

ST. IGNATIUS' PRISON-CAGE AND THE EXISTENTIALIST SITUATION

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THE writings of St. Ignatius Loyola are filled with passages more puzzling than a pedantic approach to the spiritual life likes to own. The Basque ex-soldier is a man whom one does not get to know all at once. Not because he was calculating, or inscrutable in any melodramatic way, but simply because of his genuine depth. He acted habitually from profound motives, and it is no discredit to him to say that he was not always capable of rationalizing in so many words the springs of one or another of his actions. He says this of himself often enough in his own *Autobiography* or *Testament*.

The *Spiritual Exercises* themselves are full of minor puzzles. Their general purpose is clear enough and explicitly stated: "That a man may conquer himself and order his life without being himself determined by any inordinate affection." And the general progression within the *Exercises* corresponds closely enough to the succession of purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways to be immediately intelligible in terms of the normal psychological progression which this succession registers. But within this framework, why this or that detail of the *Spiritual Exercises* should have appealed to their writer as particularly effective is not always so clear, as our great masses of commentary make only too evident.

To some of his techniques St. Ignatius seems to attach a special force which escapes us. I do not mean here the kind of thing one encounters, for example, in the talk about knights and kings, and the problems arising when such Renaissance imagery loses force in an age when knights are, for all practical purposes, extinct, and when kings, at best, are but symbolic relics of a once functional office. Here, despite the fact that these terms have become less "numinous" than they were, we can still sense what a knight meant to the sixteenth-century knight, Inigo de Loyola. There is a difficulty in our reaction pattern, but, given elementary historical information, no intellectual puzzle here.

It is quite otherwise with the peculiar "First Prelude" which occurs

over and over again in the First Week of the *Exercises*, the picture of the soul in the body as in a prison, and of the whole, soul-and-prison, thrown out among brute beasts. This construct of St. Ignatius' has presented difficulties from the very beginning, and difficulties so puzzling that they are mostly not even touched on by commentators, and, if they are touched on, are not really faced but only blurred and set aside.

The basic text of St. Ignatius in question runs as follows:

In meditation on something invisible, as here on sins, the composition will be to see, with the eyes of the imagination, and to consider my soul to be closed up in this corruptible body as in a prison, and the whole composite as in exile among brute animals. I say the whole composite, soul and body.

This is a translation of the original Spanish of the *texto autógrafo* used by St. Ignatius himself, which reads:

En la invisible, como es aquí de los pecados, la composición será ver con la vista imaginativa y considerar mi ánima ser encarcerada en este cuerpo corruptible, y todo el compósito en este valle, como desterrado, entre brutos animales. Digo todo el composito de ánima y cuerpo.¹

In the often reprinted 1548 "Vulgate" version prepared in proper Renaissance classical Latin by the Jesuit Latinist, Père André des Freux (Frusius), and approved by the Pope's censors together with the less "elegant" Latin text now known as the "Versio Prima," we find the following:

Sin autem speculationi subest res incorporea, ut est consideratio peccatorum nunc oblata, poterit loci constructio talis esse, ut si per imaginationem cernamus animam nostram in corpore isto corruptibili, velut in carcere constrictam; hominem quoque ipsum, in hac miseriae valle, inter animalia bruta exulantem.²

Although this "Vulgate" version was approved by St. Ignatius and the divergence from the original is here slight enough, it is plain that St. Ignatius' imagery had presented difficulties to Père des Freux.

¹ The texts of the *Spiritual Exercises* here cited or referred to, Spanish and Latin, are from *Monumenta Ignatiana*, Series secunda, *Exercitia spiritualia sancti Ignatii de Loyola et eorum Directoria* (Madrid, 1919).

² For the occasional slight divergence of the Vulgate from St. Ignatius' thought and emphasis, see Henri Pinard de la Boullaye, S.J., "La Vulgate des Exercices de saint Ignace, ses caractères, son autorité," *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*, XXV (1949), 389-407.

St. Ignatius' original is "la composición será ver" (*the composition will be to see*), and this is attenuated in Père des Freux's hands to "poterit loci constructio talis esse, ut si . . . cernamus" (*the composition of place could be such as though we were to see*). Frusius' difficulty is obvious: St. Ignatius seemed to be making too much of the image, and to be suggesting too strongly that it should be used for all meditations on things invisible.

St. Ignatius let his subject's alteration stand. He did not regard his text of the *Exercises* as partaking of the infallibility or inalterability of the Scriptures, and his whole attitude toward everything short of God, including certainly the *Exercises* themselves, is elastic and adaptable. But the fact remains that in the extant text which seems best to represent his thought and which he has annotated in his own hand, the Spanish *texto autógrafa*, with which the Latin "Versio Prima" slavishly agrees, he says that "the composition *will* be to see . . ." and, unless we interpolate some sort of emendation or *subintelligo* for which he provides no warrant, he proposes this "composition of place" for any and all "meditation on something invisible." Actually, this carries the composition forward only through the first four exercises of the First Week, for the fifth exercise is on hell—something visible, at least after the resurrection—and thereafter one is in the Second Week and the Incarnation, the regions of invisibility left behind. Still, the fact remains of the curious emotional strength attaching to this prison-and-brute-animal picture in St. Ignatius' mind, not to mention his curious association of it, above all other imagery, with the "invisible."

II

The immediate source of St. Ignatius' imagery need not trouble us here, although it is evident that what he invites the exercitant to picture has a long history in human thought, particularly in Western thought, Christian and non-Christian. The imagery suggests passages from the Old and the New Testament, as, for example, Wisd. 9:15: "For the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things," or Gal. 5:17: "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." Echoing such passages, countless other passages can be gathered from Christian secular and spiritual literature, and in

particular from the Carthusian writers of whom St. Ignatius was so fond.

But sources in this case operate viciously. Instead of reassuring commentators of the validity of St. Ignatius' imagery so as to bring them to put themselves more thoroughly into it, these sources at best only deflect the commentators' attention back from what St. Ignatius says to analogies from elsewhere which say something like what he says without really saying the same thing at all. The general procedure among commentators has thus been one of blurring, comparable to, but rather more advanced than, that of Frusius in his Vulgate version.

Without going into all the interpreters, we can take three well-known modern ones, one in French, one in German, and one in English—Longhaye, Meschler, and Gabriel. Longhaye sees the prelude as expressing two things: (1) the sorry plight of the soul in the body (in prison, loaded with chains, etc.) and (2) the sorry plight of man in his resemblance to brute beasts. The second of these two things reduces immediately to the first, for man is at the level of brute beasts because his soul is imprisoned in a body: "Je les domine par l'esprit; mais je me trouve à leur niveau par mes appétits corporels."³

Meschler does not consider the prison situation and the brute-animal situation as separate at all, but lumps them together and simply regards the first prelude as a whole as expressing "forcibly the sinner's vileness and degradation almost to the level of brute animals."⁴ Gabriel considers the two situations separately.⁵ The body has become a prison because, since the Fall, it has overpowered the soul. The brute-animal situation seems to have two phases: man is first pictured by Gabriel as in exile among "a rude and savage people," and then as among "filthy animals" because living as though "devoid of reason and judgment." These interpretations are not exhaustive, but they are typical of all the explanations or commentaries which I have ever been able to find—except for the large number which quickly skip the passage and move on to less puzzling phenomena.

The first thing to note about these explanations is that, beyond a

³ G. Longhaye, S.J., *Retraite annuelle de huit jours d'après les Exercices de saint Ignace* (3rd ed.; Paris: Casterman, 1925), pp. 58-59.

⁴ Maurice Meschler, S.J., *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, trans. from the German (Woodstock, Maryland: Woodstock College, 1889), p. 67.

⁵ Henry A. Gabriel, S.J., *An Eight Days' Retreat for Religious* (St. Louis: Herder, 1914), pp. 54-55.

doubt, they are doctrinally orthodox. Their general manipulation of the prison and brute-beast symbolism is well within the *analogia fidei* and can be paralleled by countless examples from spiritual writers. It is also well within what we might style the *analogia Ignatiana*, for in the second Addition at the end of the First Week we find this advice:

similarly in the second Exercise [on rising I should recall the subject-matter of meditation to mind], making myself out to be a great sinner in chains, that is to say, that I move about as though encumbered with chains on my way to appear before the most high Eternal Judge, picturing to myself as an example the way in which chained prisoners condemned to death appear before their temporal judge.⁶

This is something like the prelude we are considering, but it is not quite the same thing—although the explanations and commentaries would tend to make it so, through their tendency to dissolve the prelude in the usual commonplaces of Christian symbolism. This fact suggests a second point about the explanations: as related to the economy of St. Ignatius' own thought here, they are decidedly banal. It is often all right to be banal, and at times even necessary. But it is not all right here, for the precise difficulty to be faced is why this imagery was not banal to St. Ignatius' way of thinking, but rather extraordinarily forceful, so that he repeats it over and over again and allows it such prominence in his whole imaginative approach to the invisible world.

The third and most important thing to note about the explanations is that they do not face into the difficulties of the text. To say the least, the text itself invites us to a very clumsy and unmanageable picture. The soul is barred up, in a prison, which is the body. This prison, by every word for it in the Spanish and Latin texts, is a decidedly fixed thing. Yet it here becomes portable—and for that reason I shall refer to it from time to time as a prison-cage—as we are invited to picture the whole composite of soul-and-body in *exile* among brute beasts. St. Ignatius is not only explicit on this point but insistent: "I say the whole man, soul and body," soul and prison-cage. He is likewise explicit that the prison situation and the brute-animal situa-

⁶ "Así mismo en el 2.º ejercicio, haciéndome pecador grande y encadenado, es a saber, que voy atado como en cadenas a parecer delante del sumo juez eterno, trayendo en ejemplo como los encarcerados y encadenados ya dignos de muerte delante su juez temporal."

tion are to be pictured together: "to consider my soul to be closed up in this corruptible body as in a prison, *and* the whole composite as in exile among brute animals." How can a prison be satisfactorily imagined as in exile?

The difficulty does not end here. To make an exile among brute beasts effectively undesirable, it would seem that the contact between the person in exile and the brute beasts should be at some kind of maximum. The person should be thrown up against the brute beasts, so to speak, in the raw. If his soul cannot directly engage them, as it of course cannot, at least it should not be positively sheltered from them. But in our prelude this is precisely the fact. Exiled among brute beasts, the soul should certainly find its prison-cage a decided asset. When you are surrounded by wild animals, the very next best thing to having them in cages is to be in one yourself. And thus the second part of the prelude seems to cancel out all the effectiveness of the first. Moreover, the difficulty here seems to be quite peculiar to the Ignatian text, with no clear counterpart in any of his sources which have now been so exhaustively studied.⁷

The recognition of the difficulty here does not make its way to the surface of even so classical a commentary as Roothaan's. But retreat masters are sensitive to it, at least subconsciously, as Père des Freux once was. If the writer's experience of retreat masters is any indication of their prevailing practice, they quite commonly substitute for this prelude of St. Ignatius' some other prelude of their own devising.

III

Several offhand solutions for the difficulty could be proposed. The prison and brute-animal imagery are to be used separately—either as alternatives or in succession. The text rules out this explanation, as has been seen. St. Ignatius is clearly proposing their use together. Secondly, one might suggest that the imagery used by the author of the *Spiritual Exercises* is confused in detail and to be taken only in a general sense as echoing the general Christian tradition—and indeed a pre-Christian and para-Christian tradition—which enforces the lesson

⁷ Cf. Arturo Codina, S.J., *Los orígenes de los Ejercicios espirituales de S. Ignacio de Loyola* (Barcelona: Biblioteca Balmes, 1926). Besides this excellent detailed study, there is much other literature which cannot all be cited here.

of the degradation and sinfulness of man in a flood of debasing images of all sorts. In such an explanation the prison and the brute-animal imagery lack any precise function, at least as working in consort. Against this explanation, there is Ignatius' marked tendency not to be haphazard in the *Spiritual Exercises*, as well as the notable precision and insistence of his directions here. Finally, one might suppose that the images were hopelessly confused through some short-circuiting in Ignatius' own mind. This could be, for St. Ignatius is not infallibly "logical" in the use of images; but even if it is so, the fact would not dispense from further explanation but would rather demand it, for psychologists know too well that there is just as much reason for a particular confusion as for anything else in the conscious life. This final answer would thus leave us only with a further question: why this confusion?

At the present time, it would seem, it is less necessary than ever to suppose that St. Ignatius' imagery here ran wild through some inscrutable personal short-circuits. For we are perhaps in a better position than ever before to understand St. Ignatius' prison-cage and to profit from it, because of the great progress made in the past few decades in the elucidation of the archetypal symbolism on which human conscious activity builds. Any explanation along these lines must, of course, remain at this stage tentative and incomplete, for Catholic theology as a whole has hardly even begun to assimilate the study of symbolism which has grown up with both anthropology and psychological analysis and which is tending more and more to fuse these two sciences.⁸ The images in question have evidently for St. Ignatius high but elusive symbolic valence, and it is just such images which recent analysis is most successful in explaining, by bringing to light the reason for the forcefulness of a symbol which was earlier operative without being consciously understood.

The kind of explanation which can be ambitioned here may be suggested, by way of preliminary clarification, in terms of the water

⁸ One of the pioneer attempts to exploit symbolic analysis theologically is Victor White's *God and the Unconscious* (London: Harvill Press, 1952), where the size of the task demanded of modern theologians, as well as its urgency, is well brought home. Closely related to such psychological and symbolic analysis is the phenomenological and/or personalist, "existentialist" analysis being used for the study of the Scriptures by R. Bultmann, Mme. Herrade Mehl-Koehnlein, etc.

symbolism in baptism. Regarding the explicit signification of the baptismal rite, we know from St. Paul that baptism of water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit signifies not only the remission of sins (which it also effects, and which the baptism of John the Baptist had signified), but also death, burial, and resurrection in Christ.⁹ Washing with water has for us an obvious relevance to the taking away of sins, which we know as uncleannesses, but as referred to the death, burial, and resurrection in Christ, the symbolism has commonly been invested by modern theology with a purely juridical force. Unless we lay hold of the roots of symbolism within the human psyche, we end by asserting in effect that things are this way because God has for no ascertainable reason set them up this way. This makes the death-burial-resurrection symbolism a kind of *appliqué* which we are encouraged to force onto the rite for reasons unknown to us, but which never seems to come alive, as one might well imagine the Divine Institutor of symbolism had wished it would. We are a far cry here from a scriptural or patristic age which was intensely aware that not only words but things themselves can signify, for we are victims of the tendency, which set in during the Middle Ages but was perfected only later, to reduce all the symbolism with which the Scriptures and Fathers abound to a kind of pious but ineffectual and rather irrelevant patter.

Psychological analysis, whatever its other difficulties, has not only helped reinstate the scriptural and patristic point of view but has made possible certain types of explanation which were unavailable to earlier ages, although not out of harmony with earlier ways of thinking. This is true particularly of such work as that done by Carl Jung or Victor Frankl with archetypal symbols. Research in dream and other analysis has revealed the fact that water, to the subconscious mind, is a symbol of death, or conversely of life, for in the material universe these two are inextricably intertwined, the generation of one thing being inevitably the corruption of another. This symbolism attaching to water is not arbitrary nor accidental. That is to say, it always arises when the human sensibility is brought into contact with the world around

⁹ See Louis Beirnaert, S.J., "Symbolisme mythique de l'eau dans le baptême," *La Maison-Dieu: Revue de pastorale liturgique*, No. 22 (2^e trimestre, 1950), pp. 94-120. This article had appeared earlier in *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, 1949 (Zurich: Rhein Verlag).

it. Such symbolism is evidently at its profoundest depths related to the fact that life, in its earliest forms, whether in phylogenetic evolution or in the history of a single individual, arises in some sort of fluid medium—a fact which, by its universality, suggests that the close connection of fluid with life (and death) is itself not arbitrary, not the result of a kind of eenie-meenie-minie-mo procedure on the part of Almighty God, but intimately related to the nature of life and to existence itself. The complex of relationships here is, of course, not grasped all at once, for no one understands it in its full richness, but it is ubiquitous enough to impress itself in a thousand ways on the human subconscious, so that the human sensibility lays hold of an elementary connection between water and life long before, and independently of, any scientific understanding of the real development of the individual organism, not to mention the evolution of species. Thus it is that its own particular symbolic value attaches to water in the dream-life not only of office-workers in skyscrapers but of the most retarded of primitives. Water *means* death (or life). This is a result of the economy of the composite world of human-sensibility-vis-à-vis-reality, and due to the inherent proclivity of some things in this economy to symbolize other things. The Christian sacramental symbolism is embedded in and sanctifies this whole economy, and recent gains in our understanding of the economy show the often unsuspected psychological depths at which Christ was operating in instituting His sacraments.

IV

St. Ignatius' prison-cage is not part of the sacramental symbolism of the Church, but it seems to be a part of the world of symbolism into which the sacraments were inserted. In this world it is not an incidental item, a bit of imaginative décor, but something basic to the whole symbolic economy, so that St. Ignatius' inclination to throw great weight on this symbol becomes eminently understandable. Ultimately, the connection of the *Spiritual Exercises* with the world of symbolism is due to their concern with the self, which is a major preoccupation of the mind's unconscious and conscious symbolic activity. To glimpse some of the connections here, we need only draw on certain notions current more or less everywhere along the contemporary intellectual

front, notions which are here taken as being, in general, well enough known in their larger aspects to make unnecessary any detailed documentation—which would run on endlessly anyhow, and which can be had by those who wish it in the various reports on contemporary developments in psychological research, anthropological studies, and phenomenological and personalist or “existentialist” analysis.¹⁰

In St. Ignatius' image of a prison-cage, the notion of separation or estrangement is evidently paramount. This is due to a concern with self, which means, conversely, a concern with the non-self or the other, and with the line of separation between myself and other selves. In terms of this separation, the body functions not in the way it functions in the rather more mechanistic body-soul or matter-form point of view, for it functions not as the seat of sense organs, the starting point for concepts connecting man with his surroundings, but rather in terms of man's interior, personal, and incommunicable self-consciousness, the individual's own private experience of his own individual existence which he can never impart to anyone else nor share directly with anyone else (save God). In terms of this self, the body is less a connecting than an alienating mechanism, for our consciousness is our “interior,” and, while contact with the external world is a necessary condition of self-awareness, it is necessary not because it supplies the stuff of self-awareness—which it does not do at all, since the self is precisely what does *not* come *into* my consciousness from the outside—but because it gives us something, the “other” as a kind of background against which self-awareness can be constituted.

My interior is for me, but for no one else (save God), bright, luminous, vivid, by contrast with the dull, dead stuff of the world outside consciousness, and my body is the transit between the two realms of the interior and the exterior. The ambivalent character of St. Ignatius' prison-cage is due to the mediating role of the body here. In one way it functions as a prison, a limit, not only differentiating the interior from the exterior but actually constraining the interior, for, as Heidegger has well explained, the human self *ex*-ists. It does not merely *in*-sist but rather seeks to spread out, to bring the dead, dull, outside world within the circle of its own luminosity. But the body, the very

¹⁰ For example, in the work of Fr. Victor White already cited, or in Kurt F. Reinhart, *The Existentialist Revolt* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1952), etc.

organ through which the self becomes aware of the exterior, stands in the way, for it itself, despite its intimate connection with the self, is in a sense exterior, so that everything which comes *into* the soul through its mediation is invested with exteriority. There are other human selves, but, since the bodily senses mediate my contact with them, my knowledge of them remains radically an exterior knowledge. Even a husband cannot experience the consciousness of his wife as she does herself, nor a wife that of her husband. The one does not really know what it feels like to be the other.

As body, St. Ignatius' prison-cage symbolizes this tantalizing situation. It is a part of the self and it is not a part of the self. It is a prison and yet it can be thrown with the self into exile. Moreover, it can positively protect the self—from brute beasts. And why from brute beasts? Rainer Maria Rilke, very much in the Kierkegaard tradition, speaks occasionally of the dull, blank emptiness which stares out from the animal's eye. The animal is a living being, and as such suggestive of the human self, but he has no interiority, no self-consciousness, no self-possession. Because of this he symbolizes the situation we find ourselves in—or at least half of this situation. We have no direct access to the self-consciousness of others, although we know indirectly that such self-consciousness exists. In a world filled with real personalities we are, in a radical way, totally isolated, incapable of communicating our self-consciousness or of intimately registering that of others. The brute animal, totally devoid of self-consciousness, thus impressively symbolizes our isolation.

St. Ignatius slips quite naturally into this symbolism because he feels the isolation by reason of his religious preoccupations. Concern with God is in one way or another tied up with concern about this isolation of the ego. For God alone shares the interior of my self-consciousness, knows intimately what it feels like to be *me*. "Homo videt in faciem, Deus autem in corde." Moreover, on the strength of the Pauline text, "Cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum" (I Cor. 13:12), we can believe that in the beatific vision we shall know God with a similar interior directness, as we have never been able to know other men. Compared to God's contacts with my soul, which will flower in the beatific vision, my relations with my fellow-men are curiously empty, like relations with brute beasts where there is no "you" to respond to my own "I."

At this depth the relevance of the brute animals to the prison-cage becomes somewhat discernible: the animals suggest the effective depersonalization of everything outside the tiny interior point of personal awareness which we call consciousness of self.

The animals, of course, mean other things too. They are the passions, as we know from psychological analysis as well as from the normal symbolism of mystical or paramystical experience. They are the passions not as known by rational study, situated inside the human composite, but the passions as experienced in the existentialist situation—something strangely other, for, while they are present as a kind of living threat, and thus as somewhat assimilable to myself, they are at the same time outside the circle of luminosity which is my conscious interior. Because they come from my "lower" nature, surging up from the dark depths of the senses and the unconscious, they are strangers to my self-consciousness, and hence are "other," felt as outside me, estranged from me by my body (in which, of course, they reside), and even capable, in extreme cases, of occasioning the weird interior alienation known as a "split" personality.

The same theme of self-versus-other which gives force to the prison-cage imagery thus gives force to the animal imagery too. The animal, writes Ortega y Gasset,

has always to be attentive to what goes on outside, to the things around it. Because, even if the dangers and incitements of these things were to diminish, the animal would perforce continue to be governed by them, by the outward, by what is *other* than itself; because it cannot go *within* itself, since it has no *self*, no *chez soi*, where it can withdraw and rest.¹¹

The world outside the self is potential self, in that the self is continuously seeking to *ex-ist* toward it, to assimilate it, but it will not assimilate, it will cooperate only negatively, giving force to the self by contrast. This world, marked off by the body, is inhabited by brute animals as symbols of pure otherness, almost-selves which are nevertheless not selves at all. They are the *un-contained*. They are those beyond the pale, outside the prison-wall. Their presence shows why this prison is both stronghold and cage, partaking of the ambivalent

¹¹ Ortega y Gasset, "The Self and the Other" (an address originally delivered in Buenos Aires, 1939), *Partisan Review*, July-August, 1952, p. 394.

situation of the human consciousness, where the notion of estrangement from others and that of self-containment are complementary. The interplay of the two notions of self-perfection and self-limitation thus produces the inevitable awkwardness in St. Ignatius' picture, in which that which causes the soul embarrassment (the prison-cage) at the same time affords protection from the brute animals who would swallow man up in pure otherness.

V

The notion of containment which here assimilates itself to that of estrangement determines an important characteristic of the division between the self and the other. The division must be pictured not merely as a terminus but as something which surrounds the self on all sides. This gives rise to the familiar mandala or mandala-type design which recurs constantly as symbol of the self in all sorts of art forms and apparently in all human cultures, paleolithic, medieval European, Pueblo Indian, down to our own day. The mandala or "magic circle," which has received so much recent attention as a result largely of the work of Jung,¹² who spent some fourteen years working over the symbols before venturing to interpret them, is a design commonly featuring some combination of circle and square (the predilection for fours and antipathy to threes is marked), with, commonly, a figure of high religious significance at its center—medieval European mandalas often build out from a figure of Christ (but in terms of the *four* evangelists, etc., not of the Trinity). The mandala constructs often appear as the perpetuation of a specific artistic or religio-artistic tradition. Here the most elaborate and beautiful figures are those of the Tibetan Buddhists and of the Orient in general, where mandalas are utilized as instruments for contemplation in the Tantric Yoga and reflected in the crafts, such as rug design. But mandala figures occur also outside any formalized tradition, turning up spontaneously, for example, when

¹² See Jolan Jacobi, *La psychologie de C. G. Jung*, trans. V. Baillods (Paris: Delachaux et Niestle, 1950), esp. p. 147 ff., and the bibliography of Jung's works, p. 179 ff.; Richard Wilhelm and C. J. Jung, *Das Geheimnis der goldenen Blüte, ein chinesisches Lebensbuch* (Zürich: Rascher, 1944); Wilfred Daim, *Umwertung der Psychoanalyse* (Vienna: Herold, 1951); Igor A. Caruso, *Psychoanalyse und Synthese der Existenz* (Vienna: Herder, 1952), p. 214 ff. These works are abundantly illustrated with mandala figures, both of the artistic and of the personal clinical type.

individuals of the most diverse cultural origins are encouraged to picture in a design the relation of their selves to the external world, or to form designs symbolizing the ideal integration of their lives or personalities, and so on. Psychological literature is now full of reproductions of this sort of mandala-figure elicited under more or less clinical conditions.¹³

The psychological implications of the mandalas are extremely rich and complicated, and only certain special applications of the figures can be touched on here. The circle which mandalas commonly feature as a basis of their structure is often a clock, bowl, ball, round table, or the like, and the square a four-walled room, public square, prison-cell, college quad, four chairs around a table, and like arrangements. The presence of this kind of imagery in thought concerned with the perfection of self can be detected everywhere, once one is alerted to it: the Greek four-square man, the related Greek notion of encyclopedia which complements the four-square imagery with a "circle" of education, modern "Four-Square Gospels," the four cardinal virtues (with the hinge imagery suggesting circular movement again), St. Teresa of Avila's "mansions" and "interior castle" (images repeated time without number among spiritual writers), and thus on indefinitely. Imagery of a similar type is, of course, utilized by Our Lord Himself, who knew of what psychological stuff man was made, as when He says: "In my Father's *house* there are many *mansions*" (for the interior orientation of both house and mansions, cf. "The kingdom of God is within you"), or when He speaks of the "house" which is swept and garnished, from which the devils are expelled and to which they return. A more elaborate exploitation of the house imagery is found in Hebrews 1-5, where the house which Christ inhabits so much more confidently than Moses had—"which house are we" (3:6)—focuses the ensuing discussion concerning both the seventh-day rest of faith and Christ's priesthood itself. Passages such as this in the Scriptures may well have directly inspired some medieval Christ-mandalas.

The specialization of this symbolism in circles and four-sided figures (obviously related to the bilateral symmetry of the human body, and thus bearing a heavy material charge), and its tendency to avoid tri-

¹³ Cf. the works just cited in the foregoing note, particularly Caruso, Daim, and Jacobi.

angles (which, by contrast, carry a kind of spiritual charge),¹⁴ is not a law imputed to mandalas by some sort of extrapolation of an overheated Pythagorean imagination, but a simple fact observable in the figures which actually occur. The reasons for such facts go deep into the structure of the personal consciousness and cannot, of course, be elaborated here. They have been and are being elaborated in dismaying detail in works such as those earlier referred to, for those interested in studying them. Neither the four-sidedness nor the circularity appears overtly in St. Ignatius' prison-cage, which is a primitive or residual mandala figure as compared with the elaborate mandalas worked out in the Orient. This fact is perhaps connected with St. Ignatius' way of easing intense concentration on the self alone by merging it with a concentration on Christ, who is a person and hence other, but at the same time, as God, inhabits the interior castle of my soul as effectively as I do myself.

But, despite its rudimentary character, St. Ignatius' prison is, beyond any reasonable doubt, related to the mandala-type constructs in its way of picturing the self in a kind of enclosure, isolated from an exteriority around it. St. Ignatius' prison is an embarrassing phenomenon because the walls of the self are ambiguous in implication: they are the walls of a prison, but a prison which is also a kind of house and protection, and a prison which, because it helps constitute the self, is also portable as the self is portable, and thus, in a way, seems not to be a prison at all, but something which I have tried to catch in the expression "prison-cage." Thus the "confusion" in St. Ignatius' picture has a *real* reason for existing: his image simply picks up, like a television set, a pattern which exists independently of it. Here we are up against a certain quality in St. Ignatius' thought which makes it particularly susceptible to a phenomenological or descriptive approach and which arises less out of any particular philosophy—attempts to "systematize" St. Ignatius philosophically are singularly unconvincing—than out of an intensely personal, real, "existential" awareness of the self and of the problems of existence, and out of a

¹⁴ A triangle or trinity of any sort is male; the fourth principle is concerned with the manifestation in the cosmos, is variable and female, tending toward evil. Cf. Victor White, *God and the Unconscious*, p. 249.

complementary, real, non-abstractive approach to God, allied to what Newman calls real as against notional assent to religious truth.

The present study, which has taken as a point of departure what appears to be a real difficulty in St. Ignatius' thought, does not at all want to pretend that St. Ignatius' thought is everywhere dominated by mandala-type constructs, or that the elements here discussed explain everything that has to be explained, but only to suggest some of the reasons why St. Ignatius' remarks on the soul-*and-body* in exile can legitimately and understandably take the form they do. The remarks cannot be written off as defying rational explanation, for the reason that careful study shows more and more that there is no completely private way of picturing the self to the self, or even of erring in such a representation—only unfamiliarity with investigations in this field of consciousness can occasion the illusion that there is. To enter into the exile and estrangement of the human situation with the vigor and earnestness and honesty of this mature man turned saint is inevitably to engage a huge field of human experience with an economy exceedingly—even disconcertingly—rich, the study of which can be profitable, and about which a great deal is already scientifically known.

The obvious limitations of an article such as the present are due to the fact that so little has been done to relate this economy to what we know otherwise of the ascetical and mystical life. Exploration on all fronts is still the order of the day, with the intellectual humility which fruitful exploration demands. St. Ignatius himself was living in another age, and obviously he did not know—nor did he have to know—that he was making use of imagery which would have a particular interest to a twentieth-century phenomenologist or anthropologist. Indeed, for this very reason, the fidelity with which his imagery follows an economy only latterly subject to abstract formulation attests the utter authenticity of his spiritual language. The curious dimension of his own which St. Ignatius adds to the prison-cage imagery may be in certain ways without counterpart in his sources, but it is not without counterpart in the symbolic inheritance of mankind.¹⁵

¹⁵ In the *Autobiography* or *Testament* of St. Ignatius—the titles often supplied to the document headed *Acta P. Ignatii ut primum scripsit P. Ludovicus Gonzales excipiens ex ore ipsius Patris*, published in *Fontes narrativi de S. Ignatio de Loyola*, I (Monumenta his-

This symbolic inheritance forms a direct connection between the depths of the Catholic spiritual heritage and a large and growing mass of contemporary thought, much of it of the first order, growing out of anthropology, phenomenology, psychological analysis, and even literary analysis. The connection deserves exploitation, not only because the mind is concerned with all truth, but especially because it offers mystical and other theology a place on the contemporary intellectual *front* which so far it all too little enjoys.

It might be added that this kind of exploitation, which is already to some extent under way, was once easier for Scholastic theology than it is today, for many of the frames of thought which have to be assimilated were present in the old medical and paramedical literature—astrology and alchemy—and in the old physics which was once a great part of that Scholasticism of which theology was only a small part and which is now awakening such keen interest among psychological analysts. Much of what had been discarded was worthless detritus, but many of the frames of reference were not. Concepts elaborated for use with an impossible physics are not necessarily useless for metaphysical or psychological purposes, especially since, because their connection with physics was bogus, they probably had hidden metaphysical or psychological roots to start with. At any rate, many of the phenomena on the current intellectual front indicate a

torica Societatis Iesu, LXVI; Rome, 1943), pp. 354-507—there occur several instances of symbolic visions; symbolic, that is, in the sense that they were not of Our Lord nor of the saints, but representational in a kind of emblem-book fashion or in the manner of present-day abstract painting. These images St. Ignatius found puzzling, sometimes above suspicion and sometimes not, so that they were one of the occasions for his interest in rules for the discernment of spirits. For example, at Manresa, he saw a thing “hanging in the air,” serpent-like, but difficult to apprehend accurately, which he delighted to look at (*ibid.*, p. 390); at another time, a representation of the creation in which figured “something white, out of which rays shot, and from which God sent forth light” (*ibid.*, p. 402); or again, something like white rays shooting down from above at the time of the elevation of the Sacred Host at Mass (*ibid.*); or, once more, a many-eyed, colored, shining object, apparently the same as the serpent-like object mentioned above, which he was now able to recognize as diabolical (*ibid.*, p. 406); etc. In measuring these and his other visions by their relation to the Church’s teachings and to his own personal obligations in accord with her teachings, and in noting whether they brought real peace of soul or ended in agitation, St. Ignatius applied to these apparitions Our Lord’s text: “By their fruits you shall know them.” But he had a keen sense of the way such signs could engage the reality of his own life, as his sober approach to them and careful description of them shows.

profound relevance of the *Spiritual Exercises* and of Catholic spirituality as a whole to the contemporary mind, precisely as contemporary. And, on the other hand, present-day interest in the real as against the purely formalistic side of things, and the current development of techniques of talking about this real side—techniques which past ages had not very fully developed—promise certain insights into spiritual writings and reality deeper in some ways than those we have hitherto enjoyed. After all, the abiding worth of the *Spiritual Exercises* lies here: not that they provide some sort of system independent of the self, of *engagement*, of making a choice, but that they are a technique of *engagement*, of making a choice which has never been made before and can never be made again. They confront the self and the real.