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Imagining

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Imagining: Primary Text, Primary Technology

The blindness of the intellect begins when it would be something of itself. The weakness of the will begins when the individual would be something of itself.
Emerson

The Spaniards, the Spaniards, they will too much!
Nietzsche¹

Following Ortega's lead that "clarity is the good manners of the philosopher," we shall retrace our steps before proceeding to state with more accuracy the leading differences between the two reading technologies of cognition and imagination. The kind of clarity we are aiming for here is one of design, or image, at the expense, perhaps, of propositional details.

When we talk, in general, of cognition and imagination, our talk is rather empty because they are not objects. They are nowhere to be found so that we may submit them to our examination. What we find instead are certain operations (embodied habits) and languages through which we identify cognition or intellect and imagination and will. When we look for the intellect, we find certain cognitive skills we learn, use, and repeat. In practice, these skills "read" perception, sensuous imagining, and what is called reason as a result of certain original or primary reading technologies. These "reading" skills are the skills that use the deductive method, or inductive and transcendental methods, or some form of dialectics in its idealist or material forms. Sensuous imagining and reason are subservient to those cognitive skills. Such cognitive skills are at the top of a hierarchical ladder of faculties and knowledge. Anyone acquainted with contemporary philosophy will notice how these skills, or reading technologies, determine also the varieties of contemporary "styles" of doing philosophy: analytic, phenomenological, systematic, dialectical. In every case the reading technology causally determines the kind of signs that are to be read and the kind of

text which is considered to be primary. These reading technologies, besides, are so embodied in the subjects using them that the more transparent they are, the more they are identified with philosophy itself.

The kind of reading technology we are looking for in this description is that of imagining as prescribed by Ignatius de Loyola. We take this technology of imagining as being the kind of imagining which heralded Western culture in the form of Plato's dialectics. We mentioned in the previous chapter that this kind of imagining was the one Plato chose as his primary epistemology and the ground of his dialectics. This kind of imagining has the special feature that it is not based on images derived from sensuous objects. It is rather an imagining which builds images to the degree it is able to cancel the sensuous world. The images of this kind of imagining are non-sensuous. Aristotle, Plato's disciple, made a different choice, and images derived from sensuous objects became for him the epistemo-logical ground of his philosophy. The rest of philosophy followed in his tracks in a deliberate effort to explain, or describe, as much as possible—possibly everything—through natural means without any appeal to the extra-natural. This effort at universal explanation by one model of reason, by one cognitive reading technology, by one particular habit of thinking, has had, as a consequence, fatal deviations from reason. Power and reductionism have had more prominent exercise than reason in philosophical circles. This is nowhere more evident than in the reading of texts from our, or even more obviously, from other cultures. Historically, cognitive and imaginative technologies have had a long, irreconcilable opposition. Since both, however, have been used by humans to create conditions for making decisions in the world, and since both are embodied technologies, both need to be presented. Amputations are unhealthy actions against human memory. Each technology, however, has its own domain of competence and may not be destroyed in the name of better reason or better imagining without amputating human possibilities.

Historically, cognitive technologies derive from cognitive epistemologies, and their specific task is to read the book of nature. Imaginative technologies derive from oral/audial epistemologies—sound criteria, and their primary task is to read the will of God.

Cognition rests on principles, imagining on origins. Principles rest on axioms or logic; origins rest on memory and are made by imagining. Cognition stands on abstraction, theory; imagining on experience. Through cognitive skills, models may be devised to apply to humans without any recourse to history. Cognitive models are ahistorical or fictive; imagining, on the other hand, rests wholly on history as its witness. It is the history of how humans transformed

imaginings into human lives, and thus history becomes the count or description of those human embodiments.

These two primary texts do not divide the human psyche. Rather, whichever one we choose to operate through carries the whole human psyche with it. In practice, however, these two texts are complementary. What may be truly said in one, or done in one, may not be truly said, or done, in the other. Any attempt at mixing them up, or reducing one to the other, or simply translating one into the other, gives rise either to a hybrid text foreign to both, or to a futile exercise in power rather than reason.

These two primary texts originate and are originated through language; cognition originates languages based on some logic or another; imagining originates the language of images, especially the language of the image of creation. Cognitive languages give rise to beliefs; the language of the imagination to faith. Beliefs are handed out freely, at no cost; they are easily interchangeable and their supply is unlimited. Faith guarantees mobility, even in the dark, that is, in the absence of beliefs and their concomitant sensations. This inner mobility is the hidden spring we all need to travel the discontinuous paths of life. This is the kind of faith the retreat-ant, in Ignatius' *Exercises*, needs to cover the distance from his own self as origin and foundation to the Trinity as the genetic origin and foundation of Christian life. Faith and beliefs need to be kept separate to make human mobility possible. One may have or not have beliefs, one may lose them, but one cannot afford to have a life, any form of life, without faith and the mobility of faith that guarantees human sensitization. Faith is like life: one has to make it to receive it. It takes effort and dedication and affects the soul as much as the body.

The condition of embodiment that these primary texts acquire in actual use makes them transparent to those using them, and for this reason a separate act of hermeneutics is needed to bring these texts to the foreground.

The Image of Creation Out of Nothing

Phenomenology aims for a presuppositionless philosophy. Yet, philosophers in that tradition—Husserl of the *Crisis of European Sciences*, Heidegger, Ricoeur, Merleau-Ponty and others—following habits of reason as old as Aristotle, take as legitimate the manipulative control that scientific models have over people and things. In short, their whole philosophical project rests on a hidden mythic image that has organizing value for their activities as philosophers. A mythic image operates on the assumption that it is a necessary and sufficient condition for the organization of the whole of life.

These philosophers, on the wings of that image, take for granted the pragmatic goal of science to control natural phenomena and that therefore this end justifies the means of a fictive—non-historical—reconstruction of nature according to model systems of science that make the achievement of these goals possible. The *eidōs* (essence) Husserl is looking for remains always an invariant in manifold profiles. This mythic, hidden image that has made much of phenomenology possible, creates at the same time the main reason to doubt phenomenology's claims about the suspension of the "natural attitude," or the possibility of performing, by this method, a radical "epoché." It is also for this reason that Ortega rebelled against Husserl for not allowing himself to go far enough. Ortega believed in a phenomenology and a hermeneutics practiced as "the sport of transmigration," or justifying itself by being able to get to the roots of other people's reasons. Philosophy should examine the roots, the origins of reason as they appear historically, not only one method of defining reason. Reason is plural and needs justification to be philosophy; it does not equal a "habit of reason." Reason, to be philosophy and justify itself, needs to be able to catch the differences, not only the similarities.

As mentioned earlier what originally separated Christianity from the many mystery religions, moral reformers, free-lance worshippers, and groups that followed specific rites, was the will of God, the epistemology of the will of God.² This will (the Father) created the world out of nothing, became human flesh in the Second Person of the Trinity (the Son), and performed these deeds out of love (the Spirit). This Trinitarian experience is the origin of Christianity. It is also an experience that has already happened. It can only be recovered by another act of love. Imagination, memory, and love form the cornerstone for gaining this experience which, because it does not appear in time requires the ability to create out of nothing, to fire the imagination with images not yet born.

The epistemology of the will of God did imply, besides, that the world was, and therefore could be, created out of nothing. Conversely, it also implied that the act of creation, human or divine, required, as a first step, the cancellation of the existing world, or worlds, of God and created /interpreted by humans. Furthermore, this will of God so humbled and limited itself in the act of creation that it gave free will to the humans it created. While the original state of the created human was God's image and was seen by God to be good, the subsequent choice by humans of knowing differently introduced in the world and themselves a rift in the act of knowing itself: it introduced the fall. This was a different and lower form of knowing dependent on human criteria of rational principles and cultural usages, dependent on humans away from God.

While knowledge of the original image is unitary, knowledge of the fall is diverse and multiple and stands on the ground of human abstractions, not God's will. Historically and originally both grounds of knowing are in opposition: their first historical reconciliation is through the death of Christ at the Cross. The second historical reconciliation is through the way of the mystics and the technologies they devised for the passage from knowing through cognitive skills and ideologies that humans invented, to knowing which is identical with or close to the original act of creation out of nothing.

The mystic's sense of humility is more than a virtue. It is a systematic condition needed to embody certain technologies, languages, and habits of reading, sensing, feeling, and acting that will make the act of creation, the new birth, possible. These technologies are radical, yet they are a revolution against nothing. They simply prepare the fertile ground where the will of God will make itself manifest. These technologies, however, are not the cause of God's manifestation and mystical signs. But without them the manifestation of God and those mystical signs do not appear.³

Understanding the mythic image gives meaning and organization to the whole life of the mystics and accounts also for their faith and language. It is always within mythic contexts that the life and action of people gain ultimate meaning. Without them, the descriptions that follow would be futile and meaningless.

Suspending the Natural Attitude

In order to proceed more rapidly in this description, I also take it that there is a primary text for each mystic, in particular for Ignatius, and therefore for anyone who performs the full spiritual exercises with some proficiency.

Humans are creatures of habit. Habits are not only ideas but also a whole range of operations that act through the human body with complete transparency to the subjects. The human body abhors a vacuum; it must be active at all times. Habits, therefore, can only be changed through other habits. The more radical and transparent the habit, the more radical and difficult the change, and the deeper the concentration and dedication needed for the implementation of the new habit. Habits of thought are the most difficult to change. Other thoughts, good or bad, sublime or stupid, only reinforce an already existing habit of thought. Psychologizing will not do. A complete philosophical overhaul is needed.

In the first Annotation to the *Spiritual Exercises* (abbr. *Exer.*) Ignatius de Loyola describes what this philosophical overhaul consists of. It consists of exercises, and he also describes the purpose. By spiritual exercises he means any discipline that will exercise the

spirit, like meditation, vocal and mental prayer, devotions, examination of conscience, just as walking, running, or jogging are physical exercises (*Exer. 1*). These exercises are primarily for only one purpose: to transform the will of the subject from attachment to his own self, as center and origin of action, to attachment to the will of God, as origin and foundation of all action, and in this manner to guide one's life (*Exer. 23*).

Many people have had these general aims, but no one has had the audacity and systematic insight to develop strategies that would turn good wishes into realities. Simultaneously, no one has dared the divinity in such concrete and human terms as Ignatius did. He truly believed these exercises were the patrimony of every Christian. Ignatius gathered all his strategies (and God's eventual participation in them) within the short exercise period of four weeks, a short month considering the stakes. (As we may see from his *Spiritual Diary*, Ignatius never did meditation as he describes in his *Exercises*. It was his experience, and optimistically he foresaw that after a whole month of exercises everyone would have such powers of concentration and be on such friendly terms with the divinity that they would be able to elicit, on the spur of the moment, the powers of those technologies they so laboriously cultivated. Ignatius did just that. We see him in his *Diary* concentrating for ten minutes before Mass, or walking to it, and then using the Mass like a mandala to reach his decision.)

It is a common complaint of the mystics, and of those who take up meditation seriously, that the beginnings are the most difficult. It is a time of trial, of meandering about looking for new ways, of disorientation, of aridity.⁴ Ignatius, on the other hand, does not seem to want to take those difficulties too seriously. From the beginning of the exercises he sets the retreatant into a sort of assault on the divinity.

Ignatius is convinced that that inner space may be revealed, opened, touched, by that unique act of creation, meditation, and by no other creature, object, or sensation. Only God, he believes, owns the human center (*Exer.*, 316,322,329,330). But this center is covered by a communications system, a natural attitude, a self-indulgence, that impedes human access to it. Ignatius' initiation into this mystery is a definite effort at breaking down this communications system and building a new one through which the soul and God may communicate. Since the external communications system has also, through language and its repetition, through the use of the faculties and the repetition of this use, sensitized the subject into a series of body sensations and their habitual comfort, the new system of communications will aim precisely at destroying, suspending, this habitualization. The exercises start in the human body

and end in the transformation of this same human body. A new language is given the retreatant, a new memory and a new imagination. Through this retraining, a new will might emerge in harmony with the will of God.

Language and the Will

The first week of the exercises is one of trial and training. It is a time of testing the will of the retreatant and the body of that will. Not everyone's body is ready for meditation at the particular time chosen for the exercises. Ignatius wants to single out those who might continue from those who should proceed no further. Though the exercises carry so much promise, they could also be dangerous to one's health if not done under the best physical conditions. Ignatius says of those with *poco suieto* ("little temperament, lack of stamina and preparation") that "they should not proceed any further" (*Exer.*, 18). This first week is one of violence to the body habits of the retreatant. He is asked to search for a "place" (*Exer.*, 20) away from the ordinary place to which he/she is normally accustomed: the cave of Manresa, a lonely room, a room different from the one usually inhabited, a different house, a monastery in the country, an unaccustomed place with controlled lighting where the retreatant has to invent new body habits and where outside communications systems do not reach. The retreatant is instructed about lights: less in the first and third weeks, more in the second and fourth (*Exer.*, 79). The retreatant's body is subjected to new and calculated positions: kneeling, prostrating oneself face down, standing with the head bent down, pacing, walking, sitting rigidly (*Exer.*, 74,75,76,77), lowering the eyes, raising the eyes, closing out sounds, listening to special rhythms as the meditation dictates (*Exer.*, 81,258). The whole body of the retreatant must be reeducated until it becomes like a repellent to the familiar external communications systems and habits. All gestures, facial expressions, and bodily movements must be painstakingly gone over as if in slow motion so that the body becomes impervious to the outside and begins to learn the technologies of facing and gathering within.

The will of the retreatant is now used as a surgical knife to cut some openings into that interior world. The whole attention is now away from the world—even if in order to achieve this, the different moments of life, of a day, of a prayer, of a meditation, of an examination of conscience, of an act, a look, or a thought—must be cut to pieces, one by one (*Exer.*, 24,25,26,27,33,34,38,42,43). But on the trail of these acts of the will a language is being formed: "intense pain and tears" (*Exer.*, 55); "ugliness and evil...of sin" (*Exer.*, 57);

comparisons of God's attributes and one's own, wisdom and ignorance, omnipotence and weakness, justice and inequity, goodness and selfishness (*Exer.*, 59); *esclarnación admirative con crecido afecto* ("amazed exclamations filled with a growing emotion") (*Exer.*, 60); self-pity, gratitude, amazement, disgust, consolation, desolation (*Exer.*, 62). These are the signs of this language the will has started to create by turning the entire life and every minute of it into an interior timetable in which only the "chimes of eternity" are heard. By the time the will becomes habituated to those exercises, there will no longer be room for external and familiar languages. The clock of the "solitary region" is now running. Waking up is determined by this time table (*Exer.*, 74), and so are the time and kind of prayer; examination of conscience (*Exer.*, 43), the type of examination of conscience; meditation; conversations with the guide of the exercises; what to bring to those conversations; relaxation of emotion by changing the type of prayer to a lighter form (*Exer.*, 238); rhythmic breathing (*Exer.*, 258); contemplation on the ten commandments (*Exer.*, 238), on the seven deadly sins (*Exer.*, 244), on the three powers of the soul (*Exer.*, 246); or when to slow the meditation by considering every word pronounced (*Exer.*, 249), or just the opposite, concentration only on those points of meditation "where I felt the most intense spiritual feeling" (*Exer.*, 62). And, of course, we must not forget, a new diet has to be included (*Exer.*, 84), and one should sleep with less comfort than one is used to and cause sensible pain to the body (*Exer.*, 85). Even while going to sleep there is no stopping this clock: one should prepare oneself for the coming day by going over the memory-points of the meditation one is going to make in the morning (*Exer.*, 73), but not for too long, for one must sleep. But as soon as awake, while dressing, one should already bring to mind what one is about to meditate upon. Neither the clock of the "solitary region" nor the timetable of eternity allow for any external language to come in; there are no cracks between exercises: *No dando lugar a unos pensamientos ni a otros* ("not to make room for this kind of thoughts or any other") (*Exer.*, 74).

Spiritual exercises, however, do not compare to an army "boot camp." Ignatius is very sensitive to that: "If the one giving the exercises sees that he who makes them is in desolation or tempted, he should not be harsh or severe with him, but rather gentle and soft. . ." (*Exer.*, 7). And if at times Ignatius recommends acting against natural inclinations (*agere contra*, *Exer.*, 13, 16), as when he says that if one feels like not going the length of a whole hour in meditation one should therefore at once decide to go for one hour and a half, he also makes the exercitant aware that all those things are only means to an end. One should use, therefore, those

things only *tanto*. . . *cuanto* ("as much as") (*Exer.*, 23) one needs to in order to achieve those ends. For in the end the exercises are for the soul to get ready to receive the will of God, not just to follow suggestions from the guide of the exercises, or confessors, or friends, or enemies: ". . . it is much better, in searching for the divine Will, to let Our Creator and Lord communicate Himself to the devout soul. . ." (*Exer.*, 15).

The exercises of the will and the hint of the language that emerges build around the inner space of the retreatant a scaffolding of inner habits ready to sustain the new emerging body of meditation. Soon the drama unfolds: the retreatant experiences the excitement of the new, and the bereavement of the familiar. The retreatant is not guaranteed that the divinity may enter the solitary space, while the familiar will no longer feel the same. The retreatant can never anticipate what is about to happen or even if it will happen. One needs to give up everything, and yet, one cannot anticipate that the empty spaces are going to be filled. This journey needs raw human faith. Except for one thing: the exercises themselves, which keep opening horizons of language. And another thing: memory and its predictability. The exercises in time become established in memory.

Memory and Predictability

The origin of Christianity was an experience that had already happened. It originated outside of time with the Trinity and entered time in the Second Person of the Trinity through the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption. It is precisely because of the fact that this experience has already happened that for every Christian to know is to remember. Memory makes of Christians communities and religion; it is the common ground of memories, on which all stand, that joins them as community. Without memory Christianity could not be articulated. Christ had already set down the internal law of the community: "Do this in remembrance of me" (*Luke* 22:19). And even when the Father will send, in Christ's name, the comforter, the Spirit, he will do it to "bring all things to your remembrance" (*John* 14,25). To be a Christian is primarily to live on memory, to turn memory around, to store memories, to turn every sign, whatever its origin, into a memory-point, and to articulate those memories so that memory remains active. Those memories are the remembrance of the will of God in operation. They are of a past actively present and therefore, being God's will, with a future. It is memories that predictably organize the future—but not without human effort and participation.

Strictly speaking the spiritual exercises are a string of memories,

of memory-points. Even as written, the exercises are not to be read only for information or edification or content. Each and every word is slowly and carefully chiselled out so that it becomes a memory-point for action, or for making memory.

On its journey, the retreatant's will searches life for sins, the day divided into exercises of the will to discover and remove flaws, exercises primarily in memory: memories that travel back and forth, up and down, within the perimeters of a human life. Meditation begins by "bringing to memory" the first sin of the angels (*Exer.*, 50); "by bringing to memory" the sin of Adam and Eve (*Exer.*, 51); "by bringing to memory" our sins (*Exer.*, 52), all the sins of a life time (*Exer.*, 56), year by year, place by place, looking at the places lived, conversations held, work done (*Ibid.*); by bringing to memory the souls in hell (*Exer.*, 71); etc. He uses memory to instruct the intellect: "so that the intellect, without meandering, may reason with concentration going over the reminiscences (memories) of the things contemplated in past exercises. . ." (*Exer.*, 64). Ignatius literally means, through the *Exercises*, "to bring all things into remembrance."

To bring all things into remembrance, however, demands from us certain shifts in technologies. In every case human effort is needed.

Ignatius de Loyola shared with the other mystics of his time habits of reading different from ours. Early in his *Autobiography* (*Autobiography*, 6 and 7), he lets us know how he used reading in order to fix memory points and visualize the things the saints did and that he could also do. With these memories he would then dream of doing greater things for the service of God. In this manner Ignatius kept his mind well-occupied. Ignatius' knowledge came through the experience of meditation, not through reasoning out the mysteries of Christianity. It is true that the *Exercises* use the three potencies or faculties of the soul, but it is by turning all things into remembrance or memory that they are held together. The flight of the soul will eventually take place through imagining.⁵

Turning all things into remembrance is not an easy task, however. The memories of Christianity are not factual history, are not human deeds. In order to turn all things into remembrance one must perform a radical hermeneutical act. How does one remember "the souls in hell" or the Trinity before Creation, or angels sinning, or how Christ used his five senses, or even one's sins without a radical reinterpretation of those cognitive ciphers? Those are living memories to a Christian and therefore recoverable. To recall them is to call them, and, therefore, they may be articulated in language. They are the language in which imagining takes place.⁶ On these memory units imagining will act. This memory bank is

the only security the retreatant has that the system works; it is the lifeline, the communications system, of Christianity. It is in this sense, of memory in use, that memory acts with an element of predictability in the system. Memory, by turning back, vivifies the retreatant and guarantees the future. Memory mediates all human action: it is language, and it is divine human life.

Imagining as Individual Dismemberment

Language, in order not to be a dead language, must be used, spoken, written down. Memories would become dead if not activated through acts of imagining.

Contrary to contemporary practices in psychology in which imagining is guided so that individuals and groups share and are guided in imagining the same image,⁷ or in which archetypal images are the object and goal of imagining,⁸ Ignatius, astonishingly enough, leaves retreatants entirely to their "own abilities" (*Exer.*, 18) when it comes down to guiding them in the act of imagining. Ignatius provides memory points, describes how to imagine, but the images to be imagined are absent from the *Exercises*. Actual imagining is the retreatants' exercise. But this may be understood since Ignatius cannot draw on any existing subjective reservoir of images with which the subject may be more or less familiar, even though through some of those images individuals have experienced transformations, even creations. Ignatius displaces retreatants from any subjective or objective pool of images and vigorously transplants them to an imageless field where the absence of images will force the exercise of creating them. This kind of imagining is the more powerful because it does not rest on images anyone ever before created: The images are to be born from a sheer power of imagining.

This strategy of Ignatius, then, which is so demanding, rests more on the actual technologies of imagining than on any images. Thus his insistence on technology: concentration in order to bring out the pure image, the uncontaminated image, the image in perfect solitude, the original image, the divine image. One cannot borrow it, one must create it. The image created in meditation is the only image that will gain currency. In this creation all other images are automatically excluded. The whole technology developed in the *Exercises* has one aim: the perfect image, for it is in it and through it that God's signs will appear. The image will turn to language and return to the public domain.

The pure image, the original image, will penetrate the public domain if first it penetrates the material body of the retreatant. This material body is always set facing the scene, the image, to be imagined. But this material body is a fluid body which through

imagining may become a slave in the Nativity, a knight in the two kingdoms, a sinner facing the Cross; or may change sizes if compared to other men, the angels, God (*Exer.*,58); it may become a vermin worth "many hells" (*Exer.*,60) or the temple, the image of God, animated by God, sensitized by him (*Exer.*,235).

Technically, however, this fluid material body of the retreatant becomes dismembered through the act of imagining. Ignatius conceives imagining as an act of dismembering the senses by running them in isolation through the image being made. ⁹

Retreatants are placed in front of a scene and asked to make their own *contemplación viendo el lugar* ("contemplation seeing the place"). They are asked to make up the scene with exhausting detail: the road: how long, wide, flat, whether running through valleys or hills; the cave: how big, small, how high, how low, how furnished (*Exer.*, 112). Imagine hell, the width and depth and length (*Exer.*, 65), or imagine the synagogue, villages, and castles (*Exer.*, 91), or the Three Divine Persons (*Exer.*,102), or Mary riding a donkey or Joseph pulling an ox (*Exer.*,110). But for Ignatius the image alone is not the source of signs or of the system of signs. The image on recall may be called to memory, but the actual birth of the signs or the system of signs does not take place until the retreatant proceeds, through imagining, to read the image through his own dismembered sensorium. The perfect image, the solitary image, the divine image is set into motion through the sensuous motion of the retreatant's senses as he or she runs them, one at a time, through the image. It takes the reading of an image by each sense for it to become a mediation between the exercitant and signs of God's will. The efficacy of the image is made possible on condition that the subject as a fixed unity be kept elusively absent in the act of imagining. What retreatants are asked to do is to lend sight, sound, smell, touch, and movement to the image. They vitalize the image through their dismembered sensorium. Each sense must read the image separately, each sense must sensitize the image separately, each sense must read/write its separate movement on the image separately. What is done through visualization must be repeated through hearing, smelling, touching, moving. This applies to the exercises on hell, the Nativity, the Cross, and Resurrection; in short, to any exercises where images are to be imagined.

It is the exercise of imagining that makes possible the appearance of images and signs and the articulation of both as a language. Images, of themselves, do nothing. The retreatant must exercise them by reading/writing sensation on them. In its preparatory stage imagining is a technology that if performed in all its purity will create signs and articulate itself into a language. It will force sensible signs to appear in the act of sensitizing the image of meditation.

As a consequence, and because it is an embodied technology, it will also desensitize subjects to their original unities and attachments while sensitizing them to fresh and new sensations. Imagining, therefore, with its preliminary organization of bodily acts, memories, and sensitizing of images is the primary text through which a language appears and may be articulated. Without this primary text, this technology of habituation, written in the human body, neither signs nor the language of their articulation will appear. This primary text becomes through imagining the primary technology, causal origin of the diacritical system of signs that are to be read. Those signs will have several readers: The retreatant, his director or confessor, his spiritual guide, whoever is trained to reach such text. The readers must be acquainted with the primary technology and the primary text. They must be so expert in such reading that they may read the signs even if they are not the authors of the primary technology or the reader/writer of the primary text. It is on this condition that the primary text and primary technology produce not only a language but also the possibility of its articulation, either as a private articulation to a spiritual guide, or as a public articulation for the public domain. We shall leave these points for a later development. Meanwhile let us continue with imagining.

Mediation, Death, Transformation

The story of imagining is, as yet, an unfinished one. Ignatius de Loyola is not concerned with texts, semiotics, or language. The purpose of his *Exercises* is to bring about a transformation in human bodies in such a manner that they will be able to make decisions in conformity with the will of God. It is true that the first condition for such a transformation is the existence of a communications system through which the transformation takes place and becomes public. But this is only the beginning. Most of the inner transformations remain hidden and, for lack of a language, ineffective, not able to reach the public domain. But the fact that these transformations are not always articulated does not mean that they are completely futile, wasted, or actually of no use to the rest of humanity. We must remember that these technologies of imagining operate at a level that, because it is original, neuro-physiological, affects the rest of humanity, even if they do not know it—activities become more easily performed by others once they have become embodied, made flesh, in someone else. It is obvious from the exercises of the first week alone that they set in motion a pattern of transformation that becomes more and more clear as the other weeks roll along. The meditator's body and senses are systematically dismembered while imagining. This in turn produces new objects, attachments,

and sensitizations. While the exercises start with two frames, the retreatant's and God's, facing each other, the distance becomes slowly less pronounced. Frames intermingle through imagining, and the retreatant's frame-size changes as the actual signs of meditation begin to occur. The mediator of these two distances is the image. All imagining is a mediation. The unity and size of the image is identical with the identity the retreatant keeps receiving and shedding. This fluid mobility eventually desensitizes the retreatant to any images of self except those it discovers while imagining. While the meditator keeps building horizons, frames, in meditation, new signs and sensations eventually appear on those horizons.

As the exercises progress, in the second through the fourth weeks, the structure of imagining persists. The two frames keep facing each other in every meditation: the retreatant's and God's. The images of the life of Christ—without any theological squeamishness—become, as chosen by Ignatius, the mediation between those two frames. The results are similar to those of the first week. Now, however, sensations, language, and sensitizations become suddenly stronger. A taste for imagining anticipates the meditation and makes it fly. Imagining is produced with much greater ease. The retreatant begins to separate the right signs of meditation and becomes adept at articulating them to the guide. Ignatius believed that by the end of the second week the retreatant should be strong enough to start making decisions on those signs, with the advice of his guide.

There is a moment in the exercises, some time around the third week, when all the striving, the careful, agonistic dedication to sharpening the will, remembering, and imagining accumulate on the retreatant with such force that all the habits of the past, the expectations of the familiar, seem to collapse. Death seems to invade every corner of the retreatant's body and soul. The "old man," as Ignatius used the expression, suddenly dies. Most people stop short of this death, the most brutal episode and powerful act of these technologies.¹⁰ One is careful never to burn all the boats. At its most successful, this death is a complete death to all the habits of the original unity. A new life takes over now that sensitizes the retreatant from the inside out, rather than from the outside in. This is a painful bereavement for the body, which is not sure what will come next. This is the dark night of the soul. In the dawn of a new life it is not clear if life as we knew it will happen again, and it is even less clear that what happened while doing the exercises will ever happen again, in or outside of them. One needs to be very humble to be original. It is better to imitate. The fight within the soul that wants both the old way and the new is a continuous fight between two loves starting at last to recognize a common origin.

While the meditator has been busy building frames and imagining, what started as such innocent activity suddenly turns into experience and life: the image, through imagining, has become alive, and imagining stops, at last, the moment this life begins.

The fourth week of the *Exercises* is a new song of confirmation. The transformation has taken place, and the whole cycle of Creation, Redemption, and Resurrection gives place to "meditation to gain love" (*Exer.*, 230). The book of life, history, humans, the stars, angels, and mountains become now the secondary text, so many extraordinary signs, of the original act of Creation and love. Imagining has now gone full circle: from the original Creator to man and from man back to the original Creator. Matter and spirit have found the middle ground where the divine and the human share a language.

How this language is articulated is the scope of the next two chapters.