

IGNACIO ELLACURÍA AND THE *SPIRITUAL EXERCISES* OF IGNATIUS LOYOLA

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[Ellacuría's scholarly work needs to be understood against the backdrop of his commitment to Ignatian spirituality. The author demonstrates this by showing that Ellacuría considered the Spiritual Exercises as a crucial resource for doing theology in Latin America, particularly in response to various challenges articulated at the CELAM Conference in Medellín (1968). The author then argues, using Ellacuría's approach to the historical Jesus, that Ellacuría's work of elaborating a "philosophy of historical reality" should be understood as an attempt to craft a philosophy and theology adequate to the encounter with the historical Jesus as structured by the Exercises.]

TRAGICALLY, IGNACIO ELLACURIA first became widely known among North American theologians because of his murder at the hands of the Salvadoran military in the early morning hours of November 16, 1989.¹ To be sure, his philosophical and theological texts merit careful attention on their own terms, as doubtlessly would have become apparent even had he not been assassinated.² Painful as the facts are, the disturbing reality of

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¹ So recounts Kevin Burke, S.J., for example, in the preface of his forthcoming book *The Ground beneath the Cross: The Theology of Ignacio Ellacuría* (Washington: Georgetown University). This is the only book-length treatment of Ellacuría's theology. I am grateful to Professor Burke for sharing with me his page proofs with their incisive summaries and analysis.

² Ellacuría was already well known in the Spanish-speaking world because of his collaboration with and writings on the Spanish philosopher, Xavier Zubiri. In the United States he was less well known because much of his writings have not been translated. Among the few translated works is *Freedom Made Flesh: The Mission of Christ and His Church*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1976). As a writer he preferred the essay genre; however, he did write several important book-length works: *Conversión de la Iglesia al Reino de Dios: Para anunciarlo y realizarlo*

his death is nonetheless an appropriate avenue into the thought of a man who persistently argued for a creative integration of theory and praxis, of faith (together with its intellectual auxiliary, theology) and work for justice. He strove to live this integration in his own work as a philosopher and theologian, as a university administrator, and as a political mediator in a protracted and vicious civil war. He was murdered for his work in the latter two roles, but it is important to see their continuity with the first two.

The tenth anniversary of Ellacuría's death will see the publication of a number of reflections on his life and work.³ My own article aims to show how Ellacuría integrated two dimensions of Christian faith that modernity tends to sunder: spirituality and theology. As David Tracy has noted, this bifurcation is integrally related to modernity's other dualisms, especially that between theory and praxis.⁴ Thus, shedding light on the way that Ellacuría integrated spirituality and theology can contribute to an understanding of his attempts to overcome other divisions that plague Christian life and thought today. Moreover, approaching his thought from this angle has the advantage of seeing Ellacuría as a Jesuit, as one who lived, worked, and wrote from a profound engagement with Ignatian spirituality. Finally, it can help us to understand how spirituality can be an integral and formative factor in contemporary theology.

en la historia (San Salvador: UCA, 1985) and *Filosofía de la realidad histórica*, ed. Antonio González (Madrid: Trotta, 1991). At the time of his death he was beginning to find greater exposure in English-speaking theological circles. He was also co-editing a volume of essays, a splendid summa of Latin American liberation theology, *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Jon Sobrino, S.J., and Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993). This work includes translations of several of his important essays: "The Historicity of Christian Salvation" (251–288), "Utopia and Prophecy in Latin America" (289–327), and "The Crucified People" (580–603). Assuming that Ellacuría would eventually have stepped down as Rector of the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas (the "UCA"), there is little doubt that he would have increased his already impressive rate of publication.

³ Besides the work by Kevin Burke already cited, a collection of essays in honor of Ellacuría will appear shortly: *The Love That Produces Hope: The Thought of Ignacio Ellacuría*, ed. Kevin Burke and Robert Lassalle-Klein (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2000). Other helpful sources for understanding the contributions of Ellacuría as well as those of the other murdered Jesuits, include: *Towards a Society That Serves Its People: The Intellectual Contribution of El Salvador's Murdered Jesuits*, ed. John Hassett and Hugh Lacey (Washington: Georgetown University, 1991); Jon Sobrino, Ignacio Ellacuría, and others, *Companions of Jesus: The Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1990); and Teresa Whitfield, *Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1995).

⁴ See, for instance, Tracy's comments in "Conversation with David Tracy," interview by Todd Breyfogle and Thomas Levergood, *Cross Currents* 44 (Fall, 1994) 293–315.

That Ignatius's spiritual heritage has inspired generations of creative theological work is beyond doubt. Ignatian spirituality has had a significant impact on contemporary theology in the past century, mediated by figures such as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Henri de Lubac, Karl Rahner, and Hans Urs von Balthasar.⁵ My goal here is to show that Ellacuría should be added to this list. My thesis is that Ignacio Ellacuría is an important figure in the Ignatian theological tradition because his philosophical and theological work gave systematic conceptual elaboration to a stance toward history and being-in-history that is located in the depth-structure of Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*. I offer first a brief discussion of what is meant by an Ignatian theological tradition. I then determine Ellacuría's interpretation of the *Exercises* and argue that this interpretation offers a key for understanding Ellacuría's philosophical and theological project. Finally, I conclude with some general reflections on the dimension of Ignatian spirituality that most influenced Ellacuría's philosophy and theology.

IGNATIUS AND THE THEOLOGIANS

Ignatius of Loyola was not a professional theologian, and no one theology corresponds to his spirituality. As Avery Dulles has written: "the Ignatian paradigm, while it gives a basic horizon, does not dictate any particular set of theological theses. A variety of competing theologies, bound together by a loose family resemblance, can all legitimately claim, in one way or another, to be Ignatian."⁶ In Dulles's view, what binds and distinguishes this family of theologies is the way that its various members negotiate that set of dialectical tensions that are so integrally woven together in Ignatius's spirituality.

In the *Spiritual Exercises* themselves there seems to be an inbuilt tension between immediacy and mediation, between personal freedom and obedience, between universalism and ecclesiocentrism, between horizontal openness to the world and reverence for the sacred and the divine. Some theologians, such as Teilhard de Chardin and Rahner, put greater emphasis on immediacy to God, personal freedom and universalism; others, like de Lubac and Balthasar, especially in their later work, insist more on ecclesial mediation, sacramentality and obedience. . . . [B]ecause

⁵ See the essays of Avery Dulles, "Saint Ignatius and the Jesuit Theological Tradition," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 14 (March, 1982); "Jesuits and Theology: Yesterday and Today," *Theological Studies* 52 (1991) 524–38; "The Ignatian Charism and Contemporary Theology," *America* 176 (April 26, 1997) 14–22.

⁶ "Saint Ignatius and the Jesuit Theological Tradition" 17; see also "Jesuits and Theology" 524.

both emphases are valid and are held together in the Exercises, they must be harmoniously reconciled in theology.⁷

The ability of the *Spiritual Exercises* to elicit and interweave these tensions derives in part from its genre. The book is not a work in systematic conceptual theology but a systematic method for the practice of spirituality. It comprises a set of exercises that has as its goal not a description or analysis of God and God's work, but an encounter that gives a person an active participatory understanding of God's presence "from the inside." Tensions and dialectics that conceptual systems almost inevitably elide, dichotomize, or conflate, are preserved and resolved in the *Spiritual Exercises* because they are not thought, but enacted so as to draw the person into the mystery of God's love, a mystery which, when expressed in act or articulated in concept and system, unfolds in terms of these dialectical tensions. This enactment is built around a narrative backbone, centered on the story of Jesus as presented in the Synoptic Gospels. This is an important point. As many proponents of narrative theology have noted, narrative combines structure and novelty; it has the ability to hold and weave together tensions and polarities that escape systematic schemata. Furthermore, narrative has a multivocality and ductility that arise from the different ways that parts and whole interact. If one chooses a different character or event as one's entry into the whole, then not only the whole, but the other parts as well, take on a distinct meaning.

So too with the *Spiritual Exercises*. Divided into four parts or "Weeks," the core of the *Exercises* is a set of contemplations on the life of Jesus, which have as their goal "an interior knowledge of our Lord, . . . that I may love him more intensely and follow him more closely."⁸ The contemplations of Jesus' life are introduced by the First Week meditations on the reality of sin, and of my deliverance from sin. They are interspersed with a number of exercises not directly based on Scripture, such as the Contemplation of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ (nos. 91-100) with which the Second Week begins, and the Meditation on the Two Standards (nos. 136-48).⁹ These nonhistorical, imaginative, or conceptual exercises cast the con-

⁷ "The Ignatian Charism and Contemporary Theology" 22; and "Saint Ignatius and the Jesuit Theological Tradition" 16.

⁸ Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, translated with introduction and commentary by George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992) no. 104. References to the *Exercises* are cited within my text using the standard system of enumeration, such as (no. 104). I follow the convention of using italics (*Exercises*) to denote the text itself, and Roman letters (the Exercises) to refer to all or some subset of the exercises proposed to a person for prayer.

⁹ Ignatius names some of his exercises "contemplations" and others "meditations." Meditations are generally more conceptual and discursive; contemplations focus more on an imaginative indwelling of a given scene, with the affective re-

templation of the life of Jesus as a historical backdrop against which to make a life-determining choice, fulfilling the primary goal of the Exercises: “seeking and finding God’s will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul” (no. 1). The Third and Fourth Weeks deepen one’s imaginative identification with the person and work of Jesus, which has now been concretized in a specific decision, as he or she follows Jesus through his Passion and Resurrection.¹⁰

Ignatius understood that different persons may in their prayer need to remain in certain parts or Weeks of the Exercises. He insisted that the one who gives the Exercises should accommodate them to the aptitude and needs of the one receiving them. The lengths of the Weeks are to be adjusted so that the retreatant does not move out of one Week before he or she has fully experienced the grace appropriate to it.¹¹ This requires that the director attend to the particular needs of the person making them; it also demands a thorough knowledge of the different ways that the parts and the whole of the *Spiritual Exercises* can relate. These pastoral principles for the giving of the Exercises can be extended to provide cognate principles for determining the influence of the *Exercises* on the theology or philosophy of a person who is steeped in them.

In what follows I assume that an “Ignatian theology” can be identified and elaborated by constructing its interpretation, explicit or implicit, of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Two principles govern the construction of such an interpretation. The first principle is a hermeneutical extrapolation from the pastoral principle concerning the giving and doing of the Exercises, stated in the previous paragraph: a theological interpretation of the *Exercises* will revolve, either implicitly or explicitly, around one particular part of the *Exercises*. This hermeneutical focus could be one of the Weeks, one of the exercises (such as the Meditation on the Two Standards or the Contemplation to Attain Love), or one of the accompanying reflections or sets of rules (the First Principle and Foundation or the Rules for Thinking with the Church). The second principle is that an interpretation of the *Exercises* will unfold against a set of assumptions about the challenges to Christian life and theology. Once again, this hermeneutical principle corresponds to

sponse this may occasion; see Ganss’s commentary in *The Spiritual Exercises* 154–55, 162.

¹⁰ For a short but informative description and analysis of the *Spiritual Exercises*, with extensive notes, see John O’Malley, S.J., *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University, 1993) 37–50.

¹¹ See the fourth introductory explanation to the *Exercises* (no. 4). This was particularly true of the First Week: see for instance, Ignatius’s “Directory Dictated to Juan Alonso de Vitoria,” in *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Jesuit Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599*, trans. and ed. Martin E. Palmer, S.J. (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996) 20.

a pastoral presupposition of the giving of the Exercises. The one giving the Exercises tailors them according to a careful appraisal of the needs and capacities of the one making them. Correspondingly, a theological interpretation of the *Exercises* for a particular age will necessarily entail a reading of the signs of the times, in the light of which the resources of the *Exercises* are perceived and deployed.

Thus, for example, a number of 20th-century Jesuits have interpreted the *Exercises* against the backdrop of secularization (which can itself, of course, be understood from several perspectives). Karl Rahner saw the modern challenge as that of experiencing God in a “godless” age.¹² His interpretation of the *Exercises* centered on the Contemplation to Attain Love at the end of the *Exercises*, with its famous (although only implicitly stated) principle of “finding God in all things” and the breathtaking offering of self expressed in the *Suscipe*: “Take, Lord, receive, all my liberty. . . .” (no. 234).¹³ Hans Urs von Balthasar, on the other hand, approached secularity in terms of the modern dilemma of coordinating autonomy/freedom and authority/obedience. Accordingly, he was deeply formed by the Ignatian notions of mission and election, as articulated by the meditation on the Call of the King.¹⁴ One of the advantages offered by these interpretive principles is that they can help account for the diversity of theologies within the Ignatian tradition, and provide a starting point for an analysis and comparison of these theologies, one that does not replace other crucial discriminating factors, including differences in philosophical background or in the theological loci and resources in Scripture and tradition, but does supply a valuable complement.

ELLACURÍA INTERPRETS IGNATIUS

A number of biographical facts strongly suggest that Ignacio Ellacuría was deeply formed, both personally and intellectually, by Ignatian spirituality. Born in the Basque region of northeast Spain in 1930, Ellacuría

¹² See, for instance, Karl Rahner, “Rede des Ignatius von Loyola an einen Jesuiten von Heute,” in *Schriften zur Theologie* (Zürich: Benziger, 1984) 15.373–408. An English translation appears as “Ignatius of Loyola Speaks to a Modern Jesuit,” in Karl Rahner and Paul Imhof, *Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Rosaleen Ockenden (New York: Collins, 1979) 11–38.

¹³ For a more detailed treatment of Rahner’s relationship to Ignatian spirituality, see J. Matthew Ashley, *Interruptions: Mysticism, Politics and Theology in the Work of Johann Baptist Metz* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1998) 171–91, esp. 178–79, 181–86.

¹⁴ On Balthasar, see Dulles, “The Ignatian Charism and Contemporary Theology” 20–21, and Mark A. McIntosh, *Christology from Within: Spirituality and the Incarnation in Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1996) 42–44, 55–57, 122–27.

entered the Society of Jesus at the age of sixteen.¹⁵ Along with five other novices, he was assigned in 1949 to the mission territory of El Salvador. Their novice master, Miguel Elizondo, recalls that he himself emphasized the study and appropriation of Ignatian spirituality in its original documents as the key resource for finding their way as Jesuits in a new land and culture.¹⁶ This strategy made a lasting impression on his novices, and undoubtedly formed Ellacuría's understanding of the significance of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Ellacuría was sent to Innsbruck in 1958 where he studied theology under Karl Rahner during the exciting years leading up to Vatican II. He identified Rahner as one of his most important teachers and mentors, an important detail for the thrust of my argument, given Rahner's own conviction about the importance of the *Spiritual Exercises* for Christian faith and theology in modernity. In 1962 Ellacuría returned to Spain to study with the philosopher Xavier Zubiri. He became not only one of Zubiri's most important interpreters, but carried on his own innovative continuation of Zubiri's philosophy. Returning to El Salvador in 1967, he was assigned to coordinate the formation of Jesuits in the Central American Vice-Province from 1969 until 1974, and he was elected a delegate to the Jesuits' 33rd General Congregation in 1983.

A crucial moment in his life occurred in 1969. Along with Elizondo, he gave a series of talks based on the *Spiritual Exercises* at a province-wide meeting held to assist the Central American Jesuits to discern how they might respond both to the challenges outlined at the meeting of Latin American Jesuit Provincials in Rio de Janeiro during May 1968, and at the momentous meeting of the Latin American Bishops' conference (CELAM) held at Medellín later that same year.¹⁷ In these talks Ellacuría evinced a firm conviction that Ignatian spirituality offered to the Society of Jesus and to the broader Church unique resources for reading and responding to the signs of the times, a conviction that grew stronger in the following years. This conviction governed his interpretation of Ignatian spirituality.

While Ellacuría's understanding of Ignatian spirituality developed over time, its essential lines can be gleaned from a series of lectures on the

¹⁵ For biographical information on Ellacuría, see Burke, *The Ground beneath the Cross*, Chapter One. See also Whitfield, *Paying the Price* 15–70, and Robert Lassalle-Klein, "The Jesuit Martyrs of the University of Central America: An American Christian University and the Historical Reality of the Reign of God" (Ph.D. diss., Graduate Theological Union, 1995) 51–56.

¹⁶ Whitfield, *Paying the Price* 21–23. Elizondo, who currently lives in Mexico, had a profound impact on many Central American Jesuits as novice master and later tertian instructor, provincial, and respected spiritual director.

¹⁷ For an account of the Central American Vice-province's 1969 common retreat, see Robert Lassalle-Klein, "Jesuit Martyrs" 55–72. See also Charles Beirne, S.J., *Jesuit Education and Social Change in El Salvador* (New York: Garland, 1996) 84–87.

Spiritual Exercises he gave in 1974 at the University of Central America in San Salvador.¹⁸ These lectures reflect his experience of using the *Exercises* to facilitate the Central American Jesuits' communal discernment in 1969, as well as his five subsequent years as director of formation. In his introductory lecture, he described the *Exercises* as "a theological place for historicization."¹⁹ With some analysis this statement can disclose the horizon against which Ellacuría interprets the *Spiritual Exercises*. "Historicization" is a philosophical term that Ellacuría borrowed from Zubiri's philosophy.²⁰ It can be understood within both a broader, more accessible context, and a narrower, more technical one. Here I attend primarily to the former. From that vantage point, "historicization" is Ellacuría's name for the interpretive method that responds to the challenge laid down by the CELAM meeting at Medellín. The Bishops understood themselves there to be responding to the mandate of Vatican II to "read the signs of the times" in their Latin American context.²¹ They stated their conviction that "this historical stage of Latin America is intimately linked to the history of salvation," as well as their intention to "interpret the aspirations and clamors of Latin America as signs that reveal the direction of the divine plan operating in the redeeming love of Christ. . . ."²²

Ellacuría adopted this perspective, asserting that "the fundamental problem that confronts Latin American theology and pastoral practice is that of

¹⁸ Ignacio Ellacuría, "Lectura latinoamericana de los *Ejercicios Espirituales* de san Ignacio," *Revista latinoamericana de teología* 23 (1991) 111–47; henceforth, "Lectura." All translations are my own. For some important later commentaries, see "Fe y Justicia," which was published in two parts in *Christus* 42 (August 1977) 26–33, and *Christus* 42 (October 1977) 19–34. This was written during one of Ellacuría's periods of forced exile from El Salvador. He tells us that its essential points were given in a lecture to Jesuit educators in Chile in 1976. Finally, see his "Misión actual de la Compañía de Jesús," *Revista latinoamericana de teología* 29 (1993) 115–26. This is a document that the Central American delegates took with them to the Jesuits' 33rd General Congregation, written by Ellacuría and intended as their vision of how the Society of Jesus should meet the challenges of the contemporary world in fidelity to its Ignatian inspiration.

¹⁹ This is from the subtitle of the second major section of his first lecture: *Los Ejercicios* de san Ignacio como lugar teológico de historicización ("Lectura" 113).

²⁰ For a more detailed analysis of this term, including its roots in Zubiri's philosophy, see Burke, *The Ground beneath the Cross* 123–30. This rather awkward neologism, along with cognates such as "historicize," hints at the difficulty of Ellacuría's academic prose. While I retain the technical term in quoted material, for the sake of readability I express it elsewhere by some form of the phrase "critical historical contextualization."

²¹ Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, "The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council," in *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, ed. Alfred T. Hennelly, S.J. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1990) 91.

²² *Ibid.*

how we are to understand and actualize the history of salvation in a specifically Latin American situation.”²³ Now, for Ellacuría, to understand how any complex of human concepts functions in a specific social location, shaped by a unique constellation of historical forces, is to “historicize” those concepts: “*Demonstrating the impact of certain concepts within a particular context is what is understood here as their historicization.* Hence, historicization is a principle of de-ideologization.”²⁴ For instance, in the article from which this definition is drawn, Ellacuría pointed out that in the particular historical context of El Salvador the defense of private property as a basic human right in fact serves to disguise and legitimize a system that attacks human dignity in general, and for the majority of its people denies in practice the right to own property.

For Ellacuría, then, appeals to concepts such as the right to private property or even “human rights” in general stand in urgent need of a critical historical contextualization.²⁵ First, historicization is a contextualization; it discovers the meaning of a concept in terms of the context within which it is used. Second, it is a historical contextualization insofar as the context is not nature, but history—the realm of human freedom and responsibility, the realm of praxis.²⁶ This means not only that the interpreter must reckon with the fact that the meaning of concepts will change with their historical setting because of decisions made by human beings, but also that the interpreter must take responsibility for the way that his or her interpretation contributes to the historical process within which ultimately it also finds its meaning. Finally, this is a critical process. It operates out of a hermeneutics of suspicion, deeply aware of the ways that concepts are used to hide or distort the truth.²⁷ The example of property rights is taken from political discourse; yet, insofar as dogmatic and theological concepts

²³ “Lectura” 112.

²⁴ Ignacio Ellacuría, “The Historicization of the Concept of Property,” trans. Phillip Berryman, in *Towards a Society That Serves its People* 109.

²⁵ For Ellacuría’s critical contextualization (historicization) of human rights, see “Historicización de los derechos humanos desde los pueblos oprimidos y las mayorías populares,” *Estudios centroamericanos* 45 (1990) 589–96.

²⁶ I make this distinction as a heuristic device. Ellacuría was firmly opposed to any rigid dichotomy between nature and history, although his solution was not so much to “naturalize” history (as, say, sociobiologists tend to do), but to “historicize” nature.

²⁷ Ellacuría’s close friend and collaborator, Jon Sobrino, frequently expresses this insight theologically in these terms: “There is also, finally, *human hubris*—the tendency to manipulate the truth and suppress it for our own advantage. According to Paul’s dialectic in Romans 1:18ff., the original act of oppressing the truth results in the darkening of the heart. Then the original lie leads to the institutionalized lie” (“Theology in a Suffering World,” in *The Principle of Mercy: Taking the Crucified People from the Cross* [Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1994] 35).

(such as sin, salvation, or reign of God) are historically conditioned human creations, Ellacuría refused to exempt them from the danger of distortion and manipulation and ultimately from the need for an ongoing critical historical contextualization.

This brief description discloses a narrower interpretive framework of Marxist and revisionary Marxist critical social theory on which Ellacuría undoubtedly drew.²⁸ However, he was quite clear that Christian theology would fail if it contextualized its understanding of God's word exclusively from the epistemological, political, or socio-economic vantage point taken up by critical social theory: "Those who understand it [the necessity of rendering theology and pastoral practice Latin American] as something that has to take place and develop completely in the here and now, in absolute dependence on cultural and socio-economic reality, have not adequately reckoned with the specific character of Christian salvation."²⁹ The urgent need to contextualize doctrines and theology in specific socio-historical locations, along with the inadequacy (on theological grounds) of a purely social-critical vantage point for meeting this need, define the problematic that stands behind Ellacuría's understanding of the *Spiritual Exercises*. It suggests the following paraphrase and expansion of the introductory claim already quoted: the *Spiritual Exercises* offers a distinct, but complementary perspective vis-à-vis the one given by critical social theory from which persons can critically contextualize their understanding of God's saving love and work in and for their own historical situation.

Ellacuría identified three features of the Exercises that make them a theological place for this historical contextualization. First, "in having the personal encounter with the will of God as their goal [they] are already a principle of historicization."³⁰ His point here is that the Exercises do not have as their goal gaining information about God, or about God's will, but of encountering God and God's will, of being confronted with God's will and responding to it here and now. This goal corresponds to the theological agenda defined at Medellín: not simply understanding and articulating a Christian understanding of God and God's will in history, but allowing that will to confront the Latin American Church and transform it.

Second, Ellacuría noted that "they [the Exercises] historicize the word of God insofar as they turn to historical, personal and situational signs so that

²⁸ Ellacuría was not timid when it came to admitting the influence of Marxist thinkers (among many others); however, his own "critical theory" drew far more on the Spanish philosopher Xavier Zubiri.

²⁹ "Lectura" 111. For Ellacuría's attitude toward Marxism, see "Teología de la liberación y marxismo," *Revista latinoamericana de teología* 20 (1990) 109–35.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 113.

that word might be discovered in the concrete.”³¹ While he did not specify precisely what he meant by this, it is likely that, among other things, he was referring to the painstakingly careful introspection called for in the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits, whereby God’s will is discovered by a reading and diagnosis of one’s own external circumstances and internal disposition.³² A second illustration of Ellacuría’s point can be found in the frequent recommendation in the *Exercises* that one place himself or herself in relation to his or her actual situation in order to draw the most fruit from God’s word. For example, the Incarnation is presented as God’s loving response to a historically and socially imagined world, “dying and going down to hell” (no. 106). The retreatant is invited to provide a composition of “place” for the contemplation by seeing “the great extent of the circuit of the world, with peoples so many and diverse” (no. 105), and later, “those on the face of the earth, so diverse in dress and behavior: some white and others black, some at peace and others at war, some weeping and others laughing, some healthy and other sick, some being born, others dying, and so forth” (no. 106). One brings one’s individual situation into play in the colloquies that end the contemplations. Colloquies are familiar conversations “in the way one friend speaks to another, or a servant to one in authority—now begging a favor, now accusing oneself of some misdeed, now telling one’s concerns and asking counsel about them” (no. 54). And always one is seeking “to draw some spiritual profit” (no. 116), which, given the general aim of the Exercises, and that of the Second Week in particular, means a greater conformity of one’s own life (one’s “history”) to the will of God, by means of a more radical love for and imitation of Jesus’ humanity and his “history.” In sum, the “place” where one encounters the will and work of God is the intersection of three histories: one’s own individual history, the broader history in which it is embedded, and the history of God’s redemptive work, with its definitive moment in Jesus’ history.³³ The implication of such an approach for Latin American theology and pastoral practice is that it needs to perform a similar “composition of place.”

Finally, Ellacuría took a principle from his theological teacher Karl Rahner who also understood and interpreted the *Exercises* as a precious resource for the challenges facing the modern Church. Following Rahner, Ellacuría observed that the *Exercises* envisages an encounter with God that

³¹ Ibid.

³² *Spiritual Exercises* nos. 331–51.

³³ A similar tactic is integral to the Meditation on the Two Standards. The will of the enemy of our human nature and of Christ are presented as principles at work (through the instrumentality of demons or of disciples) in concrete historical places and situations: cities, provinces, and states of life (see especially nos. 141, 145). See “Lectura” 129–31.

has as its goal an understanding of the world and of one's mission in the world that "cannot be deduced from universal principles."³⁴ Rahner had argued that there are concrete particulars of an individual's biography and of the particular will of God for that individual that could not be evaluated by determining their fit or lack of fit with universal doctrinal and ethical principles. Ignatius's Rules for Discernment, Rahner contended, meets the need for such an evaluation.³⁵ For Ellacuría, they offer a similar resource to the Latin American Church which faces a situation that cannot be adequately met simply by the application of ecclesiological principles derived in the abstract or from different historical and cultural contexts.³⁶

Ellacuría summarized his position by asserting that the Exercises constitute a theological place for a historical contextualization of our understanding of God's will because they "posit one's own history as the hermeneutical place [for determining] who one is and what God's will is for him or her."³⁷ In other words, "they make the historical into the essential part of the structure of the Christian encounter with God."³⁸ The most important reason for this, in Ellacuría's view, is that the *Spiritual Exercises* is structured according to "the primacy of the historical Jesus."³⁹ This statement connects Ellacuría's horizon of interpretation for the *Exercises* with the part or Week that he considered to be most typically Ignatian, the heart of the *Exercises*, and hence the focal point for the interpretation of the *Exercises*. This focal point lies in the Second Week with its contemplations on the life of Jesus and the election of a way of life that more radically represents that life today.

In his fourth lecture, Ellacuría repeatedly emphasized the centrality of the Second Week. He claimed that "Ignatius gives his interpretation of the

³⁴ "Lectura" 113. He cites here Rahner's classic essay on Ignatius's Rules for the Discernment of Spirits, "The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola," in *The Dynamic Element in the Church* (London: Burns & Oates, 1964) 84–170.

³⁵ "The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola" 114–15.

³⁶ To be sure, as Ellacuría concedes, the explicit context of the *Exercises* is the *individual* and his or her biography; yet he argues that it does not exclude, but indeed even invites, extension to the social-historical dimension of human existence ("Lectura" 114). He cites the founding of the Society of Jesus as an example of this possibility. Here it is important to remember that these lectures drew on Ellacuría's experience five years earlier. Indeed, when Ellacuría and Elizondo presented the province retreat, they modeled it on the communal discernment of the first companions of Ignatius (the *Deliberatio Primorum Patrum* of 1539) as to whether or not they should formalize their companionship by forming a social-historical institution. See Lassalle-Klein, "Jesuit Martyrs" 57.

³⁷ "Lectura" 115.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.* This appeal to the historical Jesus is a controversial one to which I will return later.

key to Christianity in the Second Week,” that “the Second Week contains those texts that are most original to Saint Ignatius,” and that it “discloses the mode of life ‘for’ carrying out all the rest.”⁴⁰ While he did not dismiss the importance of the First Principle and Foundation, much less of the Contemplation to Attain Love, he insisted that they have to be interpreted in the light of the core principles of the Second Week and not the reverse.⁴¹

Ultimately, this insistence can be illuminated by recognizing that, like Johann Baptist Metz, Ellacuría advocated a discipleship Christology: “The Second Week is presented in terms of following the historical Jesus, in such a way that what is essential to the Christian life appears in this following.”⁴² For Ellacuría, the hermeneutical importance of discipleship is a consequence of the character of Christian faith and life, a character that is faithfully captured by the *Spiritual Exercises*. “Saint Ignatius’s *Exercises*, like Christian faith and Christian life, make up a totality that includes as a unity, but in permanent tension, distinct parts and aspects. In an historical process that is perennially recapitulated, they display sin, the life of Jesus,

⁴⁰ Ibid. 124.

⁴¹ Ibid. 116–19, 142–46. The First Principle and Foundation is a reflection that opens the *Exercises*, which states that “human beings are created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by means of this to save their souls” (no. 23). Other created things have value insofar as they help persons reach this end. As a consequence of this, the retreatant is urged to make himself or herself “indifferent to all created things, in regard to everything which is left to [his or her] freedom of will and is not forbidden.” The status and significance of this reflection is contested. Some see it as a summary of the entire spirituality and theology of the *Exercises*. See, for example, George Ganss’s interpretation, in his *Spiritual Exercises* 208–14. Others downplay its significance, arguing that its composition was subsequent to the most authentically Ignatian material contained in the “Weeks,” or criticize it on theological grounds because it contains no reference to Jesus Christ, and consequently contradicts the christocentric character of the *Exercises* as a whole. Some, such as Juan Luís Segundo, go so far as to argue that it contradicts the core insight of the *Exercises* and ought to be excised (see *The Christ of the Ignatian Exercises* [Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1987] 41–50). Ellacuría’s own position is that it ought to be seen not so much as a summary of the content and outcome of the *Exercises*, but as posing the initial problematic of human life, in response to which the *Exercises* as a whole are intended. Thus, for example, only subsequent to their introduction in the First Principle and Foundation, especially in the historical contemplations of the Second Week, does the retreatant discover the full and specifically Christian meanings of praise, reverence, service, and even of indifference. See “Lectura” 116–19.

⁴² Ibid. 125. Compare this with Metz’s assertion that “following Christ is therefore not just a subsequent application of the Church’s christology to our life: the practice of following Christ is itself a central part of christology” (Johann Baptist Metz, *Followers of Christ: The Religious Life and the Church* [New York: Paulist, 1978] 39).

his death, and his resurrection, situated between the First Principle and Foundation and the Contemplation to Attain Love.”⁴³ These parts mutually imply one another, and the exclusion of any one of them results in the distortion of the others. For example, a consideration of sin that prescind from the historical circumstances of Jesus’ death is dangerously abstract, as is a focus on Jesus’ Resurrection that neglects his life and Passion. Only by following Jesus can the theologian be so placed that he or she avoids dangerous abstractions and one-sided interpretations such as these. Put another way, the thoroughly incarnational wisdom of the *Exercises*, in Ellacuría’s view, is that “a human presence and an historical action is always necessary to make God present.”⁴⁴ Consequently, any encounter with the God so made present is not first or even primarily actualized and expressed in words, not even the exalted words of dogma and theology, but is enfleshed in a historically realized human life.⁴⁵ It is this historical embodiment of an encounter with the God who saves in history that, in Ellacuría’s view, is the goal of the Spiritual Exercises. This also means that following Jesus is at the same time and essentially a continuation of who Jesus was and what he did.⁴⁶ Being a disciple does not mean imitating an ahistorical ideal, but effecting a historical continuation—Ellacuría tellingly named it a “progressive historicization”—governed by “the spirit of Christ who animates those who follow him.”⁴⁷

Much more could be said about Ellacuría’s reading of the *Exercises*.⁴⁸ My goal here has not been an exhaustive evaluation of his interpretation of the *Exercises*, but the more modest one of establishing its fundamental features, using the two hermeneutical principles derived in the previous section. I have argued that Ellacuría set the stage for a contemporary reading of the *Exercises* in terms of the modern challenge of critically contextualizing Christian faith and theology in diverse cultures and histories, without fragmenting the one discipleship of Jesus to which all Christians are committed. This requires a method for interweaving the history of salvation, with its focal point in the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the histories (both individual and communal) in which contemporary followers of Christ are involved. The *Spiritual Exercises* offers such

⁴³ “Lectura” 124.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 125

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* On the significance for theological work of actualizing Jesus’ life in today’s circumstances, see *Freedom Made Flesh* 24–27.

⁴⁶ Here Ellacuría plays on the Spanish words for “follow” (*seguir*) and “continue” (*proseguir*).

⁴⁷ “Lectura” 127.

⁴⁸ He offers, e.g., an interpretation of the Contemplation to Attain Love and the Ignatian principle of contemplation in action; see “Lectura” 142–46. This interpretation is elaborated in “Fe y Justicia,” especially in the section entitled “La contemplación en la acción de la justicia,” *Christus* 42 (October 1977) 32–34.

a method. Its key lies in the Second Week, in which one strives to enfold the will of God—which for Ellacuría always meant to make it historically operative—in a specific decision (the “election”), by means of a close interweaving of one’s own historical circumstances and those of the Jesus that one is gradually coming to love and desire to imitate (insofar as the grace of the Second Week is given).

Contemplating the life, Passion and Resurrection of Jesus always involves a “composition of place” in which one imagines Jesus’ historical place and involves oneself in it. Just as importantly, however, the *Exercises* as a whole builds up a vantage from which to discern one’s place in history now, responding to the Spirit of God at work there. Ellacuría extrapolated from the individual to the social dimension of human existence to conclude that the “place” for discerning God’s will that the *Spiritual Exercises* constructs also offers a vantage point for the Latin American Church, in its work of embodying the word of God in its particular circumstances, in fidelity to Jesus Christ.

THE *SPIRITUAL EXERCISES* INTERPRETS ELLACURÍA

I have shown how Ellacuría used technical terms such as “historicization” and “historical Jesus” to work out a particular interpretation of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Yet, one can also argue in the opposite direction that Ellacuría’s appropriation of Ignatian spirituality had a profound impact on the way he used these particular terms. That is, the *Spiritual Exercises* serves as an important context for interpreting Ellacuría’s philosophical and theological work. A complete justification of this claim would require showing that his philosophical itinerary was shaped in part by a drive to articulate and explore insights garnered from his engagement with the *Exercises*, as he appropriated and worked out his Christian and Jesuit identity in Central America. This is beyond my present purpose. A more circumstantial, but still persuasive case can be built by showing the usefulness of this claim as a hypothesis for resolving puzzles or disputed questions in Ellacuría’s theology and philosophy. Following this latter strategy, I take up Ellacuría’s (and liberation theology’s) appeal to “the historical Jesus.”

Ellacuría’s claim that the *Spiritual Exercises* are structured according to the primacy of the historical Jesus touches on a neuralgic point for many Scripture scholars. John Meier, for instance, who, on the whole, is sympathetic to the work of liberation theologians, speaks for many in criticizing their penchant for appealing to “the historical Jesus” to legitimate theological claims. Analyzing Jon Sobrino’s early Christology, he concludes that “in the end, Sobrino substitutes unsubstantiated generalizations for the hard work of Jesus-research. The basic problem is never really en-

gaged, and one is left wondering how, if at all, the Bible has really been a source of theology for Sobrino—or for liberation theology in general.”⁴⁹

On the hypothesis I have suggested, an adequate response to this challenge (at least for Ellacuría’s way of doing liberation theology) will draw on his interpretation of the *Spiritual Exercises*. As a beginning, consider Ellacuría’s definition of liberation theology:

The theology of liberation understands itself as a reflection from faith on the historical reality and action of the people of God, who follow the work of Jesus in announcing and fulfilling the Kingdom. It understands itself as an action by the people of God in following the work of Jesus and, as Jesus did, it tries to establish a living connection between the world of God and the human world. . . . It is, thus, a theology that begins with historical acts and seeks to lead to historical acts, and therefore it is not satisfied with being a purely interpretive reflection; it is nourished by faithful belief in the presence of God within history, an operative presence that, although it must be grasped in grateful faith, remains an historical action. There is no room here for faith without works; rather, that faith draws the believer into the very force of God that operates in history, so that we are converted into new historical forms of that operative and salvific presence of God in humanity.⁵⁰

In this formulation, theology does not draw directly on the Bible. Rather, it reflects on the people of God as they attempt to follow the work of Jesus. They grasp “in grateful faith” the presence of God in history, which also means being grasped by the power of God at work in history and swept up into it. With telling echoes of the language he used to interpret the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ellacuría goes on to say that the Church is “that people of God who continue (*prosigue*) in history that which Jesus definitively marked out as the presence of God among men and women.”⁵¹

If theology does not reflect *directly* on Scripture, augmenting this definition of theology with Ellacuría’s interpretation of the *Spiritual Exercises* discloses the important *indirect* significance of Scripture. Ellacuría interpreted the *Spiritual Exercises* as constructing a “place” from which the Latin American Church could grasp and embody the salvific work of God in its own historical context. The focal point of the *Exercises* is the Second Week, in which Scripture mediates an encounter with Jesus who, through

⁴⁹ John P. Meier, “The Bible as a Source for Theology,” *Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings* 43 (1988) 1–14, at 7. For a summary overview of critiques of liberation theology’s use of the Bible, see Arthur F. McGovern, S.J., *Liberation Theology and Its Critics: Toward an Assessment* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1989) 62–82.

⁵⁰ Ignacio Ellacuría, “The Church of the Poor, Historical Sacrament of Liberation,” in Ellacuría and Sobrino, ed., *Mysterium Liberationis* 543.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, translation slightly emended. For the Spanish original, see “La Iglesia de los pobres, sacramento histórico de liberación,” in Ellacuría and Sobrino, ed., *Mysterium Liberationis: Conceptos fundamentales de la teología de la liberación* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1991) 2.127.

the power of the Holy Spirit, is still at work in history, and invites disciples to join in that work. The Bible is therefore the place where the Church encounters the Jesus whose history it seeks to continue by following (*pro-seguir por seguir*). Yet, the Bible is not so constituted primarily by the academic exercises of the exegete, as important as they are, but by *spiritual* exercises such as the ones so carefully crafted in Ignatius's masterpiece. Theology must proceed accordingly.

Ellacuría drew a consequence of this perspective in an essay on the need for a new Christology:

This new Christology ought to accord full revelatory status to the flesh of Jesus, that is, to his history. Today nothing would be more ridiculous than to try to construct a Christology in which the historical realization of Jesus' life did not have decisive significance. What has heretofore been dealt with—and much less so today—under the rubric of “the mysteries of the life of Jesus,” as something peripheral and ascetical, must now regain its full meaning. Of course, this presupposes an historical-exegetical reading of what the life of Jesus really was. What is necessary is a transition to a historical logos, without which every other logos is merely speculative and idealist. This historical logos would have to start with the fact, incontrovertible to the eyes of faith, that the historical life of Jesus is the fullest revelation of the Christian God, and it would have to be practiced as a logos of history that subsumes and transcends the logos of nature.⁵²

“The mysteries of Jesus' life” refer to events in Jesus' life insofar as they are the subject of Christian meditation and contemplation, as they are in the *Spiritual Exercises*.⁵³ Ellacuría's comment on their peripheral status in theology refers to the division between dogmatic and spiritual theology that dominated Catholic theology up until Vatican II. Spiritual theology dealt with the journey of the individual Christian to perfection, through the purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways. It was a subdivision of moral theology and simply applied to individuals universal principles already derived in dogmatics. Ascetical theology was a subdivision of spiritual theology. It concerned everyday practices of Christian life, such as fasting, but also daily prayer, including prayer on the mysteries of the life of Jesus.⁵⁴ In this conception, while spiritual theology could, and should, learn from dogmatic theology, the reverse was not the case. Ellacuría called for

⁵² Ignacio Ellacuría, *Freedom Made Flesh* 26 (translation emended). See *Teología política* (San Salvador: Ediciones del Secretariado Social Interdiocesano, 1973) 13.

⁵³ Ignatius followed the established medieval tradition of referring to them by this word; see *Spiritual Exercises* no. 261.

⁵⁴ Ascetical theology was contrasted with mystical theology, which concerned extraordinary divine gifts of mystical rapture and the like (the unitive way). See Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1992) 44–47. The terminology of spiritual, ascetical, and mystical theology dominated Catholic theologates and seminaries during the time Ellacuría studied theology.

a reversal of this line of influence between spiritual and dogmatic theology. More radically, he asserted the need for their reintegration.

In Ellacuría's view, therefore, theology does not draw directly on the Bible as one theological locus among others. Rather, it reflects on the Bible as a text that has been and is being used by the Church, guided by the Spirit, to mediate an encounter with Jesus, in order to continue in history the salvation that his life announced and enacted. This requires that theology be vitally concerned with all the diverse means by which Christians have used the Bible in this way that in modernity have been collected and, unfortunately, segregated, under the category of "spirituality." My argument to this point has been that one particular set of such means, those that constitute Ignatian spirituality, *were* in fact of vital significance to Ignacio Ellacuría as a Jesuit but also as a philosopher and theologian.

However, a further question arises from the proviso that Ellacuría adds to his call for a reintegration of the mysteries of Jesus life into systematic theology: "Of course, this presupposes a historical-exegetical reading of what the life of Jesus really was." What is the relationship between the "mysteries of Jesus' life," made available by spiritual exercises, and this historical-exegetical reading, particularly insofar as the latter allegedly tells us what the life of Jesus "really was"? On the one hand, does this not reconstitute the marginalization of spirituality, with the historical-exegetical reading taking the place formerly occupied by dogmatic theology? On the other hand, can a historical-exegetical reading tell us what the life of Jesus "really was"? After all, most responsible exegetes concur with Meier's opinion that "the real Jesus, i.e., the total reality of Jesus of Nazareth as he lived in the first century, is no longer accessible to us by scholarly means."⁵⁵

Once it is noted that Ellacuría invokes a *historical-exegetical* reading, then it becomes evident that much depends on what Ellacuría means by "historical." Given his claim that the Second Week revolves around "the historical Jesus," he could not have meant by "historical" that which can be reconstructed today by scholars using the canons of historical-critical method. Ellacuría was well aware that neither the content nor the methodology of that Week would pass muster on modern terms as a historical retrieval of the life of Jesus. This provides a crucial clue, however, to Ellacuría's understanding of human historicity and of historical knowing. Ellacuría followed Maurice Blondel in critiquing the philosophical presuppositions behind the claim that historical-critical method, as it has evolved over the past two centuries, exhausts the ways human beings know histori-

⁵⁵ "The Bible as a Source for Theology" 6. He goes on to say that "it is this basic insight . . . that is lacking in Sobrino's approach."

cally.⁵⁶ The closing statements of the quote about the need for a transition to a “historical logos,” connote this critique, and the need for a positive alternative to philosophical systems that model historical knowing according to the way humans come to know nature.

As a matter of fact, Ellacuría’s intellectual agenda consisted precisely in developing such a positive alternative. He sought a “philosophy of historical reality” in which the kind of engaged, historically localized (or “placed” following the language of the *Exercises*) knowing that characterizes the way one comes to know Jesus in the *Spiritual Exercises* would not be an arbitrary, subjective, and private form of knowing, and thus deficient, but the fullest, exemplary manifestation of human historical cognition. While still incomplete at the time of his death, some pivotal features of this project can be gleaned from an essay on theological method, approximately contemporaneous with his lectures on the *Spiritual Exercises*.⁵⁷

Like Bernard Lonergan, Ellacuría proceeded on the premise that a correct epistemology and an adequate theological method require a full and carefully nuanced account of human knowing that he named “sentient intelligence.” Disagreeing with a primarily hermeneutical account that takes human knowing to consist in grasping the meaning of things, Ellacuría contended that “[t]he distinctive function and formal structure of intelligence . . . is not that of comprehending being or grasping meaning; rather, it is that of apprehending and engaging reality.”⁵⁸ Engaging reality is a complex event or process, with three interwoven dimensions. The first dimension or task of intelligence is that of “*realizing the weight of reality*, which implies being in touch with the reality of things (and not merely being before the idea of things or being in touch with their meaning), being ‘real’ in the reality of things, which in its active character of being is exactly the opposite of being thing-like and inert.”⁵⁹ Second is “*shouldering the*

⁵⁶ See Maurice Blondel “History and Dogma,” trans. and ed. Alexander Dru, in *The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 219–90. Ellacuría left behind an unfinished manuscript on Blondel, composed in the early 60s, that already reflects his concern with this issue: “Introducción al problema del milagro en Blondel” (*Escritos filosóficos* vol. 1 [San Salvador: UCA, 1996] 545–58).

⁵⁷ Ignacio Ellacuría, “Hacia una fundamentación del método teológico latinoamericano,” *Liberación y cuativerio: Debates in torno al método de la teología en América Latina*, ed. Enrique Ruiz Maldonado (Mexico City, 1975) 609–35. For a more extensive reconstruction of the philosophy that Ellacuría was attempting to develop and its implications for theological method, see Burke *The Ground beneath the Cross*, chaps. 2–5.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 625. “Engaging reality” translates “*enfrentarse con la realidad*,” which could be translated more literally as “confronting oneself with reality.”

⁵⁹ Ibid. 626. I am following Kevin Burke’s translation in *The Ground beneath the Cross* 100. This material is almost impossible to render adequately into English,

weight of reality,” which manifests the integral part in human intelligence played by “tak[ing] upon ourselves what things really are and what they really demand of us.”⁶⁰ Finally, “*taking charge of the weight of reality*” points to the praxis-dimension of knowing, and connotes the fact that human intelligence is only fully actualized to the extent that it is involved in the dynamic processes by which real things are real.

The crucial point for our purposes is that for Ellacuría the latter two dimensions are not consequent to human intellection, but integral to it. One argument for this assertion starts from Ellacuría’s insistence that the reality of real things is not a static or inert quality, but dynamic and directional. What makes things real is, in part, the fact that they are dynamically related to one another, and “on the way” to a fuller (or lesser) actualization of their potencies, both those that belong to them as individuals, and those that arise because of their involvement in broader, more inclusive environments. Human freedom and human history are the fullest manifestation of this dynamic and directional character of reality, but it applies analogically to all levels of reality. If this is the reality of things, and if human intelligence is judged by how fully it apprehends and engages reality so understood, then knowing cannot consist only in detached observation. If reality is dynamic and directional, then a knowing that corresponds to that reality must share in that dynamism and that directionality.⁶¹ Here the paradigm for knowing is not what goes on in the natural sciences but what goes on in human society, particularly insofar as any society is a historical achievement that requires human beings to shoulder the responsibility of maintaining it and passing it on to the next generation. “Knowing” the reality of Kosovo or East Timor must include, on this account of human intelligence, taking up a stance toward those realities, and incarnating that stance in concrete actions, both individually and corporately. Short of that, one has not truly engaged, or confronted oneself with that reality. Human intelligence has fallen short of the mark; it has failed.

insofar as the three dimensions of human knowing are named with three complex Spanish idioms that use either the verb *cargar* or its cognate noun *cargo*. See Burke’s footnote to his translation for a full discussion of the difficulties. Ellacuría followed this strategy in order to assert the indissoluble links between the three dimensions. This idiomatic device also ensures that none of the idioms lacks an ethical or praxis dimension, including the first one, by which Ellacuría points to the noetic dimensions of knowing. Ellacuría clearly wanted to rule out from the outset any separations (as opposed to distinctions) between knowledge, ethical commitment, and committed action.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ “It is necessary to be situated actively in reality, and the knowledge that results from this ought to be mediated and confirmed by a presence to reality that is just as active” (ibid.).

If this is the essential structure of human knowing, what would it mean to “know” Jesus, to apprehend and engage him fully? Would it not be the case that the kind of exercises that Ignatius offers in the Second Week cultivate knowledge in this fuller sense? To be sure, the academic exercises that seek to reconstruct the “historical Jesus” can enrich the first moment of knowing, to the extent that they can “bring Jesus to life” as a historical person, dynamically related to his own context. They can correct and deepen the compositions of place that begin Ignatius’s contemplations, and that are crucial for “putting ourselves in touch with” the reality of Jesus. Yet if these academic exercises do not unfold into further exercises which bring us not only to put ourselves in touch with Jesus, but also to take upon ourselves what the reality of Jesus truly is and what it demands of us, and finally to take up an active stance (for or against) toward the reality of Jesus, then they cut off rather than open up full knowledge of Jesus. In short, it can be agreed that the “real Jesus” cannot be retrieved by scholarly exercises, but this does not demonstrate the inaccessibility of the former but the limited (albeit important) cognitive function and value of the latter.

Like Blondel, Ellacuría sought a philosophy in which the primary dynamism that characterizes history is not evolutionary process, but tradition.⁶² Like Blondel, he emphasized the importance of Christian practice, individual and communal, as constituting tradition. This Christian practice had a specific form for Ellacuría: the practice of the Spiritual Exercises. His lifelong engagement with the Exercises had convinced him that they offered crucial resources for meeting the crisis faced by the modern Church, if only the philosophical and theological tools adequate to mining those resources could be found. This conviction echoes his theological mentor Karl Rahner who made a similar claim about spiritual classics in general and the *Exercises* in particular. In his analysis of the experience of spiritual consolation or desolation, treated in the *Spiritual Exercises*, Rahner asserted that what is at issue for the theologian is “whether or not he already has at his disposal in his theology the means really to bring explicitly before the mind the concrete experience in question, to make it more exactly comprehensible and to justify it. Or the fact is revealed that his theology would first have to be developed through contact with these works and what they say, and allow itself to be corrected by them. . . .”⁶³ Whereas Rahner raised the issue of whether theological anthropology and fundamental moral theology had the resources to explore the experience that

⁶² See, for instance, Ellacuría discussion of history as the formal field of “traditional transmission” (*transmisión tradente*), a dynamic process of receiving, appropriating and passing on forms of being in history (*Filosofía de la realidad histórica* 388–404).

⁶³ *The Dynamic Element in the Church* 109. Rahner concludes that the “theology of the schools” is not up to this task.

Ignatius named “consolation without prior cause,” the foregoing discussion strongly suggests that Ellacuría raised it with regard to the adequacy of current philosophies to give proper weight to the experience of the “historical Jesus” found in the Second Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*. The goal of this section of my argument has not been either to summarize or to analyze the philosophy Ellacuría crafted to respond to this challenge, but to show how the agenda that gives rise to this philosophy and the fundamental experience that animates it is given by Ignatius’s *Spiritual Exercises*.

CONCLUSIONS

In a moving passage, Marie-Dominique Chenu, one of the great figures of ressourcement theology, described the importance of spirituality for theology:

The fact is that in the final analysis theological systems are simply the expressions of a spirituality. It is this that gives them their interest and their grandeur. . . . One does not get to the heart of a system via the logical coherence of its structure or the plausibility of its conclusions. One gets to that heart by grasping it in its origins via that fundamental intuition that serves to guide a spiritual life and provides the intellectual regimen proper to that life.⁶⁴

I have tried to show that this is true of Ignacio Ellacuría. I have not been able to do justice to the coherence and depth of Ellacuría’s philosophical and theological arguments. But I have argued that his philosophy and theology had as their goal the communication of a powerful “fundamental intuition” from the *Spiritual Exercises*, an intuition that was tested in the fires of violent persecution, and laboriously articulated and elaborated in long hours of scholarly research and writing. I now conclude with brief reflections on this fundamental intuition, with the help of Ewert Cousins’s historical analysis of the roots of Ignatian spirituality.⁶⁵

Cousins traces the lineage of Ignatius’s *Spiritual Exercises* back through the *Vita Christi* of Ludolph of Saxony, a volume that Ignatius read while convalescing just prior to his conversion experience in 1521, to the *Meditationes vitae Christi* by pseudo-Bonaventure, a work strongly in the tradi-

⁶⁴ From *Une école de théologie: Le Saulchoir* (Le Saulchoir, 1937) 75; cited in Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells* 147 n. 2.

⁶⁵ The relevant texts are Ewert Cousins, “Franciscan Roots of Ignatian Meditation,” in *Ignatian Spirituality in a Secular Age*, ed. George Schner, S.J. (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University, 1984) 51–64; “The Humanity and Passion of Christ,” in *Christian Spirituality 2: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt (New York: Crossroad, 1989) 375–91; “Francis of Assisi: Christian Mysticism at the Crossroads,” in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, ed. Steven Katz (New York: Oxford University, 1983) 163–91.

tion of the *Lignum vitae* of Bonaventure. Bonaventure was passing on the spiritual patrimony of the founder of his order, Francis of Assisi.⁶⁶ What unites this tradition, Cousins argues, is a devotion to the humanity of Christ, exemplified in Francis's construction of a creche for midnight Mass at Greccio in 1223. Cousins points out that more is at stake here, however, than flights of imagination, embroidery of doctrine for simple folk, or preparation for "true," apophatic mystical prayer.

I believe that it [this new form of prayer] is rooted in the very historicity of human existence and that it activates that level of the psyche whereby we draw out the spiritual energy of a past event. I have called this elsewhere 'the mysticism of the historical event.' By that I mean that it constitutes a distinct category of mystical consciousness . . . Just as in nature mysticism we feel united to the material world, so in this form of mysticism we feel part of the historical event—as if we were there, as eye-witnesses, participating in the action, absorbing its energy.⁶⁷

Cousins argues that this form of mysticism emerged in the Middle Ages as a counterpart to the Neoplatonic mystical tradition, with its penchant for the risen, glorified Christ, and its tendency to find in historical events allegories propelling the mystic out of history and into the timeless.⁶⁸ Bonaventure's contribution, in Cousins's view, is his ambitious integration of "Francis's innovative, visionary, Christ-centered mysticism into the classical Christian speculative wisdom derived from Neoplatonism."⁶⁹ This integration not only gave conceptual articulation to Francis's spirituality, but also affected a fundamental shift, "Franciscanizing" the foundations of the Neoplatonic theological structure. Cousins concludes by wondering whether Ignatius has had a "Bonaventure" of his own to integrate his spiritual vision into the broader stream of Christian spirituality, and to situate it within a comprehensive theological vision.⁷⁰

This task may be more complex for Ignatius, insofar as his spirituality is heir not just to the Franciscan tradition but draws broadly on the variegated patchwork of late medieval and Renaissance spirituality.⁷¹ More modestly, as I suggested earlier, different Ignatian theologies draw on dif-

⁶⁶ See Cousins, "Franciscan Roots of Ignatian Meditation" 55–59. For a study of the influence of Ludolph of Saxony's work on Ignatius, see Paul Shore, "The *Vita Christi* of Ludolph of Saxony and its Influence on the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 30/1 (January, 1998).

⁶⁷ Ibid. 60. He cites "Francis of Assisi: Christian Mysticism at the Crossroads."

⁶⁸ See "The Humanity and Passion of Christ" 376–80.

⁶⁹ "Francis of Assisi" 175.

⁷⁰ "Franciscan Roots" 63. He suggests that Bonaventure might do this work still for Ignatius, or a modern-day theologian strongly influenced by Bonaventure such as Karl Rahner.

⁷¹ For an introduction to this complexity, see O'Malley, *First Jesuits* 46–50, 243–72.

ferent elements of Ignatian spirituality, attempting to integrate the whole from the perspective of a particular part, and striving to find the adequate intellectual tools to articulate that integration and bring it to fruition. This issue aside, however, Cousins's interpretation allows one to locate with precision (paraphrasing Chenu) "the fundamental intuition that served to guide Ellacuría's spiritual life and provided the intellectual regimen proper to that life."

What Ignacio Ellacuría learned in the school of the *Spiritual Exercises* was the mysticism of the historical event. He used philosophical tools, primarily taken from Xavier Zubiri, but also from Karl Marx and many others, to give conceptual expression to that mystical stance, but in the process he "Ignatianized" those resources. He was, furthermore, in full agreement with the Franciscan, Bonaventuran insight that "there is no other path but through the burning love of the Crucified,"⁷² with the important qualification that the place to encounter the Crucified is in his crucified body in history, "the crucified people."⁷³ He took up diverse philosophical and theological tools to offer this intuition to the Latin American Church as a real possibility. As a Jesuit, a university teacher and administrator, and a political actor on the troubled stage of Central America, he strove to make it a transformative actuality—to "historicize" it, as he would say. This is the way that Ignatian spirituality served as a source and integrating center, not just for Ellacuría's theology, but for his entire life and work.⁷⁴

⁷² *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* 7.2; see *Bonaventure*, trans. and ed. Ewert Cousins (New York: Paulist, 1978) 112.

⁷³ See Ellacuría, "The Crucified People," in *Mysterium Liberationis* 580–603.

⁷⁴ I initiated this research while on sabbatical leave from the University of Notre Dame and supported by Boston College's Center for Ignatian Spirituality where I was a scholar-in-residence. I thank these institutions, as well as Michael Buckley, S.J., of Boston College, and the Center's director, Howard Gray, S.J., for encouragement and advice. This article also benefitted from critical readings by my Notre Dame colleague Professor Robert Krieg, C.S.C.