Durham University

Durham E-Theses

Theology and Prayer: Ignatian Discernment as Theological Methodology

EABORN, GARY

How to cite:

EABORN, GARY (2022) *Theology and Prayer: Ignatian Discernment as Theological Methodology*, Durham theses, Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/14386/

Use policy

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a link is made to the metadata record in Durham E-Theses
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the full Durham E-Theses policy for further details.

Academic Support Office, The Palatine Centre, Durham University, Stockton Road, Durham, DH1 3LE
e-mail: e-theses.admin@durham.ac.uk Tel: +44 0191 334 6107
http://etheses.dur.ac.uk

Abstract

Theology and prayer: Ignatian discernment as theological methodology

Gary Nigel Eaborn

If we conceive of theology as prayerful thought, then the relationship of the prayerful element and the thoughtful element is not straightforward: this thesis argues that the difficulties become apparent when we examine the specifics of a particular prayer practice and ask how it can be brought into the work of a theologian. The prayer practice explored in this thesis is Ignatian discernment. It is argued that this practice is not confined to individual vocational choices but is an ongoing practice that can guide the work of a theologian. This thesis further argues that Ignatian discernment: is already a place where prayer and rigorous thought co-exist; is a specific form of prayer which is, notwithstanding this specificity, epistemologically and even methodologically plural; promotes an active receptivity to all experience; and is a way of interpreting that experience that approaches it with a degree of caution and epistemic humility. This thesis argues that the ongoing practice of discernment should retain a Christological focus that can discipline Christian theology to keep to its proper task of following Christ to God's greater glory.

This thesis also argues that the critical thrust of Heidegger's later thought is directed against our pervasive misrelation to everything as meaningless resource. This misrelation is itself grounded in the Nietzschean ontotheology which holds sway in present times. The response to it, found in the constructive movement of Heidegger's later thought, requires a way of thinking akin to a spiritual discipline, rather than a metaphysics which proposes a particular relationship between God and being. It is argued that Ignatian discernment can resist this misrelation as a spiritual discipline which is, in a number of important respects, analogous to ways of thinking contemplated by Heidegger's response.

Theology and prayer: Ignatian discernment as theological methodology

Gary Nigel Eaborn

A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Theology and Religion, Durham University

2021

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

My thanks are due to Professor Karen Kilby, my principal supervisor, who has had the greatest influence on my academic formation and has been generous with her time and always inspiring and appropriately challenging. Professor Paul Murray has also provided invaluable input with the graciousness for which he is well-known. It has also been a privilege to be part of the wider academic community of the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham, which has real breadth, diversity, and an open collegiality.

My wider formation has been in the congregation of Grosvenor Chapel in Mayfair, amongst whom I first learnt to be 'unafraid to reason, unashamed to adore'. It is here that my parish priest, The Revd Dr Richard Fermer ignited my interest in Ignatian spirituality and prompted my exploration of a calling to be a priest.

For many years I was fortunate to work at and then be a partner of the law firm, Slaughter and May. It was a privilege to work with such talented and dedicated professionals. The formational process of learning to think like a lawyer has made me sensitive and attentive to the very different ways in which academics and theologians are formed.

Finally, my greatest fortune in life is to have been supported through the 'changes and chances of this fleeting world' by a loving family, particularly my wife, Sylvia, my mother, Jean (who died in 2016), father, David, and brother, Stuart. They have been the means through which God's greatest gifts have been given to me and theirs are the eyes through which Christ's compassion has so often looked on me.

Copyright Statement

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

Dedicated to my parents, Jean and David Eaborn, who taught me to pray.

Preface

The question of whether to include autobiographical and other background information in a theological work is, I will suggest towards the end of this thesis, itself a matter of discernment. However, as at that point, any such disclosure will come too late, it is necessary to pre-empt that discussion here and to briefly describe the circumstances that led to my interest in the relationship between the practice of theology and prayer. I came to the study of academic theology for the first time in my late forties after a career as a lawyer. The practising lawyer in today's world faces a similar problem to the theologian: the impossibility of assimilating all possible relevant knowledge and information. Consequently, to a significant extent, the successful practice of law depends on methodology: learning to think like a lawyer and knowing how to assemble the information relevant to a particular set of circumstances. As a latecomer to academic theology, without the possibility of spending many years learning through practice, I came to theology with a heightened interest in theological methodology. What I found, in general, was that methodological reflection by the systematic theologians is relatively inaccessible because it engages some of the most profound theological questions. [1] Rather than providing a potential shortcut to theological competence, methodological questions instead raise some of the most challenging issues.

In addition to bringing this interest in methodology to my theological studies, I also came to theology with a well-established prayer life. Although I am an Anglican, my prayer life was heavily influenced by Ignatian spirituality comprising 'silent' prayer and contemplation (in the Ignatian sense) of scripture.[2] I had made the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises on a thirty-day individual retreat in the year before

[1] Karl Rahner, for example, says that only a 'small and modest part' of his writing relates to theological methodology: Karl Rahner, 'Reflections on Methodology in Theology', in *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961-92) vol. 11, pp. 68-114, p. 68. On the other hand, there are disciplines such as practical theology where the discussion of methodology is prominent and extensive.

[2] Contemplation in an Ignatian sense does not refer to infused mystical prayer but rather to prayer about the person of Christ. Ignacio de Loyola, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings* (London: Penguin, 1996), p. xvi.

commencing my studies. One thing that I immediately noticed was that my studies disrupted my prayer life: the theological questions I was thinking about intruded into my time of prayer. Somewhat disconcertingly, St Ignatius would seem to have had the opposite problem. He describes his spiritual life as impeding his studies in Barcelona and Paris: new enjoyments of spiritual things would occur so powerfully that he could not learn things by heart.[3] My initial reaction to this intrusion, of thinking about God into prayer, was to resist it, but I then began to question this reaction. This thesis then is an extended response to the questions prompted by these experiences as to the relationship between prayer and the practice of theology: these are questions which have arisen in my own life and to which I have sought answers both through thought and through prayer as a matter of discernment.

What I have found, having overcome my initial resistance, is that the questions which I am thinking about in the course of my theological studies can be brought in a fruitful way into prayer and attended to as matters for discernment: these thoughts do lead to 'movements in the soul'.[4] At the very least, this brings to theological study a wider range of experience and a way, through discernment, of attending to it. This is perhaps the weakest claim that I would wish to make for the benefits of this form of prayerful theology. I would also make the stronger claim, that for a theologian who is a practising Christian this expresses openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their theological work and that the experience in prayer, although uncertain, can be epistemologically significant.

[3] Loyola, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, pp. 39, 53.
[4] The Ignatian phrase 'movements in the soul' refers to all interior movements and experience: its meaning will be explored more fully in Chapter Three.

Chapter One

Why focus on a specific form of prayer?

I have chosen to explore something quite specific in this thesis: the use of Ignatian discernment as part of a theologian's methodology.[5] That exploration entails a particular programme of work: an interpretation of the *Spiritual Exercises*, a constructive account of prayerful discernment as an ongoing practice and a proposal for how that practice can become part of a theologian's methodology. I am not suggesting that Ignatian prayer is the only form of prayer that can nourish the work of a theologian. The reason for examining a specific prayer practice is because otherwise, the concrete difficulties and benefits of prayerful theology are less apparent, as I will attempt to show in this chapter. I have also chosen to consider how prayerful theology relates to, and can resist, Martin Heidegger's critique of ontotheology. That engagement is not an obvious necessity and also requires a preliminary justification. In each case, the route I have taken has been inspired by and yet seeks to differentiate itself from two contemporary voices who argue that prayer is an indispensable part of a theologian's methodology – Andrew Prevot and Sarah Coakley.[6] The justification of the route I have taken is developed through an extended critical review of what they each have to say about prayerful theology to which we will now turn. I agree with much of what they say about the relationship between prayer and theology but try to show the benefits of focussing on one

[5] A reference to methodology already raises the possibility of some kind of scientific discipline with repeatable and de-personalised techniques. However, this term is used in the broadest possible sense to refer to ways of doing things which may including the personal and formational and openness to the ungraspable.

[6] For a review of the contemporary discussion of theology and prayer, see Ashley Cocksworth, *Prayer: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark, 2018), pp. 5 n.9, 41-73, 214-215. See also Travis LaCouter, *Balthasar and Prayer* (London: T&T Clark, 2021). LaCouter describes the reintegration of theology and prayer as being one of the major efforts of recent Anglophone theology and makes his own contribution to that effort in his study of the place of prayer in the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar. LaCouter's bibliography of the recent literature is found at p. 1 n.1.

prayer tradition. Having made that justification, I will then conclude this chapter by setting out how my argument will proceed from that starting point.

Prevot and Coakley on Prayer

As already stated, Prevot and Coakley each argue that prayer is an indispensable part of a theologian's methodology. Prevot's stated ambition in *Thinking Prayer* is to encourage theologians to rediscover prayer as a highly significant source of thought and life.[7] Coakley insists that 'contemplation must be the ascetical practice which undergirds any future project of systematic theology'.[8] Prevot's 2015 volume is an impressive survey of the significance of prayer in the work of a wide range of twentieth and twenty-first-century thinkers.[9] Coakley's programmatic statement about the importance of contemplative prayer for her theological method is a prolegomenon to her 2013 work, *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity*'. She adumbrates this approach in earlier treatments of the spiritual senses and the spiritual director, John Chapman OSB, and an autobiographical article.[10] The strength of Prevot's work lies in the breadth of what he calls his 'unbounded exploration'.[11] However, the broad scope of his enquiries keeps him from any detailed discussion of how any particular prayerful practice can be part of a theologian's work. Coakley does herself use contemplative prayer as part of her theological work. However, the ambitious nature of her overall project, which she describes as a *théologie totale*, means that the exploration of and

[7] Andrew Prevot, *Thinking Prayer: Theology and Spirituality Amid the Crises of Modernity* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), p. 1.
[8] Sarah Coakley, 'Sarah Coakley, God Sexuality and the Self', online video recording, YouTube, (2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0gxtpmlgBg> [Accessed 27 November 2021]. For Coakley, contemplation is any deliberate waiting on the divine as explored later in this Chapter.
[9] One thinker he does not engage with in his survey, other than in a footnote to his admission that women's voices are not sufficiently represented, is Coakley.
[10] Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Chichester: John Wiley, 2002); Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Sarah Coakley, 'Dark Contemplation and Epistemic Transformation: The Analytic Theologian Re-Meets Teresa of Ávila', in *Analytical Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*, ed. by Crisp, Oliver D. and Rea, Michael C (Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 280-312; Sarah Coakley, 'Prayer as Crucible: How My Mind Has Changed."', *Christian Century,* 128 (2011), 32-40.
[11] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, p. 15.

justification for the part of prayer in that project is relatively limited. The aim of this critical review is to demonstrate the need for an approach which concentrates on a specific prayerful practice but which has the ambition and catholicity to show how that prayerful practice can be part of the theological methodology of any theologian, or at least any theologian who is a Christian.

Prevot's Thinking Prayer

Prevot's main line of argument as to why theologians should rediscover prayer is as a response to what he presents as the crises of modernity: secularity, the nihilistic conclusion of Western metaphysics, and the structural violence of the modern world.[12] He also sees, in prayer, the basis for the reintegration of theology and spirituality.[13] The thrust of his argument, then, is to establish prayer and

[12] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, p. 5. The first two of the crises are reasons for the disintegration of theology and spirituality. I have considered the second reason in my exposition of the critical movement in Heidegger's later thought in Chapter Two. An extensive treatment of secularity is found in Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007). See also the treatment of the deformation of theology by its interaction with the social sciences, John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006). Indeed, radical orthodoxy is an attempt to 'reclaim the world' within a theological framework and from a secularism whose logic is imploding as it proclaims its own lack of meaning: John Milbank, Graham Ward, and Catherine Pickstock, 'Introduction: Suspending the Material: The Turn of Radical Orthodoxy', in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. by Milbank, John, Ward, Graham, and Pickstock, Catherine (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 1-20, p. 1.

[13]Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, p. 6. The literature in relation to the desirability of this reintegration is extensive. Mark McIntosh says that 'while it is very true that theology provides an indispensable critical function for spirituality, it is no less true that spirituality affords a radically critical perspective equally necessary for the health of theology'. Mark A McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998), p. 17. Andrew Louth says: 'So, spirituality – prayer – is, I suggest, that which keeps theology to its proper vocation, that which prevents theology from evading its real object'. Andrew Louth, *Theology and Spirituality* (Oxford: SLG Press, 1978), p. 4. Thomas Merton says 'theology and "spirituality", are not to be set apart […] the two belong together. Unless they are united there is no fervour, no life and no spiritual value in theology, no substance, no meaning and no sure orientation in the contemplative life'. Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation* (Wheathampstead: Anthony Clarke, 1972), p. 198. John Webster says 'without sanctification – without being caught up by God […] – the work of theological reason is profitless' and that 'theological reason can only be undertaken in prayer for the coming of the Holy Spirit': John Webster, *Holiness* (London: SCM Press, 2003), pp. 8, 24. Rowan Williams says: 'all theology worth the name, began as people realized that because of Jesus Christ, they could talk to God in a different way': Rowan Williams, *Being Christian: Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, Prayer* (London: SPCK, 2014), pp. 61-62. See Hans Urs von Balthasar's 1948 essay, 'Theology and Sanctity': Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology I: The Word Made Flesh* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989). For the contrary

doxology as responses to these crises and as ways to reunify theology and spirituality.[14] Whilst this serves to commend the importance of prayer, it is less clear how it justifies the conception of theology as 'thinking prayer'. The main title of his work presents the main critical issue for the reader of the text: whilst Prevot delights us with a broad exploration of all prayer and theology *about* prayer, does he deliver on his stated aim of encouraging the practice of theology itself *as* thoughtful prayer?

Prevot's subject, prayer, is broadly defined as an interaction of Trinitarian and creaturely freedoms for the sake of love. He further broadens the scope of his enquiry to include doxology – receiving, offering, or desiring God's glory and word. He declines to offer any systematic account of the relation of prayer and doxology, preferring 'an unbounded exploration of the implications and co-implications of both'.[15] Prevot's definition of prayer is explicitly Christian. Whilst he accepts that not all prayer is Christian, he does say that Christian prayer provides an 'unparalleled glimpse' into hidden-and-disclosed realities'. Prayer is, therefore, not just another spiritual practice but the 'one thing necessary'.[16]

Prayer is said to have shaped the intellectual endeavours of Christian thinkers 'far from perfectly and often without sufficient awareness of the fact'. Prevot asserts that to think as a Christian is to think prayerfully and that the 'fruits of prayer are destined not only for the heart but also for the mind'. These fruits for the mind and the 'unparalleled glimpse' provided by prayer must refer to experiences that are of epistemic significance. Theology is said to be, at its best, an approximation of a thorough synthesis of prayer and thought.[17] It is also said to be a practice of thought that seeks to make sense of the mystery of prayer and *simultaneously* a practice of prayer that seeks to meet the rigorous demands of thought. Thus, theology is not just thought about prayer as a phenomenon: theologians must allow prayer to provide 'a decisive hermeneutic' for their

---

view that theology is better practised as an intellectual skill like any other intellectual skill, see Paul J Griffiths, *The Practice of Catholic Theology: A Modest Proposal* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2016).

[14] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, p. 25.

[15] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 13-15.

[16] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, p. 3.

[17] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 3-4.

reflections on God. In other words, theology should express distinctive ways of understanding and engaging the 'reality that prayer brings to light'. Prevot here acknowledges that 'prayer exercises a significant degree of subjectivity' but asserts that the rigours of thinking demanded by the academy remain crucial: prayer imposes additional obligations to those of the academy rather than contravening or subverting them. Theology must be committed to both prayer and thought: compromises (however inevitable in practice) result in diminishment or distortion. Prayer then is said to be a constitutive source for theology.[18] Prevot's definition of spirituality, as distinct from theology (as thinking prayer), is as *living* prayer.[19]

Even this introduction raises issues. The broad definition of prayer and its combination in an unspecified way with doxology brings within their scope all aspects of Christian thought and the Christian way of life: it is, therefore, unsurprising that theology and spirituality fall within their compass. This breadth means that when Prevot says that theology should be prayerful, we are told less than would be the case if the definition of prayer was more specific. In effect, all we are told is that theology is one way of encountering God for the sake of love or of openness to God's glory or word. This is certainly a helpful way of thinking about theology, but any implications for the practice of theology are only at the most general level. Another issue is the limited discussion of prayer as an independent source of revelation about God. He says, for example, that authentic Christian prayer 'reveals constitutive features of prayer as such – including above all the supreme mysteries of Trinitarian freedom and love'.[20] The scope of this revelation, how it relates to revelation through scripture and church teaching and how it can form the basis for theology which can be engaged with by others, receives limited attention. In a footnote discussing the relationship between prayer and doctrine, Prevot clarifies that he regards doctrine as emerging from prayer. Church teachings are a 'historically emergent set of […] statements […] regarding all that has been disclosed within, or in close relation to, the mystery of prayer'.[21] In this sense,

[18] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 16-17.
[19] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, p. 17.
[20] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, p. 3.
[21] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, p. 336.

prayer precedes doctrine, but Prevot also insists that doctrine precedes prayer in the sense that those who pray begin and continue to do so through being educated as to prayer's significance. If Prevot is to achieve his stated aim of encouraging the practice of theology as thinking prayer, the status of prayer as a source of revelation is crucial and perhaps needful of more precise exposition.

Another significant issue is Prevot's insistence that theology is *simultaneously* rigorous thought and prayer: he describes his own work as 'a prayer articulated through scholarship'.[22] This insistence would seem to be particularly problematic for forms of prayer, such as some forms of contemplation, which do everything they can to avoid thought. It is these very forms of prayer that are more obviously associated with the possibility of doxological experience. Whilst Prevot acknowledges some of the practical difficulties of combining prayer and thought, this issue requires more detailed exposition to achieve Prevot's stated aim of encouraging prayerful theology.

Prevot articulates the structure of his argument very clearly. He focuses on two of the crises of modernity that he has identified: the nihilistic trajectory of metaphysics and the problem of structures of violence in the world, both socio-economic and identity-based. Prayer and doxology are the responses to these crises. He, therefore, establishes that prayer and doxology are worthy of being attended to by theologians: there should at least then be theology *about* prayer. However, whilst it is by no means absent, the case for theology itself as a form of prayer is less clear.

Prevot makes his case by the critical exposition of the work of theologians and philosophers from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. His account of the crises of metaphysics adopts Heidegger's critique, including the 'technological, nihilistic and ontotheological concealments of being and its difference, as well as

[22] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, p. 1. This raises the issue of whether theology as 'thinking prayer' implies anything for the genre of theological writing. Prevot's work does not for the most part appear to be prayerful in the way other works do, such as, for example, Augustine, *Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Karl Rahner, *Encounters with Silence* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustne's Press, 1999). See 'The Meditation on Human Redemption' and 'Prosologion': Anselm, *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp. 230-267. Benedicta Ward describes the Meditation on Human Redemption as 'the greatest of meditations', which 'shows how Anselm prayed his theology until there was no difference between theology and prayer'. Anselm, *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm*, p. 77.

the loss of a proper relation between humanity and divinity'.[23] Prevot adopts this critique, and it becomes one of the benchmarks by which he judges subsequent thinkers. However, Prevot rejects Heidegger's implication of Christian theology in this critique and Heidegger's alternative doxology based on the poetry of Friedrich Hölderlin and other figures from 'a very selective Greco-German cultural tradition'.[24] Prevot's argumentative move is to present prayer as 'a doxological path beyond the nihilistic trajectory of metaphysics'. What is definitive of metaphysics is demonstrable knowledge of the formal features of being as such and as a whole. The doxological path has to avoid seeking 'demonstrable knowledge' but also, at least as 'thinking prayer', provide the basis for rigorous thought.[25]

Prevot next considers Hans Urs von Balthasar's critical engagement with Heidegger's thought. Balthasar's adoption of the *analogia entis* and his theological aesthetics and dramatics are all presented as contributing to a rich post-metaphysical doxological path.[26] Prevot acknowledges Heidegger's specific criticism of the *analogia entis* as part of the difference forgetting tradition of Western metaphysics but relativises it by claiming that Heidegger has underestimated the apophatic nature of the doctrine.[27] Prevot accepts that Balthasar's emphasis on experiential knowledge of God accessible through contemplative prayer is open to

[23] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, p. 7. This critique and the constructive movement in Heidegger's later thought is considered in Chapter Two.
[24] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, p. 7.
[25] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 6, 21. Prevot also argues that this path is consistent with the teaching of the First Vatican Council regarding the accessibility of God to the natural light of reason, as prayer can take place naturally without explicit acceptance of Christian revelation.
[26] For a short introduction to Balthasar's theological aesthetics, see Oliver Davies, 'The Theological Aesthetics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. by Oakes, Edward T. and Moss, David (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 131-142. An important section in Balthasar's *The Glory of the Lord,* which comprises seven volumes in the English edition, is entitled 'The Task and Structure of a Theological Aesthetics'. This section sets out the distinctions between worldly and theological beauty and establishes the analogical continuities between them. Davies, 'The Theological Aesthetics', p. 133; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord I: Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982), pp. 127-137. For a short introduction to Balthasar's theological dramatics, see Ben Quash, 'The Theo-drama', in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. by Oakes, Edward T. and Moss, David (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 143-157. Quash claims that Balthasar places the theologian in the drama (which reintegrates theology and spirituality). He also points to Ignatian inspiration, saying that the *Spiritual Exercises* are structured around a movement from contemplation (the theological aesthetics) to action (the theo-drama): Quash, 'The Theo-drama', pp. 143-144. The *analogia entis* is of great importance to Balthasar's alignment of beauty and divine grace: Davies, 'The Theological Aesthetics', p. 132.
[27] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 72-74, 159 and 177-178.

question. This emphasis is implicated in Balthasar's 'rather *knowing* account of God and the world'. Prevot admits that Balthasar's 'reintegration of prayer and thought' arguably remains unfinished and 'that which is problematic about metaphysics is perhaps not fully overcome'.[28] He questions Balthasar's Trinitarian doctrine, which he describes as 'informed by prayer' for showing too much conceptual mastery.[29] Dealing with Karen Kilby's objection to Balthasar's adoption of a 'God's eye view', Prevot claims that Balthasar does not fall into contradiction here with his assertions of the need for epistemic humility. Balthasar does 'take a risk (questionable, to be sure, but perhaps not devastatingly so) which keeps his prayerful thought somewhat close to the dangers of metaphysics'.[30]

Prevot's discussion of post-metaphysical doxology proceeds from his consideration of Balthasar by considering two contrasting approaches. First, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, and John Caputo take a maximally apophatic approach. For these thinkers, doxology which promises access to any sort of divine presence 'claims too much'.[31] Prevot, against this, asserts that there is no contradiction in recognising the profound uncertainty of human knowledge and adoring the incomprehensible Trinity: this is possible 'without accepting counterfeit certainty' or 'epistemic naïveté'.[32] Alternatively, Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-Yves-Lacoste and Jean-Louis Chrétien represent a "theological turn" in French phenomenology. They address the question of prayer in a more Balthasarian way without being as metaphysical as Balthasar.[33] Chrétien is a thinker and poet who 'does not merely theorize prayer; he lets it appear'.[34] He has done the most to translate phenomenology into a Christianised doxological idiom through richly textured

[28] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 86-87.
[29] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, p. 100.
[30] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 353-354; Karen Kilby, *Balthasar: A (Very) Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012). See also LaCouter, *Balthasar and Prayer*. Here LaCouter presents Balthasar as making some of the strongest arguments in the twentieth century for the integrity of prayer and theology. LaCouter takes Balthasar's theology of prayer, particularly his one book-length treatment of prayer, *Das Betrachtende Gebet* (1955), as the key to Balthasar's *corpus* and as 'an "icon" for the sort of flexible yet deeply interconnected sort of theology he was capable of'. LaCouter reads 'Balthasar's theology not merely for what it has to say *about* prayer, but *as* a form of prayer itself' (see pp. 1, 45, 49, 173).
[31] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 111-112.
[32] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 122-123.
[33] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 112-115.
[34] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, p. 140.

symphonic discourse.[35] Chrétien avoids the dangers of metaphysics more successfully than Balthasar whilst also retaining the possibility of rich Christian prayerful discourse: 'he introduces a new approach that is thus far without equal.'[36]

At this point, Prevot shifts to his second main area of focus: prayer as a response to the structures of violence. He considers the traditions of political, liberation and black theology, which prioritise the prayerful perspective of victims in a way that is congruent with the post-metaphysical doxology he has described. He also sees the scope for these approaches to prayerful Christian thought to enhance each other. The fate of metaphysics and structural violence in modernity are connected. Consequently, prayerful thought that avoids the dangers of metaphysics also has the potential to resist this structural violence. Prevot's primary purpose, though, is to show how a Balthasarian and post-Balthasarian style of doxological contemplation needs to be supplemented and modified by prayerful spirituality developed in direct opposition to the structural violence of modernity.[37] Prevot makes a powerful case for the potential of prayer to oppose violence. He cites: the ability of prayer to cultivate subjects who are prepared to resist injustice regardless of cost or expectation of success; the potential of prayer which glorifies God to resist glorification of earthly powers or ideologies; the 'unparalleled training' prayer provides in hospitality to the other and *kenotic* self-giving love; and the strengthening of inner-worldly responsibility through the call to respond before the judgment seat of God.[38] While this establishes the potential of prayer to oppose violence and of theology *about* the prayers of victims, it does not show specifically that the theology here, whether political, liberation or black, is itself prayerful. Prevot makes a notable shift in the passage that bridges the first half of his argument, with prayer as a response to the crises of metaphysics, and the second half dealing with the potential of prayer to resist violence. He says that he will approach the traditions of political, liberation and black theology mainly as examples of *spirituality*. This is for the positive reason of bringing out their most

[35] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, p. 160.
[36] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 8 and 160-161.
[37] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 165-166.
[38] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 25-26.

striking achievement of connecting prayer with life, but it means that the connection between prayer and thought in these traditions is less clearly articulated.

Although Prevot sets out a masterful survey of the thought of Johann Baptist Metz and a range of liberation theologians culminating in Ignacio Ellacuría, it is reasonable to move to Prevot's discussion of black theology as he presents that as the culmination of the whole of his book. Prevot's discussion of slave spirituality and James Cone's black theology treats the prayer of black slaves as normative. It is the best example of prayer and doxology that resists violence and is at least as good a response to the crisis of metaphysics as any other prayerful way of thinking or living.[39] The principal advantage is the obvious one: that these prayers of black slaves directly contravene the idolatrous racism of modernity. This makes it the most rigorously doxological form of prayer. In addition, the prayers of slaves concretise all other features of doxological spirituality identified by Prevot in his survey of post-metaphysical doxology and political and liberation theology. Prevot makes a case for the influence of slave spirituality on Cone's theology which is most evident in his *The Spirituals and the Blues*.[40] The formal structure of Cone's theology, particularly his approach to analogy and aesthetics, approximates to Balthasar's but with fewer metaphysical entailments. In response to modern violence, Cone develops the "solidaristic" and "agonistic" dimensions of hospitality in terms of active solidarity with the oppressed and confrontation of those who fail to manifest hospitality.[41] There is a universal need to "become black" by entering into oppressed black people's spirituality and praying and struggling with them for their freedom. Prevot concludes that there 'may be no better locus in which to rediscover what is most crucial about the mystery of prayer itself than in the strong and sanctified and Spirit-filled songs of the slaves'.[42]

If Prevot is seeking to encourage theologians to think prayerfully, the way he has structured his argument for prayer's potential to oppose violence has the

[39] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 283-284.
[40] James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992).
[41] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, p. 311.
[42] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 321, 325.

potential to undermine that objective. By choosing to approach the traditions in this area as forms of spirituality (for Prevot, prayerful ways of living) rather than as forms of theology (prayerful ways of thinking) the emphasis is on prayerful action rather than prayerful thought as a response to violence. More generally, Prevot's approach to his argument is one of 'unbounded exploration'. As such, he makes a strong case for the benefits of prayer and for prayer to be the subject of the attention of theologians but is less obviously focused on the perplexing question of how to think and pray at the same time. We can see this from his culminating example. He clearly states the benefits of making the prayer of oppressed black people the subject of theological enquiry, but there is no specific discussion of how theologians who are not themselves oppressed black people can make their own scholarship an articulation of their own prayer. This can only be theology about prayer, not prayerful theology. At the end of Prevot's survey, we have only made sporadic and limited progress towards answering some of the questions identified earlier: the specific implications for theological methodology of a prayerful approach, the epistemic significance of prayer and its relation to revelation through scripture and Church teaching, and the apparent contrast between prayer that can wonder and prayer that can rigorously think. Prevot confidently presents his work as 'prayerful thought' and claims that the entire text is authentically prayerful, but it is, on the face of it, hard to see this work as anything other than thought *about* prayer or thought about the thoughts of others about prayer.[43]

Coakley on Prayer

Coakley, unlike Prevot, does little to raise expectations that the genre of her work will in any way resemble prayer. But because her discussion of prayer as undergirding her theological method forms part of a work of systematic theology, we would expect to see exemplification of the prayerful nature of her methodology.

[43] I am not questioning here the prayerful nature of Prevot's work, as in my opinion, the prayerful nature of theology has no *necessary* implications for its genre. But as the work on the face of it does not appear to be prayerful (in the way some other works do), it is not possible to derive from its form a way of doing prayerful theology.

That expectation is largely fulfilled as Coakley sets out what she describes as 'a prayer-based model of the Trinity'.[44] This model can be described as 'prayer-based' not only because it is based on a scriptural text about prayer (Romans 8:26) and Coakley's analysis of the early patristic exegesis of that text, but also because it is based to some extent on an appeal to the experience of prayer itself. Coakley says:

> it is the perception of many Christians who pray either contemplatively or charismatically (in both cases there is a willed suspension of one's own agenda, a deliberate waiting on the divine) that the dialogue of prayer is strictly speaking not a simple communication between an individual and a divine monad, but rather a movement of divine reflexivity, a sort of answering of God to God in and through the one who prays.[45]

This supports her presentation of a model of the Trinity where the pray-er prays to the Father by the Spirit and in the Son. Coakley, then, is prepared to use what she presents as a common experience of prayer (presumably including her own experience) as part of her argument for a particular model of the Trinity. It is by no means a decisive, and is arguably not even a necessary, part of her argument, but it does make a significant contribution. Here, Coakley shows, in the way that Prevot perhaps does not, how prayer can be part of theological method. She has, at least in this way, explicitly let the experience of prayer shape her theology.

Prevot and Coakley have much in common, including their overall assessment of the benefits of theology as 'thinking prayer'. Coakley, like Prevot, acknowledges the Heideggerian challenge to ontotheology. She is more robust in claiming that the challenge is mistaken, having 'failed to understand the proper place of the apophatic dimensions of classic Christian thought'.[46] Coakley does not see the need, to the same extent that Prevot does, to locate the answer to this challenge in post-Heideggerian developments in either philosophy or theology: she describes this as 'the 'apophatic rage' which has overtaken post-Heideggerian continental philosophy of late'.[47] However, she accepts that the ontotheological

[44] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, p. 111; Sarah Coakley, 'Prayer, Politics and Trinity: Vying Models of Authority in Third - Fourth-Century Debates on Prayer and "Orthodoxy"', *Scottish Journal of Theology,* 66.4 (2013), 377-399.
[45] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, pp. 112-113.
[46] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, p. 44.
[47] Coakley, 'Dark Contemplation and Epistemic Transformation', p. 281.

charge raises concerns which 'rightly chide those forms of theology which show an inadequate awareness of the sui generis nature of the divine, and of the ever present dangers of idolatry'.[48] For Coakley, the specific ascetical practice of contemplative prayer has a crucial role here. This role is aligned, rather than in conflict, with rational discourse about God because this form of prayer schools the theologian to seek God's face but to have that seeking constantly checked, corrected, and purged. Mere intellectual acknowledgement of human finitude is not enough.[49] Contemplation then keeps rational discourse about God within its proper bounds. Coakley's specificity also protects her from the looseness in Prevot's argument: by focussing on contemplative prayer and its benefits for systematic theology, she avoids lapsing into a more general account of the benefits of prayer. For example, Prevot, for the most part, points to spirituality rather than prayerful thought when discussing the potential of prayer to oppose violence. Coakley is more specific in asserting the role of contemplative prayer in a systematic theology that opposes violence. In this intellectual context, the violence which is resisted is hegemonic thought (which ignores marginalised voices) and phallocentric thought (which ignores women's voices and female ways of thinking). Contemplative prayer, with its schooling in attention to the other and the avoidance of control, is a corrective practice to these violent ways of thinking.[50]

Coakley's specificity here has given her argument a degree of focus which Prevot's lacks, and one is at least left with some concrete idea of what she is recommending. This specificity, though, is not without its dangers. One danger is that contemplative prayer is itself an elite practice and thus hegemonic. Coakley denies that contemplative prayer is elitist and seeks to mitigate possible elitism in a number of ways.[51] Her article on the meaning of contemplation, first published in 1990, relies on and endorses the approach of Dom John Chapman. It cites his 'democratic', although possibly idiosyncratic, presentation of the contemplative prayer of John of the Cross as something which starts when meditative prayer, such

[48] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, p. 45.
[49] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, p. 45.
[50] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, pp. 47-50.
[51] Coakley, 'Sarah Coakley, God Sexuality and the Self', online video recording, YouTube, (2014).

as Ignatian imaginative prayer, fails. This contrasts with interpretations of contemplation which describe it as the pinnacle of a spiritual ascent. Chapman also avoids elitism by providing straightforward aphoristic advice on how to pray, such as: 'pray as you can, and do not try to pray as you can't' and 'the more you pray, the better it goes.'[52] In addition, Coakley's specificity is not absolute: she adopts a broad definition of contemplation as any form of deliberate waiting on the divine, including, for example, charismatic prayer. Despite these mitigations, contemplative prayer is still somewhat elitist. Whilst contemplative prayer may not be the exclusive preserve of elite mystics, it is still not widely practised and does require commitments of time and life circumstances which make it difficult for many. Indeed, Coakley is also keen to emphasise contemplative prayer as something which requires discipline and the benefits of which will only be afforded 'over the long haul'.[53] Despite all this, in the particular context in which this question is considered, which is prayer as a method of doing theology, this elitism is less problematic. Theological reflection is already a disciplined pursuit requiring time and commitment, so for those who are willing to pursue this theological methodology, the recommendation of the discipline of contemplative prayer should not be exclusionary.

Beyond its potential elitism, Coakley's specificity in recommending contemplative prayer can also be challenged by those who would favour some other form of prayer. Benjamin Myers, for example, sees great promise in what he describes as Coakley's 'rehabilitation of the spiritual senses tradition'. However, he believes that this tradition can only be recovered 'in a theological epistemology that takes account of not only contemplative silence but also contemplative reading; not only wordless mysticism but also exegetical mysticism'. He argues that Gregory of Nyssa, Coakley's main inspiration for her retrieval of the spiritual senses tradition, is more dependent on Origen than Coakley thinks, and that for Origen exegesis and mysticism were part of a single educative and transformative process.[54] Whilst

[52] Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender*, pp. 41-45.
[53] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, p. 19.
[54] Benjamin Myers, 'Exegetical Mysticism: Scripture, *Paideia,* and the Spiritual Senses', in *Sarah Coakley and the Future of Systematic Theology*, ed. by McRandal, Janice (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), pp. 1-14, p. 14.

Myers may be right about the spiritual senses tradition and whilst many different forms of prayer can contribute to spiritual development, what needs to be considered here is the relationship between a particular form of prayer and thought. Coakley's argument for the epistemological significance and potential to oppose violence of contemplative prayer would not apply in the same way to the mystical exegesis referred to by Myers. Whilst other forms of prayer should not be ruled out – and as far as I am aware Coakley does not do so – the specific context of 'thinking prayer' is highly significant and needs to be borne in mind by those suggesting alternative forms of prayer.

A more serious objection to specificity, raised by Brandy Daniels, is that proposing a particular method such as contemplation to achieve un-mastery necessarily involves a form of inadvertent mastery.[55] If this critique is accepted, then it becomes questionable whether contemplative prayer evades the charge that it is ontotheological and whether it avoids being hegemonic and masterful. This critique will appeal to anyone who has tried to practice contemplative prayer, as awareness of technique and assessments of the success or failure of the prayer are prominent amongst the active thoughts that afflict the contemplative. It also needs to be said here that some of Coakley's language describing her theological methodology can appear masterful: she adopts the language of military manoeuvres in describing her *théologie totale* as a 'theological pincer movement'.[56] However, any form of prayer, as a practice, involves some element of technique. Whilst recognizing this unavoidable technique, we also need to recognise that the desire is to avoid mastery or certain knowledge: any unmasterful outcome is not the result of any active striving. As Coakley stresses, contemplation is a long-term ascetical practice, with many ups and downs and lapses into mastery, such as the one identified on Coakley's part, along the way. It is the fruit of a long-term effort

[55] Brandy R. Daniels, 'Getting Lost at Sea? Apophasis, Antisociality, and the (In-) Stability of Academic Theology', in *Sarah Coakley and the Future of Systematic Theology*, ed. by McRandal, Janice (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), pp. 67-97, pp. 72-73.

[56] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, p. 76; Daniels, 'Getting Lost at Sea? Apophasis, Antisociality, and the (In-) Stability of Academic Theology', p. 75. Elsewhere, Coakley insists that *théologie totale* must be *unsystematic* in the sense of remaining open to risk and challenge and to render 'itself persistently vulnerable to interruptions from the unexpected – through its radical practices of attention to the Spirit'. Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, p. 48.

that removes the need for effort: it is only then, likely sporadically, that mastery need not be deployed to achieve un-mastery.

What does need to be acknowledged is that the practice of theology as thinking prayer is not open to those who have no faith commitment. Coakley claims that if one is 'not engaged in practices of prayer, contemplation and worship, then there are certain sorts of philosophical insight that are unlikely, if not impossible, to become available to one.' This claim certainly sounds like bad news for the practitioner of theology who does not participate in these practices. Both Coakley and Prevot acknowledge the questions this raises about the place of theology in the academy, and both have the same slightly unsatisfactory answer to that question. They would both, I think, share the view expressed by Coakley that theology is an 'intellectual investigation in which secular, universalist rationality may find itself significantly challenged'. She describes a new, anti-foundationalist orthodoxy in postmodern theology that 'an Enlightenment-style appeal to a shared universal "reason" can no longer provide an uncontentious basis for the adjudication of competing theological claims'.[57] However, she insists that theology should not withdraw from public discussion, whether political or in the academy and that theologians should speak to and learn from other disciplines. Theology, including prayer-based theology, can and should contribute to reasoned public debate. Well-ordered thinking, the responsible and critical use of texts, historical evidence and philosophical arguments are essential scholarly duties.[58] To those who would question the place for thinking prayer in the academy, Coakley's and Prevot's response would be that its place is justified by the full engagement of prayerful theologians with reasoned debate. The prayerful aspect of their theology imposes, as Prevot says, an additional set of obligations to the rigour required by the academy.[59]

We will conclude our discussion of Coakley's work with a brief discussion of an issue that is of critical importance to the ability of prayerful theology to contribute to discourse in the academy – its epistemological basis. As we have seen,

[57] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, p. 16.
[58] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, p. 17.
[59] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 16-17.

Prevot explores a wide range of doxological possibilities starting from Balthasar's use of the doctrine of analogy and his aesthetics and dramatics. Coakley, in common with Prevot, claims that prayer affords distinctive ways of knowing and that contemplative prayer involves epistemic as well as spiritual deepening.[60] However, she draws on the tradition of analytic theology in this area. In a 2009 essay about St. Teresa of Avila, Coakley aims to do 'richer justice hermeneutically to the texts of mystical theology than the analytic school of philosophy of religion has so far achieved whilst retaining those traits of clarity and apologetic purpose which have been its positive hallmarks'.[61] In this essay, she surveys approaches taken by Richard Swinburne, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Alvin Plantinga and William P. Alston. They are said to develop new epistemic "soft centres" in their analysis of mystical religious experience. Coakley sees these approaches as providing 'subtle, but indispensable, bulwarks against contemporary religious scepticism'.[62] In particular, she refers to Swinburne's principle of credulity, which leaves open the possibility of a subject being right about their experience of God and, in a significant move, shifts the burden of proof onto the sceptical attacker. Following this, Wolterstorff introduces the notion that rationality is always *situated* rationality of a particular person in a particular situation. Rationality is rooted in trust and mutuality, not suspicion and scepticism.[63] Coakley's most substantial engagement is with Alston. Whilst she criticises his readings of Teresa for focusing on high-end experiences rather than transformed epistemic capacity through long practices of prayer, she welcomes other aspects of his argument. She greets his 'doxastic practice' approach as 'good news'. Alston argues that established belief-forming practices are 'innocent until proven guilty': trust precedes doubt. In what Coakley describes as a 'very clever move', Alston shows that all 'basic doxastic practices' involve epistemic circularity: they can only be shown to be reliable by the outputs of the practice itself. The reliability of sense perception can only be shown by relying on sense perception.[64] This puts religious experience on an equal footing with other belief-

[60] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, p. 19.
[61] Coakley, 'Dark Contemplation and Epistemic Transformation', p. 283.
[62] Coakley, 'Dark Contemplation and Epistemic Transformation', p. 295.
[63] Coakley, 'Dark Contemplation and Epistemic Transformation', pp. 292-293.
[64] Coakley, 'Dark Contemplation and Epistemic Transformation', pp. 302-303.

forming practices. Coakley is particularly interested in Alston's 'attempt to press his epistemological project' in an 'apophatic direction'.[65] Alston wishes to support certain theses, which are: that contemplation at its fullest development involves a union with God, this involves God sharing God's life and self-knowledge with us, and this enables knowledge of God in himself beyond concepts and in a way that is superior to other knowledge that we can have. Alston supports these theses through the experience of selected spiritual guides (Thomas Merton and Thomas Keating). He determines that these guides should be taken at their word on the basis that: they are in the best position to know what is happening, other witnesses tell roughly the same story, what they report is coherent with Christian belief and that of other theistic religions, and the quality of their lives gives us confidence that they know what they are talking about. In all this, Alston finds a justification for believing the contemplatives' claims about God. Coakley's critical appreciation of these resources from analytic theology is valuable, but she recognises them as no more than part of a broader epistemological project. They are focused on basic theistic claims, so the more widespread significance and reliability of prayerful experience for other theological claims is a significant further step.

Implications for the study of prayerful theology

In conclusion, in many ways, the work of Coakley and Prevot is complementary. They have a shared aim: both seek to promote the practice of theology as thinking prayer and do so for broadly similar reasons: as a response to the ontotheological challenge and the violence of modernity. The approach taken by each of them is very different. His survey is wide-ranging and concentrates on the work of other thinkers: her work could be described as eclectic and the focus is driven by her own experiences. She focuses on one particular prayer practice: he considers prayer at a more general and theoretical level. He almost exclusively draws on continental traditions: she draws in the traditions of analytic theology. If then we accept that the arguments for the benefits of thinking prayer are

[65] Coakley, 'Dark Contemplation and Epistemic Transformation', p. 280.

successful, what would be an appropriate and constructive continuation of the project of promoting it? Such a project needs to continue to struggle with some of the questions identified in this survey. How does prayer, which does not produce demonstrable knowledge, produce insights that can form the basis for rigorous thought? How does this prayerful thought relate to scripture and tradition? How can prayerful theology take its place and engage fully in public and academic debate? I would also suggest that such a project needs to follow Coakley and not Prevot by addressing these questions in the context of a particular tradition of prayer. This may be a more difficult path: there will be a need to address some of the identified dangers of specificity. However, this path holds the promise of a necessary confrontation with these questions which resists evasion and avoids generalization.

This thesis will therefore concentrate on one particular tradition of prayer – Ignatian prayer. If Prevot's work is an unbounded exploration, this thesis confines itself to one practice. It is a bounded exploration, in the hope that by accepting boundaries, like a monastic choosing to stay in their cell, there will be a need to face things that can otherwise be avoided.[66] By confining our exploration to a particular prayerful practice, the question of how that practice shapes a theologian's work becomes a specific one that has to confront the differences between that practice and the ways of thinking of theologians. This thesis does not assume that a theologian's prayer will *inevitably* influence their work but asks in what way it *might* do so. If we wish to answer the call of Prevot and Coakley to think prayerfully, considering that call in the context of a particular practice addresses it at a tangible and concrete level. This means, for example, that when we consider the epistemological significance of prayer, we are considering what kind of knowledge we expect to derive from a specific prayer practice and how that knowledge comes to us.

Prevot and Coakley are united in saying that prayer in some way resists Heidegger's critique of ontotheology: that is something that I will explore in this

[66] As in the saying of Abba Moses: 'Go and stay in a cell; your cell will teach you everything.' John Wortley, *The Book of the Elders: Sayings of the Desert Fathers: the Systematic Collection* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), p. 43.

thesis. If we wish to evaluate the proposition that prayer resists this critique in the context of a particular practice, then we need to articulate the criteria by which we will judge whether that is the case. This sends us back to examine the nature of the critique, its place in the critical movement of Heidegger's thought more generally, and the question of why the critique merits our attention.

Before sketching the structure of the argument, it is worth considering why Ignatian prayer has been chosen. The aim here is not to show that Ignatian prayer is the best prayerful practice for a theologian. This will not be a comparative account of Ignatian prayer and other prayer practices, nor will it be considered necessary to distinguish those features of Ignatian prayer that are common to all Christian prayer from those that are distinctive. The principal reason Ignatian prayer has been chosen is that it is a practice of discernment that seeks knowledge – knowledge at least of God's will for an individual. Ignatian prayer then is already a prayerful practice that seeks the answers to questions. There are grounds to anticipate that it will be compatible with the questioning thought of theological reflection. Furthermore, the choice of Ignatian discernment for investigation follows up on a suggestion of Karl Rahner. In his essay 'Reflections on a New Task for Fundamental Theology', he considers the contemporary problem of the plurality of fields of study and paths of knowledge. In the specific context of fundamental theology – described by Rahner as a scientific and systematic reflection upon the grounds of credibility of Christian revelation – he expresses this problem in terms of 'how the inadequacy and limitations of one's awareness of reasons and motives for an absolute decision can be overcome in a justifiable and at least "manageable" way'. He suggests that the elements of a theological theory as to how this problem can be overcome are found in the teaching of St Ignatius about choice. Rahner laments that Jesuit theology has not always brought the heritage of Ignatian spirituality into effective use.[67] In this thesis we will take up the suggestion that Ignatian spirituality can guide choice to overcome the problems of the plurality of paths of knowledge in

[67] Karl Rahner, 'Reflections on a New Task for Fundamental Theology', in *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961-92) vol. 16, pp. 156-166. Balthasar is also said to have 'recognized the scarcity of theological investigation into the Exercises and pointed out this deplorable state of affairs': Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Hans Urs von Balthasar on the Ignatian Exercises: An Anthology* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2019), p. xii.

a justifiable way, and will do so, and try to justify doing so, not only in the context of fundamental theology and the 'decision of faith' but more generally. Finally, Ignatian prayer is of interest because it is *discerning*. In other words, the spiritual wisdom of St Ignatius seeks not only openness to a plurality of paths of knowledge but also ways to interpret those paths and to follow those which lead to God and God's will.

Outline

The structure of the argument is to undertake three preliminary tasks (in Chapters Two to Four), which bring us to the point (in Chapter Five) where the specific possibility of Ignatian prayer as part of a theologian's methodology is addressed. Some patience is needed on the reader's part, as, rather than there being a gradually emerging picture, one is required to await the final chapter to see if the preliminary tasks prove to be fruitful. Those tasks are to consider the implications of Heidegger's later thought for prayerful theology, set out an interpretation of the *Spiritual Exercises* and provide a constructive account of Ignatian discernment as an ongoing practice.

In Chapter Two, we start by considering Heidegger's critique of ontotheology. The reasons for paying attention to Heidegger in this context have already been referred to, but we do start by examining those reasons in more detail. I argue that, irrespective of the merits of Heidegger's critique of metaphysics generally as ontotheological, his characterization of the resulting stance (which he calls Enframing) which humans take in relation to all things is persuasive and is something that a theologian, like any other thinker, needs to escape from. I will argue that the correct way to assess a prayerful practice is to ask whether it resists this Enframing stance. I further argue that such an assessment should be made by comparing it with the ways of thinking which Heidegger, in the constructive movement of his later work, suggests as evading an Enframing stance. This chapter, therefore, concludes with an exposition of and characterization of those ways of thinking. The actual assessment of Ignatian prayer in terms of its potential resistance can only take place in Chapter Five (after the exposition of that practice).

Chapter Three then commences this task of setting out an account of Ignatian discernment with an interpretation of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Since it is a text intended to be put into practice, any interpretation of it needs to respect both Ignatius' intention and the living spiritual practice that has arisen from it. I will rely on two twentieth-century interpreters as guides towards such an interpretation: Karl Rahner and Jules Toner. Both are Jesuits who offer contrasting and, to some extent, conflicting interpretations of the *Exercises.* Rahner's interpretation is theological, and Toner's is more literal. Out of a critical evaluation of these two interpretations, I set out an understanding of the practice of discernment as contemplated in the *Exercises.*

This exposition of the *Exercises* only takes us so far because the *Exercises* offer a structured programme primarily designed to take place intensively over a 30-day period of retreat. The issue addressed in Chapter Four is what it means to carry out this practice on an ongoing basis outside that specific context. This adaptation of Ignatius' *Exercises* is not straightforward and so, in this chapter, I undertake a constructive exercise of interpretation. In doing this, I apply the principle that all the *Spiritual Exercises* should be treated as part of the discipline of discernment. This implies that, as far as possible, all elements of the *Exercises* should be preserved in any ongoing practice.

This ongoing practice is evaluated in Chapter Five as a way of prayer that can form a basis for prayerful thought (and can be compared with ways of thinking that resist Enframing). In this chapter the case is made for the place of Ignatian discernment in the life and work of a theologian. Here I describe the role of open and active receptivity to all experience and its relationship to a narrower conception of reason. I describe the way, through discernment, that a theologian can be guided by uncertain knowledge. I also deal here with various objections to the use of Ignatian discernment in this way, including the question of whether its use is confined to finding God's will for the individual. A specific comparison is made of Ignatian discernment and the practices that resist Enframing found in Heidegger's later thought. I also here address important but incidental questions, such as the place of prayerful theology in the academy, the relationship of discerning theology to Church teaching and scripture, and the role of ongoing Christic meditation.

The adequate exposition of the above argument does not permit anything other than sporadic incidental commentary on the potential of this specific type of prayerful thought to resist mastery, violence and oppression. There are reasons, of course, to suppose that a theologian who is making better choices in relation to what they say about God will in some way be contributing to the coming of a Kingdom in which there will be no mastery, violence or oppression. In addition, specific aspects of the discipline of Ignatian prayer provide schooling in unmasterful thought and opposition to violence. These include the openness to all experience with the possibility of finding God in all things, including in other human beings and through creation generally, and the ongoing methodological and disciplined Christocentricity, which calls for a continual turning towards and following of a Christ who resists all mastery, violence and oppression. However, these issues require further detailed thought, prayer and exposition, which has not been possible here.

Theology and Spirituality

I have no desire to add to the extensive literature discussing the relationship between theology and spirituality in general terms.[68] However, it is necessary to say

[68] It is worth also briefly describing how this thesis is situated in relation to mystical theology. Mark McIntosh says: 'mystical theology is not a sub-discipline, attending to particular states of spiritual experience; rather it is the Christian theological mind itself whenever it seeks to recognize and understand more deeply the hidden (i.e. mystical) self-communication of God in all things'. Mark A McIntosh, 'Mystical Theology at the Heart of Theology', in *The Oxford Handbook of Mystical Theology*, ed. by McIntosh, Mark A and Howells, Edward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 25-43, p. 25. The focus of mystical theologians then is on the hidden self-communication by God. That is a broad focus: 'the hypostatic union in Christ […] becomes the ground for mystical theology's attention to all the other forms of divine presence: in scripture, liturgy, the creation, historical struggles for justice, and in the lives of the marginalized'. Mark A McIntosh and Edward Howells, 'Introduction', in *The Oxford Handbook of Mystical Theology*, ed. by McIntosh, Mark A and Howells, Edward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 1-5, p. 3. In this thesis, I am exploring the use of Ignatian discernment by all theologians, whether or not they have that particular focus on God's hidden self-communication. McIntosh goes on to describe mystical theology as having two moments. In the first, the theologian 'seeks to discern and understand something of the hidden divine meaning communicated by God in all things—this dimension is not so far from many ordinary scholarly endeavours'. In the second, 'the mystical theologian, reflecting upon the details of the divine self-sharing, finds that the thinking of these thoughts may become a contemplative awareness of the One about whom the theologian had been thinking'. This second aspect of mystical theology 'will thus, at least on occasion, become something like a spiritual exercise'. Here McIntosh seems to

enough to situate this thesis within that discussion and, for those purposes, I would adopt Philip Endean's conclusions in his short introductory essay in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*.[69] Endean distinguishes between the 'comparatively unimportant' question of how the study of spirituality takes its place in the academy and questions which depend on an understanding of what is involved in the theological enterprise more broadly. In relation to the latter, he describes specialists in spirituality as being united in 'an insistence that human experience is a genuine source of wisdom about God, that this experience requires a form of interpretation drawing eclectically on a whole range of academic methods, and that a proper study of spirituality requires us to go beyond a sense of truth as merely neutral and objective'. What is contentious, according to Endean, is the question of whether the study of spirituality represents a departure from theology or a summons to theology to conduct itself properly.

In this thesis, the argument for the importance of prayer in theological methodology amounts to a summons to theology to conduct itself properly by paying attention to a range of experiences.[70] However, even in Endean's short

describe the practice of theology that moves into prayer rather than a deliberate discipline (such as is being described in this thesis) of bringing theological problems into prayer. Finally, mystical theology will always be prayerful, but the form of prayer that this moves into would most obviously be contemplative prayer. The relationship between Ignatian discernment and contemplative prayer is discussed in Chapter Four. McIntosh, 'Mystical Theology at the Heart of Theology', p. 28.

[69] Philip Endean, 'Theology and Spirituality', in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. by Sheldrake, Philip (London: SCM Press, 2005), pp. 74-80. This short piece also includes a select bibliography. For a succinct statement of the detriment to both theology of this separation, see A. N. Williams, 'Mystical Theology Redux: The Pattern of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*', *Modern Theology,* 13:1 (1997), 53-74, pp. 53-55.

[70] I will suggest that Ignatian discernment calls for attention to *all* experience and not only the hidden self-communication of God which is the focus of mystical experience. But it does, therefore, include attention to mystical experience, which has been the subject of considerable recent discussion. For a summary of that discussion, see Edward Howells, 'Mystical Theology and Human Experience', in *The Oxford Handbook of Mystical Theology*, ed. by McIntosh, Mark A and Howells, Edward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 45-63. Howells critiques William James's influential account of mystical experience as being marked by ineffability, a noetic quality, transiency and passivity. As part of that critique, he discusses Denys Turner's rejection of 'experientialist' understandings of medieval mystical traditions. Turner argues that the medieval sense of the negativity of all experience (the absence of experience) has been displaced by the pursuit of negative experiences (the experience of absence). For Turner, whilst we can *know* God is present, we cannot experience God as present or absent. So medieval mysticism is properly understood as a moment of negativity within the ordinary practice of the Christian life. Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 264, 269, 272. Howells argues against this that Turner's account of God's transcendence fails to account for God's

description of what unites specialists in spirituality, there is an evident tension in relying on academic methods to study something acknowledged to go beyond them. In Heideggerian terms, there is no point in asserting the importance of openness to experience only to subject it to Enframing by bringing it within a ground plan of calculative thought. The subject of this thesis is located precisely in that tension created by the suggestion that the spiritual practice of prayer should be part of the methodology of theology. This suggestion does not elevate theology as a discipline above spirituality, or vice versa, but rather opens both to the possibility of being guided by a range of experience.

I do assume in this thesis that the contemporary practice of academic theology is, for the most part, an exercise in discursive reason. Many theologians would deny or seek to qualify that. For example, many Thomists would argue that any thought about God involves the intellect and much more than just a narrowly conceived *ratio*. Whilst I would agree with that (at least in those broadly stated terms), I would nonetheless claim that the great bulk of the output of modern theologians takes the form of an exercise in discursive reason.[71] The point of this thesis is to ask, by way of an examination of a concrete example of a defined prayerful practice that looks beyond discursive reason, whether it can be brought together with discursive reason and in that sense reunite theology and spirituality. This thesis is not just asking theologians to pray more or be more holy in the hope

---

immanence in Jesus Christ, who experiences God positively in his humanity (as well as negatively) and in whose experience believers can participate. Howells, 'Mystical Theology and Human Experience', pp. 48-49. See also Edward Howells, *John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila: Mystical Knowing and Selfhood* (New York: Crossroad, 2002), p. 130. Howells resists the notion that any one kind of experience can be called mystical, and, through exposition of the historical examples of Augustine, Meister Eckhart and Teresa of Avila, he concludes that 'they share a mystical centre point of unity with God which gradually comes to expression, bringing all parts of experience with it. Any human experience can be appropriated in this task: the positive, in terms of growth into the perfection of Christ's humanity, and the negative, as pointing to the excessive character of the divine nature, which can be identified with Christ's suffering, nevertheless leading to fuller humanity. In response to this puzzle, every experience becomes part of an unmediated divine presence that is found everywhere, in both the ordinary and the extraordinary'. Howells, 'Mystical Theology and Human Experience', p. 63.

[71] Queer theologians also challenge the methods of theology. They are 'characterized by features such as irreverence; camps styles (such as the use of irony) and a different way of […] denouncing the structures of injustice'. However, 'it is the naming of sexuality' that 'ensures that the whole apparatus of systematized theology can be refreshingly 'queered': Marcella Althaus-Reid, 'Queering the Cross: The Politics of Redemption and the External Debt', *Feminist Theology,* 15(3) (2007), 289-301, p. 290.

that their theology will somehow become better. It broadly accepts a community of academic theologians who are to a large extent wedded to discursive reason. There is no call for these theologians to all return to the cloister. What this thesis does seek to look at, in practical terms, is how the discipline of theology can bring prayer and discursive reason together in a mutually enriching way.

Chapter Two

Heidegger and our misrelation to everything

Introduction

In this chapter, I will consider the relevance of Martin Heidegger's thought for the notion that prayer has an essential place in the work of a theologian. Were it not for the discussion in the previous chapter of Heidegger in relation to the work of Andrew Prevot and Sarah Coakley, his relevance in this context might seem highly questionable. Indeed, Heidegger had very little to say about prayer. This omission is notable for two reasons. First, there is ample biographical evidence that Heidegger would, at various stages of his life, have himself engaged in some sort of prayer: this includes his youth as a pious anti-modernist Catholic and his long visits to the Benedictine Abbey, St Martin in Beuron, particularly in his later years.[72] Secondly, in 1920-21, when Heidegger lectured on the phenomenology of religion, including his exposition of the life experience of Christian faith, prayer is a puzzling absence from his description of the web of beliefs and practices which make up the Christian life.[73] If Heidegger himself did not explicate the relevance of his thought to prayer, the perhaps obvious question is why should we do so? I believe that the principal reason for paying attention to Heidegger in this context is the persuasiveness of his diagnosis of the ways of thinking in which humanity is entrapped under the sway of what he calls Enframing (*Gestell)*.[74] These ways of thinking are rooted in Heidegger's analysis of our understanding of being in the epoch in which we find ourselves. This analysis, in turn, is part of his critique of all metaphysical thought (across all the

[72] John D. Caputo, 'Heidegger and Theology', in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 326-344, p. 326; Judith Wolfe, *Heidegger and Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 9-33, 158.

[73] Benjamin Crowe, 'Heidegger and the Prospect of a Phenomenology of Prayer', in *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, ed. by Benson, Bruce Ellis and Wirzba, Norman (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 119-133, pp. 120, 122, 126.

[74] I am not here using 'thinking' in a restricted or special way, as Heidegger does to describe 'thinking' which arises out of the end of philosophy: John D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), p. 3.

epochs of such thought he identifies) as ontotheological. If we find this diagnosis persuasive, then the question which follows is how to escape from this trap and evade these ways of thinking. For the theologian, the question becomes one of how to think about God in a way that does not involve this Enframing. If we have accepted Heidegger's diagnosis of the problem, it would be reasonable to look at the solutions we can derive from his work and in doing that, in the absence of direct explication of the relevance of Heidegger's thought to prayer, to follow a route which Heidegger himself suggested: in 1959 at a meeting of Rudolf Bultmann's former pupils, the 'old Marburgers', to discuss the relation of Heidegger's work to theology, Heidegger proposed drawing an analogy between philosophical thinking as it relates to being and theological thought as it relates to God.[75] Thus, our inquiry will be into the ways that Heidegger suggests that being is thought that avoids Enframing, and into how this thinking about being can provide analogies for ways of thinking about God. In the context of this thesis, the question becomes one of whether these analogies point us in the direction of prayerful thought about God, particularly the discerning prayerful thought of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

In this chapter, the first task will be expository: to describe Heidegger's critique of the ways of thinking in which he says we are trapped. I will then discuss in greater detail the relevance of this for theology and the analogy suggested by Heidegger. This leads to an exposition of Heidegger's ways of thinking which avoid these traps. All this preparatory work allows me to address, in Chapter Five, how these ways of thinking can be applied analogously by a theologian. This final task needs to be deferred until Chapter Five as it can only be undertaken after the exposition of the specific methodology of prayerful theology explored in this thesis.

There is a broad consensus that Heidegger's thought developed throughout his life and, in particular, that a distinction can be made between the early and late Heidegger. The timing and extent of the shift are debatable. On the basis that the principal reason for paying attention to Heidegger in this context is the persuasiveness of his critique of Enframing, first articulated in lectures in 1949, and

[75] James M. Robinson, 'The German Discussion of the Later Heidegger', in *The Later Heidegger and Theology*, ed. by Robinson, James M. and Cobb, John B. (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 3-76, p. 43.

that this critique is in turn grounded in his characterisation of metaphysics as ontotheological, the clear identification of which can be dated to 1946, one would also expect to find ways of thinking which avoid these pitfalls in Heidegger's later works.[76] This means that I will not pursue potentially interesting approaches to prayerful theology that suggest themselves from Heidegger's earlier works, such as a phenomenology of prayer based on *Being and Time*, or the possibilities for anxious prayer suggested by Heidegger's existential notion of anxiety and engagement with death and guilt.[77] It is also worth acknowledging at the outset the difficulties of interpreting Heidegger's thought, the extensive scholarly debate about it, and the question of whether it can be dissociated from his membership of the Nazi Party in 1933. Without entering those debates, my aim here is the limited one of providing a credible enough presentation of his thought to establish that his diagnosis of the ways of thinking in which we are trapped, and the solutions to this which emerge from his thought are worthy of the attention of a prayerful theologian. It is this diagnosis and these solutions that I will bring into dialogue with the specific form of prayerful theology explored in this thesis once that has been fleshed out in the following chapters.

Enframing

'Enframing' is the neologism Heidegger uses to describe the essence of the technological age.[78] It is a much broader concept than its initial association with

[76] Heidegger gave four lectures in December 1949, including one entitled 'Enframing' (which was published in 1954 in an expanded version under the title 'The Question Concerning Technology') and one entitled 'The Turning'. Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. ix-x; Iain Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology: Technology and the Politics of Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 13. The timing of the major shift in Heidegger's thought identified as his 'turning' is debatable: Heidegger himself first acknowledged it in his Letter on Humanism (1947), but his emerging new view is already articulated in *Contributions to Philosophy* [1936-38]: John Richardson, *Heidegger* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p. 204; Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', in *Basic Writings*, ed. by Krell, David F. (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 190-242, p. 208; David E. Cooper, *Heidegger* (London: Claridge Press, 1996), p. 59; Caputo, 'Heidegger and Theology', p. 337; Richard Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 117-121.

[77] Crowe, 'Heidegger and the Prospect of a Phenomenology of Prayer'; Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2010), pp. 178-184.

[78] Dana S. Belu and Andrew Feenberg, 'Heidegger's Aporetic Ontology of Technology', *Inquiry,* 53:1 (2010), 1-19, p. 1; Cooper, *Heidegger*, pp. 68-72.

technology suggests: although Heidegger starts by asking what the essence of technology is, he immediately asserts that it is nothing technological, and the path he takes comes to reveal a way of thinking which encompasses our relation to everything, including other human beings and even God.[79] Enframing is such that:

> what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as object, but does so rather, exclusively as standing-reserve [*Bestand*], and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve.[80]

From this definition, we can already see that our relation to the world will be cast in terms of unconcealing. The concepts of object and subject will be reconceived as standing-reserve (or resource) and as the orderer of standing-reserve, all of which will be explored more fully in what follows.

In *The Question Concerning Technology,* Heidegger begins by inquiring into the essence of technology by asking *what* technology is. He describes the current conception of technology as a means to an end and as a human activity: instrumental and anthropological. But Heidegger asserts that this instrumental identification does not show us technology's essence. We must go on to ask: what is the instrumental itself? This brings Heidegger to causality: 'that by means of which something else is effected is a cause' and 'the end in keeping with which the kind of means to be used is determined' is also a cause. So, 'wherever ends are pursued and means are employed, wherever instrumentality reigns, there reigns causality'. Heidegger considers causality in terms of the Aristotelian four causes, asking: 'from whence does it come that the causal character of the four causes is so unifiedly determined that they belong together'. He claims that the *causa efficiens* has come to set the standard for causality, despite being but one of the four causes. The concept he proposes as a retrieval of the Greek understanding of causality is that the four causes are the ways of *being responsible* for something else: the four causes differ from one another yet belong together. However, Heidegger's inquiry does not end here: the further question is: what is the source of unity of the four causes? What does 'being responsible' mean as the Greeks thought it? The final

[79] Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 4-35, pp. 4, 19, 26-27.
[80] Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', p. 27.

step then is to find this essential unity in presencing, in bringing something into appearance, in something concealed coming into unconcealment and thus in being a way of revealing. Heidegger's claim is that 'if we inquire, step by step, into what technology, represented as means, actually is, then we shall arrive at revealing'. The essence of modern technology is a way of revealing which brings all things and relationships to presence in a way that reduces them to mere resources awaiting optimisation. This is what Heidegger calls Enframing.[81]

Heidegger describes modern technology as a challenging-forth 'which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such'. This changes the way we see things: a tract of land becomes a mineral deposit, agriculture is part of the mechanised food industry, and a river, such as the Rhine, becomes a water power supplier or an object of the vacation industry.[82] Everything is standing-reserve, in that it is called to stand-by, to be immediately at hand, to be available so that it can be on call for a further ordering: as such things no longer stand over against us as objects – both subject and object are 'sucked up as standing-reserves'.[83] Whilst humanity accomplishes this, humans themselves, as the means of this ordering, can also become a part of the standing-reserve: hence the talk of human resources or the supply of patients for a clinic. Even a forester is part of a supply chain that produces printed opinion on demand in the form of newspapers. The human both 'comes to the brink of a precipitous fall' where 'he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve' but also 'exalts himself to the posture of lord of the earth'.[84] This leads to the final delusion that humans always and everywhere encounter only themselves. However, humans are 'so decisively in attendance on' Enframing that they can never encounter themselves in their essence. Humans are thus endangered in their relation to themselves and everything that is.[85] The concept of Enframing goes beyond seeing the human being as a subject with a quest to control all objective aspects of reality: the human

[81] Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', pp. 4-12 and 19-21.
[82] Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', pp. 14-15.
[83] Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', pp. 16-17; Heidegger, 'Science and Reflection', p. 173.
[84] Gendered language has been retained here to avoid a clumsy translation of the original but without any implication that Enframing is a gendered concept.
[85] Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', pp. 18, 27.

subject itself becomes another object to be controlled. We see not only other human beings, but even ourselves, as intrinsically meaningless resources standing by to be optimised.

That this all affects thought about God is something Heidegger expressly contemplated, saying:

> where everything that presences exhibits itself in the light of a cause-effect coherence, even God can, for representational thinking, lose all that is exalted and holy, the mysteriousness of his distance. In the light of causality, God can sink to the level of a cause, of *causa efficiens.* He then becomes, even in theology, the god of the philosophers, namely, of those who define the unconcealed and concealed in terms of the causality of making, without ever considering the essential origin of this causality.[86]

An Enframing stance affects our relations with the divine, other human beings, ourselves and everything else we encounter.

Heidegger emphasises in various ways the pervasiveness and invisibility of Enframing. It affects all our doing, thinking and feeling: 'where this ordering holds sway, it drives out every other possibility of revealing.'[87] This pervasiveness is also such that it is hard to notice: as a given way of being, it is difficult for us to see alternatives.[88] Enframing 'entraps the truth of its own coming to presence with

[86] Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', p. 26.

[87] Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', p. 27.

[88] The potential inescapability of this Enframing stance is a matter for scholarly debate: Dana Belu and Andrew Feenberg argue that Heidegger's texts vary between total and partial Enframing but that both these positions conceal the aporetic nature of the concept: if we ourselves are always already Enframed then we would not identify our condition as such, but if, on the other hand, Enframing is just one of a number of attitudes that humans can take up, it is an incoherent concept, or at the very least it is not the ontological understanding Heidegger claims it to be. In my opinion, it is correct to say that Enframing is total (although I do not think that necessarily means that humanity cannot identify the Enframing stance but rather that we can do nothing about it by ourselves). Enframing then is the underlying structure of being in our epoch and is not a problem that humanity can solve by adopting appropriate remedies. However, the 'remedies' that Heidegger does suggest (which are considered in the exposition of the constructive aspects of Heidegger's later thought at the end of this chapter) take the form of waiting and openness, and thus at least to some extent recognise human powerlessness. As Belu and Feenberg say at the end of their article: 'As a result, Heidegger appears to describe enframing as an incurable disease with a cure. Meditative thinking, marginal practices, education, become philosophical analogues to prayer for a cure that is no ordinary cure but a kind of divine intervention'. The problem here is that Enframing is incurable by humanity but will nonetheless end (and so, in a sense, be cured) when the current epoch ends. The ending of the epoch in which the Enframing stance holds sway can be seen as the Heideggerian analogue of divine intervention. Enframing *is* then correctly seen as an incurable disease (as the only cure is outside human control), but also as having a cure (the ending of the epoch, for which humanity can prepare but not bring about). Belu and Feenberg, 'Heidegger's Aporetic Ontology of Technology'.

oblivion' and 'this entrapping disguises itself, in that it develops into the setting in order of everything that presences'.[89] By way of explanation of this invisibility, Heidegger refers to the 'distance of the near', which makes the things we are closest to the hardest to bring into view.[90]

Heidegger's discussion of science illustrates the pervasiveness of Enframing. The essence of modern technology as Enframing is already present even though historically science precedes technology.[91] Heidegger enquires into the essence of modern science in his 1938 lecture 'The Age of the World Picture'.[92] Enframing is not only a setting to work of entities but also a setting in place of things in the process of explaining them: science demands that nature be 'orderable as a system of information'.[93] The essence of modern science is said to be research which involves the projection of a ground plan [*Grundriss*] into the realm of what is. The rigour of research is found in binding adherence to this ground plan. Experimental research involves adducing facts to confirm or deny the ground plan. Modern science then is the activity of developing and verifying an ever more precise framework – an exact plan of nature and the world.[94] Science is dominant: it 'has developed such power as could never have been met with on the earth before and has been 'intersecting in all organizational forms of modern life'.[95] Science is an ongoing institutionalised and specialised activity that cannot avoid the danger of 'mere busyness' – the accumulation of results and calculations whether or not they serve to confirm or deny the ground plan.[96] Science adapts itself and its

[89] Heidegger, 'The Turning', p. 36.
[90] Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, p. 56; Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 135.
[91] Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', p. 22. The essence of modern technology is also the essence of modern metaphysics, the ground of which allows us to apprehend the entire essence of the modern age: Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture', pp. 116-117. Another exemplification of the pervasiveness of Enframing would be the market where: 'in self-assertive production the humanness of man and the thingness of things dissolve into the calculated market value of a market which not only spans the whole earth as a world market, but also, as the will to will, trades in the nature of Being and thus subjects all beings to the trade of a calculation that dominates most tenaciously in those areas where there is no need of numbers' Martin Heidegger, 'What are Poets For?', in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 89-142, pp. 114-115.
[92] Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture', p. 117.
[93] Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', p. 23.
[94] Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture', pp. 118, 121-122.
[95] Heidegger, 'Science and Reflection', pp. 156-157.
[96] Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture', pp. 124, 138-129.

methodology to the possibilities of procedure opened up *through itself*. Thus, methodology comes to take precedence and the scholar is replaced by the researcher, who is described in pejorative terms as needing no library at home and as one who 'negotiates at meetings and collects information at congresses'.[97] All this methodical, institutionalised, and specialised scientific activity means that we live in the first age in which the world has become a picture: where things only are as they are set up by humans who represent and set them forth – as they find a place in the enormously elaborate and precise ground plan. John Richardson describes this ground plan as a cultural-historical product, 'built by method and industry' as 'the cumulative result of generations of research' and as 'constantly improving in scope and detail'.[98]It is a 'web of references' which 'closes tight over things' where 'everything we can notice has been taken account of' and 'all blank spaces on our map of things have been filled'.[99] It is something no individual has in mind but which we nonetheless defer to.

Whilst it will be clear even from the above exposition that Heidegger has a negative view of an Enframing stance, it is worth exploring further why he is negative as it could be said that all he is describing are the achievements and explanatory power of modern science. It could also be said that he is a Luddite with an aversion to technology. The later charge would miss the mark, as Heidegger's main problem is not with technology as such, or even the uses to which it may be put; his main concern is not the disasters, such as nuclear war, which may be occasioned by technology. Heidegger's perception of the danger of Enframing is that it leads to the misrelation of humans to being and thus to things and entities. It 'drives out every other possibility of revealing' and it 'conceals revealing itself and with it That wherein unconcealment, i.e., truth, comes to pass'. The threat from Enframing, which has already affected humans in their essence, is that it could be denied to humans to 'enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth'.[100] The danger: 'consists in the threat that assaults

[97] Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture', pp. 124-125.
[98] Richardson, *Heidegger*, p. 330.
[99] Richardson, *Heidegger*, p. 329.
[100] Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', pp. 27-28.

man's nature in his relation to Being itself, and not in accidental perils'.[101] Enframing, then, prevents us from seeing the world as it is: the organising and calculating rationality is contrary to the kind of receptivity needed. That Enframing constitutes a seemingly insuperable obstacle to receptivity to being is enough of a reason in itself to take Heidegger's diagnosis seriously, but there is a temptation to want to expand the potential implications of the Enframing stance in ways which Heidegger does not.[102] In particular, it is tempting to expand on the potential ethical implications of a way of seeing the world and other human beings only as resource.[103] However, this would be premature: as we will see, Heidegger does not hold humanity responsible for adopting an Enframing stance but instead sees it as the way in which being manifests itself.

This brings us to the point where we can consider the relationship between Enframing and ontotheology. This point of transition is perhaps a good place to justify tackling these subjects in this order. It has been most typical for theologians to engage with Heidegger in the context of his critique of ontotheology, whereas, in the study of technology as a distinct specialisation, Heidegger is most often

---

[101] Heidegger, 'What are Poets For?', p. 117.

[102] By way of example, Heidegger's concept of the Enframing stance is part of the inspiration for the description of the 'technocratic paradigm' in *Laudato Si'*: humans are described there as 'the ones to lay our hands on things, attempting to extract everything possible from them while frequently ignoring or forgetting the reality in front of us'. However, whilst *Laudato Si'* goes beyond Heidegger in identifying the various ills associated with this way of seeing the world, principally the ecological crisis, it is in many ways less radical than Heidegger. It continues to describe the human use of technology in terms of subject and object, rather than seeing the human subject as also being reduced to meaningless resource. It also importantly speaks in terms which suggest a greater degree of human responsibility for adopting this stance but also apparently greater optimism about its escapability through 'thinking, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm. Francis, 'Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home'2015) <http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html>.paragraphs 106 to 114.

[103] In the 1949 lecture entitled 'Enframing' which was expanded to become the 1954 published essay, 'The Question Concerning Technology', Heidegger included in his litany of examples of technological ordering 'the production of corpses in the gas chambers and the extermination camps' which he said was the same in essence (i.e., ontologically) as the mechanised food industry. This reference was dropped from the essay published in 1954, perhaps because it could be seen as drawing a political or moral equivalence between these war crimes and the mechanisation of agriculture. However, this does raise an extreme example of the consequences of Enframing for human responsibility. Martin Heidegger, 'Das Ge-Stell', in *Gesamtausgabe Band 76: Bremer und Freiburger Vörträge*, ed. by Jaeger, P. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), pp. 24-45, p. 44; Belu and Feenberg, 'Heidegger's Aporetic Ontology of Technology', p. 5.

approached through the concept of Enframing.[104] The two are intimately linked: as I shall explain in greater detail in the next section, Enframing is just the presencing of entities that prevails in the current epoch. The current epoch is a constellation of intelligibility related to the ontotheological metaphysics of Nietzsche and itself one epoch of several such epochs.[105] This theological work starts with Enframing because this is the concept that purports to describe and diagnose the pervasive way of thinking in the current epoch. Thus, Enframing is what endangers the possibility of prayerful thought in the age in which we live. Whilst arguments about ontotheology may contribute to overcoming it, what I will suggest, following I believe a similar path to that taken by Coakley, is that what is needed to overcome the pervasiveness of Enframing is ascetic practice. Hence, the exposition of Enframing, as the description of the way of thinking we can see all around us, has been placed first in order to emphasise that theologians, like everyone else, are endangered by the Enframing stance and that a response to it cannot be confined to philosophising about ontotheology.

Ontotheology

Ontotheology is the term Heidegger uses for his characterisation of the nature of Western metaphysics.[106] Heidegger claims that 'metaphysics grounds an age': it concerns itself with the question of being and, according to Heidegger, the way humans answer that question determines their attitude to and relationship with everything that is.[107] Heidegger further claims that there have been many different answers to the question of being throughout the history of Western

[104] A notable exception to this, from a theological perspective, is George Pattison, *Thinking about God in an Age of Technology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[105] Iain Thomson, 'Ontotheology', in *Interpreting Heidegger: Critical Essays*, ed. by Dahlstrom, Daniel O. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 106-132, p. 107.
[106] Heidegger does not privilege Western metaphysics but rather refuses to generalise the results of his reading of Western metaphysics to other traditions. 'Ontotheology' is a term Heidegger takes over, and uses in a very different way, from Kant who uses it to distinguish *a priori* philosophical proofs for the existence of God from 'cosmotheology' which seeks to prove God's existence *a posteriori*: Mary-Jane Rubenstein, 'Dionysius, Derrida, and the Critique of "Ontotheology"', *Modern Theology,* 24 (2008), 725-741, p. 728.
[107] Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture', p. 115.

metaphysics, but that these answers can be broken down into relatively stable epochs where particular understandings of being have prevailed.[108] These understandings have all been of an ontotheological nature, which means that they have all sought to answer the question of being in two distinct but related ways:

> the question of being, as the question of the being of entities, is double in form. On the one hand, it asks: What is an entity in general as an entity? In the history of philosophy, reflections which fall within the domain of this question acquire the title ontology. The question "What is an entity?" simultaneously asks: Which entity is the highest entity and in what sense is it? This is the question of God and of the divine. We call the domain of this question theology. The duality in the question of the being of entities can be united under the title ontotheology.[109]

Heidegger says that it is in onto-theo-logic that the '*unthought* unity of the essential nature of metaphysics' is discerned.[110] Metaphysics then has an essence that persists throughout its history. Metaphysics thinks ontologically when it 'thinks of beings with respect to the ground that is common to all beings as such' expressed in such historical formulations as *'Φυσις, Λογος, 'Εν, Ἰδεα, Ἐνεργεια,* Substantiality, Objectivity, Subjectivity, Will, Will to Power, Will to Will'.[111] Metaphysics thinks theologically when it 'thinks of beings as such as a whole, that is, with respect to the highest being which accounts for everything'.[112] Again this has been expressed in a variety of ways historically: as the *causa prima*, the *ultima ratio,* the *causa sui* (which Heidegger characterises as the metaphysical concept of God), in Kant's postulation of the 'subject of subjectivity as the condition of the possibility of all objectivity', in Hegel's determination of 'the highest entity as the absolute in the sense of unconditioned subjectivity' and in Nietzsche's thinking of 'the *exisentia* of the totality of entities […] as the eternal return of the same'.[113]

Whether or not Heidegger makes a convincing case for his account of the essence of the metaphysical tradition is a critical question that cannot be addressed

[108] Cooper, *Heidegger*, pp. 61-68.
[109] Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 340.
[110] Martin Heidegger, 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', in *Identity and Difference* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 42-74, p. 55.
[111] Heidegger, 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', pp. 66, 70.
[112]Heidegger, 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', pp. 70-71.
[113] Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, pp. 15-16; Heidegger, 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', p. 60.

in detail here.[114] However, Heidegger's notion of the duality of metaphysics as ontotheology has an appeal if we see him as having described the two possible ways of understanding the ground of what is. As Heidegger writes: 'Being, since the beginning of Western thought has been interpreted as the ground in which every being as such is grounded'.[115] If metaphysics seeks the ground of what is, we can follow Heidegger's path if we accept that such grounding has taken two forms: in the universal and the highest.[116] In other words, the question asked by metaphysics specifies and circumscribes its own possible answers.[117] It thinks the being of beings in advance as the 'grounding ground' with a dual nature: as 'ground-giving unity of what is most general, what is indifferently valid everywhere' and as 'the unity of the all that accounts for the ground, that is, of the All-Highest'.[118] However, in doing so – in seeking to bring beings into a relationship with being as their ground – metaphysics systematically neglects 'being as such'.

Heidegger reflected at greater length on the determination of being as ground in his 1956 lecture, based on a longer essay subsequently published in 1957, *The Principle of Ground*.[119] Here he refers to various formulations of the principle enunciated by Leibniz in the seventeenth century, which states: *Nihil est sine ratione* (translated: Nothing is without ground). Heidegger says that in all that surrounds, concerns and meets us, we are on the lookout for grounds, and these are grounds that are to be presented to a judging human ego.[120] In particular, the question of being is made subject to this principle. Everything is considered a being when and only when it is secured as a calculable object for representational thought.[121] This principle is dominant today as universally and obviously – and yet, paradoxically, inconspicuously – determining all representational thought and behaviour: modern humans are becoming slaves to this principle that determines

[114] Further exposition of this deconstruction is found in Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, pp. 23-43. Polt says that Heidegger's reading of the history of philosophy is 'powerful, but it is also often seen as willful': Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction*, p. 133.
[115] Heidegger, 'The Principle of Identity', p. 32.
[116] Heidegger, 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', p. 61.
[117] Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, p. 11.
[118] Heidegger, 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', p. 58.
[119] Martin Heidegger, 'The Principle of Ground', *Man and World,* 7 (1974), 207-222.
[120] Heidegger, 'The Principle of Ground', pp. 207, 208, 210.
[121] Heidegger, 'The Principle of Ground', p. 211.

the essence of our technological age.[122] However, Heidegger says that we do not pay attention to the *is,* in the principle: Nothing *is* without ground. If we do, with the *is* representing being, we can see a harmony between being and ground which belong together in oneness. Instead of being requiring a ground, being is itself the ground: being and ground are the same. If we think of being as ground, we can step back from the question: Why?[123] This thinking then attains to a path that shows us 'what is worthy of thought and at the same time conceals itself therein'. A human as *animal rationale* is a calculating creature that demands an account of being throughout the various transformations in the history of Western thought through to the modern, atomic age. But Heidegger asks: 'Does the definition of man as rational animal exhaust the essence of man?' He suggests that humanity's relationship to being is not exhausted by calculative thinking, however successful and bewitching such thinking may be, but that we are obliged to find 'paths upon which thinking may be capable of corresponding to what is worthy of thought'.[124] For Heidegger, the history of metaphysics has been one of seeking the answer to the question of being by asking what entities are in general or what is the highest entity. The question that has remained unasked throughout the history of metaphysics is the question of the *difference* between being and beings.[125] What has been thought in the history of metaphysics is the oblivion (or forgetfulness) of this unthought difference. We cannot think this difference by forming a representational idea of it – as something added to being and beings, because we find being and beings in their difference already at the place to which we bring the addition. Thinking about being is the attempt to step back from this thinking which conceals difference: this can only be ventured in the face of the way beings as such and as a whole now show themselves – marked by the dominance of modern technology.[126] The 'stepping back' required to think this difference is not a return to

[122] Heidegger, 'The Principle of Ground', p. 212.
[123] Heidegger, 'The Principle of Ground', pp. 217-219.
[124] Heidegger, 'The Principle of Ground', pp. 221-222.
[125] Heidegger, 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', p. 50.
[126] Heidegger, 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', pp. 50-51.

the earliest thinkers of Western philosophy, but rather a step out of technology into its unthought essence.[127]

As we have already seen, the unthought essence of technology is Enframing. Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics as ontotheology, particularly his understanding of the ontotheology of the current epoch, 'undergirds and generates' this understanding of the essence of technology.[128] Ontological historicity is divided into five distinct but overlapping epochs identified as pre-Socratic, Platonic, medieval, modern, and late-modern.[129] Heidegger sees Nietzsche's metaphysics of the will to power as the metaphysics of the culminating late-modern stage. Nietzsche's metaphysics is ontotheological in that it thinks both ontologically and theologically.[130] Nietzsche's metaphysics thinks ontologically when it understands entities in terms of 'will to power': this is, in essence, a value-positing will, but the values are 'preservation-enhancement conditions within the Being of whatever is'.[131] Thus, the will to power manifests as an endless stream of becoming through the 'disaggregation and reaggregation of forces without any purpose or goal beyond the self-perpetuating augmentation of these forces through their continual self-overcoming'.[132] Heidegger's Nietzsche thinks theologically when he thinks the *existentia* of the totality of entities as the eternal return of the same: this eternal return is their *highest* mode of existence as the closest that the endless stream of becoming comes to being.[133] The 'unthought' ontotheological unity of Nietzsche's metaphysics as eternally recurring will to power inaugurates a *nihilism* representing the fulfilment and at the same time the collapse of the metaphysical project of providing intelligibility with an ontotheological foundation. Metaphysics is fulfilled

[127] Heidegger, 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', p. 52.
[128] Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, p. 53.
[129] Thomson, 'Ontotheology', p. 108.
[130] For a summary of Heidegger's interpretation, see 'Nietzsche's Metaphysics' in vol. 3 of Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), pp. 187-251. Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche contrasted with that of other interpreters from the start in finding a single coherent metaphysical conception in the will to power and the eternal recurrence of the same: Hans Sluga, 'Heidegger's Nietzsche', in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. by Dreyfus, Hubert L. and Wrathall, Mark A. (Oxford Blackwell, 2005), pp. 102-120, p. 108.
[131] Heidegger, 'The Word of Nietzsche: "God is Dead"', p. 81.
[132] Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, p. 56.
[133] Heidegger, 'The Word of Nietzsche: "God is Dead"', p. 82; Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, p. 16.

in that Nietzschean metaphysics still provides an ontotheological understanding of being as eternally recurring will to power. However, Nietzsche's conception also represents the collapse of the metaphysical project: Heidegger describes it as 'the overturning of metaphysics accomplished by Nietzsche'. Whereas previous epochal transformations of metaphysics had continued to seek 'epistemically unimpeachable and so historically immutable ontotheological foundations', the Nietzschean epoch undermines this by depriving itself of any other ground than 'concatenations of forces in the service of the will-to-power, a will that strives ultimately only for its own unlimited self-aggrandizing increase'.[134]

As the inner logic of history, Nietzsche's nihilism leads to the collapse of the metaphysical project summed up by the brief statement 'God is dead'. The suprasensory realm (not just the Christian God) is deposed to become an unstable product of the sensory realm. This culminates in meaninglessness and 'blind attempts' at extrication from this meaninglessness 'through a mere assigning of sense and meaning'. If the suprasensory – conceived by Christian interpretations of Plato as the true and genuinely real world – is without effective power, then 'nothing more remains to which man can cling and by which he can orient himself'.[135] Nihilism, therefore, is not identified only with atheism or unbelief but as the ongoing historical process of the highest values devaluing themselves. This is not a straightforward narrative of decline as the devaluing of past values belongs within the positing of new values.[136] An incomplete nihilism attempts to place something else in the position of authority previously occupied by the Christian God. Completed nihilism does away with the suprasensory realm and thus must posit new values in a different way. The different way is the positing of values by the will to power, which overturns the positing of values from the height of the suprasensory. Will to power is to be understood not as a striving for something, but

[134] Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, pp. 21, 22. See Michel Haar: 'If the major principles of metaphysics (identity, noncontradiction etc.) and of rationality have now become actual and all-encompassing in technological reality, then it is also the case that a project of unlimited calculation, led by nobody in particular, has come to encompass the entire planet. It seems then that the "end of metaphysics" consists not in its disappearance, but in its complete dominance'. Michel Haar, '"The End of Metaphysics" and "A New Beginning"', in *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000) vol. 1, pp. 149-164.
[135] Heidegger, 'The Word of Nietzsche: "God is Dead"', pp. 53-54, 57, 61.
[136] Heidegger, 'The Word of Nietzsche: "God is Dead"', pp. 63, 66-67.

as a commanding where the will unites itself to itself: it is pure will to will, the innermost essence of being and the fundamental trait of everything real. In other words, the will does not look outside itself for values or for a basis to evaluate what it is positing. God's death is not at the hands of unbelievers, but of believers who aim to situate God as the highest value within their own metaphysical system of value positing – this is a degradation of God's essence.[137] Where values are posited by the will to power, entities, including human beings, are conceived – are given value – only as raw materials to be optimally used for an endless and constant process of overcoming. Humans actualise their will by constructing the world to conform to it: the only objects of interest are things that can be controlled. In this contemporary forgetfulness of being, the oblivion itself is forgotten, thus justifying Heidegger's appropriation of Nietzsche's term 'nihilism'.[138] Nietzsche's metaphysics then underpins our epoch of Enframing as 'probably the final stage' of Western metaphysics and as the epoch of 'supreme danger'.[139]

Heidegger and theology

From the exposition so far, we have seen that, according to Heidegger, the world in which we live and the way we relate to it are shaped by our understanding of the question of being. Throughout the history of Western thought, a series of answers have been given to the question of being in a series of relatively stable configurations each of which have defined an epoch. In the current epoch, the answers are found in the nihilistic thinking of Nietzsche and the concepts of the will to power and the eternal return of the same. This underpins a pervasive Enframing

[137] Heidegger, 'The Word of Nietzsche: "God is Dead"', p. 105.
[138] Richardson, *Heidegger*, pp. 249-250.
[139] Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, pp. 21-22; Thomson, 'Ontotheology', p. 116; Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', p. 26; Heidegger, 'The Word of Nietzsche: "God is Dead"', pp. 53, 69-70, 77-78, 105. For a careful reading of Heidegger's essays in relation to the overcoming of metaphysics, see Louis P. Blond, *Heidegger and Nietzsche: Overcoming Metaphysics* (London: Continuum, 2010). Blond discusses Heidegger's thinking from the period after *Being and Time* (1927) up to his interpretation of Nietzsche in the 1930s and 1940s. He discusses the problems with the reception of Heidegger when these works appeared in English translation in the early 1960s, due to the association of both Heidegger and Nietzsche with Naziism and also of prevailing interpretations of Nietzsche (by Georges Bataille, Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida) which see him as non-metaphysical and pluralistic. Blond, *Heidegger and Nietzsche: Overcoming Metaphysics*, p. 2.

of everything we relate to as resources to be optimised. The various epochal configurations have each taken an ontotheological form that sees being in terms of what beings are in general and the highest being. This leads to forgetfulness of being and of the difference between being and beings. Being cannot be thought in a calculative or representational way or in any way which makes being a general property of beings or the highest being. Being is not found in the ground plan laid out by science or through the experiments which confirm or disconfirm it. What then is the relevance of all of this for thinking about God? In the exposition so far, we have encountered God only as a potential highest being in these ontotheologies – a position from which God has been deposed in the current ontotheology by the eternal return of an endless stream of becoming. Thus, whilst Heidegger's rejection of these ontotheologies is also a rejection of the associated metaphysical conceptions of God, the consideration of God in his thought is incidental to the consideration of the question of being. Our focus then, in the exposition up to this point, has been on the negative aspect of Heidegger's thought about being: his diagnosis of the forgetfulness of being and the ways Western metaphysics has *not* thought being. This is, however, also suggestive of how we should *not* think God: we should not think of God as a cause or as philosophical technology which is to be put to use. What the exposition thus far does not do is give us a sense of *how* to avoid an Enframing stance or of positive ways in which being (or God) might be thought.

We have been focussing so far on what Judith Wolfe, in her 2014 book, *Heidegger and Theology*, characterises as the critical movement in Heidegger's later thought. I would suggest that this critical movement has independent validity: in other words, the notion of a pervasive Enframing stance deserves to be taken seriously even if it is only a diagnosis of a way of thinking in which we are all entrapped and which we all find hard to escape. It deserves to be taken seriously even if we do not accept Heidegger's notion of the epochal configuration and dual nature of answers to the question of being. The critique of ontotheology certainly underpins the diagnosis of the Enframing stance, but the persuasiveness and explanatory power of that diagnosis can be accepted without agreeing with the understanding of what underlies it or how it has arisen. This Enframing stance is at least of interest to a theologian as a way of thinking to which they, like every other

human being, are susceptible and which can affect their thinking about God. Wolfe also identifies a constructive movement in Heidegger's later thought and this constructive movement is also of interest, at the very least, as thinking that avoids the Enframing stance (whether or not it is about God). However, before moving on to the exposition of that constructive movement, I would like to do three things. First, look at some of Heidegger's specific statements about God in the context of this critical movement to explain why these statements leave open the possibility of a non-metaphysical approach to God. Secondly, to briefly outline, in reliance on Wolfe, some of the theological reception of Heidegger to situate my approach, and thirdly, to set out a preliminary and anticipatory justification of my approach, so that an understanding of the purpose of the exposition of the constructive movement of Heidegger's thought can inform that exposition.

We have already seen that Heidegger's principal target in the critical movement of his later thought is the forgetfulness of being: God is incidental to this discussion. Much of what he has to say seems to presuppose a strict separation of the question of being from thought about God:

> Being and God are not identical, and I would never attempt to think the essence of God via Being. Some of you know, perhaps, that I started in theology and have retained an old love for it and am reasonably well-versed in it. If I were yet to write a theology – and sometimes the thought tempts me – the term "being" would not appear in it.[140]

When Heidegger does discuss God in 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', his main concern is how the concept of God has entered into philosophy. He sees this as being to the detriment of both philosophy and theology. For philosophy, it leads to the thinking of being in terms of the highest being. For theology, it leads only to a god of philosophy, a *causa sui* to whom 'man can neither pray nor sacrifice' and before whom the human can neither 'fall on his knees in awe nor can he make music and dance'.[141] Similarly, in 'The Word of Nietzsche: "God is Dead"', the heaviest blow against God is not from those who say that God is

[140] Martin Heidegger, 'Gespräch mit Martin Heidegger am 6 November 1951', in *Gesamtausgabe Band 15: Seminare (1951-1973)*, ed. by Ochwadt, Curd (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2005), pp. 425-439, p. 436. Translation from Wolfe, *Heidegger and Theology*, p. 142.
[141] Heidegger, 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', p. 72.

unknowable or unprovable but comes instead from theologians who conceive God metaphysically as the being that is most in being.[142] Finally, in 'The Question Concerning Technology', it is a god seen in terms of cause-effect coherence who is said to 'lose all that is exalted and holy, the mysteriousness of distance'. Again, God becomes, 'even in theology, the god of the philosophers'. Here we see the possibility for a non-metaphysical God, but the thinking of this God is separate from the thinking of being. As well as this separation, Heidegger also places theology in a subordinate relationship to his thinking of being. In *Being and Time,* where theology is seen as an ontic science of the Christian or 'faithful' mode of existence, theology has a subordinate relationship to Heidegger's thought, which guides it to the ontological basis of its theological concepts.[143] This subordination continues in Heidegger's later thought: even where neither being nor the divine is thought metaphysically, the divine may still be subordinated to being. In his 'Letter on Humanism', Heidegger says:

> Only from the truth of Being can the essence of the holy be thought. Only from the essence of the holy is the essence of divinity to be thought. Only in the light of the essence of divinity can it be thought or said what the word "God" is to signify.[144]

This implies that thought about God has its foundation in thought about being.[145] Similarly, in 'The Turning' Heidegger says:

> whether the god lives or remains dead is not decided by the religiosity of men and even less by the theological aspirations of philosophy and natural science. Whether or not God is God comes disclosingly to pass from out of and within the constellation of Being.[146]

Whilst the critical movement of Heidegger's later thought leaves room for a non-metaphysical God, this is as a god or gods subordinate to being. Theology takes the place assigned to it by philosophy.[147] Furthermore, if we broaden our view of

---

[142] Heidegger, 'The Word of Nietzsche: "God is Dead"', p. 105.
[143] Jeff Owen Prudhomme, *God and Being: Heidegger's Relation to Theology* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997), p. 2.
[144] Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', p. 230.
[145] The notion that God can be thought from Being (or even beings) which are not God is not necessarily problematic as it is the basis of natural or fundamental theology: the claim of exclusivity – that this is the only way God can be thought – is problematic though.
[146] Heidegger, 'The Turning', p. 49.
[147] Wolfe draws attention to Heidegger's preface to the 1970 publication of his 1927 lecture, 'Phenomenology and Theology', in which he places theology and philosophy side by side rather than

Heidegger's later thought 'in the vicinity of theology' by anticipating its constructive aspects as summarised by Wolfe, it comprises deliberations on poetry, letting-be and 'the last god'. The deliberations on 'the last god' take the form of a rigorously apophatic eschatology awaiting a god who may or may not come and who, in any event, is only the herald of being. Wolfe concludes:

> Even on an understanding of Christianity as vitiated rather than essentially constituted by an ontotheological understanding of God and the world, Heidegger's radical apophaticism regarding the nature of the God to come is at basic odds with the Christian orientation by and towards a revelation of God that has already occurred.[148]

It follows from this that any theological engagement which retains a basic Christian orientation will involve selective disagreement with Heidegger.[149]

The scope for this disagreement is significant and is not confined to matters of Christian revelation.[150] It may involve a defence of metaphysical notions of being and God. It may involve a rejection of the split between the realm of philosophy and the realm of theology. It may involve a denial that Christian metaphysics has been forgetful of the difference between being and beings (and, for example, that Thomistic metaphysics in describing God as *ipsum esse per se subsistens* is fully cognisant of this difference). It may assert that the Christian tradition through apophaticism is already aware of the limitations of speaking of God as a cause or with human concepts and language. All of these potential disagreements are important, but I would argue that they do not diminish the value of Heidegger as a conversation partner.[151] This value depends only on the acceptance of his diagnosis of the Enframing stance and its prevalence and of the nihilistic ontotheology which

---

reiterating the earlier distinction he made between philosophy as ontological and theology as a mere ontic science: Wolfe, *Heidegger and Theology*, p. 137.

[148] Wolfe, *Heidegger and Theology*, pp. 138, 145.

[149] John Macquarrie is arguably more positive about engagement with Heidegger, saying that Heidegger's philosophy 'can be interpreted in a way that is compatible with Christian faith, and it can yield important insights into the faith: John Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity: The Hensley Henson Lectures 1993-94* (London: SCM Press, 1994), p. 108.

[150] For an account of theological contestations, see Wolfe, *Heidegger and Theology*, pp. 170-177.

[151] These disagreements (which essentially allow for the possibility of a Christian metaphysics untainted by an Enframing stance or an ontotheological basis) create the possibility for terminological confusion. As Heidegger sees all metaphysics as ontotheological, any Christian thought which is not ontotheological would not be described by him as metaphysical. In this thesis, I will therefore align with Heidegger's use of terminology and equate metaphysics with ontotheology and will thus describe thinking which is not ontotheological as non-metaphysical.

underpins it – and in relation to the latter, not an agreement with that nihilism but only with the need to recognise and understand it as the ontotheological grounding of thought in the age in which we live. If this is accepted, it would also seem natural to take an interest in the positive movement Heidegger makes in response to this critique. Whilst it does not necessarily follow that the one who has seen the problem will also provide the solution, it would seem at the least that their proposals will merit attention. Whilst this thesis can therefore be of interest to those who hold that there is a metaphysics that is untainted by an Enframing stance and is not ontotheological, those readers should note that the discussion will continue to be framed (as Heidegger does) in terms of a distinction between metaphysical thought and non-metaphysical thought.

Before moving on to consider the positive theological reception of Heidegger based on 'selective disagreement', it is worth considering a more serious objection to the use of Heidegger by theologians. Robert Gall in *Beyond Theism and Atheism: Heidegger's Significance for Religious Thinking* argues that Christian theology 'embodies the very thinking that Heidegger, following Nietzsche, finds questionable and is attempting to "overcome"'.[152] He argues that Heidegger's approach is one of 'finding one's resolution in questioning itself' and that this questioning is a questioning of being. He sees this questioning as incompatible with theology because any faith stands in the way of the questioning of being. In support of this, Gall quotes Heidegger:

> anyone for whom the Bible is divine revelation and truth already has the answer to the question, "Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?" before it is even asked: beings, with the exception of God Himself, are created by Him. God Himself "is" as the uncreated Creator. One who holds on to such faith as a basis can, perhaps, emulate and participate in the asking of our question in a certain way, but he cannot authentically question without giving himself up as a believer, with all the consequences of this step.[153]

The quote here is from *Introduction to Metaphysics* based on lectures originally given at the University of Freiburg in 1935. It is notable that this text is a transitional

[152] Robert Gall, *Beyond Theism and Atheism: Heidegger's Significance for Religious Thinking* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), p. 27.
[153] Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 8. The translation by Fried and Polt has been used in preference to the translation used by Gall.

text between Heidegger's earlier and later thought. In particular, the lectures were delivered at a time when Heidegger saw theology as a positive, ontic science of faith (and not of God or speculative knowledge of God). They were also delivered at a time when Heidegger was deeply antagonistic to Christianity.[154] Gall sees even Heidegger's proposal of a more genuine and authentic task for theology as reflecting 'despair at the possibility of theology itself' and as 'an ambiguous (indeed almost lame) distinction and proposal'. Gall allows only that theology may 'have a lesson to teach us and some matter at stake in its thought'. However, 'taking that lesson up into a more original thinking and questioning seems to thoroughly dissolve both faith and theology'.[155]

This conclusion ignores a paradox explored by Heidegger that is apparent if we continue the quote from *Introduction to Metaphysics* at the point at which Gall ends it. Heidegger continues his description of the thinking of a person of faith:

> He can act only "as if"—. On the other hand, if such faith does not continually expose itself to the possibility of unfaith, it is not faith but a convenience. It becomes an agreement with oneself to adhere in the future to a doctrine as something that has somehow been handed down. This is neither having faith nor questioning, but indifference— which can then, perhaps even with keen interest, busy itself with everything, with faith as well as with questioning.[156]

One who holds to faith can still question 'as if' – although this may be a less adequate or authentic mode of questioning, it is still a questioning. More importantly, Heidegger raises the possibility that genuine faith must be open to questioning. As he says, there is plenty for one to do if one, as a convenience, adheres to a doctrine without questioning, but this is not genuine faith. It would seem to follow from Heidegger's argument that unfaith, to be a real questioning, also needs to continually expose itself to the possibility of faith. Furthermore, even if it is thought, for example, that 'God created the heavens and the earth' is an answer to the question of why there are beings at all instead of nothing, it is far from being an exhaustive answer: it is an answer that is open to question and an answer which is, at best, only a partial answer. I would suggest that Heidegger is

[154] Caputo, 'Heidegger and Theology', p. 333.
[155] Gall, *Beyond Theism and Atheism: Heidegger's Significance for Religious Thinking*, p. 30.
[156] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 8.

here affirming rather than ruling out the possibility of questioning faith, and I would further argue that the task of theology is not, as Gall suggests, dissolved but at least remains questionable, leaving room for a positive theological reception of Heidegger.

This positive theological reception is divided by Wolfe into three heuristic categories: existential theology, phenomenological Thomism and post-metaphysical theology.[157] The first two of these are based on Heidegger's earlier thought. Existential theology uses the existential analytic of *Dasein* from *Being and Time* as the anthropological starting point for Christian existentialism. Caputo claims that the formal, universal, *a priori* structures of existing *Dasein* were in part based on Heidegger's work to formalise the structures of factical Christian life as an existentiell ideal from which the existential analytic prescinded.[158] It is unsurprising then that Protestant theologians such as Heidegger's lifelong friend, Rudolf Bultmann, greeted *Being and Time* enthusiastically as having discovered the 'very structure of religious and Christian existence but without the ontico-mythical world view'.[159] Their appropriation is a reversal of Heidegger's process by developing a Christian existentiell from the existential analytic.[160] As already mentioned, this existential analytic could form the basis for a phenomenology of prayer that would be relevant for the consideration of prayerful thought. However, as it precedes and does not form part of the response to the critique of Enframing (which is why I have argued we should take notice of Heidegger), it will not be pursued further here.

Phenomenological Thomism is also based on Heidegger's earlier thought. Wolfe sees Karl Rahner and Edith Stein as being representative of this category. In each case, they contest Heidegger's decision in his phenomenology of religion to describe (any) God as radically external to the individual, and they instead develop a phenomenological description of humans with a constitutive openness to something greater than them.[161] This engagement with Heidegger is based on the

[157] Wolfe, *Heidegger and Theology*, pp. 169, 178-197.
[158] 'Existential' refers to the formal, universal, *a priori* structures of all human existence and 'existentiell' to actual, historical, concrete instantiations of human existence.
[159] Caputo, 'Heidegger and Theology', p. 330.
[160] Caputo, 'Heidegger and Theology', p. 331.
[161] Wolfe, *Heidegger and Theology*, pp. 187-193.

phenomenology of *Being and Time* and thus, again, as the reason chosen for engaging with Heidegger here is his later critique of Enframing and ontotheology, further engagement with this category of theological reception of Heidegger will not be pursued here. As we will see in the next chapter, Rahner is one of the two twentieth-century interpreters through whom I have chosen to approach the *Spiritual Exercises*. It is possible that Heidegger's thought (or at least his earlier thought) has influenced Rahner's interpretation of the *Spiritual Exercises*. That question is not one I will pursue as it raises a number of difficult questions: of Rahner's interpretation of Heidegger, the extent of Heidegger's influence over Rahner's thought, and then the extent to which Rahner's earlier more philosophical writings relate to his later more theological works.[162] It is, however, worth noting the possibility that in bringing into dialogue an interpretation of the *Spiritual Exercises* influenced by Rahner with Heidegger's later thought, there may be an element, although I think it small, of simply bringing later Heidegger into conversation with his own earlier thought.

The third category identified by Wolfe, post-metaphysical theology, is the one into which the engagement with Heidegger that I am proposing here falls.[163] She identifies this with the work of the American scholars John Caputo and Merold Westphal and with the 'theological turn' in French phenomenology represented by Emanuel Levinas, Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry, Jean-Louis Chrétien and Jean-Yves Lacoste.[164] What these scholars have in common, according to Wolfe, is that they see the potential in Heidegger's philosophy for responding to the call of the divine

[162] For a Heideggerian reading of Rahner's philosophy, see Thomas Sheehan, *Karl Rahner: The Philosophical Foundations* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1987). Karen Kilby argues that, whilst there are a few particular borrowings from Heidegger, *Spirit in the World* is not a Heideggerian work. She also argues for a nonfoundationalist reading of Rahner: his philosophical works do not form the basis for his theology. Karen Kilby, *Karl Rahner: Theology and Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 14. Peter Joseph Fritz argues that there is a 'complex and generative' relationship between Heidegger and Rahner but that Rahner is resistant theologically and philosophically to Heidegger. Peter Joseph Fritz, *Karl Rahner's Theological Aesthetics* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), pp. 261-262. These readings by Kilby and Fritz, in different ways, support my view that Heidegger's influence over Rahner's reading of the *Spiritual Exercises* is at best limited.
[163] Although I am continuing to use the term 'post-metaphysical', as stated earlier, my engagement does not depend on the abandonment of metaphysics but only on an acceptance of the diagnosis of the Enframing stance and its pervasiveness.
[164] A large part of Prevot's *Thinking Prayer* comprises a constructive engagement with this broadly post-Heideggerian tradition: Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 111-161.

without turning God into an idol by metaphysical speculation. Although Wolfe does not engage specifically with the work of any of these scholars, she does raise some general issues with this whole post-Heideggerian trajectory. These are worth considering in some detail as they are directly relevant to the path I wish to take in considering the relevance of Heidegger's thought for prayer. Wolfe acknowledges that Heidegger's later philosophy calls for a particular attitude to the world – of responding and letting be – rather than forceful Enframing. She links this to an interpretation of being as an elusive and distinct actor simultaneously revealing and concealing itself and thus having and creating a history. Whilst she acknowledges a structural similarity between this account of being and the Christian account of God, she refers somewhat dismissively to theologians who 'do little more than appeal to such structural parallels'. Her specific criticisms of this analogical approach are that it merely recalls theologians (and then through a potentially skewed lens) to neglected mystical strands within their tradition, citing Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Pseudo-Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor, John Scotus Eriugena and Meister Eckhart. In particular, if, as is contended by John Caputo, Heidegger's thought is itself influenced by mysticism, we can question the merit of bringing Heidegger into fresh dialogue with mystical sources.[165] Finally, she cites Heidegger's own 'repeated and forceful' rejection of the identification of God with his post-metaphysical understanding of being. Thus, for Wolfe, any theology 'that wishes to rigorously engage his teaching, rather than merely to find in it a convenient analogy for theology's own work' has not only to renounce metaphysical conceptions of God but also engage with Heidegger's God 'as the self-giving being'. Here she cites Lacoste's conclusion that 'theology has nothing to learn here, except that which it is absolutely not'. She goes on to say that any theology wishing to engage with Heidegger's view of God rather than mere structural parallels would have to focus on Heidegger's broadly phenomenological account of the constitution of 'God' for the believer. As she concludes, any theological appropriation of Heidegger's post-metaphysical thought must take seriously the 'abiding conflict' between his thought

[165] Caputo, *The Mystical Element*.

and Christian proclamation: the limits placed on apophaticism by the centrality of revelation for any Christian understanding of God.[166]

In her analysis, Wolfe seems oddly resistant to the force of her own conclusions. Earlier in the work, she acknowledges the fact that any theological engagement with Heidegger involves selective disagreement. She also here acknowledges that Heidegger's concept of god or the divine is inconsistent with revelation. Yet she continues to insist that engagements with Heidegger are not serious or rigorous unless they engage with his concept of god. I would suggest that the approach of analogy which she relativises is the only way to engage with Heidegger that is consistent with an ongoing commitment to Christian revelation. A 'rigorous' approach then faces up to that limitation. There is a need, of course, to be clear about how an analogous use of Heidegger's thought can be made, to which I will return. The limitations of that analogy are already evident from Wolfe's statements: she correctly characterises Heidegger's later philosophy as an 'attitude of responding and letting be rather than forceful Enframing' and links that to an interpretation of being as a distinct actor. It is in the former attitude that the promise of any analogy is most evident, and in the latter concept of being that a theologian is most likely to need to part ways with Heidegger. However, I would argue that there is value (which Wolfe relativises) in bringing Heidegger's thought into dialogue with elements of the Christian tradition, such as the mystical tradition from Origen to Eckhart. This dialogue can do much more than just remind us of elements of tradition – it is a deliberate choice to look at tradition in a way which challenges it and brings it up to date – even to look in a way that thinks the unthought in these traditions. Specifically, Heidegger's critiques of Enframing and ontotheology relate to the world as we now see it. Bringing these critiques into dialogue with Christian tradition, from times which, if we accept Heidegger's concept of epochal ontotheologies, were grounded in different metaphysical configurations, should enrich those traditions and enable us to discover what they have to say to the time in which we live. Thus, in agreement with Wolfe, I would suggest that we do need to take seriously Heidegger's rejection of identification of

[166] Wolfe, *Heidegger and Theology*, pp. 194-197.

God with his own conception of being. In disagreement with her, I would suggest that the route this leaves open to meaningful engagement with Heidegger's thought is by way of pursuing analogies.

The value of structural analogies

The pursuit of analogies, then, attempts to engage with the constructive movement in Heidegger's later thought. This brings us to the point where we can consider the analogies to be explored in this context. In her discussion of post-metaphysical theology, Wolfe says that the development of a theology that 'overcomes' metaphysics 'has hardly found a footing in German scholarship'. By returning to German scholarship, though, we can find the basis for proceeding by way of analogy. In 1959 Heinrich Ott published a paper which recognised what James Robinson describes as the 'explosive potentialities of "the later Heidegger" for theology'.[167] In particular, Ott argued that the existential theology developed by Bultmann in response to Heidegger's earlier thought had been superseded by developments in Heidegger's thinking. In that same year, the annual meeting of Bultmann's former pupils, the 'old Marburgers' chose the relationship of Heidegger to theology as its topic. Heidegger presented a day-long seminar at this meeting on 'Christian Faith and Thinking' where he concluded that the door remains open for a non-metaphysical God.[168] At the 1960 meeting of the old Marburgers, Ott presented a paper on systematic theology.[169] In his address, Ott spoke of his own theology 'fitting into' Heidegger's philosophy, but this softened only to claim a 'correspondence' in the published version of the paper. It is, however, Heidegger's response to these discussions which is of greatest interest here:

> Heidegger introduced into the discussion at the 1960 meeting the idea of an *analogia proportionalitatis:* A is to B as C is to D. As philosophical thinking is related to being, when being speaks to thinking, so faith's thinking is related to God, when God is revealed in his word.[170]

[167] Robinson, 'The German Discussion of the Later Heidegger', p. 5.
[168] Robinson, 'The German Discussion of the Later Heidegger', pp. 5-6.
[169] Heinrich Ott, 'What is Systematic Theology?', in *The Later Heidegger and Theology*, ed. by Robinson, James M. and Cobb, John B. (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 77-111.
[170] Robinson, 'The German Discussion of the Later Heidegger', p. 43.

Ott is said to have seen in this formulation, as I do, a primary emphasis on the experiential nature of philosophical and theological thought. Thus, theology is not required to relate God to a Heideggerian understanding of being. However, there is a structural correspondence between the ways that philosophy thinks being and the way that theology thinks God.[171] It is important to recognise here that we are addressing ways of thinking and not what is thought. The non-metaphysical ways of thinking being may correspond to the non-metaphysical ways of thinking God. To take a concrete example, in Heidegger's later thought, Hölderlin's poetry has an important place in his thinking of being. The analogous thinking proposed here would not suggest that Hölderlin's poetry would necessarily have a place in the theologian's thinking about God, but rather that poetry and poetical language provide a non-metaphysical way of speaking about God, just as Heidegger thinks Hölderlin's poetry is potentially revelatory of being.

Before further pursuing structural analogies, it is worth commenting on the loose interpretation of analogy being used here. It is important to be clear what Heidegger meant by his reference to an *analogia proportionalitatis*. If an ontologically grounded theory of analogy is used, there is a danger of ending up in the incoherent position of trying to describe ways of thinking about God in a non-metaphysical way by reference to metaphysically grounded analogies. Most theologians will assume (as Caputo does) that in referring to the *analogia proportionalitatis* Heidegger is referring to Cajetan's classification of Aquinas's use of analogy. If that is the case, then the reference here is to the type of analogy exemplified by Aquinas in *De Veritate:*

> Knowledge is predicated neither entirely univocally nor yet purely equivocally of God's knowledge and ours. Instead, it is predicated analogously, or, in other words, according to a proportion... [Here, the analogy is] not between two things which have a proportion between them, but rather between two related proportions – for example, six has something in common with four because six is two times three, just as four is two times two... There is no reason why some name cannot be predicated analogously of God and creature in this [second] manner.[172]

[171] Caputo, 'Heidegger and Theology', p. 339.
[172] See vol.1, q.2, a.11, Thomas Aquinas, *The Disputed Questions on Truth* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952-54)..

Here, Aquinas rejects simple analogical predication (an *analogia proportionis*) as not being possible between God and the world because it does not do justice to God's alterity. A four-term *analogia proportionalitatis* respects this alterity by setting up two analogous relationships, thus ensuring that God's relationship to the world remains indirect.[173] In this case, the reason for Heidegger referring to an *analogia proportionalitatis* is not to do with the alterity of God compared to the other terms of the analogy, but simply to establish that there is no necessary relationship between God and being. Whilst Heidegger would have been aware of the usage of this analogy in medieval thought, he is not using the analogy in a metaphysically grounded way. Heidegger would also have been aware of the use of an analogy of proportionality by Kant:

> By means of... analogy, I can obtain a relational concept of things which are absolutely unknown to me. For instance, as the promotion of the welfare of children (=a) is to the love of parents (=b), so the welfare of the human species (=c) is to that unknown God (=x), which we call love; not as if it had the least similarity to any human inclinations, but because we can posit its relation to the world to be similar to that which things of the world bear one another.[174]

Kant's analogy is in the same form as Aquinas's but, as Milbank points out, is 'primarily a linguistic doctrine'.[175] However, as Milbank also points out, whilst this use of analogy is 'totally agnostic as concerns God-in-himself', it is 'in a way dogmatic as concerns his relations to finite beings'. Again, it would seem unlikely that Heidegger would have intended to use this analogy the way Kant uses it, which is still metaphysically grounded. There is, then, no logical necessity for thinking about God to have the same relationship to God as thinking about being does to being. In this case, the force of the analogy is based on what both ways of thinking are attempting to avoid, which is thinking that is under the sway of Enframing. Thus, the analogy here is no more or less than the notion that thinking of being and thinking about God that avoid Enframing might have similarities to each other. It

[173] David Whistler, 'Post-Established Harmony: Kant and Analogy Reconsidered', *Sophia,* 52 (2013), 235-258, p. 237. The term *analogia proportionalitatis*, used for the analogy described by Aquinas is from Thomas Cajetan's *De Nominum Analogia* (1498).
[174] Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001).(4:358).
[175] John Milbank, *The Word Made Strange* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 9.

establishes this possibility – of the similarity between thinking about God and about being – without positing any necessary relation between being and God.

The proposal then is to explore Heidegger's thought to look for ways of thinking that can be analogously applied to thought about God. To briefly reprise on the reasons for doing this: although Wolfe suggests that Heidegger is a philosopher who theologians – whether critical or sympathetic – avoid at their peril, I do not consider engagement with Heidegger to be a necessity.[176] The reason for engaging with him is because of the persuasiveness of the critical movement of his later thought. This in itself would suggest that the constructive movement of his later thought may also be worth paying attention to, particularly as the very distinction between these two movements is somewhat arbitrary. The reason for seeking analogies in Heidegger's later thinking is because this is the only way to engage with his work if we also wish to retain a commitment to Christian revelation. These analogies have the possibility to be valuable. At the very least, there is a degree of assurance that ways of thinking being which Heidegger sees as resisting his critiques of Enframing and ontotheology will also serve to think of God in ways that also resist these critiques. At best, as we pursue this analogy, we are forced to examine the distinctions we make between the way Heidegger thinks being and the way a theologian thinks God opening up a fresh perspective on the Christian tradition. Whilst I would join with Caputo in saying 'I am certainly not about to try to resolve the question of Heidegger and God!', I would suggest, in what may be a cowardly evasion but which I hope will be seen as constructive, that the theologian can learn something from Heidegger's thought without resolving that question.[177]

By way of final clarification of the approach to be taken, it would be helpful to briefly outline where my path will cross with Andrew Prevot, Sarah Coakley, John Caputo and Jeff Prudhomme. If we return to the approach taken by Prevot outlined in the last chapter, we find that he accepts to some extent the critical movement in Heidegger's thought – it is the starting point of his book – but he is then very critical

[176] Wolfe, *Heidegger and Theology*, p. 151.
[177] John D. Caputo, 'What is Merold Westphal's Critique of Ontotheology Criticizing?', in *Gazing Through a Prism Darkly: Reflections on Merold Westphal's Hermeneutical Epistemology*, ed. by Putt, B. Keith (Fordham University Press, 2009), pp. 100-115, p. 110.

of the constructive movement. Much of his criticism can be attributed to his focus on the specific content of that thought rather than the ways of thinking involved. He does not look at it analogously in the loose way I have described, which allows us to look at ways of thinking abstracted from the content of what is thought. Whilst Prevot can see the benefit of poetic language in the mystery of prayer – in, most notably, the spirit-filled songs of slaves – he criticises Heidegger's engagement with Hölderlin's poetry as autochthonous.[178] Much of Prevot's criticism is based on the fact that Heidegger is describing the thinking of being and not God. My starting point is to accept this and see any relationship here as analogous: I would hope, by pursuing analogies in this way, for a more positive engagement with the constructive movement in Heidegger's later thought. We have also seen that Coakley accepts Heidegger's critique of ontotheology – although like Prevot, she is perhaps too quick to exonerate traditional theology from its main claims.[179] However, the basis for Coakley's suggestion that contemplative prayer specifically is resistant to ontotheology is not explained in any detail. One outcome of our enquiries then will be whether such a basis exists.[180]

John Caputo's main work of relevance here is his 1986 book, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*.[181] In this work, Caputo explores the same

[178] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 68, 325.

[179] Caputo distinguishes a narrow and broad sense of ontotheology. Discussing Augustine and Aquinas, he cites two good reasons why they are not ontotheologians in the narrow sense: (1) by not putting being before God or treating it as having priority over God; (2) whilst reasoning logically and well, by not making conceptual, logical thinking the measure of God. The broader sense resists any notion of there being a 'Center'. Thus, it is not just that we cannot know what the 'Center' is, but we cannot name it or even know if there is a 'Center'. Attempting to grapple with Heidegger's critical thinking on the basis of the broad sense is the path taken by the post-metaphysical theologians, who therefore face the most acute conflict with also holding to any notion of Christian revelation. If we apply it in the narrower sense, the danger lies in not listening to what can be learnt about the pervasiveness of metaphysical thought and in passing too easily over the almost insoluble contradiction of reasoning about God without making reason the measure of God. John D. Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), pp. 107, 110.

[180] More precisely, our enquiries will help establish whether the constructive movement of Heidegger's later thought would suggest that contemplative prayer is resistant to Enframing.

[181] Caputo's thinking about Heidegger continues to develop in a more critical direction after this work. Caputo sees the need to "demythologize" Heidegger. He describes Heidegger as having repressed the biblical provenance of his thought in favour of a 'mono-Greco-genealogy' in which every modern language is silent except German. This is a philosophy of the 'shining glow of *Sein'* (an alethiology) which 'leaves no room for the unrepresentable ethical idea which commands our respect' (a hagiology). See John D. Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana

structural analogy being discussed here but with a different purpose. Caputo's objective is to better understand Heidegger's thought by examining the question of whether Heidegger was influenced by mysticism. He compares Heidegger's thought to that of Meister Eckhart, both as a paradigm mystic and because of Heidegger's historical engagement with Eckhart's thought.[182] He concludes that Heidegger has appropriated the structural relationship between the soul and God in Eckhart's mysticism to articulate the relationship between thought and being. For Caputo, Heidegger's thought is, in some respects, structurally akin to that of Eckhart, but it would be an overstatement to describe Heidegger's thought as a species of mysticism.[183] Caputo finds significant analogies between Heidegger's thought and Eckhart's mysticism: they both appeal to something which surpasses the human; both advocate letting be [*Gelassenheit*]; both speak of a way to find a new rootedness amongst things; and for neither is the human adequately accounted for as a rational animal – there is something beyond conceptual reasoning and representational thinking. However, Caputo also identifies significant disanalogies including that: for Heidegger, being is found not in silence but language – particularly poetic language; Heidegger contemplates experience in time and history and not through entering into timeless eternity; mysticism retains metaphysical distinctions; and Heidegger's thought is shorn of moral and ethical dimensions that Eckhart's mysticism retains. Although Caputo's focus on the influence of a particular mystic on Heidegger's thought differs significantly from the objectives of this enquiry, his conclusions confirm the value of Heidegger as a conversation partner. The relationship between Heidegger's thought and Eckhart's mysticism is neither so close that we are simply getting a distorted view of Eckhart nor is it so distant that the promise of insights into prayerful thought seems unlikely.

In his *God and Being: Heidegger's Relation to Theology,* Jeff Prudhomme pursues a similar line to that taken here. Having examined Heidegger's early

University Press, 1993); John D. Caputo, 'People of God, People of Being: The Theological Presuppositions of Heidegger's Path of Thought', in *Appropriating Heidegger*, ed. by Faulconer, James E. and Wrathall, Mark A. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 85-100, pp. 98-99.

[182] Caputo, *The Mystical Element*, p. 8.

[183] Caputo, *The Mystical Element*, p. 239.

presentation of theology as the positive ontic science of Christian existence and also his critique of ontotheology, Prudhomme attempts to correlate Heidegger's non-metaphysical ontology with a non-metaphysical theology. This involves a characterisation of Heidegger's later thought as reflecting on language (in poetic and philosophical texts) as the self-annunciation of being. Prudhomme correlates this to the announcement of God in the non-divine (in the person of the crucified Christ).[184] He takes this correlation further than I am proposing to do here. He thinks that creating only what he describes as 'parallels' between thought about God and thought about being is insufficient as, absent clarification of the relationship between God and being, there is a danger of falling back into ontotheology.[185] Prudhomme, therefore, proposes a correlation that goes beyond any *analogia proportionalitatis* which he expresses as 'God is God as the notion of being, as thought by Heidegger through the hermeneutics of the language of being'.[186] I do not intend to critically engage with this proposed correlation because it is beyond the scope of this study and also because it presupposes a position on the relationship between God and being. It should not be necessary to establish the relationship between God and being to avoid an Enframing stance in the ways that will be explored in this thesis.

Heidegger's thinking of being.

Our exposition of the constructive aspects of Heidegger's later thought has a clear purpose: to identify the ways of thinking that Heidegger explored as non-metaphysical ways of thinking being, which are also ways to avoid taking an Enframing stance. However, we need to be aware of the potential difficulties with such an exposition. As attempts to get away from calculative, representational thinking, we should not be surprised that these ways of thinking resist systematic presentation. Heidegger used the metaphor of a country path for these ways of thinking, and, like a country path, we may find them to be meandering and at times

[184] Prudhomme, *God and Being: Heidegger's Relation to Theology*, pp. 2-3, 158, 162.
[185] Prudhomme, *God and Being: Heidegger's Relation to Theology*, p. 37.
[186] Prudhomme, *God and Being: Heidegger's Relation to Theology*, pp. 160 -165.

unclear. There is a distinct difference between the methods of *Being and Time* and later essays, which aim to follow a way rather than present a linear argument. At times Heidegger is aiming at the intellectual disruption of the reader, not so that this disruption can then be resolved, but because the very disruption promotes the openness which is being sought. Furthermore, Heidegger's thought after the 'turn' spans several decades and continues 'to turn or pivot all through them' as there is a progressive radicalisation of his thinking of the difference between being and beings.[187] We also need to recognise that a consequence of proceeding by way of analogy is that it involves making the distinction between the way of thinking and the "whither" of that thinking. The fundamental idea which characterises Heidegger's later thought is that of the event of being [*Ereignis*]: Richardson describes this as Heidegger's 'apex thought' that his later writings most preach and call us towards. *Ereignis* names how being occurs in its truth and is used in various ways by Heidegger.[188] *Ereignis* names the historical occurrence when beings are no longer abandoned by being, and the truth of being holds sway as an appropriating event. It also names the "possibility" which already calls out to a few poets and thinkers as a presentiment or an experience of the withdrawal of being. Therefore, it is both the way in which being is unconcealed and the occurrence of being itself: it describes *how* we think being and *what* we are thinking towards. We have to acknowledge the difficulty with making the distinction required by the analogical method: the *way* of thinking cannot easily be separated from that which we are thinking towards whether that is God or being. Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that Heidegger's later thought, to the extent it successfully steps outside the realm of calculative thinking, becomes both vulnerable because it cannot be defended by calculative thought and also impregnable in that it cannot be attacked by it. As Heidegger says in his 'Letter on Humanism', judging this way of thinking as a science is to apply a standard that does not measure up to it: it can be compared to evaluating the essence and powers of a fish by seeing how long it can live on dry

[187] Richardson, *Heidegger*, pp. 206-207.
[188] Daniela Vallega-Neu, '*Ereignis*: The Event of Appropriation', in *Martin Heidegger: Key Concepts*, ed. by Davis, Bret W. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 140-154.

land.[189] That this may be frustrating needs to be recognised as the kind of intellectual disruption that Heidegger's later writings are seeking.

Notwithstanding all of the above, it is necessary to give some shape to the following exposition. We will start by considering ongoing engagement with metaphysical thought: this is not something which is simply left behind – ongoing engagement with it is part not only of its overcoming but also of receptivity to what needs to be let in. We will then look at the broad theme of receptivity or 'letting be' and other aspects of non-metaphysical thinking, language's role and the specific role of the poet and poetic language.

Ongoing engagement with metaphysical thought

One of the first things we discover when we look at the constructive movement in Heidegger's later writings is that he does not turn his back on the subject of the critical movement. Heidegger sees there as being an ongoing engagement with the metaphysical thinking of this and previous epochs. He expresses this in various ways. In 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', he describes engagement with the history of philosophy as a 'stepping back' which points to a realm that has previously been 'skipped over'. This stepping back is not an isolated thought, but rather 'a long path' along which thinking moves and leads us away from what has been thought before.[190] In other words, the process of engaging with previous thought contributes to the ability to think what has previously been unthought – the difference between being and beings. This process of stepping back requires 'a duration and an endurance whose dimensions we do not know' and it is necessarily a step back to be ventured here and now in the face of the way beings currently show themselves dominated as it is by the active nature of modern technology.[191] This is not a return to the earliest thinkers of Western philosophy but rather an ongoing engagement with the entire

[189] Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', p. 148.
[190] Heidegger, 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', pp. 49-50.
[191] Heidegger, 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', p. 51.

history of philosophy in which being has both been revealed and concealed.[192] The step back brings us 'face to face with the difference' and gains 'greater distance' which allows what is near to give itself as such. Stepping back brings us closer to rigorous thinking of the difference.[193] Whilst it may seem that this provides some orientation as to how individual thinking can move from engagement with metaphysical thought to the essence of what metaphysical thought is trying to think, there is also a sense in which this is beyond individual control. Heidegger says that no one can know whether this step will develop into a proper path or whether metaphysics will absorb it as representational thinking.[194]

Alongside this idea of stepping back, another way in which Heidegger expresses the ongoing relationship with metaphysical thought is by quoting Hölderlin: 'But where danger is, grows | The saving power also'.[195]Here, the danger is Enframing, and Heidegger sees the possibility that Enframing cannot 'exhaust itself solely in blocking all lighting-up of every revealing, all appearing of truth' but 'must harbour in itself the growth of the saving power'. Indeed, 'in all the disguising belonging to Enframing […] the truth of Being flashes'.[196] As with the stepping back, we have no right to 'lay hold of the saving power immediately and without preparation' as the growth of the saving power can happen 'concealedly and quietly' and in its own time: Heidegger speaks of perhaps standing 'in the shadow cast ahead by the advent of *this* turning' of the oblivion of being to the safekeeping of its coming to presence.[197] Although this turning may occur in its own time, to see this danger and point it out, there must be 'mortals who reach sooner into the abyss', who look 'with yet clearer eyes into the danger'.[198] This does not involve the affirmation of technology or its promotion. Nonetheless, the human is needed to surmount the essence of technology – a surmounting that Heidegger describes as being similar to getting over grief or pain and which first involves a human's essence

[192] Heidegger, 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', p. 52.
[193] Heidegger, 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', p. 64.
[194] Heidegger, 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', pp. 72-73.
[195] Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', pp. 28, 34; Heidegger, 'What are Poets For?', p. 118.
[196] Heidegger, 'The Turning', p. 47.
[197] Heidegger, 'The Turning', p. 41.
[198] Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', pp. 28-29; Heidegger, 'What are Poets For?', p. 117.

opening itself to and being attentive to the essence of technology.[199] This is very different from learning from historical mistakes: Being is both revealed and concealed in the essence of technology, so ongoing proximity to the way of thinking which is being relinquished is an integral part of, and not merely a preparatory step to, the ascetic process of letting in another way of thinking.

Receptivity and releasement

Gelassenheit was published in 1959. It comprises a brief memorial address in honour of the composer Conradin Kreutzer given in Heidegger's hometown of Messkirch in 1955, and a 'Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking' supposedly written from extended notes of a conversation in 1944-45 between a teacher, a scientist and a scholar.[200] The address is relatively straightforward, describing two kinds of thinking which are said to be necessary: calculative thinking and meditative thinking. Contemporary humans are described as being in flight from meditative thinking despite their unique nature as meditative beings. Interestingly, in a way which is consistent with what we have already seen in relation to ongoing engagement with metaphysical thinking, calculative thinking is not presented as superfluous. Furthermore, the use of technological devices is unavoidable, but releasement toward things (*Die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen*) denies 'them the right to dominate us, and so to warp, confuse, and lay waste to our nature'.[201] We can notice the meaning in technical processes: this is a meaning which 'is not invented or made by us' and 'hides itself'. If we continuously heed this meaning, we can stand in the realm of, and be open to the mystery of, that which 'shows itself and at the same time withdraws'. Despite needing effort, practice, 'delicate care' and patience, meditative thinking is a way open to anyone – although each person may need to follow this path in their own manner and 'within their own limits'. It is a meditation on what lies closest – upon that which most concerns

[199] Heidegger, 'The Turning', p. 39.
[200] Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 7.
[201] Martin Heidegger, 'Memorial Address', in *Discourse on Thinking* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 43-57, pp. 46, 47, 54.

each of us here and now. It is 'persistent courageous thinking' through which releasement and openness to mystery occur.[202]

Despite the promising emphasis in this public address on meditative thinking as open to anyone and which does not lose touch with reality, the accompanying conversation gives a strong sense of the difficulties of avoiding calculative thinking.[203] The dialogue format here serves a seemingly deliberate function in promoting openness and receptivity. It may be that the reader is, in the context of a dialogue, prepared to tolerate a lack of resolution found in the absence of clear argument, a lack of conclusions and ideas that can only be partially grasped. The participants in the conversation at times express the reader's perplexity: the scientist, in particular, repeatedly returns to the fact that he cannot 're-present' to himself the way of thinking being discussed, and the reader's identification with this quickly passes over into recognition that we too are trapped by calculative thinking and then, perhaps, to a willingness to look again, with greater openness, at the source of the scientist's frustration.[204] This dialogue format is one of several techniques which Heidegger uses in his later writings to disrupt our usual ways of thinking. Heidegger moves even further than he does in his earlier work beyond 'using familiar terms in recognised ways' to an 'unsettling intellectual space' in which he introduces new vocabulary with definitions we cannot quite make out, punning connections and sweeping claims.[205] As the essay progresses, instead of increasing understanding, the reader feels their grasp on what is being said slip away. In this particular dialogue, we share the participants' journey as they gradually give up on their attempts to grasp things. The dialogue then serves to open up receptivity through disorientation, to become a place where we can dwell in which *Gelassenheit* holds sway – where having three voices gets away from the wilfulness of having one voice. This is not an unequal dialogue in which the scientist and scholar are foils for the teacher: another source of disruption is that insights do

[202] Heidegger, 'Memorial Address', pp. 47, 55, 56.
[203] Heidegger, 'Memorial Address', p. 46.
[204] Heidegger, 'Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking', pp. 62, 67, 74.
[205] Richardson, *Heidegger*, p. 255. Polt describes Heidegger's style as becoming more 'poetic' He relies 'more exclusively on common, basic German words, and by skillfully exploring their sounds and histories, he weaves together texts that flow from question to question without ever crystallising into a doctrine or technical vocabulary': Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction*, p. 119.

not always come from the expected locutor. It is, for example, the scientist who realises that the whole conversation is a lesson in waiting, saying: 'As I see more clearly just now, all during our conversation I have been waiting for the arrival of the nature of thinking. But waiting itself has become clearer to me now and there with this too, that presumably we all became more waitful along our path'.[206]

One topic of discussion, as the concept of *Gelassenheit* is elucidated, is that of non-willing. This is understood in the broad sense of not only giving up human striving but giving up a subjective position – in other words, the giving up of representational and calculative thought, all of which is wilful. The problem of the wilful renunciation of willing is recognised: how can wilful thinking be relinquished without an exercise of will? The pragmatic answer is that, whilst renunciation is still wilful, it is nonetheless a potential way in which *Gelassenheit,* which remains outside of any will, can be approached: it is a preparation for non-willing thinking; it is a trace of willing which leads to its own relinquishment.[207] *Gelassenheit* cannot be awakened by us on our own but can only be 'let in'. This understanding is distinguished from the approach of the German mystic, Meister Eckhart, who is acknowledged as the source of the term *Gelassenheit*, but who is said to remain 'within the domain of the will'.[208] There is a discussion of whether *Gelassenheit* amounts to total passivity. Ultimately, the distinction between activity and passivity in this context is a distinction that remains in the realm of the will: we find the language of both activity and passivity used in relation to *Gelassenheit.* In describing the required attitude, the seemingly more passive description of 'keeping awake' is preferred to 'awakening'; releasement conceals a 'higher acting' which is yet no activity; and, elsewhere, in the context of a discussion of the 'letting happen of the advent of truth in art, 'letting happen' is said to be 'nothing passive but a doing in the highest degree'.[209] There is a resolve in releasement 'for the coming forth of truth's nature' and a composure and hidden steadfastness.

---

[206] Heidegger, 'Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking', p. 69.
[207] Heidegger, 'Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking', p. 80.
[208] Heidegger, 'Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking', pp. 59-62. Caputo claims that Heidegger is wrong to make this distinction and that Eckhart, like Heidegger, demands a non-willing in which all concepts and representations are cast off: Caputo, *The Mystical Element*, p. 179.
[209] Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 137.

Whilst releasement is a waiting, it cannot be a waiting for something. We are to wait without knowing what we are waiting for: otherwise, we are already objectifying and reifying possibilities. Importantly, and in a way that is consistent with what we have already seen when discussing the ongoing proximity to metaphysical thought and technology, we can think (in a calculative way) that from which the transition is to happen. Letting go of this thinking is a letting in of that which we are waiting upon, which again has to remain open.[210] The concept of *Gelassenheit* is therefore intimately linked with the critical movement of Heidegger's later thought: non-willing is the overcoming of the metaphysical tradition which, according to Heidegger, culminates in Nietzsche's metaphysics of will and the pervasive wilfulness of Enframing. In Heidegger's 1946 lecture to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Rilke's death, he refers to a 'more venturesome daring', which creates safety 'outside the objectifying turning away' from being. This does not create defences by self-assertion or by counting on 'a defence erected on willing' but by being 'outside all caring'. Thus, 'the daring which is more venturesome', willing more strongly than any self-assertion, because it is willing, 'creates a secureness for us' and it receives and unfolds 'in its fullness what it has received, accomplishing without production, by receiving'.[211] The overcoming of wilful metaphysical thinking and the giving up of these defences is not a matter of discarding an opinion but requires the patient waiting that evades the realm of the will.

There is a question about the degree of continuity between the letting-in or waiting of *Gelassenheit* as first described in the above dialogue and attunement to *Angst* (translated as anxiety or dread) in Heidegger's earlier writings.[212] Caputo claims that the later notion of *Gelassenheit* was implicit in the early notion of experience of anxiety. In both, humans are brought to a halt, to a withdrawal from outer running about with beings and to a relationship with that which is other than

[210] Heidegger, 'Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking', pp. 63, 68, 80.
[211] Heidegger, 'What are Poets For?', pp. 119-120.
[212] With the exception of this possible precursor in attunement to angst, the concept of releasement can be seen as a change from resoluteness in Heidegger's early writings. Michael Zimmerman provides a detailed discussion of this change: Michael E. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self: The Development of Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1981).

any being. Caputo describes *Gelassenheit* as not 'a counter-concept to anxiety' but rather its 'further refinement'. I would prefer to say that the experience of anxiety is akin to *Gelassenheit,* but I would disagree that the latter is a refinement of the former: whilst the two concepts are compatible, if anything *Gelassenheit* is broader – the waiting or letting-in may be anxious but need not be. It is, however, worth dwelling on this concept of anxiety as a way of non-metaphysical thinking. The development of the concept of anxiety is evident from the lecture given by Heidegger upon succeeding Husserl to the Chair of Philosophy at Freiburg in 1929 and the postscript to it added in 1943. In the original lecture, Heidegger considers the question 'What is metaphysics?' by conducting an inquiry into the question of the nothing. This is a question Heidegger says is rejected by science with its concern only for beings.[213] In the course of his inquiry, Heidegger speaks of 'founding modes of attunement' which bring us face to face with beings as a whole. These modes of attunement are not transitory feelings but moods. Whilst we cling to particular beings in our everyday preoccupations, the experience of beings as a whole can overcome us in the mood of profound boredom. This is not boredom with any particular book, play or thing, but a 'drifting here and there in the abysses of our existence like a muffling fog' that removes all things and human beings and oneself into a remarkable indifference. Another markedly different example of such a mood is the joy in the presence of the *Dasein* – the authentic self – of a human being whom we love. Whilst these moods can bring us face to face with beings as a whole, anxiety is the attunement through which humans are brought before nothing itself. This is not the common anxiety which is a form of fearfulness and which regularly comes over us. It is not the fear of any particular thing but rather anxiety in the face of indeterminacy – a feeling of being ill at ease, the cause of which cannot be identified. This anxiety can stun us to silence or cause us to babble. It is a shrinking back, a bewildered calm. This anxiety, and here the link to *Gelassenheit* is most clear, causes us humans who are beings in the midst of beings to slip away from ourselves. [214] Original anxiety is a rare event, although its 'breath quivers

[213] Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?', p. 47.
[214] Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?', pp. 49-52.

perpetually', it is usually repressed but can awaken in existence at any moment 'most readily in the reserved, and most assuredly in the daring': 'the anxiety of those who are daring cannot be opposed to joy or even the comfortable enjoyment of tranquilized bustle. It stands – outside all such opposition – in secret alliance with the cheerfulness and gentleness of creative longing'. In the 1943 postscript, Heidegger responds to a series of misgivings and misconceptions raised by his original lecture, one of which is the elevation of the morbid mood of anxiety to the one key mood, which devalues courage and paralyses the will to act. Another misgiving is the opposition to logic, delivering all judgments up to chance mood. He rejects the characterisation of his thought as nihilistic, as it ultimately seeks 'Being in Nothing': 'Being as "other" than everything that "is" comes to us in dread, provided that we do not, from dread of dread, i.e., in sheer timidity, shut our ears to the soundless voice which attunes us to the horrors of the abyss'. This dread or anxiety is not to be analysed as a 'psychological stock-type' in a classification of moods from high to low. It cannot be conceived as an isolated feeling detached from its relationship to nothing. Readiness for anxiety then 'guarantees that most mysterious of all possibilities: the experience of Being. For hard by essential dread, in the terror of the abyss, there dwells awe'.[215] Courage, far from being devalued, is essential, and the morbidity is qualified by the ultimate possibility of awe. The opposition to logic is explained as opposition to calculative thinking which 'binds itself to the calculation of what-is and ministers to this alone'.[216] Essential thinking is beyond calculation and expends itself for the truth of Being. In this essential thinking, a human surrenders their historical being to the need consummated in the freedom of sacrifice. This sacrifice expends our human being to preserve the truth of Being: it expresses a 'hidden *thanking* which alone does homage to the grace wherewith Being has endowed the nature of man, in order that he may take over in his relationship to Being the guardianship of Being'. The relationship between logic and 'chance mood' is also discussed by Heidegger in his 1935/6 lecture, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', where he says that 'what we call feeling or mood […] is more

[215] Martin Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?: Postscript', in *Existence and Being*, ed. by Brock, Werner (London: Vision Press, 1949), pp. 380-392, pp. 383-386.
[216] Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?: Postscript', p. 387.

reasonable – that is more intelligently perceptive – because more open to Being than all that reason which, having meanwhile become *ratio*, was misinterpreted as being rational'.[217]

Other aspects of non-metaphysical thinking

The ongoing engagement with metaphysical thought and the receptivity of *Gelassenheit* does not exhaust the variety of ways in which Heidegger describes non-metaphysical thought, and it is worth gathering a few of his other ideas together here before moving on to look at language and poetry. First of all, Heidegger's path is one of questioning. The task of thinking for Heidegger is 'a reflection that persists in questioning', and questions themselves are said to be the 'path toward an answer'.[218] The question is not left behind in the pursuit of answers – it is part of the way toward the answer. Thinking then is questioning: 'the thinkers' questioning, as the thinking of Being, names Being in its question-worthiness'. This relates to the above discussion in that persisting in questioning is part of the waiting of *Gelassenheit* and the overcoming of Enframing. Heidegger concludes 'The Question Concerning Technology' with the words: 'The closer we come to the danger, the more brightly do the ways into the saving power begin to shine and the more questioning we become. For questioning is the piety of thought'.[219]

Another critical issue is that of inner experience. The question is whether, with all the talk of mood and feelings and events of being, Heidegger is pointing us towards inner experience as the place where the truth of being will be found. There is an extended discussion of this in the Rilke memorial lecture, 'What are Poets For?', in which Heidegger finds Rilke to remain trapped by metaphysics.[220] Reference is made to the discovery by Pascal, at about the same time as Descartes describes the *ego cogito* as the realm of presence of calculated objects, of the logic of the heart as over against the logic of calculating reason.[221] Only in the invisible

[217] Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 95.
[218] Heidegger, 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking', p. 311.
[219] Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', p. 35.
[220] Heidegger, 'What are Poets For?', p. 108.
[221] Heidegger, 'What are Poets For?', p. 127.

innermost heart is a human inclined to what there is for them to love, here described as forefathers, the dead, children and those who are to come. This is said to be an inner space beyond calculation. It can nonetheless remain metaphysical because being is 'metaphysically defined as worldly presence; this presence remains referred to representation in consciousness, whether that consciousness has the character of the immanence of calculating representation, or that of inward conversion to the Open which is accessible through the heart'.[222] Inner experience then is not epistemically privileged over experience generally and is also susceptible to Enframing – being put in place and used. In 'The Age of the World Picture', Heidegger says that the event of art moving into the purview of aesthetics in the modern world means 'that the artwork becomes the object of mere subjective experience'. Religiosity changes the relation to the gods into mere religious experience.[223] In both cases, the word used for experience is *Erlebnis*, which connotes adventure and event, rather than *Erfahrung*, which connotes discovery and learning. *Erfahrung* is used elsewhere when Heidegger refers to experience in a positive way. *Erlebnis* then is the kind of experience that becomes information that is put to use, whether it comes from the outside world or the depths of the heart. Ultimately, however, *Gelassenheit* is open and active receptivity to all experience, and that for which *Gelassenheit* is waiting, *Ereignis,* is 'a special and rare event in which a person comes into proper relation to being'. This is a historical event but also a personal one of 'unconcealing the unconcealment of being', a lighting up of being in oneself that is transformative – inaugurating a new epistemic regime.[224]

To briefly summarise, we have seen that non-metaphysical thinking does not turn its back on, but remains in close proximity to metaphysical thought, that the difficult path of non-metaphysical thought involves a willing non-willing which ultimately escapes from the domain of the will and which is an objectless waiting – a waiting that is also a questioning. We have seen an openness to moods and feelings but not a privileging of inner experience. Finally, we have seen the possibility of that which is being waited for being a personal lighting up which brings

[222] Heidegger, 'What are Poets For?', pp. 128, 132. The 'Open' is Rilke's term.
[223] Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture', pp. 116-117.
[224] Richardson, *Heidegger*, pp. 250-251, 270-271.

a person to the epistemic good of having a proper relationship with being. This brings us to the point where we can consider the particular place of language, poetry and the poet in the thinking of being.

Language and poetry

In order to give some structure to the discussion of Heidegger's later thought, the subject of language and poetry has been left until now. This has the disadvantage of making this subject seem less significant than it is, and also of reducing the impact of what Heidegger has to say about language because it fits so neatly with what has already been said, critically about metaphysical thought and positively, about the thinking of being. Establishing the correct relation to language is central to the non-metaphysical thinking of being. Again, establishing this correct relation is not a matter of developing a theory of language but is a way – the way we dwell in language. There are three key ideas that we will explore: that instrumental use of language conceals being, that language is the essence of humanity, and that being comes to us in language.[225]

Heidegger recognises the instrumental use of language as expression of thought, representation of things and as communication: 'no-one would dare to declare incorrect, let alone reject as useless, the identification of language as audible utterance of our inner emotions, as human activity, as representation by image and by concept'.[226] Whilst recognising these uses of language, for Heidegger, they conceal the essence of language, which is not instrumental.[227] As an instrument, language is the means by which Enframing is accomplished: 'speech is challenged to correspond to the orderability of what is present' and becomes information.[228] Language is itself a resource that is put to use and also the means by

[225] Although it is 'primarily an introduction to Heidegger for students of literature', Timothy Clark's *Martin Heidegger* is an excellent introduction to the issues discussed in this section, with two chapters devoted to 'The Origin of the Work of Art' and chapters discussing the way Heidegger uses language and reads poetry: Timothy Clark, *Martin Heidegger* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).
[226] Heidegger, 'Language', p. 193.
[227] Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', p. 161.
[228] Heidegger, 'The Way to Language', pp. 302-303; Heidegger, 'Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry', p. 299.

which other resources are put to use. Heidegger describes 'man as acting as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man'. It is this inversion, above all, which is said to drive a human's essential being into alienation.[229] Language as a mere tool is 'the most dangerous of man's possessions'.[230]

Despite this danger, language is essential to humanity: 'language belongs to the closest neighbourhood of man's being'.[231] The capacity to speak is the distinguishing mark of a human being, which 'bears in itself the very design of human essence'.[232] Human beings are thus within language before everything else: a way to language is superfluous. Any way to language directs us to a weft of relations in which we are already interwoven. This closeness to language means that we can linger in proximity to it without taking any trouble at all. However, Heidegger raises the possibility that, despite this proximity, the path to language may involve 'the farthest stretch of our thought', a way strewn with obstacles that arise from language itself. In this sense, the weft is a compressed mesh that obstructs any straightforward view.[233] It is important to recognise that Heidegger here is moving beyond the usual notion of language as corresponding to the essence of the human as *animal rationale* because the relationship is more essential.

Language is the house of being and the home in which the human dwells – it is the structure in which the human and being can come together. This dwelling is a belonging to the truth of being and a guarding of it.[234] Language is not in its essence instrumental: it is not the human who speaks language, but rather language itself that speaks. In every speaking by humans of language, there needs to be a hearing. This hearing is not merely simultaneous with speaking but is a hearing in advance: 'we not only *speak* language, we speak *from out of* it'.[235] Just as thinking is receptivity to being, language then is a listening to being – we must leave the

[229] Heidegger, '"…Poetically Man Dwells…"', p. 215; Heidegger, 'Buliding, Dwelling, Thinking', p. 244.
[230] Heidegger, 'Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry', p. 298.
[231] Heidegger, 'Language', p. 189.
[232] Heidegger, 'The Way to Language', p. 285.
[233] Heidegger, 'The Way to Language', p. 286.
[234] Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', pp. 147, 157, 161.
[235] Heidegger, 'The Way to Language', p. 295.

speaking to language.[236] Richardson describes this as Heidegger's principal claim about language: it has a 'constitutive' ontological function and not just a 'representational' epistemic one. Language 'brings entities to being instead of merely referring to entities already there'.[237] Language is the house of being because speaking it is the mode of *Ereignis,* described here as something 'which can only be experienced in the showing of the saying of that which grants'.[238] If language is a saying and a showing, what this means is that we are to listen to language to let it tell us its saying.[239] One way Heidegger describes this is as hovering 'over an abyss as long as we can endure what it says'.[240]This may involve an encounter with language that comprises more than its meaning but includes what Heidegger calls its earthy aspect, its sound and how that sound corresponds to other words. Hence Heidegger's somewhat idiosyncratic etymological investigations, which almost treat words as a source of meditative free association.[241] Language then needs human speech but is not a mere contrivance of our speech activities.[242] *Ereignis* is said to bestow on mortals residence in their essence, such that they can be the ones who speak. All of this can be related to *Gelassenheit*: the essence of language, as the saying which shows, rests on the experience of *Ereignis* which delivers humans to *Gelassenheit* – toward unconstrained hearing – which opens the path to language.[243]

We can see that establishing the correct relationship to language is critical and in Heidegger's later thought, poetry and the poet have a special place in doing that. The background to Heidegger's thinking about poetry can be found in his 1935/6 lecture, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', which discusses the way being is revealed (and the truth of things is disclosed) in works of art, and identifies two essential features of an artwork as the setting up of a world and the setting forth of earth.[244] The world is not just the 'tangible and perceptible realm in which we find

[236] Heidegger, 'Language', p. 191.
[237] Richardson, *Heidegger*, p. 276.
[238] Heidegger, 'The Way to Language', pp. 298, 305.
[239] Heidegger, 'The Way to Language', p. 295.
[240] Heidegger, 'Language', p. 191.
[241] Richardson, *Heidegger*, p. 291.
[242] Heidegger, 'The Way to Language', p. 296.
[243] Heidegger, 'The Way to Language', p. 301.
[244] Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', pp. 102, 105, 111.

ourselves at home' but the 'ever nonobjective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into being'. In other words, 'world' is the structural whole of the relationships a human experiences with things and other human beings.[245] The meaning of earth here is more obscure. It is described as that which comes forth and shelters as a work sets itself back.[246] The earthly character is said to jut up 'within the work because the work essentially unfolds as something in which truth is at work and because truth essentially unfolds only by installing itself in a particular being'.[247] Richardson describes earth as 'the penumbra of mystery that must surround the clearing or world'; it is the concealment that is the concomitant of the unconcealing of being; it is the ground which is *not* revealed.[248] The happening of truth in an art work is the instauration of strife between world and earth, between clearing and concealing, where clearing is the place where beings are unconcealed.[249] In this lecture, Heidegger discusses Van Gogh's painting of a peasant's shoes. In his description of the painting, he describes the (unseen) peasant woman's world:

> In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field. This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining worry as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death.[250]

The shoes as equipment belong to the earth and are protected in the world of the peasant woman. The truth that is revealed is reliability. A work of art opens the openness of beings and can 'transport us out of the realm of the ordinary'. We can *submit* to this displacement, which means that we 'transform our accustomed ties to world and earth and henceforth restrain all usual doing and prizing, knowing and looking, in order to stay within the truth that is happening in the work'. This letting a work be a work is called preserving, and works of art are essentially in need of both creators and preservers. Preservation does not reduce humans to their private

[245] Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 108.
[246] Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 109.
[247] Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 125.
[248] Richardson, *Heidegger*, p. 305.
[249] Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', pp. 112, 121.
[250] Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 101.

experience of a work but brings them into affiliation with the truth happening in the work, grounding being *for and with one another*.[251] All art is, in its essence, poetic as a setting-itself-into-work of truth. Poetry, as linguistic art, has a privileged position. Poetry is projective saying, and the projection here is 'the release of a throw by which unconcealment infuses itself into being as such'. Poetry is 'the saying of world and earth, the saying of the arena of their strife and thus of the place of all nearness and remoteness of the gods. Poetry is the saying of the unconcealment of beings.'[252]

How then does poetry bring us into the correct relation to language? This depends in turn on us having the correct relation to poetry. Just as art needs preservers, so does poetry as art's essential form. Just as with art generally, the preservers must submit to the displacement, restraining an Enframing of poetry and instead letting the work be, thus bringing the attitude of *Gelassenheit* to poetry – letting it transform our accustomed ties to world and earth. Heidegger reflects on our relationship to poetry in his essay 'Remembrance of the Poet'. In his prefatory remarks, he refers to the need to constantly practice thinking about the poet afresh by thinking about 'what has been made into poetry'. There is a dialogue between thought and poetry, but Heidegger recognises that explanations of poetry can be like snow falling on a bell, making it slightly, perhaps imperceptibly, out of tune. In order that 'what has been purely written of in the poem may stand forth a little clearer, explanatory speech must 'break up itself, and what has been attempted'. The explanation must vanish in the face of the pure existence of the poem, which then, standing in its own right, throws light on other poems so that, when we read them, we feel we had always understood them this way.[253] The preservers help the poet by 'hearkening to the spoken word and thinking about it so that it may be appropriately retained'. The word once spoken is said to 'slip out of the protection of the care-worn poet' who must turn to others 'so that their remembrance can

[251] Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', pp. 123-124.
[252] Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', pp. 127-129.
[253] Heidegger, 'Remembrance of the Poet', pp. 253-255.

help towards an understanding of the poetic word'.[254] What is different about poetry is the essential and constitutive use of language. So:

> the poet names the gods and names all things in that which they are. This naming does not consist in something already known being supplied with a name; it is rather that when the poet speaks the essential word, the existent is by this naming nominated as what it is […] Poetry is the establishing of being by means of the word.[255]

Importantly, being and the essence of things cannot be calculated from what is present but must be freely given by the speech act of the poet, which, by naming gods and things, also bases human existence on its foundation. Poetry is to be understood as this inaugural naming of gods and the essence of things. The foundation of human existence is to be found not in what humans work at and pursue but in poetic dwelling: this existence is a gift of standing in the presence of the gods and in proximity to the essence of things. The notion of poetic dwelling is taken from a Hölderlin poem, discussed in the lecture, '"…Poetically Man Dwells…"'. The phrase from which these words are taken reads: 'Full of merit, yet poetically, man | Dwells on this Earth'. Heidegger distinguishes poetic dwelling from all human activity that merits and earns this dwelling, but both are part of the dwelling, which is a dwelling on this earth: the poetic does not fly above and surmount the earth.[256]

Poetry then is not an ornament or amusement or the expression of culture but the foundation of history. Language is not the raw material of poetry. Instead, it is poetry that first makes language possible.[257] Poetry is never merely a higher mode of everyday language, but rather everyday language is a forgotten, used up poem, from which there hardly resounds a call any longer.[258] A Heideggerian reading of poetry then resists Enframing. It does not seek to define words or explain them or to conceptualise or aestheticise. It does not place a poem in its historical context or the context of a poet's work generally. It is a receptive, meditative listening to the essential use of language. It is an entering into of a world and a sensitivity to the earthiness of the poem: its rhythm, the sound of the words, the

[254] Heidegger, 'Remembrance of the Poet', pp. 289-290.
[255] Heidegger, 'Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry', p. 304.
[256] Heidegger, '"…Poetically Man Dwells…"', pp. 216-217.
[257] Heidegger, 'Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry', pp. 305-307.
[258] Heidegger, 'Language', p. 208.

relationship to other words. It can listen without trying to justify what is heard. It is a reaching beyond the representational and conceptual use of language.

Silence

The critique of ontotheology provides the impetus for what Coakley calls the 'apophatic rage' in continental philosophy, with which Prevot engages at some length. The intention here is not to enter into a dialogue with post-Heideggerian deconstruction, nor is it to make comparisons with specific Christian practices of contemplation, but rather to explore briefly the place of silence in Heidegger's thinking of being by looking at those texts where he discusses it. His discussion of silence in *Being and Time* provides context for its place in his later thought. There, the existential-ontological foundation of language is discourse: silence and listening are essential possibilities of discourse. Discourse is part of the disclosedness of *Dasein*: it is the articulation of intelligibility. Authentic silence can only occur in genuine discourse, and then only when *Dasein* has something to say: in these circumstances, reticence 'articulates the intelligibility of *Dasein* so primordially that it gives rise to a genuine potentiality for hearing and for a being-with-one-another that is transparent'.[259] The contrast here with the approach to silence in the later 'Letter on Humanism' is instructive. Here Heidegger says:

> Everything depends upon this alone, that the truth of Being come to language […] Perhaps, then, language requires less precipitate expression than proper silence. But who of us today would want to imagine that his attempts to think are at home on the path of silence? At best, thinking could perhaps point toward the truth of Being […] and be more easily weaned from mere supposing and opining and directed to the now rare handicraft of writing.[260]

As one would expect, in *Being and Time,* language is an activity of Dasein. In Heidegger's later thought, language has become the house of being in which the truth of being is spoken. Silence has thus assumed much greater importance. It is no longer an interruption of speaking to allow for a genuine hearing of the other. It now, more than precipitate expression, allows the truth of being to be heard.

[259] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 159.
[260] Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', p. 168.

Silence is not, however, an end to expression but is a means of weaning thinking away from supposing and opining. In both *Being and Time* and Heidegger's later thought, silence allows a hearing: this is no pure apophaticism. Furthermore, in both, silence does not bring an end to human expression through language but interrupts it.

In the 1950 lecture, 'Language', Heidegger describes stillness as different from soundlessness, which is merely a lack of motion. Stillness is said to be 'more in motion than all motion and more restlessly active than any agitation'. Language speaks as the 'peal of stillness'. Utterance or expression is not the decisive element in human speech: humans speak insofar as they listen and respond to the bidding call of the 'peal of stillness' of the difference of world and things. The human response is receptive listening: speech both receives and replies. Authentic hearing holds back with its own saying: it is attuned to restraint, and it appropriates itself to the peal of stillness. This is not stating a new view of language but 'what is important to live in the speaking of language'.[261] Heidegger here would seem not only to be drawing attention to this being a practice rather than just a new theory of language but also to the intimate connection between stillness and speaking. In 'The Way to Language' Heidegger says:

> Language, which speaks by saying, is concerned that our speech, heeding the unspoken, corresponds to what language says. Hence silence too, which one would dearly like to subtend to human speech as its origin, is already a corresponding. Silence corresponds to the noiseless ringing of stillness, the stillness of the saying that propriates and shows.[262]

Human speech then is based on a hearing of language speaking. It is not brought to a halt by this hearing: the hearing is intimately connected with the speaking. The heeding is not of 'silence' but the unspoken. The silence then allows the hearing of the unspoken. Silence lets language speak and is pregnant with the human speaking which responds to that. This is not so much a silence that precedes the possibility of response but is the foundational part of any response. Silence 'subtends' human speech, and stillness is part of living in the speaking of language. This is perhaps the

[261] Heidegger, 'Language', pp. 207-210.
[262] Heidegger, 'The Way to Language', p. 302.

understanding of silence we should expect of Heidegger given the importance to him of the poet and poetry: poetic dwelling is actively receptive.

Some concluding remarks

As already stated in Chapter One, in this thesis, the subject of prayerful theology will be considered in the context of the specific prayer practices of Ignatian spirituality: it is the task of the following chapters to specify an interpretation of those practices. This specificity is intended to resist any temptation to evade the difficulties of combining prayer and thought. Having established in this chapter the danger Enframing – with its ontotheological basis – poses to all thinkers, including, and perhaps even most of all, theologians, we will also consider, in due course, those specific prayer practices in the context of that critique and also Heidegger's approaches to post-metaphysical thinking (which are also approaches which resist Enframing).

We can, however, already anticipate the features of Heidegger's approach that will form one side of the dialogue – those features that form one term of the *analogia proportionalitatis*. According to Iain Thomson, the later Heidegger suggests a fundamental ontological pluralism – not 'getting hung up looking for the one right answer' nor rebounding to the relativistic or even nihilistic view that no answer is better than any other, but cultivating the view that there may be more than one correct answer, more than one meaning to be found. Whether or not it is correct to describe this pluralism as ontological, which is a question we have set aside by taking an analogical approach, what we can say is that Heidegger suggests epistemological pluralism. There is an essential openness in the plurality of pathways we find in the later Heidegger. These pathways include: the ongoing proximity to and engagement with metaphysical thinking and calculative thought; the waiting or letting be or willing non-willing of *Gelassenheit*; attunement to moods and feelings; persistent questioning; intellectual disruption; and the active receptivity to language in poetic dwelling. What we find in all these pathways is an asceticism that has been underappreciated due to the emphasis given to Heidegger's potential mysticism or apophaticism. Whilst, as Heidegger said to his

hometown audience in Messkirch, meditative thinking is a path which is open to everyone, if we review our summary of the various approaches to post-metaphysical thinking, we are left in little doubt as to the difficulties: there is a call for endurance, persistence, patience, effort, delicate care, rigour, piety, courage, a more venturesome daring, even submission and sacrifice, a looking into danger and a reaching into the abyss.[263] It might be said that epistemic plurality can descend into generality, but this would be to ignore the pervasiveness and invisibility of the Enframing stance which this determined asceticism is trying to get away from. Heidegger's approaches are very much in the world and even, as we have seen, of the earth. They are receptive to all experience, history and language. At the same time, these approaches attempt to step out of the 'world picture', which is the cultural product of the current epoch: they are an attempt to stop being contributors to the ground plan. In this sense at least, Heidegger's approaches are, like the spiritual practices that we are about to consider, in the world, but not of it.

[263] As Caputo describes it, asceticism: Caputo, 'Heidegger and Theology', p. 338.

Chapter Three

The Ignatian Spiritual Exercises

Introduction

This chapter is a necessary step in our inquiry into whether Ignatian discernment can have a fruitful place in the life and work of a theologian. In the context of that inquiry, it is necessary to set out an exposition of Ignatian discernment. This interpretative task is divided into consideration of the meaning of Ignatian discernment as contemplated by the *Spiritual Exercises* (in this chapter) and as an ongoing practice (in the next chapter). There are choices to be made in approaching any exposition of Ignatian discernment, which has been practised now in some form for some five hundred years[264] and which is based on a text published in 'final form' in 1548.[265] There is a significant history of reception, and that history includes not only numerous interpretations of the text and commentaries on it but also reception through the ongoing practice of undertaking the Exercises. In other words, the *Spiritual Exercises* is a text that is meant to be performed, and any history of its reception must take into account not only what is said about the text but also how it is put into practice. The reception of Ignatian discernment as a spiritual practice is also unusual in a significant way, which is that the intended

[264] We could date the practice of Ignatian discernment back to the conversion experiences of Ignatius of Loyola in Loyola in 1521, to him first writing down the treatise that would become the Spiritual Exercises in Manresa in 1522, or to the first times Ignatius gave spiritual exercises to his companions in Barcelona in 1524. Philip Caraman, *Ignatius Loyola* (London: Collins, 1990), pp. 26-32, 41-42, 56.

[265] Loyola, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, pp. 279-360. For notes on this translation of the *Spiritual Exercises*, see p. 282. In common with most modern translations, this translation has a number in square brackets at the start of each paragraph to make referencing easier. In this thesis, that numbering will be used with the abbreviation *Exx*. The text developed from 1522 up to c. 1541 when it reached its final form. 1548 is the date of publication with Papal approval. See Terence O'Reilly, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Context, Sources, Reception* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), p. 110. See also Michael Ivens for a brief introduction to the primary sources. Ivens also discusses the sixteenth-century directories culminating in the 1599 or Official Directory, which is described 'as a useful general resource' but which 'contains, and has perpetuated, positions which seriously distort Ignatius' own views'. Little use has been made of the directories in this thesis. Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary A Handbook for Retreat Directors* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), pp. xii-xiii.

reader of the *Spiritual Exercises* is, for the most part, the spiritual director who will guide an exercitant through the process. The relationship between the director and the exercitant, which is something we will return to in the next chapter, is a notable feature of Ignatian discernment: one consequence of it is that the exercitant, the person who is making the discernment and undertaking the spiritual practice, may have little or no knowledge of the text. In addition, the *Spiritual Exercises* is a text that itself provides for a significant degree of adaptation in its application.[266] This long history of reception *as a practice*, mediation by a director and provision for adaptation all mean that Ignatian discernment today, particularly as experienced by exercitants, is diverse and significantly different from what one would expect by reading Ignatius' text.

An important preliminary question then is whether one should attempt a retrieval of Ignatius' meaning as set out in the original text, or an understanding of how Ignatian discernment is currently practised, or some combination of these two approaches. Raising that question points to a more fundamental question, which is why Ignatian discernment is worthy of our attention in the first place. One reason is the long history and tradition of discernment using the Exercises. There are already over a thousand instances of the giving of the full Exercises in Ignatius' lifetime.[267] Although the incidence of giving the Exercises has fluctuated over time, with a notable downward fluctuation during the suppression of the Society of Jesus in the eighteenth century, the Exercises have been used countless times to make decisions, including important vocational decisions.[268] Furthermore, the widespread use of Ignatian discernment continues, now in a broad range of contexts and across denominations – there are, for example, now Ignatian retreat centres in over 100 countries.[269] Although it is difficult to make any kind of balanced assessment of the

[266] *Exx.* 18.
[267] Michael Ivens, 'The Eighteenth Annotation and the Early Directories', in *The Way of Ignatius Loyola: Contemporary Approaches to The Spiritual Exercises*, ed. by Sheldrake, Philip (London: SPCK, 1990), pp. 238-247, p. 238.
[268] Brian O'Leary, 'Jesuit Spirituality Before and After the Suppression', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review,* 103 (2014), 586-597.
[269] Philip Sheldrake, 'Introduction', in *The Way of Ignatius Loyola: Contemporary Approaches to The Spiritual Exercises*, ed. by Sheldrake, Philip (London: SPCK, 1991), pp. 1-13; Benoît Vermander, 'Jesuits in the Twenty-First Century', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits*, ed. by Županov, Ines G.

prevalence of the practice of Ignatian discernment or the possible reasons for that, it is evident that it is an important and enduring spiritual practice.

There are further reasons why Ignatian discernment is worthy of attention. If we accept some version of Hans Urs von Balthasar's arguments about the theological importance of the lives of the saints, then Ignatius of Loyola is a paradigm example of a saint whose life and teachings should be treated as theologically significant. Balthasar describes the saints as 'the great lovers […] who know about God and must be listened to'.[270] In his programmatic essay, 'Theology and Sanctity', Balthasar argues that the enduring influence of saints is as living examples of their teaching: 'there is simply no real truth that does not have to be incarnated'.[271] Ignatius is just such a saint who incarnated his own theology: the *Spiritual Exercises* were initially written based on Ignatius' own spiritual experiences at Loyola and Manresa. They were used by him many times to enrich the spiritual lives of his companions.[272] They were instrumental in the vocational decisions taken by the founders of the Society of Jesus, and Ignatius used discernment based on the *Spiritual Exercises* throughout his life and to guide the establishment of the Society.[273] A further reason for considering Ignatian discernment to be of interest could be its longstanding acceptance within the Roman Catholic Church and its endorsement by papal authority from the approval of the publication of the *Spiritual Exercises* by Pope Paul III in 1548 in his Apostolic Letter *Pastoralis Officii* through to Pope Francis's description of discernment as 'the choice of courage' and

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 1054-1072, p. 1065; Roger Haight, 'The Spiritual Exercises as an Ecumenical Strategy', *Theological Studies,* 75 (2014), 331-349; Graham Chadwick, 'Giving the Exercises and Training Directors in an Ecumenical Context', *The Way*, 35-41.

[270] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone: The Way of Revelation* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1968), p. 10.

[271] Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology I: The Word Made Flesh*, p. 181.

[272] For an account of how Ignatius' own experiences formed the basis for the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits, see O'Reilly, *The Spiritual Exercises*, pp. 145-168. For Balthasar's description of Ignatius as a saint with a preeminent "teaching mission" and as the most avowed "theo-didact" in the history of the Church see: Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'Exerzitien und Theologie', *Orientierung,* 12 (1948), 229-232; Balthasar, *Hans Urs von Balthasar on the Ignatian Exercises*, pp. 223, 232.

[273] Ignacio de Loyola, 'Reminiscences: or Autobiography of Ignatius Loyola', in *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings* (London: Penguin, 1996), pp. 1-64, pp. 14-28, 53, 58; Loyola, 'The Spiritual Diary', p. 69; Philip Endean, 'The Spiritual Exercises', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, ed. by Worcester, Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 52-68, p. 52.

as the point of strength of the Ignatian proposal.[274] Finally, the text itself carries its own authority, although we cannot know that without first interpreting it. Hugo Rahner, in his *Ignatius the Theologian,* describes the theology of the *Spiritual Exercises* as fitting in 'so well with the best traditions of the early Church' and as having 'a sure biblical touch' which he attributes to there being, 'among the saints […] an affinity which reaches beyond the conditions of historical process'.[275] Karl Rahner describes the *Spiritual Exercises* as being a 'creative prototype' which is not really an event in the history of ideas, but 'of exemplary value in a quite fundamental way'.[276]

All of these reasons point to the *Spiritual Exercises* as having a certain integrity and authority which would be lost if we were to be too selective in our reading of the text: the systematization of discernment is one of the unique features of the *Spiritual Exercises*, and if we are selective we risk threatening the coherence of that system.[277] On the other hand, the whole purpose of the *Spiritual Exercises* is to describe a spiritual practice – a practice that is inherently individual and flexible – so Ignatius' text cannot be treated as a historical artefact divorced from ongoing practice. All of this would seem to favour an approach to interpreting the *Spiritual Exercises* that attempts to both respect Ignatius' intended meaning but also to bring to that text the questions of our own time and an understanding of the Exercises as a living spiritual practice. That, however, just moves us on to another set of questions about how to implement such an approach. There are, of course, all the usual difficulties with retrieving the meaning of a historical text. In the case of the *Spiritual Exercises*, those difficulties are exacerbated by Ignatius' terse style and the need to be attentive to the fact that this terseness is, I would argue, more than

[274] For a survey of papal endorsements see Varghese Malpan, *A Comparative Study of the Bhagavad Gita and the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola on the Process of Spiritual Liberation* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1992), pp. 188-191; Deborah Castellano Lubov, 'Pope Highlights 3 Aspects of Ignatian Style'2017) <https://zenit.org/articles/pope-highlights-3-aspects-of-ignatian-style/>.
[275] Hugo Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990), p. 51.
[276] Karl Rahner, 'The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola', in *The Dynamic Element in the Church: Quaestiones Disputatae 12* (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), pp. 84-170, p. 86.
[277] Michael Buckley, 'The Structure of the Rules for Discernment', in *The Way of Ignatius Loyola: Contemporary Approaches to The Spiritual Exercises*, ed. by Sheldrake, Philip (London SPCK, 1991), pp. 219-237, p. 223.

a stylistic quirk: it is a quite deliberate and careful reticence about what can and cannot be said about experiences which are relevant to the discernment of God's will. There is a danger of overinterpreting Ignatius– of filling in the gaps left by his terse style – when his terseness is a quite deliberate choice in light of his subject matter, both because of the impossibility of describing the range of possible experiences and in order to leave the space for those experiences to take place. Just as Ignatius warns the spiritual director giving the Exercises not to get in the way of the exercitant's experience of God (*Exx.* 15), he was also wary of creating a text that would do so.

Another significant historical question is whether Ignatius, to some extent, exercised self-censorship when writing the *Spiritual Exercises*. Ignatius, from shortly after his conversion, faced attacks based on association with the Illuminist Alumbrados heresy and, over his life, faced eight trials in Spain and Rome. The better view is that he has proceeded along the subtle line which separated orthodoxy from heterodoxy.[278] Hugo Rahner sees Ignatius' followers as having to defend his orthodoxy and emphasise links with existing Church teaching rather than the novelty of Ignatius' ideas. In addition, he sees certain features of the Exercises as providing safeguards against the dangers of illuminism, such as their exclusivity, explicit requirements for choices to be consistent with the teaching of the hierarchical Church, the Rules for Discernment of Spirits and the meditations on Christ's life through scripture. This raises the question of whether any or all of these features would be there were it not for Ignatius' precarious position as a suspected promoter of direct experience of God at a time when popular movements threatened the authority of the Church hierarchy. Another potential example of self-censorship is the almost total absence of specific references to the Holy Spirit in the Exercises – something which Harvey Egan rightly describes as striking. It has been shown that even certain scriptural references in the *Spiritual Exercises* have been amended to remove references to the Holy Spirit: the 1539 Cologne recension of the text contained references to the Holy Spirit that do not appear in the later

[278] Hugo Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 138; Sabina Pavone, 'A Saint under Trial: Ignatius of Loyola between Alcalá and Rome', in *A Companion to Ignatius of Loyola: Life, Writings, Spirituality, Influence*, ed. by Maryks, Robert Aleksander (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 45-64, pp. 47-48.

Autograph and Vulgate versions.[279] This would argue in favour of an interpretation of the *Spiritual Exercises* that gives a more prominent role to the Holy Spirit. However, it is impossible to know whether and how the *Spiritual Exercises* would have differed if Ignatius had not been subject to these pressures. Furthermore, one could positively view these circumstances as the dynamic that has created the unique balance between adherence to hierarchical teaching and individual discernment found in the *Spiritual Exercises*.[280] In this case we need to take the text as we find it, but this example by itself testifies to the difficulties of any historical-critical approach to the text.[281]

These difficulties, whilst significant, fall within the normal range of problems encountered when approaching a text from a different time and place. We face

---

[279] Harvey D Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1976), p. 120; Leo Bakker, *Freiheit und Erfahrung: Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen über die Unterscheidung der Geister bei Ignatius von Loyola* (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1970), pp. 303-306; O'Reilly, *The Spiritual Exercises*, p. 103.

[280] For further discussion of the effect of illuminism on the interpretation of the *Spiritual Exercises,* see O'Reilly, *The Spiritual Exercises*, pp. 81-105. For studies of the mysticism of Ignatius, which have contributed to a recovery of certain mystical elements of the *Spiritual Exercises,* such as the second time of election and joyful consolation (*Exx.* 184-188) and consolation without preceding cause (*Exx.* 330) see Harvey D Egan, *Ignatius Loyola The Mystic* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1987); Joseph Veale, 'Dominant Orthodoxies', *Milltown Studies,* 30 (1992), 43-65; Philip Endean, 'The Concept of Ignatian Mysticism: Beyond Rahner and de Guibert', *The Way Supplement,* 103 (2002), 77-86; Brian O'Leary, 'The Mysticism of Ignatius Loyola', *Review of Ignatian Spirituality,* 38.3 (2007), 77-97.

[281] This is by no means an exhaustive discussion of the difficulties with, or contested nature of, a historical approach to the interpretation of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Hugo Rahner relativises the importance of Ignatius' sources: 'the question of historical sources has less importance with Ignatius than any other saint – with the mystic's inimitable sureness of aim he could go to the sources and find confirmation of what, with a certain obscure clarity, he already knew': Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, pp. 46-47. He also claims that the use by 'great figures in the realm of the spirit' of strikingly similar language is not evidence of literary dependence, but rather that they have undergone the same experiences 'transcending all historical cause and effect': Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 169. This approach has been criticised. John Bossy refers to both Rahner brothers as 'being largely motivated by a desire to safeguard spiritual experience as a region of certainty transcending any historical or psychological conditions': H. Outram Evennett, *The Spirit of the Counter-Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 126-127. Endean is critical of accounts of Ignatius' life which take no account of problems of interpretation which he sets out at some length: Philip Endean, 'Who Do You Say Ignatius Is?: Jesuit Fundamentalism and Beyond', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 19/5 (1987), 1-53. For a wide-ranging historical survey of the issues that affect the interpretation of the *Spiritual Exercises,* see O'Reilly, *The Spiritual Exercises*. O'Reilly addresses the evolution of the text of the Exercises from 1522-1541, the turbulence of 1520s Spain (including the potential influence of Erasmianism, illuminism and the Counter-Reformation), the question of whether the contemplative dimension of the Exercises has been played down and the question of literary sources. O'Reilly, *The Spiritual Exercises*, pp. xxiv-xxvi. On sources, O'Reilly does say that the literary sources detected are small in number and narrow in range due to the short period (within two years of Ignatius' conversion in 1521) in which the main components of the *Spiritual Exercises* were selected and ordered. O'Reilly, *The Spiritual Exercises*, p. 185.

different problems if we attempt to get some sense of the Exercises as a living spiritual practice.[282] The problem here partly arises because of the nature of the Exercises as inherently adaptable, both in a general way and to accommodate each exercitant's needs and capabilities (*Exx. 18).* Even if we are talking about the full 30-day Exercises, the way they are carried out should never be the same. Outside that particular context, the Exercises are applied in a far broader range of ways. There have been many types of shorter retreats, preached retreats, group retreats, Ignatian discernment for collective decision making and even use as a basis for business ethics.[283] The range of persons to whom the Exercises are given is broad. Even in early Ignatian practice, they were given to the uneducated as well as people 'of rank' and to women as well as men.[284] In our times, they are not only given to those with the time and financial security to go on a long retreat but also to the socially and economically deprived on inner-city estates, the homeless, prisoners and addicts.[285] Whilst at times in the history of the Exercises, their use in practice has been predominantly in the context of Jesuit vocational decisions, their initial use by Ignatius and his companions was much broader than that, and their use in our times is even more diverse. That diversity of use calls in turn for adaptation of the Exercises and flexibility in their interpretation in response to the diverse needs of potential exercitants. For example, meditations based on sixteenth-century military or feudal metaphors or examples that presuppose a subservient role for women in

[282] There is a close relationship between changes in historical understandings of the text and practice. Joseph Veale describes his life of involvement with the Exercises in two phases separated by the Second Vatican Council. In the first (ascetical) phase, the emphasis was on self-mastery, reason and willpower. In the second (mystical) phase, the action of God in the soul and discernment were emphasised. This was accompanied by a return to individual retreats. O'Reilly, *The Spiritual Exercises*, pp. 213-226.

[283] Ivens, 'The Eighteenth Annotation and the Early Directories', p. 241; Dennis J. Moberg and Martin Calkins, 'Reflection in Business Ethics: Insights from St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises', *Journal of Business Ethics,* 33 (2001), 257-270.

[284] Ivens, 'The Eighteenth Annotation and the Early Directories', p. 239.

[285] Martha Skinnider, 'The Exercises in Daily Life', in *The Way of Ignatius Loyola: Contemporary Approaches to The Spiritual Exercises*, ed. by Sheldrake, Philip (London: SPCK, 1991), pp. 131-141; Tone S. Kaufman, 'Old Practices in New Places: Breaking Violence through Ignatian Exercises in a Swedish Maximum Security Prison', *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality,* 17 (2017), 19-39; Ted Penton, 'Spiritual Care for the Poor: An Ignatian Response to Pope Francis's Challenge', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 50/2 (2018), 1-39; Jim Harbaugh, *A 12-Step Approach to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Oxford: Sheed & Ward, 1997).

society need to be adapted (*Exx.* 136-148 and 325).[286] Whilst there is a range of views on the extent to which modifications can be made, flexibility in application seems on the whole to be a valued feature of the Exercises: in recent times there is no evidence in the Roman Catholic Church or even within the Society of Jesus of any systematic effort to promote uniformity in the giving of the Exercises. All of this diversity creates difficulties if we aspire to take account of both practice and theory in our examination of Ignatian discernment. It is difficult to engage in a meaningful way with such a broad range of practices, particularly when much experience of Ignatian discernment is private.

In light of these difficulties and in the absence of any general survey of the practice of Ignatian spirituality, I would propose to approach Ignatian discernment in the first instance through two twentieth-century interpreters: by exposition of Karl Rahner's 1956 essay, 'The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola' and Jules Toner's two books, *A Commentary on St. Ignatius' Rules for Discernment of Spirits* (1982) and *Discerning God's Will* (1991).[287]

Why have I chosen these authors and texts? Karl Rahner's approach to exegesis in his 1956 essay is theological. He is appreciative of Ignatius' achievement, describing it as 'authentic thought', the fate of which is to be 'weakened and diluted in subsequent exposition', but he also believes that 'every age must rethink standard works such as the Exercises afresh from its own point of view'.[288] In particular, whilst he wants to consider the questions that the *Spiritual Exercises* raise for a theologian who takes them seriously, he sees the *Spiritual Exercises* as 'a

[286] For an example of a comprehensive reinterpretation of the *Spiritual Exercises* from a feminist perspective, see Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin, and Elizabeth Liebert, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2001). In this book, a number of difficulties for contemporary women are identified, some of which are difficulties specific to the Exercises and others relate to Christianity generally: 'Some are put off by the symbolism embedded in the text of the *Spiritual Exercises,* finding it at least uncongenial if not almost deadly to their spirits. Still others question Ignatius' unswerving obedience to the church, an institution that has been singularly destructive of women's full personhood at times in its history. The centrality of Christ in the *Spiritual Exercises* raises for others another cluster of reservations around the issue of a male savior' (p. 3).

[287] Rahner, 'Logic'; Jules J. Toner, *A Commentary on Saint Ignatius' Rules for the Discernment of Spirits: A Guide to the Principles and Practice* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1982); Jules J. Toner, *Discerning God's Will: Ignatius of Loyola's Teaching on Christian Decision Making* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1991).

[288] Rahner, 'Logic', pp. 86, 84.

downright provocation to theological pride'.[289] Jules Toner sees the need not for a historical account or a theological treatise but for a fuller understanding of the meaning of the Exercises and a deeper understanding of how discernment of spirits fits into Christian life.[290] He draws principally on the *Spiritual Exercises* themselves but also uses Ignatius' other writings, such as his autobiography and *Spiritual Diary*. He engages with practical and pastoral questions. Both Toner and Rahner had extensive experience of giving the Exercises, although Rahner's experience, certainly prior to the 1956 essay, was in the context of taught group retreats – pre-dating the return to the giving of individual retreats that his work made some contribution to bringing about.[291] There is, though, in both Rahner and Toner, a level of respect for Ignatius' text, together with a desire to bring up-to-date questions to that text. The difference between them is that Rahner brings the questions of today's theologian to the text, whereas Toner brings the questions of the contemporary spiritual director or exercitant. In that sense, both Rahner and Toner serve our objectives.

In terms of selection of works, in Toner's case, the justification is straightforward: these are his principal works on the *Spiritual Exercises* and together present a comprehensive treatment of the subject. In Rahner's case, the justification is less easy.[292] Rahner's theological output is considerable, and it has been persuasively argued by Philip Endean in his leading work of scholarship, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, that all of Karl Rahner's theology is rooted in his Ignatian spirituality and 'proceeds from a fusion inspired by the Ignatian Exercises of the idioms of mysticism and grace'.[293] From one perspective, then, a significant part

---

[289] Rahner, 'Logic', pp. 88-89.
[290] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, pp. xv-xvi.
[291] Philip Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality* (Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 8. Another, possibly more significant, impetus for the return to the individually given retreat was Ignacio Iparraguire's three-volume history of the giving of the Exercises. Sheldrake, 'Introduction', p. 8.
[292] Rahner's *Spiritual Exercises*, for example, has not been selected for particular attention. Whilst reference is made to that work, it is comprised mainly of retreat notes for addresses to exercitants which contain theological reflections on the Ignatian meditations. It is not an interpretation of the *Spiritual* Exercises. See Karl Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2014).
[293] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, pp. 7, 34. Endean's bibliography of Rahner's significant writings on Ignatian and Jesuit topics is found at pp. 268-81. Balthasar is another eminent theologian whose theology has been said to be 'fundamentally based on the Exercises' and who is

of Rahner's work is potentially relevant to understanding how he interprets Ignatius. Endean characterises the 1956 essay as 'unusual, even maverick' whilst acknowledging it to be Rahner's most substantial engagement with exegesis of the *Spiritual Exercises*.[294] However, the reasons that Endean is critical of this essay increase rather than reduce its interest to us here. Endean sees the essay as inconsistent with some of Rahner's other works and with Endean's constructive account of those works: Endean aims to present a coherent account of Rahner's theology, albeit in terms of its Ignatian inspiration. We aim to interpret Ignatius, and so if Rahner is doing that in a way that is inconsistent with what he says elsewhere, that is of secondary interest and shows that his desire to account for what he finds in Ignatius' text has pulled him away from his own theological convictions.

With that justification of the selection of Rahner and Toner and these particular works, it is worth acknowledging the weaknesses of choosing these two interpreters as our main guides: these weaknesses are at the two temporal extremes of the relative lack of interpretative insights from the early history of the Exercises, which will be addressed to some extent by engagement with Hugo Rahner and Terence O'Reilly, and absence of up to date perspectives from contemporary practice of the Exercises where we will, in the next chapter, draw on various contributions to *The Way*, a spirituality journal published by the British Jesuits, and Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits published by the United States Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality.[295] In this chapter, we will proceed, following a short description of the basic structure of the Exercises, to set out expositions of Rahner and Toner's interpretations of Ignatian discernment. As Toner is a strong critic of Rahner's interpretation, the exposition of Toner will necessarily involve a critical engagement with Rahner's position. This chapter will conclude with an overall critical assessment of the readings of Rahner and Toner. This will provide the basis

---

said to have 'firmly believed that Ignatius himself had entrusted him with interpreting the Spiritual Exercises theologically'. However, he 'never wrote a proper book on Ignatius' or even anything comparable to the modern systematic tracts such as Rahner's: Balthasar, *Hans Urs von Balthasar on the Ignatian Exercises*, pp. ix, xii, xxiii-xxiv.

[294] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, pp. 127-128.

[295] See the earlier discussion of whether Hugo Rahner's approach is historical. Hugo Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, pp. 46, 51. For an exposition of Ignatius' direct sources, see Gordon James Klingenschmitt, 'Discerning the Spirits in Ecclesial Ethics: Ignatius of Loyola and the Pneumatological Foundations of Ecclesiology', (doctoral thesis, Regent University, 2012), pp. 33-86.

on which Ignatian discernment will be considered in the rest of this thesis. In particular, that will provide the basis for looking in the next chapter at Ignatian discernment as an ongoing practice (outside the particular context of the Exercises) and then at the particular critical questions which arise if we ask how Ignatian discernment may be relevant to the life and work of a theologian.

The Structure of the Exercises

The Exercises are a structured program of imaginative prayer, intended, in their full form, to take place over four weeks and during which the exercitant will progress through prayerful contemplation of sin and forgiveness and then Christ's life, death and resurrection (*Exx.* 4). Their stated purpose is 'the overcoming of self and the ordering of one's life based on a decision made in freedom from any ill-ordered attachment' (*Exx.* 21).

As 'exercises' there is a significant element of structure and discipline. In particular, the content of contemplations and meditations is clearly specified, as is the order in which they are to be undertaken. The exercitant is discouraged from looking ahead but should read only the mystery of the contemplation that is to be made immediately (*Exx.* 20, 261-312 and 127). The whole process is under the control of a spiritual director, to whom the great majority of the instructions in the *Spiritual Exercises* are addressed. The spiritual director determines the pace of progress through the Exercises and when and whether the exercitant is introduced to particular concepts, such as the Rules for Discernment of Spirits (*Exx.* 8). But the director is also to show restraint and is discouraged from giving lengthy explanations to the exercitant or from seeking to move the exercitant to a particular way of life (*Exx.* 2 and 15). The instructions for prayer are detailed, including: what the exercitant should think about just before going to sleep and on waking, how to prepare for prayer, physical postures to be adopted, the amount of time to be spent in prayer and how penance is to be practiced (*Exx.* 73-90, 12). A comprehensive range of ways of praying is introduced including: the recitation of standard prayers; imaginative prayer, including prayer where all the senses are to be used; confessional prayer, including examination of conscience; and contemplative prayer

based on the slow recitation of standard prayers or with rhythmic breathing. Certain elements of prayer are also specified, such as the practice of asking for graces and of ending prayer with a colloquy, being a conversation with Mary, Christ or God. (*Exx.* 24-44, 46, 53-54, 65-71, 238-260). All of this amounts to a detailed program both in terms of content and methodology. However, there is also provision for the Exercises to be adapted to the capabilities of the exercitant or to allow them to be undertaken without withdrawal from 'worldly preoccupations' (*Exx.* 18-19)

We have already noted the purposes of this program as being the overcoming of self and the making of a decision free from inordinate attachments. In Annotation 1, it is clear that the overcoming of self and freedom from inordinate attachments are the same thing and are the precursor to seeking and finding the divine will, which is the basis for making a decision about one's life (*Exx.* 1). The freedom from attachments is attained by: the contemplations on sin and forgiveness; contemplation of, and attunement to, the life of Christ; and specific meditations (*Exx*. 45-90).

The actual process for seeking and finding God's will, referred to as 'making an election', has a specific place in the Exercises. The relevant material is introduced from the third to the fifth day of the Second Week, although the election does not need to be made in that time frame (*Exx.* 134-35, 163). This means that the material is introduced in the context of particular meditations: scriptural meditations on Christ's obedience to his parents, his being found in the temple and his baptism, and meditations devised by Ignatius on a choice between two standards (of Christ and Lucifer), on three persons and their differing responses to acquiring a sum of money and on three 'degrees of humility' in terms of different levels of obedience to and imitation of Christ (*Exx.* 134-160, 163-168). The making of an election, therefore, takes place in this context and presupposes, as well as freedom from attachments, that the exercitant wishes only to praise, reverence and serve God and that any choice will fall within the teaching of the hierarchical Church (*Exx.* 23, 169-170). There are three methods of making an election (called 'times of election'): 'a good and sound election can be made' by any of these methods (*Exx.* 169-189). The first time is a movement of the will by God which is indubitable in the strong sense of not being *capable* of being doubted (*Exx.* 175). The second time is when

sufficient light and knowledge is received through experience of consolation and desolation and of discernment of spirits (*Exx.* 176). The third time is to be used if the election is not made in the first and second times, and at a time when the soul is not disturbed by spirits but 'can use her natural powers freely and calmly'. The third time is divided into two ways: one involves the exercitant asking God to move their will, to bring to mind what they ought to do while they use their understanding well and faithfully and to rationally consider advantages and disadvantages and then to decide by how their reason most inclines (*Exx.* 177-183). The alternative to this is to 'feel interiorly' that love for the object chosen is for the sake of the Creator, and to consider what one would tell someone else to do, how one would look back on the decision from the time of death, and how one would want to have chosen from the perspective of the day of judgment (*Exx.* 184-188). Any elections made in the third time are to be offered to God for confirmation (*Exx.* 183 and 188).

Something more needs to be said about the second time, which refers to consolation and desolation and discernment of spirits. Ignatius assumes that the exercitant will experience spiritual movements in the soul of 'consolation' and 'desolation' whilst undertaking the Exercises: if this is not the case, the director is encouraged to make enquiries and ensure the various rules about prayer are being adhered to (*Exx.* 6 and 316-317). In the case of an exercitant who is experiencing these movements, the director is given the discretion to introduce the exercitant to the Rules for Discernment of Spirits (*Exx.* 313-336). These Rules are divided into those 'more suitable for the first week (*Exx.* 313-327) and those 'more applicable to the second week (*Exx.* 314-336). The reason for making this distinction is that the full set of Rules should apply only to those who are both spiritually experienced and are 'advancing from good to better in the service of God': these are the people who are suitable to go through the full Exercises, from the second week onwards, and to make elections (*Exx.* 18 and 314-15). The Rules guide interpretation of and response to movements of spirits. There is an underlying principle that our thoughts come from our own free will and choice or from good or evil spirits (*Exx.* 32).[296]

[296] The good spirit can refer to God or angels. There is only one place in the Exercises where it is important to distinguish movements that come from God directly from those which come from

Identification of the origin of thoughts is a key part of discernment. There is, however, no simple relationship between consolation and the origin of an impulse being a good spirit. In general, consolation is from the good spirit. In consolation, it is the good spirit that counsels and guides. However, consolation can also come from a bad spirit and discerning where this is the case may be difficult and may be possible only in retrospect. (*Exx.* 315, 318 and 331-34). The exception to this is consolation which is 'without preceding cause', which consists of movements aroused by God entering the soul and can only come from God (*Exx.* 330).[297] To make an election in the second time then, it is necessary that the exercitant is experiencing spiritual movements and can identify their source using the Rules for Discernment of Spirits.

Before moving on from this brief description of the Exercises, it is worth gathering together some of the many ways that Ignatius describes the things going on in the mind or soul of the exercitant. The exercitant's memory, reason or understanding and will are all involved. Ignatius says that in all the Exercises, the intellect is brought into action to think and the will to stir up the deeper affections (*Exx.* 3). For example, in a meditation on the sin of the angels, the exercitant is told to bring the memory to bear on that sin, then the intellect, to reason over it and then the will, so that recalling and comprehending this, the exercitant may *feel* shame and confusion (*Exx.* 50). Feeling would seem to be preferred to knowledge, so whether it comes from reasoning or divine enlightenment, 'it is not so much knowledge that fills and satisfies the soul, but rather the intimate feeling and relishing of things' (*Exx.* 2). Consolation and desolation are spiritual movements that are both *felt* as is spiritual relish, interior knowledge of sin and a sense of disorder (*Exx.* 62-63). In general, though, the intellect and will work together: even in discernment through the first way of the third time of election, which ultimately depends on the way to which reason most inclines, God is asked to move the will,

angels, and that is in relation to consolation without preceding cause. The evil spirit can refer to Satan (although Ignatius does not use that term outside the context of New Testament quotations) or to demons: Ignatius uses a variety of terms which would be covered by 'evil spirit' such as evil angel, the enemy, the leader of all enemies or Lucifer.

[297] Consolation without preceding cause will also be referred to as consolation without cause (as it is by Ignatius in *Exx.* 336) or as the 'divine consolation'.

and the second way of the third time is based in part on interior *feeling* that the love *felt* for the object chosen is for the sake of God (*Exx.* 180, 182 and 184). In the second time of election, consolation and desolation, which are felt, must bring 'sufficient light and knowledge' (*Exx.* 176).

Further definition of 'consolation' in the Exercises is as an interior movement that leads the soul to become inflamed with the love of God, shedding tears that lead to love of one's Lord and every increase of hope, and charity, interior happiness that attracts to heavenly things and salvation, leaving the soul quiet and at peace. Desolation is the contrary of consolation, and as such, our understanding of consolation contributes to our understanding of desolation and vice versa. Desolation is darkness and disturbance in the soul, attraction towards what is low and of the earth, anxiety arising from agitations and temptations, all of which leads to lack of confidence in which the soul is without hope and love; one becomes lazy, lukewarm, sad and as if cut off from God. These definitions are potentially broad and defy reduction to any essential principle. One final thing to note is that the imaginative prayer using the five senses referred to above may involve more than a straightforward imaginative reconstruction of events: Ignatius refers, in the context of a meditation on hell, to tasting 'sadness and the pangs of conscience' and, in the context of a meditation on the incarnation to smelling and tasting 'the infinite sweetness of the divinity' (*Exx.* 69 and 124). This can be interpreted as a sublime form of contemplative prayer where divine things are experienced directly, and which is akin to the notion of spiritual senses found in Origen, Augustine and Bonaventure. Whilst imaginative prayer is already significant in developing affective responses to scriptural meditation and intimate attunement to Christ, it would assume even greater importance if it is the place, or one of the places, in the Exercises where this kind of sublime experience can be found.[298]

Ignatian discernment, then, can variously be seen as the Rules for Discernment of Spirits, or the three times for making an election (to which those Rules may be relevant if the election is made in the second time) or as the purpose

[298] Hugo Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, pp. 187, 190, 192, 194, 196, 198-205; Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord I: Seeing the Form*, pp. 367-368.

of, and so as involving, the whole of the Exercises. One important exegetical question is whether Ignatian discernment can occur outside the context of the full Exercises and, if it can, which of those things set out in the full Exercises are important. Several other questions are already evident from this brief description of the Exercises, and it is worth reciting them briefly before turning to Rahner and Toner. One question is who can practice discernment: are the Exercises exclusive, either in principle or practice? Is discernment the preserve of a spiritual elite? What kind of decisions is discernment applicable to: is it just significant life-changing decisions, such as vocational choices, or can Ignatian discernment provide the framework for more day-to-day decision making? Is it necessary to believe that being moved by spirits, particularly evil ones, is a normal experience in the life of a Christian: if not, can Ignatian discernment be interpreted in a demythologised way? How does the election process work in practice: are all three times on an equal footing? Are the three times of election discrete and stand-alone, or do they depend on each other? What is the nature of experience relied on: what does it mean for God to deal directly with the creature? What is the relationship between reason and feeling and other experiences? What is the relationship between individual discernment and the teaching of the hierarchical Church and other authority such as scripture?

Karl Rahner's 'The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola'

Rahner's 'The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola' was first published in 1956, but was reprinted in 1964 in a volume entitled 'The Dynamic Element in the Church' with two other essays and an introduction.[299] The common theme uniting the essays in this volume is that 'the particular and the individual cannot be reduced to the general'.[300] The first essay makes an important argument for the significance of the particular and individual and therefore establishes the need for discernment. This provides the context for Rahner's 1956 essay, which

[299] Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church: Quaestiones Disputatae 12* (Freiburg: Herder, 1964).
[300] Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, p. 7.

provides an epistemology for concrete particulars on the life of the Church and the individual Christian.[301]

In the first essay, Rahner distinguishes principles from prescriptions. The latter are concrete individual obligations beyond the reach of general normative maxims.[302] Rahner argues that each human being is not merely a circumscribed instance of the universal and that:

> if as a spiritual, personal being he is […] more than the particular instance of a multipliable essence, then this unique and special feature, this single human existence can be summoned by an imperative prescription which is different in kind from the moral principles that derive from general characteristics.[303]

Rahner here only establishes the *possibility* of prescriptions as individual moral obligations. He does not seek to argue that in all cases where general principles leave open a range of choices that an individual prescription will apply: he says 'the relation of the prescription to the field of morally possible decisions left open by general principles cannot be further elucidated here'.[304] He also leaves open the question of the source of individual moral obligations and 'how within this free scope' the individual discovers the determining decision.[305] He does, however, suggest that:

> the individual in its particularity cannot be grasped in conceptual and propositional form. Knowledge and love, seeing and deciding are more inextricably interwoven in its apprehension than is the case with knowledge of the universal. Consequently, its apprehension, which is very intellectual and even sublimely spiritual, can be misinterpreted as merely gratuitous assertion, as feeling and mood, as an unverifiable expression of taste.[306]

Whilst he insists that the apprehension of the individual is intellectual even though it may appear not to be, it cannot be grasped conceptually or propositionally – this becomes important in his discussions of discernment in the 1956 essay.

Rahner continues his main argument by asserting that the distinction between prescriptions and principles also holds good for historical entities such as

[301] Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, p. 9.
[302] Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, p. 16.
[303] Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, p. 18.
[304] Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, p. 20.
[305] Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, p. 20.
[306] Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, p. 19.

states and other historical factors.[307] Rahner then discusses the role of the Church. The Church preaches moral principles, which is a function belonging to the Church's teaching office, and Rahner says 'that there can never be too many principles when they are correct, as the Church's teaching is'.[308] In connection with the proclamation of moral principles, the Church also has a pastoral function involving 'true decisions', in other words, prescriptions. But the Church does not have all the necessary moral and practical prescriptions for individuals and nations. There is a domain which lies outside the scope of general principles and the Church's pastoral power.[309] Rahner laments the fact that the Church propounds too many principles and not enough prescriptions. He says that people are on the lookout for prescriptions and that talk of principles can sound well-worn, tedious and facile. Pronouncements seem too cautious. There is too much concentration on the abstract rather than 'racking their brains' and 'rending their heart' over the choice of concrete means to a definite goal. This can be identified with a Church on the defensive as prescriptions are more readily challenged than principles: they are harder to come by, harder to get accepted and easier to get wrong. [310]

Rahner accepts that it is easier to lament 'the sterility of our heads and hearts in the matter of practical prescriptions' than to do anything better. He does, however, propose solutions. One is the need for less caution: a prescription based on probability is better than a correct principle from which no action springs. Another solution is the empowerment of the Christian laity. Rahner says the hierarchical Church, which has the doctrine of the gospel to preach and announce to every age, does not, for the most part, have the task of discovering and defending prescriptions. This is 'first and last a matter for the laity and for the apostolate that is theirs'. With that power goes responsibility: Christians should not

[307] Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, p. 22.
[308] The emphasis here may be on 'when they are correct' as we may detect both in this essay and in Rahner's writing more generally, a desire to limit the number of principles and increase the role of individual prescriptions. A more radical critique would be that the Church has systematically overused principles in relation to matters (such as sexual morality) which should be matters for individual discernment. For an argument (on different grounds) that sexual morality should be a matter of individual discernment see Linn Marie Tonstad, *Queer Theology: Beyond Apologetics* (Eugene OR: Cascade Books, 2018), pp. 35-38.
[309] Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, pp. 24-27.
[310] Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, pp. 32-33, 35-36.

think they have fulfilled their duties if they live in peace with the authoritatively proclaimed principles of the Church. Lay people should therefore be educated in discernment. Finally, these practical perspectives can only flourish with true freedom of opinion and inquiry, speech and discussion in the Church.[311]

The position Rahner reaches here is quite radical. On the seemingly modest foundation of establishing the possibility of prescriptions, he establishes their importance in the lives not only of individuals but also of nations and asserts the role of discerning them as one primarily for the laity. It would seem then that the laity are the 'dynamic element' in the Church. The balance Rahner strikes between individual discernment and adherence to the teaching of the hierarchical Church is very similar to that found in the *Spiritual Exercises*, which he turns to in the third essay to provide an epistemology for individual concrete decisions.

In this third essay, Rahner sees himself as putting forward an interpretation of Ignatius' text: his first task then is to justify relying on Ignatius in this way. He describes the *Spiritual Exercises* as belonging to that kind of spiritual literature which is 'more fundamentally spontaneous' than theological reflection, 'wiser and more experienced than the wisdom of the learned', a more 'authentic expression' of the Church's belief than the treatises of theologians, 'a "creative", original assimilation of God's revelation *in Christo*' and a new gift by God's Spirit of the ancient Christianity to a new age'.[312] Rahner describes the *Spiritual Exercises* as a theological source: they are a concrete realization of Christianity that is not fully deducible from abstract theological principles. Rahner asks his reader then to take the Exercises seriously. He particularly warns against the temptation of theologians to illuminate Ignatius' 'clumsily-worded and obscure passages' in light of their own theological wisdom. Rahner has been criticised by Toner and others for doing just this. It is notable, then, that he sees himself as presenting faithful exegesis rather than bringing his theological preconceptions to the text.

The basic structure of Rahner's argument in this essay is first to show that the *Spiritual Exercises* provides authority for the proposition that it is normal for

[311] Rahner, *The Dynamic Element*, pp. 37-41.
[312] Rahner, 'Logic', pp. 85-86.

God to communicate his will to individual Christians in a way that surpasses what can be known by reason alone. Rahner then identifies how, according to the *Spiritual Exercises,* God's will is communicated. The first argument is almost exclusively exegetical: we can see this is necessary from the first essay in *The Dynamic Element* discussed above because in that essay Rahner was, by deduction, only able to establish that individual moral obligations (or prescriptions) were possible, but not their importance in practice or their source. Rahner then is relying on Ignatius' authority to establish that these prescriptions are normal for a Christian and that God is their source.

Rahner takes it as generally agreed that the Exercises are 'guidance, regulations and instructions for discovering God's will'.[313] He also contends that *all* that the Exercises say is meant only as an instruction for discovering God's will.[314] Although he says that this requires no further proof, it is a significant statement and, as we will see, not one that evidently informs the rest of his exegesis. It implies an exegetical approach that sees everything in the Exercises as part of the discernment process. We cannot look for one thing as the key to discovering God's will: everything in the Exercises is relevant for this purpose.[315]

If the Exercises are a means of discovering God's will, the next step in Rahner's argument is to show that this is normal and involves something beyond reason. He asserts that:

> Ignatius candidly assumes that a man has to reckon, as a practical possibility of experience, that God may communicate his will to him. And the content of this will is not simply what can be known by a rational reflection of a believing mind employing general maxims of reason and faith on the one hand and their application to a definite situation that has also been analysed in a discursively rational way, on the other.[316]

---

[313] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 89.
[314] Rahner, 'Logic', pp. 89-90.
[315] From a historical perspective, it is interesting to note that the election (and consolation and desolation) were part of the *Spiritual Exercises* from the start (in 1522), but the Rules for Discernment were only added almost 20 years later in 1539 to 1541. The Rules can, however, be grounded in Ignatius' experiences in Manresa and are to a significant extent expressed in terms of the devotional literature he was reading at that time. See O'Reilly, *The Spiritual Exercises*, pp. 145-168.
[316] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 94.

Rahner's basis for this is his reading of the text, particularly the three times of election. This is a problematic exegetical argument because, ostensibly, the three times of election are all ones in which a 'sound and good election can be made' (*Exx.* I75), and the third time of election is, at least principally, a process of reason. It is hard to dismiss the importance of the third time, as Ignatius explicates it in some detail (*Exx.* 178-188). Rahner uses seven different arguments which have some individual weaknesses but which are cumulatively persuasive. His first argument is that the third time of election is only to be used when the other two are not available: it is the exception for the normal Christian (*Exx.* 178). Rahner next argues that the Rules for Discernment, which are related to the second time of election, are seen by Ignatius as an 'essential element' of the Exercises and as Ignatius' special discovery. Rahner cites no authority for this proposition but uses it to relativise the importance of the third time. A preference for the second time of election over the third is also supported by Annotation 6 (*Exx.* 6), which requires the director to make inquiries where the exercitant is not being moved by the spirits. This annotation implies that the time of calm in which the third time of election takes place is undesirable. This speaks in favour of the second time of election being preferable. Rahner also makes arguments based on the contents of the third time of election. The first way of the third time asks God to 'move my will', and any election made in the third time is offered to God for confirmation (which elections made in the first and second times are not). Rahner presents these features as showing that something beyond rational reflection is required even in the third time. Rahner argues that these features cannot be seen as trivial as they have to account for the significant statement in Annotation 15 that the Creator and Lord communicates 'Himself to the faithful soul in search for the will of God' and that the Creator works directly with the creature (*Exx.* 15*)*. Rahner also notes that in Annotation 17, the spiritual director is told to take an interest in the movements and agitations of spirits and not the exercitant's thoughts (Exx. 17). Rahner's final argument is that even those making an election to choose poverty are required to ask God to choose them for this highest and best level of humility (*Exx.* 168): God's will must be expressed in a way that goes beyond their own reflection and willingness. Putting these arguments together, Rahner makes a strong case for the relative importance

of the first or second times of election in which God's will is expressed in a way that goes beyond reason, and for the third time involving elements that go beyond reason.[317]

It is worth pausing briefly here to consider what Rahner means by the normal Christian here. He is referring to someone taking the full Exercises: he acknowledges that Ignatius only considered a certain number of people suitable for this. Whilst he establishes that coming to know God's will in a way beyond reason is not an exceptional experience confined to a spiritual elite, he is at this point some way from establishing that these principles are of relevance to the average Christian. This potential wider relevance comes later, but at this point, Rahner is staying close to the Exercises and what we know of the people given the Exercises by Ignatius and his early companions.[318]

Returning then to Rahner's main argument, the next topic he addresses is the danger of uncontrolled mysticism. One control is that any choices must be within the teaching of the hierarchical Church (*Exx.* 170).[319] Rahner also sees reason as a significant control. Here we have to pay attention to how Rahner has structured his argument: in the context of this topic, he gives a positive account of reason and the third time of election in a way that would have considerably muddied the waters of the argument we have just considered that God communicates his will to the individual other than through reason. Here reason is rehabilitated: 'Even in the second mode of making the Election and within the stirrings of the spirits, rational reflection can and must develop as an indispensable element in the motion of the spirits'. The 'stirrings of the spirits' are thoughts, acts of knowing and perception of values, including objective conceptual elements. Consolation and desolation are not merely physiological states but are 'impulsions having a rational structure': they are products of one's own intellectual activity. Rahner, therefore, suggests that what takes place in the third time of election also takes place in the second. The third time is a part contained within the whole of the second. Rahner even points out the

[317] Rahner, 'Logic', pp. 95-101.
[318] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 92.
[319] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 101.

third time's advantages: its verifiability and accessibility to outside observers.[320] This line of argument is of great interest because of its vision of the cooperation of reason and intimations of God's will for the individual. Just because discerning God's will for the individual involves something more than reason does not mean that it cannot also involve reason. However, the way Rahner presents this argument cuts across Ignatius, particularly subsuming the third time of election within the second and the discussion of verifiability, which implies, *contra* Annotation 17, that the director should be asking the exercitant about his thoughts and not movements of the spirits.

To summarise the argument so far, Rahner has reached the significant conclusion that God has a unique will for each individual that cannot be known by reason alone. In reaching this conclusion, he has described the third time of election as 'deficient' even though Ignatius describes it as a sound and good way of making an election. Rahner also variously describes the third time as either subsumed in the second time or as itself including elements that go beyond reason or as only available when God is silent or when there is no religiously important difference between the choices considered. I would argue that, from the perspective of faithful exegesis of Ignatius, Rahner has gone too far, and unnecessarily so, in diminishing the role of the third time. His zeal here may be explained by a desire to correct an even greater distortion of Ignatius' teaching, which has obscured its 'astonishing originality'. That distortion is a 'perpetually recurrent tendency to look upon the third mode of making the Election as the authentic and normal one'.[321] Furthermore, even if Rahner takes his argument too far, it would not seem to invalidate the soundness of his conclusion that Ignatius considered that God has a unique will for each individual that cannot be known by reason alone. Rahner considers that conclusion to raise questions for theology and ontology that have not been fully answered.[322] He does not, however, detain himself with those implications, as he believes that the 'full importance of the Exercises for theology is apparent' only in the answer they provide to the further practical question of how

[320] Rahner, 'Logic', pp. 102-104.
[321] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 116.
[322] Rahner, 'Logic', pp. 109-110.

we recognise this will of God.[323] It is here that we find the 'logic' of the title to the essay.

The Exercises are 'the first and so far the only detailed attempt' to set out a method for discovering God's will for the individual.[324] In interpreting the Rules for Discernment, Rahner describes his method as alternating between the text and theological observations, seemingly by way of distinction from his more exegetical approach up to this point. Rahner's first observation is that what is 'striking' about the Rules is that Ignatius is said to reckon on psychological experiences in the consciousness that can be recognised as coming from God – not in the way, for example, that all moral goodness comes from God, but in a way which could even be distinguished from promptings of 'good spirits'.[325] Rahner makes an important choice here in identifying consolation without cause, rather than movements of spirits more generally, as key to Ignatian discernment: out of the twenty-two Rules, only two deal specifically with this divine consolation. The significance of this consolation for discernment is Rahner's consistent theme for the rest of his exposition. For Ignatius, then, one should 'rack one's brains about whether an impulse comes directly from God or not': the 'whole point is to recognize in the very first place from the source of the impulse whether it is good'.[326] For a theologian, this poses the problem of whether there is a place in their theology for such an identifiable divine impulse as 'a more or less normal phenomenon'. Rahner thinks present-day theologians assume that, outside exceptional miraculous cases, God does not intervene in the chain of causation. Supernatural grace, which must be attributed directly to God, is beyond consciousness. Similarly, present-day humans will struggle to recognise personal divine influence in their consciousness.[327] Rahner here also acknowledges that the present-day human will have difficulty seeing 'consolation' and 'desolation' as being from outside powers. Whereas, for Ignatius, good or evil spirits could be the originators of thoughts, impulses or moods, even many orthodox present-day theologians will see that as the personification of

[323] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 115.
[324] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 115.
[325] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 117.
[326] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 118.
[327] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 119.

unforeseen psychological phenomena. Rahner suggests that 'one can, without qualms, make excisions here and yet preserve the real kernel of Ignatius' idea of the divine origination of certain experiences'.[328] Seemingly, Rahner has solved the problem of demythologizing the Exercises by focusing only on experience from God.

After this introduction, Rahner turns to what Ignatius says about divine impulses and the possibility of recognizing them. He describes Ignatius here as having accomplished 'a masterpiece of brevity, but not of clarity'.[329] Rahner sees the need to find a 'first principle' of discernment which underlies all the Rules, although he does not claim that that Ignatius made this principle explicit or has structured the Rules in a way that point to it. This principle is 'distinct from the rules' but makes them possible, so that 'they are the application and putting into practice of this fundamental certitude'.[330] Rahner argues that the first principle is found in the Rules for Discernment which apply to the second week in the experience of 'consolation without cause' referred to in *Exx.* 330 and 336:

> Only God Our Lord gives consolation to the soul without preceding cause; for it is the Creator's prerogative to enter the soul, and to leave her, and to arouse movements which draw her entirely into love of His Divine Majesty. When I say 'without cause' I mean without any previous perception or understanding of some object due to which consolation could come about through the mediation of the person's own acts of understanding and will.

Rahner has a clear and persuasive interpretation here, which differs from that of many other commentators: as Rahner says, the commentaries say very little about this matter, and what they do say is obscure and not coherent.[331] Rahner argues against interpretations that distinguish this experience by its suddenness or unexpectedness in the sense of being unconnected with prior thoughts or acts of will. For Rahner, the distinguishing feature here is that the consolation itself is objectless because the consolation is an experience of God's love that is inexpressible and non-conceptual. The concept of being drawn into the love of His Divine Majesty is the positive aspect of being without cause or without object. This is an experience of God himself, alone, beyond any circumscribable object and not

[328] Rahner, 'Logic', pp. 120-121.
[329] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 131.
[330] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 130.
[331] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 132.

as given in a thought or concept. *Exx.* 336 supports this interpretation by distinguishing consolation without cause from subsequent thoughts. For some interpreters, this rule distinguishes the thoughts accompanying the consolation from those following it. For Rahner, that is unsatisfactory: there is a structural difference – what is being distinguished is the non-conceptual nature of the consolation from the concepts that follow it.[332]

How then can this non-conceptual consolation without cause be identified as being of divine origin? How can God be present in a self-evident way but not in concepts? Here, as Rahner acknowledges, 'no direct information is given by Ignatius in the Exercises'.[333] Rahner here draws on his own theology of the 'supernatural existential', with an explicit cross-reference to his essay 'Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace' published two years earlier.[334] He thinks that such an experience could occur at a number of levels, the lowest conceivable level being an 'experience of transcendence, of a certain purity and strength'. This transcendence is the 'synthesis of the intrinsic transcendent ordination of mind to being in general, and of grace which supervenes to mould this natural unlimited receptivity and make of it a dynamic orientation towards participation in the life of God himself'. The natural intellectuality is not distinguishable from such supernatural elevation by introspective reflection. However, Rahner claims that it is evident that 'awareness of this supernatural transcendence, with God as the pure unlimited term of its endless dynamism, can grow, become more pure and unmixed.' The conceptual object can also become more transparent.[335] The 'lowest stage' of consolation without cause then is when:

> 'transcendence is present in this way in its purity and as itself the focus of awareness, without being mediated by the conceptual object and so hidden, and if this occurs not only in cognition but also as the pure dynamism of the will in positive affirmation and receptivity, in love'.[336]

[332] Rahner, 'Logic', pp. 134-137.
[333] Rahner, 'Logic', pp. 142-143.
[334] Karl Rahner, 'Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace', in *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961-92) vol. 1, pp. 297-317; Rahner, 'Logic', p. 144.
[335] Rahner, 'Logic', pp. 144-145.
[336] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 146.

The consolation here is not an added feeling but is the experience of free transcendence itself which is 'pure harmony in the depth of one's being'.[337] The essence of this experience can occur at different levels. The experience is present, though in an 'extremely implicit, unnoticed way' as a concomitant in every mental and supernatural act. In consolation without cause, this experience emerges to some degree explicitly into conscious focus. This emergence into consciousness should not be confused with reflection on concepts but can grow in intensity, depth and purity into the higher forms of mystical experience.[338] In support of his argument, Rahner identifies this experience with that described in Ignatius' letter to Teresa Rejadell:

> 'Our Lord moves and forces us interiorly to one action or another by opening up our mind and heart i.e. speaking inside us without any noise of voices, raising us entirely to His divine love, without our being able to resist His purpose'[339]

Rahner claims then that the characteristics of consolation without cause as described by Ignatius can be derived from this non-conceptual awareness of transcendence.[340] Whilst that may well be true, as we have already noted, Ignatius provides only minimal information in the Exercises about this type of consolation. The exegetical issue here is not whether Rahner's ideas fit in with what little Ignatius says about this form of consolation, but rather whether one can justify expanding the concept in the way Rahner does and whether it is correct to see it as the one fundamental principle of the whole of the Exercises.

A further critical question is how this non-conceptual experience can work in the context of an election, which necessarily involves a concrete conceptual object of choice. Ignatius describes the second time of election as when sufficient light and knowledge is received through experience of consolation and desolation and of discernment of spirits (*Exx.* 176). Rahner says that the 'starting-point and ultimate criterion of the consolations themselves and of the Election built on them can only

[337] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 150.
[338] Rahner, 'Logic', pp. 151-152.
[339] This could also be identified with the first time of election. Rahner, 'Logic', p. 152; Loyola, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, p. 133.
[340] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 154.

be this really fundamental and certainly divinely-effected consolation'. Rahner sees the process Ignatius describes as being undertaken by 'frequently confronting the object of Election with the fundamental consolation'. This 'experimental test' is made to see whether the two phenomena are in harmony: whether the will to the matter of the election leaves the pure openness to God in the experience of supernatural transcendence intact. Such a confrontation takes time.[341] Other experiences of consolation and desolation are 'probably mostly a combination of the fundamental divine consolation […] and a personal attitude adopted to […] an object of decision and choice'. Furthermore, Rahner suggests that the time of choice is the time *following* consolation without cause.[342] In relation to all these points, Rahner is departing from the common interpretation of Ignatius. There is no process of testing in the text of the *Spiritual Exercises* of the kind described here. The great majority of Rules for Discernment relate to consolation and desolation generally, not the case of divine consolation without cause, so it is perhaps surprising to see them treated by Rahner as being based on the principle of that divine consolation. The time following consolation without cause is, on a straightforward reading, a time when Ignatius is cautioning against making an election rather than when, as Rahner would have it, an election is made. One logical conclusion from this, and this is a step that Rahner explicitly makes, is that 'everything depends on our recognizing the purely divine consolation as being of divine origin'. Whether something has a divine source or not is all that matters: whether consolations come from good spirits (other than God) or desolation from evil spirits 'is not of decisive importance'. Thus, if we regard this as 'mythological personification', that has no importance for the essence and permanent value of Ignatius' logic of making the election.[343] Whilst Rahner to some extent relativises what Ignatius does say about consolation and desolation by his discovery of an underlying principle of the divine consolation without cause, he does not replace the other rules with this principle. It could even be said, that the discovery of this underlying logic places the specific Rules for Discernment on a surer foundation.

[341] Rahner, 'Logic', pp. 158-159.
[342] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 160.
[343] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 164.

Rahner makes one final important point in his concluding remarks: how all this relates to those who cannot make the Exercises. Rahner says that nearly everyone makes grave decisions more or less exactly in the way Ignatius conceives it: thinking things over for a long time and through a feeling of harmony or disharmony of the object of choice with a fundamental global feeling they have about themself. The difference between this and Ignatius' rules is not in formal structure but the application. Here we can see two related aspects of Rahner having found a fundamental principle of discernment: the principle in some way provides the basis for all human decision making, but this relativises the importance of Ignatius' specific rules as a contribution to that decision-making process.

As previously noted, our exposition of Toner will necessarily involve a critical appraisal of Rahner's interpretation of Ignatian discernment. Before we move to that critical appraisal, it is helpful to summarise the main points arising from the exposition so far. The more exegetical first half of the 1956 essay, building on what Rahner has said about principles and prescriptions, persuasively argues that it is normal for God to communicate his will to individual Christians in a way that goes beyond what can be known by reason. One difficult question here is whether Rahner loses something by diminishing the role of reason too much: whilst something beyond reason is needed, that does not mean reason becomes unimportant, so perhaps the Exercises speak of more of cooperation of reason and other ways of discerning God's will than would seem to be the case from Rahner's account. In the second half of the essay, the results of the analysis of consolation without cause establish the importance of divine consolation. It is important that divine consolation is seen as a principle which underlies rather than replaces the Rules for Discernment.

Jules Toner's interpretation of Ignatian Discernment

Toner has published two books on Ignatian discernment: *Rules for Discernment of Spirits* in 1982 and *Discerning God's Will* in 1991.[344] The first book

[344] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*; Toner, *Discerning God's Will*.

focuses on the Rules for Discernment of Spirits (*Exx.* 313-336) and the second on the Three Times of Election (*Exx.* 175-189). In both books, Toner describes these two topics as 'distinct but closely related and overlapping' and that the times of election assume a sound knowledge of the Rules for Discernment.[345] In the first book, he says that the Rules are not only useful when making the Exercises or taking crucial decisions but in everyday life.[346] This raises the interesting question, to which both Rahner and Toner give too little consideration, of how Ignatian discernment should be practised outside the context of the Exercises. They both assert value in Ignatius' approach to discernment; both seem to value the fact that Ignatius offers detailed rules, and both see that as a distinguishing feature of Ignatian spirituality.[347] Furthermore, neither see discernment as being restricted to those making the full Exercises. However, neither considers in any detail the question of just which parts of the Exercises are needed for discernment. As noted above, Rahner asserts that the whole of the Exercises are for the purpose of discernment.[348] In that, I think he is correct, but then his discussion of discernment seems to ignore that insight: he focuses only on the Rules for Discernment and the times of election, and his argument reduces all discernment not to detailed rules, but to one 'first principle'. Toner's two works also focus on the same two sections, although his second book looks at some other aspects of the Exercises. There is a further point here: the way we interpret the Rules for Discernment and ways of making an election will need to differ if they are to work outside the context of the full Exercises. In other words, to extract these two things from the full Exercises, and apply them without modification, is less faithful to Ignatius than reinterpreting them in light of the different circumstances. For example, the orderly process of going through different ways of making an election one by one may have been something Ignatius intended in the context of the Exercises, but not something he would have thought should be rigidly adhered to outside that context. As we move forward, we need to bear in mind two related points: that there may be principles

[345] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 13; Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, p. x.
[346] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 13.
[347] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. xvi; Rahner, 'Logic', p. 115.
[348] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 89.

outside these two sections of the Exercises which are important for discernment; and that these two sections may not apply in the same way or may well apply more flexibly, outside the context of the full Exercises.

Before addressing the exegesis of the Rules and times of election, Toner deals with some preliminary issues. One is whether there are personal good and evil spirits and, if there are, how they interact with humanity. Whilst this can be treated as a theological presupposition, the position taken on this question has profound implications for how we read the Exercises and possibly even whether they have any value. Toner correctly states: 'Any vision of human life which does not see it as a life of conflict between good and evil […] Christ and Satan has lost the Scriptural vision within which Ignatius is speaking'.[349] Christ and Satan conflict not as personifications but as persons. Good and evil spirits, again as persons not personifications, prompt good or evil interior motions in our soul, such as thoughts, impulses and consolation and desolation. Ignatius' understanding of theology on this point is clear from the text of the *Spiritual Exercises*. However, according to Toner, recent theological writing on this topic is not plentiful and represents a spectrum of views.[350] One source he does refer to is Karl Rahner's entry on 'Angels' in *Sacramentum Mundi*: Rahner presents a view of angels as incorporeal, yet as "principalities and powers" belonging to the world; in other words as conscious, free and personal, created finite principles of the structure of various parts of the cosmic order. Rahner's view is that as a matter of dogma, based on the Fourth Lateran Council, angels exist as a spiritual creation. He also states that scripture affirms the existence of angels and demons.[351] Within the spectrum of theological opinion identified by Toner, some assert that the question of the existence of evil spirits was incidental to the declaration of the Fourth Lateran Council and can be doubted or may even be a harmful belief. Toner's view is that the burden of proof is on those questioning traditional beliefs and that belief in evil spirits has its place in an integrated vision of the Christian faith.[352] The present purpose is not to present

[349] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 30.
[350] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 262.
[351] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, pp. 263-264; Karl Rahner, *Sacramentum Mundi: an Encyclopedia of Theology* (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), pp. 27-34.
[352] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, pp. 265-270.

any argument about the existence of good and evil spirits, but rather to ask, if there is a range of opinions, what difference that makes to the way we approach the Exercises. How does it affect our reading of the Exercises if we assume, for example, that there are no good or evil spirits and even no devil, and so all movements of the soul must be either from God, our own thoughts or our experience of the world, including other human beings?

Toner's response is that whether or not there are good or evil spirits does not need to be answered to apply the discernment rules. He argues that the purpose of the Rules is to allow us to be guided by the Holy Spirit and reject contrary influences of whatever source. So what matters is to be able to identify what is from the Holy Spirit prompting us, with or without angelic mediation, and what opposes that, again with no need to discern whether that opposition is from a personal evil spirit or not.[353] Given Toner's own belief, the basis for this pragmatic and straightforward demythologisation is not clear. Is it on the basis that Ignatius' Rules are of value because evil spirits exist, but the Rules will still work where the exercitant does not believe in evil spirits? Alternatively, does Toner believe these Rules work even if evil spirits do not exist? The latter position is much more difficult to justify, as it seeks to hold that Ignatius' text still makes sense even though some of the theological suppositions which underpin it are wrong. In particular, Ignatius attributes real agency to evil spirits, and many of the Rules are expressed in terms of dealing with a cunning and personal evil opponent. Can we make sense of the Rules if we deny agency to what opposes the Holy Spirit? Toner is somewhat inconsistent on this point. He certainly speaks about the Rules in a way that involves the personification of evil spirits and so goes beyond the terms of his own demythologisation.[354] For example, in discussing how the evil spirit tempts a regressing Christian, he says: 'What the evil spirit has to guard against is overreaching himself' and 'the evil spirit is still content patiently to destroy little by little'.[355] Furthermore, in Toner's later work, whilst he reiterates that the Rules can be used profitably by one who does not believe in evil spirits, he says that the use

[353] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 35.
[354] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 36.
[355] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 55.

by such persons will not be the same in all cases. Here he claims that interpreting inner motions caused by a personal and clever antagonist will differ from how we would interpret inner motions taking place only according to some stable laws of human psychology and spiritual life.[356] The principle here seems to be that the Rules can retain their value even if rewritten as if no personal evil spirits are involved. But what modifications would we make here? If the rules are modified to express only psychological truths, do they not lose their authority?

As we have seen, Rahner's approach to demythologisation is different and possibly more coherent. As Rahner finds a first principle of the divine consolation which underlies the Rules for Discernment, the importance of the specific Rules insofar as they relate to other forms of consolation and desolation is relativised. As already noted, Rahner says that even if we regard good and evil spirits as mythological personification, that has no importance for the fundamental logic of making the election as the fundamental divine consolation is in no way mythological.[357] Absent a belief in personal evil spirits, both Rahner's and Toner's approaches involve either ignoring or modifying a significant number of Ignatius' rules. The alternative to this, which would defend the integrity of the spiritual insights in Ignatius' detailed Rules, would be to attribute some value to personification as providing psychological insights or even insights into the nature of evil. This would involve saying that whilst there may not be personal evil spirits, it is still helpful to think of evil as personified. There is a suggestion of why this is useful in an essay by Paul Richard Blum, who sees discernment as psychological insight in the language of mysticism. He says:

> Epistemologically speaking: an idea, even an emotional impulse, may well spring from the innermost of the individual psyche, but it has to be investigated as if – counterfactually or not, does not matter – it came from another person. The method of discernment does not measure any act or thought with truth or falsehood, good or evil; rather, it judges the act or thought as flowing from someone other, as though this were oneself.[358]

---

[356] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, p. 155.

[357] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 164.

[358] Paul Richard Blum, 'Psychology and Culture of the Intellect: Ignatius of Loyola and Antonio Possevino', in *Cognitive Psychology in Early Jesuit Scholasticism*, ed. by Heider, Daniel (Neunkirchen-Seelscheid: editiones scholasticae, 2016), pp. 12-37, p. 15.

On this basis, personification becomes a spiritual exercise. Whether or not we believe in personal evil spirits, it helps to think 'as if' impulses could come from external evil spirits as part of the discernment process. We will have to leave the question of whether, in the absence of personal evil spirits, the personification of evil can be justified other than as a psychological insight. Ignatius' Rules could be seen as providing an insight into how evil works in the human mind and human society in some more general way, but that would take us into some broad questions about the nature of evil.

Another preliminary issue that Toner deals with is the scope of discernment: God's will as the object of discernment has the limited meaning of God's will for the individual. Toner says that it is certain that Ignatius never presented the Exercises as being for discernment of universal moral principles.[359] He also says that discernment is limited to an individual's own choice in a concrete situation. This is a significant limitation. Toner accepts that 'no developed thematic treatment of the limits of discerning God's will is to be found either in Ignatius' writings or in his commentators'. Toner derives this limitation from the example of Ignatius' discernment about the question of whether Francis Borgia should become a cardinal: Ignatius saw the only matter for discernment as being what he should do and not what Francis or the Pope should do.[360] Toner makes a fine distinction between discerning how to advise others (which is acceptable) and discerning what others should do (which is not). Toner makes no mention here of collective discernment, although he mentions elsewhere examples of collective discernment from Ignatius' *Spiritual Diary*, such as how Ignatius and his early companions sought God's will for them as a group.[361]

The final preliminary issue raised by Toner is the concept of 'simplicity of heart' as a precondition to discernment. This is Toner's term for what is generally

---

[359] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, p. 26. Toner refers to *Exx.* 4, 9, 10, 14, 16, 18-20, 89, 162 and 205.
[360] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, pp. 47-50; Loyola, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, pp. 145-146.
[361] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, p. 39. Toner also writes about collective discernment in an earlier work. There he treats the record of the discernment by Ignatius and his early companions (and not the *Spiritual Exercises*) as the basis for collective discernment, but he uses the *Spiritual Exercises* extensively to understand and interpret that discernment. Jules J. Toner, 'A Method for Communal Discernment of God's Will', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 3 (1971), 121-152.

referred to as indifference. The notion is that all desires should be integrated into one desire which is the greater love and praise of God. This implies freedom from the confusion of pursuing conflicting desires and finds expression in the Exercises both in the Principle and Foundation (*Exx.* 23) and the Contemplation for Attaining Love (*Exx.* 230-237). Toner sees this as a response to a call to share in Christ's self-emptying based on the intimate love and knowledge of Jesus which the whole Exercises help us to grow.[362] This is an example of the issue raised earlier about the practice of discernment outside the context of the full Exercises. Here the question would be, if Ignatian discernment presupposes simplicity of heart, which is something which the whole Exercises are designed to school us in, how can Ignatian discernment be undertaken without that schooling?

After consideration of these preliminary issues, Toner's focus is on exegesis of the Rules and times of election. Toner notes a surprising level of disagreement about what each of the three times means, how they are to be carried out and their relationship and comparative value.[363]An example of that is the significant level of disagreement between his views and those of Rahner: the most important is about consolation without cause. Toner notes the context in which the concept of consolation without cause appears in the *Spiritual Exercises*, which is in rules which describe the circumstances in which consolation can, deceptively, come from the evil spirit. The idea of consolation without cause then is presented by Ignatius as an exceptional case, where there could be no such possible deception, as consolation without cause can only come from God. As consolation without cause is mentioned only in this context, Toner sees this as strong evidence for its lack of importance for Ignatius outside this context.[364] For Toner, consolation without cause is distinguished from other consolations by not being caused by a person's previous acts of understanding and will. It follows that, as everything in the Exercises is designed to lead to consolation with cause, consolation without cause occurring in the context of the Exercises is unlikely.[365] Toner's primary focus is not on justifying

[362] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, pp. 73-75, 78, 84, 86, 98.
[363] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, pp. 6-7.
[364] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 214.
[365] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 218.

this interpretation of consolation without cause, which he sees as a straightforward piece of exegesis, but with arguing against Rahner's interpretation, which he presents as 'more theological speculation than exegetical study'.[366] Toner joins Rahner's exposition of consolation without cause to that of Harvey Egan.[367] Egan's *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, is a reworking and condensation of a doctoral dissertation completed under Rahner's direction and includes a foreword by Rahner endorsing some of Egan's arguments.[368] However, it would not appear that either Rahner or Egan see Egan's book as simply a further exposition of Rahner's ideas, and Egan explicitly reviews and draws on the work of a significant number of other interpreters of Ignatius. Even Toner describes Egan's book as revising Rahner 'under Rahner's supervision (but not necessarily with his agreement to the revisions)' and as seeming 'to achieve a clearer and perhaps improved version of Rahner's theology of Ignatian discernment'.[369] Given that Toner is very critical of Rahner's position and methodology, it would have been preferable for Toner to maintain a distinction between Rahner's views and Egan's interpretations of them. Toner's methodological claim is that Rahner has simply brought his 'already developed transcendental theology' to propose an understanding of Ignatian discernment: in other words, Rahner's reading of Ignatius is determined by his prior theological commitments.[370] As we have already seen, Rahner accepts that there is a dialogue here between theology and Ignatius' text, but he presents the theology as responding to a need, found in the text, to explain how God's will for the individual can be known if it cannot be discerned by reason.[371] He also presents his theology as responding to a need to explain the nature of experience of God, again as found in the text. It could further be argued that Rahner has modified his transcendental theology here. Endean, for example, says:

> it is undeniable that Rahner in 1956, against the grain of his own best theology, flirted with the idea that Ignatian discernment depends on some

[366] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 294.
[367] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 293.
[368] Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*.
[369] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 293.
[370] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 294; Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, p. 10.
[371] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 117.

> kind of extraordinary experience: But the 1956 essay makes sense and coheres with Rahner's other writings, only if we interpret Rahner's account of the experience more modestly, as he himself implicitly came to do.[372]

Whether or not Endean is right about what represents Rahner's best theology, it is clear that Rahner can just as easily be seen as modifying his theology to meet the needs of the text as allowing the reading of the text to be determined by his theology. This is one area where joining Rahner with Egan is potentially unhelpful, as Egan interprets Rahner's 'best theology' as being wholly *consistent* with an interpretation of consolation without cause as an indubitable experience: the 'becoming thematic of supernaturally elevated transcendence'.[373] Egan's interpretation obscures potential inconsistencies between the theology in the 1956 essay and Rahner's other writings and thus obscures the possibility that there has been a genuine dialogue between the theology and the text.

As already noted, Toner's main exegetical argument relates to the significance of consolation without cause for Ignatius: it is only mentioned in two of the Rules for Discernment (*Exx.* 330 and 336) and then only as exceptions to circumstances when evil spirits can deceive with consolation. If consolation without cause is the first principle of discernment, Toner says that he would expect Ignatius to tell us this explicitly and repeatedly: his failure to do so is 'incomprehensible negligence'.[374] Toner describes Rahner's method as starting from his premise that discernment must be based on an indubitable divine motion, thus finding consolation without cause as the only candidate for that in Ignatius' writings. Although intended as critical, Toner here is close to Rahner's argument. Rather than Rahner 'finding his own premise', the first part of Rahner's argument, based on his exegesis of the three times, establishes that premise: that there is a way of discerning God's will for the individual beyond reason. Having done that, Rahner does make the exegetical move of saying there must be an experience that allows that discernment to be made. Toner is right that Rahner selects what he sees as the

---

[372] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, p. 133.
[373] Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, p. 15.
[374] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 305. O'Reilly suggests that consolation without cause would have been vulnerable to attack as illuminist in Ignatius' lifetime and that this would explain why 'the final recension does not draw attention to its role in the Election'. O'Reilly, *The Spiritual Exercises*, pp. 183-184. This undermines Toner's argument.

'only candidate'. In the context of the Rules for Discernment, this is not such a surprising choice. There are twenty-two rules. Of the fourteen rules expressed to be 'more suitable for the first week', ten relate to responding to times of desolation and are of limited relevance to positive discernment, and one relates to those regressing spiritually. In the rules 'more applicable to the second week', at least four relate only to deceptive consolation from the evil spirit. This leaves three first-week rules and four second-week rules, which potentially provide information about the experiences which contribute to discerning God's will.[375] The fact that only two rules relate to consolation without cause needs to be seen in the context of the fact that the entire content of Ignatius' teaching on discernment is limited. That Ignatius' teaching is limited and that his terse style 'often leaves his meaning uncertain' is also a fact both Toner and Rahner acknowledge and can also be seen as inevitable and even appropriate, given that the experience referred to cannot be put into words.[376] These are all reasons to argue that Rahner's focus on consolation without cause is not as idiosyncratic as Toner claims. Further support for Rahner's position is the mention of consolation without cause in the letter to Teresa Rejadell. Although the phrase 'consolation without cause' is not used in that letter, Toner accept that it refers to this experience.[377]

The final point about Toner's criticism of Rahner's interpretation of consolation without cause is that Toner also, in his own exegesis, is prepared to use statements made in one particular context to make general points. This is an exegetical move that is unavoidable when interpreting the *Spiritual Exercises,* given the terseness of the text. For example, in his exegesis of the second time of election, Toner finds the experience of discernment to be through the counsel of the good spirit in consolation. Here, he relies on a first-week rule, which says that 'in consolation it is more the good spirit who guides and counsels us' (*Exx.* 318). The rule in which this statement appears has the principal purpose of saying that a

[375] *Exx.* 315, 316, 317, 329, 330, 331, 336.
[376] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 17. Although, in general, the approach has been taken of not attempting to assess the effect that controversies over illuminism have had on the text, it would argue against drawing a strong inference from the limited description of consolation without cause as to its importance or frequency.
[377] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 312.

person should not make any changes when in desolation. Toner here finds an important principle for his exegesis of discernment which arises as an incidental point to the purpose of the rule. This is, of course, not so different from Rahner's exegetical move, which Toner criticises, of using the concept of consolation without cause found in the context of rules about deceptive consolation.

Whether consolation without cause is an ordinary or exceptional experience is another point of dispute between Toner and Rahner. Toner says that it is exceptional and bases this opinion on the terms of the Rule and his own experience. He acknowledges that Ignatius makes no explicit statement on this in the *Spiritual Exercises* and that, in Ignatius' letter to Teresa Rejadell, it is referred to as 'frequent'.[378] However, if the nature of the experience is for the soul to be drawn 'entirely into love of His Divine Majesty', Toner thinks such an experience must be rare. In addition, this is not an experience that exercitants or spiritual directors frequently attest to. Toner says that 'most of us, I think, would be more likely to say we have never had such an experience'. [379] Toner allows that Rahner speaks of this experience occurring at a number of different levels, but rejects that because it is contradictory to speak of degrees of being drawn totally into God's love. There may be a better interpretation here which allows for Rahner's notion that this experience can occur at a number of levels. Rahner, after all, sees a whole continuum, from the way people ordinarily take serious decisions (natural transcendence) through to experiences of supernatural transcendence becoming increasingly explicit and with any categorical object becoming increasingly transparent. Consolation without cause, as described by Ignatius, is the exceptional case where there is no object at all, and therefore the drawing into God's love is entire. But that does not mean that there cannot be lower levels of this experience with lower levels of certainty. Here it is worth noting that consolation without cause

[378] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, pp. 306, 311.

[379] Michael Ivens says that Rahner's implication that an experience of consolation without cause is an element of ordinary Christian life is not generally accepted by Ignatian commentators but 'many of them […] would admit that many sincere and searching Christians may have known it in their lives, usually in quiet and unspectacular ways, but always with profound and lasting effects'. He also says that it is impossible to know Ignatius' position with certainty. Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary A Handbook for Retreat Directors*, pp. 228-229. Only two specific sources are cited, Toner and Thomas H. Green, *Wheat Among the Weeds* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1984), p. 130. Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 309.

is a kind of 'consolation', and the most basic defining feature of all consolation, as referred to in *Exx.* 316, is that it is any interior movement 'produced in the soul that leads her to become inflamed with love of her Creator and Lord'. There is, then, an experience, which is common in the life of the ordinary Christian of being drawn into God's love, and consolation without cause is a pure form of that experience. Thus, we could agree with Toner, that this experience is rare in the pure form, and only in this pure form is it incapable of being confused with deceptive consolation, but that does not mean that it cannot be more common in less pure forms.

Toner characterises his exegesis of the three times of election by two main themes. First, he maintains the distinctiveness of each of the three times, and his account, therefore, draws attention to the differences between them. Secondly, he has a positive view of the role of reason. He describes Ignatius as having great respect for human reason, 'seeing it as basically on the side of God'.[380] Toner sees reason as having a role in each of the three times, which also leads him to defend the importance of the third time. In accordance with these two themes, he sees the first time's distinctiveness as not needing any consolation and, despite the first time being indubitable, he insists on the need for subsequent reflection on what has been discerned.[381] The second time for Toner involves an impulse from God or a good spirit accompanied by consolation (again from God or the good spirit).[382] This is different from Rahner, where the matter to be tested, which may be from God, the good spirit or one's own mind is tested against the divine consolation. For Toner, the evidence in the second time is necessarily inconclusive and uncertain. There is, therefore, the need for significant reflection, although Toner sees a clear temporal distinction between the time of consolation and the subsequent time of rational reflection.[383] The third time is a time when there is no experience of consolation or desolation. This is when we discern God's will by our 'natural powers', which Toner says are more than just reason: they also include insight, reason, imagination, memory and will.[384] Toner's reading of the *Spiritual Exercises* is

[380] Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 55.
[381] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, pp. 117, 122-123.
[382] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, pp. 134-135.
[383] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, pp. 142-145.
[384] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, pp. 166-167.

that these three times are distinct, and each is a possible way of making an election. He claims this view is supported not only by the terms of *Exx.* 175, which refers to 'three times in any of which a sound and good election can be made' but also that this is the general assumption of the Directories which comment on the Exercises: in the autograph directory (Ignatius' own notes on the Exercises), it is suggested that the times are distinct and to be taken in order with the second mode of the third time as the 'last resort'.[385] Toner also refers to a letter to de Vegara in which Ignatius clarifies that the third time is sufficient in itself to take a decision to join the Society of Jesus.[386] Toner notes that the Spiritual Diary describes Ignatius as using the second and third times alongside each other: he denies this means that the times are not autonomous, but does not explain how this autobiographical evidence could be consistent with his earlier assertion that the third time cannot happen at the same time as consolation and desolation.[387] Toner also allows that reason is involved in reflection on the second time and affectivity is involved in the third time, but this is not the basis for a distinction between these two times of election. The basis for the distinction is the evidence, which in the second time is consolation or desolation.[388] For all these reasons, Toner rejects Rahner's view, which he describes as an 'extreme position', that all three times are one identical kind of election, with the first as a limiting case of the second and the third a deficient modality of the second.[389] Rahner's view here is tied up with his fundamental conclusions that there is just one underlying principle to all Ignatian discernment and that discernment could never be by reason (or even our 'natural powers') alone.[390]

---

[385] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, p. 246.
[386] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, p. 247.
[387] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, p. 244.
[388] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, p. 245.
[389] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, p. 236.
[390] Balthasar differentiates between the three times but seems to see them in some way as continuous as he describes a gradual transition from the first (psychologically unmediated) call to the second (based on inner experience, impressions, insights, inspirations and certainties). In the second time, personal and supernatural powers of good and evil manifest themselves in the natural power of the soul. The second time is described by Balthasar as standing 'on the boundary line between nature and grace': 'the light of grace, without actually becoming mysticism, permeates the normal intellectual life of the Christian through the phenomena of consciousness'. In this state, the natural conscience becomes attentive to the personal voice and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Just as the second time at its upper boundary can flow into the shining evidence of the first time, it can also flow uninterruptedly into the darkness of the third time: Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1983), pp. 451-453.

Conclusion

This brings us to a point where it is worth assessing how far Rahner and Toner have taken us towards understanding Ignatian discernment: which questions have been answered, which remain obscure or unanswered; where there are disputes, how can they be critically appraised? It would be wrong to replace Ignatius' epistemic humility with an over-confident expansion of his thought. We need to embrace the possibilities afforded by the openness of the text, whilst avoiding the spiritual insight being dissipated into meaningless generalisation. We also need to bear in mind that what may be appropriate in the context of the full Exercises may not translate into the ongoing practice of discernment.

This latter point, I think, turns out to be very important. In some cases where the exegetical conclusions we can reach about the full Exercises are clear, that certainty evaporates when we try to apply those conclusions to the practice of discernment in everyday life. There is a prior question here, of whether Ignatius intended to provide principles for discernment outside the context of the full Exercises. Both Rahner and Toner assume that he did, but neither of them addresses how the practice of discernment can translate outside the context of the Exercises. It is easier to see how Rahner's exegesis can be translated in this way because of his claim to have found an underlying first principle of discernment, which relativises everything other than the process of testing an object of choice against the transcendental divine consolation. But this belies what Rahner says elsewhere about the value of Ignatius' detailed rules and of the whole of the Exercises being for the purpose of discernment. Toner simply assumes that the Rules as they apply in the context of the full Exercises apply in the same way in an ongoing practice of discernment.

Specifically, and in the context of the Exercises, Toner would seem to be right that each of the three times is potentially a good way of making an election. That, however, does not disturb Rahner's conclusion that God's will for an individual cannot be known by reason alone because the third time does involve more than reason. Toner is also correct that a process of going through the different times is

envisaged in the full Exercises: this means the third time would only be reached when 'sufficient light' has not been received through consolation and desolation. But these conclusions need modifying if discernment principles are to be translated to life outside the retreat house, and Ignatius' own practice in the *Spiritual Diary* would reflect that. In ongoing discernment, the use of 'natural powers', which feature prominently in the third time, can happen at the same time as seeking sufficient light through consolation and desolation, which is the main source of evidence in the second time. In general, I think we can see in both Rahner and Toner the role of reason in cooperation with discernment of movements of the spirits: in Rahner, this is most obvious outside the specific context of his exegetical argument that something more than reason is required to discern God's will for the individual. In relation to the second time, Rahner's interpretation of consolation without cause as objectless experience of God is persuasive. In its pure form, that experience would be unusual, but also clearly an experience of divine consolation and thus one which would allow a good discernment to be made. It is also possible that this experience could occur at lower levels of certainty and clarity. But whilst the divine consolation may be an underlying principle of discernment, as Toner argues, it is not the only experience of consolation of which Ignatius speaks. The Exercises are directed at allowing a range of spiritual experiences, with a range of levels of certainty associated with them to be brought together with each other and with reasoned reflection to see if sufficient light has been received. The objectless experience that Rahner identifies is not restricted to occurring when there is no object in our consciousness, otherwise one wonders if it could ever occur, but it is a distinct experience of transcendence beyond objects. Ignatius clearly contemplates the usefulness in discernment of experiences of consolation, which are not transcendent in this way: instead of looking for one particular type of experience, all spiritual experience is to be seen as potentially useful.[391]

[391] See Balthasar's brief discussion of Ignatian discernment in the first volume of his theological aesthetics, where he says 'all experience (of any kind, whether of consolation or desolation) is regarded as a sign from God which must be attended to': Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord I: Seeing the Form*, pp. 290-291.

Both Rahner and Toner agree that the purpose of the Exercises is to allow God's will for the individual to be discerned. The Exercises are not intended for any form of collective discernment, although they both believe Ignatian discernment could be used for that purpose.[392] They both agree that discernment of general principles is not possible. For Rahner, this would be contrary to the logic of his distinction between principles and prescriptions. Whilst this may be correct, it is interesting to ask why it might be the case and how that relates to the possibility of collective discernment. Even if we accept that there are limits to new revelation – as everything necessary for salvation has already been revealed – that does not necessarily imply that all general principles of human morality have been discovered, or even that all principles are derivable from existing principles by reason. Why could discernment not have a role in the discovery of these new principles?

The important question of who discernment is for has an answer in the context of the Exercises. Both Rahner and Toner agree that the full Exercises are in some way exclusive: on any reading of the Exercises, it is clear that Ignatius contemplated some limitations on the people who would undertake them. But if Ignatian discernment is to be practised outside the Exercises, does that mean that anyone can benefit from it, in some modified form? Rahner, as we have seen, already believes that, in general, grave decisions are already made on the basis of his interpretation of the discernment process. At the other end of the spectrum, he also values the detailed rules in the Exercises. Between those extremes, we would expect there to be principles derived from the Exercises that can be widely used and are an improvement on doing what we would do in any event.

The final issue is demythologisation and whether Ignatian discernment makes sense without a belief in personal evil spirits. Both Rahner and Toner believe in personal evil spirits but think that Ignatian discernment can be used without that belief. The difficulty here is how to read those rules which assume that personal evil spirits exist.

[392] Rahner, 'Modern Piety and the Experience of Retreats'; Toner, 'A Method for Communal Discernment of God's Will'.

This exhausts those areas where Rahner and Toner have provided answers or taken us significantly toward answers, but there is a criticism of both of them, which is that they both, to some extent, fail to treat the whole of the Exercises as relevant to discernment. Toner does bring in some other principles such as indifference, but generally, the whole context of meditation (particularly meditation on Christ's life) and imaginative prayer is not presented as part of the discernment process. This creates the impression that the answer to the question of how to apply the principles from the Exercises to ongoing discernment is simply to extract the Rules for Discernment and three times of election and to apply them as if they were being undertaken in the context of the full Exercises. An important consequence of this is that discernment loses its Christological focus. There is a good argument that attunement to Christ through ongoing meditation is just as important to Ignatian discernment as, say, the Rules for Discernment. It is through that attunement that the individual, through Christ's kenotic example, can achieve what Toner calls simplicity of heart: that attunement opens the individual up to Christ's imperative desire to do the will of the Father.

In the next chapter, our task will be to examine some of these open areas to develop a picture of ongoing Ignatian discernment outside the context of the Exercises. We can already anticipate that this examination will bring certain questions into sharper focus, such as the limitation of discernment to God's will for the individual and the 'exclusivity' of Ignatian discernment to particular theological perspectives. We can also anticipate promise in the relationship between the use of reason and spiritual movements in discernment: Ignatian discernment is a place where thought and prayer have already been brought together.

Chapter Four

The practice of ongoing discernment

Introduction

This chapter aims to look at Ignatian discernment as an ongoing spiritual practice carried on throughout life. In the previous chapter, we put forward two quite different twentieth-century views of Ignatian discernment, which focussed very much on that practice in the context of the full Spiritual Exercises – generally conceived as a 30-day retreat. One clear task is to consider how that practice will differ when moved out of that context into daily life. However, that is far from being a straightforward exercise. This chapter, therefore, proceeds by pursuing several lines of inquiry, some of which are negative (in that they conclude by rejecting posited accounts of discernment) and some of which address quite specific questions. This approach is appropriately cautious in building up a picture of ongoing discernment from different lines of inquiry rather than asserting overarching principles. This approach contemplates a considerable degree of methodological flexibility. That flexibility can be seen as a strength, but it does mean that this chapter will not result in an instruction manual for finding God's will. The argument in this chapter is not linear and pursues a number of different lines of inquiry that aggregate to create a picture of what can and cannot be said about ongoing Ignatian discernment. I will, therefore, set out here in advance a summary of the main lines of argument, so the reader has some sense of the overall direction. We will start by considering recent literature about Ignatian discernment. Whilst this serves to some extent as a literature review to bring things up to date, that is not the primary objective: the main aim here is to describe on the one hand an approach to the interpretation of Ignatian discernment in the practical literature which is too prescriptive and which seeks to speak with too much certainty about the meaning of Ignatius' rules. On the other hand, I also consider an approach that I consider to be too limited. This is Endean's account of Rahner's interpretation of

discernment. This needs to be addressed in any event because it criticises Rahner's exegesis, including some of Rahner's conclusions that I have found to be persuasive. However, the more important reason for engaging at some length with Endean's approach is that his limited account of Ignatian discernment undermines any value that we might place on Ignatius' specific rules. The rejection of these approaches: one too prescriptive and one too limited, then, serves at least to define the space for an account that lies between these approaches. This is a space I would seek to occupy. It is also a space in which Peter Fritz's description of an aesthetic approach to the logic of discernment, which we will also consider, can be situated.

We will then turn to the main task of re-contextualising Ignatius' teaching as an ongoing practice. That will proceed by considering specific questions. We will first address the preliminary question of whether Ignatius intended that there be ongoing discernment. I will argue that he did but that it should be in a modified form from discernment in the context of the Exercises. A further preliminary question is whether having first completed the Exercises is a necessary precursor to ongoing discernment: I will argue that it is desirable but not an essential precursor. I will then propose a basic dynamic framework for ongoing Ignatian discernment. That takes us to the question of which elements from the Exercises should be carried into ongoing practice. The hermeneutical principle will be that *all* of the Exercises are for the purposes of discernment. This leads to the (rebuttable) presumption that all of the practices contemplated by the *Spiritual Exercises* should have a place in ongoing discernment. A significant issue here is the question of the Christological focus of the Exercises and the role of Christic meditations and contemplations in ongoing discernment. I will argue that they are an essential feature. This calls for a broader examination of Rahner's Ignatian writings, as his account of discernment in the 1956 essay could be seen as providing a model for discernment without any significant reference to Christ. However, we can develop a more balanced picture if we consider some of Rahner's other writings, particularly the rich Christological content of retreat conferences given in 1954/5.[393] We will finally consider other elements of the Exercises to see their place in Ignatian

[393] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, pp. 116, 123.

discernment as an ongoing spiritual discipline. This is consistent with the approach of seeing the whole of the Exercises as being for the purposes of discernment and completes the process of interrogating each element of the Exercises to see whether they can be taken into the context of everyday discernment. In particular, we will look at the Examen prayer, the role of the Spiritual Director and Ignatian prayer.

All these questions are a necessary to re-contextualise the Exercises as an ongoing practice. Despite the discrete nature of the questions, some consistent, underlying themes unify the chapter. The first such theme is the hermeneutical principle just stated, that the key elements of the Exercises should be replicated in ongoing discernment. The second theme is that the Ignatian approach to discernment is characterised by its flexibility and inclusiveness – treating all kinds of experience as potentially relevant to discerning God's will and providing for the use of a human's natural powers alongside movements in the soul.[394] This is consistent with the Ignatian principle of finding God in all things.[395] This flexibility and inclusiveness involve essential receptivity. This receptivity also has the potential (which will be assessed more fully in Chapter Five) to resist the adoption of an Enframing stance described in Chapter Two.[396] The third consistent theme is that there is a tension between all this flexibility – if this practice is to be open to the possibility of finding God in *all* things – and the necessary specificity and clarity for there to be a spiritual discipline here that can be followed. One place where this

[394] In this thesis, I will use movements in the soul to refer to everything other than reason.
[395] Whilst this principle cannot be seen as exclusive to the Ignatian tradition, as it is, in Philip Endean's words, 'proper to Christianity as such', it does receive particular emphasis in the context of Ignatian spirituality. Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, p. 75. On the attribution of aspects of Christianity to particular traditions, Rahner says: 'There is only one Christianity. And in any legitimate living of it, it has to be present in its totality. Hence it does not make sense to demonstrate (since the fact is self-evident) that some particular feature claimed as characteristic of itself by some particular school or line of thought or Order in the Church is also to be found elsewhere. For while the whole of Christianity must obviously be present at each point in it, the entelechy of the whole structure being vitally discernible in every part of the architectural plan, yet there are various schools and various spiritualities, differentiated by shifts in accentuation, by what is stressed or unstressed, by variations in dosage, by differences of perspective: in a word by their historic individuality.' Karl Rahner, 'Ignatian Spirituality and Devotion to the Heart of Jesus', in *Mission and Grace* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1966) vol. 3, pp. 176-210, p. 178.
[396] The basis for saying that a discipline of receptivity can resist an Enframing stance is that it is less focused on particular techniques for achieving experiences that are used to determine God's will (even dark or apophatic experiences), but instead is attentive to those experiences which do occur, and is accepting of periods of desolation, when no discernment of God's will is possible.

tension is apparent is when we consider the Christological focus of the Exercises. Here the tension can be seen between a readiness to find God in all things and the specificity of finding 'the unconditional presence of God in one particular set of places, namely Christian revelation'.[397]

Recent Literature

At the end of the last chapter, we reached some conclusions based on the interpretations of Rahner and Toner, in some cases arbitrating their differences. These conclusions included: that discernment can be made in the way contemplated by any of the three times of election described by Ignatius; that in all cases, something more than reason is needed to make a choice, but reason is nonetheless important; that a sequential approach to the three times of election may be appropriate in the context of the Exercises, but is less likely to be appropriate in ongoing discernment; that Rahner's account of consolation without cause as transcendental experience is persuasive, but his relativisation of other spiritual experience and spiritual consolation is not; and that ongoing Ignatian discernment needs to retain the openness and lack of exclusivity of a process that, as per Rahner, is generally used by human beings for grave decisions in any event, whilst retaining the discipline and spiritual wisdom that enhances that process.

In very different ways, Rahner and Toner presented comprehensive views of Ignatian discernment: Rahner by seeking to identify the underlying logic, and Toner by detailed and exhaustive exegesis. Although Toner did not generally proceed by analysing the views of previous commentators, the one previous commentator he did engage with extensively was Rahner. However, although this engagement was extensive, it was not deep. For Rahner, the main interest is in the theological implications of there being a means of discerning God's will for each individual. Toner does not engage with the theological implications but instead sees Rahner's reasoning about the theological implications as compromising the quality of his exegesis. There is no genuine dialogue between these two approaches. That lack of

[397] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, pp. 96-97.

genuine dialogue has continued in subsequent literature. On the one hand, there is a wealth of practical literature on discernment which tends to follow a broadly exegetical approach. To get some sense of that literature, we will consider a recent essay by Brian McDermott. Alternatively, there are works that consider Ignatian discernment in the context of Rahner's theology, such as Philip Endean's *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality* and Peter Fritz's two books: *Karl Rahner's Theological Aesthetics* and *Freedom Made Manifest: Rahner's Fundamental Option and Theological Aesthetics.* I will outline the arguments of these three works insofar as they are relevant to understanding Ignatian discernment. That a greater dialogue between these two approaches would be fruitful may seem obvious but is worth exploring. As adumbrated above, I will argue that ongoing Ignatian discernment is inclusive and, to some extent, as a result of that, flexible. One underlying assumption would be that if God has a unique will for each individual, there must also be a way for each individual to know what God's will for them is. Rahner and the post-Rahnerian scholars provide a theological basis for this inclusiveness and flexibility but arguably at the expense of a lack of clarity of how, as a practical matter, God's will is to be discerned. The more practical literature exposes the tension between the desire for clear rules and the need for those rules to be flexible so that finding God's will is a possibility for anybody.

A prescriptive approach to ongoing discernment

If we first turn to the practical literature, in Toner's introduction to *Discerning God's Will,* he notes the plentiful literature on Ignatian discernment, which 'could convey the impression that the fundamental concepts involved in such discernment are clearly understood and that there is a generally accepted interpretation'. However, he finds that any critical study uncovers 'deplorable confusion' and 'sharp disagreements about fundamentals'.[398] It would appear from McDermott's 2018 study that this situation continues: the literature about discernment continues to be plentiful, and the level of disagreement continues to

[398] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, pp. 5, 8.

be profound. Writing about consolation and the second time of election, McDermott laments what he describes as 'considerable disagreement' amongst commentators writing since the Second Vatican Council.[399] He cites twenty-five different authors of books or significant articles in English but describes the state of writing as 'not very consoling' He sees a need for authors to be careful about what they write and to argue for legitimate interpretations of Ignatius' thought.[400] This continuing wealth of literature and level of disagreement in itself illustrates the enduring importance and level of interest in Ignatian discernment and the wide range of interpretation to which Ignatius' text is open. We can also see that many authors are influenced by their own practice of Ignatian discernment – for themselves and as spiritual directors. Thus, if we take the view, as discussed at the beginning of the last chapter, that any interpretation of Ignatian discernment needs to take into account both faithfulness to Ignatius' meaning and also the living spiritual practice that Ignatius inaugurated, then this wealth of literature and diversity of opinion is to some extent to be celebrated. Indeed, it provides evidence of the adaptation of Ignatius' thinking to different circumstances and idioms, which the text of the Exercises already envisages. On the other hand, this diversity raises the concern that there is a lack of clarity in the text of the Exercises which is damaging to the claim that they can provide a reliable guide to discernment: this concern is what prompts McDermott to attempt to arrive at 'consensus' statements of certain aspects of discernment based on his review of the literature.[401]

If we examine McDermott's specific exegetical questions, we can get a sense of the level and nature of disagreement amongst commentators on Ignatian discernment. McDermott discusses two main areas of disagreement: whether spiritual consolation is always a pleasant experience and whether the second time

[399] Brian O. McDermott, 'Spiritual Consolation and its Role in the Second Time of Election', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 50/4 (2018), 1-50, p. 1.
[400] McDermott, 'Spiritual Consolation and its Role in the Second Time of Election', p. 48. The various books and articles are cited at p. 19, n. 36, p. 20, n. 38, p. 22, n. 44, p. 39 n. 74 and p. 45, n.82. The list includes a number of co-authors. Any celebration of the wide range of literature needs to be tempered by the fact that sixteen of the authors are members of the Society of Jesus, four are from other religious orders, and there are only three women.
[401] In formulating the 'consensus', McDermott favours the views of a minority of commentators and in general follows Toner's interpretation. McDermott, 'Spiritual Consolation and its Role in the Second Time of Election', pp. 22,39.

of election always involves consolation out of which an individual is spontaneously drawn to a course of action. McDermott is of the view that consolation is always a pleasant experience, in agreement with Toner and four other authors and in disagreement with Michael Buckley and eight other writers who hold that consolation must involve being drawn towards God but will not necessarily involve any affective element and others who think that consolation will always involve an affective act rather than a passive affective experience.[402] McDermott argues that Ignatius would have been more explicit if he had wished to depart from the tradition of consolation always being pleasant found in earlier spiritual writers. In this argument, McDermott is departing from the view expressed by Hugo Rahner that historical sources are of limited importance in understanding Ignatius.[403] McDermott also asserts that all Ignatius' references to consolation are to some kind of positive feeling. He holds that Ignatius' reference to shedding tears of grief for one's sins (*Exx.* 316) must refer to sweet tears because other examples of consolation are all positive.[404] I would argue that, given Ignatius' unsystematic definition of consolation, McDermott takes too strong a position here: he too readily dismisses the primacy in Ignatius' definition of consolation of being drawn to God and too easily explains the reference to tears of grief as pleasant. Outside of exegetical arguments, the majority of authors are motivated by a desire to account for feelings of being drawn to God in the context of otherwise unpleasant or mundane circumstances. However, McDermott dismisses any relevance of these experiences to what Ignatius was referring to in the Exercises.[405] This exemplifies different approaches to the balance between faithfulness to the text and experience of Ignatian discernment as an ongoing practice and between the certainty and specificity of the rules and their flexibility and adaptability. There is a significant issue as to what being faithful to Ignatius means in this context. I would argue that reading too much certainty into Ignatius' text is in itself an exegetical error: this is a text which developed over many years and to which Ignatius attached

[402] McDermott, 'Spiritual Consolation and its Role in the Second Time of Election', pp. 19-25; Buckley, 'The Structure of the Rules for Discernment'.
[403] Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 46.
[404] McDermott, 'Spiritual Consolation and its Role in the Second Time of Election', p. 26.
[405] McDermott, 'Spiritual Consolation and its Role in the Second Time of Election', p. 20.

great importance, particularly once it had been blessed by papal authority. The most faithful exegesis attends to what Ignatius says and what he leaves unsaid – it is attentive to Ignatius' restraint. On this basis, to dismiss the possibility of anything other than pleasant feelings falling within the definition of consolation goes too far, as Ignatius did not explicitly say that. This is an example of the openness of the text allowing the living spiritual practice of discernment to help us interpret that practice.

The second major disagreement McDermott identifies is how the second time of election works. McDermott believes that this always involves an experience of consolation followed by an external impulse drawing an individual to a course of action.[406] Again, McDermott adopts Toner's analysis, based largely on a statement by Ignatius in the autograph directory:

> Among the three modes [times] of making an election, if God does not move him in the first he should dwell on the second, that of recognizing his vocation by the experience of consolations and desolations. Then, as he continues with meditations on Christ our Lord, he should examine, when he finds himself in consolation in which direction God is moving him; similarly in desolation.[407]

The question here would be whether Ignatius intends (in his autograph directory, rather than the *Spiritual Exercises* themselves) to suggest an important qualification to the way discernment of spirits works.[408] As McDermott admits: 'Because Ignatius' treatment of the second time is so brief, Fr. Toner seeks to interpret Ignatius, going beyond what the saint explicitly writes'.[409] Furthermore, this passage could be seen as setting out a relatively disciplined way of carrying out discernment in the context of the Exercises, which may not translate to ongoing discernment: Ignatius in his

---

[406] McDermott, 'Spiritual Consolation and its Role in the Second Time of Election', p. 46. Here McDermott follows Toner's exegesis and identifies three other writers who take the same approach. Five authors take the view that the consolation can follow on the individual beginning to discern a possible course of action, and five are imprecise. Rahner's 1956 essay is cited here in a footnote along with a reference to Toner as providing a good summary and critique. McDermott, 'Spiritual Consolation and its Role in the Second Time of Election', pp. 39 n. 74, 45 n. 82.

[407] Martin E. Palmer, *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Jesuit Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), p. 9.

[408] Ignatius refers only to God (which, in the context of the Exercises, implies that he is referring to consolation without cause), and he also refers to desolation, whereas it is clear in the Exercises that impulses in desolation would *not* be from God.

[409] McDermott, 'Spiritual Consolation and its Role in the Second Time of Election', p. 40.

Spiritual Diary refers to moving between the times of election freely and not in ordered sequence as suggested by the passage from the directory from which this passage is taken. Even in the context of the Exercises, it is hard to see how one could determine that a choice had spontaneously come from God as an external impulse (and that this all occurred during or following consolation). Finally, Ignatius also suggests in the autograph directory that:

> The person may proceed by presenting one side to God on one day and the other on the next, e.g., the counsels on one day and the commandments on the next; and noting in which direction God our Lord gives a greater indication of his will— like someone presenting various foods to a prince and noting which of them is to his liking.[410]

This would appear to be closer to the process described by Rahner, where actual possibilities are tested. Again we see the tension between a desire for a clear set of rules and a desire to be responsive to the complexity and variety of lived experience. There is an exegetical presumption here, which needs to be questioned, that if Ignatius says that something should be done in a particular way, that way of doing things should be treated as exhaustive and as covering all possible circumstances.

A limited account of ongoing discernment

Moving then to the post-Rahnerian scholars, Philip Endean's *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality* (2004) is, to a very significant extent, a book about Ignatian discernment. Rahner's 1956 essay is one of two key texts that receive the most attention from Endean. The other is *Ignatius of Loyola Speaks to a Modern Jesuit*. Endean is critical of both these texts.[411] Endean claims that Rahner's achievement is 'ultimately rooted in his [Ignatian] spirituality'. However, he also describes Rahner's exegesis of the *Spiritual Exercises* as 'questionable', 'unsatisfactory', 'inadequate', having 'little support in the text', and as containing 'exegetical mistakes'.[412] Having

[410] Palmer, *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Jesuit Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599*, p. 9.
[411] Karl Rahner, 'Ignatius of Loyola Speaks to a Modern Jesuit', in *Ignatius of Loyola*, ed. by Imhoff, Paul (London: Collins, 1979), pp. 11-38.
[412] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, pp. 7, 102, 127, 128, 136-107, 159, 176.

cited Ignatius' description of the Rules for Discernment of Spirits as 'a masterpiece of brevity but not of clarity', Endean's assessment is that 'Rahner's interpretation of the text may be less brief but it is hardly clearer'. Endean is involved in the enterprise of showing that Rahner's theology is rooted in Ignatian spirituality despite these misgivings about Rahner's understanding of the *Spiritual Exercises*.[413] Furthermore, Endean presents a constructive interpretation of Rahner's theology whilst acknowledging the danger of the dissolution of 'the boundary between the presentation of Rahner's and one's own doing of theology'.[414] This is significant for my thesis because it results in a somewhat limited account of discernment that Endean nonetheless presents as both Ignatian and Rahnerian.

Endean identifies three fundamental Ignatian convictions: that God's grace is an experiential reality; that experience of God arises from ordinary activities, not as an extraordinary event; and that experience of God can guide our choices.[415] Although only the third is of direct relevance here, it is worth considering Endean's critical exposition of Rahner's theology which relates to the first two of these convictions. He sees them as the grounding for Rahner's 'whole achievement', which 'proceeds from a fusion inspired by the Ignatian Exercises of the idioms of mysticism and grace'. Rahner has taken immediate knowledge of God 'out of the intellectual ghetto of ascetical and mystical theology'.[416] But immediate experience of God, at least in Endean's constructive version of Rahner's theology, has a particular meaning. When Rahner describes experience of God as 'immediate' he does not mean unmediated by created realities, but rather unmediated through inference. In addition, Endean refers to the distinction between the two German words for experience: *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis*. He argues that it is not *Erlebnis* (experience as an event) that we are concerned with here, but rather *Erfahrung* which describes experiential realisation nourished by time and reflection, God's abiding presence in human consciousness.[417] Following this understanding, conversion is not an event – the transition from grace's absence to grace's presence

[413] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, p. 182.
[414] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, p. 152.
[415] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, pp. 8-10.
[416] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, pp. 32, 34.
[417] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, pp. 56, 58-59.

– but rather the acceptance of a grace already given. The immediate experience of God is not only accessible to everyone but is also present at all stages of everyone's life. Rahner says that the experienced mental reality of God's grace is permanently present in the human person; what changes is the acceptance of it and the 'ability to reflect on this reality and to make it an object of one's verbalized concrete awareness'.[418] Rahner reflects on the experience of grace in a 1954 essay where he provides a long list of examples which cannot easily be summarised:

> Have we ever kept quiet, even though we wanted to defend ourselves when we had been unfairly treated? Have we ever forgiven someone even though we got no thanks for it and our silent forgiveness was taken for granted? Have we ever obeyed, not because we had to and because otherwise things would have become unpleasant for us, but simply on account of that mysterious, silent, incomprehensible being we call God and his will? Have we ever sacrificed something without receiving any thanks or recognition for it, and even without a feeling of inner satisfaction? Have we ever been absolutely lonely? Have we ever decided on some course of action purely by the innermost judgement of our conscience, deep down where one can no longer tell or explain it to anyone, where one is quite alone and knows that one is taking a decision which no one else can take in one's place and for which one will have to answer for all eternity? Have we ever tried to love God when we are no longer being borne on the crest of the wave of enthusiastic feeling, when it is no longer possible to mistake our self, and its vital urges, for God? Have we ever tried to love Him when we thought we were dying of this love and when it seemed like death and absolute negation? Have we ever tried to love God when we seemed to be calling out into emptiness and our cry seemed to fall on deaf ears, when it looked as if we were taking a terrifying jump into the bottomless abyss,
> when everything seemed to become incomprehensible and apparently senseless? Have we ever fulfilled a duty when it seemed that it could be done only with a consuming sense of really betraying and obliterating oneself, when it could apparently be done only by doing something terribly stupid for which no one would thank us? Have we ever been good to someone who did not show the slightest sign of gratitude or comprehension and when we also were not rewarded by the feeling of having been 'selfless', decent, etc.?[419]

These experiences are not, for the most part, experiences that could occur in the context of the Exercises, but in the context of ongoing discernment, they point to

[418] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, pp. 48-49.
[419] Karl Rahner, 'Reflections on the Experience of Grace', in *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961-92) vol. 3, pp. 86-90, p. 87.

the places where experience of God may be found – in ordinary life and not extraordinary activities. As Rahner goes on to say:

> Let each one of us look for the experience of grace in the contemplation of our life, but not so that we can say: there it is; I have it. One cannot 'find' it so as to claim it triumphantly as one's own possession. One can only look for it by forgetting oneself; one can only find it by seeking God and by giving oneself to him in a love which forgets self, and without still returning to oneself.[420]

Here the self-forgetfulness that is open to the experience of God's grace is not that found in the discipline of contemplative prayer but rather in everyday acts. These everyday acts relate to the created world but look beyond it.

Turning then specifically to the question of discernment, Endean devotes four of his chapters exclusively to this: one expository, two critical and one constructive. He begins by summarising Rahner's position: that the Exercises foster moments in which the self focuses on its 'transcendence' and that the basic features of consciousness, which are typically just the tacit accompaniments and enabling conditions of particular mental acts, can become 'thematic'. This can transform our reflective self-understanding and the patterns of significance and value which shape our perceptions. It has implications for conventional approaches to judgments about priestly vocation, ethics and the decision of faith. Endean sets out the ways in which transcendence becomes thematic. He clarifies what he thinks Rahner means by transcendence: it refers to conditions within the self in the actually existing graced world. Endean says that 'an alternative jargon might speak of identity, of the subjective conditions which shape our every mental and physical act, and of moments when it is this identity itself, rather than any object outside the self, on which our awareness focuses'.[421] Transcendence becomes thematic through 'following after Christ' and in the ways described in Rahner's general metaphysics and his theology of grace. We will defer discussion of the Christological route to later in this chapter. The 1956 essay focuses explicitly on how transcendence is always supernatural and so related to Rahner's theology of grace. However, some of its formulations are rooted in Rahner's metaphysics of mind: the key moment for

[420] Rahner, 'Reflections on the Experience of Grace', p. 89.
[421] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, p. 115.

discernment is where transcendence, which is the sustaining ground of any mental act, becomes the focus of awareness. Endean is of the view that Rahner in the 1956 essay implies that the key Ignatian experience involves divine intervention and that this is contrary to Rahner's theology generally, which holds that God cannot intervene in the chain of secondary causes. He acknowledges that Rahner:

> against the grain of his own best theology, flirted with the idea that Ignatian discernment depends on some kind of extraordinary experience. But the 1956 essay makes sense, and coheres with Rahner's other writings, only if we interpret Rahner's account of the key experience, as he himself, at least implicitly, came to do. The key Ignatian experience is one in which the dark contact with God present in all experience emerges into reflective awareness – a contact which cannot be cleanly distinguished from 'purely natural' transcendence.[422]

That this kind of experience could be the basis for making choices, at first glance, seems to be problematic: there is, however, 'dark contact with God' which 'emerges into reflective awareness', and which can be distinguished, although not 'cleanly'. This account of the key Ignatian experience, found in the expository part of Endean's work, would seem to be set aside in his later critical evaluation. Endean here argues that the 'first principle' of 'supernatural logic' cannot be a particular experience but rather a regulative truth that applies universally.[423] This would seem to rule out the possibility of anything emerging into awareness, however uncertainly. Endean's argument here is partly based on his rejection of Rahner's two main exegetical conclusions in the 1956 essay: that consolation without cause is foundational for Ignatian discernment and that the second time of election is to be preferred. Endean adopts many of Toner's exegetical arguments: he says that Toner has conclusively discredited any Rahnerian account of Ignatian discernment drawing solely on the 1956 essay.[424] Endean also discusses three potential features of the key experience – consolation without cause – as described in the 1956 essay: that it is without object, that it is non-conceptual, and that it is self-authenticating. He heavily qualifies each of these features. In relation to being without object, he

---

[422] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, p. 133. It is clear, however, that Rahner did *not* consider the experience to be extraordinary, but rather to be 'more or less the normal case for the Christian', Rahner, 'Logic', p. 92.
[423] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, p. 156.
[424] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, p. 180.

asserts the categorical mediation of all experience as a key Rahnerian conviction. There is a strong and weak version of what Endean says about non-conceptual experience. The strong version is that there is no experience that is not linguistic. The weak version is that there is no experience that cannot be referred to in some way in language. The weak version is hard to deny, the strong version does seem problematic.[425] Finally, the possibility of a self-authenticating experience is denied: Endean denies that Ignatian discernment relies on any identifiable experience.[426] What then does Ignatian discernment look like for Endean? In his constructive interpretation of Rahner, the general underlying principle is that discernment is a moment of insight 'when, under God, we appropriate our 'nature', our graced identity, more fully'.[427] What is transcendent for Endean is our human identity, and he extends the Rahnerian conviction that we apprehend the transcendent through the material to include not just 'matter' but also interpersonal and cultural factors such as language, tradition and history. Endean finds the basis for his constructive account in *Hearer of the Word.*[428] As Rahner says (in a passage not quoted by Endean):

> a free decision about a single value is ultimately always a decision about and a molding of oneself as a person. In every decision, we decide about ourselves, not about an action or a thing. Thus, in our free decisions we work back upon ourselves; we affect the very criteria of our love, which determine our own being.[429]

Endean also takes from *Hearer of the Word* the notion that an individual's understanding of God 'is always a function of the orderedness or disorderedness of

---

[425] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, p. 171. I am suggesting here that there are possible experiences that can be referred to in words but which cannot be put into words. The clearest example would be: 'I had an experience which I cannot describe'. Furthermore, such experiences can be related to other experiences. I can say of them that: 'the experience I had was the same as an experience I had previously'. But this ability to compare my own experience does not mean that the experience can be put into words or that the experience itself is linguistic.
[426] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, pp. 181-182.
[427] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, p. 207.
[428] It would be a mistake, then, to say that Endean has relativised the importance of Rahner's early philosophical works by the claim that Rahner's achievement is ultimately rooted in his spirituality. His dependence on one of those works for his final constructive account of Rahner's understanding of Ignatian discernment shows that he considers both the philosophical works and the later texts to be inspired by Ignatian spirituality. Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, p. 7.
[429] Karl Rahner, *Hearer of the Word: Laying the Foundation for a Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Continuum, 1994), p. 85.

their love': a person does not know God 'neutrally' and then wonder whether to adopt a position of love or hatred towards God. Based on these insights, Endean concludes that the key Ignatian experience is always a moment of conversion and reinterpretation: a moment when our self-awareness and values change. Rahnerian 'transcendence' is always embedded in specific life histories, and it 'becomes thematic' in their development.[430]

Endean's account of how we make choices amounts to saying that we make them based on reflection about our identity and that those choices, in turn, modify our identity and thus our understanding of it. Christian revelation is one of the cultural factors through which we apprehend our 'transcendent' identity. As our identity is graced, making decisions in this way draws us into the love of God: as Endean puts it, 'if God is present in the self, then any growth in self-awareness […] is necessarily a growth in awareness of God'. Thus, for Endean, whilst all self-reflection is not guaranteed to be true, it is fundamentally oriented towards truth, and *systematic* scepticism about it implies a contradiction. The role of the Rules for Discernment, times of election and the *Spiritual Exercises* generally in all this is not clear. In the expository part of his work, Endean gives a rich account of the Christological basis of Ignatian discernment, but that does not feature in the specific context of his constructive account of discernment other than as a cultural factor. Endean would appear to see that as an advantage as it enables the generous recognition of the dynamics of Ignatian discernment amongst non-believers.[431] The other element Endean adds to his understanding of Ignatian discernment is that its proper object is the specification and purification of a desire, and only secondarily the actions and events to which this desire may lead.[432] It is in those terms that Endean delivers his qualified verdict on the process of Ignatian discernment: ' there is no reason why it should not be regarded as reliable' if one avoids the temptation to look for more than the purification of desire.[433]

[430] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, p. 211.
[431] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, p. 213.
[432] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, p. 216.
[433] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, p. 219.

Endean's overall view of Ignatian discernment tends to undermine the thesis that it can have a valuable part to play in theology as thinking prayer. Endean in this work seems to place little value on the specificity of Ignatius' principles, and it is difficult to see how it is any kind of experience of or from God which is guiding our choices – which Endean identified as a key Ignatian conviction – or how the process involves anything more than disciplined self-reflection and reason.[434] Whilst he endorses Toner's exegesis against Rahner, he is in fundamental disagreement with the assumptions of Toner's exegesis, where the Holy Spirit actively counsels and guides in consolation. Endean is not explicit about the way in which God can have a unique discoverable will for each individual, but it would seem that it could only be found in the uniqueness of the historical and other conditions in which they are born and live. Discernment is an effort to realise our identity in light of those conditions, which may or may not include Christian revelation. For Endean, that identity is already and always graced, so by acting in accordance with it, we express and modify it in a way that is in accordance with God's will. It is hard to reconcile this, though, with the notion that transcendence involves self-forgetfulness or something beyond our historically conditioned possibilities.[435] Overall, I would argue that this is too limited an account of Ignatian discernment and Rahner's interpretation of it. The immediate experience of God which Endean said had been liberated from the ghetto of mystical theology, has somehow disappeared, and the mysticism of everyday life has, on closer inspection, turned out just to be everyday life.

[434] Endean suggests that the Rules for Discernment which deal with deceptive consolation 'are clearly innocent of depth psychology; they need radical reformulation if not replacement or abolition, if they are to be used by contemporary people'. It is difficult to conclude, based on this particular work, that Endean sees any greater value in Ignatius' specific rules than as psychological insights. Given that the insights of depth psychology are themselves contested by other psychological approaches, one could ask whether reformulated *Spiritual Exercises* based on depth psychology would be usable by 'contemporary people'.

[435] The Contemplation for Attaining Love (*Exx.* 234), where an exercitant offers all they have, but specifically their liberty, memory, understanding and will to God, is an example of self-forgetfulness and looking beyond the material conditions which have shaped identity.

An aesthetic logic of discernment

In *Karl Rahner's Theological Aesthetics,* Fritz presents an account of Rahner's philosophy as consistent with his approach to Ignatian discernment. He claims that Rahner learnt from Heidegger how to disclose Catholicism's heart, which is radical and fearless openness to God's manifestation in the world. Rahner's human subject is crucially a receiver, not a controller of grace. Fritz claims that Rahner, with Heidegger, opposes modern subjectivity, which he characterises as thinking, self-important and controlling. Fritz's account of Rahner's metaphysics sees the *Vorgriff* as aesthetic, an act of the imagination, an anticipatory sense (not grasp) of being as such which manifests the ordering of humanity toward the infinite, but which is nonetheless rooted in sensibility. Rahner's metaphysics of the mind is not seen in terms of a controlling intellect but rather as aesthetic receptivity.

Fritz discusses the philosophy of *Spirit in the World* alongside the essay, 'Ignatian Mysticism of Joy in the World', both completed in 1936. In this essay, Rahner sets up a twofold description of Ignatian spirituality: its tendency to flight from the world and its requirement of active life in the world. Rahner here apparently contradicts the assertion in *Spirit in the World* that flight from the world is impossible – he instead says that the basis of flight from the world constitutes the intrinsic possibility of Ignatian acceptance of the world. Fritz argues that there is no contradiction because regarding God as the "beyond" opens up the possibility of truly affirming the world as home: this 'elucidates [*Spirit in the World's*] perspective: one does not truly understand the world until one glimpses what exceeds it'.[436]

Beyond Rahner's metaphysics, Fritz sees Rahner's Ignatian writings as 'an exemplary site in the Rahnerian corpus where he reshapes and looks beyond the spirit of the modern age'. In these writings, Fritz sees Rahner as opposing Ignatian Spirituality to the modern subject: Rahner places love of God above self-love, God's will above self-will and individual subjectivity in relationship with ecclesial subjectivity.

[436] Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1968); Rahner, 'The Ignatian Mysticism of Joy in the World'; Fritz, *Karl Rahner's Theological Aesthetics*, pp. 103-106.

In his next book, *Freedom Made Manifest,* Ignatian discernment features more significantly: freedom is the election of a form of life (not everyday choices) primarily inspired by Ignatius' Two Standards meditation where a choice is made between Christ or Lucifer (*Exx.* 136-148). Consistent with his earlier book, the basis for making this election is aesthetic and not reason or clear and distinct knowledge.[437] As will be evident from the reference to the Two Standards meditation, much of what Fritz has to say about Rahner's writings on Ignatian discernment is Christologically focused. It is worth exploring here Fritz's contention that the 'logic' of Ignatian decision-making is aesthetic. In this book, Fritz refines his definition of aesthetic, accepting that he defined it too thinly in his first book as an account of the manifestation of being. Here he uses the Kantian distinction between the aesthetic as pertaining to sensibility and the noetic as pertaining to knowledge. A Rahnerian aesthetic then sees God's self-revelation as arriving through the senses and not primarily noetically. He also uses the Kantian distinction between an aesthetic judgment as reflective and non-cognitive and a noetic judgment as determining. Finally, he uses Kant's distinction of aesthetic judgments into the beautiful and the sublime. Sublime experiences are experiences of bewildered judgment and imagination; overwhelming experiences when judgment momentarily fails and when 'precisely as a person's judgment fails she comes to recognize her personal depth, which exceeds the sensible world in which ostensibly she lives and moves and has her being'. Fritz sees Rahner as stressing human freedom as the response to the aesthetic apprehension of God's decision to self-reveal salvifically.[438] Rahner's 1956 essay is, for Fritz, a text on the theological aesthetics of freedom. He cites the paragraph toward the end of the essay where Rahner discusses the truth of Ignatius' account of decision making in the Exercises as corroborated by how people take grave decisions. Decisions are made out of one's personal ground, which involves feeling. Rahner says that decisions are made, 'not

[437] Peter Joseph Fritz, *Freedom Made Manifest: Rahner's Fundamental Option and Theological Aesthetics* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019), pp. 5-10.
[438] Fritz, *Freedom Made Manifest*, pp. 13-15.

only and not finally out of rational analysis, but out of feeling'. This 'logic' then is straightforwardly aesthetic in the sense Fritz has described.[439]

Some interim conclusions from this recent literature

In summary, the review of recent literature does not further clarify, nor does it destabilise the conclusions reached from the discussion of Rahner and Toner. There continues to be little dialogue between the more practical and exegetical approaches to the Exercises and the theological approaches. In that respect, nothing has changed from when Rahner, in the opening words of his 1956 essay, said that 'an account of the actual theology of the Exercises is something we still lack'. There is still a lack of a theology that engages in detail with the spiritual practices of the Exercises. The survey of Endean and Fritz shows that the notion that closer dialogue would be beneficial can only be endorsed in a qualified way. Endean's constructive interpretation of Rahner would seem to take us to a place where, in the absence of external impulses causing 'movement of the spirits', it is difficult to see any value in the specifics of Ignatian discernment as a spiritual practice. However, Fritz provides an example of a theological approach that could be brought into fruitful dialogue with specific exegesis of the Exercises. In particular, it is easy to see how his understanding of aesthetics can interpret and be interpreted by the practices in the Exercises which promote openness to God's self-revelation in various ways such as indifference, Christic meditation and application of the senses as well as attentiveness to, and interpretation of, movements in the soul. I would suggest that, as a spiritual practice, whilst Ignatian discernment reflects underlying principles, it is not reducible to those principles. In any account of Ignatian discernment we need to be attentive to the scope of that practice as described by Ignatius. There is a need to question both a desire to expand the Exercises into more detailed rules or to reduce them to something much more straightforward, which are both tendencies we see in the practical literature. That could sound like a call for an inflexible and therefore non-inclusive interpretation of

[439] Fritz, *Freedom Made Manifest*, p. 151.

the Exercises, but the reason I think that is not the case is that Ignatian discernment is inherently flexible – there is no need to enhance the flexibility by loose interpretation.

Did Ignatius see discernment as an ongoing process?

It is clear that Ignatius intended that discernment should be an ongoing process: his Spiritual Diary, Autobiography and Letters (for example, those to Teresa Rejadell and Francis Borgia) all attest to Ignatius' practice of ongoing discernment and that of others, the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* also contain numerous references to ongoing discernment in decisions to be made in the life of the Society, and the Rules for Discernment of Spirits are drafted in ways which contemplate an ongoing practice outside the specific context of the Exercises.[440] However, whilst the *Spiritual Exercises* do provide for their own adaptation for particular exercitants and to allow for the Exercises to be conducted over a longer period outside the context of a retreat, they do not provide for adaptation for use as an ongoing practice throughout life (*Exx.* 18, 19).[441] The question of how ongoing discernment is to be practised is, therefore, far from straightforward. As we have already seen, the approach of Toner is simply to interpret the Rules for Discernment of Spirits and the three times of election and treat those as effectively discrete parts of the Exercises, which can be extracted and carried out on the same basis as if they were

[440] Loyola, 'The Spiritual Diary'; *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus: Translated with an Introduction and Commentary*, (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970). John C. Futrell, 'Ignatian Discernment', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 2 (1970), 47-88, pp. 51-52. The rules which deal with deceptive consolation speak of retrospective reviews of the outcomes that thoughts finally lead to, which would seem necessarily to take us outside the timeframe of the Exercises (*Exx.* 333, 334). Balthasar focuses almost exclusively on the Exercises as a method of making a one-off election of a state of life (marriage, Orders or the evangelical counsels): Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Elucidations* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1998), p. 136; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Man is Created* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2014), pp. 41, 63-64; Hans Urs von Balthasar, *You Have Words of Eternal Life* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991), pp. 82-83; Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, pp. 41, 391-392. He would not seem to envisage the elections or Rules for Discernment being used outside this context.

[441] Endean has argued that adaptation is a poor translation of *aplicar* in annotation 18 (*Exx.* 18) and that what is being referred to is application of the Exercises. The thrust of his argument, though, is not for a restrictive application of the Exercises but rather that the Exercises are for all and need to be creatively applied: 'when we give the Exercises, we are not "adapting" our spirituality in such a way that others can become like us, but rather letting our own spirituality catalyse new encounters with grace in the other'. Philip Endean, '"Applying Such Exercises": Early Jesuit Practice', *Review of Ignatian Spirituality,* 98 (2001), 41-65, pp. 44-45, 54.

conducted in the context of the Exercises. I have already suggested that this is an inadequate approach because it ignores elements in the rest of the Exercises which are relevant for discernment and also because the extracted parts, particularly the times of election, need to be carried out differently when they are not part of the full Exercises. We should note here that Toner does refer to certain other elements of the Exercises as pre-conditions for discernment, such as indifference, which he calls 'simplicity of heart'. He does not address how the spiritual practices that relate to those pre-conditions should be replicated outside the context of the full Exercises: for example, through ongoing Christic meditation.[442]

If this is an inadequate approach to determining the basis for ongoing Ignatian discernment, we have to ask what an adequate approach would be. The *Spiritual Exercises* remain the principal source, and I believe that all of the Exercises are for the purposes of discernment (*Exx.* 21). This suggests a hermeneutical approach which assumes that particular elements of the Exercises are important for discernment unless there is a reason to think otherwise. There are other sources, such as the autobiographical sources and letters already mentioned. As John Futrell has identified, the *Constitutions* are also of particular importance. Futrell, in an article published in 1970, draws attention to the dangers of discussing Ignatian discernment exclusively in terms of the Rules for Discernment of Spirits, as this obscures the fact that they are just one part of the complex dynamic of ongoing discernment. The danger, as he sees it, is that discernment becomes something that is only practised in prayer but that concrete decisions are made out of religiously oriented human prudence.[443] Futrell sees the *Constitutions* as particularly important to understanding ongoing discernment, as they, unlike the Exercises, specifically address ongoing decision-making by the Superior concerning the ongoing life of the Society.[444]

[442] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, pp. 70-101.
[443] Futrell, 'Ignatian Discernment', pp. 47-48.
[444] Futrell, 'Ignatian Discernment', p. 51.

Does ongoing discernment assume that the Exercises have been made?

We will return to Futrell's model for ongoing discernment. However, a further preliminary question needs to be addressed: whether ongoing discernment always presupposes that the Exercises have already been made. There are two main reasons for making that presupposition. The first would be because the exercitant in the Exercises makes a fundamental discernment of the purpose of their life, and all subsequent decisions are tested against that fundamental orientation. The second would be that the Exercises provide essential schooling in such things as attentiveness to movements in the soul and attunement to Christ, all of which provide a foundation for making choices on an ongoing basis. However, in both cases, we would have to say that the Exercises are not the only place where this fundamental discernment or schooling could occur. If we accept the need for ongoing discernment, then the means of knowing God's will cannot be confined to those who have taken the Exercises. On the other hand, it would also seem uncontroversial that the Exercises provide ideal schooling for ongoing discernment. Beyond these straightforward observations, the question of whether ongoing discernment assumes a prior fundamental discernment engages a much broader question as to the nature of human freedom. In the Exercises, 'second-week discernment' presupposes that an individual is both spiritually experienced and 'advancing from good to better in the service of God' (*Exx.* 18 and 314-15). Thus, all Ignatian discernment assumes a certain prior orientation. But that still leaves the question of the relationship between a prior fundamental discernment and ongoing decisions. We have previously referred to Fritz's *Freedom Made Manifest,* which is an interpretation of Rahner's theology of freedom, and in which Fritz sets out his thesis that human freedom does not consist in a series of individual choices, but rather in a fundamental option as an eternal decision taken in time with respect to God's personally tailored call to salvation – that is freedom made manifest.[445] This decision is an election of one's form of life, rather than an everyday choice, and the result is permanent, whereas everyday choices can be revised and redirected again

[445] Fritz, *Freedom Made Manifest*, pp. 5-6.

and again. Fritz finds the Ignatian inspiration for this Rahnerian notion of the fundamental option in the Two Standards meditation in the Exercises. An obvious question that arises from this is whether there is a significant role for ongoing discernment. We could answer that negatively either because everyday choices are unimportant or because they are already predetermined by the election of one's form of life. Based on his reading of Rahner, Fritz would assert that everyday choices are important but also that they are, in some senses, predetermined. The role of ongoing discernment is significant because the fundamental option is manifested in individual choices. Fritz says:

> the fundamental option (as human freedom) is not an aggregate of individual acts. The relationship between the fundamental option and individual acts is best read in terms of manifestation and self-expression. The fundamental option is the ground of the existence performed through individual acts. Surely individual acts affect the fundamental option, but it is more helpful and accurate to view individual acts as making manifest a deep, underlying eternal decision in time.[446]

If we accept this picture of human freedom, there are broader implications, including for the nature of what is being discerned. However, the implications relevant for our present purposes are that ongoing discernment does presuppose a prior 'underlying eternal decision' whether manifested in the context of the Exercises or otherwise and that notwithstanding that decision, ongoing discernment is needed in relation to further choices.

A framework for ongoing discernment

If we return to Futrell and the framework for ongoing discernment, he presents Ignatius as having developed discernment in three contexts: the Exercises, the provisions in the *Constitutions* for ongoing decisions by the superior and the provisions in the *Constitutions* for communal discernment as an integral part of the superior's decision-making process. In all three contexts, Futrell finds the same basic dynamic structure, with three steps that can be analysed separately for clarity, but which 'progress together in a harmonious rhythm' and which are 'a continuing

[446] Fritz, *Freedom Made Manifest*, p. 182.

dialectic intermingling all three'. Futrell's starting point is the structure for the superior's decisions, as he sees that as presented more clearly and concretely than in the Exercises.[447] The three steps are prayer, gathering of evidence and confirmation. Prayer is the central locus but involves prayerful reflection on the evidence, constant reference to Christ and discernment of feelings. Confirmation could be external but will generally be through 'felt-knowledge' of peace and contentment. [448] Futrell says this confirmation is a much deeper spiritual experience than sensible consolation or 'rational satisfaction'.[449] This structure accommodates the necessary flexibility for ongoing discernment and the main elements we would expect to see from our review of the Exercises. However, the suggestion that all discernment needs confirmatory peace and contentment could be questioned. In the Exercises, the concept of 'confirmation' is only specifically mentioned in the third time of election, and we have also already discussed the division of opinion over the related question of whether all consolation is necessarily pleasant. There may be a greater emphasis on deep spiritual confirmation and its nature as 'peace and contentment' than would appear to be justified at least by the Exercises. Support could be found for Futrell in the autobiographical example of Ignatius going to great lengths in seeking confirmation concerning the poverty of the Society of Jesus. However, that was a decision of great significance and difficulty for Ignatius, so it justifies the need for a high degree of confirmation in some important cases but not in every context. Another notable point from Futrell's basic structure is that the reasoning takes place in prayer or is at least prayerful. This presumably is why he describes prayer as the central locus. The information-gathering exercise is presented as essentially neutral. Whilst Futrell, based on what the *Constitutions* say about decisions by the superior, stresses the need for information gathering to be exhaustive, the time for reflection and judgment on that information is prayerful. This dynamic is notable: it would be quite possible for a process of non-prayerful rational analysis along with separate prayerful reflection on that. Making that kind

[447] Futrell, 'Ignatian Discernment', pp. 52, 59.
[448] Futrell's translation of *sentir*, which Toner has questioned Toner, *Rules for Discernment of Spirits*, p. 22.
[449] Futrell, 'Ignatian Discernment', pp. 59-60, 63-65.

of distinction could even facilitate the ability to distinguish movements in the soul from things to which one is led by reason. But that is not what is suggested here. It would be possible to debate which of these two approaches is more consistent with the distinction in the Exercises between the second and third times of election. I would argue that the more rational third time is nonetheless prayerful and includes affective elements and approaches, such as considering how another person would be advised as well as looking from the perspective of death, which engage feelings as well as thought (*Exx.* 185, 186). Futrell's location of reasoning in the prayerful part of his discernment structure is both notable and consistent with the Exercises.

Futrell's framework for ongoing discernment can be supplemented by another writer, Franz Meures, who has also based his account on his reading of the *Constitutions*. He describes a 'mystagogy of discernment' based on 'three dimensions of attentiveness'. The first dimension is attentiveness to God (and, particularly, loving attentiveness to Christ). The second dimension is attentiveness to external facts and events: here, he cites the frequent references in the *Constitutions* of the need to take account of 'the circumstances of the persons, time and places'. The third dimension is attentiveness to inner motions and thoughts. The latter two dimensions correlate to Futrell's information gathering and prayerful reflection. The first dimension, attentiveness to God in Christ as a necessary part of ongoing discernment, is something to which we will now turn.[450]

The role of Christic meditation in ongoing discernment

I already raised the possibility that Rahner and Toner's interpretations of ongoing discernment are insufficiently Christological, and I identified that issue as significant in the introduction to this chapter.[451] In Futrell's basic structure for ongoing discernment, although he anticipates that there will be 'constant reference to Christ' in prayer, there is no equivalent of the program of Christic meditation

[450] Franz Meures, 'The Ignatian Constitutions and the Gift of Discernment', in *The Lord of Friendship: Friendship, Discernment and Mission in Ignatian Spirituality* (Oxford: Way Books, 2011).
[451] For an account of Ignatian discernment where the focus is on attunement to Christ, see Mark A McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth: The Spirituality and Theology of Knowledge* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2004), pp. 67-73.

which occupies much of the exercitant's time in the Exercises. Meures, however, does see ongoing attentiveness to Christ as important. Now, then, would seem to be a good time to address the question of the Christological focus of ongoing discernment. There is a prior question that needs to be addressed, which is the importance of the Christological element of discernment in the Exercises themselves. In other words, although I have suggested that discernment in the Exercises has a Christological dimension which Toner and Rahner have neglected – that still needs to be established. As previously noted, the whole of the Exercises are for the purposes of discernment: that is in the heading to the first week of the Exercises, and Rahner explicitly draws attention to that.[452] To this, we can add that almost all the contemplations and meditations from the second week of the Exercises onwards are Christic: they are either based on gospel passages or meditations created by Ignatius involving Christ. We can also add that, whilst the material concerning the times for election is introduced at a specific time in the Exercises in the midst of Christic meditations, including the Two Standards, there is no time specified for discernment to take place. This is consistent with the notion that *all* of the Exercises are for the purposes of discernment. In the three times of election, it is only the third time that has specific exercises that are exclusively discernment focused; the second time relies on sufficient evidence from consolation and desolation. So essentially, discernment takes place not as a distinct activity but rather as an intrinsic part of the process of what is mostly Christic meditation. According to Hugo Rahner, ' the whole of Ignatian theology and mysticism was essentially Christological'.[453] Hugo considers it to be 'perfectly obvious from the very start that the Exercises are essentially a clearly defined method of contemplating the divine and human life of Christ on earth'.[454] Even the first-week meditations on sin end with a confrontation with the cross.[455] Hugo presents the climax and whole purpose of the Exercises as the Two Standards contemplation and the transformative decision to which it leads to conform one's

[452] *Exx.* 21 and Rahner, 'Logic', pp. 89-90.
[453] Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 53; Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998), pp. 143, 152.
[454] Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 54.
[455] Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 56.

life to Christ.[456] He also deals with certain objections to a claim that the Exercises are Christologically focussed, particularly the question of why the Principle and Foundation (*Exx.* 23) does not mention Christ. Hugo argues that the Principle and Foundation became part of the Exercises after the Two Standards meditation and election, which are 'theologically more important'. The text of the Principle and Foundation replicates part of the election, which therefore places those words in their proper context – following the Two Standards meditation. The glorification and service of God as a purpose can only be seen as a response to the call of Christ the King: the Principle is an anticipatory summary that can only be understood in Christological terms.[457]

If we accept then that the Exercises are both Christologically focussed and all for the purpose of discernment, we need to relate more precisely the Christ-centredness to the discernment itself. We can find various accounts of this in the interpreters of the Exercises. Toner has very little to say about the role of Christic meditations and contemplations in discernment. He does say that the Exercises are to help us grow in intimate knowledge and love of Jesus, which leads to the openness to the Holy Spirit needed for sound discernment.[458] Egan surveys twentieth-century commentators on the Exercises prior to publication of his own work, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon,* in 1976: he identifies Erich Przywara's 3-volume commentary on the Exercises, *Deus Semper Maior,* as having a Christological focus and an integrated and holistic approach which treats everything as for the purpose of discernment. Przywara emphasises the self-emptying aspects of Christ's life to show that Christ's rhythm is God's rhythm. The Exercises then develop an instinct for this rhythm, and consolation and desolation are manifestations of Christ's rhythm in the exercitant. For Przywara, discernment arises from Christic meditation as the exercitant can only find God's will by making the self-emptying humility of Christ his own. Discernment happens through attunement to Christ's rhythm.[459]

---

[456] Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 55.
[457] Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian*, p. 62.
[458] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, p. 98.
[459] Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, pp. 8-10.

As well as surveying other commentators, Egan also presents his own argument for the Christocentric nature of the Exercises. He makes a powerful cumulative case, relying on establishing the Christocentric focus of the contemplations and meditations and the frequently repeated colloquys. He also points to Ignatius' own often quite literal imitation of Christ as revealed in his Autobiography: the imitation of Christ's poverty is an important consideration, for example, when Ignatius considers the question of poverty of the Society of Jesus. At a more prosaic level, we also find that the exercitant is encouraged to observe and imitate the way Christ eats and drinks and looks and talks when sharing a meal with the apostles (*Exx.* 214). The application of the senses meditations also have a role in developing intimacy with Christ. This attunement to Christ is not only at a mundane level but also has a cosmic dimension: Jesus is frequently referred to as Creator and Lord and the meditation on the Incarnation imagines a conversation amongst the three Divine Persons about the sending of Christ. For Egan, as was the case with Przywara, it is not so much a question of the relationship between Christ-centredness and discernment but rather that they are the same thing:

> Ignatius steeps the exercitant in a primordial experience of the Mystery of God in Jesus Christ which is the basic meaning of the totality of the exercitant's life. It is within this experienced totality that individual decisions find their rectitude.[460]

Egan shares and defends Rahner's view that consolation without cause is the key Ignatian experience.

This brings us to the broader question of whether Rahner's interpretation of Ignatian discernment fails to reflect the Christological focus of the Exercises. I will conclude that it does not, but it is necessary to trace the argument through criticisms of Rahner and responses to those criticisms to understand the nuanced nature of that conclusion. In other words, what will follow is a detailed argument. The benefit of understanding this argument is that it leads to an understanding of discernment that treats explicit Christic reference as unnecessary but nonetheless of great value. It is unnecessary in that discernment of God's will is possible when grave decisions are taken even in the absence of explicit Christic reference.

[460] Egan, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon*, p. 109.

However, the Christic reference is more than exemplary – it is the means by which indifference can be reached and guarantees the fruits of the unity of indifference and decision.

Rahner's emphasis on consolation without cause as a transcendent, objectless experience means that the key Ignatian experience has no necessary reference to or connection with Christ. Thus, it is possible to develop from this a model of discernment which would not be found in the context of Christic meditation, which seems superfluous. It has been observed that Rahner's 1956 essay mentions Christ only four times. This is part of a more comprehensive critique of the role of Christ in Rahner's theology generally and in his Ignatian writings in particular.[461] Irrespective of the merits of these broader criticisms, it would certainly seem to be the case that Rahner's exegesis of the Exercises and the key experience for discernment in the 1956 essay lacks any relation to Christ. One could argue that the context of Christic meditation is assumed, but that would be to ignore the extension by Rahner at the end of his essay of the basic principle of Ignatian discernment to all grave decisions which take place outside the Exercises and without the context of Christic meditation. In a generally appreciative account of Rahner's 1956 essay, Avery Dulles questions the Christological dimension of Rahner's theology of choice, describing it as 'deficient'. He sees the context of the meditations on the life of Christ as necessary in securing the exercitant from making choices purely based on what suits their natural temperament.[462] Rahner responded specifically to Dulles with a short set of comments. Rahner accepted that Ignatian choice has a Christological dimension, given and applied through the contemplations and meditations. Rahner also accepted that there is a lacuna here – that his own studies said little about this dimension but that it was, nonetheless, present. He argued that all grace is the grace of Christ, and thus, grace in the form of consolation that determines the election is the grace of Christ. He also argued that if this were not the case, the Exercises would be unintelligible as they present themselves as 'one grand choice' and yet 'consist almost entirely of meditations on

[461] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, pp. 184-185.
[462] Avery Dulles, 'Finding God's Will: Rahner's Interpretation of the Ignatian Election', *Woodstock Letters,* 94 (1965), 130-152, p. 151.

the life of Jesus'. Rahner also said that the Christological dimension can be clearly seen in freedom from attachment. A choice in relation to a particular object can only be made if a person is free of attachment to that object and thus open to immediacy to God as the sole focus of existence. This detachment is a participation in Christ's death, whether or not it is reflected on as such. The illusion that, in order to exist, a human must absolutise something in the world of existential experience is an illusion that must die as a basic element of every Christian choice, and this takes place in the grace of Christ and with Christ whether we explicitly know it or not. It is 'only Christ, crucified and risen' who 'guarantees that such a dying is possible and that it is not after all merely the descent into the void of absurdity'.[463] This answer perhaps concedes less to Dulles' criticism than would at first appear. Most importantly, there is no need for any explicit presence of Christ in Ignatian choice. Whilst it would be 'unintelligible' for the Exercises to contain so many meditations on Christ if they were irrelevant to the choice to be made, this does not mean that those meditations are necessary, and whilst the transcendent experience of 'immediacy to God' is made possible by Christ's grace and by his death and resurrection, none of that need be explicit. Thus, the possibility of extending Ignatian choice to every grave decision without any Christological reference is preserved. However, to understand Rahner's position, we need to look at his Ignatian writings more generally.

Rahner's response to Dulles was made in 1969, but his writings, both before and after that date, help fill the lacuna of the Christological dimension of his understanding of the Exercises. In 1954/5 Rahner gave retreat conferences. Verbatim notes of these conferences were taken by participants and published in 1965, with a preface by Rahner in which he is keen to emphasise that there was no written text from him and that he has not been involved in the editing. In that preface, he also refers to his 1956 essay as his express treatment of the formal logic of existential knowledge and decision.[464] With those caveats, we find in the retreat

[463] Karl Rahner, 'Comments by Karl Rahner on Questions Raised by Avery Dulles', in *Ignatius of Loyola: His Personality and Spiritual Heritage 1556-1956*, ed. by Wulf, Friedrich (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977), pp. 290-293, p. 292.
[464] Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises*.

notes rich Christological content, but the significance of that content for concrete decisions is not clear. It can be argued, as Endean does, that in these essays, Ignatian choice is represented in Christological terms. Alternatively, it can be argued that the Christological meditations provide the necessary preparation for discernment, but the concrete will of God for the individual is discerned in the way set out in the 1956 essay. I would favour the latter interpretation. The key chapter in the retreat notes is entitled 'The Following of Christ'. One of the first points that Rahner makes is repeated in his reply to Dulles some fourteen years later: that all grace is 'a concrete assimilation to Christ and a participation in His life. Therefore, ontologically and not just morally, it is the *grace of Christ*'.[465] But this is pre-given participation in the life of Jesus, before even our free decision. Even the free response to this grace can lead to a 'real following' of Christ without any historical knowledge of the life of Jesus. However, Rahner claims that this does not diminish the value and meaning of the Gospel, saying:

> Rather, only a constant relationship to the "historical" Jesus, only a repeated meditation on the mysteries of His life, and only an unceasing listening to His words can produce the kind of imitation of Christ that knows what it is doing and can thus grow to fruition.

He goes on to say that we must consciously follow Christ and knowingly pattern our lives after him, and 'it is with this end in view that St. Ignatius proposes the meditations on the mysteries of Jesus' life'.[466] The imitation of Christ is not merely following moral maxims exemplified by Christ: it is an unfolding of our inner nature. Thus, we must each find our own way of following Christ. Rahner argues that Christ can only become what He is supposed to be in His humanity, in finding acceptance in others and loving them in return, 'by being our brother and letting us exist in our own right'.[467] Thus, carrying on His life in our own way and not as 'a poor literal copy' preserves the inner structure of His life and is an authentic following of it.

My reading of this is that Rahner here takes us to the point of the election, just as the Christic meditations do in the Exercises, but what he is not doing here is

[465] Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises*, p. 115.
[466] Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises*, p. 117.
[467] Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises*, p. 118.

proposing an alternative means of discerning God's will for the individual, which, as he says in the preface, should be made in the way set out in the 1956 essay (through consolation without cause). In fact, what he is saying here is that those Christic meditations should lead to the conviction that we must find our own way of following Christ – answering a call from *within* and not our understanding of historical revelation.

Rahner also addresses the question of imitation of Christ in conferences given to the seminarians at the Canisianum in Innsbruck in 1955.[468] Here, he presents the existential elements of Ignatian spirituality in terms of devotion to the Sacred Heart. Love is described as unique and as liberating us into what is special in ourselves. Love is said to give knowledge of one's uniqueness in terms of vocation, task, and mission:

> the Exercises, rightly understood, are at one and the same the discovery of love in Jesus Christ, for the God who is ever greater than we have known, and the discovery of our own individual image, our "vocation", in inspiration from above (and not in rational planning from below).[…] our special, unique existence is a participation in the life of Christ, an imitation of our Lord and of his destiny renewed in such fashion that we are really continuing his life, not copying it for the *n*th time. And hence this Christian mission of ours, this special character, can only be discovered in love of the God-Man, a love in which we accept his love, in which he confers existence upon us.[469]

Here then, the imitation of Christ is described in a similar way to the 1954/5 retreat notes as a unique way of following him. However, it is harder to reconcile the assertion that this unique mission can only be discovered in love of Christ with the 1956 essay, which would allow for the possibility of being guided by consolation without cause with no necessary Christic reference. One additional source which may assist is a short sermon delivered in 1974 and published as 'Christmas in the Light of the Ignatian *Exercises*'.[470] In that sermon, Rahner describes Ignatian choice in terms that include both a Christic reference and the consolation described in the 1956 essay. Ignatian choice is 'in unadulterated and undivided unity, the place at

[468] Rahner, 'Ignatian Spirituality and Devotion to the Heart of Jesus'.
[469] Rahner, 'Ignatian Spirituality and Devotion to the Heart of Jesus', pp. 204-207.
[470] Karl Rahner, 'Christmas in the Light of the Ignatian *Exercises*', in *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961-92) vol. 17, pp. 3-7.

which divine freedom, the consolation of indifference and our earthly decision in freedom for something specific are simultaneously consummated'. Rahner explicitly identifies the experience of this unity with 'the existential logic of decision'. This unity of transcendence and concrete freedom (or indifferent freedom and specific decision) takes place in Jesus, to 'a comprehensive, exemplary and manifest degree' and thus constitutes 'an efficacious promise to us'. This promise is efficacious because 'such unity achieves fruition accordingly in the framework assigned to us as well'.[471] Rahner concludes that:

> the practice of Ignatian indifference, as the freedom which loses itself willingly in the mysteriousness of God, and the finding a home in the specific existence uniquely given to every one of us, allows that unadulterated and undivided unity to grow in us. We then find God in that unity, even in the down-to-earth triviality of our everyday life; and we cease to be slaves to that triviality. We cannot of course subjugate that unity to ourselves, but we can let it happen and lay hold of it, die and live.[472]

Christ then provides an efficacious promise of the fruits of the union of indifferent freedom and specific decision, and also the basis, referred to in response to Dulles, for the guarantee that indifference does not descend into absurdity.

In Rahner's Ignatian writings then, we find reasons why Christic contemplation and meditation are an important element of Ignatian discernment: his particular understanding of imitation of Christ in terms of the individuality of our response; the supreme example and guarantee of the fruits of the unity of indifference and decision; and his understanding of indifference as participation in Christ's death. Rahner can therefore be seen to value Christic contemplation as part of the spiritual practice of Ignatian discernment even though he also provides a theological framework in which God's will can be discerned outside that practice. Jesus provides the example and guarantee of indifference and the call to specific decision to follow Him in our own way.

[471] Rahner, 'Christmas in the Light of the Ignatian *Exercises*', pp. 5-7.
[472] Rahner, 'Christmas in the Light of the Ignatian *Exercises*', p. 7.

The Examen prayer in ongoing discernment

If Christic contemplations and meditations should have a role in ongoing discernment, this leads us to consider what other features of the practices outlined in the *Spiritual Exercises* should also be part of ongoing discernment. One obvious candidate is the Examen prayer. This prayer clearly has an important place in the Exercises: it is described in twenty paragraphs, immediately after the Principle and Foundation (*Exx.* 24-43). There are two forms of Examen. The Particular Daily Examen is intended to keep an account of a particular sin or defect, marking on a diagram twice daily how often the exercitant has fallen into that sin or defect. During the Exercises, this form of Examen is intended to be used to get rid of faults in the practice of the Exercises themselves (*Exx.* 90). The General Examen of Conscience is for the purpose of purifying the soul and making a good confession. It has five points: thanksgiving; asking for the grace to know one's sins; asking for 'an account of one's soul' hour by hour up to the time of the Examen in terms of thoughts, word and deeds; asking for pardon; and determining to do better. The words, thoughts and deeds which are referred to are all discussed in *Exx.* 33-42 in terms of sin. The General Examen is also to be used twice daily.[473] The regular practice of both forms of Examen was something Ignatius continued throughout his life, was assumed to be a daily practice of all Jesuits by the First General Congregation in 1558, was specified in the 1599 Official Directory to be a practice which after the Exercises were over, should be for life, and is also specified in the *Constitutions* as a daily practice.[474]

In the context of the Exercises, the two forms of Examen prayer are clearly concerned solely with sins and defects. What then would be their relevance to discernment? The Rules for Discernment of Spirits address those 'who are making serious progress in the purification of their sins' (*Exx.* 315), and the Examen has a part to play in that progress, but outside of that, it is hard to see it as of direct

[473] *Exx.* 43 obscurely refers to the General Examen 'following the order given in the Particular Examen'.
[474] Joseph A. Tetlow, 'The Most Postmodern Prayer: American Jesuit Identity and the Examen of Conscience, 1920-1990', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 26 (1994), 1-67, pp. 3-4.

relevance to the practice of Ignatian discernment. However, in contemporary practice, the Examen has more to do with discernment than sin. In 1972 George Aschenbrenner published an article that continues to be influential in which he recharacterised the Examen as an examination of consciousness, not conscience.[475] He asserted that the Examen 'is the daily intensive exercise of discernment in a person's life'.[476]

Aschenbrenner retains the five-point structure of the Examen. However, the third point, in particular, is significantly changed to eliminate moralistic overtones based on Aschenbrenner's view that 'what is happening in our consciousness is prior to and more important than our actions which can be delineated as juridically good or evil'.[477] Thus, the third point focuses on discerning our interior consciousness: 'the Lord's call to us at this intimate core of our being'[478]. The ultimate fruit of this is to develop a heart with a discerning view that is continually active.[479] Aschenbrenner sees the Examen as a mutually enhancing complement to contemplative prayer.[480]

Aschenbrenner makes little effort to justify these changes exegetically.[481] Joseph Tetlow, in a 1992 article, provides a subtle account of the factors affecting twentieth-century American Jesuits that led to these changes. These factors include the growing unpopularity of the Examen with a penitential focus, the growth in the understanding of the importance of discernment as an ongoing practice and the fact that the Examen is the mandated form of daily prayer for Jesuits. If we see Ignatian spirituality as a living spiritual practice, then the Examen as reconceived by Aschenbrenner is a vibrant example of that – it is consequently the place where we

---

[475] George Aschenbrenner, 'Consciousness Examen', *Review for Religious,* 31 (1972), 14-21.
[476] Aschenbrenner, 'Consciousness Examen', p. 14.
[477] Aschenbrenner, 'Consciousness Examen', p. 14.
[478] Aschenbrenner, 'Consciousness Examen', p. 18.
[479] Aschenbrenner, 'Consciousness Examen', p. 16.
[480] Aschenbrenner, 'Consciousness Examen', pp. 15-16. It is unclear whether he means contemplation in the sense of passive, silent waiting for God or in the more active sense of the scriptural contemplations in the Exercises.
[481] Donald St. Louis makes an explicit argument that the Examen is a prayer of discernment, but his exegetical presumption is that the Examen should encapsulate the whole of the Exercises, which is a presumption that I would question. My argument is that the Examen has a distinctive role in the Exercises in relation to sin and defects. Donald St. Louis, 'The Ignatian Examen: A Method of Theological Reflection', *Way Supplement,* 55 (1986), 67-76. See also David Townsend, 'The Examen and the Exercises - A Re-appraisal', *Way Supplement,* 52 (1985), 53-63.

find a lot of the contemporary expressions of ongoing discernment.[482] However, I would argue that the repurposing of the Examen is essentially expedient and somewhat arbitrary. The Examen in the Exercises has a distinct role in relation to sin and defects, and so there is reason to suppose that Ignatius intended that kind of self-examination to be separate from discerning God's will for the individual. That view would be reinforced by the distinction made between the first week, when meditation is sin-focussed, and the subsequent weeks when, generally, discernment is seen as taking place. An argument against this is that Ignatius' important threefold division of thoughts, into our own, those from the good spirit and those from the bad, is found at the start of the General Examen (*Exx.* 32) and that this should be taken to imply that the Examen is about the identification of all three kinds of thoughts. However, the immediately following paragraphs all focus exclusively on evil thoughts. I would see *Exx.* 32 then as describing the broader picture from which the focus in the context of the Examen narrows to thoughts from the bad spirit. This would seem to be quite deliberate. Whilst attention – even daily attention – to the movements in the soul may well be a foundational practice for ongoing discernment, there is no reason why that should take place in the context of a five-point form originally conceived for making an account of sins and defects. That five-point form, as reconceived by Aschenbrenner, retains some elements of the original focus on sin and defects. For example, the fourth point is still contrition. Furthermore, Aschenbrenner argues for the Examen to be distinct from contemplative prayer – seeing a complementary, mutually enhancing role for both. This argues in favour of distinguishing between prayer focussed on sin and defects and prayer of discernment and for a mutually enhancing role for both. I would argue both that there is merit in keeping these two things separate and that this is what Ignatius intended. The Examen prayer then, as conceived by Ignatius, is focused on sin and defects. This is a practice that Ignatius intended to continue throughout the Exercises, and throughout life, as a practice distinct from discernment. Ignatius also intended regular, even daily, attention to experiences

[482] Iain Radvan, 'Spiritual Direction, Experiential Focusing and the Examen of St. Ignatius', *The Way,* 57 (2018), 101-110, p. 105.

from our lives and the way things develop over time. This attention for the purposes of discernment should be in addition to not instead of the Examen in something like the form in which it was originally conceived.

The role of the Spiritual director

Another feature of the Exercises is the role of the spiritual director, and again, we need to ask what the role of the director should be in ongoing discernment. Neither Toner nor Rahner discusses the role of the director in discernment. Characterising the role of the director requires some care: even the title 'spiritual director' can be questioned. It is not a term Ignatius uses: he prefers to speak of the one giving the Exercises.[483] This shifts the terminology away from the language of control to that of gift. The term used to describe the director, though, is only part of the picture. The director exercises a significant degree of control: the great majority of the text of the Exercises themselves is addressed to the director and not the exercitant; the adaptation of the Exercises is all in the hands of the director; and the director controls the pace at which the exercitant moves through the Exercises and even the question of their suitability to move beyond the second week (*Exx.* 4, 18, 19, 20).

However, there are significant limitations on the director. The director is under the control of the text of the Exercises. In other words, a director who faithfully follows the text is constrained in what they can do as the text contains a precise set of instructions, with limited discretion for the director. Furthermore, any discretion on the part of the director is procedural and not substantive. The content of meditations and contemplations and their order is all specified, and the director is restricted to 'running over the salient points with brief or summary explanations': the exercitant is to be allowed to do their own reasoning or to be enlightened by grace (*Exx.* 2). In relation to discernment specifically, the director's role is limited to instructing the exercitant as to the rules (*Exx.* 8): notably, the director is not to seek to move the exercitant to particular choices and must not show a preference but

[483] Brian Grogan, 'The One Who Gives the Exercises', *Way Supplement,* 38 (1980), 18-29, p. 20.

rather remain 'in the middle like the pointer of a balance'. This is all to the end of leaving 'the Creator to work directly with the creature' (*Exx.* 16). This combination of powers and restrictions is open to a variety of interpretations. Moshe Sluhovsky sees the role of director – as mediator between the text of the Exercises and the exercitant – as one of the key innovations made by Ignatius. The others are that the Exercises are listened to rather than read alone and the availability of the Exercises to all believers. He considers these innovations to have had 'important psychological, pedagogical, spiritual and sociocultural implications'.[484] He sees one plausible reason for this change as Ignatius' 'own relations with the Alumbrados and his brush with the Spanish Inquisition'.[485] The reasoning here is that the role of the director provided necessary supervision, given the availability of the Exercises to lay people and women. In Sluhovsky's opinion, the degree of dependence on the director's authority is significant, but this judgment compares to the situation prior to Ignatius' innovations, where practitioners of spiritual exercises conducted those exercises themselves from a text. However, Sluhovsky recognises the director's role not as a 'sage' but rather as an administrator following a prescriptive text. He also recognises the director's detachment from the exercitant's actual choices: Ignatius' 'practice of the *Exercises* is far from advocating a unidirectional subjugation to authority, as some commentators, such as Michel Foucault, have argued'.[486] What is particularly significant about the director's role in ongoing discernment is that Sluhovsky sees 'the experience of being guided through taking the *Exercises*' as 'an apprenticeship that had the potential to lead the student towards independence, it supplied the practitioner […] with a kit of techniques of investigating interiority and of enhancing self-knowledge by means of introspection'.[487] Whether we see the process as one of learning techniques or becoming more open to God, and whether we see the objective as self-knowledge or knowledge of God's will, the point

[484] Moshe Sluhovsky, 'St. Ignatius of Loyola's "Spiritual Exercises" and their Contribution to Modern Introspective Subjectivity', *The Catholic Historical Review,* (2013), 649-674, p. 651; Moshe Sluhovsky, 'Discernment of Difference, the Introspective Subject, and the Birth of Modernity', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* 36 (2006), 169-200.
[485] Sluhovsky, 'St. Ignatius of Loyola's "Spiritual Exercises"', p. 652.
[486] Sluhovsky, 'St. Ignatius of Loyola's "Spiritual Exercises"', p. 661.
[487] Sluhovsky, 'St. Ignatius of Loyola's "Spiritual Exercises"', p. 673.

remains that the exercitant may no longer need the director once the Exercises are over (or a person has otherwise become sufficiently experienced).

The missing element in Sluhovsky's analysis is God. When he analyses things in terms of the relationship between the text, director and exercitant, he does not consider an active role for God in that process. This means, at least, that he is not making the same assumptions as the author of the text as well as, in all likelihood, the director and the exercitant. If we analyse the Exercises based on their assumption that there is a God, then the role of the director is to create as much space as possible for the interaction between the exercitant and God, which they do by their 'administration' of the process. We can see this in William Connolly's distinction between spiritual direction and counselling in an essay written in 1975 when he says: 'the counsellor does everything he can to protect and promote the integrity and freedom of his relationship with his client. The director does all he can to protect and promote the integrity and freedom of the person's receptivity to and response to the Lord'.[488] To the extent the text itself is seen as coercive, the goal of that coercion is to create the freedom for the exercitant to be open and willing to follow God's will. If the outcome of the Two Standards meditation seems predetermined (that the exercitant will choose to follow Christ), that is in order to create the conditions in which the exercitant can make the concrete choice of how that is to be realised in their own life in a way which is in accordance with God's will. If the director's role is always to assist with the process and not to influence the choice, then it seems that their role will always be desirable, even highly desirable, but not necessary in ongoing discernment: Ignatius certainly envisaged regular spiritual guidance for Jesuits in the *Constitutions.*[489] It does not necessarily follow, as Sluhovsky suggests, that the more spiritually experienced a person becomes, the less they will need a director, as Ignatius clearly anticipates the challenges of discernment becoming more subtle, hence the distinction between the first and second-week Rules for Discernment. Philip Sheldrake notes that the *Constitutions*

[488] William Connolly, 'Contemporary Spiritual Direction: Scope and Principles An Introductory Essay', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 7 (1975), 95-124, p. 119.
[489] Philip Sheldrake, 'Traditions of Spiritual Guidance: St. Ignatius Loyola and Spiritual Direction, I', *The Way,* 24 (1984), 312-319, p. 314.

anticipate that spiritually mature people will be able to function to a great extent on their own, but he also notes that Ignatius continued to discuss discernment in his letters with people who had made considerable spiritual progress.[490]

Ignatian Prayer

In our introduction to the Exercises in the previous chapter, we have already touched on prayer, perhaps unsurprisingly, as the whole of the Exercises are a programme of prayer. We noted the detailed nature of the instructions as to how prayer is to be carried out and the broad range of different prayer techniques, which include contemplation in the sense Ignatius uses the term – as active, and often imaginative, prayer focussed on scripture – as well as contemplation in the sense of something approaching silent prayer. We have also discussed the different interpretations of imaginative prayer, particularly application of the senses, which is seen by some as a straightforward imaginative engagement of the bodily senses and by some as drawing on the tradition of the spiritual senses.[491] In general, assuming there is no significant adaptation of the programme of prayer, that programme can be described as prescriptive but diverse.[492] In the context of discussion of the Exercises as a spiritual practice, the consensus would be that Ignatian prayer is generally active and conceptual.[493] Passive, contemplative prayer then, whilst present, has a somewhat marginal role – possibly through the 'higher' forms of application of the senses and explicitly in Ignatius' descriptions of rhythmic prayer at the end of the Exercises (*Exx* 258-260). This is seen by some as a weakness of the

[490] Sheldrake, 'Traditions of Spiritual Guidance: St. Ignatius Loyola and Spiritual Direction, I', pp. 315, 318.
[491] Juliano Almeida, '"Composition of Place" and "Application of the Senses" in Ignatian Prayer', *The Downside Review,* (2019), 47-58.
[492] Harvey Egan says that Ignatius Insists on *every* method of prayer, including those not mentioned in the *Spiritual Exercises*: Harvey D Egan, 'Ignatius, Prayer and the Spiritual Exercises', *The Way,* 60/2 (2021), 47-58, p. 54. Balthasar also says that Ignatius' method of prayer is a 'path of freedom': Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Prayer* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), pp. 132-134. Joseph Veale also describes this diversity: see Joseph Veale, 'Manifold Gifts', *Way Supplement,* 82 (1995), 44-53.
[493] Frank Houdek, 'The Limitations of Ignatian Prayer', *The Way Supplement,* 82 (1995), 26-34, p. 28; Michael Barrow, 'Discovering Non-conceptual Prayer', *The Way Supplement,* 54 (1985), 83-93, p. 83; Adrien Demoustier, 'Ignatian Contemplation and the Contemplative Way', *The Way Supplement,* 103 (2002), 16-24, p. 16.

Exercises, either because people should be able to pray in the way best suited to them (and that some people can only pray in a passive way), or because contemplative prayer is seen as a superior form of prayer.[494] This takes us back to the question of the inherent adaptability of the Exercises: when does adaptation risk the coherence of the Exercises as a spiritual practice, and how important in a spiritual practice is the ascetic discipline of doing the practice in the way specified? There is a significant concern in the literature for the inclusion in the Exercises of those who have passed beyond active prayer into a passive prayer life. Thus, Frank Houdek describes Ignatian prayer as limited. For him, even a Christocentric focus is a limitation. He sees Ignatian prayer as something with the 'potential to develop the deeper personal gifts of contemplative prayer'.[495] This approach can be criticised: Joan Scott sees Ignatian prayer as promoting spiritual freedom and as listening prayer. She is specifically critical of merit tables of prayer and the notion that there is a hierarchy of prayer with petitionary prayer at the bottom and 'dark' contemplative prayer at the top. She defends the importance of petitionary prayer – to which even those with a high level of spiritual maturity and commitment are drawn.[496] The radical nature of the revisions to the Exercises which are deemed necessary to make them suitable for contemplative use are an indication that the Exercises are not a natural home for this type of prayer. Dermot Mansfield, for whom contemplative prayer is a gift given further along the path of the spiritual life, describes Exercises where scripture is not used at all, or only sparingly, and then only outside the context of prayer.[497] It is not clear why there is a need to characterise what is essentially a contemplative retreat as the Ignatian Exercises. Presumably, the attraction of a spiritual practice requires it to retain some coherence and, in the case of Ignatian spirituality, some faithfulness to the *Spiritual Exercises.* I would argue then that active Christocentric prayer is at the heart of the

[494] Houdek, 'The Limitations of Ignatian Prayer'; John Govan, 'Spiritual Direction for a Contemplative', *The Way Supplement,* 54 (1985), 60-70.
[495] Houdek, 'The Limitations of Ignatian Prayer', pp. 29, 30-31, 33.
[496] Joan Scott, 'The Experience of Ignatian Prayer', *The Way Supplement,* 82 (1995), 54-61, pp. 54-56, 60.
[497] Dermot Mansfield, 'The Prayer of Faith, Spiritual Direction and the Exercises', *The Way,* 25 (1985), 315-324.

Exercises, so whilst contemplative retreats may well be the right thing for some people, it is proper to distinguish them from the Exercises.

A subtler point can be made about prayer in the Exercises, which is that, whilst it is predominantly active, the role of passive, contemplative prayer is something that grows throughout the Exercises. The Exercises lead towards passive, contemplative prayer. If that is the case, that would certainly have implications for the question we are currently considering of the ongoing practice of Ignatian discernment outside the context of the Exercises: it would imply, at least for some, that ongoing prayer should be contemplative. Franz Jalics sees the Contemplation to Attain Love at the end of the Exercises as a 'simple beholding of God's presence in prayer' and as the goal of the Exercises.[498] Both these claims can be contested: we have generally adhered to the view that the end of the Exercises is to make an election free of attachments as stated in *Exx.* 21, and not to achieve a particular experience of God in prayer. Furthermore, the Contemplation to Attain Love is a wordy contemplation rather than a passive experience. Jalics argues that the introduction to this Contemplation, which speaks of love being in deeds not words, and in mutual communication with God, marks a major shift from scripture as the privileged place of encounter with God. He also argues that this Contemplation involves a giving up of intellect, memory and will, which goes beyond and is qualitatively different from the commitments made in the context of the second week to follow Christ. This implies a commitment at the end of the Exercises to contemplative prayer, beyond memory, intellect and will, which will continue in everyday life after the Exercises.[499] For Jalics, if the Exercises are a school of prayer, the pedagogy leads to a particular conclusion. This going beyond scripture is marked by the last scripture meditation in the Exercises on the Ascension when the apostles have to turn to a new era.[500] Jalics deals specifically with the question of how

[498] Franz Jalics, 'The Contemplative Phase of the Ignatian Exercises', *The Way Supplement,* (2002), 25-42, p. 26.
[499] Jalics, 'The Contemplative Phase of the Ignatian Exercises', pp. 26-29.
[500] Jalics, 'The Contemplative Phase of the Ignatian Exercises', p. 29. There is an interesting autobiographical parallel with Ignatius. When he was forced to leave the Holy Land and abandon his plan to spend the rest of his life there literally walking in Christ's footsteps, the last place he visited, at some peril, was the Mount of Olives to see the impression of Jesus' feet at the point from which He ascended to heaven.

discernment happens for the contemplative: he sees that as occurring through first time election (when God indubitably moves the will), which he also links to consolation without cause. Jalics' reading is a plausible, but not the only possible, interpretation of the Contemplation to Attain Love. It has to be allowed that the outcome of the Exercises for some people could include the possibility of contemplative prayer as their main or even only way of praying. But we also have to allow that a person who has completed the Exercises will also have been thoroughly schooled in active prayer based on scripture, and that may well be a form of prayer they continue with.

In terms of ongoing Ignatian discernment, I would suggest that some kind of active prayer will be needed absent the kind of indubitable movement of the will, which is an exceptional experience. This does not mean that passive prayer cannot be a part of, or even the main part of, a person's prayer life, but for the 'ordinary' Christian, discernment will be the uncertain process of seeking sufficient evidence from movements in the soul and reason. That will involve some form of prayer that brings all those things together, which I would suggest is the form of reflective prayer contemplated by Futrell in the framework discussed earlier, and which is a natural development of the active contemplative prayer of the Exercises.

Conclusion

Some tensions consistently arise in the discussions in this chapter. One is the tension between having a coherent and describable spiritual practice and the adaptability and inclusiveness of that practice. That can also be seen in terms of a tension between faithfulness to Ignatius and the *Spiritual Exercises* and recognition of the great variety in the practice of Ignatian spirituality. A related tension is between an ascetic approach which sees a spiritual practice as a discipline to be followed – with merit in the willingness to carry out the discipline – and a mystical approach that focuses on the experiences of the person carrying out the practice. These tensions have led at every turn in the above discussions to an attempt to make balanced judgments. Ultimately, I would concur with Karl Rahner's assessment, which I see as exegetical, that the key assumption of the Exercises is

that God has a will for each individual and that knowing this will involves something more than reason. If this is the key principle, then it follows that God's will for how we pray or how we go through the Exercises or even how we discern God's will could vary from one individual to another. I would suggest that all those things are potentially matters for discernment – which implies a significant degree of flexibility in the process of applying the Exercises to each individual. That principle does not suggest a resolution of these tensions, but rather that these are persistent tensions and that they have to be balanced for each individual. When we say, for example, that ongoing Ignatian discernment should have a Christological focus, we are not saying that it is impossible to know God's will unless that condition is fulfilled, nor are we saying that someone going through the Exercises must invariably follow that path, but that departures from that focus will be exceptional.

Our ambition was to develop enough of a picture of ongoing Ignatian discernment to allow us to consider it as the basis for prayerful theology. What then does that picture look like? We have confirmed that discernment is *ongoing* in the sense that we continue to make choices throughout life and those choices are real choices, but they also manifest a fundamental option, a fundamental exercise of our freedom as human beings. Not every choice that is made is a matter for discernment. The great majority of choices flow in some obvious way from previous choices, but all human beings carry around with them a number of more difficult choices where reason does not deliver a clear answer: it is those questions that are the subject of discernment. Ignatian discernment then is the ongoing practice of *questioning* prayer. It is not just a matter of allowing for the possibility of bringing choices and questions to God in prayer but rather the spiritual discipline of doing so – the discipline of actively seeking guidance and of openness to the ways in which it might be given rather than being content to live our lives without contravening any significant moral principles. Whilst Ignatian discernment does not involve the creation of idle questions with no greater purpose than to satisfy our curiosity, it may involve an active process of unearthing those questions which lie beneath the surface of our everyday lives. The process of questioning is an active discipline in that it does involve a deliberate path of questioning – not just stumbling through

life, but instead asking the questions which arise as we try to follow Christ and as we try to discover our own unique form of holiness.

Ignatian discernment brings these choices and questions into something like the framework suggested by Futrell of prayerful reflection, information gathering and confirmation. This framework is the continuation in daily life of the times of election set out in the Exercises, but with a dynamic relationship between all the elements we find there. The framework presupposes ongoing attunement to Christ: the Ignatian means to that end is Christic contemplation, generally through prayerful reflection on scripture. There is no suggestion that this is the only form of prayer compatible with a life of Ignatian discernment, but only that it will be a component of that life. The discernment related prayer in Futrell's framework is necessarily active and potentially involves both reason and something beyond reason, what Ignatius calls a movement of the spirits and Fritz calls aesthetic judgment. This discernment may be based on mundane feelings and intuitions or may be based on experiences which, however uncertainly, are identifiable as from God – experiences of transcendence. Attentiveness to movements in the soul is a deliberate, regular and long-term prayerful practice. It is long-term not only because it is potentially a practice where our attunement and attentiveness can improve over time, but also because we need (as is contemplated by the Rules for Discernment) to pay attention not only to passing feelings but also to more enduring movements of the soul. All of this is active in a variety of ways: as we have already noted, the process of bringing questions is active. The meditation on scripture is also active, in that the imagination is brought into play, including the imaginative engagement of the physical senses. This and other techniques such as the colloquy have the effect of actively disrupting our normal ways of thinking about things and thus make us attentive to or even to generate a broader range of experience in relation to our choices and questions. The attentiveness of this prayer to all forms of experience wherever found, and the holistic integration of all that with reason, is perhaps what makes this form of ongoing Ignatian discernment most attractive. All of this receptivity and attentiveness is discerning in that, whilst there is an openness to all experience, the question is always asked whether this experience is from God. This is where the Rules for Discernment assist in helping us

to understand the significance not only of consolation and desolation but also the possibility of false consolation.

The Christic focus is also important for the indifference which is needed for the ongoing discernment of choices and questions. The notion of indifference – the relativisation of all things to the love and service of God – is found in the Exercises in the principle and foundation and in the concluding Contemplation to Attain Love. It is also encouraged by the contemplations of God as loving creator and sustainer of all things, of the world's brokenness and of our part in that, of Christ's loving and redeeming work and self-emptying example, and by the meditations on the kind of sacrificial response we should make to that. In ongoing discernment, the discipline of sustaining an attitude of indifference continues principally through ongoing meditation on Christ as an example.

If this then is the framework for the ongoing practice of Ignatian discernment, we are ready to consider the relevance of this to the notion of prayerful theology. This raises the significant issue of whether a practice that has the clear purpose of finding God's will for the individual has relevance for the theologian's task, which involves making statements about God that are of general relevance. What are the choices made by a theologian in their work? Can God guide those choices? Does this just become a form of 'private revelation' where theological positions are justified by reference to individual experiences? In other words, how can rigorous thought about God be brought into contact with movements in the soul in a way which preserves the rigour of that thought?

Chapter Five

Theological discernment

Introduction

In the previous three chapters, we have considered Heidegger's identification of the pervasiveness of Enframing thought and have explored Ignatian discernment in the context of the *Spiritual Exercises* and as an ongoing practice. The purpose of this chapter is to specifically address the issues which arise when a theologian seeks to make their theology discerning by bringing prayer and thought together. By engaging with a particular form of spirituality in some detail, the aim is to avoid generalities: to avoid showing, for example, that prayer is a desirable practice for a Christian but not the effect it can have on a theologian's work. As well as making the positive case for the role of Ignatian discernment in a theologian's life and work, I will also deal with various possible objections. The most serious objection would be that Ignatian discernment is limited to finding God's will for the individual and cannot form the basis for making public statements about God. We will start, though, with the positive case. The first and most important benefit is that Ignatian discernment is essentially open to treating all experience as potentially useful for discernment and thus, in the case of a theologian, for shaping what they think, say and write about God.[501] I would further suggest that no sharp distinction is drawn or needs to be drawn between the way in which reason and all other experience – which can be expressed in Ignatian terms as movements in the soul – contribute to that process. In other words, whether experience is human or religious, affective or the product of discursive rationality, linguistic and conceptual or beyond being put into words, it can and should all be attended to in order to

[501] It will be evident from the discussion in Chapter Two that treating experience as 'useful' raises the issue of whether Ignatian discernment is based on an Enframing stance. I will argue that essential receptivity to all experience and an acceptance of the uncertainty of experience and of discernment all resist that.

discern whether it is from God. Ignatius' terseness in his descriptions of experience and restraint on the role of the giver of the Spiritual Exercises are significant: they point to openness to a range of experience and a lack of interest in distinguishing types of experience. Ignatius' focus is, instead, on distinguishing experience by its source. This attention to all experience is different from approaches that look for particular spiritual experiences and attach epistemic significance to them. I will argue then that the specific practices of Ignatian prayer actively foster openness to a range of experience: they are intended to expand beyond pure discursive reason and engage the imagination, all the bodily senses and the feelings associated with personal relationships. I will also argue that we are dealing here in a realm of uncertainty. The range of experience to which attention is paid will in general not deliver apodictic certainty: Ignatius speaks, in the second time of election of receiving 'sufficient light and knowledge' (*Exx.* 176) and the Rules for Discernment deal with the retrospective identification of deceptive consolation (*Exx.* 334). Ignatian discernment is a method inherently based on working with, and making concrete decisions based on, uncertain information.

Ignatian discernment then encourages a theologian to pay attention to a broader range of experience and itself involves practices to broaden that experience in each case beyond the kind of reasoning which would otherwise be involved in their theological work, however 'thickly" we describe that. Ignatian discernment is already a place where reason and attention to this broader range of experience are brought together to cooperate in making decisions – often crucial decisions about the course of a person's life. Ignatian discernment is already a place where prayerful thinking occurs. As we have already seen, with the possible exception of the indubitable experience of the first time of election, all Ignatian discernment involves both reason and 'movements in the soul' in some way.

This leads us to the difficult question of how prayerful thought contributes to rigorous thinking, and beyond that, how the prayerful thought of a professional theologian informs what they write and say about God. Prevot's answer to that, which will be considered below, is to say that prayer imposes additional requirements. In other words, what a theologian writes and says must be both something they have discerned to be from God and also capable of standing up to

scrutiny as rigorous thought. Whilst I believe this answer to be the right one, it is worthy of further exploration.

We have also reached the point where the exposition of Heidegger's later thought can be brought into dialogue with the constructive account of ongoing discernment to ask whether there are similarities that lead us to conclude that this practice can resist an Enframing stance.

The above are the main points to be addressed in this chapter, but we will also encounter a number of other issues along the way, including the significance for the theologian of the treatment in Ignatian discernment of scripture and Church teaching, and the importance for the theologian of an ongoing Christic focus.

Receptivity to all experience

I have already argued in the preceding two chapters that Ignatian discernment seeks to place epistemic value on a broad range of experience.[502] In particular, it seeks to pay attention to feelings, emotions and moods. It treats both positive and negative experiences as potentially significant. It covers a spectrum of possibilities, from the indubitable movement of the will by God referred to in the first time of election to the more rational assessment of pros and cons in the third time of election. We have considered at some length Rahner's identification of a transcendental divine consolation as the experience which forms the basis of all knowledge of God's will for the individual. The conclusion reached was that, whilst Rahner's description of that experience is persuasive, as is his exegetical conclusion that something more than reason is required in order to discern God's will, there are also experiences contemplated by Ignatius as movements in the soul which are neither this divine consolation nor reason, but which are significant for discernment.

We have also seen that whilst Ignatian discernment is receptive to a range of experience, this receptivity is not, in general, passive. Ignatian discernment does not typically involve the passive waiting of contemplative prayer: this form of prayer is

[502] The epistemic value lies in its potential significance for discerning God's will.

present in the *Exercises* but has a marginal role. The receptivity of Ignatian prayer then is active: Ignatian discernment involves active exercises to elicit a range of responses to matters which are to be discerned: in the words of the third annotation 'in all the spiritual exercises that follow, we bring the intellect into action in order to think and the will in order to stir the deeper affections'. As we have seen, a wide range of different prayer practices is found in the *Spiritual Exercises,* eliciting a wide range of prayerful experiences. Christic meditation, for example, is intended to create a close and personal relationship with Christ, thus evoking the range of holistic and affective responses which arise in the context of personal relationships to supplement approaches that treat matters of choice in a discrete, analytic and abstract way. Imaginative prayer is a significant part of developing a personal and relational response to Christ. It also facilitates the possibility of experiencing a range of affective responses to whatever is contemplated, which supplement conceptual thoughts. The prayer of application of the senses encourages an embodied response, engaging (imaginatively) the bodily senses. The notion of the colloquy at the end of prayer, as a discussion with Christ 'as a friend', again evokes the personal and relational and takes us out of the realm of the purely rational. All these elements of the practice of Ignatian prayer then are active ways of evoking a range of responses and experiences that go beyond rational analysis.

One could question whether this active approach can properly be described as 'receptive'. It is a quite different kind of receptivity to the passive waiting of certain kinds of contemplative prayer: it is rather a form of active listening or attention – an attempt to ensure we are using the full range of our minds and the things they experience. In this sense, it is active in the same way as is the use of reason to contemplate God, and this I would suggest is why it is a natural home for prayerful thought because it is a place where reason and other experiences can be brought together. If one approach to receptivity then seeks to still the mind and to avoid distracting thoughts, Ignatian prayer is taking a different approach, examining "distractions" to see if they really are distractions or are, in fact, from God. Ultimately, this is an embracing of all experience, not an attempt to avoid it. It is a suggestion that God may communicate through a broad rather than narrow

spectrum. It is a suggestion that for the Holy Spirit to intercede for us through wordless groans, it is not a requirement for us to become wordless first.[503] It is a finding of God in all things, rather than a waiting to see if God might perhaps appear. It is the recognition of grace in the kind of mundane life experiences described in Rahner's 'Reflections on the Experience of Grace', which I have already quoted at length.[504] It is a recognition of what might have been glimpsed out of the corner of our eye when our attention is focussed elsewhere rather than an attempt to let our vision become unfocused.[505]

These contrasts between active Ignatian prayer and more passive forms of prayer articulate in terms of subjective experience the broader contrast between cataphatic and apophatic spiritual paths.[506] In that broader context, Denys Turner's contrast between the approach of Julian of Norwich and the 'astringently negative metaphors' of the nameless author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* is of interest. He describes her as deploying a huge range of affirmative metaphors about God because her 'cataphatic confidence is in itself an apophatic strategy, as if it is by means of, not despite, the proliferations of Trinitarian vocabulary that she achieves the goal of placing God beyond all possible words'.[507] If we translate that thought back to the subjective experience of prayer, we can perhaps see that a willingness to find God in all things is also a form of cataphatic confidence that is an apophatic strategy. In other words, although Ignatian prayer is active and embraces experience in the broadest sense, it can nonetheless acknowledge a still incomprehensible God beyond all these experiences.

---

[503] Romans 8:26.

[504] Rahner, 'Reflections on the Experience of Grace', p. 87.

[505] LaCouter describes Balthasar as having had little patience for world-denying or purely apophatic modes of mysticism which fall 'well short of the dialogic potential of Christian prayer'. Negative mysticism without sufficient Christological modulation is in danger of losing both the world and God. According to LaCouter, Balthasar's perspective on mysticism is 'deeply underwritten by his Ignatian background' and is 'dialogic with the Word, attentive to the world, and ratified in love alone. Silence is a form of attention that 'crucially, must give way to the dialogue'. LaCouter, *Balthasar and Prayer*, pp. 51, 54, 121.

[506] Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method* (London: SPCK, 1995), pp. 199-205.

[507] Denys Turner, *Julian of Norwich, Theologian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 24-25; Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism*, p. 257.

One could also question whether Ignatian prayer as a technique is a form of control. I will address later in this chapter the question of whether Ignatian prayer is resistant to the pervasive Enframing stance described by Heidegger, but, for now, it may suffice to explore the ways in which Ignatian discernment involves control. It *is* a form of control in the sense that it is active, it involves technique – in the context of the full Exercises a fairly detailed regime – and it has the purpose of acquiring specific, concrete knowledge of God's will for the individual that is intended to be put into practice. But it also has a range of features that resist being controlling. Firstly, it is prepared to find God in all things. There is no attempt to control the means by which God may communicate. This openness at least avoids the controlling imposition of prior restrictions or limitations on the kind of experience that may be relevant for discernment. Secondly, as a spiritual practice or even discipline, the use of a technique is an expression of willingness and an act of humility rather than an attempt to gain control. Techniques that cannot be consciously controlled or which may surprise us with unpredictable results need to be distinguished from techniques that are controlling. Also, in the context of the full Exercises, there is the willingness to be guided by a director through a process without knowing what is coming next and trusting the director to make important decisions along the way. So, at least for the exercitant, there is a lack of control over the process. Furthermore, in the concept of indifference, in Christic meditations (such as the Two Standards meditation and the three degrees of humility) and in the final Contemplation to Attain love (where liberty, memory, understanding and will are all offered to God), what is cultivated is the desire to follow God's will and the willingness to follow it whatever it may be, even if, for example, it is life-shortening. Finally, there is an acceptance that God's will may only be revealed in a somewhat uncertain way or perhaps not at all (in times of desolation), or even that movements in the soul may turn out to have been deceptive. Thus, Ignatian discernment can only be seen as a controlling technique in a very qualified way.

The Ignatian nature of openness to all experience, the relationship of that to indifference and the consequent avoidance of control are all expressed with great clarity by Rahner in his essay, 'The Ignatian Mysticism of Joy in the World'.

Indifference is said by Rahner to be the presupposition of 'finding God in all things'. Indifference is:

> the calm readiness for every command of God, the equanimity which, out of the realization that God is always greater than anything we can experience of him or wherein we can find him, continually detaches itself from every determinate thing which man is tempted to regard as the point in which alone God meets him. Hence the characteristic of Ignatian piety is not so much situated in a material element, in the promotion of a particular thought or a particular practice, is not one of the special ways to God, but it is something formal, an ultimate attitude towards all thoughts, practices, and ways: an ultimate reserve and coolness towards all particular ways, because all possession of God must leave God as greater beyond all possession of him.

Out of such an attitude of indifference Rahner says that there springs of itself 'the courage to regard no way to him as being the way, but rather to seek him on all ways'. Ignatius is said 'to acknowledge only one law in his restless search for God: to seek him in all things; and this means: to seek him in that spot where at any particular time he wants to be found, and it means, too, to seek him in the world if he wants to show himself in it.'[508] Similarly, in 'Ignatian Spirituality and Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus', Rahner speaks of indifference as 'an extremely alert, almost over-acute sense of the relativity of all that is not God himself; of all things distinct from God as preliminary, needing to be passed through, expendable, ambiguous.' This non-distinguishing indifference includes 'any particular exercises and methods, all the various devotions, practices, well-tried procedures and attitudes'.[509] Active receptivity then seeks God in no particular thing *or way* but is open to finding God in all things and ways, and this openness resists being controlling.

We can gain a different but illuminating perspective on what I am characterising as the active receptivity of Ignatian discernment by taking a short *excursus* to consider the work of Iain McGilchrist, and, in particular, his 2009 book, *The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western*

[508] Rahner, 'The Ignatian Mysticism of Joy in the World', pp. 290-291.
[509] Rahner, 'Ignatian Spirituality and Devotion to the Heart of Jesus', p. 181.

World.[510] His thesis, based on his exposition of the neuroscience of the differences between the left and right hemispheres of the brain, is that these differences and the increasing dominance of left hemisphere thinking have shaped the history of the West. My purpose here is not to assess this ambitious hypothesis or the critical reception of his exposition of the neuroscience, where McGilchrist himself frequently acknowledges the limitations of the data, but rather to look at how some of the broad features of brain function as he describes it shed light on the potential value of active receptivity.[511] McGilchrist makes a series of contrasts between the two hemispheres: one contrast is between the different ways the two hemispheres pay attention to the world. The left is associated with focussed, selective attention and the right with broad, flexible, exploring attention. The left is associated with the use of tools and objects, whereas the right is associated with the use of one's own body. The left thinks in categories and is abstract: the right relates to things as particular (and not as an example of a category) and sees things in a holistic way without pre-conceptions. The right dominates when we deal with new experiences and skills, but the left takes over when things become familiar. In relation to language, the left is associated with syntax and vocabulary: the right deals with higher linguistic functions such as tone, meaning in context, emotional significance, humour, irony and metaphor. Symbols for the right hemisphere evoke a series of allusions, whereas, for the left, they are assigned one meaning. The right importantly pays attention to the other in a personal, individual holistic way and with empathy.[512] McGilchrist builds up, from all these differences, a picture of two contrasting ways of thinking. What is distinctive about McGilchist's presentation is

[510] Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and his Emissary: the Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2009); Iain McGilchrist, 'God, Metaphor, and the Language of the Hemispheres', in *Religion, Language, and the Human Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 135-166. Ward draws on McGilchrist's work in his consideration of belief as a mode of cognition, with qualified support for the recovery of right hemisphere believing over left hemisphere certainty and instrumental rationalism: 'believing, not as a weak form of knowing but a faithful entrustment to one's intuitions that will always remain somewhat inchoate, even if resonant with meaning, is a right hemisphere cognitive and affective activity'. Graham Ward, *How the Light Gets In: Ethical Life I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 253-264.

[511] McGilchrist says he will be content if his thesis turns out to be 'just' a metaphor because he has high regard for metaphor. McGilchrist, *The Master and his Emissary: the Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*, p. 462.

[512] McGilchrist, *The Master and his Emissary: the Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*, pp. 38, 40, 46, 51, 54, 66, 82 and 86.

not that there are a variety of different ways of paying attention to the world, dealing with information, and thinking, but rather that all these elements can be placed into two separate groups as left and right hemisphere ways of thinking. His contention beyond that is that left hemisphere ways of thinking have come to dominate, whereas a better way to relate to the world requires the contribution of each hemisphere to be in balance.[513] He says:

> The world of the left hemisphere, dependent on denotative language and abstraction, yields clarity and power to manipulate things that are known, fixed, static, isolated, decontextualized, explicit, disembodied, general in nature but ultimately lifeless. The right hemisphere, by contrast, yields a world of individual, changing, evolving, interconnected, implicit, incarnate, living beings within the context of the lived world, but in the nature of things never fully graspable, always imperfectly known – and to this world it exists in a relationship of care. The knowledge that is mediated by the left hemisphere is knowledge within a closed system. It has the advantage of perfection, but such perfection is bought ultimately at the price of emptiness, of self-reference. […] It can never really 'break out' to know anything new.[514]

There are then two ways of seeing the world, each related to one of the hemispheres of our brain – each individually coherent but different.

If we accept this broad argument, the question is how that affects our approach to Ignatian discernment? A positive engagement would see the Exercises as, in various ways, promoting right hemisphere ways of thinking (without excluding left hemisphere ways of thinking) and thus in some ways redressing the growing dominance of left hemisphere ways of thinking that McGilchrist identifies and problematises. These ways would include attention to 'movements in the soul' generally as attention to, amongst other things, all the affective dimensions of our experience. The second time of election, then, encourages right hemisphere thinking. Another way in which right hemisphere thinking is brought to the fore is in the use of the imagination in imaginative prayer, particularly the use of all the

[513] This balance may take the form of a passing of dominance from initial intuitive attention by the right hemisphere to analytic attention by the left, followed by a return to renewed intuitive attention by the right.
[514] McGilchrist, *The Master and his Emissary: the Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*, p. 174.

senses, which promotes holistic engagement.[515] The encouragement of the relational and personal (particularly a personal relationship with Jesus Christ) also engages the right hemisphere. It is interesting to note that any imitation of another person is essentially a right hemisphere activity: imaginative contemplation of the imitation of Christ should then be particularly apt to engage the right hemisphere. Finally, the Exercises include elements that encourage us to see things in new ways, thus engaging the right hemisphere, rather than trying to fit them into existing patterns. It is interesting to consider how Ignatian indifference can be characterised in McGilchrist's schema. On the one hand, it could be seen as encouraging a left hemisphere type vision of the world as full of things to be used for a particular end. The alternative and I think better view is that it turns us away from thinking about things in the world and their uses toward the affective and holistic aspects of the glory and love of God.

I would argue then that a number of the practices comprised in the Exercises are oriented towards promoting the right hemisphere ways of paying attention and thinking. Those practices have a cumulative effect of encouraging this kind of broad, holistic, personal and affective attention with its particular openness to new things. In other words, this kind of receptivity, to the other and the new, is something that requires activity, not passivity, and a range of practices (not a single solution), and it is the kind of active receptivity and range of practices we already find in the Spiritual Exercises. This does not reduce the Exercises to being one possible way of many in which left hemisphere dominance can be addressed: the 'whither' of the active receptivity of the Exercises is Jesus Christ and the finding of God in all things, and addressing left hemisphere dominance is a means to minimising a potential obstacle to that receptivity, rather than an end in itself.

What does all this mean for the theologian? I would suggest this type of prayer, this active receptivity, can be a place of open exploration of questions not

[515] Ward, in describing the performative nature of his 'engaged systematic theology' which wishes to 'act upon the minds, emotions, imaginations, hearts and bodies of those who engage with it' references McGilchrist saying: 'language aimed at intellection alone would simply feed left-hemisphere brain activity (that wishes to control and instrumentalise). Language appealing to the body and imagination is feeding right-hemisphere brain activity (which is empathetic and attuned to the world)': Ward, *How the Light Gets In: Ethical Life I*, p. 139.

just by reason, but by attention to the affective experiences those questions evoke, by the active seeking of those experiences and by discernment of their meaning. The questions a theologian addresses are already necessarily introduced into, or even by, the theologian's irreducible subjectivity. The suggestion here is that this subjectivity is not something the theologian should try to escape, even if that were possible, but it is something to be aware of and pay attention to. Even beyond that, the attention should be active, with exercises to evoke affective responses. In other words, it is worth knowing, and is worth taking steps to enhance the possibility of knowing, how we feel about what we think and say and write about `God.

Discernment as a discipline

One thing which I found perplexing when reading Prevot was his notion that theology is both prayer and thought *simultaneously*.[516] He is by no means alone in saying this. Ward also asks, 'where for a Christian theology does prayer end and critical thinking begin?'. His engaged systematics 'would wish to correct any overemphatic hierarchy between first and second order reflection' and 'cannot accept a Kantian philosophy that demarcates noumenal religious experience from the phenomenology of critical, theological reflection'.[517] LaCouter also says 'that for Balthasar, theology is not just *supported* by prayer, not just *complemented* by the "spirituality" genre – it is rather a simultaneous exercise with prayer, coterminous with it'.[518]

Prevot is clearly making a normative statement about what good theology should be, and he is concerned in particular to establish that good theology cannot proceed based on critical thinking alone as distinct from prayer. He is also describing prayer in objective theological terms and is not necessarily describing how prayer is experienced. But this insistence on simultaneity is an overstatement

[516] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 15-17. Prevot does recognise the need for a distinction between prayer and theology. He refers to 'theology as a practice of thought that seeks to make sense of the mystery of prayer and simultaneously as a practice of prayer that strives to meet the rigorous demands of thought'. It is not clear that this solves the problem: it may just increase the number of things that are all supposed to happen at the same time.
[517] Ward, *How the Light Gets In: Ethical Life I*, pp. 122-123.
[518] LaCouter, *Balthasar and Prayer*, p. 45.

that can be counterproductive. If one seeks to make theology more prayerful, it is necessary to say how prayerful thought differs from thought that is not prayerful, because intentional and active steps can then be taken towards the end of theology based on the former and not the latter. If, as we have done in this thesis, we focus on a particular prayerful practice, we can see its relationship with critical thought. In Ignatian discernment we have seen that in some cases (such as the third time of election), the emphasis is very much on critical thinking, and in other cases (such as the first time of election), it is not. Thus theology guided by Ignatian discernment would better be seen as not *always* simultaneously thought and prayer, but rather as involving times of rigorous thought, times of prayer and times of prayerful reflection when prayer and thought are in close proximity.[519] It does not insist that all theological thinking is to be done at the prie-dieu, but neither does it exclude prayer from taking place at the theologian's desk. It may, of course, take place between the two. In the Exercises, specific instructions set out steps to be taken before and at the end of prayer. The time of prayer is thus quite clearly designated.[520] That is not to say that discernment or prayer cannot take place outside this time. Indeed, Ignatius suggests that following prayer, 'I shall either sit down or walk around for quarter of an hour while I consider how the contemplation or meditation has gone' (*Exx.* 77). However, entering into prayer is a deliberate and specific discipline.[521]

The implication of the prayerful and thoughtful elements of theology not necessarily occurring simultaneously is that discipline is needed to bring theological

[519] As already referred to in the preface, Ignatius resisted the intrusions of prayer into his studies even though they involved new insights into spiritual things. Loyola, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, p. 39. Futrell's framework for discernment could be taken to mean that all thought (other than information gathering) should take place in prayer. Futrell is keen to ensure that reasoning and decision-making are not excluded from prayer. However, I would not take this to mean, at least when applied to a theologian's work, that *all* thought should be prayerful.

[520] Outside the context of the Exercises, Ignatius discouraged too much prayer: Jesuit scholastics were limited to one hour over several sessions of prayer. See Edward Kinerk, 'When Jesuits Pray: A Perspective on the Prayer of Apostolic Persons', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 15/5 (1985), 1-20.

[521] This concept of prayer may seem to be at odds with the New Testament injunction to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17): there are 36 references to uninterrupted prayer in the New Testament. This can be interpreted in a 'material-temporal' way, to which responses range from individual attempts to interiorise continual prayer to the idea of the worldwide church praying the liturgy of the hours. Alternatively, this can be interpreted in a 'processual-dialogic' way, where

questions into prayer. This requires an active and intentional approach by the theologian: it requires a careful, diligent and persistent commitment to seek God's will in every aspect of a theologian's life and work. It envisages that all aspects of that life and work will be brought to God in prayer, including: the basic vocational choice to be a theologian; the choices along the way as to which areas of theology to focus on, where to study or work and whom to study or work with; which thinkers to spend time on, and how to relate oneself to them; a questioning of the questions themselves – that is discernment as to which theological questions to pursue, accepting that, in this age of gnoseological concupiscence, every orientation towards a particular avenue of inquiry involves turning away from other ones; [522] the choices of methodology; and the day-to-day quite granular questions of whether what the theologian proposes to say, and how they propose to say it, is in accordance with God's will. The theologian must continually engage with the question not only of whether what they are saying makes sense and is well-argued but also with the need to discern prayerfully that it is what God wants them to say. An aspect of the discipline of discernment is the simple matter of awareness of and attention to all the choices that are made and their consequences. This includes not only the choices which relate to a vocation as a theologian but also all the other choices which form the very lived experience out of which a theologian's work blossoms. All a theologian's choices, then, are matters for discernment. On the one hand, this underlines the seriousness of a vocation to be a theologian, but on the other, it is only the living out of the commitment made by every Christian who

---

prayer is part of a process of continuous transformation. In the Ignatian tradition, this is found in the concept of *in actione contemplativus* with all activities done for God's greater honour and with a contemplative eye looking for God in all things. Kees Waaijman, 'Uninterrupted prayer - A spiritual challenge', *Hervormde teologiese studies,* 75 (4) (2019), 1-4; Egan, 'Ignatius, Prayer and the Spiritual Exercises', p. 49. Although 'contemplation in action' is not an Ignatian phrase, but originates from Jerónimo Nadal (Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, p. 69.), I would not wish to deny that Ignatian discernment is dialogic in the sense that it is attentive to all experience and would not wish to deny that prayer, when broadly defined, can in some ways be seen as continuous. The idea of theology as simultaneous prayer and thought then would be consistent with this way of seeing prayer – if prayer is going on all the time, it must be going on when we think about God. But I do, for the reasons already stated, think that if one wishes to promote theology as prayerful thought, it is better to describe prayer as a distinctive practice with temporal constraints.

[522] Gnoseological concupiscence is defined by Rahner as the pluralism between different branches of knowledge such that we can no longer achieve a full or comprehensive view. Karl Rahner, 'On the Relationship between Theology and the Contemporary Sciences', in *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961-92) vol. 13, pp. 94-102, p. 94.

prays 'your will be done' and who wishes to fulfil the unique form of holiness which is God's will for them.

What is being proposed in this thesis then is not that all theology is automatically prayerful without any further action being required on the theologian's part, but rather that theological questions should deliberately be brought into prayer. An implication of this is that for most theologians, the great majority of their work will take place outside these times of prayer. In other words, theologians will continue to spend much of their time theologising using natural ways of thinking, which are no different, say, from a philosopher doing philosophy. Even in the context of mystical theology, with its particular focus on God's hidden self-communication, Mark McIntosh describes a first moment in which the theologian 'seeks to discern and understand something of the hidden divine meaning communicated by God' as being something like 'ordinary scholarly endeavours'.[523] Prayerful theology then is not at all times prayerful but does bring all things to God in prayer.

Taking uncertainty seriously

One temptation that theologians face is that of trying to say too much, or to speak with unwarranted certainty, about God or to claim to be a prophetic voice speaking God's will for the world or others. The practice of prayerful discernment is not immune from that danger and could even encourage theologians to succumb to that temptation. I would argue, however, that entering into the realm of discernment of movements in the soul is, properly understood, a resistance to that temptation. It encourages theologians to confront the question of why certain propositions backed by powerful arguments can feel wrong, and why propositions that can only be weakly justified can feel right. We have already seen that Ignatius, in the Exercises, does allow for the possibility of God's will being revealed with indubitable certainty in the first time of election (*Exx.* 175). Although Ignatius does not comment on how common this experience is, it is notable that the greater part

[523] McIntosh, 'Mystical Theology at the Heart of Theology', p. 28.

of the text of the Exercises dealing with discernment is dedicated to describing how God's will can be discerned when it is *not* revealed in this indubitable way.[524] In other words, the Exercises presuppose undecidability: which means that God's will has neither been revealed in a way that cannot be questioned nor does it simply follow from the reasoned application of general principles. The great majority of the Rules for Discernment then address the uncertainty of dealing with movements in the soul to allow concrete decisions to be taken based on uncertain information. We see this in the description of the second time of election as 'a time when sufficient light and knowledge is received through experience of consolations and desolations, and through experience of the discernment of different spirits' (*Exx.* 176). We also see this in the notion that 'confirmation' of discernment may be needed (*Exx.* 183). Finally, in Ignatius' *Spiritual Diary*, we see the process Ignatius goes through as he seeks to discern God's will about the poverty of the Society of Jesus when he ultimately has to resist the temptation to seek greater certainty through further confirmation.[525] The Rules for Discernment themselves are necessary because the experiences they deal with cannot necessarily be linked to the matters which are discerned, and the Rules deal explicitly with the possibility that experiences may turn out to have been deceptive. In general, Ignatian discernment can only ever lead to conclusions to which a degree of epistemic humility is attached: they are only ever conclusions reached on the basis of 'sufficient light'. Ignatian discernment is about paying attention to subjective factors which are inherently uncertain.

In 'On Prayer in Anglican Systematic Theology', Ashley Cocksworth identifies a grounding in the practice of prayer as a common characteristic of the projects of contemporary Anglican systematic theologians – Coakley, Ward and Sonderegger.[526] One question he raises is whether these projects allow sufficient space for the possibility of prayer going wrong: the *Schattenseite* or shadow-side of prayer. In particular, prayer can be 'not the solution but very much part of the problem of the

[524] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 107.
[525] Loyola, 'The Spiritual Diary', pp. 73-99.
[526] Ashley Cocksworth, 'On Prayer in Anglican Systematic Theology', *International Journal of Systematic Theology,* 22 (2020), 383-411, p. 383.

injustices of the world'. He further identifies the risk, in a discussion of Balthasar, that theology on the knees involves a suspension of judgment. Cocksworth raises the possibility that a 'repair of the problems of prayer' is available through 'prayer's own internal dynamics'.[527] I would argue that the practice of Ignatian discernment is grounded in recognition of the shadow-side of prayer. In other words, it is grounded in the possibility that we are moved by a bad spirit. Thus the Rules for Discernment, the continual correction of prayer by reason (and vice versa), the relationship with Church teaching (discussed further below) and correction by scriptural and Christic meditation are 'repairs' of prayer's potential brokenness. Ignatian discernment, however, does not suppose that these repairs can ever reach a state of finality: it is a process of ongoing and heightened sensitivity to the possibility of prayer going wrong. Ignatian discernment is not a practice which from time to time acknowledges the possibility that prayer can go wrong but is one that continually confronts that possibility.

In this thesis, it is not suggested that Ignatian discernment brings certainty to what a theologian thinks, says and writes about God. Instead, it is acknowledged that a theologian's work is always affected by a range of factors that cannot be grasped or pinned down. There needs to be a willingness to work with, and hope to bring better theology out of acknowledging and working with, that uncertainty. It is a stepping beyond the certainty of reason and an acceptance that, if we accept the irreducible subjectivity of the theologian, we cannot nonetheless proceed as if that has no implications for theological methodology. In addition, everything we think, say and write about God must reflect the incomprehensibility of God: all language and concepts are inadequate for these purposes. Prayerful theological methodology, which is open to the inherently uncertain influence of movements in the soul, should be more resistant to the temptation to be forgetful of God's incomprehensibility. Ignatian discernment then must remain resistant to the risk of treating movements in the soul as providing certainty or of seeking to say things about God that go beyond what has been revealed. It must remain resistant to the risk of seeking to grasp new information about God through mystical experience.

[527] Cocksworth, 'On Prayer in Anglican Systematic Theology', pp. 406-411.

This is not to deny that certain mystical experiences can, within limits, provide new private revelation or what Coakley calls 'epistemic deepening' and, as we have seen, Ignatius provides for this, most obviously in the context of the 'indubitable' first time of election (*Exx.* 175).[528] But these experiences are exceptional and not part of the ordinary life of the Christian or Christian theologian.[529] What we are talking about here is the danger of taking the 'sufficient light' of the discernment of movements in the soul and treating it as certain revelation. That, I think, would be based on a misreading of the *Spiritual Exercises,* which treat movements in the soul with caution (they may, after all, be from the bad spirit). A proper understanding of Ignatian discernment sees this caution as applying to all of the discernment process – it applies to the reasoning elements of discernment, which are just as prone to speak with forgetful certainty, as it does to the movements in the soul.[530] Ignatian discernment enhances rather than diminishes epistemic humility.

---

[528] The scope of 'private revelation' is discussed by Rahner in 'Visions and Prophecies', where he says that 'the possibility of private revelation through visions and associated auditory experiences is evident in principle for a Christian.' He also goes on to say that 'since we have in Christ God's final and definitive revelation and self-disclosure, later Christian revelations must theologically, if not psychologically have an essentially different character […] but this is no reason for thinking that such divine manifestations are now altogether impossible.' Karl Rahner, 'Visions and Prophecies', in *Studies in Modern Theology* (Freiburg: Herder, 1965), pp. 89-188, pp. 95, 98; Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, p. 19; Coakley, 'Dark Contemplation and Epistemic Transformation'.

[529] Although Balthasar is seen as one of the greatest proponents of the integrity of theology and prayer, much of what he says about this topic is based on formulating a theological response to what Balthasar saw as the exceptional mystical experiences of Adrienne von Speyr. Whether or not these private revelations provide a basis for making bold theological pronouncements is ultimately a matter for ecclesial discernment, but whilst I would argue that individual discernment is also appropriate in relation to mystical experience, this kind of exceptional revelation is not at the heart of what is being discussed in this thesis. See Gary Eaborn, 'The Inseparability of Hans urs von Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr', (unpublished master's dissertation, Durham University, 2019). For LaCouter, Balthasar's theology is prayerful and is marked by a certain 'parrhesiastic privilege', which justifies its boldness without implying that it is always correct. LaCouter claims that the authenticity of visions and experiences is not the test of theological adequacy but rather whether the resulting theology bears ecclesial fruit. LaCouter, *Balthasar and Prayer*, pp. 12, 25-26, 38-40, 49-51. Kilby, *Balthasar: A (Very) Critical Introduction*, pp. 13, 17-18, 24-26, 38, 96-101, 167; Cocksworth, 'On Prayer in Anglican Systematic Theology', pp. 408-409.

[530] Toner is of the view that God's will for the individual can be known with certainty: 'God loves us so much as to give us his Son and make us his sons and daughters in him and, consequently, wills in every situation our greater good (or lesser harm) – because he believes this, Ignatius logically believes that, if we freely do our utmost to find and choose God's will for the greater good, we can be certain that he will lead us to the true conclusion.' The certainty here is based not on the evidence which justifies the conclusion of discernment but on faith that God will lead to the correct conclusion irrespective of the evidence. Toner believes it is possible both to know for certain that the correct conclusion has been reached if we try our best and also that we can know for certain that we *have* tried our best. Toner's view is confined to individual discernment of God's will. It does not apply

Reason and movements in the soul

We have already seen, in the previous exegetical chapters, that Ignatius had a positive view of the role of reason in the discernment process. This view is supported by both of the major interpreters of the *Spiritual Exercises* whose views we considered. Although Rahner argues that something *more* than reason is needed to discern God's will for the individual, its insufficiency by itself does not diminish its importance. We have seen that the second time of election involves reason in applying the Rules for Discernment to movements in the soul. We have also seen that the third time of election involves prayer and affective exercises in a more reason-based process. Although these times of election are presented as distinct steps in the *Spiritual Exercises,* the whole of the Exercises are for the purposes of discernment, and so the role of reason and attention to movements in the soul are inseparable. This is even more evidently the case once we move outside the context of the Exercises and into ongoing discernment. Except for the first time of election, all discernment involves both reason and attention to movements in the soul.

Are reason and interior movements to be differentiated in terms of their value or significance for discernment? That question does not receive a straightforward answer in the Exercises. I would suggest that reason and interior movements are of value to the extent that they reveal God's will, and in doing that, they fulfil different but complementary roles. This takes us back to the three times of election. In the first time, God's will is revealed in an indubitable way, so this time of election *is* differentiated from the other two. The second and third times though are equally good ways of finding God's will: the evidence from each of them is of equal value. It is possible, of course, that evidence from the second and third times

---

to moral choices and would not apply to the kind of prayerful theological reflection we are referring to here. For the individual, the subjective certainty here ultimately depends on faith, not on the experiences they have had or the processes they have gone through, provided they have tried their best (or think they have). An alternative point of view on the reliability of discernment would be that indubitable experience is possible, but discernment will more often be based on less certain experience and that, whilst the Holy Spirit guides the process, the result is not guaranteed and that there may be uncertainty as to both the evidence and the process. It is not a logical consequence of belief in God's love that, under certain conditions which are entirely under the control of the individual, there is a certain way to know God's will. Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, pp. 287-311.

of election will contradict each other. If neither time of election is epistemically privileged (and if, as I have argued, both involve, to some extent, both reason and interior movements), then all this evidence will need to be taken into account. In the third time of election, Ignatius discusses the balancing of countervailing evidence as an essentially rational process of considering the advantages, benefits, disadvantages and dangers of each alternative. Having thought things over and reflected from every point of view, the final decision is found by looking 'to the side to which reason most inclines' (*Exx.* 181-182). In the second time of election, Ignatius speaks of reaching a point where 'sufficient light and knowledge' has been given by interior movements. Where reason and interior movements are all contributing to discernment, this latter test, referring as it does to both light and knowledge, would seem apt to determine when a good discernment has been made.

If it is correct, then, that neither reason nor interior movements have privileged epistemic status in Ignatian discernment, there is no need to draw any sharp distinction between the two. The question, for example, of whether the use of the imagination or intuition fall within a broad definition of reason or are movements in the soul is much less important if we accept that *all* experience is to be attended to. For the theologian, there is no jarring inconsistency with bringing questions about God and theological reasoning into this prayerful context in which both reasoning and attention to interior movements can continue. That is not to say that bringing reasoning into prayer will not cause disturbance of some sort. Indeed, that disturbance may be significant for discernment.[531] What is suggested here is not that, in Ignatian discernment, there is always harmonious cooperation between reason and interior movements, but rather that attention to both, including harmony and conflicts, is part of that process.

It is important to acknowledge how the features we have identified of Ignatian discernment as a way of doing theology also constitute limitations on the claims that can be made for it. Those features include active receptivity to all

[531] For those 'who go from good to better, the good angel touches the soul sweetly, lightly and gently, like a drop of water going into a sponge, while the bad spirit touches her sharply, with noise and disturbance, as when a drop of water falls on a stone' (*Exx.* 335).

experience, an openness to uncertain experience even when that uncertainty is persistent, a lack of privileging of reason over other interior movements (or vice versa), and the relativisation of the importance of distinctions between reason and interior movements. These features and the other aspects of Ignatian discernment described in this thesis do not in any way provide a comprehensive theological methodology: they could even be seen to resist the formulation of such a methodology. If theology is characterised as prayerful thought, Ignatian discernment has much to say about the prayer and less about the thought. Much more can be said about how to reason than is addressed in the *Spiritual Exercises*. Whilst active receptivity to all experience is comprehensive, the Rules for Discernment and other practices only take us so far, and then uncertainly, in showing how we can make use of that experience. If, for example, interior movements (or particular types of interior movements) were to be privileged over reason, that could well provide a method of discernment that would provide a surer path to answering theological questions. However, this kind of certainty is not provided. Prayerful theology in this form then is not a way to greater certainty to the answers to theological questions. I would argue that it is a way to better answers, but they are better answers because there is a greater appreciation of their uncertainty, or provisionality, or locatedness. Furthermore, this is not because this form of prayerful theology is a work-in-progress awaiting further development, but rather because prayer expands the way in which we approach theological questions, which takes them outside the narrow frame in which certain answers can be given. Ignatian discernment then is not a system waiting to be improved and made more certain by filling in the details of the rules, but rather an approach where the level of uncertainty is a reflection of its purpose.

What then are the objections to bringing reason and attention to movements in the soul together in this way? Two main issues can be identified, both of which are related. The first is whether the bringing together of reason and attention to movements in the soul has an adverse effect on the quality or clarity of the reasoning. The related issue is how the outcomes of this process can be communicated to others in a way that they can independently relate to and critically appraise. Both these issues point to the further question of the place of

this kind of theological methodology in the academy. One response to the possible risk of lower quality reasoning is that this is not entirely a problem created by this methodology. Movements in the soul are part of the irreducible subjectivity of the theologian. These factors are present in any event, and I would argue then that the risk of muddled thinking is greater if we choose to ignore the way these movements affect our thinking than if we explicitly pay attention to them. Furthermore, whilst the concept of irreducible subjectivity, as the recognition of the inevitability of reasoning taking place in bodies and coming out of a particular context, applies to all human reasoning, it has a particular significance for theological reasoning.[532] For a theologian who is a Christian (and arguably beyond that the theologian who is an 'anonymous Christian' and perhaps even every human being), the particular context in which any reasoning takes place is that of already having some kind of relationship with God. That relationship is the ultimate in unavoidable context: the context is our inseparability from the love of God of which St Paul speaks.[533] For the Christian, at least, detached reasoning about God is not possible, a critical position cannot be taken that stands outside this relationship because we cannot find a position outside God's love.[534] My argument, however, goes beyond acknowledging the special significance of irreducible subjectivity for the Christian theologian. My argument is that, just as in discernment of God's will for the individual, all of this irreducible subjectivity, all these movements in the soul, are not the things which are to be eliminated in the quest for pristine reason but are the things which are to be embraced and actively received. Discernment must not be seen as a shortcut to avoid rigorous thinking. It is also important to acknowledge that a significant part of a theologian's thinking will not be prayerful. However, Ignatian discernment and prayerful thinking increase our awareness of and attention to interior movements and treat them as potentially useful. This allows us to treat these movements as a way of enhancing our reasoning rather than as impediments to it. My argument

[532] Simeon Zahl, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience* (Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 46.
[533] Romans 8:35-37.
[534] I am not here addressing the question of whether there can be reasoning about God (such as fundamental theology or philosophy of religion) which is prior to any revelation or experience of God but am simply making the point that the Christian theologian who attempts to reason in these ways is never doing this from a position of neutrality.

then is that just as in Ignatian discernment of God's will for the individual, so in theology, active attention to this experience is of value in addition to reason: the God who is beyond all context is to be found in and through all this context and not by abstracting from it.

Transparency

Even if we accept that irreducible subjectivity is not only unavoidable, but is to be closely attended to and actively received, we still need to consider how prayerful thought about God can be communicated to others. In other words, it is necessary to acknowledge that whilst the communication of theological positions arrived at by reason is relatively straightforward, the extent to which we can and should describe the movements of the soul (or the discernment process more generally) which contribute to arriving at a theological position can be more problematic. Whilst in individual discernment it is possible to communicate accounts of the kind of interior movements that have led to particular choices, and whilst others may be able to see that this makes sense to the individual concerned, the communication of these movements may be seen as doing little or nothing to persuade those others that the individual has made the correct choice.[535] In the context of prayerful thought, if I am drawn to a theological position by feelings of consolation, even if I describe those feelings, that may do little to help others decide whether they share that theological position. If then we let movements in the soul influence theological reasoning, is that something that either cannot be articulated or the articulation of which serves no purpose? Is discernment a private and individual matter, which can influence an individual's thought about God but does not contribute to dialogue about God? And if it is, does that matter?

[535] The most notable autobiographical account of a discernment process is found in Ignatius' *Spiritual Diary.* Apart from this, Guia Sambonet notes the absence of autobiographical narratives describing the Exercises from the exercitant's perspective. She attributes this to a general distrust of personal revelations and an assumption that prayer belongs to a private realm. However, she questions whether this understanding of prayer is a cultural construction and a by-product of established patterns of authority and control. Guia Sambonet, 'How to Present the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola to the Postmodern World?', (2010) <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330026219_How_to_Present_the_Spiritual_Exercises_of_Saint_Ignatius_of_Loyola_to_the_Postmodern_World> [accessed 25 August 2020].

The answer to these questions which follows is somewhat ambivalent. The exposition of Ignatian discernment in this thesis does not provide direct answers to these questions. However, the nature of Ignatian discernment as described – particularly the epistemic humility and the bringing together of reason and movements in the soul – do justify this ambivalence. If, for example, the claim was being made that Ignatian discernment provides certain revelation, then a high degree of transparency would be appropriate. The process described here will be one where sometimes disclosure will be appropriate and helpful but which quite often will fade into the background. The question of transparency cannot be decided by applying a general principle but is itself a matter of discernment.

I would argue then that there is no *necessary* connection between the way we arrive at a theological position and how we choose to articulate it. So whilst there are theological works articulated as prayer or in which the prayerful nature is transparent, not all prayerful theology needs to be expressed in that way. The practice of Ignatian discernment by a theologian then does not necessarily dictate the way in which the resulting theology is communicated or justified – although both those things could and perhaps should be matters of discernment. In other words, the contribution of attention to movements in the soul to arriving at theological positions need not determine how those positions are shared with others: it does not restrict the range of genres and styles in which theological thought can be communicated.[536] For example, the analytic theologian could experience movements in the soul that are seen as confirmatory of their reasoned analysis, but they may feel that there is no need to communicate that fact because it would not add anything to what they do communicate. One particular danger that should give pause for thought is that communication of the prayerful nature of theology could be seen as seeking to demonstrate the virtue or sanctity of the theologian or even as seeking to insulate their theology from criticism. It is difficult to see, for example, how straightforward disclosure of the prayerfulness of theology serves any purpose unless it seeks to make clear *how* prayer has contributed to the process of reaching the theological position which is communicated. That is not to

[536] See Ward, *How the Light Gets In: Ethical Life I*, p. 178.

say that transparency about the discernment process will always be undesirable. If we accept irreducible subjectivity and the desirability of some understanding of a theologian's context to help understand their thought, then some level of transparency about the entire process that has led them to a particular position (including movements in the soul) may in some cases be helpful. This will often be the case where a theologian's life experience has contributed to the discernment process. Furthermore, greater transparency may speak to others in ways that cannot be rationally anticipated. So, if theology, as prayerful thought, is guided by things beyond reason, it may not always be appropriate to let reason alone determine which matters are to be communicated. Finally, if we accept that universal statements made by a theologian are abstractions from their total experience, the clarity of those statements can be enhanced by broader revelation of the experience from which they are abstracted. Given that the reader will, in turn, be applying and interpreting those statements in light of their own total experience, there may be unforeseen resonances (or differences) between the experiences of the theologian and reader – resonances which will only be recognised if the experiences are disclosed.

The place of prayerful theology in the academy

This discussion of the issues with the communication of prayerful theology brings us to the point where we can consider the particular position of the professional academic theologian. In the introductory discussion of Prevot and Coakley, it was noted that the answer of both of them to those who would question the place for thinking prayer in the academy is that it can be justified by the continued full engagement of theologians who practice this theological method with reasoned debate. The prayerful aspect of their theology then imposes, as Prevot says, an additional set of obligations to the rigour required by the academy.[537] I would broadly agree with this approach. This approach accepts that the professional theologian potentially wishes to engage with, and has

[537] Prevot, *Thinking Prayer*, pp. 16-17; Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self*, p. 17.

responsibilities to, the academic community and potentially society generally.[538] This implies that the theologian will wish to present what they say about God and God's relation to the world in a way that will have traction with those audiences: what they say then must be something with which those audiences can sensibly engage even if they do not share the same epistemological presuppositions as the theologian.[539] Whilst this wider engagement is a beneficial end in itself, it also exposes a theologian's speech about God to argument, including argument from other disciplines and, according to Kathryn Tanner, to a cultural contest: this exposure and challenge should produce better theology.[540]

If we articulate the notion that prayer imposes 'additional obligations' to academic rigour in the context of this thesis, we would say that theology which meets the requirements of the academy can also be subject to 'additional obligations' of prayerful Ignatian discernment. Although the requirements of prayer rather than the academy are said to be the 'additional' ones, the reality is that there are obligations to both the academy and arising from prayer. Those obligations may conflict with each other, which in some cases will mean that work that meets the requirements of academic rigour does not meet the requirements of prayerful discernment. Equally, the creative benefits of active receptivity and the free interaction of reason and interior movements may not result in work acceptable to the academy. Whilst, in theory, a theologian can be guided by prayer irrespective of the requirements they are working under, in practice these requirements may then constrain what they can say about God and how they can say it. This argues for requirements that place the minimum restrictions on the epistemological sources

---

[538] David F. Ford, *Shaping Theology: Engagements in a Religious and Secular World* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), p. 116.

[539] I have presented this as if compliance with the requirements of the academy will be a free choice of the theologian. However, it has to be acknowledged that this compliance may not be entirely voluntary where it is required in order to get or keep a job or a qualification or to get published.

[540] For the presentation of the university as a place of disputation, see Denys Turner, 'Doing Theology in the University', in *Fields of Faith: Theology and Religious Studies for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. by David F. Ford, Ben Quash and Janet Martin Soskice (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 25-38, pp. 35-38; Kathryn Tanner, 'Theology and Cultural Contest in the University', in *Religious Studies, Theology and the University: Conflicting Maps, Changing Terrain*, ed. by Linell E. Cady, Delwin Brown (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 199-212, pp. 205-206.

and methodologies but are consistent with reasoned debate with a wider audience.[541]

In some cases, in certain expressions of the modern secular university, these restrictions may involve abandoning the very practices needed to inform and guide theology, such as the prayerful discernment described in this thesis. Gavin D'Costa, for example, in *Theology in the Public Square, Church, Academy and Nation,* argues that 'without prayerfulness in students and teachers of theology, the university cannot produce theologians'. Theology for him must be prayer-based and animated by the love of God.[542] I can certainly see the force of this argument because the 'additional obligations' model we have been discussing either requires the practice of theology following academically rigorous methodologies to which prayer is added, or the practice of theology in a prayerful way, from which a product which is suitable for dissemination in the academy is extracted. Whilst D'Costa's solution is for theology to escape the Babylonian captivity of the academy, the 'additional obligations' model has the theologian stay in captivity but practice the prayerful aspects of theology behind closed doors.[543] Of course, in many expressions of the modern university, the obligations required to maintain academic rigour would not impinge on prayerful theology in this very restrictive way.[544] In general, the

[541] This should not be taken to imply that academic rigour is something that simply stands in the way of prayerful theology being freely expressed. The requirements of academic rigour have significant benefits for theology. See, for example, Andrew Louth's generally positive account of academic theology in which he concludes that 'academic theology can preserve the givenness, the prevenience, the reality of the Christ to whom we respond in love'. Louth, *Theology and Spirituality*, pp. 8-11.

[542] Gavin D'Costa, *Theology in the Public Square: Church, Academy and Nation* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 112, 123.

[543] D'Costa, *Theology in the Public Square: Church, Academy and Nation*, pp. 1,2.

[544] The additional obligations model has the benefit of being flexible and pragmatic. It provides a basis for the prayerful theologian to operate in a range of academic environments. However, whilst the acceptance of a universalist, rationalist version of what constitutes rigorous thought is in many cases a pragmatic solution, it should nonetheless be contested for the benefit not only of theology but of academia generally. There is an increasing acceptance in the wider academic world that subjective factors are an inevitable part of what is presented as rigorous thinking and that all judgments should be recognised as limited and provisional. This should give theologians greater confidence to challenge a restrictive view of the kind of thought that has a place in the academy. After all, as Simeon Zahl has argued, theology has always done its work in engagement with experience, with experiential arguments being used in the New Testament and throughout the history of Christianity and with account being taken by theologians of what he calls the 'affective salience' or anticipated experiential impact of doctrines. Zahl, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience*, pp. 32-40. See also Mike Higton's argument for secular and religious plurality, including

theologians working under the 'additional obligations' model can follow St. Paul in seeking to 'become all things to all people…for the sake of the gospel'[545] – adapting methodologies to communicate with those 'outside the faith' or at least in a way which can be the subject of reasoned debate without adopting a position of faith. Provided the theologian speaks one truth, it would seem reasonable if their prayerful theology brings them to a position to use different epistemological resources and methodologies to convince others of that position and to enrich the debate by allowing broader participation in it. However, it has to be accepted that sometimes the richness of their prayerful thought may be diminished in that process.

An illustration of the 'additional obligations' model can be found in Endean's discussion of the reception of Rahner.[546] Whilst Endean, at least implicitly, accepts that Rahner's theology includes insights that emerge from prayer, he is concerned that 'spiritual' readings of Rahner will compromise his legacy. The danger is that Rahner's theology is not seen as coherent thought but rather as based on 'telling stories about experience'. In order to avoid this, Endean states what are effectively 'requirements of the academy' that Rahner's theology must meet: that Rahner's theological insights must not be based on private revelation and that they must 'stand or fall on a basis generally acceptable at least to Christians at large, if not to human reason as such'. In other words, as Endean puts it: 'the fact that an insight emerges from prayer cannot render it immune from speculative criticism'. It is the compliance with these requirements that is seen by Endean as preserving Rahner's legacy.

Limitation to individual discernment

A potentially fundamental objection to the role of Ignatian discernment in theological reflection is that Ignatian discernment is confined to finding God's will

his argument that all university education properly takes the form of induction into a spiritual discipline: Mike Higton, *A Theology of Higher Education* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[545] 1 Corinthians 9:22.

[546] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, pp. 141-142.

for choices to be made by individuals. Thus, discernment as part of theological reflection may be seen as providing abstract information about God which is not relevant to any concrete choice to be made by the theologian. A collateral benefit to answering this objection is that it helps us understand the limits to the role of discernment here. We have already spoken of epistemic humility in the context of the fact that, generally, Ignatian discernment only leads to conclusions based on 'sufficient light' rather than indubitable certainty. As we will see, answering this objection clarifies further limitations on the assertions a theologian can make about the epistemic significance of the results of discernment.

Toner speaks of 'very severe limits' to God's will as the object of discernment, warning that these limits must be made clear if we are to avoid serious, even ludicrous, distortions of Ignatius' teaching'.[547] Ignatian discernment is for an individual to discern what should be done by that individual. Toner says that 'Ignatius is not proposing a way of finding any universal moral principle or rules applicable to all persons or to some class of persons or to some class of situations or cases.' He does not rule out the possibility that Ignatian discernment or some adaptation of it could be used in this way, but says that Ignatius never presented it for these purposes.[548] Ignatius' method then is to find God's will for a person in a particular context, and the importance of taking account of an individual's particular context is seen repeatedly in the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus.[549] This endorses the view that Ignatian discernment pays close attention to an individual's embodied locatedness. As we have already seen, Toner says that Ignatius and his commentators do not set out any developed thematic treatment of the limits of discerning God's will: his principal source is a letter Ignatius wrote to Francis Borgia about whether Borgia should become a cardinal. Ignatius writes that he is giving 'some account of the process of my feelings, as if I were examining my soul for myself'.[550] The conclusion of Ignatius' discernment is that he 'should impede the nomination to the best of my ability'. He goes on to say that he is convinced:

[547] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, pp. 25-26.
[548] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, p. 26.
[549] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, p. 27.
[550] Loyola, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, p. 245.

> that while it was God's will that I should adopt a clear position, if others adopted a contrary view and you were given this dignity, there would not be any contradiction whatsoever. The same Spirit could inspire me to take up one point of view for some reasons and inspire others to the contrary for other reasons, and what takes place would be the appointment requested.[551]

Amongst Toner's conclusions from this letter then are that discernment of God's will for the individual can include what the individual should advise and seek to persuade others and also that there is room for potentially fruitful disagreement inspired by the Holy Spirit.[552]

The role for discernment in theological reflection that I am proposing falls within the limitations that Toner derives from his interpretation of the *Spiritual Exercises* and the letter to Borgia. I would say that for the theologian, the question of what to say about God is a matter of individual discernment. It is akin to the question of what to seek to persuade others of or advise. Whilst Toner allows the possibility of the discernment of general principles, I would suggest that the discernment of general principles is not what is happening here. If that were the case, the claim made at the conclusion of the discernment process would be that a particular principle is God's will. That is not a claim that I am suggesting that a theologian can or should be making as the outcome of using Ignatian discernment as a prayerful theological method. The correct claim is that the theologian has, perhaps uncertainly, discerned what God wants that theologian to say. The epistemic consequence of this is that not only may the theologian be incorrect because of the general uncertainty of the discernment process, which has already been discussed, but also because it may be God's will that what the theologian says is just part of a discussion, perhaps a fruitful disagreement, that may ultimately lead to what is for God's greater glory. Whilst theologians may enunciate general principles, they do not do so on the basis that they have discovered them to be God's will but rather with the conviction that it is God's will that this contribution be made to the ongoing dialogue about God.

---

[551] Loyola, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, pp. 245-246.
[552] Toner, *Discerning God's Will*, pp. 52-53.

The role of the theologian here can be likened to the role of the individual in communal discernment. There are a variety of models that have been proposed for communal discernment, but one feature that they have in common is that they involve the sharing of individual discernment with the group. Communal discernment then provides us with an example of Ignatian discernment outside the context of discernment of God's will for the individual. The individuals who participate in a communal discernment process are each discerning God's will not for themselves but for the wider group.

The recent history of Ignatian communal discernment is a response to the observation in *Perfectae Caritatis,* the Vatican II decree on the religious life, that 'an effective renewal and adaptation demands the cooperation of all the members of the institute'.[553] In the Society of Jesus, communal discernment was encouraged by the then Superior General, Pedro Arrupe, to appropriate the changes initiated by Vatican II. This prompted an interest in the methodology of communal discernment and a series of studies in the early 1970s.[554] These studies drew on the principles of individual discernment in the *Spiritual Exercises* and the *Deliberatio primorum patrum*, which was the process of communal discernment undertaken by Ignatius and his companions about founding a new religious order. Both Futrell and Toner derived from these sources broadly similar methodologies for communal discernment. The details of these methodologies are not important for our purposes – what is of interest is that these methodologies contemplate individual discernment as part of the communal process and that the individual is to discern God's will for the group, not themselves. Importantly, there is an inherent

[553] Paul VI, 'Perfectae Caritatis: Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life', Vatican Archive, (1965) <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_perfectae-caritatis_en.html> [Accessed 23 August 2020].
[554] Futrell, 'Ignatian Discernment'; Toner, 'A Method for Communal Discernment of God's Will'; John C. Futrell, 'Communal Discernment: Reflections on Experience', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 4 (1972), 159-192; Ladislas Orsy, 'Toward a Theological Evaluation of Communal Discernment', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 5 (1973), 139-188; Jules J Toner, 'The Deliberation that Started the Jesuits: A Commentario on the *Deliberatio Primorum Patrum,* Newly Translated, with a Historical Introduction', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 6 (1974), 179-212. Endean is of the view that 'Ignatian legitimation for full scale Communal Discernment came principally from a highly selective reading of just one text' (the *Deliberatio*): Philip Endean, 'The Draughthors's Bloodlines: Discerning Together in the Ignatian Constitutions', *Way Supplement,* 85 (1996), 73-83, p. 80. Rahner endorses communal discernment in Rahner, 'Modern Piety and the Experience of Retreats'.

possibility that individuals may discern that they should make contributions that turn out not to represent God's will as determined by the whole group. That does not necessarily mean that the individual has not correctly discerned what their contribution should be, as that contribution may well play a fruitful role in reaching a conclusion: it may, for example, illuminate things which would not otherwise have been brought to light. There is also a recognition that each member of the discerning community must make a contribution of the results of their individual discernment and that more articulate voices must not dominate the process. There is epistemic humility here in the recognition that an unsophisticated contribution that runs contrary to the final communal choice may well be the correctly discerned contribution for an individual to make. There is a parallel with the role of the theologian, who can be seen as an individual voice discerning what to say to a wider group, even the whole of humanity, about God. As in the case of an individual's contribution to a communal discernment process, a theologian should recognise that their discernment about God can be wrong not only because of the inherent uncertainties of discernment, but also because the theologian's contribution may be just part of a process which will ultimately lead to speech about God which is to God's greater glory. This analogy, though, has its limits: the practice of theology cannot simply be identified with communal discernment. Communal discernment in the methodologies proposed in the 1970s stressed the importance of shared governing principles amongst the community carrying out the discernment. Despite this emphasis, at least in the Society of Jesus, communal discernment ran into numerous problems attributed to polarised responses to Vatican II.[555] This

[555] A description of the reception in the Society of Jesus of communal discernment from Vatican II onwards can be found in Andrew Hamilton, 'Correct Weight for Communal Discernment', *Way Supplement,* 85 (1996), 17-27. The experience of communal discernment is also linked to questions of authority and leadership, and there is some evidence that in women's religious communities there has been more of a move towards a participative model of religious life requiring, amongst other things, collective discernment: Gabriel Robin, 'Authority and Leadership', *Way Supplement,* 65 (1989), 119-130. The importance of discernment even within the Society of Jesus has varied over time but is currently at a high point: the promotion of personal and communal discernment is given the highest priority in the Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus 2019-2029: Arturo Sosa, 'Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus, 2019-2029', Curia Generalizia della Compagnia di Gesù, (2019) <https://3eh4ot43gk9g3h1uu7edbbf1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/documents/2019/03/Universal-Apostolic-Preferences-of-the-Society-of-Jesus-2019-2029.pdf> [Accessed 23 August 2020]. For the importance of lay discernment as part of the

polarisation meant that the shared principles were not present. In the context of theology, much more than in a religious order, shared principles can be absent. So whilst theology cannot simply be equated with a communal discernment process, a theologian can be one voice amongst others, and God's will for what that theologian should say can be the object of individual discernment.

Allowing that discernment can guide a theologian's work avoids distinguishing between a theologian's life and their theological work. If we were to say that a theologian can be guided by discernment in their life choices but not in what they say, think and write about God, that would involve making this distinction. As we have argued, the fact that a theologian's life is affected by their theology and their theology is affected by their wider experience is both inevitable and desirable. When Balthasar speaks of the theologian-saints who incarnate the theology they convey, the fact that their individual life choices reflect their theology is presented as desirable. Their lives are said 'to have reproduced the fullness of the Church's teaching, and their teaching the fullness of the Church's life'.[556] In any event, as Mike Higton has observed, it is 'impossible to draw a neat divide between the spaces in which inarticulate ordinary believing takes place and the spaces in which articulation takes place'. So:

> even if one looks at the believing in which atypically articulate people like academic theologians are involved, one will find that most of anyone's believing is inarticulate, that it is affectively charged and shaped, and that it is bound up in more ways than we realize with the practical patterns of life that it helps sustain[557]

On the other hand: 'those engaged in ordinary believing are always exercising agency in the reception, arrangement and transmission of their faith.'[558] I would argue then that thought about God is an inseparable part of individual discernment: distinguishing believing which is too articulate to be guided by discernment would be an arbitrary exercise. There is no reason to suppose that Ignatian discernment

laity's call to perfection, see John Zupez, 'The Universal Apostolic Preferences of The Society of Jesus', *The Way,* 60/2 (2021), 87-92, p. 90.

[556] Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology I: The Word Made Flesh*, p. 181.

[557] Mike Higton, *The Life of Christian Doctrine* (London: T&T Clark, 2020), p. 52.

[558] Higton, *The Life of Christian Doctrine*, p. 52.

cannot guide what a theologian thinks, says and writes about God as well as all the other individual choices they make.

The relationship with Church teaching

As we have seen, it is a presupposition in the *Spiritual Exercises* that all possible choices are 'on the side of our holy mother, the hierarchical Church, and are not bad or opposed to the Church' (*Exx.* 170). The *Spiritual Exercises* also contain 'Rules to follow in view of the true attitude of mind that we ought to maintain within the Church Militant' (*Exx.* 352-370). These include readiness to obey the hierarchical Church in everything, a requirement to praise and defend all the precepts of the Church and a requirement to 'maintain that the white I see, I shall believe to be black, if the hierarchical Church so stipulates' (*Exx.* 353, 361 and 365). Rahner cites the fact that choices must remain within the realm of the teaching and practice of the hierarchical Church as a reason for there being 'no need to fear that a door has been thrown open to uncontrolled mysticism'.[559] My purpose here is not to address in any general way the numerous questions which arise concerning the relationship of the theologian's task to church teaching, whether for the Roman Catholic ecclesial theologian or theologians who are members of other denominations. If that were the purpose, it would be necessary to explore, for example, the difference between making choices within the limitations of Church teaching and making choices about what is said or written about that teaching: there is scope to adopt a critical stance whilst remaining 'on the side of' the Church. My limited purpose here is to establish that the relationship with the Church is an integral part of Ignatius' teaching and not something that can simply be dispensed with without considering the wider implications. In other words, there is a clear requirement in the Exercises that choices be in accordance with the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church; that requirement performs a significant function in limiting the choices that can be made and, therefore, for non-Roman Catholics (like me), I would suggest that there is a need to consider what external constraints replace

[559] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 101.

that requirement. There is also a need to acknowledge that, in this context, I am prepared to apply Ignatius' teaching analogously, whereas generally I have tried to be faithful to his intentions. One of many possible justifications for making a distinction here is that Ignatius was not really faced with the question, at least in any meaningful way, of which of a number of different church traditions to treat as authoritative.

In answering the question of what external constraints are appropriate, it has to be acknowledged that conformity to Church teaching *does* provide a bulwark against uncontrolled mysticism. In Ignatius' time, this provided a defence against early critics of the Exercises, amidst what Aaron Pidel has described as the 'moral panic' about the uncontrolled illuminism of *alumbradismo* in Spain in the first half of the sixteenth century.[560] Pidel sees parallels between the concerns of these early critics and contemporary criticism of the Exercises for fostering 'an intensely private and interior spirituality that neglects the roles of reason and religious authority in favour of affectivity and the authority of religious experience.'[561] Nadal's defence of the Exercises emphasised those aspects that control the affective and mystical elements – particularly, reason and the conformity to the teaching of the hierarchical church. Pidel sees the critics of the Exercises as having the aim of curtailing all practice of individual discernment: the rules regarding conformity to church teaching are a balanced response to that. As Rahner says, with Ignatius the

[560] Aaron D. Pidel, 'Jerome Nadal's Apology for the Spiritual Exercises: A Study in Balanced Spirituality', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 52 (2020), 1-36, p. 6. The historical context here is complicated. According to O'Reilly, the rules regarding the relationship with the Church were late additions to *Spiritual Exercises*: the 'book was drafted in its essentials in 1522, when Ignatius was living as a recluse in Manresa' but these rules were added much later, in 1539-41. O'Reilly, *The Spiritual Exercises*, pp. 40, 54. As well as the possibility that these rules were a bulwark against illuminism, they were also likely to have been a reaction to Lutheranism. O'Reilly is of the view that Ignatius' spirituality was not shaped, or even profoundly influenced, by the concerns of the Counter-Reformation Church prior to the foundation of the Society of Jesus. After that time, the ends of papal reform became increasingly Ignatius' own. However, 'the defense and celebration of papal authority co-existed with repeated, sometimes anguished, inner conflict in his own practice of obedience, particularly during the reign of Paul IV; and it was never extreme'. O'Reilly is of the view that the rules 'were intended, at least in part, to signal the allegiance of Ignatius and his companions at a decisive point, when the key issue in Catholic-Protestant debates was the locus and nature of the church'. O'Reilly, *The Spiritual Exercises*, pp. 8, 38, 54, 103. See also John W. O'Malley, 'The Jesuits, St. Ignatius and the Counter Reformation: Some Recent Studies and their Implications for Today', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 14.1 (1982), 1-28.

[561] Pidel, 'Jerome Nadal's Apology for the Spiritual Exercises: A Study in Balanced Spirituality', p. 1.

barrier against uncontrolled Illuminism is done 'in a way which does not from the start deny, or in practice supress, what might in the individual case become dangerous, on the grounds that it has already been abused.'[562] Whether the provisions regarding conformity with Church teaching would be in the Exercises in the absence of the febrile atmosphere in sixteenth-century Spain is an interesting one, but not one that I would suggest should affect our assessment of the importance of those provisions. Even if we assume that they are a response to external pressures that does not diminish their value if we see some validity in the dangers of uncontrolled mysticism.[563] In a way, the response to external criticism is an emphatic confirmation of the validity of external constraint. The need for discernment to be constrained by Church teaching in some way is clearly established as an essential feature of Ignatian discernment as contemplated by the Exercises.

However, if we see conformity to Church teaching as simply proscribing certain outcomes of discernment, we may both underestimate the significance and misunderstand the role of the hierarchical church in the discernment process. Whilst Rahner, in 'The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola', describes this conformity as an 'antecedent delimitation of the possible field of God's will', he also points the way in other writings to a much richer understanding of this conformity, which makes it an integral part of the discernment process.[564] In 'Ignatian Spirituality and Devotion to the Heart of Jesus', Rahner identifies the relation to the Church as one of the three essential features of Ignatian spirituality, the other two being indifference and existential choice. Rahner sees these three elements as related. Indifference is a sense of the relativity of all that is not God, the existential element relates to the always interim and provisional choices made in light of this relativity, and this implies a simple and humble acceptance of 'whatever may be willed by God, though it is not God'. This includes acceptance of, and unconditional love for, 'all the relative distinctions God has willed to make' including 'the humanity of Christ, his earthly life in all its concrete limitation, for the

[562] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 102.
[563] Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God*, p. 44.
[564] Rahner, 'Logic', p. 90.

Church, the Church's hierarchy, the Pope, the rules governing our attitude to the Church'. The relationship with the Church grows from the root of 'silent love of humility, of service, of lack of self-importance, which is thus both the product and anti-toxin of existential indifference.' Rahner says this involves a *reflexive consciousness* of the Church's presence. The Church is to be served in spite of all one's experiences of its weaknesses.[565] It can already be seen that this *reflexive consciousness* of the Church has the potential to have a much more significant role in discernment than simply treating Church teaching as an antecedent, or even subsequent, limitation on the available choices.

However, Rahner's understanding of the Church's role goes beyond even ascetic humility. As Fritz has pointed out, it is part of the 'pre-cognitive, self-expressive ground that is the proper site for decision'.[566] In other words, feeling with the Church is itself part of the discernment process, a movement in the soul. Rahner asks: 'Is there any need to dwell on the fact that loyalty to the Church can only be sound and wholesome when it is the loyalty of a heart serving in love, a heart whose relationship to the Church is loving?'[567] This understanding of the relation to the Church is presented as an antidote to the 'dangers in the emphasis on the Church' where 'the Church is transformed from an instrument in the hand of God to an end in itself; the Church is identified with one particular tendency, school of thought, or attitude.'[568] Loving the Church then can involve making of the Church 'that which she is meant to be' which is 'the means, in humble service, of salvation for all.' It is not the defence of one historical tradition or our own habits or particular inheritance. It is love that does not 'degrade the rules of loyalty to the Church into narrow-minded, narrow-hearted party fanaticism'.[569] This loving relation to the Church then is more profound than the notion of antecedent limitation would suggest, but also, at least from the perspective of a theologian, more flexible in allowing the theologian to play their part in making the Church what she is meant to be.

---

[565] Rahner, 'Ignatian Spirituality and Devotion to the Heart of Jesus', pp. 186-187.
[566] Fritz, *Freedom Made Manifest*, pp. 154, 155.
[567] Rahner, 'Ignatian Spirituality and Devotion to the Heart of Jesus', p. 197.
[568] Rahner, 'Ignatian Spirituality and Devotion to the Heart of Jesus', p. 190.
[569] Rahner, 'Ignatian Spirituality and Devotion to the Heart of Jesus', pp. 197-198.

The further and final aspect of Rahner's understanding of the relation to the Church is his Christological claim that the Heart of Jesus is the source of true love for the Church. The Church then is to be loved in 'cooperation with and imitation of' that love which is her very foundation', in particular, the imitation of Christ's love for the Church as his bride. Rahner here refers to the origin of the Church as the second Eve out of the side of Christ as the second Adam, as in the typological interpretation of John 19:34 in his 1936 doctoral dissertation, *E Latere Christi.*[570] Thus, serving under Christ's standard and the following of Christ, implies sharing Christ's love for the Church as both holy (through being redeemed by Christ) and in the form of its sinful human members. This Christological understanding of the relation to the Church brings us to our penultimate topic in this chapter, which is the significance of the Christological dimension of Ignatian discernment for the theologian. My limited purpose has been to suggest that the relation to the Church is an integral part of the Ignatian discernment process and not an easily dispensable limitation. How that can be interpreted, or even whether it provides an acceptable starting point for reflection, depends on many other questions of ecclesiology and the understanding of the theologian's role. However, if we accept Rahner's interpretation of Ignatian spirituality, we can at least situate this question as Christological, as a question of Christ's loving relation to a pilgrim Church.

The Christological dimension

I have already argued in previous chapters for the importance of the Christological dimension of the Exercises and, in addition, for the importance of Christic meditation in the practice of ongoing discernment. In this chapter, we have already seen the potential importance of Christic meditation for active receptivity. Christic meditations – the practice of imaginative prayer based on scripture – along with the use of colloquys, as discussions with Christ, are not practices to be used in the Exercises then subsequently abandoned, but rather a lifelong practice. On this

[570] Karl Rahner, 'E Latere Christi', in *Sämtliche Werke: Spiritualität und Theologie der Kirchenväter*, ed. by Batlogg, Andreas R., Farrugia, Eduard and Neufeld, Karl-Heinz (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1999) vol. 3, pp. 1-84.

basis, Christic meditation would comprise an important element of the prayer life of a theologian practising Ignatian discernment as prayerful thought. It is worth briefly reciting the reasons for this. First, Christic meditation is important for cultivating the 'indifference' which is a precursor to Ignatian choice. The sense of the absolute relativity of all things to God is cultivated by the practice of Christic meditation both through the kenotic example of Christ's willingness and death and the guarantee the resurrection provides of the life beyond death to all worldly things. From an experiential perspective it is this relativisation of all things to God which allows God to be found in all things. Indifference, then, based on Christ's example is the basis of active receptivity. Imaginative contemplation of Christ's life also provides the example which is to be imitated. The openness to Christ as an example is of a different nature when it is on an imaginative basis. It is holistic and relational.[571] It is an attempt to enter into the experience of Christ's life in a fuller way than by reasoned analysis of the events related by scripture. It promotes (if we accept some of McGilchrist's argument) openness to the broadest range of metaphor and allusion and to a full range of symbolic meanings. It allows for thinking with Christ, not only about him.[572] Finally, as in the Exercises themselves, Christic contemplation provides the essential context in which movements in the soul can be attended to: Christic contemplation is transparent to the sufficient light of discernment, a time of heightened sensitivity and awareness.

There are dangers in this approach, not least that of supposing imaginative contemplation provides epistemically significant information about Jesus's life:

---

[571] For Andrew Louth, this relational aspect is of great importance. He starts his famous paper on 'Theology and Spirituality' with an account of the trial of Jesus in the fourth gospel where Pilate asks, 'What is Truth?' According to Louth, 'what we would normally regard as intellectual inquiry – the pursuit of truth – and what we would not normally regard as an intellectual matter at all – the development of a human relationship – are closely related and deeply interwoven'. He contrasts two tendencies in theology: the search for propositional truth with an appeal to discursive reason and the search for truth in the authenticity discovered in our response to Jesus Christ as a person. Louth says that 'both these tendencies have points in their favour'. Louth, *Theology and Spirituality*, pp. 1, 5-6.

[572] I would suggest that this imaginative engagement can facilitate, but not require, the kind of hermeneutical approach outlined by Barth in his Romans prefaces – in particular, the thinking after (*nachdenken*) or with (*mitdenken*) the author. This implies trying to understand scripture not for the purpose of objectively distancing ourselves from it but to point where it points: 'The Word ought to be exposed in the words'. See Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 8.

imaginative prayer should not be confused with private revelation. Assuming these dangers can be avoided, we also need to acknowledge that in adopting a prayer practice based on Christic meditation, a choice is being made that has implications for a theologian. The choice to pay attention to one area of experience – experience derived from the contemplation of Christ – will have consequences for the theology which emerges. I would suggest, though, that for a theologian who is a Christian, this is a choice that can be justified: it is justified by the theological presupposition that Christ is God's self-communication. It is further justified by the conviction that God's self-communication in this way is not exhausted by reading words and absorbing concepts about Jesus: the incarnation is already a form of communication that goes beyond words. Openness to the fullness of God's self-communication in Christ cannot then be seen as being in any way restrictive.[573]

It may be instructive to consider further some brief but profound remarks of Rahner in his 1936 dissertation, *E Latere Christi*. As pointed out by Endean, this dissertation argues for the legitimacy of reading the gospels typologically. For Rahner, that implies that the events of Christ's life 'work themselves into the life of the Christian with a salvific power, over and above the moral example they embody'. These events are not merely retrospectively symbolic but are symbols from the outset. These events then are not just examples, but an address to us who come later in history and our response to these invitations is part of the very meaning of the events which constitute the address: 'if one can read the New Testament typologically, then this yields 'applications' which really from the outset belong to the meaning of the narrated events themselves, and thus count as God's thoughts – they are not just 'pious meditations'.[574] Thus, openness to the full meaning of Christ's life requires a response to the address which the events of Christ's life constitute. In the context of Ignatian discernment, that means making all individual choices as responses to the address of the events of Christ's life. The correctly discerned individual response is part of the meaning of the events of Christ's life as intended by God. These events are not merely historical

[573] 'For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell' Col 1:19.
[574] Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality*, p. 120. The quote is Endean's translation from Rahner, 'E Latere Christi', p. 83.

exemplification of independently known general norms but the concrete individual norms in themselves.[575] Ongoing Christic meditation then is active receptivity and openness to the full and ever-unfolding meaning of the events of Christ's life and thus to God's self-communication. It is imaginative because it must be open to symbolic meaning. For the theologian who wishes to speak about God in a way that is guided by the Holy Spirit, this is not an optional element of prayerful practice but rather the one thing necessary.

Resistance to Enframing

We have now reached the point where we can consider whether theological discernment is resistant to the pervasive Enframing stance described by Heidegger as misrelating us to everything we encounter, including other human beings and even God. We can begin by asking how, in particular, a theologian is affected by this Enframing stance. If we accept Heidegger's diagnosis, a theologian, like any other human being, relates to everything as standing-reserve, as meaningless resource. Even the relation to God can see God in terms of God's uses – for example, as a cause or explanation or as philosophical technology: God and faith can be used to further arguments and agendas. Furthermore, theologians may seek to fit God into a comprehensive ground plan. In other words, theologians can be part of methodical, institutionalised and specialised activities that seek to place God into a world picture where God is only as humans represent God and set God forth. It is evident that academic theology has become an activity that requires specialisation – perhaps necessarily so because of the gnoseological concupiscence described by Rahner. The practice of academic theology is also methodical and institutionalised like any other academic activity. That all this seeks to place God into a world picture as described is more questionable, but this has to be recognised as a danger, particularly of theological endeavours which can be described as scientific, such as historical-critical exegesis or the search for the historical Jesus.

[575] Rahner, 'E Latere Christi', p. 83.

It does have to be acknowledged that theologians can be seen already to resist an Enframing stance with attention being paid throughout the history of theological reflection to the mystery of God, to the danger of worshipping idols of our own making instead of God and to the limits of what can be said about God. If, however, we accept the force of Heidegger's argument, then we will see the Enframing stance as something that entraps us. It is not something that we escape from merely by saying the right things about theological language. It is not something that can be evaded even if we believe that our Christian metaphysics has been articulated in a way that is not ontotheological. This is because Enframing is the result of the ontotheology that holds sway in our epoch and affects the way all humans relate to things, often without us even realising it. It is for this reason that I would see the avoidance of an Enframing stance as something which requires discipline. This is why we find in Heidegger's later thought a description of various ways of thinking which together amount to something analogous to a spiritual discipline. I would see such a discipline as a practice that requires effort in the sense of rigour, application, regularity and longevity. Heidegger, as we have seen, describes the ways that we should attempt to think being as requiring endurance, persistence, patience, effort, delicate care, rigour, piety, courage, a more venturesome daring, even submission and sacrifice.

If the description of the ways of thinking in the later Heidegger as a spiritual discipline seems strange, it is worth briefly considering the work of Pierre Hadot who, in *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault,* presents ancient Greek and Roman philosophy as spiritual exercises. He describes this presentation as having consequences for our understanding not only of ancient thought but of philosophy itself. Hadot explicitly identifies the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises as being the Christian version of a Greco-Roman tradition attested in early Latin Christianity well before St. Ignatius of Loyola, and corresponding to the Greek Christian term *askesis*, which he says must be understood not as asceticism, but as the practice of spiritual exercises which already existed within the philosophical tradition of antiquity. Hadot accepts that referring to spiritual exercises will be disconcerting for the contemporary reader but explains that only the word "spiritual" describes all the aspects of the reality he wants to describe. In particular,

he finds in ancient philosophy exercises that are more than "thought" or "intellectual" exercises because those words do not indicate clearly enough the important role of imagination and sensibility. These are also more than ethical exercises, as whilst these exercises are concerned with the conduct of life, they go beyond this and correspond to a 'transformation of our vision of the world'. The word "spiritual" reveals the true dimension of ancient philosophical exercises as exercises whereby the individual 're-places himself within the perspective of the Whole'.[576] Thus in Hadot, we find a circuitous link between the ancient Greek philosophy which is so prominent in Heidegger's later thought and the concept of spiritual exercises in general and Ignatius' Exercises in particular. This provides some support for the notion of describing Heidegger's later philosophy in terms of spiritual exercises, and for the possibility of a relationship between Heidegger's later thought and Ignatian spirituality, even before we examine specific analogies to see how close that relationship is.[577]

If then we are asking whether prayer as a spiritual practice resists an Enframing stance towards God and other humans, we can already see that not all forms of prayer would be analogous to the ways of thinking described by Heidegger as not all forms of prayer could properly be described as a spiritual discipline. However, ongoing Ignatian discernment as I have described it, derived as it is from the highly disciplined – though flexible – practices of the *Spiritual Exercises*, constitutes a discipline to which all the adjectives used by Heidegger to describe his own way of thinking apply, including in a quite central way the notions of submission and sacrifice. We can, therefore, properly say that Heidegger's later

[576] Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 81-82.

[577] In Hadot's few specific references to Heidegger in these key essays, Heidegger's philosophy is described (along with that of Bergson and Husserl) as 'indissolubly linked to the university' and so 'reduced to philosophical discourse' and so 'no longer a way of life or form of life'. Whilst Hadot sees Heidegger as taking up the Platonic notion of philosophy as "training for death" by making anticipation of death a precondition of authentic existence, he characterises this as *thinking* about dying rather than training for it. It would not seem that Hadot sees Heidegger as carrying out philosophy as a spiritual discipline. However, these limited asides would seem to be based on Heidegger's earlier philosophy (Hadot describes him as an existentialist), so this is not directly relevant to an argument that Heidegger's later way of thinking, which aims to resist Enframing, can be described as a spiritual discipline. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, pp. 95, 120-121 (fn. 123), 271-272.

thought that resists Enframing and prayerful discernment share the similarity of both being spiritual disciplines or exercises. This may be a surprising conclusion. If, as many theologians do, we focus only on Heidegger's critique of ontotheology, then we may consider an adequate response to be found in a philosophical argument about the relation of being to God. If we go beyond that and engage with Heidegger's diagnosis of entrapment by an Enframing stance, we may think the response to seeing everything as meaningless resource can only be found in passivity that lets things be. It is only if we engage with the constructive movement of Heidegger's later thought that we see that his approach is not passive in this way, and is better seen in terms of active exercises.

This characterisation of Heidegger's ways of resisting Enframing and Ignatian spirituality as a disciplined activity should nonetheless give us pause for thought: in both cases, the end which is sought – the avoidance of Enframing or the discernment and submission to God's will – seems to be contradicted by the wilful means used to reach it. In the context of Ignatian spirituality, we have discussed this tension in our consideration of whether Ignatian discernment is a controlling technique. In our discussion of Heidegger's thought, we have come across this tension as we considered the willing non-willing of *Gelassenheit.* When we discussed this, briefly, in the neurophysiological idiom of Iain McGilchrist, it was in terms of the promotion of right hemisphere activity (rather than passivity) as the antidote to rigid and controlling left hemisphere dominance. The point of raising this here is not to further the discussion of that tension, but merely to note that it is common to both Heidegger's later thought which resists Enframing and Ignatian discernment.

If we accept then that Heidegger's positive ways of avoiding Enframing and ongoing Ignatian discernment can both be seen as spiritual exercises, this at least establishes the possibility that the prayerful practice I have described can resist Enframing. In order to explore that possibility further, we need to consider further the analogies and disanalogies between the two. In doing this, I am not seeking to show that Heidegger's "country paths" can be equated with Ignatian prayer in any way, but rather to ask whether these analogies lead us to suppose that Ignatian prayer has features that help us to avoid an Enframing stance. The areas to be

explored in comparing what I will refer to as "Heidegger's path" with the "Ignatian path" will be: the relation to calculative reason, authentic questioning, disruptive techniques, language and poetry/scripture, Gelassenheit, active receptivity and the epistemic significance of inner experience.

The relation of Heidegger's path and the Ignatian path to calculative reason is of great importance because it is at the heart of the difficulty we are exploring of bringing prayer together with thought about God. As we have seen, the critical movement of Heidegger's thought and his identification of the Enframing stance presents a clear and strong critique of calculative and representational thought in a way that Ignatian discernment does not. If we accept Heidegger's version of the history of metaphysics, the ontotheology that underpins the Enframing stance only begins to hold sway in the Nietzschean epoch. Heidegger's diagnosis and identification of the Enframing stance did not even apply to the ways of thinking and relating to things that held sway in Ignatius' time. Nonetheless, prayer generally and particularly Ignatian discernment do provide alternatives to calculative and representational thought. Both the Heideggerian path and the Ignatian path seek to distinguish themselves to some extent from calculative reason. In the Ignatian path, a distinction is made between reason and movements of the spirits. As Rahner has argued, something more than reason is needed to find the prescriptions needed for an individual or group to discern God's will when it cannot be derived from general principles. In Heidegger's path, calculative reason is identified with the Enframing stance. So Ignatian prayer and Heidegger's path of thinking are distinct from calculative reason, but both also importantly envisage an ongoing relationship with it. In Heidegger's path, there is an enduring engagement with the metaphysical thinking he seeks to overcome: Enframing harbours within itself the saving power. As I have argued, this engagement is an integral part of, and not merely a preparatory step to, letting in another way of thinking. Heidegger straightforwardly acknowledges the necessity for calculative and representational thought alongside meditative thought in the memorial address in his 1959 book, *Gelassenheit*. In Ignatian discernment, as I have argued earlier in this chapter, there is also ongoing positive engagement with reason – attention to both is a necessary part of discernment. I would see the Heideggerian path and Ignatian path (or at least the

Ignatian path as currently practised) as struggling with the same problem here. Calculative and representational thought needs to be overcome in order to allow for the possibility of another way of thinking which can correctly relate us to being (or God) and everything else, and yet calculative thinking also has a crucial and ongoing role even in attaining this other way of thinking. The analogy between the two paths here is that both seek to differentiate themselves from calculative and representational thought but also recognise the need for an ongoing relationship with it. It is this need for an ongoing relationship that I would see as the most striking: in the case of Ignatian discernment, it is surprising to find a reasoning process embedded alongside prayer; in the case of Heidegger's path, the ongoing engagement with calculative reason is surprising given the strength of his critique of it.

Both Heidegger's path and the Ignatian path can be described as questioning. We have seen that Heidegger describes his way of thought as one which cannot leave questioning behind: questioning is 'the piety of thought'. We have also discussed Gall's challenge: that faith stands in the way of authentic questioning, and we found in Heidegger a response to that challenge in the paradox that genuine faith must be open to questioning if it is to be something other than a convenience. Ignatian discernment is a prayerful practice in which the questions – the matters to be discerned – are central. We do though need to be aware that questioning can itself be part of the Enframing stance. When Heidegger describes the development of a ground plan and world picture, the kinds of questions being asked are very much part of that. They can be the kind of questions that will fill in and expand the ground plan and facilitate the verification of a precise framework. It follows that, the fact that questions are being asked does not in itself mean that an Enframing stance has been evaded: there is a need to pay attention to the kinds of questions that are asked and to their openness and authenticity. The choice of questions can be a form of control: inauthentic questions can determine the results of the enquiry. Does prayer generally, and the Ignatian path, in particular, resist an Enframing stance in the way questions are asked? I would suggest that they do. The kind of questioning we find in Ignatian discernment places it somewhere between petition and contemplation. As with petition, something is being asked for, but the

answer may well be found in the openness of contemplation. The Christian tradition does place limits on petitionary prayer which serve to restrict its use as an instrument. For example, Aquinas sees petitionary prayer as a refinement of desire: knowing what we ought to ask for is equated with knowing what we ought to desire. Petitionary prayer is the interpretation and transformation of human desire into the likeness of divine desire.[578] In Ignatian prayer, which seeks guidance, we see the concept of indifference and openness as playing an important part in seeking – almost as a precondition – this kind of transformation of desire. The Principle and Foundation (*Exx.* 23), the Suscipe prayer in the Contemplation for Attaining Love (*Exx.* 234) and the Meditations which reflect on submission to God's will such as the Two Standards (*Exx.* 136-142) and the three kinds of humility (*Exx.* 165-168), all promote submission to God's will and thus resist human wilfulness. These notions of indifference and openness contribute to an approach to questioning that resists the questioning itself being part of an Enframing stance. The Ignatian path, like Heidegger's path, is a way of questioning that questions the questioning itself to ensure that it does not become instrumental.

The next issue to be considered is whether Heidegger's path and the Ignatian path comprise disruptive techniques which contribute to overcoming an Enframing stance. I would argue that we do find such techniques, but that they are not the same techniques in the two different paths and that, whilst these techniques seek to take us away from calculative thought, quite how they prevent us from seeing things as resources to be optimised is not entirely clear. There is some overlap here with the discussion of language and poetry which follows. In the Ignatian path, the whole context of prayer is disruptive: thinking that takes place before or in the presence of God already takes place in a context that disrupts our own position of control. There are, however, much more deliberate disruptive techniques in the Ignatian tradition. The most obvious is imaginative prayer and, in particular, the prayer of the senses. These techniques aim to move away from calculative reason and place the pray-er in a position where their response can be emotional or based on the feeling or mood which is evoked. These techniques can

[578] Cocksworth, *Prayer: A Guide for the Perplexed*, pp. 145, 146, 151-154, 162.

make the pray-er's responses more personal: they can be intended to make them more, not less, involved. By focussing on seemingly superfluous detail, imaginative prayer is at the very least a distraction from attention to rational analysis. It is at the very least then a less instrumental approach, which takes the pray-er away from being an orderer of resource. Another such prayerful technique is that of the colloquy, where there is a straightforward dialogue with Christ. The expectation is not that a reasoned conversation will ensue, but instead that the pray-er, by entering into a conversation, moves away from seeing themselves as an objective observer. In Heidegger's path, we have also noted disruptive techniques. In his later writings, we find works in the form of dialogue (the previously discussed 'Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking') and even poetry.[579] We also find changes in Heidegger's style from his earlier work, described by Richardson as including the widespread use of new vocabulary, definitions that we cannot quite work out, punning connections, sweeping claims and enigmatic conclusions. In general, we find a departure from linear argument. Heidegger's disruptive techniques are subtle and can only be seen by comparison with the style of his earlier works. Any relationship between these techniques and the much more obvious ones of the Ignatian way, even by way of analogy, is relatively weak. Generally, these techniques have a shared objective of moving away from calculative rational thought, but not much more than that.

In the area of language and poetry, the analogy between the Ignatian path and Heidegger's path would seem to be closer. Here comparisons can be made between the way Heidegger reads poetry and works from metaphysics, particularly early Greek philosophy, and the Ignatian approach to reading and meditating on scripture.[580] One particularly notable thing is how Heidegger often reflects at length on short passages from poetry or philosophy as if they 'speak with authority'– for example, his citation of Hölderlin's lines about the proximity of danger and the saving power or his citation of the words "…poetically man dwells…".[581] There is a

[579] Heidegger, 'Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking'; Heidegger, 'The Thinker as Poet'.
[580] Caputo compares Heidegger's reading of philosophical texts to Eckhart's reading of scripture: Caputo, *The Mystical Element*, pp. 167-169.
[581] Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', pp. 28, 34; Heidegger, 'What are Poets For?', p. 118; Heidegger, '"…Poetically Man Dwells…"'.

common emphasis in Heidegger's path and the Ignatian path on receptivity – on letting language speak. In the same way that Heidegger speaks of poetic dwelling, we can also speak of scriptural meditation as a dwelling. Heidegger's approach to poetry and Ignatian reading of scripture does not treat the text as something to be studied but instead as an event that calls for a response.[582] In the Ignatian tradition, imaginative prayer is an important part of treating scripture as an event in this way – this is not a re-creation of a historical occurrence with realistic detail, but rather an attempt by the prayerful reader to enter into the event being related. There is a shared wariness – in both Heidegger's approach to hermeneutics and meditative reading – of adding our own explanations: this is expressed by Heidegger's memorable metaphor of interpretation having the subtle detuning effect of snow falling on a bell. Scripture, like art and poetry for Heidegger, transports us outside the realm of the ordinary to the 'strange new world within the bible'.[583] The meditative reader of scripture then has a similar role to the preserver of art and poetry, as described by Heidegger. The preserver needs to stay within the truth that happens in the work, letting the work be and submitting to displacement. Our previous summary description of Heidegger's reading of poetry can also serve as a description of meditative reading of scripture: it does not seek to define words or explain them or to further conceptualise or aestheticise. It does not seek to place a passage in its historical or even broader literary context. It is receptive and meditative listening – an entering into of a world and a sensitivity to earthiness. It is a listening without an attempt to justify and a reaching beyond the representational and conceptual.[584] I would argue then that there are significant parallels between the approach to Christic scriptural meditation in the Ignatian tradition and Heidegger's approach to poetry.

Notwithstanding this shared emphasis on receptivity to, rather than instrumental use of, language, Heidegger's path and that of Ignatius also involve

[582] Robinson claims that Heidegger traces his own hermeneutical approach to his study of theology: Robinson, 'The German Discussion of the Later Heidegger', pp. 51-52.
[583] Karl Barth, 'The Strange New World Within the Bible', in *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1928), pp. 28-50.
[584] This is not to suggest that this is the only way for a theologian to read scripture, but rather that this is a way of reading scripture that is attentive to movements of the soul, giving it a central place in Christocentric prayerful discernment.

receptivity to *all* experience. I have already argued earlier in this chapter for the breadth of Ignatian receptivity to all experience, particularly the Ignatian articulation of that as indifference: a willingness to find God in all ways by having the courage to regard no way to God as being *the* way. The analogies with Heidegger's path are found here in the notion of *Gelassenheit*. This includes attunement to moods such as anxiety and profound boredom – but also to joyful moods. It can involve meditation on what lies closest; on that which concerns each of us here and now. In both the Ignatian way and Heidegger's way, there is an analogous receptivity to everyday experience of moods, feelings and emotion. Both are cautious about attaching epistemic certainty to inner experience. Whilst Ignatian spirituality does not deny the possibility of indubitable experiences, as I have argued earlier in this chapter, the need for discernment does not arise in those extraordinary cases but rather where choices are to be made based on uncertain experience. Similarly, whilst it could be argued that *Ereignis* should be seen as analogous to extraordinary indubitable experience, Heidegger also calls for attention to be paid to everyday uncertain inner experience. Both ways are not looking for particular experiences which can be pointed to as providing information but rather to learn from things that cannot be attributed any certainty. We are to look beyond the world of those things we can grasp and have the courage to leave our attention there.

Whilst the relation between Heidegger's way and the Ignatian way is found in these loose analogies, I would argue that this relationship is sufficiently close that there is some promise for the Ignatian way to resist an Enframing stance. Many of these analogies would also exist in relation to other prayerful practices. However, in the case of Ignatian prayer, if we take all the analogies together – of discipline, of a differentiation from, but ongoing relationship with, reason, of disruptive techniques, the importance of language (and respectively poetry and scripture) and the nature of receptivity – I would suggest that the closeness is quite marked. This, then, is an alternative to contemplative practices to which the "apophatic rage" would otherwise point us. A comparison of Ignatian discernment and the constructive movement in Heidegger's later thought shows us a way to think God, which has the potential to resist Enframing, but which may not have been apparent

had we focussed only on the critical movement in Heidegger's later thought or if we had focussed on the whither of that thought rather than the methodological analogies.

Conclusion

For the theologian who is a Christian, prayerful theology does not replace rigorous thought about God, but neither is it an entirely separate Exercise. There must be thought about God whilst kneeling and prayer whilst at the desk or even in a liminal state between the two. I have suggested then that the practice of ongoing Ignatian discernment can provide a fruitful basis for prayerful theology. It encourages active receptivity and openness to all experience, it resists mastery, it is relational and in a radical way open to the other, it provides a place where thought and attention to interior movements can co-exist and interact. It is not a seeking of God in a particular way but an openness to all ways and yet it is always in and through Christ – without that in any way being a limitation to openness. It recognises our irreducible subjectivity without making of that locatedness an impregnable place from which the rest of the world can be judged but where the theologian is immune from judgement. For the theologian who is a Christian, prayerful thought recognises that God is a context that cannot be escaped from. God is not an element of subjectivity that can be overcome. Whenever we choose to speak about God, we do so in God's presence. There are also significant similarities between Ignatian discernment and the paths of thought described by the later Heidegger in his attempts to think in ways that resist an Enframing stance. These similarities point to the potential of Ignatian discernment to also resist the Enframing stance and, through following a discipline, to attempt to resist misrelation to the world, the other and God. This is not then a call for theologians to return to the cloister to bring theology and spirituality together, but rather to be in the world and there to find God in all things and all experience. This is not a way of setting theologians apart or asking them to be especially holy or gifted with great mystical experiences or to elevate their own experience above that of others. It is rather asking theologians like every Christian to be vitally concerned to seek God's

will in their daily task, which in the case of a theologian happens to be speaking about God. Ignatian discernment should provide theologians with the confidence to speak in the ways in which the interaction of reason and movements of the spirits points them, but the humility to recognise the fallibility out of which they speak. Ignatian discernment is not *the* way to think prayerfully or pray thoughtfully, but it is *a* way to do so. If I return to my own experience, which led to these deliberations and discernment, I have come to recognise that the disruption of prayer by thought or thought by prayer can be fruitful. I can perhaps see that this disruption, this willingness to be surprised by God, is a recognition that theology's system – the coherence for which theology is always striving – will constantly be disrupted by experience however unsettling that disruption may be and will always be gloriously exceeded by that of which it tries to speak.

Epilogue

Rule 5 of the Rules for Discernment of Spirits (*Exx*. 333) says:

> We must pay close attention to the whole course of our thoughts: if the beginning, middle and end are entirely good, and tend towards what is wholly right, this is a sign of the good angel, but if the course of the thoughts suggested to us leads us finally to something bad, or distracting, or less good than what one had previously intended to do, or if in the end the person is weakened, upset or distressed, losing the peace, tranquillity and quiet previously experienced, all this is a clear sign of the bad spirit, the enemy of our progress and eternal well-being.

This Rule calls for the retrospective assessment of the discernments we have made. Whilst this kind of assessment may seem to come too late, it at least allows for 'the review that prepares for the future' contemplated by Rule 6.[585] In other words, paying attention to the results of discernment is part of the long ascetic discipline of ongoing discernment.

In the context of a doctoral thesis yet to be submitted for examination it does at the very least seem awkward to disclose at this point my own assessment of the course of my thoughts, and I am not about to do that. Even if I were minded to make such an assessment, it would seem prudent not to use criteria that require the course of my thoughts to have been 'entirely good' and not to have led to something 'less good than what one had previously intended to do'. This is a clear example of a time when the thought expressed in this work needs to be allowed to stand alone without being supported (or undermined) by a self-assessment of its prayerfulness.

So, this thesis cannot in any explicit way serve as an example for the kind of prayerful theology it is seeking to promote. Indeed it is, on its face, an exercise in discursive reason, to be judged by the rigour of the academy, and the assessment of whether it complies with 'additional requirements' of discerning prayer will need to remain undisclosed. However, I think it is possible and instructive in an epilogue to disclose, in a limited and general way, some part of the largely unremarkable

[585] Timothy M. Gallagher, *Spiritual Consolation: An Ignatian Guide for the Greater Discernment of Spirits* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2007), pp. 90-101.

spiritual journey I have been on whilst working on this thesis. There are three themes – one from the beginning, one from the middle and one from the end of the course of my thoughts. They are respectively: hospitality, discipline and the need for a balance between prayerfulness and thoughtfulness.

From the beginning, the feeling I have been more or less aware of is a sense of gratitude for the hospitality I have received. It is the hospitality that made me welcome as an Anglican in a Jesuit retreat house in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains to make the Spiritual Exercises.[586] It is the hospitality I received in my university studies.[587] Being welcomed and accompanied in the course of thought and prayer is something to be grateful for. One response on my part to this feeling of gratitude is a desire, which has been realised only sporadically and unsystematically, to be as hospitable as possible in the methodology of prayerful thought that I have proposed. So, I have tried, where possible, to limit the number of things that the reader has to agree with in order to find the possibility of discerning theology helpful: I have exercised restraint in making gratuitous doctrinal assertions. This means, for example, that I have tried to keep the space I seek to occupy between too limited a view of discernment and too prescriptive or knowing an approach to discernment, as broad as possible. Another example would be my attempt to explain the relevance of Heidegger for the Christian metaphysician. However, this hospitality is inadequately realised. There is, for example, limited appeal to those who seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit but would want to see an entirely bible-based justification for that. So, I have been motivated by a desire to be as open and hospitable to as many theologians from as many traditions as possible, but have to recognise that more could be done.

The second theme, from the middle of my thoughts, would be the realisation on my part of just how difficult the discipline of prayerful theology can be. There are the usual problems of finding the time for prayer in an already busy life. There are also the problems of the complexities of the life amidst which prayer takes place and the calls that places upon us – in my case, the onset of the global

[586] The Sacred Heart Jesuit Retreat House, Sedalia CO.
[587] The kind of hospitality described in Chapter 7, 'The Sociable University' of Higton, *A Theology of Higher Education*, pp. 197-214.

pandemic. But beyond these normal problems of any prayerful discipline, thinking prayer has its own challenges. There is a persistent temptation to just go back to following the paths of reason without prayer. It is hard sometimes to see the point of bringing theological questions to God in prayer. Discerning prayer can go through long periods of feeling utterly futile. When discerning theology is carried out in the midst of life (as it must be), one must identify those feelings of consolation and desolation which are both spiritual and in some way related to the theological question being discerned and not to all the other matters in your life where God would wish his will to be followed. So, whilst I would wish to promote discerning theology, I would not wish to do so on a false prospectus of it always being easy or obviously fruitful.

The third theme, which comes from the end of my thoughts, is a realisation of the need to promote and recognise the true value of the thinking in thinking prayer. From the start of looking at this issue, I was aware that calls for prayer and theology to be reunited recognised the detriment to both prayer and theology of the separation. But for me, the emphasis was very much on the detriment to theology of not being prayerful. The problem for me personally, as related in the preface, was the intrusion of theological questions into my prayer life. However, throughout this thesis, the focus has very much been on whether bringing theological questions into prayer and bringing thought into prayer can be fruitful for the resulting theology. An emphasis that has only become clear to me at the end of my studies is that the thoughtful and reasoned elements of discernment are of great value in the discernment process itself. Most discernment involves attention to both reason and discernment of the spirits. The importance of reason holds not just for theological discernment but also for all communal and individual discernment. So, in all these cases, better reasoning leads to better discernment. More generally, I would say not only that prayerful thought about God is better than just thought about God, but also that thoughtful prayer to God is better than just prayer to God. So what I have found then is not just that there is potential for the intrusion of theological questions into prayer to provide the collateral benefit of bearing theological fruit but also for the prayer itself to thereby become better.

Bibliography:

Almeida, Juliano, '"Composition of Place" and "Application of the Senses" in Ignatian Prayer', *The Downside Review* (2019), 47-58.

Althaus-Reid, Marcella, 'Queering the Cross: The Politics of Redemption and the External Debt', *Feminist Theology,* 15(3) (2007), 289-301.

Anselm, *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973).

Aquinas, Thomas, *The Disputed Questions on Truth*, trans. Mulligan, Robert W., McGlynn, James V and Schmidt Robert W. 3 vols. Vol. 1 (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952-54).

Aschenbrenner, George, 'Consciousness Examen', *Review for Religious,* 31 (1972), 14-21.

Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Chadwick, Henry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Bakker, Leo, *Freiheit und Erfahrung: Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen über die Unterscheidung der Geister bei Ignatius von Loyola* (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1970).

Balthasar, Hans Urs von, *The Christian State of Life*, trans. McCarthy, Frances Mary (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1983).

———, *Elucidations*, trans. Riches, John (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1998).

———, 'Exerzitien und Theologie', *Orientierung,* 12 (1948), 229-232.

———, *Explorations in Theology I: The Word Made Flesh* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989).

———, *The Glory of the Lord I: Seeing the Form*, trans. Leiva-Merikakis, Erasmo (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982).

———, *Hans Urs von Balthasar on the Ignatian Exercises: An Anthology* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2019).

———, *Love Alone: The Way of Revelation* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1968).

———, *Man is Created*, trans. Walker, Adrian. Vol. 5, *Explorations in Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2014).

———, *Prayer*, trans. Harrison, Graham (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986).

———, *You Have Words of Eternal Life*, trans. Martin, Dennis (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991).

Barrow, Michael, 'Discovering Non-conceptual Prayer', *The Way Supplement,* 54 (1985), 83-93.

Barth, Karl, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Hoskyns, Edwyn C. 6th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933).

———, 'The Strange New World Within the Bible', in *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1928), pp. 28-50.

Belu, Dana S., and Feenberg, Andrew, 'Heidegger's Aporetic Ontology of Technology', *Inquiry,* 53:1 (2010), 1-19.

Blond, Louis P., *Heidegger and Nietzsche: Overcoming Metaphysics* (London: Continuum, 2010).

Blum, Paul Richard, 'Psychology and Culture of the Intellect: Ignatius of Loyola and Antonio Possevino', in *Cognitive Psychology in Early Jesuit Scholasticism*, ed. by Heider, Daniel (Neunkirchen-Seelscheid: editiones scholasticae, 2016), pp. 12-37.

Buckley, Michael, 'The Structure of the Rules for Discernment', in *The Way of Ignatius Loyola: Contemporary Approaches to The Spiritual Exercises*, ed. by Sheldrake, Philip (London SPCK, 1991), pp. 219-237.

Caputo, John D., *Demythologizing Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

———, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982).

———, 'Heidegger and Theology', in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 326-344.

———, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986).

———, 'People of God, People of Being: The Theological Presuppositions of Heidegger's Path of Thought', in *Appropriating Heidegger*, ed. by Faulconer, James E. and Wrathall, Mark A. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 85-100.

———, 'What is Merold Westphal's Critique of Ontotheology Criticizing?', in *Gazing Through a Prism Darkly: Reflections on Merold Westphal's Hermeneutical Epistemology*, ed. by Putt, B. Keith (Fordham University Press, 2009), pp. 100-115.

Caraman, Philip, *Ignatius Loyola* (London: Collins, 1990).

Chadwick, Graham, 'Giving the Exercises and Training Directors in an Ecumenical Context', *The Way*, 35-41.

Clark, Timothy, *Martin Heidegger*. 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

Coakley, Sarah, 'Dark Contemplation and Epistemic Transformation: The Analytic Theologian Re-Meets Teresa of Ávila', in *Analytical Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*, ed. by Crisp, Oliver D. and Rea, Michael C (Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 280-312.

———, *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

———, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Chichester: John Wiley, 2002).

———, 'Prayer as Crucible: How My Mind Has Changed."', *Christian Century,* 128 (2011), 32-40.

———, 'Prayer, Politics and Trinity: Vying Models of Authority in Third - Fourth-Century Debates on Prayer and "Orthodoxy"', *Scottish Journal of Theology,* 66.4 (2013), 377-399.

———, 'Sarah Coakley, God Sexuality and the Self', online video recording, YouTube, (2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0gxtpmlgBg> [Accessed 27 November 2021].

Cocksworth, Ashley, 'On Prayer in Anglican Systematic Theology', *International Journal of Systematic Theology,* 22 (2020), 383-411.

———, *Prayer: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark, 2018).

Cone, James H., *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992).

Connolly, William, 'Contemporary Spiritual Direction: Scope and Principles An Introductory Essay', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 7 (1975), 95-124.

The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus: Translated with an Introduction and Commentary, (St. Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970).

Cooper, David E., *Heidegger* (London: Claridge Press, 1996).

Crowe, Benjamin, 'Heidegger and the Prospect of a Phenomenology of Prayer', in *The Phenomenology of Prayer*, ed. by Benson, Bruce Ellis and Wirzba, Norman (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 119-133.

D'Costa, Gavin, *Theology in the Public Square: Church, Academy and Nation* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005).

Daniels, Brandy R., 'Getting Lost at Sea? Apophasis, Antisociality, and the (In-) Stability of Academic Theology', in *Sarah Coakley and the Future of Systematic Theology*, ed. by McRandal, Janice (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), pp. 67-97.

Davies, Oliver, 'The Theological Aesthetics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. by Oakes, Edward T. and Moss, David (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 131-142.

Demoustier, Adrien, 'Ignatian Contemplation and the Contemplative Way', *The Way Supplement,* 103 (2002), 16-24.

Dulles, Avery, 'Finding God's Will: Rahner's Interpretation of the Ignatian Election', *Woodstock Letters,* 94 (1965), 130-152.

Dyckman, Katherine, Garvin, Mary, and Liebert, Elizabeth, *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2001).

Eaborn, Gary, 'The Inseparability of Hans urs von Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr' (unpublished master's dissertation, Durham University, 2019).

Egan, Harvey D, *Ignatius Loyola The Mystic* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1987).

———, 'Ignatius, Prayer and the Spiritual Exercises', *The Way,* 60/2 (2021), 47-58.

———, *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1976).

Endean, Philip, '"Applying Such Exercises": Early Jesuit Practice', *Review of Ignatian Spirituality,* 98 (2001), 41-65.

———, 'The Concept of Ignatian Mysticism: Beyond Rahner and de Guibert', *The Way Supplement,* 103 (2002), 77-86.

———, 'The Draughthorse's Bloodlines: Discerning Together in the Ignatian Constitutions', *Way Supplement,* 85 (1996), 73-83.

———, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

———, 'The Spiritual Exercises', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, ed. by Worcester, Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 52-68.

———, 'Theology and Spirituality', in *The New SCM Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. by Sheldrake, Philip (London: SCM Press, 2005), pp. 74-80.

———, 'Who Do You Say Ignatius Is?: Jesuit Fundamentalism and Beyond', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 19/5 (1987), 1-53.

Evennett, H. Outram, *The Spirit of the Counter-Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

Ford, David F., *Shaping Theology: Engagements in a Religious and Secular World* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007).

Francis, 'Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home'(2015) <http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html>.

Fritz, Peter Joseph, *Freedom Made Manifest: Rahner's Fundamental Option and Theological Aesthetics* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019).

———, *Karl Rahner's Theological Aesthetics* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014).

Futrell, John C., 'Communal Discernment: Reflections on Experience', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 4 (1972), 159-192.

———, 'Ignatian Discernment', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 2 (1970), 47-88.

Gall, Robert, *Beyond Theism and Atheism: Heidegger's Significance for Religious Thinking* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987).

Gallagher, Timothy M., *Spiritual Consolation: An Ignatian Guide for the Greater Discernment of Spirits* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2007).

Govan, John, 'Spiritual Direction for a Contemplative', *The Way Supplement,* 54 (1985), 60-70.

Green, Thomas H., *Wheat Among the Weeds* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1984).

Griffiths, Paul J, *The Practice of Catholic Theology: A Modest Proposal* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2016).

Grogan, Brian, 'The One Who Gives the Exercises', *Way Supplement,* 38 (1980), 18-29.

Haar, Michel, '"The End of Metaphysics" and "A New Beginning"', in *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000), vol. 1, pp. 149-164.

Hadot, Pierre, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. Chase, Michael (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

Haight, Roger, 'The Spiritual Exercises as an Ecumenical Strategy', *Theological Studies,* 75 (2014), 331-349.

Hamilton, Andrew, 'Correct Weight for Communal Discernment', *Way Supplement,* 85 (1996), 17-27.

Harbaugh, Jim, *A 12-Step Approach to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Oxford: Sheed & Ward, 1997).

Heidegger, Martin, 'The Age of the World Picture', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 115-154.

———, *Being and Time*, trans. Stambaugh, John (New York: State University of New York Press, 2010).

———, 'Buliding, Dwelling, Thinking', in *Basic Writings*, ed. by Krell, David F. (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 243-255.

———, 'Conversation on a Country Path About Thinking', in *Discourse on Thinking* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 58-90.

———, 'Das Ge-Stell', in *Gesamtausgabe Band 76: Bremer und Freiburger Vörträge*, ed. by Jaeger, P. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), pp. 24-45.

———, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. Anderson, John M. and Freund E. Hans (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

———, 'The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking', in *Basic Writings*, ed. by Krell, David F. (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 311-325.

———, 'Gespräch mit Martin Heidegger am 6 November 1951', in *Gesamtausgabe Band 15: Seminare (1951-1973)*, ed. by Ochwadt, Curd (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2005), pp. 425-439.

———, 'Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry', in *Existence and Being*, ed. by Brock, Werner (London: Vision Press, 1949), pp. 293-315.

———, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Fried, Gregory and Polt Richard. Second edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

———, 'Language', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, ed. by Hofstadter, Albert (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 187-210.

———, 'Letter on Humanism', in *Basic Writings*, ed. by Krell, David F. (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 190-242.

———, 'Memorial Address', in *Discourse on Thinking* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 43-57.

———, *Nietzsche*. ed. by Krell, David F. 4 vols (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

———, 'The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics', in *Identity and Difference* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 42-74.

———, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in *Basic Writings*, ed. by Krell, David F. (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 88-139.

———, *Parmenides*, trans. Schuwer, André and Rojcewicz, Richard (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

———, *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

———, '"…Poetically Man Dwells…"', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, ed. by Hofstadter, Albert (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 211-229.

———, 'The Principle of Ground', *Man and World,* 7 (1974), 207-222.

———, 'The Principle of Identity', in *Identity and Difference* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 23-41.

———, 'The Question Concerning Technology', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 4-35.

———, *The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).

———, 'Remembrance of the Poet', in *Existence and Being*, ed. by Brock, Werner (London: Vision Press, 1949), pp. 252-290.

———, 'Science and Reflection', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 155-182.

———, 'The Thinker as Poet', in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 2-14.

———, 'The Turning', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 36-49.

———, 'The Way to Language', in *Basic Writings*, ed. by Krell, David F. (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 285-306.

———, 'What are Poets For?', in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 89-142.

———, 'What is Metaphysics?', in *Basic Writings*, ed. by Krell, David F. (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 45-57.

———, 'What is Metaphysics?: Postscript', in *Existence and Being*, ed. by Brock, Werner (London: Vision Press, 1949), pp. 380-392.

———, 'The Word of Nietzsche: "God is Dead"', in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 53-112.

Higton, Mike, *The Life of Christian Doctrine* (London: T&T Clark, 2020).

———, *A Theology of Higher Education* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Houdek, Frank, 'The Limitations of Ignatian Prayer', *The Way Supplement,* 82 (1995), 26-34.

Howells, Edward, *John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila: Mystical Knowing and Selfhood* (New York: Crossroad, 2002).

———, 'Mystical Theology and Human Experience', in *The Oxford Handbook of Mystical Theology*, ed. by McIntosh, Mark A and Howells, Edward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 45-63.

Ivens, Michael, 'The Eighteenth Annotation and the Early Directories', in *The Way of Ignatius Loyola: Contemporary Approaches to The Spiritual Exercises*, ed. by Sheldrake, Philip (London: SPCK, 1990), pp. 238-247.

———, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary A Handbook for Retreat Directors* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998).

Jalics, Franz, 'The Contemplative Phase of the Ignatian Exercises', *The Way Supplement* (2002), 25-42.

Kant, Immanuel, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, trans. Ellington, James W. 2nd edn (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001).

Kaufman, Tone S., 'Old Practices in New Places: Breaking Violence through Ignatian Exercises in a Swedish Maximum Security Prison', *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality,* 17 (2017), 19-39.

Kilby, Karen, *Balthasar: A (Very) Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

———, *Karl Rahner: Theology and Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2004).

Kinerk, Edward, 'When Jesuits Pray: A Perspective on the Prayer of Apostolic Persons', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 15/5 (1985), 1-20.

Klingenschmitt, Gordon James, 'Discerning the Spirits in Ecclesial Ethics: Ignatius of Loyola and the Pneumatological Foundations of Ecclesiology' (doctoral thesis, Regent University, 2012).

LaCouter, Travis, *Balthasar and Prayer*, *T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2021).

Louth, Andrew, *Theology and Spirituality* (Oxford: SLG Press, 1978).

Loyola, Ignacio de, 'Reminiscences: or Autobiography of Ignatius Loyola', in *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings* (London: Penguin, 1996), pp. 1-64.

———, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, trans. Munitz, Joseph A. and Endean, Philip (London: Penguin, 1996).

———, 'The Spiritual Diary', in *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings* (London: Penguin, 1996), pp. 65-110.

Lubov, Deborah Castellano, 'Pope Highlights 3 Aspects of Ignatian Style'(2017) <https://zenit.org/articles/pope-highlights-3-aspects-of-ignatian-style/>.

Macquarrie, John, *Heidegger and Christianity: The Hensley Henson Lectures 1993-94* (London: SCM Press, 1994).

Malpan, Varghese, *A Comparative Study of the Bhagavad Gita and the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola on the Process of Spiritual Liberation* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1992).

Mansfield, Dermot, 'The Prayer of Faith, Spiritual Direction and the Exercises', *The Way,* 25 (1985), 315-324.

McDermott, Brian O., 'Spiritual Consolation and its Role in the Second Time of Election', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 50/4 (2018), 1-50.

McGilchrist, Iain, 'God, Metaphor, and the Language of the Hemispheres', in *Religion, Language, and the Human Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 135-166.

———, *The Master and his Emissary: the Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2009).

McIntosh, Mark A, *Discernment and Truth: The Spirituality and Theology of Knowledge* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2004).

———, 'Mystical Theology at the Heart of Theology', in *The Oxford Handbook of Mystical Theology*, ed. by McIntosh, Mark A and Howells, Edward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 25-43.

———, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998).

McIntosh, Mark A, and Howells, Edward, 'Introduction', in *The Oxford Handbook of Mystical Theology*, ed. by McIntosh, Mark A and Howells, Edward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 1-5.

Merton, Thomas, *Seeds of Contemplation* (Wheathampstead: Anthony Clarke, 1972).

Meures, Franz, 'The Ignatian Constitutions and the Gift of Discernment', in *The Lord of Friendship: Friendship, Discernment and Mission in Ignatian Spirituality* (Oxford: Way Books, 2011).

Milbank, John, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006).

———, *The Word Made Strange* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

Milbank, John, Ward, Graham, and Pickstock, Catherine, 'Introduction: Suspending the Material: The Turn of Radical Orthodoxy', in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. by Milbank, John, Ward, Graham and Pickstock, Catherine (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 1-20.

Moberg, Dennis J., and Calkins, Martin, 'Reflection in Business Ethics: Insights from St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises', *Journal of Business Ethics,* 33 (2001), 257-270.

Myers, Benjamin, 'Exegetical Mysticism: Scripture, *Paideia,* and the Spiritual Senses', in *Sarah Coakley and the Future of Systematic Theology*, ed. by McRandal, Janice (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), pp. 1-14.

O'Leary, Brian, 'Jesuit Spirituality Before and After the Suppression', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review,* 103 (2014), 586-597.

O'Leary, Brian, 'The Mysticism of Ignatius Loyola', *Review of Ignatian Spirituality,* 38.3 (2007), 77-97.

O'Malley, John W., 'The Jesuits, St. Ignatius and the Counter Reformation: Some Recent Studies and their Implications for Today', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 14.1 (1982), 1-28.

O'Reilly, Terence, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Context, Sources, Reception* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

Orsy, Ladislas, 'Toward a Theological Evaluation of Communal Discernment', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 5 (1973), 139-188.

Ott, Heinrich, 'What is Systematic Theology?', in *The Later Heidegger and Theology*, ed. by Robinson, James M. and Cobb, John B. (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 77-111.

Palmer, Martin E., *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Jesuit Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996).

Pattison, George, *Thinking about God in an Age of Technology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Paul VI, 'Perfectae Caritatis: Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life', Vatican Archive, (1965) <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/document

s/vat-ii_decree_19651028_perfectae-caritatis_en.html> [Accessed 23 August 2020].

Pavone, Sabina, 'A Saint under Trial: Ignatius of Loyola between Alcalá and Rome', in *A Companion to Ignatius of Loyola: Life, Writings, Spirituality, Influence*, ed. by Maryks, Robert Aleksander (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 45-64.

Penton, Ted, 'Spiritual Care for the Poor: An Ignatian Response to Pope Francis's Challenge', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 50/2 (2018), 1-39.

Pidel, Aaron D., 'Jerome Nadal's Apology for the Spiritual Exercises: A Study in Balanced Spirituality', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 52 (2020), 1-36.

Polt, Richard, *Heidegger: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1999).

Prevot, Andrew, *Thinking Prayer: Theology and Spirituality Amid the Crises of Modernity* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015).

Prudhomme, Jeff Owen, *God and Being: Heidegger's Relation to Theology* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1997).

Quash, Ben, 'The Theo-drama', in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. by Oakes, Edward T. and Moss, David (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 143-157.

Radvan, Iain, 'Spiritual Direction, Experiential Focusing and the Examen of St. Ignatius', *The Way,* 57 (2018), 101-110.

Rahner, Hugo, *Ignatius the Theologian*, trans. Barry, Michael (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990).

Rahner, Karl, 'Christmas in the Light of the Ignatian *Exercises*', in *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961-92), vol. 17, pp. 3-7.

———, 'Comments by Karl Rahner on Questions Raised by Avery Dulles', in *Ignatius of Loyola: His Personality and Spiritual Heritage 1556-1956*, ed. by Wulf, Friedrich (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1977), pp. 290-293.

———, 'Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace', in *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961-92), vol. 1, pp. 297-317.

———, *The Dynamic Element in the Church: Quaestiones Disputatae 12* (Freiburg: Herder, 1964).

———, 'E Latere Christi', in *Sämtliche Werke: Spiritualität und Theologie der Kirchenväter*, ed. by Batlogg, Andreas R., Farrugia, Eduard and Neufeld, Karl-Heinz (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1999), vol. 3, pp. 1-84.

———, *Encounters with Silence*, trans. Demske, James M. (South Bend, IN: St. Augustne's Press, 1999).

———, *Hearer of the Word: Laying the Foundation for a Philosophy of Religion*, trans. Donceel, Joseph (New York: Continuum, 1994).

———, 'The Ignatian Mysticism of Joy in the World', in *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961-92), vol. 3, pp. 277-293.

———, 'Ignatian Spirituality and Devotion to the Heart of Jesus', in *Mission and Grace* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1966), vol. 3, pp. 176-210.

———, 'Ignatius of Loyola Speaks to a Modern Jesuit', in *Ignatius of Loyola*, ed. by Imhoff, Paul (London: Collins, 1979), pp. 11-38.

———, 'The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola', in *The Dynamic Element in the Church: Quaestiones Disputatae 12* (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), pp. 84-170.

———, 'Modern Piety and the Experience of Retreats', in *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961-92), vol. 16, pp. 135-155.

———, 'On the Relationship between Theology and the Contemporary Sciences', in *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961-92), vol. 13, pp. 94-102.

———, 'Reflections on a New Task for Fundamental Theology', in *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961-92), vol. 16, pp. 156-166.

———, 'Reflections on Methodology in Theology', in *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961-92), vol. 11, pp. 68-114.

———, 'Reflections on the Experience of Grace', in *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961-92), vol. 3, pp. 86-90.

———, *Sacramentum Mundi: an Encyclopedia of Theology*. 6 vols. Vol. 1 (London: Burns & Oates, 1968).

———, *Spirit in the World*, trans. Dych, William V. (London: Sheed & Ward, 1968).

———, *Spiritual Exercises*, trans. Baker, Kenneth, S.J. (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2014).

———, 'Visions and Prophecies', in *Studies in Modern Theology* (Freiburg: Herder, 1965), pp. 89-188.

Richardson, John, *Heidegger* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

Robin, Gabriel, 'Authority and Leadership', *Way Supplement,* 65 (1989), 119-130.

Robinson, James M. , 'The German Discussion of the Later Heidegger', in *The Later Heidegger and Theology*, ed. by Robinson, James M. and Cobb, John B. (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 3-76.

Rubenstein, Mary-Jane, 'Dionysius, Derrida, and the Critique of "Ontotheology"', *Modern Theology,* 24 (2008), 725-741.

Sambonet, Guia, 'How to Present the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola to the Postmodern World?', (2010) <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330026219_How_to_Present_the_Spiritual_Exercises_of_Saint_Ignatius_of_Loyola_to_the_Postmodern_World> [accessed 25 August 2020].

Scott, Joan, 'The Experience of Ignatian Prayer', *The Way Supplement,* 82 (1995), 54-61.

Sheehan, Thomas, *Karl Rahner: The Philosophical Foundations* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1987).

Sheldrake, Philip, 'Introduction', in *The Way of Ignatius Loyola: Contemporary Approaches to The Spiritual Exercises*, ed. by Sheldrake, Philip (London: SPCK, 1991), pp. 1-13.

———, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method* (London: SPCK, 1995).

———, *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998).

———, 'Traditions of Spiritual Guidance: St. Ignatius Loyola and Spiritual Direction, I', *The Way,* 24 (1984), 312-319.

Skinnider, Martha, 'The Exercises in Daily Life', in *The Way of Ignatius Loyola: Contemporary Approaches to The Spiritual Exercises*, ed. by Sheldrake, Philip (London: SPCK, 1991), pp. 131-141.

Sluga, Hans, 'Heidegger's Nietzsche', in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. by Dreyfus, Hubert L. and Wrathall, Mark A. (Oxford Blackwell, 2005), pp. 102-120.

Sluhovsky, Moshe, 'Discernment of Difference, the Introspective Subject, and the Birth of Modernity', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* 36 (2006), 169-200.

———, 'St. Ignatius of Loyola's "Spiritual Exercises" and their Contribution to Modern Introspective Subjectivity', *The Catholic Historical Review* (2013), 649-674.

Sosa, Arturo, 'Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus, 2019-2029', Curia Generalizia della Compagnia di Gesù, (2019)

<https://3eh4ot43gk9g3h1uu7edbbf1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/documents/2019/03/Universal-Apostolic-Preferences-of-the-Society-of-Jesus-2019-2029.pdf> [Accessed 23 August 2020].

St. Louis, Donald, 'The Ignatian Examen: A Method of Theological Reflection', *Way Supplement,* 55 (1986), 67-76.

Tanner, Kathryn, 'Theology and Cultural Contest in the University', in *Religious Studies, Theology and the University: Conflicting Maps, Changing Terrain*, ed. by Linell E. Cady, Delwin Brown (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 199-212.

Taylor, Charles, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

Tetlow, Joseph A., 'The Most Postmodern Prayer: American Jesuit Identity and the Examen of Conscience, 1920-1990', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 26 (1994), 1-67.

Thomson, Iain, *Heidegger on Ontotheology: Technology and the Politics of Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

———, 'Ontotheology', in *Interpreting Heidegger: Critical Essays*, ed. by Dahlstrom, Daniel O. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 106-132.

Toner, Jules J, 'The Deliberation that Started the Jesuits: A Commentario on the *Deliberatio Primorum Patrum,* Newly Translated, with a Historical Introduction', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 6 (1974), 179-212.

Toner, Jules J., *A Commentary on Saint Ignatius' Rules for the Discernment of Spirits: A Guide to the Principles and Practice* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1982).

———, *Discerning God's Will: Ignatius of Loyola's Teaching on Christian Decision Making* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1991).

———, 'A Method for Communal Discernment of God's Will', *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits,* 3 (1971), 121-152.

Tonstad, Linn Marie, *Queer Theology: Beyond Apologetics* (Eugene OR: Cascade Books, 2018).

Townsend, David, 'The Examen and the Exercises - A Re-appraisal', *Way Supplement,* 52 (1985), 53-63.

Turner, Denys, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

———, 'Doing Theology in the University', in *Fields of Faith: Theology and Religious Studies for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. by David F. Ford, Ben Quash and

Janet Martin Soskice (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 25-38.

———, *Julian of Norwich, Theologian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

Vallega-Neu, Daniela, '*Ereignis*: The Event of Appropriation', in *Martin Heidegger: Key Concepts*, ed. by Davis, Bret W. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 140-154.

Veale, Joseph, 'Dominant Orthodoxies', *Milltown Studies,* 30 (1992), 43-65.

———, 'Manifold Gifts', *Way Supplement,* 82 (1995), 44-53.

Vermander, Benoît, 'Jesuits in the Twenty-First Century', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits*, ed. by Županov, Ines G. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 1054-1072.

Waaijman, Kees, 'Uninterrupted prayer - A spiritual challenge', *Hervormde teologiese studies,* 75 (4) (2019), 1-4.

Ward, Graham, *How the Light Gets In: Ethical Life I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Webster, John, *Holiness* (London: SCM Press, 2003).

Whistler, David, 'Post-Established Harmony: Kant and Analogy Reconsidered', *Sophia,* 52 (2013), 235-258.

Williams, A. N., 'Mystical Theology Redux: The Pattern of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*', *Modern Theology,* 13:1 (1997), 53-74.

Williams, Rowan, *Being Christian: Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, Prayer* (London: SPCK, 2014).

Wolfe, Judith, *Heidegger and Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

Wortley, John, *The Book of the Elders: Sayings of the Desert Fathers: the Systematic Collection* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012).

Zahl, Simeon, *The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

Zimmerman, Michael E., *Eclipse of the Self: The Development of Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1981).

Zupez, John, 'The Universal Apostolic Preferences of The Society of Jesus', *The Way,* 60/2 (2021), 87-92.