

# THE DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

## When Do the Second Week Rules Apply?

*Timothy M. Gallagher*

ANY SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE on Ignatius of Loyola's Second Week rules for discernment quickly reveals a wide diversity in the concrete application of these rules. This diversity is particularly evident in the examples given to illustrate such applications. Certain fundamental questions about these rules are consequently unavoidable. When precisely do these rules apply? Can these eight rules explain such diverse spiritual experience? How specific is the spiritual experience that Ignatius contemplates in them? Is it possible to delineate this experience clearly? Does such precision matter? If so, what is at stake spiritually?

### ***A Selection of Examples***

To clarify the questions raised here, I shall take some representative examples from different writers of various ways of applying the Second Week rules.

John English takes the case of an inexperienced retreatant whom the Enemy deceives with the 'fantasy' of 'going on difficult missions, or some other extraordinary apostolate'.

The rule that has the most frequent application is the Fourth Rule: 'It is a mark of the evil spirit to assume the appearance of an angel of light. He begins by suggesting thoughts that are suited to a devout soul, and ends by suggesting his own.' (Exx 332) One sign of the Enemy is that its good suggestions are often far-fetched, especially with beginners. For example, some retreatants may start thinking about going on difficult missions, or some other extraordinary

apostolate, long before they are purified of mortal sin or deep disordered attachments.<sup>1</sup>

The Enemy is presented as targeting ‘beginners’ and presenting good, but ‘far-fetched’, suggestions. This deceptive activity of the Enemy under ‘the appearance of an angel of light’ occurs ‘long before they are purified of mortal sin or deep disordered attachments’: the Second Week rules are understood to apply to people who are still struggling with mortal sin. The retreatant’s ‘fantasy’ would thus pertain to the Second Week rules: the ultimately distracting quality of such a fantasy would reveal the deception of the Enemy posing as an ‘angel of light’.

David Lonsdale applies the rules to the problem of discerning between true spiritual consolation—a genuine call from God—and a person’s natural psychological inclinations. Here deception arises from a confusion between genuine spiritual consolation and the ‘natural enthusiasm’ of a person who responds energetically to challenges in general:

The experience of a call to be a prophet is one in which people can in good faith be deceived in the ways described by Ignatius in the Rules for Discernment of the Second Week. The ‘consolation’ itself, that is the alleged experience of a call to be a prophet, can be deceptive (Exx 331) in the sense that natural enthusiasm for a cause in a person who naturally responds enthusiastically to challenges can be mistaken, perhaps in the atmosphere of a retreat or a prayer-meeting, for true, spiritual consolation.<sup>2</sup>

Jean Gouvernaire uses the Second Week rules to explain interior movements associated with objectively evil (even criminal) behaviour:

When the person’s dispositions are bad, then the silence and noise reverse. James is a university student who has abandoned his former faith and moral principles. He is tempted by drugs after having experimented with them; but he has no money. A companion suggests a way to solve the problem. They will wait near a bank on their motorcycle. When a woman carrying a purse exits the bank, they will approach, steal her purse, and ride off. Except for a slight

<sup>1</sup> John English, *Spiritual Freedom: From an Experiencing of the Ignatian Exercises to the Art of Spiritual Guidance* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1995), 179.

<sup>2</sup> David Lonsdale, ‘The Serpent’s Tail’, *The Way Supplement*, 52 (1985), 70.

concern that the attempt may fail, the idea enters James' heart very naturally, as if in its own home. It harmonizes with his present way of living.<sup>3</sup>

In this scenario, the person involved 'has abandoned his former faith and moral principles'; his 'dispositions are bad'. Consequently, an invitation to commit theft enters his heart 'very naturally, as if in its own home'. A subsequent stirring of compassion for his victim, on the other hand, 'agitates and disturbs him': it enters his heart, in Ignatius' words, 'perceptibly with clatter and noise' (Exx 335).

Thomas Green, by contrast, applies the Second Week rules to a 'devout soul', one who is 'relatively mature and stable' in a committed following of the Lord.

She is no longer the 'beginner' of the First Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*, whom the evil spirit can hope to turn away from her commitment by discouragement, fear, anxiety or other forms of desolation. In order to deceive her now [the Enemy] has to come to her under the appearance of good. He has to use her very desire for God and holiness as a means to lead her astray. If she loves to pray, he will encourage this love (and even reward her with visions and revelations and other unusual experiences) in order to foster pride or to cause her to neglect her apostolic responsibilities.<sup>4</sup>

This is a person 'for whom enticements to what is obviously evil would have little attraction'. This person is no longer 'the "beginner" of the First Week', one whom the Enemy attempts to dishearten through

*FIRST RULE. It is proper to God and to His Angels in their movements to give true spiritual gladness and joy, taking away all sadness and disturbance which the enemy brings on. Of this latter it is proper to fight against the spiritual gladness and consolation, bringing apparent reasons, subtleties and continual fallacies.*

<sup>3</sup> Jean Gouvernaire, 'Un discernment plus subtil: règles de seconde semaine des Exercices Spirituels de Saint Ignace', *Supplément à vie chrétienne*, 339 (1990), 29. (Author's translation, as are all subsequent quotations from non-English publications.)

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Green, *Weeds among the Wheat: Discernment: Where Prayer and Action Meet* (Notre Dame, In: Ave Maria Press, 1986), 135.

*SECOND RULE. It belongs only to God our Lord to give consolation to the soul without preceding cause, for it is the property of the Creator to enter, go out and cause movements in the soul, bringing it all into love of His Divine Majesty. I say without cause: without any previous sense or knowledge of any object through which such consolation would come, through one's acts of understanding and will.*

desolation. The Enemy now attempts to turn such persons' spiritual zeal against them, using their 'very desire for God and holiness' as a means to lead them astray. The Second Week rules assist these spiritually mature persons in discerning deceptions related to spiritual zeal.

Daniel Gil focuses on ardent Christians whose hearts stir with love for the cross of Christ, prayer, poverty, apostolic service and total belonging to the Lord. The rules assist such people in discerning between spiritual consolation of the good spirit and spiritual consolation of the Enemy in these areas of spiritual strength.

That the good spirit consoles the soul has been said from the beginning (Exx 315, *in fine*) .... However ... the demon can and effectively does bring spiritual consolations to the soul .... These consolations are not different in such fashion that they may be distinguished simply of themselves; nor will a person ... sense the difference immediately.<sup>5</sup>

Here discernment according to the Second Week rules is highly refined: the Enemy, like the good spirit, gives genuine spiritual consolation, such that only great attentiveness and careful application of the rules permit accurate discernment.

In Achille Gagliardi's example, the rules are applied to a generous person moved by 'a desire to love and serve God' to seek good and holy things. The rules expose the Enemy's tactic of leading this person by gradual steps from good beginnings to serious sin. The efficacy of this tactic

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Gil, *Discernimiento según San Ignacio: Exposición y comentario práctico de las dos series de reglas de discernimiento de espíritus contenidas en el libro de los Ejercicios Espirituales de San Ignacio de Loyola (EE 313–336)* (Rome: Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis, 1971), 309.

derives from its progressive nature: the gradual stages lead to a sinfulness which, if proposed openly in the beginning, the person would reject.

For example: from a desire to love and serve God, he [the Enemy] will lead a woman to seek someone who can assist her as guide and teacher in the spiritual life. He will then work to awaken in her a spiritual and holy affection towards him under the form of divine inspiration and of progress in spiritual things. Then frequent conversations between them follow; then an honest human affection, though not spiritual as before, and conversations about human things; then, little by little, the honest affection is transformed into another, tender and strong, which gradually leads to a focus on superficial things, to idly passing time, and then to empty and useless conversations; from this derive acts which, though not obviously bad in themselves, have the power of awakening concupiscence; these lead to unchaste acts, though still slight, from which the process continues until they reach the consummation of the sin.<sup>6</sup>

The juxtaposition of these various examples reinforces the questions raised above. Can the Second Week rules explain such diverse spiritual experience? Do they apply across the broad spectrum of the spiritual journey—from the person still immersed in serious sin to the person lovingly and single-mindedly dedicated to the crucified Saviour? Did Ignatius understand them to apply so widely?

### ***The Criteria for Applying the Rules***

In Annotations 8–10, and in the text of the Second Week rules themselves, Ignatius supplies criteria for the spiritual experience to which these rules properly apply. The Enemy is attempting to deceive a spiritual person in a precise way. The rules assist *this* spiritual person to overcome *this* specific form of deception. The criteria are the following two: the *person*—one who is ‘exercising himself in the Illuminative life, which corresponds to the Exercises of the Second Week’ (Exx 10); and the *form of deception*—the enemy is tempting this person ‘under the appearance of good’ (Exx 10).

<sup>6</sup> Achille Gagliardi, *S. P. Ignatii. De discretione spirituum regulae explanatae* (Naples: Typis Paschalis Androsii, 1851), 83.

*The Person*

Ignatius describes the person of the Second Week rules as a ‘devout soul’, a ‘just soul’ (Rule 4, Exx 332), and a ‘spiritual person’ (Rule 8, Exx 336). Such people have,

... already experienced the ‘purgative life’ (Exx 10) of the prayer of the first week in the Spiritual Exercises. With God’s grace, they have progressed effectively in overcoming sin, and their hearts are now ready to seek the Redeemer whose love has awakened in them a desire to respond in love (Exx 53).

These persons actively strive to know more deeply and to follow more closely the Lord they love (Exx 104). They have assimilated the spiritual dispositions described in the characteristic exercises of the second week: ‘The Call of the King’ (Exx 91–98), ‘The Two Standards’ (Exx 136–147), ‘The Three Classes’ (Exx 149–157) and ‘The Three Degrees of Humility’ (Exx 165–168). As these classic exercises indicate, such persons deeply desire to embrace God’s will in their lives. They wish to dedicate themselves actively to Christ’s saving work in the world and are prepared to relinquish any attachments that may diminish their freedom to follow Christ’s call. They are disposed even to partake of Christ’s own life of poverty and humiliation, should God so desire.<sup>7</sup>

The persons of the First Week rules, according to Ignatius, are ‘persons who are going on intensely cleansing their sins and rising from good to better in the service of God our Lord’ (Exx 315). A higher level of spiritual growth is clearly presumed in those to whom the Second Week rules apply.<sup>8</sup> Indeed Ignatius explicitly excludes from these rules any person ‘who has not been versed in spiritual things, and is tempted

*THIRD RULE. With cause, as well the good Angel as the bad can console the soul, for contrary ends: the good Angel for the profit of the soul, that it may grow and rise from good to better, and the evil Angel, for the contrary, and later on to draw it to his damnable intention and wickedness.*

<sup>7</sup> Timothy Gallagher, *Spiritual Consolation: An Ignatian Guide for the Greater Discernment of Spirits* (New York: Crossroad, 2007), 26–27.

<sup>8</sup> Gallagher, *Spiritual Consolation*, 139–140. Compare Luis Teixidor, ‘La primera de las reglas de discreción de espíritus más propias de la segunda semana’, *Manresa*, 8 (1932), 30.

*FOURTH RULE. It is proper to the evil Angel, who forms himself under the appearance of an angel of light, to enter with the devout soul and go out with himself; that is to say, to bring good and holy thoughts, conformable to such just soul, and then little by little he aims at coming out drawing the soul to his covert deceits and perverse intentions.*

grossly and openly' (Exx 9).<sup>9</sup> It seems evident, also, that Ignatius presupposes significant experience of discernment according to the First Week rules in those who are properly subjects of the 'greater discernment of spirits' (Exx 328), the more 'subtle' and 'high' (Exx 9) discernment typical of the Second Week. If the Enemy now attempts to deceive such people through spiritual *consolation* (Rule 3, Exx 331), it is because they are accustomed to reject his more basic tactic of spiritual *desolation*: they are already practised in discernment according to the First Week rules.

#### *The Form of Deception*

The Second Week rules apply, Ignatius says, when people of this kind are being 'assaulted and tempted under the appearance of good' (Exx 10). The Enemy, disguised as 'an angel of light' (Rule 4, Exx 332), attempts to deceive them through 'apparent reasons, subtleties and continual fallacies' (Rule 1, Exx 329); through spiritual consolation with a preceding cause (Rule 3, Exx 331); through 'good and holy thoughts, conformable to such a just soul' (Rule 4, Exx 332); or through 'various resolutions and opinions which are not given immediately by God our Lord' in the time following consolation without preceding cause (Rule 8, Exx 336).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The same would apply to the person described in Annotation 18, a person of 'little ability or little natural capacity', to whom some of the easier exercises only should be given, and who is not to 'go on into the matter of the Election, or into any other Exercises that are outside the First Week'. A further question regards the *psychological* maturity of the 'Second Week' person. The level of spiritual maturity in such a person is clearly presumed to be higher than that of the 'First Week' person. Can the same be said of this person's psychological maturity? Is solid psychological maturity a further—almost necessary—sign that the Second Week rules, with their more subtle and more elevated (Exx 9) discernment, truly do apply to this person's spiritual experience?

<sup>10</sup> In the Second Week rules, as in those of the First Week, Ignatius is speaking of specifically *spiritual* consolation. See Gallagher, *Spiritual Consolation*, 153, and *The Discernment of Spirits: An Ignatian Guide for Everyday Living* (New York: Crossroad, 2005), 48–51.

Ignatius's brief but clear indications may be summarised as follows: the Second Week rules properly apply when a *spiritual person* who has already intensely (Exx 315) experienced the 'purgative life' with growing freedom from sin; who is practised in discernment according to the First Week rules (overcoming spiritual desolation); and who possesses the generous dispositions (readiness to share Christ's poverty, humiliation and redemptive mission) requisite for the election in the Second Week, is now being tempted by the enemy *under the appearance of good* through *spiritual consolation* and related *good and holy thoughts*.

### ***Deceptions through Energy***

The First Week rules essentially concern deception by the Enemy through a deficit of spiritual energy: through *spiritual desolation* and its related misleading thoughts. But the Second Week rules treat of deception through spiritual energy itself: through *spiritual consolation* and its related (deceptive) good and holy thoughts. Which *deceptions through energy* belong properly to the Second Week rules? Are there such deceptions which do not belong to them? If so, does Ignatius address these elsewhere in his Spiritual Exercises? I shall attempt to answer these questions through a series of examples.

*John is a young, single professional. Since college he has abandoned his practice of the sacraments and all involvement in the Church. Under the influence of friends he has adopted, at first hesitantly, then with increasing willingness, a life of self-indulgence and promiscuity. He also engages in seriously dishonest dealings in his work. His friends now invite him to spend a week in the Caribbean. John knows that this will be a week without moral restraint; he is excited by the possibility and makes the necessary plans with enthusiasm.*

This is clearly a deception through energy—John is 'excited' and makes his plans 'with enthusiasm'—but, equally clearly, neither the person nor the form of deception match Ignatius' criteria for the Second Week rules. John's experience is that described in the First Week, Rule 1 (Exx 314):

In the persons who go from mortal sin to mortal sin, the Enemy is commonly used to propose to them apparent pleasures, making them imagine sensual delights and pleasures in order to hold them more and make them grow in their vices and sins.



*FIFTH RULE. We ought to note well the course of the thoughts, and if the beginning, middle and end is all good, inclined to all good, it is a sign of the good Angel; but if in the course of the thoughts which he brings it ends in something bad, of a distracting tendency, or less good than what the soul had previously proposed to do, or if it weakens it or disquiets or disturbs the soul, taking away its peace, tranquillity and quiet, which it had before, it is a clear sign that it proceeds from the evil spirit, enemy of our profit and eternal salvation.*

This spiritual experience is the furthest removed from that of the 'spiritual person' to whom the Second Week rules apply.

*Martha is making her first directed retreat. The initial days have been a time of discouragement; prayer has been difficult, God has seemed distant, and on several occasions she has nearly abandoned the retreat. But today all that has changed. Prayer has been warm and joyful, the scriptural texts have come alive, and God has felt close. Now Martha is certain that her problems are over, that her spiritual struggles are finished, that heaviness of heart will no longer burden her spiritual life. She dedicates herself with great energy to prayer as the day continues.*

This is truly an experience of spiritual consolation: as she prays, Martha is filled with spiritual joy. She appears unaware, however, of the pitfall addressed in the First Week, Rule 10 (Exx 323): 'Let him who is in consolation think how he will be in the desolation which will come after, taking new strength for then'. If she prepares in her time of spiritual consolation for the eventual return of spiritual desolation, Martha is less likely to be harmed by that desolation. The danger here is from naivety and its consequences when spiritual desolation returns; the need is for wise provision for future desolation.

*Clare began daily prayer with Scripture three months ago; each morning she dedicates half an hour to this prayer. At first, though she was faithful, she found the prayer dry and difficult. In recent weeks, however, she has felt God's closeness and his love in her daily prayer. This awareness of God's love gives joy to her heart throughout the occupations of the day.*

*She is filled with satisfaction that she has achieved so rich an ability to pray, and is pleased to see herself progressing so surely in her spiritual life.*

Once again, this is an experience of spiritual consolation. Clare perceives this, and ‘is filled with satisfaction that she has achieved so rich an ability to pray’; she is ‘pleased to see herself progressing so surely in her spiritual life’. In the First Week, Rule 11 (Exx 324), Ignatius writes: ‘Let him who is consoled see to humbling himself and lowering himself as much as he can, thinking how little he is able for in the time of desolation without such grace or consolation’ (compare also Rule 9, third cause, Exx 322). The danger here is self-satisfaction: Clare almost unconsciously ascribes the gift she has received to her own abilities; the need is for humility. Such humility will bless Clare as her journey of prayer continues.

*Mark is a university student who is easily moved by enthusiasm though, generally, his enthusiasm does not endure at length. Recently he was invited by a friend to a retreat. He was struggling with loneliness at the time and willingly accepted the invitation. Mark was deeply struck by the sense of community and fraternal love he found among the participants. Now, filled with joy in the Lord, Mark is certain that he has found his way at last. He wants to embrace this new life fully, and decides to become a priest; he plans to interrupt his studies and apply for admission to the local seminary. Mark enthusiastically shares his decision with the university chaplain.*

This too is an experience of spiritual consolation: Mark is ‘filled with joy in the Lord’. But in Annotation 14, Ignatius writes:

*SIXTH RULE. When the enemy of human nature has been perceived and known by his serpent’s tail and the bad end to which he leads on, it helps the person who was tempted by him, to look immediately at the course of the good thoughts which he brought him at their beginning, and how little by little he aimed at making him descend from the spiritual sweetness and joy in which he was, so far as to bring him to his depraved intention; in order that with this experience, known and noted, the person may be able to guard for the future against his usual deceits.*

If the one who is giving the Exercises sees that the one who is receiving them is going on in consolation and with much fervour, he ought to warn him not to make any inconsiderate and hasty promise or vow: and the more light of character he knows him to be, the more he ought to warn and admonish him.

Mark's decision does indeed appear to have something 'inconsiderate' and 'hasty' about it, and Annotation 14 appears to apply here.

*Andrew is a married man in his thirties who, after years away from the Church, six months ago embraced his faith with new commitment and energy. Aware of this, and knowing his business skills, his pastor asked Andrew to serve on the parish financial council. Andrew was happy to accept. Now he delights in exercising his ability to handle financial matters effectively and is increasing his involvement in the financial council. This additional activity, together with his responsibilities to family and work, strains his energies.*

This too is a deception through energy. Further, it occurs through involvement in 'sacred' things—fostering the life of the parish. Questions arise, however, regarding whether this experience properly pertains to the Second Week rules. Is Andrew—a man who 'after years away from the Church, six months ago embraced his faith with new commitment and energy'—truly the spiritually mature person of the Second Week? Is his experience truly *spiritual* consolation (from his life of faith and his relationship with God), or might it be non-spiritual, psychological consolation deriving from the welcome exercise of his skill in financial matters? Nothing in the vocabulary clearly indicates a specifically spiritual experience. And while the Enemy may (and, it seems clear, does) exploit psychological liabilities in deceiving Second Week persons under the appearance of good, can we assume that *every* time a person is harmed by excessive application to sacred things this must pertain, by that very fact, to discernment according to the Second Week rules? If the consolation involved is non-spiritual, do the Second Week rules properly apply? Is this truly the 'subtle' and 'high' discernment which, according to Ignatius, requires the application of these rules?

*Ruth is a married woman, deeply dedicated to her marriage and family. For many years she has lived a faithful and profound spiritual life. Her*

*prayer has simplified, and she lives in frequent communion with God. In the midst of busyness at home and at work, she strives to love those whom God has placed in her life. One Sunday at Mass, the gospel of the sending of the Twelve to proclaim the Kingdom was read. The words deeply stirred Ruth's heart. Gratitude to God for the gift of faith arose within her, and she felt a longing to bring this gift to others. She found herself thinking of forming an outreach group in the parish; as she considered this, Ruth experienced profound joy, and felt God's love grow strong in her heart.*

Ruth appears to be a Second Week person: she is spiritually mature, a woman of deep prayer and great fidelity to her vocation, generous in her service of God. As the Sunday gospel is proclaimed she experiences spiritual consolation. Good and holy thoughts about an apostolic initiative arise in this time of consolation—thoughts which bring her profound joy and a strong sense of God's love.

Is Ruth's spiritual consolation a sign that these thoughts are of the good spirit? How may she know whether God truly desires that she undertake this initiative? It seems evident that in this situation the Second Week rules do apply and will be of great assistance. Was the initial touch (the affective resonance) of the thought regarding the outreach group like a drop of water entering a sponge or like a drop of water falling on a stone (Second Week Rules 7, Exx 335)? Are there indications of the Enemy's 'apparent reasons, subtleties and continual fallacies' in Ruth's thoughts as they unfold (Second Week Rules 1, Exx 329)? As the thoughts progress, is there any sign of objective diminishment ('something bad, of a distracting tendency, or less good than what the soul had previously proposed to do') or subjective diminishment (that 'weakens it or disquiets or disturbs the soul, taking away its peace, tranquillity and quiet, which it had before') in Ruth's spiritual condition (Second Week Rules 5, Exx 333)? If so, can Ruth

*SEVENTH RULE In those who go on from good to better, the good Angel touches such soul sweetly, lightly and gently, like a drop of water which enters into a sponge; and the evil touches it sharply and with noise and disquiet, as when the drop of water falls on the stone. And the above-said spirits touch in a contrary way those who go on from bad to worse.*

learn by reviewing this process of diminishment and so guard more readily against similar deceptions in the future (Second Week Rules 6, Exx 334)?

### ***Analogical Applications of the Rules***

At this point we may return to our initial inquiry: when precisely do the Second Week rules apply? As we have seen, these rules properly apply when a spiritually mature person *with Second Week dispositions* is tempted by the Enemy *under the appearance of good* through *spiritual consolation* and its related *good and holy thoughts*.

Can these rules be applied, then, to a broader spectrum of spiritual experience? The answer would appear to be that a number of such applications are *analogical*: the Second Week rules apply *in some measure*. The prime analogue—the situation that Ignatius most directly envisages in these rules—is that of a person making the Spiritual Exercises, with Second Week dispositions, in the process of election, who experiences spiritual consolation and good and holy thoughts with regard to one or another of the different choices in the election. Other applications of the rules are, in varying degrees, by way of analogy.

What may be said of such analogical applications of these rules? In response to this question I shall first present words of caution from three authors; then I shall suggest principles by which such applications may be fruitfully made.

#### *Counsels of Caution*

A first caution regards *every* application of these rules outside their original context—the complete Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. Daniel Gil writes:

These rules [both First and Second Week] were composed to assist in clarifying carefully specified situations within the distinctive spiritual process of a retreatant engaged in the full Spiritual Exercises. When they are applied to other situations we must be aware that they are being placed outside their context, in such fashion that their validity will be affected according to whether the new context is analogous or not to that for which they were written. That this is the case should never be easily presumed.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Gil, *Discernimiento*, 15.

It is beyond doubt that the rules apply in daily life after the experience of the Exercises, and that they are of great value when so applied. Nonetheless, as Gil indicates, all such applications are analogical, and his caution seems very much to the point.

John Veltri describes three situations in which a spiritual director might wish to apply the Second Week rules: a man in the Nineteenth Annotation Exercises experiences two days of consolation, expects continued consolation, and is dismayed when he experiences desolation; a woman struggles in the Nineteenth Annotation Exercises, and when, ‘not too aware of her own competitive nature’, she copies the approach of another retreatant, finds herself in desolation; a man with good intentions to improve in prayer listens to advice which awakens doubts in him and leads to desolation. Veltri comments:

In dealing with situations like those above some spiritual guides might want to apply the Second Set of Discernment Guidelines .... After all, in each case, the Desolation began with an attempt to do something good or worthwhile .... A spiritual guide might assess these movements along the lines of notation (Exx 332) and check the beginning, middle, and end of the spiritual movement: its beginning to discover the point of entry of the Deception; its middle to understand what happened as the Deception developed; its end to notice the end result. This is good advice and applicable in many different areas of human experience and behaviour. Thus, a spiritual guide could use these guidelines here. But if he did so it would be *by way of analogy only*.<sup>12</sup>

Veltri then evaluates the analogical application of the Second Week Rules to these directees’ experiences:

You could use the edge of a pair of pliers to bang a nail into soft wood, or a spoon to eat your salad, though these are not the intended purposes of the pliers or the spoon. In much the same way, these three cases do not need the instrumentation of the Second Set of Guidelines since these cases are adequately covered by the First Set, notably notations (Exx 317, 325 and 327).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> John Veltri, *Orientations: For Those Who Accompany Others on the Inward Journey* (Guelph, Ontario: Guelph Centre of Spirituality, 1998), volume 2, part B, 428–429. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>13</sup> Veltri, *Orientations*, 429–430. Veltri is the only author I have found who explicitly discusses the analogical application of the Second Week rules to First Week experience.

The application of the Second Week, Rule 4 to such cases is ‘good advice’, Veltri says, because this counsel is ‘applicable in many different areas of human experience and behaviour’. But, he continues, this application is not necessary since these cases are adequately covered by the First Week rules.<sup>14</sup> This caution, too, seems very much to the point.

Finally, Michael Kyne observes that, even for Christians with ‘a settled aim of a generous service to God’—even for religious and priests,

... discernment is, so often, no more than that exercised by beginners in the Christian life—according to the rules set out in the first week of the *Exercises*. Many do not, in fact, manifest, in their impulses, mature choice of an aim .... So often the problem which faces us is not one of fine discernment, but of human maturity, religious education and motivation.<sup>15</sup>

*EIGHTH RULE. When the consolation is without cause, although there be no deceit in it, as being of God our Lord alone, as was said; still the spiritual person to whom God gives such consolation, ought, with much vigilance and attention, to look at and distinguish the time itself of such actual consolation from the following, in which the soul remains warm and favoured with the favour and remnants of the consolation past; for often in this second time, through one's own course of habits and the consequences of the concepts and judgments, or through the good spirit or through the bad, he forms various resolutions and opinions which are not given immediately by God our Lord, and therefore they have need to be very well examined before entire credit is given them, or they are put into effect.*

<sup>14</sup> Such applications of the Second Week rules also risk weakening the true sense of these rules. When they are applied to situations which ‘do not need’ their application because they ‘are adequately covered by the First Set’, one may more easily lose sight of their proper application—and thus be less prepared to apply them when they are truly vital for discernment.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Kyne, ‘Discernment of Spirits and Christian Growth’, *The Way Supplement*, 6 (1968), 20–26, here 23.

This caution regards the *person* whose spiritual experience is to be discerned. Kyne's observations invite us, before applying the Second Week rules, to consider carefully whether the person in question is truly the spiritually mature person of the Second Week.

*Principles of Analogical Application*

There is wide agreement that Ignatius' rules for discernment apply in daily life outside the formal Spiritual Exercises: Ignatius' own practice, a review of Ignatian literature and the experience of countless people confirm this judgment. If this is so, then the answer to the question, 'Is it proper to apply the Second Week rules analogically?' must be fundamentally affirmative.

The basic principle which guides such applications would seem to be that the closer to the prime analogue the experience is, the more confident the application may be; and the farther from the prime analogue, the more cautious the application must be. A comparison of two experiences will illustrate this principle:

*The pastor of a thriving suburban parish, a man of prayer, a dynamic preacher and a dedicated shepherd, under whose leadership the parish has been revitalised and through whose ministry the parishioners find vital spiritual nourishment, experiences a growing attraction in prayer towards serving the poor in an inner-city parish. His heart rejoices in the thought of serving Christ in the marginalised people of such a parish. He considers asking the bishop for a transfer, confident that the spiritual joy he feels confirms that God is asking this of him.<sup>16</sup>*

*A busy married woman who attends Sunday Mass regularly is asked to lead the singing for Holy Week in her parish. She loves to sing and rarely finds an opportunity to do so in a public setting. She accepts the request enthusiastically, and pours her energies into preparing and directing the singing. As she does so, she grows increasingly tired and is unable to attend properly to her children and her other responsibilities.*

The application of the Second Week rules to either of these situations will be analogical (outside the original context of the rules in

<sup>16</sup> Gallagher, *Spiritual Consolation*, 2.



the Spiritual Exercises). It is clear, however, that such application may be made more confidently in the first situation than in the second. The first situation closely approximates the prime analogue: the pastor is very likely to be the spiritually mature 'Second Week' person who is properly the subject of these rules; and he is experiencing spiritual consolation with good and holy thoughts towards the choice of a good and holy thing.

In the second situation, it is less clear that the woman is truly the spiritually mature person presumed by these rules; it is likewise less clear that she experiences *spiritual* consolation: her enthusiasm may be simply the non-spiritual, psychological consolation evoked by the opportunity to exercise a natural talent. Finally, can we affirm that this is the 'subtle' and 'high' discernment that Ignatius describes in the Second Week rules? Is not the light of reason already sufficient when the choice lies between voluntary activity, good though it may be, and responsibilities inherent in one's vocation?

Ignatius indicates that to speak of the Second Week rules to one in the exercises of the First Week, 'if he is a person who has not been versed in spiritual things, and is tempted grossly and openly ... will be harmful to him, as being matter too subtle and too high for him to understand' (Exx 9). Consequently, any analogical application of the Second Week rules must carefully avoid the possibility of harm to such persons.

As John Veltri indicates, to apply the Second Week, Rule 4 to experience properly subject to the First Week rules—to counsel the person to 'check the beginning, middle, and end of the spiritual movement'—is 'good advice'. Though such an application is not necessary, there seems little risk of harm in it. Any application, however, which might lead a person in the First Week situation to doubt the work of the good spirit in time of spiritual consolation is, according to Ignatius, potentially harmful to that person. In the First Week situation, the good spirit guides and counsels through spiritual consolation and the thoughts that arise from it (First Week, Rule 5); these are the 'good movements' which the person is to 'receive' (Exx 313) and so be spiritually strengthened. Only in the Second Week situation must the person discern whether the Enemy might be tempting under the appearance of good through spiritual consolation.

It would appear, as a logical consequence, that appropriate analogical applications of the First Week rules will be more common than those of the Second Week rules. As Ignatius indicates in Annotations 9–10, the deception (through spiritual desolation) treated in the First Week rules is the more basic. Experience in spiritual direction confirms this.

Finally, analogical applications of the Second Week rules may be fruitful in a less defined but very real way. My sense is that for many people, knowledge of these rules awakens a general awareness of the possibility of deception in their *energy for good things*, regardless of whether the specific spiritual situation properly demands the Second Week rules or not. Knowledge of these rules is likely to alert them more quickly to deceptions in their spiritual strength and in the human capabilities which underpin it. Ignatius' Second Week rules are one of the clearest—perhaps the clearest—statements of the need for vigilance with respect to our energy in spiritual things. Such analogical applications of these rules may prove a great blessing on the spiritual journey.

**Timothy M. Gallagher OMV** was ordained in 1979 as a member of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, a religious community dedicated to retreats and spiritual formation according to the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. He obtained his doctorate in 1983 from the Gregorian University. He has taught (St John's Seminary, Brighton, Massachusetts, USA and Our Lady of Grace Seminary Residence, Boston, Massachusetts, USA); assisted in formation work for twelve years; and served two terms as provincial in his own community. He has dedicated many years to an extensive ministry of retreats, spiritual direction and teaching about the spiritual life. He has published five books on Ignatian spirituality, including *The Discernment of Spirits*, *The Examen Prayer*, and *Spiritual Consolation* (Crossroad, 2005, 2006, 2007).