

TO MAKE THE EXERCISES BETTER THE ADDITIONAL DIRECTIONS

By BRIAN GROGAN

UNENTHUSIASTIC READERS of the additions in the *Spiritual Exercises* may be helped by this description of a Zen painting instructor:

A painter seats himself before his pupils. He examines his brush and slowly makes ready for its use, carefully rubs ink, straightens the long strip of paper that lies before him on the mat and finally, after lapsing for a time into profound concentration, in which he sits as one inviolable, he produces with rapid, absolutely sure strokes a picture, which capable of no further correction and needing none serves the class as a model.

The masters behave as if they were alone. They hardly condescend to give their pupils a glance, still less a word. They carry out the preliminary movements musingly and composedly, they efface themselves in the process of shaping and creating.

Why does the teacher not allow these preliminaries . . . to be done by an experienced pupil? Does it lend wings to his visionary and plastic powers if he rubs the ink himself? And what impels him to repeat the process at every single lesson? . . . he knows from experience that the preparations for working put him simultaneously in the right frame of mind for creating. The meditative repose in which he performs them gives him that vital loosening and equability of all his powers, that collectedness and presence of mind without which no right work can be done.¹

This article will refer to all the advice which Ignatius offers to the person who gives the Exercises, some of which is to be passed on to the exercitant. It is not restricted to the notes commonly called additions,² but also includes the annotations, preludes to prayer and various sets of rules. The Directory which Ignatius dictated to Father Vitoria supports this broader interpretation of the additions:

¹ Herrigel, Eugene: *Zen in the Art of Archery* (New York, 1971), pp 64-65.

² Exx 73-90, 127-31, 204-07, 226-9.

Also he can be told as a sort of annotation or counsel (*quasi como annotacion o aviso*) . . . that he should agree that he should be able to take so much greater fruit from the Exercises to the extent that he is resigned into the hands of the Lord. . . .³

The purpose of the additions is to mobilize the whole person in his search for the divine will. Ignatius had a comprehensive view of man: body, imagination, mind, senses, feeling, and will were all to be brought into play to reach the goal of the Exercises. The quest for God's will is not limited to formal periods of prayer, but extends throughout the day: there is an addition to cover the moment of waking and another for the moment of going to sleep. All the human resources are harnessed to the work of the Exercises; obstacles to God's action are removed; peace, harmony, simplicity, unity of purpose are promoted. Ignatius states that the additions are 'to help one to go through the Exercises better and find more readily what he desires'.⁴ He considers them important: 'All ten additions are to be observed with great care'.⁵ Throughout the four weeks he expects the exercitant to use the particular examen to see whether he is being faithful to the additions.⁶ If the exercitant is not experiencing God's action the director is to ask him about the additions.⁷ Observance of the additions expresses the exercitant's seriousness of purpose and willingness to co-operate with God.⁸

The Context of the Additions

We can only understand the additions by referring them to the purpose of the Exercises, which in turn must be placed within the context of God's initiative. It is first of all necessary to want to make the Exercises; to be eager and generous in seeking God's will.⁹ God must implant the decision to make the Exercises and the desire 'to make as much progress as possible'.¹⁰ It would be semi-pelagian naturalism to think of the additions as work done by the exercitant to prepare himself to receive God's grace.¹¹ The person giving the Exercises does not know in advance what is going to happen and what he is going to do. He can only watch to see how God will guide this particular exercitant through the various

³ MHSI *Directoria* doc. 4 (Rome, 1955), p 97. See translation, quoted here, by Program to Adapt the Spiritual Exercises, New Jersey.

⁴ Exx 73.

⁵ Exx 130.

⁶ Exx 90.

⁷ Exx 6.

⁸ Exx 5.

⁹ Exx 15.

¹⁰ Exx 20.

¹¹ Gagliardi: *Commentarii in Exercitiis Spiritualibus* (Bruges, 1882), p 74. *Nec ullae reliquiae in nobis residuae sint illius pelagianismi spiritualis, in quam multi incidunt.* MHSI *Directoria*, p 660.

additions. He has to remind himself repeatedly that God is the real director of the retreat: 'He knows our human nature infinitely better than we do and when we try various additions he often grants to each one the grace to understand what is suitable for him'.¹² Annotation eighteen is addressed to those who seek limited peace of soul (*cierto grado do contentar*). Annotation twenty is for those who want to find the perfect peace of living their whole lives according to God's will whatever the price of reform. This annotation brings out clearly Ignatius's grasp of the delicate balance between God's work and man's co-operation:

The more the soul is in solitude and seclusion the more fit it renders itself to approach and be united with its Creator and Lord; and the more closely it is united with Him, the more it is disposed to receive grace and gifts from the infinite goodness of its God.

Flexibility and Adaptation

Ignatius himself learnt by hard experience how God wanted him to use penances, food, cleanliness, periods of prayers, light and darkness. Each addition is a distillation of the knowledge he himself gathered in his progressive search for the divine will — for himself and for others. The additions are so well-tryed that they should not be lightly discarded; but to be of real value they must be used creatively and flexibly. They are designed for a particular person making the Exercises. Ignatius's sense of each man's uniqueness became blunted when we began to give retreats to groups. He intended the additions to respect the Principle and Foundation: to use things in so far as they help and to avoid them in so far as they hinder spiritual freedom. Director and exercitant must follow Ignatius and learn from their own experience, which presupposes continuous discernment. In the rules for food, for instance, the exercitant 'will often experience more abundantly within the soul, lights, consolations and divine inspirations by which the proper means will become evident to him'.¹³ In the notes on penance Ignatius tells us that when we experiment and make changes God our Lord 'often grants each one the grace to understand what is suitable'.¹⁴

The Directories emphasize both the importance of the additions and the need for creativity and adaptability. Father Vitoria's Directory states:

¹² Exx 89.

¹³ Exx 213.

¹⁴ Exx 89.

(The one who gives the Exercises) should watch the order of (the various rules), which is very important. For my part when I was giving them this was recommended to me by our Father, because any other method will make many mistakes and the exercitant will not make the progress that he should, as it seems from experience.

The Directory goes on to affirm that the director should take into account differences in temperament.¹⁵ Depressed people should not be driven too hard. Fragile people may need to be handled with care. Some may have to be summoned to greater austerity, tempered by gentleness and affability. Today's director must be as sensitive to individual needs. Ignatius compiled his additions from a multitude of practices common in his day. We should be equally ready to use skills provided by transcendental meditation, bio-feedback or Zen, and ready to recognize that late twentieth-century man is physically, psychologically, culturally and spiritually different from the exercitants of the sixteenth century.

Environment

Annotation twenty recommends the man who wants to make much progress to withdraw from his place of residence, from friends and acquaintances, from all those cares which absorb body, mind and heart and leave too little leisure for listening to God. Today it is more important than ever to give this advice and even more difficult to take it. If we want to keep normal preoccupations at a distance, incoming and outgoing correspondence and telephone calls have to be stopped. It is probably more important than in Ignatius's day for retreatants to have a good rest before they start. The noise of traffic and transistors is more oppressive, and we need to stress the value of exterior silence as an aid to interior silence and peace.

Many exercitants find that they bring with their baggage much of the untidiness of everyday life, where the day is shaped by impulse and pressure. To counteract these complex and confusing rhythms and to do justice to the set times of prayer,¹⁶ the exercitant should arrange with his director a suitable time-table to distribute over the day times of prayer, preparation beforehand and reflection afterwards, a meeting with the director, exams and the Eucharist. It is necessary to recognize

¹⁵ MHSI *Directoria* doc. 4, p 104; PASE translation, p 30. The 1599 *Directory* states: *Ex altera parte caveri etiam debet omnis excessus, et habenda est ratio personarum et complexionum.* MHSI *Directoria*, p 660.

¹⁶ Exx 72.

that some retreatants are incapable, when they start, of a full hour's prayer. It may be better for them to begin with short periods of prayer spread over the day and to build up gradually to the full hour as they go on through the first week.

All the details concerning environment, including music at meals, should help to create a new pattern in the retreatant's life. Solitude brings him into the presence of God; silence sharpens his listening to God; his senses are heightened to be more aware of the action of God; the sacrifices he has to make are a sign of the God-given magnanimity and generosity, essential conditions for seeking, finding and carrying out God's will. Failure to establish this order and peace can be traced back in the first instance to a half-hearted acceptance and application of the additions, but ultimately the root of the trouble is likely to be the absence of those dispositions stressed in annotations five and fifteen.

The Eucharist may be an even more important event for us than it was in the sixteenth century, and yet it presents greater problems. Ignatius's detailed attention to external arrangements should persuade us to make every effort to harmonize the liturgy with a particular retreat; but obviously directors and retreatants will differ a great deal in their emphasis. Some will want to express the communitarian nature of the Exercises and the fact that we mediate Christ's salvation to one another. This may best be done by a shared homily and bidding prayers. Others may prefer to let the simplest possible liturgy underline the tremendous mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. Some will be more sensitive, others less, to the possibility of discord between the Eucharist and the different paths of the retreatants on their way to God.

The Body

The bodily discipline required by the additions does not come easily to many modern exercitants. Corporal penance is recommended;¹⁷ laughter must be restrained;¹⁸ the eyes controlled;¹⁹ silence observed;²⁰ punctuality in rising is presumed.²¹ The retreatant must pray for a full hour²² several times a day and usually at midnight. He has to oppose natural appetites and temptations.²³ The determination to avoid venial and mortal sin,²⁴ the willingness to accept poverty²⁵ and insults²⁶ can make frightening physical demands on men who do not come from an ascetically-minded world. The spirit can be willing, but the flesh can

¹⁷ Exx 82-89.

¹⁸ Exx 80.

¹⁹ Exx 81.

²⁰ Exx 20.

²¹ Exx 73.

²² Exx 12, 13, etc.

²³ Exx 13 and rules for eating.

²⁴ Exx 165-6.

²⁵ Exx 98.

²⁶ Exx 167.

be decidedly weak. The director should know what is being asked of each individual and what is possible.

To prepare the body for prayer I am told to stand a pace or two away from the place of prayer and to 'make an act of profound reverence'.²⁷ In Ignatius's opinion the whole of a man must show reverence for the Divine Majesty. The appropriateness of a bodily posture in prayer is to be determined by whether or not I find what I desire.²⁸ I am to remain in one position not until I am tired, but rather until I am satisfied. Ignatius presumes a degree of physical control which many people today do not possess. For the Zen masters posture is all-important: the lotus position is recommended, but failing that some way of sitting which will keep the back perfectly straight, and secure complete immobility. This posture considerably reduces discursive reasoning and helps the mind to concentrate on a single point. Breath control is also important: deep rhythmic breathing lowers the pulse and heart rate, promotes interior calm and peace and develops a deep state of concentration.²⁹ I believe that our western methods of prayer can be much enriched by what the east can teach us about the control of body, breath and mind. But we must be discerning in our use of this knowledge. Zen lacks the flexibility of Ignatius, who recommends darkness in the first week and light in the fourth. Ignatius draws on feelings and imagination in the service of what I desire: Zen aims to quieten feelings and imagination, while what I desire is either to remain constant or to be suppressed as much as possible. For Zen silence and tranquillity are ends in themselves, whereas for Ignatius they are steps on the way to the summit of his prayer, which is to be moved by God towards action and service. Fortunately there is a growing wealth of experience in the use of Zen to help us to make the Exercises.³⁰

The Mind

During the weeks of the Exercises the retreatant is asked to direct his mind according to the different graces he is seeking. Mind, imagination and will all focus together on one subject. In the first week the exercitant should not think of pleasure, but of the pain and sorrow he wants to

²⁷ Exx 75, which Father Corbishley happily translates 'I will make an act of profound reverence'.

²⁸ Exx 76.

²⁹ Kapleau, Philip: *The Three Pillars of Zen* (Boston, 1967), pp 3-24; Johnston, W.: *Christian Zen* (New York, 1971); *Silent Music; The Science of Meditation* (London, 1974), Part I, 'Meditation', pp 13-52, Part III, 'Healing', pp 105-58.

³⁰ Kadowski, Kakichi: *The Ignatian Exercises and Zen — An Attempt at Synthesis*, (FASE edition).

experience.³¹ In the second week he is encouraged to read the gospels, the *Imitation of Christ* and the lives of the saints and to fill his mind with their words and images.³² Ignatius does not choose haphazardly such images as the knight who feels ashamed.³³ He realizes his deep need for compunction and the image aptly expresses the need. This is far from being mind control; rather it is more akin to the scientist or the poet struggling to understand, and so calling up some images and rejecting others. As Bernard Lonergan has remarked:

. . . the stream of sensitive experience can become the automatic instrument or rather the vitally adaptive collaborator of the spirit of inquiry.³⁴

The images of the knight or of the prisoner loaded with chains need to be re-fashioned. Fresh images may occur spontaneously to the exercitant or they may be drawn from the bible or the liturgy.

Our minds and wills can easily be influenced by our feelings. Everyday emotional life is at the mercy of conflicting currents beyond my control. Several additions propose that I should marshal my feelings and bring them into harmony with what I desire: 'I will seek to rouse myself to shame for my sins';³⁵ 'I will make an effort to be sad and grieve . . .';³⁶ 'I will strive to feel joy and happiness'.³⁷ Two difficulties spring to mind. The first is that Ignatius is expecting more emotional control than many retreatants possess. The second is that reactions are sometimes thought of in too one-sided a way; there is a place for humble and joyful gratitude in the face of God's mercy,³⁸ which is found in many scriptural stories about repentant sinners.

Ignatius has no time for a casual approach to prayer. Before beginning to pray I am to 'recollect myself for a while, and either seated or walking up and down, as may seem better, I will consider where I am going and for what purpose'.³⁹ This addition restores the cutting edge of prayer which can so easily be blunted through weariness or monotony. When I get up, my mind is particularly apt to wander; and therefore the direction

³¹ Exx 78.

³² Exx 100: this directive and the one concerning not reading ahead should be supplemented today with a warning not to spend too much time reading one's favourite spiritual author and not to indulge in scripture study. The addition about readiness to accept the director's point of view (Exx 22) should now include an agreement not to speculate about the demythologization of the infancy and resurrection narratives, hell, angels and so on.

³³ Exx 74.

³⁴ Lonergan, Bernard: *Insight* (London, 1957), p 186.

³⁵ Exx 74.

³⁶ Exx 78.

³⁷ Exx 229.

³⁸ Exx 61.

³⁹ Exx 239.

of my thoughts last thing at night and first thing in the morning will help me to concentrate on what I truly desire.⁴⁰

It is worth noting that the greatest gifts are often given outside periods of formal prayer; hence the importance of a tranquil atmosphere throughout the day. Zen masters believe that *satori* or enlightenment may come at any time: at the fall of the almond blossom or the sound of the temple bell. In such relaxed moments, when we are off guard and suitably open, the Creator comes to us to say and to do whatever he pleases.⁴¹

Composition

Fr W. Peters has made an important contribution to this subject and I can add little to what he has said.⁴² The purpose of composition is to make the exercitant at one with the event he is contemplating; it means both inner unity and harmony⁴³ and oneness with surrounding reality. It is rather a composition of *self* than of *place*. The exercitant must compose himself to the fact that he is an exile among brute beasts⁴⁴ or to the fact that hell exists and that he has been preserved from it by God's mercy.⁴⁵ Composition therefore means reconciling oneself with and being present to the reality in question. It is in fact God who composes me; I remain where God wants me to be, where he gives intimate understanding and relish of the truth.⁴⁶ Composition is strengthened by listening to the story and seeing the place with the imagination.⁴⁷ Gradually the depth and totality of my presence to God's action in each event are increased.

⁴⁰ Rahner, K.: 'A Spiritual Dialogue at Evening: On Sleep, Prayer and Other Subjects', in *Theological Investigations III* (London, 1967), pp 220-36, recalls the common experience that when we sleep on a problem we sometimes find the solution ready to hand in the morning. A mechanism for selecting appropriate images seems to be at work in our minds. He notes that imagination and fantasy have also been redeemed, although the struggle against evil persists in this sphere as in others. He talks about consecrating the world of darkness and recalls christian tradition: 'On Christ is our thought directed even in the midst of darkness' by Prudentius; 'Far from us may evil dreams and night fantoms withdraw' from the Ambrosian hymn at Compline; 'I sleep, but my heart is awake' in Cant 5, 2.

⁴¹ Exx 330.

⁴² Peters W. A. M.: *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius: Exposition and Interpretation*, (PASE).

⁴³ MHSI, *Directoria* doc. 4, says the exercitant is to set a good example *con la humildad y composición de su persona*.

⁴⁴ Exx 47.

⁴⁵ Exx 61.

⁴⁶ Exx 2, 76, etc.

⁴⁷ Exx 102-03.

Composition presents the modern director and retreatant with an interesting set of challenges. It takes time and is unlikely to give up its secret to the man in an unreflective hurry. The Old Testament has been opened to us, and scholarship has immensely enriched our understanding of the scriptures as a whole. But the same scholars may tempt us down side-streets to ask arid, irrelevant and awkward questions. Fortunately it is not so very difficult to be at one with some of the Old and New Testament writers. It may help the modern director to become more familiar with the use of fantasy and imagination in prayer. In *God is more present than you think*,⁴⁸ R. Ochs suggests that it is much more concrete to follow one's own fantasy than to struggle to re-create a gospel scene, and when one has failed, to conclude that there has been yet another bad meditation. He describes a man who saw himself barred from the cave at Bethlehem. This went on for some days, and gave him a new appreciation of his unworthiness. One day he felt himself invited to go in, and this was a turning point in his life.

The Preparatory Prayer

The preparatory prayer⁴⁹ is made before every hour of prayer.⁵⁰ I ask for the disposition contained in the Principle and Foundation: to want and to do only that which God wants of me. What *God* wants; while 'desirous of making as much progress as possible,'⁵¹ I allow God to indicate the limits of possibility at this stage in my growth. I must not run ahead of the holy Spirit in a 'hasty or inconsiderate' fashion.⁵² God must give me the desire and the power to carry it out. Joyous consolation is the sign that he is doing so. Joylessness and harshness in performance are the signs that I am forcing God's hand. It is possible to choose a course of action which is good in itself but not intended by God for this person at this moment. Ignatius constantly counteracts such pelagian tendencies. I pray for actual poverty provided only that it is for God's greater service and praise and that God 'deign to choose and admit me to such a state and way of life'.⁵³ In the annotations the director is warned not to interfere with God's action by persuading the exercitant to become poor or celibate. He is told to let God dispose the exercitant to serve him better in future.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Ochs R.: *God is more present than you think* (New York, 1970).

⁴⁹ Exx 46.

⁵⁰ Exx 49.

⁵¹ Exx 20.

⁵² Exx 14.

⁵³ Exx 98, 157.

⁵⁴ Exx 15.

The general advice for each period of prayer tells me to consider *how* God beholds me.⁵⁵ How does God behold me? While my relationship with God develops slowly over the weeks of the Exercises, his relationship towards me remains constant. The best description of how God looks on me is found in the Contemplation to Attain Love. He sees me as a person with whom he is in love, to whom he wishes to give all his gifts, himself included.⁵⁶ He sees me as a temple, 'since I am created in the likeness and image of the Divine Majesty'.⁵⁷

What I want

There appears to be a double contradiction: between what God wants and what I want; and between what I really want and what I am told to want. Almost the first step in the Exercises is to believe that God deals directly with his creatures⁵⁸ and that he implants good desires in our hearts. My prevailing desire at this moment may well be my God-given response to the divine initiative. But it is often a feeble response, because my desire to collaborate with God and to love as I am loved has to grow, a growth which does not necessarily correspond to physical and psychological growth. These good, God-inspired, God-directed desires will no doubt be in conflict with evil desires. To be aware of contrasting desires and to know where they are leading is in itself a gift from God. Exercitant and director can detect degrees of growth and types of conflict. The resolution of the contradictions — what God wants, what I want, what I really want, what I am told to want — consists at this moment in wrestling with my divided heart and asking for help. Sometimes I shall have to decide whether I have the magnanimity and generosity to begin or to continue the Exercises.⁵⁹ Prayerful reflection on such passages as the sons of Zebedee,⁶⁰ the man who built a tower⁶¹ or the woman at the well⁶² teaches me to understand the stage I have reached in my growth towards God and the clashes between my various desires.

Going Against

Ignatius's advice about going against what I desire is often misunderstood. It is not a question of always preferring the less pleasant course of action. Ignatius knows that the good spirit makes all things easy.⁶³ Pleasant thoughts, inclinations and actions may show that at this particular

⁵⁵ Exx 75.

⁵⁸ Exx 15.

⁶¹ Lk 14, 28-33.

⁵⁶ Exx 234.

⁵⁹ Exx 5, 15.

⁶² Jn 4.

⁵⁷ Exx 235.

⁶⁰ Mt 20, 20-23.

⁶³ Exx 315.

moment I am free to go to God, and that this harmony has been established in my life. At other times I may find pleasure in being excessively attracted and attached to a form of imprisonment,⁶⁴ to a job, a person, a set of habits, which hinder my growth and movement towards God. Desolation is a tyranny which keeps me away from God and prevents me from lovingly serving him. Hence Ignatius urges me to use my limited freedom to pray longer, to resist the enemy and to overthrow him,⁶⁵ to intensify my activity against desolation,⁶⁶ in the name of greater freedom and greater pleasure. This is what Ignatius means by 'the conquest of self'.⁶⁷

Exterior Penance

Ignatius's comments on exterior penance must be placed in their historical context. The tradition of the flagellants was still strong; St Charles Borromeo had to make regulations about their processions. Monastic tradition and reformers within the Church regarded the use of the discipline as obligatory. Lives of the saints were full of physical mortifications. Even the gentle St Francis de Sales praises the marvellous power of the discipline to stir devotion. At the beginning of his conversion Ignatius was impressed by the penances of the saints,⁶⁸ which he regarded as a measure of their generosity. He began to discipline himself each night.⁶⁹ Slowly his powers of discernment developed and he began to break away from the traditions of his day. In the Constitutions he makes the revolutionary statement that in the Society there are to be no customary penances and austerities obligatory on all.⁷⁰ In the Exercises, forms of penance exist to foster and to express interior dispositions such as repentance and satisfaction for past sins.⁷¹ Penance must be subordinated to the whole process of the Exercises, whose purpose is freedom for the greatest possible service of God. Moderation is therefore essential: too much is as bad as too little.⁷² God must teach us to choose what is suitable. Here, as in the rules for eating and throughout the Exercises, the retreatant is God's apprentice in the art

⁶⁴ Exx 16.

⁶⁵ Exx 13.

⁶⁶ Exx 319.

⁶⁷ Exx 21.

⁶⁸ *Autobiography* 9.

⁶⁹ *Autobiography* 13.

⁷⁰ *Constitutions* 552.

⁷¹ Exx 87.

⁷² Exx 89.

of discernment. Ignatius set much store by exterior penance: it warms the spirit and regulates disordered passions;⁷³ it is a *means* to acquire interior freedom in the greater service of God. Today few of his followers would subscribe to the view that 'the more we deny ourselves something of what is suitable, provided we do no harm to ourselves, the better the penance'.⁷⁴ Yet exercitants do experience the spontaneous desire for penance. Inflicting bodily pain is out of fashion, but fasting and watching are normal and can be salutary. Some retreatants are frightened when penance is mentioned, but when invited to cut down alcohol, coffee or smoking, they are pleased to find a new sense of freedom. Our senses put us in touch with the world; when they are dulled our grasp of the world is dull. Clarity of vision is often obscured in a polluted world. Many of us eat too much and would be healthier physically and spiritually if we ate less. But let God teach us the mean to be observed.

Conclusion

Let God teach us. . . . This is perhaps the best conclusion to a set of directions, which are so detailed, so concrete and so much in need of creative adaptation to the circumstances of each individual. The director must learn for himself — or rather be taught by God — what advice to give in order to set the retreatant free.

⁷³ *Constitutions* 582.

⁷⁴ Exx 83.