

# THE ROLE OF INNER KNOWLEDGE IN THE PROCESS OF THE EXERCISES

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COMPLEXITY—AN ENLIGHTENING COMPLEXITY—is a characteristic of St Ignatius! A good example is his treatment of the theme of ‘inner knowledge’ that runs through the *Spiritual Exercises*, so much so that it provides the key to all of them. Here I shall keep closely to the text and try especially to uncover the dynamic at work, because, like everything in Ignatius, this theme follows an order.

An initial general remark about the complexity of this ‘inner knowledge’ is that, to start with, the term ‘knowledge’ recurs constantly throughout the text, even if, as will become clear, two opposed dynamics are involved. The theme appears very early in the text, as it forms the essence of Annotation 2, which points to the real meaning behind the terminology of ‘inner knowledge’. The text,<sup>1</sup> with italics supplied by me to underline the key terms, is as follows:

Someone who gives to another a way and a plan for meditating or contemplating must provide a faithful account of *the history* to be meditated or contemplated, but in such a way as to run over the salient points with only brief or summary explanations. For if the other begins contemplating *with a true historical foundation, and then goes over this history and reflects on it personally, he or she may by themselves come upon things which **make clear** or help one to **feel** a little more its meaning.*<sup>2</sup> *Whether this arises out of the person’s own reasoning*

<sup>1</sup> The English translation of the *Exercises* used for this translation is basically that of Michael Ivens (Leominster: Gracewing, 2004), but taking into account the close study of the Spanish terms undertaken by the author.

<sup>2</sup> For ‘which ... meaning’ Michael Ivens’ translation is more free: ‘which throw further light on it or which more fully bring home its meaning’, thus omitting the words ‘a little more’ (*un poco más*) of the Spanish.

*or from the enlightenment of divine grace, more gratification and spiritual fruit is to be found than if the giver of the Exercises had explained and developed the meaning of the history at length. For it is not much knowledge, but the inner feeling and relish of things that fills and satisfies the soul. (Exx 2)*

The person who is acting as companion ‘must provide a faithful account of the history’ and nothing more. This, and this alone—the ‘history’ faithfully presented—is what the person who is to experience the process finds at the starting point. It is up to the exercitant to ‘come upon things’ by going over the ‘history’ and reflecting on it personally. Ignatius gives more importance to whatever *little* thing the person, being open to God, gradually comes across than to any manner of sublime reflections that we others may provide. ‘*Come upon things which make clear or help one to feel a little more its meaning*’: ‘a little more’, a little thing, is of use. Too much does no good.

There are two key verbs here that constantly come into play whenever ‘internal knowledge’ occurs: ‘to make clear’ (*declarar*) and ‘to feel’ (*sentir*), either as the fruit of ‘reasoning’ or because of ‘enlightenment’ from above. The complexity of this internal knowledge comes from three essential elements in the process: the personal search by the exercitant (using reason and intellect), the feelings involved, and the action of God. And so it is from the exercitant’s effort to search and from his or her own findings—and solitude is indispensable—that ‘more gratification and spiritual fruit is to be found than if the giver of the Exercises had explained and developed the meaning ... at length’.

The key point is the ‘history’. This is a given and is not something invented, either by the person giving the Exercises or, still less, by the person making them. The history, therefore, is data; but the *meaning* of the data cannot be passed on by the giver, no matter how sublime a meaning the giver may draw from them. Each exercitant has to uncover the personal meaning that the data suggest.

So *internal knowledge* will be something completely personal and non-transferable, the components coming from the person’s own search, both intellectual and affective, and from the action of God. The person who accompanies must avoid all interference (Exx 15) in the latter. Any intervention will get in the way of the ‘enlightenment of divine grace’ (Exx 2). Such is the basic ground plan, and Ignatius shows a touch of genius when he closes Annotation 2 with the remark:

‘it is not much knowledge, but the inner feeling and relish of things that fills and satisfies the soul’.

The starting point is now fixed. Even if more could be said about the ‘history’, thanks to greater expertise, what is essential for the process is the ‘feeling and relish’ that has to be gained by our own personal discovery or ‘coming upon’, no matter how slight and petty it may look. It is ours. It is what is given us through the meaning of the history—along with the action of God. We cannot know when or how the latter will work, but, unaccompanied, we have to leave ourselves open to that action.

A second initial remark of great importance is that, as is made clear at the beginning (Exx 1), throughout the entire process of the Exercises Ignatius is obsessed with this one thought: that the exercitant should *profit in some way*. He constantly points out that whatever is done or should be done has a purpose. There is a search for something definite. At the start, we may not know if we will be able to find it, because we do not know where the path is leading. But we do know where the Four Weeks are going, and it is there that the *method and order* can be found. All the rest are so many incidental elements, which the giver of the Exercises should use according to the needs of the particular exercitant.

***There is a  
search for  
something  
definite***

On the one hand, we should reflect, ‘in order to draw profit’ (Exx 106, 107, 108, 114, 115, 116). Considerable thought has gone into this phrase and it is not used casually. It occurs only where both contemplations and application of the senses are proposed. When Ignatius is describing a meditation with the three powers of the soul, he does not speak of ‘drawing some profit’ but instead talks of ‘going over the subject with the understanding ... and arousing the affections of the heart with the will’ (Exx 50, 51, 52). It would appear that knowledge as such has nothing to do with praxis. Pure intellectual knowledge—having clear ideas—if this is all that occurs, does not lead anywhere. One is not going to ‘draw profit’.

Consequently, in the meditations with the three powers the aim is not to ‘draw profit’ but to ‘arouse the affections’, so that we may begin to stir up ‘feeling and relish’. It is only through the feeling and relish that arises in contemplation—which consists in reflecting (that is, allowing the mystery to reflect itself in us)—that we will be able to draw some profit.

On the other hand, there is in the Exercises another dynamic at work which should help us ‘to find the right way forward’ (Exx 318). This consists in ‘perceiving and understanding the various movements produced in the soul: the good that they may be accepted, and the bad, that they may be rejected’ (Exx 313). In other words, we are created to find the right way forward, but that finding is not assured and we will have to discern (through ‘feeling and knowing’) the motions that are at work in order to find the right way, for ‘by following the counsels of the bad spirit, we can never find the right way forward’ (Exx 318).

This ‘finding the right way forward’ by means of discernment, joined to ‘internal knowledge’ gained by reflecting in order to draw profit, are two opposed and simultaneous dynamics in the process of the Exercises. One of these begins with *knowing* and finishes by incorporating *feeling* (meditation—contemplation—application of the senses); the other sets off from *feeling* the personal ‘movements produced in the soul’ and ends by *knowing* ‘the good that they may be accepted’ (Exx 313) (discernment of spirits), so making possible a deliberation—the election that is ‘sound and good’ (Exx 184).

We find all this brought together in the formula for the offering that closes the Kingdom meditation: ‘My resolute wish and desire, and my considered determination’ (Exx 98). These three verbal nouns dynamically link together the complex procedure that Ignatius has unlocked in the exercitant with his process:

- *my resolute wish*: my wanting has been built up through ‘inner knowledge’, which reveals to me the ‘meaning of the history’ and of reality;
- *my desire*: my desires that move me (motions, spirits) need to be ordered ‘to some extent’ (Exx 313) by means of the discernment, which at some moments will be more ‘subtle’ (Exx 9) and ‘more advanced’ (Exx 328), so that the desires may coincide with my wish and can be converted into ...
- *my considered determination*: this is made concrete in a ‘sound and good election’ (Exx 175).

There is an additional factor in Ignatius’ rich anthropology that can be of assistance in our search:

I presuppose that there are three kinds of thought processes in me, one sort which is properly mine and arises simply from liberty and will, and two other sorts which come from outside, one from the good spirit and the other from the bad (Exx 32).

In other words: there are three thoughts active *in me*. For Ignatius, 'thought' is all that can express and affect me as a person; as he comments at one point, 'in the same way, the thoughts that spring from consolation are contrary to the thoughts that spring from desolation' (Exx 317).

Thus three impulses are active: *our very own*, that arises from our sheer liberty and will, and another two that originate *from outside* our own sheer liberty and will. These two are in us ('produced in the soul' [Exx 313], but not produced by us), and Ignatius will speak of motions, affects, desires. One of the two is *from the good spirit and the other from the bad*. These motions are in fact what move us, and we will have to discern which is which and put them in order before making them our own.

To sum up: the inner knowledge will give content to our sheer liberty and will, and at the same time we shall have to unmask and set in order the motions (spirits, affects and desires) that move us, 'the good that they may be accepted, and the bad, that they may be rejected' (Exx 313), and so to *discernment*. Both of these impulses will allow us 'to desire and choose only what conduces more to the end for which we are created' (Exx 23), so *deliberation–election*.

Given these presuppositions, we can now consider briefly these dynamics in the *process* of the Exercises.

### **The Process**

The process referred to here is that set in motion by the Exercises: meditation in the First Week, contemplation and application of the senses from the Second Week. This is a process in which knowing advances and gradually incorporates feeling. Later we shall see the opposite process going on, in parallel and at the same time, as we comment on discernment, deliberation and election as distinct realities: the move from feeling motions to knowledge of them and of their meaning. The result of this double process is what the Exercises are aiming for above all: that we may gain some profit and that we may find the right way forward.

*From Knowing to Feeling and Inner Knowledge:  
Meditation—Contemplation—Application of the Senses*

In the sequence of the Four Weeks, feeling is incorporated *into knowing*, giving inner knowledge.

There are three crucial moments when Ignatius mentions inner knowledge: in the First Week (in connection with sin), in the Second Week (in connection with Christ), and in the Contemplation to Attain Love (in connection with ‘all the good I have received’ [Exx 233]). All three moments are important, and each makes possible the one that follows. I think the overall result is the feeling that comes at the end of the Contemplation to Attain Love.

In the First Week, the very knowledge of sin is a grace that has to be asked for. The exercitant has to receive ‘the enlightenment of divine grace’ (Exx 2) for that knowledge to become ‘inner’. But I also have to attain knowledge of *my* sin, and this is a grace that Ignatius invites me to ask for in the preparatory prayer of the ‘First Method of Praying’:

A preparatory prayer should be made, in which, for example, I ask God our Lord for grace to be able to know my failings in relation to the Ten Commandments. I should ask, as well, for grace and help to do better in the future, and for a perfect understanding of the Commandments so that I may keep them better for the greater glory and praise of his Divine Majesty. (Exx 240)

It is not in our own power to attain this knowledge. This in itself is something of a surprise. Ignatius is the great ‘master of suspicion’. The big problem that we, as human beings, always have is that we want to indulge in self-justification, and truth cannot justify itself—not just because St Paul told us,<sup>3</sup> but long before he told us. All self-justification is a façade that we set up as our version of the truth, which does not in fact exist. Truth requires no justification; it is itself. Only God justifies. Thus the first great grace is to acknowledge the need ‘to ask for grace to know my sins’ (Exx 43). We are still at the stage of knowing, not of *inner knowing*.

The reason is that, for Ignatius, sin is a great blindness. The three Divine Persons look down on the people of the earth ‘living in blindness’

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 4:4.

(Exx 106). Often, when we see someone we know do something stupid and unjustifiable, we say, 'I don't know what he's thinking of! He must be blind!' That is why we need Someone to open our eyes so that we may know—and this is where *inner knowledge* comes in.

How does Ignatius arrange the process of the five exercises (meditations with the three powers) in the First Week? Initially we have to 'ask for a personal shame and confusion' (Exx 148), but this is as we face up to a sin that is not our own. What a stroke of genius! When it comes to judging others, we are able to see things with perfect objectivity—as happens to Nathan with David (2 Samuel 12: 1–15). So this is what Ignatius does. Once the objective nature of sin has been seen mirrored in others, there comes the key moment of *inner knowledge* of sin. This leads to a personal encounter with God, and to sorrow and tears in a colloquy of mercy (Exx 53, 61).

The moment now comes to plead 'in a colloquy made to Our Lady, so that she will obtain grace for me ... that I may have a felt inner knowledge of my sins' (Exx 63); for the mere knowing as such does not lead anywhere (Exx 2). Into the knowing has to be inserted the 'feeling'. And now appears the key word, 'abhorrence'. In our normal



Nathan Admonishing David, by Rembrandt

usage we do not use this word to say that we dislike something, but only when there has been a revulsion and a change in our sensibility. We never fall into sin to get what we dislike, but because we want to get something that in some way we like.

Our spiritual experience has much in common with our ordinary human experience. Once we have asked for knowledge and we have seen 'the intrinsic foulness and malice of each deadly sin committed' (Exx 57), not only do we begin to 'feel' something, but the feeling we had before for something which attracted and seduced us turns into 'abhorrence'. At that point, what we had asked for before simply as knowledge has now fully become inner knowledge for us.

By virtue of the process, an anti-sensibility has been formed that did not exist before. With this sort of knowledge not only do I realise that something is bad, which I had nevertheless liked; now there has been added that 'I find it abhorrent' (Exx 63). That is when we begin to acquire the knowledge we had requested. In addition this experience makes possible a 'feeling' (which adds an 'inner' dimension) and an 'abhorrence' for the disorder of my ways of acting; I now 'know' the world and abhor 'worldly things and vanities' (Exx 63).

Also in the colloquy, I ask 'that I may feel the disorder in my actions, so that finding it abhorrent, I may amend my life and put order into it' (Exx 63). It is impossible for us to try and amend and put order in our lives unless first we have felt abhorrence. On this will depend the validity of our amendment and reordering. Similarly, our knowledge of the world transforms itself into abhorrence, so that we are able to separate ourselves from 'worldly things and vanities'.

The process of gaining this new sensibility will be rounded off by 'the fear of punishments' which 'may help me not to fall into sin' (Exx 65).

#### *The Process in the Second Week*

Just as in the First Week the key word for *inner* knowledge is 'abhorrence' (a feeling of revulsion amounting to abhorrence), so in the Second Week the factor that will provide dynamic force and make my knowledge become 'inner' is the surprise of discovering 'the Lord who became human for me' (Exx 104).

In the Third Week, the petition while contemplating the Last Supper brings together petitions from the First Week: '... personal shame and confusion' (Exx 48), 'sorrow and tears for my sins' (Exx 55), along with that 'inner knowledge of the Lord' (Exx 104) of the Second Week, now



transformed by 'grief, deep *feeling* and confusion', not on my own account but 'because it is for my sins that the Lord is going to his Passion' (Exx 193). The inner knowledge is constantly gaining in depth as the contemplations follow one another and eventually touch the 'grief with Christ in grief' (Exx 203), that prolongation of the 'for me': the key feeling which has been decisive since the start of the Second Week (Exx 104), or rather which had already been hinted at in the first phase of the process with the colloquy of the first meditation (Exx 53).

In the Fourth Week this *inner knowledge* acquires another element: joy—'grace to feel gladness and to rejoice intensely over the great glory and joy of Christ our Lord' (Exx 221). It is possible to see the way in which feeling is incorporated into knowledge when one studies the dynamic implied by the layout of the Ignatian day.

#### *The Ignatian Daily Timetable*

As is well known, a normal day while making the Exercises consists of two contemplations (occasionally just one), two repetitions and an application of the senses ('bringing the five senses to bear' [Exx 121]). The dynamic of such a day is very important if we are to understand *inner knowledge*. I mentioned earlier that in the Second Annotation (Exx 2), the giver of the exercises is warned not to give the 'meaning' of the history. To find that, the exercitant has to manage on his or her own, alone with God. But how is the exercitant, alone, able to open up to 'feeling'? How are we able to reach beyond mere 'knowing'?

Quite simply, the whole process of the Exercises depends entirely on the repetitions. One cannot claim to have given the exercitant the possibility to attain to, and become open to, the 'meaning' if repetitions have not been made available. In such a case there have not been any Exercises. To reach that 'felt meaning' the exercitant must pass through repetition.

At this point, we come to what the process of human knowing is. Ignatius did not spell it out, just as he refrained from spelling out so many things. However, he was in touch with what is going on when we acquire knowledge. There is a dynamism in our knowing (natural? supernatural?) by which 'feeling' comes into play—something that transforms our knowing into *inner knowledge*.



This is something that we experience in the acquisition of many types of human knowledge, for example learning to drive, with which it is not enough to 'know', nor to desire ardently to know. No doubt the day that I pass my driving test is the one when I 'know' most, and when my wishing and desiring is at its height. But that does not automatically give me full control and security. Rather the opposite: I begin to appreciate how complicated things are. So, what is missing? Simply repetition. The knowing process is not yet complete. It is when I continue to drive, when I repeat the experience again and again, that somehow my first 'knowing' becomes deep and complete, to the point that I go far beyond what I first knew. In Ignatius' terms, I have gained 'inner knowledge'.

In the second repetition of the First Week Ignatius notes that 'the understanding, carefully and without digressing, should range over the memory of things contemplated in the previous exercises' (Exx 64). He means that, without realising it, we pass from meditation to contemplation through the exercise of repetition. As exercitants we gradually become more passive. In the meditation we are searching, and from that we can get no profit. But in the repetition, we pass from meditating to contemplating. And for contemplation, there is no question of puzzling with the understanding, which is what we were supposed to do in the meditation of the three powers; we are simply 'reflecting'.<sup>4</sup>

As I mentioned earlier, to 'reflect' means here that the ray of light falls upon an opaque body. We should allow the true heart of the history to reach us, obviously without altering that history—so removing the automatic reflexes of self-justification. It is that direct and personal confrontation with the history, in all its reality, that can shock us. And

<sup>4</sup> In Spanish there are two verbs: *reflectir* and *reflexionar*, the latter implying intellectual thought and effort.

then, what tends to happen? We have come up against a reality that we did not expect, unlooked for, that has changed us. We did not have time to dress it up, and it has penetrated. On these occasions, to reflect is to let the reality show itself, 'seeing the persons, listening to them, seeing what they are doing' (for example Exx 114–116).

Then 'to bring the five senses to bear ... it will be profitable to pass the five senses ...' (Exx 121). When a person has just passed the driving test and knows a lot and has great ambitions—that is not enough. So here, the mere affection as such is not enough; something else is needed which is more permanent than an affection. What is required is an alteration in the structure of our sensibility. When we are learning to play the piano, it may be boring to repeat the scales again and again, but in the end the fingers function of themselves. We may get up one day and not feel like playing the piano, but the fingers have not forgotten. A feeling is one thing, but the construction of a sensibility is another. For the latter, repetition and the application of the senses are required.

There may be circumstances in which we come to know and feel something which has had an effect on us and moved our affections. But I still have to 'bring the five senses to bear'. So, how is this done? We cannot exactly say how, but we may be sure that it is necessary if we are to make something our own. For the time has now come to give reality to that wish 'to imitate Christ our Lord in the use of the senses' and also 'our Lady in the use of the senses' (Exx 248). In so far as we can acquire for ourselves a change in sensibility (in the five bodily senses), the car driver demonstrates true competence and the contemplative *inner knowledge*.

Throughout the process of applying the senses, the role of the exercitant is one of complete passivity. How is this done? If you feel the need to ask the question, you are on the right path—not knowing how to do something but realising that it is necessary. Unless this urge is there, it is not possible for us to make a new sensibility our own, which can only happen with 'praxis'. It is praxis that is linked to the restructuring of our sensibility. A competent car driver who has to drive an unfamiliar car no longer has to think about the gear change—which was certainly not the case on the day that he or she passed the driving test. It is the changed structure of our sensibility that enables praxis—and, in what now concerns us, the process of the Exercises, the following of Jesus.

The outcome of the process will be the ability to make the Contemplation to Attain Love. If both our bodily senses (Exx 248) and 'the five senses of the imagination' (Exx 121) have become like those of Christ, our perception of reality will now have another meaning. In the Contemplation to Attain Love, Ignatius restores us to reality. But the reality that in the Principle and Foundation was sheer inconvenience (more precisely, not the reality as such but us and our way of making use of it, hence the 'need to make ourselves indifferent' [Exx 23]) is now seen as opportunity. The reality is the same. The world has not changed. We have changed. In what respect? In our sensibility: now we can perceive the same reality as a *gift*, as an *opportunity*. This is the 'interior knowledge of all the good I have received' (Exx 233) at its deepest level, the 'entirely<sup>5</sup> acknowledging this with gratitude' (Exx 233). It is as if one were to say, 'I am so astonished that I cannot react in any other way than by having the same dynamic love that I am feeling'. As the Second Note accurately expresses it:

Love consists in mutual communication. That is to say, the lover gives and communicates to the loved one what they have, or something of what they have, or are able to give; and in turn the one loved does the same for the lover. Thus the one who possesses knowledge will give it to the one without it, and similarly with honour or wealth. Each gives to the other. (Exx 231)

What had appeared as 'obstacle' (Exx 9) has disappeared: not the reality but our possessive relation to reality, our way of entering into a relationship which seeks to grasp and to appropriate. Such a relationship was distorted. Now we see everything as something given, not as something that demands. The whole transformation that has been taking place in this process of *inner knowledge* is summed up in that move from the demanding to the given.

So total is this change of outlook that it can cancel out, even obliterate, certain steps that had appeared to be true gains. For example, the Declaration of Human Rights is undoubtedly a benefit, but the way it is put into practice is flawed. Each person thinks of him- or herself as the 'subject of rights'; yet, strictly speaking, the only subject of rights is the child (and the incapacitated old person) because

<sup>5</sup> The word 'entirely' (*enteramente*) needs to be added to the English translation used here.

in such cases there is no subject able to have any duty or responsibility. Everybody else is subject to duties. Nothing of what I have is owed to me. The surprise is that nothing—neither my life nor anything else—is mine. I find myself with them. Everything is a gift. And I also have to be a gift. This is a true regaining of reality, by means of ‘the interior knowledge of all the good I have received, so that ... I may be able to love and serve in everything’ (Exx 233).

*From Feeling to Knowing and Determining:  
Discernment—Deliberation—Election*

There remain a few remarks to be made about the inverse process. So far I have been considering one process, that of knowing, and this should certainly not be presupposed. From the first moment we have had to request this as a grace, and we have had to incorporate it with a new sensibility—that of Jesus.

The problems connected with ‘discernment—deliberation—election’ flow from the inverse process: moving from ‘feeling’ to ‘knowing’. The title itself of the Rules for Discernment make this clear: ‘Rules by which to perceive [*sentir*] and understand [*conocer*] to some extent the various movements ...’ (Exx 313). First, *sentir*, and then *conocer*.

Behind all this is the basic personal experience of Ignatius. In his *Autobiography*, he wonderfully expressed the surprise he felt at having this experience in the opening stages of his conversion:

Still there was this difference: that when he was thinking about worldly stuff he would take much delight, but when he left it aside after getting tired, he would find himself dry and discontented. But when about going to Jerusalem barefoot, and about not eating except herbs, and about doing all the other rigours he was seeing the saints had done, not only used he to be consoled while in such thoughts, but he would remain content and happy even after having left them aside. But he wasn’t investigating this, not stopping to ponder this difference, until one time when his eyes were opened a little, and he began to marvel at this difference in kind and to reflect on it, picking it up from experience that from some thoughts he would be left sad and from others happy, and little by little coming to know the difference in kind of spirits that were stirring: the one from the devil, and the other from God.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Autobiography*, 8.

Discernment consists in paying attention to certain motions that are present whether we are alert to them or not: we attend to what is happening and we feel what aftertaste they leave. We attend, which means that we simply take note without manipulating. If we do intervene, the discernment is over—before it even began.

The text says, 'he began to marvel': in other words, he realised what was happening. First came *sentir* and afterwards *conocer* ('to reflect' ... 'picking it up from experience' ... 'little by little coming to know'). There is a rule, the third among the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits for the First Week, where Ignatius describes 'three principal causes for our finding ourselves in desolation' (Exx 322). It merits special attention in the present context:

Thirdly, spiritual desolation gives us true knowledge and understanding, so that we may perceive within ourselves that on our part we cannot arouse or sustain overflowing devotion, intense love, tears or any other spiritual consolation, but that that all this is a gift and grace from God our Lord. So we are not to build our nest where we do not belong, becoming elated in mind to the point of pride and vainglory, and putting down to our own account devotion or other forms of spiritual consolation.

There is an abundance here of the terms that describe the process that concerns us: 'true knowledge', 'understanding', 'perceive', 'overflowing devotion', 'intense love', 'becoming elated in mind', 'putting down to our own account'. By undergoing the experience of becoming aware of the reality of desolation it becomes possible for us to gain knowledge of 'the various movements produced in the soul', and thus be enabled to 'accept the good' for ourselves, and 'reject the bad'.

As we 'pay close attention to the whole course of our thoughts' (Exx 333) (movements, wishes), many of which 'come from outside' (Exx 32), we need not only to 'feel' (*sentir*) but 'recognise' (*conocer*) whether they 'tend to what is wholly right' or on the contrary 'lead us finally to something bad or distracting' (Exx 333). These thoughts are what will eventually provide the energy for deliberation-election.

It is important not to confuse the *deliberation* with the discernment. It is the former term which should be used in the case of any community process, as here there is no question of identifying spirits through the observation of movements. Deliberation deals with 'things' and results in a decision.

The *election* comes as the final objective outcome of the process, begun in the Principle and Foundation, ‘desiring and choosing only what conduces more to the end’ (Exx 23). Such a result has to be preceded by a desire that is both enlightened and purified of all deception. At the start of the path to a decision (election) there is ‘my resolute wish and desire and my considered determination’ (Exx 98), but this has to be filtered through the grill of suspicion (we may be deceived), and therefore we have asked for ‘knowledge of the deceits of the evil leader ... and also for knowledge of the true life’ (Exx 139). We can arrive finally at a decision by finding our place with objectivity alongside those who have been right: ‘I will see myself standing in the presence of God our Lord and of all his saints that I might *desire* and *know* what is more pleasing to his Divine Goodness’ (Exx 151).

The double dynamic process provoked in the exercitant by the method of the Exercises makes possible that inner grasp of the ‘history’ (its felt meaning) and a perception of reality as a gift (*inner knowledge*) through meditation—contemplation—application of the senses. At the same time it gives objectivity to movements that arise in us and which we need to question (‘perceive [*sentir*] and understand [*conocer*]’ [Exx 313], using discernment) and which can be confirmed by God, who ‘without intermediaries<sup>7</sup> deals with the creature’ (Exx 15), ‘without preceding cause’ (Exx 330, and see Exx 175).

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<sup>7</sup> These two words (*immediate* in the Spanish) are missing from the English version.