

From a Schooling of Desire to Happiness The *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius of Loyola viewed against an Augustinian backdrop

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Abstract

In this text, we will examine the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius against the backdrop of Augustinian ethics by using selected passages showing the close affinity between the two mystics. Then we will seek to show how St Ignatius, describing his realization of the desires inhabiting every human being, proposes a pedagogical path very akin to the Augustinian *ordo amoris* and the distinction between *bona utenda* and *bona fruenda*, fully in keeping with the *Principle and Foundation*. Like the *amores* of St Augustine, the desires alluded to in the *Exercises* can make us better persons and more divine beings. *Amor* (St Augustine) and *Desire* (St Ignatius) are two catchwords that evoke the mystery of the search for the meaning of the human person. Between the desire and the act of will, there may be a great distance. But, in their common pedagogy towards happiness, through discernment, all desires and affections can be integrated into the same *ordo amoris*.

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Introductory Reflections

This article comes from the meeting of two scholars, a patristic Theologian and a Pedagogist, who regularly practiced the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius. Presented at a conference, using their specialties to address the proposed theme, “What is Happiness? From *Eudaimonia* to Wellness,”¹ they both noted such an affinity between their communications, that the Ignatian Pedagogist declared that he had better understood Ignatius in the light of Augustine; and the Augustinian Theologian became aware of having understood Augustine better, through his own practice of Ignatius’s *Exercises*.

They both are convinced that sharing this mutual enlightenment can be very beneficial in better understanding Augustine’s philosophy and better practicing the Ignatian *Exercises*. Contemporary Moral Theology finds itself forced to communicate its message to a culture that is less attentive to essence and more attentive to existence, less attentive also to theory and more attentive to practice. Without separating it from its solid metaphysical basis, Saint Augustine’s *imago mundi* can be a persistent inspiration with an “existentialist” tone; and it can find, in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius, the practical translation that it needs to effectively engage in the education of the new Christian generations.

After describing Augustinian happiness as a righteous relationship with Being and beings (I), we will read the Pedagogy of Desire of the *Exercises* in the light of that Augustinian *Ordo Amoris* (II), interpreting its more general dynamism as a search for meaning in life (II. 1) and going through its key words (II. 2) – “Principle and Foundation,” “Ignatian Indifference,” “*Magis*” – to describe its moral Pedagogy as the Ordering of desires in function of the unifying Desire which is the desire of God

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(II. 3 and 4). Finally, the anthropology underlying both Augustinian Ethics and the *Spiritual Exercises* is presented in its counter-cultural aspect (II. 5): not having, not having oneself, in order to be. Both the Augustinian *Amor* and the Ignatian *Deseo* presuppose that, in the life of each human being, everything else is ordered to the End of God, and only thanks to it everything can gain a taste of eternity.

I. Augustinian happiness: “to bring order to the will”

The concept of happiness (*beatitudo, beata vita*) presupposes a teleological order of beings. St Augustine inherited from Plato and the Neoplatonic tradition that surrounded him the identification between happiness and wisdom, in that the end of intelligence is knowledge – of beings (*notitia, scientia*) but, above all, of Being (*Sapientia*). However, his Christian experience as someone in need of grace and salvation belies the assumed identification between *scientia* and *virtus*. So, he shifts Platonic happiness from the intellective to the volitional paradigm. That is to say, happiness lies not – except *per transenam* – in the faculty of knowing, which is intelligence, but rather in the faculty of wanting or loving, which is the will. Intelligence itself is ordered to the act of the will, which is love. And the human soul is happy when it attains the object of that act, which is the good. Augustinian happiness consists, therefore, in the good relationship with the beings and with Being. Let us take a closer look at what this good relationship consists of.

The Augustinian motto *ama et fac quod vis* (*In Epistolam Joannis Tractatus*, VII, 8), is (perhaps too) well known, and most often taken out of its exegetical context, which is fundamental to its understanding, 1 Jn 7:8:

In this was manifested the love of God in us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we may live through Him. (...) Behold the Father delivered up Christ (*tradidit*); Judas delivered Him up! (...) is God the Father a traitor? (...) There was

a “traditio” (delivering up) by the Father; (...) there was a “traditio” by Judas: the thing done is the same, but what is it that distinguishes the Father delivering up the Son, the Son delivering up Himself, and Judas the disciple delivering up his Master? This: that the Father and the Son did it in love, but Judas did this in treacherous betrayal (*in proditione*). (...) The diverse intention therefore makes the things done diverse. (...) The deeds of men are only discerned by the root of charity. For many things may be done that have a good appearance, and yet proceed not from the root of charity. For thorns also have flowers: some actions truly seem rough, seem savage; howbeit they are done for discipline at the bidding of charity. Once for all, then, a short precept is given thee: *Love, and do what thou wilt*: whether thou hold thy peace, through love hold thy peace; whether thou cry out, through love cry out; whether thou correct, through love correct; whether thou spare, through love do thou spare: let the root of love be within, of this root can nothing spring but what is good.²

Love, understood as the Will in act, is like the clef that determines the true meaning of the whole score of human conduct, so that the meaning of every act lies in the intention (*diversa intentio, diversa facta*). We could be led to think, then, that the moral depth of the personal act lies in the sheer subjectivity of the agent. Clearly, it is not a question of

² “In hoc manifestata est dilectio Dei in nobis, quia Filium suum unigenitum misit in mundum ut vivamus per ipsum (...) Ecce Christum tradidit Pater; tradidit Judas. Ergo traditor est Deus Pater? Facta est traditio a Patre, facta est traditio a Filio, facta est traditio a Juda; una res facta est; sed quae res discernit patrem tradentem filium, seipsum filium tradentem, et Judam discipulum tradentem magistrum suum? Quia hoc fecit Pater et Filius in Charitate; fecit autem hoc Judas in proditione (...) Diversa ergo intentio diversa facta fecit (...) Non discernuntur facta hominum nisi de radice charitatis. Nam multa fieri possunt quae speciem habent bonam et non procedunt de radice charitatis. Habent enim et spiniae flores : quaedam vero videntur aspera, videntur truculenta ; sed fiunt ad disciplinam dictante charitate. Semel ergo breve praeceptum tibi praecipitur : Dilige, et fac quod vis : sive taceas, dilectione taceas ; sive clames, dilectione clames ; sive emendes, dilectione emendes ; sive parcas, dilectione parcas ; radix sit intus dilectionis, non potest de ista radice nisi bonum existere” (In *Epistolam Joannis Tractatus*, VII, 8). Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John; Homilies on the First Epistle of John; Soliloquies; The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 7*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), 861-862, <<https://ccel.org/ccel/s/schaff/npnf107/cache/npnf107.pdf>>.

“intention” as such, that is, any intention, but only that “of which can nothing spring but what is good” (*de ista non potest nisi bonum existere*), which is Charity. The precept presupposes therefore the virtue of Charity as *Ordo amoris*, capable of directing the intention of the volitional subject towards the objects of the will (goods) and its ultimate Object (the Good). The possibility of moral failure is not, of itself, in the willed objects, which, as creatures, are always good, but in the subject who wills them, since it is up to this subject to discover through his/her intelligence, and respect through his/her will, their natural order, both among themselves, and between them and the absolute Good:

[Bodily] beauty, which is indeed God’s handiwork, but only a temporal, carnal, and lower kind of good (*temporale carnale infimum bonum*), is not fitly loved in preference to God (*postposito Deo*), the eternal, spiritual, and unchangeable good (*aeternum internum sempiternum bonum*). When the miser prefers his gold to justice (*justitia deserta*), it is through no fault of the gold, but of the man; and so with every created thing. For though it be good, it may be loved with an evil as well as with a good love (*bene amari potest et male*): it is loved rightly when it is loved ordinally (*ordine custodito*); evilly, when inordinately. It is this which I have briefly said in these verses in praise of the Creator: “These are Thine, they are good, because Thou art good who didst create them. There is in them nothing of ours, unless the sin we commit (*nisi quod peccamus amantes*) when we forget the order of things (*ordine neglecto*), and instead of Thee love that which Thou hast made.” But if the Creator is truly loved (*Creator autem si veraciter ametur*), that is, if He Himself is loved and not another thing in His stead, He cannot be evilly loved (*male amari non potest*); for love itself is to be ordinally loved (*ordinate amandus est*), because we do well to love that which, when we love it (*quo bene amatur quod amandum est*), makes us live well and virtuously.

So that it seems to me that it is a brief but true definition of virtue to say, it is the order of love.³

As we can see, the Love referred to in the Augustinian precept is identified with nothing less than Virtue itself, by which one can live well (*qua bene vivitur*) or attain happiness (*beata vita*). Thus, all Virtue, especially Charity, is *ordo amoris*, because it consists in the habit of loving well what one loves, that is, according to a natural order in which the love of God plays a role analogous – we might say today – to that of gravity in the structuring of the corporeal world. Consequently, love is the weight (*pondus*) which guides the faculties of the mind (*anima*) through mediate ends towards their end. However, only within the framework of this order is it a source of happiness, insofar as this is identified with the repose of the will when it finds its proper place, which is God:

In your Gift we find rest, and there we enjoy you (*ibi te fruimur*). Our true place is where we find rest. We are borne toward it by love, and it is your good Spirit who lifts up our sunken nature from the gates of death (*illuc exaltat humilitatem nostram*). In goodness of will is our peace. A body gravitates to its proper place by its own weight. This weight (*pondus*) does not necessarily drag it downward, but pulls it to the place proper to it: thus fire tends upward, a stone downward. Drawn by their weight (*ponderibus suis aguntur*), things seek their rightful places (*loca sua petunt*). If oil is poured into water,

³ “Sic enim corporis puchritudo a deo quidem factum, sed temporale carnale infimum bonum, male amatur postposito deo – aeterno interno sempiterno bono – quem ad modum justitia deserta, et aurum amatur ab avaris nullo peccato auri, sed hominis. Ita se habet omnis creatura. Cum enim bona sit, et bene amari potest et male ; bene, scilicet ordine custodito, male ordine perturbato. Quod in laude quadam cerei breviter versibus dixi: “haec tua sunt, bona sunt, quia tu bonus ista creasti/ nil nostrum est in eis, nisi quod peccamus amantes/ ordine neglecto pro te, quod conditur abs te”. Creator autem si veraciter ametur, hoc est si ipse, non aliud por illo quod non est ipse ametur, male amari non potest. Nam et amor ipse ordinate amandus est, quo bene amatur quod amandum est, ut sit in nobis virtus qua vivitur bene. Unde mihi videtur quod definitio brevis et vera virtutis est ordo amoris” (*De civitate Dei* 15, 22). Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (Moscow – Idaho: Roman Roads Media, 2015), 424, <https://files.romanroadsstatic.com/materials/romans/nicene-christianity/City%20of%20God.pdf>.

it will rise to the surface, but if water is poured onto oil it will sink below the oil: drawn by their weight, things seek their rightful places. They are not at rest as long as they are disordered, but once brought to order they find their rest. Now, my weight is my love (*pondus meus amor meus*), and wherever I am carried, it is this weight that carries me. Your Gift sets us afire and we are borne upward; we catch his flame and up we go (*dono tuo accendimur et sursum ferimur*).⁴

The Augustinian formula of happiness – as the repose of the Heart in God – featured in the opening lines of the *Confessions* (not to mention its iconographic echoes) is widely known: “You have made us and drawn us to yourself [, O Lord], and our heart is unquiet until it rests in you” (*donec requiescat in te*).⁵ The *pondus* of the human soul is the love of God and neighbour in God, or Charity. In other words, it is in God, the Good, in the absolute sense, that the Will, represented by the heart – that muscle that persists in the common imagination as a byword for the seat of love – finds its rest. Not so well known is the fact that the *Confessions* cyclically highlight the sui generis character of this Good: “Give me yourself, O my God, give yourself back to me. (...) This alone I know, that without you all to me is misery (*male mihi est praeter te*), woe outside myself and woe within, and all wealth (*copia*) but penury (*egestas*), if it is not my God.”⁶ How can one not recognize here, the climax of the

⁴ In dono tuo requiescimus: ibi te fruimur. requies nostra locus noster. amor illuc attollit nos et spiritus tuus bonus exultat humilitatem nostram de portis mortis. in bona voluntate pax nobis est. corpus pondere suo nititur ad locum suum. pondus non ad ima tantum est, sed ad locum suum. ignis sursum tendit, deorsum lapis; ponderibus suis aguntur, loca sua petunt. oleum infra aquam fustum super aquam attollitur, aqua supra oleum fusa infra oleum demergitur; ponderibus suis aguntur, loca sua petunt. minus ordinata inquieta sunt; ordinantur et quiescunt. pondus meum amor meus; eo feror, quocumque feror. dono tuo accendimur et sursum ferimur (*Confessiones* 13, 9, 10). Augustine, “The Confessions,” in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. John E. Rotelle, O.S.A., I/1, trans. Maria Boulding, O.S.B. (New York: New City Press, 1997), 348.

⁵ “Fecisti nos ad Te et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te” (*Confessiones*, 1, 1).

⁶ “Da mihi te, deus meus, redde mihi te(...) en amo (...) hoc tantum scio, quia male mihi est praeter te non solum extra me sed et in me ipso, et omnis mihi copia quae deus meus non est egestas est” (*Confessiones* 13, 8, 9).

quintessential Ignatian prayer? “Give me only your love (*amorem Tui solum*) and your grace, and I am rich enough; I ask for nothing more.”⁷

All goods acquire meaning and flavour in God, who is a good incommensurable with them. Outside of God, despite their greater abundance, they are nothing more than a finite sum of finite beings lacking their ordering principle, their *pondus*, for the most part in an attempt to cope with their lack of infinitude through quantitative imitation. If the will does not want (or love) its ultimate end – i. e., if it is bereft of its ordering principle – it tends to accumulate more finite goods, and progressively and exponentially tends to increase their number – a behaviour we might call addictive, in that it ultimately leads to depression and the destruction of desire. In fact, apart from God, the will does not know how to want (or love) any other good (*male mihi praeter te*). “Paralysis of the will” would be the Augustinian term for depression, a dysfunction to which the will is more exposed in the context of plenty than in that of penury, since the latter is protected from the danger of confusion between the (infinite) Good and the (always finite) sum of many finite goods. The Good is therefore not of the same order as the goods. When the tension for the possession of the absolute Good is lacking in the will (and the name for this tension is the same as that for the virtue of Hope), all other goods lose their goodness. On the contrary, inserted in this tension, desire itself (*desiderium*) becomes the *oratio continua* that St Paul spoke of,⁸ as observes Michael Cornelius McCarthy, in his exhaustive treatise on the theology of prayer in Saint Augustine.⁹ “Before you is my whole desire” (*omne desiderium meum*), says the Psalm (Sl 37,9). And Augustine comments: “Your own desire is your prayer; if

⁷ It is the prayer that every retreatant eventually learns and sings by heart, in which the three faculties of the soul are returned to their origin, and in which one asks – almost as if translating Teresa of Ávila’s *Solo Dios basta* – for the *unicum necessarium* that satisfies the will: *Suscipe Domine, universam meam libertatem, accipe memoria, intellectum, atque voluntatem meam. Quidquid habeo vel possideo mihi largitus es. Id tibi totum restituo ac tuae prorsus voluntati trado gubernandum. Amorem tui solum, cum gratia mihi dones, et dives sum satis, nec aliud quidque ultra posco.*

⁸ *Sine intermissione orantes* (Thes 5, 17).

⁹ Michael C. McCarthy, *The Revelatory Psalm: A Fundamental Theology of Augustine’s “Enarrationes in Psalmos”* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2003), 213-219.

desire is continuous, prayer is continuous (...) the interior prayer that does not cease is desire.”¹⁰ Only in this prayer, finally, do all other desires (*saecularia desideria*)¹¹ find unity and meaning. Therefore they are also prayer, if they are integrated into the interior prayer (*interior oratio*) which is the Desire of God; as long as the distinction between the two orders of Goods that attract the will is always kept clear on the horizon of existence.

We can find in another treatise, *De Trinitate*, the best formulation for distinguishing between these two orders of goods. St Augustine takes time to contemplate in the cosmos, and above all in the human microcosm, several ternary marks on which he sees printed as many traces of the Trinity (*vestigia Trinitatis*). Of these, the most profound one is the tripartite structure of the mind, in the three powers or faculties, with their correlations to the transcendental predicates: memory, connatural to unity¹²; intelligence, connatural to truth; and the will, connatural to the good. But as we have indicated right at the beginning, it is ultimately in the will that the realization or failure, the happiness or unhappiness, of the human being is decided:

Therefore the knowledge and science of many things are contained in two of these three, memory and understanding; but the will must be present (*voluntas adest*), that we may enjoy or use them (*per quam fruamur eis vel utamur*). For we ‘enjoy’ things known, in which things themselves the will finds delight for their own sake, and so repose (*ipsis propter se ipsa delectata conquiescit*); but we ‘use’ those

¹⁰ Ipsum desiderium tuum, oratio est: et si continuum desiderium, continua oratio (...) est alia interior sine intermissione oratio, que est desiderium (*Ennarrationes in Psalmos*, 37, 14, on SI 37, 9).

¹¹ *Ennarrationes in Psalmos*, 53, 5.

¹² On the traces of the Trinity in human memory and understanding, see José Carlos Miranda, “A ‘Memória’ em S. Agostinho – Memoria Rerum, Memoria Sui & Memoria Dei,” in *Humanitas*, Revista do Instituto de Estudos Clássicos da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra, LIII (2001): 225-247.

things, which we refer to some other thing which we are to enjoy (*quae ad aliud referimus, quo fruendum est*).¹³

In the distinction between “objects of enjoyment” (*fruenda*) and “objects of use” (*utenda*), lies a summary of Augustinian ethics; in other words, that distinction is the key to happiness. The former belong to the order of ends, and the latter to the order of means. If Virtue, its safe track, is that of the *ordo amoris*, the inversion or Virtue, which is Vice, is the disorder between means and ends, the right track to human frustration. According to the dense formula of *Diversae Quaestiones*, Vice consists in “willing to use the objects of enjoyment (*fruentis uti velle*) or in willing to enjoy the objects of use (*et utendis frui*).”¹⁴ Temporal beings belong to the order of means, and spiritual beings to the order of ends; a century later, the latter would commonly be called “persons” (human, angelic or divine).¹⁵ Happiness, as joyful fruition (*gaudium*) of the Supreme Good in the ultimate horizon, becomes fruition in the temporal horizon (*frui*) of personal beings, as goods willed for their own sake (*propter se ipsa*), through the use (*uti*) of earthly beings, willed in view of a good other than themselves (*quae referimus ad aliud*); and in the chain of consecutive “references” of temporal goods to each other, and from these to the people whom we enjoy, the ultimate guarantor of the effective goodness of them all is the Good in the absolute sense, for the sake of which the Will was created. Use of temporal goods and enjoyment of spiritual ones – this is the virtue by which one lives a good life. Conversely, “Neither the life of man vicious and culpable in any other way, than as wrongly using and wrongly enjoying” (*male utens et male*

¹³ “Duobus igitur horum trium, memoria et intellegentia, multarum rerum notitia atque scientia continentur; uoluntas autem adest per quam fruamur eis uel utamur. Fruimur enim cognitis in quibus uoluntas ipsis propter se ipsa delectata conuiescit; utimur uero eis quae ad aliud referimus quo fruendum est. Nec est alia uita hominum uitiosa atque culpabilis quam male utens et male fruens” (*De Trinitate*, 10, 10, 13.).

¹⁴ Augustine, *De Diversis Quaestionibus*, 83, trans. Vernon J. Bourke, *Joy in Augustine’s Ethics*, The Saint Augustine Lecture 1978 (Villanova: Villanova University Press, 1979), 30-31.

¹⁵ The modern attribution, to Kant, of the axiological specificity of personality in the character of a being that is an end in itself, irreducible to a means to another end, is therefore simplistic and abusive.

fruens).¹⁶ Enjoyment of temporal goods as if they were eternal and use of people for this enjoyment – this is the vice by which one leads a bad life. Nothing is more topical...

Finally, those same keywords also open up the meaning of social happiness, whose indicator is Peace, the tranquil possession of the *ordo amoris*; and, ultimately, the meaning of celestial happiness, once any and all use whatsoever of temporal means has ceased. As a last element for the backdrop against which we will read the *Exercises* of Saint Ignatius, may we translate the well-known passage from the *City of God* on peace. We will highlight its surprising consistency in light of the two pillars of Augustinian ethics: the notion of *Ordo amoris* (which entails an *ordo iustitiae* at the social level), and (underlying the *utilfrui* dialectics) the distinction between the two orders of goods.

Peace between man and man is well-ordered concord. Domestic peace is the well-ordered concord between those of the family who rule and those who obey. Civil peace is a similar concord among the citizens. The peace of the celestial city is the perfectly ordered and harmonious enjoyment of God, and of one another in God (*societas fruendi Deo et invicem in Deo*). The peace of all things is the tranquillity of order (*tranquillitas ordinis*). Order is the distribution which allots things equal and unequal, each to its own place. (...). God, then, the most wise Creator and most just Ordainer of all natures, who placed the human race upon earth as its greatest ornament, imparted to men some good things adapted to this life (*quaedam bona huic vitae congrua*), to wit, temporal peace, such as we can enjoy in this life from health and safety and human fellowship, and all things needful for the preservation and recovery of this peace, such as the objects which are accommodated to our outward senses (*quae apte et convenienter adjacent sensibus*), light, night, the air, and

¹⁶ “Nec alia vita hominum vitiosa ac culpabilis quam male utens et male fruens” (*De Trinitate*, 10, 10., 13). See Augustine, *The City of God*, 193.

waters suitable for us, and everything the body requires to sustain, shelter, heal, or beautify it: and all under this most equitable condition (*aequissimo pacto*), that every man who made a good use (*recte usus fuerit*) of these advantages suited to the peace of this mortal condition, should receive ampler and better blessings (*accipiat ampliora atque meliora*), namely, the peace of immortality, accompanied by glory and honor in an endless life made fit for the enjoyment of God and of one another in God (*ad fruendum Deo et proximo in Deo*); but that he who used the present blessings badly (*perperam*) should both lose them and should not receive the others.¹⁷

We should enhance this point from the conclusion: eternal life is not a discretionary or optional ‘plus’ that everyone can add to the enjoyment of mortal life with its temporal goods. Their horizon, more or less categorized, is a condition for their good use. Once the horizon of eternity is lost, so are worldly goods, insofar as they are devoid of the end that brings order to them, which is the eternal “enjoyment of God and of one another in God.”

Let us now turn to the *Spiritual Exercises (SE)*¹⁸ to see how St Ignatius of Loyola understands happiness. The language there may often

¹⁷ “Pax hominum ordinata concordia, pax domus ordinata imperandi atque oboediendi concordia cohabitantium, pax civitas ordinata imperandi atque oboediendi concordia civium, pax caelestis civitatis ordinatissima et concordissima societas fruendi Deo et invicem in Deo, pax omnium rerum tranquillitas ordinis. Ordo est parium dispariumque rerum sua cuique loca tribuens dispositio (...). Deus ergo naturarum omnium sapientissimus conditor et justissimus ordinator, qui terrenorum ornamentorum maximum instituit mortale genus humanum, dedit hominibus quaedam bona huic vitae congrua, id est, pacem temporalem pro modulo mortalis vitae in ipsa salute et incolmumitate ac societate sui generis, et quaeque huic paci vel tuendae vel recuperandi necessaria sunt (sicut ea, quae apte ac convenienter adjacent sensibus, lux, vox, aerae spirabiles, aquae potabiles, et quidquid ad alendum tegendum curandum orandumque corpus congruit), eo pacto aequissimo, ut, qui mortalis talibus bonis paci mortalium adcomodatis recte usus fuerit, accipiat ampliora atque meliora, ipsam scilicet immortalitatis pacem eique convenientem gloriam et honorem in vita aeterna ad fruendum Deo et proximo in Deo; qui autem perperam [usus fuerit], nec illa accipiat et haec amittat” (De Civitate Dei, 19, 13). See Augustine, *The City of God*, 193.

¹⁸ Louis J. Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: A New Translation Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph* (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1951), § 23, <https://spex.ignatianspirituality.com/PuhlTranslation.html#pre01>.

sound somehow different, but a rhythmic intersection can be found in the semantics of “order” and “ordering”, as well as in the recognition of intelligence and will as *eros*,¹⁹ underscoring a perfect consonance with Augustinian ethics. This consonance is likely to derive from the period of Ignatius’s mystical experiences,²⁰ which took place long before his late scholastic studies. His acquaintance with the *Imitation of Christ* – a work with a wealth of points of contact with said ethics, and one attributed not by chance to Thomas à Kempis, an Augustinian – is well known.²¹ In this “method for the schooling of desire,”²² the exercises dealing with movements in the soul, such as “indifference”, choice of “actual poverty” and *agere contra*; concepts like “inordinate attachment”; principles of conduct such as *magis* and *tantum quantum* could in fact be understood in their full scope as pedagogical materializations of Augustine’s *ordo amoris*. Along the same line, the “Principle and Foundation”, the “Contemplation to Attain the Love of God” and the concept of “consolation” could be understood as condensed formulations of the Augustinian two orders of goods (*bona utenda vs bona fruenda*), and his “Repose of the Heart” concept. In other words, when viewed against the backdrop of these texts, St Ignatius’s *Exercises* epitomize the implementation of Augustinian ethics in terms of a spiritual pedagogy.

¹⁹ In *Au lieu de soi* (*In the place of the self* but also “*Instead of the self*”) expanding the famous phrase *Deus intimior intimo meo* (“God is more inward than my innermost self”), Jean Luc Marion shows how Augustine understands that the human mind finds not only the Good but also Truth itself only by loving God. Intelligence and will, in this sense, are forms of theological eros, which lead the subject out of itself, toward the Other (see Jean-Luc Marion, *Au lieu de soi. L’approche de saint Augustin* (Paris: PUF, 2008), especially Chapter VI.

²⁰ See Rogelio García Mateo, «Los Estudios Filosóficos de Ignacio de Loyola y su espiritualidad,» *Manresa* 62 (1990): 73-86.

²¹ See Emanuele Lacca, “L’azione retta come mezzo di salvezza. Il De Imitatione Christi e la storia come profezia,” *Revista Portuguesa de Humanidades*, vol. 25, 1-2 (2021): 43-72.

²² José Manuel Martim Lopes, *Santo Inácio de Loiola, um Educador do Desejo* (Braga: Editorial A.O., 2003).

II. Happiness according to St Ignatius: “schooling desires”

Much research (not confined to the spiritual or theological field) has been carried on with regard to the *Spiritual Exercises (SE)*.²³ While the *SE* have revolutionized the Church’s spirituality, above all because of the way they help the exercitant to find meaning in life in this world and to persevere in it, it is no less true that, at times, they are sought after by non-believing Catholics, and even non-Christians, as a means of finding a path that can lead them to well-being and happiness. There is also a tendency to use the spiritual dynamics of the *SE* for self-knowledge and psychological development. While this way of using the *SE* may not be considered abusive, the truth of the matter is that in St Ignatius’s mind they are first and foremost an encounter with God. Human beings will only know whither they go if they know from whom they come. From this perspective, we will approach the issue of happiness and the *SE*, focusing mainly on the *Principle and Foundation*²⁴ and on human desire, as understood by St Ignatius. His intention is to create the conditions for a “surgical operation” to be performed on the heart of the exercitant, so that love, properly ordered, takes hold of himself. Only in this way does the exercitant attain balance and inner freedom in relation to any circumstance or place. Naturally, human beings will be happier if they are and do what they must, without surrendering to corruption or letting themselves be corrupted by outside pressures. God does not take anyone out of the world, but gives grace to live in it, in freedom and peace. The *SE* help the person to remain focused on what is essential in life, and this way of being in the world, which should result from doing those exercises, produces beneficial consequences at both the physiological and the psychological level. The *SE* thus have a pedagogical content that aims to help the exercitant to dive into the spiritual experience. In order for

²³ See A. B. Newberg *et al.*, “Effect of a one-week spiritual retreat on dopamine and serotonin transporter binding: a preliminary study,” *Religion, Brain & Behavior* 8/3 (2018): 265-278; see Centro Loyola de Fé e Cultura, *Pesquisa aponta que Exercícios Espirituais trazem benefícios para a saúde* (Rio de Janeiro: PU-C-Rio: 2020), <http://www.centroloyola.puc-rio.br/loyola-online/pesquisa-aponta-beneficios-que-exercicios-espirituais-trazem-beneficios-para-a-saude/>.

²⁴ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*.

this experience to evolve, the *SE* propose some techniques (“exercises” in prayer, discernment of movements produced in the soul, evaluations, mobilization of all the faculties of the body and the spirit, etc.) so that the exercitant does not give in, for lack of discernment, to the whims of his inner movements in his search for the greater good. Only this process of gradually seeking and conquering the greater good can provide the greatest happiness.²⁵

1. *The Spiritual Exercises and the search for meaning in life*

We must not forget that we are dealing with a booklet designed not to be read, but to be lived. It is intended to be used by those who have faith, as a *way of proceeding* in prayer and in the encounter with the living God, in order to elicit questions about the world and the life of the person, as a way of redirecting freedom towards its very essence, which is the ability to do good. The *SE* are not a sequence of pious meditations that, with good will, can be done whenever and wherever. They rather consist in the attempt, carried out with methodical rigour, to lead the exercitant to make a decision before God, in the face of a critical existential predicament, a decision that cannot be straightforwardly deduced from the general principles of faith and practical wisdom, as it is grounded in prayer, in God’s grace and in one’s existential coherence.²⁶ In this sense, the *SE*, far from being a set of superficial pious practices and cognitive activities, or a theological treatise, are ultimately the exercitant’s choice of the specific means to make Christianity a living and effective reality in the world. In St Ignatius’s mind one thing alone counts: to place oneself before God and ask: *what should I do? what do you want from me?*²⁷ The director of the Exercises can help to discern the voice of God, but he

²⁵ See Gilles Cusson, “Antropologia Biblica ed Esercizi Spirituali II,” *Appunti di Spiritualità* 39 (1994): 76-77.

²⁶ See Karl Rahner, *The Content of Faith. The Best of Karl Rahner’s Theological Writings*, eds. Karl Lehmann, Albert Raffelt and Harvey D. Egan (New York: Crossroad, 1993).

²⁷ See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*.

can never take the place of the exercitant, to whom God personally tells without mediation, what God intends.

As the title indicates, these are “exercises of the (human-)rooted spirit,” totally involving the body, reason, heart and soul of the person. They provide

themes for meditation along with realities to be contemplated, scenes to be imagined, feelings to be evaluated, possibilities to be explored, options to be considered, alternatives to be weighed, judgments to be reached, and paths of action to be integrated into the express purpose of helping individuals to ‘seek and find the will of God’ which influences the fundamental ordering of their lives.²⁸

The fundamental dynamics of the *SE* is therefore rooted in the personal encounter with the Spirit of Truth, and the realization of His never-ending invitation addressed to every human being, to welcome in his/her own life a unique project of *happiness*, and to go on discerning, in freedom, *whither* the Spirit of God leads him/her, on a path of seeking the greatest personal fulfilment, or, in the language of faith, the glory of God and the salvation of one’s own soul.²⁹ Viewing the human being as one whole, St Ignatius regards the exercitant’s prayerful reflection on his/her life as a necessary means to corroborate, reshape or validate the meaning of his/her life. Only through close reflection about one’s personal experience, and through prayerful internalization of its meaning, will the exercitant be able to freely choose the path of action that leads him/her to fully espouse the good sought after. Hence, for St Ignatius, prayer and reflection are, therefore, key tools for *meaningful* action, the very action that constitutes the *raison d’être* of the *SE*. It is a pedagogy

²⁸ Pedagogia Inaciana – Uma Abordagem Prática, no. 24 (Braga: GRACOS – Grupo de Reflexão e Análise dos Colégios da Companhia de Jesus, 1994).

²⁹ See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*.

that leads to the kind of *happiness* that finds its strength and deepest root in the personal encounter between God and man.³⁰

2. Principle and Foundation

2.1. *God, Man and the Creatures*

St Ignatius's anthropological view on happiness can be found in the *Principle and Foundation* of the *SE*. While certainly not designed as a systematic, academic work on that topic,³¹ Ignatius's writings do reflect a theoretically consistent view of man, based both on his personal experience in Manresa³² and the studies he carried out in Paris.³³ They provide, in fact, a comprehensive (spiritual-theological) anthropology that can truly be called an Ignatian anthropology.³⁴ The human being is called by God to transcend him/herself in praise and service.³⁵ Being a creature, and being created *for* God, constitutes for man the *foundation* of his life in time, and his ultimate destiny. Before him is God's initiative as gift and grace,³⁶ to which he must respond by freely using his powers and qualities. Therefore, says St Ignatius, "we ought not to speak of grace at such length and with such emphasis that the poison of doing away with

³⁰ See François Charmot, *La Pédagogie des Jésuites, ses principes, son actualité* (Paris : Editions Spes, 1946), 13-206; Pedagogia Inaciana – Uma Abordagem Prática, nos. 24-26.

³¹ See Luis María García Domínguez, *Las Afecciones Desordenadas – influjo del subconsciente en la vida espiritual* (Madrid-Santander-Bilbao: Universidad Pontificia Comillas-Editorial Sal Terrae-Ediciones Mensajero, 20152), 91-120.

³² See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*.

³³ See Rogelio García Mateo, "Los Estudios Filosóficos de Ignacio de Loyola y su espiritualidad", 73-86.

³⁴ See Anaís Madera-Roldán, "Antropología religiosa. Ensayo de síntesis," *Manresa* 22 (1950): 306-312; Láutico García, *El hombre espiritual según San Ignacio* (Madrid: Editorial Razón y Fe, S. A., 1961), 14; Joseph Thomas, *Le Secret des jésuites : Les Exercices spirituels* (Paris: Desclée-Bellarmin, 1984), 31-67; also, Manuel Ruiz Jurado, "L'antropologia di Sant' Ignazio di Loyola," in *L'antropologia dei maestri spirituali* ed. Charles André Bernard (Torino: Piemme, 1991), 239-256; and Francisco José Ruiz Pérez, "Teología del camino. Una aproximación antropológico-teológica a Ignazio de Loyola," Colección Manresa 22 (Bilbao: Sal Terrae, 2000).

³⁵ See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*.

³⁶ See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 230-237.

liberty is engendered,”³⁷ since without this liberty it is not possible to return everything to the Creator: “Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty”³⁸.

Out of both liberty and the human make up itself arises the inevitable tension that characterizes man’s mortal life, and which can divert him from his end, either through sin or through the self-deception of one’s faculties. Both the *Principle and Foundation*³⁹ and the *Contemplation to Attain the Love of God*,⁴⁰ express the need for the exercitant to put something of his/her own, to “dispose him/herself” as a way of striving to cooperate with divine grace.⁴¹ This brings about a tension between opposing forces, within and without the human person; or, as Tellechea says, the battle against the worst in one’s self.⁴² Every man senses the strain towards sin and against the discourse of the Kingdom,⁴³ the disorder of his/her operations,⁴⁴ while the outside world lures him with its vainglory.⁴⁵ This whole tension between reason illuminated by faith and sensuality is emphasized throughout the *SE*.⁴⁶ The solution comes from self-transcendence, the resolute action “against [one’s] sensuality and carnal and worldly love,”⁴⁷ since one can choose and decide “because of weightier motives presented to my reason, and not because of any sensual inclination.”⁴⁸ In keeping with the *Principle and Foundation*, the exercitant ought to set before him/her the end “for which I am created, that is, for the praise of God our Lord and for the salvation of my soul,”⁴⁹

³⁷ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 369.

³⁸ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 234.

³⁹ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 23.

⁴⁰ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, nos. 230-237.

⁴¹ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, nos. 1; 16; 319.

⁴² See José Ignacio Tellechea Idígoras, *Solo y a pie* (Cristiandad: Madrid, 1986), 278.

⁴³ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 63.

⁴⁴ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, nos. 97 e ff.

⁴⁵ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 63.

⁴⁶ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 87.

⁴⁷ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 97.

⁴⁸ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 182.

⁴⁹ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 169.

as the necessary precondition for the “surrender of self-love and of *his* own will and interests,”⁵⁰ which are constitutive of *man*.⁵¹

Although St Ignatius recognizes the intrinsic value of things, he also knows that, if they remain in the purely human sphere and separated from their true reference, they ought to be relativized for the sake of the divine which gives them meaning. Although all natural goods or values (e. g., health, wealth, honour, success) come from on high,⁵² they are of lesser importance than the religious, moral value,⁵³ “so that not even were I made lord of all creation, or to save my life here on earth, would I consent to violate a commandment, whether divine or human, that binds me under pain of mortal sin.”⁵⁴ The *Principle and Foundation* puts forward this **teleological** vision of man. For St Ignatius, the rational and the spiritual ends are not **separable**; they mutually support each other. Reason illuminated by faith, once freed from inordinate attachments, is a sound criterion for discernment and election, according to the third time, “when the soul is not agitated by different spirits, and has free and peaceful use of its natural powers.”⁵⁵ The job of the *SE* is to regulate, purify and elevate this natural love and make it spiritual.⁵⁶ Indeed, in his response to God, man experiences at least two types of resistance: from sin, and from inordinate attachments. The struggle against sin occupies the exercitant during the first week, although it continues during the following weeks. However, the inordinate attachment is a subtler resistance, as it can deceive discernment in any of its subsequent steps. Hence the rules of the second week, intended, to a large extent, to discern consolation with a preceding cause, since it may carry the evil spirit’s deception with it. Although in the first week the enemy of our human nature can

⁵⁰ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 189.

⁵¹ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I^a, q. 20, 1, <https://sumateologica.files.wordpress.com/2017/04/suma-teolc3b3gica.pdf>.

⁵² Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 237.

⁵³ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, nos. 23; 146; 166.

⁵⁴ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 165.

⁵⁵ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 177.

⁵⁶ See Láutico García, *El hombre espiritual según San Ignacio*, 179 e ff.

also be deceitful,⁵⁷ deception becomes the central theme of the second set of rules⁵⁸ in the second week.⁵⁹ In this second situation, therefore, the exercitant moves in a hidden, deceiving world, with “fallacious reasonings, subtleties, and continual deceptions”⁶⁰ in which the evil spirit assumes the appearance of an angel of light, which begins by suggesting holy and pious thoughts, but with only one objective: to get away with his own thoughts, “drawing the soul into his hidden snares and evil designs.”⁶¹ It is only at the end that the good soul realizes that everything started apparently with good and continued in the good, but eventually ended in something evil, or simply in a lesser good.⁶²

For this reason, during the discernment process, the exercitants ought not to close in on themselves, and should seek help from someone skilled in spiritual things.⁶³

2.2. Indifference

Indifference, as the basic precondition of the *SE*, means detachment from the things of this world. Without it, objective reasoning, indispensable to the sound choice of a way, is not possible. In order for the exercitants to make the right choice, within the framework of a plan that goes infinitely beyond themselves, but which cannot exist without them, they must develop and welcome, in humility and grace, a climate in which freedom is not conditioned. To do so, and in order to remain inwardly detached from the things of this world, they must choose as pilgrims and strangers in this world, as someone who cannot settle permanently in a place, because they consider all things as ephemeral, and

⁵⁷ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 326.

⁵⁸ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, nos. 329, 332, 334 and 336.

⁵⁹ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 139.

⁶⁰ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 329.

⁶¹ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 332.

⁶² Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 333.

⁶³ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 334.

some even irrelevant. Certainly, man's free choice is not always the result of a fully mature reflection, or a perfectly enlightened, concrete knowledge. Very often, before they start the decision process, those who choose in a *SE atmosphere* have already chosen. It must be recognized with humility, that it is not possible to establish the moment in time when the hesitant person reached the decision, as it will always include a certain amount of imponderability, non-reflection and, consequently, the possibility of prejudices and predeterminations, which can also be the result of previous determinants.

This brings us to the real subject. The very possibility of the influence of previously held views (for example, "That would be stupid!" or, "That cannot possibly be for me!") points up the fact that by our very nature we are not indifferent when it comes to making a free decision. Indifferent is what we must become. But this does not come about through goodwill alone, or by saying that I am indifferent; for indifference is something that must enter into the nerves and the very marrow of the bones. Nor is indifference the mere resolution not to let oneself be carried along by the crowd; it demands, rather, the existential distance from things that is self-appropriated in such a way that it even frees the will to reject its own previous prejudices. [...] The *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius of Loyola propose an active indifference in virtue of which we are to act in such a way that both the use and non use of things can and must be our own responsibility. This active indifference is surrounded and protected by the human being's humble handing over of himself to God's good pleasure. God levels out in the only proper way the differences in the reality of our human existence, even those that we ourselves may not level out. And, finally, we lose everything in death. In death, despite our great freedom, we do not have control of ourselves, but can only endure, and say: "Into your hands I commend my spirit." In death, we must let the incomprehensible dispose of us in such a way that we believe that this disposition is

the work of an infinite love, and is preserving our spiritual human existence from meaninglessness.”⁶⁴

Detachment from the things of the world requires one’s continual self-conquest. Indeed, since we do not stop loving things, we need the courage to be constantly on alert to overcome our attachments, in a search for truth and authenticity, which are the building blocks of the person. In determining our attitude towards things, while accepting the will of God, our ultimate and irreversible decision is beyond the universally binding moral precepts. Thus, in the *SE*, even though a person will never be able to practice indifference in an absolute and definitive way, s/he is urged to free her/himself emotionally and effectively, as far as is within the reach of her/his will, from any prejudices and assumptions, in order to be able to say: *I wanted and sought the good, according to the will of God*. In this sense, religion and life, grace and nature, divine will and human freedom are all interwoven in the *SE*.⁶⁵ Indifference in keeping with the *SE* is therefore synonymous with inner freedom. It means neither the elimination of one’s own interests, desires, will and freedom, nor heartlessness or apathy; it is rather a positive attitude, one’s strong conviction, radical commitment and loving passion translated into an action that materializes in the person’s unconditional willingness to desire and fulfil God’s will; i. e., to desire and choose what God desires and wills.

2.3. *The magis*

The deepest essence of indifference entails also the decision to embrace the *magis*. Indifference is one’s detachment from things as to their use, and it must be transformed into non-indifference. Indifference is not an end in itself, but is sought in terms of the choice of “what is

⁶⁴ Rahner, *The Content of Faith. The Best of Karl Rahner’s Theological Writings*, 561.

⁶⁵ See Juan Luis Segundo, *Teologia Aberta para o Leigo e Adulto – Graça e Condição Humana* (São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 1975), 54-57.

more conducive to the end for which we are created.”⁶⁶ One’s decision process entails freedom, but ultimately the decision is granted by God, as what the person is seeking is God’s will. Indifference must, therefore, be understood as a temporary separation from things allowing for the exercitant self-determination in the light of God; it is the freedom of someone who, far from purporting to stoically assert such freedom, wants to entrust it, along with the decision, to God. Therefore, the “as far as” of indifference must be complemented by “what is more conducive to the end for which we are created,”⁶⁷ i. e., the end of the very decision that the person entrusts to the Lord. This would avoid any heroism, since here on earth man does not have a permanent abode, and God is the Being ever greater, requiring constant vigilance on our part, lest we obstinately close in on a given path. Hence indifference is the exact opposite of apathy. The difference with which the Lord shaped all things must be recognized: humiliation is not the same as honour, pain is not the same thing as joy, for example.⁶⁸ Whoever thinks otherwise is a Stoic, not a Christian. Indifference does not mean uniformity, aloofness or mediocrity, nor does it suppose that all things are at the same level or that they do not provide pleasure. God wills to save everyone, but the way to call each one to be a Christian depends on Him, and not on us. Most people do not make real choices as far as most things are concerned. A Christian is born free, but s/he has to choose to be a Christian. It is only when the person departs from this world and God “takes away” everything, including the person from her/himself, that s/he does realize what s/he was called to get rid of.

3. Man: a being of desire

The *SE* are, as it were, a way of schooling desire, or a sort of heart surgery designed to lead the exercitant to reach her/his ultimate goal:

⁶⁶ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 23.

⁶⁷ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 52.

⁶⁸ St Ignatius reports some typical examples of indifference: the instincts of vitality (health-illness), wealth (richness-poverty), esteem (honour-humiliation), existence (long life-short life). They exemplify the symptomatology of man’s self-affirmation in the various dimensions of existence. Rahner, *The Content of Faith. The Best of Karl Rahner’s Theological Writings*.

encounter *the One* who is the way to happiness. Desire, as the inclination towards someone or something, is an integral part of every human being⁶⁹. Due to a pessimistic view of our natural tendencies, the spontaneity of desire was very much feared for a long time in the context of education as something that should be repressed, for fear that it goes against the ethical goals of education. With Rousseau and his optimistic view of the natural tendencies of man, the pedagogy of control and repression gave way to a pedagogy of spontaneity, gratification and (in its distorted limit) permissiveness. A more recent view holds that desires should not be given free flow but should be not only acknowledged for what they are, but also elaborated and restructured, that is, schooled.⁷⁰ Now, what makes people educable is their desire for happiness, and so the true beginning of responsible action as an option lies in desire. However, desire is not a sheer, authentic force that cannot be distorted. In general, people want what they usually have within their own reach. Most often, however, human beings act on their desires without troubling to put them in order and check them against truth. Human beings very easily create an image of contempt and fear about what they do not master.⁷¹ Overcoming this fear by expressing one's desires is what constitutes humility, i. e., truth about oneself in its deepest sense. The free person is the one capable of expressing her/his desires, thereby providing her/himself with the opportunity for reconciliation and encounter. According to St Ignatius of Loyola, God desires too,⁷² and His greatest desire is to give *himself* to human beings; man's greatest desire is a reflection (although not a symmetric one) of God's self-bestowal (*Da mihi Te*, as in

⁶⁹ See Lopes, *Santo Inácio de Loiola, um Educador do Desejo*, 233.

⁷⁰ See Amedeo Cencini, *Il mondo dei desideri – Orientamenti per la guida spirituale* (Milano: Paoline, 1998), 35.

⁷¹ We recall here the well-known fable by La Fontaine, *Le Renard et les raisins*, widely taught in schools during the 18th century and in the first half of the 19th century. The fox gives up the grapes, considering them unripe, not because they are, but because he cannot reach them. See Jean de La Fontaine, *Le Renard et les raisins*. In La Fontaine, *Fables, Contes et Nouvelles*, texte établi et annoté par René Groos (Fables) et par Jacques Schiffrin (Contes) (Paris : Gallimard, 1954), livre III, fable 11.

⁷² See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*: “how much, as far as He can, the same Lord desires to give Himself to me according to His divine decrees.”

St Augustine's prayer). Therefore, the whole spiritual process consists of identifying one's desires with God's desire.⁷³ On the other hand, desires cannot be viewed only as an individual's reality, as they are historically⁷⁴ and culturally⁷⁵ perceived and shaped. All desires are culturally mediated, and none of them goes straightforwardly to its object. The desires we actually feel, far from being spontaneous, are shaped, elaborated and mediated by cultural models that make the desire to be always suggested or illuminated by the mediator (the hero's desire), who substantially modifies the relationship established between the subject who desires and the desired object.

Corella says that desires need to be cherished and that the most natural way to do so is by favouring any type of fulfilment of them, however modest it may be.⁷⁶ One of the essential tasks in life, and an important goal for an adequate pedagogy of desire, is to regulate the desires a person carries within her/himself, by integrating them into a set of core desires.⁷⁷ On this, the *SE* could not be clearer: "the reason he wants or retains anything will be solely the service, honour, and glory of the Divine Majesty."⁷⁸ This pedagogy of desire regulation is sensitivity-centred. In this sense, the *SE* are basically a school of "reordering" of one's sensitivity. Underlying this wisdom of "I will ask God our Lord for what I want and desire"⁷⁹ is the goal of schooling and "forcing" the exercitant to decide to will and desire only what God wills and desires, and conversely refuse to will or desire – but rather abhor – what He neither wills nor wants. Here lies one of the secrets of the *SE*: to learn how to "surrender

⁷³ See Aleixandre Dolores, "El deseo y el miedo. Reflexiones desde la Biblia y desde la espiritualidad ignaciana," *Manresa* 66 (1994): 129.

⁷⁴ See Amadeo Cencini. *Il mondo dei desideri – Orientamenti per la guida spirituale*, 38.

⁷⁵ See Xavier Quinzá Lléo, "La cultura del deseo y la seducción de Dios," *Cuadernos FyS* 24 (1993): 5.

⁷⁶ See Jesús Corella. "Dinámica del deseo y de las afecciones desordenadas en el proceso de los Ejercicios," *Manresa* 66 (1994): 160.

⁷⁷ See Darío Mollá, "Pedagogía del deseo Cristiano," *Sal Terrae* 84/1 (1996): 655.

⁷⁸ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 16.

⁷⁹ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 48.

[one's] self-love and [one's] own will and interests,"⁸⁰ to imitate and become more like Christ.⁸¹

A practical way for a better understanding of desire could be to look at one's behaviour (insofar as it stems from desire) and then move to the attitudes (lifestyle, predispositions to act) and the feelings (emotional dispositions, more or less lasting), in order to reach the personal reasons. These make up the true "reason", the core of the actions and projects that "unveil" the person's deepest desires, as they flow either from a fundamental option on her/his part, or from a fundamental mistake. By "tracing" the history of one's desire, i. e., the moment a specific desire sprang up and that in which it "gained momentum," one can understand how to best "maintain" it, if it helps the person, or to "annihilate" it, in case it destroys her/him. The point, in a nutshell, is how to transform our desires into friends of ours.

4. Ignatius and the schooling of desires

4.1. *Eliciting desire*

According to William Lynch, imagination is one of the three core elements of hope.⁸² We cannot wait if we cannot imagine possibilities. St Ignatius's way of fostering spiritual growth in the exercitants is by touching their imagination. He elicits desire by suggesting images of what to expect from God, and from the desires the exercitant may have. Very interesting in this regard is the final prelude to each meditation in the *SE*, in which the specific grace to be asked for is suggested to the exercitant: "what I want and desire."⁸³ In this way, rather than willing to regulate desires, St Ignatius wants to elicit them; and he does so by stirring interest in the imagination of the exercitant. Thus, the *SE* create

⁸⁰ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 189.

⁸¹ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 167.

⁸² See William F. Lynch, *Images of the Hope* (Notre Dame – Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974), 23.

⁸³ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 48.

an atmosphere of generosity for the exercitant to respond with new, ever more genuine desires.

St Ignatius believed that desires should be Christocentric, and that they ought to develop to the extent permitted by grace. In the *SE* there is no “terminal station” to allow for the exercitants to say in their hearts, with a certain amount of relief: “I have arrived!” Each day, the exercitant is asked to wonder about new possibilities for Christ-centred growth. In this context, it is worth mentioning the famous phrase from the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*: “Where through human weakness and personal misery the candidate does not experience in himself such ardent desires in our Lord, he should be asked whether he has any desires to experience them”⁸⁴ – in other words, whether the candidate has a desire to have serious desires, as a way of pursuing his best desires, even if the feelings to sustain them are lacking. Fostering the desire to have desires enables the person to imagine her/himself possessing attitudes or actions that s/he recognizes as good, but for which s/he still either does not have the grace or recognize their value to carry them forward. For St Ignatius, the pursuit of true desires always means spiritual progress.

4.2. *Ordering one’s desires*

In the *SE*, St Ignatius assumes that the struggle between contrasting desires will be more often the rule than the exception. Should this struggle not occur, he would be very worried.⁸⁵ This means that one of the contrasting desires has to yield. The meditation on the “Three Classes of Men” brings about that very crisis of conscience, by putting forward the inconsistency of clinging to a desire one does not want to let go, vis-à-vis the desire to do God’s will.⁸⁶ When the exercitants recognize that such a situation is impossible, they are told to put all energy into

⁸⁴ John W. Padberg (Ed.), *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms: A Complete English, trans. of the Official Latin Texts* (St. Louis: The Institut of Jesuits Sources, 1996), no. 102.

⁸⁵ See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 6.

⁸⁶ See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, nos. 149-155.

desiring the divine will and countering (*agere contra*) said attachment.⁸⁷ The exercitant's willingness to lessen contrasting desires and fears, in order to be able to channel their energies more freely, is to a large extent what St Ignatius understood by mortification. Although he approved of fasts, corporal penances, vigils, and the ascetic dimension of one's vows, the most fruitful mortification is that of the will. Those who do not have their fears and desires in "order" will not be able to duly channel their energies. They may desire to give themselves in service to others, but they fear the cost; they want happiness without willing to give up the wounds that have built along their own journey. St Ignatius calls this paralyzing condition "lukewarmness" and considers it one of the worst spiritual diseases, as it plunders spiritual vitality from the soul. The unmortified lukewarm do not discipline their desires and are unable or unwilling to say "no" to some desires or fears in order to be able to say "yes" to others. Inauthentic desires and fears lead not to greater energy and freedom, but rather to repression, restlessness, lack of peace or inner harmony.

4.3. *Searching for the true desire: God*

The theme of desire runs throughout the book of the *SE*: "Our one desire and choice should be;"⁸⁸ "I will ask God our Lord for what I want and desire;"⁸⁹ "it is my earnest desire and my deliberate choice;"⁹⁰ "always being intent on seeking what I desire."⁹¹ Now, fear is something that hinders desire. In the *SE* St Ignatius alludes to this, in connection with poverty, toil, dishonour, illness, short life..., and the experience of fear, which is put forward there as repugnance,⁹² as "restlessness rising from many disturbances and temptations,"⁹³ as something that disturbs

⁸⁷ See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, nos. 157 and 16.

⁸⁸ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 23.

⁸⁹ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 48.

⁹⁰ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 98.

⁹¹ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 76.

⁹² Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 157.

⁹³ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 316.

with fallacious reasonings, seeking to prevent the soul from advancing,⁹⁴ and as “obstacles to advance in the service of God our Lord,”⁹⁵ which results in “[losing] courage, and [turning] to flight”⁹⁶... Liberation of desire does not mean getting what we want, but willing to be our innermost being.⁹⁷ For St Ignatius, desire is imperatively directed towards the search for God and His Kingdom.⁹⁸ God is the greater Desire, the One who attracts, precedes and challenges the believer; the One who “provokes” and “summons” her/his always to go beyond her/his borders and limits. St Ignatius speaks of God as the One who calls to follow Him,⁹⁹ the One who with “interior joy [...] invites and attracts to what is heavenly”¹⁰⁰ and “desires to give Himself [...] according to His divine decrees.”¹⁰¹ The whole spiritual process consists of identifying one’s own desires with God’s, i. e., adopting, as one’s own, God’s desires. The *SE*’s proposal is no different: “seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul.”¹⁰²

Still about the theme of fear, we can find a remarkable coincidence between the fundamental ways to overcome fear according to the *SE* and according to the Bible. In the Bible, fear must be faced head on. Along the same line, St Ignatius is convinced that, as evidenced by many Old Testament texts, the enemy turns to flight “as soon as one leading a spiritual life faces his temptations boldly, and does exactly the opposite of what he suggests.”¹⁰³ We could go on citing other significant passages: “he [who suffers desolation] can do much to withstand all his enemies. Let him find his strength in his Creator and Lord;”¹⁰⁴ “to intensify

⁹⁴ See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 315.

⁹⁵ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 9.

⁹⁶ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 325.

⁹⁷ See Sebastian Moore, *Jesus the Liberator of Desire* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 18-34.

⁹⁸ See Alexandre Dolores, «El deseo y el miedo – Reflexiones desde la Biblia y desde la espiritualidad ignaciana», 127-130.

⁹⁹ See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 95.

¹⁰⁰ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 316.

¹⁰¹ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 234.

¹⁰² Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 1.

¹⁰³ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 325.

¹⁰⁴ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 324.

our activity [against the desolation];”¹⁰⁵ “act against;”¹⁰⁶ “when we feel an attachment opposed to actual poverty [...] it will be very helpful [...] even though corrupt nature rebel against it, to beg our Lord in the colloquies to choose us to serve Him in actual poverty.”¹⁰⁷ The second way to overcome fear consists of trusting the One Savior from all evils (fear included). The one in desolation “can resist with the help of God, which always remains, though he may not clearly perceive it,”¹⁰⁸ and “by making use of the sufficient grace offered him, he can do much to withstand all his enemies. Let him find his strength in his Creator and Lord.”¹⁰⁹ This is the reason why, from the outset, the exercitant is invited “to enter upon the *SE* with magnanimity and generosity toward his Creator and Lord.”¹¹⁰ In St Ignatius’s view, therefore, fear is an inordinate attachment: not only does it deform reality,¹¹¹ it also leads the person to relate to reality in a perverted and paralyzing way. As Avelino Fernández shrewdly observes, “Desire is ambiguous in essence. So much so that the Ignatian spirituality, due to its insistence on continually examining and discerning movements and feelings in the soul, has been accused of being a ‘spirituality of suspicion’.”¹¹² However, following St Ignatius, we cannot be afraid of desires. If we want to find out what our true desires are, we will have to be willing to dive, without fear, in what our world of desires has to say to us.¹¹³ Last but not least, a true desire that is not integrated into a larger structure tends to vanish and hardly will it survive. The man of desires emerging from the framework of the *SE*, is a man of

¹⁰⁵ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 319.

¹⁰⁶ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 97.

¹⁰⁷ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 156.

¹⁰⁸ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 320.

¹⁰⁹ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 324.

¹¹⁰ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 5.

¹¹¹ See José Maria Rambla, “Bondad y Ambigüedad del deseo,” *Manresa* 66 (1994): 161-164.

¹¹² Avelino Fernández, “Importancia e insuficiencia del deseo en la espiritualidad ignaciana,” *Manresa* 66 (1994): 138.

¹¹³ See S. Ignacio de Loyola, Autobiografía. In *S. Ignacio de Loyola Obras Completas*, transcripción, introducciones y notas de Ignacio Iparraguirre and Candido Dalmases, 4.ª ed. (Madrid: BAC, 1982), no. 5.

the “first class of men,”¹¹⁴ because true desires must lead to serve other people, and to commitment.

5. Happiness in the *Spiritual Exercises* as countercultural desire: not to have, not to have oneself, in order to be

Ignatius, like Augustine, suggests that the only path leading to happiness is knowledge and identification with Christ and His radicalness.¹¹⁵ Through the *SE*, Ignatius proposes the imitation of Christ as the only way for man to be happy. We are aware that this is a countercultural proposal for our contemporary world, a world enticed by selfish self-accomplishment, luxury and comfortable living; a world that loves prestige, power and self-reliance.¹¹⁶ Living like Christ, poor and humble, with fidelity and value, is hardly seductive, because it can entail humiliation, persecution, even death.¹¹⁷ In fact, the *SE* are a preparation for the sort of action which, due to the asceticism involved, would hardly be attractive for contemporary man, eager to hedonistically enjoy the present moment.¹¹⁸

A few examples are in order: *agere contra* is a way of schooling the inner man in self-control, so that we may always choose what leads to our ultimate end as human creatures;¹¹⁹ prudence in consolation, i. e., take consolation as a way to better face harder times ahead, rather than getting into the euphoric mode;¹²⁰ reach out to other people, being more ready to put a good interpretation on another's statement than to

¹¹⁴ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 153.

¹¹⁵ See Santo Agostinho, “A Vida Feliz,” trans. Ir. Nair de Assis Oliveira, In *Santo Agostinho, Soliloquios e a Vida Feliz* (Paulus: São Paulo, 1998), 115; e Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 104.

¹¹⁶ See Congregação Geral XXXIV – Documentos da Congregação Geral 34 da Companhia de Jesus, trans. Maria da Graça Coutinho de Lencastre, revista por Manuel Morujão, Vital Dias Pereira e Elias Couto (Braga: Edição da Cúria Provincial S.J., 1996), Decreto 26, n.º 5, 333; see Manuel Ruiz Jurado, *Linee Teologiche Strutturali Degli Esercizi Spirituali*, 3.ª ed. riveduta e ampliata (Roma: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1998), 33.

¹¹⁷ See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 101.

¹¹⁸ See Gabino Uríbarri Bilbao, “El sujeto ignaciano en la cultura contemporánea. Desafíos y recursos,” in *El sujeto. Reflexiones para una antropología ignaciana*, dir. et altri Rufino Meana Peón (Bilbao/Madrid: Mensajero / Sal Terrae / Comillas, 2019), 317-334.

¹¹⁹ See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, nos. 13, 16, 97, 157, 217, 325 e 351.

¹²⁰ See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 14.

condemn it as false;¹²¹ since the end of man is clearly that of becoming a spiritual being, this becomes the criterion for the use of all things and what gives meaning to a person's life, understood as a pilgrimage,¹²² to make one's action a contemplation, in order to become more oneself.¹²³ The *SE* are, therefore, a perfect mystagogy of desire, as they introduce us into a process of reordering the affections towards the search and attainment of a peculiar happiness, in keeping with the terms detailed above. After a period that includes delimitation and crisis as far as desire is concerned, the next stage is that of desire orientation, always linked to freedom of heart, which necessarily involves the discovery of the true face of God.¹²⁴ The key element in the *SE* is, therefore, the personal choice, the core of which lies in what St Ignatius calls *foundation*.¹²⁵ The object of meditation in the Principle and Foundation is practical, in that it invites a decision *for* or *against* God, and it must be achieved in the decision itself. It is an impulse towards the living God, and one that in the world is often found in the bitterest darkness of the person and in the impenetrability and uncertainty as to the future.

Now, God infinitely transcends all that can be said about Him. Whatever we may legitimately speculate about God's attributes, that must simultaneously be negated in order to better approach God, who is *Deus semper maior*. God is Someone who, in His freedom, is full of mystery. He shares life with man and "disposes" of him, but in such a way that our autonomy not only is not harmed by God's absolute divinity but is actually perfected by it. The image of God in the *SE* is that of a loving God who, as such, is willing to grant each person the possibility of partaking in His life. His absolutely gratuitous love is gratuitously bestowed upon us. This is what makes our life dangerously unfathomable: that, as creatures, we are granted the faculty of choosing at our discretion. God's

¹²¹ See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 22.

¹²² See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 23.

¹²³ See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, nos. 230-237.

¹²⁴ See Lopes, *Santo Inácio de Loiola, um Educador do Desejo*, 202.

¹²⁵ Rahner, *The Content of Faith. The Best of Karl Rahner's Theological Writings*.

intimate love gives our existence its deepest meaning, one that is always different, depending on the specific circumstances of each person, which also shows that God's self-communication to each person is unique and unrepeatable.

Conclusion

From the beginning, Philosophy was seen as a path that leads human beings to their ultimate goal: happiness. St Augustine also dealt with *eudaimonia* or *beata vita* (happiness) as one of the main topics of his thought, namely in a study in which he discusses the relationship between the writings of philosophers before him and his Christian worldview. In stark contrast with Stoics and Neoplatonists, St Augustine argues, as early as in his *De Beata Vita*,¹²⁶ that happiness, far from being within the reach of Philosophy, is only attainable with the possession of God, the only source of happiness. This is, in a way, how St Ignatius views happiness. And this is also our starting point to approach the theme of happiness drawing upon the *Spiritual Exercises*.¹²⁷ We started with a principle which is also one of the most important imperatives of Ignatian pedagogy in the *SE*: God communicates *himself* directly to the person who seeks God; accordingly, the spiritual director must be "like a balance at equilibrium,"¹²⁸ without seeking to exert any influence whatsoever. The very deepest soul, heart and secret of the *SE* is their underlying openness to the mystery of God, the care to favour and respect the crucially important encounter between God and man, in an atmosphere of acceptance and response but also of vigilant discernment, from the *Principle and Foundation*¹²⁹ up to the *Contemplation to Attain Love*,¹³⁰ constantly seeking the balance between the objective pole (the

¹²⁶ See Augustine, "The Happy Life," in *Saint Augustine: The Happy Life, Answer to Skeptics, Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil, Soliloquies*, trans. Ludwig Schopp (New York: CIMA Publishing, 1948), 43-86.

¹²⁷ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*.

¹²⁸ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 15.

¹²⁹ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 23.

¹³⁰ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, nos. 230-237.

faith content, i. e., the whole of Revelation) and the subjective pole (the faith context of the exercitant).¹³¹ It is in a context involving God who acts and the concrete person being called that the exercitant puts into practice the *Ignatian way*. Indeed, rather than doing St Ignatius's *SE*, the exercitant does his own exercises, throughout his decisive and personal encounter with God.

Finally, it is worth remembering that the *SE* put forward and illuminate a view of faith and life according to which our self-accomplishment is found through learning how to take our place in our own time, fully aware that each one is an integral part of a History that infinitely transcends us but to which we also give meaning. At stake is the asceticism required by the truth to be sought, a personal duty-to-be illuminated by Revelation. Also at stake, a truth that uninstalls and often may cause scandal; a truth that constantly contradicts the standards (like power, wealth, glory, the "first place," false self-sufficiency) for an exclusively human effectiveness. The Gospel links glory and the cross. *Life came out of death: how come?* This is the most paradoxical truth of the Gospel for us to contemplate.¹³² This perspective is countercultural, since nowadays the reigning humanist optimism does not accept as a reality the dark side of man. Mainstream culture holds that we shape our own being autonomously as we project our personal future; hence no need for someone, no need for an absolute reference point whatsoever. Still, the concept of a secularized, post-religious man willing to act as if there were no God, has not disappeared yet.¹³³

According to the worldview that shapes both the Augustinian ethics and the *SE*, we are created by God, we are before Him, destined for Him and called to an immediate participation *in* and *of* His glory. However, we are living in time and in the world, and not in our eternal seat. This predicament requires our humility (recognition that we are itinerant) and fortitude (the personal drive towards future communion with God,

¹³¹ Gilles Cusson, "Antropologia Biblica ed Esercizi Spirituali II", 32-38, 43-46, 52-53.

¹³² See 1 Cor 1:17-24.

¹³³ See Jurado, *Linee Teologiche Strutturali Degli Esercizi Spirituali*, 33.

notwithstanding our inner contradictions and those in the world around us). According to the existential structure of the *SE*, and plainly in continuity with St Augustine, human happiness is inextricably linked with praise, reverence and the service of God.¹³⁴ To that end everything else is ordered, and thanks to it everything gains a taste of eternity.

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¹³⁴ See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, no. 23.

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