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THE RHETORIC OF LEADERSHIP

Deepening Responsible Autonomous Agency and Broadening the Scope of Participation through an Ignatian Contemplation of the Parable of the Good Shepherd

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Le bon pasteur : une métaphore parlante pour un *leadership* d'aujourd'hui ?

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Article abstract

The contentions of meaning implicit in the metaphors and symbols of the Good Shepherd Parable bear upon leadership issues and highlight the ambiguities, paradoxes, and conflicts of self-transcending social, cultural, and religious projects. Both shepherds and sheep need metaphors to stretch their understanding and engagement and symbols to reach toward a guiding vision that remains beyond their grasp. The Ignatian appropriation of the medieval monastic adaptation of principles of Ciceronian rhetoric in the practice of mental prayer helps to resolve, discern, cultivate, and direct the use of self in the service of such visionary projects. Ignatian discernment contributes to such dynamic development by identifying and resolving the norming affective dispositions of gratitude for creaturehood, freedom in the use of gifts and talents, and commitment to praise, reverence, and serve God and neighbor. These dispositions affirm human agency and orient practitioners to purposeful action without certainty about present facts and future outcomes. Such healing of human agency and participation in a higher purpose contributes to the restoration and elevation of human history.

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Introduction

In the Parable of the Good Shepherd, the mutual recognition of the shepherd and the sheep anticipates a remembering of agency and a re-description of a project that displace the vantage and surpass the horizon of human shepherds and sheep. Shepherds learn that they are not just hired hands, and sheep determine that they are not merely arithmetic additions to a collective. Recognizing oneself and others as characters in the metaphors and symbols of the parable, each discovers a capacity to advance projects that elude either's sole control and may even remain beyond joint definition. Whether we are more like shepherds or sheep, our capacities and goals as leaders and followers are awakened, drawn into action, and realized by being part of projects beyond ourselves.

Metaphors draw upon and stretch the resources of language to figure nascent experience and articulate complex issues. They often mobilize symbols accompanying our interior dialogue with our embodied experience and support our reach toward self-transcendence. Living metaphors present powerful, surprising juxtapositions of images and discourses that demand thoughtful reflection and invite growing insight. Sometimes, metaphors are no more than the residues of previous discoveries and constructions of meaning, familiar figures of speech that have lost their provocative quality. Metaphors can become so domesticated that they require little attention, thought, and active response from readers. In the contention between the internal sense of language and its meaningful reference, living metaphors creatively stretch sense and symbols extend the reach of reference. Together, they figure the psychic presentation of embodied sensation and self-transcending desire.[1]

1. Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory. Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Fort Worth TX, Texas Christian University Press, 1976.

In the following reflections, I retrieve the contentions of meaning implicit in the metaphors and symbols of the Good Shepherd Parable, particularly as they bear upon leadership issues and highlight the ambiguities, paradoxes, and conflicts of self-transcending social, cultural, and religious projects. Then, addressing the inevitable disputes about resource allocation, differentiated social roles, political authority, cultural values, personal vocations, and religious commitments, I focus on the contribution of an Ignatian appropriation of the medieval monastic adaptation of principles of Ciceronian rhetoric in the practice of mental prayer to resolve, discern, cultivate, and direct the use of self in the service of such visionary projects.

Social and religious controversies, not unlike our own, confronted Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), the founder of the Jesuit order and author of the *Spiritual Exercises* (1548).[2] In response, he adapted and deployed monastic, mental prayer practices – actively engaging thoughts and feelings – to the task of discerning how to assess and address the issues of the dawning modern age. In the face of ecclesial corruption, populist religious movements, and the rise of new socio-economic structures, Ignatius' proximate goal was neither to gain a speculative overview nor to chart an unwavering path but to develop the interior resources and a breadth of vision required to shape life-enhancing contributions to the church and world. Amid civil turmoil, social shame, and widespread confusion, he cultivated agency by discerning practical, modest ways to advance praiseworthy, divine projects within the opportunities afforded by circumstances, one step at a time. By humbly participating in projects reaching beyond self-interest and self-definition, the founder of the Jesuits showed a way to develop the affective freedom and intellectual flexibility required to recognize and cooperate with the traces of transcendent purpose in daily events.

1. The Parable of the Good Shepherd

The use of shepherds and herders as tropes for leadership has a long history predating the Jewish and Christian Scriptures.[3] In the Tanach, shepherds are among the figures shaping the narratives in the Pentateuch, the historical books, and the prophetic literature. The men and women who tended flocks, often in life-long servitude, were not counted among the social and political elite. Numbers presents becoming a shepherd as a punishment (14:33). Genesis relates that the Egyptians found all shepherds to be detestable (46:34).

2. Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius. A New Translation Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph*, trans. Louis J. Puhl, Westminster MD, Newman Press, 1951.

3. James B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament with Supplement*, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 2016, pp. 368b, 443b, 443c, 443d.

Yet, Jacob reverses the trope as he blesses his grandchildren in the name of the God who had been his shepherd all the days of his life (Gen 48:15). This resignification of the trope flags the complex and dynamic role that shepherds play throughout the Scriptures.

Sometimes shepherds are dramatic characters. The boy-shepherd David slays Goliath and rises to lead Israel, assigned by God to shepherd his people (2 Sam 5:2, I Chr 11:2). Sheep without a shepherd signals a vulnerable, disoriented, scattered, and aimless people (Num 27:17, 2 Chr 18:16, Is 13:14). Shepherds are assessed for their lack of understanding and self-interest (Is 56:11). After relating God's promise to give the people "shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and faith" (3:15), Jeremiah refigures the same trope in an extended lament about senseless, faithless, uncaring, destructive leaders (10:21, 12:10, 23:1-2, 25:34, 50:6). Ezekiel holds up God's promise to "shepherd the flock with justice" (34:16) but then calls out self-centered, irresponsible shepherds who care only for themselves and eat of the flock (34:8, 34:10). Zechariah chastises both the people who "wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd" (10:2) and their leaders who neglected their flocks to enrich themselves. Charged to become a shepherd with a responsibility to bring justice to the land, he takes up two staffs "Grace" and "Union" to cancel the covenant and punish unfaithful Judah and Israel, "the flock marked for slaughter" (Ze 11:4-17).

The Gospels take up similar dramatic tensions. In Matthew, the unsuspecting wise men visiting the duplicitous Herod as heralds of the birth of the Christ bear witness to the prophecy that from Bethlehem "will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel" (2.6). Later, Jesus has compassion on the crowds who were harassed and helpless, "like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt 9:36). Both Matthew and Mark record Jesus' prediction that his disciples will betray him at the crisis moment of his crucifixion, "for it is written: I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered" (Mt 26:31, Mk 14:27).

In an intertextual reading, drawing on the complex tradition of the shepherd and sheep tropes, evoking positive and negative threads, John describes Jesus as the "Good Shepherd" who guards the gate of the fold and "lays down his life for the sheep" (10:11). John develops the imagery of the sheep who recognize the shepherd's voice and follow him: "I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father" (10:14-15). The repeated use of *ginôskô* in the Greek text, typically translated in English as "know," denotes mutual recognition and acknowledgment and conveys the connotation of affective bonding, which anticipates and resonates with post-Hegelian, identity-shaping recognition theory.[4] As we discuss below,

4. Risto Saarinen, *Recognition and Religion. A Historical and Systematic Study*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 42-44.

this type of vulnerable, intersubjective attachment is revealed and resolved through discerning self-reflection on feelings, perceptions, and actions.

In the recollection of the scriptural accounts of the life of Jesus Christ in the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius recalls Luke's version of the birth of Christ our Lord made known to the shepherds by the angel. "I bring to you glad tidings of great joy … for there has been born to you this day a Savior." Identified here as the disadvantaged of society, the shepherds immediately recognize and respond to life-transforming opportunity. They "went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in the manger" and "returned glorifying and praising God."[5]

Of course, the point I am developing here remains that the potential senses of shepherd tropes are internally complex, and possible references to leadership do not escape social, political, and religious ambiguity. In their performative effect, they may dissimulate illegitimate, oppressive social structures or provoke reflective agency leading to needed social transformation. As Paul Ricœur suggests, utopian tropes such as the Good Shepherd dwell in the contention between concealment and disclosure, either erasing political awareness with deferred aspirations or motivating present social change.[6] Yet, unlike many other literary forms, utopian literature is transparent in its reflective provocation. Ironically or not, the utopian genre heightens the potential for critical self-awareness.[7] With a similar intent, I turn to the Ignatian tradition of spiritual discernment to enhance our self-critical capacity to participate in social, cultural, and religious projects beyond self and group interest.

2. An Ignatian Retrieval and Reconstruction

Before returning to reflect on the Parable of the Good Shepherd, some remarks on the recent renewal of the Ignatian charism over the last forty years may help orient readers to the role of Ignatian spirituality in the promotion of free and flexible agency and higher, self-transcending purpose. Like others following Christian spiritual traditions and responding to the invitation of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) to renew consecrated life, practitioners have retrieved and adapted the Ignatian spiritual charism to address contemporary social and cultural movements.[8] Beginning in the 1970s, the practice of Ignatian spirituality in English-speaking contexts replaced an

5. Luke 2:8-20, *Spiritual Exercises*, #265.

6. Paul Ricœur, "Ideology and Utopia" in *From Text to Action. Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson, Evanston IL, Northwestern University Press, 2007, pp. 308-324.

7. Ricoeur, "Ideology and Utopia," p. 318.

8. *Perfectæ caritatis*. Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965, #2. Available at https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_perfectae-caritatis_en.html

almost exclusive reliance on preached group retreats with individual spiritual accompaniment focused on practitioners' affective and cognitive movements. With spiritual conversation and reflective listening, trained spiritual guides direct practitioners' attention to the strength and direction of their thoughts and feelings. Guides recommend mental prayer activities, often involving the imaginative contemplation of Scripture, to develop interior freedom and discerning insight. Although historians and practitioners contend over the extent to which the change reflects a retrieval or an adaptation, this twofold renewal has involved a dramatic shift in engaging the reflective prayer activities recommended by Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises*.[9]

Following the Council and the pervasive social turmoil of the 1960s, personalism dawned broadly in Roman Catholic Church and many western societies. Individual authenticity and social engagement became the hallmarks of responsible agency. In mounting distrust of social and religious institutions, many people cultivated their faith through interior reflection leading to heightened self-awareness and critically directed social praxis. While this reflective approach typically espouses humanistic ideals and rightly challenges institutionalized corruption in church and society, the focus on personalism often embraces exaggerated, unrealistic individualism. Individual spirituality and personal authenticity overtake and displace imperfect communal rituals and all too fallible ecclesiastical authority. The resulting social fragmentation risks sacrificing the slow to ripen but potentially substantial fruit of bearing with others in structured, day-to-day social interaction, even if plagued by ambiguity. Avowing to be spiritual but not religious becomes a familiar if somewhat incongruous tagline.

For the young Ignatius, there was no such incongruity. To be religious was still a presupposition of his age. Though weakened by the beginning of the sixteenth century, the bulwarks of religious belief still shaped the social imagination of the renaissance.[10] The coming age of enlightenment had not yet confronted the notion of a spiritually enchanted universe supported by providential purpose and a divinely ordained social order. Born the thirteenth sibling, the youngest son, in a modestly titled noble family in Azpeitia in the

9. For a discussion of the retrieval and renewal of Ignatian spirituality leading up to and flowing from the Second Vatican Council, see John W. O'Malley and Timothy W. O'Brien, "The Twentieth-Century Construction of Ignatian Spirituality. A Sketch," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, 52 (2020). For a discussion of the renewal of the practice of the *Spiritual Exercises*, see Philip Endean, "Spiritual Exercises" in Thomas Worcester (ed.), *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Jesuits*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139032780. I propose that the contemporary adaptation signals a deep retrieval of Ignatius's creative and dynamic contribution.

10. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge MA – London, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007, p. 29.

Basque country of present-day northern Spain, it was not an altogether surprising eventuality for Ignatius to become a cleric.[11]

Although spiritual accomplishment was still primarily associated with the rituals and prayer practices of clerics and vowed members of the religious orders, Ignatius was born into a religious culture already marked by an early, emerging differentiation of popular spirituality and formal religion. Motivated by the scandal of corrupt and wayward clergy, the *Devotio Moderna* and other lay confraternities had begun to promote lay piety movements, which quickly fell under suspicion and censure by wary ecclesiastical authorities. At least for a time, this wariness extended to include Ignatius and the lay spiritual formation program advanced by his *Spiritual Exercises*.

Implicit in this early differentiation of spirituality and religion is the later disciplinary distinction between religion's transcendent and sociological functions. Beyond and apart from theologians' investigation of self-and-world-transcending purpose and meaning, sociologists identify and explore the role of religion in disseminating common meanings and values and, thereby, fostering social group cohesion.[12] Functions that had previously coincided in a compact notion of religion are distinguished. In the minds of many, personal spirituality has come to eclipse the transcendent function of religion by the present day. Religion is now associated almost solely with the function of group cohesion, which is inherently ambiguous. Whether advanced by religious motivations or other social strategies, world history demonstrates that promoting group cohesion can be directed toward reprehensible atrocities or praiseworthy, even self-and-world-transcending goals.[13]

While the differentiation of religion's transcendent and sociological functions promises to subject religious practice and authority to more transparent accountability, separating personal spirituality from communal religious practice risks overlooking the profoundly social dimensions of personal formation and encompassing human enterprise. The sociological function of religion is as inevitable and necessary as it is inherently ambiguous. Differentiating but then reintegrating the social and transcendent aspects of religion cultivates and draws upon the reflective practices of spirituality to identify, discern and

11. While Ignazio, as he was known in his youth, did not take a conventual path to the priesthood, he did receive minor orders. He was initiated into the clerical state sometime during his youthful service in the court of Duke of Nájera, first as a young page and later an adolescent courtier and soldier. For a biographical sketch, see Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *A Pilgrim's Testament. The Memoirs of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, Barton T. Geger (ed.), Chestnut Hill, MA, Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2020. Although the *Memoirs* are not written in the genre of a modern autobiography, they still provide an overview of the events of Ignatius's life.

12. Clive Gamble, John Gowlett and Robin Dunbar, *Thinking Big. How the Evolution of Social Life Shaped the Human Mind*, London, Thames & Hudson, 2014, pp. 194-197.

13. For instance, see the discussion of the interplay between religious aspirations and real world outcomes at the Paris peace talks following the First World War in Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919. Six Months That Changed the World*, New York NY, Random House, 2003.

reshape attitudes and actions flowing from otherwise less self-aware group identification.

Although religion continued throughout Ignatius' lifetime to foster social cohesion, the relegation of religion to clerics and the domination of spirituality by formal religious rituals was beginning to yield to a coming age that would differentiate the present world sociological function of religion from the transcendent purpose of spirituality. Escaping the contemporary tendency to eclipse the social role of religion, our discussion needs to retrieve the interrelation of spirituality and religion and their joint contribution to leadership formation. The social dimension of religion requires corrective cultivation by deepening personal agency and expanding its transcendent vision.

Venturing on the cusp between the late middle-ages and the early modern period, Ignatius's life journey and the evolving notion of pilgrimage found in his writings illustrate this emerging differentiation of religion and spirituality and anticipate their reintegration.[14] As he lay bed-ridden for months recuperating from an injury sustained at the Battle of Pamplona, the still youthful courtier-soldier experienced an inner awakening and religious conversion. Reflecting the innate privilege of a member of the petty nobility, the soldier turned penitent embarked on a pilgrimage to the holy land as an ascetic discipline of spiritual purification to replace his self-promoting worldly ambition with a life dedicated to the praise, reverence, and service of God and neighbor.

Unhindered by doubt about social location or religious values, he undertook an ascetic journey at a time when distance travel involved a real risk to well-being and life itself to realize well-defined and socially recognized religious goals. After Ignatius overcame obstacles and reached the holy land, ecclesiastical authorities found him ill-educated and rejected his plan to preach to pilgrims. Under pain of excommunication, they ordered Ignatius to leave Jerusalem. This ecclesial injunction shattered his unquestioned social identity and self-directed plans.

This unsettling of his assumed worldview marked the embarkation point of a second physical journey and the emergence of a transformed notion of pilgrimage. Setting out from Jerusalem, the disquieted Ignatius searched no longer from a socially defined identity under the guidance of an established religious program. Instead, he searched for identity and encounter with a now hidden God. This repurposed journey verged on a modern notion of a questing pilgrimage. For Ignatius, this search for meaning led to completing the *Spiritual Exercises*, a period of study in preparation for apostolic service, and gathering a group of companions drawn from fellow university students.

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14. For my discussion of the three pilgrimages, I follow André Brouillette, "Le pèlerinage ignatien. Entre ascèse, identité et mystique," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 140 (2018), pp. 91-106 (here 91), https://doi.org/10.3917/nrt.401.0091.

Companions who later deliberated to establish a common life of spiritual companionship and service.

By 1540 Pope Paul III approved the founding of the Society of Jesus as an apostolic religious order, and the first companions elected Ignatius as their superior general. Ignatius later related an account of his life to a young Jesuit, who subsequently composed a narrative tracing a divine guiding presence through the founder's literal pilgrimages and metaphoric spiritual journeys.[15] In these recollections, the reader discovers that beyond Ignatius' search for spiritual intimacy and divine service, the elder Jesuit had ventured from the outset in mystical union. Thus, from the start, a divine undertow had accompanied Ignatius' youthful ascetic, penitential journey to confirm his conversion and then his later questing journey to discover a more profound identity in a less self-directed encounter with transcendence. In effect, a third pilgrimage, a spiritual odyssey shaped in the narration of previously unnoticed interior movements, had accompanied his previous travels.

Although these three notions of pilgrimages mark sequential waypoints in Ignatius' personal development and reflect the cultural evolution of his times, they also flag concurrent influences. True, much like the notes of a melody, the three notions sound the progression of successive moments. The second moment recalls the first by creating a counterpoint and anticipates the third, which advances the mounting contention in a moment of dynamic resonance. Yet, we could also understand these cascading movements as simultaneous intermediation of deepening agency, evolving social engagement, and reaching purpose. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius guides practitioners to identify and discern the warp and woof of this intermediation to guide vocational and daily life decisions.

In the program outlined in the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius adapted an established tradition of monastic, mental prayer practices. Prayer practices that either presumed or explicitly adapted elements of the *trivium* – grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic – a classical training of cognition.[16] Grammar developed competence in the structure of language and its poetic tropes. Spiritual discernment adapts the grammatical principle of *akribeia* to respect the tradition and its mores through a strict interpretation of their demands. Rhetoric focused on the skilled but flexible deployment of language in the practical task of communicating effectively to a particular audience. Discernment adapts the rhetorical principle of *oikonomia* to promote a generous accommodation to the

15. Luis Gonçalves da Câmâra serve as *amanuensis* who received Ignatius oral narration and composed the *Acta patris Ignatii*, ed. Dionisio Fernandez Zapico and Candido de Dalmases, S.J., *Monumenta historica societatis Iesu*, 66, Rome, Monumenta historica societatis Iesu, 1943. For a contemporary translation, Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *A Pilgrim's Testament*.

16. For a discussion of the trivium, see Roland Barthes, "L'ancienne rhétorique," *Communications*, 16 (1970), pp. 172-223. https://doi.org/10.3406/comm.1970.1236.

limitations of the immediate circumstances to guide a reasonable response to a situation's affordances and constraints. Finally, dialectic nurtured proficiency in logic, argumentation, and debate to pursue coherence and truth. Discernment adapts dialectic to probe the contention between *akribeia* and *oikonomia*.[17]

Most explicitly, Ignatius deployed and adapted the monastic appropriation of four principles of Ciceronian rhetoric to the prayer practices and discernment processes outlined in his spiritual program.[18] First, by this active approach to prayer, practitioners gather teachings, texts, and other resources, hold them in active, dynamic memory, and engage them creatively to compose responses to the present moment's needs (*inventio*). Together, the derivative English notions of inventory and invention flag these two dimensions. Next, practitioners construct an imaginative pathway through the twists and turns of spiritual and daily life. They explore intertwining issues to assume multiple vantages in generative and often unresolved contention (*dispositio*). Then, they attend to their evolving feelings, an affective matrix that accompanies the unfolding path (*elocutio*). They savor the journey's ripened and yet to ripen fruits while acknowledging a final summation may remain suspended or postponed. *Dispositio* and *elocutio* combine to trace the interplay of conflicting emotions and commitments in character development, a development powerfully illustrated in Ignatius' account and other narratives.[19] Finally, Ignatian practitioners become responsible moral agents not through rote recollection of rules but by enfleshing a living, ever-emerging tradition (*memoria*). In the continuation of late medieval memorial culture, to be steeped in ethos and resources of such a living tradition is to develop the virtue of prudence, which combines traditional wisdom, insight into circumstances, and clarifying vision of higher purpose. For Ignatius, the fruits of the life journey ripen as wise, ever-maturing agents of transformation navigate prudently through murky, turbulent waters and invent surprising, often liberating approaches that reframe issues and point out new paths to advance continually clarified, higher purpose.[20]

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17. For illustrations of *akribeia* and *oikonomia*, see the rhetoric approaches taken by Paul in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 and Galatians 5:1-6.

18. Here I am applying of the work of Mary Carruthers to the Ignatian corpus. See Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory. A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*[2] (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 70), Cambridge – New York NY, Cambridge University Press, 2008; Mary J. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought. Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 34), Cambridge – New York NY, Cambridge University Press, 1998. For a very helpful tracing of the sources of Ignatius' adaptation of the tradition of meditative prayer to the daily task of election, see Javier Melloni, *The Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola in the Western Tradition* (Inigo Texts Series 5), Leominster – New Malden, Gracewing Publishing – Inigo Enterprises, 2000.

19. For a discussion of the relation of plot and character development, see Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, Chicago IL, University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 113-139.

20. Examples of these performative rhetorical dynamics abound in the *Spiritual Exercises*. For instance, consider how Ignatius identifies movements toward and away from faith, hope, and charity in the Two Standards Exercise (##136-148). The negative, desolating movement away

As a perennial pilgrim venturing on a spiritual odyssey along the cusp of the medieval and modern ages, Ignatius adapted these resources of mental prayer to resolve, discern and cultivate the desires shaping and guiding his journey. Near the outset of the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius proposes a foundational exercise to identify and evaluate practitioners' affective responses to their personal characteristics, socio-cultural location, and higher purpose.[21] This religious meditation addresses the practitioner's affective orientation as acknowledging or resisting creaturehood, spiritual detachment from all gifts and talents, and pervasive, ultimate commitment to praise, reverence, and serve God and neighbor. For Ignatius, perseverance in gratitude and joyous freedom to use oneself and one's resources in a spirit of service are evidence of a normative and well-disposed orientation focused on participation in self-transcending projects. Conversely, entitlement, envy, jealously, and a desire to spend oneself and one's resources in self-promotion and self-protection are evidence of an anti-normative, ill-disposed orientation centered upon the self and its appropriated possessions.

Ignatius associates these norming orientations with either consoling movements toward closer union with God and engagement with self-transcending purpose or desolating movements toward increased alienation from God and abandonment of higher purpose. He further proposes two sets of rules to discern the positive or negative valence of potential courses of action. The First Week Rules counsel persons inhabiting an anti-normative orientation to resist

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from fuller participation in the divine source and goal of human action begins by placing some good but finite gift at the center of human concern. Such a misplaced finite gift becomes a false, weakly secured possession, disassociated from the gift-giver. A profound lie that avoids disclosure by turning to others for admiration. The potential withdrawal of such honors threatens the vulnerability of the lie, which then seeks protection in the self-sufficiency of pride. A desolating movement, thus, flows from mislocated riches to false honor to isolating pride. In contrast, the positive, consoling movement toward fuller participation begins from the experience of poverty. The very center of the person's existence and desiring focuses not on a possession but a relation to the gift-giver. Divine love is offered freely and without entrapping entitlement. Living in this vulnerable state subjects the person to the scorn of self-secured others, who shelter their fragility by humiliating those they perceive as weak. Yet, those who accept their giftedness in transparent simplicity live in freedom and truth, which unites them in humility with Christ. A consoling movement, thus, emerges from poverty to humiliation to humility. For a fuller discussion of the use of epideictic rhetoric to illumine the *Spiritual Exercises*, see Gordon Ambrose Rixon, "Transforming Mysticism: Adorning Pathways to Self-Transcendence," *Gregorianum*, 85 (2004), pp. 719-734. Our discussion below focuses on the rhetorical dynamics of the Foundation Exercise, #23, the Rules for Discernment (##313-336), and the Rules for Thinking with the Church, especially ##365ff.

21. *Spiritual Exercises*, #23. Puhl refers to this foundational exercise as the "First Principle and Foundation." Elsewhere, and notably in the first guides to the use of the *Spiritual Exercises*, known collectively as the "directories," Ignatius and other early authoritative practitioners refer simply to the "Foundation," which serves as a primary reference point in the process of discernment. For examples, see Martin E. Palmer (ed.), *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises. The Early Jesuit Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599,* St. Louis MO, Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996.

apparent attractions and pursue countervailing plans of action, even if these actions were disturbing and unsettling. The same rules advise those resolving a normative orientation that delight generally accompanies positive action and disquiet signals negative choices and suggest further monitoring and testing of inclinations. In every case, discerning the normative and anti-normative character of a person's foundational affective orientation serves as the sounding point for the discernment of subsequent courses of action.[22]

Practitioners demonstrating generally stable orientations consistent with gratitude, freedom, and commitment are encouraged to employ the Second Week Rules to assess their inclinations further to detect patterns of self-deceit and subtle deviations from ventures well begun.[23] Here Ignatius urges practitioners to notice and reflect about the whole movement of apparent consolations, advising practitioners to notice the source, development, and fruit born by actions proceeding under superintending affective inclinations. Acknowledging only God can grace persons with consolation without any apparent cause, Ignatius observes that the source of consolations associated with identifiable events could be inspired by positive or negative spirits and lead ultimately toward or away from closer union with God. Even in the case of profound union with God in the experience of consolation without cause, Ignatius remarks that not every course of action that follows remains consoling in its development and ultimate fruit. Careful, thoughtful attention is required to detect the dawn of subtle self-deceptions or deflections of consoling movements, either introducing the distortion of self-promotion or the pursuit of a lesser good than initially envisioned. Ignatius urges practitioners to build up reflective, self-knowledge about consoling and desolating patterns in the inspiration and development of their affective movements.[24] Demonstrating implicit confidence in the ultimate integrity of the human person's gifted participation in self-transcending desire, Ignatius promotes deepened agency and generous concurrence in providential purpose through reflective self-regulation.

Ignatius's confident and hope-filled disposition did not blind him to the limitations and failings of his situation. The shortcomings of ecclesial authorities and the polemics of the Reformation shaped the immediate context of his commitment to serving a divine project within the Roman Catholic Church. As a practical aid to navigate ever-present imbroglios, Ignatius drafted *Rules*

22. *Spiritual Exercises*, ##313-327.

23. The Foundation Exercise helps practitioners resolve the general orientation of their value horizon by eliciting affective responses to its presentation of stipulated normative claims and dispositions, affective movements which then become available to the retreatant and spiritual guides as matter for further reflection, and, thereby, establishing a basis to apply the rules for discernment and from which to move forward into the remaining exercises. For a discussion of the role of the Foundation Exercise, see Juan Alonso de Vitoria's account of the Ignatius' directives, Palmer, *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises*, pp. 21-22.

24. *Spiritual Exercises*, ##328-336.

for Thinking with the Church, which are appended to and intended to be read in conjunction with the *Spiritual Exercises*.[25] A brief reflection about the controversial thirteenth rule helps to relate Ignatius's spiritual program to the challenge of faithfully addressing social and political issues under the guidance of a self-transcending vision.

A plain sense reading of the thirteenth rule offends contemporary sensibilities, positing: "If we wish to proceed securely in all things we must hold fast to the following principle: What seems to me white, I will believe black if the hierarchical Church so defines…"[26] In part, the weight of the offense lightens when readers read the text as performative rhetoric and appreciate that the Spanish autograph of the text employs *sentire* in place of the standard English-language translation *thinking* (i.e., rules for *feeling* with the church). This revised reading of the rule solicits practitioners' empathetic disposition toward the accumulated wisdom of the tradition and the burden of authority rather than commanding the abdication of critical and responsible thought. However, a contextualized rhetorical reading invites further insight into the text.

Among the gnarled controversies of the period is the debate between Erasmus and Luther over human freedom.[27] Beyond and eclipsing the substance of the debate, the disputants adopted diverging rhetorical strategies. Whereas Erasmus employed deliberative rhetoric to form consensus by weighing the arguments for and against a position, Luther utilized juridical rhetoric to determine guilt or innocence by presenting compelling empirical evidence. In the classical period, deliberative rhetoric aligned with skeptic epistemology and its appeal to reasoned arguments. Juridical rhetoric allies with stoic epistemology and its reliance on the clarity of sense perceptions. The trope in the debate between the skeptics and the stoics turned on the question, "How do you know snow is white?" In response, the stoic would appeal to the overwhelming evidence of blinding white snow on a sunny day. In contrast, the skeptic would raise the question about the muted gray of days-old snow.

Advising practitioners to avoid embroiling in controversies, Ignatius plays on the trope as he adopts a third rhetorical strategy, epideictic rhetoric, which praises laudable courses of action. The thirteenth rule introduces five additional rules that parse a dynamic movement toward a balanced pastoral engagement of pressing issues.[28] He eschews both the certainty of perception and the speculative overview sought by reason. Instead, he adopts the mod-

25. *Spiritual Exercises*, ##352-370.

26. *Spiritual Exercises*, #365.

27. Here I am following the discussion in Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, "Angels Black and White. Loyola's Spiritual Discernment in Historical Perspective," *Theological Studies*, 44 (1983), pp. 241-257. See also Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Loyola's Acts. The Rhetoric of the Self*, Berkeley CA, University of California Press, 1997.

28. *Spiritual Exercises*, ##366-370.

est program of advancing little by little, one praise-worthy action at a time to advance the church and its mission toward what "is wholly pleasing and agreeable to God our Lord."[29] Both confident of the wisdom of his faith tradition and well-advised of its failings, Ignatius advocates movement toward the good over a rigid adoption of an unrealistic moral idealism, no matter how this may be defined.

3. Concluding Reflections

How does Ignatius help us discern a path navigating the ambiguities incumbent upon those who would labor as leaders and contributors for a more just world guided by an open vision of a transcendent project? Shepherds and sheep guided by a vision of a Good Shepherd? Simply, an intertextual reading of the parable with its stretching metaphors and reaching symbols makes a rich complex of affect, insight, and aspiration available for discernment. Actively engaged by readers, the parable figures affect-laden images of marginalized persons who rise to leadership roles. Self-promoting leaders who cloak their self-interest in subterfuge. Leaders who are willing to spend their life energies and even lay down their lives for a greater good. No less, the parable enlivens affective images of masses of people scattered and lost without a vision of a higher purpose. People who are vulnerable to exploitation. People who hope for more but lack a way of proceeding. People whose identities could reflect the recognition of a noble leader and aspire to take their place and exercise agency in building a new humanity.

Two paradoxical but core theological affirmations guide Ignatian discernment. Faced with the denigration of the natural environment, the erosion of social trust, and assaults against human dignity, we cannot reverse these offenses and save ourselves. We turn to a greater power and higher purpose. But God, in whatever way we conceive deity, does not save us without us. The restoration and elevation of human history turn on the healing of human agency and participation in a higher purpose. Sheep need metaphors to stretch their understanding and engagement and symbols to reach toward a guiding vision that remains beyond their grasp. The growth of the flock symbolizes the advance of the project

Ignatian discernment contributes to the dynamic development of human agency and its varied contributions to higher purpose by identifying and resolving the norming affective dispositions of gratitude for creaturehood, freedom in the use of gifts and talents, and commitment to praise, reverence, and serve God and neighbor. These dispositions affirm human agency and orient practitioners to purposeful action without certainty about present facts

29. *Spiritual Exercises*, #370.

and future outcomes. The discernment process flags the need for ever-growing self-knowledge about emerging patterns of fruitful achievement and deplorable self-deceit. The vulnerable humility of gratitude contextualizes necessary commitments to courses of action. A humility that risks the potential humiliation of correction and purification of self-interest, if not self-promotion.

Most importantly, the discernment process affirms and operationalizes the presupposition of cosmic process's ultimate goodness and meaningfulness and humanity's capacity to engage a self-and-species-transcending project. By acting in accord with this presupposition, Ignatian discernment confirms humanity's ability to thrive amid the contention between freely invested, creative personal agency and serving a project that may eclipse not only self-interest but complete comprehension by individual participants. Human shepherds recognize that they serve best as sheep discerning the voice of a Good but never-domesticated Shepherd.

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SUMMARY

The contentions of meaning implicit in the metaphors and symbols of the Good Shepherd Parable bear upon leadership issues and highlight the ambiguities, paradoxes, and conflicts of self-transcending social, cultural, and religious projects. Both shepherds and sheep need metaphors to stretch their understanding and engagement and symbols to reach toward a guiding vision that remains beyond their grasp. The Ignatian appropriation of the medieval monastic adaptation of principles of Ciceronian rhetoric in the practice of mental prayer helps to resolve, discern, cultivate, and direct the use of self in the service of such visionary projects. Ignatian discernment contributes to such dynamic development by identifying and resolving the norming affective dispositions of gratitude for creaturehood, freedom in the use of gifts and talents, and commitment to praise, reverence, and serve God and neighbor. These dispositions affirm human agency and orient practitioners to purposeful action without certainty about present facts and future outcomes. Such healing of human agency and participation in a higher purpose contributes to the restoration and elevation of human history.

SOMMAIRE

Les ambivalences de signification implicites dans les métaphores et les symboles de la parabole du Bon Pasteur portent sur des questions de leadership et mettent en évidence les ambiguïtés, les paradoxes et les conflits de tout projet d'action sociale, culturelle et religieuse visant à la transformation de l'existence. Bergers comme moutons ont besoin de ces métaphores pour étendre leur compréhen-

sion et leur engagement, et de ces symboles pour atteindre une vision directrice qui reste hors de leur portée. L'appropriation ignatienne de l'adaptation monastique médiévale des principes de la rhétorique cicéronienne à travers la pratique de la prière mentale aide à résoudre, discerner, cultiver et orienter la mobilisation de soi au service de tels projets visionnaires. Le discernement ignatien contribue à un tel développement dynamique à travers l'identification et la résolution des dispositions affectives à la gratitude pour la condition de créature, pour la liberté dans l'usage des dons et des talents, pour un engagement à louer, révérer et servir Dieu et le prochain. Ces dispositions donnent confiance dans la capacité humaine d'agir dans le monde et orientent vers une action qui reste déterminée quant aux intentions, mais sans certitude quant à la réalité présente et aux résultats à venir. Une telle guérison de l'agir humain et la communion à des valeurs supérieures contribuent à la restauration et à l'élévation de l'histoire humaine.