John F. Kane

Building the Human City: William F. Lynch's Ignatian Spirituality for Public Life.

Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016. xxiii + 265 pages. Hb, \$35.

John Kane is to be commended and thanked for providing readers with an engaging, well-researched, and much-needed treatment of William Lynch's work. At several points in the book, Kane asserts that his goal is "simply to introduce" readers to Lynch's thought. This is far too modest a claim, for Kane succeeds not only in giving readers a broad sense of Lynch's intellectual achievement but also in providing Lynch a chance to speak to the needs of our age. Kane encourages us to give ear to William Lynch and to embrace a spirituality according to the "pattern of Ignatian thought" (224) that leads to an engagement *with* the world and not a flight *from* it.

As one would expect from an introduction to a thinker, Kane begins by giving an overview of Lynch's thought and a biographical sketch. Because Lynch remains relatively unknown, the first two chapters are vital in mapping Lynch's life and thought onto the terrain of the twentieth century. A Jesuit priest, Lynch served as the editor of Fordham's *Thought* and in 1960 was praised by *Time* magazine as "one of the most incisive Catholic intellectuals in the U.S." (1). Lynch is remembered primarily as author of *Christ and Apollo* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960) and the deeply moving *Images of Hope* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965). Less well known, but no less important, are numerous essays on literature and culture, a work on Plato's *Parmenides*, and books like *The Integrating Mind* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962) and award-winning *The Image Industries* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962). Yet Lynch's productivity came at a cost: a major psychological breakdown in 1956 led to his resignation as editor of *Thought*. From 1957 to 1962 he did teach at Georgetown but left university life to pursue writing full-time, thereby depriving him the chance to mentor graduate students. Thus, though he knew great acclaim as a lecturer, essayist, and public intellectual throughout the 1960s and 1970s, he was soon forgotten after his death in 1987.

Kane's book is only the second monograph written on Lynch's thought. He writes as an appreciative student convinced that Lynch has much to say to us today. Kane orients the reader to Lynch's thought, exposes us to the scope of his *oeuvre*, and argues throughout that, "the central concern of his writing was to bring the resources of Christian faith into sustained engagement with different arenas of the human and secular activities of our world" (4). Lynch, according to Kane, Lynch is best understood as "working towards the retrieval and development of a *fundamental* or *foundational* spirituality for worldly ac-

tivity" (5). Subsequent chapters use Lynch's works to lay the framework for this spirituality.

Perhaps I might entice readers to consider this text by mentioning Lynch's diagnosis of the "totalistic temptation" whereby one sees "most issues and concerns in 'either-or' terms" and is tempted "to embrace simplistic and 'total' solutions" which regard all opposed or alternative positions as enemies" (57). Though true in all ages, but certainly true in the twenty-first century, Lynch recognized the human tendency to polarization and a drive to "build 'walled cities' of purity, simple clarity, and supposedly perfect unity" (59). Yet the unity Lynch enjoined does not come from a spiritual Gnosticism eager to eradicate contrarities or withdraw from engagement. Instead, an Ignatian-inspired spirituality of engagement is needed, a spirituality that draws one *into* the messiness of the historical milieu rather than endeavoring to extricate us *from* it.

Throughout the book, one finds nuggets such as the "totalizing temptation," the "gnostic imagination," the "sacramental imagination," or the nature of "wishing" that will give one pause. In my estimation, there is much to be gained from a patient and prayerful reading of this text. A patient reading will expose readers to a lamentably under-recognized figure who has much to offer an era plagued by a "totalistic temptation." Furthermore, Kane helpfully makes connections with contemporary issues that are illuminated in light of Lynch's thinking. A prayerful reading, I should like to suggest, will help to highlight how Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* are profoundly incarnational. This book helps, in effect, to cultivate something of an Ignatian sensibility deeply attuned to detecting and responding to God's presence in all things.

Ironically, Kane's book will be a success only to the extent that it fails. That is, to the extent that the book fails to satisfy readers' curiosity about Lynch or plumb the depths of his writing, it will succeed in goading them to "take up and read" Lynch for themselves. Readers will have to struggle with Lynch themselves; they will have to move through and ponder his often dense and difficult writings in order to allow his words to touch and stir the imagination. Thus the book's conclusion should be anything but, for it has the potential to be a great beginning. Apprenticing ourselves to Lynch, encouraged by Kane's diligent work, we might take our own steps into the human valley and allow our experience of finding God in all things to help sustain our engagement with, and our contribution to, public life.

Ryan Duns, S.J.

Boston College

ryan.duns@bc.edu

DOI 10.1163/22141332-00404008-24