

ZEN AND THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES: A DIALOGUE BETWEEN FAITHS

DANIEL J. O'HANLON, S.J.

Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley

ONE OF THE CRITICAL and characteristic issues confronting Christian faith in the contemporary world is the growing dialogue with the East. The ecumenical involvement of the Roman Catholic Church, which took its rise in the earlier decades of this century, has been complemented, with the encouragement of the Second Vatican Council, by the increasing engagement with other religious "traditions whose seeds were sometimes already planted by God in ancient cultures prior to the preaching of the gospel."¹ The difference here is significant. The ecumenical movement was and is an interchange within Christianity, within a basic Christian faith, seeking for a deeper unity which expresses that common commitment to God's self-communication in Christ. The discussions with other religious traditions are a dialogue between faiths whose beginnings are quite separate and whose existence has continued for millennia with separate concepts and languages.²

The separate histories of these religious cultures suggest a different kind of dialogue, one that is more rooted in direct religious experience than in doctrinal or theological formulations. These traditions come together as two people meeting for the first time with quite different languages. If two such people meet in a dark room with their different languages and with no common visible world of experience to point to, communication is long and arduous. But if there is some visible world to which they can point, things move better and faster. The Buddhist and the Christian are something like that. If they simply share on the level of their different words and concepts, communication is very limited. If there is a shared experience to fall back on, communication is better, and eventually the languages too can be sorted out. The dialogue between faiths in the contemporary world is better conducted as a dialogue between faith-experiences than as a dialogue between theologies.

This is the intention of the following paper: an attempt from within the Catholic tradition in its Ignatian form to understand better another

¹ Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, no. 18.

² "The fact is that not only Zen but all forms of Buddhism are going to make an enormous impact on the Christianity of the coming century. If there has been a Hellenized Christianity (which is now about to succumb with the passing of the so-called Christendom), there is every likelihood that the future will see the rise of an Oriental Christianity in which the role of Buddhism will be incalculably profound. Indeed this process has already begun" (William Johnston, S.J., *The Still Point* [New York: Harper & Row, 1971] xiv).

tradition, the Buddhist tradition in its Zen form. The attention to direct religious experience is most appropriate here. For, as we shall see, the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola are above all a method of experience, direct experience of the presence and work of our Creator and Lord in our lives. Indeed, it was precisely this character of the Exercises which rendered them suspicious to the guardians of orthodoxy in Ignatius' own time. It is a wry bit of humor that the Exercises, which at their origins were mistrusted for their appeal to the experience of the "creature directly with his Creator and Lord,"³ came to be despised as no more than a manual of exercises imposed on the mind and the will after the manner of a military drill. That for Zen direct experience is decisive will surprise no one, and this fact helps to explain its appeal to a generation for whom experience is the touchstone of authenticity. The comparative method which the present study employs could be described more as an interchange on the level of religious experience, and "faith" is operative here not so much to denote propositional assent but the more radical experience at the basis of articulated belief and practice.

Furthermore, the intention of this study is not simply to compare the experiences with a view to understanding them better, but for the purpose of deepening and enriching the tradition of the Spiritual Exercises. The study is carried on in the spirit of a dialogue in which both partners discover untapped resources which are implicit in their own tradition. There is a mutual invitation to renewal, reform, and fresh development which (to paraphrase *Ad gentes*) will faithfully bring to full growth the seeds which God has planted in both traditions. Needless to say, any borrowing must be made with full understanding of what is done. De Guibert observes wisely that "one cannot suppress, change or replace at will any important part without running the risk of compromising the stability or efficiency of the whole."⁴ This does not mean that new development will not take place. Indeed "new branches will be taken from other trees and grafted on it. But these new branches will not be taken at random. Rather, as in every successful grafting, they will be sprouts possessing an affinity for the tree which they come to enrich."⁵

³ St. Ignatius Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, tr. and ed. Louis J. Puhl, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola University, 1951) 15; henceforth abbreviated SE, with the marginal numbers Puhl has taken from the Spanish-Latin text published by Marietti (Turin, 1928).

⁴ Joseph de Guibert, S.J., *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice* (Chicago: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1965) 9.

⁵ *Ibid.* 543. This article grew out of a course taught in the fall of 1977 at Berkeley with a small group of students, some of whom came with experience of Zen practice, some with experience of the Spiritual Exercises, some with both. Those with experience in one of the two disciplines were asked, during the course, to enter into the experience of the other discipline, so that, as far as possible, the reflections we made together would grow out of direct experience as well as out of the extensive reading which was assigned. I myself, who

Something should be said briefly about both Zen and the Spiritual Exercises before embarking on a point-by-point comparative study of the two disciplines. An initial observation is that this is not simply a comparative study of Christianity and Buddhism. It is a study of two very particular traditional disciplines within Christianity and Buddhism. The larger context of both traditions must be taken into account; but it is no less important to recognize that many of the particular features of each discipline are characteristic of this particular spirituality within the larger tradition. If, for instance, we were to make a comparative study of a certain form of Tibetan Buddhist spiritual discipline, with its intricate visualizations and strong emphasis on discursive reasoning, and the apophatic mysticism of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, much of what we have to say about Zen and the Spiritual Exercises would be reversed.⁶ For not all forms of Buddhism are so starkly nonimaginative, nonconceptual, and nondiscursive in their method as is Zen. In many ways Zen is more like the *Cloud of Unknowing*, and the Spiritual Exercises are more like Tibetan visualization than vice versa. Both Zen and the Exercises, however, are imbued with the knightly spirit. Zen began its liveliest period in Japan during the Kamakura period in the twelfth century and was closely associated with the samurai, the Japanese equivalent of Ignatius' medieval knight. The spirit of noble generosity, of distinguished dedication and service, is common to both Zen and the Ignatian Exercises. Closely allied to this is a predominance of masculine traits in both disciplines, perhaps more particularly in Zen. Father Oshida, a remarkable Japanese Dominican priest who runs a Christian Zen commune in Japan, remarked that "Zen insists on strength, focuses awareness in *hara*, in the pit of the belly. But at the same time they should have some emphasis on the

taught the course, have been making, giving, and studying the Spiritual Exercises over a period of almost forty years of Jesuit life and have been involved in Zen practice with varying intensity for five or six years, including two sesshin (silent retreats consisting principally of a day-long series of sitting meditations, usually for a period of seven days) in Japan, one with Fr. Enomiya-Lassalle, S.J., the other with Yamada Roshi, and one sesshin in California with Maezumi Roshi. I mention my own background and experience out of the conviction that the reader has a right to know the sources of an author. That means, especially in matters of this kind, not only the books read but the experience relevant to the matter at hand. In fact, in my own case, partly because I began the study of Hinduism and Buddhism when already in my 50's, and partly out of the conviction that direct experience was not only a quicker but a more reliable way of understanding another religious tradition, more of what I understand comes, I believe, from the experience of these last years than from the many things I have read. One final word about the sources of this paper: my debt to the dozen students who studied these matters with me should be recognized. Both their questions and their insights have helped shape this study.

⁶ John Blofeld, *The Tantric Mysticism of Tibet: A Practical Guide* (New York: Dutton, 1970).

heart. It is also a very important center. . . . Satori is not only a special moment of enlightenment, it is a state of mercy, great mercy."⁷ Not all forms of Buddhism show these traits. Shingon, an earlier Tantric form of Japanese Buddhism, is much less *macho*, as are the elegant statues and *thankas* of Tibetan Buddhism. Zen is, however, one of the best known and most widely practiced in the West of the serious Eastern spiritual disciplines.⁸

Heinrich Dumoulin insists that Zen, whatever else it may be, is a form of Buddhism, with a clear lineage going back to Shakyamuni himself in India in the sixth century B.C., then, mediated through Bodhidharma, to the first Zen patriarch in China in the sixth century B.C., and to Japan in the twelfth century.⁹

The Spiritual Exercises¹⁰ stand solidly in the Roman Catholic tradition and can more easily be given a precise historical identity than Zen. Some of the reasons for this are: (1) They emerged in a tradition in which history is valued. (2) The origins of the Spiritual Exercises are closer to us in time, space, and culture than the origins of Zen, and are illuminated by many secondary written sources. (3) They can be linked to a particular person, Ignatius Loyola, and can be connected in considerable detail with his own spiritual pilgrimage, documented for us in his autobiography.¹¹ (4) There is a single basic text in which the Exercises themselves come down to us. The living oral transmission is indispensable in both traditions, but as we shall see when we come to treat the role of the director or roshi, Zen relies much more thoroughly and more consciously on an enlightened teacher, the roshi, than do the Spiritual Exercises—in fact,

⁷ See my "The Remarkable Oshida and Christian Zen," *National Catholic Reporter*, Sept. 12, 1975, p. 8.

⁸ A thorough account of the history of Zen Buddhism is provided by Heinrich Dumoulin, S.J., *A History of Zen Buddhism* (Boston: Beacon, 1969). While drawing generously on the work of D. T. Suzuki, he takes issue with him on the question of Zen's connection with Buddhism.

⁹ Some further materials to provide a general view of the context of Zen: Alan W. Watts, *The Way of Zen* (New York: Vintage, 1957), "Background and History" 3-112; Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* (New York: Weatherhill, 1970); D. T. Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism*, ed. W. Barrett (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1956) vii-xx, 3-24; William Johnston, S.J., *Christian Zen* (New York: Harper, 1971) 1-20; Johnston, *Still Point* 47-65; Thomas Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (New York: New Directions, 1968) 33-58. One extremely helpful written source for the phenomenon of contemporary Zen is Philip Kapleau's *Three Pillars of Zen* (Boston: Beacon, 1967). It provides a more concrete, practical, down-to-earth account of Zen practice than the beautifully lyrical and enigmatically Zen-like English writings of D. T. Suzuki. It is, indeed, a small encyclopedia of contemporary Japanese Zen theory and (especially) practice.

¹⁰ For a general view of the Spiritual Exercises and their context: de Guibert, *Jesuits* 1-17, 21-73, 109-22, 152-81, 527-54.

¹¹ John C. Olin, ed., *The Autobiography of St. Ignatius Loyola* (New York: Harper, 1974).

relies on the roshi almost exclusively. In a sense, one can say that the basic way of dealing with any practical problem in Zen practice is to go to the roshi. Out of his state of enlightenment, without the need of text or guide, he *knows*.

We come now to a systematic comparative study of the two disciplines,¹² carried on under the following headings: (1) their goal or purpose, (2) the means used, (3) the director or roshi, (4) discursive vs. intuitive modes, (5) contemplation and action, (6) discernment, (7) body and environment, (8) personal and impersonal.

GOAL OR PURPOSE

First, what is the goal or purpose of the Spiritual Exercises?¹³ On this question, the experts are not in full agreement. Here I indicate the main lines of the discussion. One tendency, probably the majority, points to the descriptions of purpose given in the text of the Exercises themselves,¹⁴ and the large part of the text, in its central section, devoted to the process of the election. Leonce de Grandmaison, S.J., for instance, writes: "The Spiritual Exercises envisage above all a concrete, clearly determined case. Their aim is to place a man, one who is well gifted for the life of the apostolate and who is still free to dispose of his life, in a position to discern God's call clearly and to follow it generously."¹⁵ The other position is put forth eloquently by Louis Peeters,¹⁶ who argues: "The Exercises can have as their center of perspective and culminating point only the union with God which is most intimate and total."¹⁷ Michael J. Buckley, S.J., has pointed out to me that, writing in the *Constitutions* about the training of novices, Ignatius recommends the Exercises as an aid to find *devotio*, showing that for Ignatius himself the Exercises were considered adaptable to purposes other than an election.¹⁸ This presumes that the director of the Exercises makes full use of the prerogative of adapting them, which is urged by Ignatius in the Exercises themselves.¹⁹ It should not be overlooked, however, that Ignatius writes: "To one who is more disengaged, and desirous of making as much progress as possible, all the Spiritual Exercises should be given in the same order in which they follow below."²⁰ One of my students put the two tendencies together in this way:

¹² Cf. Kakichi Kadowaki, S.J., "The Ignatian Exercises of Zen: An Attempt at Synthesis," 21-page offprint without indication of when or where published. This is the description of Fr. Kadowaki's experiments using Zen techniques in directing the Spiritual Exercises. He began his project in 1973.

¹³ De Guibert, *Jesuits* 122-32, 593-601; John J. English, S.J., *Spiritual Freedom* (Guelph, Ont.: Loyola House, 1975) 29-34.

¹⁴ SE 1, 21.

¹⁵ De Guibert, *Jesuits* 122-23.

¹⁶ Louis Peeters, S.J., *An Ignatian Approach to Divine Union* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1956).

¹⁷ De Guibert, *Jesuits* 123.

¹⁹ SE 18, 19.

¹⁸ *Constitutions* 3, 1, 20.

²⁰ SE 20.

"The goal of the Spiritual Exercises is union with God realized in a process of conversion from disordered attachments, contemplative identification with Jesus, and attunement to God's will as it unfolds in daily life." John J. English thinks that "the key to both approaches to the Exercises is the need of a person to become free. The Exercises are an instrument to help the person come to freedom."²¹ Harvey Egan, in an excellent recent study, integrates both approaches in Rahnerian fashion: "Through the dynamics inherent in the Exercises, the exercitant is often called to elect in some specific way, perhaps an entire way of life, to exteriorize, to make utterly actual in his life, his transcendental, interior election of openness to the Mystery of God in Christ. The actual Ignatian Election is the *exteriorized-interiority* of this deeper election."²² But whichever element is emphasized, the concrete reality of a particular decision or the intimate union with the Creator and Lord who inflames the soul with his love and praise,²³ the goal is not conceived in quite the same way as that of Zen practice.

William Johnston remarks that while Christianity centers around conversion, Buddhism centers around enlightenment.²⁴ And it is true that when one compares the goals of Zen and the Exercises, the clear contrast is that Zen does not enter into the matter of election or decision in any direct way. The fruit of enlightenment may be a transformation of the mode of one's daily life, but the direct aim is not that. The so-called Bodhisattva vow, which is recited regularly at Zen monasteries and sesshin, promises that "however innumerable the sentient beings, I vow to save them all."²⁵ This commitment not to enter into nirvana until all other sentient beings are saved from suffering is what distinguishes Mahayana Buddhism, of which Zen is one form, from the Theravada, or Southern, school, which turns its attention more exclusively to personal enlightenment, satori, and its ultimate completion, nirvana. But even in Zen, the primary thrust of the practice is toward enlightenment, not toward moral reform or service to the neighbor, and certainly not toward what Ignatius calls an election. This question will return when we come to deal with the contemplation/action pair.

Soto Zen²⁶ is even suspicious of setting any goal and aiming at it. The

²¹ English, *Spiritual Freedom* 30.

²² Harvey Egan, S.J., *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1976) iii.

²³ SE 15.

²⁴ Johnston, *Zen* 103. See also D. T. Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism* 83-108; Kapleau, *Three Pillars*, "Eight Contemporary Enlightenment Experiences" 189-268; Johnston, *Zen* 95-104; H. M. Enomiya-Lassalle, S.J., *Zen: Way to Enlightenment* (New York: Taplinger, 1968) 11-46; Johnston, *Still Point* 1-25.

²⁵ Dumoulin, *History of Zen* 27.

²⁶ A beautiful presentation of this approach is found in Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind*.

danger of being caught in a new kind of craving and clinging is thought to be too great. Suzuki Roshi tells his students that "our practice should be without gaining ideas, without any expectations, even of enlightenment."²⁷ In fact, "if you are trying to attain enlightenment, you are creating and being driven by karma, and you are wasting your time on your black cushion."²⁸ In this Suzuki Roshi is faithful to the essential teaching of Buddhism, which sees *tanha*, craving, as the source of all suffering. One should "just sit," for "when you do not try to attain anything, you have your own body and mind right here."²⁹ "When you do something, just to do it should be your purpose,"³⁰ for "big mind is something you have, not something to seek for."³¹

The Rinzai school of Zen, the second of the two principal Zen schools, takes a different approach. Yasutani Roshi, though nominally a Soto master, incorporated much of the more goal-oriented Rinzai approach in his teaching.³² In interviews with his students we find him urging them on with exhortations such as "Resolve to achieve enlightenment without further delay";³³ "If you concentrate with all your mind you will surely attain enlightenment";³⁴ "Don't relax—do your utmost."³⁵ However, whether the more receptive approach of Soto or the more aggressive approach of Rinzai is used, the goal (whether to be gained or simply realized as already present) is a new kind of awareness, something akin to what the Christian tradition calls contemplation.

The description which Ignatius gives of his vision on the bank of the Cardoner River is remarkably similar to descriptions of the Zen enlightenment experience. Here are the essential sentences from his account:

As he went along occupied with his devotions, he sat down for a while with his face toward the river which was running deep. While he was seated there the eyes of his understanding began to be opened; though he did not see any vision he understood and knew many things, both spiritual things and matters of faith and learning; and this was with so great an enlightenment that everything seemed new to him. Though there were many, he cannot set forth the details that he understood then except that he experienced a great clarity in his understanding. This was such that in the whole course of his life through sixty-two years, even if he gathered up all the many helps he had from God and all the many things he knew and added them together, he does not think they would amount to as much as he had received at that one time.³⁶

Seeing reality clearly as it is remained a major concern of Ignatius in the Exercises. When, for instance, in the contemplation on the Incarna-

²⁷ Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind* 41.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 99.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 26–27.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 43.

³¹ *Ibid.* 92.

³² Kapleau, *Three Pillars* xvi.

³³ *Ibid.* 102.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 114.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 119.

³⁶ Ignatius, *Autobiography* 39–40.

tion, he asks us to turn our attention to what the Three Divine Persons see as they look down on the unredeemed earth, it is "great blindness" that lies at the root of it all.³⁷

There is an overlap, then, in the goal of Zen and of the Spiritual Exercises. Both have a contemplative dimension and both bring about a transformation of the concrete reality of daily life; but, to put a complex matter in rough terms, Zen aims at a contemplative state, out of which changes in one's life emerge, while the Exercises aim directly at a concrete choice about one's life, bringing it about by laying the exercitant bare and without resistance to the immediately experienced love and power of his Creator and Lord.

What can be learned for the making or directing of the Exercises from the way in which Zen articulates or deals with goals? There is something to be learned about detachment in the goallessness of Zen, especially Soto Zen. Buddhism diagnoses the source of pain and unsatisfactoriness in our lives (*dukkha*) as craving or clinging desire (*tanha*) and invites us to free ourselves from it. Ignatius' effort to bring the exercitant to a state "like a balance at equilibrium, without leaning to either side,"³⁸ is another way of expressing the same thing. However, in the kind of aggressive, violent, manipulative world in which we live, there is perhaps some danger of misusing such things in the Exercises as the preludes which focus on "what I want and desire,"³⁹ especially if "what I desire" is something like tears.⁴⁰ The danger is akin to that to which the novice is liable when he embarks on the project of "becoming a saint." Some new ambition, some new self-magnifying project, can lurk here. Ignatius is aware of this danger and sees one of the reasons for desolation as God's desire to show us that "it is not within our power to acquire and attain great devotion, intense love, tears, or any other spiritual consolation; but that all this is the gift and grace of God our Lord."⁴¹ The goallessness of Soto Zen, then, can put us on our guard against attachment even to spiritual gifts, can remind us of the pitfalls of "what I desire," and can teach us to be completely open and receptive to the Lord, content with whatever he sends us. In some paradoxical sense, goallessness is the goal, and desirelessness is what we should desire.

More concretely and specifically, Zen can remind us that during the time of retreat the principal work is not a constant attention to the details of election or reform of life, but the cultivation of a sense of alertness, freedom, and openness to the Lord. Out of that, without anxious calculation or laborious ratiocination, what needs to happen will emerge.

³⁷ SE 106.

⁴⁰ SE 203.

³⁸ SE 179.

⁴¹ SE 322.

³⁹ SE 48 and *passim*.

MEANS

The means⁴² to the goal of the Exercises can be grouped under four main headings. (1) There are the presuppositions and qualities which the exercitant must bring to the work of the Exercises: aptitude, physical strength, qualities which lead one to expect much fruit from the exercitant must be present before anyone is considered a likely candidate.⁴³ The exercitant must come disengaged, desirous of making as much progress as possible.⁴⁴ Above all, he/she must enter with a large and generous heart, offering the Lord his/her entire will and liberty.⁴⁵ (2) Once under way, certain attitudes and procedures must be present. The exercitant must keep the director fully informed about "the various disturbances and thoughts caused by the action of different spirits."⁴⁶ He/she must make a consistent effort to control the body and senses, to maintain a proper environment, and cultivate appropriate thoughts, images, and feelings. Regular self-examination ensures that all these things are being attended to. Throughout, every effort must be made to go contrary to any inordinate attachments. (3) The formal exercises are many and various, but there is a basic direction to the flow of each day and of the Exercises as a whole. One of the primary means is the structure of the typical day of exercises. It begins with two contemplations of the mysteries of the life of Jesus, followed by two repetitions, and concludes with the Application of the Senses. The movement through these five exercises is steadily toward a deepening of the experience. The day begins with more emphasis on the discursive modes, but the movement by these means is toward a simpler presence to the Creator and Lord. "For it is not much knowledge that fills and satisfies the soul, but the intimate understanding and relish of the truth."⁴⁷ The constant direction through the various exercises is steadily toward a deeper and simpler interiority which will "permit the Creator to deal directly with the creature, and the creature directly with his Creator and Lord."⁴⁸

One of the means which is most important and characteristic of the Exercises is the constant immersion in the mysteries of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The key meditation before the Second Week on the Call of the King introduces this process. Ignatius takes with full seriousness the truth that Jesus is the Way, and everything which happens in the Exercises is directed toward bringing the mind and heart of the exercitant in tune with the mind and heart of Jesus. Sometimes, particularly around the time of the election, ingenious exercises are used

⁴² Johnston, *Zen* 48-67; de Guibert, *Jesuits* 132-39.

⁴³ SE 18.

⁴⁴ SE 20.

⁴⁵ SE 5.

⁴⁶ SE 17.

⁴⁷ SE 2.

⁴⁸ SE 15.

to unmask and break inordinate attachments which might otherwise go undetected or disregarded, but they draw their power eventually from the daily exercises in which the exercitant is in direct touch with Jesus, who exemplifies in himself all the qualities and attitudes expressed abstractly in sections like the First Principle and Foundation⁴⁹ and the Three Classes of Men.⁵⁰

The means which is characteristically Ignatian, in leading to the goal of the election, a means considered by some to be the unique and distinctive contribution of Ignatius in the Exercises, is the close and constant attention to the feelings which arise in connection with the contemplations on the mysteries of Jesus. (4) A series of rules or guidelines help to handle problems which arise. The most important are two sets of rules for Discernment of Spirits:⁵¹ a set of rules for dealing with scruples,⁵² and another set for Thinking with the Church.⁵³

In the means which Zen uses,⁵⁴ we find ourselves in a different world. Instead of laying out a detailed description of a series of spiritual exercises, using thoughts, reasonings, memories, visualizations, images, feelings, stories, personal colloquies, optional bodily positions, and the like, the Zen student is asked to simply sit still with an erect back and let go of all thoughts and images. It is presupposed, of course, in classical Zen, that the student is observing the basic moral precepts. Furthermore, for the Buddhist monk and to an extent the student at a Zen sesshin, there is an ordered round of the day, including ritual chanting and the like in a disciplined and recollected environment. Contemporary Western practitioners of Zen not uncommonly begin practice while their moral practice is still not in accord with Buddhist moral precepts. If the practice is continued faithfully, the normal consequence is that the moral practice rights itself. But that is not the traditional Buddhist order of things. Classically, the order is morality, concentration, wisdom.

The central practice, then, is silent sitting meditation, with precise prescriptions for the mode in which one sits, the main requirement being an erect spine, which several millennia of experience have shown to be the position most conducive to stilling the agitations of body and mind. There are variations of style within this format, the two principal ones being that of the Soto and of the Rinzai schools. But whether the practice is watching and counting the breath, Soto *shikan-taza*, "just sitting," with the mind fully involved in just that and nothing else, or whether it is the Rinzai practice of grappling with a koan, a seemingly absurd set of

⁴⁹ SE 23.

⁵² SE 345-51.

⁵⁰ SE 149-57.

⁵³ SE 352-70.

⁵¹ SE 313-36.

⁵⁴ Kapleau, *Three Pillars* 63-82; Walpole Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught* (New York: Grove, 1958) 45-50.

words which baffles and frustrates the discursive mind,⁵⁵ the process is always one of trying to get unhooked from thoughts in order to activate a level of awareness deeper than that of the merely rational and discursive. "Does it make sense to squat for hours just to think of nothing? It certainly does. To rid oneself of egocentric thoughts for a few days is itself of great value. Such retreats do not dull the mind, as many may be led to believe. On the contrary, the mind is stimulated to new activity."⁵⁶

Dokusan, or regular interviews with the roshi, are another means, and they too are directed to the process of gently leading or vigorously forcing the mind to this deeper level of awareness. "Most people place a high value on abstract thought, but Buddhism has clearly demonstrated that discriminative thinking lies at the root of delusion," said Yasutani Roshi in his instruction to his students.⁵⁷

In the process, after it has been engaged in seriously for some time, illusory visions and sensations appear. These are known as *makyo*, the disturbing or "diabolical phenomena which appear during sitting meditation."⁵⁸ The appearance of these phenomena is considered to be a sign of progress, just as in the Exercises the experience of consolation and desolation shows that the process is under way. But the mode of handling them is different. They are not to be used as indicators of any particular direction, or potential sources of guidance, but are simply to be disregarded. The process aims directly at the deeper level of nonconceptual, immediate awareness; all the rest is simply *makyo*.⁵⁹ Another means in the process is the *teisho*, given by the roshi, a kind of extended group koan. It is not meant to be an orderly instruction or a communication of information, but a mode of speaking, whether in stories or parables or paradoxes, which strikes sparks from the pure, enlightened mind of the roshi and must be caught with the same alert, intuitive receptivity one brings to silent sitting meditation. It is perhaps akin to what Paul was thinking about when he wrote "from faith to faith."⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Sasaki Roshi, when he teaches a group of Trappist monks, gives them the cross as their koan, and Johnston cites "He that loses his life will save it" as a Christian koan (*Zen* 63). Could we not regard Ignatius' third degree of humility as a koan (*SE* 167)?

⁵⁶ Enomiya-Lassalle, *Zen* 18.

⁵⁷ Kapleau, *Three Pillars* 29.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 38.

⁵⁹ "In the widest sense, everything short of true enlightenment is *makyo*" (*ibid.* 100). This is very similar to the Christian apophatic tradition.

⁶⁰ Rom 1:17. Within the Hindu context, Swami Abhishiktananda (Henri Le Saux, O.S.B.) says something similar: "The *guru* is not the simple spiritual director well known in the West. It is one who from his own 'inside,' leads the disciple to the latter's 'inside'—by ways of external teaching, much more by way of intimate contact, heart to heart, through the *medium* of the Spirit which encompasses all" ("An Approach to Hindu Spirituality," *Clergy Review* 54 [1969] 170).

Let us note again that the contrast between the Zen mode and the Exercises mode, as seen in the use of means, is not quite the same as a contrast between Buddhism and Christianity. The exhortation of the fourteenth-century Catholic mystic to leave all words, images, and thoughts behind as one tries to pierce the "cloud of unknowing" bears a distinct methodological resemblance to Zen. William Johnston reminds us that words and concepts and images of Christ are not Christ and, echoing John of the Cross, tells us we must get rid of images of Christ if we want the high contemplative union with Christ which is the real thing.⁶¹ The mode of the Exercises working *through* thoughts and images and feelings is perhaps more characteristically Western, and bears a closer relation than Zen to contemporary Western psychological techniques, which concentrate on the level of feelings and images; but it is not coterminous with Christianity or the only legitimate Christian mode.

What can the Exercises learn from Zen about means? Probably the most obvious lesson is a method of stilling the mind and rendering it receptive to the movement of the Spirit—or even just capable of attending steadily to a text or image or Gospel event. The world in which the Exercises were developed was not the world we experience. It was not a world in which a mass invasion of human awareness by omnipresent and sophisticated communication media makes simple recollection extraordinarily difficult. So, perhaps such helps as Zen provides may serve our contemporary needs. The Zen emphasis on bodily position and disciplines for escaping slavery to the "monkey mind" should, at the minimum, remind the exercitant to attend seriously to all the aids given to this end by Ignatius. But the regular use of specific means, such as sitting with an erect spine and watching the breath, could usefully be added at least as means to quiet and concentrate the mind.

The question, whether the Zen mode of meditation should not simply be used as a preliminary mind-settler but given a more central position in the Exercises, is a more difficult one. The question is not whether it is an authentic or good practice, not even whether it can be sound Christian practice. It is rather a question of the degree to which it can be a practice at the heart of the Exercises without interfering with their particular dynamism. I suggest that a skilled director under the right circumstances, with the right exercitant, might find it appropriate.

DIRECTOR OR ROSHI

In both Zen and the Exercises a teacher is essential for real progress and there are many similarities in the qualities desired. Both have frequent contact with the student or exercitant. The two principal points

⁶¹ Johnston, *Zen* 50–51; see also Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 1972) 150–57.

of contact with the student for the roshi are the *teisho* and *dokusan*. Transcripts of interviews of Yasutani Roshi with students⁶² show that he takes the opportunity of *dokusan* to provide considerable "theological instruction" in addition to practical suggestions and tests of the authenticity of the student's *kensho* and *satori*.⁶³

A close relationship grows up between the student or exercitant and the director or roshi in which the latter must be kept fully informed of what is happening to the former. This is not a matter of knowing all the "private thoughts and sins of the exercitant"⁶⁴ or of discussing personal problems,⁶⁵ but the director should be "kept faithfully informed about the various disturbances and thoughts caused by the action of various spirits."⁶⁶ The roshi asks that "all questions should relate to problems growing directly out of your practice—you may ask anything so long as it arises directly out of your practice."⁶⁷ In both cases he must discern the precise meaning of what is happening and be able to give the proper advice. In both cases the self-activity of the student or exercitant is all-important. Not, however, in a Pelagian or "gaining" way (at least in Soto style). The director or roshi is the midwife, not the mother, of what is coming to birth. He is expected to be severe when necessary (the roshi perhaps more so than the director) and yet compassionate as well, especially when the exercitant or student is experiencing desolation or difficulty. He acts as a kind of stabilizing balance-wheel for the student or exercitant.

Some of the differences are that in the Exercises⁶⁸ the role of the director is spelled out in considerable detail. But the roshi,⁶⁹ once he has reached the stage of enlightenment and is approved by an authentic roshi to teach, once, in other words, he has received *inka shomei* (seal of approval),⁷⁰ is on his own. He is considered to have the experience and insight to judge the authenticity of the student's experience and to inspire and advise the student in whatever occurs in the course of practice. It is considered necessary for the teacher to be authenticated by someone who has in turn been authenticated in a living line of tradition reaching all the way back to Shakyamuni himself. The person having the experience on his own for the first time is in danger of thinking it is a true experience when it is not. Only one who is genuinely enlightened is a true judge of

⁶² Kapleau, *Three Pillars* 83-154.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 335.

⁶⁴ SE 17.

⁶⁵ De Guibert, *Jesuits* 74-108; Ignatius Iparraguirre, S.J., *A Key to the Study of the Spiritual Exercises* (Allahabad: St. Paul, 1959) 112-13; Claudio Acquaviva, *Directory to the Spiritual Exercises (1599)* (London: Manresa, 1925) 21-34, 100-102; English, *Spiritual Freedom* 12-28, 56-68.

⁶⁶ Kapleau, *Three Pillars* 83-154, 49-53.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 333.

⁶⁸ Kapleau, *Three Pillars* 51.

⁶⁹ SE 17.

⁷⁰ Kapleau, *Three Pillars* 51.

enlightenment in another.⁷¹ As a matter of fact, Zen in principle rejects every kind of written norm: “‘no dependence on words or letters’ is one of its most inexorable principles; it claims to be a living tradition, something handed down from master to disciple from the very time of Bodhidharma”⁷² (sixth century A.D.).

This process is not without its problems, for the question naturally arises whether all the masters are really competent. Japanese Zen masters confess that the modern crisis of Zen is precisely in the fact that there are masters who are not real masters at all.⁷³

For directors of the Exercises, formal controls do not exist as they do for roshis. There is no real equivalent of the “seal of approval.” But it is generally accepted that no one can direct the Exercises well without adequate experience in making them. Ignatius wrote that “it is very important that he who gives them be well exercised in them.”⁷⁴ In the text of the Exercises themselves the Introductory Observations, or Annotations, have detailed instructions for the director.⁷⁵ He is presumed to have mastered all the material in the full text of the Exercises, especially such significant parts as the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits.⁷⁶

Chapter 5 of the 1599 Directory has a whole series of observations on the qualifications and duties of the director, beginning with Ignatius’ prescription in the *Constitutions* 4, 8, p. 5, that “he must be one who has been through them himself, that he may be competent to expound them, and also possess the needful dexterity in exposition.”⁷⁷

In short, the director seems to be more dependent on and assisted by an actual written text which is the distillation of the “enlightened” experience of Ignatius, its author, and somehow puts him in touch with that experience. He is presumed to have experience, but that experience is not as formally tested and approved as is the roshi’s. Nor does the director work with the same kind of independent reliance on his enlightenment. The conscious reliance of the director on the immediate work of the Holy Spirit⁷⁸ may make him less concerned about his own lack of full enlightenment. The roshi, conscious of his enlightenment, may tend to rely on it more, but it would be unfair to overlook the fact that he too acts consciously as a midwife, assisting the birth of something beyond his own personal powers.

When all is said and done, the remark of Iparraguirre holds true: “The Exercises are worth as much as the experience of the one who gives them

⁷¹ Ibid. 133.

⁷² Johnston, *Still Point* 15.

⁷³ Ibid. 16.

⁷⁴ De Guibert, *Jesuits* 111 n. 4.

⁷⁸ Ignatius speaks of the Creator and Lord, not of the Holy Spirit, apparently as one way of not arousing the suspicion of the Alumbrado-seeking Inquisitors.

⁷⁵ SE 1-23.

⁷⁶ SE 313-36.

⁷⁷ Acquaviva, *Directory* 21-25.

is worth."⁷⁹ Perhaps the principal lesson the Ignatian director can learn from Zen is that the degree of helpful insight and illumination he can bring to the exercitant is very closely related to his own holiness. It is true, of course, and Ignatius insists on it, that God Himself is the true guide of the exercitant, but the degree to which the director will be able to assist the exercitant in being alert to illusion and errors and fully responsive to the guidance of the Spirit is conditioned by the vigor of that same Spirit's life in himself.

DISCURSIVE VS. INTUITIVE MODES

This is a key issue, both for the interpretation of the Spiritual Exercises themselves, and for the comparison between them and Zen.⁸⁰ It was an issue which involved Ignatius with the Inquisition because of their fear that he was tinged with the heresy of the Alumbrados. Both during Ignatius' lifetime and in the early years of the Society of Jesus it was necessary to defend him and his Exercises against the charge that they relied in a direct and presumptuous way on the direct experience of God.⁸¹ Since this was not a trivial or peripheral aspect of the Exercises, but at the very heart of their special and unique genius, the discussion was long and serious, and has not yet come to an end.⁸² It was a circumstance which made the Society very suspicious and defensive about contemplative prayer in its early years, especially during the generalate of Everard Mercurian (1573-80).⁸³ Putting the Exercises alongside Zen for comparison revives and gives fresh significance to this old controversy.

A first observation is that there is a clear difference in the approach of the two disciplines. One of my students put it briefly and precisely: "In the Exercises the discursive is cultivated extensively and yet remains open to experiences of a more intuitive nature. . . . In Zen the intuitive is insisted on from the very beginning. The goal of Zen is to cease discursive thinking and arrive at a direct intuition of one's nature. Discursive methods are not only not cultivated but actively discouraged."

Yet, studies such as those of Hugo Rahner and Harvey Egan legitimately insist that when one comes to the decisive moments of the Exercises, the intuitive element, which carries the deepest meaning of Ignatius' *sentir*, is the most important. It would be difficult to defend the thesis that the experience of union with God is what the Exercises directly and primarily intend. But a good case can be made, and has been made,

⁷⁹ Iparraguirre, *Key to Exercises* 112.

⁸⁰ Johnston, *Zen* 21-29; Johnston, *Still Point* 67-100, 129-50; De Guibert, *Jesuits* 544-65; Egan, *Exercises* 31-65.

⁸¹ Hugo Rahner, *Ignatius the Theologian* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968) 136-80.

⁸² Thomas Keating, "Contemporary Prayer in the Christian Tradition," *America*, April 8, 1978, pp. 278-81.

⁸³ De Guibert, *Jesuits* 222-29.

for the thesis that Ignatius saw the election being made in the light of an *intuitive* awareness of God's will. The best place in the Exercises to see all this at work is in the election, and particularly the "three times when a correct and good choice of a way of life may be made."⁸⁴ The first time is "when God our Lord so moves and attracts the will that a devout soul without hesitation, or the possibility of hesitation, follows what has been manifested to it."⁸⁵ The second time is "when much light and understanding are derived through experience of desolations and consolations and discernment of diverse spirits."⁸⁶ The third time is "a time of tranquillity, that is, a time when the soul is not agitated by different spirits, and has free and peaceful use of its natural powers."⁸⁷ The "first time" is often considered to be extremely rare, but Ignacio Iparraguirre has proved that it happened in several cases in the early Society.⁸⁸ Hugo Rahner shows that Ignatius and his interpreters gave the first and second time priority over the third, and that Ignatius attached decisive value to the second time.⁸⁹ Ignatius says that "this is done by continuing in the contemplation of Christ our Lord and seeing in which direction God is moving the soul during the experience of consolations, and the same with desolations."⁹⁰ It is significant to note that "this manner of conducting oneself in prayer was stated, quite boldly and unmistakably, by the immediate disciples of Ignatius to be a prayer *sine ratiociniis*—without discursive reasoning."⁹¹ According to Polanco, if the exercitant "places himself" simply and humbly in God's presence and follows this method of nondiscursive cognition, he will find the *sentire* for that to which God is calling him. Henri Pinard de la Boullaye has shown that this *sentire* is a key word in the Ignatian theology of prayer. It has nothing to do with emotional, let alone sensual, impressions; it is a completely intellectual mode of cognition, though it is certainly higher than discursive reasoning and must be ranked among the "spiritual senses." Ignatius concluded none of his letters without the wish that we may all "feel" the will of God "in order that we may fulfil it perfectly."⁹² The official 1599 Directory, considering the mood of the times, spoke with remarkable courage in favor of this second, nondiscursive time. "No reasoning process of one's own is wanted, only attention to the voice of God, and all possible readiness to hear it, and to accept the motion imparted."⁹³ "What is being proposed here is a truly experiential knowledge of God, a contact with God which far surpasses all merely intellectual cognition . . . and it was in this that the

⁸⁴ SE 175-78.

⁸⁵ SE 175.

⁸⁶ SE 176.

⁸⁷ SE 177.

⁸⁸ H. Rahner, *Ignatius* 142.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 145.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 146.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.* 147.

⁹³ Acquaviva, *Directory* 30, 6.

disciples of Ignatius considered the profoundest element of the Exercises to lie."⁹⁴

The moment of the election reveals the central value and emphasis Ignatius gave to the intuitive mode in his Exercises. The Application of the Senses, with which the exercises of each day normally conclude, is another indication. Just as the election is prepared by a variety of discursive exercises but culminates in a moment of intuitive receptivity, so each day follows a similar rhythm: exercises of a more discursive kind conclude in the evening with an exercise which encourages simple openness to the Lord's presence.

The progressive deepening from exterior to interior which marks each day and the Exercises as a whole is very much in the medieval tradition. This progression is described well by the Carthusian Guigo II, ninth prior of the Grande Chartreuse, who died in 1188:

Reading comes first and is as it were the foundation; it provides the subject matter which we must use for meditation. Meditation considers more carefully what is to be sought after; it digs (Prov 2:4) as it were for treasure which it finds (Mt 13:44) and reveals, but since it is not in meditation's power to seize upon the treasure, it directs us to prayer. Prayer lifts up to God with all its strength and begs for the treasure which it longs for, which is the sweetness of contemplation. Contemplation when it comes rewards the labours of the other three; it inebriates the thirsting soul with the dew of heavenly sweetness. Reading is an exercise of the outward senses, meditation is concerned with the inward understanding, prayer is concerned with desire, contemplation outstrips every faculty. The first degree is proper to beginners, the second to proficients, the third to devotees, the fourth to the blessed.⁹⁵

This is the tradition to which Ignatius belonged and which he further developed.⁹⁶

Precisely because it makes things "present" in this way, the Application of the Senses is more than a disconnected series of mental pictures and tends of its very nature to lead up to the *altiora*, to higher and finer spiritual perceptions of which the Directory speaks.⁹⁷ This kind of exercise

⁹⁴ H. Rahner, *Ignatius* 150. There may be some inconsistency in this section of Rahner. He affirms that the mode of cognition in question is completely intellectual, yet later says that it surpasses all merely intellectual cognition. The point he seems to be making is that it is not just on the level of shallow surface feelings, but neither is it an ordinary process of the rational mind; it is beyond both.

⁹⁵ Cited in Godfrey O'Donnell, "Contemplation," *The Way*, Supplement no. 27 (Spring 1976) 30.

⁹⁶ For the Ignatian "contemplations," of which this is an example, seem not to have been much in evidence in monastic spirituality. Their antecedents are rather in Renaissance "esotericism." See Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1966).

⁹⁷ H. Rahner, *Ignatius* 193-94.

emphasizes directness; the exercitant is not thinking *about*, but directly seeing, touching, tasting. "When the exercitant unlocks his soul in the relaxed evening hour after the strenuous labours of prayer, he should abandon himself," says Hugo Rahner, "to the divine contact and 'feel' the things of God (the word *sentir* is fundamental in Ignatian prayer)." ⁹⁸ "This uniting of understanding and heart, reason and imagination, thought and feeling, was what Ignatius wanted to teach the exercitant to achieve in the highest form of the Application of the Senses. For him, this form of the Application of the Senses was the very essence of *sentir*, the feeling for the things of God." ⁹⁹

The Exercises, then, contain both discursive and intuitive prayer. If one lists the means which are used, the exercises which are presented, they are almost exclusively in a discursive mode, but that to which they consistently lead, and which is the heart of the whole process, is an intuitive experience of the Creator dealing "directly with the creature; and the creature directly with his Creator and Lord." ¹⁰⁰

In Zen, by contrast, the discursive is not used—unless one wants to call the teasing and frustrating of the rational mind by the koan a discursive process. Rather, the ordinary discursive processes of the mind are put aside and considered hindrances to the experience of enlightenment. The intuitive mode reigns supreme. It is interesting, however, in connection with Ignatius' use of the Application of the Senses, that "Zen disciples often explain . . . that the immediacy of their lived experience is analogous to that of immediate sense perception." ¹⁰¹

The principal manner, then, in which the Zen emphasis on the intuitive dimension can helpfully influence the Exercises may well be simply in its challenge to rediscover what lies at the heart of the Ignatian process.

CONTEMPLATION AND ACTION

Suspensions of Illuminism played a part in shaping not only the approach of Ignatius and his early disciples and spiritual descendants to discursive and intuitive prayer, but also the closely related issue of contemplation and action. ¹⁰² In this context, I am using "contemplation" not in the way Ignatius does in the Exercises, but in the more general sense in which it is used by, for instance, Thomas Merton. ¹⁰³ "Resting in loving here-and-

⁹⁸ Ibid 197

⁹⁹ Ibid 207

¹⁰⁰ SE 15

¹⁰¹ Dumoulin, *History of Zen* 159 The fact that Zen is practiced with open eyes is not without significance

¹⁰² Joseph Conwell, S J, *Contemplation in Action* (Spokane Gonzaga University, 1957), Johnston, *Still Point* 101-17, de Gubert, *Jesuits* 579-90, William J Young, ed, *Finding God in All Things* (Chicago Regnery, 1958), Merton, *Zen and Birds*, A Coemans, S J, "La lettre de P Claude Acquaviva sur l'oraison," *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 17 (1936) 316-20

¹⁰³ Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer* (New York Image, 1971), Merton, *New Seeds*

now awareness" would be one way to put it.

It should be clear enough that the Exercises are not simply directed to the experience of contemplation for its own sake. Their more immediate orientation is toward personal decision and generous service of the Lord. But the Exercises are more than a pragmatic handbook for action. Contemplation is a central feature of the Exercises at their most decisive point, and a spirit of contemplation, of finding God in all things, is meant to be one of the principal fruits of the Exercises, particularly of the exercise which normally concludes them, the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God.¹⁰⁴

It is important in studying the spirituality of Ignatius to consider separately his own experience in the interior life and the way he trained his first disciples. "This great contemplative who at Manresa devoted seven hours a day to prayer and who at Rome lived habitually in an abundance of the highest divine favors, spoke of the gifts of infused prayer to his disciples only with the utmost reserve."¹⁰⁵ For Ignatius, amid all these contemplative favors, faithful and generous service of the Lord remained central from the beginning to the end of his spiritual pilgrimage. The vision at La Storta in 1537, just before his arrival in Rome, expressed this characteristic note of his spirituality. He saw Jesus weighed down by the cross, and the Father saying to Jesus: "It is my will that you take this man [Ignatius] for your servant." Then Jesus says to Ignatius: "It is my will that you serve us."¹⁰⁶ But again, this service was no mere external task, performed out of a sense of duty. It grew out of, and was constantly nurtured by, a sense of God's immediate presence. Nadal, who knew Ignatius intimately, thought that this special grace was "to see and contemplate in all things, actions, and conversations the presence of God and the love of spiritual things, to remain a contemplative even in the midst of action."¹⁰⁷ Another trait of Ignatius' personal spirituality was a constant mindfulness. Those who lived with him felt that in all the movements he made, reflection always preceded them.¹⁰⁸

In teaching others, and in the Exercises, his most explicit teaching instrument, Ignatius stressed the cultivation of freedom from inordinate attachment and of generous self-giving in service. He was convinced that for those who were studying, an hour a day for prayer was enough, presuming that mortification and self-denial were being practiced. He maintained that such a person would easily accomplish more in a quarter of an hour than an unmortified person in two hours. De Camara reports:

The other day . . . the Father . . . told me he thought there was no worse mistake in spiritual things than the desire to lead others as oneself. He was speaking about

¹⁰⁴ SE 230-37.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 45.

¹⁰⁵ De Guibert, *Jesuits* 11.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 68.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* 38-39.

the long prayers he made. He then added that out of one hundred men who give themselves to long prayers and severe penances, the majority expose themselves to great harm. The Father was referring especially to stubbornness of judgment (*dureza de entendimiento*); and thus he was placing the whole foundation in mortification and abnegation of the will.¹⁰⁹

Contemplation is important for Ignatius, but principally as a constant mode of the way we live, finding God everywhere and in all things. That, he believes, will happen naturally and easily, if we are genuinely free of inordinate attachment.

And what of Zen?¹¹⁰ The emphasis on service is not as prominent as with Ignatius, but it is clearly present, especially in the so-called Bodhisattva vow, which is characteristic of Mahayana Buddhism. In contrast to Theravada, which stresses the monastic and contemplative aspect much more exclusively, and invites the seeker to enter into nirvana as soon as possible, Mahayana makes the Bodhisattva the ideal. He commits himself to postpone his final and definitive freedom from the world of *samsara* until all sentient beings can also be freed and saved. This is perhaps the point at which Buddhism comes closest to the Christian ideal. Zen expresses this ideal in one of the famous oxherding pictures. This series of pictures, illustrating the stages of spiritual growth, originated with a Chinese Zen master of the twelfth century, and their number gradually increased from five to the ten which are reproduced in Kapleau.¹¹¹ The ox is the mind. The herder is the seeker. He moves through the stage of seeking, finding the tracks, the first glimpses, then of catching it, taming it, and riding it home. The ox is then forgotten and the self is alone. Next—an empty circle—both ox and self are forgotten. Then comes a return to daily life: “the waters are blue, the mountains are green”; finally he enters the market place with helping hands. “Carrying a gourd, he strolls into the market; leaning on his staff, he returns home. He leads innkeepers and fishmongers in the Way of the Buddha. Bare-chested, barefooted, he comes into the market place. Muddied and dirt-covered, how broadly he grins! Without recourse to mystic powers, withered trees he swiftly brings to bloom.”¹¹²

The Zen meditator, in the popular view, is “out of it.” But the data from biofeedback machines tells us something different. “EEG [electroencephalograph] experiments have shown that if you make a noise, the Zen meditator hears it; if you flash a light, he sees it; if you stick a pin in him, he feels it. This is because his meditation is very much geared to the here and now, to a total presence to reality. In this sense, Zen is very

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 89.

¹¹⁰ Kapleau, *Three Pillars* 311; Rahula, *Buddha Taught* 76–89; Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind*.

¹¹¹ Kapleau, *Three Pillars* 301–13.

¹¹² Ibid. 311.

incarnational. On the other hand, when the yogi enters into a very deep meditation, he hears nothing, sees nothing, and feels nothing."¹¹³

In summary: the Exercises are directly geared to a concrete decision which will shape a particular life of action, but they achieve this by drawing the exercitant into a contemplative awareness of the Lord's guiding presence. The consequence of making the Exercises fruitfully is a life of service in which one sees and gratefully responds to God in all things. Zen is more directly aimed at awareness itself. It is more directly contemplative. But if authentically practiced, it leads to a consciousness of reality's inner beauty, and a life of compassionate help of all sentient beings to that same awareness and freedom.

Robert Egan, S.J., sees a similarity between Zen and the Exercises in the way they experience "things." In a letter to me he says: "It seems to me that Zen pays a very special kind of attention to things—ordinary objects, flowers in a vase—and has a special kind of experience around this issue of 'just so' or suchness. There has always seemed to me to be something similar in the Ignatian tradition—most clearly maybe in [Gerard Manley] Hopkins—this sense of the suchness, the 'just so' of things."

In Zen (and even more explicitly in Theravada insight meditation) the contemplative mode of "just observing," without either craving for or aversion from, brings with it a detachment and freedom out of which a higher kind of spontaneity emerges. One can more easily be "in the world but not of it." The parallel practice of some such meditative process daily during an Ignatian retreat might in some cases be a helpful complement to the Exercises.

DISCERNMENT

Discernment is an Ignatian term, but its equivalent is also found in the world of Zen.¹¹⁴

There is a sense in which the whole purpose of the Exercises is discernment. For Ignatius says that "we call Spiritual Exercises every way of . . . seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life."¹¹⁵ All the work of the Exercises converges on this final discernment of God's will, and concerns itself along the way, particularly in the crucial stages leading up to the election, with subtle discernment of the feelings the exercitant is experiencing, with his/her consolations and desolations, and with an assessment of precisely what they mean. Discernment of the subtle ways in which self-love and inordinate attachment can blind and mislead one at all stages are further matter for discernment.

¹¹³ Johnston, *Silent Music* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974) 40–41.

¹¹⁴ Kapleau, *Three Pillars* 38–41, 269–91; H. Rahner, *Ignatius* 136–80; H. Egan, *Exercises* 132–56; Young, *Finding God* 183–202; English, *Spiritual Freedom* 124–41, 190–209.

¹¹⁵ SE 1.

We have seen how the whole process of election, and the discernment which guides it, rest ultimately, according to Ignatius, on the intuitive, not the discursive, activity of the exercitant.¹¹⁶ Not that the rational or discursive element is despised. It has its place, and can be used as a secondary check, since the light of faith and the light of reason cannot contradict each other; but, for Ignatius, the insight which is most important in the election is the discernment which is intuitive. Even when the "third time" ("a time of tranquillity, that is, a time when the soul is not agitated by different spirits, and has free and peaceful use of its natural powers"¹¹⁷) is used for the election, the choice needs to be brought to the Lord and offered "that the Divine Majesty may deign to accept and confirm it if it is for His greater service and praise."¹¹⁸

As the exercitant, with the director's assistance, examines his/her experiences of consolation and desolation, one of the principal safeguards against exposure to purely subjective and possibly deluded feelings is the ongoing contemplation of the mysteries of Jesus. It is important that discernment of the will of God through consolations and desolations is done not simply by attending to free-floating consolation and desolation, but also, as Ignatius says explicitly in his Directory, "by *continuing in the contemplation of Christ Our Lord* and seeing in which direction God is moving the soul during the experience of consolations, and the same with desolations."¹¹⁹ "Two things are necessary if this audacious and easily misunderstood 'Second Time' ['when much light and understanding are derived through experience of desolations and consolations and discernment of divine spirits'¹²⁰] of the Election is to remain on the right theological lines: first, the gift of the *discretio spirituum*, and then, either during this or afterwards, the control of the rational understanding (i.e., the 'Third Time'), the function of which is to test the movement of spirits in the light of the exercitant's gifts of nature and grace, the limits imposed by the Church, and the example of Christ's life."¹²¹

In Zen the principal resource for discernment, apart from the insight which comes from whatever light the student enjoys, is the enlightened and compassionate roshi. In principle, the roshi, if truly and fully enlightened, is able to see through the various illusions and deceptions of the student. In a way, his task of discernment is simpler than that of the director, since all images, thoughts, and feelings are no more than *makyo* and are to be simply disregarded. He does not take on the task, as does the director in the Exercises, of discerning what certain thoughts, consolations, or desolations might mean. But if he is to do his work well and is to recognize the enlightened state when it truly arrives, he himself

¹¹⁶ H. Rahner, *Ignatius* 149; H. Egan, *Exercises* 132-56.

¹¹⁷ SE 177.

¹¹⁸ SE 183.

¹¹⁹ H. Rahner, *Ignatius* 146 (emphasis added).

¹²⁰ SE 176.

¹²¹ H. Rahner, *Ignatius* 151.

must already be there. Further, he must be able to recognize in the words, gestures, attitude, and appearance of the student whether or not they manifest the reality of enlightenment. Kapleau's transcripts of Yasutani Roshi's interview (*dokusan*) with students show that he constantly rejects what are proposed as expressions of enlightenment until the moment of true kensho or satori arrives.¹²²

By definition, the illuminating and corrective norm of the mysteries of the life of Jesus are not available to him. The traditional accumulated wisdom of the Buddhist community (the sangha) over the centuries is with him, stretching back to and in continuity with the initial enlightenment of Shakyamuni, but there is a distinctive independence in the Zen roshi's own enlightenment. "Be lamps unto yourselves," said the Blessed One to Ananda in his farewell message.¹²³

Some of the norms used by Harada Roshi in discernment can be seen in his comments on the letters of a remarkable young Japanese girl, Yaeko Iwasaki, written in 1935 over the course of a few days just before her death and describing her enlightenment experiences.¹²⁴ He criticizes her early stages by noting that her experience is still tinged with conceptual thinking,¹²⁵ but at the same time confirms that "she has truly seen the Ox, for there is in her experience deep self-affirmation, the desire to save all sentient beings, and the determination to discipline herself spiritually in her daily life." Yet, "there still remains a subject who is seeing. Her mind's home is still far distant."¹²⁶ Two days later he marvels at her intense devotion and confirms her affirmation that she has "grasped the ox."¹²⁷ In the next day's letter he follows her declaration that she has every intention of strengthening even further her powers of concentration by exclaiming: "Yes, yes, you really do understand."¹²⁸ He identifies her state in her second letter as the third degree of the Five Degrees established by the Patriarch Tozan (awareness of the One is paramount). The third letter manifests the fourth degree (no self-conscious trace of enlightenment).¹²⁹ Her remark that she has "a distinct aversion to being called enlightened" prompts him to comment: "I am delighted to hear you say this. Yet it is only with full enlightenment that it is possible to put your Zen into practice in daily life."¹³⁰ He identifies this letter with the fifth stage (absolute naturalness).¹³¹ When she says with intense gratitude that her enlightenment is as much due to his benevolent guidance as to her intense longing and striving for Buddha-

¹²² Kapleau, *Three Pillars* 83-154.

¹²³ *Mahaparanibbana Suttanta*, "Second Portion for Recitation," cited in E. A. Burtt, ed., *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha* (New York: Mentor, 1955) 49.

¹²⁴ Kapleau, *Three Pillars* 276-91.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* 276.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* 277.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* 277-79.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* 281.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* 282.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* 283.

hood that she may save all living beings, he comments that she is the incarnation of a great Bodhisattva.¹³² In this letter he sees her as having reached the stage of *tada*, realizing that Shakyamuni Buddha is no different from her.¹³³ The next day he contradicts the claim in her letter, shortly before her death, that she has rid herself of the "smell of enlightenment," noting that "to become attached to one's own enlightenment is as much a sickness as to exhibit a maddeningly active ego. Indeed, the profounder the enlightenment, the worse the illness. In her case I think it would have taken two or three months for the most obvious symptoms to disappear, two or three years for the less obvious, and seven or eight for the most insidious. . . . My own sickness lasted almost ten years. Ha!"¹³⁴ The Zen roshi does exercise his discernment without hesitation or lack of self-confidence!

The Zen mode of discernment once again challenges the director of the Exercises to deepen his/her holiness and wisdom so that his/her judgments may be made not just secondhand, out of what he/she has read or heard, but with the power and assurance that comes from firsthand personal experience of the life of the Spirit.

BODY AND ENVIRONMENT

For Zen and the Spiritual Exercises, both the body and environment are extremely important, but each discipline, because of its distinct character, deals with them differently. To put order into a complex set of data, I shall begin with what is more exterior and move step by step into what is more interior, stopping short before we come to thoughts or to the deeper inner level of the self. The order will be (1) external environment, (2) the physical body, (3) things actually perceived by the five external senses, (4) fantasy mood-setters, (5) inner senses.

1) For Ignatius, the surrounding environment is very important. To begin with, a place should be chosen which is as free as possible from contact with friends, acquaintances, or worldly cares. There should be privacy and easy accessibility of liturgical celebration.¹³⁵ Depending upon "what I desire" at each stage of the Exercises, light or darkness, pleasant or disagreeable weather, refreshing coolness in summer, sun and fire in winter should be used.¹³⁶ The Contemplation to Attain the Love of God invites us to find God in our total environment.¹³⁷

2) The physical body is given serious attention. During the First Week "I should not laugh or say anything that would cause laughter."¹³⁸ A pause in a standing position a step or two from where I am to meditate

¹³² Ibid. 284.

¹³³ Ibid. 285.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 287-89.

¹³⁵ SE 20.

¹³⁶ SE, Seventh Additional Direction 79, 130:vii, 229:vii.

¹³⁷ SE 230-37.

¹³⁸ SE 80.

or contemplate should precede entering the meditation, and be followed, just before moving into the meditation, by some bodily gesture of reverence or humility.¹³⁹ I should choose that bodily position during the Exercises which helps me most to find what I desire, and remain in the position in which I find it.¹⁴⁰ Walking movement is an option for the exercise of reflective evaluation after each exercise.¹⁴¹ When one notes that one has fallen into a particular sin or fault, the hand is moved and placed on the breast.¹⁴² One of the methods of prayer includes co-ordination of the breath with the words of the prayer.¹⁴³

3) The perceptions of the five physical senses should also be attended to. The eyes should be restrained from wandering about;¹⁴⁴ the taste and the appetite which accompanies it should be restrained from all immoderation;¹⁴⁵ the sense of touch should, when appropriate, be disciplined by penance, chastising the body by inflicting sensible pain and doing away with comforts in how we sleep.¹⁴⁶ But when appropriate, during the Fourth Week, for instance, there should not be bodily penance.¹⁴⁷ Finally, there is a simple form of prayer which reflects on the way in which one has used the five senses of the body.¹⁴⁸

4) The cultivation of imaginative images to set the proper mood for "what I desire" begins with the moment of awakening.¹⁴⁹ During the day, thoughts in tune with the spirit of that day should be deliberately cultivated.¹⁵⁰ The First Preludes or initial visualizations at the beginning of each exercise serve the same purpose.¹⁵¹ At the last moment of the day, just before falling asleep, the exercise of the next morning is briefly reviewed.¹⁵²

5) The inner senses are systematically activated especially during the Application of the Senses.¹⁵³

The attention Zen gives to the body is no less serious, but it focuses on fewer things. (1) The requirements for the surrounding *environment* are much like those for the Exercises, whether it be for daily sitting meditation or the more concentrated work of a monastic life or a sesshin. Anyone who has had the experience of a sesshin will recognize that the simple austerity of the zendo, along with black robes, the scent of incense, the sounds of bells, gongs, wooden clappers, drums and chanting, the simple meals, and the elementary manual labor all contribute to the process. Zen has produced a whole aesthetic style which is bare, simple,

¹³⁹ SE 73.

¹⁴⁰ SE 76.

¹⁴¹ SE 77.

¹⁴² SE 27.

¹⁴³ SE 258.

¹⁴⁴ SE 81.

¹⁴⁵ SE 210-17.

¹⁴⁶ SE 82-89.

¹⁴⁷ SE 229:x.

¹⁴⁸ SE 247-48.

¹⁴⁹ SE 74, 130:ii, 206:ii, 129:ii.

¹⁵⁰ SE 78, 130:vi; 206:vi, 229:vi.

¹⁵¹ SE 47 and *passim*.

¹⁵² SE 73.

¹⁵³ SE 65. Though actually an application of the senses, Ignatius calls this exercise on hell a meditation (121 and *passim*).

lean, and evocative of something beyond what is heard or seen. However, variations for different stages and different “feelings” do not enter into consideration, since feelings are only *makyo* and should be disregarded, not managed or cultivated.¹⁵⁴ Zen is a concentrated “one-track” process, moving beyond all thoughts and images and feelings to pure direct awareness.

2) The *position* of the body in Zen is of central importance. And in its essentials it is not optional, for an erect back and a relaxed unmoving posture are considered necessary. One is not invited to experiment and find out for oneself what is best. The experience of three or four millennia is thought to have settled this matter satisfactorily. In Japanese Zen there is a good deal of bowing, by which, says Suzuki Roshi, “we are giving up ourselves.”¹⁵⁵ Breathing too is important, but not in the controlled form of yoga pranayama. Rather, one is simply keenly aware of one’s breathing. “When your mind is pure and calm enough to follow this movement, there is nothing: no ‘I’, no world, no mind or body; just a swinging door.”¹⁵⁶ In *kinhin*, or walking meditation, the same kind of awareness is applied to the walking as is applied to the breathing in *zazen*.

3) Zen does not cultivate the perceptions of the five senses as mood-setters, except inasmuch as the motionless resting of the gaze on a point a yard or so away stills the wandering of attention. Moderation of senses to the extent that they crave and cling to pleasant things is, of course, part of the general teaching of Buddhism. During sesshin, the meditators often sleep on the mat in the place where they have been meditating. The blows given by the monitors with the *kyosaku* (a light flat-tipped staff) during sesshin are not a form of penance, but meant to heighten the alertness of the meditators. The direction of the attention of the senses, mainly sight and touch, is mainly a matter of focusing them attentively on some single object in order to fix and still the wandering mind. In a way, the particular object chosen is inconsequential.

4) There is no cultivation of imaginative images in Zen. On the contrary, all such images are to be allowed to drop. When they arise on their own, it is *makyo*. (5) Neither are the inner senses activated in Zen.

When we look at the way Zen and the Exercises deal with the body and the environment, we see once again the consistent way in which each of the two disciplines hangs together. The Exercises use a great variety of postures, movements, thoughts, images, imaginations, moods, feelings, stories, and the like,¹⁵⁷ moving steadily with and through them to direct

¹⁵⁴ See n. 59 above.

¹⁵⁵ Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind* 43.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 29.

¹⁵⁷ There is much attention to “imagination, fantasy, and empathy,” in the words of O’Donnell, “Contemplation.”

experience of the guidance of the Creator and Lord. Zen systematically reduces all these to a few simple forms in its single-minded penetration to pure awareness. What variety exists is mostly from the spontaneous improvisation of the roshi, especially in the Rinzai style.

PERSONAL/IMPERSONAL

One of the most significant differences in basic doctrine between Buddhism and Christianity, and consequently between Zen and the Spiritual Exercises, has to do with person. The concept of person is simply alien to the Buddhist mind. One of the most consistently and firmly held doctrines of Buddhism since the beginning, especially in the Theravada school, is the doctrine of *anatta*, of no person. What seems to be a human person is simply a label put on an impermanent combination of constantly changing elements. Nor is ultimate reality personal. True, "the Buddha, through his teaching and his image in Buddhism, acquired 'the quality of a personalized center for religious devotion' as Winston King points out; nevertheless, Buddhists of all schools have consistently rejected the idea of a personal God."¹⁵⁸

This does not make Buddhism an irreligious phenomenon, but it does affect the character of Buddhist religion, and this is quite evident in the different approaches of Zen and the Exercises. These differences, however, should not be exaggerated, nor unwarranted conclusions drawn. The distinction which Zaehner makes in most of his writings between "Indian," "Eastern," "mystical," or "immanent" religion on the one hand, the "Judaic," "Western," or "prophetic" religion on the other,¹⁵⁹ is helpful as far as it goes, and we lose something of great value if we too easily assume that all religions are pretty much the same. We forfeit the challenge that comes from stretching our mind to learn from something genuinely different from our own, and fruitful dialogue is thus prevented before it can even begin. But it is also possible to carry the stress on differences too far. It does seem overstated to say, for instance, that "basically the two religions [Christianity and Buddhism] are not dealing with the same subject matter."¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, a perusal of Zaehner's posthumous book *Our Savage God*¹⁶¹ shows the bizarre conclusions which grew out of Zaehner's theory when carried all the way. "Eastern mysticism" becomes responsible for the grisly murders of Charles Manson, and Western religion gives us a God who is "so utterly unfair and crazy as to crucify himself." Blind obedient submission, *islam*, remains

¹⁵⁸ Heinrich Dumoulin, S.J., *Christianity Meets Buddhism* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1974) 189 n. 43.

¹⁵⁹ See R. C. Zaehner, "Introduction," *The Concise Encyclopedia of Living Faiths* (Boston: Beacon, 1959) 15-20.

¹⁶⁰ Zaehner, *Encyclopedia* 20.

¹⁶¹ *Our Savage God* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1975).

the only approach left to man. My inclination is to use Zaehner's categories with great caution; but it is easy to see that they appeal to the Christian apologist.

The Buddhist tells us that he experiences all reality, including ultimate reality, as impersonal. What are we to make of that? First, "there can be no serious doubt about the authenticity of Zen enlightenment as an experience of reality."¹⁶² It is, in fact, not unlike the experience Ignatius had on the banks of the Cardoner, which focused more on an expansive insight into the nature of all reality than a personal exchange with God as person. The Zen disciple, following in this the cosmic view of Mahayana Buddhism as a whole, understands the experience of enlightenment as a nonpersonal contact with reality.¹⁶³ But a cosmic view does not necessarily exclude recognition of the personal. This is seen in Ignatius himself; it is found again in the doctrine of a modern Jesuit, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who "combines a cosmic outlook with a very explicit personalism."¹⁶⁴ In Teilhard's thought, the personal and the cosmic do not contradict each other.¹⁶⁵ But the whole problem of person, especially as it applies to God, needs more careful study.¹⁶⁶ It is somehow at the center of a syndrome of differences discovered between Christianity and Buddhism.

If God is a person, and if human beings are truly persons, then freedom and the interchange between free persons become important. The reality of love, which has dimensions not found in compassion, moves into the foreground. Since the freedom of God chooses to bring the universe and other persons into existence, there is creation. But for Buddhism there is no such thing as creation. Since there is, then, for Christians a beginning which will move on to an end, history, an unpredictable tissue of interacting freedoms, becomes a reality. But history is problematic for Buddhists. Since finite persons can fail in love, turn away from and break their relationship with their Creator and Lord, sin appears for Christians. Because that relationship can be restored in a moment when the sinner freely turns back and accepts the ever-present love of the Creator, forgiveness and reconciliation—not simply the gradual reversal of karma—can take place. Because this reconciliation and restoration, through the freely given and freely received grace of the Creator, can establish the converted sinner in a relationship which is essentially complete, long series of reincarnations are not called for. That does not mean that the consequences of human disorder and sinfulness simply disappear when the sinner returns to God. This "karma" must be worked

¹⁶² Dumoulin, *Christianity Meets Buddhism* 159.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* 148.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 149.

¹⁶⁶ Edward C. Schillebeeckx and Bas van Iersel, *A Personal God?* (Concilium 103; New York: Seabury, 1977).

out, and that is precisely the function of the state of purification after death which tradition calls purgatory. If an alcoholic who has been drinking hard for twenty years suddenly decides to stop, a radical turn-about has taken place. But it will take much time and pain to clear out of the system the consequences of those twenty years. Karl Rahner's remarks on the doctrine of temporal punishment due to sin, found in his essay on indulgences,¹⁶⁷ provide a helpful way of dealing with this problem. The Buddhist who feels that the Christian doctrine of sin and full forgiveness trivializes the consequences of bad human actions—as though one could snap one's fingers and have them disappear in a moment—should examine Rahner's clarification of this point. But although the process of purification is central to Buddhism, sin and forgiveness lose their meaning without the reality of persons. And when all these things can be worked out only through the impersonal law of karma, the process understandably calls for many reincarnations. The constant involvement of the exercitant with the concrete details of the life of Jesus, as compared with the absence of such historical particularities in Zen, also has something to do with this basic difference. If Christianity involves a relation of free persons, history emerges. If history, specifically the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, is the context of human relationships to God, that relationship almost necessarily is tied in with imagination. How can one bring history into contemplation except through imagination?

An exclusive Christology is also connected with this syndrome of person, freedom, history, and unique particularity. The exclusive Christology which Buddhists usually hear from Christians is ordinarily offensive to them. Can the claim that Jesus is the only "way" and that without him no one can be saved still be maintained? The new openness of Vatican II to salvation outside of Christianity, even outside of theism,¹⁶⁸ invites us to examine this question afresh. The conciliar statements on Christology we have inherited were hammered out in a series of councils in the first centuries of the Church as the early Christians struggled to come to terms with Greek philosophy. Although each council concluded with a set of irreformable decrees, the next council re-examined and reformulated. Then the process, for a time at least, came to a halt.

It was the confluence of Christianity, the daughter of Israel, with Greek thought and culture which brought about this intense process of doctrinal expression, with new and improved formulas emerging as one council followed another. In our time another major confluence is upon us. It will be necessary for Christian theologians to attend to those rich religious insights of the East which have developed and stood the test over several

¹⁶⁷ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* 2 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963) 194–98.

¹⁶⁸ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, no. 16.

millennia. The challenge of these ancient and sophisticated religions may eventually occasion a council of the Christian Church—perhaps, as in the early Church, a series of them. If and when that happens, the issue of a Christology which seems to limit spiritual goods too exclusively to Christians, and the related issue of person and the personal in religion, may well be a center of concern.

Let us be modest in our claims to understand just what is meant by referring to reality as personal or impersonal. At least part of the reluctance to speak of God as personal (a reluctance found more and more commonly now among many Westerners as well, including Christians) may spring from a healthy fear of putting limits on God. "Person" may in fact be visualized as "human person" with all its limitations, and the term may seem unsuited to the fathomless mystery of God. The serious questions contemporary Christian theologians raise about the word "person" as applied to the Trinity should put us on our guard.¹⁶⁹ This may be a major instance of misunderstanding between traditions with completely different histories of language, of symbol, of presuppositions as yet unexplored.

Furthermore, the language of most of the Eastern scriptures is, like the language of the Christian mystics, a description of a deep experience of transcendent reality, in a language we might call psychological. That is to say, it is not a detached metaphysical analysis of reality—of God and the human person as they come closer and closer. What the language does is speak of the way the relation is experienced, and it turns out to be an experience of total forgetfulness of self, total unawareness of self. It is as if *I* simply did not exist.

Finally, the assertion of Aquinas that we do better speaking of what God is not than of what He is, expresses well the attitude of the Buddhist who tries to speak of the Absolute. When we hear words like "impersonal," we do well to keep this in mind.

In any case, "accounts of personal experience are as numerous and authentic in the history of mysticism as the apersonal type. Both types can be sufficiently recognized as authentic when the evidence is fully taken into account."¹⁷⁰

What practical consequences does this difference in the approach to person have for Zen and the Spiritual Exercises? They are extensive and profound. Zen has no sense of personal offense, sin, or guilt. There is no such thing as a break of personal relations with a loving Creator. Nor is there the radical turnabout of a conversion to that Person. Yet there is, perhaps inconsistently, a deep sense of gratitude in the enlightened Zen disciple, which prompts one to ask how gratitude without someone to be grateful to might be understood. There are no colloquies, no petitions.

¹⁶⁹ See, e.g., Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970) 103–15.

¹⁷⁰ Dumoulin, *Christianity Meets Buddhism* 161.

There is no equivalent of the central Ignatian exercise on the Call of the King, nor anything like contemplation of the mysteries of Jesus' life with striving to know, love, and follow him.

Nevertheless, it is the differences, or what at least appear to be differences, which turn out to be the source of the greatest mutual enrichment. The Zen attitude toward the personal could well be a corrective for a Western tendency toward sentimental individualism masquerading as personalism. As we look at our Western culture, a kind of exaggerated individualism seems to be at the root of much contemporary malaise. At this point Buddhist insight may join the incisive Marxist critique of Western individualism and of the alienation which accompanies it. In spiritual practice itself personalism may degenerate into a frothy pietism. The sober and austere realism of Zen can cut through that kind of distortion.

It would be a mistake to conclude without noting that on the whole the similarities between Zen and the Exercises are very deep and perhaps more significant than the differences. Both demand radical detachment and a loss of self-importance; both stress the immediacy of religious experience; both lead to a realm of reality far beyond the ordinary, yet both eventually find it *in* the simple, the ordinary, the everyday.

Is there a theological framework for understanding these differences without either demeaning the greatness of the Zen experience or overlooking what is legitimately unique in Christian experience? In the early meeting of the Church with the Greek world, where *logos* was such a central reality, appeals were made to the presence of the Word outside Christianity from the beginning of time—and that is by no means an outdated approach. All that is in any way word, whether it be the visible creation, the wisdom of wise and holy men and women, or the events of history, can be seen as a participation in the Father's Word. But perhaps in the present meeting of Christianity with the older religions of the East, we can focus our attention more on the Spirit as we probe the mystery of God's Trinitarian economy to understand what is happening. The Father has manifested Himself through His Spirit to all men and women from the beginning of time, but this manifestation, even more than the manifestation through "words," leaves God without a face or a name. His light, His movement, and His power are experienced, but the revelation of God as a free person does not come through clearly. The full revelation of God as personal and the full communication of His plan come with Jesus. "For all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you" (Jn 15:15). The Spirit which breathes within every man and woman everywhere is the Spirit of Jesus as well as of the Father, and so there can be no contradiction between what the Spirit has been communicating through the ages and the message made known in Jesus. God can be expected to be consistent with Himself.

Perhaps it is along such lines that we can begin the new and important dialogue between the religions of the East, which, though older than Christianity, are still very much alive, and the younger religion of the West. Some of us would not be surprised if what comes of this exchange, now beginning with a seriousness not found in all the centuries of their histories, turns out to be the most significant religious development of the centuries just ahead of us.