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[Ong, The Barbarian Within, 1962 - suite]

Auteur : Foucault, Michel

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example the way in which chained prisoners condemned to death appear before their temporal judge.⁶

This is something like the prelude we are considering, but it is not quite the same thing—although the explanations and commentaries would tend to make it so, through their tendency to dissolve the prelude in the usual commonplaces of Christian symbolism. This fact suggests a second point about the explanations: as related to the economy of St. Ignatius' own thought here, they are decidedly banal. It is often all right to be banal, and at times even necessary. But it is not all right here, for the precise difficulty to be faced is why this imagery was not banal to St. Ignatius' way of thinking, but rather extraordinarily forceful, so that he repeats it over and over again and allows it such prominence in his whole imaginative approach to the invisible world.

The third and most important thing to note about the explanations is that they do not face into the difficulties of the text. To say the least, the text itself invites us to a very clumsy and unmanageable picture. The soul is barred up, in a prison, which is the body. This prison, by every word for it in the Spanish and Latin texts, is a decidedly fixed thing. Yet it here becomes portable—and for that reason I shall refer to it from time to time as a prison-cage—as we are invited to picture the whole composite of soul-and-body in *exile* among brute beasts. St. Ignatius is not only explicit on this point but insistent: "I say the whole man, soul and body," soul and prison-cage. He is likewise explicit that the prison situation and the brute-animal situation are to be pictured together: "to consider my soul to be closed up in this corruptible body as in a prison, and the whole composite as in exile among brute animals." How can a prison be satisfactorily imagined as in exile?

The difficulty does not end here. To make an exile among brute beasts effectively undesirable, it would seem that the contact between the person in exile and the brute beasts should be at some kind of maximum. The person should be thrown up against the brute beasts, so to speak, in the raw. If his soul cannot directly engage them, as it of course cannot, at least it should not be positively sheltered from them. But in our prelude this is precisely the fact. Exiled among brute beasts, the soul should certainly find its prison-cage a decided asset. When you are surrounded by wild animals, the very next best thing to having them in cages is to be in one yourself. And thus the second part of the prelude seems to cancel out all the effectiveness of the first. Moreover,

the difficulty here seems to be quite peculiar to the Ignatian text, with no clear counterpart in any of his sources which have now been so exhaustively studied.⁷

The recognition of the difficulty here does not make its way to the surface of even so classical a commentary as Roothaan's. But retreat masters are sensitive to it, at least subconsciously, as Père des Freux once was. If the writer's experience of retreat masters is any indication of their prevailing practice, they quite commonly substitute for this prelude of St. Ignatius' some other prelude of their own devising.

III

Several offhand solutions for the difficulty could be proposed. The prison and brute-animal imagery are to be used separately—either as alternatives or in succession. The text rules out this explanation, as has been seen. St. Ignatius is clearly proposing their use together. Secondly, one might suggest that the imagery used by the author of the *Spiritual Exercises* is confused in detail and to be taken only in a general sense as echoing the general Christian tradition—and indeed a pre-Christian and para-Christian tradition—which enforces the lesson of the degradation and sinfulness of man in a flood of debasing images of all sorts. In such an explanation the prison and the brute-animal imagery lack any precise function, at least as working in consort. Against this explanation, there is Ignatius' marked tendency not to be haphazard in the *Spiritual Exercises*, as well as the notable precision and insistence of his directions here. Finally, one might suppose that the images were hopelessly confused through some short-circuiting in Ignatius' own mind. This could be, for St. Ignatius is not infallibly "logical" in the use of images; but even if it is so, the fact would not dispense from further explanation but would rather demand it, for psychologists know too well that there is just as much reason for a particular confusion as for anything else in the conscious life. This final answer would thus leave us only with a further question: Why this confusion?

At the present time, it would seem, it is less necessary than ever to suppose that St. Ignatius' imagery here ran wild through some inscrutable personal short-circuits. For we are perhaps in a better position than ever before to understand St. Ignatius' prison-cage and to

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