all moral agents. From our point of view, all of this sets him very much in the territory of the 'third time of election', and his insight into what count as reasons—even without the theological dimension—can help us think what a 'stronger inclination of the reason' might mean for us in the context of an election.

At one level, utilitarianism is simply a way of trying to put ethics, as an other-centred search for the common good, on a scientific basis. As an overarching principle, the greatest happiness of the greatest number

¹¹ For instance, John Kay, *The Truth about Markets: Why Some Nations Are Rich, but Most Remain Poor* (London: Penguin, 2004).

¹² For instance, Tim Jackson, *Prosperity without Growth: Foundations for the Economy of Tomorrow* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

¹³ Derek Parfit, *On What Matters*, 3 vols. (Oxford: OUP, 2013–17).

seems at first glance a reasonable and laudable aim. Indeed, we often use rough-and-ready versions of this sort of calculation in our day-to-day choices. But there are a number of problems. Two are of particular concern here. One is that, theoretically, once the sums are done, there will only be one right answer to every moral dilemma and, once that answer is known, there will be an absolute imperative to act accordingly. A second is that any victims of that imperative (who are usually so in virtue of being numerically few) cease to have ethical value.

But that is not actually how ethics works for us. First, we will often find ourselves balancing incommensurate elements of ethical concern: the Department of Transport must weigh up building a new ring road against preserving a local community; Sartre's young Frenchman is torn between joining the Resistance and caring for his sick mother.¹⁴ Secondly, when our choices have victims, the fact that people get hurt continues to matter to us, however satisfied we may be that we have taken the better part. Genuinely ethical choices find a way of respecting the moral value of those on the rough side of the decision. For this reason Parfit discusses at length Kant's second categorical imperative: 'so act that you use humanity ... always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means'.¹⁵ Any form of utilitarianism that has an authentic part in our moral reasoning has to evolve in this direction of 'transcendental respect' for all those affected by a decision.

Parfit also takes seriously the nature of ethical incommensurability. He begins by noting that Sidgwick's account of reason-based ethics separated our reasoning into what was properly moral and what was not. The properly moral meant disinterested action for the good of others (possibly at personal cost) as against self-interested action (and that could include the interest of our family or our friends). For Sidgwick this incommensurability suggested that reason-based ethics was fatally flawed, because reason pointed us in two incompatible directions.

Parfit, however, is more optimistic. He accepts instead that there may sometimes be a number of different answers to the question, *what is the reasonable thing to do?*, without this undermining the basis for rational ethics. Some of those answers may indeed be self-interested, but the

¹⁴ See Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Existentialism Is a Humanism', translated by Philip Mairet, in *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*, edited by Walter Kaufman (New York: Plume, 1991).

¹⁵ Immanuel Kant, *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, edited and translated by Mary Gregor and Jens Timmermann (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 87, and see Parfit, *On What Matters*, volume 1, chapter 9.

fact that they are does not make them non-moral. Earning enough money to pay for my flat is reasonable, moral and self-interested. On the other hand, if I give more attention to the welfare of other people's children than to that of my own, while I may have an other-centred reason for doing so, this does not make it straightforwardly the right thing to do. The fact that these are my children gives me a reason to give them more attention than the children of others (a tension that overworked teachers often feel they face). The fact that, for me, telling the truth is a moral obligation gives me a reason to tell the truth, even though my telling the truth might start a war. Again, the relationship between what is moral, what is self-interested and what is other-centred is not what it first seems.

In fact (through Parfit does not make this particular point), our everyday language enables us to rank behaviour according to the quality of the reasons behind it. At one end we have things that reasons might explain but do not justify. These are the inexcusable or objectionable. Then we have things which are at least forgivable (a white lie under pressure) and perhaps understandable (I did not rush into the burning house to rescue the old man on the top floor). Then come the reasonable (I sold the house at a good price), the expectable (he helped his neighbour with the fallen tree) and the admirable (she did risk her life to rescue the old man).

Of course, we need to be aware that all these evaluative labels have a cultural context, and common expectations can shift in good and bad directions. What is expectable in a culture in one decade can become inexcusable in the next. And, as we are discovering in the present time, that process can go into reverse. For Parfit, what anchors our other-centred reasoning and gives it a constant direction is compassion—the absolute recognition that others can suffer or be happy and that this matters irrespective of whether we like them or not. The anchor of the Exercises is the more remote 'will of God', though this is always (at least in mainstream Christianity) interpreted as a will of compassion, a will for the good of creation and the salvation of the individual soul without partiality. It is such a will that we are to share and play a part in fulfilling.

So in the context of the 'third time of election', we can recognise the invitation to move beyond the understandable and the reasonable to the admirable, though we may find (especially in family matters) that we run up against the expectable. We can intuit Ignatius' awareness

***What
anchors our
other-centred
reasoning ...
is compassion***

of the real tensions that arise as people of rank try to make God-centred decisions about the size of their house and staff, or how much income to allocate to dependants and how much to the poor.

The Ignatian utility principle ‘for the greater glory of God and the salvation of your soul’ (Exx 185) is both other-centred and self-interested. Bentham’s principle of utility—maximise the greatest happiness of the greatest number—is purely other-centred, though it includes the self as part of the calculation. Kant’s—‘so act that you use humanity ... always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means’—is other-centred, but allows for self-interested choice. But what happiness means, what the greater glory of God means and what ‘the end’ means only ever acquire content when they are local and particular to people and circumstances.





















It is in this particularity that we find ourselves balancing the variety of incommensurable reasons: the self-centred, the other-centred, the duties to others, obedience to rules. The inclinations of sensuality and the inclinations of reason in fact intertwine. Sometimes the cold clarity of a utilitarian calculation—or the exaltation of religious insight—will expand our moral horizons. Sometimes the thrill of such clarity and such exaltation will blind us to our real duty towards those before us. It is in this complex space that we try and identify the ‘stronger inclination of reason’ and move from choosing the understandable to choosing the truly admirable.

5. *Hearts, Clubs and Minds*

This section centres on a game-theory exercise in rational choice which you may like to explore for yourself (though I would not recommend it for family Christmases).¹⁶ It touches on many of the foregoing themes.

The exercise divides a group into four teams, each of which is given two cards: one heart and one club. In each round of the game the teams have to decide, independently of each other, which card to play. The cards are collected and then displayed together and points are awarded. The key factor is that points are awarded on the basis not only of the card that your own team has chosen, but also of the cards the other teams have chosen. The allocation is easiest to see from the score sheet:

¹⁶ I am indebted to Adrian Porter SJ for introducing me to this exercise, which is used in some of our school retreat programmes.

			
50	50	50	50
			
300	-100	-100	-100
			
200	200	-200	-200
			
100	100	100	-300
			
-50	-50	-50	-50

If all four teams play hearts, everyone gains 50 points, but if one team plays clubs, that team gains 300 points and everyone else loses 100 points. If everyone plays clubs, then everyone loses 50 points. The game is played over a number of rounds, and can be varied by occasionally having individuals take the decision for the whole team, or arranging embassies between the groups to negotiate a common strategy. With all the groups I have encountered, the majority of teams will eventually opt to play clubs most of the time and will break negotiated agreements for the sake of gaining points at the expense of those who hold to an agreement to play hearts. Very occasionally, a group will selflessly continue to play hearts, even as the others acquire vastly more points (and as their own point score plunges into the abyss) on the grounds that this is the moral thing to do. If this does not happen, the net result of all teams playing clubs over a number of rounds is that everyone ends up with negative points.

This version of the game is slanted to favour competitive strategies and set up for rational choice in the self-interested mode. Other versions might favour collaborative strategies, but they would still be in self-interested mode. So our game is not about a choice between other-centred reasoning and self-interested reasoning, but about which choices help or hinder self-interested reasoners in the pursuit of their goals, when they have to take into account the decisions of other agents pursuing their own goals.

We need to remind ourselves that ‘self-interested’ does not necessarily mean ‘immoral’—or even ‘non-moral’. The teams could represent parents protecting their families, unions protecting their members, executives fulfilling their duty to shareholders or governments protecting their people. And, critically, the choice is not simply between a greater benefit

and a lesser benefit, but also and perhaps more importantly between a lesser and a greater harm to 'our team'.

Headlines about migrants such as the one from the *Daily Express* highlight communal fears about *our* jobs, *our* housing, *our* NHS. However distorted those fears may be by misinformation and primal xenophobia, the concern for the well-being of one's own that they also represent is not intrinsically evil. Our anti-collaborative decisions can be as much about protection of those in our care as about aggression. It is not just our malevolence, but our locally engaged benevolence as well, that can block those noble other-centred imperatives to welcome the stranger or to work for the well-being of all peoples. If it was just about my life and did not affect my dependants ... so we settle for the understandable at the expense of the admirable, because of the expectable.

The obvious strategy in the game, by which everyone slowly wins and, over time, wins substantially, is collaborative. However, this is only possible if we are prepared to risk others taking advantage of us. And even if we begin optimistically, after a few bruising encounters we usually determine that the best outcome we can expect in an aggressive environment is to meet club with club and take the consequence of a slow decline together. This sets a depressing pattern that we can recognise recurring throughout the history of economics and politics, and one that has analogues in other areas of the biological realm of which we are a part.

But it is important to remember that the real rules and incentives are more complex and more finely adjusted in the actual games we play within our ecotopes. And they can change over time. The prospect of mutually assured destruction, whether through nuclear war or climate change, gives new reasons to begin to collaborate. When prophetic, powerful public figures take admirable risks for the sake of a more universal good, the global culture of decision-making can begin to flow in a better direction. When our neighbours take the initiative in engaging with newcomers on our street, headlines can begin to dissolve in the encounter with human reality. When wise legislation and a measure of prosperity make us and those we care about secure, it is easier for us to be our generous selves. We are highly imitative creatures and this can serve us for good as well as for ill.

But all such changes depend on insight and the transformation of individual consciences, transcending outworn certainties that cannot cope with new realities, recovering the vital values buried in systems that have lost their humanity, selflessly searching for the truth that actually will

set people free. Perhaps creating space for that transformation is part of what it will mean for the Exercises in the twenty-first century to help us all seek the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls.

The material for our ethical reflection comes from our circumstances, whether we are a wealthy householder trying to live more equitably, or someone fired by the Gospel deciding whether or not to commit to a vowed life. The basic tools and skills that we deploy in the third time of election are drawn from a wider reasoning environment. Perhaps awareness of the challenges discussed here can help us overcome limitations in the reasoning within our particular environment, in order to draw closer to that ‘perfect equilibrium’ Ignatius asks for, and enhance the quality with which we weigh our options. But though all this content comes from outside, by being brought into the space of the Exercises our careful reasoning is suspended in a silent dialogue with the Gospel and anchored in the search for the compassionate and saving will of God. Thus, the rational and the spiritual may become one.

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Gerard Manley Hopkins, Jesuit poet

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MOVEMENTS OF THE SPIRITS IN A WORLD IN FLUX

Philip Shano

Being and Becoming

ALTHOUGH I DID NOT participate in the conference that forms the basis for this issue of *The Way*, I am certainly taken with its title. For my fundamental perspective on personal and communal life, our culture and our world, and, therefore, on a spiritual understanding of experience, is expressed well by the word *flux*.

This word takes me back to my initial encounter with Heraclitus of Ephesus, a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher. He was noted for his strong insistence on ever-present change as being the fundamental essence of the universe. This is summed up in the line famously attributed to him: ‘No one ever steps in the same river twice’—the point being that the river always keeps moving along and those who step into it are themselves constantly changing.¹ Heraclitus is usually regarded as one of the first to venture upon the philosophical concept of *becoming*. Introductory philosophy courses tend to contrast him with Parmenides, his contemporary. Parmenides is seen as being one of the first to explore a philosophy of *being*. This basically says that *what is, is*. The dichotomy of being versus becoming is useful for understanding much of philosophy. It goes without saying that the opposite of a world in flux is a world where *what is, is*. That type of world would be characterized by stability, peace, stasis and being ever-the-same. I maintain that we will not find such a world in this life.

My own approach to explaining reality—my own life, my culture, the world, the universe—starts from the vantage point of constant change and flux. I have considerable experience with Ignatian dynamics—accompanying people through the Spiritual Exercises, using the Exercises in my teaching and presentations, acting as novice director and working in other formation ministries in the Society of Jesus and in the Church

¹ Plato, *Cratylus*, 420a.

at large, and in exercising Ignatian governance and other types of leadership. Forty years of such diverse ministry experience has convinced me that Ignatian spirituality is a gift for a world and individuals who are changing. Ignatius precisely offers us a spirituality for a world in flux; the spiritual tradition of St Ignatius is inherently incarnational, and I believe that our incarnational reality is marked by flux.

The Reality of Flux

Julián Carrón is president of the global ecclesial movement Fraternity of Communion and Liberation. As such, he is one of the principal Roman Catholic leaders and intellectuals in the world today. In an engaging and thought-provoking collection of essays, *Disarming Beauty*, Carrón grapples with the interaction between Christian faith and modern culture, drawing on many respected thinkers, including Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis.

Carrón speaks of an ‘anthropological drift’ concerning moral and ethical issues in today’s Western culture, and the growing attempts of people to obtain fulfilment through so-called ‘new rights’.² The common trait of these rights,

... is that they are centred on an individual subject who lays claim to absolute self-determination in every circumstance of life: he wants to decide if he lives or dies, if he suffers or not, if he has a child or not, if he is a man or a woman, and so on.

This individual subject, however, avoids asking the fundamental questions of existence, restricting him- or herself to ‘techniques and procedures’ such as the pursuit of rights.³ As a consequence, the ‘value of the individual self’ has been placed in doubt: ‘by now the very word “I” evokes for the great majority of people something confused and drifting’.⁴

The image of *drifting* is a helpful way of speaking of the manner in which flux is so often expressed in the Western world today. One of its principal experiences is that we can no longer rely on any institution to provide moral leadership and authority. There may be a few individuals who still do so: Pope Francis would be on many people’s lists, but there

² Julián Carrón, *Disarming Beauty: Essays on Faith, Truth, and Freedom* (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame P, 2017), 18.

³ Carrón, *Disarming Beauty*, 11.

⁴ Carrón, *Disarming Beauty*, 87.

are limits to his authority. He may lead the Roman Catholic Church, but his voice does not hold much sway over the increasing numbers of nations and individuals whose focus is on the 'new rights'. Furthermore, the nagging issue of the abuse of minors within the Church and its scandalous concealment threaten the very manner in which people hear him. And the agenda of Pope Francis guarantees that the Church is also in flux. His efforts to implement major reforms in the universal and local Church have their supporters, but also enemies.

There are many other illustrations of the flux within our culture, and much of the change we see today is for the worse. The list that follows is far from complete and each item deserves much more space. The political climate in our world has not been so perilous since the Second World War, with the rise of 'populist' elected leaders such as President Donald Trump in the USA and Premier Doug Ford in Ontario (where I live); Brexit and its threat to European unity; the risky ground on which NATO and various other global coalitions are standing; the growing fragility of Western cooperation, with trade wars and the self-interest of individual nations; and the rising influence of China. It is a new world where the President of the USA has more affinity with the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, than with traditional US allies. The Middle East and its perennial issues now share airtime with an escalating number of other troubled areas. The plight of record numbers of refugees and migrants is worsened by the increasingly xenophobic response of so many nations. The perceived threat from Islamic fundamentalists and other



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Syrian refugees prevented from travelling at Kelkети railway station, Hungary, in 2015

terrorists is raising the level of fear among people even in what were seen as safe and peaceful cities and nations.

And then there is our planet itself. The implications of climate change were felt all over the world in the hot summer of 2018. Even those who doubt the reality of global warming find that their lives are being affected by the extreme weather in daily ways. We are discovering that our great technological advances have costs, and the very pace of technological change sometimes seems to be out of control. Such change is also posing significant threats to traditional notions of labour and employment, friendships and families, mass media and communications, personal privacy, banking and the economy more broadly. Leaders in politics, business and religion are being forced to adapt to deal with the shifts caused by emerging technologies.

Through all these and other changes, the situation of the materially poor and marginalised is getting worse rather than improving, and the outlook for the next generation is becoming more uncertain. Carrón names the concern for young people that exists in Europe and throughout the Western world:

Do we have something to offer them that speaks to their search for fulfilment and meaning? In many young people ... there reigns a great nothingness, a profound void that constitutes the origin of the desperation that ends up in violence.⁵

Ignatius and Interior Movement

Ignatian spirituality is the very opposite of *drifting*. It is a spirituality of intentionality and purpose. Its various tools and exercises are designed to bring a discerning heart to bear on the prayer and life of the person. The spiritual experience of drifting, by contrast, leads the person to avoid making connections between interior and exterior lives.

One of my customary starting points for an introduction to the prayer and discernment methods of St Ignatius is the notion of *movement*. I suggest that my listeners begin with a recognition of their own interior movements—dreams, fears, longings, anxieties, preoccupations, gratitude and any other feelings (including ones that they would normally disregard). It is also natural to invite them to reflect on movement and change in corporate bodies such as the family, the Church, nations and every level

⁵ Carrón, *Disarming Beauty*, 49.

of the community. I am then in a better position to explain the Ignatian concepts of spiritual consolation and desolation, and to demonstrate how those interior movements are related to the feelings they described earlier. Along the way, I introduce Ignatian contemplation and the examen of consciousness to demonstrate how Ignatian prayer techniques are helpful for discerning the movements—the spiritual flux—in our lives.

A skilled director of the Spiritual Exercises can use the tools of Ignatius to approach our culture in a discerning way as well. The Exercises are adaptable to all kinds of people and situations. I usually offer prayer material and reflection questions to help retreatants pray *with* our culture and discover the diverse ways in which God is operating in their personal lives and in the world. If it is helpful, I explain certain of Ignatius' Rules for Discernment, making use of the retreatants' personal experience to help them understand how God is at work in them. Ignatius is interested in having the director help people to discern movement, and I do not think that we need to exclude experience of the world at large. Rather, the idea is to foster a type of discerning literacy within the retreatants in considering the world.

**To help
retreatants
pray with our
culture**

St Ignatius offers plenty of tools for reflection on experience. He provides a series of introductory observations, commonly referred to as the Annotations. These are helpful reminders and suggestions, primarily for the spiritual director who is guiding someone through the Exercises. One that speaks directly to the experience of interior movements is Annotation 6. If the director perceives that the retreatant is 'not experiencing any spiritual motions in his or her soul, such as consolations or desolations, or is not being moved one way or another by different spirits, the director should question the retreatant much about the Exercises' (Exx 6). The insistence of the director here suggests that Ignatius saw it as normal for movements to take place in a person, to the extent that it was almost questionable if he or she did not notice them. Ignatius was always flexible, because the retreatant is always in flux.

Annotation 15 reminds the director about the importance of keeping the focus on the movements within the exercitant. The director is not to urge the person in one direction or another, but, rather, 'while standing by like the pointer of a scale in equilibrium, to allow the Creator to deal immediately with the creature and the creature with its Creator and Lord' (Exx 15). Annotation 17 emphasizes that the director needs to be aware of 'the various agitations and thoughts which the different spirits

stir up in the retreatant'. This ensures that the follow-up exercises will be 'adapted to the needs of the person who is agitated in this way' (Exx 17).

As some authors have pointed out, the Spiritual Exercises are adapted—almost rewritten—each time they are offered.⁶ The skilled spiritual director must have enough knowledge of the person who is praying that the experience is suited to that person sitting there, with his or her actual situation. Each Week includes Additional Directives, which are offered to provide specific assistance to the individual. The spirit of these additional points is expressed well by one given in the First Week: 'if I find what I desire while kneeling, I will not change to another posture' (Exx 76.1). Dealing with exterior penance, Ignatius once again focuses on what each person needs: 'for some persons more penance is suitable, and for others less' (Exx 89). Thus the Additional Directives are provided to help each exercitant find what he or she desires, using the particular method that will be most conducive to what is being sought. This is very much in line with the First Principle and Foundation (Exx 23).

Ignatius provides different advice depending upon whether someone is old or weak, or a strong person has become exhausted (Exx 129). Modifying one of the Additional Directives for use in the Second Week he adds the qualifier: 'to the extent that I find ... profitable for myself and helpful toward finding what I desire' (Exx 130). At other times, he suggests 'it is sometimes profitable ... to make changes in procedure, to help him or her in finding what is desired' (Exx 133). Even the essential element of Ignatian repetition (first explained in Exx 62) is tailored to the individual exercitant. Where did *this* exercitant experience 'greater consolation or desolation, or had a greater spiritual experience' (Exx 62)? The director can lengthen or shorten the Weeks, depending upon what is happening with the person. Given the intensity of the Third Week, the number of exercises each day may be adjusted for the age, health and physical constitution of the person (Exx 205). The text is full of phrases that reveal the tremendous freedom and flexibility given to the skilled director in working with a retreatant. Ignatius does not tend to say that *one must* do such and such but, rather, that a person should recognise what is suitable.

In the context of the Second Week, Ignatius provides invaluable advice for someone who is discerning between one good and another, one

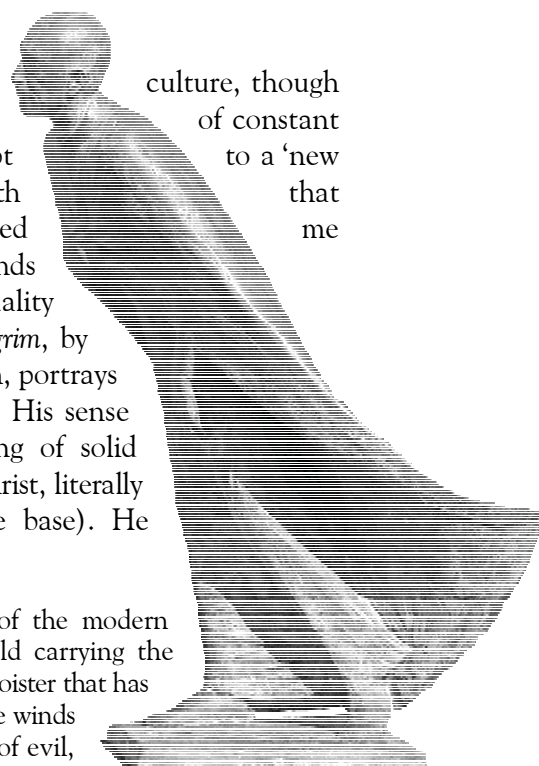
⁶ See, for example, Mark Rotsaert, 'When Are Spiritual Exercises Ignatian Spiritual Exercises?', *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* (CIS), 98 (2001), 30.

path in life and another. By the time the Spiritual Exercises come to deal with material for discernment and decision-making, Ignatius and the skilled spiritual director can assume that the exercitant's prayer during the Exercises so far has been unique to that specific person. Thus Ignatius offers the exercitant several different exercises, methodologies and ways of making a good choice. Which is used must be very carefully discerned, in dialogue with the director. What will be most helpful and conducive towards the desires with which the person is praying? Ignatius affirms, 'I ought to focus only on the purpose for which I am created Accordingly, anything whatsoever that I elect ought to be chosen as an aid toward that end' (Exx 169), and the means to that end should be in harmony with God's way of working with the individual. The Rules for the Discernment of Spirits are best used in relation to a particular need of the retreatant. They are always focused on the person's diverse interior movements: Ignatius is almost allergic to *stasis*.

Ignatius the Pilgrim

Flux is not so terribly novel in Western culture, though it is probably safe to say that the present level of constant change is unprecedented. We often adapt to a 'new normal', and Ignatius was comfortable with that dynamic. An image of Ignatius that has moved for forty years is the sculpture that stands outside Loyola House, the Jesuit spirituality centre in Guelph, Ontario. *Ignatius the Pilgrim*, by the Canadian sculptor William McElcheran, portrays Ignatius as striding forward into the wind. His sense of movement is accompanied by a feeling of solid rootedness (metaphorically rootedness in Christ, literally the sculpture's grounding in its concrete base). He describes his image of Ignatius:⁷

Ignatius is probably the prototype of the modern Christian; going forth into the world carrying the cloister about his heart—a very large cloister that has room for the whole of creation The winds of change are not merely the forces of evil,



⁷ A printed copy of this commentary is posted on the wall of Loyola House, and it is also available at http://orientations.jesuits.ca/retreat_05.html, accessed 3 October 2018.

but nevertheless, the hand that clutches at the cloak is opposing the destructive power that accompanies them.

The tools offered by Ignatius of Loyola are suited to the discerning examination of a world in flux and our personal appropriation of it. Ignatian spirituality cannot remove the changeability of our culture, but it can help a person to stay at peace in that culture. Such peace is found in one of the major graces of the Spiritual Exercises: ‘an interior knowledge of Our Lord, who became human for me, that I may love him more intensely and follow him more closely’ (Exx 104).

Philip Shano SJ has been a Jesuit for more than forty years. He has used the dynamics of Ignatian spirituality in a diversity of ministries: in education, formation, Jesuit governance, writing and teaching. He lives in the La Storta community in Pickering, just east of Toronto, Canada, and works with the Spiritual Exercises

PRAYER AND OUTREACH IN NORTH WALES

Damian Jackson

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE of Wrexham was established in 1987, covering the whole of North Wales. In geographical area (3,000 square miles of a predominantly rural and mountainous region) it is one of the largest dioceses in England and Wales. With the exception of the town of Wrexham itself and the other town parishes along the North Wales coast, the majority of the forty parishes in the diocese are rural, and the parishioners very few in number. The Catholic mass-attending population is only just over 5 per cent of the total—roughly half the national average. The age profile of North Wales is higher than average; so for this reason, among others, the large majority of the parishioners are elderly. Therefore the resources of many of the parishes are not strong.

In 2016 the largest church attendance at weekends was just over 600 and the smallest just 21 people. There are only thirty priests working full-time in these parishes, so some have more than one parish, and in some cases several mass centres, to care for. Seventeen of the priests are from overseas, belonging to religious congregations from India and Africa; almost all the others are British and Irish—the majority, like their parishioners, are elderly. There are a small number of permanent deacons who do important work supporting the priests. There are just three Catholic secondary schools in the diocese and three large general hospitals.

The needs of the diocese of Wrexham are different from those of the more urban and well-resourced dioceses in the UK and, since 1989, the British Province of the Society of Jesus has run an outreach programme, based at St Beuno's Jesuit spirituality centre near St Asaph, to help to meet those needs. From the start of this work we have followed and developed a policy of trying to establish and build up small faith-sharing groups in the parish communities: groups which would continue when, inevitably, the number of mass centres dropped because there were fewer clergy. It has also been our hope from the beginning that, though our contract is with the Catholic diocese of Wrexham,

our pastoral work will be ecumenical and open to anyone who wants to 'come and see'.

Our aim is still the same today: to respond to the needs of all the people of God in this area, at a time of great change and uncertainty about the future. In doing so we have been very inspired and challenged in a positive way by three quotations. The first two are from Benedict XVI's homily in 2005 at the Mass of his inauguration: 'There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the *encounter* with Christ', and 'There is nothing more beautiful than to know Him and to speak to others of our *friendship* with Him'.¹ The third comes from Pope Francis's apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (n.264):

The best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from contemplating it with love, lingering over its pages and reading it with the *heart*. If we approach it in this way, its beauty will amaze and constantly *excite* us. But if this is to come about, we need to recover a contemplative spirit which can help us to realize ever anew that we have been entrusted with a *treasure* which makes us more human and helps us to lead a new life. There is nothing more precious which we can *give* to others.

I have emphasized four words from this excerpt, and one each from the other two. Prayer is primarily about relationship: *encounter*, and then *friendship*. This is perhaps the most important need everyone has. It starts in the *heart*, in our *excitement* and recognition of a *treasure*, and, if it is fully human, it will be completed in *giving* to others. Christians see this process in its fullness realised in the person and life of Christ.

A really close personal relationship with Christ (and through him with the Father), the need to give and receive support, and to share Christ's values with others underpin the ways our outreach programme tries to help the people of North Wales today.

Changing Times

In the years since 1989 our work gradually developed in response to the needs of the diocese, taking the form of three 'stages': weeks of guided prayer, the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius in daily life and Ignatian support groups to build on the experience of those who had made the Exercises. In addition, we trained a group of lay prayer guides.²

¹ Benedict XVI, homily, St Peter's Square, 24 April 2005, available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20050424_inizio-pontificato.html.

² See Damian Jackson, 'The St Beuno's Outreach Programme', *The Way Supplement*, 95 (1999), 93–98.

By 2007, however, it was becoming increasingly obvious that things were changing. Some parishes would have to be merged and some mass centres closed. There would be at least one Mass in each parish on either Saturday or Sunday, and we hoped there would also be one mass on a weekday in most parishes. Then in September 2015 our new Bishop, Peter Brignall, wrote to the parishes saying ‘This situation is not sustainable, the current model of Church that we have is not realistic and we don’t have the time to evolve to another model; there has to be radical, but I hope creative, change. That change has to begin immediately!’

We still hear it said that ‘so long as we can cover the Masses there will be a Church’. Yes, of course the Mass is the Church’s central act of worship, but—as in many parts of Europe, let alone other parts of the world—more and more people, for a variety of reasons, cannot get to Mass. Mass is just not available, and other ways are needed of meeting, supporting and sharing prayerfully with each other—of being Church together. Services of the Word and Communion in the absence of a priest are no longer encouraged, so there must be other ways for people to gather in prayer—not just reciting words, but praying together in a contemplative way.

Today so many people, both old and young, are longing for a kind of prayer that emerges from stillness and quiet. Our bishop is also very keen that people should learn to appreciate the Word of God as an encounter with Christ Jesus that is as real and necessary as our encounter with him in the eucharist. What could be better, then, than for them to spend some time slowly and deeply reflecting on scripture, where they can



© Clive Hicks

View of North Wales from St Beuno's spirituality centre

truly encounter Christ and allow their hearts to be touched and maybe changed as, together with him, they reflect on their daily lives?

Prego Groups and Prego Leaflets

So, in 2007, to try and enable this to happen, we began to produce simple weekly leaflets about the Sunday Mass readings, and we invited people to come together in groups and pray with them. These leaflets, written by some of the prayer guides, were nicknamed ‘Pregos’; and the groups, which usually meet once every two weeks, are known as Prego groups. (We still have weeks of guided prayer in some parishes, and it must be noted that they are still a very good way of helping people to pray.)

The Prego leaflets are posted weekly, and can be found at www.stbeunosoutreach.wordpress.com/prego, as well as on the British Jesuit website, www.pathwaystogod.org/my-prayer-life/sunday. As a result, the Prego is now used not only within the Wrexham diocese but also downloaded by people in different pastoral situations all over the world. The first page briefly outlines the themes of all the readings at Mass the following Sunday, and also the opening prayer of the Mass. On the two inner pages are the Gospel and one of the other mass readings, with suggestions for prayer and reflection. The final page lists four or five verses or phrases from the readings under the heading *Here’s a text if you’ve only a minute*; to these are added the text of the opening prayer in the old translation. Each week there is an image or photo appropriate to the theme of the mass readings—those who pray more visually often find these to be very helpful.

We now have about twenty Prego groups in the diocese. They vary in their membership, ranging from twenty or more down to only three or four. Some are mostly elderly, but other groups have a greater mix of ages and backgrounds. There are two groups for young mothers and other women—who, in the midst of busy lives, long for and greatly appreciate the peace and quiet of their fortnightly meetings. They treasure the support they give and receive from each other. For such younger people, the Prego group is often the only place in their lives where they can share with others who believe. For those who are struggling with the Church, or with the whole idea of religion and the existence of God, the meetings are a safe place where they can speak openly, feel listened to and not feel judged.

Most meetings begin with a time of gradually trying to become quiet and still. Then the group prays with one or both readings in that week’s

leaflet with the help of, for example, *lectio divina*, or the imagination—particularly if there is a gospel scene. The text(s) may be read several times—there is always plenty of time just to ponder and reflect, or become utterly still before the Lord. People are nearly always invited to share the experience of this time of prayer either in pairs or small groups, or in the whole group. No one has to share anything if he or she would prefer not to. This is a very important point: no one should feel under pressure to speak. Afterwards people have the opportunity to ask for prayers for any intentions they may have: some are personal—perhaps for family members—and some are prayers for national or international issues. These prayers help the groups to be outward-looking, not just a select circle of friends.

Finally, we find it very helpful to pause and ask people to get in touch with how they feel now, at the end of the meeting. They are invited to share just one word, or a short sentence, or to pass if they would prefer to say nothing. Again, there is no pressure to share. This simple short reflection and sharing at the end of the meeting is very valuable and contributes to a feeling of support and a desire to translate what has come through in the prayers into action in people's lives. This leads to a sense of mission arising from a prayerful awareness of the Spirit working in and through us; it truly is a good way of seeking to make real St Ignatius' note in the Contemplation to Attain Love (Exx 230): 'Love ought to manifest itself more by deeds than by words'.³

The Spiritual Exercises in Daily Life

Once the Prego groups began to take root and flourish, we started to invite members whom we sensed would benefit from the Spiritual Exercises to make them individually with the accompaniment of a prayer guide over a period of approximately nine months—and sometimes longer if events in life made it necessary.

Today the outreach programme has about twenty prayer guides—all but three are laypeople, and they are now generally drawn from the Prego groups. They lead groups, give individual guidance and accompany people through the Exercises in Daily Life. A small group continues to write the weekly Prego leaflet and other related resources, including the

³ More information on running a Prego group is available at <https://www.pathwaystogod.org/resources/praying-sunday-readings-guide>; with some reflections from group members at <https://www.pathwaystogod.org/resources/centre-news-ignatian-insight/place-let-go-and-be-still>.

Prego Plus, providing simple background material on the scripture texts. Where necessary they also help with administration. Their commitment is very impressive and very professional. Prayer guides are carefully selected and trained. With a few exceptions, all have made the Exercises in daily life themselves. After a further year in their own group, they begin to help an experienced prayer guide run a group, and also visit other groups. Then the following year (and for the rest of their time as a prayer guide) they attend monthly training days run by Outreach in the diocese, and some may do a training course at St Beuno's as well. It is during this time that they will be invited to run a Prego group along with another prayer guide. This programme of training takes time, but it is firmly held that the group members (and the Church) have the right to well-trained prayer guides who pray themselves, just as we all expect to have praying clergy well trained in spirituality.

Those making the Exercises meet their prayer guide, as far as possible, once a fortnight for an hour's individual session. The Exercises are presented in seventeen simple, short leaflets, and people try to pray for about thirty minutes each day during the retreat. We recognise that this is a considerable commitment. Prayer in the midst of daily life is not infrequently interrupted, but the pace and movement through the Exercises are always determined with the help of the prayer guide and based on the needs of the individual. There is no rush. This is not an exhausting marathon, but a journey *with* Jesus which follows God's time, adapted entirely to circumstances.

Meanwhile, those making the Exercises continue to attend the fortnightly Prego meeting with their group. At this meeting they do not share their prayer with the Exercises, but focus with the other members of the group on the Prego readings. Their continued attendance is helpful to them, giving them support as they make the Exercises. But we also find that as their prayer deepens during their retreat, their sharing at the Prego group is deeper too and this in turn helps the rest of the group.

It is not an exaggeration to say that all those who have made the Exercises in this way in the diocese have found that their relationship with God has deepened; their *awareness of God's presence in all things* now comes more instinctively; and their ability to discern and make good decisions inspired by the Spirit of God has increased. Their desire to go out in service of others in the different areas of their lives has also developed as they have grown in trust of God and awareness of their God-given gifts, however ordinary.

Looking to the Future

The model we have developed over the years in the outreach programme is not fixed; it must be adaptable to the ever-changing circumstances of life in this twenty-first century. We do not believe in 'roman candle' spirituality: a big and often beautiful sight in the night sky which only lasts for a short time before darkness returns. We believe in the mustard seed: it is small but—given time—it will grow. We must help our people realise their potential and free them to use their faith and gifts. There are fewer priests and, yes, priests are important; but we are all apostles and together we can make the light carry on shining and help others who are in the dark and searching for that light. Finally, we must always be open to where the Spirit is inviting and leading us.

Damian Jackson SJ has led the Ignatian Outreach programme from St Beuno's Jesuit spirituality centre in the diocese of Wrexham since its inception there. He is currently a member of the resident team at St Beuno's, having been director of Loyola Hall (1979–88) and of St Beuno's itself (1989–98).

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SWEARING, BLASPHEMING, WOUNDING, KILLING, GOING TO HELL

The World, as Seen and Heard by Ignatius

Michael Kirwan

A Global View

THE WORLD THAT Ignatius asks us to contemplate at the beginning of the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises, as prelude to the Incarnation and Nativity, is not really in a 'state of flux' at all. It is distressingly unidirectional: a world where all humanity is heading for perdition. The Three Divine Persons look down upon 'the whole surface or circuit of the world, full of people' (Exx 102) who 'swear and blaspheme ... wound, kill, go down to hell' (Exx 107–108), and confer as to what should be done. The Second Person then offers himself as the one who will enter into this human reality and bring about salvation. Then the camera zooms in from the cosmic overview ... to a room in a house in Nazareth where an angel appears to a young woman.

This contemplation is an important gateway from Week One (which ends at the foot of the cross, acknowledging Christ, who has won forgiveness for our sins) to the exercises of Week Two, centred upon the life and mission of Jesus. As it stands, however, it raises a number of problems, which become evident when we recognise that this is not the only way of telling the human story. Put bluntly, it holds that Christ entered our dysfunctional human existence in order to put things right, much as we might call someone in to mend the boiler (W. H. Auden speaks of Jesus as the 'mild engineer').¹ It begins the Christian story with what has been described as a 'pact with the negative': that is, it prefaces our telling of the Good News with a piece of bad news about humanity

¹ See W. H. Auden, 'Spain 1937', in *The Collected Poetry of W. H. Auden* (New York: Random House, 1945), 183.

(our sinfulness, weakness, concupiscence and so on).² As Karl Barth puts it, God says 'No' to humanity before God says 'Yes'.³

Contrast this with a similar scene from St John of the Cross, clearly based on the Ignatian text: his Romance 3, 'The Creation', in which the poet 'listens in to' the tender words of love between Father and Son. John sees the Creation as the Father's gift to his Beloved:

Son, I wish to give you
A bride's tender love.
A bride who is worthy
For you to approve;

And she shall dwell with us
In company sweet,
And eat at our table
The bread which I eat.

The Son replies with gratitude:

I will give all my brightness
To your gift of a bride,

So that she may value
My Father's great worth
And how my very being
From your being had birth.

In perpetual delight
In my arms I will hold her,
To praise your great goodness
And in your love enfold her.⁴

Then the camera zooms in ... to a room in a house in Nazareth, where an angel appears to a young woman.

These readings ask us to think very differently about the Christmas story. In the account given by Ignatius, the emphasis is on the way Creation has turned out disastrously and on the need for someone (the Second Person) to come down and fix things. The poem from John of the Cross has none of this: the Incarnation happens as the fulfilment of

² See Walter Lowe, 'Christ and Salvation', in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, edited by Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), 236.

³ See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, volume 2, part 2, *The Doctrine of God*, translated by T. H. L. Parker and others (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1964 [1934]), 13.

⁴ St John of the Cross, 'The Creation', in *The Poems of St John of the Cross*, translated by Kathleen Jones (London: Burns and Oates, 2001), 83.

God's plan, the joyful coupling of the Son with His bride in perpetual 'delight'. The first approach reads the Incarnation in terms of our sin and our alienation from God, the second in terms of God's overwhelming love for us.

I should like to revisit this crucial moment in Ignatius' Exercises here and ask some questions for our time. What is this world, this humanity, to which the Second Person undertakes to commit himself? And what is the nature of the encounter between them? The picture from Ignatius, in contrast to the nuptial imagery of John of the Cross, is not very flattering: humans are fighting, swearing, going to hell; is Ignatius remembering here his own swaggering past life? This is not a description that our modern age can recognise or tolerate, wedded as we are to notions of freedom and authenticity which require a more positive account of human capacity. Can the contemplation on the Incarnation be retrieved for a 'secular age'?⁵

In attempting to address this question I may sometimes ramble away from direct analysis of the Exercises themselves, though I hope not too far. It may help, therefore to present two metaphors which can help us towards a better understanding of the human-divine encounter generally and, I would claim, that of the Exercises in particular. Each of these metaphors is an example of 'overaccepting', a theatrical term that refers to the technique of overlaying or interrupting a dramatic piece with an alternative, improvised performance in such a way that the trajectory of the overall meaning is changed.⁶ Samuel Wells works out the wider implications in his book *Improvisation*: a skilled improviser can 'overaccept' the performance of the other, as opposed to simply 'blocking' the other's creativity or merely 'accepting' it (that is, suppressing his or her own creativity in response). 'Overaccepting is accepting in the light of a larger story It is a way of accepting without losing the initiative.'⁷

First—and this is an example given by Wells himself—imagine a child who strays on to the stage in a concert hall, just as a piano recital is about to begin. She sits at the piano and strikes the keys haphazardly, to very dissonant effect. The pianist simply stands behind the child and

⁵ See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard UP, 2007). Taylor argues that our present 'secular age' has witnessed 'a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and, indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace' (3).

⁶ See Keith Johnstone, *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1989).

⁷ Samuel Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004), 131.



plays alongside her. His skill is able to complement the child's inept banging with notes and chords of his own, thus improvising something more melodic.⁸

Secondly, I wish to recall a moving scene from the French-Canadian movie *Jesus of Montreal*, which retells the story of Holy Week in a modern-day setting.⁹ A group of actors are producing a passion play in the grounds of a Montreal pilgrimage sanctuary. Their historical reconstruction of the crucifixion, however, is deemed too unbearably graphic by the church authorities, who seek to cancel the performance. The stand-off between the actors and the clergy replicates, therefore, the confrontation of Jesus and his disciples with the religious authorities in Jerusalem. During the rehearsal, one of the actors asks a favour of 'Jesus' (played by Lothaire Bluteau). Would it be all right, during the passion scene, for him to recite the soliloquy from *Hamlet*? The other actors are bemused until he explains. As an actor of very average talent, he will never be asked to play the part of Hamlet; and this may be his only chance to recite the famous speech in public. 'Jesus' shrugs; the other actors agree. And so the performance takes place, concluding with Christ yielding up his spirit on the cross. The lights go out—and on comes a single spotlight, as the actor declaims: 'To be or not to be'

In the example of the little girl's unforeseen recital, the skilled pianist neither 'blocks' the child's performance (by sending her away)

⁸ Wells, *Improvisation*, 131.

⁹ *Jesus of Montreal*, directed by Denys Arcand (1989). As a lapsed Catholic and atheist, Arcand did not envision *Jesus of Montreal* as a religious film; instead seeing the story of the passion as a metaphor for the artist's struggles and temptations.

nor 'accepts' it (by letting her carry on banging away alone). Similarly, the actors find a way to include, within their re-enactment of the passion, another performance which at face value is inappropriate. This second example is especially clever; just as the subversive passion play 'interrupts' the sanitised piety of the sanctuary authorities, so the play is itself 'interrupted' by the anguished existentialism of the Hamlet soliloquy, in a way that is potentially enriching on many different levels.

The theological resonance of 'overacceptance', highlighted by Wells and taken up William T. Cavanaugh, is that God's 'script' is skilful and generous enough to find room for and include our own, even when it is wildly incongruous. God's 'performance' in the world is aimed at nudging human actions, which are the stuff of tragedy and destruction, in the direction of 'divine' comedy.¹⁰

Overaccepting imitates the manner of God's reign. For God does not block his creation: he does not toss away his original material. Since Noah, he has refused to destroy what he has made. But neither does he accept creation on its own terms. Instead he overaccepts his creation. One can see the whole sweep of the scriptural narrative as a long story of overaccepting.¹¹

The 'Pact with the Negative': Naming Ourselves

We shall explore this further, but we need first of all to return to the problem of the 'pact with the negative' mentioned above: the paradox that it seems difficult to tell the Good News without first of all narrating 'bad news' about human beings and what they are like. This is certainly a challenge to evangelization, given that our 'secular age' is not generally disposed to hear its self-sufficiency and autonomy being brought into question; even when limitation or deficiency is acknowledged, people are reluctant to turn to religious faith for answers.

And yet, if Christianity is to be true to itself, and not offer cheap or false consolation, then there should be a readiness to provoke and challenge our culture, even at the risk of being perceived as proclaiming a negative, world-denying message. There are in 2018 so many indicators of cultural sickness and danger that to ignore them would be irresponsible. I suggest a twofold diagnosis of this dangerous epoch, which Charles

¹⁰ See Wells, *Improvisation*, chapter 9, 'Incorporating Gifts'; and William T. Cavanaugh, 'From One City to Two: Christian Reimagining of Political Space', in *Migrations of the Holy: God, State and the Political Meaning of the Church* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2011), 46–68.

¹¹ Wells, *Improvisation*, 134.

Taylor ventures to call 'a secular age', but which is normally understood in relation to 'modernity': as in 'post-', 'late', 'accelerated', 'hyper-' and so on.

The first diagnosis, from the US theologian David Tracy, concerns the inadequacy of these various descriptors. If our age cannot even name itself, he asks, how is it going to 'name God'?¹² Ours is a trauma of lost identity, and the inability to name confidently is a signal of our weakness. The second diagnosis, clearly related to this, comes from the British political philosopher Gillian Rose, who describes and regrets the 'postmodern condition' as one of 'aberrated mourning': a grieving for lost certainties—except that these certainties were never really certain, so the grieving process is skewed.¹³ So, the world 'in flux' that we seek to address is a world which cannot name itself, and which is mourning badly.

We may note the similarities with Ignatius' world, as we commonly recognise it to be on the 'cusp' of the late medieval and early modern periods. Is our own epoch more or less transitional and bewildering than that of Ignatius and the first companions? The hindsight that we bring to our understanding of Ignatius is, of course, not available for our own situation. We cannot 'name' our age—any more than the first Jesuits could name theirs. So what is there, within the spirit and logic of the Exercises and within Jesuit religious wisdom more generally, that helps us make modern sense of a humanity—to repeat—fighting swearing and heading towards damnation but, nonetheless, stirring the compassion and concern of the Trinity in the Contemplation of the Incarnation?

I do not think it is too strong a 'pact with the negative' to assert that the biggest political challenge of our time is the struggle against fascism. I intend the noun with full seriousness. I would, again in all seriousness, wish to extend the term to include people's felt experience of abusive religious authority, as well as political. In no way is the epithet 'fascist' simply an extravagant or polemical metaphor, but a less contentious word might be 'swaggering'.¹⁴ The meltdown of the post-war political consensus under the financial and economic pressures of globalisation; the rise of a 'post-truth' culture; the revival of ancient antagonisms against new enemies: all have allowed for the flourishing of populist and extremist groups, and a coarsening of mainstream political discourse. Astonishingly,

¹² See David Tracy, *On Naming the Present: God, Hermeneutics and the Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994).

¹³ Gillian Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law: Philosophy and Representation* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), 70.

¹⁴ Mistress Quickly, in Shakespeare's *Henry IV Part II*, II.iv: 'If he swagger, let him not come here: no, by my faith; I must live among my neighbours: I'll no swaggerers!'

the bombastic pathologies of mid twentieth-century Europe are being revived.

Helen Berry speaks of the widespread fear that characterizes our fluctuating world.¹⁵ Fascism is one political form of this fear, taking root in the anxieties of vulnerable groups whose identity or well-being is felt to be under threat. Here I invoke Gillian Rose: though she was writing well before our present situation—she died prematurely in 1995—her words predict the current debasement of politics in the abandonment of the ‘common good’; the adoption of dualist thinking and the breakdown of bipartisan cooperation; the advent of ‘alternative facts’ and ‘post-truth’. Against all this, Rose asserts: ‘Politics begins not when you organise to defend an individual or particular or local interest, but when you organise to further the “general” interest within which your particular interest may be represented’.¹⁶ Identity politics, whether individualist or communitarian, only ends in paralysis, with the competing claims of rival groups cancelling each other out.

What is interesting here is the emotional aspect, and this is indeed the reason why I think Gillian Rose is especially relevant, even several decades after her death. Her description of ‘aberrated’ or incomplete mourning makes sense of the intense, visceral antagonism which now permeates our political discourse, amplified, no doubt, in the social-media age. But where has this anger and denial come from? In her autobiographical reflection, *Love’s Work*, Rose speaks movingly of a shocking experience of intense dislocation one afternoon in North London. What strikes her is the immensely sad disconnection between an English wedding party and the Hasidic Jewish neighbourhood which served as a backdrop but had no part in the celebration:

My disinterested perception of this happy procession was brusquely interrupted by the loud irruption of a subhuman howling, the source of which was unlocatable. It was howling as if from a dark, dark, cave, where some deformed brute had been chained and tempted since time immemorial. The howling did not cease even after the last of the wedding party has disappeared from view.¹⁷

Rose records her fear and panic: ‘It was I who was howling, in utter dissociation from myself’. Her paroxysm arises from the shocking

¹⁵ See above, 26.

¹⁶ Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, 3.

¹⁷ Gillian Rose, *Love’s Work: A Reckoning With Life* (New York: New York Review Books, 1995), 39–40.

separateness between ‘the environing Judaism and this epiphany of protestants’ with their contrasting dress: ‘the cloaks of the clandestine pious cleaved by the costumes of those weightless, redeemed beings’. Rose’s work—including this ‘subhuman howling’—has been described as a reflection upon, and a protest against, all such disconnection between people.¹⁸ Underneath the swaggering political bombast, this ‘subhuman howling’ Rose describes is still, 21 years after her death, the immensely sad but largely unheard soundtrack of our post-2016 world.

Here is material for a Week One scrutiny of our desires and passions. We ask for the grace to see which of these are directed, not towards God, but toward idols; and to see how, as a result of our tragic misreading of ourselves, we build structures of self-affirmation which separate us from one another and breed exploitation.

Overaccepting

In the beginning was the subhuman howl. So many images bring this howling to mind as the only proper reaction to the willed and vindictive divisiveness of political rallies and referenda: the ‘winners’ scorning the ‘losers’, who need to ‘get over it’, as if our politics were nothing more than a game of football. Even more painful, for Christians, is the knowledge that the Church itself, far from being a place of reconciliation and healing, has been a poisonous well for the victims of clerical abuse and for those scandalized by it. Whatever other responses from the Church are needed, surely the appropriate, human one is for each one of us to hear the howl, deep within, to make ourselves aware of the pain and loss, so we can begin to mourn properly.

Men and women, swearing, blaspheming ... (one could add ‘trolling’); the world depicted by Ignatius in the Incarnation contemplation is, perhaps, not so far off the mark. In the face of such a reality, Gillian Rose’s howl of utter dismay is an entirely natural and appropriate response; just as Weeks One and Three of the Exercises require us to feel shame, sorrow and confusion as the natural response to what we are praying about.

The visceral howl is real; but is it the *beginning*, the first word? Here is the place to comment on the overall structure and dynamic of the Exercises, and their drama of overacceptance. Just as a theatrical play is a succession of interactions between independent actors, so God’s drama is a succession of divine initiatives and human responses. Each

¹⁸ Andrew Shanks, *Against Innocence: Gillian Rose’s Reception and Gift of Faith* (London: SCM, 2008), 3–4.

instance is implicit in the preceding one, thus enabling us to speak of the unity of the dramatic action. We begin in the Exercises with the First Principle and Foundation, affirming God's purpose in creating human beings for God's praise and service. One could wish for the 'John of the Cross' version of the Incarnation to be inserted at this point: the story would begin, then, with the gasp of loving wonder from the Son as he sees His bride, and the destiny of creation (including created humanity) would be revealed as nuptial union.

In any case, the possibility of falling away from our destiny is contained within the First Principle and Foundation; this moves us into Week One, in which the dynamics of refusing God's initiative are explored. God's response to our failing is a renewed call to fellowship with God, in the form of the Son, made flesh for us (Week Two). The human response, once again, is resistance and refusal, the consequences of which we contemplate at the foot of the cross in Holy Week (Week Three). God's response to this is the raising of the Son from the dead, which is—yet another—call to peaceful fellowship with God.

The pattern is clear: God's iron determination to make sure that this story, which humans perversely want to play out as a tragedy, will eventually be a comedy. At each stage (in each 'act'), our freedom is respected; but God's response, like that of an expert chess player, takes our move into account and countermands it. To revert to the image of the theatre: our actions are not simply obliterated and overridden by God's because both are equally an integral part of the drama.

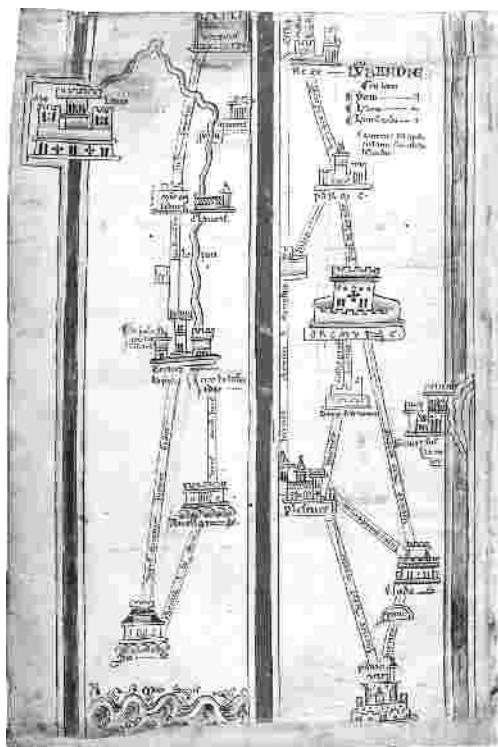
Of course, other spiritual traditions take seriously the synergy of divine and human capacities. But the structure of the Ignatian Exercises allows for a *dramatic* understanding of how this interaction plays out in history. To repeat: that history can be conceived as a joyful complementarity of human and divine wills, which goes beyond the impoverished imagination that sees only two dismal alternatives—either an ascendant divine will 'blocks' human freedom, or a triumphant human will is 'accepted' and allowed to go unhindered toward its own tragic destruction (swearing and blaspheming all the way).

Time Over Space

There is another aspect of the notion of the Exercises as drama that is worth highlighting here, because it links up with the discussion of modernity earlier on, and also with the pastoral theological strategy of Pope Francis. It is striking that Francis uses one particular maxim a great deal:

‘time is greater than space’. He has also declared that we should be concerned about ‘initiating processes rather than possessing spaces’.¹⁹

What does he mean by these mysterious phrases? A thinker who can help us make sense of this is the French Jesuit Michel de Certeau, whose work on spirituality and historical sociology has renewed our appreciation of *practices* and *performances*. It is obvious to anyone acquainted with them that the Exercises represent a series of practices to be undertaken rather than a treatise on holiness. The clue is in the name, perhaps; one can no more become holy by reading a spiritual book than one can become fit by reading a manual on physical education! In terms of the drama, there is a difference between reading the script of a play and acting it out, or watching it enacted.



Page from an *itinerary of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem*, by Matthew Paris, 1250s

Certeau alleges that the modern era (our ‘secular age’) is impoverished because it has lost sight of the importance of practices. This is because modernity has privileged a certain understanding of *space* over *time*.²⁰ We have two ways of thinking about the spiritual life, best understood through Certeau’s distinction between an *itinerary* and a *map*.²¹ In premodernity, a journey (for example a pilgrimage) was organized temporally in terms of a sequential list of places to visit or stay. This *itinerary* made sense—for the person actually making the journey. The disposition of space in the modern period, by contrast, presents the journey very

¹⁹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, nn. 222–223.

²⁰ See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: U. of California P. 1988), volume 1, 36.

²¹ Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, volume 1, 119.

differently: it appears visually, as a map, independently of anyone who undertakes it.

This has important resonances for theology, especially when we speak of a person's 'spiritual journey'. It repeats the point made above about the Exercises; they are an 'itinerary', not a 'map'. One does not 'do' the Spiritual Exercises by reading the book from cover to cover, any more than one walks a journey by contemplating a map.

For Pope Francis this distinction is fundamental. 'Time is greater than space', because Francis associates 'time' with discernment and the peaceful resolution of problems, and 'space' with conflict and division. This last point is easily confirmed if we think of the ways in which many of our spatial metaphors suggest conflict or rivalry: we 'stand our ground' or 'make a stand' in an argument, we 'stake a claim', we 'defend our position' and so on. Many conflicts, religious or secular, are contestations of territory. When, at the beginning of *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis declares once again that 'time is greater than space' (n.3), he is saying that reflection, discernment and accompaniment are more important, because their effects are longer lasting, than stating and defending a position. The encyclical is about helping people in difficult pastoral situations to discern their way forward. For Francis, the spiritual or moral life is working to an itinerary, not consulting a map.

Worth noting here is the fact that, for all that our secular age is less and less interested in institutional religion, the notion of pilgrimage (with Santiago de Compostela being the best-known example) retains an extraordinary fascination and attraction for many people. Ignatius' self-description in his *Autobiography* was 'the pilgrim'. More generally, the political theologian W. T. Cavanaugh picks up the implications of this for the life of the Church in the modern/postmodern era. The Church needs, finally, to let go of any vestiges of 'Christendom'. In other words, we should no longer aspire to be a certain kind of 'spatial' presence, as for example, when we speak of the 'place' of the Church in the secular or public 'sphere' or 'square'. To think in this way simply keeps us locked into 'turf wars'. Instead, says Cavanaugh, the Church undertakes and enacts a certain kind of *performance*—above all the eucharist—which, in important respects, transcends and reshapes our everyday understandings of time and space.²² It is our belief, and our hope, that this simple

²² See W. T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and the Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), chapter 6, 'Performing the Body of Christ'.

practice—the breaking and sharing of bread in remembrance of Christ’s perfect sacrifice—will eventually ‘overaccept’ and envelope all the imperfect strivings of the world towards justice and fellowship.

Mourning Together

Let me offer a concrete example of what is at stake in the two different kinds of religious imagination implied above. I write in Dublin after Pope Francis has visited Ireland to conclude the World Meeting of Families (August 2018). He arrived in a firestorm of criticism concerning the Church’s record on clerical sexual abuse—a continuous source of pain and anger, inflamed further by the revelations concerning the scale of historical abuse in the dioceses of Pennsylvania. Peaceful protests took place to coincide with the papal Mass in Phoenix Park on Sunday 26 August: a prominent and vocal survivor of abuse held a gathering at Dublin’s Garden of Remembrance, while a survivors’ group commemorated the hundreds of abandoned children buried at Tuam in the west of Ireland. Each of these events was entirely understandable and appropriate; but the insistence that they take place *at the same time* as the papal Mass gives them a different character.

I am aware of the importance of these sites of grief for many people who are simply too alienated and damaged to go anywhere near a church celebration. Nevertheless, there is every reason why I, a devout and bruised Catholic, listening to the ‘inhuman howl’ of my own sorrow and my need for healing after atrocity, might want to do all three: to attend the papal Mass *and*, later, to visit the places of sorrow. To insist that I have to choose between them—which I must if they are simultaneous—is to make of these performances an essentially political contest. We are, in effect, being told: your tears and anguished repentance are valid *here*, but not *here*. You need to decide: which of these sacred spaces is holier? And the inevitable outcome of such an either/or decision is to divide people, not to bring them together.

The question is not unlike the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John’s Gospel about the location of authentic worship. ‘Neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem’ (John 4:21): Jesus breaks the connection between sacred performance and specific territory. Perhaps a similar liberation awaits the Irish Church, when the nostalgia for its ‘Christendom’ existence as ‘Holy Ireland’ has finally receded. In the meantime, well-intentioned and justified protests, which nevertheless seek to ‘evict’ the Church from sacred space altogether by establishing

new and rival holy places, must be respectfully questioned. They are contestations which divide us and close off the possibility, over time, of overacceptance: the possibility of receiving—together—the mercy that all of us need. Will they help us to mourn, properly?

I am taken with the child performing beautiful music *together with* the concert pianist, despite her total lack of musical talent. I am moved by the actor who seizes the moment of a lifetime, in which his own ambition to play the most famous and anguished of tragic heroes is enveloped into, enriching and enriched by, a far grander tragic comedy. And I am fully aware that the glimpses of *shalom* which these images yield seem very improbable in a world where swearing, blaspheming, wounding and killing—deeds and words gone awry—seem to define us irredeemably. Amid the bitter coarseness of our public life, the overwhelming, the only possible, response, from deep within each of us, seems to be an inhuman, sobbing howl.

But Gillian Rose has her watchword also: 'Keep your mind in hell, and despair not'.²³

Pope Francis's prioritisation of time over space conveys his deep intuition that only pacific processes, over time, will transform the world. The intuition is expressed, above all, in his insistence on discernment, and on his understanding of pastoral care as accompaniment; likewise W. T. Cavanaugh points us to the eucharist, performed within time but shaping time and space anew. In similar vein, the child pianist and the yearning actor reflect, I hope, something of what happens when we encounter God in the Exercises. In this series of 'performances', my own compulsions and heroic desires are not obliterated; on the contrary, to quote Philip Larkin, they are 'recognised, and robed as destinies'.²⁴ I place myself discreetly and humbly in the scenes—here, as a shepherd boy in the stable of the nativity, there, as a soldier-knight, listening to my commanding king—finally to be elevated to the role of the Beloved, showered with gifts. In this way, in my totality of roles, real and desired, I find myself enfolded into Christ and into God's tragicomedy.

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²³ This saying, attributed to St Silouan the Athonite, is the epigraph to *Love's Work*.

²⁴ Philip Larkin, 'Church Going', in *Collected Poems* (London: Faber, 1988), 98.

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OUR GROWTH AND OUR FREEDOM

New Approaches to Mental Well-Being

Stephen Noone

A FAMOUS PASSAGE attributed to Viktor Frankl (although his estate has recently disputed that it was said by him) hints at a uniquely human attribute. 'Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.' Unlike other living creatures, humans always have the capacity to stand back from a conditioned response and choose an alternative.

In this way, it makes perfect sense that meditative techniques such as mindfulness have become central to recent therapeutic developments in mental health and well-being. When practised regularly, mindfulness offers a new resource that appears to give our minds greater tolerance to the demands of life and greater availability to its wonderful things. It is interesting that meditation practice in modern therapy appears to have drawn heavily on the eastern Buddhist tradition. Yet the Roman Catholic Church has a long history of contemplative practice and centuries of wisdom about the inner journey to greater freedom, compassion and peace. It may be an interesting exercise to reflect on how some of the ideas I shall describe here can be linked to those traditional Christian practices.

The Unweeded Garden

There is a general agreement that humans have a negative bias in thinking and attention. Essentially, it is an evolutionary advantage to consider negative options in a distressed or difficult situation as this increases the chances that such attention may inhibit unnecessary risk and therefore promote safety. We are the offspring of ancestors who erred on the side of caution when suspecting that a rustle in the woods might be a predator. Those ancients who disregarded their instinct and carried on regardless were probably eaten and died along with their optimistic instincts.

This negative bias is captured beautifully by Shakespeare in Hamlet's first soliloquy. Reflecting on his father's loss and the burden of a heavy and negative affect he says:

... O God! God!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,
seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
that grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
possess it merely.¹

It is the metaphor of the mind as an unweeded garden that is so interesting here. It describes how the mind operates independently of its 'gardener', continually producing negative thoughts like weeds. One logical conclusion from this metaphor could be that positive mental health is a well-weeded garden and therapy is akin to weeding. Accordingly, the traditional answer to mental distress usually involves some means of reducing or deadening it. Whether by medication or talking therapies, the essential goal is one of removal. But developments in modern therapy have moved away from these traditional approaches to one that seeks

to promote greater acceptance and tolerance of distress, and to develop a new relationship with negative and troubling thoughts.

Although new to psychology, this approach can be found in the ancient wisdom of Zen. Shunryu Suzuki, in his influential book, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, sums this up when he says: 'You should rather be grateful for the weeds you have in your mind, because eventually they will enrich your practice'.² 'Practice' here refers to formal mindfulness meditation, in which negative experiences may emerge, like weeds, to disfigure



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¹ *Hamlet*, I. II. 132–136.

² Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind: Informal Talks on Zen Meditation and Practice* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2010 [1970]), 20.

our inner calm. Rather than attempting to reduce or remove this interference, Suzuki is encouraging meditators to encounter the experience in a new way, without attempting to suppress it. Such a stance is at the heart of the modern definition of mindfulness given by Jon Kabat-Zinn: ‘paying attention in a sustained and particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally’.³

Like the gardener who sees weeds as organic material to be recycled back into the earth, we may see our intrusive thoughts and distressing emotions as offering something that is not immediately obvious. Learning to notice something without labelling it as negative may stop the continuous cycle of reaction and further response. Approaching psychological experience with a neutral or even kind curiosity may be counter-intuitive, but may also hold the key to releasing an untapped resource that will be nurturing in the future.

The behaviour of animals can be explained by a process of adaptation through natural selection. Adaptation to environmental demands within the life cycle of an individual creature can be understood through simple principles of reinforcement and punishment. All living things are likely to repeat the same behaviours if they are followed by a positive experience, and are equally likely to avoid behaviours that are followed by a punishment. These simple principles do also apply to human behaviour, but of course that is not the complete story. The development of complex language singles humans out in the animal kingdom. The capacity to think in and produce such language creates extraordinary advantages. The human mind can learn from experiences it has never encountered, it can plan for events that have not happened yet and create options through hypothetical constructs. This extraordinary capacity is acknowledged later on by Hamlet:

What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason!
how infinite in faculty! in form and movement how
express and admirable! in action how like an angel!
in apprehension how like a god!⁴

Yet with such gifts come considerable challenges. The human mind is always busy. It never stops. It is always making connections, jumping to

³ Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Mindfulness for Beginners: Reclaiming the Present Moment—and Your Life* (Boulder: Sounds True, 2012), 1.

⁴ *Hamlet*, II. II. 295–298.

conclusions and finding the gist of information. The mind operates by making comparisons and, as we have seen, has evolved to be negative.

In fact, when we take a step back and consider how the human mind operates, we can see how easy it is to slip into distress and mental ill-health. Two leading authors on the application of mindfulness to well-being, John Teasdale and Michael Chakelson, make this point very well when they say: 'the patterns of mind that keep people trapped in emotional suffering are, fundamentally, the same patterns of mind that stand between all of us and the flowering of our potential for a more deeply satisfying way of being'.⁵ Understanding these patterns may be the means to stay well and to flourish.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

One of the leading forces in the newer psychological approaches, Steve Hayes, has developed a psychological intervention called Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).⁶ The central tenet of ACT is that well-being and psychological distress can be best understood in terms of *psychological flexibility*. Destructive psychological rigidity can be broken down into six central components that offer a new way of understanding human distress, and present us with specific options to promote well-being.

Cognitive Fusion: Becoming Entangled with Our Thoughts

This may seem a novel or even outlandish idea. It is not uncommon to assume that when we think we are simply being our self and expressing who we are. Therefore, the premise that we are not our thoughts and that what we think and how we think can be dependent on a physical or emotional state and what is happening around us, can be unsettling. Yet on closer inspection it is also self-evident. If we are asked to give an important talk to a large group of people who may be sceptical about what we have to say, it is not long before our mind automatically starts to imagine possible scenarios. When we are at the start of a heavy cold we may notice our thinking becoming sluggish. And, just like Hamlet, when our mood is flat our thinking can indeed be like an unweeded

⁵ John Teasdale and Michael Chakelson, 'How Does Mindfulness Transform Suffering? I: The Nature and Origins of *Dukkha*', in *Mindfulness: Diverse Perspectives on its Meaning, Origins and Applications*, edited by J. Mark G. Williams and Jon Kabat-Zinn (London: Routledge, 2013), 90.

⁶ See Steven C. Hayes, Kirk D. Strosahl and Kelly G. Wilson, *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: An Experiential Approach to Behavior Change*, 2nd edn (New York: Guilford, 2012). The acronym, Hayes specifies, is pronounced like the word 'act'.

garden that grows to seed. The important point here is that it is one thing to have negative thoughts, but it is another to start accepting that they are true.

A main thrust of modern psychological therapy is based on enabling people to decentre themselves from their thoughts and to challenge the validity of those thoughts as accurate accounts of reality.

Experiential Avoidance

The second part of the problem occurs when we try to avoid our own experience because it is uncomfortable. People do this in a variety of ways. These include shutting down and withdrawing, using alcohol or other drugs or—as odd as this may seem to some—self-harming. The infliction of self-harm breaks the immediate encounter with painful emotional states. Unfortunately, avoidance can only ever offer the short-term pay-off of reduction and escape from distress. Before too long the discomfort returns.

Inflexible Attention: Jumping from Past to Future

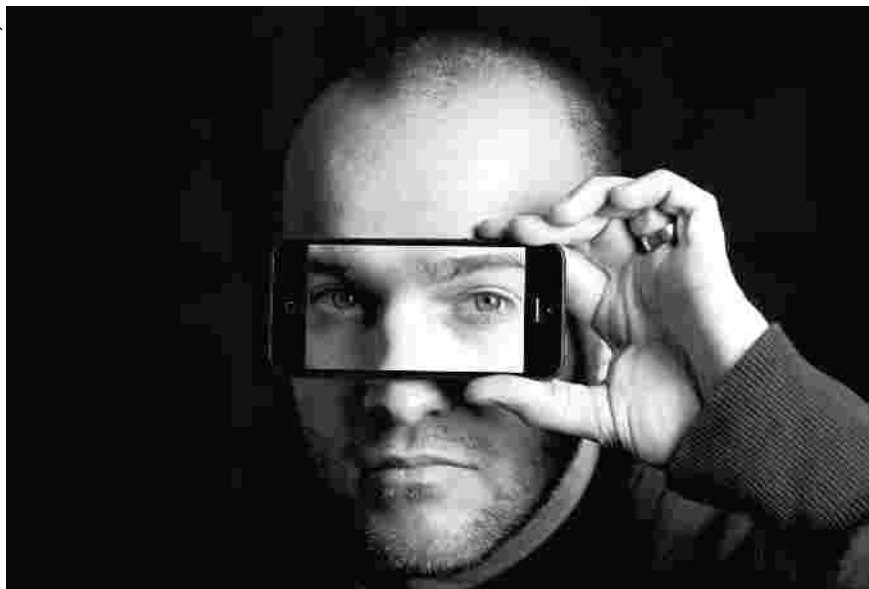
The American psychologist Ellen Langer wrote a book 25 years ago called *Mindfulness*. This was not a book about meditation, but about the dangers of being *mindless*. Langer defines mindlessness as a habit-driven preoccupation that make us insensitive to the immediate context of each present moment.⁷ It can occur when we are overly rule-governed and it can result in the destructive combination of being ‘frequently in error but rarely in doubt’.⁸ Ultimately, for Langer, the big problem of being mindless is that, when you are not there, you are not there to know you are not there! Mindlessness can mean that people sleepwalk through their lives, insensitive to the abundance that is available to them. They become imprisoned in their thoughts and are dislocated from the moment-by-moment encounter with their physical experience.

What Langer calls ‘mindlessness’ has been identified in the literature of ACT as ‘inflexible attention’: ‘rigid attentional processes that tend to carry people into the remembered past or imagined future’, at the expense of their experience of the present.⁹

⁷ See Ellen Langer, *Mindfulness* (Cambridge, Ma: Perseus, 1989), especially part 1.

⁸ Ellen Langer, *On Becoming an Artist: Reinventing Yourself through Mindful Creativity* (New York: Ballantine, 2005), 11.

⁹ Hayes, Strosahl and Wilson, *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*, 66.



Attachment to a Conceptualised Self

The concept of the self is a popular idea in our culture. It may even replace the notion of a soul in secular society. Yet it can contain a number of inherent problems.

Humans, as a species, have been around for about 200,000 years. During the early development of communication, language evolved to talk about *things*. It enabled people to tell each other about food sources and potential dangers. These things were either good or bad, useful or useless. As we have developed to the point of creating the construct of the self, we have fallen into the trap of treating it as another thing to be judged as either useful or not. In our Western culture young people spend enormous amounts of time on social media where they are continually comparing their view of their own self with the self-presentation of others. They inevitably judge themselves as not being good enough, because they are judging their self against a huge range of comparisons. It is only a matter of time before they find that they fall short.

Steve Hayes describes the self in three separate parts. If you are asked to describe yourself to others you will probably refer to your job, education, age and so on. We all carry a CV of events and achievements from our history that would form the answer to the question, *who are you?* This is the first level of self, sometimes referred to as the conceptualised self. But if you are asked to close your eyes and describe what you are

experiencing in this present moment, you may talk about the thoughts that are going through your head or the physical sensations in your body. For example, you may have a touch of indigestion and be thinking about what you ate for lunch. All of these descriptions are 'you', but clearly separate from the CV self. This different level is the experiential self. The third level of self can be understood by asking: if you are able to describe all the different sensations and thoughts you are experiencing in the present moment, who or what is observing these sensations? This observer self is the non-changing self, distinct from both experience and labels.

Psychological problems may occur when we become too closely identified with a conceptualised self that is either overly negative or the focus of our attention because we are reacting to a personal attack or criticism.

Disruption of Values: Losing Contact with What Our Lives Should Be About

One of the most important contributions made by ACT is the emphasis it places on clarifying individual values. Rather than seeing the aim of therapy as simply the reduction of distress, ACT asks the question as to what a person wants to do with his or her life and what values stand out as non-negotiable for that person. Although this sounds straightforward, the questions can be difficult for some people to answer. Values are different from goals. Values give life meaning and direction, and do not require confirmation from others. Clarifying personal values also raises the ultimate pragmatic question: *what do you want your life to stand for?* This focus can provide a helpful reference point in thinking about the cost of experiential avoidance and mindlessness.

Avoidant Persistence: Not Making Time for the Things That Matter Most

The final part of the hexagon is perhaps the most pragmatic. If we know what is most important in our lives, how can we make sure that we invest the necessary time in the things that really matter? It is easy to become tied up by habituation in ways that restrict this.

ACT suggests that well-being can be achieved by clarifying what really matters in our life and ensuring that we do make time for it. To this can be added the approaches we have learnt from addressing the other elements of psychological inflexibility: being in the here and now, not becoming entangled in our thoughts and having a willingness to experience fully the wide range of sensations and emotions that go with being alive.

What Is Well-Being?

One final bit of research may be of particular interest here. From his study of brain activity, the highly respected neuropsychologist Richard Davidson has proposed four distinct psychological elements that positively promote well-being.¹⁰

Resilience

This can be defined as the ability to recover rapidly from adversity. It has been shown that more rapid recovery in key neural circuits in the brain after exposure to a stressful event equates with higher levels of well-being. Meditation has been shown to promote this resilience, but it also seems to require huge amounts of practice time. It essentially needs several thousand hours of meditation before someone sees real change.

Positive Outlook

If that seems a little disheartening for the average person, recent research indicates that simple, shorter exercises in loving kindness and compassion meditation may alter the brain circuitry quite quickly. This type of practice resembles intercessional prayer. It is scripted, and typically involves moving the focus of befriending and well-wishing thoughts first to a mentor or loved one, then to one's self, then to a stranger, and finally to someone with whom one might be in conflict. It is usually done in stillness as part of a sitting meditation, and research suggests that thirty minutes of practice a day for two weeks can lead to a significant increase in well-being.¹¹

*Attention: 'A Wandering Mind Is an Unhappy Mind'*¹²

A very simple but ingenious study was able to access huge numbers of people via social media and ask them four questions. *What are you doing right now? Where is your mind right now? Is it focused on what you're doing, or is it focused elsewhere? How happy or unhappy are you right now?* The results

¹⁰ See Richard J. Davidson, 'The Four Keys to Well-Being', *Greater Good Magazine* (21 March 2016); and Richard J. Davidson and Brianna S. Schuyler, 'Neuroscience of Happiness', in *The World Happiness Report 2015*, edited by John Helliwell, Richard Layard and Jeffrey Sachs (New York: Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2015).

¹¹ See Christina Feldman, *Boundless Heart: The Buddha's Path of Kindness, Compassion, Joy and Equanimity* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2017); Helen Y. Weng and others, 'Compassion Training Alters Altruism and Neural Responses to Suffering', *Psychological Science*, 24/7 (July 2013), 1171–1180, at 1173.

¹² See Matthew A. Killingsworth and Daniel T. Gilbert, 'A Wandering Mind Is an Unhappy Mind', *Science*, 320 (12 November 2010), 932. The app for this study is still available from www.trackyourhappiness.org.

showed a clear relationship between being unfocused and dissatisfaction. This is an especially worrying finding for a society that assumes its members to have an attentional span of only a few minutes.

Generosity

Finally, psychologists can sometimes be accused of stating the obvious, but sometimes the obvious is worth stating. Davidson and his colleagues have been able to show that engaging in generous and altruistic behaviour activates circuits in the brain that foster well-being. These positive changes are more enduring than the response to other positive incentives, such as winning a game or earning a prize.

* * *

Psychology, like any science, is never in a position to talk with any great certainty. It remains a process of putting pieces of a hugely complex jigsaw puzzle together, but it produces a growing picture from the evidence that suggests which things are helpful. From the ideas reviewed here it would be reasonable to suggest that silent contemplative prayer, together with regularly wishing others well, being generous, being focused, being clear about what is most important in life and investing enough time in it, not getting lost in our invented sense of self, learning to see thoughts as just thoughts and being willing to experience all aspects of life as it is ... may help. What we call the result is open for discussion.

Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.
(Isaiah 40:31)

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GENEROSITY, RELATIONSHIP AND IMAGINATION FOR A WORLD IN FLUX

James Menkhaus

THE FIRST TIME I travelled to the small migrant town of Immokalee, Florida, I noticed that the environment was different from other areas of the USA. The Hispanic culture emanated from the people, the animals and the restaurants. While I felt different, I also felt at ease and welcomed. I was later told that 'Immokalee' comes from Seminole, meaning 'my home'.

I had gone to Immokalee with a group of students from John Carroll University as part of a service-immersion trip to learn about the lives of undocumented migrant workers. One of the highlights of the trip was a conversation with a student named John. As we walked along the gravel road, a young child kicked a ball over a fence and it landed at John's feet. He smiled to the kids, picked up the ball, and tossed it back. Then he turned to me and spoke from his heart: 'These are people too'. While obvious, his insight revealed a deeply theological truth. Ten years later I continue to take students to Immokalee, hoping that the Spirit works in them to bring about the same insight.

In the current political climate in the USA, immigration has become an embattled issue. Certainly, the rise of Donald Trump has poured gasoline on the already inflammatory topic, but even before his presidency it was a hotbed of debate.¹ Who belongs in the USA? A country founded by immigrants and once known as a 'melting pot' of cultures is wrestling with its identity. Immigrants coming from Mexico, Guatemala and Haiti to small towns such as Immokalee pick many of the fruits and vegetables consumed in the United States. However, these women and men have become pariahs of a society in flux. Although they work hard, they are

¹ An excellent text on the issue of immigration along the southern border of the USA during the presidency of Barack Obama is Jason de Leon, *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail* (Oakland: U. of California P, 2015).

rarely properly rewarded for their efforts and are treated as a disposable resource.

In this essay I wish to draw out of the Ignatian tradition three themes that the United States, and the world at large, could apply when approaching immigration. Although there is work being done that applies the themes of each week of the Spiritual Exercises, I wish to return to the introductory Annotations.² This is for two reasons. First, I think introductory discussions reflect where the United States currently is on this issue, not truly ready to move forward. And second, just as the introductory Annotations provide a road map of key principles for directors of the Spiritual Exercises, so too, I believe, they can provide a road map for entering into the immigration debate.

Annotation 5: The Magnanimous Spirit

The fifth of the twenty Annotations that begin the Spiritual Exercises requests that exercitants should enter into their retreat with a spirit of generosity or a willingness to do the things to which God calls them. The alternative is entering with a preconceived conclusion already established. Ignatius instructs, 'The persons who receive the Exercises will benefit greatly by entering upon them with great spirit and generosity ... so that his Divine Majesty can make use of their persons and of all they possess ...' (Exx 5). The magnanimous spirit is not only about generosity, but also humility. The willingness to enter into an experience must involve openness to what is revealed, not merely the desire to confirm an already established presupposition. The retreatant must be willing to go where God is leading.

With many issues today, those in positions of influence enter into discussion like the retreatant who knows how the retreat will conclude. Especially in politics, it is more about defeating the opposition than listening with authenticity to the contrary side. Immigration in the USA has perhaps become the most polarising political topic of all in the past year. President Trump has declared that he will take a hard line against those entering the country across its southern borders. Early in 2018 his administration established detention centres to imprison those who

² For example, Joanna Williams, director of education and advocacy at the Kino Border Initiative on the USA–Mexico border, gave a thoughtful reflection on the four Weeks of the Spiritual Exercises in her work with migrants. This talk was delivered at the Ignatian Solidarity Network College Summit in July 2018 at John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio, USA.

attempted to cross the border. Video and photos of these centres quickly found their way on to social media.

Both sides soon entrenched their views. Those who supported the centres, which notoriously practised the separation of children from their parents, referred to the repercussions of breaking the law. Attorney General Jeff Sessions even cited the Bible to defend the actions of the administration. He stated, 'I would cite you to the Apostle Paul and his clear and wise command in Romans 13 to obey the laws of the government because God has ordained the government for his purposes'.³ Holding the other position, people compared the policy to the internment of Jews in Nazi Germany. While space does not allow for an in-depth analysis of the hyperbole of both positions, it is clear that neither side is entering into dialogue with a spirit of generosity. The extremes of both positions make dialogue impossible.

The magnanimous spirit calls for entering dialogue where each side may have to give before moving forward. The Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh offers a path towards this kind of dialogue when he writes: 'No argument, no reasoning, no blame, just understanding. If you understand and you show you understand, you can love, and the situation will change.'⁴ Argument and blame are often the reason why we enter into debate, but Hanh asks us to move beyond entrenched positions towards the other, which can lead to understanding. Generosity towards the other is the beginning of true dialogue.

Annotation 15: God's Relationship with Creatures

An essential dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises, and of Ignatian spirituality in general, is the reality of a loving God who communicates directly with God's creatures. Established in the Fifteenth Annotation of the Spiritual Exercises, this is a crucial foundation for successful spiritual direction. Ignatius instructs:

Accordingly, the one giving the Exercises ought not to lean or incline to either direction but rather, while standing by like the pointer of a scale in equilibrium, to allow the Creator to deal directly with the creature and the creature with its Creator and Lord. (Exx 15)

³ Emily McFarlan Miller and Yonat Shimron, 'Why Is Jeff Sessions Quoting Romans 13 and Why Is the Bible Verse So Often Invoked?', *USA Today* (16 June 2018), available at <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/06/16/jeff-sessions-bible-romans-13-trump-immigration-policy/707749002/>, accessed 30 August 2018.

⁴ Thich Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace* (Berkeley: Parallax, 2005), 111.

The centrality of this Annotation stems from the format of the retreat: as Ignatius explains, ‘Outside the Exercises it is lawful and meritorious’ to offer counsel to others, ‘But during these Spiritual Exercises when a person is seeking God’s will, it is more appropriate and far better that the Creator and Lord himself should communicate himself to the devout soul’ (Exx 15). A director may, unfortunately, attempt to sway the one undergoing the retreat towards one perspective or another. However, trust in God and God’s love for the creature should supersede the director’s promptings.

The belief that God is working in our lives and communicates God’s love to us is difficult to comprehend even in the spiritual arena, but more so in a political one. Respecting the human dignity of all people should be central to debating political issues. This is especially true with immigration because individual human lives are directly affected by policy choices. The decision to send people ‘back’ to a conflict zone or to split a family should be taken with great care, asking how the dignity of the person is most protected in the decision.

Two criminal cases in August 2018 illustrate how in politics people have become symbols of groups rather than human beings. In one, Mollie Tibbetts, a student at the University of Iowa, was murdered by an undocumented Mexican immigrant. The case caused a national stir in the United States because of the perpetrator’s immigration status. The man, Cristhian Bahena Rivera, who confessed to the murder, became a symbol for ‘illegal immigration’ and the need to stop people from entering the country across the southern border.⁵

The same week, a man named Christopher Watts was accused of killing his pregnant wife and two children. A white, middle-class man from Colorado, Watts also admitted to murder.⁶ But, unlike Rivera, Watts did not become a media representative of all men from the same background as himself. To be clear, both crimes are heinous. The public reaction, however, has been to treat Rivera as a symbol of all undocumented migrants, whether they too have committed a crime or have just come

⁵ Stephen Dinan, ‘Suspect’s Legal Status Turns Mollie Tibbetts Case into Immigration Flashpoint’, *Washington Times* (22 August 2018), available at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/aug/22/cristhian-rivera-legal-status-turns-mollie-tibbett/>, accessed 30 August 2018.

⁶ Sady Swanson, ‘What’s next for the Colorado Murder Case against Christopher Watts?’, *Coloradoan* (30 August 2018), available at: <https://www.coloradoan.com/story/news/2018/08/30/whats-next-christopher-watts-murder-case-shanann-watts/1111964002/>, accessed 30 August 2018.

to the USA to raise money for their families. Both men will face justice in the courts, but the shame of Rivera's crime will cast a shadow over people who share nothing with him except his heritage.

Ultimately, dialogue must never forget who the human person is before God: a creature, created in love. This consideration should not dictate policy, but it provides the starting point for policy direction. Ignatius calls retreatants to see the relationship between Creator and creature as the cornerstone of the Spiritual Exercises and it should also be foundational when making decisions about other people's futures.

Annotation 18: Adaptation as Innovation

Entering dialogue with a generous spirit and remembering God's love for all, we can apply a third Annotation to the issue of immigration. The Eighteenth Annotation states, 'The Spiritual Exercises should be adapted to the disposition of the persons who desire to make them' (Exx 18). Ignatius believed that adaptation is crucial for the implementation of the Exercises because not everyone can take thirty days to make a full retreat. Such adaptation may also be needed in thinking about the way a person lives out God's call. Someone who feels called to live a life of service may respond to that call differently depending upon age, family, financial concerns and other personal issues.

Adaptation is also an important part of the Ignatian world-view. Missionaries such as Matteo Ricci in China used adaptation to bring Christianity to a new culture. Educators must adapt at Ignatian schools around the world to keep the Ignatian spirit alive in a new millennium. Adaptation is not about conforming for the sake of change; rather, like Vatican II, it is an invitation for the Spirit to enter into a changing world. Adaptation or innovation is greatly needed in the immigration debate in the USA. Both sides feel that they have exhausted their positions. However, there must be something between creating a country of open borders and closing off the country to all who wish to enter it. Matteo Ricci was faced with a Chinese culture whose beliefs were new to him and he sought to meld Christian principles with what he encountered. Such ingenuity will be crucial to any solutions we may find on this issue.

While I do not have an answer myself, I wish to offer an example from history. In the 1980s the Republican president Ronald Reagan was faced with a similar issue. His response was to issue an amnesty bill in 1986 that allowed 3 million people who were in the United States illegally to gain legal status. During my time in Immokalee, I have learnt that

many people who own small homes on the outskirts of the town have those homes because of the Reagan Amnesty bill. Many of these men and women continue to harvest produce and work in other areas of the town. They are not treated like criminals, but as citizens who work hard, pay tax and help provide for the country. This does not mean that a new amnesty bill is the best path forward, but it took ingenuity to create this solution in 1986. Is there a new form of adaptation to the signs of the times that offers a way of proceeding now?

These Are People Too

When I last visited Immokalee, in the spring of 2018, I met one of my personal heroes, Gerardo Reyes-Chavez. He was one of the founding members of a group called the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, which was established in 1993. This group labours to make sure the rights of farm workers are respected and that their pay more closely reflects their tireless work in the fields. Reyes-Chavez told us that he grew up as a young boy in Mexico to learn as much as he could and to make the world his classroom. No matter where you go, you can take knowledge and experience that you gain with you. He remembered this lesson as he worked in the fields and now as he advocates the rights of farm workers.

His message is timely. What can we learn about the position of the other so that we can enter into generous dialogue? How can we respect



The Coalition of Immokalee Workers demonstrating in Miami

the humanity of all people? What have we learnt that will help us solve our problems through adaptation and ingenuity? These are not simple questions and they cannot be answered in print. Instead, they need to be explored in a world in need of reconciliation.

In his book on virtue ethics, *Go and Do Likewise*, William Spohn writes about the evolution of prayer.⁷ He says children often ask God for things, telling God what they want. As they grow, this becomes listening to God, shifting the agenda from 'me'-centred to God-centred. This is not the final step, though. The last step in the process becomes listening 'for' God, rather than 'to' God. This movement, from 'for' to 'to' takes the onus off the creature even to know the correct questions to ask God. Maybe we do not have all the answers, or even the questions. Our world in flux may need people who are not searching for answers but instead searching for the loving God in our midst, the God who is waiting to lead us to new places of dialogue, places where John's observation will be found to be true: 'These are people too'.

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⁷ William Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise* (New York: Continuum, 2007).

PAPAL WISDOM FOR THE LONG TERM

Kenneth R. Overberg

LONG BEFORE THERE WAS a Jesuit Pope, fidelity to the papacy characterized the Ignatian spirit. Turning to papal wisdom, then, in our world in flux is a most appropriate Ignatian response. Recent popes have consistently addressed the two issues that dominate humanity's long-term security—nuclear arms and the environment—offering insight and guidance for action that will, we hope, lead to there actually being a long term.

Nuclear Arms and the Threat of War

John XXIII

Having lived through two world wars, St Pope John XXIII developed a passion for peace. This passion intensified when, in 1962, he helped resolve the Cuban missile crisis, a confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union that threatened nuclear war. John shared his vision of a path to peace in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*.¹ This vision is expressed in ever-widening concentric circles, with human dignity as the centre and basis. Then come human rights: life and the means necessary for its proper development—food, clothing, shelter, medical care and education. These rights bring with them corresponding duties. As social creatures, we must contribute to the common good—those conditions that enable people to flourish as human beings. The next circle is that of public authorities, whose responsibilities include such basic things as transport, communications, water, public health and housing. These authorities have the challenge of balancing competing rights and claims.

Pope John expands his focus to consider international relations, focusing on truth, justice, solidarity, and liberty. Here he addresses war,

¹ This and all the following papal statements can be found at www.vatican.va. All italics are original.

deploring the production of arms with its 'vast outlay of intellectual and economic resources' (n.109). He concludes that justice and humanity demand that the arms race should cease, weapon stockpiles be reduced equally and simultaneously, and nuclear weapons be banned (n.112). To move towards this ideal of the universal common good, the Pope calls for a public authority with worldwide powers and the means to pursue it. This authority must be set up by common accord and not imposed by force. Recognising that the one body closest to such an authority is the United Nations, Pope John affirms its Universal Declaration of Human Rights and prays that the UN 'may become ever more equal to the magnitude and nobility of its tasks' (n.145).

All the popes who have followed John XXIII (except John Paul I, who died only 33 days after becoming pope) have affirmed John's convictions about nuclear arms and the need for a true world political authority.

Paul VI

Saint Pope Paul VI issued his key encyclical on social justice in 1967, *Populorum Progressio*. Here he describes the way to authentic peace by focusing on 'integral human development', that is, on developing the whole person and every person. He expands the traditional emphasis of early encyclicals on economic justice to focus on all aspects of human life. To help realise the goal of authentic development he calls for aid to poor nations, equitable trade relations and universal charity.

Moving in this way towards the authentic development of all people will lead to true peace. Paul states: 'Extreme disparity between nations in economic, social and educational levels provokes jealousy and discord, often putting peace in jeopardy' (n.76). He adds, agreeing with John XXIII, 'Who can fail to see the need and importance of thus gradually coming to the establishment of a world authority capable of taking effective action on the juridical and political planes?' (n.78)

Shortly after writing this encyclical, Pope Paul created the World Day of Peace, to be celebrated every January 1.² He encouraged not only the Roman Catholic Church but also all people of good will to repeat this commemoration of hope and promise every year. Paul issued ten more statements on the World Day of Peace. In his 1977 statement, 'If You Want Peace, Defend Life', the Pope reflects on the institutions and actions that promoted peace after World War II, but worries about

² See 'Message of His Holiness Pope Paul VI for the Observance of a Day of Peace' (1 January 1968).

new threats, especially nuclear arms, with the potential for ‘terrifying destruction’ (n.5). He reflects on how the arms race takes resources from schools, health and civic welfare. ‘The policy of massive armaments is immediately called into question With forthright boldness of our principles, we thus denounce the false and dangerous programme of the “arms race”.’ (n.15) Thus he reaffirms his conviction that peace is a duty.

John Paul II

During his many years as pope, St Pope John Paul II wrote numerous World Day of Peace messages. A list of some of the topics offers a sense of John Paul’s inclusive vision: ‘Development and Solidarity: Two Keys to Peace’; ‘Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All Creation’; ‘If You Want Peace, Reach Out to the Poor’; ‘Women: Teachers of Peace’; ‘Respect for Human Rights: The Secret of True Peace’; ‘No Peace without Justice, No Justice without Forgiveness’; ‘Do Not Be Overcome by Evil but Overcome Evil with Good’. In these and other messages, and in his encyclicals, John Paul II contributed to the development of the Catholic view on war and peace. He offered nuance and new insight into the Church’s teaching on non-violence, humanitarian intervention and forgiveness in international politics. He encouraged more interfaith dialogue and questioned narrow applications of the traditional ‘Just War’ theory.³

Given its timing (shortly before the United States invaded Iraq in 2003), John Paul’s address to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See is particularly striking. The Pope begins with a sobering summary of the state of the world:

I have been personally struck by the feeling of fear, which often dwells in the hearts of our contemporaries. An insidious terrorism capable of striking at any time and anywhere; the unresolved problem of the Middle East, with the Holy Land and Iraq; the turmoil disrupting South America, particularly Argentina, Colombia and Venezuela; the conflicts preventing numerous African countries from focusing on their development; the diseases spreading contagion and death; the grave problem of famine, especially in Africa; the irresponsible behaviour contributing to the depletion of the planet’s resources: all these are so many plagues threatening the survival of humanity, the peace of individuals and the security of societies. (n.2)

³ For more details, see Drew Christiansen, ‘Catholic Peacemaking, 1991–2005: The Legacy of Pope John Paul II’, *The Review of Faith and International Affairs*, 4 (2006), 21–28.

Courtesy Ronald Reagan Library



John Paul II with Ronald Reagan in 1984

But immediately John Paul adds: ‘Yet everything can change’ (n.3). Such change depends on political leaders, so the Pope lists some requirements that must be met ‘if entire peoples, perhaps humanity itself, are not to sink into the abyss’ (n.3). The list begins with three affirmations: respect for life, respect for law and the duty of solidarity. John Paul adds that this list implies that peoples and leaders must have the courage to say no to death, no to selfishness, no to war.

War is not always inevitable. It is always a defeat for humanity I say this as I think of those who still place their trust in nuclear weapons and of the all-too-numerous conflicts which continue to hold hostage our brothers and sisters in humanity. (n.4)

John Paul concludes that it is possible to change the course of events with good will, trust in others and fidelity to commitments.

Benedict XVI

Benedict’s major encyclical on social justice, *Caritas in Veritate*, was originally intended as a commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of Paul VI’s *Populorum Progressio* (1967). Delays pushed Benedict’s encyclical into 2008, and then the financial crisis and global recession called for revision. The result was that *Caritas in Veritate* finally appeared in 2009, but still celebrates and affirms Paul’s emphasis on authentic human development as the path to peace.

Benedict addresses a wide range of topics, though he highlights economic ones. The Pope affirms that globalisation and technology offer great promise for authentic human development—but also present a profound threat. Human work rooted in charity and truth and expressed in justice, the common good and a consistent ethic of life will help fulfil their promise. In this encyclical, Benedict discusses peace-building in the context of technology. He writes: ‘Even peace can run the risk of being considered a technical product’. While diplomatic work, strategies to end military conflicts and plans to deal with the causes of terrorism are all necessary, the Pope urges that these efforts ‘be based on values rooted in the truth of human life’: solidarity, mutual understanding and love (n.72).

In his World Day of Peace messages, Pope Benedict often returns to the theme of authentic human development as the path to peace. In his final message, ‘Blessed Are the Peacemakers’ (2013), he writes:

It is alarming to see hotbeds of tension and conflict caused by growing instances of inequality between rich and poor, by the prevalence of a selfish and individualistic mindset which also finds expression in an unregulated financial capitalism (n.1).

Benedict speaks directly about nuclear arms in his first World Day of Peace message in 2006, ‘In Truth, Peace’:

What can be said ... about those governments which count on nuclear arms as a means of ensuring the security of their countries? Along with countless persons of good will, one can state that this point of view is not only baneful but also completely fallacious. In a nuclear war, there would be no victors, only victims. (n.13)

Similarly, in his 2007 message, ‘The Human Person, the Heart of Peace’, the Pope states:

Another disturbing issue is the desire recently shown by some States to *acquire nuclear weapons*. This has heightened even more the widespread climate of uncertainty and fear of a possible atomic catastrophe. We are brought back in time to the profound anxieties of the ‘cold war’ period Unfortunately, threatening clouds continue to gather on humanity’s horizon. The way to ensure a future of peace for everyone is found not only in international accords for *the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons*, but also in the determined commitment to seek their reduction and definitive dismantling. May every attempt be made to arrive through negotiation at the attainment of these objectives! The fate of the whole human family is at stake! (n.15)

Pope Francis

Although Francis may be better known for his care for the environment, he has also expressed profound concern about war and nuclear weapons. In his 2017 World Day of Peace message, 'Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace', he recalls the world wars and the threat of nuclear war. Francis describes present-day conflicts as 'a horrifying *world war fought piecemeal*'. He lists some of the horrors of the war: 'terrorism, organized crime and unforeseen acts of violence, the abuses suffered by migrants and victims of human trafficking; and the devastation of the environment'. He concludes that violence 'is not the cure of our broken world' and leads to the death of many people, 'if not all' (n.2).

Already in his first World Day of Peace message (2014) Francis discusses the immense suffering caused by war. He affirms the emphasis of his papal predecessors on authentic human development for every person as the path to peace. To move towards that goal, he writes, 'I make my own the appeal of my predecessors for the non-proliferation of arms and for disarmament of all parties, beginning with nuclear and chemical weapons disarmament' (n.7).

Environmental Crisis

Pope Francis is not the first pope to address the ecological crisis. In 1971 Paul VI already discusses the issue in his apostolic letter, *Octogesima Adveniens*, celebrating the eightieth anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (the encyclical often described as the first of modern Catholic Social Teaching). All of Paul's successors have also expressed concern about the environment.

Pope Paul VI

In *Octogesima Adveniens* the Pope reflects on the significant changes that have taken place since Leo's encyclical (in 1891), so as 'to extend the teaching of our predecessors, in response to the new needs of a changing world'. The challenges he addresses include urbanisation, the new roles of women, racial and cultural discrimination, immigration and the exploitation of the environment. Paul's reflections on ecology are brief but significant:

... another transformation is making itself felt, one which is the dramatic and unexpected consequence of human activity. Man is suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature he risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of

this degradation. Not only is the material environment becoming a permanent menace ... but the human framework is no longer under man's control, thus creating an environment for tomorrow which may well be intolerable. (n.21)

John Paul II

Pope John Paul dedicated his 1990 World Day of Peace message to the ecological crisis. He begins with a stark and sobering statement:

In our day, there is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by the arms race, regional conflicts and continued injustices among peoples and nations, but also by a lack of *due respect for nature*, by the plundering of natural resources and by a progressive decline in the quality of life (n.1).⁴

Throughout the message the Pope emphasizes that the crisis is a moral problem requiring attention to ethical values. After a biblical reflection on the goodness of creation, John Paul describes some of the causes of the crisis: the indiscriminate application of advances in science and technology, 'industrial growth, massive urban concentrations and vastly increased energy needs ... the burning of fossil fuels [and] unrestricted deforestation' (n.6). All of these, he argues, demonstrate a 'lack of respect for life' (n.7)

In response, John Paul begins by stressing that '*Respect for life, and above all for the dignity of the human person, is the ultimate guiding norm for any sound economic, industrial or scientific progress*' (n.7). He recalls Vatican II's emphasis on the universal destiny of all goods: 'God destined the earth and all it contains for the use of every individual and all peoples' (n.8).⁵ Such a goal, he admits, demands a 'more internationally coordinated approach to the management of the earth's goods' (n.9) along with appropriate action by individual nations, both in creating fitting standards and in addressing structural forms of poverty.

John Paul turns his attention to warfare as a related threat—especially chemical, bacteriological and biological warfare. He concludes that 'any form of war on a global scale would lead to incalculable ecological damage' (n.12), destroying human life and social structures, ruining crops and vegetation, and poisoning the soil and water. Here the two great threats to life merge. The Pope ends by emphasizing the duties of

⁴ John Paul II, 'Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation' (1 January 1990).

⁵ See *Gaudium et Spes*, n.69.

individuals, nations and the international community to search for peace and to help restore a healthy environment (n.15).

John Paul returned to this theme as part of his 1999 World Day of Peace message on human rights. After noting the danger of damage to land and sea, flora and fauna, the Pope states that the 'world's present and future depend on the safeguarding of creation, because of the endless interdependence between human beings and their environment'.⁶

Benedict XVI

Pope Benedict addressed the ecological crisis a number of times, including in his message to the United Nations summit of 2009 on climate change, his major encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (also 2009) and his World Day of Peace message in 2010. Describing the earth as a precious gift of the Creator, the Pope urges the UN summit to protect the environment. 'The economic and social costs of using up shared resources must be recognised with transparency and borne by those who incur them, and not by other peoples or future generations.'⁷ So Benedict encourages world leaders to act jointly, 'respecting the law and promoting solidarity with the weakest regions of the world'.

Pope Benedict develops these themes in his encyclical, stating 'there is a pressing moral need for renewal solidarity, especially in relationships between developing countries and those that are highly industrialised' (n.49). He notes that the way humans treat the environment influences the way they treat themselves. This calls for some reflection on the lifestyle of contemporary society, which Benedict adds, 'in many parts of the world, is prone to hedonism and consumerism'. The Pope then speaks of the Church,

The Church has a responsibility towards creation and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere. In so doing, she must defend not only earth, water and air as gifts of creation that belong to everyone. She must above all protect mankind from self-destruction. (n.51)

In his 2010 World Day of Peace message, Benedict asks,

Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change, desertification, the deterioration and loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas, the pollution of rivers and

⁶ John Paul II, 'Respect for Human Rights: The Secret of True Peace' (1 January 1999), n.10.

⁷ Benedict XVI, 'Videostatement to the UN 2009 Summit on Climate Change' (24 September 2009).

aquifers, the loss of biodiversity, the increase of natural catastrophes and the deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions?⁸

To his long list of exigencies the Pope adds ‘the growing phenomenon of “environmental refugees”’ and conflicts over access to natural resources. Benedict states that humanity faces a complex set of moral crises that calls for a heightened sense of interdependence and for a lifestyle marked by sobriety, intergenerational solidarity and responsibility. He mentions a number of specific initiatives that would promote authentic human development while expressing respect for creation: ‘a model of development based on the centrality of the human person, on the promotion and sharing of the common good, on responsibility, on a realization of our need for a changed life-style, and on prudence’ (n.9). These initiatives include technological and scientific research into innovations such as solar energy, management of forests, ‘strengthening the linkage between combating climate change and overcoming poverty’ (n.10), and education for peace. ‘In a word, concern for the environment calls for a broad global vision of the world.’ (n.11)

**Humanity
faces a
complex set
of moral
crises**

In this context Benedict, like John Paul II, turns to the related threat of nuclear war. He encourages progressive disarmament and the elimination of all nuclear weapons ‘whose presence alone threatens the life of the planet and the ongoing integral development of the present generation and of the generations yet to come’ (n.11). He concludes that protection of the environment in order to build a world of peace is a challenge and duty for every person.

Pope Francis

In his encyclical *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home*, Pope Francis addresses not just people of good will but ‘every person living on this planet’ (n.3). His introduction lists a number of themes that will appear regularly throughout the encyclical. These include the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the conviction that everything in the world is connected and the serious responsibility of international and local policy (see n.16).

In discussing pollution and climate change, like his predecessors the Pope urges humans to recognise ‘the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption’ (n.23). Francis accepts the evidence (still

⁸ Benedict XVI, ‘If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation’ (1 January 2010), n.4.

rejected by some) that global warming is mainly caused by human activity. He writes:

Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day. Its worst impact will probably be felt by developing countries in coming decades. (n.25)

With similar attention and care, Francis discusses water (both quality and quantity), the loss of biodiversity, the breakdown of society and the decline in quality of life and global inequality (nn.27–52). He expresses his frustration with the weak political responses to these threats to our common home, stating ‘the most one can expect is superficial rhetoric, sporadic acts of philanthropy and perfunctory expressions of concern for the environment’ (n.54).

For a stronger response, Pope Francis looks to scripture. He corrects false interpretations of the creation stories and affirms that humans have a duty to protect the earth (n.66, 67). Later he adds, ‘Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.’ (n.91)

After discussing the human roots of the ecological crisis, especially the dominance of the technocratic paradigm (nn.106–114), Francis offers his view of an ‘integral ecology’, affirming that we face a single complex crisis that is both social and environmental. ‘Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.’ (n.139) Two themes emerge as necessary: the common good and intergenerational solidarity, ‘since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us’ (n.159).

Francis then turns to the ‘paths of dialogue’ that can ‘help us escape the spiral of self-destruction which currently engulfs us’ (n.163). The first of these takes place internationally, to confront issues that cannot be resolved by one nation; like earlier popes, Francis affirms the ‘urgent need of a true world political authority’ (n.175). Pope Francis next encourages national and local dialogues to help different communities deal with their own particular challenges. Another necessary dialogue is that between politics and economics: ‘Today, in view of the common good, there is urgent need for politics and economics to enter into a frank dialogue in the service of life’ (n.189). Here, the Pope sees the

need to challenge the goal of maximization of profits (n.190). Finally, Francis advocates dialogue between the religions and science.

‘Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone.’ (n.202) With these words Pope Francis begins the final chapter of *Laudato Si’*. This chapter is rich, reflective, challenging, spiritual, profound; it invites prayerful pondering and committed action. In it the Pope challenges the consumer lifestyle, recommends education in environmental responsibility and gives examples of specific everyday actions that ‘reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings’ (n.211). He affirms the role both of political institutions and of the Church in raising awareness of environmental concerns. He speaks of simplicity, joy, and a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle (n.222). He ends with prayer.

Discerning Responses

Thinking about nuclear arms, the ecological crisis and the wisdom of the popes brings us to a fundamental aspect of Ignatian spirituality—discernment. There are, of course, many serious life issues, but only these two—the use of nuclear arms and the destruction of the environment—can wipe out humanity. As individuals and groups confront these two global threats to life, the question emerges: what ought I or we to do? Paying attention to the movements of grace in the midst of competing claims offers a sound way of proceeding

The calls to work for peace and to care for our common home express a vision rooted in the gospel but also present a serious challenge. These calls may not fit an individual’s values as these have been



Pope Francis releases a dove of peace

shaped by class, gender, politics or society. Besides pondering what successive popes have said, working with and learning from others may help in discernment. Forming or joining a civic or faith-based group can offer support in making counter-cultural decisions. Whether as individuals or groups we can research what is happening politically, socially and economically in our local area to help promote peace and care for the earth. Then we can pick an issue and get involved.

Some people may be able to have influence in their business. Others may enter politics. Most can vote—but everyone can pray. Pope Francis offers a fine example for all believers at the end of his encyclical:

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey upon it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognise that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.

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THE TWO STANDARDS AND IGNATIAN LEADERSHIP

Nikolaas Sintobin

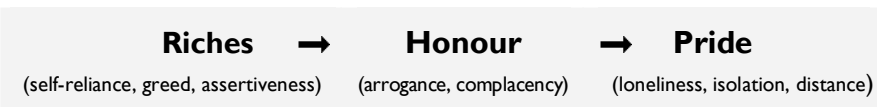
IN HIS MEDITATION on the Two Standards, Ignatius offers us a way of reading two very different experiences. The meditation testifies to a refined understanding both of human psychology and of Christian spiritual experience. It is about two scales of values that we all recognise. The first one is very attractive, even though it represents the dynamics of evil. The second is not attractive at all at first glance. However, this is the one that leads us to Jesus.

The Dynamics of Evil

Evil is the power that wants to destroy human beings. The ‘enemy’ tries to isolate us from other people, to lock us up in ourselves and thus to draw us away from real life. Ignatius teaches us that the evil one likes to take the form of the angel of light (Exx 332). Under the disguise of the good, starting from something that is at first only good and therefore seems attractive, he eventually destroys us as human beings by destroying our relationships. This applies both to individuals and to communities. He does this in two ways.

The Path of Systematic Self-Overestimation

This first path seems attractive, at least at the beginning. We are spontaneously drawn to it. Ignatius distinguishes three steps here, each following from the last.



and it is the right answer. My students are really fortunate to have such a teacher. What a good thing for my colleagues that they are allowed to work with someone like me.

I am also a real gift for the diocese. I just hope they realise how lucky they are.

Fortunately for the whole organization, there is at least one person of my level and competence. How on earth would our community be able to function if I were not here ...? It is so good for our network that there is at least one work where everything is really in order: our planning, our personnel policy, the development of our vision They can at least take an example from us.

Actually I am more or less irreplaceable. And, in all modesty I just have to say that I owe it all in the first place to my own strength, talents, competence, creativity and work. Thank you very much, my God, that you have made me so good.

Thus we end up at the second stage, that of *honour*: everything derives from my own merit.

I owe everything to myself. It is because of my hard work and because of all the human and technical know-how I have developed. Meanwhile, the level of my colleagues, the other schools, the other retreat houses ... my goodness. They are friendly people. At least, most of them. They only do what they can. They do their best. You can't blame them for that. But, as I say, the level on which they operate leaves a lot to be desired. At the very least, I am a professional. The conclusion is simply evident: since I have, I know and I am more than the others, I am also better than the others.

This brings us to the third stage, that of *pride*. At my own level, in my role and in my sector, I start to regard myself as the centre of the world: the smartest, the best, the most interesting, the most efficient

To some extent, I'm a bit the one who keeps the school going. What would happen if I were ever to leave this place?!

What would happen to the community and to the province if they couldn't count on me? Luckily I can give some advice to our provincial from time to time. That way, he gets to hear something sensible now and then.

I am simply at the top of the pyramid and, in fact, even if I do not really want to admit it, I am looking down on the others. They have the right to exist. But I can't really work with them, let alone need them.

There is only one problem. At the top I am all alone. There is only room for one. That's me.

I don't need the opinion of my colleagues. My presentations are simply better than theirs. There is no need for me to listen to my students or my colleagues. They should listen to me as much as possible. The provincial has nothing to teach me. He just doesn't know what it's all about.

I am simply better; I know better. What could I learn from others? What could cooperation on an equal footing bring me? By the way, I have also noticed that they have now, in fact, become a bit frightened of me. People admire me, admittedly. But when I'm very honest, I find that they don't love me. They start to keep their distance.

I am well aware that there are still weaknesses in my way of working and in our organization. But I'd rather not talk about that; they don't matter much. I do realise that I don't always have the answer either. Some people refer to this as vulnerability. But it would be quite ludicrous if I showed that to my subordinates or colleagues. Besides, the attraction and persuasiveness of what I can and do know is so great that these imperfections no longer have any importance. Anyway, where could I go to for advice or help? I would embarrass my partners with difficult questions to which they do not know the answers.

A subtle form of this dynamic may mean that you can see it in sharp focus and clearly at work among others—colleagues, brothers—but, at the same time, you are firmly convinced that things are really different for you.

Ignatius likes to call the devil 'the enemy of human nature'. What is specific to human nature—as God wants it to be—is to be in relation, a relation of mutual respect and appreciation, living and working with others. This is exactly what the enemy, starting from the attractiveness of riches, has successfully destroyed.

The logic of wealth and pride has cut me off from others and destroyed my relationships. I am efficient and productive, very definitely. But on the inside I have become a hard, lonely and complacent being. As successful as I may seem to the outside world, at the bottom I am actually an unhappy person. I am the prisoner of my 'riches', which are so attractive; my 'treasures' have become my golden cage. I do feel somewhere that something is wrong. But I will not give up this deep secret for any money in the

world. My 'riches' have led me to hell in a sly way. All my good qualities have, in a sense, been perverted. Instead of opportunities they have become obstacles.

The Downward Spiral

The dynamics of evil can just as easily lead us into a downward spiral, of systematic self-underestimation and feelings of inferiority. This is the mirror image of the upward spiral. Ignatius does not speak explicitly about this. But, fundamentally, it is about the same thing: insisting too much on all kinds of richness, this time the *absence* of richness.

Denial of Self-Worth → Inferiority → Self-Destruction

Instead of considering yourself to be great, you believe yourself to be nothing. In your heart there is a voice that says:

I have nothing to offer, no special talents, I am not liked by my collaborators; I am simply too stupid, pedagogically a disaster, I stumble more than I speak, I have nothing to offer my pupils, let alone my colleagues. The mission I received from the provincial, that is just to keep me busy. They don't really know what to do with me, nor do I know myself. In community sharing or staff meetings I prefer to keep quiet rather than to speak nonsense. If it wasn't that I had a permanent contract, I would be sacked tomorrow. If the superiors had known what I really am, they would never have allowed me to start as a novice. I'm just not worth anything. When I compare my organization with the sister organizations of the other provinces, I feel like a small mosquito in front of an elephant.

Everything is stuck and every step is one too many. If, once in a while, things go well, then you can't really accept it any more. It must be an accident. A friendly comment from a colleague must be flattery. An encouraging word from the director cannot be sincere.

He simply understands what the problem is with me and so, at best, he felt sorry for me. It is simply the objective truth that I am an inferior being.

You are your own prisoner, locked up in your own dungeon, this time not made up of all your fantastic talents but of your limitations. You are the only one who has the key to unlock the prison cell, but the last thing you will do is use that key. Your feelings of inferiority have become a self-fulfilling prophecy. It's just a small step from 'I can't do anything' to

'I'm nothing'. You consider yourself to be a superfluous, awkward, deadweight, isolated from others, without value or dignity.

This attitude is particularly prevalent among younger people. But adults, too, can get stuck in this logic. Thoughts of running away or quitting or even suicide—'I'm done with it'—are not far away any more. Here, too, evil conceals itself in the form of good. Your own disappearance or elimination from human society will give you and others peace and quiet. Here, too, relationship—that which defines us as human—is seriously disturbed, because of a distorted attitude towards 'riches', or rather their pretended absence. The enemy takes advantage of your vulnerability to destroy relationships here as well. You don't dare or can't ask for help. You sincerely believe that if you start to show your vulnerability to another person, all is lost. Now you are hiding behind a front The fear, the shame, the inferiority mean that you hardly dare enter into an open relationship with other people, let alone with God. Here too, as a human being, you are in danger of complete loss through an overvaluation of riches, this time in the variant of not having certain forms of riches.

The Dynamics of Good: The Dynamics of Jesus

The dynamics of evil tries to destroy our relationship with others and to make life impossible. The dynamics of good—the dynamics of the life Jesus teaches us to live—does exactly the opposite. Here, too, three stages can be distinguished. At first sight, they do not seem so attractive. But this is the golden path of evangelical life as way to God.

Poverty → Humiliation → Humility
(limitation, powerlessness)

The dynamics of Jesus starts from the experience that human beings are small and unfinished and not self-sufficient. We need each other. If I dare to look honestly at my reality, then I am constantly confronted with my poverty. We do not live in a perfect world and always encounter the limitations, the smallness, the confines of knowledge and ability that characterize our human reality. This is true for my own personal imperfection as well as those of other people and of the organizations and structures in which we work. Whether we like it or not we have too little time, we lack all kinds of know-how to be able to cope all on our own. We are making mistakes. We are poor and limited people and we

need help. If we are honest, we can only conclude that we cannot live and work without others.

I may have prepared the dossier so well; I may have done everything I could; and I may have done it well; but the outcome is often different from what I had foreseen.

Our spirituality may be so rich, but for some people it just doesn't take hold, and for some problems it doesn't offer an answer.

My personal experience of vows or marriage, community life, the concrete organization of our retreat centre or our social centre, of our province ... if you look at it a little more closely, there are problems everywhere. In theory, it's all very nice. Practice is different.

We had worked out a fantastic project with our province, the financing was complete, the necessary people were found, there was a good communication and, nevertheless, it has become a big fiasco—a nightmare.

Like every human being, I have talents. I also have limitations. Sometimes I have particular characteristics that mortify me. Sometimes I am confronted with this in a very unpleasant way.

Spontaneously, a person prefers to avoid the experience of this poverty. It takes courage to look it straight in the eye. The awareness of such poverty simply hurts. After all, we want to be strong and independent. We want to be able to handle everything, and everyone, on our own. Experiencing our own powerlessness, limitation, injury and brokenness is a little humiliating. No healthy person longs for humiliation as such. No healthy person likes to be confronted with poverty. You do not desire it in your organization, in your specific mission, nor with regard to yourself, in your family or in your community.

Nevertheless, Ignatius mentions this second step of humiliation as an important one in the imitation of Christ. And in his *Autobiography* we see time and again how Ignatius does not shy away from humiliation. Sometimes, in his desire to identify himself more intensively with Jesus, he himself consciously searches for it. In his *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius regularly invites us to imitate the poor and humiliated Christ.

Let us not forget that it is the ultimate humiliation of the cross that will allow Jesus to experience and thus reveal to us the fullness of God's love. Perhaps, therefore, we too do not need to fear the experience of humiliation so much—humiliation in the footsteps of Jesus—which always comes at the wrong time and which always hits us just where we do not

want it to hit us. Perhaps we, too, can make sense of this humbling but fundamentally unavoidable confrontation with our poverty in such a way that it can enable us to become more connected with the Lord and with God, and thus to grow in authentic humility and real humanity.

You have the choice. You can always refuse the confrontation with poverty and the humiliation that goes with it. But then the risk is real that you will end up in self-deception, running away from your reality. You can also face poverty and humiliation, and try to find a place for them out of a desire to identify more with Jesus. Then they become a springboard to grow in truth and humility.

Being humble means accepting that you cannot do everything, that you are limited as a human being, as a group, as an organization; that you do not control everything; that you dare, or desire, to open up to the help and assistance of others; that you can receive, rather than just give yourself. Working together, making compromises, experiencing your limitations and dependence, is no longer a failure. The other, whether a colleague, younger person or sister organization, is no longer a rival to whom you have to prove yourself but a partner from whom and with whom you can receive more life, in mutual trust, learning, working things out and enriching your experience.

Humility makes you discover that all the beauty in life is ultimately a gift. You can only really give if you have learned to receive first. To need to receive, to know yourself dependent and vulnerable, is no longer an experience of failure but a privileged way to live more to the full. Consider the conversion of Thérèse of Lisieux. At first she thinks she will set a good example on her own and do everything herself, far better than everybody else. This will be a total failure. In the end she will say that she can only hold out empty hands—and with gratitude. For in her empty hands she can receive much more grace.¹

Humility makes gratitude possible. Humility is the experience that it is the other who makes you great. Ultimately, for the believer, that other is God. Humility is the source and condition of joy par excellence. Humility makes a person gentle and shows the way to humour and healthy self-mockery. Humility means that imperfection is no longer seen as an obstacle, but as an invitation to enter into a real relationship with the other and to receive and learn from each other.

¹ See *The Prayers of St Thérèse of Lisieux: The Act of Oblation*, translated by Aletheia Kane (Washington, DC: ICS, 1997), 54.

The dynamic that Ignatius extracts from the example of Jesus can serve as a spiritual pedagogy. It allows us not to have to endure human limitations as a tragic destiny. It teaches us that we should no longer be frightened or feel ashamed of being confronted with our smallness, vulnerability and even, sometimes, stupidity through the experience of humiliation because of our failures. It is not necessary to repress these experiences or rationalise them to make them harmless. We may, on the contrary, admit to them, trusting that something good will result. In this way our poverty can become a pathway to more human richness and, for the believer, a springboard to greater intimacy with the Lord. Poverty can indeed become, paradoxically, a source of consolation.

When I reflect on my regency—I was in charge of the social outreach programme for 175 pupils of our high school in Paris—I especially remember a number of gaffes I made there in dealing with pupils and parents. Several times they confronted me with these errors, in a friendly way, or not so friendly. Even some of the pupils challenged me directly. I am still taking advantage of the lessons I learned at that time. This did not happen automatically. It required quite some reflection and prayer. I note that I am still grateful for what they taught me, even if, at the time, it was sometimes very confrontational. Some of these people have become close friends.

A friend of mine became the director of a small conference centre. In the first weeks she took ample time to get to know her staff. Every day she invited someone to come and drink a cup of coffee at her desk,



including the gardener, who has been working there for fifteen years. The man was moved and it took a while before he could indicate why. In the all those years, he had never been invited to sit down when talking to the previous director. My friend said how touched she had been by this and how much she had learnt from it. Indeed, not only can you learn from your own poverty, but also from that of others. Just as pride destroys our relationships and our humanity, humility is an invitation to strengthen relationship, with others and with God, and to make us grow towards greater humanity.

Both dynamics are present in our lives: in our attitude towards ourselves, towards others and towards God. I have presented them in black and white, emphatically so as to make things clear. Often they do not happen in such an obvious way. In particular, the dynamics of evil can be very subtle. It can be disconcerting to discover how much it can sometimes manipulate you; how, behind noble motives, something sly can hide. It is only if you learn to recognise it that you can also learn to deal with it. And then you can really choose for the good in your life.

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