

# The Spirit of the Colloquy in St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises and Martin Buber's *I and Thou*

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The Colloquy and its practice plays a crucial role in the *Spiritual Exercises* (henceforth *SpEx*) of St. Ignatius of Loyola. In the *SpEx* the colloquy is understood as a “spiritual exercise”, an activity like making an examination of conscience, entering into a meditation, or contemplation, or vocal or mental prayer, or any other activity that can aid the exercitant in being free of inordinate attachments so as to seek and find the will of God in a choice of a way of life.<sup>1</sup>

More specifically: «A colloquy, properly so called, means speaking as one friend speaks with another, or a servant with a master, at times asking him for some favor, at other times accusing himself of something badly done, or sharing personal concerns and asking advice about them.» (*SpEx* 54)<sup>2</sup>

In the colloquy the persons addressed are Jesus or the Father, or the Trinity, or in sequence the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father. In this conversation

«...one should talk over motives and present petitions according to circumstance. S/he may be tempted or may enjoy consolation, may desire to have this virtue or another, to be disposed in this way or that, or may seek to grieve or rejoice according to the matter being contemplated. Finally, s/he should ask for what is more earnestly desired with regard to some particular interest.» (*SpEx* 199)

In the *SpEx* the colloquy is usually made at the conclusion of some meditation or contemplation and marks the culmination or the culminating moment of that spiritual exercise as the exercitant is to strive to address *directly* the *persons* of Mary, Jesus, the Father, or the Trinity.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The first (as well as the twenty first) of the *Introductory Observations* at the beginning of the *SpEx*.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Ivens' translation, from his *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, (Gracewing 1998) 53. As Ivens note, the colloquy is characterized «by a personal and spontaneous quality of conversation between friends.»

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Speaking directly to the person or persons in the Ignatian colloquy involves moving beyond merely meditating on a particular scene by acts of the imagination or intellect in actually *addressing and speaking* to the person involved. For example, at *SpEx 53* the exercitant is invited not simply to *imagine* and *behold* Jesus before us on the Cross and to *reflect* on what s/he has done, is doing, and will do for Christ, but is instructed to *speak* with Christ, *asking* how it is that as our Creator has become man and suffered for us. And after conversing with Him in this way the exercitant is to close by *praying* the *Our Father*.

Similarly in the colloquy at *SpEx 61*, in considering who God is against whom one has sinned and the reaction of creation and all the saints to one's sin, the exercitant is instructed to *extol* the mercy of God our Lord by *pouring out* his/her thoughts to Him and *giving thanks* that up to this moment God has given him/her life, and by *resolving* with God's grace to amend his/her life. S/he is then to close by *praying* the *Our Father*.

Again, in the first Colloquy at the end of the Meditation on the Two Standards (*SpEx 147*) after imagining Satan and the Lord and reflecting over the significance of their different messages the exercitant is instructed to *address* our Lady, *asking* her to obtain from her Son and Lord the grace to be received under His standard in the highest spiritual poverty, even in actual poverty, to bear insults and wrongs to imitate Him the better, closing with praying a *Hail Mary*. In the second colloquy, the exercitant is to *ask* Jesus her Son to obtain these same favors from the Father, saying the *Anima Christi*, and in the third colloquy to *beg* the Father for the same graces, closing with an *Our Father*.

Further, in addressing the persons about poverty, should the exercitant feel an attachment opposed to actual poverty and seek to overcome this, s/he is encouraged in the Note following the meditation of the Three Classes of Men (*SpEx 157*) to *beg* Our Lord in the colloquies to choose him or her to serve the Lord in actual poverty, *insisting* that this is what s/he desires, *begging* and *pleading* for this – provided that it be for the Lord's service and praise.

In the same manner, in the Note to the Three Kinds of Humility (*SpEx 168*) with respect to the third degree of humility, the exercitant should *beg* our Lord in the colloquies that the Lord may choose him or her to serve Him in the third degree of humility so as to imitate and serve Him more closely – provided this be to His equal or greater praise and service.

In these examples, the colloquy as conversation with the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father or the Trinity demands from the exercitant an effort beyond acts of the imagination and in actively addressing and conversing with the persons by clearly articulating what it is s/he desires to receive from them. This requires a more intense effort than is required in a meditation or contemplation on what the exercitant desires. Arguably this greater effort in addressing and conversing with the persons is an invitation to a greater generosity – a greater gift of self – offered to the persons themselves.

The same invitation to exercise greater generosity toward the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father appears operative in the colloquies following meditations and contemplations in the Third and Fourth Weeks. And in the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God, the exercitant, after reflecting on all that God has done for him as well as on

how God dwells in, works, and labors for him is to conclude by offering the Lord the *Suscipe* entering into a colloquy and finally praying the *Our Father*.

While each meditation and contemplation in the *SpEx* is a spiritual exercise in itself which demands a personal commitment from the exercitant, the colloquy is clearly the culmination of this exercise in which the exercitant commits him/herself to God in addressing and conversing with the persons of Mary, Jesus, and, finally the Father. The Ignatian colloquy, so understood and practiced, can be considered the high point of Ignatian prayer in the process of discerning and carrying out the will of God in a choice of life.

But given the Colloquy's capital importance in the *SpEx*, in general, and especially with respect to finding the will of God in a choice of life (or some other important choice), how is the exercitant to prepare properly for the colloquy?

In his *Additional Directions at SpEx 75.3* Ignatius gives some instructions as to how to enter into prayer: «I will stand for the space of an *Our Father*, or contemplate, and with my mind raised on high, consider that God our Lord beholds me...Then I will make an act of reverence or humility.»<sup>4</sup>

These instructions refer to entering into prayer generally, rather than specifically into the colloquy. However, to the extent that the exercitant is being directed to prepare to *address* God, these instructions at *SpEx 75.3* are pertinent for preparing to enter into the colloquy.

In the *Introductory Observations (SpEx 3)* we read

«In all the Spiritual Exercises which follow, we make use of the acts of intellect in reasoning, and of the acts of will in manifesting our love. However, we must observe that when in acts of will we address God our Lord or His saints either vocally or mentally, greater reverence is required on our part than when we use the intellect in reasoning.»

Addressing and conversing with the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father in the Ignatian colloquy requires of the exercitant not just acts of intellect but acts of will in loving reverence for the persons addressed. This loving reverence in addressing and conversing with the persons establishes a bond between the exercitant and the persons that is critical in receiving from those persons the grace s/he is begging for – to know and to generously respond to God's will in an important choice s/he wants to make. As this bond between the exercitant and the persons addressed and can only be the result of divine grace in the presence and action of God's Spirit,<sup>5</sup> the Spirit of the Ignatian colloquy can be understood as this divinely graced relationship between the exercitant

<sup>4</sup> Puhl translation from *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, a New translation based on Studies in the language of the Autograph (Chicago, Loyola Press, 1951).

<sup>5</sup> While the person of the Spirit is rarely mentioned explicitly in the *SpEx*, His presence and influence are acknowledged throughout: e.g. *SpEx 102, 106-109*, in the process of the Election *SpEx 69-189*, cf. Ivens, 77, and most notably for our concern in this paper as the personal bond in the relationship between Christ and His Church, *SpEx 365*, the same bond between the exercitant and the persons addressed in the Colloquy.

and the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father, a relationship which enables the exercitant to ask for and receive the grace sought from the persons.

One way we might better appreciate the Spirit of the Ignatian colloquy within the *SpEx* is to step outside the *Exercises* themselves and view the Ignatian colloquy from the point of view offered by Martin Buber in his classic work *I and Thou*.<sup>6</sup> In Buber's analysis of *I-You* relationships between human beings and between human beings and God the *spirit* (Geist) is what *I* and *You* share in their address to each other as *You*.<sup>7</sup> In the following, we will consider relevant aspects of Buber's *I and Thou* as a way of appreciating from this perspective the Spirit of the Ignatian colloquy as found in the *SpEx*.

In Buber's *I and Thou* each of us is an *I* in relation to the world and others in the world. *How* we relate to the world and others in the world depends on our taking one of two basic attitudes.<sup>8</sup> One attitude, which Buber calls «*I-You*» is the way *I* relate to the world and others in the world as real and of value in and of themselves apart from me and my own concerns, while the other attitude, which he calls *I-It*, is the way *I* can approach the world and others simply as an object of my own particular concerns. When *I address* another out of an *I-You* attitude *I address* that other as my «*You*» and when this attitude and address is mutual we two share a *spirit* between us.<sup>9</sup> However, should *I address* the other from an *I-It* attitude *I am* in effect treating that other as an *It* – a mere object of a limited concern or project of mine.<sup>10</sup> In such an address there can be no true mutuality and no *spirit* shared. This twofold attitude and address determines not only how *I relate* to others but how *I understand* myself – either as the *I* of a *person* in an *I-You* relation or as an *ego* with respect to the other as my object in an *I-It* relation.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *I and Thou* and *Afterword*, translation W. Kaufmann, (New York, Touchstone 1996), 53. This will be the translation used throughout the paper.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *I and Thou* 89.

<sup>8</sup> According to Buber there is no world of appearance, there is only the world – which appears twofold to us according to our twofold attitude, cf. *I and Thou* 125.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *I and Thou* 89. Speaking the primal word «*You*» in dialogue is not a *description* of the partner but an act of intending (*Meinen*) the reality of the partner. Later, Buber explains that the term *You* points to the reality intended, or «to something in reality that had not or had too little been seen» cf. M. Buber, *Replies to My Critics in The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, Ed. P. A. Schilpp and M. Friedman, Open Court Press, 1967, 693.

<sup>10</sup> In a later work commenting on *I and Thou* Buber makes this explicit «What I mean is that when a man presents himself to the «world» or in general to others, when he takes up an «attitude», when he «speaks a primal word», it is either the one or the other – and that he actualizes either the one or the other. But *I do not mean* at all that the life of man or even only his «inner life» represents a continuity of such attitudes, such «*speakings*» such actualizations. In the one moment he is over against another as such, sees him as present and relates to him thus. In the other moment he sees everything else collected around him and from time to time singles out, observes, explores, applies, uses. Both the moments are included in the dynamic of a lived life» *Replies to My Critics*, 699.

<sup>11</sup> *I and Thou* 111-112. Buber's analysis of this twofold attitude and especially his valorization of the *I-You* attitude has been controversial, cf. M. Zank, «Martin Buber», (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* online 2020) and most notably perhaps W. Kaufmann, «Buber's Failures and Triumph», *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 32 (1978/4) 441-459; S. Katz, «A Critical Review of Martin Buber's Epis-

While Buber recognizes three spheres of possible *I-You* relations, relations with things in nature, with other human beings, and with God,<sup>12</sup> he is most interested in human and divine *I-You* relations,<sup>13</sup> relations in which the human partners or the human and divine partner take an *I-You* attitude to each other and address each other as *You*. In considering both human and divine *I-You* relations and how the one is an introduction to the other, Buber begins by examining the human *I-You* relation for, as he believes, «Only here does the word, formed in language, encounter its reply»<sup>14</sup>... «The relation to the human being is the proper metaphor for the relation to God – as genuine address is here accorded a genuine answer.»<sup>15</sup>

In the following, we will follow Buber in considering first the basic elements of the human *I-You* relation and secondly in considering our human relation to God as our eternal *You* as both these relations can help us appreciate the Spirit of the Ignatian colloquy in a new way as an *I-You* relationship between the exercitant and the persons s/he addresses in the colloquy.

## I. Human *I-You* Relations in *I and Thou* and the Ignatian Colloquy

In the First Part of *I and Thou* Buber describes a number of basic characteristics of human *I-You* relations in which the partners address each other as *You*. We will list and describe these characteristics one by one and compare them with the exercitant's relation with the persons he or she addresses in the Ignatian colloquy.

The first basic characteristic Buber sees in human *I-You* relations is that the partners in the relation address each other as *You* with the *whole* of their being<sup>16</sup> treating each other as a person (*Person*) – as a reality in him/herself.<sup>17</sup> This is in contrast to approach-

temology of I and Thou» in *Martin Buber A Centenary Volume*, ed. Haim Gordon and Jochanan Bloch, Ben-Gurion University of Negev, KTAV Publishing, 1984, 89-121, and F. Rosenzweig in B. Casper's «Franz Rosenzweig's Criticism of Buber's I and Thou» in *Martin Buber A Centenary Volume*, 90-120. Katz also offers a sustained criticism of Buber in S. Katz «Dialogue and Revelation in the Thought of Martin Buber», *Religious Studies* 14 (1978) 57-68.

<sup>12</sup> Including possible *I-You* relations with forms of art, cf. *I and Thou* 60-61.

<sup>13</sup> In his *Afterword* written year after *I and Thou* Buber states that his «most essential concern» in the work was the central significance of the close association of the relation to God with the relation to one's fellow man. *Afterword*, 169.

<sup>14</sup> *I and Thou* 151.

<sup>15</sup> *I and Thou* 151. In addition to being the proper metaphor for the relation to God, Buber later added that our human relations with each other are essentially similar to our relations with God in that both relations involve a turning to the other as a *You* and both find their fulfillment in actual reciprocity, cf. Buber, *Replies to My Critics*, 694.

<sup>16</sup> *I and Thou* 54, 89.

<sup>17</sup> For Buber speaking «*You*» to the other out of an *I-You* attitude is not a *description* of the other but an act of intending (*Meinen*) the other as a reality in himself. In a later work, Buber explains that speaking the word *You* points to the reality, cf. Buber, *Replies to My Critics*, 693.

ing each other by withholding something of themselves by treating the other as an It and oneself as an ego (*Eingewesen*).<sup>18</sup>

In the Ignatian colloquy in the *SpEx*, the exercitant is to address and enter into conversation with the persons of Mary, Jesus, or the Father or the Trinity of divine persons. Addressing and entering into a conversation with another person as that person is in reality, requires a greater personal commitment on the part of exercitant than in merely thinking about or imagining the person.

The second basic characteristic of human *I-You* relations for Buber is that the persons in this relation do not seek to *possess* each other as objects (*It*) but they rather stand in *relation* (*Beziehung*)<sup>19</sup> to each other as persons (*You*).<sup>20</sup> The desire to possess is a desire to experience (*Erfahren*) or use (*Gebrauchen*) the other as my object out of an *I-It* attitude.<sup>21</sup>

In the Ignatian colloquy the exercitant, in addressing and conversing with the persons, is presumably trying to *meet* the persons – not trying to possess or control them (as he might be tempted to when *imagining* or *thinking* about them). Conversation *with* the persons presupposes but transcends any mere meditation or contemplation *of* the persons. The exercitant has, as it were, to step *outside* him/herself *toward* the other as addressed and with whom s/he converses.

Buber notes a third characteristic of human *I-You* relations – that the awareness of the partner as *You* is *immediate* or *unmediated* (*unmittelbare*),<sup>22</sup> that is, an awareness of the other without any goal or purpose beyond that of simply encountering the other as *You*.<sup>23</sup>

This characteristic of human *I-You* relations may help the exercitant consider his or her motivation in the colloquy. Is s/he interested only in *what* is desired *from* the persons or is the exercitant primarily concerned with *who* the persons are in and for themselves? In the preparatory prayer of every exercise, the exercitant is to beg God for the grace that all his or her intentions, actions, and operations be directed to the praise and service of God (*SpEx*46). Since the grace the exercitant asks from the persons – to know and do the will of God in making a choice of life – is desired for the greater glory of God – a desire that is shared by the persons themselves – meeting and conversing with the persons to obtain this grace by their intercession will be an integral aspect of meeting the persons immediately as they are in themselves.

<sup>18</sup> *I and Thou* 112-115 In treating the other person in the conversation as an *It* I become limited as an ego among other egos.

<sup>19</sup> *I and Thou* 56.

<sup>20</sup> *I and Thou* 55.

<sup>21</sup> «Experience» (*Erfahrung*) founds the world of *It*. Buber plays on the etymological root of the term in *fabren* «to travel». To travel is to experience only the surface of life, whereas real intimacy is possible only through prolonged dwelling with the other. Buber uses the term *Erlebnis*, from *Leben* to express the *I-You* relation as signifying authentic human *living*, cf. R. Wood Martin *Buber's Ontology*, (Evanston Northwestern Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy 1969), 40.

<sup>22</sup> *I and Thou* 65-67.

<sup>23</sup> *I and Thou* 62, 63.

A fourth characteristic of human *I-You* relations for Buber is that in their *addressing* each other as *You* the partners are aware of their *presence* (*Gegenwart*) here and now,<sup>24</sup> in contrast to merely thinking about or imagining each other as in the past or in the future.<sup>25</sup> This mutual awareness of presence transcends limitations of physical space and time and causal necessity.<sup>26</sup>

With respect to the exercitant and his/her relation to the persons in the Ignatian colloquy, in addressing and conversing with the persons the exercitant is aware of their presence here and now as opposed to meditating about or contemplating those same persons in the past or the future. Of course, the exercitant can meditate on or contemplate the persons s/he addresses as present here and now but it is the address itself rather than the meditation or contemplation that is decisive in being present with the persons. Though rooted in imagination and thinking, being present to the persons in addressing and conversing with them in faith can be understood as an experience transcending the limits of physical space, time, and causality.

A fifth characteristic Buber sees in *I-You* human relations is the *exclusiveness* (*Ausschließlichkeit*) of the *You* in the partners' mutual address. By this term, Buber means that in addressing each other as *You* the focus of the partners' concern is each other – a focus which “fills the firmament” of their attention but which also *includes* their awareness of others and the world around them with respect to each other.<sup>27</sup> It is only when the partners step outside of an *I-You* relation by taking an *I-It* attitude toward each other that their focus falls on each other as their object – an object whose spatial, temporal, and causal dimensions are located among other objects in a system of coordinates from this limited point of view.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *I and Thou* 63, cf. 58. This difference between presence (*Präsenz*) and object especially marks the real boundary between *You* and *It*, *I and Thou* 63-64.

<sup>25</sup> The *I* of the basic word *I-You* directly confronts (*Gegenüber*) the *You*; the *I* of *I-It* does not but rather surrounds itself with a multitude of contents (*Inhalten*) with a past but no present. Objectification reduces the present to the past in the sense that the uniqueness we meet is considered only in terms of what it has in common with other things encountered in the past, the other becomes object of experience and future anticipation of the other is based on past experience of the other as object, cf. Wood, *Martin Buber's Ontology*, 54.

<sup>26</sup> The *It*-world hangs together in space and time. The *You* world does not hang together in space and time *I and Thou* 84. In the *It*-word causality holds unlimited sway *I and Thou* 100.

<sup>27</sup> *I and Thou* 59, 126, cf. 66, 67. Buber likens this exclusiveness to prayer for, “as prayer is not in time but time in prayer and as the sacrifice not in space but space in the sacrifice”, so in addressing each other as *You* we no longer find ourselves in time or space but rather we experience time and space in our awareness of each other. We shall see though, that this exclusivity is limited by the duration of the presence of the *You*, *I and Thou* 126, 127 and by the introduction of another *You*, cf. *I and Thou* 148.

<sup>28</sup> *I and Thou* 60, 81. S. Katz, «Dialogue and Revelation in the Thought of Martin Buber», *Religious Studies* 14, (1978) 58-67 criticizes Buber for completely separating *I-Thou* relations and *I-It*. But with respect to specifically *I-You* human relations, while Buber does separate the two as *attitudes*, his understanding of the *I-You* attitude in human relations can, *pace* Katz, include an awareness of the objective dimension to the human *You* - though not as *separate* from the *You*, cf. Buber, *Replies to My Critics*, 711. This *I-You* inclusion of the objective can be seen in Buber's description of community life in which the drive to expe-

With respect to the Ignatian colloquy, when the exercitant enters into a colloquy with Mary, Jesus, or the Father (or the Trinity) the person(s) as addressed “fill the firmament” of the exercitant’s attention yet in such a way that in their presence the exercitant is aware of the world and others as well.

The sixth characteristic of the human *I-You* relationship for Buber is a reciprocity (*Gegenseitigkeit*) involved in speaking *You* to each other.<sup>29</sup> This reciprocity Buber sees is an encounter (*Begegnung*) in mutual election and electing, passivity and activity at once.<sup>30</sup> This reciprocity is conversation as a genuine dialogue.

With respect to the Ignatian colloquy, the exercitant is encouraged to address and converse with the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father or with the Trinity as with a friend. Such a conversation will not be a monologue but a reciprocal interaction in which both partners make the effort to speak to and listen for each other’s response. The Ignatian colloquy between the exercitant and the persons is thus a real conversation between two partners – anything but a monologue from one side alone.

A seventh characteristic Buber sees in human *I-You* relations is that this relation is based on dispositions of *belief*, *will*, and *grace*. A belief (*Glaube*) in the partners’ separate individuality,<sup>31</sup> their will (*Wille*) to address each other as *You* and the grace (*Gnade*) of being addressed as such.<sup>32</sup>

If *I-You* human relations for Buber consist in the partners’ mutual dispositions of *belief*, *will*, and a reliance on *grace*, a certain analogy can be made with the exercitant’s relation to the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father in the Ignatian colloquy. For by addressing and conversing with the persons in faith, the exercitant believes in their *real* existence and wills to address and converse with them as real partners, trusting in the grace of their response.

An eighth characteristic Buber sees in human *I-You* relations, a characteristic which flows from the reciprocity of their interaction is the *spirit* (*Geist*) between the two persons. For Buber, *spirit* is both the word spoken *between I and You*,<sup>33</sup> as well as the

rience and use is objectifying only when my relations with others in the community are no longer *I-You* relations. The economic will to profit and the political will to power can be natural and legitimate when tied to the will to human relations (*Beziehungswillen*) and carried by it, *I and Thou*, 97. Indeed, community life in the spirit requires the *It* world – but only as properly ordered to the Spirit, cf. *I and Thou*, 99, 100.

<sup>29</sup> *I and Thou* 67, 84.

<sup>30</sup> *I and Thou* 62, cf. 124, 125.

<sup>31</sup> What Buber understood as *belief* in *I and Thou* in his later work *Distance and Relation* becomes the awareness of a primal setting at a distance, the first of a twofold principle of human life of which *will* is the second, cf. «Distance and Relation» in M. Buber *The Knowledge of Man: A Philosophy of the Interhuman*, translated and edited with an introduction by M. Friedman, (NY, Harper Torchbooks, 1965), 59-71, and Appendix II: A Tentative Answer” in Buber’s «Autobiographical Fragments» in *The Philosophy of Martin Buber The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, Library of Living Philosophers Ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp New York: Open Court 1967, 35, and in M. Buber, *Replies to My Critics*, 691.

<sup>32</sup> *I and Thou* 62, cf. 109.

<sup>33</sup> *I and Thou* 89. In a later work, Buber describes “the between” in a genuine dialogue as that reality shared by the partners which is nevertheless neither their physical presence in speaking and gesturing nor the psychic phenomena they experience within themselves, cf. Buber, *Replies to My Critics*, 706-707.

silence the partners share in listening to each other.<sup>34</sup>

This eighth characteristic of human *I-You* relations could be a beautiful description of the Ignatian colloquy as a conversation between the exercitant and the persons. The *spirit* as Buber understands this in the context of human *I-You* relations can be understood from the Christian faith perspective of the Ignatian colloquy as the presence and action of the Holy Spirit uniting the exercitant with the persons he or she reverently addresses in faith. While Ignatius does not explicitly name the Holy Spirit in the *SpEx*, the presence and action of the Spirit is presumed throughout the *Exercises* and especially in the Colloquy.<sup>35</sup>

The ninth characteristic of human *I-You* relations for Buber is that the word ‘*You*’ spoken between the partners emerges from their *longing* for *I-You* relations. Buber describes this longing as the *innate You* – the *a priori* of all relation.<sup>36</sup> This fundamental human desire for a relation with *You* is actualized in each finite *You* encountered<sup>37</sup> but is fully actualized only in relation with the *eternal You*,<sup>38</sup> that *You* that unlike any finite *You* cannot be an *It*.<sup>39</sup>

Buber’s description of this innate *You* as this deep natural longing which ultimately finds its fulfillment in a relationship with the eternal *You* is reminiscent of St. Augustine’s recognition of just such a human longing in his famous prayer to God at the beginning of his *Confessions* «You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you».<sup>40</sup> Similarly, the Ignatian colloquy, can be understood, especially in the Triple Colloquy as an address in faith first to Mary, then to Jesus, and finally to the Father, as the realization of the natural human longing to address and converse with the infinite and eternal God as inspired by the Spirit.

The tenth characteristic of human *I-You* relations is what Buber calls the transience or evanescence (*Vergänglichkeit*) of the partners’ awareness of their *You*.<sup>41</sup> The aware-

<sup>34</sup> *I and Thou* 89.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Footnote 5., and cf. Ivens, 26, 30, 31, 32, 43, 54, 65, 76, 77, 88, 205-209, 211.

<sup>36</sup> *I and Thou* 78, 79. Buber believes that the development of the child’s soul in its prenatal life in the womb is connected with this longing for the *You*, as an innate drive for contact with another being which appears originally in tactile contact followed by optical contact from which the drive for reciprocity and tenderness appears. While his description of an innate *You* as an *a priori* of all relation realized in the *You* we encounter, cf. *I and Thou*, 79 makes use of recognizably Kantian terminology, what he means by this description need not be construed as referring to anything more than the natural human desire for personal relations with others, a desire that is rooted in human rationality and so present as a natural *potential* in the human infant – a potential which is subsequently actualized in his relations with others throughout his life. But for another interpretation and critical evaluation of Buber’s philosophical dependence on Kant’s epistemology in *I and Thou*, cf. Katz, «A Critical Review of Martin Buber’s Epistemology...», 89-99, and S. Katz, «Lawrence Perlman’s Buber’s Anti-Kantianism: A Reply» *Association of Jewish Studies*, 15 (1990/1) 109-117.

<sup>37</sup> *I and Thou* 78.

<sup>38</sup> *I and Thou* 128.

<sup>39</sup> *I and Thou* 123.

<sup>40</sup> St. Augustine *Confessions*, Chadwick translation (Oxford, Oxford World’s Classics 1998), i (1).

<sup>41</sup> *I and Thou* 146, 147.

ness of the human *You* alternates between actuality and latency (*Latenz*)<sup>42</sup> as the personal attention to each other is prone to fade into an objectivizing gaze which reduces their *You* into of an *It*.<sup>43</sup> This loss of the actuality of presence between the partners is not permanent but rather *latent* as the partners can again become aware of each other as *You* whenever they re-enter the event of relation.<sup>44</sup>

Analogously, in the Ignatian colloquy, addressing, conversing, and actively listening to each other requires of the exercitant and the persons a mutual commitment. For the exercitant, this commitment will require real physical and psychological effort in attending to the persons with the loving reverence they deserve. Due to human weakness and distraction the exercitant will at times lose this active awareness but given his or her graced desire to speak and listen to the persons, the relation between the exercitant and the persons at such times can be understood as “latent” – in that the exercitant as one partner in the Colloquy, while not actually engaged in the conversation has an abiding disposition to be so engaged.

The final characteristic of human *I-You* relations as described by Buber in the First Part of *I and Thou* is that in addressing each other as *You*, the partners become aware of an *eternal You*. «In every sphere, through everything that becomes present to us, we gaze toward the train of the eternal You; in each we perceive a breath of it; in every You we address the eternal You...»<sup>45</sup>

This ultimate characteristic of human *I-You* relations will become in the Ignatian Colloquy an introduction to the Triune God as our *eternal You*.

## II. God as Our Eternal *You* in *I-You* Relations and the Ignatian Colloquy

In the second section of this paper we will explore how for Buber we can become aware of God as our eternal *You* in our *I-You* relations with one another and how an awareness of this *You* as Buber describes this can help us appreciate from this perspective how the exercitant in the *SpEx* can become aware of God in addressing and conversing with the persons in the Ignatian colloquy.

<sup>42</sup> *I and Thou* 147, 68-69, 84-85. By «*Latenz*» Buber might be understood as referring to a way of being akin to an Aristotelian habit or fixed disposition formed as a result of repeated action, cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* II.1.

<sup>43</sup> *I and Thou* 147, 68-69. Genuine contemplation, for example, never lasts long; the natural being that only now revealed itself in the mystery of reciprocity has again become describable, analyzable, classifiable, *I and Thou* 68. The inherent limitation of the *You* in the world seems to be reciprocal in Buber's understanding as based on the physical dimension of beings in the world. *I* am limited and so *I* cannot sustain my *I-You* attitude to you and you yourself as limited are susceptible to my reducing *You* to an *It* for me.

<sup>44</sup> *I and Thou* 84.

<sup>45</sup> *I and Thou* 57, 84.

## 1. Addressing God as our Eternal You In I-You Relations

The final characteristic of human *I-You* relations was that the *You* we address in such relations provides us with some access to an eternal *You*. Buber explores this access in the Third Part of *I and Thou*. At the beginning of this part we read «Extended, the lines of relationships intersect in the eternal *You*. Every single *You* is a glimpse of that.»<sup>46</sup> While this image of extending lines has puzzled his commentators,<sup>47</sup> Buber describes this glimpse of the eternal *You* as *through* every single *You* «Through (*Durch*) every single *You* the basic word addresses the eternal *You*.»<sup>48</sup>

«Through every single *You*... the innate *You* is actualized each time without ever being perfected. It attains its perfection solely in the immediate relationship to the *You* that in accordance with its nature cannot become an *It*.»<sup>49</sup>

The finite *You* appears to *mediate* the eternal *You* by imperfectly actualizing the innate *You* – our natural longing for *You* which cannot be satisfied until we address the eternal *You*. For Buber the finite *You* mediates the eternal *You* by providing us with the occasion for actualizing the innate *You* which can only be satisfied in our addressing the eternal *You*.<sup>50</sup>

This eternal *You* who alone satisfies our innate longing for personal relationship is for Buber the *Creator* who gives us the being and freedom to respond to him as our eternal *You*. «Creation – happens to us... we participate in it, we encounter the creator, offer ourselves to him, helpers and companions.»<sup>51</sup> «In prayer and sacrifice we step before the countenance of the eternal *You* and pour ourselves out to God, acting on God without exacting anything from God.»<sup>52</sup>

<sup>46</sup> *I and Thou*, 123.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Y. Amir «The Finite Thou and the Eternal Thou in the Work of Martin Buber» in *Martin Buber A Centenary Volume*, ed. H. Gordon and J. Bloch, KTAV Publishing House, Ben Gurion University of the Negev 1984, 83.

<sup>48</sup> *I and Thou* 126.

<sup>49</sup> *I and Thou* 126.

<sup>50</sup> Buber does admit though that our innate *You* can impel us to seek the eternal *You*, even in solitude apart from any human *I-You* relations – as long as in that desire in solitude does not involve a rejection of human *I-You* relations, cf. *I and Thou* 152, cf. 155. In his later works Buber acknowledges the actuality of a direct relation to God apart from a relation to human beings though he insists that this relation to God must find its complement in the essential relation to man, cf. Buber, *Replies to My Critics*, 710.

This dynamic of the innate *You* which can be fully satisfied only in addressing the eternal *You* is not unlike the very desire St. Augustine describes in his prayer to God in the beginning of his *Confessions*, «You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you».

<sup>51</sup> *I and Thou* 130. In a later work while Buber admits that the fundamental importance of creation and all its implications are established by his faith, cf. Buber, *Replies to My Critics*, 702, he tries to understand the act of creation in such a way that does not threaten his belief in the *mutuality* of an *I-You* relationship with God – as seen for example in his prayer «let your will be done – through me whom you need.» *I and Thou* 131 and in a later work he writes «I believe not merely in the creative act in the beginning but also in the creation at all times, in which man has a share as God's comrade in the work of creation.» Buber, *Replies to My Critics*, 714.

<sup>52</sup> *I and Thou* 130, 131.

Buber's description of addressing God as our eternal *You* presumes his own faith in accepting the revelation of God in the Hebrew Scriptures who reveals himself as Creator and Redeemer to those whom he addresses. This personal faith in the God who reveals himself in Scripture requires of the believer *belief, will, and grace* – *belief* in the reality and otherness of God, the *will* to address God as *You* and the acceptance of the *grace* of God's *revelation* (*Offenbarung*) in which

«Man receives and what he receives is not a content but a presence, a presence as strength. This presence and strength includes three elements...first, the whole abundance of actual reciprocity...second the inexpressible confirmation of meaning...third the meaning not of «another life» but of this our life...of this our world.»<sup>53</sup>

For Buber God reveals Himself in the *I-You* relation in His presence as the eternal *You* – a life transforming presence that cannot be possessed as an object, a feeling, an *It*, an *Idol*.<sup>54</sup> An *I-You* relation with God in addressing and being addressed as *You* is revelation and mission. The partner's response to this revelation is to go forth for «When you are sent forth, God remains presence for you; whoever walks in his mission always has God before him...of course he cannot attend to God but he can converse with him. Bending back on the other hand, turns god into an object.»<sup>55</sup>

If the *spirit* (*Geist*) of dialogue for Buber is both the word spoken and the silence shared *between I and You*, this spirit reaches its zenith when the eternal *You* is revealed to us in and through our *I-You* relations with each other and we in response are missioned to share this revelation.

## 2. Addressing the Persons in the Ignatian Colloquy as our You

From being guided by Martin Buber in addressing God as our eternal *You* in addressing one another as *You* from an *I-You* attitude, we turn to the Ignatian Colloquy in the *SpEx* and consider how in an analogous way the exercitant may address and converse with God as his eternal *You* in addressing and conversing with the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father.

We have already noted the Ignatian colloquy will require of the exercitant a proper respect for the persons whom s/he addresses and with whom s/he converses. And in comparing the exercitant's relation with the persons in the Ignatian colloquy with Buber's description of the dialogue partners in human *I-You* relations in the First Part of his *I and Thou*, we have seen that the exercitant, in reverently approaching the persons in the Colloquies strives to address and converse with them with his or her whole being, desiring not to possess or otherwise control the persons but to meet them as they are in the present moment, believing in their real presence, sharing with them the Spirit in a mutual give and take of speaking and listening. These are some of the ways that Buber's

<sup>53</sup> *I and Thou* 158-159.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *I and Thou* 129-130, 152, 153-155, 160-168.

<sup>55</sup> *I and Thou* 164-165.

analysis of human *I-You* relations can help the exercitant (and all of us) appreciate the Spirit of the Ignatian colloquy as an *I-You* relation.

But how can Buber's description of God as our eternal *You* as described in the Third Part of *I and Thou* help the exercitant (and us) appreciate the Spirit of the Ignatian colloquy as inspiring us to address God as *our* eternal *You*?

Fundamentally, Buber's description of addressing God as our eternal *You* presumes an innate desire for the eternal *You* and a faith acceptance of what the God of the Hebrew Scriptures reveals of Himself. Analogously, for the exercitant to address and converse with God in the Ignatian colloquy presumes a personal desire to address God and a faith acceptance of what God has revealed of Himself in Jesus Christ in the Gospels – as the *Father* of Jesus Christ and in Christ *our* Father.

Moreover, there is a certain analogy between Buber's *I-You* understanding of addressing God and the exercitant's addressing God in the Ignatian colloquy. For as in addressing God as *You* in an *I-You* relation will require the whole of one's being, so the Ignatian colloquy requires of the exercitant to commit wholeheartedly to address and converse with the persons in a sincere attempt to seek and find the will of God in a choice of a way of life.

Yet there are also obvious dis-analogies between Buber's *I-You* analysis of addressing God and the exercitant's addressing God in the Ignatian colloquy. For besides the distinct intention of seeking to find the will of God in a choice of a way of life in the Colloquy, the exercitant addresses God as his or her eternal *You* in addressing God the Father through the intercession of the persons of Mary and Jesus. This Christian prayer grounded in the Trinitarian revelation of God respects the different ontological status of Mary, Jesus, and the Father. The exercitant will address and converse with Mary, for example, out of respect for her human person as the Mother of Jesus who is personally God as well as human. The exercitant will in turn address and converse with Jesus out of the reverence of *latría* due his divine person as Son of God. Finally, with Mary and through, with, and in Jesus in the Spirit the exercitant will address and converse with the divine person of the Father as the very source of the Trinity.<sup>56</sup>

Another dis-analogy between Buber's understanding of addressing God as our eternal *You* and addressing God in the Ignatian Colloquy is the different way the human *You* mediates the exercitant's address to God. For Buber we address God as our eternal *You* in faith *through* addressing each other as *You* impelled by an innate desire. In this way the human *You* mediates the eternal *You* as a personal creature to his or her personal Creator. This kind of mediation compares favorably with the exercitant's address to Mary as a personal creature in the Ignatian Colloquy. Yet in addressing Mary in the Colloquy the exercitant addresses her not only as a creature in relation to her Creator

<sup>56</sup> In the Colloquy (*SpEx* 109) following the Contemplation of the Incarnation and the Nativity it appears that the exercitant can address the Three Persons together. With respect to the addressing the Trinity in addressing the Father in the *SpEx*, cf. Ivens 54, and, in general, the Trinity throughout the *SpEx*, cf. Ivens, 26, 30, 43, 54, 67, 76-77, 93, 172, 178.

but as a creature who is also able to personally receive and respond to the exercitant's prayer by her intercession to God. Mary is not just an occasion for the exercitant to address God as the eternal *You* and Creator but she is an active mediator in the exercitant's prayer to God through her. And in addressing the person of Jesus that He might to intercede for the exercitant with the Father, Jesus as divine intercedes for the exercitant as Son to His Father. This mediation of the Son with the Father within the Trinity transcends any merely human mediation with God.

Another dis-analogy between addressing God as our eternal *You* in addressing one another as *You* and the Ignatian Colloquy of addressing God through the person of Mary and Jesus is the explicit use the exercitant makes of the revealed *names* of the persons. In addressing the persons by name, the Ignatian Colloquy presumes as background the special importance of the name in both ancient and Biblical traditions as expressing the reality of the person named. By invoking the name of each of the persons in faith as the persons have revealed themselves in their names, the exercitant *knows* each person in their unique personal reality. And in *knowing* that person by name in addressing that person, the exercitant is thereby uniquely *known* by that person.<sup>57</sup>

In the Ignatian Colloquy the exercitant addresses and converses with the persons by calling them by their revealed *names* – especially in the prayers offered to each of the persons – Mary in the *Hail Mary*, and to the divine persons of Jesus and the Father respectively in the *Anima Christi* and the *Our Father*.

By contrast, in *I and Thou* the singular importance of the revealed divine name is not emphasized for what is decisive for Buber in addressing God is the *manner* by which this is done

«Men have addressed their eternal You by many names. When they sang of what they had thus named, the still meant You: the first myths were hymns of praise. Then the names entered into the It-language; men felt impelled more and more to think of and to talk about their eternal You as an It. But all the names of God remain hallowed – because they have been used not only to speak of God but also to speak to him.»

What is crucial for Buber in addressing God as our *You* is entering into an *I-You* relation with God by speaking *to* God from an *I-You* attitude rather than in talking *about* God from an *I-It* attitude. If we speak *to* God as our *You*, we enter the divine presence; no matter what name we may use to do so. But relying on *any* name of God outside of being in an *I-You* relation with God is to make an idol of the name.

This emphasis on the importance of an *I-You* attitude in addressing God is also seen in our being addressed by God in revelation. For in divine revelation, according to Buber we don't have something as a possession for «man receives and what he receives is not a content but a presence»<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> E.g., cf. 1 Cor 13.12. Of course in this life the exercitant in the Ignatian Colloquy can come to know and be known by God by faith not by sight.

<sup>58</sup> *I and Thou*, 157, 158.

Buber's hesitancy to invoke the revealed name of God in addressing God as *You* is rooted in his fear that the human desire «to have God continually in space and time»<sup>59</sup> or define to God<sup>60</sup> or to *possess* God in any other way inevitably leads to reducing the eternal *You* for us to an *It* – an *object of faith* or of *cult* – an object which is then used to *substitute* for the divine presence. This substitution for the divine presence occurs in the degeneration of religion.<sup>61</sup> «Degeneration of religions means the degeneration of prayer in them: the relational power in them is buried more and more by objecthood, they find it ever more difficult to say *You* with their whole undivided being.»<sup>62</sup>

Buber's later distinction between faith as *trust* and faith as confident *assurance* in dogmatic content is the basis for the distinction he draws between what he sees as two types of faith: the *emuna* of early Israel, and the *pistis* of Pauline Christianity.<sup>63</sup>

Buber's concern for how the name of God can be misused is surely important for the exercitant to consider in addressing the persons in the Ignatian colloquy. However, if the exercitant addresses and converses with the divine persons by name with the reverence due their persons, s/he can be understood to address and to converse with the living God rather than to an idol of the exercitant's making. Indeed, if the *Spirit* of the Ignatian colloquy can be understood as the exercitant's *inspired* conversation with the persons (human and divine) by reverently invoking their divinely revealed names, he or she can be understood to meet and converse with these persons out of reverence for them as they reveal themselves to be. And in response to this address, the exercitant can come to know who he or she really is.

It is at this point where we can appreciate what Martin Buber has to teach us about our relation with God as our eternal *You* out of an *I-You* attitude with respect to the relation between the exercitant and the persons in the Ignatian Colloquy. For if the *spirit* (*Geist*) of dialogue for Buber is both the word spoken and the silence shared *between I and You* and this spirit reaches its zenith when the eternal *You* is revealed to us in and through our *I-You* relations with each other, we can understand this spirit by analogy as the Spirit of the Ignatian Colloquy between exercitant and the persons s/he addresses. For the Holy Spirit inspires the exercitant to call on the revealed names of the persons in the Ignatian Colloquy in faith and loving reverence. In doing so, the exercitant can be understood to address the persons as his or her *You* out of an inspired *I-You* attitude leading ultimately to addressing the eternal *You* of the Father. But to the extent that God has been revealed as a Trinity of Persons and the saints, especially Mary,

<sup>59</sup> *I and Thou* 161.

<sup>60</sup> *I and Thou* 159-160.

<sup>61</sup> *I and Thou* 162. For Buber's understanding of faith, cf. M. Friedman, «Martin Buber's View of Biblical Faith», *Journal of Bible and Religion*, 1954, XXII 3-13 and his development in that understanding, cf. Lorenz Wachinger, «Buber's Concept of Faith as a Criticism of Christianity» 437-455 in *Martin Buber A Centenary Volume*, ed. H. Gordon and J. Bloch, KTAV Publishing House, Ben Gurion University of the Negev 1984.

<sup>62</sup> *I and Thou* 167.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. M. Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, New York: Macmillan 1986, 7-12, 170-174.

as persons who are deeply interested and involved in the exercitant's successfully seeking the divine will in his or her life, the persons will reveal themselves by name to the exercitant and actively intercede on behalf of the exercitant for the one thing all hold of final value – *doing* the divine will.

Thus the exercitant in addressing and conversing with Mary and the divine persons in loving reverence by invoking their revealed names in a sincere desire to seek and find the will of God in his or her life can be understood to include and at the same time transcend what Buber describes as an *I-You* relation with God as our eternal *You* in *I and Thou*.

## Conclusion

The conclusion then of this paper is that by appreciating the spirit (*Geist*) of *I-You* relations in Martin Buber's *I and Thou* as the word and silence shared between us and God as our eternal *You*, we can come to a deeper appreciation of the Spirit of the Ignatian Colloquy as this divinely inspired conversation between the exercitant and the persons of Mary, Jesus, and the Father in seeking the will of God as the zenith of Ignatian Prayer. This conversation opens the exercitant to the fullest revelation of who the persons reveal themselves to be in revealing their names – as persons deeply committed to the divine will and as deeply committed to helping the exercitant seek and find the will of God in his or her life. And in revealing themselves to the exercitant as persons who themselves are wholly committed to the divine will, they reveal to the exercitant who he or she is (or wants to be) – one who is seeking to find and do the will of God in a choice of a way of life.