

Zen Buddhism and Ignatian Spirituality

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4 ABSTRACT

5 The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola are one of the most important paths
6 of spiritual deepening in the Christian tradition. Despite the fact that Saint Ignatius
7 offers a detailed methodological description to live the experience, it is often
8 approached by people who perform daily meditation practices close to Zen. In this
9 paper, we analyze the possibilities of living the experience of Ignatian Exercises from
10 the base of Zen meditation. Does it mean to distort the Exercises proposal or can it
11 allow an even more profound experience? The study is preceded by an historical
12 description of the encounter between Zen and the Society of Jesus, which pays special
13 attention to the figure of two important Jesuits in this dialogue: the German Enomiya
14 Lassalle and the Japanese Kadichi Kadowaki.

15 KEYWORDS: Ignatian, Lassalle, Kadowaki, exercises, *zazen*

16 INTRODUCTION

17 According to Charles Wright Mills in his essay *On Intellectual Craftsmanship*,¹ if social
18 researcher wants to carry out his task in an authentic and profitable way, he/she has to
19 integrate it into his/her personal life: each of them will enrich the other one. In other
20 words, an honest investigation must address the fundamental questions that the
21 researcher asks himself in the intimacy of his heart, those in which “life is at stake”
22 within his own process of development and maturation. This is the case in this
23 paper.

24 We will try to analyze here the possibilities of encounter between Zen Buddhism
25 and Ignatian spirituality, mainly with Spiritual Exercises. This question could be fostered
26 in two different directions:

- 27 (1) Is it possible for Christians to approach the experience of Ignatian Spiritual
28 Exercises from the methodology of Zen Buddhist meditation?
- 29 (2) Would be important or interesting for Buddhists to have the experience of
30 Ignatian Spiritual Exercises?

31 In this paper, we will focus on the first one; that means, we will ask the question from
32 the Christian perspective.

33 The question we aim to study is clearly *methodological*. In other words, we could
 34 pose it as follows: can *zazen* offer a valid methodology for Spiritual Exercises? To make
 35 Spiritual Exercises through *zazen* practice would mean to distort or misunderstand the
 36 experience?

37 THE STORY OF AN ENCOUNTER

38 Before focusing on this question, it is very convenient to offer a brief historical
 39 trail about the process of encounter between Christian spirituality and Zen
 40 Buddhism.

41 We could consider that the interest of Westerners on Eastern spiritualities is as old as
 42 the encounter between both civilizations. More specifically, the History of the encounter
 43 between the Society of Jesus and Buddhist tradition is described accurately in this paper
 44 by Trent Pomplun “From Missionaries to Zen Masters: The Society of Jesus and
 45 Buddhism.”² According to him, “missionaries of the Society of Jesus pioneered studies
 46 of Buddhism in Japan, China, Vietnam, Thailand, and Tibet.” Even if we use to under-
 47 stand that Francis Xavier was the first Jesuit to describe Buddhism, “his famous account
 48 [. . .] made use of two previous reports, one written by the Portuguese trader Jorge
 49 Álvarez and a second written by Lancillotto.”³ Apart from Francis Xavier (1506–1552)
 50 and Lancillotto (d. 1558), Pomplun specifically refers to writings by other Jesuits as
 51 Cosme de Torres (1510–1570), Luis Fróis (1532–1597), Baltasar Gago (1515–1583),
 52 Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606), and many others.

53 There are many letters written by Francis Xavier to Rome about Buddhism. In one
 54 of them, dated June 22, 1549, he describes “a distinctive way of meditating” in
 55 Buddhism.⁴ He—and other Jesuits as Cosme de Torres—started an intense theological
 56 dialogue with Buddhism; in that dialogue they remark many similarities and dif-
 57 ferences. For example, as a similarity, they stated that the Buddhist doctrine of
 58 *emptiness* as first principle was identical to the Scholastic notion of *prime matter*; as
 59 a difference, they found the Christian doctrine of *creation* incompatible with
 60 Buddhist notions of *rebirth*.

61 During the following years and centuries, other Jesuits continued this dialogue,⁵
 62 as Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1592–1666), Martino
 63 Martini (1614–1661), Diego de Pantoja (1571–1618), Manuel Dias the Younger
 64 (1574–1659), and others. Many of these works—over all in the first years of the
 65 Jesuit presence in Asia—are framed in a general intention of refute Buddhist ideas
 66 not convergent with Christian Theology.

67 After the parenthesis provoked by the suppression of the Society of Jesus (from
 68 1773 to 1814), we find an important change in 1892, within the context of its fourth
 69 General Congregation. According to Pomplun, “riding the wave of “historical faith”
 70 initiated by Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), [Jesuits] began to search out primary
 71 sources and publish critical editions concerning every aspect of its history and mis-
 72 sion.”⁶ With the publication of the *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu* and its subseries,
 73 the History of the presuppression Society’s encounter with Buddhism was available
 74 for scholars.

75 Meanwhile, out of the Society of Jesus, in 1893 took place an event that deserves
76 special attention: the first Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago. One of the
77 guests was the Zen master Shaku Soyen, who was accompanied by his translator and
78 disciple D. T. Suzuki. As Zen aroused an enormous interest among participants,
79 Suzuki returned to the United States invited by the editor Paul Carus, who asked
80 him to translate some texts from Zen Buddhism into English.

81 The main stumbling block was that he could not find right terms in English to
82 translate accurately the content of the Japanese texts. He tried then to use the reli-
83 gious psychology by William James; but later on he knew some texts from the
84 Christian mystical tradition, specifically by Meister Eckhart, and he found there
85 the lexical framework that he needed to translate the texts properly. From then
86 on, Suzuki became "the messenger of Zen in the West."⁷

87 Suzuki firmly believed that Zen could become a supra-religious spiritual prac-
88 tice, and his work found an important echo in numerous authors, such as Erich
89 Fromm. Together, Fromm, and Suzuki wrote the book *Zen Buddhism and*
90 *Psychoanalysis*. In that book, Fromm states that "Zenbudism helps man to find
91 an answer to his existential question, which is basically the same as that of the
92 Judeo-Christian tradition."⁸

93 From the other side, Westerners deepened their knowledge and appreciation of
94 Eastern spiritualities through the research of many scholars and missionaries; a sig-
95 nificant number of Jesuits played an important role in that process, as Joseph Masson
96 (1908–1998), Heinrich du Moulin (1905–1995), or Henri de Lubac (1896–1991).
97 But beyond theoretical, theological, or historical studies, many missionaries assigned
98 in Asia approached Eastern spiritualities from a practical way, engaging directly
99 their practices. Apart from Dumoulin, we could mention other Jesuits as Thomas
100 Hand (1921–2005), Robert Kennedy (b.1933), Ama Samy (b.1936), Niklaus
101 Brantschen (b.1937), Ruben Habito (b.1947), William Johnston (1925–2010),
102 Hans Waldenfels (b.1931), and others.

103 In this paper, we will pay special attention to two of them: Enomiya Lassalle
104 (1898–1990) and Kadichi Kadowaki (1926–2017).

105 *Hugo M. Enomiya Lassalle*

106 One of the most important figures in this process was the German Jesuit Hugo M.
107 Enomiya Lassalle (1898–1990),⁹ a true pioneer in the extraordinary encounter
108 between Christian and Buddhist traditions. Yamada Koûn Roshi used to say that
109 it was thanks to Fr. Lassalle, as a pioneer, that the gate for Christians to practice
110 Zen was opened. Also Pomplun considers him as "the founder of modern Zen-
111 Catholic dialogue."¹⁰

112 When he was thirty-one, in 1929, Fr. Lassalle was sent to Japan, first to Tokyo and
113 later to Hiroshima. He endorsed very soon the idea of *accommodation* or *inculturation*.¹¹
114 That was an idea introduced by Valignano in the sixteenth century¹² (even if the terms
115 were coined much later by Joseph Masson [1908–1998]) to express that announcing
116 of Gospel could not be confined to Western practices and ways of thinking.

In May 1936, an instruction from Rome allowed Japanese Catholics to honor the spirits of the fallen as it is mandated by Japanese Shintoism and to participate in ceremonies of this tradition. This apparently unimportant step meant that, for the first time, Catholics could participate in non-Christian religious acts, which facilitated Hugo Lassalle's approach to Zen.

In February 1943, he participated in his first Zen retreat or *sesshin* in Tsuwano, near Hiroshima, under the guidance of Shimada Roshi, and he realized that Zen monks experience came from the same source than Christian mysticism. Since then, driven by an inexhaustible thirst for an encounter with Christ, Lassalle embarked on a long journey to integrate Christian spirituality into the ways of Zen. His journey was hard and plenty of difficulties, since both the Catholic Church and the Company of Jesus were still far from fully understand these possibilities, which hampered Lassalle's aspirations for interfaith encounter.

Meanwhile, the situation in Japan had become tremendously turbulent as a result of its entry into World War II. On August 6, 1945, the atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima. Lassalle lived that tragic experience with Fr. Pedro Arrupe—currently in the process of beatification—, who years later would be superior general of the Society of Jesus and a key figure in Lassalle's own life. Once Japan agreed to capitulate, a time of healing and rest opened for Lassalle that marked a crossroads in his life. As Saint Ignatius did, Lassalle experiences a rebirth during his convalescence that fills him even more with faith and enthusiasm. On September 18, he wrote in his diary:

What have I done so far? What do I want to do? Actually, it has been very little. Since life is given to me again, I want to do everything possible with redoubled forces for my own progress and for the salvation of souls. That makes me feel very happy and encouraged.

Many years later, Lassalle would use the same expression ("life is given to me again") in the introduction to his book *Zazen and the Exercises of San Ignatius* to refer to the new life that was offered to San Ignatius after his convalescence: "Ignatius took the decision to completely put the new life that was given to him at the service of God and his fellow men."¹³ It seems that this parallelism between Ignatius's and his own life had not only gone unnoticed by Lassalle, but also inspired him deeply.

Lassalle continued to practice *zazen* with enormous discipline in the company of his master, Yamada Koûn Roshi. Very soon he understood that his spiritual search in Zen Buddhism was mainly coincident with the *quiet prayer* by Saint Theresa. He became absolutely faithful to the path of Zen and maintained that commitment throughout his life. As he wrote down in his diary,

Finding God in the depths of the soul. It is difficult and it seems impossible to me. But apparently there is no other way for me. This is precisely what I feel a strong attraction towards: being alone with God in my soul.¹⁴

In February 1957, Lassalle decided to present to the next General Congregation of the Jesuits a postulate proposing the introduction of mysticism through Zen.¹⁵ Although

158 it wasn't approved, Pedro Arrupe proposed to establish in Hiroshima a place where
159 young Jesuits would study Buddhism and start practicing Zen.¹⁶

160 On January 25, 1959, John XXIII convoked the Second Vatican Council, which
161 meant a great advance in the respect to the cultural context of non-Christians. Lassalle
162 himself intervened in the drafting of the conciliar text that says,

163 Let them reflect attentively on how Christian religious life might be able to
164 assimilate the ascetic and contemplative traditions, whose seeds were some-
165 times planted by God in ancient cultures already prior to the preaching of
166 the Gospel.¹⁷

167 In 1959, Lassalle was absolutely devoted to organize *sesshins* for Catholic people. In
168 1960, he bought a piece of land in Kabe, near Hiroshima, to build a Christian Zendo,
169 which was inaugurated in December 1961 with the name *Shin-mei-kutsu* ("Cave of
170 Divine Darkness"). Lassalle wrote in his diary a Christian interpretation of the name:

171 God *absconditus*, you cannot see him. In order to see him in any way, one must
172 enter the darkness, the night of the sense and the spirit, and be silent, as in a
173 dark cave. In the darkness and silence, find God. In a cave Saint Benedict had
174 his great illumination as a thousand years later had San Ignatius.¹⁸

175 In 1965, he tried to found a new *Shin-mei-kutsu*, *Akikawa Shin-mei-kutsu*, in a natural
176 park a hundred kilometers away from Tokyo, with the purpose of deepen the inte-
177 gration between Zen and Christian spirituality. However, most of the decisive people
178 in the Jesuit Japanese province were against his projects. At that time, Raimon
179 Panikkar wrote about him:

180 I saw in him a great person in a difficult and painful situation. The encounter
181 between cultures and religions is not a game. He was only sixty-five, but his
182 path seemed totally obstructed. He had no followers or successor, nor was there
183 any hope of understanding from his superiors or Rome. Who should he obey,
184 his conscience or his superior?¹⁹

185 Amid so much opposition, Lassalle understood that there was no exit for him. On the
186 one hand, he had to be faithful to what he understood as God's will. On the other hand,
187 he was clashing with his colleagues and superiors. In 1966, having reached his limits to
188 withstand this tension, he wrote to Arrupe requesting the exlaustration *ad tempus*:

189 I think the impulse comes from God. This internal conflict is yet unbearable. It
190 is the greatest sacrifice of my life to leave the Company of Jesus. But I do not
191 want - to put it clearly - to have to reproach myself at the time of my death,
192 which is surely not far away, that out of fear of sacrifices I have stopped doing
193 what seemed to be the will of God in an important matter.

194 The support of Fr. Pedro Arrupe was constant and decisive for Lassalle to complete his
195 path. The answer, written in German and in a very personal tone, read like this:

196 Your project of a house in Tokyo is interesting. But it seems to me better if you
 197 first talk about this with the provincial Fr. If he approves it, I am not against it
 198 either. As you know, here in Rome we also value “romantic life”. An exclaust-
 199 tration would really be the last step.

200 Finally, thanks to Arrupe, the provincial Fr. agreed, and the archbishop of Tokyo sup-
 201 ported Lassalle’s plans.

202 Almost four decades after arriving in Japan, in 1967, Lassalle was returning to
 203 Europe to introduce thousands of Europeans in the practice of Zen. From that
 204 moment on, European spirituality was deeply moved. Thousands of men and women
 205 thirsty for a deeper spirituality found in Zen a new path that brought them closer to
 206 the mystery of the encounter with God.

207 The encounter with European personalities close to Zen, such as Dürckheim—
 208 whom he had already met in Japan—was very important for Lassalle. He was moved
 209 and stimulated by reading Gebser’s theses, in which he found confirmation of his idea
 210 that “Zen could contribute to the spiritual progress of humanity, fostering a new con-
 211 sciousness based on the experience of the absolute.”²⁰

212 Little by little he was getting supports in Europe. Pedro Arrupe gave Pope Paul VI
 213 a *memorandum* of Lassalle’s work and requested an audience for him. The Pope’s bless-
 214 ing for his Zen project was very important for Lassalle.²¹ This audience took place on
 215 October 23, 1969. Lassalle himself described the meeting in a letter dated
 216 December 12:

217 The meeting began with a handshake. The Pope asked what was I doing;
 218 answer: “Buddhism.” The Pope immediately said: “That is very important.
 219 Those things, those contacts, we have to look for them. I thank you, I pray
 220 for you”. Then I said: “in particular I dedicate myself to Zen meditation.”
 221 He asked me if it was a form of concentration. He also said that I surely
 222 had written books on this, which I confirmed.

223 Lassalle then gave Paul VI some photos of Hiroshima with the invitation from the
 224 city for the 25th anniversary of the atomic bomb events. Afterward, he would send
 225 him his book *Zen Buddhism* from Japan. A few months after that, Lassalle received a
 226 letter from Secretary of State Benelli, who confirmed that the Pope had read the book
 227 and gave him his apostolic blessing. At last, after decades of a long and difficult jour-
 228 ney, Lassalle had found his place in the Church.²²

229 Since then, new supports and encouragement for Lassalle’s work continued to
 230 appear. The Bishop of Essen, Franz Hengsbach, asked him for an introduction to
 231 Zen for the theologians in his diocese. The first Zen course for Jesuits was organized.
 232 Attendees at his lectures numbered in the hundreds: 500 people at the University of
 233 Frankfurt; 650 in Munich; 450 people in Stuttgart applied for a place to participate
 234 in an introduction to Zen (although “only” 200 could participate for reasons of space).
 235 Within a few years, Lassalle observed that many participants came already equipped
 236 with their meditation blankets, benches, and cushions. The sowing was done.

237 KADICHI KADOWAKI

238 Kadowaki was born in Japan in 1926 and was brought up within a Zen—Buddhist
239 background from school. He adopted the Christian faith and was baptized by the
240 abovementioned Fr. Domoulin; he joined the Society of Jesus in 1950, where he
241 received a profound impression from Fr. Enomiya Lassalle²³ that pushed him to reen-
242 gage on a formal Zen practice, which he made under the teachings of Master Sogen
243 Omori and the own Fr. Enomiya Lassalle in Shinmeikutsu. He became Professor of
244 Philosophy at the University of Sophia (Tokyo), director of the Institute of Oriental
245 Religions, and—according to Zen—Rinzai Zen master.

246 As he deepened his understanding of Zen and Christian Spirituality through
247 more than ten years of study and practice of the above-mentioned Zen training
248 and simultaneous training in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, he become
249 increasingly aware of the similarity between Zen and Ignatian Spirituality, and
250 so he was able to write *Zen and the Bible* and to translate the Spanish Spiritual
251 Exercises into Japanese.²⁴

252 According to that, he developed the International Zen—Ignatian Training Program,
253 which is extremely interesting for us regarding the aims of this paper. It took place
254 every year at the Prefecture of Gunma, Kitakaruizawa (Japan). In the introduction
255 text of that experience, Kadowaki says,

256 For the past thirty years as a Jesuit priest, I have been making efforts to combine
257 Zen Style meditation harmoniously with Ignatian Spirituality. I believe that I
258 have been able to accomplish this to a certain extent, and so I decided to offer
259 this program to more people, especially Jesuits. In 2001, I directed the first stage
260 of the program for three priests and one nun, who have come to understand and
261 experience the fact that Zen meditation and training could greatly help them to
262 deepen their Christian prayer. In 2004 I started a new program focusing on
263 St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises. During my long period of Zen training I have
264 always borne in mind the idea of synthesizing Zen and Ignatian Spirituality, and
265 so the new program is just what I have desired to do for long time, that is to say,
266 it is my dream so to speak, inspired by the Lord Jesus Christ.²⁵

267 What Kadowaki's offered in his program was basically a way of deepen the experience
268 of Spiritual Exercises through the practice of *zazen*. We'll come back on his method-
269 ology later on.

270 SPIRITUAL EXERCISES AND BUDDHIST MEDITATION

271 *Centering the Question*

272 At this point, we recover the main question of this paper: is it possible to accomplish
273 the experience of Ignatian Spiritual Exercises from the practice of Zen Buddhist
274 meditation?

275 C. G. Jung used to say that, except for the Exercises of Saint Ignatius, “there is no
276 method in Christian spirituality comparable to yoga or Zen.”²⁶ In the same line,
277 Hugo Lassalle offered a close comparison between both paths in his book *Zazen*
278 *and the Exercises of Saint Ignatius*,²⁷ where he points out several coincident aspects
279 present in both of them:

280 First of all, silence. It is the starting point and inseparable companion of both
281 experiences. Neither can be conceived without a strong fidelity to a profound silence.
282 In the Exercises, silence means austerity and rejection to everything that could dis-
283 tract the encounter with God:

284 To him who is more disengaged, and who desires to get all the profit he can, let
285 all the Spiritual Exercises be given in the order in which they follow.[. . .] In
286 these he will, ordinarily, more benefit himself, the more he separates himself
287 from all friends and acquaintances and from all earthly care. [. . .] The more
288 our soul finds itself alone and isolated, the more apt it makes itself to approach
289 and to reach its Creator and Lord.²⁸

290 In a *sesshin*, silence is absolutely central; through silence, practitioners are progres-
291 sively emptied of whatever that may hinder their journey to the deepest regions
292 of their being.²⁹

293 In both experiences, practitioners are asked to give themselves completely and to
294 live it thoroughly. The first and second additions to the Exercises advice that first and
295 last thought of each day should be focused on the next exercise proposed. In some way,
296 Ignatius is demanding practitioners to focus on Exercises all the time during the
297 experience, both day and night. This is also the case in the experience of *sesshin*.

298 I believe that the main similarity between these experiences is based on the fact
299 that both constitute a path of detachment. Zen penetrates to the depths of the soul in
300 order to eliminate all attachment since Buddhism believes that the root of suffering is
301 precisely that attitude. This teaching can be traced back to the Buddha himself and
302 his expression of the Four Noble Truths:

303 The key (or so it seems to me) is detachment, the art of which is highly devel-
304 oped in Zen. It should be remembered that all forms of Buddhism are built on
305 detachment and that the roots of Zen are here.³⁰

306 Also Exercises are oriented to achieve a perfect detachment, since they prepare and
307 dispose “the soul to rid itself of all the disordered tendencies, and, after it is rid, to
308 seek and find the Divine Will as to the management of one’s life.”³¹ In the *Principle*
309 *and Foundation*, complete indifference is requested toward every creature. Only when
310 we are free from disordered affections we can see things as they are. The exercise of the
311 *three degrees of humility* goes even one step beyond as it demands the “detachment of
312 detachment.” This attitude is also present at Zen,³² where complete liberation is only
313 possible when all dependence and attachment disappear. Neither Zen nor the
314 Exercises kill the feelings; they just want practitioners to live them as they are: events
315 that happen in the field of our conscience; understand this marks in both experiences

316 a path of freedom as we learn that we don't need to obey blindly the voice of feelings
317 and emotions.

318 We still find another coincidence in this detachment process: in none of these
319 experiences detachment is the ultimate goal. For the Exercises, detachment is the
320 way to recognize God's will and order one's life in accordance with it. In Zen, it
321 is the way for enlightenment and perfect unity with the Absolute. Both of them con-
322 sider detachment as a way to know the true self.

323 Despite these similarities, we also find essential differences. Most important ones
324 are probably these: (a) they pursue different aims and (b) they are based on two rather
325 different methodologies.

326 (1) Exercises, according to the original intention of St. Ignatius, are oriented toward
327 the choice of state or a reorientation of the state already chosen. But they also
328 lead to a personal commitment to Christ. The goal of *sesshin* is enlightenment or
329 awareness of oneness with the Absolute. Obviously, the search for Christ is not
330 present in Zen Buddhism; but there is not even the encounter with Buddha.
331 As the well-known quote by old Master Rinzai says: "if you meet Buddha, kill
332 him." This means that *zazen* practitioner should not cling to any thought, not
333 even the best.

334 (2) Regarding methodologies, in the Exercises experience, memory, will and under-
335 standing play a fundamental role. Ignatius recalls the use of intellectual capa-
336 bilities, reflection, imagination, and so on. Each exercise is preceded by a request
337 expressed by a differentiated thought that does not fit into the framework of
338 Zen. But, furthermore, the role of motions in the experience of Exercises is abso-
339 lutely central. Zen is intended to silence thought, imagination, intellectual
340 activity, feelings or emotions. In other words, the Exercises methodology is fun-
341 damentally *cataphatic*, while that of Zen is clearly *apophatic*.

342 Both differences are such important that we cannot state that compatibility between
343 them is simple and easy. In Lassalle's words, "a proper synthesis is hardly possible.
344 After all, 'thinking' in one way and 'non-thinking' in the other one is too central.
345 Trying the synthesis would mean denature both methods."³³

346 So, according to all we said above, are they compatible or not? Let's discuss
347 about it.

348 DISCUSSION: ARE THEY COMPATIBLE OR NOT?

349 When William Johnston, SJ, reflects about Zen-Buddhism and Christianity, he
350 states:

351 *What can Christians learn from Zen? And first of all it seems to me that Zen can teach us a*
352 *methodology in prayer.*³⁴

353 Maybe many Zen practitioners would protest this statement, as they could argue that
354 Zen is much more than methodology, that it is substantive in itself, and deeply rooted
355 in the Buddhist dharma. They would be absolutely right. Let's, then, reformulate
356 the question: could Christians learn from Zen a way of deepen their true self and
357 get there an opportunity to know their own nature? Far from misunderstanding

358 or lacking respect to Buddhism, probably the answer—even Buddhists’ answer—
 359 would be “yes.” In other words, *zazen* methodology could be enormously valuable
 360 for Christians.

361 Let’s come over methodology through (a) Lassalle, (b) Kadowaki, and (c) Habito.

362 (a) *Lassalle*

363 Lassalle states that many people who have exercised for years according to Ignatius’
 364 methodology, sometimes reach the prayer of silence, “a state of consciousness that
 365 recall all the energies of the soul and, in deep silence, they can be addressed to
 366 God.”³⁵ He considers this as a sign of a call to mystical prayer and that such people
 367 should simply focus on the depths of his soul and stay there. In this, Zen can be of
 368 great help.

369 Are these methodological indications compatible with Spiritual Exercises, as they
 370 concern the intellectual and emotional world of the practitioner?

371 To answer it, Lassalle comes back to the original text of the Spiritual Exercises.
 372 As we know, they are organized in a progressive four-week structure. According to
 373 Lassalle, as the experience progresses, Ignatius also qualifies his proposal. In the
 374 second week, he suggests to practitioners to ask for the grace of “intimate knowl-
 375 edge of Christ.” It does not seem that Ignatius is referring to a merely intellectual
 376 knowledge. For that reason, Ignatius invites to make three repetitions of each
 377 contemplation, and in each one the activity of mental understanding is some-
 378 what reduced. In this way, the truth penetrates deeper into the soul. The third rep-
 379 etition is an “application of the senses,” who could also refer to the inner senses; in
 380 current terminology, it would also refer not only to external senses, but mainly to
 381 *proprioception* and *interoception*.

382 The fourth week in the Ignatian Exercises focuses on “feeling one with Christ,
 383 asking for grace to rejoice and be glad intensely at so great glory and joy of Christ
 384 our Lord.”³⁶ This proposal is not obviously about mental speculation. And, less than
 385 anywhere, in the *contemplation to gain love*. At this point, Ignatius suggests the use of
 386 either the method he proposes or any other that practitioner could prefer. The only
 387 important objective here is to surrender: “Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my
 388 memory, my intellect, and all my will—all that I have and possess. Thou gavest it to
 389 me: to Thee, Lord, I return it! All is Thine, dispose of it according to all Thy will.
 390 Give me Thy love and grace, for this is enough for me.”³⁷

391 In such cases, without being this Zen in a formal sense, practitioner could with-
 392 draw into silent attention as corresponds to *zazen* and even adopt the body posture
 393 proper to this practice.

394 If this is right, why Ignatius didn’t offer clearly an apophatic methodology? For
 395 Lassalle there are two reasons:

- 396 1. Ecclesiastical authorities were very concerned since the fourteenth century by
 397 the mystique “savage.” In the sixteenth century, in the context of the
 398 Protestant Reformation, this worry was even bigger, and required greater vig-
 399 ilance. Due to his problems with the Inquisition, Ignatius had to be very

400 reserved in describing his methodology.³⁸ But the truth is that Ignatius was
 401 deeply convinced of the need to enter into the depths of the soul and let spon-
 402 taneous action arise from there, as Johannes Tauler had already taught. Lassalle
 403 finds in the introduction to the Constitutions of the Jesuit order a reflection of
 404 this idea when Ignatius asks the Jesuits to allow themselves to be guided more
 405 by that “interior law of love, which usually writes and imprints the Holy Spirit
 406 on hearts, than by any external rules.”³⁹

407 2. Ignatius offers his Exercises to people with very different experience or spiri-
 408 tual situations. For this reason, “it was wise to start with a mode of meditation
 409 accessible to everyone, but leave the path open to a higher mode of prayer and
 410 drive carefully towards it. But once arrived to the love of God, all barriers
 411 should fall.”⁴⁰ According to Lassalle, hence, those who repeat the experience
 412 of Exercises could increasingly relegate discursive thinking and behave in an
 413 increasingly passive way. Also here, one could try, instead of holding mental
 414 meditation, to withdraw into a complete inner silence and even adopt the
 415 body posture of *zazen*.⁴¹

416 (b) *Kadowaki*

417 As we wrote above, Kadowaki offered a training program which aimed to deepen the
 418 experience of Spiritual Exercises through the practice of *zazen*. The initial part of it
 419 was to rely on the experience of the creation of man (Gen 2: 7) through the breathing
 420 method of *zazen*. It was described like this by the own Kadowaki:

421 The aim of this first stage is an “initiation” to deepen Christian prayer, using
 422 the Zen breathing method. It is founded in Genesis 2-7, which speaks of the
 423 creation of man through the breath [*ruab*, Spirit] of the life of God (the Holy
 424 Spirit), for by getting a knack of the *Tanden-koku* (or breathing with the guts),
 425 you will experience the close relationship that lies between breathing and the
 426 Holy Spirit, in order that you may acquire an insight into the realization within
 427 you of the “Principle and Foundation” (Ex. 23), with a spiritual eye (a kind of
 428 Christian Satori).⁴²

429 William Johnston shares this idea that links Spiritual Exercises and *satori*:

430 Ignatius had a method – it is outlined in his Spiritual Exercises – and he aimed
 431 at bringing people to something like *satori*.⁴³

432 From that starting point, Kadowaki proposed practitioners a *Christian Koan*⁴⁴ and
 433 advanced into the main Exercises proposed by St. Ignatius through the practice of
 434 *zazen*: the call of Christ the King, the two Standards, the three Classes of people,
 435 the three modes of humility, and the Contemplation to obtain Love.

436 It has been impossible to get a more accurate description of his methodology, apart
 437 from his own indications on the training program presentation text. As examples
 438 contained in it, he mentions the proposal of living the experience of *Kénois* of
 439 Christ (which is a radical experience of emptiness) through the pronunciation of
 440 the holy syllable “Mu.” In other part of his training, he recovers a Christian expression

441 (“*Abba*, Father!” instead of “Mu”) to invite practitioners to experience their divine
442 sonship as it is contained in the Christian faith.

443 One of Kadowaki’s most famous books is *Zen and the Bible*.⁴⁵ The writing of this
444 text was suggested by a young Catholic theologian named Joseph Ratzinger within a
445 course devoted to Meister Eckhart held in Germany where Kadowaki had a Lecture
446 about Zen and Christianity. Part III of the book is entirely dedicated to *Zen* and
447 Spiritual Exercises. His initial statement about the possibilities of encounter between
448 them is fairly clear:

449 I explained before why *zazen* can make a great contribution to Christian prayer,
450 and we can see here how it also suits the prescriptions of the Ignatian
451 Exercises.⁴⁶

452 He makes many links between both experiences and underlines their similarities (e.g.,
453 in both cases, the experience demands from practitioners entire will and freedom,
454 courage, and renunciation). He also describes the path of Ignatian Exercises during
455 the four weeks in terms of inner process to remark the deep and significant similarities
456 between them and a *Zen sesshin* (mainly, “to die the great Death and be reborn”).
457 Regarding methodology, Kadowaki says,

458 Ignatius does not stipulate in detail regarding bodily posture during prayer
459 and meditation but says: “At times kneeling, at times prostrate on the
460 ground, at other times supine, or seated or standing, always intent on seeking
461 what I desire”.⁴⁷ Therefore adopting the method of *zazen* presents no difficulty
462 at all.⁴⁸

463 He also mentions other methodological advices given by Saint Ignatius; that is,

- 464 • Practitioner should maintain the same position during all the time that takes
465 the exercise.
- 466 • He should keep in the exercise a full hour, and not to short it even when prac-
467 titioner feels tired or desolated.

468 These advices are clearly convergent with *zazen* methodology.⁴⁹ Furthermore,
469 Kadowaki invites practitioners to make every exercise not from the dialogic mind
470 but “from the visceral level, from the *hara*.”⁵⁰

471 (c) *Habito*

472 Another important work on this particular topic is *Zen and Spiritual Exercises*, by
473 Ruben Habito.⁵¹ In that book, he makes a close comparison between both paths,
474 but—as in Kadoki’s book—mainly centered on the inner process contained in both
475 experiences, whose similarities are evident. In his book, Habito walks the road con-
476 tained in the four-week experience of Ignatian Exercises making strong links with the
477 Zen-Buddhist world. For instance, as he describes in chapter 5, first week in the
478 Ignatian Exercises is devoted to get in touch with our weakness or dark sides of
479 our life. *Meditation on death* is not far from the beginning of Buddha’s way, who

480 “is said to have been launched on his path to enlightenment by his encounter with a
481 sick person, an aging person and finally with a corpse.” He also points at the fact that,
482 “in Theravada Buddhism, meditation on death is an important feature of the path to
483 awakening.”

484 Another example: Habito underlines that first week in Ignatian Exercises con-
485 verges finally with our need of healing. He points out the link of this experience with
486 the Buddhist concepts of *dubbka* and *three poisons* (greed, ill will, and ignorance). He
487 also explains some other differences between them, as their concepts of *hell* or
488 *illumination*.

489 As we stated above, his book is mainly devoted to make a comparison between the
490 inner process that happens in both paths, and to underline very interesting similari-
491 ties between them. Nevertheless, it also contains important methodological clues that
492 concern closely to the question we are asking about; among them, he introduces what
493 we could consider as *echoes* of the *zazen* practice, even if he doesn't use the word “*zazen*”
494 but “sitting in stillness” or “in silence” or “attentively.” For instance, when he ends
495 the second part of the book (*Recovery*), he makes a few indications to make the *general*
496 *examen*, and he advises to “sit in silence and breathe with awareness through the pro-
497 cess.” After that, he indicates: “sit and breathe attentively and put yourself in the
498 position of those persons you hurt.” Furthermore, when he analyzes the Ignatian
499 Exercise related to the contemplation of Jesus' birth contained in Luke's Gospel,
500 he makes a general methodological advice who points in the same direction:

501 Now I invite the reader to find time, to sit in silence in a comfortable spot,
502 reread the passage in Luke's gospel above, follow the same guidelines for con-
503 templation, and launch off on your own. [...] These suggested instructions
504 apply, too, for the rest of the contemplative exercises in this book.⁵²

505 As Ignatian Exercises are devoted to choose a life state, and as discernment and taking
506 decisions is central in the experience, Habito suggests to go further our rational
507 mind to take such decisions, and to dive into our inner silence, maybe through *zazen*
508 (or “sitting in stillness,” as he prefers to express it in his book), and let the decision
509 come from the deepest region of our life. He states that decisions that emerge from
510 such process are profoundly clear:

511 Sitting in stillness is an excellent way to enable us to connect with the core of
512 our being and see our life in perspective from the point of view of its spiritual
513 center. From there, any decision taken can be made on solid ground. Allowing
514 ourselves simply to sit in stillness can bring clarity to the matter at hand and
515 make the decision a clear and undoubted one. Such clarity can occur without
516 getting into a discursive process wherein we weigh the pros and cons and deter-
517 mine rationally which course is more to our advantage.⁵³

518 Also Kadowaki points at the same idea when he states that “when the mind becomes
519 tranquil through doing *zazen*, the spiritual meaning of Scripture is able to penetrate
520 to the depths of the heart.”⁵⁴

521 WHERE DOES IT LEAD US?

522 If Kadowaki, Lassalle, and Habito are right, there seems to be a mystical apophatic
523 root at the Spiritual Exercises, but it remains hidden and in a permanent risk of being
524 misunderstood. William Johnston seems to agree with this idea:

525 Yet the method of Ignatius was grossly misunderstood, and became tied up
526 with rationalism, with reasoning and thinking and a so-called “discursive
527 prayer” that appeals little to modern man, who wants mysticism.⁵⁵

528 That’s why it is—according to them—so urgent to recover the mystical experience
529 underlying Ignatian Spiritual Exercises.

530 The question now could be: where does it lead us? To assume a Buddhist practice
531 would put at stake non-Buddhist faith traditions, or even would deny them?

532 I think that it seems clear that *zazen* as a spiritual practice—yet being Buddhist—
533 could be helpful for believers of other faith traditions, and it doesn’t imply that other
534 beliefs should be rejected. According to Zen master Rafael Navarrete, SJ, when we
535 start the daily practice of *zazen*, we should become aware of the faith in which we sit.⁵⁶
536 This is convergent also with Johnston, who states that

537 Christians can practice Zenlike meditation being intensely aware of God with-
538 out making Him an object of thought. God is not, strictly speaking, an object.
539 He is the ground of being.⁵⁷

540 Also Kadowaki says that “when a Christian does *zazen*, he must penetrate into the
541 essence of his belief.”⁵⁸ In this way, if practitioner is Christian, his *zazen* experience
542 will be an experience of radical abandonment in Christ that could be lived as mystical
543 death. Those who have had this experience can get to the heart of the third week in
544 the Spiritual Exercises: becoming one with Christ, suffering with Christ, dying with
545 Christ, and living the profound transformation of the resurrection in Christ.

546 And where does it lead us specifically in our quest about Spiritual Exercises? If our
547 understanding is right, it seems that Lassalle, Kadowaki, and Habito suggest that
548 making Ignatian Exercises from *zazen* practice is possible under certain conditions,
549 and also convenient in order to get a deep experience. In general terms, they seem
550 to suggest practitioner to make every exercise according to the Ignatian methodology
551 and to include its contents, but slide slowly into a deep silence, as *zazen* provokes. In
552 Johnston’s words,

553 What [modern men] want is deep interior silence. And this can be found
554 through Zen, as it could be found through Ignatius’ method if it were properly
555 understood. Zen has simple techniques, however, for introducing people to
556 inner peace and even to the so-called Christian “infused contemplation”.⁵⁹
557 [. . .] In short, it seems to me that Christians can profit greatly from Zen meth-
558 odology to deepen their Christian faith [. . .] because the contemplative life is
559 fantastically underdeveloped in the developed and affluent nations.⁶⁰

560 This is convergent with my personal experience. I believe that it is possible to carry
561 out a careful preparation of the points of each exercise, to express firmly the request
562 suggested by Ignatius and begin the exercise according to the Ignatian methodol-
563 ogy. Then, in a progressive, almost imperceptible way, practitioner can abandon
564 himself to the exercise, gradually quieting the discursive mind and, finally, in
565 the calm of silence and with the help of *zazen*, enter the depths of the soul.
566 This approaching between both methodologies happens very naturally, and drive
567 to a deeper experience which is not affected by differences on believes. That was
568 also Lassalle's experience:

569 Christianity and Zen were like two parallel lines for me; I mean, I was faithful
570 to Christianity, but in Zen I followed the instructions of the masters. But over
571 time these two parallel lines became one without any theoretical reflections; it
572 just happened. For me at least there is no contradiction, believe me or not.⁶¹

573 And also Kadowaki's:

574 To a person who has never had the experience this may sound strange, but by
575 practicing Zen I not only learned about Buddhism, I also came to understand
576 Christianity much better than before.⁶²

577 And Johnston's:

578 Christian prayer must find place for both facets of reality. Like Zen it can be
579 silent, imageless, without subject-object relationship, and beyond dialogue. In
580 this kind of meditation all is one, God is all in all, "I" am lost. But there can
581 also be dialogue between creature and Creator [. . .]. Generally the prayer of
582 Christians advanced in meditation in a mixture of both. [. . .] Consequently,
583 coming to practice, I would suggest that Christian who do Zen use both meth-
584 ods of meditation. Let them follow their deepest spiritual instincts.⁶³

585 I consider, therefore, that at the times and circumstances indicated, the person
586 trained in the daily practice of *zazen* can resort to it to deepen the experience of
587 the Exercises remaining faithful to Ignatius's proposal and to Christian faith.

588 CONCLUSION

589 It is often said that we have to unite the *apophatic* and *cataphatic* ways of prayer as each
590 one enriches the other. I totally agree with this idea. If the *apophatic* prayer gives us
591 radical depth in the experience of transcendence, the *cataphatic* prayer offers a concrete
592 face to this experience. In the Christian case, of course, it is the face of Christ. In my
593 opinion, the encounter between *zazen* and Ignatian Spiritual Exercises can offer a mar-
594 velous way of union between *apophatic* and *cataphatic* prayer, and can open an immense
595 horizon of inner depth to the practitioner. In fact, living the deep experience of emp-
596 tiness and abandonment that Zen offers is absolutely meaningful for those who look
597 for the footsteps of Christ in their lives.

598 In a conference by Yves Raguin, SJ,⁶⁴ in Paris,⁶⁵ he was asked about how was possible to offer to Christians ways of praying where Christ was not the center and object
599 of all meditation. Raguin responded with these words of Jesus in the Gospel (Jn.
600 16:7): “it is convenient for you that I go, because if I do not go, the Paraclete will
601 not come to you; but if I go, I’ll send it to you.” For him, experiencing the fact that
602 Christ goes to the Father is essential in Christian spirituality, as it is lived in the third
603 week of Exercises. Raguin continued saying: “from that moment on, we no longer see
604 Christ as an object of thought. That is, we can no longer relate to Christ from his
605 external presence, but from the experience that he lives in us. Since then it is He
606 himself who, through the Holy Spirit, turns our gaze to the Father and makes us
607 cry out: Abba, Father.”
608

609 Only if we experience the deep emptiness of Christ’s departure from us, as it is
610 experienced in the third week of Ignatian Exercises, can Christ invite us to share
611 the *unitive way* in the fourth week, which is clearly a way of repairing the divine pres-
612 ence that inhabits us, something that would have been impossible without experienc-
613 ing the abandonment of Christ. “If this is so, I can leave out all image, all thought
614 about Christ in his historical reality, a Christ who is consequently external to me. On
615 the contrary, I will turn first to the reality of Christ who lives in me.”⁶⁶

616 *Kenosis* is the word used in the Bible to refer to the profound abandonment and
617 extreme hopelessness of Jesus in the cross. This abandonment, comparable to death, is
618 a necessary condition for the birth of the new man in the resurrection, and to be able
619 to exclaim like Saint Paul: “I do not live, it is Christ who lives in me.”⁶⁷

620 I believe that verse is fundamental in order to reveal the possibilities of meeting
621 between Zen and Christianity since, for both, *kenosis* is the necessary condition for a
622 deep transformation.

623 The Passion of Christ expresses the core of Christian experience; *zazen*, throughout
624 the path of purification and abandonment, offers Christians a way to live passion with
625 Him. Experiencing the passion with Christ and living the resurrection with Him
626 means that the self, as the center of all disordered affections, has disappeared. It
627 may arise, then, a completely disinterested joy typical of someone who has died to
628 his self to rise again in Christ.

629 When we can accomplish the experience of Exercises in this way, we receive the
630 grace of touching the unfathomable depth of our identity, which is human and divine
631 at the same time, and to live the most intimate experience of encounter with Christ.
632 Probably this is not pure *Zen*, but in my opinion it is pure Ignatian Spiritual
633 Exercises.

634 NOTES
635

636 1. Wright-Mills, C., *La imaginación sociológica* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica,
637 1961), 206–236.

638 2. Pomplun, T., “From Missionaries to Zen Masters: The Society of Jesus and Buddhism,”
639 *Jesuit Historiography Online*, 2007, at http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2468-7723_jho_COM_204365,
640 accessed February 25, 2021.

- 641 3. Ibid., 2.
- 642 4. Ibid.
- 643 5. A detailed description of it is in Pomplun, T. "From Missionaries to Zen Masters."
- 644 6. Ibid., 5–6.
- 645 7. U.B., 232.
- 646 8. Erich Fromm and D. T. Suzuki, *Budismo Zen y Psicoanálisis* (México: Fondo de Cultura
- 647 Económica, 1964).
- 648 9. Since we will make numerous references to Ursula Baatz. *Hugo M. Enomiya-Lassalle.*
- 649 *Una vida entre mundos* (Bilbao: Desclée de Brouwer, 2001) and to the Enomiya Lassalle's diary
- 650 contained in that book, it will be noted simply as "U.B." followed by the page number. If it is a
- 651 quote from Fr. Lassalle's diary included in this book, the notation will be "U.B.-D." followed
- 652 by the date of diary entry and the page number.
- 653 10. Pomplun, "From Missionaries to Zen Masters," 8.
- 654 11. U.B., 112.
- 655 12. Pomplun, "From Missionaries to Zen Masters," 3.
- 656 13. Enomiya Lassalle, *Zazen and the exercises of San Ignacio* (Madrid: Paulinas, 1985), 8.
- 657 14. U.B.-D., September 29, 1974, 244.
- 658 15. U.B., 272.
- 659 16. Ibid., 296.
- 660 17. Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes*, n. 18.
- 661 18. U.B., 304.
- 662 19. Ibid., 336.
- 663 20. Ibid., 349.
- 664 21. Ibid., 350.
- 665 22. Ibid., 356.
- 666 23. Kadowaki, K., *Zen and the Bible* (London: Arkana, 1989), 6.
- 667 24. From <http://buddhist-buddha-christianjesuitjesus.com/styled-26/index.html>, accessed
- 668 March 5, 2021.
- 669 25. Ibid.
- 670 26. Jung, C. G., *Zur Psychologia westlicher und östlicher Religionem* (Zürich, 1963), 618,
- 671 quoted in Lassalle, H. M., *Zen y mística cristiana* (Madrid: Paulinas, 1991), 302.
- 672 27. Lassalle, H. M., *Zazen y los Ejercicios de San Ignacio* (Madrid: Paulinas, 1985), 55.
- 673 28. Spiritual Exercises, 20th annotation.
- 674 29. Also Kadowaki underlines this issue in Kadowaki, *Zen and the Bible*, 131.
- 675 30. Johnston, W., *Christian Zen* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 16.
- 676 31. Spiritual Exercises, first annotation.
- 677 32. About this, see also Kadowaki, *Zen and the Bible*, 145.
- 678 33. Lassalle, *Zazen y los Ejercicios de San Ignacio*, 85.
- 679 34. Johnston, *Christian Zen*, 15.
- 680 35. Ibid., 86.
- 681 36. Spiritual Exercises, third prelude to fourth week.
- 682 37. Spiritual Exercises, *Contemplation to Gain Love*, first point.
- 683 38. Lassalle, *Zazen y los Ejercicios de San Ignacio*, 43, and Lassalle, *Zen y mística cristiana*,
- 684 303.
- 685 39. Ibid., 303.
- 686 40. Ibid., 308.
- 687 41. Lassalle, *Zazen y los Ejercicios de San Ignacio*, 86.
- 688 42. Ibid., 85.

- 689 43. Johnston, *Christian Zen*, 17.
690 44. In his book *Zen and the Bible*, he devotes Part II to Christian *koans*.
691 45. Kadowaki, *Zen and the Bible*.
692 46. *Ibid.*, 130.
693 47. *Spiritual Exercises*, n. 76.
694 48. Kadowaki, *Zen and the Bible*, 129.
695 49. *Ibid.*
696 50. *Ibid.*, 135 and 141.
697 51. Habito, R., *Zen and the Spiritual Exercises* (New York: Orbis Books, 2013).
698 52. *Ibid.*
699 53. *Ibid.*, ch. 8.
700 54. Kadowaki, *Zen and the Bible*, xii.
701 55. Johnston, *Christian Zen*, 16.
702 56. Teachings addressed to the participants in the *sesshin* conducted by him in Casa de
703 Ejercicios San Ignacio, Dos Hermanas (Sevilla), from December 16 to 18, 2011.
704 57. Johnston, *Christian Zen*, 26.
705 58. Kadowaki, *Zen and the Bible*, 16.
706 59. Johnston, *Christian Zen*, 16.
707 60. *Ibid.*, 19.
708 61. “Ergänzungen zu Eminem Kensho-Report an Roshi Yamada,” 1985, quoted by
709 U.B., 392.
710 62. Kadowaki, *Zen and the Bible*, 42.
711 63. Johnston, *Christian Zen*, 27.
712 64. Yves Raguin (1912–1998) is another outstanding figure in the Society of Jesus in
713 relation to the study of Eastern spiritualities (Buddhism and Taoism mainly). Together with
714 Fr. Jean Lefevre and other Jesuits, he founded the Ricci Institute in Taipei, where he was direc-
715 tor until 1996. For forty years, he supervised the elaboration of the Great Chinese-French Ricci
716 Dictionary, a project that was concluded three years after his death. He published numerous
717 works, and also was lecturer at the universities of Saigon, Dalat, Taiwan, and Manila. We con-
718 sider that his experience of discovering Christ through Zen is of such importance that it exceeds
719 the possibilities of this paper, since it could justify by itself a monographic work.
720 65. The conference was entitled “Paths of Contemplation: Meeting between East and
721 West” and was delivered in the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris on October 15, 1978.
722 66. Raguin, Y., *Plenitud y vacío* (Madrid: Narcea, 2010), 21.
723 67. Gal. 2:20.