ILLUSION IN SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE AND THE QUEST FOR RESILIENCE: PHENOMENOLOGY IN CONVERSATION WITH IGNATIAN DISCERNMENT*

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ABSTRACT

The article brings into conversation phenomenology and the Ignatian tradition of discernment as it explores phenomena of illusion in spiritual life. Special attention is paid to harmful illusions, such as religiously motivated and/or justified sexual abuse, abuse of authority, and terrorist acts. Here the article explores both the resilience of illusions, as they enter at different phases of experience, and a process of learning resilience as a person or a community learns to cope with misperceptions, serious errors of judgment and their consequences.

Keywords

Phenomenology; Ignatian spirituality; Illusion; Religious violence; Sexual abuse; Authority abuse; Terrorist acts; Discernment; Resilience; Franz Brentano; Edmund Husserl; Martin Heidegger; Mark Juergensmeyer

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1. Introduction

This article focuses on the phenomenon of illusion in spiritual life, on its presentation, evaluation, and its harmful effects if the evaluation is incorrect. It uses difficult examples, in which incorrectly judged

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spiritual experiences or manipulated judgments have led to harmful actions like the abuse of authority, sexual abuse or terrorist acts. Methodologically, it draws on Franz Brentano's analysis of experience as a mental phenomenon, and in particular, his approach to different phases of experience, complemented by Edmund Husserl's notion of intentionality, and Martin Heidegger's understanding of care (*Sorge*). The approaches of phenomenology are complemented by insights from the Ignatian tradition, as it more explicitly addresses different movements taking place in spiritual life, and offers tools for learning how to understand and evaluate these processes adequately. It argues that the gift and the art of discernment[1] are vital for strengthening resilience, both of individual people and of communities affected by harmful illusions.

In recent years, the theme of resilience has assumed a vital importance in public discourse. In our part of the world, attention given to resilience is conditioned by the Covid 19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and now by the terrorist attacks in Israel and the violent response while searching for their perpetrators in Gaza. Such global events continue to remind people of their fragility. Resilience is often seen as an antidote. In this article, however, the quest for resilience is seen in broader terms.

1.1 What Is Resilience?

In dictionary definitions, resilience refers to the state or quality of 'recovering quickly from a shock' and being 'able to return to normal shape after stretching'.[2] Resilience then means both 'elasticity' and 'power of recovery' and 'has to do with resistance to adversity'.[3] The notion has its roots in biology and physics. Ecology uses biological insights when it speaks of resilience as 'the ability of an ecosystem to

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[1] The word discernment may need some further classification, as it is not commonly used in everyday discourse. The Greek for discernment is *diakrínein*, which combines the prefix *dia* (between) and *krínein (judge, decide). Diakrínein* then means to separate out, to make a distinction, to learn by discriminating, to determine, to decide, to give a judgment. The substantive *diákrisis* is derived from such an operation. To discern usually refers to the ability to 'see or be aware of (something) clearly' (*Collins Paperback Dictionary & Thesaurus*, 215) or 'to recognize or perceive clearly … to recognize or perceive (differences)' (*Collins English Dictionary*, 445) as well as the acts that demonstrate or cultivate such ability.

[2] See *Collins Paperback Dictionary & Thesaurus*, ed. Jeremy Butterfield (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 2002), 647.

[3] *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 2, ed. Lesley Brown (Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2547, s.v. 'resiliency'.

return to its original state after being disturbed', and technology draws on physics when it understands resilience as 'the amount of potential energy stored in an elastic material when deformed'.[4]

In humanities and social sciences, resilience is seen as 'an ability to absorb disturbing impulses and to adapt oneself' when facing 'crises at the level of individual lives, society and socio-ecological systems'.[5] It is not presupposed that people can return to an 'original state'. Rather, resilience is seen as an integrative process making it possible to work through crises, opening ways forward in which people can and need to participate and communicate.[6] In such a process, there is a long-term and ongoing interaction between the different personal and communal webs of understanding, survival strategies, communication skills and other competences contributing to coping well when the stability of life is significantly disturbed.[7] Resilience is not understood here only as a capacity to overcome crisis, to adapt, but rather as a holistically understood care for personal and social sources of life that can help in times of danger when certainties are disintegrating, because they can offer complex support.[8]

The insights from the social, political and psychological contexts in which the concept of resilience is used are relevant also in the field of

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4 *Collins English Dictionary*, general consultant J. M. Sinclair (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 2000), 1310.

5 Alice Koubová, podcast at Svobodná akademie, April 27, 2023, https://havelchannel.cz/cs/01816 (accessed February 20, 2024).

6 See Ondřej Horký-Hlucháň and Clara Burry, 'Building Resilience through Participation: Lessons from the Civil Society in Eastern Europe and Western Balkans,' *Policy Publications*, September 18, 2023, https://www.iir.cz/en/building-resilience-through-participation-lessons-from-the-civil-society-in-eastern-europe-and-western-balkans-1 (accessed October 24, 2023).

7 In the first phase of the research programme Resilient Society for the 21st Century (Research Programme of the Czech Academy of Sciences AV21, 2021–2025), coordinated by Alice Koubová, resilience is identified as a complex of social connections, strategies, policies and ways of communication that in a time of crisis society can use in a way that would not be in the long-term disadvantageous for the society (e.g. negatively reactive, short sighted, extremist), but transformative, responsible and sustainable. Social resilience is irreducibly connected with individual resilience. See *Odolná společnost*, http://odolnaspolecnost.cz/o-programu/ (accessed February 20, 2024).

8 Alice Koubová explains that 'the care for the sources of well-being means something other than to be just focussed on supressing threats and shortcomings … it does not deny them, but frames them, so that they cease to be boarderless, and their power even may diminish by the pure fact that they are losing hegemony.' See Alice Koubová, 'Společenská odolnost – rámování perspektivy a metodologická východiska,' in *Odolná společnost: Mezi tyranií a bezmocí*, ed. Alice Koubová and Barbora Braunová (Praha: Filozofický ústav AV, 2023), 7–24, here 16.

spiritual life studied in this article. While analysing the phenomena of illusion, in particular those illusions heavily damaging human well-being, such as authority and sexual abuse, and justifications of terrorist acts, I will focus mainly on one aspect of resilience, namely that of the transformative power of understanding.

1.2 Allusions and Illusions in Spiritual Life

In the mainstream religious traditions, spiritual experience is seen as a deeper personal engagement, personal and shared/collective, with the realities that the ritual, dogmatic or ethical dimensions of these traditions proclaim and celebrate. In the broader sense, however, it is possible to understand spiritual experience as any human experience that is linked to some encounter with the transcendent and/or the holy, or that includes insights or motivations for actions with the frames of reference including the transcendent and/or the holy.[9] In this field, crises caused by having trusted in something that later proved to be illusory are painful and can have damaging effects on individuals engaging with the illusions, their direct surroundings as well as broader communities.

For studying the possibilities of transformative understanding an important difference needs to be made, namely between allusions and illusions that impact on spiritual life and often come close to each other.

Allusion means three things: 'a play on words, a pun'; 'a metaphor, a parable, an allegory'; and 'a covert, passing, or indirect reference'.[10] In religious discourse, allusions are related to the prophetic literature; to warnings or even judgments that, while expressing a finality, are still open to reversal; or to promises that can be only occasionally confirmed by the events taking place in the given moments of history.[11] One of the classic examples is a mirage, seeing an oasis in the desert. There is the 'apparent perception of an external object or sense-datum when no such object or stimulus is present',[12] and yet, it is an authentic

[9] See Ivana Noble, *Tracking God: An Ecumenical Fundamental Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 193–194, 211–234.

[10] *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 1, 59.

[11] See Benjamin Sommer, 'Allusions and Illusions: The Unity of the Book of Isaiah in Light of Deutero-Isaiah's Use of Prophetic Tradition,' in *New Visions of Isaiah*, ed. Roy Melugin and Marvin Sweeney, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* 214 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 156–186, here 174.

[12] *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 1, 1186n. 20.

phenomenon, an authentic experience of an illusion.[13] But the illusion is not raised to reality by its authenticity. The oasis is not what is real, but the experience of the people who believed they saw it is real, even if they later found out that they only imagined they saw it. In the case of the mirage, the allusion may provide a type of insight into one's own fallibility that does not damage human integrity, and in retrospect may be even liberating, because the allusion can contribute to the understanding of the 'elasticity' of human experience.

Illusion signifies both a deliberate mockery and an error of judgment that leads to 'misapprehension of the true state of affairs' or even to instances of 'sense-perception' of an external reality 'suggesting a false belief as to its nature'.[14] However, illusion does not always have only a negative meaning. In works of art, illusion is at times deliberately engaged in order to discern and reveal a deeper truth.[15] Illusions can be turned into allusions,[16] and this is also valid in the field of spiritual experience.[17] This process, as we will see later, vitally contributes to long-term resilience building. And yet, it would be wrong to deny that

[13] See Lucien O'Dwyer, 'Reality in Husserl and in Heidegger,' in *A Hundred Years of Phenomenology: Perspectives on a Philosophical Tradition*, ed. Robin Small (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 43–51, here 50.

[14] *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* I, 1318.

[15] Lawrence Kimmel points out that in art the polarity between reality and illusion can be at times overcome, as the 'the discernment of reality and the disclosure of truth' can happen 'through the art of illusion'. Lawrence Kimmel, 'Reality and Illusion in the Work of Art,' in *Human Creation between Reality and Illusion*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *Analecta Husserliana LXXXVII* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), xi–xxv, here xxv. The art of illusion, however, does not cover spiritual, religious, moral or political illusions. Kimmel speaks about a gentler layer of human experience, where fine art, music, literature, theatre or film constitute a fictive reality that 'lies somewhere between the real of common sense and the imaginary of poetry' (ibid).

[16] Max Statkiewicz says that 'in a sense only in the theater can one see the truth as deception and the truth of deception, that is, the mechanisms … capable of conjuring up the gods or the idols.' See Max Statkiewicz, 'On the Truth and Lie of Illusion in the Theatrical Sense,' in *Human Creation between Reality and Illusion*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 43–52, here 43 and 50.

[17] Brian Grassom speaks about the paradoxical nature of the announcement in art: 'It is the announcement of the ever-unfulfilled promise: the advent of the Other. The invisible is about to become visible. The unnameable will be named. The unknowable will become knowable. The impossible is about to happen, quietly and peacefully. A Stranger will appear at the door of the heart. Silence will become sound for a brief moment in eternity, before becoming Silence once more. Time stands still, and waits for eternity to pass, before becoming time again.' Brian Grassom, 'Reality, Illusion, and Alterity: The Advent of the Other,' in *Human Creation between Reality and Illusion*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 127–137, here 135–136.

some experiences are extremely hard to integrate into such a process, and some illusions have a strong power to mislead and harm.

1.3 Harmful Illusions

One such hard example is the case of Jean Vanier, the founder and the leader of the L'Arche community. After his death, it became known that over nearly 70 years of his active ministry he abused more than 25 women, both sexually and spiritually.[18] In Vanier's case, the spiritual experience of his teacher, Thomas Philippe, a Dominican priest, was used as justification for practising and requiring nudity and sexual touching in spiritual direction or shared contemplation, arguing that it was important for the spiritual growth of his victims.[19] Johanna Stiebert argues that cases of sexual abuse do not occur in isolation from the ideologies, religious cultures, communities and institutions that sustain them. Often these do not appear as extremist or fundamentalist on the surface, and yet a multifaceted analysis of the different forms penetrating both the physical social space and the realm of media can reveal how a damaged spirituality, sexuality and position of power participate in the dangerous illusions and their spread.[20]

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[18] See the Study Commission set up by L'Arche International, that was released on 30 January 2023; for the full text in English, see Bernard Granger, Nicole Jeammet, Florian Michel, Antoine Mourges, Gwennola Rimbaut, and Claire Vincent-Mory, *Control and Abuse Investigation on Thomas Philippe, Jean Vanier and L'Arche (1950–2019)*, https://commissiondetude-jeanvanier.org/commissiondetudeindependante2023-empriseetabus/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Report_Control-and-Abuse_EN.pdf (accessed November 5, 2023).

[19] Kate Shellnutt summarises: 'The commission describes a French ministry called *L'Eau vive* (Living Water), which had been led in the 1950s by Vanier's spiritual mentor, a Dominican priest named Thomas Philippe. After a mystical experience involving the Virgin Mary, Philippe developed "theological arguments to justify his sexual practices with nuns or young lay women aspiring to a religious vocation," the report said. "Philippe's behaviour led him to be barred from public or private ministry by the Catholic Church, but he remained clandestinely in touch with Vanier and other members of *L'Eau vive*, who went on to found *L'Arche* in 1964. Jacqueline d'Halluin, an aspiring nun who also became a disciple of Philippe's and whose letters describe a sexually intimate relationship with Vanier, came up with the organization's name. Philippe became the director of *L'Arche*'s spiritual centre *La Ferme* through 1991.' See Kate Shellnutt, 'Report: Jean Vanier's *L'Arche* Hid "Mystical-Sexual" Sect for Decades,' *Christianity Today*, January 30, 2023, at https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2023/january/jean-vanier-l-arche-abuse-sect-report-thomas-philippe-catho.html (accessed November 4, 2023).

[20] See Johanna Stiebert, 'Religion and Sexual Violence,' in *The Routledge Handbook of Religion, Gender and Society*, ed. Caroline Starkey and Emma Tomalin (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 339–350. For the critique of church complicity in perpetuation of abuse acts, see also Hilary Jerome Scarsella and Stephanie Krehbiel, 'Sexual

The second area includes situations in which religion was used as justification of acts of public violence, where the experiences, including call to actions, draw on 'a divine mandate for destruction'.[21] Human judgment regarding what comes and what does not come from God, Mark Juergensmeyer argues, is also here underpinned by the ideology, the motivation and the organizational structure that operate on the threshold of the political, social and ideological circumstances. A vision of God becomes 'fused with violent expressions of social aspirations, personal pride, and movements for political change'.[22]

1.4 Phenomenological Analysis and Ignatian Discernment in a Conversation

Stilbert draws on cultural anthropology as well as post-colonial and feminist biblical hermeneutics, as she studies self-conscious emotions and the institutional dynamics that is implicit in the continuation of violent illusions.[23] Juergensmeyer's analysis takes a 'sociotheological approach'[24] to the problem of illusion in spiritual life. In this article, I will offer a different methodological approach, as I bring into conversation phenomenological analysis and Ignatian discernment.

Brentano draws attention to the different stages of experience and thus helps in identifying where illusion comes in. Husserl, Brentano's pupil, further develops an understanding of intentionality and its

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Violence: Christian Theological Legacies and Responsibilities,' *Religion Compass* 13, no. 9 (2019): 1–13; Ruth Everhart, *The #MeToo Reckoning: Facing the Church's Complicity in Sexual Abuse and Misconduct* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020).

[21] See Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 6.

[22] See Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 10. Juergensmeyer quotes the old saying: 'One person's terrorist is another person's freedom-fighter', and he analyses the cases when what is seen as 'a subjective judgment about legitimacy of certain violent acts' is nourished by 'the transcendent moralism with which such acts are justified … the religious images of struggle and transformation – concepts of cosmic war'. See Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 9–10.

[23] See Johanna Stiebert, 'Within and Without Purity, Danger, Honour, and Shame: Anthropological Approaches in Feminist Hebrew Bible Studies,' in *Feminist Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Retrospect III: Methods*, ed. Susanne Scholz (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2015), 111–135.

[24] See Mark Juergensmeyer and Mona Kanwal Sheikh, 'A Sociotheological Approach to Understanding Religious Violence,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence*, ed. Michael Jerryson, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Margo Kitts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 620–644.

impact on all phases of experience. He and Heidegger[25] also provide new insights for assessing the roles and limits of one's active engagement in identifying the illusion as illusion. Heidegger also links intentionality with his understanding of the care for being or its absence, and thus he makes a significant contribution to the understanding of what Brentano sees as the final stage of experience, in which the presentation and judgment are transferred into the emotional and the practical life.

I argue that it makes a difference in dealing with the crisis engagement that a spiritual illusion causes, and thus it is also relevant for resilience building. At different stages of illusion, it has a different potential to cause harm but also a different allusive potential.

Ignatian discernment lies within the divine–human relation; at a horizontal level, it is also relational, as it has both personal and communal dimensions.[26] It gives resilience the dynamics of integration, as it concerns not only individual acts but the whole process of forming human spiritual life. Thus, discernment in the Ignatian tradition goes beyond working with binary oppositions such as illusion/truth, good/evil, justice/injustice, as it includes also possibilities of nuance, recognition of different human perspectives and of the otherness of God to any human perspective. And yet it does not opt for relativism. This rich tradition is thus a helpful complement to the phenomenological analysis. Both together are suitable to address the problem of human fallibility in the different layers of experience. Both together can help in spelling out how learning through fallibility may be beneficial, and how the 'elasticity' of faith can be strengthened through the deepening of an understanding of what has been going on in times of crisis.

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[25] Heidegger was familiar with Brentano's work, and already in 1914 wrote a book review on his thought. See Martin Heidegger, '"Von der Klassifikation psychischer Phänomene", von Franz Brentano,' *Literarische Rundschau für das Katholische Deutschland* 40 (1914): 330–332.

[26] Discernment as a gift is at the same time 'the art of choice, which safeguards both the transcendence of the Good and the ultimate freedom of the human person.' Brother Adalberto Mainardi and Ivana Noble, 'Discernment and the Christian Life: Introduction,' *Acta Universitatis Carolinae Theologica* 9, no. 2 (2019): 5–10, here 6. See also Antonio Barruffo, 'Discernement,' in *Dictionnaire de la vie spirituelle*, ed. Stefano de Fiores and Tullo Goffi (Paris: Cerf, 1983), 271–278. In the *Spiritual Exercises* of St Ignatius and in his *Autobiography*, discernment is understood as a key to living in harmony with the divine call to praise God and to serve God, and to find salvation in it. See Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises* 23. I am using the translation by Joseph Munitiz and Philip Endean, eds., *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996), 279–360.

2. Illusions at Different Levels of Experience

Brentano claimed that we have access in our inner consciousness to what we call experience in three ways, or we could also say in three layers, dimensions or phases, although their succession is not always that easy to isolate. These are: (i) the presentation; (ii) the judgment; and (iii) the movement of our will and feelings.[27]

2.1 Presentation

The first layer of experience refers to our mental encounter with that which emerges. It is a bedrock of experience, its most stable reference point. As such, however, it is pre-linguistic. It does not yet involve an interpretation, and the question of truth and untruth does not yet enter in. In the case of spiritual experience, this would be the moment of revelation or illumination, the encounter with reality perceived as external to the conscious subject. When an illusion enters here, we can speak about a deception. It can be deliberate when the presentation is fabricated – by someone else or by the person involved. Either the presentation of what is claimed to be presented has not taken place, and people behave as if it did, or something else has taken place and it has been deliberately twisted. It can be different from wishful thinking or any other form of projection in which no external impulses are involved. For this reason, some phenomenologists exclude the possibility of illusion at this stage and even insist that perception excludes illusion, because any singular perception, if it is perception, needs to be structurally cohesive with the entire system of perception.[28] My article takes a different line as it argues that deception and illusion impact on the whole scale of human experience, even where we are not dealing with deliberate deception or hallucination. For that argument, however, I need to include human intentionality already into this first stage.

As an example, we can return to the case of Jean Vanier's mentor, Thomas Philippe, referred to above. In the report of the Study Commission set up by L'Arche International, Philippe is quoted as follows:

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[27] See Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 198.

[28] For them this cohesiveness distinguishes a perception from an illusion or a hallucination. For a detailed argument, see Claude Romano, *At the Heart of Reason* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015).

> On several occasions, while in Rome in 1938 … I received very obscure graces, which I still do not manage to identify and classify: those graces were neither lights nor consolations; although they had the same characters and the same effects as the inner graces of tranquillity and union, they involved a divine embrace of the body, definitely located in the region of sexual organs and radiating from there as if from one's inside throughout the whole body and onto the spirit.[29]

According to the witness, something presented itself, to the senses, through the understanding of Philippe. Retrospectively, we know that such experiences were at the beginning of justifying and perpetrating acts of sexual and authority abuse.[30] But where did the illusion enter in? Was it at the presentation or the judgment?

When we move to the spiritual and pastoral context, the Ignatian tradition of discernment offers some helpful tools. It works with the possibility of error at the level of presentation, although it recognises that it is accessible only retrospectively, through a 'reflective awareness' of what has taken place. Such reflection includes the other levels of experience, especially 'inner moods and feelings'. Then, equipped with the effects of the presentation, later noted and analysed, it returns to its origins. St Ignatius differentiates between a perception of the divine agents, and of the deception of the enemy, whom he understands as 'a malign intelligence who operates through deceit'.[31] He most closely addresses this theme in his *Spiritual Exercises*, offering twenty-two rules for the discernment of the spirits, organised in two sets.

The first set is recommended for beginners, to help them understand, at least to some extent, 'the various movements produced in the

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[29] Jeammet et al., *Control and Abuse Investigation on Thomas Philippe, Jean Vanier and L'Arche* (1950–2019), 76.

[30] The report continues: 'During his trial, T. Philippe presented and defended his "system" himself. … Those documents [recordings from his interrogation in 1956], in which he takes full responsibility and firmly defends his beliefs and practices without admitting their sinful nature, enable one to access his presentation of the facts and retrace their chronology.' Jeammet et al., *Control and Abuse Investigation on Thomas Philippe, Jean Vanier and L'Arche* (1950–2019), 76, n. 2.

[31] See Jim Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality A to Z* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2017), 71. Manney points out that Ignatius uses many different words for 'the malevolent spiritual entity that seeks to turn us away from God – the "bad spirit", "bad angel", and "Lucifer" appear frequently in his writings, but his favourite is "enemy". He calls it "the enemy", "our enemy", "the enemy of our progress and eternal salvation", and often "the enemy of our human nature"'. See ibid. 1.

soul, the good that they may be accepted and the bad that they may be rejected'.[32] First of all, St Ignatius points out, it is important to be aware whether we are on the way towards God or away from God because this has an impact on how the different agencies come to us through our perception. Those who are adjusted to sinful life perceive the agency of God as disturbing, while for those who 'are making serious progress in the purification of their sins and advancing from good to better in the service of God Our Lord' it works the opposite way: 'then it is typical of the bad spirit to harass, sadden and obstruct, and to disturb the soul with false reasoning, so as to impede progress.' On the other hand, 'the distinctive trait of the good spirit is to give courage and strength, consolations, tears, inspirations and quiet, … removing all obstacles, so that the person may move forward in doing good.'[33]

This set of rules would not help much when dealing with what might be called a false consolation, such as in Philippe's testimony. The second set of rules, for the more advanced, would be more helpful here, as it offers more detailed insights regarding how 'the evil spirit' misleads by manipulating what people who think that they are on the way towards God experience as a consolation. When St Ignatius says that '[o]nly God Our Lord gives consolation to the soul without preceding cause',[34] he is aware of a much more complex web of communication in which human beings and the spiritual world participate, as well as of the role human abilities and limits can play in simulating spiritual experience. Thus he says: 'We must pay close attention to the whole course of our thoughts: if the beginning, middle and end are entirely good and tend towards what is wholly right, this is a sign of the good angel.'[35]

It is interesting that he speaks about the 'course of thought' when he refers to spiritual experience. We can interpret it as a need to distance himself from the non-critical acceptance of claims that what we perceive is identical to what God communicates. Similarly, he speaks about the contrary, about the situations when 'the course of the thoughts

[32] St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 313.
[33] St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 315.This simple distinction reflects Ignatius's early spiritual experiences as dictated in his *Autobiography* 6–8. I am using the translation by Philip Endean, in Munitiz and Endean *Saint Ignatius*, 13–64. Endean prefers to call the work *Reminiscences*. Here I use the more standard term *Autobiography*, the paragraph numbers are the same in all the critical editions.
[34] St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 330.
[35] St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 333

suggested to us leads us finally to something bad, or less good than what one had previously intended to do … all this is a clear sign of the bad spirit, the enemy of our progress and eternal well-being.'[36]

No set of rules can grasp every human situation, and St Ignatius was aware of that. His insights, nevertheless, help in tracing why and how 'bad ideas and disastrous mistakes present themselves in attractive garb',[37] and, we can add, why the level of presentation is prone to illusions. Here St Ignatius offers a quite polarised interpretation of the differences. When illusion enters at the level of judgment and response, however, as we will see, he needs to work with more nuance.

2.2 Judgment

For Brentano, the second layer of experience consists of formulating a judgment.[38] It builds on our linguistic-intellectual grasp of what was presented and allows for new insights or clarifications as well as for new errors. According to Brentano, human intentionality plays an important role here, but Brentano does not explain this role in relation to the whole web of lived experience, where the capacity for resilience needs to be situated and where the objective and the subjective dimensions of human lives interact.[39] For this, we need to go to Husserl, who states that both presentation and judgment involve human intentionality.[40] Husserl explains that intending something means wanting to

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[36] Ibid. For more complex examples, see also *Autobiography* 19 and 31.

[37] Jim Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality A to Z* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2017), 72.

[38] See Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint,* 198. Brentano presented the distinct classes of psychical phenomena, presentations and judgments, already in his Würzburg lectures in 1869–1871. He first saw judgments as instances of acceptance and rejection. His notes show that he intended to write a fourth book of his Psychology dedicated to judgment, where he would elaborate on the distinction between evident and blind judgments. See Robin D. Rollinger, 'Brentano's Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint: Its Background and Conception,' in *Franz Brentano's Metaphysics and Psychology*, ed. Ion Tănăsescu (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2012), 262–309, here 269, 273.

[39] Moran and Cohen point out that Brentano does not recognise that in all intentional experiences that give content to the complex lived experience, the objective and the subjective interact. 'When I see an object, I only ever see it from one side, in a certain kind of light, from a certain angle and so on. … The same object is presenting itself to me in different modes,' and thus it is necessary to distinguish 'between the object which is intended and the particular mode under which it is intended'. See Dermot Moran and Joseph Cohen, *The Husserl Dictionary* (London: Continuum, 2012), 169; Husserl, *Logical Investigations* V §17.

[40] Husserl goes back to Brentano's presentation and states: 'In perception something is perceived, in imagination, something is imagined, in a statement something stated, in love something loved, in hate hated, in desire desired, etc.' Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), V §10.

think or to say something, bringing it by will to mind and sometimes also to the tongue. For him, perception involves intending that can be fulfilled or unfulfilled, judgment is intending that is already joined to a particular content.[41] Still, the content comes to our consciousness in different ways, and it is not free of ambiguity. For Husserl not only what is being intended at the level of judgment matters, but also the quality of the act of intending: in other words, what kind of act it is, and what it does to the judgment.[42] Thus we can see judgment from more than one side, and allow for the subsequent changes in judgment that can include both expansions of understanding or radicalisations of intended outcomes.

The Ignatian tradition of discernment focuses on resilience as a kind of gaining elasticity of faith that helps to broaden the scope of its understanding. At the level of judgment, which is seen as a backbone to resilience, it involves cultivating 'the ability to separate what's important from what's irrelevant or misleading'. It is a skill that consists in 'learning how to interpret spiritual senses and inner movements of the heart' and a methodology 'applying these skills (and other tools) to the choices we face in real life'.[43] The possibility of illusion is not excluded, and St Ignatius' rules for how to make a good choice focus more on the process than on the end result, which would, for him, still be conditioned by our fallibility.[44] This, however, also means that illusion is not demonised and that coping with the illusion at the level of judgment is integrated into the stages of further growth.

When St Ignatius speaks about making a choice of life in the Second Week of the Exercises, he insists that the human and the divine perspectives are not mixed in the human judgment. Thus he speaks about 'every good election, in so far as it depends on us …', and with that in mind he recommends that 'it will be to the exercitant's advantage to make it properly', rather than assume that a kind of infallibly good

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41 See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1967, §4, 15, 20.

42 See Husserl, *Logical Investigations* V §21 and 37.

43 Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality A to Z*, 62.

44 See St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 2, 5, 14–18. He is aware of different levels of certainty one has and can have regarding the judgment on what really comes from God, as he explains that the direct communication does not mean direct and infallible understanding on the human side, and that the human judgment and understanding is to a different degree clouded by different desires and attachments. Therefore, he warns, people who undergo the Spiritual Exercises need to be careful not to make hasty decisions based on their premature judgments.

choice is guaranteed.[45] He distinguishes three times for, or three proper ways of, making a good choice: (i) 'When God our Lord so moves and attracts the will that without doubting or being able to doubt, such a dedicated soul follows what is shown'; (ii) 'when sufficient light and understanding is received through experience of consolations and desolations and through experience of the discernment of different spirits'; (iii) when 'the soul is not disturbed by different spirits, and can use her natural powers freely and calmly'.[46] St Ignatius further offers two ways of making a good and correct choice in the third time, when the judgment of a devout person uses the powers of reason and imagination in order to place one's best possible choice in the given time and circumstance into God's hands.[47] Thus, the choice is not free of ambiguity, but it is integrated into the living relationship with God.

Integration of what is first judged as an experience of an illusion into the whole of human spiritual life, and thus turning an illusion into an allusion, stands and falls with this need to allow for nuances. This process of integration both requires and strengthens the ability to change, to accept where one has been wrong, and not to stay in that wrong, as well as the personally grasped knowledge that even if we as human beings are fallible, it is still possible to grow even through illusions.

But then, there is something like a wrong judgement that lasts and leads to wrong actions. Thomas Philippe, and others like him,[48] perpetuated acts of violence over a long period of time, and the recognition that such behaviour was wrong did not come from them themselves. In these cases, superiors and church authorities acting upon allegations of the harmed witnesses and the public pressure that came with it, have worked towards integrating such difficult experiences of the victims

[45] See St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 169, 174.

[46] St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 175–177. The first and the second times are rare, because, as Jim Manney points out, 'we live in a condition of a perpetual spiritual conflict.' See Jim Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality*, 71.

[47] See St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 178–188. Manney says: 'It seems that the certitude promised by discernment is limited. We get a small peek at the mind of God; it doesn't come with a guarantee that things will turn out the way we think they should. Discernment does not give us certainty about the future. But we can have confidence that the decision we make *now* in these circumstances is the right one.' Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality A to Z*, 254. Following St Ignatius, we could say even less, namely that we can have a confidence that the decision is done rightly.

[48] See, for example, the cases of Brother Emmanuel of Taizé or the famous Jesuit artist Marko Rupnik.

into the healthy judgment and actions regarding the common life of the communities involved and people with whom they engage.[49]

2.3 Response

This takes me to the third layer of experience identified by Brentano. He could not find one single word to describe it and, in the end, settled for the movement of two human powers together, will and feelings, pushing people in different directions, liberating them or paralysing them with fear, making them generous or selfish. The word 'movement' signifies the openness of this process in which the basic attitudes in our mental structure, like–dislike, love–hate, form our relations to God, to others, to ourselves and to the world in which we live.[50] If the illusions enter in here, they affect translations of human judgment into motivations for actions. In the following analysis, I will call this third way a response[51] and complement Brentano's insight with the Heideggerian notion of *Sorge,* usually translated as concern or care.[52]

According to Heidegger, *Sorge* is both influenced and influences *Dasein,* being in the world, or There-being, as William J. Richardson

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[49] Apart from the report of the Study Commission set up by L'Arche International, see also a statement by the prior of Taizé, Brother Alois, *Ascertaining the Truth*, June 4, 2019, https://www.taize.fr/en_article26170.html (accessed November 5, 2023), and the document *Safeguarding at Taizé: Report 2019–2022*, December 12, 2022, https://www.taize.fr/IMG/pdf/22.12.12_rapport_etape_en-2.pdf (accessed November 5, 2023). The third example is still pending: see the attempts to restore correct judgment and actions, such as *Statement from Fr. Johan Verschueren SJ, Delegate of Fr. General Sosa SJ and Major Superior for the International Houses: 'Rupnik Case: Jesuits Invite Anyone Who Has Suffered Abuse to Contact Them'*, December 18, 2022, https://www.jesuits.global/2022/12/18/rupnik-case-jesuits-invite-anyone-who-has-suffered-abuse-to-contact-them/ (accessed November 5, 2023).

[50] There is an interesting biographical context to this theory. *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* came out first in 1874, four years after the promulgation of the dogma on Papal Infallibility, and it is likely that this event to which he had serious reservations, provided a background against which he worked with the open dynamics of human understanding and attitude formation.

[51] Alternatively, I can speak about an attitude, as does Robert Romanyshyn, who argues that the existential-phenomenal reflection revealed that 'an attitude was an *intentional and situational phenomenon which related an individual to some aspects of his own history, to other people and to a project unfolding in time.*' Robert Romanyshyn, 'Towards a Phenomenology of Attitudes,' in *Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology I*, ed. Amedeo Giorgi, William F. Fischer, and Rolf von Eckartsberg (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1971), 174–197, here 174.

[52] For a more detailed analysis, see William Blatther, 'Care (Sorge),' in *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*, ed. Mark A. Wrathall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 137–144.

translates it.[53] Heidegger says that in the There-being (*Dasein*) 'the There' is 'the luminosity of Being'.[54] To care for Being is to 'assume himself as the There and thus achieve authenticity – to fail to do so is to be victim of inauthenticity'.[55] In the case of spiritual experience, it means that within human care/concern there is an openness towards what is not intended by humans.

Heidegger himself may be a good example of someone whose response (concern/care/*Sorge*) was clouded by the illusion with which he perceived the Nazi regime in Germany, whose atrocities he never fully acknowledged. His judgment influenced his response: he held the office of rector and was willing to expel Jewish students and colleagues as well as to engage in Nazi propaganda.[56] Heidegger's own theoretical reflection on failing to respond to the presentation and judgment as being 'a victim of inauthenticity' might have participated in his lack of taking responsibility in this particular and heavily problematic instance. It is too passive. It does not take sufficiently into account the share of responsibility for the consequences of one's choices, for embodying or disembodying the luminosity of 'the There'.[57]

Thus, we may need to go back to Husserl's correlation of the subject and the object also in the third layer of experience, response. There, the subject is not only a victim of their likes and dislikes, of what they care for and of what they ignore, of what they are interested in and of what they leave behind as boring or irrelevant, of what they aim at and what they miss. The concrete existence in which human authenticity is at stake reaches beyond the passive/active divide. And the notion of care/concern (*Sorge*) is a key to the actual movement of the feelings and of will that co-create the horizons in which people move, and co-shape

[53] See William J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1963), 539–540.
[54] Martin Heidegger, *Brief über den 'Humanismus'* (Berlin: Francke, 1947), 71.
[55] Heidegger, *Brief über den 'Humanismus'*, 77.
[56] For this reason after the war he was tried and briefly expelled from the university. However, he never admitted that he was in the wrong. See Thomas Sheehan, 'Heidegger and the Nazis,' *The New York Review of Books* 35, no. 10 (June 16, 1988): 38–47, here 47.
[57] Heidegger, *Brief über den 'Humanismus'*, 77.

the world in which they live.[58] In this context, Heidegger's claim that '[m]an is the shepherd of Being'[59] falls into place.

The limit of one's active role, however, remains. It is related both to the ability to perceive truth, or in a more Heideggerian language, 'the luminosity of Being',[60] which even in an authentic mode of living still transcends the human self,[61] and to the 'disposition that includes affectivity and is oriented to decision making'.[62]

Illusion entering through the door of human response to what was presented and judged is addressed by Mark Juergensmeyer. He uses many different examples, such as 'the shy young man', who grins into a video camera a day before he was to become a Hamas suicide bomber, in his view, a martyr. This man proclaims that he is 'doing this for Allah'. For Juergensmeyer, this is a classical instance of 'spiritualizing violence', a process in which 'religion has given terrorism a remarkable power'.[63] People like this young man, as Juergensmeyer demonstrates, are found in all religious groups where apocalyptic beliefs are mingled with notions of election and with political aspirations.

Juergensmeyer also analyses the assassination of Muslim men and boys praying at the tombs of Patriarchs, and Rabbi Meir Kahane's justifications of further killing of Muslims by the members of his Jewish Defense League, which drew on the idea that 'the Messiah will come in a great conflict, in which Jews triumph and praise God through their

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58 See Whelan's interpretation of Lonergan's grasp of Heidegger's *Sorge*: 'Normally consciousness is a directed concern, what we care about, care for, are interested in, aim at. Heidegger's term is *Sorge*, care, "concern" … Thus we have four moments of concrete existence: subject, concern, horizon, world. The subject's concern determines his horizon and his horizon selects his world.' Bernard Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, CWL 10 (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1993), 83–85; Gerard Whelan, *Redeeming History: Social Concern in Bernard Lonergan and Robert Doran* (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2013), 10–11, n. 5.

59 Martin Heidegger, *Brief über den 'Humanismus'* (Berlin: Francke, 1947), 75.

60 Heidegger, *Brief über den 'Humanismus'*, 71.

61 Richardson links care in Heidegger to what people at the level of judgment comprehended as truth. He explains: 'It is the process of truth that constitutes man's care (*Sorge*) as man. Insofar as his concern is the bringing-to-pass of truth according to his measure, he guards (*hütet*) truth, serves as watchman (*Wächterschaft*) to it.' Richardson, *Heidegger*, 539. And this makes it possible for him to link the limit of what one can comprehend to the truth. He says: 'It is only this that lies within man's power to accept or reject. Whether the process of truth comes to pass in the first place is not for him to decide. The only question is whether or not he himself will discover the genuine sense of his own commitment corresponding to the mittence of Being imparted to him.' Ibid, 540.

62 Whelan, *Redeeming History*, 10.

63 Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 216–217.

success.' Kahane, according to Juergensmeyer's account, adds that 'he felt that it was going to happen fairly soon and that he and his partisans could help bring about this messianic act.' And he claims: 'Miracles don't just happen, … they are made … [to] change the course of history.' Juergensmeyer shows in detail how one form of spiritualisation of violence produces another, while it is largely impossible to trace its prime cause. Rather he speaks about similarities and correlations when people become 'shepherds of Being' in a twisted way, performing their dramatic acts of symbolic meaning in which 'violence has been accompanied by strong claims of moral justification and an enduring absolutism, characterised by the intensity of the religious activist's commitment and the transhistorical scope of their goals.'[64] Their care/concern (*Sorge*), their movements of feelings and will are expressed within struggles that are cosmic, religious, national, social and move within them in a closed circle that provides all, motivation, means, justification. Only when the closed circle is broken and thus opened can illusions be identified as illusions, and different, though hard processes leading towards healing and genuine spiritual growth can start.[65]

Juergensmeyer points out that a process of breaking circles of violence needs to include ways of working with religious imagination that has gone wild as well as with social and political tensions and personal humiliations experienced by people 'who long to restore an integrity they perceive as lost'. And he concludes that for this to happen 'some assertion of moderation in religion's passion, and some acknowledgment of religion in elevating the spiritual and moral values in public life' are needed.[66] Here one needs to ask what kind of moderation in religion's passion would be helpful, such that it would not cause in effect a reduction of spiritual life to its mediocre forms. Hence, the role of discernment and in particular, a good analysis of desire comes into play.

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[64] Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 217.

[65] Juergensmeyer looks at different approaches that may help in curing such religiously motivated violence: (i) destroying terrorism by force; (ii) terrifying terrorists by violent reprisals or imprisonment; (iii) allowing the causes terrorists fight for to win; (iv) separating religion from politics and excluding political actions with religious motivation all together; (v) healing politics with religion – that is helping secular authorities 'embrace moral values, including those associated with religion'. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 229–243, the citation is from 238.

[66] Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 242–243.

St Ignatius sees desire as the central motivation factor. Desire, however, is not free from disordered affections or attachments, that is, things people love or hate. Thus people's bond to these attachments has grown out of healthy proportion, and thus they limit human freedom and cloud human judgment. For this reason, Ignatius goes back from a response of feelings and will to judgment. He points out that when affections become disordered, it is impossible to see clearly, and to discern between what is important and what is less important or even irrelevant, to be aware of the interplay of different motives that move the particular person towards loving or hating, desiring or dreading certain things.[67]

As was said earlier, Ignatian discernment does not work only with the polarised differences between what comes from God and what does not, what is right and what is wrong, what is reality and what is an illusion. When it comes to motives for human response, St Ignatius is aware that most often they are mixed. As Jim Manney says: 'The motives for any important decision typically include the practical and the idealistic, the selfish and the generous, the fearful and the trusting, the realistic and the fanciful.'[68] Here discernment is able to assist another vital component of resilience, namely the ability to make progress in the spiritual life. It offers a test regarding the direction one progresses towards that can be spelt out in the following way: 'Is this action [towards which I feel spiritually moved] consistent with who I am and who I want to become?' Manney adds that for St Ignatius it means: 'We are open to what God wants, which is what we most deeply want as well.'[69] In Ignatian tradition, to change the motives of human response

[67] This recognition goes back to his conversion process that took place after being wounded during the battle of Pamplona. Retrospectively he discovered a difference between desires that guided him, one type of desire leading him back to his former life and the career at the court, the other type of desire opening up a new journey of imitating the life of Christ and the saints. He notes that each of the types of desire formed a different lasting spiritual response in him, one of desolation, the other of consolation. See St Ignatius, *Autobiography* 6–8.

[68] Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality A to* Z, 67. See St Ignatius *Spiritual Exercises* 16, 149–157; 169–188. More detailed instructions come when St Ignatius introduces the meditation on three classes of persons, and when he deals with how to make a good choice of a way of life.

[69] Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality A to Z*, 65, 68.

means to grow in inner freedom, identified as indifference, as a gradual liberation from disordered attachments.[70]

The inner freedom includes also the ability to desire the negative. According to St Ignatius, this includes to desire humility, poverty, whether spiritual or material, the gift to bear insults, following Christ in his suffering.[71] Philip Endean points to the psychological and moral problems involved in the spiritual 'desire for the negative', saying that:

> The pious imagination easily skips over the point … to understand Ignatius' petitions properly, we need some account of why and how the invitation to enter into suffering with Christ is distinguishable from irrational masochism. On what basis can we invoke a relationship with Christ as a licence for abandoning common sense? There are also subtler problems. How can we distinguish the authentic selflessness to which Ignatius is challenging us from a mere mirage masking a deeper egoism, from the ressentiment with which Nietzsche classically reproached Christianity?[72]

Endean's critique, according to which illusion at the level of human response can lead to psychologically and morally wrong consequences, sheds light on the question as to why, for example, sexual abuse and the abuse of authority took place also among the Jesuits. It goes beyond saying that they, like everyone else, are only human and as such open to

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[70] See St Ignatius, 'First Principle and Foundation,' in *Spiritual Exercises* 23. Parmananda Divarkar points out that such a process of liberation is the fruit of a combination of spiritual knowledge, practical following, mission, preaching and ministry to others. He says that in the life of St Ignatius, pointing out that for him this meant 'opening himself up to the whole strength of God', where 'he felt a tremendous sense of liberation, of awakening to a new life that was more real and full of possibilities then the one he had spent so far.' P. Parmananda D. Divarkar, *The Path of Interior Knowledge: Reflections on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola* (Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Parkash Anand, 1990), 4.

[71] See St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 98, 147, 167, 203. St Ignatius is aware of the danger of exaggerating such desires, and thus warns against self-inflicted harm, self-seeking martyrdom and against justifications of creating burdens for others. See also Philip Endean, 'On Poverty with Christ Poor,' *The Way* 47, no. 1–2 (Jan./April 2008): 47–66, here 52.

[72] Endean, 'On Poverty with Christ Poor,' 51. In support of his argument, Endean cites a Jesuit psychiatrist W. W. Meissner, who warns that 'the effort to resolve pride by resorting to humility may only drive … narcissistic impulses underground, so that they find equivalent satisfaction in the exercise of a humility that can make one feel unconsciously superior to the rest of men – who have not achieved such a high degree of humility!' W. W. Meissner, *Ignatius of Loyola: The Psychology of a Saint* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), 104.

sin and failure, because it mentions one of the possible sources of illusion at the level of human response. He also points out that it is vitally important to seek for the journey from illusion to reality even here. He says: 'If the gospel is true, then Christ has revealed potentials in the human condition for bringing good out of evil.'[73] This, however, does not involve trivialising the harm that illusions can do. Instead, Endean opts for going through the harm without justifying sinful behaviour and without a 'spirituality of world-denial', for a 'sense of God's self-gift to the world should extend to the full range of human possibility', and, one needs to add, challenging injustice, while praying 'for those dispositions that enable us to bear suffering, in whatever form it occurs, so that life can come forth', bearing 'witness that such transformation is possible'.[74] It does not happen, however, only at the level of response; one needs to go back to the presentations that impacted on one's judgment.

3. Conclusion: Resilience, Discernment and Human Fragility

In this article, I have shown that in spiritual life resilience and fragility do not stand in a binary opposition. The fact that people are open to illusions at all the different levels of experience demonstrates such fragility. On the other hand, allusions born out of times of crisis, after people and human communities had to work through what had proved illusory, contribute towards what I have called transformative understanding, one of the ingredients of resilience.

3.1 Divine Grace When People Are Fragile

People are not 'materials' that can be stretched and then put back to normal shape. As the article has argued, the processes of adaptation after a crisis are much more complex, and they stand and fall with the interaction between the personal and the communal webs of understanding, survival strategies, communication skills and other competences contributing to a successful recovery, and to strengthening a kind of degree of immunity when the next crisis comes. Theologically speaking, these assisting webs are seen as initiated by and open towards an ongoing gift of grace, of the divine creative and re-creative

[73] Endean, 'On Poverty with Christ Poor,' 61.
[74] Endean, 'On Poverty with Christ Poor,' 63–66.

energies. Divine-human communication is included, again, in all its complexity and openness to human misunderstanding, illusions and other forms of errors. But precisely because it is an interaction, the human subject is not the only active one. And this is of vital importance when we speak about resilience in spiritual life.

Human fragility includes that in spiritual experience there is an ongoing negotiation between the illusory and the real, for 'we live in a condition of a perpetual spiritual conflict' of the two.[75] Manney states:

> It seems that uncertainty is built into the nature of things. The Ignatian conviction that God can be found in all things means that no religious system is ever complete. We will never reach the end of 'all things'. Some things will always be hidden from us, and something will always come along to make God present in a new way. There will always be surprises.[76]

This means that the perpetual conflict he speaks about has a positive role. If accepted and worked out well, it builds resilience. It includes the possibilities of recovering from shocks, it helps in balancing between an excess of power and an excess of powerlessness.[77] When speaking about the role of transformative understanding in spiritual life, this article underlined that there is also another balancing going on, namely between human awareness that illusions are woven into the web of our understanding in the way that we are never completely free of them, and that we live and move within a reality that is deeper and broader than all our true and false images of it, and that this reality is active and helpful. It makes it possible to strengthen the elasticity of our understanding and with that a healthy resistance not to change but rather to adversity.[78] In that context, when illusions are transformed into allusions, people are provided with a liberating understanding, a potential to grow.

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[75] See Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality A to Z*, 71.

[76] Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality A to Z*, 253.

[77] Koubová claims that work with power is central to the different aspects of resilience building. Moreover, in fact, some level of instability in relation to power is healthy, because it prevents people from an excess of obsessive control, as long as one is aware of the other danger, namely of traumatising powerlessness. See Koubová, 'Společenská odolnost,' 17.

[78] See e.g. St Ignatius's account of his encounter with 'the very beautiful thing' in *Autobiography* 19 and 31.

The hard examples of authority and sex abuses or of terrorist acts remind us that there are situations when the integrative processes of spiritual and intellectual understanding are not yet possible. People who either were harmed or who perpetrated harm may not yet be ready to enter such processes, and more basic forms of support may be necessary first.[79] Then there are patients with mental illness who experience severe hardships without the outbreaks of insights, or people whose consciousness is altered by drugs, just to mention some other difficult examples.[80] While I will try to include at least partly this problematic in the final summary, I am aware that studying them in greater depth is beyond the scope of this article.

3.2 Discernment Supporting Resilience at the Different Stages of Experience

As presentation is the base of experience, the danger of illusion at that pre-linguistic level is most polarised. If people come with illusory presentations, it is important to pay attention to the possibility that they may be suffering psychotic symptoms of mental illness, and if needed, consult the case with a psychiatrist, in an anonymised way, fully keeping the confidence. Hallucinations or false memories can be also related to some chemical processes caused by medicines or drugs which people are using or by external ideological manipulation. When these possibilities are excluded, other forms of deception need to be explored, and in particular, possible motivations, and the level at which people actively contribute to such deception or self-deception.

[79] Klára Šimáčková Laurenčíková speaks about situations of people who committed terrible things and first need to find some non-toxic contact with themselves and their basic unfulfilled needs. See Klára Šimáčková Laurenčíková, 'Vítězem obvykle bývá ten, kdo zůstává ještě dlouho poté, co už ostatní dávno odešli,' in *Odolná společnost. Mezi tyranií a bezmocí*, ed. Alice Koubová and Barbora Braunová (Praha: Filozofický ústav AV, 2023), 28–58, esp. 29–37.

[80] See Osborne P. Wiggins and Michael A. Schwartz, 'Schizophrenia: A Phenomenological-Anthropological Approach,' in *Reconceiving Schizophrenia*, ed. Man Cheung Chang, K. W. M. Fulford, and George Graham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1–14, DOI:10.1093/med/9780198526131.003.0006, accessed October 23, 2023, www.researchgate.net/publication/229085116_Schizophrenia_a_phenomenological-anthropological_approach; see Timothy Leary, *The Politics of Ecstasy* (Berkeley: Ronin, 1998), and *Chaos & Cyber Culture* (Berkeley: Ronin, 1994); for a contemporary discussion, William Stephenson, 'Timothy Leary and the Trace of the Posthuman,' in *PostHumains: Frontières, évolutions, hybridités*, ed. Elaine Després and Hélène Machinal (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014), 281–298, in English, OpenEdition Books, https://books.openedition.org/pur/52532?lang=en (accessed October 23, 2023).

Illusion as presentation could also mean that human intentionality, that is, human desires or fears or convictions, has grown out of proportion and overshadowed the relationship with external reality.

The sources of Ignatian discernment also work with external spiritual agencies that can be negative. Although Christian spirituality cannot close this possibility down if it does not want to cut itself off from the wisdom of large segments of its tradition, the possibility needs to be treated with much care, so that treating mental phenomena as spiritual possessions is not encouraged. While St Ignatius offers here polarised images of how to recognise in a reflected retrospection what spirit was at work,[81] he is aware that mental encounter with that which emerges as an external spiritual agency is not identical with having that agency's perspective, in other words, seeing that presentation as if from the outside. In this, he is quite close to phenomenology. At the moment of revelation, illumination, consolation or desolation, one cannot say without error what has caused such phenomena. Discernment happens only in a reflective retrospection. Thus also transformation that would turn an illusion into an allusion, a deception into a perception, happens only in reflective awareness, only in retrospect. As, for Husserl, intentionality needed to involve both presentation and judgment,[82] thus also the possibility of transformation involves presentation and judgment.

While seeking for the differences regarding the levels of experience affected by illusions, it became clear that the level of judgment played a mediating role between presentation and response. This is why a distance, a change of perspective, a liberation often takes place at that level. This is where people can arrive at a deepened understanding of a kind of inner paradoxical 'logic' of spiritual life. Judgments can be revised, illusions turned into allusions. As this level of experience involves language it allows for communication. In the Ignatian tradition, this is with a spiritual director, as well as with the broader community of the church and with all contexts the particular person belongs to. The possibility of transformation at the level of judgment thus draws on insights illuminated or harmed by relationships. That includes both a direct and mediated relationship with God. However, St Ignatius is aware that the process of human judgment is never, not

[81] See the two sets of the rules of discernment, *Spiritual Exercises* 313–336.
[82] See Husserl, *Logical Investigations V* §17.

even at later stages, completely free of inner and outer voices competing with God, and negatively influencing spiritual progress. Here his approach is less polarised: what is progress and what is regression is at times less clear. And judgment alone is not sufficient for a broader and deeper understanding of the differences. The inner feelings and inclinations of will that give rise to human responses and actions also need to be included.

Coming back to the person touched by an illusion at the level of judgment, the transformation towards a better understanding of spiritual life and evaluation of its different events can be initiated by different means coming out of the relational exchange. Sometimes this is by new evidence that sheds new light on previous judgments. Other times it is by learning from how illusion-based judgments were followed by illusion-based responses, formed illusion-based attitudes and led to wrong actions. In the article, I have used the examples of sexual and authority abuse and of terrorist actions. Even there, processes of transformation are possible but not easy. Liberations from illusions and returns to initial flexibility are often long and painful, as harm to others or self-harm does not disappear just by the change of judgment. But it is a starting point.

The illusion at the level of response, of the movement of feelings and will, as Brentano puts it, or at the level of what Heidegger calls concern/care (*Sorge*), can be based on an illusion taking place at an earlier level of experience. Or as we have seen, an illusion can enter also at this level, as an inauthentic response. Transformation then needs to focus on the possible shifts from inauthenticity to authenticity. It is helpful that human likes, dislikes, desires and fears are worked with in a much more robust way than on the level of judgment. To use Ignatian language, it is about struggles with disordered affections or attachments that move people inwardly towards different directions and cloud their judgment.[85] If the 'disposition that includes affectivity and is oriented to decision making'[84] is to remain flexible and contribute to people's resilience, learning from illusions and from one's openness to them needs not to be too quickly delegated to the rational level of judgment. While judgment needs to be included, as it is a mediating level of experience, some kind of transposition has to be made that would allow for

[85] See St Ignatius, *Autobiography* 6–8.
[84] Whelan, *Redeeming History*, 10.

a symbolic participatory language to be used that would not reduce the emotional and the volitional dimensions of human desire, which plays a central role here, to the rational dimensions of experience. It can be very fruitful to find ways in which emotions and will are re-included into the ability to perceive truth, or in a more Heideggerian language, 'the luminosity of Being',[85] even if not in an indiscriminate way.

Emotions can mislead people as much as ideas, and likewise, decision-making may be underpinned by corrupt impulses. Acceptance that one can be wrong, and still more having lived and learned from having been wrong at that level, could be as liberating as a profound realisation that our memories can be falsified. In both cases an understanding of where the process has broken down leads to insights concerning where one needs to be careful.[86] Both Heidegger and the Ignatian tradition are aware that at this level of experience it is hard, if not impossible, to eliminate our disordered inclinations completely, in other words, that a ditch would continue to belong to the path one undertakes. For St Ignatius, this would be a source of humility, a necessary complement to the belief that besides human perception of presentation, judgment and response, there is also a divine perception and divine help that precedes and accompanies every human step. And the gap through which human fallibility has entered is at the same time a reminder of and a radical need for the communion of love with God that reaches beyond human illusions as well as human truths.[87]

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[85] Heidegger, *Brief über den 'Humanismus'*, 71.
[86] See Shaw, *The Memory Illusion*, 241, 255.
[87] See St Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises* 15 and 230–237.