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# **The Ignatian Exercises in the Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar**

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Hans Urs von Balthasar died in Basel just over a decade ago, in June of 1988. Without a doubt one of the most significant representatives of Catholic theology in this century, he left to us an unusually large corpus of writings. The reception and interpretation of his thought is now well under way, but it is far from finished. It is already clear that it doesn't help to approach it with ready-made clichés: Is it progressive? Is it conservative? His thought just can't be squeezed into such categories. It does indeed draw deeply from the tradition, but in such a way as to remain relevant far, far beyond the fads of this or of any day.

It is characteristic of von Balthasar that he was, on the one hand, a strong, resourcefully creative personality and, on the other hand, always developing his thought in dialogue with others: with Origen, with Irenaeus, with Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, Augustine, Anselm of Canterbury, Blaise Pascal, Thérèse of Lisieux, Charles Péguy, Georges Bernanos, and with many others as well.

Today, January 28, the Church celebrates the feast of St. Thomas Aquinas. It would be possible and indeed fascinating to sketch the dialogue of von Balthasar with Thomas. We would have to review his scholarly commentary on the questions of St. Thomas which have to do with his teaching on charisms. And we would have to consider the Thomistic ontology of finite being expressed in the doctrine of the real distinction between essence and existence; for this plays an important role in the work of von Balthasar. Finally, we would have to deal with von Balthasar's conviction that Neothomistic theology has to be drawn from the spirit of the *true* Thomas, one of the huge tasks on which he labored along with his teacher and friend Henri de Lubac and others.

Tonight we want to take a look at von Balthasar's dialogue with Ignatius of Loyola. This can enrich us in two ways. It can help us to a better understanding of the Ignatian Exercises in their theological substance, and it can help us to get a clearer grasp of von Balthasar's theological options. This dialogue of von Balthasar with Ignatius and his Spiritual Exercises stands out among the many other dialogues not only because it is a scholarly discussion between one of the most important teachers of the spiritual life and a modern theologian. This dialogue also grew out of,

and was characterized by, the existential adherence of von Balthasar to the spiritual family of Ignatius. That is what I will talk about in the first section of this address.

## Section I: Biographical Aspects

Henri de Lubac once called Hans Urs von Balthasar "a fervent disciple" of St. Ignatius<sup>(1)</sup>. This statement is strongly confirmed by a look at von Balthasar's work and path; even more, it provides a key to understanding them.

In the summer of 1927 von Balthasar (at that time a student of German literature and philosophy) made a thirty-day Ignatian retreat in Whylen near Basel under the direction of Friedrich Kronseder SJ. During this retreat he decided to enter the Society of Jesus after the conclusion of his studies. He did so in 1929. A few decades later he recounted that the retreat of 1927 was the crucial turning point of his life<sup>(2)</sup>. In order to suggest the dimensions of this event, he made use of the concepts of the Exercises: he came to know and to grasp God's will in the sense of "the first time of making a good choice"<sup>(3)</sup>. It became clear to von Balthasar at that time that choice is the center of the Exercises. Von Balthasar's later studies confirmed this insight, and he stressed it again and again.

Von Balthasar lived in the Society of Jesus for over twenty years and thus came to know within this order that lives out of the spirituality of the Exercises. When von Balthasar left the order in 1950, this was not a turning away from Ignatius; according to von Balthasar's conviction, it happened in obedience to a new mission, namely, the founding and leading (together with Adrienne von Speyr) of the "Community of St. John". He later wrote, "What Ignatius wanted in his time clearly meant for me from then on, 'world-community' (secular institute); the difficult sacrifice demanded by the transition was accompanied by the certainty of serving the same idea with greater exactness."<sup>(4)</sup>

Only a few weeks after his leaving the Society of Jesus, after his being unable to take his final vows in this Society von Balthasar went to the Benedictine Abbey of Maria Laach and there pronounced in private form the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. In the text of these vows he expressly emphasized that, as far as possible, he wanted to lead his life under the guidance of Ignatius.

Even after leaving the Society of Jesus, von Balthasar remained in many ways tied to it; as he said in 1965, it was "his most dear and self-evident home"<sup>(5)</sup>. At times this connectedness also expressed itself in concerned criticism<sup>(6)</sup>. To the end of his life, von Balthasar always worked both theoretically and practically with the Exercises. In 1955 he recounted, "I often gave talks at retreats and conferences about the idea of the Exercises, about their philosophical and dogmatic foundations, about the encounter between Ignatius' thought and modern thought in a theology of choice. The most important thing always happens, of course, during the Exercises themselves: one cannot 'lead' them without also receiving them anew from the origin."<sup>(7)</sup> Ten years later, in 1965, he wrote, "I translated the *Exercises*<sup>(8)</sup> and gave about one hundred retreats; if anywhere,

this is where Christian joy lives. If anywhere, this is where it becomes clear what being a Christian means in its 'origin': listening to the word that calls, and becoming free for the expected answer."  
(9)

From about the year 1985, von Balthasar was taking steps to be once again formally accepted into the Society. His discussions about this with the general superior of the Society of Jesus, Fr. Kolvenbach, were proceeding positively. But before the concrete steps to this reintegration into the Society of Jesus could be agreed upon and taken, he was overtaken by death.

Von Balthasar's personal journey and pastoral activity were thus shaped in a special way in Ignatian terms. This suggests the context within which his theological endeavours concerning the Exercises become intelligible.

## Section II: The Exercises in von Balthasar's Theology

There are few, at least among the theologians of our century(10), who as frequently offered incidental or thematic theological treatments of Ignatius' Exercises as von Balthasar. The number of studies or texts expressly dedicated to themes of the Spiritual Exercises is considerable. Some of them are presented below.

Von Balthasar's translation of the Exercises first came out in 1946 and has gone through many editions. In a postscript the translator gives an account of the manner of translating. It was his intention "to reproduce, whenever possible, the authentic tone of the original."(11) This tone is characterized by brevity and strictness as well by the inner dynamism of "ever more" and "toward".

**Text 1:** *The comparative (mas, mejor, etc.), as the increase open toward what is above, is the true rhythm of life and thought of the founder of the Society of Jesus. Disinclined toward the static positive and superlative, he sees in the non-closure of 'more' the distinctively divine (deus semper maior) but also the distinctively creaturely in the face of God (ad maiorem Dei gloriam). (12)*

Von Balthasar calls the "open comparative" the "spiritual password of the Exercises"

In 1948, soon after translating the Exercises, von Balthasar published an article in the journal *Orientierung*(13), in which he emphatically pointed to the theology of the Exercises as still not sufficiently noticed and containing permanently relevant accents. Ignatius, the article argues, though not a professional theologian, had a new access to the Gospel, moved by God's Spirit; this access is expressed in the Spiritual Exercises. In a special way he could therefore enrich academic theology and make it fruitful. For this reason it would be well if theologians paid new attention to the Exercises to receive their theological contents. Ignatius had "an eminent 'mission of teaching' in the Church".(14) The profits of this mission have not been sufficiently gleaned either by the Church as a whole or by the Society of Jesus.

**Text 2:** *One would be very much mistaken about their importance, if one limited it to the area of praxis, of asceticism, an area with which professional dogmatic theologians need not concern themselves. This has been done long enough, really for centuries, and so the Exercises have*

never been submitted to penetrating theological study. The flood of literature on the Exercises remains almost entirely stuck in pastoral and ascetical aspects; only few had had the idea that the Exercises must contain decisive pointers and points of departure for theoretical theology as well. Suarez attempted in his time to construct a sort of theological spirituality of the Society; most recently Erich Przywara has undertaken the same synthesis in his monumental work *'Deus semper maior': Theologie der Exerzitiën* (Herder, 1938-1940). In general, however, even within the Society of Jesus, there is a certain dualism between a theoretical philosophy and theology with a specifically pre-Ignatian form (not even Molina, Lessius, Lugo, Lallemand, and Rodriguez are exceptions) and an Ignatian pastoral method. A great number of Jesuits, by the way, are Thomists, either of the old or the newer form (Maréchal).(15)

In the remaining sections of the text von Balthasar unfolds three concepts around which the theology of the Exercises revolves: choice, indifference and obedience. If one thinks them through in their content and connections, new and hitherto unnoticed accents in the understanding of God, humanity, and the Church emerge. To unfold and support these accents is the object of the texts some of which will be presented here.

The most extensive and significant study written by von Balthasar on the theology of the Exercises is *The Christian State of Life*. A first version was completed around 1945, but the book was not published until 1977 and then only in a reworked form.(16) In its more than 400 pages it presents itself as

**Text 3:** *an extensive meditation on the foundations and backgrounds of the meditations of the Exercises on the 'call of Christ' (Exercises, 91); about the response that must be given to this call, if one 'wants to let oneself be grasped by it' (Exercises, 97); and the choice with which this call confronts one: to follow Christ our Lord 'into the first state which consists in following the commandments' for which he gave us the example in his obedience to his parents, or 'into the second state, which consists in the perfection of the Gospel' when he left his family 'in order to be free in the pure service of his eternal Father'. All this 'in order that in every state or life which God our Lord gives us that we may choose it, we may be able to arrive at perfection' (Exercises, 135), of Christian Love, of course.(17)*

Von Balthasar sees the core event of the Exercises in self-abandonment to God's call, in choosing God's choice. Through all the texts he wrote on Ignatius' Exercises this position runs like a red thread. The choice is made into a "state" and thus has a concrete ecclesial dimension. In this context, "state" refers to three things: (a) the general state of Christians, (b) the differentiated state of life as a priest, a person with vows, or a married person, and (c) "the concrete standing here and there within this state".

**Text 4:** *This threefold gradation of the call - the call to the state of being in the Church, the call to a state within the Church, and finally the call to a concrete standing-place within this chosen state - manifests something like an analogy of the call that first of all makes a Christian a Christian by calling him out of the world, places him into a definite state by a new unique, second, and later call, in order to give him permanently a Christian life in this state through the concrete, ever-present quality of the call. The doctrine of the call thereby becomes the indispensable completion of a doctrine of the Christian states. It could seem at first that it faces the doctrine of states of life as the subjective side faces the objective side. But the above shows that this delimitation cannot be successfully carried out, because the call of God in the first place creates the standing of the Christian in each case and is the very substance of this standing.(18)*

Ignatius surpassed the ancient and medieval doctrine of the spiritual life, which circled around a schema of the ladder of perfection independent of the concrete call of God, by understanding Christian perfection completely in terms of obedient listening to God's call, completely in terms of choosing God's choice. The encounter of the listening and choosing person with the calling and disposing God is an ever-actual event of freedom and love.

In his work *The Christian State of Life*, von Balthasar made expressly clear and unfolded systematically what is contained in the new spiritual teaching of the Exercises: the God who chooses and calls out of love; Jesus Christ in his archetypal obedience to the Father; the Holy Spirit, who bears the Father's will toward Christ; and thus: the triune God of love; further, the Church, which unfolds from Christ in the midst of the concrete order of creation, sin, and grace into a mutuality of states of life; finally, the human person who comes to God and to himself by letting himself be sent into the state chosen for him by God.

*The Christian State of Life* is a large-scale systematic meditation and reflection on the motif of "choice", which is central in the Exercises. What Ignatius offers with the utmost brevity is here placed into larger theological contexts and clarified in its implicit contents. This procedure is characteristic of von Balthasar's approach to Ignatius in general. One finds it also in shorter texts. (19)

The correct fundamental disposition of the creature in the face of the choosing and calling God is abandonment or - which is the same - *indiferencia* or disposability. Von Balthasar often sketched it, for example in one of his late essays "Drei Formen der Gelassenheit" ("Three forms of Abandonment")(20). The essay speaks of "three forms" because it first deals with the abandonment of the Christian who is making the Exercises, then with the abandonment of Mary, who is again and again called upon in the Exercises as the mediatrix of prayers, and finally with the abandonment of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of the Father. The three forms objectively belong together in their distinction, and they point to each other.

Abandonment is the openness without which the one who is going through Exercises cannot choose. In the "first week" as well as in the "second to fourth week" of the Exercises what is at issue is *indiferencia*:

**Text 5:** ...the Exercises use the entire 'first week' for cleaning out the sinful disorder; in the process, perhaps for the first time, a life is penetrated by the light of the divine judgement, by the full seriousness of the Cross. However, this first week of purification is not an end in itself, but preparation: removal of all illusions about things constructed and reached out of one's own power, humiliation to the point of insight into one's own perdition - if existence did not still hang on the unbreakable thread of God's grace (no.71). The meditations on sin do not only create emptiness, they open a gaping abyss and, through deep fright at one's own disorder, they make yearning for a true order of life possible. In the double meaning of *disponer*, the first meaning is reached in the first phase of the rhythm of the exercises: to dispose oneself through (indifference) that the second meaning may prevail: that God dispose of me. The second to fourth week serve this second meaning: in the meditation on the life, Passion, and Resurrection of Jesus, in following from situation to situation, Christ's choice will happen and will be understood by me "if I am not deaf to his call" (no.91). He chooses; we choose what he chooses for us. We know now 'how we are to prepare (*disponer*) ourselves, so that in every

*state or life which God our Lord gives us to choose (nor diere para eligir) we may come to perfection' (n.135). We have been created for this reality that has been chosen for us by God from eternity; by choosing God's choice we realize our own ideal as it exists in God, and this is supreme freedom.(21)*

While in medieval and late medieval piety "abandonment" had been understood as an attitude characterized largely by passivity, it transforms itself in Ignatius into an "active indifference" which remains in an actively open posture of listening and is, at the same time, ready to let itself be sent into action.(22)

Confronted with God's call, *indiferencia* transforms itself into obedience. The Exercises address the reality of obedience in the "Rules for Thinking with the Church"(23); in the Constitutions written by Ignatius for the Society of Jesus and in his letters this obedience appears thematically.

**Text 6:** *In Ignatius the 'theology of obedience' springs without a doubt from the Second Week of the exercises (which already makes itself felt in the meditation on the call and on the standards and in the 'three modes of humility') as a noble passion to serve the crucified Lord precisely in his weakness and to allow the spirit of 'the true bride of our Lord Christ, which is our holy mother, the hierarchical Church', to take shape in us as concretely as possible, by taking over her readiness and obedience (Exercises, no. 353).(24)*

A famous chapter of the Exercises contains the "Rules for Thinking with the Church" (no. 352-370). In the great essay "To love the Church?" von Balthasar explained the meaning and limits of the ecclesial sense and worked out the essential theological contents of Ignatius' rules.(25) Above all, he made it clear that only the Marian character of the Church, which Ignatius points to in rules 1 and 13, can serve as a foundation for assent to the Church. In the "rules" Ignatius lists

**Text 7:** *a whole list of Catholic objectivities that are to be 'praised', all the things that had been thrown overboard by the Reformation: frequent reception of the sacraments, liturgical devotions, evangelical counsels and vows concerning them, 'stations, pilgrimages, indulgences, jubilees, bulls concerning crusades and the lighting of candles in churches', fasting, external penance, decorations in the churches, veneration of images, etc. If one looks closely (and realizes the brilliant sense of humor in this list) one realizes that what is at issue is a fundamental attitude: obedient readiness before 'the true bride of Christ' and her ordinances, 'ever ready to find reasons in defense of her and in no way for resistance against her' - even in the face of abuses (363), for effective improvements can be found, not through public contestation, but only through prudent personal commitment. The elements of landscape and atmosphere are not defended in their crude materiality, but as a 'living area' around the mother's house and in it; and it is characteristic that Ignatius does not speak of 'love for the Church', but of readiness before her, evidently in order to be drawn into her love for Christ, and through Christ for all human beings.(26)*

However, von Balthasar also reminds us of the Church's Petrine character when speaking of the meaning of the ecclesial sense. The Marian and Petrine elements together institute the inner dimensions of the Church founded by Christ.

**Text 8:** *It was only late that obedience emerged in the foreground for the founder and his first companions, namely, in the measure in which the new Christian all-readiness expressly offered itself to the visible hierarchical Church as an instrument at its disposition. The Pope thereby became the steward of this readiness, the true 'father general' of the new Society, and the Society became the eminent instrument of the ecclesial Counter-Reformation. Without*

*denying the universal principle, 'finding God in all things', these 'things' now became mainly the things of the Church Militant. If the first core of the Exercises is the 'discernment of spirits' in view of the right choice of God's will for my life, its final word is 'alabar', the praise and fundamental assent and approval of ecclesial things: Ignatius praises them, just as Francis in his 'Canticle' had praised the elements of nature as transparent for God. Ignatius praises them in all simplicity and in an act of a son's chivalrous faithfulness for 'the true bride of Christ our Lord, which is our holy mother, the hierarchical Church'. He loves her with a slight tinge of humor, at any rate with wise patience ... (27)*

The original relevance of the ecclesial sense in Ignatius manifests itself in the context of "choice". This sense must become effective especially in the moment when the "state" of "life" is chosen in which one is to serve God and human beings (no. 170). At that very beginning of *The Christian State of Life* von Balthasar points to this fact.(28) According to von Balthasar, the "ecclesial sense" does not exclude criticism of the Church. However, criticism does her justice and is helpful to her only if it stems from identification with the Church's true nature as posited by Christ.

In a study from the year 1967 von Balthasar compared two modes of faith, that of Martin Luther and that of Ignatius of Loyola.(29) Both sought, through all ecclesial tradition and institution, the immediate encounter with Jesus Christ, in order to shape their lives anew out of the experience of his saving work. Martin Luther derived Jesus Christ's salvific importance "for me" from the Pauline doctrine of Justification, but adopted a more negative attitude toward meditations on the life of Jesus from which the concrete contents of obedient following are derived. Ignatius, on the other hand, has the person going through the Exercises abandon himself to God's call in the context of meditations on the life of Jesus. This approach shows itself most clearly in No. 53 of the Exercises. Von Balthasar writes that the relation between the master who calls and the disciple who follows

**Text 9:** *comes from the pauline faith in the substitution of the sinner on the Cross ('moriendum pro meis peccatis', Exercises, 53) and from the dialogue ('colloquium': 53-54; 61;63) between the Lord and friend crucified out of love and the person without love and faithfulness, which is myself. From this strongly emphasized pro me the question immediately emerges, 'quid ego ... agere debeam pro Christo' (53); however, this question can be answered only where, beyond comprehension, the call to follow makes itself heard (95 f) and where the unusable sinner, contrary to all expectations, becomes usable for his Lord on the basis of the pure grace of the Cross (and not of any synergism!).(30)*

However, Ignatius has us meditate not only on Christ on the Cross, but on Christ as he meets us in the multitude of the mysteries of his life. Modern exegesis has shaken trust in the texts of the Gospels, but has also opened up possibilities of seeing the mysterious content of Jesus' earthly life in a retrospective vision from Easter, e.g. when it speaks of "implicit Christology" in the life of Jesus. Von Balthasar considers this contribution of modern exegesis sufficient for bringing to bear the concerns of Ignatius.

**Text 10:** *In their life-of-Jesus meditations, the Spiritual Exercises emphasize in late medieval fashion a strongly pictorial illustration of scenes. However, they do so only in order to allow the person who prays to reach in each scene the full personal concreteness of the call to follow. This is also the goal of the entire practice of indifference as readiness. One can even say that nowhere in the Catholic sphere is there a stronger interior contact with the positive concern of*

*contemporary theological exegesis than in the concern of Ignatius in the face of the call of Jesus' divine word to place the person into the eschatological decision of life, in order to move him to a corresponding form of selling everything (in order to find everything in following).(31)*

According to Ignatius' instructions, the meditation of the *mysteria vitae Christi* must employ all senses and powers. At the end of the day - as he expressly recommends - there should be an *applicatio sensuum*.

**Text 11:** *The 'application of the five senses' that concludes every theme of meditation in the Ignatian Exercises does not rise above the concrete form which is seen in the Gospels (nos. 121-125), for the text explicitly demands that we should 'see the persons with the inner eyes in recollection and meditation', 'hear what they are saying'; with the sense of touch 'embrace and kiss the places in which the persons enter and where they remain'; and through such sense-experience come to the smelling and tasting of the 'infinite fragrance and sweetness of the Godhead'. Ignatius does not speak, therefore, (like Origen and, after him, Bonaventure) of spiritual senses that grow in the soul when the bodily senses have been laid to rest. The human person is a unity of body and soul and all faculties of sense are borne, according to Thomas Aquinas, by the one and only spiritual soul; thus they have within themselves a spiritual dimension, even a graced dimension, if the person has been grasped by grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.(32)*

An extensive account of the Ignatian doctrine of the *applicatio sensuum* (including its prehistory and its reception) is found in the first volume of *The Glory of the Lord*, which is concerned in general with the perception of the form of revelation. The "application of the senses" in the Exercises intends to familiarize the person (who is going through the Exercises and choosing) in all layers of his being with the character of Jesus Christ, so that the choice can concretely orient itself by Jesus Christ. In this context, poverty plays a great role. Von Balthasar points out that

**Text 12:** *that already in the first meditation on the life of Jesus, Ignatius lays his finger on following 'in enduring all injustice, all shame, and all poverty'; at the highpoint of exercising a choice of life in abandonment, he demands 'the most complete humiliation' which consists in this, that I 'ever more wish for poverty with the poor Christ, ever more shame than honor with the Christ full of shame, and that I ever more desire to be considered an imbecile and a fool for Christ's sake, who was first considered such, more than to be considered wise and clever in this world.(33)*

In the Exercises there are two series of "rules for the discernment of spirits" (nos 313-327; 328-336). Von Balthasar dealt with these as well, especially in the third volume of *Theologik*, which came out in 1987 and which unfolds a theology of the Holy Spirit. In the chapter that discusses the working of the Holy Spirit in the Church there is a lengthy section on the discernment of spirits, in the course of which von Balthasar recalls Ignatius' rules.(34) Being moved by the spirits was for Ignatius himself the point of departure of his spiritual path. In order to choose God's will, the spirits had to be discerned. Ignatius was able to make use in this context of the experiences and texts of earlier masters of the spiritual life. What is characteristic of Ignatius' rules for the discernment of spirits, according to von Balthasar, is their orientation toward choice. Thus he writes, after recalling the content of the rules in summary fashion,

**Text 13:** *All these rules are primarily directed toward the central process of the exercises, the choice of the way of life appointed by God for the individual person, in which choice the*

*harmony between human and divine freedom must make itself present in its purity: for 'in every life or state which God our Lord gives us for us to choose, we should be able to reach perfection' (Exercises, 135). For this fragile coordination which is endangered by human impurity, this pure and limpid (*pura y limpida*) coordination of most free divine offer and most free human consent - this is the main concern of the Exercises - must not be clouded by anything, if it is to succeed in all truth.(35)*

Ignatius provided for a person going through the Exercises to entrust himself to the company and guidance of a retreat master. According to von Balthasar, it is the task of this master in the process of the discernment of spirits to bring to bear the Spirit of God inasmuch as that Spirit meets one in the givens of the institutional Church.

**Text 14:** *This discernment of spirits is apparently highly subjective, and the master is accordingly forbidden to mix his own opinions into the dialogue between God and the soul (no. 15). Nevertheless, since a life within 'the sphere of the holy mother, the hierarchical Church' (no. 170; 353) is to be chosen, it is indispensable that there be a control of this subjectivity through the objectivity of the official Church, embodied in the retreat master who must examine on his part a person's discernment of spirits in the light of ecclesial knowledge of the discernment of spirits (nos. 8-10; 14). It will not be enough to say that 'human reason' is here simply 'sufficient, supported, and illumined, however, by the light of faith, which on its part stems from God, and one cannot contradict the other, because truth necessarily agrees with truth' (*Directorium* of 1599, 28:5); one must call this 'light of faith' more precisely as the grace of a discernment specifically bestowed on the retreat master by the Holy Spirit. This gift is connected with the objective spirit of ecclesial office so that, in fact, subjective and objective spirit cannot contradict each other here, if both together listen to the inspiration of God's Spirit. (36)*

### **Section III: Locating the Exercises in the History of Theology and in von Balthasar's own Theology**

It is characteristic of all of von Balthasar's endeavors concerning the Exercises that he situates them within the history of theology and spirituality. In some cases the frame is large; in others it covers a short period of time.

The "Principle and Foundation" of the Exercises begins with the sentence, "Man was created to praise, reverence and serve God, our Lord, and so to save his soul" (no. 23). In the essay, "*Homo creatus est*", von Balthasar interprets this sentence by placing it in the widest context of the history of philosophy and theology.(37) His concern is to show that in Ignatius' Exercises the Christian image of God and humanity is expressed with a new and unaccustomed clarity. The Old Testament and New Testament contours of the understanding of God and humanity are brought to bear again without hindrance after being through centuries shaped by assimilation to more philosophically determined views. The opening sentence of the "foundation" expresses the meaning of being human in two ways: on the one hand, to praise, to reverence, and to serve God; on the other hand, to save one's soul. In the second purpose a motif makes itself heard that had a long pre-Christian as well as Christian history. According to this motif, the origin and destiny of the human person is disclosed in longing for happiness. This is the path chosen by the Platonism of Plato and Plotinus and by the idealistic tradition of Western metaphysics. At all times Christian

theologians oriented themselves by this model of thought and life that stresses the movement of eros and transcendence of the human spirit. Von Balthasar mentions especially Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, then Thomas Aquinas; from our century, Joseph Maréchal and his disciples. Despite all the differences between their philosophies and theologies, they agree in positing the experience of God as the fulfillment of their longing for happiness. In extreme cases it is not excluded that means and end reverse themselves and that God becomes a means for reaching the longed-for bliss. When this happens, man becomes the measure of all things, theology becomes anthropology.

The "foundation" of the Exercises also mentions the striving for salvation and blessedness as a human destiny, but only in the second place. In the first place there is the praise and service of God. These attitudes and acts characterize the understanding of humanity in the Bible, first of all in the Old Testament - the Psalms document it with full clarity -, then also in the New Testament, which speaks of Jesus Christ. Jesus' life and death is entirely praise, reverence and service. In the situation of death on the Cross, these are completed. The line to the Cross is a descending line. The distance of the incarnate and finally crucified Jesus from the Father, which can only be thought in a trinitarian theology, is the final ground of the possibility of the God-given distance and self-standing of the created human person before God. The person rightly lives this situation of createdness if he lives in praise, reverence and service and lets himself be sent, at the same time, with Jesus into serving others. Ignatius clearly gave first place to the theology and anthropology that think in terms of descending *agape*, and he gave the subordinate place to the theology and anthropology of *eros*. While the medieval theologians were still struggling for a balance of these theologies and anthropologies, the emphasis has become clear in Ignatius. It is important, however, that the line of *eros* is not simply dropped, but integrated into the whole. The entire medieval world of thought remained within

**Text 15:** *the attempt to reach a balance between the biblical glorification of God and the blessedness of God in antiquity. Ignatius is distinct from this balance inasmuch as he pinpoints 'praise, reverence and service' as the goal of creation, even in the final sentence of the 'foundation' according to which one must choose with indifference, 'lo que mas nos conduce para el fin que somos criados' (that which brings us most to the goal for which we were created). Only in a short final phrase and as if by the way does he mention that one thereby 'saves one's soul' and reaches salvation. It must also be noted that Ignatius demands from the beginning the transcending of all selfish strivings for the sake of reaching that indifference which is the presupposition of pure praise and pure reverent service, and that this effort throughout the Exercises has as its aim that I make what God has chosen for me my own choice (no. 135), and thus that I choose 'praise, reverence, and service' from 'generous' love of God as the goal of my life. For this reason he can juxtapose and mention in one breath, almost by the way, 'amor y alabanza' (no. 15), 'amar y servir' (no. 233), 'en todo amar y servir' (no. 363). Just as the Psalmist who praises and serves God has the Shema, the main commandment, in his ear, so in Ignatius, throughout the Exercises, the love of God is present in a hidden and nevertheless effective way, in such a way, however, that he thinks and especially acts always for God and his glory (for all forms of prayer and choice in the Exercises are in an eminent sense action, which becomes clear already from the comparison with the bodily exercise in the first preliminary remark). Love finally emerges thematically in the 'meditation for obtaining love' (Nos. 230-237) while the concept of 'blessedness' still remains unmentioned; this concept need not be mentioned, because the entire blessedness of the*

*person clearly lies already in the Suscipe (no. 234) which answers God's abounding love. If one has given all one's own to God, because one returns what one has received, what more can one ask for? 'Give me your grace and your love and that is enough for me'.(38)*

In this way Ignatius went beyond the theology of the ancient Church and the Middle Ages, and thereby brought biblical thought to bear in a new way. If one surveys the entire argument, one sees that, according to von Balthasar, Ignatius is decisively important in the attempt to find a correct mediation between Western metaphysics and Christian theology inasmuch as Ignatius freed theology and anthropology again from the embrace of philosophy, not by abandoning philosophy, but by inserting it into the primarily theological overall picture.(39)

According to von Balthasar, Ignatius is of towering importance in the history of spiritual theology. (40) He received strong stimuli from (late)medieval tradition, but placed new emphases. These emphases concern especially the understanding of "indifference". The great representatives of medieval piety, known to Ignatius from his reading of meditations on the life of Jesus (Ludolf of Saxony, *the Imitation of Christ*, *the Ejercitatoria de la vida espiritual* by Garcia de Cisneros, and other writings) understood this fundamental attitude as "becoming empty" and as readiness to "transcend beyond all other creatures into immediacy with God". Ignatius was the first to include an active cooperation of the person with the omnipotent and allactive God. Between God and man there is an *analogia entis* or rather an *analogialiberta-tis*. Von Balthasar described Ignatius' step beyond his predecessors as follows:

**Text 16:** *It is absolutely decisive that Ignatius, when he followed out the idea of indifference in all its Christian radicality, did not take over its metaphysical formulation by the Germans, especially Eckhart. Even when it is thought and lived without any substraction, Christian indifference does not imply the hylomorphic schema of antiquity: form (God) and matter (creature). In this way, indifference need not be practiced in the direction of the annihilation of the creature's own being and will, a direction that, with more or less strength, has given to spirituality from Eckhart to Fenelon hidden monothelite not to say oriental-pantheist parameters. By contrast, the true mystery of God, namely, 'God in all', 'I live, yet not I, Christ lives in me', may be sought as God's universal causality in the creature's active cooperation - in indifference, abandonment, and service. This cooperation cannot remain in the condition of indifference as mere 'letting it happen'; rather, God's particular will, which is actively to be grasped and realized, must also actively be sought. For this reason, indifference, which stands at the end of Rhineland mysticism, stands at the beginning in Ignatius and heightens itself in the Second Week of the Exercises through the central event of the 'choice'. In the analogy of freedom between God and the creature, man chooses 'what God our Lord gives us to choose; he freely and spontaneously consents to the particular choice that has been made for us in God's eternal freedom.(41)*

Ignatius' thought and work had a far-reaching history of reception. Of course it was not possible to absorb his fundamental intuitions in all areas. The best situation in this regard was offered by the great culture of the baroque. However, one-sided tendencies made themselves felt when the Reformation had to be resisted. In theological terms (Bellarmine), and those of ecclesial politics, the concern of bringing to bear the Church's form of poverty was pushed too much into the background in the Counter-Reformation.(42) The principle of active indifference was usually received in one-sided fashion by the spiritual teachers and schools of the Society of Jesus. Some took up the element of "indifference" and interpreted it in the sense of the mystical tradition (L.

Lallemant), others concentrated on the element of "activity", but understood it as achievement-oriented ascetism.

**Text 17:** *The indifferent openness to the choosing God could easily be interpreted in earlier terms, e.g. in terms of the 'mystical' tradition that was alive everywhere. Already during his own lifetime, Ignatius had to struggle hard against this tendency (Fr. Araoz and the Spanish contemplatives and quietists), while later it achieved a sublime and subtle height in the doctrine of Fr. Balthazar Alvarez (cf. the biography by Fr. De Ponte) and in the Doctrine Spirituelle of Fr. Louis Lallemant and his school. True listening to God's internally spoken word and to the movements and gifts of the Holy Spirit is rightly given a central place; however, the one-sidedness shows itself in a fearful concern with personal contemplation and a reduction of active apostolic commitment. Along the lines of ancient monasticism and German mysticism, action and contemplation are again dualistically split, and the superiority of passive contemplation is defended in a literal sense. When the leadership of the order began to suspect and condemn the mystical tendency, it gave an impetus to the opposite tendency that placed the emphasis, relatively correctly, on the spontaneity of human action in the analogy of freedom and choice and thus gave the word to active asceticism (represented by the 'Guide to Perfection' of Fr. Rodriguez). As an unsuspected but necessary consequence, it misunderstood Ignatian indifference as an achievement, which is a Stoic and Buddhist misunderstanding. This deformation can be recognized in the practice of distance from the created world and in the resulting pseudo-ethical raising of the person over the world of fellow human beings which is judged to be merely apparent, insignificant, and perhaps even dangerous. This tendency endangers the true exposed Christian encounter between I and Thou. Both of these possible extremes are forms of escape from the narrow and steep charism that had been given to Ignatius.(43)*

From this text it becomes clear that part of Ignatian spirituality is a closely intertwined unity of action and contemplation. The person who meditates and goes through the Exercises encounters a God who "works" arduously(44), who chooses the person that turns to him and who sends the person into cooperation on behalf of other human beings and the world. In Ignatius the person is ordained toward this binarian event of contemplation and action.(45)

Not only did von Balthasar frequently take up texts and motifs of the Ignatian Exercises to interpret them in terms of larger theological contexts; he shaped his own theological conception out of the spirit of the Exercises. He explicitly states on occasion that this is the case; as a rule it remains unspoken. Of course, the one who is familiar with Ignatius' Exercises finds their fundamental options at every step in von Balthasar's theological conception. The dimension of von Balthasar's work are extraordinary. At the center one finds, apart from the five volumes of *Theologische Skizzen*,(46) the numerous volumes of the trilogy; more precisely, *The Glory or Theo-Aesthetic, Theo-Dramatic and Theo-Logic*. It is not easy to give a brief sketch of the content of these many volumes. I will venture to pinpoint, more briefly still than von Balthasar himself did in the *Epilog* to the trilogy (47), the central thought out of which the whole is formed and to relate it to the fundamental Ignatian intuition.

The decisive thing is what one can summarize in the words "*analogia libertatis*". This phrase "analogy of freedom" is patterned after "analogy of being". In the traditional understanding, "analogy of being" refers to the specific relation between God and the world, Creator and creation, in the horizon of the question of how they are related to each other in their being. *Analogia*

*libertatis* also refers to the relation between God and world, Creator and creation. However, being is now understood as freedom, so that the issue is now the togetherness of infinite divine freedom and finite human free-dom. This shift of emphasis from the question of being to the question of freedom was probably brought about in von Balthasar through the encounter with Ignatius' thought; for Ignatius too is centrally concerned with the confrontation between the free human person and the free God - in the process of choice. Theology from the point of departure of *analogia libertatis* also means: emphasis on the action of the triune God on behalf of the world, an action that can in no way be deduced; and simultaneously, emphasis on the Marian, ecclesial and personal presence with God in the sign of indifference or following. *Analogia libertatis* signals the program of a comprehensive new shaping of Christian theology as a whole, which is possible, of course, only in dialogue with the great tradition of Christian theology. The decisive question faced by such a theology is this: how is it possible that human freedom lives itself out to the point of closing itself against God, while God at the same time respects such human paths and integrates them in saving fashion into his own life? To answer this question, von Balthasar placed a trinitarian theology of the Cross at the center of his work. Through the Cross God remains, in the face of the drama of history, the God of merciful and glorious love.

This theology makes the claim of being an ontology made concretely possible only through the Gospel, which both surpasses and integrates the ontology developed by Western philosophy. The three parts of the *Trilogy* show how the great themes of Western metaphysics are transformed in such an ontology. The first focuses thematically on beauty, the second on freedom, the third on truth.

The theology of the Ignatian Exercises is not the only impulse that gave its specific profile to von Balthasar's theology, but without a doubt it had special weight. Once again, in the twentieth century, Ignatian theology has thus been able to bring to bear its power of inspiration in a surprising way, now in the field of dogmatic theology.

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1. Henri de Lubac, *Un témoin du Christ dans l'Église*: Hans Urs von Balthasar, in: *Paradoxe et Mystère de l'Église*, Paris 1967, 185

2. see *Por que me hize Sacerdote*, ed. U. and R.M. Sans Vila, Salamanca 1959, 29-32

3. see *Por que me hize Sacerdote*, 29; and *Spiritual Exercises*, No. 175

4. *Rechenschaft* 1965, Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag 1965, 35

5. *Erster Blick auf Adrienne von Speyr*, 4 th ed., Einsiedeln 1989, 38

6. see e.g. *Christologie und kirchlicher Gehorsam*, in: *Pneuma und Institution*, Einsiedeln 1974, 133-161, esp. footnote 16

7. *Kleiner Lageplan zu meinen Büchern*, Einsiedeln 1955, 6, no 1

8. Ignatius von Loyola, Die Exerziten. Aus dem Spanischen übertragen von H.U. von Balthasar, 9th. ed., Einsiedeln 1986
9. Rechenschaft 1965, 8
10. see E. Przywara, Deus semper maior. Theologie der Exerziten, Wien/München 1964; G. Fassard, La dialectique des Exercices Spirituels de Saint Ignaces de Loyola, Paris 1966; K. Rahner, Betrachtungen zum Ignatianischen Exerzitenbuch, München 1965
11. Ignatius, Exerziten, 95
12. *ibid.*
13. *Exerziten und Theologie, in: Orientierung 12, 1948, 229-232*
14. *ibid.* 230
15. *ibid.*
16. *Christlicher Stand, 2nd. ed., Einsiedeln 1981*
17. *ibid.* 7
18. *ibid.* 318
19. *cf. the discussion of the motif of choice in other texts, e.g. Theodramatik II, Die Personen des Spiels, Teil 1: Der Mensch in Gott, Einsiedeln 1976, 278; Endliche Zeit innerhalb ewiger Zeit, in: Homo creatus est, Einsiedeln 1986, 38-51*
20. *Drei Formen der Gelassenheit, in: Homo creatus est, 31-37*
21. *ibid.* 32-33
22. *see Exercises, nos. 352-370*
23. *Herrlichkeit, Bd. III/1: Im Raum der Metaphysik, 2. Teil: Neuzeit, 2nd.ed., Einsiedeln 1975, 465*
24. *Christologie und kirchlicher Gehorsam, in: Pneuma aund Institution, Einsiedeln 1974, 160, no.16*
25. *Die Kirche lieben?, in: Pneuma und Institution, 162-200*
26. *ibid.* 188-189
27. *Herrlichkeit III/1/2, 462*
28. *see Christlicher Stand, 7*
29. *Zwei Glaubensweisen, in: Spiritus creator, Einsiedeln 1976, 76-91*
30. *ibid.* 86

31. *ibid.* 90-91

32. *Das Schauvermögen der Christen*, in: *Homo creatus est*, 54-55

33. *Herrlichkeit III/1/2*, 495

34. *Theologik III: Der Geist der Wahrheit*, Einsiedeln 1987, 360-362

35. *ibid.* 361. A fundamental work which also moves into currently urgent and concrete areas appeared under the title "*Vorerwägungen zur Unterscheidung der Geister*", in: *Pneuma und Institution*, 325-339

36. *Theologik III*, 361, cf. also "*Autorität*", in: *Klarstellungen. Zur Prüfung der Geister*, Freiburg, 1971, 85 f.

37. *Homo creatus est*, in: *Homo creatus est*, 11-25

38. *ibid.* 23-24

39. For an essay that moves in a similar direction, see "*De arriba*", in: *Homo creatus est*, 26-30

40. see the chapter "*Ignatius von Loyola und die Barockherrlichkeit der Repräsentation*", in: *Herrlichkeit III/1/2*, 455-466

41. *ibid.* 457-458

42. see *ibid.* 463 ff.

43. *ibid.* 465-466

44. see the exercise "*Meditations to attain Love*", in: *Exercises*, nos. 230-237, esp. 236

45. Von Balthasar repeatedly thought through and discussed the interpenetration of contemplation and action. See for example "*Jenseits von Aktion und Kontemplation?*", in: *Pneuma und Institution*, 288-297

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