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A Text for Reading, A Text for Deciding

ANTONIO T DE NICOLAS
Fordham University

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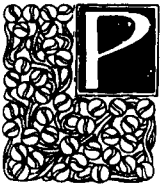
A Text for Reading; A Text for Deciding

In whatever way men approach me,
in the same way they receive
their reward.
—Bhagavad Gītā,4.11.



HILOSOPHY IN GENERAL AND HERMENEUTICS in particular remind me so often of a magic show. The magician is able to pull the rabbit out of the hat not because the rabbit was there in the first place, but because the magician or the assistant put it there. A magic trick like this takes place when the philosopher reads texts without having embodied the primary technologies of those texts. The philosopher keeps pulling out rabbits he has inserted and keeps doing this again and again.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, reading in general depends among other things on a particular input fed into the neurophysiological system. The invention of the press was a type of input that made possible a program of action, a definitive technology of composing and reading. This program of action, through repetition, resulted in a crystallized neural hardware that in turn incorporated a definite cultural loop into the functioning human nervous system. This new habit, this technology of composing and reading, changed both the internal and external environments and both became, in turn, reinforced through a system of education that was itself the result of the new technology.

When a new system of reading becomes the standard technology of a period, it does not mean that it destroys the previous systems through which reading was done. The old technologies become temporarily forgotten, ready to use any time the subject decides to do so. Technologies, that is, inner technologies concerning body actions, are not completely forgotten; they just need to be revived through exercise, as is the case of riding a bicycle.

The primary text of the *Exercises*, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is identifiable through a technology that transforms the human faculties to operate in a manner different from, say, "reading for information." This primary technology is the necessary and sufficient condition for a series of signs to appear so that we may have a readable text; that is, a text for reading. The primary technology is not itself, in whole or in part, a sign, nor may it be read as a sign. It is, rather, a series of acts that through repetition form an input into the human body. This input crystallizes into neural hardware and incorporates a cultural loop into the human nervous system. The whole species may now act on this habit made possible through an individual or collective exercise. This neural hardware in meditation is not causal of the signs that appear in meditation, but it is causal of the text offered for reading, that is, the text as articulated.

Since these signs, as articulated, depend on as many texts as there are people who enter meditation, it will be near impossible to speak of "one" text. While the primary text and primary technology are one and apply to all those entering meditation, the secondary text, in contrast, is a multitude, and we cannot offer generalities that apply to all. For this reason in examining the secondary text one must go case by case. For the purposes of this study in hermeneutics and imagining we shall refer exclusively to Ignatius' secondary texts; that is, the signs that appear in the "Rules for discerning spirits" and the *Spiritual Diary*. This being the secondary text of Ignatius, we also cannot separate it from the purpose Ignatius had for it: making decisions. Thus the secondary text will serve us not only as an exercise in reading, but also as a deliberate plan for making human decisions.

The secondary text needs several simultaneous readers to lead to decision making or even to decipher. The first reader is the exercitant. The other reader is the spiritual guide. These first readings might eventually place the secondary text in the public domain, as a text for public scrutiny, a readable text, or as decisions affecting the public domain.

EXPERIMENTING WITH A MULE

When Ignatius de Loyola was only Iñigo de Loyola, a soldier recovering from his wounds, he discovered to his astonishment that what used to sensitize him, fantasizing about women, had come to an end. Gone were the days of carousing about, gambling, and bringing illegitimate children into this world. He had had a conversion. But then the problem became what to do with his life. He soon discovered in his fantasies that thinking of doing the things the

saints did for Christ would bring him more lasting pleasure than fantasizing about women, or the woman he had chosen for his fantasies (*Autobiography*,1:6,7,8). He held to that more lasting pleasure as a sure sign from God and decided to dedicate his life to the service of Christ. But how would he do that? Would he go to the Holy Land and preach to the infidels, or move to a monastery and become a Carthusian? (*Autobiography*,1:12). While in these deliberations, a sign came to him in the form of a vision "with such excessive consolation that it left him with such disgust for the whole of his past life, and especially for anything concerning the flesh, that it seems to him his soul had been deprived of all sense-impression previously printed in it" (*Autobiography*,1:10).

Strengthened by these signs, he sets out in search of a final shape for the adventure of his new life. Montserrat, where he intends to become a knight-in-armor for Christ, is the first step. On his way to the mountain he comes upon a Moor on horseback, and both ride together for a while. In the course of the conversation the Moor disagrees with Ignatius on the virginity of Mary, mother of Jesus. The Moor explains that he does not negate Mary's virginity *before* the birth of Jesus. But how could she remain a Virgin *after* giving birth? Ignatius is enraged. The Moor, cautiously, takes off and rides ahead. Ignatius does not want to act on impulse; nor does he want to make a decision on rational principles; and so, as a test of his new life, he lets the mule decide. If the mule were to take the left fork of the road, he would chase after the Moor and kill him. If the mule were to take the right fork, he would let the Moor go in peace, take the road to Montserrat, and spend the night in knightly vigil. The mule took to the right; the Moor was safe. Ignatius took this as a sign from God that the Moor should not be killed and that God took pleasure in his knighthood for Christ (*Autobiography*,2:14-15).

This raw interpretation by Ignatius of these early signs already gives us a clue to the direction he is going to take when he becomes more sophisticated. Still, Ignatius seemed prone to oversimplifications. When Ignatius made it to Jerusalem with a group of pilgrims, he ran away from the group at great personal and diplomatic risk in the hope of staying behind. A friar found him, took him by the arm, reprimanded him severely, and delivered him to the ship with the others bound for home. Ignatius took this as a sign that God did not want him to remain in Jerusalem (*Autobiography*,4:44-48).

Ribadeneira, his official biographer, recounts the story of how Ignatius, already an old man, used to keep the whole community of Jesuits in the refectory after dinner, longer than usual, in order to read to them his latest notes on obedience. One night, as he was doing this reading against the will of many of those present, the

roof fell on the spot in the garden where they would have been sitting, as was their custom, had he not detained them reading about obedience. This Ignatius, obviously, took as a sign of how pleased God was with his notes on obedience. And so on.

But this same Ignatius is the one who discovered, through his own reading of the signs that came to him while doing the exercises, the true inner signs of meditation accompanied by joy, consolation, desolation, visions, and other material that convinced him that he and God were on the same communications system. With the meticulousness of an accountant he noted them, examined them, and instructed the exercitant and the spiritual guide on how to read them and use them to make decisions. His vision by the Cardoner River also convinced him that the knowledge from these signs was more lasting, exact, and definitive than any form of knowledge derived from human cognitive devices (*Autobiography*,3:30). It was a legitimate basis for making decisions.

THE SECONDARY TEXT(S): PRIVATE ARTICULATION

The test that the primary technology is functioning is that it gives out certain signs. The second test is that these signs must be such that they can be read simultaneously by the retreatant and another person, usually the spiritual director. Both must find themselves reading the same text.

What for the retreatant is one thing, namely the deciphering of the signs produced by the exercise of the primary technology, for the spiritual director or any other external reader is a different thing. For the spiritual director or external reader have first to establish the secondary text. However, both retreatant and external reader must agree as to what the secondary text is. What makes such an agreement possible is the fact that both share the same primary text, the same bodily unity of being experts at using an embodied primary technology. The reading of the secondary text(s) is not dependent on the actual, immediate, use of the primary technology. It is dependent, however, on the primary text to the extent that those participating in the reading share a common, embodied, primary technology. The external reader, besides, carries the advantage of having read many such secondary texts besides his own. All readers are reading a commentary text, derived and secondary.

It does not take much effort to read in the *Autobiography* the agonic task Ignatius placed upon himself in discerning the diverse movement of the different spirits afflicting or consoling him while

doing the exercises at Manresa: Consolation, desolation, tears, visions, scruples, sightings, joy, depressions; simultaneously these were penances to force the signs, changes in penances to force the signs, and articulation of those signs in writing, in conversations, in confessions, and in decisions (*Autobiography*,3:19,25,33,34; 10:96-97).

A man so experienced about signs, through his own meditations, would be meticulous in bringing this knowledge to others. The structure of this secondary text, or signs of meditation, is found early in the *Exercises*. The annotations instruct the one giving the exercises not to embellish the story, but simply to mention the points for meditation (*Exer.*,2). In this same annotation Ignatius sets the "style" which both retreatant and guide are looking for: "For to know much does not fill and satisfy the soul, but rather to feel and taste things interiorly."

Since to feel things interiorly implies the use of the will, Ignatius cautions the retreatant: "In all the exercises that follow we use of the acts of the intellect to reason and of the will to feel; one must be careful, when using the will. . .to use more respect on our part than when we use reason to understand" (*Exer.*,3). What then, will the text appear? Ignatius took it for granted that it should, but if it does not appear as "spiritual motions in the soul of the retreatant, like consolations, desolations, or not shaken by different spirits," then the one giving the exercises should question the retreatant about the way he/she makes the exercises (*Exer.*,6). Ignatius, through the spiritual guide, sends the retreatant to the minor leagues for retraining: back to basics. In listing those basic conditions Ignatius gives us the structure of the secondary text, too:

Does the retreatant (a) make the exercises the primary text? b) follow the times assigned for them? c) follow the additions diligently (*Exer.*,73-90)? Both the retreatant and guide should go over these points carefully.

It will clarify matters for the reader if again we summarize these additions insofar as they constitute the "basics" on which the primary text is put into practice: 1) Summarize points for meditation before going to sleep; 2) Revise those points on waking up; 3) Take one or two steps before the place of meditation considering how God looks at one; lower the head in sign of reverence; 4) Look for the body positions that best helps and stay in it; 5) After the exercise, for about fifteen minutes, reflect on what happened, how the meditation went—if badly, look for the cause and repent; if well, give thanks; 6) Avoid joyful thoughts in the first and third weeks, thinking of sad and painful things instead; 7) Darken the room, except for reading and eating; 8) Do not joke or say things to make people laugh; 9) Keep eyes down; 10) Do penance—of

diet, sleeping, punishing the flesh. The reasons for penance are a) to pay for past sins, b) to conquer oneself, c) to find what one is looking for in meditation. The rule for making penance should be to find what we are looking for in the exercises; therefore, if we do not, then we should change the diet, sleeping penances, or flesh penances, either doing more or less, alternating days or several days doing penance and others abstaining (*Exer.*,73-90).

But what are we looking for in the exercises? Each exercise has a second prelude which constitutes the secondary text of the exercise (*Exer.*,48) where what one wants to find in the exercise is demanded or requested: "according to the subject matter, that is, if the exercise is on the Resurrection, we should ask for joy with Christ rejoicing, if it is on the Passion, we should ask for pain, tears and suffering with Christ suffering. In the present meditation one should ask for shame and confusion, for I see how many souls have been damned for one single mortal sin and how many times have I deserved to be damned for the many sins I have committed" (*Exer.*,48).

Ignatius de Loyola is, once again, at the heart of Christian tradition. In the absence of the Father and the Son, the Spirit is the only text Christians are left with. "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I do, I will send him to you" (John,16:7). The Father, who remains always hidden, appears through the Son, who comes from heaven and returns to heaven. Only the Spirit remains with Christians, and the Spirit needs to be interpreted, too. There is no immaculate perception for Christians. Paul, once again, comes to the rescue with his classification of the signs of the Spirit: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal.5:22).

In practice, however, the reading of these signs created many problems for Christians. In the case of Ignatius the movements of his soul were so intense and confusing that he was led more to scruples and even a temptation of suicide (*Autobiography*,3:24). As a consequence of this incident and on its resolution Ignatius came to note "the way by which that Spirit had come upon him" and how God's way of handling him at that time was "as a teacher a child" which was as well, for "he had no one to instruct him" (*Autobiography*,3:27). The vision by the river Cardoner changed for Ignatius his way of discerning the signs, for it was after this vision that he was able to distinguish another vision in the form of a serpent with radiant light and many eyes as not coming from God but from the devil (*Autobiography*,3:31). The ability to read these signs, which Ignatius acquired with such pains and agonic effort, is what he tries to share with the guide of the exercises and the

retreatant. These reading guides appear in separate annotations and series of notations worth noticing: there are the preliminary annotations we have already mentioned (*Exer.*,1-20); the additions (*Exer.*,73-90); preambles on elections (*Exer.*,169-189); rules for discerning spirits (314-327); rules "for greater discernment of spirits" (328-336); rules for reading the signs of the enemy (345-351); and finally rules to "keep our true place in the Militant Church" (352-370).

Through the preliminary annotations he warns retreatants and guides that signs are normal in the course of the exercises. If there are no signs, retreatants should be questioned. It is not important for the guides of the exercises to question or know anything about the sins of retreatants, but it is very important that they learn about the signs of the exercises. Only on this data will guides be able to judge whether retreatants should be led on to an election and to the end of the *Exercises*, or whether they should keep retreatants in the program of the first week only (*Exer.*,8,9,18).

The most extraordinary innovation in Ignatius' *Exercises* is that he links signs with elections or decisions. These decisions involve a choice between different possible states of life: married, single, religious life, etc.; and also elections or decisions about two alternate choices within that chosen state of life: study or prayer, poverty or riches, Carmelite or Dominican, etc. These decisions are reached in several stages, but in the end they rest on our ability to read certain signs. In order for us to be able to make a "judiciously" sound decision, Ignatius presupposes three different situations, each one related directly to our ability to read signs.

The first situation is the perfect one, when God so moves the will that there is no doubt whatsoever as to what to do. Secondly, "when one finds much light and information through the experience of consolation and desolation and the ability to read these signs"; and finally, when there is a "period of calm when the soul is not agitated by diverse spirits and when it exercises its natural faculties freely and tranquilly" (*Exer.*,175-177). Even in the third situation, when we have reached the "greatest rational motion," the election should be submitted for approval to God in meditation for consent and verification (*Exer.*,182-183), which involves further reading of signs.

For our purpose here, however, the most interesting scenario is the second one: when the ability to read consolation and desolation determine also our ability to decide. For it is in this ability that our hermeneutical activity here rests. How complicated can reading get? I wish to summarize here the whole process as given in the *Exercises*, for these are going to be our working criteria for reading the *Spiritual Diary*.

The series of criteria for reading the first week's signs set the retreatant and the guide on the lookout for only those signs derived from the primary text. The program of this reading may be summarized as a dedication to continue the reading, regardless of how many contradictory signs appear in that reading. Although addressed to beginners, the reading criteria presuppose a "person working with fervor to purify the self from sins"; that is, persons bent on a vocation looking for the will of God (*Exer.*,315). Consolation and desolation are the signs to be looking for, even when at this stage they come mostly from natural causes (*Exer.*,316-317).

Desolations, as signs, appear on account of three main reasons: a) the exercises are not properly made; b) they are a trial allowed by God to show we do not need the constant bribery of joyful signs to persevere in the goal; c) they are signs to show us the dependence of all signs, in particular the joyful ones, not on us but on "a gratuitous gift of God" (*Exer.*,322). The result of those readings will be to encourage us to keep on reading; that is, making the text, by not changing the original orientation; by not changing the resolutions already made, unless it be to counter with generosity the signs of desolation themselves (*Exer.*,318-319); by continuing reading in the certainty that the signs from God are present, though not experienced (*Exer.*,320); by learning to wait for the signs to appear, for all signs are transitory (*Exer.*,321).

On the other hand, the signs that appear as consolation are to be read awaiting the signs of desolation, so that we learn that all spiritual success comes from God (*Exer.*,323-324). This is not too complex a program for reading. The only addition is Ignatius' remarks on the tactics of signs appearing from the devil. Like a scheming woman, he makes those signs appear strong if because of the anxieties and hesitations of the reading person he is not opposed. Like a seducer, he tempts the reader to keep his deceitful signs secret, for if they were articulated to the guide of the exercises, they would never end even in a sentence, much less into a resolution. Like a military strategist, he aims those signs at the weak spots in our resolutions (*Exer.*,325-327).

The guides to reading consolation, in particular those in the second week, introduce new, more sophisticated variations. Though the signs of consolation are presented as "proper to the good spirit," they may not be always read as such. The bad angel may disguise signs to appear as good. They are joyful, and yet may lead to bad resolutions. Ignatius here introduces a new kind of reading. The retreatant and the guide should be looking for signs as consolation that appear without previous cause, or that may not be attributed to any other external cause (*Exer.*,330). Consolation signs must be submitted to rigorous reading through examination: separate the

time of reading the present consolation from the time the soul is over it. In this period the soul might be making wrong decisions inspired by a wrong reading. All consolation signs must be examined carefully (*Exer.*,336). If they come from the bad angel, the signs of "his serpentine tail" (*Exer.*,334) will soon appear.

THE SUBTLE READING

If the primary text of the *Exercises* has been duly embodied by the retreatant and the guide of the *Exercises* is an expert in sign reading, we would then have the following situation: Both are simultaneously reading the same set of signs. Both are looking for the same signs that would enable decisions to be made. Both would know that retreatants should be, by this time, indifferent to all types of choices. In fact, both know that retreatants should not, of themselves, make any choices. What they do instead is to present to God two equally valid choices for confirmation or verification. The choice will depend on the nod of God to either one of those alternatives. But that nod will have to be read carefully from the signs. Since the signs come from the good as well as the bad angel, and good signs may be produced by either, other reading criteria must be discovered to be sure the reading is correct.

Ignatius de Loyola summarizes a life of experience in reading those signs in the *Exercises* 333-336. This is the text for reading:

> 333. We must examine with great attention the sequence of our mental life. If the beginning, the middle and the end is all good, leaning to the good, this is the sign of the good angel. But if the series of thoughts suggested end up in some bad thing or distraction, or less good than what the soul had already planned to do, or the soul becomes weak, or disturbed, or agitated by losing its peace, tranquility and quietude it previously had, this is a clear sign that all this comes from the evil spirit, the enemy of our advancement and eternal salvation.
>
> 334. When the enemy of human nature is thus felt and known by his serpent's tail and bad end it leads to, it is then useful for the person so tempted to examine at once the sequence of the good thoughts the devil suggested to that person, and from the very beginning and how little by little the enemy set about lowering that soul from the sweetness and spiritual joy it had up to that point to his perverse intention; in this manner thanks to this experience understood and remembered the soul may in the future guard against the devil's accustomed tricks.
>
> 335. For those who travel from good to better, the good angel touches the soul quietly, lightly, pleasantly, like a drop of

> water entering a sponge. The bad angel touches it sharply, with noise and agitation, as when a drop of water falls on a stone. In those who are going from bad to worse, the same spirits act in contrary manner. The reason for this is that the dispositions of the souls are contrary or similar to the said angels; thus, when they are contrary the spirits enter noisily and with disturbances that are easily noticed; when they are related, the spirit enters silently, as coming home through an open door.

As we see from the above descriptions, Ignatius is not asking us to read words and sentences, but rather the signs of motions. In this particular case the subtlety of the sign, a change in interior balance, is rather a *symptom* that needs to be read as a *sign*. It takes long experience in reading to be able to detect these signs. Yet, the more subtle reading depends on this ability, or the text collapses into jibberish.

THE SPIRITUAL DIARY

All the promissory notes Ignatius has been distributing along the path of the *Exercises* find a textual bank, where all are cashed at once, in the *Spiritual Diary*.

The *Spiritual Diary* is one of the most remarkable documents ever written in any language. It covers the period of one year, February 2, 1544 - February 27, 1545, and shows the master, Ignatius, at work in the art of reading signs. The *Diary* is his own account of different signs that come to him in meditation and that he needs to read in order to come up with the right decision. In short, it is the verification of the primary text: the *Exercises*. The choices Ignatius puts up for election in the meditations that we witness in the *Diary* are these: should the Jesuit houses have full income, partial, or none at all? In modern terms, should the Jesuit houses accept endowments or not? For a whole year we witness Ignatius presenting this election to the nod of God. By being able to discern signs, Ignatius eventually reaches the decision that the Jesuit houses should have no endowments whatsoever.

The *Spiritual Diary* clearly shows the working of Ignatius' spirituality. It verifies for us the causal connection between the primary and secondary texts as we have described them here and embodies in a few pages the criteria for reading the secondary text we have outlined in this chapter and regathered from the *Exercises* and the *Autobiography*. It also has the implication that the favors Ignatius received during his lifetime are all linked to the fact that the primary text of meditation was readying him to receive those favors. Thus we see how many of the favors narrated in the *Auto-*

biography did actually happen in the context of meditation. We have carefully outlined those passages so that the thesis stands complete. In reading the *Diary* one has a better idea of how the other documents were compiled and how all together form the communications system Ignatius outlined for Christian practice.

The *Spiritual Diary* has remained practically unknown until very recently and of course unpublished. This is the first time the complete *Diary* is offered in English translation with the codes deciphered and passages included that appear in other documents. The early Jesuits were cautious to the extreme, aware as they were of the ever present Inquisition, and decided to keep the mystical *writings* of Ignatius under wraps. A few fragments were included by Ribadeneyra and Bartoli in their life of the saint. It was not until 1892 that Fr. Juan José de la Torre published the first part of the *Diary* in the *Constitutiones S.I.* (Madrid). In 1922, Fr. Feder brought out a German translation of the same. Only in 1934 was the *Spiritual Diary* published in its totality in the first volume of the *Constitutions* in *Monumenta Historica*. This edition is the basis of the translation presented in this volume—including the words Ignatius erased or added on the margins, plus the study of Fr. de Guibert in 1938 and the latest details to decipher the abbreviations of the *Diary* as they appear in *Obras Completas de Ignacio de Loyola*, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid 1977. This edition by the Spanish Jesuits has made it possible for a single man to translate and put together a work that had occupied generations of scholars for many centuries.

The *Spiritual Diary* is the verification system, the secondary text, of the *Spiritual Exercises*, of the primary text. It would be trivializing the *Diary*, now available, to describe it at greater length. This sequence of documents also makes the *Spiritual Exercises* a different kind of document than it is normally taken to be. The description made of the primary text in the previous chapter is made possible with greater normative power once the *Diary* is read. The text of imagining is more vigorously prominent than it was believed to be. The connection between imagining and the will is richly established. The *Diary* opens clearly the way to those secrets of Christianity that up to recent times were only whispered as possible or lost. But above all it clearly establishes the exhaustive detail of the act of reading the signs. In the short span of one year the *Diary* records the following different signs: in the first forty days alone, Ignatius has tears over 125 times, an average of four times a day, and 26 times tears with sobbing. Other signs he meticulously reads: joy, spiritual rest, intense consolation, rising of the mind, divine impressions, illuminations, intensification of faith, hope, charity, knowledge, spiritual flavor and relish, spiritual visitations, rapture, etc. Of these kinds of signs is the *Diary*'s reading made.

THE QUESTION OF OBEDIENCE

Obedience appears again and again as a question mark in this text of signs to be read.

The human tension of cognition and imagination, of the image and the origin, of theology and experience, of the two wills—God's and the retreatant's—of the two texts and two technologies, primary and secondary, of the two readers, the retreatant and the spiritual guide, is finally resolved in the unity of a decision taken. Through decision, the signs that appear in the act of imagining while meditating, become flesh in the world, become the world. God's desire for the world and the world's for God are reconciled in the deciding body of the retreatant through the decision made. In Ignatius' spirituality the primary and secondary texts, the primary and secondary technologies, have as their goal to make decisions, to bring the will of God to the world. Other founders of religious orders used meditation differently; John of the Cross, Teresa de Avila for example used meditation more as a goal in itself. But in Ignatius' communications system the rule of *tanto. . . cuanto* ("as much. . .as") applies to all things including meditation. The articulation of the secondary text must return as language to the world. Private articulation is not sufficient. The will of God must be turned to language and join the public domain.

We have established earlier that the secondary text has at least two readers: the retreatant and the spiritual guide. A bond must be established between those two readers as to whether a reading is to make it to the public domain and if so which reading is the final one.

At the beginnings of a conversion we see any mystic looking around for someone to help read those signs. Nobody seems to understand them till someone arrives with help. The mystics become attached to the reader who helps them decode the coded messages. The second reader contributes with the mystic to the formation of the readable text. The method is always the same: the second reader becomes a severe editor of the text. He points out the true readings, edits messages not pertinent to the text, moves the mystic to keep on creating new signs when stuck by a writer's block or by scruples, or to return to the fundamentals of writing when other interests distract. The confessor, the second reader, is also the writer of the text. He helps build the text as an expert reader. But only on one condition: that the mystic obey him blindly and follow his instructions without hesitation, without even mental reservations (see letter on obedience). In the beginnings things seem to work out under this arrangement. We see Ignatius, as he narrates in his *Autobiography*,3:24-27, struggle with scruples and jump ahead by follow-

ing the instructions of the confessor. The second reader seems to be imperative in the making of the secondary text, at least in the beginnings.

Soon, however, the mystic begins to experience in the flesh such certainty, such knowledge, "more than putting together all the help received from God in a life time, all the knowledge even if gathered in one pile, as in that one only time," (*Autobiography*, 3:30), as happened to Ignatius in the vision by the Cardoner River, that the advice of others becomes a torment, if not a nuisance and perhaps unnecessary. However, there is always the danger that what started as the search for the will of God might turn out in the world as the imposition of the will of an individual. The remedy, in Ignatius' hands, was again obedience to the superior. The second reader must always contribute to the reading of the text, must always be present.

A different kind of challenge to Ignatius' spiritual economy came in the opposite direction. Ignatius founded the Jesuits on a spiritual program that would not only be spiritual but would enter the public domain and influence it in competition with the established public institutions in Europe, Asia, Africa, or the ends of the world. Within this program his spiritual proficiency was seen as a means to an end. The secondary text was all he required of his Jesuits. If, by any chance, or God's gifts, some of them received extraordinary graces, they should not interfere with this universal program of public service. The Jesuits should be able to read those signs and those signs only in collaboration with their superiors and confessors that would make the whole project of universal efficacy possible. Spirituality was a necessary condition for the society but only if it also contributed to reading the will of God in the world.

Some Spanish and Portuguese Jesuits discovered that while studying their spiritual life was at a low ebb. They decided to use the exercises as an end in themselves—to the detriment of their future efficacy in the public domain. They wanted to meditate more and deal with the world less. Ignatius wrote to those young Jesuits the "Letter on Obedience" (included in this volume), trying to remedy this misunderstanding of the true goals of the society. One of the leaders of this movement was a co-founder of the society, Simón Rodríguez, and Ignatius used all possible ways to make him understand. When Ignatius was convinced there was no way to bring him under obedience, he dispatched Fr. Nadal, his secretary, with letters of discharge asking the offender to leave the society. Fortunately, Fr. Rodríguez died a Jesuit, before Fr. Nadal could catch up with him. The young Jesuits of Coimbra understood obedience, and the crisis was over. But not the question of obedience, which to this day remains a large question in the text of reading the signs.

Ignatius, of course, found some form of solution, suggesting that if one is turned down, after following all the conditions of the primary and secondary text, in anything proposed to the superior, one should bring it up again and again if the election receives the nod of the divinity in subsequent presentations. In practice, however, obedience works differently, much as finding favorable readers for a manuscript prepared for publication. Mystics were forced to keep on changing readers, confessors, not so much looking for a good editor as someone who would favorably read their text. At one given time a religious person is under several superiors. There is always a chance that one of them would make a good reader. The common objection against obedience, however, does not remove the fact that without it the secondary text, the reading of signs, technically cannot be formed. And if it is not formed, then any projects of world information are doomed to failure. Though obedience is not part of the readable text, it presumes the embodiment of the text as an integral part of the historical world to be informed. Obedience is part of sharing in the hardware of the primary text. A share in the company of the best, the saints, the creation. It affirms the faith that the primary text is already in the world. It is only for this reason that private articulation is possible, that there is a community of embodied subjects, and that the public domain may be newly informed. Were this not the case, the articulation of the acts of imagining could only be psychologized—made exclusively private—but they could never find a place in the public domain through a philosophical hermeneutics.

4

Imagining and the Public Domain

It was the dawn that joined the dewdrop
to the drop of blood,
and made them tremble
under a forest of memories.

And thus to release chance,
pure and new, into the hands
of the one who was arriving.

—Laureano Albán[1]

THE PATH OF IMAGINING IN SEARCH of experiential origins, we identified, earlier on in this study, with structures marked by audial/musical criteria. The parameters of the oral/audial world were tone and number—memory and imagination—as Plato testified. (The Greek atomists displaced this cosmology by introducing the parameters of space and time). In Plato's *Republic*, as in Tennyson's Camelot, this text bears the form of the desire of the world:

> . . .the city is built
> to music, therefore never built at all.
> And, therefore, built for ever.

Imagining, like music, provides quantity, that is numbers of memories, and quality precisely and spontaneously so that sense impressions can be measured, accounted for, and so that proportion can be experienced. The eternal polarity between growth and limit, contraries and contradictories, silence and speech, is resolved in imagining through the continuous unities of embodiment and discontinuous plurality of decisions. This discontinuous plurality inevitably leads to problems of compatibility, which music resolves, as does imagining, with a universal "tempering" of every system, a universal sacrifice shared by everyone involved. Where cognitive theologies emphasize a monodic propositional agreement, the audial tradition, of which Christianity is a part, gives us a polyphonic symphony of experience. For this reason a hermeneutics of mystic