

Preface: The Jesuits and I

*The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.*

*And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs –
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.
'God's Grandeur', Gerard Manley Hopkins, SJ*

It is important (and Ignatian) to begin with *experience*. A dialectical process suggests itself:

- Experience
- Reflection
- Articulation

In this Preface, I would like to briefly recount my experiences of the Jesuit Order and of Ignatian spirituality, before proceeding in the rest of the book to reflect on how their charism echoes my research in

analytical psychology and articulating some implications of this for the Ignatian hermeneutic.

My first encounter with the Jesuits was while I was in boarding school. I was awarded, at the age of 17, the Church History medal for an essay I wrote on St. Ignatius of Loyola (founder of the Jesuits), and the Catholic Counter-Reformation: 1530-1660. Ever curious, one evening, a few of us snuck onto 'the priests' corridor' and we saw a group of stylishly dressed priests in charcoal grey uniforms. 'Who do you think they are?' my companion in crime asked. 'Jesuits of course,' I replied. 'Must be'. Common perceptions of Jesuits, in certain quarters, include those of possessing an elevated self-perception. An oft-repeated joke tells of a Franciscan and a Dominican who are debating about whose Order is the greater. They decide to ask for an answer from God directly when they die and years later in Heaven to resolve their old disagreement, they pose their question to God who seems a bit puzzled and tells them he will reply in writing a few days later. After much deliberation, God sends the following letter: 'My beloved children, please stop bickering about such trivial matters. Both of your Orders are equally great and good in my eyes. Yours sincerely, God, SJ'.

This book is a continuation of that initial encounter with Ignatius and his *Spiritual Exercises*. As we shall see, Carl Jung's first impression of Jesuits was very negative.

My exploration of Ignatian spirituality continued as I pursued my academic career at University College Dublin. While there, an ex-Jesuit student told me about St Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* and said they would be good to do especially in relation to decision-making, which was at the heart of them. This proved very fruitful because I took off to Northern Spain, where St Ignatius, a Basque soldier, hailed, and taught English to teenagers at a summer school in the Jesuit-run University of Comillas in Santander. When I got my exam results, I had to decide which two of Philosophy, English, and Spanish to continue studying. (I had discerned earlier in the year to drop Psychology). Doing the *Spiritual Exercises* solo in Spain helped a lot. I eventually plumbed for Philosophy and Spanish.

After my postgraduate studies there and my psychoanalytic training, I ended up lecturing philosophy part-time in various third-level institutions, including the Jesuit-run Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy. It was there in the Common Room that I got to know many individual Jesuits more closely. I asked a Jesuit political philosopher whether there was any way I could gain a tenured position

as a philosophy lecturer. ‘There is one way’, he said. My interest thus piqued, I enquired ‘what way?’ He answered, ‘You could become a Jesuit’. The thought had crossed my mind!

Around this time, a barrister friend of mine was trying to discern whether he had a vocation to the Jesuits or to family life as a married man. An old Jesuit asked him whether he had a desire for celibacy. He answered no. He was then asked did he have the desire to have the desire for celibacy. He said no, again. The Jesuit told him to marry his girlfriend, which he duly did; I later learned that this was a very typical Jesuit way of proceeding.

For eight months, from January to August 2004, I did the *Spiritual Exercises* in their nineteenth annotation version. That was my grounding in Ignatian spirituality – it was practical and adaptable to everyday life. This was and is its immense appeal. I have to admit, I did find the imagining part to be difficult to practise, though a Spanish Jesuit told me we deploy the human faculty of imagination to access/approach the God beyond images. Both the *Exercises* and the Examen transcend formal religious affiliation and denominational difference and may be applied ecumenically. Ignatius didn’t invent the *Exercises* from scratch of course, but rather borrowed from a wide variety of sources, synthesising the aspects of his previous experiences in a new way. A primary focus, however, is the use of the imagination to enter into the Gospel scenes, making them come alive (the imagination as the royal route or *via regia* to the Divine).

By this time, my peripheral involvement with the Jesuits followed a recognisable pattern, and I was known to a few of them. The Jesuits on Leeson Street in Dublin interviewed me, and the recording came out as a CD titled ‘A Philosopher’s Search for Meaning’. I edited a book on spirituality which was published in 2002 as *The Search for Spirituality: Seven Paths within the Catholic Tradition*. The last chapter was written by Joe Veale, SJ (a well-known spiritual director and expert on the *Exercises*) on Ignatian spirituality and it affected me deeply. I reprint it here in Chapter 4. ‘Our goal is not to become holy but to be spent’ was a sentence from Joe which I would never forget. Jesuits die in harness.

Then in 2013, Cambridge Scholars Publishers produced a book of mine, *Philosophy and the Flow of Presence*, chapter 7 of which is titled ‘Discerning the Divine Desire: The *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola’. There I brought Ignatian spirituality into dialogue with the philosophy of Eric Voegelin.

To this day, I continue to feed the apprentice theologian that moves within me – reading Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Bernard Lonergan, Henri de Lubac, and Teilhard de Chardin. I am particularly fond of the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, SJ. I was delighted to read in Pierre Hadot's stunning book, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, that St Ignatius was influenced by the ancient Stoics and that the *Spiritual Exercises* can be seen as a Christian rendition (and extension) of earlier Stoic spiritual exercises.

On 27 July 2022, I flew to Northern Spain on an Ignatian pilgrimage – 'In the Steps of St Ignatius' – landing in a very hot Bilbao and departing more than a week later from an even hotter Barcelona. During the fortnight, the (extremely eclectic) group and I visited Loyola, Pamplona, Manresa, Montserrat, and Barcelona. We saw the house of Ignatius' birth, the chapel (former bedroom) of his conversion, the church in Azpeitia where he was baptised and the hospital where he preached, the family home of his mother in Azkoitia, the hermitage of Olatz, then travelling by coach to Pamplona where Iñigo was struck by that fateful French cannon-ball, travelling on to Montserrat where the beautiful Benedictine monastery is situated, then on to the famous cave in Manresa. It was an historical, spiritual, but above all, real composition of place as Ignatius' Spain came alive and took form before our eyes. Finally, in January of 2023, I enrolled in a five-week course on Ignatian mysticism through the London Jesuit Centre, given by Fr Ladislav Sulik, SJ.

The contributions of the Jesuit Order to the Church and the world have been truly remarkable. I remain a staunch supporter of the 'Jes', whom I admire and respect. My own prayer practice has been influenced by Ignatius. The monastic tradition of *Lectio Divina* has its equivalence in Ignatian *contemplatio*, in other words, in applying the imagination to the Gospel stories. *Imaginatio*, one must point out, isn't just visual. Ignatius invites one to engage *three* faculties of the imagination: 'seeing the persons' (visual), 'what the persons are saying' (auditory), and 'what they are doing' (kinaesthetic, which also encompasses feelings).

Now, I must briefly mention my interest in C.G. Jung as he features significantly in this work. I had read some of Jung's books while a teenager and was immediately grasped by them, especially *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, and *Man and His Symbols*, as well as by Sir Laurens van der Post's book, *Jung and the Story of Our Time*. Later, at university, I found myself often taking down and reading the various volumes

from the library shelves which housed his *Collected Works*. During the final stages of my doctorate in philosophy and psychoanalysis, I trained in psychoanalysis at the then Irish Institute of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (1993–96) as it was the only institute at the time to offer an analytic training with a strong Jungian component. Equal weight was given to Freud, Jung, and Klein (later, some Lacan). There was no Jungian training institute at the time in Ireland nor has there been one established since. One or two people styled themselves as Jungians and though I was accepted for their training I subsequently discovered that it wasn't recognised or accredited by the International Association of Analytical Psychology in Switzerland and nor had they even been analysed. So, I embarked first on a Jungian analysis and, later, a Kleinian one for four years. Subsequently, I saw a Jesuit psychoanalyst and trained in Viktor Frankl's school of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis. In April of 2021 I received an email from Dr Anthony Stevens, the well-known Jungian analyst, whose works had impressed me and with whom I had been in dialogue over the years. He advised me to 'make use of the wisdom you have already gathered, using your own authority to explore and develop the similarities you see between Jung and advaita or to integrate Jung's approach with that of existential analysis. Building bridges between different disciplines is a highly creative activity. And it's fun! Good luck. Anthony'. Another email from him wished me well 'with all my heart'. I have taken his advice in this book but within the context of Ignatian spirituality. Sonu Shamdasani, the great Jung scholar, emailed me to point out that I should stay clear of much of the secondary literature on Jung as it is 'simply not worth engaging with'. I have endeavoured to cite in this book mainly primary sources in relation to Jung.

My interest in Ignatius and Jung is threefold – as a psychoanalyst (schooled in depth-psychology), as a philosopher (interested in the philosophy of religion), and as someone who did the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius of Loyola.

This present book is intended as an introduction, from a philosophical and depth-psychological perspective, to Ignatian *askesis* (set of spiritual exercises) – as a sketch of Ignatian spirituality in conversation (mainly) with Jungian (analytical) psychology. In Part I, I cover the core characteristics of the Ignatian charism (Chapter 1); an overview of the *Spiritual Exercises* is adumbrated in Chapter 2; a discussion follows in Chapter 3 on conscience and consciousness, as they pertain to the Ignatian Examen, as extrapolated by Viktor Frankl and C.G. Jung in

relation to the former and by Bernard Lonergan and Eric Voegelin in relation to the latter; a Jesuit's account and interpretation of the *Exercises* is offered in Chapter 4. Part II begins with two central topics which I single out for thematic treatment: gratitude and forgiveness (Chapter 5); the relationship between Ignatian wisdom and mental wellness is foregrounded in Chapter 6; C.G. Jung's commentary on the *Exercises* is explored in Chapter 7; the outline of a Twelve-Step programme of Recovery from alcoholism/addiction with help from the *Exercises* is the theme of Chapter 8. In Part III, I address Ignatian discernment and decision-making (Chapter 9); Teilhard de Chardin's mystical theology (and also its connection with Jungian psychology), together with a postscript covering some observations from Hans Urs von Balthasar and Erich Przywara (Chapter 10); concluding with unitive consciousness, and a brief comparison between Ignatian spirituality and Yoga (Hinduism) as well as Zen (Buddhism) in Chapter 11, whose theme is mystical union. In the Epilogue, I include some criticisms of Ignatian spirituality that have been put forward as well as a *précis* of Jesuit Pope Francis. I also include an appendix on Jesuit works.

The appeal of the Ignatian *Exercises*, and in my case too, the Enneagram, martial arts (Aikido and Wing Tsun Kung Fu), and the Examen, is that all of these constitute a practical-philosophical form of *askesis*, the aim of which is self-transformation, a metamorphosis of the personality through various existential exercises. Ignatius' ones are within the specific context of Christian spiritual practice.

I might not have the letters 'SJ' (standing for the 'Society of Jesus') after my name, as all Jesuits do, but I do have them before my surname. That will have to suffice.

S. J. Costello, Dublin, 31 July 2023
Feast of St Ignatius of Loyola