Abstract

This thesis argues that there is an ethical development inherent in the mystical pedagogy of Ignatius of Loyola and Teresa of Avila. The various stages of mystical development are read through the lens of Wittgenstein as ethical forms of life premised on an absolute good. Through mystical pedagogy one simultaneously develops the language and the praxis of mystical forms of life. Mystical forms of life, though seeking the transcendent, are historically and socially conditioned. This historical and social conditioning is explored principally through Michel de Certeau’s account of spiritual spaces.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Henri de Lubac, SJ provocatively writes: “From the Catholic perspective, one can say that nothing is more important and more necessary than a certain mysticism...Through it Christian reality can be assimilated so well that it brings about fruitfulness of the divine revelation, but, taken alone, [mysticism] is sterile.”¹ While “sterile” may be an overstatement, theology and church life provide a vital context for mysticism and mysticism provides necessary inspiration for theology and church life. In the early church theology, church life and mysticism were broadly unified.² This unity becomes tenuous over the centuries, much to the detriment of theology and ecclesial life.

The place of mystical discourse in ecclesial and theological life became particularly vexed beginning in the middle ages.³ The reintroduction of Aristotle in the West brought increased systemization to theology. Though such systemization could be integrated with mysticism in the skilled and saintly hands of Thomas Aquinas, subsequent generations of theologians were less successful. After Aquinas, theology became progressively estranged from mysticism, culminating centuries later in rationalized forms of Christianity and their emphasis on divine law rather than a personal God.⁴ The systematic structures of theology supported by and supporting the structures of the Church made increasingly exclusive claims on how to properly speak about God and God’s expectations for human beings. Mystics came to be seen as a potentially dangerous alternative source of authority. Mysticism that is self-evidently authoritative and at odds with systematic pronouncements could undermine the institutional Church and established theological norms. Many scholars, particularly feminist scholars, see the special authority of mysticism as a means for individuals to gain some personal autonomy from ecclesiastical

authority in the middle ages and early modern period. The systemization of theological and Church structures coincides with and influences the increasing systematization of ethical demands from the middle ages to the modern period. The demands of systematic ethics are increasingly set against the mysterious ethical inspirations of the mystic. In modernity the connection between personal prayer, church community, and ethics that had existed in the early Church is tenuous at best. By the twentieth century there is a complete estrangement of ethics and mysticism, such that in some cases mysticism is seen as amoral or even immoral. My thesis hopes to partly recover a contextualized vision of mysticism by arguing that the mystical and ethical are necessarily linked in both the theory and practice of Saints Teresa of Avila and Ignatius of Loyola. This re-contextualization is a small step towards the broader project of re-asserting mysticisms’ proper place at the heart of theology and church life.

Michel de Certeau, SJ argues that the term “mystical” as commonly used is a product of the Renaissance, as personal spirituality and official religion drifted apart. Certeau’s thesis is controversial and requires critical evaluation. However, he helpfully articulates the emergence of mysticism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a spiritual and cultural phenomenon largely disentangled from the patristic and medieval syntheses. Certeau argues that early modern mysticism creates spiritual, linguistic, and ethical practices, which frame how one interacts with the world; he refers to these practices as spaces. The language of spaces can be helpfully translated into Wittgenstein’s life world language.

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Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* grounds language in forms of life. “[T]o imagine a language means to imagine a life-form.” My thesis is that the mystical language of ascent is a series of related languages tied to ethical forms of life. Wittgenstein offers a striking articulation of the connection between religious language and ethical forms of life in his confession of doubt: “I cannot utter the word ‘Lord’ with meaning. Because I do not believe that he will come to judge me; because that says nothing to me. And it could say something to me only if I lived completely differently.” To imagine the language of a high level of mystical ascent, a level of great intimacy with God, is to imagine living and acting in such intimacy. The ethical instructions of Teresa and Ignatius are both descriptive and proscriptive. They are descriptive of forms of life associated with a certain level of intimacy with God. They are proscriptive insofar as their students desire greater intimacy with God and thus must live differently. This ethical praxis is always historically conditioned; through historical analysis one can ascertain the context for specific life worlds.

Modern mysticism scholarship often focuses on the mystic’s psychological elements, rather than social contexts. The origins of this scholarship are as early as Spinoza and Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher writes: “Religion's essence is neither thinking nor acting, but intuition and feeling.” Schleiermacher opens an individualistic and psychological approach to religion and mysticism that remains both prominent and problematic for theology and church life. William James’s influential account of religious experience at the beginning of the twentieth century continued a largely individualistic and emotive approach to mysticism. Individualized,
psychological approaches to mysticism ignore the ethical norms of theology and community. Such strictly experiential approaches to modern mysticism have led to the controversial claims that drugs might occasion mystical experiences and that mystics can be reprobates. Emotive and individualistic emphases in conceptualizing mysticism can threaten systematic theology and ecclesial unity. By contrast, an ethical, contextualist approach helps mysticism to regain what de Lubac referred to as its “necessary” role in theology and the church.

**Thesis Statement**

My thesis will argue the mystical pedagogy of Saints Ignatius of Loyola and Teresa of Avila necessarily includes ethical development as a cognitive ground for their spiritual theology of mystical ascent. For both figures, mystical ascent is fundamentally a growing intimacy and union with God. All human beings are called to orient themselves towards the mystery of God with the help of God’s grace working directly in their lives and mediated through the Church. Karl Rahner, SJ’s description of mystical experience is apt for Teresa and Ignatius, “the real basic phenomenon of mystical experience of transcendence is present as [sic] innermost sustaining ground (even though unnoticed) in the simple act of Christian living in faith, hope, and love.” Mysticism is inextricably bound to the praxis. The definition of mysticism in this thesis is mysticism as intimacy with God in Rahner’s sense. Mysticism in the narrower sense of extraordinary experience is derivative of this fundamental sense.

The mystical pedagogy of both Teresa and Ignatius assumes a prior, often unacknowledged, mystical presence of God that is the fundamental ground for mystical assent. Experiences of this growing intimacy take on different forms through the process of ascent ranging from the mundane to the rapturous to oneness with the divine. Ignatius’ mysticism stresses the use of

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15 See, for example: Agehananda Bharati, *The Light at the Center: Context and Pretext of Modern Mysticism* (Santa Barbara, California: Ross Erikson, 1976).


imagination in contemplation. By contrast, Teresa is cautious about imagination and places greater emphasis on the prayers of quiet and infused recollection. Despite these differences both affirm that mystical ascent requires, though is not limited to, the ethical development of their novices and students. This ethical development constitutes a development in their life worlds and opens new linguistic possibilities necessary for spiritual theology and ascent. Though I suspect this thesis is broadly true of other influential Christian mystical theologians, I will limit my investigation to the writings of Ignatius and Teresa. These two figures are roughly contemporary and share an historical context, however their work is sufficiently dissimilar to exhibit diverse instantiations of ethics in mystical pedagogy. The thesis does not aim to comprehensively address ethics in either mystic, but to articulate an underlying ethical concern common to both mystics. The concern for ethics between the two mystics suggests that ethics is not an idiosyncrasy of a particular mystic but something more fundamental.

The writings of Teresa and Ignatius include ethical instructions both broadly and narrowly construed. I will interpret these instructions and their relation to ascent through two related lenses. First, drawing on Michel de Certeau’s theory of mystical praxis, I will historically situate their pedagogy in the broader development of “mystical science” as Certeau calls it. For Certeau, the mystical simultaneously makes language strange and more real. The mystical usage of language does not conform to received usage but reinvents and reinvigorates language. Reinvigorated language is rooted in and facilitates new religious and ethical praxis. Second, Wittgenstein argues that language games require shared forms of life. A renewed language of mysticism is a new language game arising out of a new form of life. Following a reading of Wittgenstein that sees a strong unity between early and late Wittgenstein especially with regard to non-sense, the so-called “resolute” reading, I will argue that ethical instructions help to shape students of mysticism into a form of life able to participate in mystical language games.

My governing question will be: how does the spiritual seeker, such as the religious novice, make sense of the often-abstract or metaphorical mystical language of his or her teacher? Articulating the ethical framework within and presumed by the mystics’ teaching offers a partial answer to this question. This answer will be contextualized within contemporary discussions on mysticism, with special attention to the thought of Certeau and Wittgenstein.
Methodology

The primary sources for this project are the mystical writings of Teresa and Ignatius, including Teresa’s *Interior Castle* and *Autobiography*, and Ignatius’s *Spiritual Exercises* and *Constitutions*. In addition to these major texts, the practical writings and correspondence of these mystics contain instructions on spiritual ascent and ethical development. Often these minor works offer concrete illustrations of the instructions of the mystics and will be used to interpret the major works. Through a close, comparative, and historically sensitive reading of the primary sources, the thesis will attempt to distill the mystical theologies of Teresa and Ignatius. Particularly emphasis will be placed upon showing how these mystical theologies function as practical guides for students. In my reading, I attempt to link the practical instructions of the texts, especially ethical instructions, with the texts’ broader mystical theology. I argue that moral instruction does not necessarily have specifically moral predicates. Thus even those aspects of the mystics’ writings that are not explicitly moral instructions can be understood as having moral implications when properly contextualized.

Procedure

The thesis is divided into five chapters including the present introduction.

Chapter Two: Method

The second chapter develops a framework for analyzing the mystical texts principally through Wittgenstein and Certeau. My interpretation of Wittgenstein will be aided primarily by Stephen Mulhall’s work. My interpretation of Certeau will draw upon Graham Ward’s work. This theoretical framework will be located very briefly in reference to two major thinkers in religion and ethics, Alston and Wainwright, in order to provide a larger context. My theoretical framework is then brought into dialogue with and partly problematized by contemporary theorists of ethics and mysticism including Horne, Stace, and Stoeber. The goal of this discussion is to highlight areas of support and challenge between my framework and the ethics

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18 See also *Status Quaestionis* in my Appendix, pp. 80-83, where I briefly outline significant secondary literature on the topics of ethics, pedagogy, and mystical ascent in the writings of Teresa and Ignatius.
and mysticism literature. The treatment of each figure will be limited to these points of convergence and divergence.

Chapter Three: Ignatius

The third chapter locates Ignatius in his historical context drawing on Certeau, McGinn, and other secondary literature. The dynamics of the Counter-Reformation in Spain will be considered as they inform the life worlds of the Ignatius and his students. Having established the proper context, the chapter closely explores Ignatius’s writings for their mystical theology and ethical content. The role of ethics is reasonably explicit in Ignatius. The Second Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* emphasizes laboring with Christ. This spirituality is manifest concretely in the foundational documents of the Society of Jesus where the Glory of God and the pursuit of the common good are intertwined.\(^\text{19}\)

Chapter Four: Teresa

Chapter four begins by highlighting the importance of confessors in the lives of Counter-Reformation woman religious. Most of Teresa’s writings were written at the behest of her various confessors in part to prove her orthodoxy. Having set the appropriate context, Teresa’s writings are read closely for their mystical pedagogy and ethical content. Teresa writes of the “tremendous evil” of religious not following their rule of life properly.\(^\text{20}\) Her ethical instructions are largely in the context of monastic life. Through the process of ascent, one’s perception of the world and ethical praxis improves.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The final chapter begins by synthesizing the mystical and ethical foundations common to Teresa and Ignatius. The moral and communal character of their mysticisms are emphasized. The

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\(^{19}\) See for example the “Formula of the Institute” which proposes that the Jesuit should “perform any other works of charity, according to what will seem expedient for the glory of God and the common good.” *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), 4.

chapter then draws pastoral implications from the project for further work on mysticism, ethics, and context. Finally, there is a brief discussion of potential future development of the thesis project.
Chapter Two: Method

This chapter will develop a method for reading mystics that highlights the relationship between mystical ascent and ethical praxis drawing principally on the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Michel de Certeau, S.J. The chapter will be divided into four unequal parts. First, early Wittgenstein asserts that the mystical and the ethical are “nonsense.” Drawing on the work of Stephen Mulhall and other Resolute readers of Wittgenstein, I will argue that nonsense is both non-pejorative and practically important. The early Wittgenstein articulates the challenge of mystical and ethical speech and action, while the later Wittgenstein establishes a context for such speech and action in forms of life. Forms of life provide a conceptual bridge between mystical language and ethical praxis. Second, Certeau offers a theoretical and historical analysis of the “mystic science” as a new language and way of life. I will argue that Certeau offers a historically contextualized and broadly complimentary approach to that of Wittgenstein. Third, Wittgenstein and Certeau’s frameworks are compared against contemporary frameworks for ethics and mysticism. This comparative context highlights the importance of the social dimension of mysticism and ethics as opposed to understanding mysticism as an individualistic phenomenon. Finally, based upon the preceding discussion, I will articulate briefly four interpretive strategies to be applied in the subsequent chapters.

Wittgenstein on Nonsense, the Mystical, and Ethics

Mystical language does not conform to logical rules—paradox, negation, and apophaticism are frequent in mystical texts. Mystical speech typically describes a move outside or beyond the world and, thus, beyond logical rigor. Further, mysticism cannot make easy recourse to empirical facts. Mystical experiences are difficult to describe and often limited to individuals or small groups. By contrast, logical frameworks function best given clear, exhaustively defined and decontextualized axioms. In the early twentieth century, Wittgenstein’s teacher Bertrand Russell among others had ambitions to set mathematics and discourse more generally on rigorous logical and empirical foundations. Wittgenstein’s early work is sensitive to the strictures of logic and carefully distinguishes sensible propositions conforming to the canons of logic from nonsense. Wittgenstein is arguably more rigorous than Russell in his determinations of what constitutes
sensible language.\textsuperscript{1} Wittgenstein affirms the importance of what falls outside the strictures of logic, particularly mysticism, ethics, and aesthetics.

Both Wittgenstein and Russell affirm that logic sets limits in which mysticism cannot seem to fit.\textsuperscript{2} Logic functions within the whole created by the axioms; it exists only within the bounds of a world. Logic makes no claims upon the foundational axioms themselves except insofar as those axioms are evaluated within the context of another more expansive world. Axioms are foundations and limits for a particular world. They do not explain their own existence or relevance. In his “Lecture on Ethics” Wittgenstein writes: “If I say ‘I wonder at the existence of the world’ I am misusing language.”\textsuperscript{3} The limits of sensible language are the limits of the world. For Wittgenstein ethical and mystical cases are not anomalous hard cases in an otherwise systematic philosophy—to live is to constantly encounter the mystical and ethical. As Stephen Mulhall argues, Wittgenstein’s philosophy has a “pervasive ethical or spiritual dimension.”\textsuperscript{4} Ethical and mystical perspectives and language operate outside of the sensible strictures of the world. The ethical is a way of seeing the world.\textsuperscript{5} So too the mystical frames the world. Wittgenstein writes: “Feeling the world as a limited whole—it is this that is mystical.”\textsuperscript{6} Speaking and action from mystical and ethical perspectives thus frees one from the constraints of the world, not by changing empirical facts but by changing the meaning of the world. Certeau develops a similar insight arguing that the mystical makes normal language strange and thus reinvigorates it. The mystical makes a new type of language, a reframing of language that creates and is supported by a new space, a new place of action. To speak in a new way requires willing and acting in a new way. Wittgenstein’s world and Certeau’s spaces include ethical contours at their foundation. Mystical language both presumes and reinforces an ethical framework for its

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{2} Bertrand Russell, \textit{Mysticism and Logic} (Garden City, N. Y: Doubleday, 1957), 2.
\bibitem{4} Mulhall, “Ethics in the Light of Wittgenstein,” 320.
\bibitem{5} Wittgenstein, \textit{Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus}, 6.43.
\bibitem{6} Wittgenstein, 6.45.
\end{thebibliography}
adherents, though such a framework may be at odds with broader social norms in the same way mystical language does not conform to standard uses of language.

**Early Wittgenstein: Absolute and Relative Ethics**

The *Tractatus* offers the so-called picture theory of propositions that at first seems to conform to Russell’s ambitions. “A proposition is a picture of reality. A proposition is a model of reality as we imagine it.”\(^7\) These pictures can either be verified or falsified by reality.\(^8\) To understand a proposition is to understand the conditions under which that proposition is true. Wittgenstein’s discussions of ethics and mysticism are late additions to the text and seem to partly undermine the clear logical framework of most of the text. “It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental.”\(^9\) Wittgenstein argues that ethical propositions and indeed all propositions concerning human meaning and ultimate meaning are nonsense. One cannot clearly picture nor verify “Fred is good” in the same way one could picture “Fred is in the car.” The assertion “Fred is good” makes a universal claim about goodness that cannot be pictured and verified in the world. Wittgenstein concludes that ethics is inexpressible as such ethical statements are nonsensical.\(^10\) Ethics is not a question of describing the world but of setting the bounds of the world. “If the good or bad exercise of the will does alter the world, it can alter only the limits of the world, not the facts—not what can be expressed by means of language. In short, the effect must be that it becomes an altogether different world. It must, so to speak, wax and wane as a whole. The world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man.”\(^11\) So too the world of the mystic is different from that of the non-mystic and the higher level mystic from that of the lower. The human experience of the world is fundamentally shaped by the ethical and the mystical.

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7 Wittgenstein, para. 4.01.
8 Wittgenstein, para. 4.023.
9 Wittgenstein, para. 6.421.
Wittgenstein draws a distinction between relative and absolute senses of evaluative terms like good or bad. Wittgenstein sees little difficulty in statements such as “Suzie is a good tennis player.” Good in this context means conforming to the rules and strategies of tennis. Consider the statement “Tennis is good for Suzie.” There are two ways of reading this. The relative reading would treat “for Suzie” rather like the rules of tennis. Good for Suzie can be taken to mean an empirically answerable question about Suzie’s mental and physical health and thus a relative evaluation. Alternatively, good for Suzie could mean good in an absolute sense not relative to any contextualization of the term good. Religious rules such as those of Teresa and Ignatius are oriented towards an absolute good, yet also provide a framework of relative goods. Thus, the student mystic may progress towards the relative good of conformity to the religious rule and towards the absolute good by means of that rule. Relative evaluations are sensible insofar as they conform to the rules of the world. However, absolute value statements are nonsensical. Statements about a transcendent God are similarly outside the rules of the world and, thus nonsensical. They are statements about the whole of the world and cannot be pictured.

Ethical and religious statements concern the whole. Wittgenstein writes:

> [I]n ethical and religious language we seem constantly to be using similes. But a simile must be the simile for something. And if I can describe a fact by means of a simile I must also be able to drop the simile and to describe the facts without it. Now in our case as soon as we try to drop the simile and simply to state the facts which stand behind it, we find that there are no such facts.

The Resolute reader of Wittgenstein, like Mulhall, takes Wittgenstein at his word here. Wittgenstein does not deny nor affirm the existence of what is outside the world. Rather he denies the scientific capacity to articulate such matters. Wittgenstein concludes: “Ethics so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable, can be no science. What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help

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respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it.” W15 Wittgenstein’s respect is for ethical forms of life. As noted above, Wittgenstein sees an ethical purpose in his work, yet he cannot fully articulate this purpose. A moral, mystical, or aesthetic appreciation cannot be held to definitive proof. In his later work, Wittgenstein will argue that language requires agreement in judgement. To admire the ethical is a type of judgement.

Christian mystics attempt to find union with a God who is an absolute good, outside the world. The good will of mystics is an absolute or transcendental good will. Insofar as their way of living is premised on their relationship with a transcendent Reality, this way of life cannot be justified according to Wittgenstein’s high standards of logical sensibility. Mulhall argues that a transcendental good will is free from the “vicissitudes” of the world:

What, then, of the transcendental good will? In order to intuit its presence in another, which presumably means being compelled to characterize that other in terms of a kind of piety in action, an ability to look with a clear eye at the world’s vicissitudes and to acknowledge unconditionally its independence from his will, one necessarily resorts to nonsense phrases, and so registers a kind of resistance to the understanding in such goodness. But that resistance to sense also involves a perception of the miraculousness of such goodness, the sheer incomprehensibility of its realization in the world, the utter inexplicability of such radical self-abnegation in terms of our best naturalistic patterns of moral and psychological explanation.16

The mystical and the ethical are outside the logical confines of sense but not outside the confines of affect nor praxis. One cannot describe the absolute goodness of another’s action; neither can one remain silent about such absolute goodness when one recognizes it. Consider, for example, the work of Saint Teresa of Kolkata (Mother Teresa). One could describe her work in terms of her history or the social conditions in which she found herself. Yet such descriptions fail to adequately explain her action because her actions seem to transcend those conditions. She did not concede to the dismal logic of the extreme poverty she encountered. One could attempt to pathologize her actions and motivations, yet this concedes the point that her actions are outside

15 Wittgenstein, 12.
16 Mulhall, The Great Riddle, 34.
Pathologizing can be an absolute ethical judgement albeit a negative one. By contrast, Malcolm Muggeridge’s attempt to document and explain Mother Teresa’s work lead to his own religious conversion. He could give no adequate explanation of Mother Teresa’s work except for a “miraculousness” or a mysticism. Transcendent good will is often spoken about but never adequately. Religious and mystical language is doomed to failure yet perennially compelling.

The later Wittgenstein, to whom we now turn, draws together nonsensical language and meaningful life. As Mulhall argues: “Religious language is thus essentially self-subverting language; the repeated collapse of its affirmations into complete disorder is its mode of order—it is, one might say, the only way the ‘language-games’ woven into honest, transparent religious language-games should be played.” The self-subverting nature of religious language is on particular display in the mystical tradition. Pseudo-Dionysian’s “Mystical Theology” is a classic example of self-conscious, self-subverting language. “[M]y argument now rises from what is below up to the transcendent, and the more it climbs, the more language falters, and when it has passed up and beyond the ascent, it will turn silent completely, since it will finally become one with him who is indescribable.” Pseudo-Dionysius makes explicit that religious language though useful is ultimately inadequate. In Teresa and Ignatius, recognition of self-subverting language is often framed in the language of humility. The mystic is unequal to describing God or God’s work in his or her life. The language of abandonment to divine providence so common in mystical writings includes recognizing that one’s language of God is necessarily inadequate.

17 Christopher Hitchens is among the most notorious of those attempting to pathologize Mother Teresa’s life and work. See: Christopher Hitchens, The Missionary Position: Mother Theresa in Theory and Practice (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2012).


Late Wittgenstein and Forms of Life

Wittgenstein begins his *Philosophical Investigations* with a critique of St. Augustine’s understanding of language as ostensive. Augustine presents a simple and attractive picture that words are correlated with meanings which are themselves correlated with the world. For a wide variety of cases pointing seems straightforward. The phrase “the cup on my desk” has a clear referent currently sitting next to my computer. Wittgenstein notes that in speaking of the colour of the cup ostentation becomes far more difficult. “Blue” does not point to a single object. Instead it could point to the blue sky, the blue cup, the blue Danube, etc… Wittgenstein likens using abstract concepts like blue to the movement of chess pieces. The movement of the piece from one square to another is only intelligible in the broader context of the rules of the game. Similarly, language is a type of game—the words are pieces. Like a board game, the movement of pieces is only intelligible in the broader context of the game. A philosophical confusion for Wittgenstein is when statements become unmoored from their proper context. Wittgenstein argues that this is the particular curse of much of philosophy. For Wittgenstein language requires an acknowledgement of finitude.²² Wittgenstein imagines a foreman calling out the word “Slab!” In this case the reference of the word to the slab on the ground does not convey the full meaning. The foreman is instructing the worker to pick up the slab. However, in another context the same utterance might simply draw attention to the slab over there. In the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein questions what it means for a concept to point to an object.²³ Wittgenstein takes from this and other examples that language is contextual. “To imagine a language means to imagine a life-form.”²⁴

Language both derives from and informs one’s way of life and enables communication with others sharing similar ways of life. A way of life implies agency and judgement. Therefore, Wittgenstein argues, language is not neutral but built upon judgements. “[Language] is not only agreement in definitions, but also (odd as it may sound) agreement in judgements that is [sic]

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²⁴ Wittgenstein, para. 19.
required for communication by means of language.”25 In other words, one has some choice in which language game he or she is playing, so the rules can be changed somewhat in a new situation. The rules of the language are a combination of one’s context, history, and volition. The rules of one’s language, including ethical language, are drawn from and inform one’s way of life. Mulhall following Cora Diamond argues that ethics is not a particular category of predicates or utterances. The judgements one makes in order to speak and live are ethical at least in part. All forms of life have an ethical dimension insofar as they are oriented to some purpose. The ethical is not a subset of things that can be expressed. Rather ethical action, like speech is a response to a context and the judgements one makes on that context. Ethical judgments not only arise out of speech, they are also presumed in speech. Wittgenstein along with Mulhall and Diamond argue that there is no neutral ground of language and action. To play the language game and the action game is to make judgements with ethical implications.

The judgements that inform speech and action can be changed and hopefully improved. The ethical content of language is not fixed but dynamic given changing context and volition. Mystical assent is such a process of change and, hopefully, improvement. Oftentimes one’s ethical vocabulary and range of activities are not apposite to a given situation, perhaps because the situation is novel. For example, the student mystic who comes to a greater awareness of God’s presence in the world is presented with a situation where her language, judgement, and action are not immediately able to cope with a new or changed context. In the new context, some expressions and ways of acting may seem appropriate whereas others do not. Upon emerging into a new context, judgements are often tentative. Mulhall observes: “Determining whether or not a given context allows or invites the projection of a given word will depend (amongst other things) upon a given speaker’s imagination, her linguistic creativity, her individual weightings of the multiple nodes of critical interconnections that give any word its identity.”26 In the case of ethical speech, the creative speaker must forge and also disentangle connections between pre-existing ethical judgements of language and her new synthesis. Changing one’s ethics requires a coordinated change in judgement, language, and action.

Mulhall and Diamond draw on literary examples to show the creative potential for language including the creation of ethical connections in language. To say that a story has a moral does not mean that the story has a specific ethical command, even though stories may have specific ethical appeals. Creative writers need not and, indeed the majority of the time, ought not make proscriptive moral statements. Novel linguistic synthesis is a far more effective form of moral exhortation. For example, Dostoyevsky need not offer explicit ethical advice on the importance of real human connection nor transparency to oneself in his *Notes from the Underground.* The whole novella is ethical. There is no way to separate the ethical from the narrative—the two are one. Cora Diamond concludes: “We cannot, that is, say that these are the words, moral words for moral subject matter, that can have this character, it arises not through its content but from its use on particular occasions.”

I argue that this principle is vital to interpreting mystical texts. While Ignatius and Teresa offer obvious ethical advice in their works, i.e. one should do x and should avoid y, such ethical injunctions exist in the broader context of their mysticism. Teresa and Ignatius guide their students into new relationships with God that demand new language and new action. Ignatius and Teresa create novel religious syntheses adapting to new contexts. They syntheses include ethical concerns.

The syntheses of Teresa and Ignatius, indeed most religious and mystical life, are premised on mysteries of faith. Mulhall rightly notes and Wittgenstein would surely agree that these mysteries defy logical explanation. They create and subvert their own language. The practices of religious or mystical persons and communities are themselves not mysterious. Anyone can observe what religious people do or hear what religious people say. In principal, their way of life is transparent. Mulhall writes: “The perspective of religious faith embodies conceptions of meaning, hence of logic and of rationality, that are not only specific to it but partly constitutive of that particular form of life with language.”

Building on Mulhall’s thought, I argue that one

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28 Wittgenstein’s precise views on this are a matter of controversy. Mulhall is offering a Wittgensteinian reading. Though I am sympathetic to his reading, the textual accuracy of this reading is beyond my present scope.


30 Mulhall, 57.
can enter into the form of life premised upon mystery as a path towards entering into the language game of those mysteries. This is precisely the work of the ethical in mystical pedagogy. One cannot explain mysteries, but one can enter into them indirectly through living by their ethical demands. The ethical praxis of students of a mystic is a publicly available entry point to the language of mysticism. Anyone can see what the mystics do. One comes to learn their language games as one does as the mystics do. Taking on the form of life of mystics is not a straightforward deliberative process but rather a conversion process of taking on judgements through praxis as much as through deliberation.

**Fideistic Objection**

Various scholars object to Wittgensteinian accounts of religious language and by extension action, like the one just articulated, on the grounds that such an account allows one to affirm any proposition in the name of the underlying judgements inherent to language. Thus, they claim that Wittgenstein allows for a kind of fideism. If religious judgements used to inform religious language are merely stipulation, a Wittgensteinian account of the religious language would be fideism and of little worth as knowledge. William Alston and Kai Nielson offer two versions of this fideistic critique.

William Alston objects that for Wittgenstein, “religious ‘language’ is so completely distinct from other uses of language as to constitute a separate ‘language game,’ with its own battery of concepts, criteria of intelligibility, criteria of truth, and so on.”³¹ Religious language is divorced from other sorts of language and other ways of life. Alston argues that religious language is only partially intelligible to people of different religious commitments because they differ in underlying judgements. Along similar lines to Alston, Kai Nielson argued against “Wittgensteinian Fideism” in philosophy of religion (particularly Norman Malcolm’s

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interpretation of Wittgenstein). The crux of Nielsen’s argument is that conceiving of religion as a distinctive form of life places it beyond rational evaluation insofar as that form of life can only be understood from within. If language requires shared judgements only one’s co-religionists can understand religion. Whether or not a Wittgensteinian approach to religious language is fideistic depends upon how context and life world inform religious language, as well as the relationship between religious language and language more generally. Mulhall helpfully summarizes: “Plainly, such a pervasive emphasis on the logical distinctness of various modes of discourse lies at the root of Nielsen’s sense that Wittgensteinians picture our life with language as falling apart (at least analytically) into self-sufficient linguistic compartments or subsystems.”

The criticisms of both Alston and Nielsen are premised upon significantly independent forms of life. Stanley Cavell argues that there are two important axes of forms of life in Wittgenstein, the vertical and the horizontal. Cavell’s vertical axis is the axis of different species. Through his axis Cavell illustrates a fundamental similarity between all human forms of life when compared against other possible forms of life, for example animal forms of life. Thomas Nagel famously asked, “what it’s like to be a bat.” The answer is difficult to conceive given the differences between bats and humans. What would a form of life involving echolocation be like? From the human form of life, it is difficult to say. Cavell’s point compliments Nagel’s. Compared to the wide variety of forms of life among various animals all human forms of life are similar. The horizontal axis, by contrast, is the difference between various forms of life in a given species.

The two axes are important because emphasizing difference at the horizontal axis, as many Wittgensteinians do, renders Wittgenstein’s language games stipulative or in the area of religious language fideistic. Wittgenstein’s goal is subtler. Language can differ significantly between various groups—between different language games. My thesis’ argument relies on the particular


33 Mulhall, *The Great Riddle*, 16.


social context of mystical pedagogy however, there is a danger of overstatement. The language games of one group might be unclear to another because of significant horizontal differences. Fragmented political discourse and mutual misunderstanding in many countries show serious gaps of mutual understanding across divides of location, family structure, religion, etc.... For example, the Carthusian living the evangelical councils in monastic isolation may have great difficulty understanding the Wall Street Trader whose life is occupied by the pursuit of profits. Nevertheless, humans have broadly similar forms of life from a vertical perspective. The Carthusian would surely have an easier time understanding and communicating with the Wall Street trader than with a bat. The differences in the language games of different groups can be significant but such significant differences do not render mutual understanding impossible, they only make it difficult. Cavell offers an illuminating comparison: “The biological or vertical sense of form of life recalls differences between the human and so-called lower or higher forms of life, between, say, poking at your food, perhaps with a fork, and pawing at it, or pecking at it.” The mystical pedagogue relies on the similarities of human forms of life that cross language games, the verticality, while assisting students into a new form of life at the horizontal level, the mystical form of life. The Carthusian can potentially become a trader or vice versa. Mystical pedagogy facilitates something of this transformation. On the horizontal axis of different forms of human life there exists the possibility to change forms of life, though this possibility is often very difficult to actualize.

Between the Carthusian and the trader or the novice and the mature mystical teacher are a continuum of levels of understanding. After a weekend at the monastery the trader would probably have a better understanding of the Carthusian than before, though surely an incomplete understanding. She or he might be able to describe what the monastery was like and accurately account for some of the motivations of the monks without understanding the monks. So too the novice in the monastery receiving his initial instruction in the life may begin to understand the prayer of the order. In the early months and years, the rhythm of life and prayer may seem strange.

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36 Cavell, 255.
Levels of Piety

In *Culture and Value*, Wittgenstein writes: “In religion every level of devoutness must have its appropriate form of expression which has no sense at a lower level. This doctrine, which means something at a higher level, is null and void for someone who is still at the lower level; he can only understand *wrongly* and so their works are *not* valid for such a person.” As discussed above, language or expression is a game ultimately premised on a form of life. By extension devoutness is a form of life. Meaningful pious language is necessarily combined with pious praxis, which is horizontal according to the taxonomy above. Without acting devoutly, one cannot speak the language of devotion properly, though one has a limited understanding of it. An impious form of life does not support pious language—though it may support a deceptive form of language. Refusing to be a pious fraud, Wittgenstein places himself on the continuum of piety:

> I read ‘No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.’ –And it is true: I cannot call him Lord; because that says nothing to me. I could call him ‘the paragon’, ‘God’ even—or rather, I can understand it when he is called thus; but I cannot utter the word ‘Lord’ with meaning. *Because I do not believe* that he will come to judge me; because *that* says nothing to me. And it could say something to me, only if I lived *completely* differently.

Wittgenstein asserts that living differently causes belief rather than belief causing a reform of life in this example. Altered praxis alters language and thus belief. Years later, well into the period of his later philosophy, Wittgenstein repeated this sentiment. “I believe that one of the things Christianity says is that sound doctrines are all useless. That you have to change your life. (Or the direction of your life.)” This does not deny that belief compels change in action. Rather it points to the fundamental connection between language and action, whether it be for Wittgenstein’s belief in the Lordship of Christ or one of Teresa’s novices ascent into a higher dwelling in the *Interior Castle*.

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37 Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 32e.
38 Wittgenstein, 33e.
39 Wittgenstein, 53e.
De Certeau

Like Wittgenstein, Michel de Certeau rejects simple ostention, especially in the case of Christian language. “There is a fading away of any ‘primitive’ object capable of being delimited by a knowledge and possessed [sic] as in ownership. This is a loss of anything ‘essential’ immediately given in the image or in the voice. On the contrary, the ‘kenosis’ of presence gives rise to a plural, communitarian language.”

Christianity is thinkable in the space opened by the absence of Christ in his death and presence in his resurrection, which is the relationship of kenosis to glory. The space opened between kenosis and glory is a communal space. For Certeau, the mystics’ task is to develop and renew this space.

Like Wittgensteinian forms of life, the communal space created by mystics is both a linguistic and practical space. For Certeau the task of the mystic is the reinvigoration of old traditions. The mystical transforms common language. Though Certeau speaks of the “mystic science,” he shares Wittgenstein’s resistance to systemization. “Mystic science was not constituted by the creation of a coherent linguistic body (that is, a scientific system), but by defining legitimate operations (that is, by a formalization of practices).” The mystical use of language draws on standard cultural uses and transforms them. “A journey on the part of the speaker [of mystical language] produces a shift in meaning.” The shifted language is at once familiar and strange. Through this process of shifting a new spiritual space is formed. The new language and practice of mystics is often a threat to the status quo. Certeau argues that “The ways of mystics were accused (with good reason) of being ‘new.’… grounded in their faith in Beginning that still comes in present, mystics established a ‘style’ in the form of practices defining a modus loquendi and/or a modus agendi.” This new mystical style commanded authority that sometimes conflicted with established moral and spiritual authority, especially as mysticism—or at least

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41 Certeau, 146.

42 Certeau, The Mystic Fable: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, 1:142.


mystical “experience”—becomes desocialized and depoliticized. Modern mysticism becomes disconnected from its scriptural, liturgical, and theological foundations, which had been integral to it in medieval and patristic periods.\textsuperscript{45}

Certeau controversially argues that “mysticism” is properly speaking a product of the early modern period.\textsuperscript{46} Certeau’s argument illuminates the importance of the social for mysticism. In the early Church, described by Certeau’s mentor Henri de Lubac S.J., mysticism was tied to scriptural interpretation and a broader enchanted view of the cosmos. In the early modern period this enchantment recedes. The mystic’s spiritual assertions must take the place of the broader enchanted context of previous ages. The Church had been particularly prominent in defining this enchanted context. It was a privileged place of enchantment both as a physical space and a community. Whereas mysticism in the ancient sense spoke out of an enchanted context, the modern mystic in Certeau’s sense must form an enchanted space or context out of his or her disenchanted society.\textsuperscript{47}

Certeau argues that “the problem is not to determine whether an exegetical treatise by Gregory of Nyssa, for example, is a product of the same experience as a discourse later termed ‘mystic,’ or whether both are constructed following roughly analogous rhetorical processes; it is, rather, to understand what happens inside the field delimited by the proper name (‘mystic’), in which an operation regulated by an applicable set of rules is undertaken.”\textsuperscript{48} For Certeau, mysticism is not fundamentally about a particular type of experience but about the creation of a spiritual space. While the experiences that inspired mystical communities may be common throughout history, Certeau argues that the historical exigencies that give rise to mysticism as distinguishable movements, defined socially, arise only in the early modern period. “The mystic movements would concern themselves precisely with the institution of new sites of utterance (‘retreats,’ \textit{ecclésioles}, holy towns, ‘orders,’ monasteries) in which to restore (re-form) the social space that

\textsuperscript{45} Certeau, \textit{The Mystic Fable: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries}, 1:199; Certeau, \textit{The Mystic Fable, Volume Two}, 2:3,15.

\textsuperscript{46} Certeau, “Mysticism,” 13–14.

\textsuperscript{47} Mark Allen McIntosh, \textit{Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology}, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 1998), 68–69.

\textsuperscript{48} Certeau, “Mystic Speech,” 190.
is the necessary condition for saying to take place.”

Modern mysticism arises out of the marginalization, corruption, and decline of western Christendom over several centuries. Certeau argues that the full emergence of modern mysticism occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, though the dynamics of decline operative in this emergence are centuries older. Certeau recognizes that the mystical communities of both Teresa and Ignatius are heavily influenced by the decline of Christendom, especially the split of Christendom in the Reformation. Insofar as their mysticism arises out of this decline, they are modern mystics in Certeau’s sense or at the very least well on their way to being modern mystics. It is an overstatement to regard mysticism as completely new to the modern period, given historical precedents of communities gathered around mystics in previous eras, nevertheless Certeau’s argument makes plain the importance of historically conditioned language for mystical speech.

Certeau conceptualizes the mystical as a kind of spiritual space of desire. Spiritual space includes ritual practices, ethical practices, and community practices. These form a sacred worldview and are mutually interpenetrating. Graham Ward observes:

Liturgy, like ritual, names activities performed within a sacred worldview; what is done is not an end in itself (a labor, the expenditure of a calculable energy for a definite purpose) but a creative act, expressing, being, [sic] a gift to what is other and divine. Its performance opens up spatial possibilities. Space here is not identical with place; it is excessive to location. In fact, as Certeau himself states, ‘Space [here] is a practiced place,’ but where this place escapes all rationalist topologies.

Like Wittgenstein, Certeau offers an anti-foundationalist view of language, especially religious language. Spiritual space is vital for human life and meaning but cannot be readily defined and delimited. For Certeau, mystical language and space are essentially relational rather than informational. Mystical communities are about common willing. This includes ethical willing. Certeau argues that speech acts and in particular mystical speech requires an “Illocutionary

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51 Ward, “Michel de Certeau’s ‘Spiritual Spaces,’” 503.

relation” between speakers.\textsuperscript{53} The speakers must find a reciprocal relationality that underlines and contextualizes their speech. Certeau’s conception of speech as principally relational is particularly apt for spiritual direction relationships recommended by both Teresa and Ignatius throughout their work. Interrelationality also explains potential failures of mystical speech and mystical pedagogy. The relation between speakers depends on the will (\textit{volo}) of the speakers.\textsuperscript{54} Certeau assumes a virtue account of such willing as a capacity that can be habitually developed.

Certeau argues that while all language is socially characterized, mystical language is characterized by interior freedom. “Its [mystical speech’s] performativity consists in instituting a place (that of the subject) and the autonomy of the interior (‘mystic’ by definition, free from the labyrinth of social controls) rather than in setting up a convention for dialogue.”\textsuperscript{55} Mystical speech retains a social element, but it ultimately transcends the social in its creative and unlimited desire for and orientation to God. The apophatic tendency of mysticism moves beyond social conventions, yet mysticism is also a social movement and requires social context.

Certeau recognizes the fundamental tension in mysticism between the concrete and the transcendent. Mystical language is rooted in biblical language, traditional language, and social convention.\textsuperscript{56} Mystical language also aims at an unconditioned yes to God who surpasses the concrete and the social. The paradox of mystical language in Certeau is comparable to the self-subversion of religious language in Wittgenstein. Mystical language is a language of tension, a movement towards the absolute. The mystical is never a stable point of arrival but of constant departure.

For Certeau the rise of mysticism is, in part, a product of the disenchantment of the Church. Certeau sees the trajectory of early modern disenchantment continue and intensify in the post-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{53} Certeau, 1:164.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Certeau, 1:166–67.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Certeau, 1:174.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Certeau, 1:148.
\end{itemize}
Vatican II church. Certeau argues that mysticism preserves meaning through disenchantment—
attempts “to restore the horizon of a human unity in symbiosis with the universe”—which
includes the diminishment of religious institutions and orthodoxies. While sympathetic to
Certeau’s articulation of the individual mystical experience, Graham Ward critiques what he sees
as the excesses of Certeau’s anti-institutionalism. “For Certeau, space is opened and organized
by praxis; it is closed and policed by institutional authorities. The Church as place has to
collapse, but the Church as that space for communal living characterized by Eucharistic
practices?” Certeau sets praxis against tradition and institution, favoring praxis as the source of
renewal. Ward argues that Certeau’s reliance on this opposition is ultimately unsuccessful.
Certeau hopes for the reestablishment of bodily, traditional, community space yet falls into
dualities and nihilism. Institutional critique including critique of the ethical standards of
institutions and communities is limited by the importance of institutions in creating spaces. The
process of creating space, even space that problematizes institutions themselves, requires some
institutional presence. Both Ignatius and Teresa needed to be institution builders in order to be
institutional reformers. While Certeau is correct that interior freedom from social constraint is
essential to mystical discourse so too is the communal space of that discourse which includes
ethical expectations. The mystical transcends the ethical yet is also rooted in the ethical. The
ethical helps delimit mystical space without exhausting that space. While spiritual space may
reach up into the heavens, the human persons inhabiting such space must still remain rooted on
the ground in the concreteness of corporeality and social context.

Both Certeau and Wittgenstein would agree that mystical discourse is informed by and expressed
in forms of life with their concrete social and historical contexts. The transcendence and
instability of mystical language seems to create tension between such mysticism and concrete


59 Ward, “Michel de Certeau’s ‘Spiritual Spaces,’” 514.


ethical praxis; this is a creative tension. Various scholars of mysticism consider this tension between the transcendence of mysticism and concreteness of ethics. These scholars have the benefit of a more developed taxonomy of mysticism. In the next section their work is considered in light of the approaches proposed by Wittgenstein and Certeau.

**Dialogue with Scholars of Mysticism and Ethics**

This fourth section brings the approaches of Wittgenstein and Certeau into dialogue with selected contemporary scholars of mysticism—particularly with regard to mysticism and ethics. Wittgenstein did not locate himself within and largely predated contemporary mysticism scholarship. Wittgenstein was an avid reader of William James.\(^62\) Wittgenstein and James share anti-foundationalist tendencies and a concern for mysticism, although Wittgenstein is critical of James—for example he is explicitly critical of James’s assertion of thoughts without words.\(^63\) As noted above, language, including mystical language, is a communal project. Certeau frames his discussion in psychological and sociological debates around mysticism beginning with the debates between Freud and Jung.\(^64\) He engages with what was then current mystical scholarship in the first chapter of his unfinished second volume of *The Mystic Fable*. Certeau praises the contextualist work of Stephen Katz against essentialists accounts such as those of R.C. Zaehner. Certeau does not reject an essentialist core of mystical experience *per se* but argues that such a core is undefinable given the self-subverting nature of mystical language. If mystical experience has a core it is precisely the ineffable.\(^65\) For Certeau one cannot discuss ineffability directly but rather mystical practices which are necessarily conditioned.

Both Certeau and Wittgenstein would likely agree with James Horne that moral mysticism is primarily an extrovertive, sought mysticism.\(^66\) Learning a mystical, ethical language (or entering a mystical space in Certeau’s terms) is a communal and effortful process. Horne argues that such


\(^{64}\) Certeau, “Mysticism,” 11–12.

\(^{65}\) Certeau, *The Mystic Fable, Volume Two*, 2:19.

mysticism integrates itself into the broader life project of the mystic. For Horne, mysticism is a basic feature of morality and religion.\(^\text{67}\) Moral mysticism is not a “pure” mysticism and mystical morality is not a social morality.\(^\text{68}\) The mystical experience may re-orient the mystic’s ethical priorities to be at odds with social expectations. However, the mystical is not an isolated experience otherwise disconnected from the mystic’s life. Rather the mystical informs the whole mystic’s life, or in more Wittgensteinian language the whole of the mystic’s world.\(^\text{69}\)

Horne argues that the ethical obligations of mystics sometimes come into tension with mystics’ obligations to God directly. Like the mystical assent more generally, the ethical sensibilities of mystics evolve.\(^\text{70}\) Given a finite amount of time one cannot silently contemplate all day and engage in practical service. Ignatius and Teresa both engage in discernment around the competing demands of practical service and contemplation.\(^\text{71}\) They arrive at different conclusions as evidenced by the different forms of life of Jesuits and Carmelites, though both seek to integrate the mystical and the ethical. Along somewhat Wittgensteinian lines, Horne argues that mysticism changes one’s view of basic empirical facts.\(^\text{72}\)

William Wainwright argues that theistic mysticism with a mixed life ideal is inherently moral whereas monistic mysticism is not.\(^\text{73}\) Wainwright argues that the morality of the mysticism of the theistic mystic is an effect of that person’s theism rather than his or her mysticism per se. The “mixed life” of late Medieval mystics is an exemplar of moral mysticism. This ideal broadly covers Ignatius and Teresa. The mix holds the desire for contemplation and action in tension.

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\(^\text{67}\) Horne draws on Iris Murdoch who writes: “Morality has always been connected with religion and religion with mysticism. The disappearance of the middle term leaves morality in a situation which is certainly more difficult but essentially the same. The background to morals is properly some sort of mysticism, if by this is meant a non-dogmatic essentially unformulated faith in the reality of the Good, occasionally connected with experience.” James R. Horne, *Mysticism and Vocation*, Editions SR 18 (Waterloo, Ont: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996), 28.


\(^\text{69}\) Horne, 21.

\(^\text{70}\) Horne, 70; Horne, *Mysticism and Vocation*, 44.


Arguing from a narrative perspective, Michael Stoeber would likely take issue with Wainwright’s sharp distinction between theistic and monistic mysticism. Drawing on the reports of mystics including St. Teresa of Avila, Stoeber posits what he calls “theo-monistic” mysticism that is a theistic mystical narrative with monistic elements.\textsuperscript{74} An ethically demanding, mystical pedagogy within a theistic context can give rise to monistic mystical language. From the approach developed above, Wainwright’s distinction between mysticism as such and its context is untenable.

For Wittgenstein and Certeau, mystical language is inextricable from its context. The dependence on context does not deny possibility of a core mystical experience affirmed by essentialist scholars but rather argues than such a core experience or experiences would necessarily be mediated through one’s social context. Sought mysticism in particular arises from a social and personal context, which provides at least the initial motivation for mystical pursuits. Insofar as mystical experiences change one’s life, those changes are manifest in a social context. Though one functions within a social context, mysticism remains transcendent and not definitively bound to the rules of that context. Stoeber rightly argues that theistic mystics such as Teresa use monistic language. Mystical experiences often bend or even break linguistic categories such as oneself and the divine other. As will be discussed in detail below, in the wake of such experiences Teresa affirms the necessity that mystical experience be joined with ethical praxis. For Teresa unity with God occasions action.

**Method Conclusion**

In conclusion to this methods section, I will draw four interpretive insights from the preceding discussion to apply to the work of Ignatius and Teresa in the following chapters.

1. Mystical language is premised on forms of life. Furthermore, mystical beliefs are dependent upon mystical language. The relationship between language and practice is

reciprocal. The interrelationship between ethics and mysticism is rooted in the interrelationship between language and praxis.

2. There is a continuum of mystical and ethical practices rather than a stark binary between the mystical and the non-mystical, the ethical and the non-ethical. Mystical formation is intended to inform and transform the whole person. Mystical pedagogy relies on the relatedness of human forms of life to move mystical students from one level to the next. Mystical pedagogy transforms existing language and practice.

3. Mysticism and absolute ethics are self-destabilizing. The language of both mysticism and absolute ethics is always provisional. Ongoing ethical and religious praxis occasion and inform but cannot firmly ground mystical and ethical language. Since the mystical and ethical frame the world, nothing in the world can firmly ground the ethical nor the mystical.

4. Though personally and individually oriented toward the absolute, ethics and mysticism are located in a social context. Mystics are humans with human forms of life existing within human communities. The mystical challenge to social norms still relies upon social and institutional realities. The journey towards the absolute occurs in the concrete.
Chapter Three: Ignatius of Loyola

In his *Theory of Justice*, John Rawls briefly but insightfully criticizes Ignatius of Loyola.¹ “For Loyola holds that the dominant end is serving God, and by this means saving our soul. He is consistent in recognizing that furthering the divine intention is the sole criterion for balancing subordinate aims.”² From Rawls’ point of view this is a stinging indictment. Ethics for Rawls necessarily requires rationally weighing various competing goods. Rawls goes on to argue: “Although to subordinate all our aims to one end does not strictly speaking violate the principles of rational choice..., it still strikes us as irrational, or more likely as mad. The self is disfigured and put in the service of one of its ends for the sake of system.”³ For Ignatius, it is precisely in orienting one’s life entirely to God that one imitates Christ and becomes most fully herself or himself. *Pace* Rawls, Ignatius does not create a system but offers guidance towards a way of life and ecclesial context that brings greater unity with God. A Wittgensteinian reading of Ignatius shows the inadequacy of Rawls’ systematic critique. Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises* seeks to rid the soul of “disordered affections.”⁴ The Greater Glory of God is both an ethical and spiritual imperative. For Ignatius the two cannot be fundamentally separated. Though the ultimate end point is articulated, how to pursue that endpoint while living in the contingent world is often unclear. Though he does not offer a traditional ascent account, Ignatius offers a progressive approach to mystical pedagogy.⁵ Ignatius’ mysticism is often called a mysticism of service in that his contemplative practice is oriented towards concrete action for the Greater Glory of God. Spiritual progress mirrors progress in ethical praxis.

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³ Rawls, 486.


⁵ For example, Ivens argues that Ignatius develops a new, less apophatic mysticism. Ivens draws a stark contrast between apophatic mysticism and Ignatian mysticism of service. I argue against such a stark distinction. Teresa shows that service is also present in more traditional forms of mysticism and contemplative life. Michael Ivens, *An Approach to St Ignatius of Loyola* (Oxford: Way Publications, 2008), 64–66; Michael Ivens, *Keeping in Touch: Posthumous Papers on Ignatian Topics: Including Tributes by Various Authors* (Leominster, Eng: Gracewing, 2007), 32–33.
The following chapter will proceed in four sections. First, I will briefly sketch Ignatius and his historical context. Second, Ignatius advised that the First Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* be given freely but that most persons should not progress beyond the First Week. This section argues that ethical awareness is essential to the broader awareness of the need for God in the First Week. The third section focuses on the dynamics of election and the ethical and communal prerequisites that Ignatius requires for making elections. The fourth section explores concrete ethical praxis within discerned forms of life drawing on the *Constitutions*.

**Historical Context**

A classic dilemma in historically situating Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) is whether to regard him as a late medieval or an early modern. His upbringing as the youngest son of a minor Basque noble family who seeks reputation at court and on the battlefield is in keeping with medieval customs. The tales of chivalry Ignatius favored pointed toward an idealization of the world that was passing away rather than the world that was coming into being. The year after Ignatius’ birth Columbus began colonization of the Americas. Throughout Ignatius’ youth and early adulthood Erasmus and other scholars were developing an influential new Christian humanism. Ignatius was twenty-seven when Martin Luther nailed ninety-five theses to the door of All Saints’ Church in Wittgenberg. Political reforms coincided with religious reforms as recognizably modern states rose out of the feudal order.

In his *Mystic Fable*, Michel de Certeau explores the transition to modernity as essential to the rise of the mystic science of which Ignatius’ work is a part. Certeau uses the painter Hieronymous Bosch to typify the transition between the medieval and the modern. Bosch draws on the traditional images of medieval bestiaries to make his images new. By Bosch’s time, earlier forms of art seem tired, they no longer captured the imagination. Bosch used an “alchemy” of old tropes but made new and resonate images through recombination. In the same way, Ignatius performs an “alchemy” with the cultural ingredients of his age. Ignatius maintains a strong continuity with the spiritual and institutional traditions of the Church and even the martial language of his favored stories as a young adult. His reform draws mysticism back into

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an institutional context. The religious experiences occasioned by the *Exercises* are, in part, evaluated according to ecclesial standards, such as the “Rules for Thinking with the Church” discussed below. As discussed in the previous chapter, Certeau takes his analysis in a sometimes unhelpfully anti-institutional direction. Certeau says relatively little about Ignatius directly in the *Mystic Fable*. He briefly discusses how Ignatius asserts “a parallelism between an ecclesiastical hierarchy and a mystical order.”  

Though he does not discuss Ignatius or the Jesuit role specifically in establishing this parallelism, Certeau argues that it broadly takes two forms. First, drawing the inner secret worlds of people into the Church primarily through confession, though the *Exercises* have a similar effect. Second, treating the church as a miraculous institution such that the obvious external flaws can be overlooked because of a great inner truth. Both of these categories could aptly be applied to Ignatius. Certeau sees these strategies as a type of rearguard action to reassert ecclesial control in a more personalized form. Though Certeau details the institutional realities of sixteenth century mysticism, he tracks the trajectory of the mystical as a move away from the institutional. Ignatius (and Teresa) try to reconcile and creatively appropriate the mystical within the institutional.

Ignatius is a reformer living in an age of change from steadily increasing colonial efforts to the centralization of political power in the formation of modern states to religious reformation. Ignatius reforms remain intentionally within the context of the Church even as Jesuits under his direction cross oceans and ideological chasms engaging with Protestant and non-Christian thinkers. Ignatius entered into an ecclesial and social context that was both moving towards and fearful of individual religious experience. Imaginative reflections on scripture were popular in Ignatius’ time as an outgrowth of the *devotio moderna*, through such writers as Thomas á Kempis and Ludolph of Saxony, who proposed imaginative exercises on the life of Christ through the scriptures. Nearly all of the fifty-one topics found in Ignatius’s *Spiritual Exercises* are present in the same order in Ludolph’s *Vita Christi*. Michael Buckley, SJ notes a particular connection between Ignatian and Ludolph’s Carthusian spirituality: “There is an overriding

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7 Certeau, 1:85.
8 Certeau, 1:87.
similarity between the Carthusians and the Jesuits, and it lies with their solitude, an interiority with God which in its Ignatian form is not defined by particular persons or places.”

The Carthusian form, especially as articulated by Ludolph is firmly ecclesial and morally demanding. Nevertheless, reading Ludolph is strikingly different from reading Ignatius. Ludolph’s *Vita* provides long, detailed meditations. He is firmly entrenched in time, place, and method. Ignatius’ *Exercises* by contrast offer comparatively minimal direction. The “alchemy” of the *Exercises* combines the opening of horizons of the age of exploration and the development of interiority to pre-existing spiritual forms, securing a renewed openness to individual mystical experience within a formative, ecclesial context. Even martial metaphors drawn from Ignatius’ youthful reading of chivalric stories find new expression in his mature spirituality.

Certeau argues that the mystical science which developed in the early modern period found new sites of utterance for spirituality as social spaces changed and traditional Christendom fragmented. In the context of the Counter-Reformation, creative spirituality was viewed as both a necessity and a threat. Inquisitors interrogated and briefly imprisoned Ignatius. The Spanish Inquisition published an edict against the *Alumbrados* (the enlightened ones) in 1525 and actively pursued *Alumbrados*, real or imagined, for decades thereafter. The *Alumbrados* were accused of replacing official, communal prayer with what they considered to be a higher, individual form of prayer. In Counter-Reformation Spain, any new religious form, like Ignatius’s *Exercises*, that seemed to emphasize individual or mental prayer, fell under suspicion. After official approbation by the papacy, Ignatius was generally seen as an ally of the institutional Church rather than a threat—perhaps because his mysticism was located firmly within spiritual exercises that were explicitly framed within the institutional Church. Ignatius as a man with one

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13 In contrast to Ignatius, St. Teresa of Avila spent much of her career under a cloud of Inquisitorial suspicion. Counter-reformation suspicion of mental prayer will be treated in greater detail in the next chapter.
foot in the medieval and another in the modern world created new and ethically demanding spiritual space.

**Spiritual Exercises**

The *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius are a guided method of prayer to discern the will of God in one’s life and act on it. This election of the will of God requires an abandonment to and love of God and God’s will, which the *Exercises* seek to cultivate. The retreatant is invited to imaginatively engage in a series of contemplations, the majority of which are based on the life of Christ. The full form of the *Exercises* is a retreat of around 30 days. The retreat is silent except for a daily meeting with a director. There are numerous adapted forms of the *Exercises* for use in daily life over longer periods of time, often nine months to a year. Regular conversations with a director are essential to both forms of the *Exercises*.

The *Exercises* begin with a broadly scholastic articulation of humanity’s purpose in God’s universe. In his opening “First Principle and Foundation”, Ignatius identifies the one, overriding good to which all other goods must conform—namely “to praise, reverence and serve God.”

Within a strictly logical, deductive framework the whole of the ethical and spiritual life proceeds from the First Principle and Foundation. The final exercise of the *Spiritual Exercises*, the “Contemplation to Attain Love”, proposes the same hierarchy of goods as the First Principle.

The dynamic of the *Exercises* is in large part the appropriation of this hierarchy. The Principle and Foundation is broadly speaking a scholastic argument for the ordering of the world whereas the Contemplation to Attain Love is an affective as well as cognitive appropriation of that ordering.

Wittgenstein’s difficulty in saying that “Jesus is Lord,” discussed above, is useful in distinguishing between these two thematically similar passages at the bookends of the *Exercises*. On a superficial level Wittgenstein knows what the words “Jesus is Lord” mean, but on a more fundamental level he does not live in such a way that the words are meaningful. Similarly, the retreatant is not expected to understand the full implications of the First Principle and Foundations until he or she apprehends the Contemplation to Attain Love, later in the *Exercises*.

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The process of the *Exercises* is a process of better understanding and living for the greater Glory of God.\(^\text{16}\)

The transformative process of the *Exercises* is indivisibly cognitive and practical. Though the *Exercises* in their standard 30-day form involve little physical and social activity, the *Exercises* are oriented towards action in the world. Ignatius writes that: “Spiritual Exercises [are] to overcome oneself and to order one’s life without reaching a decision through some disordered affection.”\(^\text{17}\) Ethical ordering is an essential facet of this broader ordering of the exercises, especially in the earlier stages. Immediately after the Principle and Foundation, Ignatius proposes a process of “Particular and Daily Examen” to be adopted within the course of the Exercises. The Examen is a hallmark of Ignatian prayer outside the context of the *Exercises*. Upon rising Ignatius directs that “the retreatant should resolve to guard carefully against the particular sin or fault he or she wants to correct or amend.”\(^\text{18}\) In the evening, one then recalls one’s progress or lack thereof to correct that particular sin. The retreatant is to record the frequency of the sin or defect through the day and compare progress from day to day.\(^\text{19}\) For Ignatius, the categories of unethical and sinful appear to be interchangeable. Ignatius conception of sin includes thought, word, and action—thus one’s cognition, speech, and action are all implicated by sin. Ignatius highlights the importance of understanding one’s sinfulness through the *Spiritual Exercises*. Sensitivity to sinfulness, which leads to less sinfulness, improves one’s “interior understanding.”\(^\text{20}\) The first step in developing interior language is a recognition and repentance of sinfulness. A language of interiority is required to progress in the *Exercises* both for the retreatants own understanding and for his or her capacity to speak with the director. Though the *Exercises* are undertaken by individuals, reform has a social dimension. Among sins, sins involving other people are considered graver.\(^\text{21}\) The *Exercises* ultimately orient one to ethical

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18 Loyola, para. 24.

19 Loyola, paras. 27–31.

20 Loyola, para. 44.

21 Loyola, para. 37.
action within a community. Amendment of a sinful life includes amendment of thought, word, and action. Sins effects are thorough going so also are the effects of reform.

Reform of life is primarily a matter of the will rather than the intellect, though the two are intertwined. Ignatius suggests the primacy of the will over the intellect in Annotations three and five. In annotation three Ignatius notes the requirement for will and intellect. However, “greater reverence” is required of the will than of the intellect. In the fifth annotation, Ignatius exhorts courage in the exercitant turning over her “desires and freedom” to God. Ignatius’s focus on will is reaffirmed in the preparatory prayer to the various exercises, “to ask God our Lord for the grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be ordered purely to the service and praise of the Divine majesty.” As with the First Principle and Foundation, the preparatory prayer is an aspiration beyond the capacity of the exercitant.

First Week

The First Week emphasizes the utter need for God’s grace. One cannot merit salvation. Grace facilitates growth in both knowledge of one’s own sinfulness and the virtue to resist sin. In the first exercise of the First Week Ignatius directs the exercitant to ask: “that I may feel an interior knowledge of my sins, and also an abhorrence of them. Second, that I may perceive the disorder in my actions, in order to detest them, amend myself and put myself in order. Third, that I may have knowledge of the worldly in order to detest it and rid myself of all that is worldly and vain.” These requests are made within a prayerful colloquy with Mary. They may also be applicable in the conversation with the director. Not that the director may answer the exercitant’s prayers, but that acknowledgement of sin and amendment of life provide a context for further conversation with the director. A form of life that includes repentance and moral striving sustains the language of the Exercises.

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22 Loyola, para. 3.
23 Loyola, para. 5.
24 Loyola, para. 46.
25 Loyola, paras. 53, 61.
26 Loyola, para. 63.
Cultivating an awareness of sin and desire for amendment of life is the prerequisite for further advancement in the *Exercises* beyond the First Week. Ignatius advises the lengthening of the First Week until this is accomplished.\(^{27}\) In annotation eighteen Ignatius instructs directors to adapt the *Exercises* to the ability of persons receiving them particularly the “uneducated” and those of “little natural ability.”\(^{28}\) To those unsuitable for advancement in the *Exercises*, Ignatius recommends the examination of consciousness as well as contemplation on the deadly sins. The director is not to give contemplations except for those listed for the First Week nor to allow the exercitant to proceed to an election. Ignatius offers similar advice to the Jesuits at the Council of Trent: “the first week of the Exercises can be given indiscriminately to anyone, but no more of the Exercises except to certain exceptional individuals who are ready to dispose their future lives in the light of a retreat election.”\(^{29}\) Ignatius does not mention intelligence in his letter to the council. Rather the criterion for advancing in the exercises is a disposition to make an election. Coming to the point of ethical awareness and having the ability to communicate this awareness to the director opens the exercitant up to the Second Week of the *Exercises* and in particular the election.

For Ignatius, Christian ethics is law-like in its basic formulations such as the deadly sins and the ten commandments. One cannot enter into a Christian way of life or language without, minimally, striving to live out of basic Christian moral teachings. The work of the First Week is, in part, to confirm this basic ethical orientation and language. An election is impossible for one who seeks to discern between moral goods and moral evils. Within that basic framework are further ethical and vocational calls that are less readily definable. Discernment is between goods. For Ignatius, the ethical world of the good is an explicitly ecclesial world. It is a world and a language that the director and exercitant share during their conferences. There moral world and thus judgements must be sufficiently similar to communicate effectively.

\(^{27}\) Loyola, para. 4.

\(^{28}\) Loyola, para. 18.

Second Week and Election

The central feature of the Second Week and arguably the whole of the *Spiritual Exercises* is the election. The Second Week begins with “The Call of the Temporal King.” Ignatius asks retreatants to imagine an excellent earthly king. This imagining includes moral excellence, which his followers are expected to imitate. Recognizing the excellence and rightness of this earthly king, the retreatant desires to follow him. Christ is then introduced as a yet more excellent king. “All those who have judgement and reason will offer themselves wholeheartedly for this labor [of following Christ the King].” The overarching question of the Second Week is not whether one is to follow Christ, but how. Through the process of desiring to imitate Christ, to take on Christ’s form of life, one must continually reaffirm and intensify the commitment to follow. The exercises of the Second Week deepen the language of commitment to Christ in the process of concretizing that language. In Wittgensteinian terms, one’s ethical actions are being changed concretely while simultaneously one is coming to inhabit a new ethical world. Where the First Week suggests a social context through the varying gravities of sin depending on their involvement of other people and need for reformed actions, the Second Week makes the social context more explicit.

The Contemplation on the Incarnation offers an imaginative change of worldview. The retreatant is asked to look upon the world with the Trinity. The particular, empirical, circumstances considered do not change, but the world as a whole—the ethical importance of the particular circumstances changes—when one takes the perspective of the Trinity. The Trinity is the absolute good looking down on earth. Any description of the Trinity is inadequate—though this is less clear in Ignatius than some other mystics. Unlike many other mystics, Ignatius’ work is primarily instructive rather than autobiographical. His short autobiography and spiritual diaries are exceptions. In his autobiography he recounts an illumination of the Trinity by the river

30 Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, para. 91.
31 Loyola, para. 93.
32 Loyola, para. 96.
33 Loyola, para. 101.
34 Loyola, paras. 106–107.
Like many mystics in the pseudo-Dionysian tradition, Ignatius cannot express the heights of his mystical illumination. Fundamental to election is to “observe the intention of Christ our Lord.” The ground for election is the incarnation, the absolute good made present on earth in Christ. It is only after contemplating Christ as incarnate as well as the infancy narratives and the finding of Christ in the Temple that Ignatius begins the consideration of different states of life which encompasses the better part of the Second Week.

Immediately following the introduction to discerning states of life are the meditation on the “Two Standards” and the “Three types of Men.” Both aim, in part, at clarifying and solidifying the moral world the retreatant inhabits. The “Two Standards” makes a stark binary between the moral world centered on Christ and on the Devil. In this contemplation Ignatius presents two fundamental ways of being in the world, Christ’s and the Devil’s. The primary focus is the goodness of Christ and the evil of the Devil. Secondarily, the retreatant contemplates the various persons and actions that fall under each banner. Imitating Christ in humility and poverty leads to “all the other virtues.” This exercise reinforces the First Week disposition to follow God, though it adds an imaginative component through which various good and bad actions particular to one’s own context are specified.

The “Three Pairs of Men” nuances the binary by showing degrees of attachment to money gained nefariously at least in part. One can have various dispositions towards the absolute good and competing worldly goods or “attachments.” All three pairs eventually rid themselves of the money. The first pair notionally wants to rid themselves of the attachment but constantly delays. The second pair wants both peace with God and the other attachments. The second pair represents an attempt at compromise. The third pair are indifferent to keeping or giving away the money because the only relevant factor is the will of God. Only the third pair actively goes

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36 Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, para. 135.
37 Loyola, paras. 135–188.
38 Loyola, 136–57.
39 Loyola, para. 146.
towards God. The third disposition is to rid oneself of other competing desires and goods—the sorts of desires and goods that Rawls argues are essential for ethical life.

Ignatius’ ethical world is on one theoretical level starkly hierarchical, yet this hierarchy is unstable insofar as it requires constant revisiting. One could attribute this revisiting to mere *akrasia*—surely weakness of will is an aspect of the answer. However, the other, more important aspect is the very nature of interchange between concrete praxis and ethical worlds. An ethical world is nonsense in Wittgenstein’s non-pejorative sense. As such it cannot be rigorously evaluated as one would evaluate constructs within the world. The application of the two standards and three pairs of men comes from imaginative engagement with the life of Christ, which conforms to the law-like moral requirements of the First Week but goes beyond them. In the contemplations of the Second Week the retreatant journeys with Christ through his earthly ministry with an indifference to all created things. One is invited to come to a greater experience of Christ’s way of life and to model one’s own life on Christ’s. As noted above, Ignatius gives broad latitude in contemplating the life of Christ compared with Ludolph of Saxony’s more detailed descriptions of various scenes. Ignatius was keen that the retreatant bring Christ, the absolute good, into contact with the exigencies of his or her own life in their particularities.

The election proper comes after contemplating Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem and a contemplation on humility. Ignatius argues for fairly specific ethical and by extension linguistic bounds in the election. Elections of the Second Week are always elections between goods rather than a choice between a good and a bad. Ignatius distinguishes between electing for some good and serving God secondarily through that good and electing for God.\(^{40}\) A proper election seeks the will of God first. The particular state of life to be adopted arises out of a prior commitment to God.

Ignatius further specifies the conditions of the election. One must be free to make an election having made no unchangeable commitments such as marriage or priesthood.\(^{41}\) The ethical and linguistic world of the election is circumscribed by Ignatius’s first point on elections. “It is necessary that all matters about which we want to make an election should in themselves be

\(^{40}\) Loyola, para. 169.

\(^{41}\) Loyola, paras. 171–172.
indifferent or good, so that they function constructively within our Holy Mother the hierarchical Church, and are not bad or opposed to her.”

42 He reiterates this framework in the subsequent exercise and offers an extended discussion in his Rules for Thinking with the Church.43 Though there is no direct textual evidence, Ludolph’s influence appears to be at play here. Ludolph’s expression of the relationship between the moral demands of Christ and the moral demands of the Church seems equally apt for Ignatius. “Indeed, whatever virtues the Church possesses she has received from Christ himself, by means of the lessons of his deeds.”

44 Ignatius’s starkest treatment of the moral guidance of the Church is the thirteenth rule for thinking with the Church:

To keep ourselves right in all things, we ought to hold fast to this principle: What seems to me to be white, I will believe to be black if the hierarchical Church thus determines it. For we believe that between Christ our Lord, the Bridegroom, and the Church, his Spouse, there is the one same Spirit who governs and guides us for the salvation of souls. For it is by the same Spirit and Lord of ours who gave the ten commandments that our Holy Mother Church is guided and governed.45

An uncritical reading of this rule might confirm John Rawls’ fear regarding Ignatius and ethics. The evidence of Ignatius’ life and his desire to reform the Church demonstrates that he maintains his critical faculties with regard to the Church. For example, Ignatius refused to allow Jesuits to participate in the Inquisition as inquisitors. In relation to the thirteenth rule, Gill Goulding, CJ observes that the non-contradiction of doctrine was a given for Catholics of this period even in cases of seemingly contradictory visible evidence. For example, the Eucharist looks like bread and wine but is the Body and Blood of Christ.46 Michael Buckley, SJ argues elections are necessarily ecclesial. “If the election is to be sound, the exercitant comes to participate in the

42 Loyola, para. 170.
43 Loyola, paras. 352–370.
44 Ludolph of Saxony qtd. by Walsh, “To Always Be Thinking Somehow about Jesus,” 29.
45 Loyola, Spiritual Exercises, para. 365.
struggling Church, united with the Church, and configured to Christ as the Church is configured to Christ in this struggle.”⁴⁷

A Wittgensteinian reading of the ethical standards for making an election and Rules for Thinking with the Church help frame Ignatius’ seemingly irrational claim. For Ignatius, elections are premised upon God who is an absolute good. As such elections are nonsense precisely because they are founded upon the way the whole world is, not on particular facts about the world. Elections assume the “First Principle and Foundations” providential understanding of the world created and sustained by God. No empirical fact refutes an absolute good because absolute goods are a fundamentally different mode of discourse. There is no empirical test for the “First Principle and Foundation” nor for any of the contemplations. Absolute goods, like God’s providence, change how one views empirical facts. Empirical facts can potentially change one’s view of absolute goods, but the process is not a direct one. For example, if one leads a life of great suffering that may make one suspicious of the existence of a good God, but such a suspicion would be an alternative sense of the whole. It would not be a logical deduction from empirical facts per se. Absolute goods by definition have no clear falsification nor validation conditions.

Consider Ignatius’ “Three Times for Making, in any one of these, A Sound and Good Election” in the light of Teresa of Avila’s account of levels of prayer, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Teresa of Avila distinguishes between different levels of prayer in part by the proportion of divine-human participation in the prayer. Higher levels of prayer rely less on human effort and more on grace. Ignatius seems to make a similar claim, though less thoroughgoing claim with the three times of election. In Teresa’s case if low level prayer is like watering a garden with a bucket, high level prayer is like a rainstorm. The three times of election are ordered according to the relative operations of grace and deliberation.

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The first time requires no deliberative process. God “moves and attracts the will in such a way that a devout person, without doubting or being about to doubt, carries out what was proposed.”\textsuperscript{48} For the person with the correct disposition, elections of this first time are obvious and seemingly effortless, though becoming disposed to see and accept God’s will in this way is a process of graced, self and community cultivation. The second time of election requires some deliberative process in weighing “consolations and desolations.”\textsuperscript{49} These consolations and desolations provide light and knowledge for discernment—thus this second type of discernment is still primarily receptive. By contrast, the third time of discernment requires reasoning from, what is essentially, the “First Principle and Foundation” to an election. This process is not wholly rational and empirical. Ignatius describes at great length how to weigh advantages and disadvantages of various options during this third time of election while being open to the divine will.\textsuperscript{50} The three times are hierarchically ordered. Given the presence of the first, no further discernment is required. Only in the absence of the first and second is the third required. The hierarchy is the inverse of the level of human engagement and engagement with empirical judgements. Yet, vitally, all three times of election lead to action in the world and to a particular form of life. The first is most clearly mystical and a direct appeal to an absolute good. The third appeals to an absolute good but through deliberative processes involving the weighing of relative goods. Also, even for the first time of election, one must be disposed to receive and identify such a time. Though Ignatius would certainly not limit the freedom of God’s grace to enlighten anyone, a person still in a position of choosing between good and evil is unlikely to be disposed to make an election of the first time.

An election requires a form of life and language that is open to validations and affirmation of the first time. The director is not to interfere with such an election except to attempt to confirm that it comes from the good spirit as evidenced by among other things its conformity to the ways of life within the Church. The third time requires the same conformity to ways of life in the Church but with the added burden of choosing between morally good options based on the particular

\textsuperscript{48} Loyola, \textit{Spiritual Exercises}, para. 175.
\textsuperscript{49} Loyola, para. 176.
\textsuperscript{50} Loyola, para. 181.
circumstances of the exercitant in the light of the absolute good. For Ignatius state of life elections are undertaken rarely, however the disposition underlying the elections and a sensitivity to discerning the divine will are meant to become habitual.

Third and Fourth Weeks

The Third Week of the Exercises takes the exercitant through the passion of Christ. The retreatant practices indifference to all other goods except for Christ by journeying with Christ in his sufferings. Ignatius highlights satisfaction theology. Christ dies for the sins of the world and the sins of each person in particular.\textsuperscript{51} The absolute goodness of Christ’s sacrificial act is greater than the sinfulness of the world. In the resurrection, which marks the transition to the Fourth Week, the divinity of Christ is made manifest.\textsuperscript{52} Wittgenstein poses the question “What inclines me to believe in Christ’s Resurrection?”\textsuperscript{53} For Wittgenstein and Ignatius the question of the empty tomb is not a matter of historically reconstructing the condition of Jesus tomb on a Sunday morning some two thousand years ago. The empty tomb is world changing. Seeing the empty tomb as world changing is a critical task of the Exercises. The retreatant’s understanding of the world founded in Christ should be transformed in light of the resurrection. Having contemplatively journeyed with Christ, the exercitant takes stock of his or her world transformed by that experience.

Wittgenstein argues that, rather than belief in an empirical state of affairs, “Only love believes the Resurrection.”\textsuperscript{54} Through the experience of the redeeming love of Christ, one comes to believe in the resurrection. “Everything will be different” because one “suspend[s] yourself from heaven.”\textsuperscript{55} The final exercise, the “Contemplation to Gain Love,” is precisely living out of the experience of the love of the resurrected Christ and acting out of that love. The Contemplatio relies upon the same metaphysical grounds as the First Principle. God created all things and is the ultimate good. The dynamic of the Exercises moves from a theoretical, non-sensical, mystical

\textsuperscript{51} Loyola, para. 197.
\textsuperscript{52} Loyola, para. 224.
\textsuperscript{53} Wittgenstein, \textit{Culture and Value}, 33e.
\textsuperscript{54} Wittgenstein, 33e.
\textsuperscript{55} Wittgenstein, 33e.
experience of God’s love, to an inhabiting of life grounded in and coloured by this worldview. In the Contemplatio one is expected to live in the world pervaded and shaped by God’s love. One responds to this love with action. In the first note of the Contemplatio Ignatius writes “love ought to manifest itself more by deeds than by words.” Thus the Contemplatio has ethical implications. The absolute good of God and God’s love must inform the actions of the exercitant. Second, Ignatius notes, “love consists in mutual communication between two persons. That is, the one who loves gives and communicates to the beloved what he or she has, or a part of what one has or can have; and the beloved in return does the same to the lover.” The lover and the beloved establish a language between themselves that is continuous with action. This self-emptying communication and action is well summarized in Ignatius Suscipe prayer “Take, Lord, and Receive…” In this form of life, one sees the world differently. Ignatius asks the retreatant to consider the whole world from the perspective of God’s love. Wittgenstein’s observation here is apt—that the ethical and mystical do not change particular facts about the world. Rather they change the way they live in and experience the world.

Ignatius’s Spiritual Exercises, from the First Principle and Foundation to the Contemplatio, is a process of changing the whole world of the retreatant including language and action. Though Ignatius sketches what this world should be like in broad strokes, especially with regard to its ecclesial and moral dimensions, the particularities of these dimensions are not specified. Such particularities depend on the individual election. In the Jesuit Constitutions and in his correspondence, Ignatius offers more particular advice regarding the connection of prayer and ethical praxis based upon the circumstances of the audience. This is particularly true of his writings to Jesuit like the Constitutions. Jesuit spirituality and language are a subset of the wider Ignatian language of the Exercises.

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56 Loyola, Spiritual Exercises, para. 230.
57 Loyola, para. 231.
58 Loyola, para. 234.
Constitutions

The ethical and communal dynamic present in the *Exercises* becomes more specific in the Jesuit *Constitutions*. The *Constitutions* and many of Ignatius’ letters presume an experience of the *Exercises*. While the *Exercises* were suitable for a range of people, the *Constitutions* were addressed specifically to Jesuits. Echoing the language of the *Exercises*, in a section on the formation of novices, Ignatius writes: “They should often be exhorted to seek God our Lord in all things, removing from themselves as far as possible love of all creatures in order to place it in the Creator of them, loving him in all creatures and all creatures in him, in conformity with his holy and divine will.” Janos Lukacs, SJ argues that in the *Constitutions*: “concrete ‘virtuous’ acts are seen as integral parts of a progression toward God.” Lukacs argues that the progressive dynamics of the exercises are mirrored in the progress of formation through the *Constitutions* though with a different emphasis. Speaking of the form of life Ignatius expects Jesuit to take on, Ignatius writes, “Although all this can be taught only by the unction of the Holy Spirit and by the prudence which God our Lord communicates to those who trust in his divine majesty, nevertheless the way can at least be opened by some suggestion which help and prepare for the effect that is to be produced by divine grace.” The *Constitutions* with their more particular audience can focus on the concrete and incarnational primarily and the more abstractly spiritual secondarily.

Ignatius offers concrete instruction to scholastics “in the means of helping their neighbor.” Ignatius suggests a variety of such means ranging from teaching catechism to working with the sick. Though the primary work of scholastics is study, this study is intended as a preparation for greater service, not an end in itself. The Jesuit in formation is expected to acquire the ability to communicate the Gospel in a variety of ways, including moral instruction. Formation is a process

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60 *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, para. 288.


64 *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, para. 400.
of taking on a form of life and with it a language. The entire process is founded upon God as an absolute good.

The formed Jesuit takes on the world and language of the Constitutions. The Society is on some level an ethical and mystical world insofar as it is premised on the experience of God as an absolute good instantiated corporately in a particular way of life. In the last part of the Constitutions, Ignatius summarizes the spiritual dynamic of the Society of Jesus, which includes a dynamic of service oriented towards an absolute good. Ignatius begins the chapter writing: “The Society was not instituted by human means; and it is not through them that it can be preserved and increased, but through the grace of the omnipotent hand of Christ our God and Lord.” The supernatural end is primary but works in conjunctive integration with the natural. This dynamic is present on both the corporate and the individual level. On both levels Jesuits undertake concrete ethical praxis.

Supernatural ends as Ignatius calls them, which are in Wittgenstein’s terms absolute goods, work through natural virtues. “It appears that care should be taken in general that all the members of the Society devote themselves to the solid and perfect virtues and to spiritual pursuits and attach greater importance to them than to learning and other natural and human gifts. For these interior gifts are necessary to make those exterior means efficacious for the end which is being sought.” These interior gifts include the Fourth Week capacity to find God in all things, such that the empirical is viewed through the ethical and the mystical. The Jesuit Constitutions articulate a form of life and a mystical pedagogy to come into that life. This form of life encompasses natural virtues and human institutions but grounds everything in the absolute good that is the Greater Glory of God.

**Ignatius Conclusion**

Ignatius expresses ethical concern coupled to spirituality throughout his vast corpus. In his letter to the Jesuits at the Council of Trent he offers a particularly concrete ethical instruction. “If there

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66 *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, para. 812.
67 *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, para. 813.
are three of ours in Trent, each should visit the poor at least once every four days. When they are urging people in their dealings with them to go to confession and communion, to say mass frequently, to undertake the Spiritual Exercises and other good works, they should also be urging them to pray for the Council.” Ignatius’ discernment premised upon the absolute good is manifest in a variety of concrete ethical actions. The Council of Trent crafted the Catholic Counter-Reformation and had a profound effect on the Church for centuries. As such it is a particularly important example of Ignatian alchemy in action. Jesuits at the council participated in the learned discussion but did so according to the Jesuit form of life as instructed by Ignatius and cultivated through formation. The central criterion for all these actions is the Greater Glory of God which for Ignatius includes the social context of the Church. The balance that Ignatius strikes between the various activities is not a Rawlsian weighing of goods but a seeking after God’s glory in the exigencies of life.

Ignatius’s spirituality includes a progressive shift of worldview of oneself from earthly concerns to the exclusive service of the Greater Glory of God. The conversion process is an all-encompassing one. As in the Suscipe prayer, one’s entire self is offered to God. Through this self-offering one thinks and acts out of an absolute good, who is Christ. Though each individual makes such a self-offering, for Ignatius such an offering is always in the context of the Church. The Church articulates basic ethical standards for acting for the Greater Glory of God. More importantly it is the context for such action and a place of discourse about the interior life. Election and ongoing discernment sustains and is informed by a way of life in the midst of the Church. While law-like ethical rules provide a baseline for election, they do not provide a limit. Election is free and at times includes illumination without prior cause, the first time of election. Ignatius’ mystical pedagogy seeks to transform the world of his students from a world grounded in quotidian affairs to a world grounded in the Greater Glory of God. This re-grounding does not change particular empirical affairs but makes the whole world, and how one things and acts in it, new.

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68 Loyola, “Selected Letters,” 166.
Chapter Four: Teresa of Avila

Teresa of Avila wrote: “I have had a great deal of experience with learned men, and have also had experience with half-learned, fearful ones; these latter cost me dearly [sic].” Teresa has the rare honor of being both a great reformer of the Church and a great teacher of contemplative prayer. Her life as a contemplative reformer meant navigating often vexing political and ecclesial contexts in which she sought help and council from learned men and sought to avoid the “half-learned.” Though her way of life is markedly different from St. Ignatius of Loyola, she was no less a contemplative in action. Her activity, including a deep and abiding ethical praxis, was deeply rooted in her mystical prayer, a way of prayer she attempted to instill in her sisters. Throughout her writings Teresa criticizes pride and extols humility, she criticizes self-love and extols love of neighbor. Her mystical pedagogy aims at transforming prayer and praxis together.

This chapter will proceed in three parts. First, Teresa’s social context in Counter-Reformation Spain will be investigated through the lens of Certeau. Though roughly contemporary with Ignatius, as a woman and lacking explicit papal approval, Teresa was more vulnerable to the influence of the Spanish Church, including many “half-learned men.” The second section will draw on Teresa’s Autobiography and Interior Castle to articulate the relationship between ethical praxis and mystical ascent. Ethical praxis is usually necessary for mystical ascent but never sufficient. One can be ethical yet lack a prayer life. The final section examines the connection between ethics and mysticism in Teresa’s more practical works including her Way of Perfection, Foundations, and Constitutions. Though mystical ascent and ethics cannot be strictly determined by social context, nevertheless social and institutional context aid in the process of ascent.

Historical Context

Michel de Certeau argues, “the world is no longer perceived as spoken by God, that it has become opacified, objectified, and detached from its supposed speaker.” The early modern

2 McGinn, Mysticism in the Golden Age of Spain, 121.
3 Certeau, The Mystic Fable: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, 1:188.
period shows the beginnings of what would later be called secularization. Though religious language is broadly spoken, such speech becomes contentious. Unlike in the earlier understanding of Christendom, God does not seem to speak directly in such a way that resonates in the public sphere. Certeau does not argue that God was clearly heard in the Middle Ages but rather that there was a greater social consensus on God’s action in the world. This consensus is fragmented in the religious disputes of the Reformation and the turn to individual experience. Structures of political control over Churches become more and more prominent. Certeau argues that there are two options for recovering God’s voice. One option is to decontextualize statements. Christian messages in their various confessional varieties are judged on their internal consistency. Concern for doctrinal orthodoxy in both Catholic and Protestant circles becomes paramount. As noted above, Certeau argues that mysticism is anti-institutional. The second option, and Certeau argues the option chosen by mystics including Teresa of Avila, is to construct a new spiritual space. Certeau argues that Teresa’s *Interior Castle* is such a space. Though God can no longer speak in the public sphere, within the confines of the soul God speaks. Certeau’s definition of mysticism presupposes such a division between the public and newly created spiritual space.

Certeau is correct that Teresa creates a new spiritual space. However, he overstates his distinction. Teresa is self-consciously institutional. Her mystical experience is both at the service of the Church and at times perceived as a threat by Church officials. Her *Interior Castle* is a spiritual space outside of the world, yet it has worldly consequences. For Teresa, mystical assent, though founded upon God, resonates in the world and through the institutions of the Church. Even in her ethnic background, Teresa’s relationship with the Church is complex.

Teresa’s grandfather converted from Judaism under pressure from the Spanish Church and crown. Her father was a successful merchant and bought a minor noble title. Teresa was born

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6 There is little direct textual evidence of the influence of Teresa’s Jewish background on her thought, some such as Green argue that the structure of Teresa’s work shows a Jewish influence. See: Michael McGaha, “Teresa
Dona Teresa de Ahumada in 1515 in Gotarrendura, Spain. She entered the Carmelites in 1535. Her religious life was marked by a propensity for both illness and extraordinary mystical experiences. Teresa recounts a wide variety of spiritual practices and experiences from communal vocal prayer to ecstatic experiences of God to profound union with God in which the distinction between God and Teresa seemed to disappear. A central theme throughout Teresa’s work is looking within through the prayers of recollection and quiet to find and unite with God. Counter-reformation Spain was keen to emphasize the centrality of liturgical prayer and ecclesial control. Teresa’s emphasis on interiority and her reports of extraordinary mystical experiences raised suspicions that she was unorthodox and perhaps associated with or at least sympathetic to condemned groups such as the Alumbrados. The Alumbrados emphasized individual over liturgical prayer and held that the soul is sinless during prayer. Their mode of prayer was one of quiet, passive abandonment to God’s grace. Human activity, be it directed attention in prayer or good work, was considered antithetical to abandonment. Alumbrados were a focus of Inquisitorial attention during Teresa’s time. Throughout her writings, Teresa is eager to frame her mental prayer in orthodox terms distinct from the Alumbrados. She writes in her Autobiography: that mental prayer, “is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us.” Teresa goes on to argue that many great saints practiced mental prayer. Teresa is keen to show that mental prayer and authentic mystical union strengthen both ecclesial commitment and good works.

As noted above like other religious women of her time, Teresa’s life, prayer, and work were strongly influenced by a series of priest-confessors. Teresa actively sought confessors sympathetic to her spiritual insights and experience, though she was not always successful in this. Many of her “half-learned” confessors questioned her orthodoxy. As noted above, Ignatius

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9 For example, she laments the years spent trying to find a sympathetic confessor: Avila, sec. 4.7.
fell under suspicion by the Inquisition in part because of his practice of mental prayer. After Ignatius received the proper ecclesial credentials including ordination and a theological degree, and especially after papal approbation of the Society of Jesus, the Inquisitorial suspicion of Ignatius was mitigated. As a woman Teresa had no recourse to university education nor to ordination. Her access to papal approbation was mediated through the complex ecclesial politics of the Spanish Church and the papal nuncio. By force of social necessity, she was reliant on her learned confessors not only as sources of spiritual advice but also as advocates for her and, in her later years, for her new reformed monasteries. Her writings on prayer are not only descriptions of her own life but the foundation for the lives of the nuns of her reformed monasteries. Her writings had a lesser but still significant influence on reformed Carmelite friars and on the Spanish Church more broadly. Her influence made her a target for the Inquisition.

Teresa’s major writings including her *Autobiography* and *Interior Castle* are written at the behest of her confessors. Her *Autobiography* was written in large part to demonstrate her orthodoxy, and by extension the orthodoxy of her fledgling reform, to Inquisitorial critics. Rowan Williams helpfully notes, “The Life [*Autobiography*], therefore, is anything but an anecdotal compilation of rare and interesting experiences; Teresa has a perfectly clear apologetic purpose.”¹⁰ Teresa utilizes the style of an unlettered woman.¹¹ Her language is informal. She rests the case both for her own orthodoxy and by extension her reform movement on her prayer. The central section of the *Autobiography* offers a first articulation of Teresa’s account of mystical ascent and union. She prefaced this by writing. “God gave me in a moment completely clear understanding so that I knew how to explain His favor in a way that amazed me more than it did my confessors; for I understood better than they my own dullness.”¹² Teresa strikes a delicate balance in her writings. On the one hand, she works within the context of the Church. Throughout her writings she professes obedience to Church teaching and authority. Her mystical experiences and advice for living are fully integrated into the sacramental life of the Church. On the other hand, she is a reformer. Her intimate relationship with God is also her mandate for reforming the Carmelite

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¹¹ For example, she writes: “For I am without learning or a good life, without instruction from a learned man or from any other person” Avila, “The Book of Her Life,” sec. 10.7.

¹² Avila, sec. 12.6.
order and for teaching her various learned confessors and many others whose formal education is well in excess of her own.

The spiritual space Teresa articulates in her writings, especially in the *Interior Castle*, exists in a dynamic tension with the Church structures of her day. Teresa’s spirituality is an inward journey towards the center of the soul where God dwells. The journey into the soul is one of virtuous self-transformation as one grows in union with God and simultaneously love of others. Increasing union with God often occasions profound religious experiences culminating in perfect or nuptial union with God in the inmost part of the soul.\(^\text{13}\) As noted above inwardness is often perceived as a threat in Counter-Reformation Spain. Teresa self-consciously responds to this perception. Teresa participated in the liturgies of the Church throughout the day. Often in her writings she intertwines the interior and the liturgical showing that there is no stark distinction between the two.\(^\text{14}\) Teresa embraces both that the Church and its sacraments are divinely instituted. Even in the inmost part of one’s soul one is also in the Church as the body of Christ. Despite the divine origins of the Church many people in power in the Church are “half-learned” and must be navigated around. Contrary to Certeau’s more anti-institutional analysis of mysticism, Teresa’s mysticism, like Ignatius’, is a mysticism of service to the Church. Certeau is correct that Teresa’s mysticism removes her from the public sphere and the ecclesial debate. The form of prayer and the form of life she articulates is premised on mystical union with God rather than the politicking of the world. Like Ignatius, her contemplation leads her to action. Rather than missionary action, her action takes the form of internal Carmelite reform and dialogue with the Spanish Church. Teresa’s mysticism does not take her out of the world so much as ground her in relationship with Christ. This relationship moves her to action in the world.

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\(^\text{14}\) For a few representative examples see: Avila, “The Book of Her Life,” secs. 16.2, 16.6, 18.8, 28.8.
Autobiography and Interior Castle

Teresa of Avila articulates her understanding of mystical assent in both her *Autobiography* and *Interior Castle*. As noted above, her *Autobiography* was written for an Inquisitorial audience. The *Autobiography* is a mixture of autobiographical details, as one would expect, as well as a four-part hierarchy of mental prayer. The *Interior Castle* was written about ten years after the *Autobiography*, also at the urging of her confessor though with less concern about Inquisitors, her reputation having become somewhat better established. The *Interior Castle* contains a similar though more mature articulation of her spirituality. By the writing of the *Interior Castle*, Teresa had founded twelve monasteries which would be guided in part by this book. The four-part hierarchy of the *Autobiography* is increased to seven parts, though the same basic dynamic of increasing dependence on the Spirit is present in both. Through the process of ascent Teresa describes various forms of prayer. The first stages of prayer such as vocal prayer and intellectual contemplation of divine truth (discursive prayer) are principally founded upon human capacities. Prayer is predominantly active in the first three dwellings. As one ascends, one’s prayer and experience is given by the Spirit. In the fourth dwelling, for instance one is given the prayer of infused recollection. The Holy Spirit actively offers the soul a loving awareness of God; the soul receives this awareness. The soul’s activity is in response to that of the Spirit. Also in the Fourth Dwelling, Teresa describes the prayer of quiet in which one’s will is captivated completely by God. For her critics, Teresa’s prayer of quiet bore a worrying similarity to *Alumbrados*. Teresa is keen to reconcile human activity, ecclesial context, and abandonment to God. The various forms of prayer culminate in the Seventh Dwelling with Mystical Marriage in which one enjoys and lives out of a continuous awareness of and intimacy with God. Teresa argues that contemplation and action are ultimately reconciled in the highest form of mystical union.

Both the *Interior Castle* and *Autobiography* articulate ethical praxis as a necessary means for advancement in the mystical life. Both articulate the importance of the ethical in the early stages of the spiritual life. The *Interior Castle* argues the importance of the ethical in the higher stages of the mystical life; the *Autobiography* is less clear on ethical praxis in spiritual maturity. The spiritual space articulated by the *Autobiography* and, especially, the *Interior Castle* is an ethical space. Given their overlapping concerns I will treat these two works together, drawing more
heavily on the *Interior Castle* as the more mature work and on the *Autobiography* as a compliment.

Though Teresa’s work eventually finds a wide audience, she is primarily writing about her own spirituality and that of her reform movement. She is concerned that entrance into religious life is not sufficient to lead a truly religious life. In her *Autobiography* Teresa writes, “Oh, tremendous evil! Tremendous evil of religious … where religious life is not observed, where in a monastery there are two paths (one of virtue and religious life, and the other of a lack of religious life) and almost all walk in like manner; rather, in place of like manner I should say evil manner.”

Teresa both describes her own journey towards a virtuous religious life and offers advice for others to follow. Such a religious life requires individual commitment, this commitment is made within and aspires to the ideals of a religious order. As already discussed, confessors are an integral part of Teresa’s writing and spiritual life. Their exhortations range from the practical to the ethical to the mystical. So too Teresa highlights the importance of less formal spiritual friendship as a great help in the path of virtue. The context for individual prayer, ethical action, and mystical experience is the institutional structure of the order and the Church. This institutional structure is necessary but not sufficient.

Teresa frequently describes the mystical ascent as a growth in virtues. For Teresa, God is by definition the “true Virtue” and other virtues come from God. In the First Dwelling of the *Interior Castle*, Teresa argues that all the good works in the world are useless for the attainment of glory when one is in a state of mortal sin. Good action is only good in reference to God. Though Teresa does not articulate a metaphysical “First Principle and Foundation,” she shares with Ignatius the conviction that one’s entire moral life should be rooted in God. Good actions undertaken for reasons other than good itself are not really good actions. John Rawls would likely level the same opprobrium against Teresa as he had against Ignatius if Rawls had been familiar with her work.

15 Avila, sec. 7.5.
16 Avila, secs. 7.20-21, 22.16.
17 Avila, sec. 14.5.
Teresa offers at least two images of spiritual progress with moral implications in the *Interior Castle*. The dominant image is the journey inward towards God. The second is the removal of pitch from the transparent crystal of the soul.\(^{19}\) In both images God dwells in the inmost part of the soul. In the first image, one journeys from the outside of the soul to the inmost places. In doing so one moves away from sin represented by reptiles and other foul creatures which surround the castle. These reptiles occasionally penetrate the castle, though only the first few dwellings.\(^{20}\) The second image requires cleansing the soul of the sinful darkness that obscures the light from the center of the soul. In both images, spiritual and moral progress are linked. The advanced soul is, to mix metaphors, free from reptiles and luminous.

Like the First Week of the *Exercises*, the dynamic of the First Dwelling of the *Interior Castle* moves the soul away from mortal sin.\(^{21}\) As noted above, in a state of mortal sin all is lost. Teresa discusses many common causes of mortal sin namely pride, inadequate self-knowledge, and demonic influence.\(^{22}\) Often the soul is distracted by the standards of the world and unaware through pride and a lack of self-knowledge of its own perilous state of sin. Teresa sees the maleficent influence of demons in such distractions. Living by the standards of the world rather than those of God is the very definition of sin for Teresa. Growth in humble self-knowledge is a prerequisite for growth in knowledge of God.\(^{23}\) As the soul better understands itself so too it better understands the goodness of God and seeks to imitate the goodness of God. Thus, growth in humble self-knowledge facilitates detachment from sin both at this first stage of the spiritual life and as one advances.

Before proceeding any farther into the spiritual life, one must definitely turn away from sin. This turn away from sin is presumed in the Second Dwelling though returning to sin remains a problem. Teresa writes: “But they [the persons just entering the second dwelling] still don’t have the determination to remain in this second stage without turning back, for they don’t avoid the

\(^{19}\) Avila, sec. I.2.4.
\(^{20}\) Avila, sec. II.1.8.
\(^{21}\) Avila, sec. I.2.1.
\(^{22}\) Avila, sec. I.2.13-17.
\(^{23}\) Avila, sec. I.2.8.
occasions of sin. This failure to avoid these occasions is quite dangerous.” Teresa goes on to argue that though the second dwelling has fewer dangers to the soul, the soul is more aware of the dangers in the second dwelling. The ability to recognize sin is itself an aspect of advancement in prayer. Again, the parallel with the *Exercises* is striking. A major grace of the First Week is the capacity to recognize sinfulness and to move beyond it. The movement into the second dwelling roughly corresponds to the movement from the First Week of the *Exercises* to the second.

The spiritual development of the Second Dwelling includes an explicit social context. Teresa argues that one comes to recognize and avoid bad company while seeking out the help of good company for spiritual assistance. In Wittgensteinian terms, the Second Dwelling is a new language and form of life. Growth in virtue is the essential dynamic of this stage. Though Teresa is known for her powerful religious experiences, at this point in spiritual development she cautions against seeking after such experiences. While she is open to the possibility that God could grant consolations as an extraordinary favor to one early in her spiritual development, the experience of spiritual delight generally requires greater advancement in virtue. That is, in Wittgensteinian terms, a form of life typical of the later dwellings.

Teresa ends her discussion in the second dwelling arguing for the mutual interdependence of contemplating Christ and acting for Christ. “Well, if we never look at Him or reflect on what we owe Him and the death He suffered for us, I don’t know how we’ll be able to know Him or do works in His service. And what value can faith have without works and without joining them to the merits of Jesus Christ, our Good?” Two key themes of the first two Dwellings are succinctly reaffirmed in this brief passage. First, the moral good is dependent on Christ. Knowledge of Christ in prayer is foundational for good action. Second, action is required. Contemplating Christ rings hollow without works arising from that contemplation.

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24 Avila, sec. II.1.2.
25 Avila, sec. II.1.6.
26 Avila, sec. II.1.7.
27 Avila, sec. II.1.11.
The Third Dwelling further raises the moral bar. Souls in the Third Dwelling place, “long not to offend His Majesty, even guarding themselves against venial sins; they are fond of doing penance and setting aside periods for recollection.” Teresa connects this greater sensitivity to sin with greater service. Wanting to serve God is necessary but not sufficient. “But since there is need of still more in order that the soul possess the Lord completely, it is not enough to say we want it; just as this was not enough for the young man whom the Lord told what one must do in order to be perfect.” Like the rich young man, avoidance of sin is necessary but insufficient. Total devotion is required “when the Lord tells us what we must do to be perfect.” Concrete action is required. “This love, daughters, must not be fabricated in our imaginations but proved by deeds.” Teresa goes on to explain that this is not because God has any need of these actions. Rather spiritual progress requires that one’s will is oriented towards God through ethical action. True willing is evidenced by action rather than imagination or vague intention.

All of one’s labors are to be devoted to God, yet Teresa cautions that such commitment does not ensure entry into deep union with God. Moral devotion to God is necessary but not sufficient for mystical assent. Action must arise from one’s relationship with God. Along similar lines to Ignatius, Teresa distinguishes two ways of undertaking an action. These two types of action will parallel Teresa’s two types of spiritual experience in the Fourth Dwelling. The first case is to decide on the action through one’s own reasoning and later devote it to the glory of God. The second and superior case is to prayerfully discern which action to undertake. Ethical praxis must be combined with a humble openness to God’s will. Like Ignatius, Teresa argues that the will of God must be primary. Human weakness makes such openness and action difficult. Teresa resolutely avoids the temptation to Pelagianism. Though Teresa was eminently reasonable in her actions, reason is not primary for her. Love of, and thus surrender to, God is primary and overcomes human weakness. “…for the love of the Lord; let’s abandon our reason and our fears

28 Avila, sec. III.1.5.
30 Avila, sec. III.1.7.
31 Avila, sec. III.1.7.
32 Avila, sec. III.2.4.
into His hands, let’s forget this natural weakness that can take up our attention so much.” In opening oneself to God and receiving divine favors, one grows “in the practice of works and virtues.” In Wittgenstein’s terms, Teresa grounds herself in openness to an absolute good. An absolute good by definition cannot be justified by reasoning from empirical evidence. One can assent and even surrender to an absolute good, but one cannot adequately justify such a good. A divine call as an absolute good must be assented to without comprehensive understanding.

The Fourth Dwelling takes “a long while” of practicing prayer and spiritual discipline to reach. By the time one reaches the Fourth Dwelling, the “poisonous creatures” of sin and temptation are largely left behind and those that remain pose little danger. One has habituated virtues, in particular humility, self-knowledge, and courage in trials, such that sin is less prominent compared to the earlier dwellings when avoidance of sin is a major focus. The Fourth Dwelling marks the beginning of “supernatural experiences.” Even at this higher level of prayer, the social and ecclesial context of prayer remains. For example, Teresa writes that desiring the “increase of the Catholic Church” is a sign that one is loving God.

Teresa divides consolations and spiritual delights. Consolations begin in the human and find their end in God whereas spiritual delights begin in God. Teresa harkens back to a metaphor for prayer she developed in her Autobiography. The effortful prayer of consolation is like watering a field by drawing water from a well or in a somewhat higher level of prayer like aqueducts. By contrast, spiritual delights are like the rain falling upon a field or like a spring of water bubbling up close to the field. The particulars of Teresa’s water imagery change in her various versions of the metaphor. The important distinction she draws in the different versions is between effortful

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33 Avila, sec. III.2.8.
34 Avila, sec. III.2.11.
35 Avila, sec. IV.1.2.
36 Avila, sec. IV.1.5.
37 Avila, sec. IV.1.1.
38 Avila, sec. IV.1.7.
39 Avila, sec. IV.1.4.
41 Avila, “The Interior Castle,” sec. IV.2.3.
prayer premised mainly on human activity and secondarily on divine grace and spiritual delights which are primarily given and secondarily premised upon human receptivity. Unlike the Alumbrados, Teresa is careful not to cast divine grace and human efforts in opposition. “When I see souls very earnest in trying to understand the prayer they have and very sullen when they are in it—for it seems they don’t dare let their minds move or stir lest a bit of their spiritual delight and devotion be lost.” Teresa argues that union with God includes union with the divine will. Quiet prayer does not mean inactivity but receptivity to the will of God. “Works are what the Lord wants!”

Though the higher form of prayer in the fourth dwelling and beyond is based upon divine initiative rather than human effort, such prayer nevertheless improves human ethical praxis. “Because [the soul] has already experienced spiritual delight from God, it sees that worldly delights are like filth. It finds itself withdrawing from them little by little, and it is more master of itself for doing so. In sum, there is an improvement in all the virtues.” Though she does not offer a comprehensive account of “all the virtues,” throughout her writings Teresa holds humility as the central virtue. Through humility one becomes open to transformation by God. Teresa also highlights the virtue of courage in trials throughout her writings. Courage is required to meet the challenge of the fourth dwelling—that is to “persevere in receiving” virtues through various trials.

Virtues must be habitually reinforced by grace. Thus, the ethical praxis arising out of these improved virtues is dependent on the supernatural as well as the natural. The form of life required for these virtues is one that is habitually open to receiving supernatural delight. The struggle to maintain virtue is not only a struggle with oneself but with the devil who attempts to thwart one’s assent. This supernatural register of ethical praxis further undermines human systemization of such praxis. God is both the origin and the terminus of ethical action. Even in this more supernatural context, the community is a source of support in spiritual transformation.

42 Avila, sec. IV.3.11.
43 Avila, sec. IV.3.11.
44 Avila, sec. IV.3.9.
45 Avila, sec. IV.3.10.
and in spiritual trials. Teresa advises her sisters to seek the counsel of the prioress when feeling languid in prayer. The prioress can assist a sister in concretely ordering her life so that she might pray on this supernatural level in such a way that is sustainable. By the Fourth Dwelling the natural and the supernatural are joined.

The Fifth Dwelling discusses the prayer of union with Christ. She prefaces this section by cautioning that the prayer of union is beyond intellectual comprehension. Though the prayer of union is a high level of prayer, the possibility of illusion remains. Teresa remains deeply concerned that the devil actively attempts to thwart the spiritual progress of even so advanced souls as those in the Fifth Dwelling. The virtues gained on the journey to and within the fifth dwelling can be lost, sometimes without the subject of the loss becoming aware: “Oh, but there remain some worms, unrecognized until, like John that gnawed away the ivy, they have gnawed away the virtues. This happens through self-love, self-esteem, judging one’s neighbors (even though in little things), a lack of charity for them, and not loving them as ourselves.” Teresa is careful to distinguish between these “worms” of the Fifth Dwelling and the sinful temptations of the early dwellings. These worms are not necessarily sinful, though they do arrest spiritual progress. Rather like the second of Ignatius’s three pairs of men, they are sufficiently detached from worldly concerns to avoid sin but not whole heartedly detached thus further purgation is required. Teresa considers sinful backsliding to be possible in the Fifth Dwelling, but this is treated more as an unfortunate existential possibility than a common concern for someone so advanced.

Even in this largely incomprehensible context of supernatural prayer, the social context remains vital. Teresa affirms the importance of a learned confessor for spiritual progress. A central focus of the Fifth Dwelling is the intimate connection between love of God and love of neighbor.

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46 Avila, sec. IV.3.13.
48 Avila, sec. V.1.1.
49 Avila, sec. V.3.6.
50 Avila, sec. V.4.6.
51 Avila, sec. V.1.8.
Teresa reflecting on the dual commandment of love of God and love of neighbor writes: “The most certain sign, in my opinion, as to whether or not we are observing these two laws is whether we observe well the love of neighbor. We cannot know whether or not we love God, although there are strong indications for recognizing that we do love Him; but we can know whether we love our neighbor.”

Teresa goes on to argue that the best indication of the love of God is in the love of neighbor. The love of God is ultimately mysterious. All the statements about the love of God that Teresa makes are inadequate to the love of God. They are self-undermining though useful. Insofar as one can understand one’s own love of God, such understanding relies on one’s selfless love of neighbor.

Though the love of others and desire to speak about God to others arises from one’s own love of God, Teresa argues that sometimes the desire to do good for others remains even when the love of God that originally inspired it has grown dim. “And even when the soul has lost this fire, the inclination to benefit others will remain, and the soul delights in explaining the favors God grants to whoever loves and serves Him.” This loss of fire is not a temporary loss of the felt experience of divine life but a moral fault. Teresa cites Judas and Saul as examples of those who had received divine favor and lost the fire. The love and service towards others is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for spiritual advancement. The absence of love of others indicates a serious spiritual problem, “if we fail in love of neighbor we are lost.” Yet, its presence does not necessarily indicate that all is well. Wittgenstein’s distinction between absolute and relative goods is helpful here. Love of God is an absolute good that inspires good acts. These good acts can never exhaust the absolute good. Speaking of God with others after the fire of divine love has grown dim might be considered a high level relative good. Evangelization and service have an internal coherence that can be self-sustaining, at least for a time. Teresa argues that some people who dim in the love of God, “enjoy helping others.”

One can go astray in one’s relationship with God and still help one’s neighbors at least for a time, thus as discussed above.

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52 Avila, sec. V.3.8.
53 Avila, sec. V.3.1.
54 Avila, sec. V.3.2.
55 Avila, sec. V.3.12.
56 Avila, sec. V.3.2.
love of neighbor is an important though imperfect indication of one’s love of God. Only those works inspired by and directed towards God’s will advance one spiritually at this level of prayer. Enjoyment in helping others may be a graced addition to such service but it cannot be the motivation if one is to advance spiritually.

The Sixth Dwelling moves from the prayer of union to spiritual betrothal with its attendant ecstatic and other extraordinary mystical experiences. The fourth level of prayer in the Autobiography roughly corresponds to this Dwelling with its emphasis on spiritual experience. Detachment from sin is even more acute in this dwelling. “[the soul] would not commit knowingly a venial sin even were others to crush it to pieces.”57 The Sixth Dwelling begins by noting the shadow side of social contexts. Those advancing spiritually are often slandered with the cynical accusation of insincerity or spiritual pride in aspiring to sanctity.58 Friends and community members who are not similarly advancing in the spiritual life often gossip and impede the progress of those who are advancing. The language and context that properly supports spiritual advancement is quite limited. Even within religious life only some sisters properly understand and support such advancement. So too only some confessors are properly learned and supportive.

The Seventh Dwelling is the final culmination of the Interior Castle, an intimate spiritual marriage with Christ. The passions that have troubled the soul are conquered in this dwelling.59 In the Seventh Dwelling the soul comes to better understand its union with God in Spiritual Marriage.60 The darkened soul Teresa laments in the First Dwelling lacks of the light of truth.61 Teresa rather boldly claims: “When the soul is brought into that dwelling place, the Most Blessed Trinity, all three Persons, through an intellectual vision is revealed to it through a certain

57 Avila, sec. VI.6.3.
58 Avila, sec. VI.1.3-4.
59 Avila, sec. VII.2.10-11.
61 Avila, “The Interior Castle,” sec. VII.1.3.
representation of the truth.” One might assume that such a vision consumes all the soul’s attention. Teresa claims the opposite, “the soul is much more occupied than before with everything pertaining to the service of God.” A clear mystical vision of God facilitates rather than inhibits service.

Teresa reaffirms that union with God is the absolute good. That union leads to a concrete way of life which supports an openness to union. Teresa concludes the final chapter of the Seventh Dwelling with a reading of the story of Martha and Mary that sets the heights of contemplation in the context of service and vice versa. Teresa puts the matter quite pointedly: “I repeat, it is necessary that your foundation consist of more than prayer and contemplation. If you do not strive for the virtues and practice them, you will always be dwarfs.”

Though the phrase is most associated with Jesuits, Teresa’s vision of the Carmelites is also one of Contemplatives in action, albeit action in the context of the cloistered life. Though Teresa’s Autobiography and Interior Castle are broadly similar. The Autobiography lacks the equivalent of the Seventh Dwelling’s emphasis on a mysticism of service. Bernard McGinn observes that “In the Life [Autobiography] union is temporary, ecstatic, and marginal to the body’s senses and faculties, which are in absorption. In the Interior Castle the union of spiritual marriage is permanent in the center of the soul (though apprehended in different ways). The body and its apostolic activity partake of this union and receive strength to act from the union enjoyed in the center of the soul.”

While the contemplative Mary receiving the better part is traditionally taken to privilege the contemplative over the active, Teresa rejects this interpretation. Prayer is for the sake of service not for enjoyment alone. Teresa writes: “Martha and Mary must join together in order to show hospitality to the Lord and have Him always present.” The contemplative life is also a life of

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62 Avila, sec. VII.1.6.
63 Avila, sec. VII.1.8.
64 Avila, sec. VII.2.4-6.
65 Teresa also discusses the collaboration of Martha and Mary in her: Avila, “Meditations on the Song of Songs,” sec. 7.3.
67 McGinn, Mysticism in the Golden Age of Spain, 207–8.
service. The Seventh Dwelling articulates an ethics that is driven by mystical union. One does not merit mystical union through service; one’s contemplation and active service flow out of the same source, the love of God one experiences in union. They are premised on the same relationship and the same form of life. This form of life is generative and encourages new active mystics. Teresa’s own writing might be considered a movement from her relationship with God in the Seventh Dwelling to be of service to others.

**Practical Works**

Teresa’s great spiritual insight was joined with her practical labors as a founder and reformer of the Carmelites and a major voice in the Spanish Church of the Sixteenth century. All of her works concern prayer, though some have a more directly practical intent than the *Autobiography* and *Interior Castle*. In the Ignatius chapter, the *Spiritual Exercises* were shown in their application through the *Constitutions*. A similar dynamic exists when comparing the Interior Castle and Teresa’s *Constitutions, Way of Perfection*, and *Foundations*. Each work will be briefly considered in turn.

The *Constitutions* are a short text regulating the form of life of Teresa’s sisters. The text proscribes the procedures of the house and is generally considered to be one of Teresa’s minor works. Within this fairly dry and legalistic text the apostolic and ethical character of her spirituality emerges in two places. First, in the section on enclosure Teresa argues for the importance of keeping separation from the world through a strict enclosure. Teresa mitigates this principle somewhat writing: “The Sisters should pay no attention to the affairs of the world, nor should they speak about them. They may do so if the matter concerns something for which they can offer a remedy or help those with whom they are speaking, assist them in finding the truth, or console them in some trial.”

Though the sisters are committed to separation from the world, this separation accommodates the love of neighbor. A related accommodation for love of neighbor is briefly mentioned at the end of the *Constitutions*. Teresa provides a procedure for keeping alms for the poor. The *Constitutions* do not specify how the sisters should distribute

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70 Avila, para. 58.
alms. Any reasonable distribution program would involve some contact with the outside world for the good of others. These are the only sections dealing directly with the good of the neighbor.

The internal life of the monastery is also an ethical context. The Constitutions attempt to order this life. For example, Teresa asks that “The sick should be cared for with the fullness of love, concern for their comfort, and compassion in accordance with the poverty we practice.” The ordering of the monasteries and individual sisters abiding by the Constitutions is for the good of all members of the monastery. The form of life of the monastery is an ethical form of life for those within its walls.

Teresa wrote her Way of Perfection shortly after her Autobiography at the request of her sisters in answer to their questions on the Carmelite form of life. The text deals in some detail with the particulars of her vision of religious life including the observance of the evangelical councils. She highlights three particularly important and interrelated qualities central to the life of prayer for her sisters: love of neighbor, detachment, and humility. Teresa discusses these qualities in the context of relationships within the walls of the community, which would be the sisters’ primary interactions. She describes a form of spiritual friendship that is non-exclusive and generous. This is contrasted with particular friendships, where sisters prefer the company of one sister and exclude the rest of the community thus causing division. Teresa adds a specific caution for sisters who might develop a particular and not altogether spiritual fondness for their confessors.

Detachment and humility allow for orientation to God as the absolute good. This orientation is eminently practical in Teresa’s thought. It helps create: “A love with no self-interest at all. All that it desires or wants is to see the other soul rich with heavenly blessings.”

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71 Avila, para. 23.
73 Avila, sec. 4.4.
74 Avila, sec. 4.9.
75 Avila, secs. 4.14-15.
76 Avila, sec. 7.1.
Teresa agree on the goal of such self-giving love founded in the absolute good of the love of God. The forms of life that support and articulate such love are strikingly different. While Ignatius sent Jesuits across the world to manifest that love in concrete missionary service, Teresa’s instructions include such love in the everyday domestic activities that constitute much of monastic life. Teresa remarks that true love involves setting one’s own good aside for another’s sake. She then offers a very concrete instruction. “Another very good proof of love is that you strive in household duties to relieve others of work, and also rejoice and praise the Lord very much for any increase you see in their virtues.”

For Teresa the practice of living generously in community is integral to one’s own spiritual development and the spiritual development of the other sisters. Though she recognizes and has great experience with the difficulties of community life, community life is an aid to spiritual growth. One of Teresa’s duties as a superior and reformer is to ensure a vital and spiritually nourishing community life.

Teresa’s Foundations combines a history of her reform efforts with spiritual counsel. She devotes the fifth chapter of the Foundations to integrating contemplation and activity. Again, Teresa focuses on loving as a kind of activity in addition to a kind of passivity. Teresa writes, “the soul’s progress does not lie in thinking much but in loving much.” She argues that one acquires love: “By being determined to work and to suffer.” The work and suffering Teresa has in mind is within the context of the monastery and of religious obedience. Sometimes such obedience takes time away from explicitly prayerful activities, yet Teresa observes that spiritual progress is made through such obedience-service. Teresa again returns the discussion to a concrete, domestic context. She writes that if obedience calls sisters to the kitchen they should: “Know that if it is in the kitchen, the Lord walks among the pots and pans helping you both interiorly and exteriorly.” The spiritual union Teresa speaks of in the fifth and subsequent dwellings requires leaving one’s solitude for the obedience of work. In these higher dwellings,

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77 Avila, sec. 7.9.
79 Avila, sec. 5.3.
80 Avila, sec. 5.8.
81 Avila, sec. 5.8.
particularly the seventh, one retains the pleasure of union with God both in silent prayer and amidst the din of kitchen noise while washing the pots and pans. Resistance to such work does not indicate true union with God but rather an unhealthy absorption with religious experience as a kind of selfish pleasure similar to the quietist excesses of the *Alumbrados.*

Teresa and Ignatius theoretical approaches to mysticism may differ especially in the higher levels of assent and with regard to imagination. On the practical side, they both draw an essential connection between the ethical and the spiritual. The disposition of Ignatius’s *Suscipe* is the same as Teresa’s *Foundations.* Teresa writes that her sisters should be God’s “slaves” giving over their whole will in the practice of obedience and charity. True mysticism is mysticism in action. The sphere of that action depends on social context. Given the constrains of their time and monastic way of life, Teresa’s sisters remained mainly within the confines of their monasteries. Jesuits by contrast were sent far and wide. Though their respective situations differed, the basic orientation towards love of God in and through love of neighbor was the same. Concrete ethical acts for both Teresa and Ignatius are a means of mystical assent and an end of mystical assent insofar as one loves God through one’s neighbor.

**Teresa Conclusion**

Teresa of Avila articulates a powerful vision of prayerful reform that navigates the fraught ecclesial milieu of sixteenth century Spain. She is at once cautious of the world and deft in navigating power structures. Though she is a monastic, Teresa’s spirituality joins the contemplative with the active. Like Ignatius, she understands that the heights of prayer are joined with the heights of service within the context of one’s form of life. The contemplative Mary needs her sister, the active Martha, in order to serve the Lord. Teresa’s service included extensive travels and consultations with the great, the good, and the not so good. She highlights the service of God not in such grand travels but in the everyday activities of the monastery. The active fruits of contemplative prayer should be manifest in the simple actions of loving attentiveness in the kitchen. The criterion for ethical action is love of God through love of

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82 *Avila,* sec. 5.13.
83 *Avila,* sec. 5.17.
neighbor. For Teresa good action arising from contemplation begins at God’s promptings and is fulfilled through loving God by loving others in humility, detached from all earthly cares.
Chapter Five: Conclusion

This final chapter is divided into three parts. The first part synthesizes the preceding argument. The second part argues for the importance of differentiating spiritual programming in various pastoral contexts based upon Teresa and Ignatius’ mystical pedagogy. The third and final section presents avenues for further research.

Synthesis

Shortly after the time of Teresa and Ignatius, Caravaggio painted “The Calling of Saint Matthew” for the Cointerel chapel in the Church of St. Louis the French in Rome.¹

The painting shows St. Matthew, dressed in the garb of the turn of the seventeenth century, busy at work with fellow tax collectors. Jesus enters the room and gestures towards Matthew beckoning him to follow. Caravaggio imitates the hand of Michelangelo’s Adam in his rendering of Jesus’s hand to signal. Jesus is the second Adam and that his call is one of cosmic import. Jesus is bathed in heavenly light coming from behind and above him, which then shines on the other figures in the painting. Jesus is in the room but not of the room. He is both present and mysterious. The standard interpretation of the painting is that the bearded figure pointing to himself is Matthew. Some scholars argue that the young man at the end of the table is Matthew based upon the lighting of this second figure. Like art, spiritual space, is often ambiguous—both interpretations of the painting illustrate spiritual space and conversion albeit at different stages. In the standard interpretation, Matthew is surprised by his call; his eyes remain fixed on Jesus. He cannot seem to look away from the one who calls him. Around the same table, two of his fellow tax collectors look down at the coins they have collected. In the alternate interpretation, Matthew has yet to enter a new spiritual space. Jesus is present yet unacknowledged. In either case Caravaggio’s masterpiece illustrates one physical space but at least two spiritual spaces within the same physical space and amongst the same community. In the presence of Jesus, Matthew’s ethical world changes or will change soon. Jesus’s call becomes the absolute good. Jesus’s call of Matthew is a creative act on both Matthew’s and Jesus’ parts. Matthew’s form of life is about to transform from the rhythms of a tax collector to the hardships and joys of the disciple. Matthew will live anew with Jesus. His fellow tax collectors’ ethical world remains centered on money. In his new life Matthew attempts to draw others, including his own community of tax collectors, into a new spiritual space. Within the same social and physical space exist at least two distinctive forms of life, two spiritual languages, two visions of the good.

Caravaggio’s painting offers a simplified illustration of the spiritual evolution of the sixteenth century—the plurality of spiritual spaces within the same physical space and among the same group of people. While countries for the most part maintained a common or at least official confession of faith, the Reformation brought a plurality of religious options into the realm of

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possibility. A variety of spiritual spaces became available to a much greater extent than in the previous centuries. While mystical experience is as old as humanity itself, Certeau argues that mysticism as a social phenomenon emerges as a means of creating and articulating spiritual space. That new spiritual space was not only an individual space but the space of a community.

This thesis has considered two communal spiritual spaces created by Ignatius of Loyola and Teresa of Avila. Both describe journeys towards mystical union with God that are marked by a variety of mystical experiences, from imaginative contemplation to prayer of quiet to nuptial union. These experiences were set within and interpreted through the tradition of the Church. Both Ignatius and Teresa creatively forged a new spiritual space, each with its own language and way of life, out of the various elements available to them in their culture and experience. Teresa’s reformed Carmelites and Ignatius’s Jesuits became institutional instantiations of spiritual space. Certeau defines modern mysticism, which arises out of the decline of Christendom, as a movement away from the institutional. He argues that movement away from the institutional opens new spiritual spaces for the mystical. Teresa and Ignatius inhabit the new spiritual spaces opened by the decline of Christendom. Both would agree with Certeau that institutional association is not a guarantee of spiritual awareness nor of ethical praxis. Teresa and Ignatius’s own religious institutes adapted to their social contexts and became effective schools of spiritual and ethical growth. Their response to the decline of Christendom was not to move away from institutions but to create new institutions in light of their new spiritual space.

A particular focus for both Teresa and Ignatius is the education of new members of their institutes into the spirituality of the Carmelites and Jesuits respectively. The primary focus of this thesis has been the mystical pedagogy of Teresa and Ignatius particularly in its ethical implications. The analogy between the call of St. Matthew and the pedagogical work of Teresa and Ignatius, though broadly apt, fails if one takes Matthew’s conversion to be immediate. Spiritual pedagogy assumes a gradual mystical assent. Through the scripture records, like the other disciples Matthew’s process of spiritual development following his conversion experience was gradual. After the resurrection, the disciples, including Matthew, must move into a new spiritual space to recognize Jesus resurrected. The novice Jesuit or Carmelite may begin inhabiting the same physical space as the rest of his or her community upon entrance, but entering into the spiritual space of the community takes time. In fact, the community is not one
spiritual space, but a number of related spiritual spaces. Teresa knew well that some of her sisters remained in the early Dwellings, while others advanced far into the *Interior Castle*.

The religious novice must learn a new language and a new form of life. Wittgenstein insightfully noted that he could not call Christ “Lord” meaningfully, much like the tax collectors. While he was capable of saying the word, given his judgements on the world, his language, and his form of life, he could not say “Christ is Lord” in the way that is credible. Wittgenstein argues that he must change his life to credibly say “Christ is Lord.” Before his conversion Matthew could not call Jesus “Lord.” Similarly, a novice might enter the novitiate of the Jesuits speaking of the Contemplatio’s “Finding God in All Things” or enter the Carmelite novitiate speaking of Spiritual Marriage with Christ. Some progress in the spiritual life is required for entrance, however most novices are unlikely to be spiritually advanced. Both Teresa and Ignatius attempt to create a structure to assist their students in mystical ascent.

Both Teresa and Ignatius argue that separation from mortal sin is a prerequisite for any spiritual progress. One cannot move beyond the First Week of the *Exercises* or the First Dwelling of the *Interior Castle* without orienting oneself away from the values of the world and towards God as the absolute good. Moving away from sin means a concrete reformation of one’s activities. Breaking with sin is not a singular accomplishment but requires considerable advancement in the spiritual life. In the Second Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* and the Second and Third Dwellings of the *Interior Castle* the implications of orienting oneself towards God become clearer. One’s language around and awareness of venial sin becomes more acute and with it one’s resistance to such sin.

Ethical praxis remains essential on the highest levels of mystical assent. In both the Fourth Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* and the Seventh Mansion of the *Spiritual Castle*, love of Christ implies concrete, self-abandoning service to Christ. This service occurs in the spiritual space of a world seen though the absolute good of God apart from worldly desires, even though one is acting in the midst of the world. In drawing this parallel, I do not mean to imply that Ignatius’s Fourth Week and Teresa’s Seventh Dwelling are equivalent. Teresa’s Seventh Dwelling with its

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3 Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 33e.
movement beyond, among other things, imagination seems to be more rarified and specific than Ignatius’ Fourth Week. In his *Autobiography* Ignatius records his mystical enlightenment on the bank of the Cardoner river that was beyond his powers of description. This experience seems more in line with Teresa’s descriptions of the higher Dwellings, though Ignatius’s brief description makes any such comparison tentative at best. The key insight is that mystical ascent for both Ignatius and Teresa implies ethical praxis.

The exact nature of this praxis differs considerably between Teresa and Ignatius. Teresa’s vision of such praxis is largely within the monastic form of life, even though Teresa’s own life included active engagement well beyond the walls of her various monasteries. Following a religious rule generously can be mystical and ethical. At best the rule of life and rhythms of the monastery should aid in spiritual assent, though the monastery can also be an obstacle to assent. Teresa’s work was in large part an attempt to institutionalize her spiritual insight through her various monasteries. No institution in the world can perfectly conform itself to Christ, however Teresa believed that her reformed monasteries could be a great aid in spiritual ascent. In the terms of this thesis, the monasteries offered an institutional context for the language and praxis of mystical assent. The nuns prayed for a wide variety of those in need. The concrete ethical actions associated with this ascent were largely confined to the monastery, though as noted above, Teresa does allow for service to those outside of the monastery.

Ignatius’ vision for Jesuit spirituality was one of direct service. The *Constitutions* set out a program of formation for instilling virtuous conduct at the early stages of Jesuit life. Though Jesuit life at all its stages involves external service, the novitiate environment is highly structured to assist the novice in overcoming attachment to sin, growing in humility, and ultimately developing spiritually. Ignatius’s expectation was for a greater internalization of the spirituality of the Society such that a formed Jesuit could remain in the spiritual space the Society aspired to while at a table with those in very different spiritual spaces, rather like Matthew. In his correspondence, notably the letter to the Jesuits at Trent, Ignatius highlights the importance of

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concrete ethical action for these fully formed Jesuits. Ethical praxis is not only a stepping stone in spiritual ascent but a vital feature of the spiritual life for Ignatius.

Pastoral Implications

Both Ignatius and to a somewhat lesser extent Teresa offer spiritual counsel to those beyond their religious institutes. Ignatius’s *Exercises* are adaptable to a variety of life conditions. Ignatius and Teresa both understood that their orders represented a path to holiness but that there are many paths to holiness, in many states of life. The Second Week of the *Exercises* is precisely an exercise in following God’s call through an election. In *Lumen Gentium*, the Second Vatican Council declared: “The Lord Jesus, the divine Teacher and Model of all perfection, preached holiness of life to each and every one of His disciples of every condition… all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity; by this holiness as such a more human manner of living is promoted in this earthly society.”5 The council makes explicit the integral connection between growing in holiness and ethical praxis.

In the years since the council there has been an admirable focus on the spiritual development of the whole Church, not only priests and religious. A practical weakness of many approaches to the spiritual development of lay Christians is an undifferentiated presentation of spiritualities of ascent including those of Ignatius and Teresa. Ignatius and Teresa both caution against those at an earlier level of prayer attempting to proceed too quickly. Teresa, for instance, cautions those in the first dwellings about the desire for visions. Ignatius makes repeatedly clear that one should not proceed beyond the First Week of the *Exercises* without having taken on the language, judgements, and ethical praxis of the First Week to translate Ignatius into the terms of this thesis. Teresa and Ignatius’s cautions are both descriptive and prescriptive. They recognize a spiritual harm of proceeding to higher levels of spiritual language such as “Finding God in All Things” or “Nuptial Union” prematurely. To do so is rather like Wittgenstein’s observation that he cannot say “Christ is Lord” without changing his life. Worse still one might lack Wittgenstein’s self-critical assessment and mistakenly believe oneself to be more spiritually advanced than one truly

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is. The path of mystical ascent as described by both Teresa and Ignatius is an arduous but necessary one.

Both Teresa and Ignatius are deeply concerned about the deceptions of the evil spirit. One particularly acute danger is appropriating “Nuptial Union” or “Finding God in All Things” in worldly terms. Mystical language is nonsense insofar as it is premised on an absolute good. However, both “Nuptial Union” and “Finding God in All Things” promise a life of greater meaning that is attractive in worldly terms at least on a superficial level. Teresa and Ignatius are adamant that one must uproot connections with worldly goods and ground oneself in God prior to the consolations of the higher levels of mysticism.

Religious life and seminary formation usually offers differentiated spiritual guidance through a process of formation. The results of such processes are imperfect at best. Nevertheless, such differentiation, which aims to transform those being formed, is certainly in keeping with the visions of Teresa and Ignatius. Outside of the context of religious life and seminary formation such differentiation is rarer. For example, parish programing by dint of practical necessity aims to attract a broad swath of people. While such programs are admirable and on the whole helpful, Teresa and Ignatius aptly demonstrate the need for differentiated spiritual formation. To that end spiritual direction for lay people is an essential means of formation as it was for Teresa, Ignatius, and their followers. The availability and promotion of well-trained spiritual directors is vital in guiding mystical ascent. Also essential are opportunities to engage in Christian service, especially with others seeking to integrate prayer and work. Wise spiritual teachers should be particularly cautious with those who seem to develop either great ethical or contemplative capacities in the absence of the other. One such wise spiritual teacher, Pope Francis, draws on various mystics in his apostolic exhortation on holiness including Teresa and Ignatius. Francis writes: “It is not healthy to love silence while fleeing interaction with others, to want peace and quiet while avoiding activity, to seek prayer while disdaining service…We are called to be contemplatives even in the midst of action, and to grow in holiness by responsibly and generously carrying out our proper mission.”

Integral spiritual development requires

contemplation and ethical action, though the particular form of ethical praxis will vary greatly depending on one’s state of life. Parishes, schools, and dioceses would be well advised to consider differentiated spiritual development programs to meet the diverse needs of persons in different stages of their spiritual journeys.

**Points for Further Investigation**

This thesis has relied upon the Wittgensteinian notion of nonsense in order to articulate the mystical and the ethical. Nonsense cannot be mapped into a rational order. The notion of nonsense is in keeping with the classic notion of the mystery of God which is expressed through much of the tradition, from the Burning Bush to the Cloud of Unknowing. The Fourth Lateran Council affirmed the dissimilarity between creatures is always greater than the similarity. Thomas Aquinas rightly argued that language about God could not be literal but must instead be analogous. Though Thomas may not go as far as a Wittgensteinian notion of nonsense, at the very least language about God does not function in the same way as language about the world. A distinction between the two types of language must be made.

The marking of ascent in Teresa, Ignatius, and many other mystical accounts affirms the mysterious nature of language about God. The language of experiences of God and closeness to God is also distinct from worldly language. Yet progress and higher perspectives are key to mystical pedagogy. There must be a criterion to establish higher versus lower perspectives, higher versus lower forms of life. This thesis explored the mystical pedagogy of Ignatius and Teresa through various forms of life and the ethical praxis inherent in those forms. It further argued that forms of life premised on an absolute good are nonsense. The thesis took as axiomatic that Teresa and Ignatius correctly ordered levels of ascent. In my doctoral work I hope to build upon this project by exploring how higher levels of ascent offer higher perspectives whilst remaining nonsensical. From the higher perspective, retrospection involves the concrete forms of life that can be sensibly described at least in terms of internal consistency. Using Wittgenstein’s account of riddles, I hope to supplement the work of this thesis with an exploration of the epistemic status of higher mystical levels based upon retrospection in the broader context of nonsense.
Appendix

Status Quaestionis

I can find no secondary literature focused directly on the intersection of ethics, pedagogy, and mystical ascent in the writings of Teresa and Ignatius. However, the secondary literatures on these various components and combinations thereof are vast and of varying degrees of relevance. The survey of secondary literature begins with work most directly related to the thesis. More general work on the mystics, mysticism and ethics, and Wittgenstein and religious language is treated in turn.

Wittgenstein, Language, and the Mystics

Peter Tyler’s 2011 _Return to the Mystical: Ludwig Wittgenstein, Teresa of Avila and the Christian Mystical Tradition_ is the most closely related work in the secondary literature to my thesis.¹ Tyler reads Teresa of Avila through Wittgenstein’s theory of language games drawing inspiration from a therapeutic interpretation of Wittgenstein offered by Stanley Cavell.² Tyler summarizes his position: “the meaning of mystical speech is found through transformative act [sic].”³ He argues that transformation cannot ultimately be described but must be shown. The ethical is at best a secondary concern in Tyler’s account. My thesis differs in its interpretation particularly on issues of sense and nonsense.⁴

Sarah Coakley offers a Wittgensteinian account of the ‘spiritual senses’ as a means of understanding belief in the resurrection. Coakley briefly cites Ignatius of Loyola but her primary focus is patristic. She argues that “Religious beliefs and doctrines are not to be demonstrated by ‘evidences’. Embracing them is more like the adopting of a whole new way of life.”⁵ My thesis

¹ Tyler, _The Return to the Mystical._
³ Tyler, _The Return to the Mystical_, 53.
applies aspects of the Wittgensteinian framework Coakley builds for belief in the resurrection to the case of mystical pedagogy. Coakley limits her engagement with Wittgenstein almost exclusively to his *Culture and Values*, while my thesis engages his *Philosophical Investigations* as well.

**Teresa and Ignatius**

Turning to scholars of Teresa and Ignatius, James Howells’ work on mystical knowing and selfhood in Teresa offers an important starting point for understanding the relationship between ethical and mystical development. Howells makes explicit many presuppositions made by Teresa about the soul and the soul’s development through mystical ascent. These suppositions are informed but not strictly determined by a scholastic theological framework. Gillian Ahlgren’s work on Teresa is particularly useful in understanding Teresa’s delicate position as both a woman and a *converso*. The literature on Ignatius Loyola is enormous. The connection between Ignatian spirituality and ethics is well attested in both scholarly and popular literature. Bernard McGinn’s recent *Mysticism in the Golden Age of Spain* is particularly helpful in historically contextualizing Ignatius and Teresa.

**Mysticism and Ethics**

James Horne argues that the mystical life can enhance morality and that the mystical transcendence of morality implies a morality. My thesis builds on Horne’s distinction between

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sought and spontaneous mysticism as well as his controversial assertion that extrovertive mysticism is a higher form of mysticism precisely because of its ethical implications.\textsuperscript{11} Leonard Angel argues that the mystical is an aspect of a broader project of religious life and is interrelated to personal, professional, and sexual aspects of life.\textsuperscript{12} William Wainwright and Richard Jones discuss mysticism and morality in a comparative context.\textsuperscript{13} Wainwright argues that there is no essential connection between mystical consciousness and morality. Jones combines a philosophical approach with a sociological and anthropological evaluation of ritual and practice of mystical groups across traditions.

\textbf{Wittgenstein and Religious Language}

Several scholars link Wittgenstein with the apophatic mystical tradition. Timothy D. Knepper explores the grammatical rules of ineffability in the Dionysian tradition of mysticism and how such an investigation improves potential metaphysical difficulties.\textsuperscript{14} Earl Stanley B. Fronda’s \textit{Wittgenstein’s (Misunderstood) Religious Thought} argues for strong kinship between Wittgenstein’s work and Pseudo-Dionysius. \textit{Ludwig Wittgenstein between Analytic Philosophy and Apophaticism} contains a series of essays applying Wittgensteinian approaches to Eastern Christian authors.\textsuperscript{15} Frederick Sontag’s \textit{Wittgenstein and the Mystical} argues that Wittgenstein sees philosophy as an ascetical, perhaps even mystical practice.\textsuperscript{16} All of these essays make strong, though perhaps unsupportable, claims about Wittgenstein’s views on the mystical. Wittgenstein’s personal religious views are notoriously difficult to define; claims to the contrary.

\textsuperscript{11} Horne, \textit{The Moral Mystic}, 33, 35.

\textsuperscript{12} Leonard Angel, \textit{The Silence of the Mystic}, Philosophy in Canada 7 (Toronto: Published for the Canadian Association for Publishing in Philosophy by Morgan House Graphics, 1983).


\textsuperscript{16} Frederick Sontag, \textit{Wittgenstein and the Mystical: Philosophy as an Ascetic Practice}, Reflection and Theory in the Study of Religion, no. 02 (Atlanta, Ga: Scholars Press, 1995).
typically rely on a selective reading of Wittgenstein’s opus. My thesis uses Wittgensteinian tools but makes only limited claims regarding Wittgenstein’s own views on mysticism per se.¹⁷

Stephen Mulhall and Rowan Williams have recently published complimentary accounts of broadly Wittgensteinian approaches to religious language.¹⁸ Both offer a sophisticated treatment rooting religious language in life worlds and demonstrating the porous division between religious and non-religious language. D.Z. Phillips developed an influential approach to religious forms of life, though it is more stipulative than my approach.¹⁹

¹⁷ Within Wittgenstein scholarship, there is a great deal of work on the relationship between the ethical and mystical on a, for lack of a better term, metaphysical level. The ethical and the mystical both see the world as a whole. This discussion while interesting is mostly beyond the present scope. See: Cyril Barrett, *Wittgenstein on Ethics and Religious Belief* (Oxford: Blackwell Pub, 1991).


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Translations


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