

THE STRUCTURE OF THE RULES FOR DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

By MICHAEL J. BUCKLEY

WHILE THE CONTENTS of the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits have been analysed and applied over the past four centuries, the structure or internal unity in which they are presented has almost escaped attention.¹ Enormous weight has been given to their individual instructions, but almost no significance has been attributed to their collective form and anatomy. They are treated as individual units or groupings brought to bear as occasion warrants or as temptations indicate their use, both within the weeks of the Exercises and within the discriminations made every day of conscious christian living. In such employ, they have offered an enormous clarity and prudence to prayer, choice, action, and direction, except when their understanding degenerated into simpliste maxims and painfully obvious platitudes.² It is the contention of this brief paper, however, that the renewed interest in discernment should engage an inquiry into their formulation precisely as a tight-knit collectivity, that they should be submitted to a structural analysis analogical to that which the entire Exercises

¹ For the early commentaries and elaborations of the 'Rules for Discernment of Spirits', cf Joseph de Guibert, *The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice* (trans William J. Young, Chicago, 1964), pp 213, 257, 417. For a further discussion of the commentators, cf *Discernment of Spirits* – a translation of the article 'Discernement des Esprits', in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, by Jacques Guillet, Gustave Bardy, François Vandenbroucke, Joseph Pegon, Henri Martin (Collegeville, 1957), pp 79ff.

² Witness, for example, the extended and penetrating analysis conducted by Karl Rahner on the rules dealing with *consolación sin causa* – 'The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola', in *The Dynamic Element in the Church* (trans W. J. O'Hara, New York, 1964), pp 84–169. Another customary approach is to comment upon each rule without indicating the unity of the whole: for example, W. H. Longridge, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola* (London, 1919), pp 184ff. Sometimes a pastiche of citations is formed into a single picture with an occasional comment: e.g. William A. M. Peters, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: Exposition and Interpretation* (Jersey City, 1968), pp 117–118.

are undergoing, and that from this examination an understanding should emerge, both about the meaning of the individual directive and about the location of these within the general organization of the Exercises. The basic claim here is identical with that of any structural analysis: that the argument by which the elements are conjoined specifies their meaning and illumines the function which they may serve.

There is a particular urgency about this task now. Western man is submitted to a variety of religious experiences and a heterogeneity of religious traditions beyond anything which has entered his civilization since the fourth century. Variety and heterogeneity have become characteristics proper to our times, whether one refers to them in terms of future shock or as the collapse of the modern world. They offer the Church a unique *kairos*, standing amid the confluence and even chaos of so many religious traditions, both within and without the christian community. The old stabilities and enclosed cultural forms have perished, and the Church must choose among the myriad and complex voices which surround it. Even more fundamentally, the Church must decide whether its posture in this contemporary encounter with newness will be synthetic or polemic, whether she is to assimilate even while transmuting that which is assumed, or whether she is to battle even while admitting that there is much to commend in her adversary. It is the contention of this paper that the ignatian structure of discernment reveals and offers to the catholic spirit the means by which various strands of religious traditions can be recognized and revered as a progression of the divine Spirit through the world, that the integration which this structure achieves allows for an openness to religious experience without reducing it to magic and superstition, rationalism and enlightenment, or sentimentality and enthusiasm. The structure of the Rules for Discernment of Spirits should provide for a synthesis which is more than an undifferentiated syncretism, whether that synthesis illumine a grace given for individual choice or a providence by which the Body of Christ may be present to more civilizations and cultures.³

A fundamental conviction founds and supports the history of religious consciousness and commitment: God himself will direct a man's life. Within this religious context, God emerges more person-

³ For the importance of internal structure in literary criticism, cf Richard P. McKeon, 'The Philosophic Bases of Art and Criticism', in *Critics and Criticism: Ancient and Modern* (ed. R. S. Crane, Chicago, 1952), pp 533ff.

ally than the ultimate source of meaning, being, and value, more engaged even than what stands primary in any process and that towards which things ineluctably move, more immediate than an explanation for the existence of contingencies or a presupposition for the imperatives of the ethical enterprise or an horizon within which beauty and spirit are gathered and made available to men. All of this the religious man may sense or intuit or accept, but none of these constitute his focus or his motive. He longs for God, not as men think about marriage, but as they search for a wife. He knows God, not so much in awareness that the cosmos is rooted in a source, but in the contemplative experience of his longing – God is apprehended as the correlative object of his desires. It is not so much rigour in thought or morality in living that is intended; it is experience and possession and a union comprising the compenetration of persons and ecstatic transcendence of presence. Within the religious context, God is not so classically ‘He’ (or ‘She’), as ‘Thou’; just as in religion, a man stands not as another fact within the universe, but as someone called by name out of nothingness and to whom a word is spoken. A process becomes predominantly religious – rather than metaphysical or ethical or aesthetic – when the man so named turns to claim or to be claimed by the ‘Thou’ about which studies may speak as the Absolute, but which none of them can control or deliver. Religion differs from the academic as its engagements are particular, its modalities are interpersonal, and its aim is transforming union.⁴ The religious man is vitally persuaded not only that God has offered himself as such a possibility and fulfilment, but that he will guide human life towards this realization; God offers not only finality, but consistent direction.

So the pressing question lies not about general purpose or willing providence, but about concrete means; how does God direct human life to himself? What are the means of contacting or of being guided by God? Where does one locate this directing power of God? To this

⁴ Thus Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., would agree with Friedrich Heiler, ‘The History of Religions as Preparation for the Co-operation of Religions’, in *The History of Religions* (ed. M. Eliade and J. Kitagawa, Chicago, 1959), pp 142–153. Lonergan points out that there are at least six areas common to such world religions as Christianity, – Judaism, Islam, Mazdaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism: ‘that there is a transcendent reality; that he is immanent in human hearts; that he is supreme beauty, truth, righteousness, goodness; that he is love, mercy, compassion; that the way to him is repentance, self-denial, prayer; that the way is love of one’s neighbour, even of one’s enemies; that the way is love of God, so that bliss is conceived as knowledge of God, union with him, or dissolution into him’. *Method in Theology* (New York, 1972), p 109.

question three variant and complex answers historically have been given.

Some have sought or found their guidance from God through the mediation of the preternatural, personalities or realities which – while not identifying with the divine – so transcend and influence the human that they alter thoughts or control destinies or marshal forces or tempt resolution or effect liberation or deceive intention. Joan of Arc had her voices, Socrates his *daimon*, Antony his devils, and even Rilke fell back upon the angels as embodying the higher degree of reality of the invisible, angels reminding men of their remoteness from human destiny or providing what Rilke called the ‘direction’ of his heart.⁵ Saints, devils, and angels. The *Gathas* present a cosmos dominated by the unseen conflict of light and darkness,⁶ while the orthodox tradition of Athos, Jewish apocalyptic writings, and Qumran see it locked into a parallel warfare of spirits. Islam made the angelic order one of the six pillars of its truth, a source of revelation and of providence, while popular Buddhism sees the individual situated within a struggle of spirits and demons over his choices and actions.⁷ In the *Kabalah*, this superhuman intermediation constitutes the ‘Archetypal World’ or the *Yesod*; it is the ‘Perfect Land’ of the ancient Egyptian religion or the ‘Astral Plane’ of the tradition of the occult.⁸ Contact with this super-sensible world allows hermetic science its method of attaining that ultimate which illumines the phenomena.⁹ In this effort, spiritualists invoke the ghosts of the dead, astrologers chart the movement in the stars, and gnostic religious doctrines posit the emanations as intermediaries by whose influence a man can journey back towards God. What all of these traditions, rich and divergent, contradictory and discordant among themselves, have in common is this: they posit an ultra-human reality with whom one can come into contact, through whom his life will be guided by the divine. Men must touch that which is above man so that God might instruct and lead them to himself.

There is, however, another path: ‘We mortal men can find no

⁵ Cf Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies* (trans with commentary J. B. Leishman and Stephen Spender, New York, 1950), pp 87–88.

⁶ *Yasna*. Cf Helmut Humbach, *Die Gathas des Zarathustra* (Heidelberg, 1959), I, pp 84–87.

⁷ Cf *Koran*, Sürāhs: 6.61; 8. 9–12; 35.1; 69.17; 79.5. As in *The Koran* (a new translation from the original by Mirza Abu'l-Fazl, Bombay, 1955), pp 130, 174, 446, 606, 626. For a superficial account of daily life within a culture permeated by popular Buddhism, cf Kenneth J. Saunders, *Buddhism and Buddhists in Southern Asia* (New York, 1923).

⁸ Underhill, Evelyn: *Mysticism* (New York, 1961), p 154.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p 151.

other ladder whereby to ascend unto God but by the works of God', wrote Robert Bellarmine, distinguishing the ascent of the mind from the rapture of the spirit and representing an intellectualistic tradition which he himself would trace back to Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*.¹⁰ Man progresses towards union with God by comprehending the real nature of things; these are divine products and 'the efficient cause may be known by the effects, and the example by the image'.¹¹ Conversely, the possession of God works a new union between the knowledge of God and all things in Jacob Boehme: 'In this light my spirit directly saw through all things, and knew God in and by all creatures, even in herbs and grass'.¹² There is a significant shift here from an arcane, magical immersion in the preternatural to a rational ascent made through graded orders of being. So this tradition often speaks of a ladder or of a journey of the mind to God, as Plato found a continuity of the developing intellect ranging through all studies and arts to its final contemplation of that which is best in existence.¹³ Porphyry wrote that Plotinus's 'end and aim was an intimate union with God who is above all things', and the method by which his life moved towards this completion was dialectic, passing through the nature of things and the differentiation of categories to rest finally in the unity of them all.¹⁴ 'Things here are signs, they show therefore to the wiser teachers how the supreme God may be known; the instructed priest reading the sign may enter the holy place and make real the vision of the inaccessible'.¹⁵ The end is attained in ecstasy and vision, but the path and the guidance to this fulfilment is the dispassionate use of the mind, years of serious human thought. In orthodox spiritualism, this ascent structures the three degrees of knowledge of Isaac of Nineveh, and in the catholic, the dialectic ascent of Monica and Augustine at Ostia'.¹⁶ So the Tao is approached not through conventional knowledge but by the practice of the 'simple and subtle

¹⁰ St Robert Bellarmine, *The Ascent of the Mind to God by a Ladder of Things Created* (trans. B. Gent, London, 1928), pp xxi-xxii. Cf Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* (trans P. Boehner, New York, 1956). ¹¹ Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, p xxii.

¹² Boehme, Jacob: *The Aurora* (trans John Sparrow, London, 1960), xix, 13, p 488.

¹³ Plato, *Republic*, vii 532-534, in *Plato: The Collected Dialogues Including the Letters* (ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, New York, 1961), pp 764-766.

¹⁴ Plotinus, *The Six Enneads* (trans Stephen MacKenna and B. S. Page, Chicago, 1952), *Ennead* i. 3. 4, p 11. For Porphyry's comment, cf 'Biographical Note', *ibid.*, p vi.

¹⁵ *Ennead*, vi. 9. 11; *Ibid.*, p 360.

¹⁶ Saint Isaac of Syria, 'Directions on Spiritual Training', in *Early Fathers from the Philokalia* (trans E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer, London, 1954), p 192. Augustine, *The Confessions*, ix. 23-25 (trans Edward Bouverie Pusey, Chicago, 1952), pp 67-68.

art of *wu-wei*, knowledge becoming knowledge only in a *docta ignorantia*.¹⁷ Mahayana Buddhism in Nagarjuna moves towards religious liberation, as the 'middle way' dialectically refutes each metaphysical proposition in order to experience its relativity before a final intuitive enlightenment.¹⁸

It is this mysticism which underlies the coherence between the religious and scientific consciousness, so that the pattern of the planets enabled Kepler to reach a coincidence between his mind and that of the Creator, or the outreach of the phyla for Teilhard de Chardin speak out the directing influence of the cosmic Christ, or the advice to physicians of that 'strangely wonderful man', Theophrastus Paracelsus: 'He who understands and knows much of nature's work is high in faith, for the creator is his teacher . . . He should know about the earth, what grows on it, of the sea and sky, so that he knows the Creator of all things'.¹⁹ When Spinoza attempts the contemplative realization 'of the union between the mind and the whole of nature', his essay transposes this tradition from a dialectical to a logistic mode; and his 'third kind of knowledge' terminates in presence and union: 'As each person becomes stronger in this kind of knowledge, the more he is conscious of himself and of God, of himself that is in God and of God as in himself'.²⁰

For still another tradition, neither the transcendence of the preternatural nor the elaborations of reasoning and vision offer an approach to the divine. 'The heart has its reason, which reason does not know'.²¹ Men are carried into the divine by affectivity and the surge of emotion. One is touched by God. So William James scores Cardinal Newman for his failure to realize that 'feeling is the deeper source of religion',²² and all intellectual operations are 'interpretative and inductive operations, operations after the fact, consequent upon religious feeling, not co-ordinate with it, not independent of what it ascertains'.²³ It is far more important to feel contrition; the only

¹⁷ Watts, Alan W.: *The Way of Zen* (New York, 1957), p 19.

¹⁸ Dumoulin, Heinrich: *A History of Zen Buddhism* (trans from the German by Paul Peachey, Boston, 1963), p 36.

¹⁹ Kepler, Johannes: *Epitome of Copernican Astronomy* (trans Charles Glenn Wallis, Chicago, 1952), *Epitome IV*, p 960. Teilhard de Chardin: *The Phenomenon of Man* (trans Bernard Wall, New York, 1959), pp 294ff. Stoudt, John Joseph: *Jacob Boehme: His Life and Thought* (New York, 1968), pp 26-28.

²⁰ Spinoza, Benedict de: *Ethics* (ed. James Gutmann, New York, 1949), v. 31. 6, p 272. Cf Spinoza, *On the Improvement of the Understanding* (New York, 1949), p 6.

²¹ Pascal, *Pensées* (trans W. F. Trotter, Chicago, 1952), Section IV, 277, p 222.

²² James, William: *The Variety of Religious Experience* (New York, 1911), p 431.

²³ *Ibid.*, p 433.

function of intellect, implicitly stated, would be the secondary contribution of knowing its definition, becomes the teaching of the *Imitation of Christ*.²⁴ John Wesley's *Journals* record 'righteousness, peace and joy in the holy Ghost. These must be *felt*, or they have no being'. And again: 'How do you know whether you love me? Why, as you know whether you are hot or cold. You *feel* this moment that you do or do not love me. And I *feel* at this moment that I do not love God, which therefore I know because I *feel* it'.²⁵ Out of this persuasion issues the enthusiast, moving towards God under the impetus of religious exuberance, while 'especially, he decries the use of human reason as a guide to any sort of religious truth'.²⁶ Feelings can offer a more profound threshold of consciousness which catches up the whole person in the intensity of his experience, and allows experience to indicate conversion, justification, progressive sanctification, co-operation with providence, and the promise of salvation. But feelings can also live in the far more modest statement of the *Theologia Germanica*: 'So this love so makes a man one with God, that he can never be separated from him'.²⁷ This same assertion of the simplicity of affectivity comes through the tradition of the Sufis: 'Through the heart you can make your connection with God', wrote Attar of Nishapur; while the *Cloud of Unknowing* makes this claim much starker in its contrasts: 'By love he may be sought and held, but by thinking never'.²⁸

Preternatural influences, process of intellection, attractions of affectivity – these have constituted the several ways in which men have attempted to secure the guidance of their God, and their distinction and their interplay continue the complicated history of religious experience. Seldom does one predominate to the total exclusion of the other two. Often two will exist at various moments as the same movement towards God, sometimes even existing together in collaboration and in opposition to the third: affectivity can join with the preternatural to war against reason, or reason can find support in human emotions for its rejections of angels, emanations and stars.

It was not the genius of Ignatius of Loyola that he counted all

²⁴ *The Imitation of Christ*, Bk i, ch 1.

²⁵ Wesley, John: *Journal*, quoted in *Enthusiasm*, by Ronald Knox (New York, 1961), p 537.

²⁶ Knox, *op. cit.*, p 3.

²⁷ *Theologia Germanica* (trans Susanna Winkworth, London, 1950), xii, p 192.

²⁸ Indries Shah, *The Way of the Sufi* (New York, 1970), p 63; *The Cloud of Unknowing* (trans Clifton Wolters, London, 1970), Ch 6, p 60.

three factors as critical within religious experience. This he did, but so did other major figures of his time such as Teresa of Jesus, John of the Cross, Peter of Alcantara, etc. What Ignatius provided was a structure within which each of these finds a significant place; none is dismissed out of hand. A co-ordination among them is established so that they reach an integrity of effect, and one is taught how to recognize and reply to each. This, perhaps more than any other contribution, comprises the unique value of his Rules for the Discernment of Spirits. They are formal codifications of insights and responses which have arisen and justified themselves in Ignatius's own religious practice, though they can trace a patristic heritage back to Hermas and Origen, and a location with the history of spirituality back to Athanasius's *Life of Antony*, the *Conferences of Cassian*, and Diadochus of Photike's *De perfectione spirituali capita centum*.²⁹ The middle ages continued this tradition in Bernard of Clairvaux, Henry of Friemar, Bernadine of Siena, Denis the Carthusian, and Gerson.³⁰ But Ignatius's work, though situated within this ecclesiastical tradition, seems strangely innocent of it. The origin of these Rules for Discernment of Spirits is much more to be sought in his unfolding *Autobiography* than in his readings of the fathers and doctors of the Church. Ignatius is not so much derivative from the literature of spirituality as he is amazingly co-ordinate and contributory.³¹ What is both underivative and unique about ignatian discernment is the schematization in which he placed it. No author either before or after has offered such a concise codification of discernment; this internal structure is his work, and here more than any other place should be sought the uniqueness of his vision. It is this argument which emerges from the actual text of his Rules.

Rules: First Week

The initial rule sets up a structure which unites the various approaches to religious experience into a co-ordinate and causal matrix. Preternatural influences become either the good spirit or 'the enemy'; thoughts and intentionality become either the conscience with the self-accusations of reason or the imaginations of

²⁹ For the patristic development of the discernment of spirits and its coincidence with the doctrine of Ignatius, cf Hugo Rahner, S.J., *Ignatius the Theologian* (trans Michael Barry, New York, 1968) pp 165-180. Cf *Discernment of Spirits, loc. cit.*, pp 55-65.

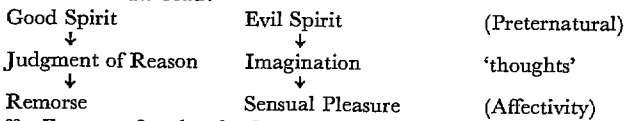
³⁰ *Discernment of Spirits, loc. cit.*, pp 65-78.

³¹ Hugo Rahner, *op. cit.*, p 136; De Guibert, *op. cit.*, p 29.

sensual pleasure; affectivity and emotion become either remorse or sensual pleasures which draw towards or maintain a state of sin. Both of these three levels of influence are intrinsically and causally connected: the enemy through the imagination causes sensual attraction; the good spirit through the reason and conscience causes remorse. And the relationship between the two causal lines is contradiction on every level: the enemy *versus* the good spirit; imaginations of sensual pleasures *versus* the self-accusations of reason; sensual pleasures drawing towards sin *versus* remorse. What Ignatius has erected here is a tripartite division distributed into two contradictory columns which will serve as a general scheme for the rest of his elaboration of discernment.³²

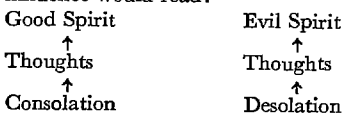
What is enormously important to notice is that the vectors in religious experience, the causal lines, can either move down, as they do in this first rule from preternatural influences through human imagination and rational intentionality into affective states, or they can move up, as they do in the fourth and fifth rules. Certain affective-conditions, consolation and desolation, can spontaneously generate commensurate thought: 'the thoughts that spring from consolation (*que salen de la consolación*) are contrary to the thoughts which spring from desolation (*que salen de la desolación*)'.³³ Irrespective of how one comes into a state of desolation, for example, whether by an accident of the day or by temperament or by external influences, there will be thoughts and perspectives which correspond to this state of affectivity. The line of causality now moves up from affectivity to thoughts. The fifth rule warns against being determined by these thoughts, because they almost mechanically place one under the influence of the evil spirit: 'As in consolation the good spirit rather leads and directs us by his counsel, so in desolation does the evil spirit'.³⁴ The schematization of religious experience allows one

³² First rule, first week (314). Diagrammatically, such a schema with its vectors of influence would read:



³³ Exx 317: fourth rule, first week.

³⁴ Exx 318: fifth rule, first week. Diagrammatically, such a schema with its vectors of influence would read:



to move either under angelic inspiration through a quality of thoughts down to moods and sets of feeling, or contrariwise from moods and sets of feeling (irrespective of their origins) through a corresponding quality of thought to a location under angelic or diabolical influences.

This prior specification of the matrix, in the first rule, is geared to a particular state of religious disposition, for those whose lives are dominated by the capital sins, the root of whose actions are found in pride, covetousness, lust, anger, etc.: that is, those who have not turned their lives over to the Lord Jesus.³⁵ The mode of their temptation is pleasure, operating instinctively and almost automatically on the pleasure-pain axis. But the first week also takes account of a more developed subject, one whose conscience is progressing through a period of purification, possibly even preparatory to a higher degree of union with God. For a man moving through purification, the modes of temptation are dialectically reversed, and the instrumentality of evil is no longer imagination but thought. A higher level of human development is presupposed: a man no longer dominated by his imagination and sensual pleasures but operating by reason and insight. Here the evil spirit through false reasoning brings about pain and sadness and a sense of futility, the reasoning devolving upon obstacles to a continuation of the process of conversion. The good spirit moves in conjunction with the developmental effort of the person; and the effect of his movement within affectivity is courage and strength, consolation, tears, inspirations and calmness. Temptations still run on the pleasure-pain axis, but now they appeal to pain, the cost of discipleship.³⁶

The first and second rules set up the initial schematization of the three levels of religious influence, a matrix whose variables are affectivity, imagination or intellectual intentionality, and preternatural influences. With one kind of subject, these variables achieve a particular kind of value; with another kind of subject, they are concretized differently. Ignatius can further unify the multiform realities of affectivity in terms of two critically important concepts: consolation and desolation. Neither is an influence external to man, nor is either of them a quality of rational intentionality. They are states of affectivity, 'an interior motion' defined by the direction of the movement. Consolation is any interior movement of emotionality, feeling, or sensibility whose term is God – a man is drawn or driven

³⁵ Exx 314: first rule, first week.

³⁶ Exx 315: second rule, first week.

to God. The primary instance of such an experience is that of love, but it can also include the tears of remorse, any sensible increase of faith, hope, charity, and a joy whose effect is quiet and peace in God. Desolation is precisely the opposite, that is, any movement of emotionality or sensibility whose term is evil, whether that affectivity be painful as a troubled mind or comfortably cynical as a movement to distrust.³⁷

Consolation and desolation do not identify necessarily with pleasure and pain. Men with their arms locked, singing bawdy songs on their way to the local whorehouse, are in desolation for Ignatius: 'any movement to base and earthly things'. Consolation and desolation, then, must be critically distinguished both from Freud's description of instinctual satisfaction and from the use of these terms in other spiritual authors. In no sense does consolation merge with pleasure and desolation with pain. They are obvious states of affectivity, but they are not denoted by their sensible or even spiritual enjoyment, but by their direction, by their terminus. As motives, then, for prayer, neither is posited except in its orientation towards God, a catching up of the feelings and sensibility of man in the orientation of all things to God. Consolation is any interior movement of human sensibility – irrespective of the cause – whose direction is God, whether that movement be one of exuberant emotion or quiet peace, whether its presence is experientially pleasant or not. And the initial 'instantiation' of this experience is the finest description Ignatius gives of indifference: 'the soul begins to be on fire with the love of her Creator and Lord, and consequently, she can love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself, but only in the Creator of them all'.³⁸

Once this schematization is established in the initial rules of these directions, the structure of the whole falls into an obvious unity. Advice is offered how each level of religious influence is to be handled when its movement is towards evil: Rules five and six, how to act directly against *desolation* itself; Rules seven to eleven, how to act directly against the *thoughts* that arise from desolation; Rules twelve to fourteen, how to act directly against the sphere of the *evil spirit*. The purpose of this paper would be dissipated by an extended gloss on each rule: its aim is to establish the synthetic nature of the Rules for Discernment of Spirits. But to substantiate these structural comments a brief comment is in order.

³⁷ Exx 316–17: third and fourth rules, first week.

³⁸ Exx 316: third rule, first week.

To act directly against *desolation*, since it places one within the guidance of evil, no change should occur in the direction toward which the desolation would organically point; one is to remain faithful to previous commitments and inspiration. On the contrary, since the contradictory of evil is good, one should take his clue from this pointing of desolation and tend towards the opposite way.³⁹

Further, to move directly against the *thoughts* which proceed from desolation is not so much a question of action as of meditation and rational focus. One is to consider (*considerere*) the nature of the process itself, that God is purifying one's radically human powers, and so has moved beyond sensibility as a newness in growth, and that his grace in this developmental stage is insensibly present.⁴⁰ He is to consider (*piense*) that consolation is part of his future.⁴¹ Further, one must understand the three causes, reasons for this state of desolation.⁴² One must prepare for desolation by thoughtful planning (*piense*) while in consolation.⁴³ Lastly, the subjects of reflection (*pensando*) during consolation and desolation are dialectical opposites: in the latter one meditates on the strength gained from grace, in the former one recognizes the weakness without such grace.⁴⁴

Thirdly, when countering directly the pervasive influence of the *evil spirit* within human life, the focus is neither immediate choice nor a concentration of rational intentionality; it is three pivotal life stances, suggested through these three similes: the angry woman, the false lover, and the captain of an army. Through the first image, an initial courage and determination are demanded, an orientation whose origins come from confidence in God.⁴⁵ Through the second image, an openness with a confessor or with a spiritual director, an orientation whose origins comes from inter-personal, even ecclesial guidance.⁴⁶ Through the third image, an abiding and perceptive self-knowledge is indicated, an orientation whose origins bespeaks a man's own self-appropriation.⁴⁷ These three similes evoke a response to the pervasive influence of evil within human life in terms of a man's attitude towards God, towards others, and towards himself.

In these fourteen rules, a matrix emerges for synthesizing religious experience on three different levels: ultra-human, rational and

³⁹ Exx 318-19: fifth and sixth rules, first week.

⁴⁰ Exx 320: seventh rule, first week.

⁴² Exx 322: ninth rule, first week.

⁴⁴ Exx 324: eleventh rule, first week.

⁴⁶ Exx 326: thirteenth rule, first week.

⁴¹ Exx 321: eighth rule, first week.

⁴³ Exx 323: tenth rule, first week.

⁴⁵ Exx 325: twelfth rule, first week.

⁴⁷ Exx 327: fourteenth rule, first week.

affective. This matrix provides both for the causal inter-relationship among the three, and the contradictory antitheses between the evil and the good. Established through these inter-connected variables, the structure is variously and flexibly realized differently by different kinds of subjects. Once this internal unity is asserted, serious but laconic directives are offered for responding to each kind of religious influence which would lead a man into evil, whether through pleasure or through pain – whether the appeal is made to sensibility and feeling, to imaginative and rational intentionality, or through the perverse influence of powers that are beyond man. The elaboration of discernment in the first week is geared to men drawn towards obvious evil. Now the much more difficult question obtains: how to respond to religious influences when the matter is much more subtle, when evil draws under the appearance of good? The first week saw temptation as unified both as phenomenon and as real; evil appeared to be what it is. The second week takes up the disjunction between the two: when the phenomenon is good but the reality is actually evil.

Second week

The general matrix initially elaborated for the first week is restated for the second week in its first rule: the enemy through specious reasoning effects sadness and perturbation, while spiritual joy comes from the influence of God and his angels. Once more, the antithetical relationships are established between the two groups of influences, and the causal vectors within each are set. A necessary level of rational intentionality is not placed immediately under the influence of God and his angels as something of invariant constancy: and this, because there will occur a kind of consolation that does not arise through thought but through affectivity.⁴⁸

Another dimension of equal importance will be now added to this matrix: the temporal. The causality of the first week, represented by single vertical lines, will be expanded by the historical dimension. One must attend to the contrary historical ends to which moments of consolation will lead: ends which indicate whether this seeming moment of grace actually comprises a hidden temptation.⁴⁹ The introduction of evil into good is subtle and slow, carried on over a gradual devolution.⁵⁰ For this reason, one must attend to the process

⁴⁸ Exx 329: first rule, second week.

⁴⁹ Exx 331: third rule, second week.

⁵⁰ Exx 332, fourth rule, second week.

itself as well as to the first moment of consolation. It is no longer enough to know how to deal with attractions towards obvious evil: one must attend to one's attractions towards the good by analysis of the entire beginning, middle, and end.⁵¹ These temporal divisions – so similar to the partition of the action of an aristotelian drama – serve not only to indicate the possibilities of an ingress of evil into human activity, but to situate moments at which such an ingress can be discerned. Initially, one can determine the deceptive nature of this consolation by the term to which it has led.⁵² Next, as one becomes more subtle, one can disentangle it from the course of the process itself, noting how the disintegrative process gradually became dominant.⁵³ Lastly, even the initial moment of first consolation can itself serve its own criteria for determining this falsity, antecedent to the development of this moment into a process.⁵⁴ The temporal, historical dimension given to the matrix of discernment in the second week is telling even in the last directive: one should distinguish the first moment of *consolación sin causa* from the second period which follows upon it.⁵⁵

The addition of the temporal dimension is critically important for two more reasons: it indicates a different subject for whom these rules are more appropriate, and it allows for a more fundamental distinction between the kinds of consolation.

The rules for the first week are geared for those whose motivation functions within the pleasure/pain polarities; they are tempted by apparent pleasures or by projected pain.⁵⁶ The rules for the second week are oriented towards those who are far more humanly developed and for whom instinctual satisfaction does not constitute the goal. They have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord – at least within the dynamic of the Exercises – and are now tempted under the appearance of good. This embodies one of the most significant insights of ignatian discernment: the good man – the one who has taken Christ as Lord and now is searching out his guidance of his life – is not so much tempted by the obviously evil, whether satisfying or painful, as he is tempted under the appearance of the moral good (*de especie de bien*).⁵⁷ Not obvious moral compromise, but the deceitful good will destroy him. Thus there is no discussion of desolation

⁵¹ Exx 333: fifth rule, second week.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Exx 334, sixth rule, second week.

⁵⁴ Exx 335, seventh rule, second week.

⁵⁵ Exx 336, eighth rule, second week.

⁵⁶ Exx 314–15; 9: first and second rules, first week; ninth annotation.

⁵⁷ Exx 10: tenth annotation.

within these rules: desolation is a movement of affectivity away from God in some sort of evident manner – the phenomenon in the first week bespoke the reality of the religious influence. Here it is quite different. The phenomenon is good, obviously good, and it is far more destructive than the evil. What is at issue here is the discrimination between that movement of affectivity which is genuinely and organically towards God, and that which is deceptive.⁵⁸

Both the temporal dimensions of this new structure and the differentiation of the subject allow for a third, crucial distinction, one that works out of the relationship between rational intentionality and affectivity: consolation without and with a cause. *Consolación sin causa*, as Karl Rahner has pointed out, is characterized neither by its suddenness nor by its engulfing qualities, but rather by the absence of any antecedent intentionality proportional to the drawing of affectivity into God.⁵⁹ One is deeply drawn affectively towards God as subject without any prior grasp of a predicate through which affectivity might be moved. Very simply this kind of experience is that a man finds himself deeply loving God without being aware of how he came to this. There could be a note of suddenness about it or surprise, but neither is particularly necessary. It is rather the total movement of affectivity and sensibility towards God without any proportional influence of imaginative or rational intentionality prior to the experience – whether this priority is conceived temporally or naturally. The fifteenth annotation suggests such a consolation as pivotal: ‘God works with the soul embracing her to his love and praise and so disposing her for the way in which she can better and hereafter serve him’.⁶⁰ For Ignatius this moment is self-authenticating, a movement of total affectivity and feeling towards God, a ‘yes’ which alone in our history contains no experience of ‘no’, which can have neither the level of intellectual intentionality as commensurate object nor the level of preternatural influence as an agent.⁶¹

In any other kind of consolation, of being drawn towards God, this is not true. When imaginative or rational intentionality either precedes affectivity or is commensurate with it, as thoughts spring out of consolation, the consolation is an equivocal experience. This *consolación con causa* can be either divine or angelic or diabolic, and the quality of its commensurate thoughts do not remove this ambiguity. Thus the distinctions among consolations allow the

⁵⁸ Exx 331–2: third and fourth rules, second week.

⁵⁹ Karl Rahner, *op. cit.*, pp 129–156.

⁶⁰ Exx 15: fifteenth annotation.

⁶¹ Exx 330: second rule, second week.

directives of the rules of the second week to form around each, emphasizing the second because of ambivalence of its direction and giving structure to the entire complex of these directives. While the initial rule laid down the basic matrix, and the second rule treated *consolación sin causa*, rules three to eight deal with *consolación con causa*, and the last combines both kinds of consolation into a single directive.

It is particularly in the *consolación con causa* that the temporal or historical dimension tells upon the operation and application of the original schematization. In this consolation, both good and evil can console the soul, but they engage it in a process whose end is either development or destruction. Here one is not dealing with a single moment or a period, but with an entire process, and the failure in the source will eventuate as a disintegration of the process. While the initial, atomic moment may well have contained nothing but obvious insights and attractions, little by little the process deteriorates, and the prior evil influence becomes more obviously in appearance what it primordially was in reality. These descriptive statements stand as presupposed in Ignatius's prescription for the reception and analysis of such consolation.⁶²

The temporal distinctions within the process not only allow for a functional division of the internal structure, but the structure itself indicates a pattern of progressive maturity in assimilating this kind of discernment. Three directives correspond to these three moments. Initially, at the end of a process one can recognize that one has been 'taken in', by an examination of either level: of rational intentionality or affectivity. If the thoughts of a man are 'evil or distracting or less good than what the soul had previously proposed to herself to do', disintegration has taken place. Further, if sensibility or the complex of human feelings has been weakened or made restless or so troubled that a previous peace and tranquillity have been lost, then the process has either been corrupted at its beginning or been lost during its development. Notice that neither affection nor rational intentionality is self-justifying; it is their unity which must obtain and in which one level is critically judgmental of the other.⁶³ The second moment of the learning of discernment, given in the next rule, is within the process itself and resembles nothing so much as Ignatius's own experience at Loyola and Manresa: having found

⁶² Exx 331-2: third and fourth rules, second week.

⁶³ Exx 333: fifth rule, second week.

himself 'taken in', a man retraces in memory and in retrospect the steps which led him to his present situation, notices how evil was gradually introduced into the development, 'so that by such experience, observed and noted down, he may be on his guard in the future against his (the Enemy's) customary machinations'. Experience eventually gives a man control over the process itself, making him sensitive to the introduction of the lesser good, as the evaluation of the initial consolation continues.⁶⁴ Finally, it is subtly possible, even at the initiation of the consolation, to discern the true from the false: the true consolation will enter a man given over to the Lord, almost imperceptibly, in silence, as a drop of water enters a sponge. On the contrary, that which is not of God will enter with the violence and perceptibility of a drop of water hitting a rock. The condition of affectivity indicates the quality of consolation long before any discriminations are elaborated on the worth of the ideas which spontaneously spring from this consolation.⁶⁵

It is for this reason that the ninth annotation warns seriously against giving the rules of the second week for those in the first week.⁶⁶ The criteria in each are almost the opposite. In the first week, affectivity was judged by its obvious direction, and distinguished as consolation and desolation; it was the moral worth of the attraction which qualified and denominated the sensibility. In the second week, the apparent moral worth of what is proposed is – at its beginning – beyond cavil; but its real worth is judged by affectivity, by one's feelings of peace and joy. Mix these up, and you have a monster on your hands. The one who feels at peace in cruelty is sick, or the religious who experiences joy in infidelity is pathological. Affectivity is not the criterion in the first week; it is the criterion in the second. And between these two moments lies the conversion and reorientation of human sensibility worked through the purifications and completions of the first week. Only when affectivity is ordered can it in turn become the clue to the direction in which one should go within the myriad good options which surround one's life.

This differentiation of religious experience into three levels, and the introduction of the temporal factors, allows Ignatius to draw the times of election into some parallels with the various levels in the discernment of spirits. The first time corresponds in some way to God's moving a man deliberately without the interplay of thoughts

⁶⁴ Exx 334: sixth rule, second week.

⁶⁵ Exx 335: seventh rule, second week.

⁶⁶ Exx 9: ninth annotation.

and affectivity, a movement in which, as with the *consolación sin causa*, there is no possibility of doubt.⁶⁷ The second time corresponds to the movements of affectivity which demand the full work of discernment; here affectivity is made the criterion of the divine call.⁶⁸ The third time emphasizes the processes of thoughts moving through the nature of options, but demanding confirmation in affectivity.⁶⁹ As in the Rules, more time is spent on the use of conscious reflection, but its integration with sensibility and emotion is cardinal to the judgment of its soundness.⁷⁰

Thus it is important to notice a certain completion in these Rules for Discernment. They are geared to choice, to the discovery of the divine guidance in that which attracts me; one set is oriented to the situation when the attractions around me are towards evil, another when the attractions which surround me are towards good. Both of them allowing for the careful interplay of preternatural influences, thought and affectivity with the history of a human pursuit of salvation.

Conclusion

What Ignatius has accomplished through these few Rules for Discernment of Spirits is a schematization which goes far beyond the needs of a single individual attempting to choose among the manifold options within his life, or beyond the exigencies of a religious community moving to determine the direction which God would have it take. Ignatius has provided a flexible matrix, whose variables can be so divergently given their values that the entire structure can incorporate religious experiences of the most diverse inspiration. He has done so, not by opting for one of these divergent approaches over its competitors, but precisely by allowing each a critically important influence upon human choice and by uniting all of them through a complex causal structure. That the elements are there and that they are united, is crucial. Angelic influences without reason and affectivity become superstition and terror. Reason without affectivity would become rationalistic and abstract, a deism in which God does not interact with this world. Affectivity without reason would degenerate into its own sectarian varieties of enthu-

⁶⁷ Exx 175: *El primer tiempo*.

⁶⁸ Exx 176: *El segundo*.

⁶⁹ Exx 177: *El tercero tiempo*.

⁷⁰ Thus the cardinal importance of the 'confirmation' in the third time. Cf the sixth point of the first mode of making an election in the third time and the concluding remarks at the end of the second mode. Exx 183, 188.

siasm. In any case, they are here – as they have been and are present within the religious traditions of man – and they are conjoined, so that one mutually supports and interprets the others. It is not so much their presence as their inter-relationship which is of pivotal importance, so that no area of religious experience be unattended to, and that no single one be allowed to become cancerous, so extended beyond its natural and organic location that it subsumes the operation of the whole.

The effect of this structure so uniting these influences within an operative synthesis should be to open one not only to the various and marvellous ways in which God can manifest himself within one's personal history, or even within the history of the Church, but to the myriad ways in which he can and has affected human history and the religious consciousness of man. These Rules, studied and assimilated in depth, could well provide one of the instrumentalities with which the Church comes to grips with traditions with whom she has held too long a polemic, and to whose peculiar religious genius she has too long been hostile and resistant. Without hesitation and arrogance and also without a naive syncretism, the vocation of the contemporary Church is to discover the presence of the liberating Spirit of God within the most radical diverse religious forms and expressions. And for this urgent task, the Society of Jesus should be able to present greater depth in understanding the Rules for Discernment of Spirits.