

Hong Kong Journal of
Catholic Studies
《天主教研究學報》

第十一期 2020 年

Issue No. 11 2020

Ignatian Spirituality and the Contemporary World

〈依納爵靈修與當代世界〉

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The Chinese University of Hong Kong
香港中文大學天主教研究中心

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Editor's Word

Two events have given birth to the theme and content of the Journal this year.

In February 2019, Fr. Sosa Arturo, superior general of the Society of Jesus, formally issued four universal apostolic preferences to be implemented creatively for the coming decade by Jesuits and their collaborators worldwide. This came about after he collected results of the discernment in common, which lasted about 16 months, from Jesuit communities, institutes and provinces around the world. The apostolic preferences are: A. To show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment; B. To walk with the poor, the outcasts and those whose dignity has been violated around the world, in a mission of reconciliation and justice; C. To accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future; and D. To collaborate in the care of our Common Home.

Among the four, Pope Francis, in his remarks towards this announcement, emphasized that “the first preference is crucial because it presupposes as a basic condition the Jesuit’s relationship with the Lord in a personal and communal life of prayer and discernment.” He added, “Without this prayerful attitude the other preferences will not bear fruit.” In August 9, 2019, six months after the letter was issued, we Jesuits in Hong Kong began to sponsor the Centre for Catholic Studies in Chinese University as a continuation of the good work started by Hong Kong diocese under the leadership of Fr. Louis Ha. This also symbolizes our

Jesuit attempt to establish the intellectual apostolate and service in Hong Kong.

Inspired by these two significant happenings, the management committee of the Catholic Centre has decided on the theme “Ignatian Spirituality and the Contemporary World” for the present issue, as a common effort to draw out a deeper reflection on the first universal apostolic preference for our time. The seven invited contributors have been very generous in sharing their expertise and reflections for us in their respective articles below.

Fr. Gerard Whelan, in the first part of his article, gives us a succinct historical review of how the Jesuits, directly influenced and formed in Ignatian Spirituality, have developed over the last few centuries. Though they were the symbol of renewal and renovation in the Church in the 16th century after the Society of Jesus was founded, their living example and influence have experienced a kind of decline due to various reasons. According to Fr. Whelan, the Spiritual Exercises provide general principles to engage in the contemporary world, but they do not in themselves provide the means to achieve this.

To fill this discrepancy, he presents to us how Bernard Lonergan, a contemporary Jesuit philosopher and theologian, has provided the means and bridge through his contributions in epistemology and cosmology, his understanding of religious conversion and history of redemption, and finally in theological method. Fr. Whelan does us a service in introducing the range of Lonergan’s thought and contributions in a comprehensive and lucid way. Lonergan’s analysis of insight and cognition theory in fact lays a strong intellectual foundation for dialogue with cultures and history, overcoming the hegemony of classism which allows only one valid culture.

Lonergan seems to be the intellectual version, or reflection, of St. Ignatius' pilgrim heart, whose eyes always focus on God. In the quoted words of Robert Doran, who draws out their parallel, "Lonergan speaks of a transcendent object of the pure desire to know, an insight he shares with Ignatius, who is confident that exploring our deepest desires will reveal that we desire to know God and to do His will." It is also striking that the intellectual pursuit in a Lonergan trajectory empowers and endows us with Ignatian consolation in the contemporary world: "This consolation is related to an illumination that insight can effect: in fact this world is intelligible, things do hold together, we can make sense of the universe and of our lives, we can overcome the fragmentation of knowledge, we can make true judgments, we can make good decisions, we can transcend ourselves to what is and to what is good."

Presence has become a significant topic and concern in contemporary literature in spiritual direction and counselling. However, its exact meaning and application seems difficult to grasp. On the one hand, presence looks too banal to be emphasized. On the other hand, it signifies one's disposition beyond the necessary skills of listening and counselling. Here, Ms. Mickie Wing Yin Yau does us a service in delineating the multi-dimensional nature of presence. She does this by integrating the rich Ignatian tradition, Gestalt therapy and Christian theology, allowing us to appreciate and ponder deeper the reality and significance of presence.

The dictum of Ignatian Spirituality, "finding God in all things," implies in the first place the feasibility of such to be present in order to be contemplated, so that it might allow the sense of God to emerge. Thus, the fundamental capacity of a spiritual director is to let such experience or being of the counterpart be present without obstructing it.

Apart from letting be, presence involves response from both parties. Ms. Yau utilizes the model of Self, Other and Situation, and Field theory to draw our attention to the impact of the interactive and co-emergent elements during the spiritual direction process. The spiritual director has the responsibility to heighten his/her consciousness in these happenings, apart from focusing on the task itself and its evaluation.

Elaborating further on other dimensions of presence as attunement, dialogue, contemplation and healing love, Ms. Yau offers us a fuller picture of her understanding of presence and its importance, which can render spiritual direction an effective service to elicit changes, conquer shame and build up oneself in God's love.

As an experienced educator and companion to the younger ones, Dr. So Ying Lun presents an Ignatian picture and art of accompaniment in our time. There are various ways to develop or form the younger generation. In Dr. So's conviction, however, accompaniment seems to be the most effective way to draw out individuals' potential in facing an unpredictable future, considering what is happening now in Hong Kong and around the world. As the present human condition is witnessing the erosion of authority, rise in automation, and a vacuum of higher meaning, a top-down approach in conveying knowledge and instruction can no longer satisfy the mind, let alone win the heart. Only by open, respectful and honest conversation can accompaniment elicit the capacity in the younger ones to confront genuine issues, even when there are no certain answers and with the possibility of mistakes being made. In this way, the younger ones can be equipped to face their future meaningfully.

In genuine accompaniment, certain qualities are expected from the accompanying person, Dr. So insists. They include safeguarding security, taking the accompanied person as he/she is rather than being judgmental, being focused on reality and truth, and fostering the capacity of independence of the counterpart.

To be a good companion is like learning an art. Dr. So emphasizes the flexibility and mutual adjustment in conversation, raising questions more than giving answers, being open and at ease to the possibility of being speechless in facing difficult questions in life, and allowing space and silence for the counterpart to explore, etc. This kind of respect and granting of freedom in exploration is another façade of Christian love in the Ignatian tradition.

Fr. Peter McIssac, in his rich experience of giving the Spiritual Exercises around the world, helps us understand and appreciate better the bridge between spiritual life and rendering justice in our life and ministry. First, he affirms we are not created, as the mystics of various traditions tell us, for ourselves but given the potential to be in union with God. Second, this encounter with God in prayer and especially in the context of the Spiritual Exercises grants us the love and new vision to hold the polarity between God and human, being and doing, contemplation and action, faith and justice, etc.

The keyword here is contemplation. From the second week of the Spiritual Exercises onwards, the retreatant, by seeing, desiring and choosing Christ, learns and experiences the dynamics towards the other in his/her interiority, which leads to compassion and consolation in God. Fr. McIssac reminds us here that consolation does not necessarily imply good feelings but genuine compassion towards the Lord and others. From this love comes the foundation of discernment in which one is able

to see and authentically respond to the suffering and vulnerability of the world, and live out genuine solidarity with the poor and needy. In the process of his articulation, he clarifies for us the relationship between consolation, contemplation, discernment, compassion and solidarity.

The whole movement of the Spiritual Exercises can be summarized as a conversion of the self to truly see our neighbour as they truly are, not simply what they appear to be. It is the fruit of our union with the Lord that heals any dichotomy of the interior life and our social reality.

In his interesting but serious article, Mr. Yan-ho Lai demonstrates self-appropriation in engaging in the social and political movement as a committed Catholic, in living out the discipleship even in the midst of great tension and conflicts in the present historical time of Hong Kong. Readers might not share his political stand or affiliation, but his seriousness in collecting facts from related historical events, in applying recognized intellectual tools to do theological reflection and in integrating with his spiritual formation in Ignatian tradition offers a practical way of proceeding for any Christian believer.

Mr. Lai highlights first the three spiritual tasks that puts us in a proper disposition to begin the later exercise, namely, an experiential self-understanding of being a beloved sinner in the eyes of God, familiarity by practice in the art of discernment of spirits, and an attitude of *Agere Contra*. Afterwards, he applies the skills of doing social analysis to understand the social infrastructure, cultural superstructure and the root cause of this socio-political movement in Hong Kong. Finally, by using Fr. Whelan's articulation of theological reflection, he picks up on the Christological and ecclesiological dimensions to identify the dynamics of progress, decline and redemption, which are the three

vectors of history from Lonergan's perspective. But this is not the end. The exercise is to arrive at its very beginning, namely the threefold disposition as the Ignatian qualities mentioned above, to appropriate our own calling and mission, in which Mr. Lai recommends 12 steps for our readers to refer to and practice.

Fr. Elton Fernandes, in his familiarity with the Spiritual Exercises, points out their wisdom and richness to us in learning leadership, a path less traveled but promised to be greatly rewarding. Similar to a spiritual guide who lets the retreatant interact directly with God, a good leader is to provide space, time and trust to let others explore and find answers or solutions for their own development. Putting the priority of ends over means, an inspiration from the first principle and foundation in the Spiritual Exercises, he/she is flexible and not afraid to make changes. In facing challenges, leadership, in its very depth, is to help others discover the core issues and existing patterns. Finally, a good leader is not afraid of failure. Rather, he/she sees and takes it as an opportunity to help the group and community surrender to God and discover the deeper meaning in life.

In his expertise on Ignatian philology, Fr. José García de Castro leads us to appreciate the richness in meaning of the word "consolation." His skill in drawing out its ecological implication as our contemporary concern through Spiritual Exercise no. 316, one of Ignatius' rules on discernment, is original and profound. What is striking in his interpretation of "can love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself but only in the Creator of them all" is that it actually implies the unifying nature of this love and consolation in one's creatureliness towards others in creation. Ignatius indicates the simultaneous awe towards the Creator and all the creatures, though the source comes as

prior ontologically. Consolation is not exclusive but inclusive between God and creatures.

Moreover, in the author's remark, "the Holy Spirit through consolation 'draws me' toward the world, and I feel irretrievably linked to it by the one love that grounds all being. The creation and I...we are much more alike than we might suspect." This understanding, which echoes Fr. Jose's interpretation of Spiritual Exercise no. 60, brings home to the movement of equality in God's love between human beings and other creatures. The world is the mystical and ecological support of our action where the creatures and human beings are actualizing the cycle of Spirit – consolation – ministry – world – Spirit together.

I believe our readers will share my appreciation of the many unique and original insights in these seven articles and will find them interesting and rewarding. Hopefully, their contributions will stimulate your own reflections in your prayers and daily life, giving flesh and blood to this Ignatian tradition in the contemporary world by your continual exploration and practice.

I would like to give my heartfelt gratitude to Ms. Lucia Cheung, Mr. Hessler Lee and Ms. Teenie Or, who, in many ways have supported my editing of this enjoyable journal.

Fr. Stephen Tong, SJ

主編的話

兩件重大的事件成就了本期刊今年的主題和內容。

2019 年 2 月，耶穌會總會長蘇薩神父（Fr. Sosa Arturo）根據全球各地耶穌會團體、機構和省區經過歷時十六個月共同分辨的結果，正式發表了四項普世性使徒優先，並將由耶穌會會士及其合作者在未來十年內具創意地落實。這四項優先分別是：（甲）通過神操及分辨，揭示邁向天主之路；（乙）在修和及正義的使命中，與窮人、被世界遺棄者、其尊嚴受侵犯者同行；（丙）陪同年輕人創建充滿希望的未來；及（丁）合作照顧我們的共同家園。

教宗方濟各在談及這四項優先時強調：「第一優先具有關鍵性，因為它預設一項基本的條件：耶穌會士在個人及團體生活的祈禱和分辨中，與主的關係。」他補充道：「缺少這種祈禱的心態，其他的優先將無從結出果實。」在總會長發出信函的六個月後，即 2019 年 8 月，耶穌會在香港的會士開始資助香港中文大學天主教研究中心，以繼續這由香港教區開創，並在夏其龍神父領導下取得良好成果的工作。這亦象徵耶穌會在香港學術領域建立使徒工作及服務的努力。

受到這兩項重大事件所帶來的靈感，天主教研究中心管理委員會決定採用「依納爵靈修與當代世界」作為本期的主題，共同努力深入反省在我們世代的普世使徒第一優先。七位作者受邀提供文章，慷慨分享他們的專長及反省。

杰勒德·維蘭神父 (Fr. Gerard Whelan) 的文章開首便以精簡的歷史回顧，對耶穌會會士如何在過去幾個世紀以來受依納爵靈修的影響及培育，作了清晰的介紹。耶穌會於 16 世紀創立後，會士們雖然一度是教會更新和改革的標記，但基於種種原因，他們生活的模範及影響力亦經歷了某種的衰落。據維蘭神父指出，《神操》雖然為與當代世界接觸提供了一般性的原則，但其本身沒有提供相應的方法去達到這目的。

故此，他向我們呈現當代耶穌會哲學家兼神學家郎尼根 (Bernard Lonergan) 如何透過他在知識論、宇宙論、對宗教皈依及救贖論的認識、和最終在神學方法的貢獻，填補了這不足之處。維蘭神父為大家清晰而全面地介紹了郎尼根一系列的思想。郎尼根的洞察分析和認知理論實為與文化及歷史的交談奠定了穩固的知性基礎，克服了古典主義在文化上只此一家的霸氣。

郎尼根似乎是聖依納爵這位以情感之心雙目緊盯著天主的朝聖者知性的一面或反映。引用羅伯特·多蘭 (Robert Doran) 的話就可以看出兩者的相似之處：「郎尼根談及人具有純粹的求知欲望去認識一個超越的對象，這個洞察也是依納爵的洞察。後者深信發掘到我們最深處的渴望，就會發現我們其實渴望認識天主和承行祂的旨意。」以郎尼根的軌跡作理智追求，竟能帶給我們依納爵所述說的神慰，並能與現代世界對話；這也是很超凡的：「這種神慰與由洞察所引致的光照有關，即這個世界根本是可以理解，所有的事都有所依據，我們可以理解這個宇宙，我們的生命是有意義的，我們可以克服知識的碎片化，作出真實的判斷及好的決定；能超越自己，進入真實及美好本身。」

臨在成為當代靈修指導及輔導著作顯眼的話題及關注。可是它確實的意義和應用則很難掌握。一方面，臨在似乎太顯而易見，不值一談；另一方面，它指示出一種個人的質素，超乎一般的聆

聽及輔導技巧。邱穎妍女士在此為大家詳細描述臨在的多維面，並結合依納爵靈修、完形治療法及基督宗教的神學的豐富傳統，讓我們感受及沉思其實在性和意義。

依納爵靈修的格言是：在一切事上發現天主。這隱然表示，首先是要有人事物等的臨在，才会有默觀，然後才可能感覺到天主在呈現。故此，靈修指導者最根本的能力是要能夠讓事物、經驗，或對方的存在毫無阻擋地臨在。

除了順其自然地讓對方呈現，臨在亦涉及雙方的反應。邱女士應用自我、他人及場景模型，加上場域理論，讓我們注意到在靈修指導過程中，互動及互現元素的影響。靈修指導者有責任在這些場景中提高自身的覺察，而非只專注在任務的本身及評估。

在進一步談及臨在其他維度，諸如感應、交談、默觀及療癒的愛，邱女士為我們提供了她所瞭解的臨在及其重要性一個更全面圖像，有助於使靈修指導成為帶出改變、克服羞恥及在天主的愛內重建自己的一個具有效果的服務。

蘇英麟博士是位經驗豐富的教育家及青年陪伴者。他為我們帶來一幅具有依納爵特色的圖畫及在我們這年代成就人的藝術。培育年輕一代有各種方法；可是蘇博士深信，最有效成就人的方法是，鼓勵對方發揮自己的潛質，去面對現時在香港及世界各地出現的、無法預計的未來。由於現代人見證著權威的衰落、科技的自動化及追求更高層意義的貧乏，令只靠由上而下強加於他人身上的知識和要求，已無法說服人的頭腦，更遑論滿足人心了。要成就年輕人只有通過開放、尊重及誠意的交談，鼓勵他們發揮能力去面對真正的難題，不怕沒有肯定的答案，也不怕犯錯。這樣便可以裝備年輕的一代面對將來及活出有意義的人生。

蘇博士堅持，要真正的去陪伴他人，當事人是需要具備某些質素。它們包括能保障安全、接納而非判斷對方、聚焦在實情與真理上、及培養對方的獨立能力。

要成為好的陪伴者猶如學習一門藝術。蘇博士強調，交談時的彈性及互相調節，提問而非給予答案，在面對人生難題時的開放、從容、甚至可以無言，留予對方去發現的空間及靜默等是關鍵的。這種尊重和給予對方的自由，正是呈現依納爵傳統中基督的愛的另一個面貌。

伯多祿·麥克薩克神父（Fr. Peter McIssac）根據其在世界各地帶領神操的豐富經驗，幫助我們更能明瞭及領會靈修生活與在我們生活和使命中活出公義的關係。他首先肯定不同傳統的神秘家所言，我們的被造並非只為自己，而是賦有與天主合一的潛質。其次，在祈禱中與主相遇，特別是在神操的語境中，祂賜予我們所需的愛和新的視角，去承載神與人的張力、內聖與外王的張力、默觀與行動的張力、信德與公義的張力等等。

這裡的關鍵字是默觀。從神操第二周開始，做神操者由凝視、渴望及選擇基督中，學習及經驗在內裡趨向這位他者的動力，和在天主內的憐憫與神慰。麥克薩克神父在此提醒我們，神慰不一定意味著感覺良好，反而是對吾主基督及他人真誠的憐憫。隨著這種愛帶來了分辨的基礎，從中可以看到甚麼是對世間苦難與脆弱之真正回應，真實地活出與貧窮者及有需要者休戚與共。在他的分享中，他為我們清晰闡釋了神慰、默觀、分辨、憐憫及團結之間的關係。

神操的整體動態可以總結為，是真正看到鄰人的本相，而非他們的表象而已的自身皈依。這是我們與吾主基督合一的果實，並藉此醫治任何個人內在生命與社會外在實況的分裂。

黎恩灝先生既有趣又嚴肅的文章展示了，身為一個有承擔的天主教教友，在參與社會及政治運動時，就算是處於現時香港歷史時刻的巨大張力及衝突中，如何活出自己信徒的身分。讀者未必同意他的政治立場或所屬陣營，但他認真收集相關歷史事件的事實、利用公認的知識工具作神學反思、及以他在依納爵傳統的靈修培育把這些歸納起來，提供了一個具體的進行方式，供基督信徒採用。

黎先生首先點出，導引我們進入稍後操練的正確靈修要具備三重狀態，即從經驗中體會到自己在天主眼裡是個被愛的罪人、透過實際操練對分辨神類藝術有純熟的認知、及「反行其道」（*Agere Contra*）的態度。然後，他應用社會分析去瞭解社會的架構，上層的文化結構及香港社會政治運動的底因。最後，他利用維蘭神父所倡言的神學反思，引用了基督論及教會學的維度，找到是次運動的進步、衰落及救贖的動力，也就是郎尼根歷史觀的三個矢量。但這一步尚非終點，這個操練又回到其開端，即上述所言的依納爵性質的三重狀態，去實踐我們的召叫及使命。黎先生就此為讀者建議了十二個步驟，供大家參考和實踐。

熟悉神操的方進德神父（Fr. Elton Fernandes）為我們指出，神操具有學習領導的智慧和豐富內涵。雖然這個主題少為人所談及，但其實可以從中獲益良多。猶如靈修帶領者讓避靜者直接與天主交往，好的領袖會提供空間、時間和信任，讓對方為自我成長去發掘及尋求答案或方法。此外，把目的置於方法之上，是來自《神操》原則與基礎的靈感，一個領袖是富有彈性和無懼於改變。在面對挑戰時，有深度的領導是幫助他人發現核心的問題及現存的模式。最後，一位好領袖不怕失敗，反而視它為機會去幫助群體或團體向天主順服和發現生命更深的意義。

身為依納爵語言學專家的何塞·加西亞·德卡斯特羅神父（Fr. José García de Castro）帶大家去領會「神慰」這詞豐富的含意。他透過對《神操》中依納爵分辨神類規則之一[#316 號]的闡釋展現了自己的造詣，揭示了神慰與我們當今關注的生態之關聯，不單富有創意，而且發人深省。令人嘆為觀止的是，他將「使人在我們的造物主天主的聖愛中，開始燃燒、熾熱……只能在造物主中愛它們」詮釋為，這愛具有結合的本質，人在自身的受造中感到神慰時就會從造物主趨向其他受造物。依納爵指出，對創造主及創造物的驚嘆是同時出現的，雖然在本體論上，造物主作為根源具有先存和絕對性。神慰不是排斥，而是涵括天主與受造物的種種。

此外，作者稱：「作為萬物基礎的愛，聖神透過神慰『引領』我進入世界，祂令我感到不可分離地與萬物連接在一起，造物界與我……雙方比想像的更為近似。」這體會實在與他另外對《神操》60 號的詮釋互相呼應，即天主對人和其他受造物的愛無分軒輊。世界給予我們行動上一份神秘及生態上的支持，也使受造物與人一起實現這循環，即聖神—神慰—使命—世界—聖神。

細閱了這些文章，獲益良多！各位作者的心得都很有獨特性及原創性，相信讀者會同意。期望他們的心力會啟發你個人的反思，並在祈禱及生活中更有興趣去探索及操練，讓依納爵靈修在現代的處境中在你身上延續及傳遞下去。

最後，我想在這裡衷心多謝李子林先生、柯雅麗女士及張小蘭女士！他們的細緻幫忙令我能享受並順利完成這次很有意思的分享。

董澤龍神父

（李子林翻譯）

Ignatian Spirituality and the Contemporary World

〈依納爵靈修與當代世界〉

Ignatian Spirituality and the Contemporary World: From Ignatius of Loyola to Bernard Lonergan

Gerard Whelan, SJ

[Abstract] This article suggests that the link between Ignatian spirituality and the question of how to engage in the contemporary world is one that lies at the heart of the vision of St. Ignatius. However, it stresses that the question of just how to make this link is complex and that the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, themselves, do not provide the intellectual instruments for deciding on the details of how to make this link. It traces how Jesuits over the centuries have sometimes being more successful, sometimes less, in striking an appropriate balance. It then turns to the thought of the twentieth-century Canadian Jesuit, Bernard Lonergan, to suggest that his work, *Method in Theology*, provides appropriate tools for making this link, a link that is deeply in tune with the spirit of Vatican II.

Keywords: *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, discernment of spirits, nature, reason, transcendental method, conversion, emergent probability, functional specialties

The theme of this issue of *Journal of Catholic Studies* is “Ignatian Spirituality in the Contemporary World.” I explore this theme, first by studying how a concern for engagement with the contemporary world is intrinsic to the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. Next, I conduct a brief study the history of the Jesuits, suggesting that while the engagement of the first Jesuits with their contemporary world met with spectacular success, this was not consistently the case through succeeding centuries. I then suggest that while the *Spiritual Exercises* provide broad principles for engagement with the contemporary world, they do not provide the means for working out exactly how to achieve this. I then turn to the thought of the twentieth-century Canadian Jesuit, Bernard Lonergan, suggesting that he offers intellectual tools that can assist the kind of regular re-evaluation needed to assure that the broad principles provided by the *Spiritual Exercises* can be translated into concrete pastoral proposals which can be updated as the contemporary world changes.

Part 1: The *Spiritual Exercises* and the Contemporary World

In 1540 Pope Paul III founded a new religious order, approving of ideas for such an entity that had been proposed to him by Ignatius of Loyola and a group of companions.¹ This proposal is still extant in a document, *The Formula of the Institute*.² This new order caused

¹ See John O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

² The Society of Jesus, *The Formula of the Institute*,” https://s3.amazonaws.com/bc-iajs-wordpress-uploads.bc.aws.avalonconsult.net/prod/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/29174018/1540_Formula.pdf

controversy at the time because its rule was radically new. Members of the “Society of Jesus” would not be required to live in a monastery or to recite the liturgy of the hours in common. Rather, they would be free to concentrate on active ministries such as preaching, administering the sacraments, and working with the poorest of the poor, sometimes requiring them to travel far from any base community of fellow Jesuits. Ignatius trusted that such Jesuits could be offered an intense spiritual formation in their early years, which would assure their faithfulness to the principles of their religious order in the active years of their maturity. Central to this formation was a retreat, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*.³

During a two-year period of initial formation, a Jesuit novice undergoes *The Spiritual Exercises* over a period of 30 days, where he maintains silence, prays for up to five hours each day, and meets daily with a spiritual director.⁴ The material for prayer each day consists almost entirely of passages from the Bible, with some imaginary exercises added that are composed by Ignatius, although these also are Bible-based. The booklet known as *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* is, in fact, intended as a manual to be employed by the director. The book opens with a series of instructions for the director. The first of these states that the metaphor of a journey should be employed to understand the spiritual life.⁵ This point is amplified in the second

³ O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, Chapter 1, “Foundations before the Founding,” 23-50, and Chapter 2, “Taking Shape for Ministry,” 51-90.

⁴ For the remainder of this section, I use the exclusively male pronoun “he” to describe both the one who is undergoing the *Spiritual Exercises* and the one who accompanies him. I do this for convenience and because there is an implied reference to the Jesuit novice as the retreatant and his Novice Master as director.

⁵ St. Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius*, trans. Louis J. Puhl, SJ (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1957). “Introductory Observations,”

paragraph of instructions. Here Ignatius tells the director not to talk too much! He explains, “For it is not much knowledge that fills and satisfies the soul, but the intimate understanding and relish of the truth.”⁶ Ignatius insists that “intimate understanding and relish” will arrive as a gift of the Holy Spirit, not as a result of clear explanation by a director. Ignatius instructs the director to understand himself as merely accompanying a process where the main action is occurring between God and the retreatant. In another instruction, he states:

In the Spiritual Exercises, it is more suitable and much better that the Creator and Lord in person communicate Himself to the devout soul in quest of the divine will, that He inflame it with His love and praise, and dispose it for the way in which it could better serve God in the future. Therefore, the director of the Exercises, as a balance at equilibrium, without leaning to one side or the other, should permit the Creator to deal directly with the creature, and the creature directly with his Creator and Lord.⁷

Ignatius is not naïve on this point. Already in his first instruction, he has mentioned the “inordinate attachments” that tend to characterize our lives. Next, he explains that in addition to God communicating himself to the retreatant, so also an “Evil One,” who is the “Enemy of Human Nature,” communicates with us. Ignatius provides 15 “Rules for

paragraph 1 (all following citations from the *Spiritual Exercises* will cite paragraph numbers.) See also, <http://spex.ignatianspirituality.com/SpiritualExercises/Puhl>

⁶ Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 2.

⁷ Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 15.

the Discernment of Spirits”⁸ to help the retreatant distinguish between the two. He explains to the director that it is one of the director’s major tasks to help the retreatant attend to his inner affective movements during prayer and to learn to distinguish “consolation,” which is the gift of the Holy Spirit, to a “desolation” that is the work of the evil spirit. The first Rule describes the way we can swing between consolation and desolation: “It is characteristic of God and His Angels, when they act upon the soul, to give true happiness and spiritual joy, and to banish all the sadness and disturbances that are caused by the enemy.”⁹ As such experiences recur during the 30 days, Ignatius invites the director to employ his good judgment to present other Rules, as that individual experiences one or other of the subtle manifestations of both consolation and desolation.

Ignatius is clear about one further point: discernment of spirits is an instrument for decision-making. He explains that when we are in a state of consolation, ideas will occur to us regarding how we might respond to the love of God. He explains that, if we are in genuine consolation, we can employ these stirrings of the heart to make decisions, for, “there can be no deception in it, since it can proceed from God our Lord only.”¹⁰ By contrast, “in time of desolation we should never make any change.” He explains, “for, just as in consolation the good spirit guides and counsels us, so in desolation the evil spirit guides and counsels us.”¹¹ Ignatius proposes that a habit of discernment of spirits, once formed, can serve as a guide for making decisions, large and small,

⁸ Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 328-344.

⁹ Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 329.

¹⁰ Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 336.

¹¹ Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 318.

throughout a lifetime. However, for an individual undergoing the *Exercises*, he raises the possibility of discernment being employed to make a major life choice. He allows some discretion to the spiritual director to decide when a retreatant is ready to be presented with a series of exercises that include titles such as, “Introduction to Making a Choice of a Way of Life,” “Matters About Which a Choice Should Be Made,” “Three Times When a Correct and Good Choice of a Way of Life May be Made.”¹²

This orientation to decision-making makes it clear that engagement with the contemporary world is central to Ignatian spirituality. Ignatius further encourages the retreatant to reflect on how any vocational choice he might make places him within the larger context of the plan the Triune God has for the salvation of humanity and, in fact, for the whole universe. It is notable that many of the non-Biblical imagination exercises that Ignatius proposes to be included in the *Spiritual Exercises* appertain to this point. Before praying about the birth of Jesus, Ignatius proposes an imaginary prayer where one is located with the Trinity who look down on the Earth and see, “that all are going down to hell, They decree in Their eternity that the Second Person should become man to save the human race.”¹³ In another place, Ignatius, the former soldier and knight, proposes exercises where Christ is portrayed as a good King, and adds: “Consider how the Lord of all the world chooses so many persons, apostles, disciples, etc., and sends them throughout the world to spread His sacred doctrine among all men, no

¹² Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 169-189.

¹³ Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 102.

matter what their state or condition.”¹⁴ The final exercise proposed by Ignatius in the *Spiritual Exercises* is called “Contemplation to Attain the Love of God.”¹⁵ He invites the retreatant “to recall to mind the blessings of creation and redemption, and the special favours I have received.” Similarly, he invites the retreatant to consider “how God works and labours for me in all the creatures upon the face of the earth.”¹⁶ Within this cosmic and historical context, he invites the retreatant, “as one would do who is moved by great feeling,” to offer the following, radical, prayer:

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given all to me. To Thee, O Lord, I return it...Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for this is sufficient for me.¹⁷

One final point is worth noting. The kind of decision upon which the *Spiritual Exercises* focus is primarily one of making a major life choice. However, at various moments, Ignatius makes points that are relevant for making other kinds of decisions. The final Rule for Discernment of Spirits talks about the relationship of being in a state of consolation and the use of our natural powers of reasoning and decision-making. He speaks of the importance of attending to “our own reasoning on the relations of our concepts and on the consequences of our judgments.” He adds that “they must be carefully examined before they are given full approval and put into execution.”¹⁸ Also of interest is an

¹⁴ Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 145.

¹⁵ Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 230-237.

¹⁶ Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 236.

¹⁷ Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 234.

¹⁸ Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 336.

exercise “Three Times When a Correct and Good Choice of a Way of Life May Be Made.” In discussing the first two, he acknowledges that sometimes we can feel so illuminated by a sense of closeness to God that what decision should make is instantly obvious to us. However, he describes the third time of making a decision as being in a “time of tranquillity” when “the soul has free and peaceful use of its natural powers.”¹⁹ In this context, he suggests that the retreatant should think-through decisions “with the matter with care and fidelity.”²⁰ The significance of this confidence in our natural powers of reason would become evident in the early years of the life of the Society of Jesus, as it would influence the choices of ministries that the first Jesuits would undertake.

Jesuits as “Contemplatives in Action”²¹

When first introduced, The Spiritual Exercises represented a novelty in the Catholic Church and met with rapid success.²² Ignatius remained as superior general of the new religious order for 16 years and

¹⁹ Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 175.

²⁰ Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 180. See also “Rules for Thinking with the Church,” 352-370. Here Ignatius takes care to differentiate what he is saying from the theology of the Protestant reformers. He stresses that the work of grace should not be so emphasised “that works and free will suffer harm, or that they are considered of no value” (369).

²¹ At this point, my article may seem to be identifying Jesuit spirituality and history with Ignatian spirituality. This is not my intention. I am aware that, today, there is a wide community of those who are motivated by Ignatian spirituality, including women religious and various associations of lay people. However, Jesuits are central custodians of Ignatian spirituality and the question of how this spirituality guides engagement with the contemporary world is well explored by studying how Jesuits attempted this project over the centuries.

²² See, John O’Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

during this time the number of Jesuits grew to 1,000. During this tenure, major decisions had had to be made regarding details of how this expanding institution would organise itself. One challenge included how to form young Jesuits into the culture of the new order, beyond simply undergoing the *Spiritual Exercises*. Much responsibility for this was delegated by Ignatius to his trusted assistant, Jerome Nadal. This Jesuit coined a term to describe the identity, or “charism,” of the Jesuits: “contemplatives in action.” He intended the term to be paradoxical, acknowledging that the main tradition of contemplation in the Church up to that point had been that of monasticism, where one withdrew from active engagement in the world in order to seek holiness. One commentator states that, by contrast, for Nadal, “the contemplative element—if it can still be called so—is subordinated and ordered to the active-apostolic life.”²³ However, Nadal still advocated the same goal as did earlier spiritual masters, “Be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father in heaven is perfect” (Mt. 5:48.) However, he explained that, in the Ignatian tradition, “perfection is to be realised in the perfection of action guided and impregnated by love.”²⁴

Beyond questions of formation of young Jesuits, questions needed to be addressed regarding what ministries the Jesuits would undertake. The originating document of the Society of Jesus, *The Formula of the Institute*, had remained vague on this matter.²⁵ However, in addition to the usual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, the Jesuits had opted

²³ Emerich Coreth, “Contemplative in Action,” in Robert W. Gleason, *Contemporary Spirituality: Current Problems in Religious Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 184-211.

²⁴ Coreth, 193.

²⁵ O’Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 1-90.

to take a special vow of obedience to the Pope. The purpose of this was “for missions.” They understood that the responsibility of the Pope for the universal mission of the Church gave him a particular capacity to direct Jesuits to what might be for “the greater glory of God,” a term that would become their maxim. Popes of the time found that the Jesuits were uniquely suited to address some of the challenges facing the Church. They were from diverse nationalities, highly educated, mobile, and were spiritually “reformed” priests in an age of much decadence in priestly behaviour. At this stage, developments occurred that had not been anticipated in the *Formula of the Institute*. Jesuits became assigned to undertake tasks that might seem more secular than explicitly religious. It was discovered that Jesuits made excellent teachers and they were invited to teach the sons of the emerging Catholic bourgeoisie in many of the cities of Europe. They became, at least in part, an order of teachers of young boys. In fact, in document destined to become famous, a *Ratio Studiorum*, they developed ideas about creating schools with structured curricula that would contribute to the emergence of the notion of secondary education that prevails until today.²⁶

Other ministerial options required that Jesuit life develop in further unexpected directions. The Council of Trent was underway during these years and Jesuits participated in this as theological experts. One result was that they were given responsibilities in creating a new notion of “seminary” where young man entering the diocesan priesthood could be trained. In addition to such explicitly religious responsibilities,

²⁶ O’Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 200-242. This describes the development of the *Ratio Studiorum* a plan for a structured curriculum to be followed in secondary schools—an innovation for the age.

the Pope continued to ask Jesuits to engage in the contemporary world in a way that might be considered secular. He sent Jesuits to work in universities, trusting them to articulate a new “renaissance humanism” compatible with what historians now call the “Catholic reform.” This would result in Jesuits becoming artists, musicians, dramatists, and scientists.²⁷ Finally, another unexpected development world concerned “missions.” During these years, the Pope was receiving requests from the Kings of Portugal and Spain to send priests as missionaries to those new territories of Latin America and Asia that had recently been conquered.²⁸ The Pope trusted Jesuits to perform these tasks and the model for generations of such Jesuits became the good friend of Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier. Jesuits are now regarded as being important agents of the process of early-modern globalisation.²⁹

Misjudgements Through the Centuries

In the first century and a half of Jesuit history, the link between Ignatian spirituality and the contemporary world was widely regarded to have been negotiated with success. Many new religious congregations grew up, of women as well as men, that imitated the Jesuit notion of contemplation in action. Similarly, a network of lay associations, “sodalities,” grew up where members underwent the *Spiritual Exercises* and combined their ordinary commitments to work and family life with the performing of good works. These associations were usually urban

²⁷ O’Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 253-263.

²⁸ O’Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 243-329.

²⁹ See “The Jesuits and Globalisation Project,” at The Berkley Centre for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Georgetown University, USA, <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/projects/the-jesuits-and-globalization>.

and specific to one or other trade or profession (there were also sodalities for women.) In this way, the spiritual exercises penetrated a good deal of the life of Catholic Europe, and, through missionary work, other continents also.³⁰ However, as time passed, changes occurred in contemporary culture to which Jesuits did not always adapt with the same success.

Three examples suffice to illustrate how, as the contemporary world changed, Jesuit ministries did not always adapt successfully. The first example relates to the suppression of the Jesuits as a religious order by Pope Clement XIV in 1773, a suppression that continued until 1814.

The causes of the suppression of the Jesuits are complex.³¹ One dimension of the reality was that the fate of the Jesuits was now intimately interwoven with the affairs of the Catholic Church as a whole. Consequently, when the Church endured a time of crisis in the eighteenth century, Jesuits became a focus of this crisis. This century witnessed the scientific revolution and the philosophical Enlightenment which followed. The Church as a whole, and the Jesuits with it, struggled to adapt to the shift of intellectual and cultural climate that these developments represented. This became an age of decline in the political power of kings, the rise of parliamentary structures of governments, and an ever-increasing freedom of thought in an emerging bourgeoisie. Some historians have been slow to criticise the Jesuits, suggesting that the suppression of this religious order was a great mistake made by a

³⁰ O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 243-283.

³¹ See Jeffrey D. Burson and Jonathan Wright eds., *The Jesuit Suppression in Global Context: Causes Events and Consequences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1-12; 40-64.

wider Catholic Church, which had submitted itself to the will of leaders of radical European governments. One commentary follows the details of Church politics of the time and states of the Jesuits:

Success was their undoing. Other orders were jealous of their dominance: there was widespread envy of their riches; there was suspicion of their influence upon monarchs; and a distaste among Gallicans for their Ultramontane tendencies...the Jansenists were shrewd in expanding the basis of their own support by targeting a group who were universally unpopular.³²

Other historians are less approving, suggesting that Jesuits had given cause for their unpopularity. There is some support for this thesis from Jesuit archives. Prior to the suppression, a series of General Superiors had written letters to all Jesuits complaining that some tended to work too hard, to neglect the spiritual dimension of their lives, to become too “worldly,” and, at times, to be too involved in commerce and the politics of the age.³³ At any rate, the Jesuits seemed not to have adapted with flexibility to changing times, relying rather on outdated formulas for how their Ignatian spirituality should guide engagement with the contemporary world.

The second period of questionable ministerial decision-making by Jesuits concerns the time after the Society of Jesus was re-established in 1814. This occurred in the same year that Napoleon was defeated, and

³² See Frank Tallett and Nicholas Atkin, *Priests, Prelates and People, A History of European Catholicism since 1750* (London: UK: Bloomsbury, 2003), 34.

³³ See Martin Morales, “The Suppression, a Historiographic Challenge,” *Jesuit Yearbook*, 2014, 16-19.

at the beginning of a period of reactionary politics across Europe.³⁴ Describing developments in the Catholic Church at large, one commentary states “we can already see that the papacy was moving towards a comprehensive rejection of all things modern and a retreat into a theological bunker.”³⁵ This commentary explains that the dominance of reactionary politics in Europe would not remain for long, with revolutions in 1848 ushering in a new wave of radical change. It contends that the Church failed to perceive the long-term significance of the Enlightenment and the French revolution:

The Church...failed to perceive that several of the trends initiated or highlighted by 1789—popular participation in politics, the emergence of new ideologies such as liberalism, nationalism and socialism—were here to stay and that it was necessary to reach some understanding with them.³⁶

Historians agree that the Jesuits supported these options by the official Church and shared its oversights. Representatives of this broader lack of creativity was the performance of Jesuits in the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, known also as the “Roman College.” This university had been operated by Italian diocesan priests during the year of the suppression of the Jesuits. A historian explains that events such as the French revolution and the invasion of Rome by Napoleon’s troops had created a crisis and that, “there had been no time in Rome for

³⁴ See Robert Danieluk, “The Society: Continuity and Discontinuity,” *Jesuit Yearbook, 2014*, 44-47; Miguel Coll, “The Beginnings of the New Society,” *Jesuit Yearbook, 2014*, 65-68. See also Atkin and Tallet, Chapter 3, “Catholicism Restored: 1815-1850,” 85-128.

³⁵ Atkin and Tallett, 128.

³⁶ Atkin and Tallett, 128.

a theological recovery when the Jesuits took over the Roman College.” He adds that, for the Jesuits, “the only teachers available had been formed in the old schools. They could scarcely be expected to do more than perpetuate the dry philosophy of the late eighteenth century.” He concludes that these professors taught material that was “lifeless if not erroneous, reflecting a mentality long out of date.”³⁷ He adds that this state of affairs would not change substantially as the century progressed.

A third example of Jesuits experiencing problems related to how they engage with the contemporary world occurred in 1981. At this time, the General Superior of the Jesuits, Pedro Arrupe, fell ill and it was clear that he would have to be replaced. Next, Pope John Paul II intervened and suspended the ordinary functioning of the Jesuit constitutions. For a short time, he imposed his own delegate as the administrator of the Society, not trusting the Jesuits to appoint a new General Superior that he would consider acceptable.³⁸ This moment of crisis was resolved relatively quickly, and the Pope soon allowed the election of a new Superior General according to the normal procedures of the Jesuit Constitutions. However, the General Superior who was elected, Peter Hans Kolvenbach, would take care to heed the concerns of the Vatican in subsequent years.

The background to the tension with the pope includes the way the Jesuits had conducted the Thirty-Second General Congregation of the institute in 1975. An aim of this congregation had been to translate the

³⁷ Philip Scaraman, SJ, *University of the Nations: The Story of the Gregorian University of Rome from 1551 to Vatican II*, (NY: Paulist Press, 1981), 86.

³⁸ See “Religion: John Paul Takes On the Jesuits,” *Time Magazine*, 9 November 1981: <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,922654,00.html>.

vision of the Second Vatican Council into a vision for how to express the Jesuit charism in contemporary times. The Congregation published a decree entitled, "Our Mission Today: The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice." This document revisits the dimension of being contemplatives in action in a world characterised by Cold War politics and an increased awareness of the sufferings of countries of the, so-called, "Third World."³⁹ The emphasis on social justice in the document would characterise many Jesuit ministries in the years that followed, and this would prove controversial with the Vatican, which considered such policies to be influenced by the theology of liberation that had emerged in Latin America after Vatican II. Pope John Paul II saw fit to challenge certain aspects of this theology, inviting Cardinal Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, to produce a document entitled, "Instruction On Certain Aspects of 'the Theology of Liberation.'" ⁴⁰ This instruction praised aspects of this theology, including its notion of "preferential option for the poor," and a concern for social justice. However, it criticises a tendency towards the use of Marxist categories, and a tendency toward "utopian" thinking, over-identifying the Gospel notion of the Kingdom of God with a reductionistic, even an atheistic notion of social progress.

From the point of view of this article, it suffices to note that still in 1981 it seemed that the Jesuits were experiencing problems regarding

³⁹ Society of Jesus, *General Congregation 32* (1975), Decree 4, "Our Mission Today, the Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice," https://jesuitportal.bc.edu/research/documents/1975_decree4gc32/.

⁴⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1984, "Instruction On Certain Aspects of 'the Theology of Liberation'," http://w2.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19840806_theology-liberation_en.html.

just how to think through the way that Ignatian spirituality should guide engagement with the contemporary world, while at the same time “thinking with the Church.”⁴¹

Part II: Bernard Lonergan: Elevating Catholic Theology “To the Level of Its Times”

I turn now to outline the thought of Bernard Lonergan, which I believe is relevant to helping those formed in Ignatian spirituality to think through—on a regular basis—the complex question of how to engage with the contemporary world. My central point is as follows. The *Spiritual Exercises* provide general principles for how to engage in the contemporary world but they do not, in themselves, provide the means to achieve this. I have noted that, within the spectrum of spiritualities of the time, Ignatian spirituality placed much emphasis on the cultivation of our natural gifts of reason so as to better dedicate the whole person to the supernatural end of cooperating with God’s plan of salvation. However, Lonergan points out that the Jesuits were founded at the beginning of the modern era when understanding how to use our powers of reason was itself changing. It would take a long time for these developing notions of reason to mature and for the Catholic Church to trust these developments sufficiently to incorporate them into its way of doing theology. The Church would begin to do this when Pope John XXIII convoked the Second Vatican Council and called for an

⁴¹ See Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises*, “Rules for Thinking with the Church,” 352-370.

aggiornamento (updating) in the Church characterized by a willingness to employ "modern methods of study":

The Church...must ever look to the present, to the new conditions and new forms of life introduced into the modern world, which have opened new avenues to the Catholic apostolate...the whole world expects a step forward toward a doctrinal penetration and a formation of consciousness in faithful and perfect conformity to the authentic doctrine, which, however, should be studied and expounded through *the methods of research and through the literary forms of modern thought*. The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another.⁴²

In some respects, the 16 documents produced by Vatican II can be understood as a response to this call. Lonergan understood his own work to be in continuity with that of Vatican II and also to respond to what he called, "Pope John's Intention."⁴³ He liked to speak of his work on epistemology, metaphysics, religious conversion, and theological method as part of an effort to help the Church "strive to mount to the level of one's time."⁴⁴ He believed that the key characteristic of the modern "methods of research" is that they were conducted from within

⁴² Pope John XXIII, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, Opening Discourse to Vatican II, 1 October 1962: <http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/it.html>.

⁴³ Lonergan, "Pope John's Intention," *A Third Collection* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), 224-238.

⁴⁴ Lonergan borrowed this phrase from the philosopher Ortega Y Gasset who wrote on the need to update university education. See "Original Preface of *Insight*," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*, 3/1(1985): 3-7, at 4.

a horizon of “historical consciousness.”⁴⁵ He contrasted this with what he called a horizon “classicism.” He considered the Neo-Scholastic theological manuals used in the Catholic Church prior to Vatican II to be preeminent examples of classicism. I suggest that what Lonergan came up with not only helps prolong the vision of Vatican II in theology in general but represents a deeply Ignatian approach to thinking through how to engage with the contemporary world.

Four aspects of Lonergan’s thought relate him directly to Ignatius of the *Spiritual Exercises*. The first two are philosophical, the second two theological.

Epistemology

Lonergan is known for two masterworks: *Insight: A Study in Human Understanding* (1956),⁴⁶ and *Method in Theology* (1972).⁴⁷ Chapter 1 of *Method in Theology* is entitled, “Method,” which summarizes and extends much of what the earlier work had to say about

⁴⁵ Lonergan is not alone in describing Vatican II as involving a shift to historical consciousness, although he offers his own, particular, analysis of what historical consciousness should mean. See John O’Malley, “Reform, Historical Consciousness, And Vatican II’s *Aggiornamento*”; Ormond Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutic Principles* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2004), and contributing authors to the five-volume series, eds. Giuseppe Aberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak *History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Press/Leuven: Peeters, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006).

⁴⁶ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, Volume 3, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1992).

⁴⁷ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert M. Doran and John D. Dadosky, Volume 14, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017 [original edition 1972]).

cognitional theory and epistemology.⁴⁸ He introduces his theme with the statement: “A method is a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results.” He then describes how the ground of all particular academic methods lies in spontaneous operating of the human mind in terms of four levels of “intentional consciousness”:

There is the *empirical* level on which we sense, perceive, imagine, feel, speak, move. There is an *intellectual* level on which we inquire, come to understand, express what we have understood, work out the presuppositions and implications of our expression. There is the *rational* level on which we reflect, marshal the evidence, pass judgment on the truth or falsity, certainty or probability, of a statement. There is the *responsible* level on which we are concerned with ourselves, our own operations, our goals, and so deliberate about possible courses of action, evaluate them, decide, and carry out our decisions.⁴⁹

He explains that “the many levels of consciousness are just successive states in the unfolding of a single thrust, the eros of the human spirit.”⁵⁰

He explains what the foundations of this thrust are: “The prior transcendental notions that constitute the very dynamism of our conscious intending, promoting us from mere experiencing towards

⁴⁸ Principle biographical sources on Lonergan are Richard M. Liddy, *Transforming Light: Intellectual Conversion in the Early Lonergan* (Collegeville, MN, The Liturgical Press, 1993); Frederick E. Crowe, *Lonergan* (Collegeville, MN, The Liturgical Press, 1992); William Mathews, *Lonergan’s Quest: A Study of Desire in the Authoring of Insight* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Michael Shute, *The Origins of Lonergan’s Notion of the Dialectic of History* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993).

⁴⁹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 13.

⁵⁰ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 16.

understanding, from mere understanding towards truth and reality, from factual knowledge to responsible action.”⁵¹ Because this method of human knowing and deciding—in authentic persons—is driven by transcendental notions, Lonergan calls it a “transcendental method.”⁵² He states that “in a sense everyone knows and observes transcendental method” because we are spontaneously drawn to employ this capacity. However, he adds, “in another sense it is quite difficult to be at home in transcendental method” because, “it is a matter of heightening one’s consciousness by objectifying it, and that is something that each one, ultimately, has to do in himself and for himself.”⁵³ At this point, Lonergan arrives at one of the most original aspects of his thought. He invites his readers to a moment of “intellectual conversion.” This involves, “applying the operations as intentional to the operations as conscious.” He explains that this requires:

Experiencing one’s experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding, 2. Understanding the unity and relations of one’s experienced experiencing, understanding, judging, deciding, 3. Affirming the reality of one’s experienced and understood experience experiencing, understanding judging, deciding and 4. Deciding to operate in accord with the norms immanent in the spontaneous relatedness of one’s experiencing and understood, affirmed, experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 15.

⁵² Lonergan compares his notion of transcendental method with that of both the Scholastics and Kant, *Method in Theology*, 17, note 11.

⁵³ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 7.

⁵⁴ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 7-8.

Lonergan explains that intellectual conversion involves arriving at step 3, as described here (I postpone discussion of step 4—moral conversion—until later.) In presenting an invitation to readers to perform this act of self-affirmation, we see similarities and differences from Ignatius of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Lonergan’s invitation to introspection bears a striking resemblance to the way Ignatius invites retreatants to discern the interior movements of their spirit. We recall, also, how Ignatius proposes that this self-attentiveness extend to attending to the natural working of our reasoning process “with care and fidelity.”⁵⁵ On the other hand, when Ignatius invites individuals to attend to the “concepts and judgments” involved in the reasoning process, he is invoking Scholastic epistemology. According to Lonergan, this approach is guilty of “oversight of insight” and tends to conceive of knowing as if it were just “taking a good look.” He points out that this leads one to believe one should arrive at timeless, universal, truths as the culmination of a knowing process. By contrast, Lonergan points out that intellectual conversion helps us recognize that knowing emerges gradually as the culmination of a process that passes from experience, through insight, to culminate in judgment.

Cosmology

Only the first half of *Insight* is devoted to cognitional theory and epistemology. The second half is devoted to metaphysics. As he had stated in his Introduction:

⁵⁵ Ignatius, *The Spiritual Exercises*, 180.

Thoroughly understand what it is to understand and not only will you understand the broad lines of all there is to be understood but also you will possess a fixed base, an invariant pattern, opening upon all further developments of understanding.⁵⁶

Once he has led the reader through “the five finger exercise” of intellectual conversion, he points out that distinguishing the level of judgment from a level of insight allows one make a breakthrough to a “notion of being,” a “notion of objectivity” and, consequently, to a critically valid metaphysics. He explains, “at the root of cognitional process there is a cool, detached, disinterested desire to know, and its range is unrestricted. Being is the anything and everything that is the objective of that desire.”⁵⁷ According to some interpreters of Lonergan, this “is one of the great insights of Western philosophy.”⁵⁸

Lonergan next speaks of an “isomorphism” that exists between knowing and being and develops a “heuristic” account of the being of the universe in terms of a process of “emergent probability.” This process is complex to explain. However, it employs the flexible and creative process of human intelligence to explain the basic characteristics of being. The structure of being explained by this means include an evolutionary understanding of the universe where higher levels of being emerge from lower ones, just as “higher viewpoints” emerge in human understanding when one insight is attained which embraces a series of more limited insights. Lonergan describes

⁵⁶ Lonergan, *Insight*, 22.

⁵⁷ Lonergan, *Insight*, 376, see also 372.

⁵⁸ Mathews, 258.

“schemes of occurrence” where events occur in a circle of causation, and where “the actual functioning of earlier schemes in the series fulfils the conditions of the possibility of the functioning of later schemes.” He adds, “when it occurs, a probability of emergence is replaced by a probability of survival; and as long as the scheme survives, it is in its turn fulfilling conditions for the possibility of still later schemes in the series.”⁵⁹

Toward the end of *Insight* Lonergan applies this notion of an emergently probable universe to human history. He explains that human freedom brings unique characteristics to this level of being: it allows humans to be creators of new instances of being, for example in their culture and social structures. He adds that the phenomenon of human freedom can be either employed authentically to create “progress in history” or inauthentically to produce “decline in history.” Finally, he explains that a major fruit of intellectual conversion is that it helps identify the difference between progress and decline, with the hope that communities will choose to promote the former and reverse the latter:

For man can discover emergent probability; he can work out the manner in which prior insights and decisions determine the possibilities and probabilities of later insights and decisions; he can guide his present decisions in the light of their influence on future insights and decisions; finally, this control of the emergent probability of the future can be exercised not only by the individual in choosing his career and in forming his character, not only by adults in educating the younger

⁵⁹ Lonergan, *Insight*, 145.

generation, but also by mankind in its consciousness of its responsibility to the future of mankind. Just as technical, economic, and practical development gives man a dominion over nature, so also the advance of knowledge creates and demands a human contribution to the control of human history.⁶⁰

Religious Conversion and the Redemption of History

While *Insight* is an important work, it remains primarily philosophical, with the possibility of a supernatural intervention of God in history mentioned only in its final chapter. This lack is compensated for in *Method in Theology*, published 18 years later.

As already outlined above, Lonergan speaks of four levels of consciousness.⁶¹ Regarding the fourth level, he describes how facts judged as true at the third level provoke an affective response to value. He then traces how we “discern value in feelings” and that values reveal themselves to us in a scale, or hierarchy, of preference: “Not only do feelings respond to values. They do so in accord with some scale of preferences. So we may distinguish vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious values in an ascending order.”⁶² He next explains that this process of discernment concludes when we decide that we have reflected enough and we make a “judgment of value,” concerning just what value

⁶⁰ Lonergan, *Insight*, 252-3.

⁶¹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, Chapter 1, “Method,” 7-27. In fact, *Insight* speaks only of three levels of consciousness. Lonergan develops his notion of a fourth level as a result of extensive reading in existential and hermeneutical philosophy in the years subsequent to *Insight*.

⁶² Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 32.

is at stake in the concrete situation we are confronting. He then describes how this judgment prompts a decision to act.⁶³

Lonergan next invites his readers to recognize how religious conversion is an event that registers in the fourth level of consciousness. He explains, "to our apprehension of vital, social, cultural, and personal values, there is added an apprehension of ultimate value."⁶⁴ He describes how this apprehension remains more at a level of a feeling of awe than any detailed knowledge of what it is we are encountering. On the other hand, he acknowledges that what we are encountering "may be objectified as a clouded revelation of absolute intelligence and intelligibility, absolute truth and reality, absolute goodness and holiness."⁶⁵ Now, he explains that, following the structure of our fourth level of consciousness we proceed from merely apprehending this ultimate value to affirming that it is real. He adds, "with that objectification there recurs the question of God in a new form. For now it is primarily a question of decision: Will I love him in return, or will I refuse?"⁶⁶ He completes this analysis by describing what happens when we decide to accept the love that is offered by this source of ultimate value:

Religious conversion is being grasped by ultimate concern. It is other-worldly falling in love. It is total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, reservations...a dynamic state that is prior to and principle of subsequent

⁶³ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 37-41.

⁶⁴ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 112.

⁶⁵ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 112.

⁶⁶ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 112.

acts...for Christians it is God's Love flooding our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.⁶⁷

Next, Lonergan explains that moral conversion flows relatively spontaneously from religious conversion.⁶⁸ He asserts, “the love of God will transvalue our values and the eyes of that love will transform our knowing.”⁶⁹ Lonergan's tone of realism extends beyond stressing that moral conversion is unlikely without religious conversion. He states that even after moments of religious and moral conversion our progress in holiness and goodness is always “dialectical.” He states that “human authenticity is never some pure and serene and secure possession. It is ever a withdrawal from inauthenticity.”⁷⁰ Consequently, he describes the life of graced individuals as continuing to be a three-cornered struggle between our natural ability for self-transcendence, sin, and graced recovery. Nevertheless, Lonergan never abandons a broadly Thomist approach to this question. He does not regard the experience of grace as substituting for our natural capacity for self-transcendence, but rather as re-empowering it.

At this point in *Method in Theology*, Lonergan imitates the structure of the argument of *Insight* and advances from an analysis of the dynamics of the subject to a discussion of social and historical affairs. Reminding us of the strength of decline, he describes how “a civilization in decline digs its own grave with a relentless consistency.”⁷¹ He

⁶⁷ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 226, citing St. Paul's Letter to the Romans 5:5.

⁶⁸ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 104.

⁶⁹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 101, 102.

⁷⁰ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 106.

⁷¹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 53.

identifies the fundamental cause of decline as being the alienation of the human individual from his or her capacity for self-transcendence: "The basic form of alienation is man's disregard for the transcendental precepts, Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible."⁷² He then adds: "A religion that promotes self-transcendence to the point, not merely of justice, but of self-sacrificing love, will have a redemptive role in human society."⁷³ Consequently, his account of religious and moral conversion becomes the basis for a comprehensive account of a third heuristic category, or "vector," of history: redemption. He describes this in terms of a metaphor, "development from above downwards," to be distinguished from "development from below upwards,"⁷⁴ which can produce both progress and decline. He explains that this development from above is characterized by a love that is capable of reversing decline and restoring progress: "Where hatred plods around in ever narrower vicious circles, love breaks the bonds of psychological and social determinisms with the conviction of faith and the power of hope."⁷⁵

Theological Method

As just mentioned, Lonergan's account of religious and moral conversion, as outlined in *Method in Theology*, enriches and completes the account of intellectual conversion offered in *Insight*. In his earlier

⁷² Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 54.

⁷³ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 54.

⁷⁴ Lonergan, "Healing and Creating in History," *A Third Collection*, 100-108, at 106. In fact, the notion of two ways of development is a metaphor that Lonergan begins to use after the publication of *Method in Theology*.

⁷⁵ Lonergan, "Healing and Creating in History," 106.

work, he had clarified what historical consciousness means for him. It involves employing a cosmology of an emergently probable universe and understanding history to be constituted by a triple dialectic of tendencies: progress, decline, and redemption. What remains for him to achieve in *Method in Theology* is to outline, in detail, the method of a historically conscious approach to theology, one that can help a religious community be a catalyst of redemption in history.

At the beginning of *Method in Theology*, Lonergan offers a definition of the function of theology: “A Theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion in that matrix.”⁷⁶ He then describes theology as a collaborative process where diverse specialists perform distinct tasks in two phases. The first phase retrieves a religious tradition; the second phase mediates this to a current cultural matrix. He develops a notion of eight functional specialties, four in each phase. He names the first four functional specialties: research, interpretation, history, and dialectic. The second four he calls: foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications. A reason he fixes on four specialties in each phase is that he recognizes that the end purpose of each specialty is analogous to one of the levels of consciousness.⁷⁷

Lonergan invokes the notion of “classic text” employed by hermeneutical philosophers and makes the obvious point that in Christianity the classic text is the Bible (he nuances this by adding that

⁷⁶ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 3.

⁷⁷ See Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, Chapter 5, “Functional Specialties,” 121-138, at 128. Part 2 of the book devotes a chapter (or two) to each of the functional specialties.

non-Biblical aspects of religious tradition, e.g. liturgy, are also a source for theology.) He describes the first two functional specialties, research and interpretation, as primarily studying the meaning communicated by the Bible to its immediate intended audience. Next, he notes that, over the centuries, the Christian religion developed a sophisticated system of normative interpretations of this text—a doctrinal tradition—which is studied in the functional specialty history. He next explains that not all aspects of the Christian tradition have the protection of being considered doctrine, and indeed some aspects of this tradition contradict other aspects. He explains that the fourth functional specialty is dialectic, which points out the contradictions and inadequacies of certain aspects of the tradition.

Turning to the second phase of theological method, Lonergan notes that the creative process of both deconstruction of the past and reconstruction of a message for the present needs to be exercised by wise practitioners who sincerely participate in the Christian faith. Consequently, the fifth functional specialty, foundations, is closely linked to its predecessor, dialectic. Lonergan explains that, in the fifth functional specialty, explicit reference must be made in the conversions of the theologian: religious, moral, and intellectual.⁷⁸ He also states that the theologian should make clear what intellectual instruments he or she will be employing in the creative exercise of selecting from the options presented in the specialty of dialectic and seeking to mediate them to contemporary culture. He proposes that these instruments must exhibit

⁷⁸ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, Chapter 11, “Foundations,” 250-274. See especially, “Foundational Reality,” 251-252.

historical consciousness and suggests that his theory of history in terms of progress, decline, and redemption should play a key role in this.⁷⁹

The sixth functional specialty, doctrines, represents the result of the process of selection and decision in the previous two specialties. It necessarily involves a respect for Church doctrines, which the theologian is not at liberty to dispute. However, it can also involve an assent to “theological doctrines” which the theologian believes to be true, even if the Church has not yet promoted such theological opinions to the level of a doctrine. The seventh functional specialty, systematics, represents an effort to explain the meaning of the doctrines that have been selected in the previous specialty. Such explanations will be more intelligible than the mere statement of doctrines, but they do not have the same claim to truth. This permits, for example, the emergence of pluralism in theological opinion, and the development of doctrines over time, if the church promotes a theological opinion to a doctrine.

Finally, it is in the eighth functional specialty, “communications,” that “theological reflection bears fruit.”⁸⁰ This involves communicating the insights of systematic theology to the whole Christian community, helping the set of meanings and values expressed in this specialty to become the constitutive meaning of that community. In this way, Lonergan speaks of communications helping the Church to become a “process of self-constitution.”⁸¹ Next, however, Lonergan reminds his

⁷⁹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, Chapter 11, “Foundations.” See especially, “General Theological Categories,” and “Special Theological Categories,” 267-272.

⁸⁰ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 327.

⁸¹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 334.

readers that the Church is also supposed to be an “out-going process,”⁸² attempting to communicate redemptive meanings and values to the broader culture.

Conclusion: Ignatius and Lonergan

The four key characteristics of Lonergan’s thought, just outlined, can be easily related to the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. Regarding the epistemology of *Insight*, Robert Doran writes of “*Insight* as a set of *Spiritual Exercises*.” Here he points to the close parallel between Lonergan’s invitation to introspection and the invitation of Ignatius to discern the affective swings we experience in prayer.⁸³ Similarly, he notes how Lonergan speaks of a transcendent object of the pure desire to know, an insight he shares with Ignatius, who is confident that exploring our deepest desires will reveal that we desire to know God and to do His will. Doran states that, already in the Preface to *Insight*, “the reader is being told that by reading this book he or she will be plunged into a struggle that, while cognitive and intellectual and philosophic, is also profoundly existential and spiritual.”⁸⁴ Next, Doran speaks of an “Ignatian ethos” that pervades *Insight*.⁸⁵ He points to the Ignatian “tone” of Lonergan’s complex metaphysics and speaks of the consolation he felt while reading it for the first time. He explains:

⁸² Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 335.

⁸³ Robert Doran, “Essays in Systematic Theology 19: Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan: Revisiting a Topic That Deserves Further Reflection,” 10-12: <https://bit.ly/38CQ8aB>.

⁸⁴ Doran, “Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan,” 10-11.

⁸⁵ Doran, “Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan,” 3.

This consolation is related to an illumination that *Insight* can effect: in fact this world *is* intelligible, things *do* hold together, we *can* make sense of the universe and of our lives, we *can* overcome the fragmentation of knowledge, we *can* make true judgments, we *can* make good decisions, we *can* transcend ourselves to what is and to what is good.⁸⁶

Doran adds, “This commitment to long-range effects, ultimate issues, even though [these are] theoretical questions, has always been a hallmark of the Society of Jesus, where the Society has remained faithful to its own origins and vocation.”⁸⁷

When one turns to Lonergan’s account of religious conversion, the links to the *Spiritual Exercises* become more than ever evident. However, here one notes an irony: these links were not always evident to Lonergan himself. The reason for this is that when Lonergan had been a novice, the *Spiritual Exercises* were poorly understood and poorly presented. Jesuits were so influenced by their Neo-Scholastic philosophical horizon that they were unable to recognize where this conflicted with the dynamic of the *Spiritual Exercises*. One commentator describes how, over the years, Lonergan had needed to “unburden the experimental life of grace presumed by the authentic practice of the *Spiritual Exercises* from voluntarist and conceptualist presuppositions in order to explore the transformative union of the human person with God.”⁸⁸ The ironic fact is that, for many years, Lonergan developed his thinking in

⁸⁶ Doran, “Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan,” 6.

⁸⁷ Doran, “Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan,” 4-5 (parenthesis added).

⁸⁸ Gordon Rixon, “Bernard Lonergan and Mysticism,” *Theological Studies*, 62(2001): 479 to 497, at 484.

philosophy and theology without recognizing how Ignatian his thoughts were. It was only toward the end of his life, when listening to a lecture on the renewal of understanding of the *Spiritual Exercises* after Vatican II, that Lonergan grasped how close was his account of religious conversion to that of consolation without cause in the *Spiritual Exercises*. He declared:

I had been hearing those words since 1922 at the annual retreats made by Jesuits preparing for the priesthood. They occur in St. Ignatius's “Rules for the Discernment of Spirits” in the Second Week of the *Exercises*. But now, after fifty-three years, I began for the first time to grasp what they meant.⁸⁹

Finally, Lonergan’s account of functional specialisation leaves one in no doubt that he seeks to put the deepest of intellectual reflection to the kind of pastoral application of which Ignatius would be proud. Describing the task of the final functional specialty, communications, he states:

The Christian message is to be communicated to all nations. Such communication presupposes that preachers and teachers enlarge their horizons to include an accurate and intimate understanding of the culture and the language of the people they address. They must grasp the virtual resources of that culture and that language, and they must use those virtual resources creatively so that the Christian message becomes, not

⁸⁹ Lonergan wrote this in a letter of recommendation for academic promotion for Harvey Egan SJ, reproduced as “Bernard Lonergan to Thomas O’Malley,” in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*, Volume 20, Number 1, 2002: 81-2.

disruptive of the culture, not an alien patch superimposed upon it, but a line of development within the culture.⁹⁰

Robert Doran offers an analysis of the problems the Society of Jesus experienced with Pope John Paul II in 1981. He suggests that a better employment of the “intellectual apostolate,” such as advocated by Bernard Lonergan could have helped avoid such problems. He states:

Wherever this commitment has been lost or abandoned in the history of the Society, the Society itself has lost its way and has had to be called back to something very important in its service to the Church, just as Fr Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, with mixed results so far, is trying to call the Society back today to the centrality of the intellectual apostolate, precisely for the sake of ‘the service of faith and the promotion of justice’ that we have recognized as partly constitutive of our vocation.”⁹¹

I believe there is much truth in this severe comment, but I would like to nuance it in two ways. First, in centuries prior to the twentieth the only tools available to the intellectual apostolate were classicist ones. Consequently, even the best of intellectual reflection was unlikely to have been adequate to guide the Society of Jesus through the challenging times of the suppression and restoration of the Society. Secondly, in 2018 the current General Superior of the Jesuits, Fr. Arturo Sosa, produced a new formulation of four “Universal Apostolic Preferences.”⁹² These stand in continuity with the mission statement of

⁹⁰ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 334.

⁹¹ Doran, “Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan,” 5.

⁹² The Society of Jesus, “The Universal Apostolic Preferences,” <https://www.jesuits.global/uap/#>.

1975 while also demonstrating a maturing of reflection that is related to having listened to the critique of the Vatican. The first of these preferences can be understood as echoing the call of the General Congregation of 1975 for the service of faith. The second is a rearticulation of the call to promote social justice, which it now describes in terms of “social reconciliation.” A third preference regards the promotion of ecology; and the fourth regards the importance of working with young people. I suggest that there is every possibility of illuminating these preferences with the thought of Lonergan. What is important now is that an opportune time—a *Kairos*—has arrived when the tools are available to allow the links between Ignatian spirituality and the contemporary to be well worked out. It would take another article to explore ways in which the pontificate of Pope Francis might deepen the reality of such an opportune time.⁹³

⁹³ The notion that the pontificate of Francis might represent a *kairos* moment for the reception of Lonergan is the purpose of the book, Gerard Whelan, *A Discerning Church Pope Francis, Lonergan and a Theological Method for the Future* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2019).

〔摘要〕本文認為，依納爵靈修在如何融入當代世界的問題上，兩者之間的連繫是聖依納爵（St. Ignatius）的願景的核心所在。然而，它強調如何構成這種連繫的問題本身是複雜的，而聖依納爵神操本身並沒有提供知識的工具來決定如何進行此連繫的細節。本文追溯了幾個世紀以來耶穌會士如何在取得適當的平衡方面，有時取得更大的成功，有時則很少。然後它轉向 20 世紀加拿大耶穌會士伯納德·朗尼根（Bernard Lonergan）的思想，提出他的著作《神學方法》（*Method in Theology*）提供了適當的工具來建立這種連繫，而這一連繫與梵二精神十分調和。

關鍵詞：聖依納爵神操、分辨神類、本性、理性、先驗方法、皈依、出現的概率、功能專業

Presence in Contemporary Ignatian Spiritual Direction

Mickie Yau Wing Yin

[Abstract] While presence is a term widely used in the literature of psychology and is an essential phenomenon in Christian spirituality, presence is elusive and challenging to articulate. Presence in spiritual direction is a contracted and relational process though little has been articulated as to what supports a director to be present in a way that will contribute to the goals in spiritual direction. Is presence within the context of spiritual direction a quality, charisma or a skill? What kind of presence best aligns with the goals in Ignatian spiritual direction?

Christian spiritual direction develops from its early emergence with the desert fathers in the fourth century to contemporary professional practice. While the foundations remain essential and enduring in Christian spiritual direction tradition, no doubt its original format will change in response to the nature and background of people involved. This article engages an interdisciplinary discussion on the process of presence in contemporary spiritual direction, and reviews literature from Ignatian spirituality, psychology, philosophy and theology. Exploring different articulations of presence will help to build a rich phenomenological understanding of presence. Since the writer has a background in Gestalt relational psychotherapy and spiritual direction, a relational perspective in discussing presence guides the focus of this paper. This article suggests that presence is a disposition that the director holds and

involves 1) embodied action; 2) attunement; 3) dialogue; 4) contemplation, and 5) healing love. This article aims to stimulate reflection on contemporary Ignatian practice in spiritual direction.

Keywords: presence, Ignatian, spiritual direction, relational, discernment

Introduction

As those living in the twentieth-first century, we experience a complex, materialistic and fast-changing era. Whether there is an active search for purpose and spiritual connection in life or a desperate sense of meaninglessness and hopelessness, both speak of an unchangeable quest for something beyond our ego concerns. The ministry of spiritual direction has enthusiastically and rigorously developed in recent decades in response to this yearning.

Spiritual direction is now inclusive of all faith traditions, but Christian (Ignatian) spiritual direction distinctively addresses the active presence of the Triune God. Jesuit Theologian Karl Rahner identifies the heart of Christian spirituality as the experience of God as “Presence, intimate, and relatable Presence.”¹ The divine mystery that Christians name God is always present, and our response is to actively engage our attention with Presence in our lived experience. Trinitarian theology offers an image of God as “relational love and Spirit, three persons in

¹ Karl Rahner, "The Spirituality of the Future," in *The Practice of Faith: A Handbook of Contemporary Spirituality*, ed. Karl Lehmann and Albert Raffelt (London: SCM Press, 1985), 22.

loving relationship,”² and the Son of God incarnate Jesus shares our humanity and longs for a personal relationship with each of us. Ignatian spirituality holds that God is not a theory or dogma to study, but a real, living, affectionate Other with whom we can communicate and relate intimately. Robert Webber highlights Christian spirituality as “our mystical union with God accomplished by Jesus Christ through the Spirit. God unites with humanity in his saving incarnation, death and resurrection.”³ Paul Tillich believes that even when we are experiencing the absent God, we know God, as this empty space evokes a longing for the presence of God to fulfil us.⁴

Being present originates from our human nature as relational beings since we “are created in the image of God as ontologically relational and gifted with spirit, then there is an actual relationship between all humans and God.”⁵ Although the relational capacity of people varies, healthy humans generally possess subjective thoughts and feelings and at the same time can observe that others have separate sets of thoughts and feelings. Thus, the dynamic of exchange and connection exists. Intimacy happens when I am “making my inner world known and getting to know the inner world of the other.”⁶ The capacity to fully see,

² Maureen H. Miner, “Back to the Basics in Attachment to God: Revisiting Theory in Light of Theology,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 35, no. 2 (2007): 116.

³ Robert E. Webber, *The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006), 16.

⁴ Steven Ogden, *The Presence of God in the World: A Contribution to Postmodern Christology based on the Theologies of Paul Tillich and Karl Rahner* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), 87.

⁵ Miner, “Back to the Basics in Attachment to God: Revisiting Theory in Light of Theology,” 119.

⁶ Gordon Wheeler, “Towards Gestalt Developmental Model,” *British Gestalt Journal* 7, no. 2 (1997): 120.

hear and feel the other who is beyond my boundary creates presence. David Augsburg suggests that “when one is truly there for another, depth of communication occurs that is beyond words or style, or technique, or theory, or theology. It is presence gifted by Presence.”⁷

Christian Spiritual Direction as Relational

Christian spiritual direction is an intrapersonal, interpersonal and transpersonal activity which is “directly concerned with a person’s actual experiences of his relationship with God.”⁸ Roger Hurding proposes that the spiritual director is a kind of desert-dweller “who has experienced the refining process of solitude” and can listen from “a quiet inner centre.”⁹ A spiritual director firstly cultivates a personal and intimate relationship with the Divine, supporting others with the wisdom from their own inner journey. Janet Ruffing describes the relationship of spiritual director and directee as one which explores everything from the stream of life together, akin to panning for the gold which is “the experience of grace and the Spirit.”¹⁰ William Barry and William Connolly believe spiritual experience is the “foodstuff for cooking” in spiritual direction,¹¹ and the director aims to enable the directee:

⁷ David W. Augsburg, *Pastoral Counselling Across Cultures* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1986), 37.

⁸ William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, Rev. and updated ed. (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 7.

⁹ Roger Hurding, *Five Pathways to Wholeness: Explorations in Pastoral Care and Counselling* (London: SPCK, 2013), 95.

¹⁰ Janet Ruffing, *Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 57.

¹¹ Barry and Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 56.

to pay attention to God’s personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship. The focus of this type of spiritual direction is on experience, not ideas, and specifically on religious experience, i.e., that dimension of any experience that evokes the presence of the mysterious Other whom we call God.¹²

Although sharing spiritual experiences is a crucial element in spiritual direction, the goal of the spiritual path is not limited to talking about prayer. For Thomas Merton, the

...whole purpose of spiritual direction is to penetrate beneath the surface of a person’s life, to get behind the façade of conventional gestures and attitudes which one presents to the world, and to bring out one’s inner spiritual freedom, one’s inmost truth, which is what [Christians] call the likeness of Christ in one’s soul. This is an entirely supernatural (spiritual) thing, for the work of rescuing the inner person from automatism belongs first of all to the Holy Spirit.¹³

Merton’s emphasis on inner freedom for Christ resonates with Gordon Smith’s assertion that Christian spiritual direction is different from life coaching or counselling, which is helping another towards a self-constructed life. Christian spiritual direction aims to support those

¹² Barry and Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 8.

¹³ Thomas Merton, *Spiritual Direction and Meditation* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2013), 8.

who have a desire to live with a “radical dependence on the Spirit and through intentional response to the Spirit.”¹⁴

In the sixteenth century, St Ignatius of Loyola wrote *the Spiritual Exercises* for people to deepen their relationship with God and live out the impact of that relationship. Ignatius expects that the Exercises journey has the potential to “prepare and dispose the soul to rid itself of all inordinate attachments, and, after their removal, of seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul.”(Exx 1)¹⁵ The *Exercises* and subsequent directories are written mainly for those who give the Exercises in the context of Ignatian retreats. Philip Sheldrake reminds us to avoid “uncritically removing certain items from the text of the Exercises in order to construct”¹⁶ a wider model of spiritual direction. Nonetheless, these guidelines not only lay the foundation of Ignatian spirituality but in my observation, have been referenced by spiritual directors beyond this tradition.

Ignatius believes that self-awareness and discernment are the keys to attaining inner freedom. The Exercises journey aims to support a directee in their “conquest of self and the regulation of one’s life in such a way that no decision is made under the influence of any inordinate attachment.” (Exx 21) Ignatian self-awareness does not promote self-absorption, but indeed encourages a person to notice and examine how

¹⁴ Gordon Smith, *Spiritual Direction: A Guide to Giving and Receiving Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014), 22.

¹⁵ The Annotations in the *Spiritual Exercises* will be abbreviated as ‘Exx’ thereafter in this article. Ignatius and Louis J. Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph* (Manila: St Pauls, 1987).

¹⁶ Philip Sheldrake, “St Ignatius of Loyola and Spiritual Direction,” in *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance*, ed. Lavinia Byrne (London: Cassell Publishers, 1990), 99.

specific inner experience situates in one’s relational dynamics with God. As noted in the *Principle and Foundation* the director and directee co-discern which promptings, attitudes, dispositions or decisions draw each of them towards or away from our life orientation to “praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul” (Exx 23).

What leads one to freedom might lead another to entrapment. Ignatius expects those who enter the Exercises journey to be inflamed by God’s love and motivated towards loving service. Love is the basis for discernment and decision-making. Neil Pembroke acknowledges presence as the core of spiritual care.¹⁷ To facilitate discernment and growth of inner freedom, a spiritual director listens to both self and others in an attuned and respectful way. Margaret Guenther uses the image of the midwife to describe how spiritual directors give support, encouragement and monitor progress by being “present to another in a time of vulnerability, working in areas that are deep and intimate.”¹⁸ Guenther notes this is a ministry of presence, patience, waiting and being with uncertainty.¹⁹ This intense work also includes the joy of celebrating the experience of being the giver of life’s blessings.

Spiritual directors are therefore called to be present with holistic awareness. The section that follows explores how presence involves physical, emotional, psychological, mental, relational and transpersonal dimensions.

¹⁷ Neil Pembroke, *The Art of Listening: Dialogue, Shame, and Pastoral Care* (London; New York; Grand Rapids, MI: T&T Clark/Handsel Press; William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 1.

¹⁸ Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening: the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cowley Publications, 1992), 89.

¹⁹ Guenther, *Holy Listening: the Art of Spiritual Direction*, 91.

1. Presence as Embodied Action

Shari Geller believes that relational presence is not binary, either we are wholly present or not. Presence is “a continuous process with varying intensities that unfold in your encounter with clients.”²⁰ We first communicate presence through our body and it is common for people to feel a different energy after “being with” certain people. Neuroscience suggests that our nervous system has a mimic function towards the state of others through activation of mirror neurons in our brain. The neurobiological well-being of a person consequently influences the quality of presence. One can often observe oneself being impacted by another person whose state is relaxed, nervous, calm, agitated, dazed, tired or energised.

A person who intentionally offers presence serves through continuous self-regulation. David Benner proposes that “presence is the awakening that calls us into an engagement with some aspect of the present moment” and “the distance between whatever we notice and us is suddenly reduced.”²¹ Peter Senge et al. define presence as “consciously participating in a larger field for change” by “deep listening” and “full conscious awareness” which conclude by “leading to a state of letting come,” and “letting go of old identities and the need to control.”²² Otto Scharmer suggests presencing is using our “highest

²⁰ Shari M. Geller and American Psychological Association, *A practical guide to cultivating therapeutic presence* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2017), 201.

²¹ David G. Benner, *Presence and Encounter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2014), 2.

²² Peter M. Senge, *Presence: Exploring Profound Change in People, Organizations, and Society* (New York: Crown Business/Currency Books, 2008), 13.

self as a vehicle for sensing, embodying and enacting emerging futures.”²³

Gestalt therapists, Marie-Anne Chidiac and Sally Denham-Vaughan claim that “presence seems to enfold the dualities of being and acting, stillness and movement, availability and responsiveness.”²⁴ There is “a quality of being grounded, fully alert and yet apparently still.”²⁵ Presence involves a physiological state of concentration, calmness, uncluttered mental state and heightened awareness to “what is.” This “holding” stance is often addressed in spiritual direction.

Chidiac and Denham-Vaughan summarise the process of presence as “energetic availability and fluid responsiveness”²⁶:

	Energetic Availability	Fluid Responsiveness
As I experience presence in others	Feeling deeply attracted by presence in others. Feeling noticed and seen by the other.	Feeling held/safe and with a person who is well resourced.
As I experience my own presence	Alert yet calm. Attentive to, and connecting with others.	Knowing what I know liberates me to focus on others, on the new.

Table 1: The experience of presence of self and others: energetic availability and fluid responsiveness.²⁷

²³ Otto Scharmer, “Learning from the future as it emerges” (Conference on Knowledge and Innovation, Helsinki School of Economics, Finland, 2000).

²⁴ Marie-Anne Chidiac and Sally Denham-Vaughan, “The Process of Presence,” *British Gestalt Journal* 16, no. 1 (2007): 11.

²⁵ Chidiac and Denham-Vaughan, “Presence for Everyone: A Dialogue,” 11.

²⁶ Chidiac and Denham-Vaughan, “Presence for Everyone: A Dialogue,” 9.

²⁷ Chidiac and Denham-Vaughan, “Presence for Everyone: A Dialogue,” 11.

Energetic Availability

I share a similar heritage to Chidiac and Denham-Vaughan as a Gestalt therapist and understand that their articulation of what presence is in therapy could also apply in spiritual direction.²⁸ While it is challenging to capture the feeling of presence through words, those who have experienced presence describe it as being “met in a way that is deeply entralling.”²⁹ Richard Hycner poignantly describes this being met in such a way as “an embrace of gazes.”³⁰ Presence is experienced as knowing “the other has the ability and capacity to understand and hold all that I am in the moment, and that which I give freely unto the other.”³¹ This “holding” and connecting capacity emerges not only through verbal exchange, but from our whole being. Kathleen Fischer agrees, noting that “the feelings [of a directee] usually arise of themselves when a person is strong enough to let them come.”³² The psycho-spiritual integration work in the director’s life thus enhances the capacity to “be with,” similar to how Michael Brown describes “the presence process” as an unconditional embrace of “what is.”³³ Brown further states that integration is not about feeling better but getting better with feelings, especially those we

²⁸ Special acknowledgement is given to the generous support of Relational Change (UK and Europe) through Dr Sally Denham-Vaughan in providing guidance to explore the concept of presence. www.relationalchange.org

²⁹ Chidiac and Denham-Vaughan, “Presence for Everyone: A Dialogue,” 10.

³⁰ Richard Hycner and Lynne Jacobs, *The Healing Relationship in Gestalt Therapy: A Dialogic—Self-Psychology Approach* (New York: Gestalt Journal Press, 1995), 9.

³¹ Chidiac and Denham-Vaughan, “Presence for Everyone: A Dialogue,” 10.

³² Kathleen Fischer, “Working with the Emotions in Spiritual Direction: Seven Guiding Principles,” *Presence* 12, no. 13 (2006): 32.

³³ Michael Brown, *The Presence Process: a Healing Journey into Present Moment Awareness* (Vancouver: Namaste Publishing, 2005), 120.

used to suppress in childhood such as anger, grief and fear.³⁴ Accepting one’s vulnerability is a pathway to integration, which means allowing whatever comes to awareness to have space to exist.

A person who intends to serve by being present is expected to have resources to share. In psychotherapy, this includes knowledge of human development and therapeutic skills. In spiritual direction, the director’s personal relationship with God and theological reflective ability is essential.³⁵ Bernadette Miles highlights that “personhood” is the primary resource for a spiritual director.³⁶ In her research interviews with spiritual directors, interviewees describe some directees reporting they have experienced a subliminal understanding from them. Directees may not know the life stories of the director, but they “know” if the person listening can understand their experience and what is allowed in the room.³⁷

Kathleen McAlpin defines spirituality as lived experience coming from an “internalised vision of faith.”³⁸ Here faith not only refers to “a morally good [Christian] life, characterised by keeping commandments, prayer and some sacrificing service.”³⁹ Spiritual directors are called to

³⁴ Brown, *The Presence Process: a Healing Journey into Present Moment Awareness*, 98.

³⁵ Brian O’Leary, “What is Specific to an Ignatian Model of Spiritual Direction?,” *The Way* 47, 1-2 (2008): 16. O’Leary highlights theological reflective ability not as having formal theological training but able to understand how certain spiritual experiences are understood to have theological frameworks.

³⁶ Bernadette Miles, “Spiritual Direction as an Enabling Resource for Leadership and Organizational Development for the 21st Century” (PhD University of Divinity, 2018), 223.

³⁷ Miles, “Spiritual Direction as an Enabling Resource for Leadership and Organizational Development for the 21st Century,” 224.

³⁸ Kathleen McAlpin, *Ministry that Transforms* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 99.

³⁹ George J. Schemel and Judith Roemer, *Beyond Individuation to Discipleship* (Scranton, PA: Institute for Contemporary Spirituality, University of Scranton, 2000), 55.

engage in spiritual life, defined by George Schemel and Judith Roemer as having a “sensitivity to life” and “a more authentic experience and expression of emotions.”⁴⁰ The interpersonal relationship with God and others can be more challenging. Ignatian spiritual directors will not be surprised by the ebbs and flows of inner life but will be energetically available in attending to all movements, trusting they are valuable ingredients for understanding oneself and our relationship with God.

Fluid Responsiveness

Being present also means to have fluid responsiveness, which involves an agenda “to be fully available in that moment and as responsive to the needs of the situations as I can be.”⁴¹ Spiritual directors constantly make responsive decisions around choosing a theme to follow, asking a question, giving feedback, pausing for silence or offering necessary teaching. Fluid responsiveness is also located within professional boundaries. The code of ethics is written to promote the safety and integrity of the ministry. The director is required to ground his or her service in professional values from which “one can choose to just ‘be’ or feel moved to act and intervene.”⁴² Ignatian directors are particularly reminded to be indifferent regarding directee’s decisions.

Chidiac and Denham-Vaughan have recently developed a new concept of “Ethical presence” to describe the type of presence that is required when someone is in a role that holds more power and expresses

⁴⁰ Schemel and Roemer, *Beyond Individuation to Discipleship*, 55.

⁴¹ Chidiac and Denham-Vaughan, “Presence for Everyone: A Dialogue,” 11.

⁴² Chidiac and Denham-Vaughan, “Presence for Everyone: A Dialogue,” 10.

“an ethical stance in service of the other.”⁴³ To be ethically present, the practitioner orientates themselves to find an optimal balance of awareness to all three elements below:

- Self: can be seen as individual, group, community or organisation.
- Other: as the “Other” in the relationship at any given moment; and
- Situation: in which the issues are rooted.⁴⁴



Figure 2 Ethical presence at the centre of the SOS (self, other, situation) model ⁴⁵

Based on the concept of ethical presence, I understand that spiritual direction uniquely focuses on exploring and becoming aware of how God is present, embedded and interacting with all three aspects. Such intersubjective interaction potentially evokes an emerging awareness which may connect to each sphere and the whole context.

⁴³ Marie-Anne Chidiac, *Relational Organisational Gestalt* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 54.

⁴⁴ Marie-Anne Chidiac and Sally Denham-Vaughan, “Gestalt, The Good and the concept of Ethical Presence,” *British Gestalt Journal* 29, no. 1 (2020): 22.

⁴⁵ Chidiac and Denham-Vaughan, “Presence for Everyone: A Dialogue,” 22.

Spiritual direction is an intersubjective contemplative practice where the director, directee and God participate in immediacy and mutual impact. The community of spiritual directors collaboratively advocates an awareness and embodiment on how God is present and acting in our collective situation.

Spiritual Direction Encounter as Emerging Field

Presence is a wholehearted willingness to enter an “unknown” territory with another and be present to whatever surfaces. Field theory, proposed by Kurt Lewin, initially refers to the “field” as phenomenal, the psychological environment that exists within the person, both conscious and unconscious that drive our behaviours. A person is not an isolated entity, but always a person in context.⁴⁶ Frank Staemmler studies different theories using the concept of “field” and concludes that relatedness is the commonality. Since everything is interconnected, the social, psychological and physiological all exist in the field and are part of it.⁴⁷ Culture, people, ecology, economy, social circumstance and time in a person’s situation are influential. Each person may have an internal psychological response to the external environment.

With field perspective, the liminal space between God, the director and directee in spiritual direction sessions is co-created to enable the reception of grace and transformation.

⁴⁶ Kurt Lewin, *Resolving Social Conflicts & Field Theory in Social Science* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1997), 210.

⁴⁷ Frank-M Staemmler, “A Babylonian Confusion?: On the Uses and Meanings of the Term ‘Field’,” *British Gestalt Journal* 15, no. 2 (2006): 76.

*The liminal space...is characterised by a willingness to let go of anything familiar and an openness to what is emerging. It lies therefore at the moment of both being and becoming where the immanent and transcendent are joined.*⁴⁸

Field theory highlights the “in-between” in a relationship—the co-emergence. The process, problems and solutions all serve unique functions in the relationship. The spiritual direction relationship is co-constructed and moves beyond two persons by acknowledging the Mystery as the Ground of all Being.⁴⁹ “People are not in a field but of a field”⁵⁰ and all the details of a relationship serve a certain function. For example, when directors observe growing anxiety, boredom, frustration or disconnection in the conversation, they might begin to ponder if misunderstanding, shame, avoidance, resistance or something else is present. Contemporary spiritual directors are also being asked to have a heightened awareness of what we are bringing into that liminal space. This includes theological preconceptions, cultural-racial-historical influence, gender norms, relational beliefs and patterns, power and privilege. Without such awareness, the director could unconsciously impose parts of themselves upon the ministry space.

Gestalt therapist Lynne Jacobs challenges the traditional understanding of transference and countertransference as if the therapist is the only one who knows the “truth.” She challenges this approach as

⁴⁸ Sally Denham-Vaughan, “The Liminal Space and Twelve Action Practices for Gracious Living,” *British Gestalt Journal* 19, no. 2 (2010): 35.

⁴⁹ Benner, *Presence and Encounter*, 17.

⁵⁰ Gary Yontef, “The Relational Attitude in Gestalt Therapy and Practice,” in *Relational Approaches in Gestalt Therapy*, ed. Lynne Jacobs and Richard Hycner (New York: Gestalt Press, 2010), 41.

possibly inhibiting dialogue.⁵¹ A more creative and power-balanced stance may ask “why and how, here and now” certain phenomena appear in the director-directee dyad. When a directee becomes over-dependent on a director, what is needed in this relational field? This way of enquiry also questions the fear among spiritual directors about “not getting in the way” between God and the directee. My hypothesis is that directors will share a presence between God and the directee once the direction relationship begins. The core concern is how and in what ways our presence is helpful to the development of the directee’s relationship with God. A passive, dismissive or disengaged presence can hinder the potential of the emerging field as is the case with a codependent, intrusive or controlling presence.

Field theory also offers us a broader vision to locate the human person. Traditionally, Western culture perceives development more as the result of personal effort.⁵² Developmental and spiritual growth models developed by Erik Erikson, James Fowler and Lawrence Kohlberg successfully outline the tasks or signs for each developmental stage.⁵³ These paradigms have not yet offered a consideration of how other life forces, particularly relationships, affect a person’s self-organisation. Looking at development solely as the effort of oneself can

⁵¹ Lynne Jacobs, “Hopes, Fears, and Enduring Relational Themes,” *British Gestalt Journal* 26, no. 1 (2017): 8.

⁵² Malcolm Parlett and Robert Lee, “Contemporary Gestalt Therapy: Field Theory,” in *Gestalt Therapy: History, Theory and Practice*, ed. Ansel Woldt and Sarah Toman (London: Sage Publication, 2005), 45.

⁵³ Erik Erikson has outlined a person’s life in eight stages according to age and each has tasks to fulfill in order to facilitate growth and integration. James Fowler uses a seven-stages model to highlight a person’s faith development. Lawrence Kohlberg’s model focuses on a person’s development in moral consciousness.

be shame-inducing as if the person who struggles is inadequate. An example would be how a “problematic child” internalises the field by unconsciously carrying issues from a dysfunctional family situation. I find it helpful to pay attention to how a directee presents relationally in the spiritual direction session, hoping that this might reveal their relational patterns with God and others in their lifeworld, and what kind of relational grace could be beneficial.

2. Presence as Attunement

As I reflect on fluid responsiveness, another related concept is attunement. Although Ignatius stresses discipline and structure, he keeps reminding directors to be flexible and attune to the specific needs of the directee (Exx 7, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19). Daniel Siegel suggests that “presence is our openness to the unfolding of possibilities. Attunement is how we focus our attention on others and take their essence into our own inner world.”⁵⁴

*When we attune with others we allow our own internal state to shift, to come to resonate with the inner world of another. This resonance is at the heart of the important sense of “feeling felt” that emerges in close relationships. Children need attunement to feel secure and to develop well, and throughout our lives we need attunement to feel close and connected.*⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Daniel J. Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 1st ed., Norton series on interpersonal neurobiology, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010), 34.

⁵⁵ Daniel J. Siegel, *Mindsight: the New Science of Personal Transformation*, 1st ed. (New York: Bantam Books, 2010), 27.

Unless we feel the other person is attuned to what is happening in us, we cannot feel the other as being with us. The feeling of being impacted and moved by the experience of the other is a springboard to genuine connection. Attunement, however, does not require relinquishing our own experience to the other, which may lead to over-identification or enmeshment. To be attuned is to become aware of how one's energy and information flows in or out and to pay attention to any energy vibration during a relational encounter. In the physical world, when two objects vibrate with the same frequency there is resonance. This "physical phenomenon of resonance [is seen] as analogous to the intentional action of attuning or attending to self and other" in relationships.⁵⁶

The ability to attune to others is largely influenced by our own relational recollection in life. Attachment theory was developed by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth to understand how the early emotional bond between an infant and the primary caregiver impacts a person's life satisfaction, self-functioning and relational capacity.⁵⁷ Across the globe, only half of the population experience a secure attachment style which means they generally have a better relational capacity, including attunement.⁵⁸ Insecure attachment, also known as attachment trauma, is usually caused by abusive, unpredictable or unattuned parenting. Parents

⁵⁶ Chidiac and Denham-Vaughan, "Presence for Everyone: A Dialogue," 16.

⁵⁷ Marinus. H. van Ijzendoorn & Abraham Sagi-Schwartz Judi Mesman, "Cross-Cultural Patterns of Attachment: Universal and Contextual Dimensions," in *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*, ed. Jude Cassidy and Phillip R. Shaver (New York, NY ; London: Guilford Press, 1999), 880-905.

⁵⁸ Bowlby and Ainsworth categorise four attachment styles between primary caregiver and infants, which are named as secure, anxious-ambivalent (preoccupied), avoidant-dismissive and disorganised.

who have unresolved trauma and loss may impair their ability to be present and consequently passed on trauma through generations.⁵⁹ Although the spiritual direction relationship is different from parent to child, attachment theory may briefly inform spiritual direction practice in two ways. First, it is worthwhile questioning how significant it is for a spiritual director to embody some level of secure attachment experience to provide a healthy relational experience to others. In talking about this influence in professional relationships, Siegel writes that

[i]f someone has an insecure adult attachment status, their own patients will likely be treated in ways that reflect that insecure history. It is essential for all people in the healing arts to care for themselves – which includes creating a coherent narrative of their own lives.⁶⁰

Future research could investigate how the attachment style of spiritual directors impacts our work. In practical terms, neuroscience literature suggests that a therapist’s presence can support a secure relational environment for clients as they down-regulate their defenses so that social engagement system can be optimised.⁶¹ Furthermore, when an individual is feeling safe in the presence of a regulated another,

⁵⁹ David J. Wallin, *Attachment in Psychotherapy* (New York: Guilford Press, 2007), 37.

⁶⁰ Siegel, *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*, 72.

⁶¹ Shari M. Geller and Stephen W. Porges, “Therapeutic Presence: Neurophysiological Mechanisms Mediating Feeling Safe in Therapeutic Relationships,” *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration* 24, no. 3 (2014): 179.

the bodily state and nervous system has access to better openness and self-exploration which in turn facilitates restoration and growth.⁶²

Second, attachment theory can help to explain how relational patterns of directees parallel their relationship with God, self and others. Deepening their relationship with God therefore not only requires will power but involves affective experiences to foster an “earned secure attachment” in other relationships.⁶³ The reality of neuroplasticity means the brain has the ability to restructure through new experiences.⁶⁴ People may be able to re-establish a sense of security when they experience someone “making them feel cared for, important and providing them with a feeling of safety.”⁶⁵ While spiritual directors partly fulfil this need for security by holding a safe space for exploration, Melissa Kelley identifies attachment to God as the ultimate secure base that helps people negotiate separation and loss and thus increase their capacity for love and intimacy.⁶⁶ Gordon Kaufman agrees that

the idea of God is the idea of an absolutely adequate attachment figure...the point is that God is thought of as a

⁶² Geller and Porges, “Therapeutic Presence: Neurophysiological Mechanisms Mediating Feeling Safe in Therapeutic Relationships,” 181-82.

⁶³ Daniel J. Siegel, *The Developing Mind: Toward a Neurobiology of Interpersonal Experience* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999), 11.

⁶⁴ Daniel J. Siegel, *Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology: An Integrative Handbook of the Mind*, 1st ed., The Norton series on interpersonal neurobiology, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012), 8-1.

⁶⁵ Louis J. Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships: Attachment and the Developing Social Brain*, Second edition. ed., The Norton series on interpersonal neurobiology, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014), 410.

⁶⁶ Melissa M. Kelley, *Grief: Contemporary Theory and the Practice of Ministry* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 59.

*protective and caring parent who is always reliable and always available to its children when they are in need.*⁶⁷

For healing to happen, attachment with God has to be a felt experience rather than simply an intellectual knowledge. Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au distinguish between professed knowledge of God and operating experience of God.⁶⁸ While a person might profess that God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, the real experience might be of a God who is distant and aloof, rather than someone caring and loving. Ignatian spiritual direction supports people in exploring how an unconscious negative image of God might sometimes be a psychological transference from a childhood experience and re-experience God through new contemplative experiences.

Apart from having a new relational experience to transform our attachment model, people who have adverse childhood experiences can also enhance their presence and security by integrating memories.⁶⁹ Story-telling is one way to enable people to “establish meaning and to integrate our remembered past with what we perceive to be happening in the present and what we anticipate for the future.”⁷⁰ Jose Garcia de Castro Valdes proposes that

⁶⁷ Gordon D. Kaufman, *The Theological Imagination: Constructing the Concept of God*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), 67.

⁶⁸ Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au, *The Discerning Heart: Exploring the Christian Path* (New York: Paulist Press, 2006), 112.

⁶⁹ Psychological tool such as Adult Attachment interviews has been developed to help adults to review their childhood experience and making sense of them through the support of helping professionals.

⁷⁰ Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, *Mighty stories, dangerous rituals weaving together the human and the divine*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 5.

*Spiritual Directors are called to help the retreatant to pronounce the most suitable word related to his/her inner experience in front of the mystery. Only through the light of language I can understand what I am and what God is asking me. Through words, God and I are able to build the relationship Creator-creature.*⁷¹

Ignatian spiritual direction enables the same healing process as therapy through holding space for directees. They may then find their narrative in life and furthermore, begin to put words onto how God is present and at work.

3. Presence as Dialogue

Spiritual direction is a dialogic process. Martin Buber, named as “philosopher of dialogue,” offers an elegant depiction of dialogic processes as spiritual because “all actual life is encounter.”⁷² Deep encounter between humans can also offer a glimpse of the Divine. Buber acknowledges that human beings are always embedded in the context of relational dynamics⁷³ and our longing in relationship shapes our lives in compelling ways. This echoes Kurt Lewin’s understanding that all of us

⁷¹ Jose Garcia de Castro Valdes, “Silent God in a Wordy World. Silence in Ignatian Spirituality,” *Theologica Xaveriana* 181 (2016): 192, <https://doi.org/10.11144/javeriana.tx66-181.sgwswsis>.

⁷² Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Arnold Kaufmann (New York: Scribner, 1970), 62.

⁷³ Donna M. Orange, *Thinking for Clinicians: Philosophical Resources for Contemporary Psychoanalysis and the Humanistic Psychotherapies* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 19.

are of the field and influence each other. Buber’s philosophy of dialogue distinguishes two kinds of relationship, namely I-You and I-It.

I-You encounter involves the whole being of both,⁷⁴ “when You becomes present does presence come into being”⁷⁵ and relationship exists. “Presence is not what is evanescent and passes but what confronts us, waiting and enduring.”⁷⁶ Presence requires that our focus and consciousness is not on one particular point (the object), but the whole You. Buber also describes our relationship with God as relating to the Eternal You.⁷⁷ When Buber uses *Ich-Du*, he uses *Du* (You) with an intimacy similar to lovers and friends.⁷⁸ Prayer in the paradigm of I-You is direct and unmediated.⁷⁹ The composition of colloquy in the Ignatian Spirituality could potentially be a highlight of this kind of encounters. Prayers are not prescribed, pre-written, formulaic or recited, but have an immediacy that is personal and here and now.

When I-It is not confronted by You, it is merely “surrounded by a multitude of contents”⁸⁰ from the past. When a person lives in the past, this moment has no presence. I-It encounter objectifies another person.⁸¹ When we objectify another, that person is reduced to a quality, a skill, a symptom, a theme or a story that can be used. Buber comforts us that as human, we will not permanently stay in an I-You relationship though I-

⁷⁴ Buber, *I and Thou*, 54.

⁷⁵ Buber, *I and Thou*, 63.

⁷⁶ Buber, *I and Thou*, 63-64.

⁷⁷ Buber, *I and Thou*, 123.

⁷⁸ Buber, *I and Thou*, 14.

⁷⁹ Buber, *I and Thou*, 62.

⁸⁰ Buber, *I and Thou*, 63.

⁸¹ Donna M. Orange, *Thinking for Clinicians: Philosophical Resources for Contemporary Psychoanalysis and the Humanistic Psychotherapies* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 15.

You has the potential for healing and sacredness. In my work as a supervisor to spiritual directors, I have observed encounters that demonstrate an I-It quality. For example, some directors from certain traditions that I have worked with can be more concerned if a particular directee performs some devotional practices that are highly valued in their tradition. Some directors may be occupied with addressing issues such as sexual orientation, mental health conditions, addictions, marital problems or whether one should stay or leave a religious order. While I am not suggesting that these themes do not come up in the spiritual direction, but when a director becomes anxiously preoccupied with one issue, they may lose sight of the person before them.

In the actualisation of I-You relationships, the practice of inclusion and confirmation are two important principles. Inclusion means “the attempt to imagine what at this moment the other person is thinking, feeling, wishing, perceiving.”⁸² Buber himself describes how this can only be experienced through a “bold swinging, demanding the most intensive stirring of one’s being, into the life of the other.”⁸³ Buber’s notion of inclusion emphasises more than empathy. Inclusion does not simply mean feeling towards another. Inclusion affirms my own perception or feelings, but also a willingness to include those who may feel differently.

Pembroke defines confirmation as “making the other person in her uniqueness and particularity”⁸⁴ and “confirmation is beyond acceptance

⁸² Pembroke, *The Art of Listening: Dialogue, Shame, and Pastoral Care*, 43.

⁸³ Martin Buber, “Elements of the Inter-human,” *Psychiatry* 20 (1957): 110.

⁸⁴ Pembroke, *The Art of Listening: Dialogue, Shame, and Pastoral Care*, 96.

and empathy.”⁸⁵ The practice of confirmation requires the director to “bracket” their own assumptions. The director holds the space for the other person to make meaning of their experiences at their own pace. The agency of the directee is respected. Humanistic psychotherapist Carl Rogers claims that since human beings possess a self-actualising tendency, “clients gained the greatest benefit in therapy when...allowed to find their own solutions—a strong reminder of the discernment process advocated by St Ignatius of Loyola.”⁸⁶

Buber reminds helping professionals to try and “influence the other person as little as possible.”⁸⁷ This requires humility and self-containment on the part of the helper. Buber believes that imposing on the other is much easier than leaving the person to him or herself.⁸⁸ Gonçalves da Câmara, who edited the autobiography of Ignatius, wrote in his diary: “[Ignatius] said to me that there can be no greater mistake, in his view in things of the Spirit, than to want to mould others to one’s own image.”⁸⁹ Commitment to staying in dialogue includes allowing others to differentiate, and this sometimes leads to disagreement.⁹⁰ To truly allow the directee to be who they are, we may stay in the tension

⁸⁵ Pembroke, *The Art of Listening: Dialogue, Shame, and Pastoral Care*, 4.

⁸⁶ Lynette Harborne, *Psychotherapy and Spiritual Direction Two Languages, One Voice?* (London: Karnac Books, 2012), 22.

⁸⁷ Martin Buber, *Martin Buber on Psychology and Psychotherapy: Essays, Letters, and Dialogue* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 240.

⁸⁸ Buber, *Martin Buber on Psychology and Psychotherapy: Essays, Letters, and Dialogue*, 240.

⁸⁹ O’Leary, “What is Specific to an Ignatian Model of Spiritual Direction?” 102.

⁹⁰ Orange, *Thinking for Clinicians: Philosophical Resources for Contemporary Psychoanalysis and the Humanistic Psychotherapies*, 20.

of being “different.” Yet, through exploring the difference in dialogue, a new consciousness may arise in the intersubjective space.

There has been some discussion about the power behind the concept of directedness as exercised in the field of spiritual direction. Is the word “direction” an appropriate description for our ministry given that directors do not really “give” or decide the direction for the directees? Some consider the word “direction” is overpowering and therefore modify its naming to spiritual conversation or companionship. Some argue that spiritual direction does need directedness to avoid an “everything goes” tendency. As a director trained in Ignatian tradition, the *Principle and Foundation* in the *Spiritual Exercises* grounds me and offers a compass. I therefore wonder if the allergic response to “directedness” actually addresses the power issue within the direction relationship. In a conversation between two friends, two persons share equal power in deciding the direction of a conversation. In spiritual direction, the director directs the awareness of the directee by asking questions, affirming insights, validating emotions, noticing the movement of spirits and suggesting prayer themes.

Guenter notes that the director may not be authoritarian and yet “has great authority [because] she has skill, knowledge and perspective”⁹¹ to provide solidarity. There is no doubt a power imbalance in the spiritual direction relationship. Buber’s concept of inclusion and confirmation in dialogue could possibly serve as an

⁹¹ Guenter, *Holy Listening: the Art of Spiritual Direction*, 106.

antidote to using that power to support discernment which Guenther beautifully concludes as a stance of “loving detachment.”⁹²

4. Presence as Contemplation

Spiritual direction is contemplation in action. Existential philosopher Gabriel Marcel describes contemplation as a present-moment, an intimate act with oneself which empowers one to engage with others. Contemplation involves receptivity and nurturing inwardness to establish true meeting within a person. At this depth, a person has the capacity to be receptive, available and give oneself freely.⁹³ Marcel distinguishes between a spectator as something “in front of” me and a contemplative who allows the object both within and inside me.⁹⁴ This resonates with presence as “letting come.” When I contemplate, I let this “other” impact me. Benner suggests contemplation as “spiritual posture...with intentional openness and presence.”⁹⁵ Tilda Norberg emphasises how contemplation relates to recognising God’s presence:

As we allow ourselves to sink wordlessly into God’s presence, we are awed by God’s power and love as we watch people being invited to greater wholeness. Instead of trying to make something happen we pay gentle attention, trusting God will somehow shape our awareness as well as that of the person coming for healing. In other words, as best we can we

⁹² Guenther, *Holy Listening: the Art of Spiritual Direction*, 106.

⁹³ Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, two vols. (London: Harvill Press, 1950), 45, 120, 23, 27., quoted in Neil Pembroke, *The Art of Listening*, 13.

⁹⁴ Pembroke, *The Art of Listening: Dialogue, Shame, and Pastoral Care*, 17.

⁹⁵ Benner, *Presence and Encounter*, 39.

*surrender the other person to God's desire to heal, knowing that God is already at work. Out of that deep rest comes direction and discernment about how to proceed.*⁹⁶

Maureen Conroy writes that a spiritual director listens “actively with interest, sensitivity and compassion”⁹⁷ so as to help a directee “to savour, relive and respond to their experience of God, to notice interior changes, and the effects of these changes in relationships and life circumstances.”⁹⁸ Silence is not only permitted in spiritual direction but encouraged when this serves as a more appropriate response than words to foster a contemplative consciousness.⁹⁹ Maintaining regular spiritual direction is a contemplative practice.¹⁰⁰ When people share, the presence of God can be noticed and felt. The image of the visitation (Luke 1:39-56) between Mary, mother of Jesus, and Elizabeth in their pregnancies captures how the meeting of two people can individually and together celebrate the presence of God in their lives. When the director and directee follow the movement of the Spirit in the encounter, both can leap for joy through affirming the unique and shared grace. The direction encounter also becomes a spiritual experience.

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius encourages a directee to contemplate Christ's life through imagination and senses. The person who contemplates becomes one of the participants in the scene and

⁹⁶ Tilda Norberg, *Consenting to Grace: an Introduction to Gestalt Pastoral Care* (Staten Island, NY: Penn House Press, 2006), 39.

⁹⁷ Maureen Conroy, *The Discerning Heart: Discovering a Personal God* (Chicago: Loyola University Press), 76.

⁹⁸ Conroy, *The Discerning Heart: Discovering a Personal God*, 75.

⁹⁹ Pembroke, *The Art of Listening: Dialogue, Shame, and Pastoral Care*, 1.

¹⁰⁰ Liz Budd Ellmann, “Seeking God Everywhere and Always: Ten Trends in Global Spiritual Direction,” *The Way* 53, no. 2 (2014): 73.

interacts with the characters and the flow in the gospel events. As a giver of the *Exercises*, we also share the participatory grace of the directee through engaging our senses and imagination in contemplative listening. Conroy describes the role of a spiritual director as forming a supportive relationship with directees and nourishing a contemplative atmosphere that enables directees to express freely their vulnerability, pain, joy and gratitude.¹⁰¹

Such contemplative stance always asks: “where is the Spirit present to the directee and calling for growth in faith, hope and love?”¹⁰² Sometimes the answer may even lie in a person embracing their suffering. For example, in contemplating Jesus’ passion, the directee may feel intimate, encouraged, terrified, sad, dry, strengthened, angry, powerless and helpless in staying with the suffering Christ. It can be a passion for one to contemplate the Passion.¹⁰³ However, Michael Ivens suggests that the participatory grace is compassion as it requires spiritual empathy.¹⁰⁴

Presence as contemplation in the Ignatian tradition distinguishes spiritual direction from psychological therapy because contemplation in the Christian tradition is fundamentally relational and points to notice the presence of a loving God who is actively at work in a person’s life. However, helping professionals from other fields can also integrate a contemplative attitude in their work. There has been growing research on the benefits of applying contemplative strategies to cultivate

¹⁰¹ Conroy, *The Discerning Heart: Discovering a Personal God*, 75.

¹⁰² Smith, *Spiritual Direction: A Guide to Giving and Receiving Direction*, 23.

¹⁰³ Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 147.

¹⁰⁴ Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 147.

therapeutic presence—a new psychological research field called contemplative studies.

5. Presence as Healing Love

How we choose to spend our time indicates what we value. What can be more loving than when someone is willing to set aside other agendas and devote undivided attention to another person? Spiritual directors offer the world a living sign of “God as love” through interpersonal care. The Jesuit scientist, Teilhard de Chardin, believed that love is an energy in evolution. “God continues to create from within this all-embracing love.”¹⁰⁵ Spiritual direction holds a unique perspective in recognising God as our Source of life and love. Directors and directees are connected travellers in life and both have joys, struggles and pain. When people are questioning the absence of God, the director is present and seeks to embody God’s love. Perhaps 1 John 4:12 best describes its nature. “No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”

In my early years as a spiritual director, I was often reminded that we do not “do” therapy as the focus of spiritual direction is deepening one’s relationship with God. I now believe that healing is an integral part of spiritual direction just as healing is a core part of Jesus’ ministry. Living in a socio-political complex, fast-paced, materialistic and technologically-bombarded era, we are confronted with the fragmentation of lives. While the structure of counselling usually helps

¹⁰⁵ Patricia H. Berne and Louis Savary, *Teilhard de Chardin On Love* (New York: Paulist Press, 2017), 5.

a person to restore a functioning ego in times of crisis, spiritual direction is helping us to dissolve our unhealthy ego representation so our authentic self can live in alignment with the Spirit. The healing process in spiritual direction often involves reconstructing images of God and images of self.

The “Selfing” Process through Relationships

“Selfing” is a term in relational psychology that refers to the understanding of “self” as a process in relation to an environment which is in a constant state of flux.¹⁰⁶ Our sense of self is formed through our encounter with others.¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, this developing sense of self affects the way we relate to others and forms a recursive relationship.

“Selfing” emerges through meeting and relating with others, including God. Our self-image and our God-image are like two sides of the coin. For instance, a person who has an image of God as a critical judge may constantly feel themselves to be inadequate or flawed. Another person’s image of God as a compassionate and encouraging Father may enable them to experience themselves as being loved and confident. As noted above, Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au further distinguish our professed knowledge of God from our operating experience of God.¹⁰⁸ While a person might profess that God is powerful, loving and present, their felt experience might be a distant and aloof God, rather than a God showing care and protection.

¹⁰⁶ Dave Mann, *Gestalt Therapy 100 Key Points & Techniques*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 88.

¹⁰⁷ Buber, *I and Thou*, 62.

¹⁰⁸ Au and Au, *The Discerning Heart: Exploring the Christian Path*, 112.

Christianity has a strong emphasis on values and moral standards which serve as guidelines in how one “should” behave. Misconception is sadly formed around negative emotions as bad or unholy, especially negative feelings towards God. To be accepted, Christians sometimes learn to hide their vulnerabilities by suppressing or denying powerful emotions such as anger, grief, fear, anxiety, bitterness or jealousy, and sexuality.¹⁰⁹ Shame arises when people judge their feelings as flawed or when confronted with their vulnerabilities as inferior. To avoid shame, some people choose to sacrifice authenticity. Wilkie and Noreen Cannon Au see this abandoned self as our shadow, a part of our personality that is unconsciously suppressed. We then form an ideal self-image by adjusting to what is acceptable in our early experiences in family and culture.¹¹⁰

Spiritual direction has the potential to enable a person to cultivate an intimacy that starts with self, then extends to God and others. Monica Brown writes:

Self-intimacy is about one’s ability to see and know the depths of one’s own being. It is the ability to live with one’s self, not in the sense of self-absorption or isolation, but in the sense of knowing one’s truth, owning one’s brokenness, embracing

¹⁰⁹ Irene Bloomfield, “Religion and Psychotherapy: Friends or Foes,” in *Spiritual Dimensions of Pastoral Care: Practical Theology in a Multidisciplinary Context*, ed. David Willows and John Swinton (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2000), 122.

¹¹⁰ Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au, *Urgings of the Heart: a Spirituality of Integration* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 25.

*one’s fears and all that prevents one from coming home to one’s self in a spirit of wellbeing and acceptance.*¹¹¹

Spiritual directors show acceptance to the other person whatever their circumstances are, just as God accepts the director. Spiritual directors do not impose moral judgments though each will have their own ethical framework. Acceptance is not a passive stance of “putting up with things,” but intentionally seeing and noting experience with curiosity and openness. Steven Hayes et al. note that “acceptance has a flexible and active quality such that psychological events are noted and seen—even at times enhanced—moment to moment so that these events are available to participate in behaviorally if it makes sense to do so.”¹¹² When we can bracket immediate judgements, that will help us to see that everything, even our disordered tendency, exists for a reason.

Pembroke talks about shame as the primary emotion associated with the widespread phenomenon of narcissism, a cause of emotional distress in our time.¹¹³ As Buber proposes, “a soul is never sick alone, and there is always a between-ness.”¹¹⁴ Egocentricity is a kind of defence developed in childhood where we more or less have experienced conditional love from parents.¹¹⁵ Shame originates from a lack of

¹¹¹ Monica Brown, *Embodying the God We Proclaim: Ministering as Jesus Did* (Stowmarket: K. Mayhew, 2000), 82.

¹¹² Steven C. Hayes, Kirk Strosahl, and Kelly G. Wilson, *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: The Process and Practice of Mindful Change*, 2nd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2012), 86.

¹¹³ Neil Pembroke, *Renewing Pastoral Practice: Trinitarian Perspectives on Pastoral Care and Counselling* (Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 83.

¹¹⁴ Buber, *Martin Buber on Psychology and Psychotherapy: Essays, Letters, and Dialogue*, 21.

¹¹⁵ David G. Benner, *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 75.

unconditional positive mirroring in childhood within the family system. Our society and the emergence of social media further intensify the need to constantly look capable and successful. This affects parenting, education and even culture in the church as achievement is emphasised over authenticity. While shame brings alienation, “love is the power that allows the human person to overcome this state of estrangement.”¹¹⁶

As discussed before, being relational is our human nature. Brené Brown claims that “connection is why we are here. We are hardwired to connect with others, it is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives, and without it there is suffering.”¹¹⁷ Fritz Kunkel points out that our hope for growth and wholeness is based on the desire to return to the “we-experience—the experience of interpersonal connectedness,”¹¹⁸ where we are constantly looking for love and belonging. As humanistic psychotherapy believes, the therapeutic relationship itself contributes to healing. Integration happens when a person has a positive experience of being held by another with compassion and kindness. Our capacity to trust God relates to our ability to “see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living” (Psalm 27:13). In difficult times, Ignatius encourages the director to express gentleness and kindness:

[when] the exercitant is in desolation and tempted, let him [the director] not deal severely and harshly with him, but gently and kindly. He should encourage and strengthen him for the future by exposing to him the wiles of the enemy of our human nature,

¹¹⁶ Pembroke, *Renewing Pastoral Practice: Trinitarian Perspectives on Pastoral Care and Counselling*, 83.

¹¹⁷ Brené C. Brown, *Daring Greatly*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Gotham Books, 2012), 153.

¹¹⁸ Benner, *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel*, 75.

and by getting him to prepare and dispose himself for the coming consolation. (Exx 7)

Barry and Connolly also affirm that the relationship between the director and the directee may potentially serve as a positive mirror for a person’s relationship with a benevolent God.

It is true that God can relate to people without the mediation of anyone else..., God’s usual way is, however, through other people. So the quality of the church’s ministry must be a great concern; ...This is especially true of spiritual directors.¹¹⁹

During the First Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius of Loyola invites the directee to ask for the grace of shame and confusion, and to recognise any disordered attachments. If shame is understood as the barrier of love, disordered attachment could be our loss in experiencing unconditional love and our adjustment to “earn” this love which is already promised. The grace of the First Week is to experience oneself as a loved sinner. Our capacity to internalise God’s unconditional love is an ongoing collaboration of will and grace. It requires initially the grace of God and also our will to receive and embrace that love by cultivating an attitude towards self-compassion, which is contrary to self-rejection and self-abandonment.

The encounter between Jesus and the woman at the well (John 4:4-26) illustrates the Paradoxical Theory of Change proposed by Arnold Beisser. Jesus and the woman have a conversation over many things. However, it is the unconditional acceptance of Jesus which removes the

¹¹⁹ Barry and Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 143.

toxic shame the woman bears. She felt seen and known and as a consequence, can proclaim her encounter with the “Saviour of the world.” The underlying premise of this theory is that “change occurs when one becomes what he is, not when he tries to become what he is not.”¹²⁰ Change in a person does not come from effort, coercion or persuasion, but first from accepting who the person truly is. As a metaphor, a person needs to be grounded firmly in their present reality, and then they may move one step forward. The woman has encountered God’s love incarnate, and this is what ministers of presence are called to become.

Obstacles to be Present

While the capacity to present can be developed, it is important to understand that even experienced spiritual directors can still face obstacles to be fully present. Some possible reasons might be related to physical tiredness, stress, distractions, narcissistic preoccupation, triggering of our personal issues, or having specific outcomes in mind. In my experience, the anxiety around “what and how to do” is a common distraction among new spiritual directors.

Supervision is a confidential and supportive space for people to reflect on ministry experiences and explore graces and struggles to gain wisdom and freedom in service. Maureen Conroy writes that the goal of supervision is to support directors in noticing one’s “interior movements while in the process of directing...to help spiritual directors to grow in self-awareness and interior freedom to stay with directees’ experiences

¹²⁰ Arnold Beisser, “The Paradoxical Theory of Change,” in *Gestalt Therapy Now*, ed. Joen Fagan & Irma Lee Shepherd (New York: The Gestalt Journal Press, 1970), 77.

and to be attentive to God during direction sessions.”¹²¹ Neil Pembroke notes that while genuine presence facilitates healing and wholeness, a pretence of presence can become a source of embarrassment and shame which the other person can observe.¹²² Shame occurs when we notice ourselves giving an inappropriate response in a given situation or when one feels a sensitive or vulnerable part is exposed. Supervision explores feelings that have been dismissed in conversation or content that make us “absent.”

Spiritual directors are also humans who are trying their best with the grace of God to serve. The idea of the “wounded healer” proposed by Henry Nouwen¹²³ can be used to describe spiritual directors who also have life struggles and brokenness just like anyone else. What makes us become an instrument is our containment of personal experience in the unconditional love of God, which is the foundation for true self-awareness and self-compassion. We are then able to be present, accept and understand others with growing compassion and a discerning heart.

Concluding Remarks

It is not an easy task to discuss a phenomenon that is rich and hard to fully capture. This article aims to stimulate discussion and reflection rather than offer a definition. I believe in the value of spiritual direction in supporting people to live a God-oriented life. At the same time, working both as a supervisor and formator, my heart also aches to hear of people being wounded by the process of spiritual direction. While I

¹²¹ Maureen Conroy, *Looking into the Well: Supervision of Spiritual Directors* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1995), 9.

¹²² Pembroke, *The Art of Listening: Dialogue, Shame, and Pastoral Care*, 163.

¹²³ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2014).

still adhere to Ignatius' reminder to hold a good interpretation of others (Exx 22), some of this damage could be minimised if we as a community of practitioners are willing to engage in critical reflection on the dynamics of our practice.

As I write, I also observe the growing numbers of people seeking spiritual direction and the expansion of spiritual direction formation programs around the world. My hope is that spiritual direction does not become a trend, but truly ignites genuine passion in people to seek Presence and loving service in the world. Hurding notes that the twenty-first century is named as a conceptual age characterised by the need of creators and empathisers.¹²⁴ Can spiritual direction offer hope for authentic living and connection? This commitment to authenticity is grounded in our Christian faith that God loves and accepts all of our humanity, including our vulnerability. It is out of this authentic presence that genuine trust and connection can be strengthened among people and with the Divine. Faith communities can be maintained with vitality.

This paper has discussed the notion of presence in Ignatian spiritual direction through literatures from various fields. All converge to reveal that presence allows fundamental human needs to be met: to be seen, heard, respected, secure, loved, connected, makers of meaning and self-transcending. Spiritual direction can indeed learn much from other modalities to refine our knowledge of human development. This paper is one attempt to bring a dialogue between other fields and the practice of spiritual direction. Presence is one of the phenomena.

¹²⁴ Hurding, *Five Pathways to Wholeness: Explorations in Pastoral Care and Counselling*, 126.

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〔摘要〕臨在是心理學文獻中廣泛使用的詞彙，也是基督教靈修中必不可少的內涵，它卻難以完全捉摸並透過文字來表達。靈修指導中的臨在是一個有協定的關係過程，但到底如何臨在才能使輔導對受導者作出最大支持，以符合靈修方向的目標做出貢獻則甚少有具體表述。究竟靈修指導中的臨在是種素質、神恩還是技巧呢？怎樣的臨在最能符合依納爵傳統靈修指導的目標？

基督信仰下的靈修指導始現於第四世紀的沙漠教父時期，到當代逐漸發展成為專業服務。儘管某些基礎在基督教靈修指導傳統中仍然經久不衰，毫無疑問其原始格式會根據所涉及的成員特質和背景而改變。本文對當代靈修指導的臨在過程進行跨學科的討論，包括回顧了來自依納爵靈修傳統、心理學，哲學和神學的文獻。探索表達臨在的不同方式將有助於建立對臨在的豐富現象學理解。因著完形療法和靈修指導的背景，拙文在討論過程中突顯了關係視角作為重點。本文認為臨在是靈修指導者的修持，其中涉及以下元素：1) 具身化的行動；2) 同情共感；3) 對話；4) 默觀；5) 療癒的愛。本文旨在激發讀者對當代依納爵靈修指導的實踐作出反思。

關鍵詞：臨在，依納爵，靈修指導，關係上的，分辨

Accompanying Today's Young People in the Ignatian Tradition

So Ying Lun

[Abstract] Formation of the youth is a key concern for parents, teachers, social workers, schools, universities, governments and societies around the world. The Society of Jesus has made “Journeying with the youth” as one of its four Apostolate Preferences from 2019 to 2029. Using “accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future” as the subtitle to this Preference, the adoption of accompaniment as a uniquely Ignatian way is highlighted. Of the many approaches that one can go about relating to and forming young people, why is accompaniment uniquely relevant in today's context? What are the conditions, approaches and dispositions of the accompanying person that will be conducive to such an approach to formation? In this article the author shares his insights based on reflection upon his years of experience working with and forming young people in secondary school, university and business through the lens of Ignatian spirituality.

Keywords: Youth, Education, Formation, Ignatian Spirituality,
Universal Apostolic Preferences

A. Introduction

This article is the author’s reflections on experience of working with and for young people in different contexts: home, secondary school, university and the workplace. It may be of reference to parents, teachers, and mentors who are interested in the formation of young people.

Older adults’ views about young people today vary greatly. On one end of the spectrum, there are those who lament their naiveté, are horrified by their extreme views and infuriated by their “insolence.” On the other end, there are those who are touched by their purity of intentions, hopefulness about the possibilities for change, and courage to take action. Despite the divergent views, these older adults probably agree on one point, that the youth represent our future. In this regard, they are all interested in the formation of the youth.

B. Why Accompany

How should one go about developing today’s young people? A range of possibilities is commonly suggested: from disciplining them, commanding them, lecturing them, motivating them, accompanying them, to simply leaving them alone, i.e. the “laissez-faire” approach. Obviously, one should pay attention to the context, but context aside, the approach of choice will be dependent primarily on one’s values as well as assumptions about human beings, the world and life. Based on reasons to be elaborated later in this section, the author believes that the “accompanying relationship” as inspired by Ignatian spirituality is worth serious consideration for adoption as the underlying attitude by parents, teachers, mentors and anyone with the purpose of youth formation.

The accompanying relationship evokes the image of the accompanying person journeying with the accompanied together so that the former is always somewhere near, though the distance and position could vary from time to time in a somewhat natural manner without a rigid pattern. He or she is sometimes beside the accompanied, sometimes in front, and sometimes behind. As pointed out by Fr. Alan Harrison SJ,

“...accompaniment relates essentially to the art or skill of becoming or acting as a companion to a person or persons. It implies a willingness to associate with and establish some union of interest with others, and often a desire to further the wellbeing of the other or others, always within the essential professional boundaries.”¹

In terms of time and effort per person, the accompanying relationship in the Ignatian tradition is resource-intensive and may thus seem inefficient. However, efficiency in effort without effectiveness in outcome is meaningless. Worse still, blind push for efficiency in human affairs may even produce the opposite result. There are a number of reasons why accompaniment is especially effective in youth formation today.

Firstly, it is the approach that young people will be most receptive of, given the stage of development in their lives and the current erosion

¹ Alan Harrison SJ (2012) “Accompaniment in Ignatian Education” in *Accompaniment in Education in the Tradition of St Ignatius: Papers from a Colloquium on Jesuit Education*, Campion Hall Oxford, April 2012.

in the authority of more experienced people. With a receptive mind, the impact will also be more profound and long-lasting.

Secondly, in the context of greater diversity in views, a higher level of automation in technology, and increased uncertainty about how our society will develop, those young people who are more open and who can think more independently based on a deeper appreciation of human beings and how the world works will be much better prepared for the future. The respect, openness, and space provided in accompaniment offer the optimal conditions for developing such needed qualities in young people.

Finally, the formation of young people’s attitudes, character, values, worldviews, beliefs, etc. goes much deeper than skills training and touches on the way they find ultimate meaning. Things cannot simply be imposed from outside or above. There must be the recognition of and meeting with the young person’s inner being which may be in various stages of awakening. Space must be provided for the process to run a course that no one in the world can perfectly predict.

The effectiveness of accompaniment can be summarized by St Ignatius’ observation in the notes to the Spiritual Exercises:

“...if retreatants advance considering matters for themselves, they find more relish and spiritual fruit than if their director explains to them and amplifies the meaning of the events.”²

² Ignatius Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises* n.2

C. Creating the Conditions for Accompaniment

Among the different approaches to develop the youth, accompaniment is the least straightforward and most subtle. Since this is a less structured approach and seemingly less formal, the underlying assumptions about this relationship become even more important than other approaches.

First and foremost, the young person being accompanied needs to feel safe in a relationship based on trust. The accompanying person should not have any ulterior and selfish motives. It should either be governed by a certain professional code of conduct if it is in a professional context or that there is a mutual understanding about boundaries if the context is less formal.

Secondly, the person being accompanied should feel accepted and welcome unconditionally for who he or she is. Love is an essential element in the accompanying relationship. However, being limited beings, we do not always know how to love. Even in the case where the accompanying person cares deeply about the young person, the former's eagerness to enable the latter to become the "best" person possible (based on the former's standards), he/she may inadvertently form the impression that meeting his/her high expectations is a condition for his/her love. Thus, it is vital for the young person to appreciate that there are two sources of love—the unconditional love of God and the strive towards unconditional love of the accompanying person. For the latter, it is a lesson in the awareness of our limitation in understanding other complex beings like us, the faith to acknowledge that there is goodness in all human beings created by God even if one is not yet able to

appreciate what it is for some, and the deep appreciation that Jesus has loved and forgiven ourselves unconditionally.

The classic distinction between loving the person and approving of the person’s actions must be conscientiously guarded and sensitively communicated. Admittedly, this is not easy. The natural inclination for us is to see other humans in a holistic manner. The skill to communicate simultaneously a genuine concern for a person with a suspension of judgment of the person’s actions will be helpful. However, the more enduring approach would be the gradual development of a proper mutual understanding of this subtle distinction in the relationship through experience over an extended period of quality time spent together.

Thirdly, there must be an assumption about honesty with goodwill in the relationship so that one can tell the truth even if it may be unwelcome. The distinction highlighted in the last paragraph is again relevant here. While the one accompanied is accepted unconditionally, this does not mean that, for the sake of maintaining a harmonious relationship, the accompanying person does not care about the accompanied person’s behaviors or thoughts that raise concerns. In fact, this care is an expression of love. Certainly, being honest is not the same as being tactless. The way to express and follow up on concerns must be conscientiously managed, and more detailed discussions on this point can be found in the next section of this paper.

Fourthly, while a trusting and loving relationship is key to the success of the accompaniment, one should be careful not to develop dependence in the relationship other than healthy mutual support among companions. After all, the aim of the accompanying relationship with

young people is to form them in such a way that they learn to act responsibly. The ultimate measure of whether the formation is successful is whether the accompanied youth can stand on his or her own feet and be free.

A sign of dependence is that the person accompanied trusts the love and wisdom of the accompanying person so much that he/she just relies on whatever advice the latter gives and feels very insecure when such advice is not available. Thus, to avoid the development of such a relationship of dependence, a degree of restraint and openness on the part of the accompanying person when dealing with the accompanied is necessary so that space is provided for the latter to learn to discern on his/her own the decision to make. While that part of Note 2 of the Spiritual Exercises as quoted at the end of Section B is again relevant here, Note 15 may provide further insight at this point:

“In the Spiritual Exercises, it is more suitable and much better that the Creator and the Lord in person communicate Himself to the devout soul in quest of the divine will, that He inflame it with His love and praise, and dispose it for the way in which it could better serve God in the future. Therefore, the director of the Exercises, as a balance at equilibrium, without leaning to one side or the other, should permit the creator to deal directly with the creature, and the creature directly with his Creator and Lord.”³

When the young person accompanied is seen to be making considered decisions on his/her own (notwithstanding that he/she makes

³ Ignatius Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises* n.15.

reference to advice from others as inputs), takes responsibilities for such decisions, and reflects on the experience afterwards, then he/she is on the way to being free.⁴

By adding this fourth condition to the previous three on the list, the task of the accompanying person becomes more nuanced. For example, when the young person expresses an unconventional thought which is potentially risky, should the accompanying person give space for the former to go ahead and learn from the richness of the experience or should the accompanying person challenge the former or even step in to stop him/her? To answer these questions, some general factors to consider might include seriousness and reversibility of consequences, the effect on others and the maturity of the young person being accompanied. However, this is a tension which is intrinsic to an accompanying relationship, and there are bound to be some situations which do not yield straightforward solutions.

D. Conversation

A large part of youth formation is effected through verbal communication. The primary approach to verbal communication in the accompanying relationship is “conversation.” As noted by David Fleming:

⁴ It is worth clarifying the meaning of “independent” and “free” in this section in that they refer to the relationship with other human beings only and not to the divine. Actually, in ridding oneself of dependence on some human beings, one should be developing a reliance on God or some transcendental goodness as it is a dangerous illusion to believe that one can be absolutely independent even from God.

“Ignatius describes his ministry by the simple Spanish word *conversar*...Its simplest meaning in English is sincere talk with another person, the kind of comfortable, satisfying conversation whereby we truly get to know someone else...*Conversar* has broader meaning as well. It means “to be conversant with” something or someone—that is, truly know them deeply...To converse with someone is to know them and to be involved with their lives.”⁵

While it is natural to first think about what to “say” in a conversation, the essence of conversation is that it is a two-way process. This means that each engaging party is expected to adjust his or her responses in the course of conversation based on what the other party says. Thus, it is not a prepared speech but a flexible “semi-rehearsed dance.” In order for this to happen, attentive and empathic listening is crucial.

And when it comes to the accompanying person to speak, the objective is to enable the one accompanied to find the way himself or herself. One aspect to consider is the degree of openness in the accompanying’s response. In general, it should be more questioning than answers, more offering of alternatives for consideration than the “best” option, more suggestive than assertive, more tentative than absolute. Even silence is an option. The point is to make it open enough so the one accompanied needs to take an active part in the process, but not so open

⁵ David L. Fleming, S.J., *What is Ignatian Spirituality?* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 50.

as to leave the one accompanied clueless.⁶ The actual degree of openness will depend on the maturity of the one accompanied and the context, including factors mentioned in the last paragraph of Section C.

A closely related aspect to consider is the primacy of the process of searching for the way over the result of that search. The purpose in the accompanying relationship is to enable the person accompanied to experience, explore and master the way applicable to different situations. This implies that the accompanying person might find it appropriate to let the person accompanied go through uncertainties, make mistakes and suffer short term setbacks as it can be a worthwhile price to pay if this experience provides a chance for more profound learning. The accompanying relationship is not result-driven, not short-term results anyway.

There is no guarantee that the accompanying person knows what to say in every situation or, even if he or she knows what to say, finds it appropriate to say it in that particular situation. Regarded as the wiser one in the relationship, the accompanying person may feel pressured to say something inspiring, especially when it seems that the one accompanied is totally stuck. This calls to mind an incident when Pope Francis was confronted by a 12-year-old girl in Manila in 2017 when she tearfully described how, as a young kid, she was forced to scavenge for food from garbage and to sleep outside on cardboard mats. “Why did God let this happen to us?” she asked, covering her face with her hands as she wept. The Pope’s response is a lesson about accompaniment:

⁶ Unless getting the accompanied clueless is intended to be part of the journey for formation.

“The nucleus of your question almost doesn't have a reply,” the pontiff said at first, pain clearly etched on his face as he mentioned that he had seen her tears.

“Only when we too can cry about the things that you said are we able to come close to replying to that question,” Francis continued.

“Why did children suffer so much?” he asked. “Why do children suffer?”

“Certain realities in life we only see through eyes that are cleansed through our tears,” Francis said.⁷

This is a powerful response, not because of the wisdom of the answer (as none was actually offered to the question of why God let the suffering happen), but the love embodied in the empathic accompaniment: it is as if the Pope was saying “I don’t know the answer, but I shall be with you in the suffering.” This is another layer to the conversation, moving from a dialogue on the subject of the discussion to the underlying relationship that holds that dialogue. Furthermore, implicit in this response is the message that while the accompanying one may not yet have an answer, his or her faith still shines a light of hope on the matter. Ultimately, it is not the accompanying person who is offering the answer, but God. The “Creator deals directly with the creature, and the creature directly with the Creator.”⁸

⁷ Joshua J. McElwee, “Francis Struggles to Answer Crying Girl’s Question about Suffering,” *National Catholic Reporter*, 17 January 2015, accessed 7 July 2020: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/world/francis-struggles-answer-crying-girls-question-about-suffering>.

⁸ Ignatius Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises* n.15.

E. Disposition of the Accompanying Person

Based on the nature of the accompanying relationship inspired by Ignatian spirituality discussed in the previous sections, one can infer a list of qualities required of the accompanying person. Certain skills, such as communication or counselling, will surely be helpful. The more fundamental, however, are some inner dispositions that will be conducive to an accompanying relationship.

To create a safe and trusting relationship necessary for effective accompaniment, the accompanying person has to be sincere, authentic and with integrity. He or she should also emanate peace and calm so that his or her stability and that of the relationship are not a concern.

As attentive and empathic listening is of paramount importance, the accompanying one should be a reflective person with good appreciation of the complexity of the self as well as of the human person in general through introspection and other means. Listening is not solely about how good one’s ears are. What has been heard has to be decoded and interpreted, and the quality of this process depends on the maturity of the accompanying person.

To provide the necessary space for the young person accompanied to explore the possibilities of finding his or her way, the accompanying person has to be respectful, patient and humble. This is not a matter of virtue. Rather it must be grounded on the genuine appreciation of one’s own finite understanding and the sense of wonder of the infinite mystery of God and his creation.

F. Conclusion

In introducing Ignatian Spirituality, Fr. Brian Grogan SJ said:

“What is important about [Ignatius of Loyola] is not what he said, or did, or wrote, or suffered. What matters most I think is that this man had a gift, a gift to share with people in any time and place. The gift is to enable others to get in touch with God so that God directs their lives from then on.”⁹

In other words, the greatest contribution of St. Ignatius is not the fruits of his encounter with God, but rather his sharing his way with others so that they too can have their personal encounter with God, bearing their own fruits as a result. This lies at the heart of the emphasis on accompaniment in the Ignatian tradition as a way to lead, teach, nurture and mentor people who are younger or less experienced than us. No matter how experienced or wise, we remain hopelessly limited in front of the limitless potentials of the multitude of people whom God has created. Accompaniment will help unlock such potentials which the accompanying person himself or herself may not possess, enabling the person accompanied to go to places that even the accompanying person can never tread.

⁹ From Fr. Brian Grogan’s online video introduction to the Online Course *Ignatian Spirituality and Leadership*, accessed 8 July 2020: <https://www.educatemagis.org/lesson/ignatian-spirituality-leadership-course-materials/>.

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〔摘要〕 培育青年是父母、教師、社會工作者、學校、大學、政府，以至整個社會都十分關心的。耶穌會將「陪同年輕人創造充滿希望的未來」作為其 2019 年至 2029 年間四個普世性使徒優先之一。這裡用上了「陪同」兩字並非偶然，事實上「陪伴」是依納爵傳統的特色之一。培育青年有許多方法，為什麼「陪伴」在當今的處境具有獨特的意義？若果「陪伴」要做得好，要有哪些條件和方法？作為陪伴者又要有甚麼質素？在本文中，作者以依納爵靈修的角度，反思他在中學、大學和企業中多年培育年輕人的經驗，並分享了他的見解。

關鍵詞：青年，教育，培育，依納爵靈修，普世性使徒優先

Seeing with the Heart: A Contemplative Form of Compassion

Peter Melsaac, SJ

[Abstract] There would be little disagreement over whether the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius provide the foundation for an authentic Ignatian spirituality. Yet there is a substantial divergence of opinion as to the *purpose* of those Spiritual Exercises, and St. Ignatius’ intention for offering them to those who seemed ready to undertake what may appear as a daunting process of spiritual transformation.

There is probably no single purpose or intention, but perhaps rather a cluster of goals that revolve around a unifying notion of “discernment”—which itself is a term rather diffuse in its interpretation. It sometimes involves “decision-making” or “election” (or more broadly, discerning God’s particular will); but it also encompasses learning to interpret interior movement (discernment of spirits), through a growing familiarity and deepening intimacy with God.

Emerging out of St. Ignatius’ own experience of mystical union with God, the Spiritual Exercises may also be seen as a structure for employing various methods of prayer to lead the Exercitant “to the threshold of contemplation:” that is, providing an occasion for the retreatant to experience the divine love that allows one to “see God in all things.”

It is this contemplative “seeing” that the paper seeks to explore more fully as the foundation for a maturing practice of authentic discernment—certainly, at the important moments of making life-choices; but also in the ordinary movement of daily living. In this sense, “seeing” is used metaphorically, and refers to a contemplation of God that awakens us to (and through) compassion. The experience and practice of mercy (or “compassion”) thus offers a contemplative basis for cultivating solidarity for the establishment of justice. Without this contemplative depth, our “option for the poor” and social ministries may become hollow ideals.

Keywords: Spiritual Exercises, Contemplation, Compassion, Solidarity, Justice

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“It is only with the heart that one can see rightly;
what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

(Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*)

Introduction

In the process of offering spiritual and retreat direction over the years, I have been amazed by the number of persons who relate to me what I would identify as “mystical” encounters with God. Unfortunately,

the common notion of mysticism perhaps obscures those encounters: it is a word that is very often associated with visions, locutions, intense affectivity, and paranormal experiences.¹ It is hardly surprising: Among the great mystics of the Christian tradition, these phenomena are often recounted in great detail and are a natural source of fascination.

The danger, of course, is that these experiences can distract us from the essence of a mystical encounter, which I propose here is a form of union with God that goes beyond our natural human faculties—beyond emotion, image, understanding, or desire—and it does so precisely because of God’s absolute transcendence. Secondly, these extraordinary phenomena can place the fundamental purpose and goal of our human life outside the reach of those who genuinely seek God. The Carmelite, Ruth Burrows, in her work on John of the Cross, expresses the counter-position clearly:

Each of us by the very fact of being human is made for union with God. It is our nature to be thus. We have within ourselves, or rather we *are* ourselves, a potentiality for this union.²

Emerging out of St. Ignatius’ own union with God, the Spiritual Exercises may thus be seen as a structure for employing various methods of prayer to lead the Exercitant “to the threshold of

¹ Harvey Egan calls these “secondary mystical phenomena” in his work *Ignatius Loyola the Mystic* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1987), 21. He goes on to distinguish mysticism in the broad and strict senses; “ordinary grace” and “extraordinary grace;” “acquired” and “infused” contemplation. We will return to these latter distinctions subsequently.

² Ruth Burrows, *Ascent to Love* (Denville, New Jersey: Dimension Books, 1987), 19.

contemplation”³: that is, providing an occasion for the retreatant to “experience” union with the divine love that ultimately leads one to “seek God in all things.”⁴

The process of the deepening union with the divine creates the locus for a cluster of goals in the Spiritual Exercises that revolve around a unifying notion of “discernment”—a term which is rather diffuse in its interpretation. It sometimes involves “decision-making” or “election” (that is, discerning the particular will of God); but it also encompasses the interpretation of interior movement (discernment of spirits), through a growing familiarity and deepening intimacy with God. Such discernment, however, is always grounded in the ultimate mystery of our human purpose and goal, which is awakened contemplatively and given expression in our mission and ministries.

The encounter with God, and the transformation of the human person by God’s love, have been variously described in both Christianity and other mystical traditions as “conversion,” “awakening,” “enlightenment,” among others. Our focus here is neither the method of meditation that best precipitates our spiritual transformation, nor the conditions or causes of that transformation.⁵ Rather, we explore the

³ Alexandre Brou and William Young, trans., *Ignatian Methods of Prayer* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1949), 3. I will return to examine more closely the notion of contemplation subsequently.

⁴ John W. Padberg, ed., *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus and Their Complementary Norms* (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996), III, c. I, n. 26.

⁵ After much time devoting himself to severe penances and long periods of prayer, St. Ignatius “awakens” on the bank of the river Cardonner apparently without “prior cause.” Ruth Burrows would suggest, too, that St. John of the Cross distinguishes the “active night” and “passive night” in order to clarify what part our own efforts contribute to union with the Beloved, and how God alone can ultimately effect this union. Burrows, *Ascent to Love*, 22-23.

effect of that encounter on our interpretation of a world which we now “see” in a new way—an awareness of God’s transcendent love permeating the movement of creation and history.

It is this contemplative “seeing” that the paper seeks to explore more fully as the foundation for a maturing practice of authentic discernment—certainly, at the important moments of making life-choices; but also in the ordinary movement of our daily lives, and specifically the transformation of society. In this sense, “seeing” is used metaphorically, and refers to a contemplation of God that awakens us to (and through) compassion. The experience and practice of mercy (or “compassion”) thus offers a contemplative basis for cultivating solidarity for the establishment of justice. Without this contemplative depth, our “option for the poor” and social ministries may become hollow ideals.

1. Faith and Justice

For well over a century, the Catholic Church has promulgated a wide body of “social” teachings, covering many and diverse topics of social concern. Not always received favourably by those who are challenged by their conclusions, even within its own membership, the Church’s social teaching effectively rejects the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the secular, religion and society.

The World Synod of Bishops in 1971 expressed this in a very emphatic way:

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.⁶

Although the Synod's statement seemed controversial to some, it flowed rather naturally out of Vatican Council II's teaching in *Gaudium et spes* (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World),⁷ which in some ways *defined* the Church in relationship to the full reality of our world. It is rooted in our fundamental belief in the mystery of the Incarnation as an expression of God's love for creation. It is a conviction that God is active and labouring in the continuing work of creation and the unfolding of salvation history.

For those who are familiar with the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the union of the spiritual and secular should be immediately obvious throughout the process of the Exercises: perhaps more explicitly in the contemplation on the Incarnation⁸ and in the final "Contemplation to Attain the Love of God;"⁹ but also as the ultimate movement towards the goal of "seeking God in all things," and the

⁶ World Synod of Bishops, Second Ordinary General Assembly, "The Ministerial Priesthood and Justice in the World" (1971), n. 6, accessed 10 May 2020:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_19711130_giustizia_po.html.

⁷ Vatican II Council, *Gaudium et spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. A. Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing, 1975), 903-1001.

⁸ Louis J. Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph*. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1951), nn. 101-109.

⁹ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius*, nn. 230-237.

priority given to the various methods of discernment integral for living out the Spiritual Exercises in daily life.¹⁰

The articulation of the mission of the Society of Jesus at its Thirty-Second General Congregation in 1975 as “...the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement”¹¹ was certainly revolutionary in the sense that it generated new forms of social ministries. In another sense, however, it merely recovered and expressed in a new way St. Ignatius’ mystical illumination of the immanence of God and His labour in creation and history.¹² The Decree was “radical,” not in the sense that it broke with the past, but rather that it was deeply “rooted” in the well-established contemplative charism of the Society of Jesus.

Twenty years later, however, at its Thirty-Fourth General Congregation, the Society of Jesus felt a need to clarify further the relationship of faith and justice:

The aim of our mission received from Christ, as presented in the Formula of the Institute, is the service of faith. The

¹⁰ Particularly the various forms of the Examen of Consciousness.

¹¹ In *Jesuit Life & Mission Today: The Decrees & Accompanying Documents of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John W. Padberg. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009), General Congregation 32, Section I, Decree 4, “Our Mission Today: The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice,” 298 [48].

¹² St. Ignatius offers his own brief descriptions of those “experiences” in Joseph N. Tylenda, *A Pilgrim’s Journey: The Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1985), 36-39. Over a year in Manresa, he had several moments of mystical illumination concerning the mysteries of the Trinity, creation, the Eucharist, the humanity of Christ, as well as a more general “awakening” to all of the mysteries of the faith. A closer examination of these illuminative experiences offers fresh insights into the purpose, focus and structure of the Spiritual Exercises that he developed subsequently.

integrating principle of our mission is the inseparable link between faith and the promotion of the justice of the Kingdom.¹³

Distinguishing the “aim” and the “integrating principle” of the mission certainly developed the way in which we should understand justice as an “absolute requirement of faith” as it was earlier expressed. More importantly, perhaps, was the recognition that the inseparable link between faith and the promotion of justice is part of the contemplative path that unifies an interior journey with the work of social transformation:

The Society continues to insist on the promotion of justice. Why? Because it corresponds to our very spirituality...¹⁴

Yet fundamental issues and questions remained. What is the relationship between spirituality centres and social action centres? In what way does one’s personal faith journey (manifested in the contemplative focus of the Exercises) animate the diverse forms of ministry? How does the social dimension of the service of faith shape the ministry of a teacher, a pastor, a spiritual director, or a human rights advocate?

¹³ Padberg, *Jesuit Life & Mission Today*, General Congregation 34, 1995, Decree 2, “Servants of Christ’s Mission,” 527 [39].

¹⁴ Padberg, *Jesuit Life & Mission Today*, General Congregation 34, 1995, Decree 3, “Our Mission and Justice,” 535 [73]. Using the language of “personal conversion” (Decree 3, p. 534 [66]) and speaking of the creation of “communities of solidarity” (Decree 3, p. 534 [68]) gave a spiritual and pastoral character to what may have otherwise seemed a mere moral imperative to some. The promotion of justice was becoming more explicitly grounded in the experience of the Spiritual Exercises and the movement of interiority.

The original question of the relationship between faith and justice had significantly broadened: it had introduced nuanced distinctions involving the social dimension and social ministries; it had proposed principles of integration in mission; and it had sought greater spiritual depth in the discussion concerning strategies for social and environmental transformation.

By the Thirty-Fifth General Congregation in 2008, the discussion of the mission of the Society of Jesus had taken on a character that would have been familiar even to the first generation of Jesuits:

Being and doing; contemplation and action; prayer and prophetic living; being completely united with Christ and completely inserted into the world with him as an apostolic body...[W]e cannot abandon this creative polarity, since it marks the essence of our lives as contemplatives in action, companions of Christ sent into the world.¹⁵

If we take a closer look at the process of St. Ignatius’s deepening conversion throughout his lifetime, however, with its progressive moments of illumination and mystical union, we see it culminate in the simplicity of his charism: seeking and finding God in all things. It is the gradual synthesis of both the absolute transcendence and radical immanence of God; of St. Ignatius’ encounter with God’s inconceivable mercy, and a movement of compassion flowing from the “graces” that shape his heart and mission.

¹⁵ Padberg, *Jesuit Life & Mission Today*, General Congregation 35, 2008, Decree 2, “A Fire that Kindles other Fires,” 736 [26-27].

It is my suggestion, then, that the Spiritual Exercises offer us a glimpse of St. Ignatius' own journey, while inviting us to enter the mystery he himself encountered. However creative the polarities of being and doing, contemplation and action, prayer and prophetic living may be, it is the mystical path that we share with St. Ignatius that discloses the inseparable link between faith and the promotion of justice—conceptually at times, but also profoundly in the praxis of our ministries.

2. Love and Solidarity

Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.
(1 John 4:8, NRSV)

The encounter with God's love and mercy, the response of gratitude and love, and the union of mind and heart with God incarnate in Christ for the mission with Him: it is these that constitute the fundamental movement of the Spiritual Exercises. St. Ignatius begins with the "consideration" of the purpose and goal of our created being ("The Principle and Foundation") and ends with the contemplative savouring of all the graces received in the period of silent enclosure ("Contemplation to Attain the Love of God"). The entire process, however, is pervaded by various methods that lead us to an encounter of God's love in creation and salvation history, so that our lives (and mission) might become an image of that love.

On that path of spiritual awakening, St. Ignatius offers a means of discerning genuine love by the interpretation of our interior movement. His description of "consolation" is instructive in this regard:

I call it consolation when an interior movement is aroused in the soul, by which it is inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord...It is likewise consolation when one sheds tears that move to love of God...Finally, I call consolation every increase of hope, faith and love, and all interior joy which calls and attracts to heavenly things and to the salvation of one's soul, quieting it and giving it peace in its Creator and Lord.¹⁶

There is much in this description of consolation that warrants our attention, not least of which is his consistent reference to the love of God: it is the "end" that facilitates the discernment of interior movement. It is a common enough error to identify consolation with "good feelings;" or conversely, desolation with "bad feelings." For St. Ignatius, our thoughts, emotions, and desires may be important interior movements experienced in our prayer, but they are subject to discernment in light of the divine love that constitutes genuine consolation.¹⁷ We can be deceived as much by our own spurious reasoning, as we can be by the "false consolation" of the evil spirit.¹⁸

This may account for the affective ambiguity that is often experienced in meditation. A retreatant once recounted her experience

¹⁶ Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 142 [n.316].

¹⁷ George E. Ganss cautions against the facile identification of good feelings with consolation and suggests that "...consolation always includes a tendency toward an increase in charity." *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), n.148: 192-193. Rather than distinguishing "non-spiritual consolation" and "spiritual consolation" as he does, however, I would propose that consolation as Ignatius understood it is characterized by a discernment of interior movements that is always considered through the lens of divine love and union.

¹⁸ This is clearly explained by St. Ignatius in his "Rules for the Discernment of Spirits" suitable for the second week of the Exercises. See Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, [especially nn.332 and 336].

of tears in prayer. When the director asked if they were tears of joy or sadness, she responded: “They were neither tears of joy, nor sadness. It was as though my heart was so full of love, it overflowed through my eyes.” In the same way, Ignatius’ understanding of consolation facilitates the interpretation of aridity in prayer, or even darkness: that is, psychological phenomena may not have much bearing on the discernment of interior movement.

Placing love at the centre of discernment also helps us to understand how our human faculties, the methods of prayer that we engage, and the goal of contemplation are all related to the mystical awareness of God in all things. Pope Francis described this in terms of the Biblical use of the “heart” metaphor:

In the Bible, the heart is the core of the human person, where all his or her different dimensions intersect: body and spirit, interiority and openness to the world and to others, intellect, will and affectivity. If the heart is capable of holding all these dimensions together, it is because it is where we become open to truth and love, where we let them touch us and deeply transform us.¹⁹

The difficulty, of course, is identifying the interior movements that bring clarity to the notion of love itself. In popular discourse and culture, love is often identified with affection, desires, and an attraction to an “other.” Certainly, these phenomena can be important, particularly for the establishment of a relationship. For those that have encountered

¹⁹ Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, (2013, n.26), accessed 30 May 2020: http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html.

and cultivated a deeper and more mature love, however, feelings and attraction diminish in importance as a relationship undergoes various “seasons.” At times, too, these “experiences” can even be the tools for manipulation, exploitation, and the antithesis of love. Our emotions and desires require discernment.

Genuine or authentic love, by contrast, is a process (over time, in a variety of circumstances) of deepening union with the “other,” involving elements of intimacy, sacrifice, and surrender. It is the mutual gift of self to the other that unites the two as one. This is at the heart of St. Ignatius’ understanding of consolation, informs the movement of the Spiritual Exercises as a whole, and explicates his notion of contemplation.

The interior movement, then, that is of primary interest to St. Ignatius are those which participate in the dynamic of love: that is, they reflect the movement from self-absorption and self-centredness (characteristic of desolation) to the awareness and union with the “other.” While there are, no doubt, many others that are important, three interior movements seem prominent in St. Ignatius’ Exercises: contrition,²⁰ gratitude and compassion. Each may be expressed in the intellect, will and affectivity, but they cannot be reduced to the content of those expressions.

²⁰ John English explains well the discernment of “tears” in the First Week, which may be self-centred, rather than an indication of genuine contrition. *Spiritual Freedom* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1995), 74. I would add the important distinction of the notions of guilt and contrition: the former is focused on the emotional response that may be largely self-concerned; the latter an awareness of the wound I have inflicted upon the beloved.

What is common to all three of these “impulses of the soul” is that each one, in its own unique way, represents a movement of self to the other: self-forgetfulness, as well as the awareness and embrace of the other. They are all dimensions of love.

Our focus here is compassion. Often confused with “feeling for” another, genuine compassion is more accurately understood, in the spiritual sense, as “union with” another. In that sense, compassion is sometimes even used synonymously with the notion of mercy, and very broadly as love itself.²¹ While compassion may have an affective dimension, it goes well beyond an emotional response.²² In the Gospels, Jesus is described at times as “moved with compassion” (Luke 7:13; 10:30; Matthew 14:14), which is clearly much more than a passing emotional response. As the incarnate compassion of God himself, Jesus’ encounters are characterised by a union with the heart of the other, sharing their joy and pain, healing and transforming them in the centre of their being.

Following the graces of contrition and gratitude of the First Week, then, when the Exercitant touches intimately the mercy of God in the awareness of sin (cosmic, social, and personal), St. Ignatius leads us in the Second Week to a contemplation of God’s compassion: in the Incarnation, as an expression of the mercy of the Trinity, and in the life and ministry of the Christ. As we grow in that “interior knowledge” of

²¹ Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, (2015, n. 8), accessed 16 June 2020: http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html.

²² The emotional response of the Good Samaritan, for example, who was moved to compassion for the wounded traveller, is not the most important element of the story, as much his awareness of the man and the selfless spontaneity of his merciful care.

Jesus, our contemplation becomes increasingly intimate and “suffused with love.”²³

The various dimensions of love, that is, the union of self with the other, are woven into the invitation of the Second Week to greater intimacy and discipleship.²⁴ Three important moments of this love manifest themselves in the movement of the Second Week: “Seeing” the other (The Contemplation of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ²⁵); “Desiring” the other (The Meditation on Two Standards²⁶); and “Choosing” the other in freedom (The Meditation on the Three Classes of Persons.²⁷ In this way, the “election” or decision-making process is part of a deepening discernment of God’s love.²⁸

The dynamic of love that manifests itself in the moments of seeing, desiring, and choosing the other always involves the underlying transformative movement of love from self to the other. The Spiritual Exercises cultivates the solitude and silence of enclosure so that in the depths of prayer we might encounter God’s love, unite ourselves to the heart of the compassionate Christ, and open ourselves to discern God’s

²³ Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, [104], 56; and n.65, p.163.

²⁴ “...that I may love him more intensely and follow him more closely.” Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, [104], 56.

²⁵ Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, [91-100], 53-55.

²⁶ Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, [136-148], 65-67.

²⁷ Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, [149-157], 68-69.

²⁸ It is hardly surprising, then, that St. Ignatius offers as a conclusion for the Second Week material the “consideration” of the “Three Degrees of Humility” or the “Three Kinds of Love.” Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, [165-168], 72 - 73. Ganss offers insight into the tradition that unites humility and love in note 86 (pp.173-175). Most importantly, he alludes here to the way in which this Exercise pervades the entire course of the Exercises. I would add that the desire for this perfect love of Christ becomes an important moment of transition from the contemplation of Christ’s compassion (the Second Week) to an intimate sharing of his passion, death and resurrection, which is the compassion we seek as a grace in the Third and Fourth Weeks.

Spirit in the life of God's people, so that we might become agents of transformation and healing in the world.

In the Jesuits' Thirty-Sixth General Congregation, the relationship of our personal conversion to social transformation is strongly stated:

For us Jesuits, compassion is action, an action discerned together. Yet we know that there is no authentic familiarity with God if we do not allow ourselves to be moved to compassion and action by an encounter with the Christ who is revealed in the suffering, vulnerable faces of people, indeed in the suffering of creation.²⁹

Nevertheless, the converse would be equally true: there is no genuine (or "discerned") compassion for the suffering of humanity and creation without the intimacy with God that comes through our contemplative union. Our ministries of service, advocacy, development, and empowerment are animated and made effective in God's love. Compassionate action on behalf of justice flows out of our contemplative union with the heart of Christ; our contemplation is deepened by the discernment of God's presence in the suffering and vulnerability of our world.³⁰

²⁹ *Jesuit Life & Mission Today: The Decrees & Accompanying Documents of the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (Chestnut Hill, MA: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2017), Decree 1, "Companions in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice," 21 [20].

³⁰ For those who have undergone the Spiritual Exercises more than once, the experience of the 30 days can be significantly different each time. The on-going practice of meditation in the interim, the wisdom that comes with life experience, and the richness of our relationships afford a new breadth and depth to the movement of the Exercises. My personal experience of many years of insertion, life and ministry among the most marginal in Jamaica, for example, allowed a

The notion of “solidarity” that is used with such great frequency in the Church’s social teaching (as well as in Jesuit documents) is helpful for bringing conceptual unity to the interior and social dimensions of love. Just as the movement of “self to other” provides clarity for distinguishing consolation and refines our understanding of consolation beyond affect; so too do the features of “seeing, desiring, and choosing” nuance the commitment to social transformation.

“Do you see this woman?” (Luke 7:44, NRSV) When Jesus asks this question of Simon the Pharisee as a woman of ill-repute came to express her love, we might assume that he uses the question rhetorically in order to introduce the subsequent lesson. Yet perhaps the question needs an answer. Simon does not “see” the woman: he is distracted by her reputation, and by his own sense of self-righteousness. The story not only instructs us in the process of conversion of the woman, but also provides an occasion for Jesus to challenge the “blindness” of social exclusion. Jesus “sees” the woman. He contemplates her in a movement of unity. His compassion for her is perfected by the “sight” that is fundamentally contemplative.³¹ Given Simon’s prior doubts about Jesus’ prophetic identity, Jesus ironically demonstrates not only his ability to know her heart, but prophetically penetrates the truth of her social reality. In this way, he provides a remedy for her personal healing, as well as offering a path to social reconciliation.

new way for me to enter into the graces of the Exercises when I was given a second opportunity to engage them in a 30-day retreat.

³¹ “Human beings, whenever they judge, look no farther than the surface, whereas the Father looks into the very depths of the soul.” Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, (2015, n. 14).

Like compassion, then, solidarity involves far more than passing feelings of pity, or indignation about injustice. Solidarity involves a fundamental conversion that allows us to contemplate our neighbour, as they truly are, and not merely as they appear to be (or what we would want them to be). It is contemplatively discerned and realised tangibly in the community.³² Our contemplation opens us to forms of compassionate action, and our insertion in the genuine community (in all its poverty) intensifies our interior life. Genuine solidarity is constituted by the union of hearts that forms communities of justice, and it is contemplative in its essence.

3. A Contemplative Life of Compassion

[Contemplation is] life itself, fully awake, fully active, and fully aware that it is alive. It is spiritual wonder. It is spontaneous awe at the sacredness of life, of being. It is gratitude for life, for awareness, and for being. It is a vivid realization of the fact that life and being in us proceed from an invisible, transcendent, and infinitely abundant Source. (Thomas Merton)³³

“To seek and find God in all things” is the heart of St. Ignatius’ mysticism, or perhaps of mysticism more generally. The simplicity of love prescinds from any dichotomy of the interior life and our social

³² It is in this way that the path of a deepening path of interiority and the manifold of ministries are united in a movement of contemplative compassion. This is true as much in personal relationships as it is in our work for structural transformation.

³³ Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (Boston and London: Shambala, 2003), 1.

reality. In his description of a Jesuit as a “contemplative in action,” it was unfortunate that Jerome Nadal’s phrase would later give rise to a polarisation of contemplation and action. He clearly intended to unite the two, so that there might be a “rejection of both a disembodied spiritualism and a professional secularized activism.”³⁴

Part of the difficulty, however, is that the word “contemplation” tends to be used in many different senses. In its most common usage, it refers generically to various forms of meditation. St. Ignatius uses the term to refer both to a method of meditation (as distinguished from other methods) that involves the use of imagination; as well as to a moment of mystical union that infuses the beloved with a loving gaze of the lover. The imaginative method of prayer merely leads us to the threshold of contemplation, which unites the lover and beloved.

It is this second sense of St. Ignatius, as a moment of divine union, that clarifies the intention of Jerome Nadal: The one who is united with God, through Christ, in the Spirit, is an instrument of the divine love that brings reconciliation to the world, as the justice of the Kingdom. It is compassion and solidarity that unites us to the other, as part of the divine desire for the establishment of genuine community.

To be contemplative is not the same as engaging in a method of meditation, even if the latter is presupposed. It is not only an interior

³⁴ Peter Hans Kolvenbach, “Jerome Nadal: Fifth Centenary of his Birth,” *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* (XXXVIII, 3/2007), 10, accessed 15 June 2020: <http://www.sjweb.info/documents/cis/pdfenglish/200711602en.pdf>. Fr. Kolvenbach goes on to suggest that “Father Nadal presents the familiarity with God of a companion of Jesus as a circular movement which finds its origin in the movement of the Spirit, passes through our heart, and is fulfilled in a concrete apostolic commitment to return to its source in God.” (12).

activity, it is a discernment of the presence of God in all things that transforms our perception, orients our desires, informs our decision-making, and animates our ministries. As such, the Spiritual Exercises do not conclude at the end of the retreat, but rather open the retreatant to a lifelong process of deepening contemplation.

The place and purpose of the “Contemplation to Attain Love” is instructive in this regard. As the final contemplation of the Exercises, and given its character, George Ganss has good grounds to propose that its primary function is to “build a bridge for intensive spiritual living in everyday life after the Exercises have ended.”³⁵ It is at once a review of all that has been received in the Four Weeks, a contemplative gaze of the Lover and Beloved, as well as an Exercise that St. Ignatius perhaps intended to be practised regularly to dispose us to the grace of union with God’s love. The “Contemplation to Attain Love” completes the Spiritual Exercises in one sense, but also provides a path for an on-going, deepening awareness of Christ’s compassion in us that expresses itself as solidarity and the desire for justice.³⁶

In the Spiritual Exercises, we awaken to the love of God that infuses all creation, and we begin to “see with the heart.”

³⁵ Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises*, note 120, 184.

³⁶ Here we return to the earlier reference to the common distinction of “acquired” and “infused” contemplation (note 1). The Exercises are not mechanical: St. Ignatius is clear that the grace of the “Third Degree of Humility” is one that cannot be acquired. In the same way, he proposes Exercises that dispose us to the unitive mystical experience but acknowledges that the gift of that union cannot be manufactured. It is as spontaneous and “without cause” as his own experiences in Manresa. The Spiritual Exercises do not presume to effect the mystical graces of divine union, and the “Contemplation to Attain Love” continues the invitation to deeper awareness, compassion and solidarity.

〔摘要〕人們對於聖依納爵神操是否為真正的依納爵靈修奠定了基礎，沒有多大的分歧。然而，對於神操的**目的**，以及聖依納爵（St. Ignatius）意圖將它們提供給那些似乎準備好進行一種可能令人生畏的靈性轉化過程的人，大家的意見分歧卻很大。

可能沒有單一的目的或意圖，反而可能是一組目標圍繞著一個統一的「分辨」概念，而分辨這個詞本身的解釋是相當鬆散。它有時涉及「決定」或「選擇」（或更廣義地說，是辨別天主的特殊意願）；但它也包括通過與天主與日俱增的熟悉和親密關係來學習闡釋內心的運動（辨別神類）。

神操是聖依納爵從自己與主的神秘結合的經歷中產生出來，它也可以看作是一種採用各種祈禱方法引領操練者「進入默觀門檻」的結構；也就是說，它為靜修者提供一個時機去體驗天主的愛，使他們能夠「在一切事物中看見天主」。

本文正是通過這種默觀的「觀照」來作更全面的探索，以此作為日漸成熟的真正分辨的實踐基礎——當然，是在作出人生選擇的重要時刻；也在日常生活中的平凡運動中。從這個意義上，「觀照」作為隱喻，指的是對上主的默觀，它喚醒（並通過）我們的同情心。因此，憐憫（或「同情」）的經驗和實踐為培養建立正義的團結提供了默觀的基礎。沒有這種默觀的深度，我們的「優先關愛窮人」和社會牧職可能成為空洞的理想。

關鍵詞：神操、默觀、同情心、團結、正義

Discernment of Spirits and Pastoral Circle in Social Movement: A Theological Reflection on Hong Kong's Anti-extradition Protests

Yan-ho Lai

[Abstract] Tensions between developing spiritual growth and civil resistance often occur when spirituality is perceived as merely a personal pursuit of internal tranquillity and transcendence while civil resistance is regarded as generating confrontations, struggles and sometimes violence against political authority. Such tensions become more prominent in the year 2019 and 2020 when social protests flourish against political, economic and racial injustice in the world. This article responds to such tension by studying how the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola and Gerard Whelan's theological framework of pastoral circle can be applied in discerning the ways that individual Christians respond to the development of Hong Kong since the anti-extradition movement commenced in 2019. This article argues that the social movements in Hong Kong in 2019 revealed the shortcomings of Hong Kong's social infrastructures and cultural superstructures, but at the same time, allowed for the finding of seeds of redemption in the vibrant and resilient civil society, the development of which has been nurtured by previous social movements in Hong Kong. The Spiritual Exercises and the pastoral circle assist in the development of personal discipleship via strengthened identification of beloved sinners,

discernment of spirits and resilience-building under the idea of *agere contra*. Individual believers and Christian communities have also been invited to develop communal discernments and contextual theologies to enrich the mission of the Church. This article contributes to the theological debate on the relationship between Ignatian Spirituality and political activism by offering first-hand experiences from a Chinese society, alongside demonstrating how discernment of spirits can be carried out by Christian activists and Christian communities.

Keywords: Ignatian Spirituality, Discernment of Spirits, Social Movement, Politics and Religion, Hong Kong

Introduction

“Sing Hallelujah to the Lord! Sing Hallelujah to the Lord! Sing Hallelujah, sing Hallelujah, sing Hallelujah to the Lord!” hundreds of people who stayed on the pedestrian bridge leading to the government headquarters repeatedly chanted the famous gospel acclamation before dozens of riot police. At the frontline was a female Protestant pastor, telling the crowds that they would be staying and praying overnight, and urged everyone to remain calm.¹

The event occurred on 13 June 2019, a day after clashes between thousands of protestors and riot police took place outside the Legislative

¹ I was at the scene located on the pedestrian bridge to Citic Tower, Admiralty of Hong Kong on 13 June 2019.

Council Complex in Hong Kong. Lawmakers were set to debate at the second reading of a bill proposing amendments to the extradition law that allowed for fugitives be sent back to Mainland China, which had resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong on 1 July 1997. Fearing that the new amendments would have the potential of extraditing Hong Kong citizens alleged of criminal activity to the criminal justice system in Mainland China, a system notorious for its poor record in access to justice and protection of human rights, more than one million citizens took part in a march on 9 June 2019 calling upon the government to withdraw the bill.² Nonetheless, the government insisted on passing the bill as scheduled. Tensions escalated when thousands of protestors blocked major vehicular routes outside the government headquarters and the Legislative Council on 12 June 2019. Hundreds of Christians held prayer meetings around the government headquarters, and some pastors formed human chains before riot police in hopes of protecting the crowds. At 3 pm, the Police dispersed the protest crowds by firing tear gas canisters, rubber bullets and sponge rounds, injuring dozens of citizens. Public outrage broke out after government leaders declared the generally peaceful protest a riot. The clash had attracted attention from the international community over Hong Kong, and the Police's repressive ways of handling protests were widely criticised across international media. Three days later, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong announced the suspension of the bill, but the decision failed to bring a

² Jennifer Creery, "Over a Million Attend Hong Kong Demo Against Controversial Extradition Law, Organisers Say," *Hong Kong Free Press*, 9 June 2019, accessed 18 September 2020: <https://hongkongfp.com/2019/06/09/just-no-china-extradition-tens-thousands-hong-kong-protest-controversial-new-law/>.

halt to further protests. A record-breaking number of two million citizens took place in the demonstration the following day.³

These protests marked the beginning of the anti-extradition movement in Hong Kong. The movement is still ongoing in the city, although the COVID-19 pandemic and the enactment of the National Security Law in Hong Kong on 30 June 2020 have led to the dying down of direct actions. This movement was unprecedented in the history of social movements in Hong Kong, in terms of its scale and duration. Professional bodies, business communities, civil societies and believers of various Christian denominations were deeply involved in the movement.⁴ Protest demands have also evolved from calling for the withdrawal of the bill to investigation of police brutality, de-characterisation of the protests as riots, amnesty of all peaceful protestors and universal suffrage. Although the government eventually withdrew the bill three months after the outbreak of the movement, protest actions continued to evolve and diversify, ranging from chanting protest songs inside shopping malls to occupying the airport.⁵ “Sing

³ I was one of the organisers of the Civil Human Rights Front’s rallies on 9 June and 16 June 2019. The number of demonstrators was announced by the Civil Human Rights Front. Annie Lee, Fion Li and Shawna Kwan, “As Many as Two Million Protesters Hit Hong Kong Streets,” *Bloomberg*, 16 June 2019, accessed 18 September 2020: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-06-16/protests-swell-as-hong-kong-rejects-leader-s-compromise>.

⁴ This article focuses mainly on the dynamics and responses of the Roman Catholic Church and Catholics in Hong Kong. The term “Church” here refers to The Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong; “Christians” and “Catholic” are sometimes interchangeable, depending on the context. Christians from other churches will be addressed in accordance with their denominations, such as Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists or Lutherans.

⁵ There is a multitude of journal articles and books that document the anti-extradition movement in Hong Kong, offering insights and evaluation of this ongoing event from different perspectives. I would recommend three of them for readers who desire for a comprehensive description of the protest: Antony

Hallelujah to the Lord” also became a famous song as it signified the engagement of Christian believers and ministers in the protests and symbolised the peaceful and non-violent nature of the movement during its early stages.⁶

The role played by Christians in rights defence and social movements have long been debated among theologians. The debate became more active when civil disobedience became a popular form of promoting or resisting social change, especially during the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1960s.⁷ Many Christians took part in acts of civil disobedience, direct action and civil resistance after the Second World War, as a way of protesting against war, social

Dapiran, *City on Fire: the Fight for Hong Kong* (London: Scribe Publication, 2020); Zuraidah Ibrahim and Jeffie Lam ed., *Rebel City: Hong Kong's Year of Water and Fire* (Singapore: Scientific Publishing & Hong Kong: South China Morning Post Publishers, 2020); and Kong Tsung-gan, *Liberate Hong Kong: Stories from the Freedom Struggle* (Sydney: Mekong Review, 2020).

⁶ “Hong Kong Protests: How Hallelujah to the Lord Became an Unofficial Anthem,” *BBC News*, 22 June 2019, accessed 8 August 2020: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-48715224>.

⁷ David L. Chappell, “Religious Revivalism in the Civil Rights Movement” in *African American Review*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Winter 2002, Vol. 36 No. 4: 581-595; Dennis C. Dickerson, “African American Religious Intellectuals and the Theological Foundations of the Civil Rights Movement, 1930-55” in *Church History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, June 2005, Vol. 74 Issue 2: 217-235; Curtis J. Evans, “White Evangelical Protestant Responses to the Civil Rights Movement” in *Harvard Theological Review*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, April 2009, Vol. 102 Issue 2: 245-273; Paul Harvey, “Civil Rights Movements and Religion in America” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedias*, August 2016, accessed 7 September 2020: <https://oxfordre.com/religion/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-492>; Vaneesa Cook, “Martin Luther King Jr., and the Long Social Gospel Movement” in *Religion and American Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Winter 2016, Vol. 26 Issue 1: 74-100.

injustice and even democratisation, such as in the United States, Poland, Taiwan, South Korea.⁸

Tensions between developing spiritual growth and engaging in civil resistance often occur due to the difference in nature between spirituality and civil resistance. Whereas spirituality is perceived as personal pursuit of internal tranquillity and transcendence, civil resistance generates confrontations, struggles and sometimes violence against political authorities. Such tensions became more evident in 2019 and 2020 as protests and political movements against political, economic and racial injustice flourished all over the world, including in France, Spain, Chile, Iraq, India, Indonesia and Hong Kong.⁹ The dichotomy between spirituality and activism poses an intellectual challenge to Christian theologians in Hong Kong. Since the Umbrella Movement in 2014, theologians from various Christian denominations in Hong Kong have engaged in debates concerning ways to overcome the dichotomy. The Umbrella Movement, being the other most important movement to strive for full democracy in recent times ended in vain. No political reform was brought about at all.¹⁰ Although a number of scholars from different protestant denominations in Hong

⁸ Daniel Philpott, “The Catholic Wave” in *Journal of Democracy*, 2004, Vol. 15 Issue 2: 32-46; Paolo G. Carozza and Daniel Philpott, “The Catholic Church, Human Rights, and Democracy: Convergence and Conflict with the Modern State” in *Logos*, 2012, Vol. 15 Issue 3: 15-43; Yan-ho Lai, “Building Heavenly Kingdom on Earth: The Roman Catholic Church and Deepening Democracy in Brazil and South Korea” in *Hong Kong Journal of Catholic Studies*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2015, Vol. 6: 173-205.

⁹ Samuel J. Brannen, Christian S. Haig and Katherine Schmidt, *The Age of Mass Protest: Understanding an Escalating Global Trend* (Washington: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2020).

¹⁰ Justin K.H. Tse and Jonathan Y. Tan edited, *Theological Reflections on the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement* (US: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

Kong sought to author some works concerning the relationship between Christianity and the Umbrella Movement, such theological reflections were under-developed within the Catholic Church.¹¹

Against this background, this article engages in the intellectual debate of the relationship between spirituality and activism by demonstrating how the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola and Gerard Whelan's theological framework of pastoral circle can be applied to discern social actions by activists. The *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius offers rich resources for individual and communal discernments of social and political actions. The pastoral circle, proposed by Joe Holland and Peter Henriot and modified by Whelan, serves as an analytical tool for the Church to make decisions on pastoral actions with regards to the context. This article utilises their theoretical resources and explores how individual Christians in Hong Kong responded to the anti-extradition movement. This article argues that the social movements in 2019 revealed the shortcomings of Hong Kong's social infrastructures and cultural superstructures, but at the same time, allowed for the finding of seeds of redemption in the vibrant and resilient civil society, the development of which has been nurtured by previous social movements in Hong Kong. The *Spiritual Exercises* and the pastoral circle assist in the development of personal discipleship via strengthened identification of beloved sinners, discernment of spirits and resilience-building under the idea of *agere contra*. Individual believers and Christian communities

¹¹ The only edited volume of Catholics involving in the 79-day Umbrella Movement was *The Opening Umbrella and the Faith* (傘開·信念), edited by a group of young Catholics. The book was even not published in Hong Kong but in Taiwan (Taiwan: Elephant White, 2015).

have also been invited to develop communal discernments and contextual theologies to enrich the mission of the Church.

The methodology adopted in this article includes participant observation, analysis of existing empirical data and reflections on the anti-extradition movement, alongside interpretation of them in light of theological resources. Particularly, my personal experiences and participation in spirituality and activism have been examined. My connection with activism in Hong Kong began as a junior high school student in late 2002, when I joined the first rally against the national security law with my Churchmates and Catholic priests. Since 2010, I became a social movement organiser in the Student Union of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese. In the following year, I was elected as Convenor of the Civil Human Rights Front (CHRF), a coalition of Hong Kong’s civil society which has been the organiser of the annual 1 July rally since 2003. After the outbreak of the anti-extradition movement in June 2019, I returned to CHRF to help with the organisation of the rallies, and later on, took up the role as Vice-convenor until September 2020. I have witnessed and been involved in the progress and transformation of Hong Kong’s activism for almost a decade. The outbreak of the anti-extradition movement has awakened Christians, including myself, to contemplate on their role in times of political turmoil. With my formation under Ignatian Spirituality, I am urged by the Holy Spirit to share my reflections and insights.

This article is divided into three sections. The first section reviews the essentials of discernment of spirits in St. Ignatius’s *Spiritual Exercises* and Whelan’s theory of pastoral circle. The second section

demonstrates how the pastoral circle can be integrated with the *Spiritual Exercises* for personal discernment amid Hong Kong's anti-extradition movement. The last section concludes the article with recommendations to Hong Kong's Christian activists.

Discernment of Spirits under the Ignatian Tradition

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius and Discernment of Spirits

St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491 - 1556) was the founder of the Society of Jesus and the author of the *Spiritual Exercises* (the Exercises). The Exercises crystallised his lifetime experiences with God into a manual for individuals to develop spiritual growth in a systematic manner. The Exercises was designed mainly for Christian retreatants to undergo a deep conversion for God by “preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections and then, after their removal, of seeking and finding God’s will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul” (Paragraph 1 of the Exercises).¹²

The Exercises is structured into four parts, named as “weeks” for retreatants to exercise in around 30 days. The First Week invites retreatants to navigate themselves towards the “principle and foundation” of human beings, that is, “to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls” (Paragraph 23).¹³ One should pray for the grace of “holy indifference,” helping oneself to use

¹² George E. Ganss translated, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius* (Chicago: Loyola Press 1992), 21.

¹³ Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, 32.

earthly things that are created for the pursuit of the end, and to free oneself from things that hinder such pursuit.¹⁴ The “principle and foundation” in the Exercises urge Christians to depart from inordinate attachments and disordered affections to seek God’s will. The Exercises then asks retreatants to contemplate sins and hell, and acknowledge that they are beloved by God, whose power and love transcends one’s sinfulness. The Second Week offers guidelines on meditation and imaginative contemplations of the Gospels to help retreatants discern and confirm one’s election of the way of life, realising discipleship as a Christian. The Third Week comprises a test of commitments for retreatants who made their election for God by contemplation of the passion of the Lord. Retreatants are asked to meditate and experience the costs and sufferings of following the will of God just as what Jesus had undergone. The Fourth Week offers meditation of the Lord’s resurrection where retreatants share the paschal joy and then contemplate the attainment of the love of God in everything, to own a deep interior knowledge of God who gives unceasing graces for and intimacy with his children. The Exercises also supplement instructions on prayer, spiritual discernment, almsgiving, scruples and methods to enhance one’s unity with the Church.

The Exercises can be treated as a manual to live out a genuine discipleship, when exercitants commit to the way they elect to follow the Son of God. Activism can be a path to the realisation of discipleship, as activism is a critical approach to the fulfilment of the imperative of

¹⁴ Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, 32.

the stewardship when God commanded Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:28).¹⁵ The Exercises offer rich resources to develop one's discipleship, and this article addresses three of them: (1) beloved sinners, (2) discernment of spirits, and (3) *agere contra*.

“Beloved sinner” refers to our spiritual identity. As stated by the “principle and foundation,” we are created to praise, reverence and serve the Creator, whatever we have done in our lives. Our weaknesses and wrongdoings do not separate us from the love of God if we decide to reconcile with the Father like the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32 & Romans 8:35). We are liberated from our sins once we realise the deep-rooted evilness and consequence of the sins we committed and the transcendent love from God. Otherwise, sins and the “sinfulness” in our interior selves would turn to be ‘inordinate attachments’ that obstruct us from realising and achieving our purposes in life. Despite our fragility, we can still be called to be beloved disciples of Christ, to live in whatever way that God invites us. Identification of sinners beloved by God is the disposition and basis of discernment of spirits. Our relationship with God is not defined by our actions or inactions in social movements or our commitment to a distinctive ideology that supports our political participation, but by our true identity as an image of God (Genesis 1:27). Then, we can begin to discern the will of God, who asks us to follow him in a particular way.

Discernment of spirits plays a central role in discipleship. It is an ongoing process to own interior knowledge of God, to love and follow

¹⁵ The Scripture quotations contained in this article are from *The Holy Bible, New International Version*[®], NIV[®] Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.[®] Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

him in our entire lives. In the “Rules for the Discernment of Spirits” of the Exercises, Ignatius explained how exercitants could understand “the various motions which are caused in the soul” (Paragraph 313).¹⁶ In his view, one should receive good motions, or good spirit while at the same time, reject bad motives or evil spirit that drives us away from God. In other words, retreatants and Christians should discern and follow the good spirit and be God-oriented in their lives. The progress of discernment of spirits can be identified by a pair of contrasting ideas: “consolation” and “desolation.” When one increases faith, hope and charity, he or she experiences consolation that moves himself or herself towards God (Paragraph 316).¹⁷ On the contrary, when one moves in the opposite direction, he or she undergoes desolation (Paragraph 317).¹⁸ It should be noted that the ideas of consolation and desolation are not necessarily related to one’s state of emotions, for one can undergo a difficult consolation through sharing one’s experiences of suffering. In other words, discernment of spirits is not an emotional forecast; it requires exercitants to use both intellect to reason and elicit affections (Paragraph 3).¹⁹

Discerning interior movement is an essential part for Christians to collaborate with God. In the short run, it helps us to make good decisions in our daily lives and assists us in moving towards God intimately; in the long run, discernment equips us with the will to commit to the chosen path of Christian life: we are not choosing a specific way of life, but choosing God who may ask us to take an “U-turn” in critical times. In

¹⁶ Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, 121.

¹⁷ Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, 122.

¹⁸ Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, 122.

¹⁹ Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, 22.

activism, Christians are called upon to discern possible actions with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, the Spirit directs us to a path that contradicts with the will of other protestors. What matters is whether one can distinguish a good spirit from an evil one, and then insist on following the good spirit and make one's decisions in line with God's will.

The third element that constitutes discipleship is "*agere contra*," a Latin phrase meaning "to act against." It refers to one's capacity to build resilience, which is essential for ensuring perseverance in living out one's election under the discernment of spirits. In the Exercises, Ignatius offers a solution for combating desolation in prayer:

"In time of consolation it is easy and scarcely taxing to remain in contemplation for a full hour, but during desolation it is very hard to fill out the time. Hence, to act against (agere contra) the desolation and overcome the temptations, the exercitant ought to remain always a little longer than the full hour, and in this way become accustomed nor merely to resist the enemy but even to defeat him" (Paragraph 13).²⁰

Ignatius suggested each exercitant of the Exercises to take a full hour for each prayer. Knowing that human tendency inclines to cling to comfort zones rather than to embrace challenges, he asked exercitants to pray longer than an hour if he or she is undergoing spiritual desolation. This is a solution for resisting the temptation of shortening prayer time, which is often a tactic of the evil spirit to distract people from God. *Agere contra* is an exercise of resilience for overcoming temptations. It

²⁰ Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, 25.

stretches our interior freedom, which may be limited by our comfort zones. We often feel hesitant to act against our conventional practices, and our natural resistance to change results in us being “unfree.” For instance, in public debates, people tend to listen to and reinforce their belief in views that they possess and are reluctant to consider or even try to understand opposing views. The creation of “echo chambers,” amplified by social media, limits our ability to accept diversified opinions and thus restricts our freedom. *Agere contra* is a technique to strengthen our will by allowing us to break through our established ways and stretch our inner freedom and capacity; thereby enabling us to follow the footsteps of the suffering Christ who was nailed on the Cross to fulfil the Father’s will.

Discernment of Spirits, Historical Analysis and the Pastoral Circle

The principles and techniques of discernment of spirits were further developed and systemised by theologians to promote discernment from personal to communal and institutional levels. One famous figure is Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984), a Canadian Jesuit and theologian in the 20th Century. In his book *Method in Theology*, Lonergan proposed an idea of “levels of consciousness” to explain how humans make decisions based on affective connections. The first level of consciousness goes to one’s experiences through his or her senses. The second level of consciousness occurs when one moves to a stage of registering and understanding the experiences. When one’s inner-self contemplates certainty, he or she judges whether his or her insights are true. The third and last level of consciousness is reached where, after

making judgment over the facts and understanding those facts, one decides on his or her actions in order to live in authenticity.²¹ Such a linear stage-by-stage process may be constrained by the unwillingness to be attentive to experiences, the excessive caution in making rational judgments, or the reluctance to live authentically.²² The intervention of the Spirit grants graces of strength to Christians who practice *agere contra*. Religious conversion is essential for the transcendence of human frailty with the love of God and strengthens the resilience of human consciousness in making authentic decisions.²³

Lonergan developed a “theory of history” from his idea of “level of consciousness” that applies the process of individual self-appropriation to historical analysis. Four ideas are addressed in the theory of history: progress, decline, redemption and the mission of the Church. “Progress” refers to the evolution of social structures that move towards the common good, such as changes in technological, economic and political infrastructures alongside cultural superstructures. In Lonergan’s view, a society undergoes “progress” when everyone acts authentically. “Decline” is a regression to such social structure, often caused by selfishness of the privileged class in society. “Redemption” means that despite the strong force of “decline” in human history that

²¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007). Interpretations of his theory can be found in Michael McCarthy, *Authenticity as Self-Transcendence: The Enduring Insights of Bernard Lonergan* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015) and Gerard Whelan, *A Discerning Church: Pope Francis, Lonergan, and a Theological Method for the Future* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2019).

²² Gerry (Gerard) Whelan, “Theological Reflection and the Slum of Nairobi” in Pierli, Francesco and Yago Abeledo ed., *The Slums: A Challenge to Evangelization* (Nairobi: Pauline Publication Africa, 2002), 80.

²³ Whelan, “Theological Reflection and the Slum of Nairobi,” 80.

may prevail over the force of “progress,” divine redemption operates in history as well, just as the divine graces that bestow upon individuals undergoing discernment of spirits. In practice, Lonergan believed that redemption happens in social infrastructures and culture superstructures. Lonergan proposed that the mission of the Church be to serve the foundation of redemption in human history through its priestly, prophetic and kingly functions. Priestly function serves as a mediation of religious conversion by the liturgical tradition of the Church. Prophetic function refers to the ministry of engaging in dialogue or advocacy for the moral and social teaching of the Church to influence social values and cultural beliefs. Kingly function means that the Church shall establish various infrastructures to connect the kingdom of God with real human needs, such as schools, hospitals and development projects, except seizure of political power.²⁴

Lonergan’s theory of history has enriched the theological discussion of discernment of spirits, which extended the application from individual Christians to communal and institutional levels of the Church. A Jesuit theologian Gerard Whelan integrated Lonergan’s theory of history with the idea of “pastoral circle,” which is proposed in Joe Holland and Peter Henriot’s *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*.²⁵ The pastoral circle refers to a repeating process under evaluation, reassessment and reordering of pastoral preferences. It consists of four steps: (1) insertion, (2) social analysis, (3) theological

²⁴ A general description of Lonergan’s theory of history can be found in Whelan, “Theological Reflection and the Slum of Nairobi,” 81-3.

²⁵ Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice (USA: Orbis, 1983)*; Whelan, “Theological Reflection and the Slum of Nairobi,” 78.

reflection and (4) pastoral planning.²⁶ The next section applies Whelan's revised framework of the pastoral circle, which is integrated with Lonergan's insights in history, to study the social context of Hong Kong and discern the presence and direction of the Spirit through my observation and reflection.

Applying the Pastoral Circle

Step 1: General Description

Whelan suggests the first step of the pastoral circle as offering an overview of the institution that the discerner is placed and his or her personal information in relation to the institution. Against the background of the anti-extradition movement and my biography related to Hong Kong's activism set out above, I will focus on discussion of Hong Kong's situation as the context of discernment in this section, which will be set out in four facets.

State repression led to mass resistance in Hong Kong. From 12 June 2019 onwards, protestors in Hong Kong restlessly took collective actions to fight for the five demands and addressing of police brutality. There were at least 300 public assemblies and processions related to the anti-extradition movement, of which 252 of them were objected by the Commissioner of Police.²⁷ The Hong Kong Police was also criticised for using excessive force to disperse protest crowds. A scholarly report

²⁶ Whelan, "Theological Reflection and the Slum of Nairobi," 78.

²⁷ Independent Police Complaint Council, *A Thematic Study by the IPCC on the Public Order Events arising from the Fugitive Offenders Bill since June 2019 and the Police Actions in Response, Volume 1* (Hong Kong: Independent Police Complaint Council 2020), 38.

found that between June 2019 and January 2020, Police fired more than 10,008 rubber bullets, 15,969 tear gas canisters, 1,999 bean bag rounds and 1,852 sponge rounds against protestors and passers-by in protest sites.²⁸ Police’s use of force, together with the attacks by thugs against civilians in Yuen Long on 21 July 2019, escalated violence in subsequent demonstrations, where “black-bloc” protestors vandalised against shops and buildings owned by Chinese business corporations, and vigilant against anti-protest citizens. Casualties in protests were unexpectedly high. More than 2,600 were wounded, of which 520 were Hong Kong police officers.²⁹ However, the Police were also alleged of committing torture and sexual abuses against arrested protestors in custody, as reported by Amnesty International and other human rights organisations.³⁰ Numbers of arrests and prosecutions of protestors by law enforcement also reached an unprecedented level. Between 9 June 2019 and 29 May 2020, Hong Kong Police made 8,981 arrests connected with the protests. Among the arrestees, 1,749 were charged with rioting, taking part in unlawful assembly, assault occasioning actual bodily harm

²⁸ Progressive Scholars Group, *Silencing Millions: Unchecked Violations of Internationally Recognised Human Rights by the Hong Kong Police Force* (Hong Kong: Progressive Scholars Group 2020), 154.

²⁹ Progressive Scholars Group, *Silencing Millions*, 154.

³⁰ Amnesty International, “Hong Kong: Arbitrary Arrests, Brutal Beatings and Torture in Police Detention Revealed,” *Amnesty International*, 19 September 2019, accessed 8 August 2018: <https://bit.ly/2IsgTTP>; Civil Rights Observer, *Policing Protests in Hong Kong: Torture, Cruel and Degrading Treatment and Punishment* (Hong Kong: Civil Rights Observer, May 2020); The Sounds of the Silenced, *Follow Up Submission To The Committee Against Torture Concerning the Fifth Report of The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of People’s Republic of China*, (Hong Kong: The Sounds of the Silenced, December 2019), accessed 8 August 2020: <https://bit.ly/2H886pq>.

and other related offences. In addition, 1,707 were under 18 years old, and the youngest one was 11.³¹

Allegations of police brutality in Hong Kong caused backfire in the global community as well, when dozens of first-aiders, medical doctors and nurses were arrested and charged with rioting for carrying out humanitarian work at the frontline of the protests.³² The most obvious foreign response to the anti-extradition movement was the passage of “Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act” and “A bill to prohibit the commercial export of covered munitions items to the Hong Kong Police Force” by the US Congress in November 2019. The bills grant the US government power to sanction Hong Kong government officials who are alleged of human rights abuses, alongside embargo of crowd-control items such as tear gas and rubber bullets.³³ In

³¹ Adolfo Arranz, “Arrested Hong Kong Protesters: How the Numbers Look One Year On,” *South China Morning Post*, 11 June 2020, accessed 8 August 2020: <https://multimedia.scmp.com/infographics/news/hong-kong/article/3088009/one-year-protest/index.html>.

³² All-Party Parliamentary Groups on Hong Kong, *The Shrinking Safe Space for Humanitarian Aid Workers in Hong Kong: Inquiry into Violations of Human Rights and Humanitarian Principles by the Hong Kong Police Force* (UK: All-Party Parliamentary Groups on Hong Kong, August 2020), accessed 8 August 2020:

<https://mk0whitehousecooxpwm.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/APPG-on-Hong-Kong-inquiry-report.pdf>; Darren Mann, “International Humanitarian Norms are Violated in Hong Kong” *The Lancet*, 21 November 2019, accessed 8 August 2020: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(19\)32909-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(19)32909-5).

³³ 116th Congress of US (2019-2020), *S. 1838—Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act of 2019*, *CONGRESS.GOV*, 27 November 2019, accessed 8 August 2020: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1838>; *S.2710—A Bill to Prohibit the Commercial Export of Governed Munitions Items to the Hong Kong Police Force*, *CONGRESS.GOV*, 27 November 2019, accessed 8 August 2020: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/2710/text>.

sum, both the State and people in Hong Kong paid a heavy price for the State’s repression against the anti-extradition protests.

The deterioration in Hong Kong’s economy was a price to pay for the protests and repressions. The government’s attempt to amend the extradition bill caused local and foreign businessmen and investors to lose confidence in Hong Kong’s status as an international financial centre, the stability of which has all along been guaranteed by freedoms and liberties and adherence to the rule of law.³⁴ Furthermore, the waves of anti-extradition protests also adversely impacted on tourism and sales, causing Hong Kong to undergo an economic recession for the first time since 2009. Tourism arrivals in Hong Kong dropped by 26% compared with the same period in the previous year three months after the outbreak of the protests in June 2019, which was the second-largest drop since records commenced in the 1990s. Hong Kong’s retail sales fell in August at the quickest rate since records began in 1982.³⁵ The government’s hard-line strategies against the protestors, alongside Hong Kong’s gradual integration into China’s authoritarian rule, also caused global credit rating agencies like Fitch and Moody to downgrade Hong Kong.³⁶

³⁴ American Chamber of Commerce, “Extradition Bill could Undermine Rule of Law and Competitiveness: AmCham President,” 30 May 2019, accessed 18 September 2020: <https://www.amcham.org.hk/news/hong-kongs-extradition-proposal-could-undermine-rule-of-law-and-competitiveness-says-the-amcham-president>.

³⁵ Valentina Romei, “How Hong Kong’s Economy is Reeling from the Protests—in 7 Charts,” *Financial Times*, 27 November 2019, accessed 8 August 2020: <https://www.ft.com/content/0dd8e27e-0ae0-11ea-bb52-34c8d9dc6d84>.

³⁶ AJ Impact, “Fitch Ratings Downgrades Hong Kong as Protests Drag On,” *Al Jazeera*, 6 September 2019, accessed 8 August 2020: <https://www.aljazeera.com/ajimpact/fitch-ratings-downgrades-hong-kong-protests-drag-190906063629632.html>; Jerome Taylor, “Moody’s Downgrades Hong Kong, Blames Government Response to Protests,” *Hong Kong Free Press*, 21 January 2020, accessed 8 August 2020:

Hong Kong has become a traumatised city since the protests began. In January 2020, a research conducted by the University of Hong Kong revealed that nearly one-third of adults in Hong Kong reported symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) during the anti-extradition protests, based on surveys carried out with more than 18,000 Hong Kong residents between 2009 and 2019.³⁷ Seven months later, another polling research of 11,500 survey respondents from the same university found that nearly three-quarters of Hongkongers were exposed to moderate-to-high levels of symptoms of depression, and over 40% showed moderate-to-high levels of PTSD symptoms; among the respondents, nearly half of those surveyed aged 24 or younger reported symptoms of PTSD or depression.³⁸

Christians, especially believers in Protestant denominations, engaged in Hong Kong's anti-extradition protests in multiple ways, which enhanced the moral ground of the movement. Just before the outbreak of the one million people's march on 9 June 2019, two major Christian denominations, the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church Union Hong Kong and the Baptist Convention of Hong Kong published statements to call for the government's suspension and withdrawal of the bill to amend the extradition law, on the basis that the government's

<https://hongkongfp.com/2020/01/21/moodys-downgrades-hong-kong-blames-government-response-protests/>.

³⁷ BBC News, "Hong Kong PTSD Level 'Comparable to Conflict Zones,' Study Finds," *BBC News*, 10 January 2020, accessed 8 August 2020: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-51058233>.

³⁸ Gigi Choy, "One-two Punch of Protests, Coronavirus Playing Havoc with Mental Health in Hong Kong, Study Finds," *South China Morning Post*, 6 August 2020, accessed 8 August 2020: <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/3096326/one-two-punch-protests-coronavirus-playing-havoc>.

handling of the bill departed from the virtue of justice.³⁹ After the march on 9 June 2019, hundreds of protestant pastors and individual believers organised prayer meetings outside the government headquarters on two consecutive nights until 12 June 2019. One day after pastors and believers were dispersed by tear gas canisters at the protest site, a press conference was held by Christian ministers, who criticised the excessive use of force by the Police against peaceful protestors, and the Police’s use of insulting language against their religion.⁴⁰ Later on, individual believers continued to assemble for prayers and led chanting at the protest scenes. Young Catholics, mostly from the Hong Kong Federation of Catholic Students and members of the Diocesan Youth Commission Hong Kong, also organised prayer meetings, outdoor masses, Way of the Cross and memorial meetings for a protestor who died on 15 June 2019. Parishes and Church buildings near protest sites were open on a voluntary basis to serve people in need.

However, some institutional Churches disappointed protestors and even moderate believers. As regards the Anglican Church in Hong Kong, its Archbishop Paul Kwong and Rev. Canon Peter Douglas Koon, who are serving as political consultants to the Chinese government, were vocal in their support for the government.⁴¹ For the Catholic Diocese,

³⁹ Baptist Convention of Hong Kong, *Statement on Amendment of the Fugitive Ordinance* (In Chinese), 7 June 2019; Christian and Missionary Alliance Church Union Hong Kong, *An Appeal to Believers on Hong Kong Government’s Amendment of the Fugitive Ordinance* (In Chinese), 8 June 2019.

⁴⁰ Javier C. Hernández, “With Hymns and Prayers, Christians Help Drive Hong Kong’s Protests,” *New York Times*, 19 June 2019, accessed 8 August 2020: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/19/world/asia/hong-kong-extradition-protests-christians.html>.

⁴¹ UCANEWS Reporter, “Church Fights Changes to Hong Kong’s Extradition Law,” *La Croix International*, 25 May 2019, accessed 8 August 2020:

Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Ha attended prayer meetings at protest sites many times, while the retired Cardinal Zen had long been active in criticising the bill and the government's handling of the protests. Cardinal John Tong, who serves as the Apostolic Administrator of the diocese, issued statements to urge the government to set up an independent commission of inquiry, echoing the protest demands.⁴² Yet, the Vatican kept utterly silent on Hong Kong protests. When asked by a journalist about his view on Hong Kong, Pope Francis only replied that he did not know enough about the situation.⁴³

Step 2: Social Analysis

In the second step, Whelan revised Holland and Henriot's guidelines on reflection of history to analyse objective, intersubjective social infrastructures, and cultural superstructures in society.⁴⁴ They serve as navigators to distinguish signs of progress from signs of decline and to identify where redemption arrives.

History and Decline

The continuity of colonialism constitutes the central theme in the history of Hong Kong. Hong Kong was a British colony between 1842 and 1997. Colonial administration, together with the common law

<https://international.la-croix.com/news/politics/church-fights-changes-to-hong-kongs-extradition-law/10178>.

⁴² Michael Sainsbury, "Top Catholic Leaders in Hong Kong Have Backed Street Protesters," *Angelus News*, 4 December 2019, accessed 8 August 2020: <https://angelusnews.com/news/world/top-catholic-leaders-in-hong-kong-have-backed-street-protesters/>.

⁴³ Cindy Wooden, "Pope Francis Fields Questions on Vatican Finances, Nuclear Energy, Turmoil in Hong Kong, Diplomacy and Mediation," *The Dialog*, 26 November 2019, accessed 8 August 2020: <http://thediolog.org/international-news/pope-francis-fields-questions-on-vatican-finances-nuclear-energy-turmoil-in-hong-kong-diplomacy-and-mediation/>.

⁴⁴ Whelan, "Theological Reflection and the Slum of Nairobi," 83-4.

system, were transplanted to this Chinese city. Despite the global decolonisation movement after the Second World War, Hong Kong remained under British colonial rule, and in 1972, Hong Kong was also removed from the United Nations List of Non-Self-Governing Territories under the pressure of China, meaning that the right to self-determination established by the United Nations’ “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples” was no longer applicable to Hong Kong.⁴⁵

In 1984, a Joint Declaration was signed between the British and Chinese governments, upon which China resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong. Most of the colonial administrative institutions, economic and social systems were preserved by the Basic Law of Hong Kong, including the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance which was passed by the colonial legislature in 1991. Although the Basic Law guarantees universal suffrage of the Chief Executive and Legislative Council in Hong Kong, fundamental political freedoms progressively diminished after the handover. First, the Provisional Legislative Council revived draconian terms in the Public Order Ordinance with the effect that protests are only lawful upon the granting of a permit by Hong Kong’s Commissioner of Police, which sowed the seeds for the mounting tensions between protest organisers and the law enforcement today. Second, the Chief Executive is selected by the Election Committee which consists of only 1,200 members, of which

⁴⁵ Joshua Wong and Jeffrey Ngo, “How China Stripped Hong Kong of Its Right to Self-determination in 1972—and Distorted History,” *Hong Kong Free Press*, 8 November 2016, accessed 8 August 2020: <https://hongkongfp.com/2016/11/08/china-stripped-hong-kong-right-self-determination-1972-distorted-history/>.

more than half belong to proxies of the Chinese government and its collaborators in industrial and commercial sectors. A similar institutional arrangement is provided for in the Legislative Council, where half of the members are returned by “functional constituencies,” which are not seats constituted by direct elections. These arrangements are signs of upholding the capitalist system in line with the interests of the wealthy elites at the time, who had enjoyed much political power in the Executive and Legislative Councils, as well as various consultative committees during the colonial rule. Third, although the Court of Final Appeal has been established in Hong Kong as part of the new constitutional order after the handover, the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress holds the overriding power to interpret the Basic Law. In essence, the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress shares the same status as the Privy Council of the UK during the colonial era of Hong Kong in being an ultimate powerful sovereign. Fourth, in recent years, colonial laws were deployed to sentence activists and leaders of Hong Kong’s democracy movement, such as the charges of incitement and public nuisance against nine activists, professors and lawmakers who took part in the 2014 Umbrella Movement. The inheritance of the colonial system laid the foundation for conflicts between the State and Hong Kong, and the anti-extradition movement became an inevitable result of the tensions when the conflicts reached its optimal point.

Continuity of the colonial system has brought about undesirable social infrastructures and cultural superstructures in Hong Kong. Political and economic infrastructures are intertwined, as evident by the electoral systems of the Chief Executive and Legislative Council which

institutionalise the presence of capitalists and their proxies. Political inequality is sustained as exemplified by the fact that more than three million electorates are deprived of the right to nominate and choose the city’s mayor in free and fair settings, which was further consolidated by the decision of the Chinese authorities made in 2014 to implement a candidate-filtering mechanism if the Chief Executive were to be selected by popular vote. The biased political system also enhanced economic inequality and brought about policies and legislations which were favourable to business and property sectors, who possess the “true mandate” of the executive government and half of that of the legislature. These policies include the privatisation of the management of shopping malls in public housing estates, leading to a focus on commercial interests in the malls rather than that of residents of the public housing estates; the suspension of construction of public housing for several years which was a contributing factor to the sharp rise in property prices; the absence of standardised working hours, collective bargaining and universal pensions in line with employers’ interests; the acceleration of economic integration between Hong Kong and China resulting in the domination of the market of basic necessities by local and Chinese capitalists.

The infrastructure of Church-State relations still possesses colonial features, even though the Catholic Church has gradually become more critical of the government. Many social institutions in Hong Kong are provided by the Catholic Diocese, under which the building and running Catholic schools have been subsidised by the government since colonial times. In addition, Caritas of Hong Kong receives government sponsors for the provision of social welfare and

medical services. In short, the Church has always been a partner of colonial and post-colonial governments. The Church's economic "dependence" raises the cost of any open opposition to the political authority. Collaboration with the Government, however, does not mean that religious freedom and institutional autonomy are taken for granted. The Government introduced the Education Ordinance in 2004, proposing a mandatory "school-based management" that the sponsoring body no longer had a complete say in appointing board members in educational institutions. The new law diminished the role of sponsoring bodies, including that of churches. The Catholic diocese openly disapproved of the law, seeing it an infringement of the church's autonomy and religious freedoms. Yet, the Catholic diocese ultimately lost its application for judicial review in court, whereby it challenged the constitutionality of this new law. This illustrated the diminishing influence of religious organisations in the society, despite the fact that the Church chose to follow the colonial trajectory to position itself as a collaborator to the State.⁴⁶ In sum, regressions can be found in political, economic and religious infrastructures of Hong Kong.

The cultural superstructures of Hong Kong have always been contentious, as reflected by the continual occurrence of conflicts between values and beliefs after the handover. In the early period of British colonialism, the society was much less politicised when people, mostly refugees from China, saw Hong Kong as a "borrowed space and

⁴⁶ Yan-ho Lai. "What can Hong Kong Catholics Learn from the Past 20 Years?" *La Croix International*, 30 June 2017, accessed 8 August 2020: <https://international.la-croix.com/news/world/what-can-hong-kong-catholics-learn-from-the-past-20-years/5452>.

borrowed time.”⁴⁷ The 1967 Riot also reinforced a general mentality amongst the people to stay away from politics. The depoliticised political culture was sustained by the introduction of an independent anti-corruption agency and the absorption of social elites into the administrative system. As a result, the colonial government provided comfort and confidence to the people of Hong Kong, and successfully soothed the population to make up for the democratic deficit.⁴⁸ Only by the beginning of the political transition in the mid-1980s and the Tiananmen massacre in 1989 were the political consciousness of Hong Kong people awakened, who started to strive towards the ideals of freedom and democracy. With the introduction of the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance in 1991 and civic education by the government before the handover, people’s civic consciousness and awareness of human rights were strengthened. As affirmed by the results of an academic survey conducted in 2017 which invited respondents to rank Hong Kong’s core values, “the rule of law” (22.9%) and “freedom” (20.8%) were ranked as the most important core values in Hong Kong. The core values of “just and corruption-free” (15.3%), “democracy” (11.1%) and “social stability” (8.3%) were also shown to be of some importance to the respondents. The remaining core values asked of the respondents in the survey were “peace and benevolence,” “market economy,” “diversity and tolerance,” “individual property,” “level

⁴⁷ Richard Hughes, *Borrowed Place, Borrowed Time: Hong Kong and Its Many Faces* (Andre Deutsch, 1976).

⁴⁸ Ambrose Yeo-chi King, “Administrative Absorption of Politics in Hong Kong: Emphasis on the Grass Roots Level” in *Asian Survey*. University of California Press, May 1975, Vol. 15 No. 5: 422-439.

playing field,” and “family,” which all received less than 6% of support by the respondents.⁴⁹

Yet, the value orientation of the people of Hong Kong certainly conflicts with the post-colonial State, which favours authoritarian rule for consolidation of the party-state and dismisses the importance of civil and political rights. In 2013, an internal government document entitled “Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere” was leaked to the public, highlighting that Western ideas including “universal values,” “civil society,” “press freedom” and “judicial independence” should be banned in higher education institutions.⁵⁰ This document evidences the adoption of a hard-line approach to ideological control by the Chinese Communist Party. The conflicts in ideologies and values between Hong Kong and the Chinese sovereign were revealed in 2014 when the State Council issued a White Paper claiming that the Chinese government holds comprehensive jurisdiction over Hong Kong, which had all along been enjoying political autonomy and self-government under “one country, two systems” since the handover.⁵¹ At the same time, nearly 800,000 Hong Kong citizens voted in a civil referendum endorsing political reform proposals that allowed every voter to be eligible for nominating candidates in future Chief Executive

⁴⁹ Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, *CUHK-HKIAPS Poll: Pluralistic and Diverse Core Values of Hong Kong* (In Chinese), accessed 8 August 2020: http://www.hkiaps.cuhk.edu.hk/wd/ni/20170612-111811_1.pdf.

⁵⁰ “Document 9: A China File Translation”, *ChinaFile*, 8 November 2013, accessed 8 August 2020: <https://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation>.

⁵¹ Xinhua News Agency, “Full Text: The Practice of the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ Policy in the HKSAR,” *China Daily*, 10 June 2014, accessed 8 August 2020: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-06/10/content_17576281.htm.

elections.⁵² The conflict of values between complete political control from the top and the pursuit of free and fair elections from the bottom led to the 79-day Umbrella Movement, which sowed the seeds for the anti-extradition movement.

Progress and Redemption

While “declines” can be found in Hong Kong’s political and social institutions, “progress” and “redemption” can be found from the people. It is important to notice the movement of the Spirit and examine signs of its graces in Hong Kong’s anti-extradition movement. Are there graces of consolation that move us towards God? It is noteworthy to acknowledge that there were the criticisms of the movement, including the toleration of the various acts of violence, such as the storming of the Legislative Council Complex, the vandalism against restaurants and shops owned by Chinese capitalists, and the assaults against persons who attacked citizens indiscriminately. However, the denunciation of vigilantism that emerged from the movement does not render non-existent the graces revealed in the dynamics of the protests. The resilience and solidarity of the civil society, both organised groups and individual citizens are examples of faith, hope and charity bestowed in the movement. Apart from chanting political demands that highlighted the importance of democracy and freedom, a number of mottos and slogans emerged which depicted the protocol of solidarity in the

⁵² BBC News, “Hong Kong Democracy ‘Referendum’ Draws Nearly 800,000,” *BBC*, 30 June 2014, accessed 8 August 2020: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-28076566>.

movement: “no split,” “no divide,” “no snitch,” “no whistleblowing,” and “just as brothers climbing mountains, each offering one’s effort.”⁵³

Despite the augmented repression by the State, members of civil society also evolved to a more decentralised network, allowing for the introduction of new tactics in sustaining the protests, and the provision of support to protestors through various ways. Radical protestors and moderate participants had a clear and tacit division of labour: moderate participants in a rally would form chains to transfer items such as umbrellas or helmets to the frontline, while frontline protestors set roadblocks to protect demonstrators from being arrested by the Police. Many professionals, including lawyers, social workers, medical doctors and nurses, were involved in the movement and supported protestors with their professional knowledge and skills.⁵⁴ Citizens also voluntarily created social media platforms, such as Telegram channels, to exchange real-time information related to the protests, and organise drivers and vehicles to transport civilians away from the protest sites.

Moderate participants and supporters of the movement also made use of printed propaganda and post-it messages to set up “Lennon Walls” to cheer protestors up and publish messages of the movement across the city. They also formed human chains, imitating the “Baltic Way” in the 1980s, and chanted a movement anthem “Glory to Hong Kong” in public places, drawing media attention and popular support as means to sustain

⁵³ Francis L. F. Lee, Samson Yuen, Gary Tang and Edmund W. Cheng, “Hong Kong’s Summer of Uprising” in *The China Review*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, November 2019, Vol. 19 No. 4: 1-32.

⁵⁴ Nicolle Liu, Sue-Lin Wong and Alice Woodhouse, “The Lawyers, Doctors and Artists Behind the Hong Kong Protests,” *Financial Times*, 30 September 2019.

the momentum of the movement.⁵⁵ Protestors who stormed into the Legislative Council Complex on 1 July 2019 insisted on bringing the remaining four comrades who planned to stay until being arrested out of the Legislative Council Chamber, in accordance with their motto of “going up and down together.” Not only did protestors uphold faith in values of democracy, freedom and solidarity, alongside hope in achieving the five demands, the mainstream population also showed support towards the protest demands. After nine months of protest since June 2019, a public opinion polling showed that supporters of the protests weighted 58% among the respondents; and demands of universal suffrage and setting up an independent commission of inquiry were supported by 68% and 76% of the respondents respectively.⁵⁶

One can also witness the grace of charity and reciprocity bestowed in Christian communities. Parishes opening up in the midst of protests set good examples of being a “good Samaritan.” As mass demonstrations in the anti-extradition movement were mainly held on Hong Kong Island, four Churches around the route of rallies, including a Catholic parish, The Church of Christ in China, and two Methodist Churches, often opened as shelters and service centres to provide refreshments and medical, psychological and spiritual assistance to protestors. The hospitality of those Churches received criticisms from

⁵⁵ Popular participation and support in those protest actions can be found in *Research Report on Public Opinion During the Anti-extradition Bill Movement in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Centre for Communication and Public Opinion Survey The Chinese University of Hong Kong, May 2020), 51-4.

⁵⁶ Felix Tam and Clare Jim, “Exclusive: Support for Hong Kong Protesters’ Demands Rises Even As Coronavirus Halts Rallies: Poll,” *Reuters*, 27 March 2020, accessed 8 August 2020: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hongkong-protests-poll/exclusive-support-for-hong-kong-protesters-demands-rises-even-as-coronavirus-halts-rallies-poll-idUSKBN21E11L>.

State-printed media, *Tai Kung Pao*, accusing the Churches of becoming a “private club for rioters to escape from police arrest.”⁵⁷ Despite the labelling by State media press, the parish priest and pastors of the Churches published a joint statement to affirm their position to welcome everyone without discrimination. They emphasised that church buildings were the “oasis of the city” and is prioritised for providing pastoral care to believers and the neighbourhood.⁵⁸ The response of these Churches offered witness of charity following the command of Christ: “Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward” (Mark 9:41). The humanitarianism amid the conflicts of protests is a sign of redemption where reciprocal bondage between human beings is restored.

Step 2A: Root Causes

Root causes summarise social analysis by searching for the most significant events and reasons leading to the current situation. For Whelan, root causes are the key to “enforcing decline in a situation and resisting redemption,” and they own potentials to be “emergence of a force of redemption in a situation.”⁵⁹ This article suggests that “centralised power structure” and “resilience of civil society” are the two

⁵⁷ Reporter, “Church Turns to Be A Private Club of Rioters: Clothes and Showers are served” (In Chinese), *Tai Kung Pao*, 2 October 2019, accessed 8 August 2020:

<http://www.takungpao.com.hk/news/232109/2019/1002/356570.html>.

⁵⁸ Man-wai Lo, “Four Churches Respond to Tai Kung Pao’s Disinformation: Joint Statement Reaffirms the Provision of Pastoral and Humanitarian Services” (In Chinese), *Christian Times*, 4 October 2019, accessed 8 August 2020: https://christiantimes.org.hk/Common/Reader/News/ShowNews.jsp?Nid=159814&Pid=102&Version=0&Cid=2141&Charset=big5_hkscs.

⁵⁹ Whelan, “Theological Reflection and the Slum of Nairobi,” 85.

root causes. The former cause contributes to the continual situation of decline, while the latter contributes to the presence of redemption.

Centralised power structure refers to the political and economic infrastructures in Hong Kong. With the colonial legacies that undermine citizens’ rights to, *inter alia*, freedom of assembly and association, along with the suspension of Hong Kong’s progress of democratisation by the National People’s Congress, the state power is highly centralised with limited checks and balances. Even if the courts of Hong Kong have the authority to conduct constitutional reviews of government policies and legislation, the National People’s Congress also enjoys the power to interpret the Basic Law which can carry the effect of overturning a court decision. As a result, the centralisation of political power consolidates structures of political and economic inequalities. Tensions between the State and society deepens as the latter cannot enjoy inclusive and democratic governance. The State asserts its authoritarian rule by carrying out acts to suppress dissenting voices, deter protestors, diminish civic space, promote propaganda of monolithic ideology and establish a police society. Power centralisation is thus a fundamental factor leading to the creation of an unjust society in Hong Kong.

Resilience of civil society refers to the strong ties between individual citizens and groups independent of state control. Civil society, sometimes called the “third sector,” is a sphere distinguished from the direct influence of political power and economic capital, and consists of voluntary associations and people who exercise citizenship. Plurality, autonomy, freedom, democratic equality and solidarity are the basic values of civil society. The civil society in post-handover Hong Kong has been nurtured by its protest movements. The creativity, plurality and

solidarity demonstrated in the anti-extradition movement can be attributed to the awakening of civic consciousness and mass protests in Hong Kong particularly since the 1989 Tiananmen massacre, and the partially democratic elections which were implemented in 1991. Thereafter, Hong Kong underwent events of mass protests that contributed to the resilience of civil society, including the demonstration against the national security law in 2003 which recorded a turnout of over 500,000 by the organiser of the rally; the anti-high speed railway movement in 2010 where thousands of young protestors surrounded the Legislative Council building; the protests against moral and national education led by Joshua Wong and some high school students in 2012; and the 2014 Umbrella Movement, which evolved from the Occupy Central with Love and Peace campaign which commenced in 2013. As a member of civil society, the Church, including both the clerical leadership and laity, played a significant role in the movements by holding prayer meetings and mobilising believers to take part in public meetings. The diversity and strength of civil society were enhanced, sowing the seeds for developing greater solidarity which was seen in the anti-extradition movement.

Step 3: Theological Reflections

Whelan invites Christians to contemplate the theological implications of the situation in two dimensions. The first dimension is Christological reflection, where the words and deeds of Jesus in the Gospels shall be paid attention to in the current context. The second dimension is Ecclesiological reflection, contemplating on how the Church can respond to the situation by functioning its priestly, prophetic and kingly ministries, and that they should be weighted equally in

pastoral action.⁶⁰ After Christological and Ecclesiological reflections, Whelan proposes that one should spend time on deciding a pastoral proposal at the last step.⁶¹

Christological Reflection

Christological reflection bridges my experience of engaging in activism on a spiritual dimension. Social movement is often characterised with altruism. When people join collective actions to promote or resist social change, the ultimate goal is to restore a just and equal society that protects the dignity and well-being of everyone. In strategising the movement, activists may fall into the trap of creating antagonism against the State or corporations in order to attract greater sentimental support from the public. In this situation, activists tend to be antagonistic against persons in power, rather than the systems or institutions of the government. In the Exercises, Ignatius invited exercitants to acknowledge that they are beloved sinners in the eyes of God. The identity of beloved sinners does not degrade human dignity. Rather, it helps exercitants to understand and embrace human frailty, and to surrender their ego and narcissism to God. In the Gospel of Luke, when Peter realised the divine identity of Jesus who made a miracle in fishing, he cried to Jesus “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man” (Luke 5:8). Yet, Jesus responded by calling them to be his disciples. God also told Paul in his apostleship that “my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul saw it as a requisite of conversion to Christ: “That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in

⁶⁰ Whelan, “Theological Reflection and the Slum of Nairobi,” 86.

⁶¹ Whelan, “Theological Reflection and the Slum of Nairobi,” 87.

difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10). The notion of beloved sinners reminds Christian activists of their common identity shared with their “enemies” and deepens solidarity in the unconditional love of Christ.

The idea of *agere contra* also inspired me to meditate on the relationship between social analysis and activists’ responses. Acting against one’s habitual behaviours is always a difficult task. One needs God’s grace to build one’s resilience against the temptation of giving up or staying in the comfort zone. Two Gospel images enable us to contemplate how Jesus learned to be resilient for taking up his mission: Transfiguration of the Lord and his prayer on the Mount of Olives. The transfigured Christ did not stay on Mount Tabor for the joy of company with Moses, Elijah and the Father who declared Jesus as his beloved son. He chose to leave the mountain and headed to Jerusalem, as “the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands” (Matthew 17:12). In his prayer to the Father, he expressed his choice to act against his will: “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). Jesus demonstrated that the source of resilience does not only come from his own will but from his intimate relationship with the Father.

In discernment of spirits, Ignatius did not reject objective knowledge and rationality. He rejected discernments merely on the basis of joyful and peaceful sentiments, which is often a deception of the evil spirit. Yet, he prioritised acts of affection to reasoning, as spirituality is not a game of the mind. Spirituality is fundamentally a process of building an intimate relationship with God. The methods of Lonergan and Whelan stress the importance of affective experience in discernment,

which goes beyond the observation of objective facts. After all, discernment is not equal to selecting the option most favourable to oneself, but the option that follows the will of God. Otherwise, one’s discernment departs from the “principle and foundation.”

The recognition of affective knowledge can be a form of acting against one’s preference, especially for activists who are required to strategise and make decisions by reason. Emotional and spiritual strengths of activists and social movement participants constitute resilience in the face of difficulties, such as failures in tactics or repression from structural injustice. Activists are invited to build resilience to balance immediate gains and long-term goals. In social analysis, seeds of redemption have been revealed in the vibrancy of civil society, and it needs to be cultivated in the long run. Just as the parable of the mustard seed requires patience, faith, hope and charity to nurture a mustard tree (Matthew 17:20), it is crucial for Christians to build a resilient way of life that enables them to seek the will of God and to manoeuvre His kingdom, and to bear the cross of following Him in real lives.

Ecclesiological Reflection

Ecclesiological reflection invites discerners to pay attention to the mission of the Church. Whelan suggests two questions for contemplation: the first question concerns “[t]o what extent is this Church institution performing its functions as priestly, prophetic and kingly,” while the second one evaluates whether “these three functions exist in some kind of balance.”⁶²

⁶² Whelan, “Theological Reflection and the Slum of Nairobi,” 86.

The Catholic diocese of Hong Kong focuses much on the priestly function, which refers to “religious conversion in individual and communities” and the kingly function, which means “direct involvement in works of mercy.”⁶³ The kingly function allowed for the sustainment of a friendly relationship between the Church and the State, and in turn, the Church faces less hurdles in carrying out its priestly function. Yet, such State-Church relations also limits the development of the Church’s prophetic function in society as “promoting ideas, values and symbols that promote the common.”⁶⁴

One major reason is that public theology remains an underdeveloped scholarship within the Catholic Church in Hong Kong. Established under British colonialism, the Hong Kong Catholic diocese mainly interacted with the society by collaborating with the colonial government to provide medical services, education and social welfare. After the handover, the diocese relies on the ties established with the political institutions to secure resources and licences for running schools and providing social welfare services in the city. Thus, the diocese as an institutional Church does not have a strong motivation to take critical positions against the government. Furthermore, when the Vatican started taking a soft approach in engaging the Chinese government in diplomatic dialogue on the appointment of bishops in Mainland China, the diocese has inevitably been affected geopolitically and turned passive on issues concerning public affairs.

This is evidenced by two events. In January 2019, the Diocesan Bishop Michael Yeung passed away. According to the Canon Law of

⁶³ Whelan, “Theological Reflection and the Slum of Nairobi,” 86.

⁶⁴ Whelan, “Theological Reflection and the Slum of Nairobi,” 86.

the Catholic Church, the diocesan Curia is responsible for electing an administrator before the Vatican appoints a new bishop. At that time, Bishop Joseph Ha was the only Curia member ordained as a bishop. However, the Holy See announced soon after the death of Yeung that the retired Cardinal John Tong was appointed as the Apostolic Administrator to govern the diocese of Hong Kong.⁶⁵ Bishop Ha, who was ordained as an Auxiliary Bishop in 2014, was vocal in giving sympathetic understanding to the Umbrella Movement publicly. The decision of not appointing Ha was seen as favourable to the improving relationship between the Vatican and China.⁶⁶ Another event was the diocese’s change of attitude towards the national security law for Hong Kong enacted by China’s National People’s Congress in June 2020. The new national security law was a matter of wide concern amongst lawyers and experts, who were worried that Hong Kong’s criminal law, being deployed in the name of “national security” would become elusive and even absurd, especially when the wording of the national security law was compared to that of the bill proposed by the local government in 2003. Yet, while the diocese vocally opposed the bill in 2003, Cardinal Tong told the media in 2020 that China’s decision to enact the national security law “is understandable,” believing that the diocese’s relationship with the Vatican would not be regarded as colluding with

⁶⁵ Paul Wang, “Card Tong Appointed Apostolic Administrator of Hong Kong,” *AsiaNews*, 7 January 2019, accessed 8 August 2020: <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Card-Tong-appointed-Apostolic-Administrator-of-Hong-Kong-45901.html>.

⁶⁶ Tony Cheung and Alvin Lum, “Hong Kong Bishop Brought Out of Retirement by Pope ‘Mainly over China Relations’,” *South China Morning Post*, 9 January 2019, accessed 8 August 2020: <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/2181250/hong-kong-bishop-brought-out-retirement-pope-mainly-over>.

foreign forces, which is one of the criminal offences defined under the national security law. Tong added that the religious freedom of the diocese would not be affected, as China and the Vatican are on amicable terms.⁶⁷ Public theology includes critical horizons in ethics, ecclesiology and political theology. The dramatic shift of the diocese's position is unfavourable for the development of a scholarship of public theology within the diocese, who manages the only Catholic theology college in Hong Kong. It also reflects the political cause of the Church's unbalanced functions of priesthood, prophecy and kingship.

Step 4: Pastoral Proposal

The outbreak of the anti-extradition movement urges Christian communities in Hong Kong to rethink their relationship with the political authorities, which used to collaborate with religious institutions for “social harmony.” This article suggests that communal discernment and contextual theology should be developed to restore a balance between the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of the Church.

Communal discernment is a collective process of discernment of spirits among members of the Church to understand their interior movements, to seek the will of God for the community, to own their decisions in God's favour and to be resilient in bearing the price of the decisions. Contextual theology is an attempt to develop theological reflection from the bottom. It begins with the analysing of the context or history in which one is situated and then reflects on how God engages

⁶⁷ CNA staff, “New Hong Kong Laws will Have ‘No Effect’ on Religious Freedom Says Cardinal,” *Catholic News Agency*, 24 June 2019, accessed 8 August 2020: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/new-chinese-security-laws-will-have-no-effect-on-religious-freedom-in-hong-kong-says-cardinal-john-tong-hon-37713>.

in a specific time and space. Both communal discernment and contextual theology require dialogue among Christians, as well as dialogue between God and men. Cultivating communal discernment within the Church can enhance its priestly function when decisions concerning social actions are results of prayerful dialogue among Christian activists. The Church can also perform its prophetic function to a greater extent by promoting dialogue between social scientists, activists and theologians, and then building a scholarship of contextual theology in Hong Kong. The kingly function of the Church can be enhanced if the idea and practice of communal discernment and contextual theology can be institutionalised in the diocese, spiritual centres or theology college.

This article does not intend to offer a comprehensive pastoral program of the Church. The above proposal serves as a preliminary step for both Christian communities and individuals to contemplate and discern. The final section concludes this article with lessons of the above exercise and offers some guiding questions to facilitate communal discernment.

Conclusion

Five years ago, I presented at a seminar in the aftermath of the Umbrella Movement, entitled “What can we do in the future after the Umbrella Movement?”⁶⁸ I proposed a circle of discernment in the context of community, which was based on the “see-judge-act” formula

⁶⁸ The seminar was held by the Justice and Peace Commission of Hong Kong Catholic Diocese on 28 March 2015.

in liberation theology.⁶⁹ My proposal recommended Christian communities, often named as “cell groups,” to integrate social action with meetings of discernment and liturgical celebrations. Organised Christian communities play a role in mediating personal spiritual growth and participation in social activism, as community engenders and diffuses the graces of prayer and fellowship among themselves to engage in social change.⁷⁰

This article contributes to the study of the relationship between spirituality and activism in another way, exploring how personal experience in social movement can be deepened, and how a sense of discernment from the tradition of Ignatian spirituality can be cultivated in such experience. This article also discusses how the *Spiritual Exercises*, including the identity of “beloved sinners,” the “discernment of spirits” and the exercise of “*agere contra*,” can integrate with social movement participation. It then illustrates a multi-faceted social analysis in Hong Kong under Gerard Whelan’s framework of the pastoral circle and its interaction with the *Spiritual Exercises*. In the process of theological reflection, this article suggests that Christian activists need to uphold the identity of beloved sinners and build spiritual resilience in imitating Christ. Christian communities shall develop communal discernment and contextual theology in order to advance the mission of the Church in Hong Kong. Apart from the three elements of discipleship discussed in this article, there are other principles and spiritual

⁶⁹ Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987).

⁷⁰ The presentation was published in a book chapter: Yan-ho Lai, “What can We Do After the Umbrella Movement?” (In Chinese) in Catholic Youth under the Umbrella Edited, *The Opening Umbrella and the Faith* (傘開·信念) (Taiwan: Elephant White, 2015), Chapter 30.

constituents such as “finding God in all things,” “two standards” and “being united with Christ in sufferings and resurrection” that can be deployed in discerning actions in social movements. Their roles and contributions to the debate on spirituality and activism are not covered in this article and are topics for study in future research.

As a famous quote reminds us, “the glory of God is human fully alive,”⁷¹ one’s spiritual exercises and engagement in activism generates positive synergy that moves one towards God. The grace of discernment is a grace of awareness and attentiveness to the unfolding divine love. Twelve guiding questions are proposed at the end of this article as recommendations to Christian activists exercising discernment of spirits. These questions are adapted from the same presentation five years ago, for the purpose of encouraging Christians to appreciate spiritual discernment in social actions. May the guiding questions enable us to look for the will of God and make decisions in His favour. Amen.

12 Guiding Questions for Christians in the Anti-extradition Movement

1. What events, details, values or whom are we attracted by in the movement?
2. Do we understand the goals, ideas and rationales of the movement?

⁷¹ The quote is attributed to but not directly from St. Irenaeus. See “Man Fully Alive is the Glory of God—St. Irenaeus,” *Crossroad Initiative*, 27 January 2020, accessed 8 August 2020, <https://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/media/articles/man-fully-alive-is-the-glory-of-god-st-irenaeus/>.

3. Do we identify the political, economic and social infrastructures that make the movement progress or decline?
4. Do we identify the cultural superstructures that influence the progress or decline of the movement?
5. Do we identify the root causes of those infrastructures and superstructures?
6. Are signs of redemption unearthed in the movement? If so, what are they, and how shall we respond to them?
7. Do we affirm our weaknesses as human beings, and the need to surrender ourselves to the power and love of God?
8. What are possible actions in response to the situations, with reference to the words and deeds of Jesus Christ in his public life?
9. Can we notice an increase in faith, hope and charity while analysing the social situations, and discerning responding actions?
10. What can we as Christians do to contribute to our community of faith, which shares the priestly, prophetic and kingly ministries?
11. What are the hurdles or comfort zones that discourage us from taking those actions? What graces can we pray for to act against our tendency towards comfort and convenience?
12. What is our purpose for those actions? Are they compatible with the principles and foundations of us as being created by God?

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〔摘要〕當靈修僅被視作個體追求內在寧謐和超性生活，而公民抵抗被認為是製造對立、衝突甚至有時以暴力對抗政權的行動時，推進靈性成長和參與公民抵抗兩者之間的張力就顯露無遺，尤見諸二零一九至二零二零年在世界各地反抗政治、經濟和種族不公義的社會抗爭。本文旨在探討上述的張力，研究聖依納爵羅耀拉的《神操》和杰勒德·維蘭（Gerard Whelan）有關「牧民循環」的神學理論，如何為基督徒個人提供辨別之途，回應香港以二零一九年反修例運動以來的時局。本文指出，這場運動揭示了香港社會基礎和文化上層建築的缺點，但亦讓人發現救贖的種子植根在活潑和堅韌的公民社會之中，正是香港近年社會運動陶成的結果。《神操》和「牧民循環」的理論能輔助個人使徒身份的發展，包括肯定自己是「被愛的罪人」、進行分辨神類和建立「背道而馳」的抗逆力。個人信徒和基督徒團體亦能藉團體分辨和處境神學豐富教會的使命更豐盈。本文為依納爵靈修和政治行動主義關係的神學辯論貢獻一個來自華人社會的第一身視角，並為基督徒社運人士和基督徒團體示範分辨神類。

關鍵詞：依納爵靈修、分辨神類、社會運動、宗教與政治、香港

Elements of an Ignatian Leader

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[Abstract] This article examines leadership and Ignatian spirituality. More specifically, what wisdom can the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola offer regarding the spirit and skills of a good leader. The paper outlines basics of leadership, Ignatian spirituality and the Spiritual Exercises. It then articulates four aspects of the Spiritual Exercises that inform good leadership. First, how the Exercises and good leadership encourage people to interact directly with God, that is, interact directly with what is true, good and beautiful. Second, how flexibility in leadership is improved by examining the fruits, the ends and means as well as micro and macro aspects of situations. Third, the value of pausing to look deeper at the roots of success and failure so as to learn from these experiences. Fourth, the paradox of surrender, how leadership is made more effective not by increasing control, but rather, by surrendering to something greater. The article also includes reflection questions regarding leadership.

Keywords: leadership, Ignatian spirituality, Spiritual Exercises, discernment, group dynamics

Introduction

Leadership

Leadership is a broad topic. There is much discourse regarding the definition of a leader and the impact of leadership on society. Some leaders are internationally recognized figures, while others live out this role quietly in schools, small businesses and families. Leaders may be icons or they may be ordinary people.

The focus of this article is leadership from an Ignatian perspective. More specifically, what wisdom can the Spiritual Exercises offer regarding the spirit and skills of a good leader?

To provide some context, we will first consider points regarding leadership. This will not be an exhaustive discussion of leadership, but rather, serve as an introduction to the more specific topic of Ignatian elements of a good leader.

The Oxford dictionary defines a leader as, “The person who leads or commands a group, organization, or country.”¹ More specifically, leadership can be defined as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.”² The leader helps people move forward, to progress toward something that is desired. Leadership is multi-faceted.³ In fact today, the word ‘leadership’ is often

¹ “Leader”, Lexico.com, Oxford University Press, (2020), accessed 3 June 2020: <https://www.lexico.com/definition/leader>.

² Peter Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice—Sixth Edition* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2013), 6.

³ There are approximately 1400 different definitions of “leader” or “leadership.” Gloria Moss, *Inclusive Leadership* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 2.

prefaced by other words such as: collective, transformational, relational or servant.⁴

To better understand leadership it can be beneficial to consider specific models or approaches, for example, the trait perspective and the process perspective.⁵ The trait model holds that leaders have a certain personal quality (or combination of qualities) that facilitates the expression of the leadership role. Accordingly, if we want to understand leadership, then, we must examine these qualities. Unfortunately, there is no consensus as to which qualities definitively constitute a good leader. Various studies purport various traits as key: confidence, persistence, emotional intelligence, communication skills, problem-solving ability, etc.

The process perspective understands leadership not as primarily dependent on traits of the leader, but rather, as a process by which the leader interacts with members of the group. Leadership involves helping a team move together toward commonly held goals. This process is non-linear and includes changes (positive as well as negative) in the way the team perceives the leader and the way the leader perceives the team. Leaders and followers exist in a reciprocal relationship; it is not the

⁴ For example, the idea of servant leadership, first coined by Robert Greenleaf, holds that a leader must act as a servant first and leader second. Such a person seeks primarily to help followers become more healthy, wise, free, autonomous, able to reach their full potential and more likely to become servant leaders themselves. Balancing conceptual thinking with day-to-day operations, servant leaders nurture in others the ability to dream great dreams. Larry Spears, “Characteristics of Servant Leadership” in *Servant Leadership in Action*, ed. Ken Blanchard and Renee Broadwell (New York: Berrett-Koehler, 2018), 14-18.

⁵ Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice—Sixth Edition*, 5-7.

individual leader, but rather, this dynamic relationship that is actually leadership.⁶

This more inclusive understanding of leadership helps us notice a crucial dimension of leadership: leaders can be considered either assigned or emergent.⁷ Assigned leaders have a leadership role designated to them, such as manager or director. Whether or not they actually live out the qualities of an authentic leader, however, is independent of this assigned title. An assigned leader may be a true leader or may be a leader in title alone.⁸

In contrast, an emergent leader is a person who, over time, becomes the most influential member of a group, regardless of whether or not this person has a title. Such a leader surfaces gradually through a process of communication and interaction with team members.

What encourages an emergent leader to emerge? Is it possible for a person to learn and be formed into a leader? “Ample empirical research illustrates that leadership is unequivocally learnable...leaders are rarely born and often made.”⁹ In fact, there are specific aspects that facilitate the formation of leaders. A formal education in leadership from a university may be beneficial. However, research indicates that other

⁶ Nicholas Clarke, *Relational Leadership: Theory, Practice and Development* (London: Routledge, 2018), 1-2.

⁷ Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice—Sixth Edition*, 8-9.

⁸ Managers may or may not be true leaders. Managers administer, leaders innovate; managers maintain the status quo, leaders challenge it; managers focus on systems, leaders focus on people; managers cling to stability, leaders tolerate chaos to attain a broader vision; managers do things right, leaders do the right thing. Leaders may have more in common with artists and creative thinkers than with managers. Moss, *Inclusive Leadership*, 6-8.

⁹ John P. Dugan, *Leadership Theory: Cultivating Critical Perspectives* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 17, 18.

elements are more crucial in regard to what forms a leader: a person must be sensitive to what is happening around him or her, learn about self, learn about others, reflect upon his or her ways of acting as a leader and accrue insight from such reflection.¹⁰ Thus, a significant factor that creates growth and improvement as a leader is personal reflection on experience. Personal reflection is also a key element of Ignatian spirituality.

Ignatian Spirituality

Ignatian spirituality is the spirituality based on the experiences and writings of Ignatius of Loyola, a sixteenth-century soldier, mystic and saint. This spirituality presupposes that God is present in Scripture and the Church. It goes further, however, and asserts that God can also be found in the everyday world around us. Accordingly, Ignatian spirituality provides tools to assist a person in recognizing and discerning God's voice amidst the busyness of daily life. It presupposes that Christ has an invitation or calling for each person. Ignatian spirituality helps a person to hear this call and respond to Christ with love.

This exploring of relationship with Christ occurs through prayers, such as Gospel contemplation, meditation and the Examen. Such prayer gradually informs what a person says, does and decides in daily life. However, it does not end here. Actions, experiences and desires from daily life are brought back to the Lord in prayer. In this way, there is continual interaction between the two aspects of prayer and daily life

¹⁰ Ann Cunliffe and Julie Wilson, "Can Leadership Be Taught?" in *The Routledge Companion to Leadership*, ed. John Storey, Jean Hartley et al. (New York: Routledge, 2017), 532.

experience; there is a balancing of contemplation and action. Accordingly, it is a spirituality that is open to both the practical and the mystical. The aim is a drawing closer to God, a deepening of relationship with Christ.

The Spiritual Exercises

All essential aspects of Ignatian Spirituality spring from *The Spiritual Exercises*. This is a retreat consisting of prayer material written by St. Ignatius. This material can be prayed during 30 days of silence at a retreat house or for nine months over the course of daily life.

The specific content is divided into four main parts or “weeks.”¹¹ Each week has its own theme or dynamic. For instance, during the First Week, the retreatant is invited to recognize and have a felt experience of self as a sinner as well as someone who is loved deeply by God. As the retreatant prays various contemplations, meditations and other exercises of the retreat, he or she experiences movements in the soul. The retreatant is encouraged to notice these movements. Gradually through the Exercises, the retreatant is invited to put aside disordered attachments (aspects of life that lack freedom), recognize God’s invitation more clearly, and finally, respond generously to God’s call in daily life—this is what leads to salvation.¹² This is not an easy process. Through the Exercises, however, retreatants are often blessed with an intimate union with Christ; a person “...acquires the style of Jesus, his

¹¹ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, trans. Louis Puhl (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1951), #4.

¹² Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #1.

feelings, his choices.”¹³ It is this relationship with Christ that changes the person. It is Christ who inspires a sense of mission and a desire to share God’s love with others in the world today.

How did Ignatius himself view the Exercises? We catch a glimpse in a letter he wrote to Fr. Manuel Miona in 1536. Ignatius writes, “The Spiritual Exercises are all the best that I have been able to think out, experience and understand in this life, both for helping somebody to make the most of themselves, as also for being able to bring advantage, help and profit to many others.”¹⁴

Leadership and the Spiritual Exercises

Is there a relation between the Spiritual Exercises and leadership? If so, what does this look like practically?

Below we will examine how the form, content and spirit of Ignatius’ Spiritual Exercises denote elements of an Ignatian leader. This article is not meant to be a comprehensive examination of this topic. Rather more modestly, it offers points for reflection, prayer and discussion for people who are interested in Ignatian spirituality or who engage in some form of leadership. We will consider four elements: interacting directly with God, flexibility, depth and the paradox of surrender.

¹³ “Decree 1: Companions in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice.” in *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees & Accompanying Documents of the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (Boston: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2017), par. 18.

¹⁴ Letter to Rev. Fr. Manuel Miona, 16 November 1536. Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola—Personal Writings: Select Letters*, trans. Joseph Munitiz and Philip Endean (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 139.

Considering Elements of an Ignatian Leader

1. Interacting Directly with God

“But while one is engaged in the Spiritual Exercises, it is more suitable and much better that the Creator and Lord in person communicate Himself to the devout soul in quest of the divine will, that He inflame it with His love and praise, and dispose it for the way in which it could better serve God in the future. Therefore the director of the Exercises, as a balance at equilibrium, without leaning to one side or the other, should permit the Creator to deal directly with the creature, and the creature directly with his Creator and Lord”¹⁵

In the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius very rarely refers to the person who accompanies the retreatant as “the director,” but rather, as “the one who gives the exercises.”¹⁶ This choice of words may seem odd, even cumbersome. An important point, however, underlies this distinction. The role of the person who gives the exercises is not to direct the retreatant, but instead, to encourage the retreatant to interact directly with God.

The prayer style known as Ignatian contemplation is an example of this and is used extensively throughout the Exercises. It invites the person praying to not simply read the Gospel text, but more profoundly, to enter into and become an active part of the scene. The person is invited to interact with the characters within the context of the particular Gospel story. Most importantly, the person praying is invited to interact directly

¹⁵ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #15.

¹⁶ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14 etc.

with Jesus, whether this be walking with him, eating with him, expressing a deep desire to Jesus, listening to Jesus or simply being with Jesus and letting Jesus embrace him or her. By way of this interaction and time spent together, the retreatant slowly learns from Jesus, lingers in his blessing and is gradually changed by Jesus.

For people accustomed to Ignatian prayer, this type of interaction may seem obvious or natural; it can be easily taken for granted. However, not all prayer traditions aim for such interaction.¹⁷ Ignatius presumes that, by the grace of God, a person can interact directly with God in prayer—this is no small grace. The dynamics and effect of the Exercises rely heavily on this generous gift from God.

Can this grace of direct interaction with God be extended beyond the experience of prayer? Can leaders and leadership benefit from such grace?

The teacher is a leader in the classroom. If we apply this principle from the Exercises, it affects the way we perceive the role of teacher. A primary task of the teacher is to convey content to the students, for example, by giving lectures, having students read a textbook or presenting a video. From an Ignatian perspective, however, a teacher has a more profound and valuable role than conveying content: it is to encourage students to interact directly with truth. Jesuit education emphasizes activity on the part of the student, rather than passive

¹⁷ For example, the Carmelite tradition of contemplation is one that does not rely on words, images or the sensual. Contemplation is viewed as an infused gift from God that a person receives rather than actively creates. Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles, *Meditation and Contemplation—What is the Difference?* (2020), accessed 3 June 2020: <https://carmelitesistersoecd.com/2013/meditation-contemplation/>.

reception, and encourages the student to learn independently of the teacher.¹⁸

Inviting such direct interaction with the truth requires great tact and creativity. At times, it is more convenient or expedient for the teacher to provide an answer or conclusion directly. Great patience is required to wait for a student to receive some material, grapple with what is unknown and then discover the truth for himself or herself.¹⁹ In practising this Ignatian ideal, there is also a risk that the student may not arrive at the answer today. If a teacher (or any leader), however, chooses to ask a question that inspires exploration, rather than give a direct answer, then the teacher allows the student time and space to develop. In this way, the student is not merely gaining knowledge about a specific topic, but rather, being formed as a human being. Through this process of discovery, the student acquires a deeper and more memorable appreciation of something. By demonstrating such patience, the teacher or leader is also imitating God’s abundant patience with us.

¹⁸ Jesuit Institute, *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education*, par. 45 (1986), accessed 3 June 2020: <http://jesuitinstitute.org/Resources/Characteristics%20of%20Jesuit%20Education.pdf>.

¹⁹ For example, instead of listing the rules of refraction of light, the teacher may provide students with a convex lens and a light source. The students are invited to experiment creatively. Reflecting on the results, students take note of any patterns and discover rules for themselves. In another field, instead of explaining the meaning of a poem, the teacher may invite a student first to read it out loud and then notice any emotions it evokes. This noticing of emotion and the sensual aspects of the poem can enhance intellectual understanding. It can help the student have a felt experience of the art of poetry.

Subsidiarity

There is a further advantage of a leader allowing a person or group to interact directly with God. This method allows the people involved to have a deeper sense of participation and ownership of the fruits produced over the course of a project or process.

An Ignatian leader, for example, provides support and guidance for a team. However, if the leader notices that the members of the team have the ability to move toward the goal on their own, then this leader steps back and allows the group to move in this direction as independently as possible.

This is risky. The people may not arrive at the goal. They may make mistakes or end up using time, money or other resources inefficiently. However, if they can achieve the goal without undue directing, then the beauty and sense of fulfilment of their achievement are magnified.

Approximately 2500 years ago, the Chinese sage, Lao Tzu, reflected on leadership in this way:

The highest type of ruler is one of whose existence the people are barely aware.

Next comes one whom they love and praise.

Next comes one whom they fear.

Next comes one whom they despise and defy.

When you are lacking in faith,

Others will be unfaithful to you.

The sage is self-effacing and scanty of words.

When his task is accomplished and things have been completed,

All the people say, “We ourselves have achieved it!”²⁰

Lao Tzu lists various kinds of leaders: one who is detested, one who is feared and one who is adored. Yet there is one leader greater than any of these. It is the leader whom people hardly notice. It is the leader reserved enough to allow the people to express their gifts, take responsibility and move toward the goal with little or no interference.²¹ The result is that the people are naturally inspired by their own sense of accomplishment.

This may sound easy. However, to guide in this way, a leader requires a deep appreciation of his or her own value. After all, the credit for any success that the group receives may not fall to him or her. The leader needs to be free from the craving for affirmation. If the leader is not grounded in his or her personal value, then the leader will be tempted to take hold of the reigns and so—directly or indirectly—inhibit others from stepping up and manifesting their gifts.

This idea, implicit in the Spiritual Exercises, also corresponds to the Church’s social teaching. The principle of subsidiarity holds that “functions of government should be performed at the lowest level

²⁰ Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, trans. John C.H. Wu (Boston: Shambhala, 1961), #17.

²¹ Such letting go of control is sometimes known as “enabling leadership” and is well suited to our modern knowledge economy. Clarke, *Relational Leadership: Theory, Practice and Development*, 139.

possible, as long as they can be performed adequately.”²² ²³ This describes governments but can also apply to businesses, parishes and families. If someone is able to do a task independently, this person should be allowed the opportunity to do so—to express his or her gifts freely.²⁴ Subsidiarity, in other words, opposes a dictatorship or undue control from above. Rather, it affords people at every level freedom to develop, increases their sense of responsibility and ultimately contributes to the common good.²⁵

How does a leader, then, invite people to interact directly with God? How does an Ignatian leader ask people to explore the truth, explore beauty or explore goodness? There are myriad ways. An Ignatian leader may choose to ask a question instead of giving an answer. An Ignatian leader can tell a story that inspires curiosity or that motivates the listener to look deeper. An Ignatian leader can invite people to reflect on the experience of daily life so that they themselves notice the ways God is already speaking to them or interacting with them.

²² Development and Peace: Caritas Canada, *Subsidiarity and the Role of Government* (2018), accessed 3 June 2020: <https://www.devp.org/en/cst/subsidiarity>.

²³ The first Pope to formally describe subsidiarity was Pius XI, “...it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do.” Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, par. 79 (1931), accessed 3 June 2020: http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html.

²⁴ Subsidiarity helps a team to move forward when members are first adequately educated or trained to carry out the tasks related to a project.

²⁵ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, par. 196 (2015), accessed 3 June 2020: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

2. Flexibility

The Spiritual Exercises must be adapted to the condition of the one who is to engage in them, that is, to the retreatant’s age, education, and talent.²⁶

Ignatius stresses that the form and content of the Exercises are to be adjusted to suit the situation or needs of the person praying. For example, in annotation 4, Ignatius states that the length of each week (each section of the retreat) is not fixed, but rather, open to shortening or lengthening. Ignatius also prescribes flexibility in relation to prayer content, listing various options for praying with materials of the Second Week and Third Week.²⁷ This spirit of flexibility also extends to the physical. Ignatius discusses how prayer posture is adaptable and that the number of prayer periods per day may be adjusted according to physical considerations such as weakness or exhaustion.²⁸

What is the criterion for such adjustment? It is whatever will help the retreatant attain “the fruit that is proper to the matter assigned.”²⁹ In other words, the standard to consider is what will help the retreatant have a felt experience of the grace or essential theme of that particular exercise.

Ignatius did not wish the Exercises to be given rigidly. This does not mean, however, that anything goes. Rather, adjustments are made in

²⁶ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #18.

²⁷ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #162, 209.

²⁸ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #76, 129.

²⁹ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #4.

light of what will draw the retreatant closer to God. Accordingly, an Ignatian leader guides people with a heart that is flexible.

What particular criteria, then, exist to provide some boundaries or reference for such flexibility? What determines whether an adjustment should be made to a situation or whether a leader should simply leave it unchanged?

Flexibility: Observe the Fruits

Jesus illustrates that if we want to identify the nature of something, then we should look at its fruits.³⁰ The Spiritual Exercises encourage a retreatant to look at the fruits—the fruit of prayer, relationships, habits, life experiences, etc.. More specifically, Ignatius invites the retreatant to look at two particular fruits: (a) consolation—what increases faith, hope and love in the soul and (b) desolation—what results in a lack of faith, hope or love.³¹ The heart or essential meaning of consolation is a movement—being drawn closer to God. Desolation is also essentially a movement—being drawn away from God. Since consolation and desolation both involve direction, noticing such direction is key to discernment.

An Ignatian leader, then, notices the fruit. If the predominant fruit of a particular relationship, project, or new way of operating within the organization consistently draws the group closer to God, then this is affirmation that the group is cooperating with God. However, if it is discovered that the consistent and main fruit of a particular relationship,

³⁰ “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit.” Luke 6:43-44 NRSV.

³¹ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #316, 317.

project, behaviour or way of proceeding is unhealthy and is drawing people away from God as the centre of their lives, then this indicates that something needs to be changed.

Intriguingly, consolation and desolation can be observed at the level of the individual, as well as at the level of the community. Peter Bisson, S.J. articulates this difference when describing discernment in common (group discernment).³² Communal or group consolation, for instance, is specifically manifest as creativity, respect among group members, mutual trust and a sense of hope for the future present among the team. Communal desolation, in contrast, commonly manifests as a predominant sense of fear, mistrust, hanging on to past hurts or competition between group members. Many of these movements are recognizable whether or not the group is Christian; these fruits are valid in both religious and secular contexts. The leader does not need to use explicitly Ignatian language or terms; the importance is the observation of fruits and then acting accordingly. In fact, Ignatius provides suggestions concerning how to act during a time of consolation and how to act during a period of desolation.³³

³² Additional signs of communal consolation: the group is aware of God’s presence among them, there is a sense of hope for the future, group members listen to one another listen, talents of members are recognized and used toward shared goals, the group is able to move forward in creative ways, the group recognizes that they are more than the sum of their parts. Additional signs of communal desolation: the group cannot sense God’s presence, fear or hopelessness predominates group interactions, members are preoccupied with personal agendas, the group is fixated on old ways of proceeding, members do not feel free to express true feelings or opinions, there is an absence of humour and unity. Peter Bisson, Elaine Regan-Nightingale & Earl Smith, *Communal Apostolic Discernment: A Toolkit*. Document currently in draft stage. (Toronto, 2014), 59-60.

³³ For example, in a time of desolation, do not hastily change what was decided during a period of consolation. Instead, learn from this experience. Reflect back

Noticing consolation and desolation, however, has its challenges. Often the pressures of work do not encourage us to pause and examine fruits. Instead it is easy to become overly focused on completing a task rather than considering its quality or direction. Further, the fruit at the beginning may differ from the fruit after a period of time has passed. Life is rarely black or white; it is often a mixture of consolation and desolation.

In order to arrive at greater clarity then, Ignatius invites us to look at the beginning of something, its middle and end.³⁴ If the predominant fruits of all three periods are consolation, a focus on God and what leads us to cooperate with God, then this indicates that the individual or group is on the right path. If one or more of these periods produces something unhealthy or predominantly leads away from God, then the leader needs to be flexible and free enough to consider a change.

Flexibility: Observe Ends and Means

Another criterion for flexibility and deciding on whether or not to make a change is to consider if the means are suited to the end. In the section of the Spiritual Exercises known as the Principle and Foundation,³⁵ Ignatius invites the retreatant to consider that all the things on the face of the earth are to be used to attain the end for which human beings have been created. That is, a person is to interact with

to see what led to the onset of this desolation. Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #318-324.

³⁴ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #333.

³⁵ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #23.

things in so far as they help the person “...praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by this means save his [or her] soul.”³⁶

We are to engage with people and utilize the resources of this world to the degree to which they help us give glory to God. In other words, things in themselves should not become our focus; they are means to a greater end. This may seem obvious. Practically, however, it is easy to confuse means and ends.

“I must not subject and fit the end to the means, but the means to the ends. Many first choose marriage, which is a means, and secondarily the service of God our Lord in marriage, though the service of God is the end.”³⁷ In this part of the Exercises, Ignatius asserts that, when discerning a calling in life, the first step should be to ask the Lord which state of life (i.e. marriage, the single life, the religious life) will bring God the greatest glory and then proceed accordingly.

So as we reflect on leadership, keeping means ordered toward an end is just as important, and this principle is evident in the work performed by the group. For instance, a person or group can be so engrossed with completing a project, that it results in an unhealthy drive to finish. In the process of completing the work, relationships are harmed, personal needs are neglected (e.g. balance, rest, prayer, etc.)³⁸, and environmental resources are not used in a sustainable way. In the end,

³⁶ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #23.

³⁷ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #169.

³⁸ Self-care is sometimes an aspect that is neglected in the process of completing a project. Intentionally taking time for self-care allows a leader to fulfill physical, psychological and spiritual needs that can result in better long-term health as well as greater fruit for the mission.

the battle is won, but the war is lost. For the sake of a short-term gain, the group has put aside fidelity to deeper values.

This discussion of means and ends relates deeply to daily life activities. There are subtle ways that ends can be subsumed to means. Sometimes a business, parish or group continues to perform an activity even though the activity no longer supports the mission. For example, an activity is carried out this year because it was carried out last year or in previous years. There may be little reflection or evaluation of the relevance of this project to the current mission of the group. This can lead to a kind of “clutter” within the organization, as new activities are added on while old ones are maintained. Ultimately, this can engender a dissipation of resources, decreased sense of satisfaction among the team, a lack of connection with the people whom the group serves and difficulty focusing on meaningful goals.

A group may discover that in order to live out the mission more fully it does not need to do more; rather, it needs to do less. An Ignatian leader is not afraid to consider how a streamlining of process or a reduction in activities can help a group move closer to its ultimate purpose or end. Doing less or doing something more simply can sometimes give a clearer witness to Christ.

The Exercises encourage a leader to consider the mission of the community or group at the beginning, middle and end of a project. In practical application, if I am a leader, how familiar am I with the group’s mission statement and values? Do I find that these are relevant today? Do they need to be updated? Is this particular project commensurate or in tension with the group’s overarching mission, vision and values? Are

the methods of implementing the project also consistent with the overall values of the group? Are people being respected in the process of implementation or are they being objectified? More essentially, is God calling us to implement this project? These questions require patience, perspective, flexibility and great courage to answer.

An Ignatian leader considers the ultimate end regularly since this informs the process being carried out today. This principle flows from Jesus’ own encouragement: “No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”³⁹ On one hand, Jesus invites the listener to avoid hesitation when following him. More positively, however, Jesus also exhorts the listener to look toward the goal and keep the distant target in view. If the group tends to stray from the path, as human beings sometimes do, a good leader is not afraid to make an adjustment to help the group return to the way which leads to the authentic and ultimate end.

Flexibility: Let the Macro and Micro Complement Each Other

There is one more aspect of flexibility that can guide leaders: fruits can be observed at the level of macro and the level of micro. An example of this wisdom is manifest in Ignatius’ description of the Election in the Second Week, more specifically, as he describes ways of “making a good and correct choice.”⁴⁰

In this section, Ignatius invites the retreatant to consider two ways to approach a choice at hand. The first method is to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the options. Using the intellect, the retreatant

³⁹ Luke 9:62 NRSV.

⁴⁰ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #178-188.

considers the practical elements and reasons: What are the advantages of choosing A? What are the disadvantages of choosing A? Such brainstorming may include anything from salary considerations to accessibility to public transportation, from proximity to a good school for the children to the local level of pollution. A chart can be used to list out the various advantages and disadvantages of each option.

The second method Ignatius presents is a set of scenarios for the retreatant to consider: How would I advise a third person in my situation to choose? At the moment of my death when I look back on my life, what option would I wish to have chosen at this point in my life? At the final judgment, which option would I be most pleased to tell Jesus I chose at this moment of my life? These cases invite the retreatant to step back and gain a larger perspective.

There is a simple but profound internal logic at work here. Ignatius invites the retreatant to consider the details in the first method. Then he invites the retreatant to step back and gain perspective on the broader context. These methods complement each other. Often one or the other of the methods will help the retreatant come to clarity regarding Christ's voice or invitation.

An Ignatian leader strikes a balance, paying attention to the details of daily life as well as the broader mission. Specifics are important, yet an Ignatian leader resists the temptation to get caught up in details or spend an inordinate amount of time on minutia. Conversely, stepping

back and looking at the larger picture can provide valuable perspectives. Yet, this too must be balanced with definite actions in daily life.⁴¹

Considering micro and macro dimensions relates closely to reflection on means and ends. These all relate to an examination of fruits. They provide useful information when considering if a change is appropriate or if a situation should be left as it is. These considerations help leaders to be flexible in an Ignatian way.

3. Depth

“The complexity of the problems we face and the richness of the opportunities offered demand that we build bridges between rich and poor, establishing advocacy links of mutual support between those who hold political power and those who find it difficult to voice their interests. Our intellectual apostolate provides an inestimable help in constructing these bridges, offering us new ways of understanding in depth the mechanisms and links among our present problems.”⁴²

Looking deeper allows us to discover patterns in the nature of things. It helps us to see challenges more clearly—including their root causes—and consider ways to address these for the benefit of individuals

⁴¹ Consider the final years of Ignatius. A man who once walked vast distances and sailed to the Middle East, chose to remain in small rooms in Rome during his last years. From here he wrote (or dictated) between 6000 and 7000 letters concerning matters such as administration of the Society of Jesus, personal friendship and spiritual direction. Ignatius found that administrative work—when performed with balance—was not a waste of time, but rather, an invaluable tool for the advancement of the Society as well as the progress of individual souls. Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola—Personal Writings: Select Letters*, 113.

⁴² “Decree 3: Challenges to Our Mission Today,” in *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees & Accompanying Documents of the 31st-35th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John Padberg (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2009). par. 28.

and society. We see this dynamic of taking a deeper look as present within the Spiritual Exercises.

For example, in the meditation on the Two Standards, Ignatius reflects on the nature of good and evil. He invites the retreatant to notice a pattern. Evil tempts in stages: “The first step, then, will be riches, the second honour, the third pride. From these three steps the evil one leads to all other vices.”⁴³ Ignatius explains that being drawn away from God does not happen all at once. Rather, there is a slippery slope: one first concedes to something that does not appear terribly dangerous, yet this subtly and steadily leads to serious sin and significant distance from God. Ignatius then articulates another and contrary pattern. Jesus invites people to poverty as opposed to riches, insults as opposed to worldly honours and humility as opposed to pride. From these three, Jesus leads us to all other virtues.⁴⁴

Through this meditation, Ignatius invites the retreatant to consider if the patterns above manifest in his or her own experience. Eventually, if the retreatant is able to recognize evil more quickly in the future, then he or she will be more likely to break free from its pattern. The meditation on the Two Standards also provides the retreatant with the chance to notice (as well as savour) the ways Jesus leads him or her to what is holy, good, beautiful and true.

In summary, Ignatius fosters a deeper understanding through first articulating a pattern but then leaving space for the retreatant to reflect and find connections with personal experience.

⁴³ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #142.

⁴⁴ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #146.

This same dynamic is also present in the First Week of the Exercises when the retreatant considers the topic of sin.⁴⁵ Ignatius does not simply ask the retreatant to examine sin in his or her life. Instead, Ignatius utilizes an approach that inspires a deeper understanding. He invites the retreatant to notice that, before any human being sinned, sin was committed on a cosmic level—the sin of the angels. The retreatant first takes time to pray with this story. Secondly, there was the sin of Adam and Eve, original sin—sin on the level of humanity. The retreatant slowly reflects on sin and its effects as described in Genesis. Thirdly, Ignatius invites the retreatant to consider a mortal sin committed by an unnamed third person. Through this ordering of material, Ignatius invites the retreatant to realize that the choice to sin made by someone today is related to and affected by a larger context of sin. By noticing these dimensions of sin, the retreatant is able to understand the nature of sin more deeply.

It is only after such reflection that Ignatius invites the retreatant to review his or her own life and personal sins.⁴⁶ The retreatant is thus able to reflect on sin in the context of human relationships, creation and relationship with God. Since the retreatant has been prepared by way of the material above, he or she can now pray more practically and profoundly. Accordingly, retreatants often not only notice their own sins but also issues of structural sin present in their society and world today.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #45-54.

⁴⁶ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #55-61.

⁴⁷ Structural sin refers to the ways in which social or economic structures of a culture systematically resist God’s grace. Structural sin transcends the sin of an individual person; it describes a collective way of thinking or acting that is sinful yet has become engrained in a society. Modern and historical examples include preference or privilege given to male children over female, over-reliance on oil

Ignatius then goes one step further. In the Third Exercise⁴⁸ of this same First Week, he invites the retreatant to ask for the grace of understanding—this is a chance to look at the root of sin in his or her life. What is causing sin, especially those sins that emerge again and again in life? This opportunity to pause and reflect more deeply on personal sin as well as the nature of sin itself can become a moment of grace. Retreatants sometimes realize for the first time that a particular sin present in his or her life today is related to some specific experience of hurt or trauma from the past. Beneath this sin there is a deeper need that lies unrecognized, such as the need for healing, safety, acceptance, authentic intimacy or simply to be loved. Sin is often an unhealthy and unsuccessful attempt to fulfill this underlying but healthy need. If a retreatant is able to see and understand this, he or she can bring this need to Jesus. Perhaps for the first time in life, the retreatant can ask the Lord directly to fulfill this need.

How does this relate to leadership? When a leader realizes that the group is facing a challenge, how does he or she respond? There is perhaps an instinct to remedy the problem as soon as possible. In this way, the team can move on to other pressing issues. What would it be like, however, to pause instead and look deeper? What if the leader and team took time to reflect together?

What has led to this situation of challenge? What is the context or background? Is this current situation part of a pattern? If similar challenges are emerging regularly, is it possible that there is a deeper

and single-use plastics, and legalized discrimination against once race within a society.

⁴⁸ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #62-63.

need that is not being addressed? This could be a need within the team, a need of the people whom the team serves, or a need of the people with whom the team cooperates.⁴⁹ Once the need has been acknowledged, the team can then consider how it can be addressed more appropriately.

Good leaders reflect on experience. What would it be like to learn from the Two Standards, to pause together with the team and reflect upon team dynamics?⁵⁰ How does the enemy try to distract our team from attaining our goals? Are there any specific ways that the enemy draws us into squandering time, energy or other resources? How does the enemy try to blind us to see the good work we are already doing, the good fruit we are already producing? Perhaps more profoundly, amidst the busyness of daily life, when have we most clearly felt God present in our team? What does the Lord do or say to us that encourages us as a team to keep serving others with generosity and love amidst the

⁴⁹ There are many ways to identify and articulate deeper needs. Surveys, analyzing current trends in the broader society, and consulting with universities or other research institutes can bring to light useful information and trends. Time for reflection as well as communication—within the team and beyond—often benefits this process.

⁵⁰ Given the demands of work, a team day of reflection may seem like an unaffordable luxury. Yet, such an opportunity to reflect, share, listen to each other, and listen to Christ’s voice can be a turning point for team dynamics. “Spiritual conversation” involves taking account of inner movements, both individual and communal, and then sharing the fruits of this reflection with others. The content of conversation does not need to be a religious topic, but rather, can be any work or service done by the team. Respectful listening to others and then expressing what has stirred a person most deeply creates at an atmosphere of trust and welcome. Such spiritual conversation is encouraged by the latest Jesuit General Congregation. “Decree 1: Companions in a Mission of Reconciliation and Justice.” in *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees & Accompanying Documents of the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus* (Boston: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2017), par. 12.

difficulties of modern society? Such communal reflection takes time but leads to greater depth and richer fruits.

As a particular example of group reflection that looks deeper, consider something that is unsightly by worldly standards—failure. Failure is a terribly painful thing. It hurts tremendously when we are unable to achieve what we desire or expect. When we fail, we not only feel pain from within; we naturally consider how others will view or judge us in light of this failure. Ignatius experienced failure in his life. At the battle of Pamplona, not only was his leg seriously injured, to add insult to injury, he and his companions clearly lost the battle. Yet we now know God used this failure and subsequent time of recovery to lead Ignatius to reflect on his life. This failure ultimately altered the course of Ignatius' life for the better. This very painful experience of loss became an instrument of grace.

According to worldly standards, Jesus was a failure. In the end, he was abandoned by friends and was tortured to death. We also know that Jesus' death was not the end of the story, nor the end of God's work. It was the beginning of abundant life through the resurrection. Leaders and teams will fail. How does the leader view this failure? How does the team view this failure? Is it possible to find any meaning in this failure? If we dare to ask these challenging questions, they can lead to a greater depth of understanding concerning the meaning of work. Such discussion can also establish deeper bonds between team members, including the leader. This confirms the notion that leadership is not about one person, rather, leadership is deeply relational.

4. The Paradox of Surrender

“For one must keep in mind that in all that concerns the spiritual life his progress will be in proportion to his surrender of self-love and of his own will and interests.”⁵¹

A good leader naturally wants a group to progress and reach its goals. So what happens when a challenge obstructs progress, or worse, makes it seem as though there is no way forward? What does a leader do when there is no apparent way to resolve an issue? At such times, it may seem advantageous for the leader to assert greater control over a situation or the people involved. A voice whispers: the more you control, the better; the harder you push, the more progress; rely on strength and force.

In the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius posits something radically different: authentic progress depends, not on control or will power, but rather on the degree to which a person surrenders to God. Progress relates to how deeply someone is willing to place control in God’s hands.

Yet, is this reasonable? Is this not, rather, foolish or at the very least an escape? Perhaps. Yet when one steps back and considers, that for Ignatius, the greatest leader of all is the Lord, then this option is at least worth exploring. For Ignatius, progress depends on the extent to which a person is willing to put aside any self-centred tendencies and place one’s will at the disposal of God, who is the paradigm of leaders.

How is this to be done? Is Ignatius advising us to forsake our faculties and become passive observers to God’s work? Not so. Rather,

⁵¹ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, #189.

an Ignatian leader deliberately allows the Lord to take the reigns. An Ignatian leader places his or her faculties in the Lord's hands and then actively cooperates with the Lord's lead. It is a surrender of control, not a renunciation of action.

This willingness to let God lead, however, is risky. It takes courage. We do not know what God will do or ask of us if we surrender. We do not know what new endeavour the Lord will ask us to take up or what project he will ask us to put down. It makes us vulnerable. Yet Jesus himself chose to live with courage and vulnerability in just this way:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself...⁵²

Jesus chose to empty himself and follow the Father's invitation for his life completely. The Greek term for this self-emptying is *kenosis* and is predicated on Jesus' deep humility and obedience to God the Father.⁵³ For Jesus, this choice entailed immense sacrifice and intense pain. It was neither easy nor comfortable. Yet he held firm faith that God's way is indeed best. Such self-emptying and surrender, not only determines how and where Jesus lived out his ministry on a daily basis, it is what led Jesus through his darkest suffering and to the ultimate fulfilment of God's desires for him. In the Garden of Gethsemane, when faced with the prospect of intense suffering, it is Jesus' surrender to God the

⁵² Philippians 2:5-7 NRSV.

⁵³ Ingvild Røsok, "Unconditional Surrender and Love: How Spirituality Illuminates the Spirituality of Karl Rahner," in *The Way* (Oxford, England: The British Jesuits Oct. 2011, Vol. 50 Issue 4): 122.

Father⁵⁴ that leads to his death. It is this same surrender that leads to his definitive victory through the resurrection. This surrender leads to new life for him and many, many others.

The Spiritual Exercises encourage a leader to live in this way. The Exercises help us recognize that we are indeed sinners with limitations. Paradoxically, this is not a drawback, but rather, a way forward. Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner explains that when we admit our own limitations and finiteness, we open ourselves to something greater—we become aware that there is something infinite beyond us. Rahner holds that “...man is in so far as he abandons himself to the absolute mystery whom we call God.”⁵⁵ In other words, such surrender to God infinite actually allows us to be most fully who we are called to be, to be most fully human.

If Rahner’s words seem abstract, perhaps we can see this paradox more plainly through an example, the life of Mother Teresa. In 1928 she entered religious life by joining the Loreto Nuns in Ireland. The next year she was sent to serve in Calcutta, India. There she taught religious studies and geography at a Loreto school for 15 years. She eventually became principal. Her life seemed quite settled.

On 10 September 1946, however, while riding a train to Darjeeling, she had an experience of God that changed her life irrevocably.⁵⁶ God

⁵⁴ “Then he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed, ‘Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.’” Luke 22:41-42 NRSV.

⁵⁵ Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Seabury Press, 1968), 218.

⁵⁶ Joseph Langford, *Mother Teresa’s Secret Fire* (Huntington Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 2008), 42-47.

allowed Teresa to feel Jesus' deep thirst on the cross.⁵⁷ She understood Jesus has a profound desire to love every human being and to be loved by every human being. God communicated to Teresa that she was to go to the slums of Calcutta and express Christ's unconditional love to the poorest of the poor. She decided to follow this voice.

Yet how was she to do this? Many questions swirled. Would she have to leave the Loreto Sisters? She had promised to be a Loreto Sister for the rest of her life. How could she serve so many people? Would people view her choice as naïve, idealistic or futile?

The decision to leave Loreto and follow God's voice made her vulnerable in many ways.⁵⁸ It took great courage to step away from the stability offered by the Loreto Sisters and to try something drastically different. This is self-emptying exemplified. This choice is a reflection of the *kenosis* we see in Jesus' own life. It was precipitated by a humble and profound faith in God.

It is in this abandoning of her life direction into the hands of God infinite that allowed something greater to emerge. Mother Teresa's radical and loving acceptance of God's invitation to serve the poor, sick and dying, gradually attracted a group of followers. The first companion arrived in 1949 and the group grew to twelve by 1950.⁵⁹ Eventually,

⁵⁷ For Mother Teresa, Jesus' words on the cross, "I thirst" (John 19:28) were instrumental in her choosing this path. She understood deeply the mystery of God's thirst revealed in Jesus. God's yearning to love and be loved is a force that inspires all God's works. She discovered that God was further asking her to be an instrument of this love. Langford, *Mother Teresa's Secret Fire*, 77-80.

⁵⁸ Mother Teresa left the convent with five rupees in her pocket. Langford, *Mother Teresa's Secret Fire*, 28.

⁵⁹ Missionaries of Charity, *About the Missionaries of Charity* (2020), accessed 3 June 2020: <https://www.mothers Teresa.org/missionaries-of-charity.html>.

Mother Teresa became the leader of the congregation known as the Missionaries of Charity. This group now numbers more than 5000 members and serves the poorest of the poor in 139 countries.⁶⁰ By abandoning herself to God’s lead, she discovered a deeper vocation and led others to do the same.

Such surrender is indeed delicate. It requires prayer and honest communication with God. It requires deep faith to accept that God’s path is better than any other, even when we cannot see how. What leads to progress is paradoxical.⁶¹ Examining the fruits of such surrender, however, reveals its inherent goodness. An Ignatian leader recognizes surrender to God not as act of weakness, but rather, as an act of wisdom.⁶² When a leader surrenders and allows God to lead, then it is God, the best of all leaders, that leads the leader and the group.

In this way, we see Ignatius’ own prayer in the final section of the Spiritual Exercises in a new light. It is a deliberate, wise and loving

⁶⁰ Missionaries of Charity, *About the Missionaries of Charity* (2020).

⁶¹ The Trappist monk and mystic, Thomas Merton agrees with this view. He holds, “The whole Christian life is a life in which the further a person progresses, the more he or she has to depend directly on God. The more we progress, the less we are self-sufficient. The more we progress, the poorer we get so that the person who has progressed the most is totally poor and depends directly on God.” Thomas Merton, *Monastic Spirituality* (cassette tape AA2083) cited in Richard Boileau, “Falling in Love with God,” in *The Way* (Oxford, England: The British Jesuits Apr. 2014, Vol. 53 Issue 2): 18.

⁶² The spiritual diary of St. Ignatius provides glimpses into his soul. When faced with decisions about forming the new Society of Jesus, Ignatius had to make decisions that would impact the lives of Jesuits to come. His diary indicates the frequency and importance he placed on seeking God’s preference when making decisions. Ignatius remarks on the value he placed on submission to God. His diary entries from 12 March to 4 April 1544, for example, mention *submission* 29 times. Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Saint Ignatius of Loyola—Personal Writings: Spiritual Diary*, trans. Joseph Munitiz and Philip Endean (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 100-104.

decision to give all to God so that his life, and the lives of those who pray the Spiritual Exercises, will be more profoundly led by God.

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,
All I have and call my own.

You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me.⁶³

Conclusion

As a way of bringing this article to a conclusion, a classic approach would be to reiterate the main points. However, I would like to try something different. Since Ignatius encourages us to reflect on our experience and to interact directly with the truth, why not try this now?

Below are some simple questions—it is enough to choose just one:

As I come to the end of this article, what is in my heart? Is there one point or image that strikes me the most?

⁶³ Loyola Press, *Suscipe: St. Ignatius of Loyola* (2020), accessed 3 June 2020: <https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/prayer/traditional-catholic-prayers/saints/suscipe-prayer-saint-ignatius-of-loyola>.

What is one area of my work where I can give myself or others greater space to interact directly with God (truth, beauty, goodness, holiness)?

As I reflect on my team or community, when is one moment we have experienced communal consolation?

What most commonly distracts my team or community from more deeply living out our vision? Is there a deeper need here? Can I present this need to Jesus?

Do I dare to surrender myself (or my work) to God’s care and leadership?

Jesus is Lord as well as a friend. I can talk to him about anything that surfaces in my heart, any hope, any fear or any question. I pause for a moment to listen, to see if the Lord has anything to say to me. I wait on Jesus...to discover how he desires to lead me.

〔摘要〕 本文探討領導才能和依納爵靈修。更具體地說，對於成為一個好領袖的精神和技巧，依納爵·羅耀拉的神操可以提供什麼樣的智慧。本文概述領導才能的基本要素、依納爵靈修和神操；然後闡述神操有四個方面，能有助於建立良好的領導才能。首先，神操和良好的領導才能如何鼓勵人們直接與天主互動，即與真、善、美的事物直接互動。第二，如何通過檢視結果、目的和方法以及微觀和宏觀的形勢來提高領導能力的靈活性。第三，暫時停下來的價值在於更深入了解成敗的原因，從這些經驗中學習。第四，屈從的悖論，如何通過聽任於更高的事物而非增加控制來提高領導的效能。本文還包括有關領導才能的反思問題。

關鍵詞： 領導才能、依納爵靈修、神操、分辨、群體動力

Ecology and Consolation: The Ignatian Mystical Foundation for Our Option of Ecology

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[Abstract] The experience of Ignatius Loyola and the spirituality that flows from it make it possible for us to interpret the world and history as places of God’s revelation. Ignatius’s experience on the banks of the Cardoner River [Autob. 29], his understanding of Consolation [*SpEx.* 316], and his objective in proposing the “Contemplation to Attain Love” [*SpEx.* 230-237] can help us to understand the Holiness of things. Our commitment with Creation flows from above. Consolation as the “mundane-mystical” feeling of the Love of God reveals the foundation of every action to take care of Mother Earth.

Keywords: Action, Consolation, Ecology, Holiness, Love

1. Consolation as the worldly sensing of God's gift

I believe that the most important clue for understanding and justifying our option of caring for the natural world is to be found in what is the hermeneutical centre of Ignatius' system of discernment of spirits and the keystone of his anthropology: CONSOLATION.

As is well known, Ignatius defines consolation in no. 316 of the *Exercises*; this is the third rule for discernment, though it was perhaps not the first one he worked out.

The first part of the definition of consolation states what I take to be the definition of Consolation without Prior Cause (“*consolación sin causa precedente*” [SpEx 330]), that is, the most direct, natural, and desired way that God has of communicating with his creatures: giving himself essentially in Love that “is” rather than just “gives”—it involves “being inflamed with love of one’s Creator and Lord.”

Thus in *Spiritual Exercises* [316.1] Ignatius links this direct experience of God (an interior movement that inflames the soul with *love* of its Creator and Lord) very closely with the orientation toward *creatures* because of the love received, which “descends from above,” for he states: [in the experience of consolation the soul] “can *love no created thing* on the face of the earth in itself but only in the Creator of them all.”

For Ignatius direct experience *of* God (that is, *of* God in us) is the unifying experience that creates a religious subject, but that same experience is also an experience of the world, a way of *feeling* the world to be a creature like myself. Ignatius does not want to diminish the

importance or the density of the human being’s intimate experience of the Creator or of the Creator’s intimate experience of the creature, for to diminish it would be to destroy the heart of Ignatius’ intention and the originality of his contribution to the spiritual tradition of the West. What is marvellous about this experience is that it finds its authenticating element in the transformation that takes place in the “spiritual” subject [SpEx 336]; the ultimate test of authenticity is in the way the subject beholds the world and, beholding it, *feels it*. Such feeling or “feeling perception” of the world cannot be understood except in terms of *creatureliness*, a quality to which I have access by the love that is conceded to me.

Consolation is therefore (*consequenter*, [SpEx 316]) the experience *of* God (possessive genitive) which, passing through me, flows toward the world and senses the world as Creature, that is, as existing in absolute relation with its Creator. Consolation reveals to me the profound identity of the world as creaturely, as always relative by definition, as existing inevitably in reference to its Creator. If we expand logically the terse expressions characteristic of Ignatius, we might say that in our mystical experience of being indwelt by God (cf. Contemplation to Attain Love [CAL]) and our *feeling* this to be so, we also experience the world itself as “inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord” just as we ourselves become inflamed in the deep, inalienable part of our religious experience.

Consolation experienced *in this way* (for it can also be experienced in other ways, as explained in [316.2] and [316.3]) is, therefore, an experience of universal fraternity, of the close relation of all of nature to what I feel to be the same ontological status as I have myself: a *creature*

and therefore a lovable receptacle of the divine presence. Thus, the Holy Spirit through consolation “draws me” toward the world, and I feel irretrievably linked to it by the one love that grounds all being. The creation and I...we are much more alike than we might suspect.

It is worthwhile to observe two nuances of special importance for us.

a. One is the *consequenter* (therefore) to which we have already alluded: “...and *therefore* since [the soul] can love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself...” The term refers here not to a temporal consequence (first one thing, then another) but to a semantic consequence, that is, one concerned with meaning; this is proper to the dynamic of the experience of consolation, which necessarily implies being attracted by the love of creatures. But I think that Ignatius wants to refer to just a single mystical instant. Sensing God is inevitably sensing the lovable condition of all reality that lives with me on the face of the earth.

b. The second consideration concerns the *in itself*: “since [the soul] can love no created thing on the face of the earth *in itself*.” A careful reading shows us that this phrase can be interpreted in two ways. It may refer to the *subject* of the sentence and thus would mean: “When the soul experiences consolation, it cannot love creatures *in itself* [itself refers here to “the soul”], but only in the Creator of them all.” But the *in itself* can also refer to the creatures, and then the phrase would be interpreted thus: “When the soul experiences consolation, it can love no created thing on the face of the earth *in itself* [for itself], but only in the Creator of them all.”

We will never know where Ignatius intended to place the accent (whether on the subject or on the creatures), but what is important is that in both cases *the source* of love is in neither the subject nor the creatures. Neither is the soul capable of loving the world this way by its own strength, nor are things of themselves or in themselves lovable in that way, but only because they are referred to the Creator whose goodness dwells in them.

2. Creatures “for me,” the living reality of God

In the First Week of the *Exercises* we find an image that has not had the benefit of good theological interpretation and translation in our times. It has therefore often been neglected in both the theological and pastoral commentaries on Ignatius’s manual. I refer to number [60], the fifth point of the second exercise of the First Week.

Given the spiritual nature of angels and saints, we can quite easily understand why they react to my sin by “interceding and praying for me.” But what we perhaps find more difficult to understand is how these functions of prayer and intercession can be attributed to creatures such as “the heavens, the sun, the moon, the stars, and the elements; the fruits, birds, fishes, and animals—and the earth, how is it that it has not opened up and swallowed me?” [60]. What was in Ignatius’ mind when he wrote this? How did he conceive nature and its relation to human beings? What kind of life did he attribute to it? And above all, what role did he see it playing in the religious experience of the one making the Exercises?

In this point, Ignatius makes creatures that are apparently spiritless part of the retreatant’s spiritual process, thus foreshadowing the

Contemplation to Attain Love at the end of the Exercises. But the creatures are not spiritless: they become present to me in the process of conversion and take on an active function. They react with solidarity to the malice and seriousness of “my sin;” they bear it, they suffer it, they respond to it in the only way they can since the world in itself is good—the world is a creature, and like every creature it manifests its fraternal solidarity spontaneously and uncritically.

Just as my sinful situation grieves the Creator, so it also grieves the world’s creatures, which join themselves to the prayer of the angels and saints. Thus, the world is experienced as a living organism animated by the love of God that dwells in all of it; it is a world endowed with *pneuma* according to its own particular form of existence. Its freedom consists in revealing the mutual love of creatures and how they work together for me. That is to say, the way in which creatures express their praise and reverence for the Creator and prove that “love is shown more in deeds than in words” takes the form of incessant intercession for sinners, for me, before the Creator.

Therefore, how can I not love this world which has borne with my wickedness and responsibility and which still, despite my deserving to be justly condemned, suffers with amazing patience my criminal neglect of itself?

Delving more deeply into this vision of the world can help us to correct our vision of nature and the whole environment that makes our life possible. For Ignatius, *things* are animate reality, indwelt reality, spiritual reality; they are a sibling reality that lives-with-me and feels-with-me and therefore, a reality that affects my history and shapes it

silently and patiently. To the extent that they can, things also “labour and work for me” as God does in the CAL [*SpEx* 236]. Nature is a mother, a womb of religious energy that does not remain indifferent in the face of my sinful affairs; rather it becomes a sister to me, a sister who feels herself bound to me by the same indwelling love, and therefore “offers herself for the labour” (as in the meditation of the Temporal King [*SpEx* 96-97]) and works for my benefit. Does not this Ignatian intuition change our way of “experiencing and knowing” things?

What complicates matters, as is often the case in theology, is the kind of freedom human beings possess, which is different from the freedom experienced by plants and animals. Ignatius responds to this complexity in the human realm in the first note of the CAL, where he tells us that “love ought to manifest itself more by deeds than by words” [*SpEx* 230]. When we are disconnected from this referential experience of *consolation*, our going forth in mission to the world and to history often becomes an arid, exhausting effort, a labour more akin to egocentric, Promethean projects than to religious ventures borne gently by the Spirit. The key for approaching and influencing the world has to do with the ecology of the Ignatian subject, for the Ignatian subject *first* experiences the Risen One’s “consoling role” [*SpEx* 224] (first passivity) and only then produces the *works* proper to love for the world (reflex activity).

3. Our works and ministries, the construction of a pneumatological ecology

The proper working of consolation is loving labour on behalf of history. We might say that, understood in the Ignatian sense, the work of the Spirit in us does not consist in our presenting to the world the experience we have had of God in some intimate moment apart from the world. It does not consist in giving the world what we have received from God (that is, it is not the Dominican schema of “*contemplata aliis tradere*”). Rather, it means going forth lovingly toward that world which calls us out of the love that it has already received and that sustains it. What we do (work/ministries) is a loving dialogue for the construction of a pneumatological ecosystem which is continually moving creation, in the midst of its groans (Rm 8,22), toward its final destiny, its Omega Point, Christ. I believe that given the great urgency we feel to “heal” so many wounded parts of the world, we can find here a solid mystical support for our action and for linking it to a religious option for ecology: the world is God’s World.

Spirit – consolation – ministry – world – consolation – Spirit. This is the cycle. It’s not that we do good things *after* we have experienced God’s goodness in us. No, that is not how we justify our experience *of* God. Rather, our experience *of* God is in our working; our experience is of God working through our hands. A parallel can be found in rule 2 of the First Week [*SpEx* 315] where Ignatius says that “in the case of persons who are earnestly purging away their sins and who are progressing from good to better in the service of God our Lord” the good spirit gives them courage and strength and makes things easier to eliminate “so that they may move forward in *doing good*.” It is the Spirit

who “draws me” toward the same Spirit who dwells in all things, who is all in all. “Healing the world” means healing the very God who indwells the world, thus completing a process of goodness in which “the beginning, middle, and end are all good and tend to what is wholly good [333].”

But how does God dwell in the world, and what type of relationship with him does he propose to us? As Ignatius comments briefly in [236]: God dwells in the world *by working and labouring*. The first of these verbs, working [*trabajar* in Spanish], alludes to what we might call the strenuous element of God’s activity. His presence is a constant, persevering, exhausting activity. It was in this way that God entered into history in Jesus, “journeying and toiling” [116]; it was in this way that Jesus called those who would be his disciples: “whoever wishes to come with me must labour with me” [95]; and these will consequently “offer themselves wholeheartedly for this labour” [96]. The second verb, *labouring* [*laborar* in Spanish], adds a qualitative character to God’s action: it is the careful activity of the hands of the weaver at the loom, the hands of the potter at the wheel, or the hands of the carpenter with the wood. God works hard, but he labours carefully, lovingly, artfully...such is his presence in Creation, and such is the presence that draws us toward the world so that we “go and do likewise,” following the lead of the Samaritan.¹

¹ The etymology of the word “*trabajar*” offers us specific information: *trabajo* comes from the Latin *tripalium*, an instrument of torture made of three sticks on which the condemned person was stretched. This etymology evokes in our time connotations of suffering, pain, effort, just as in the 16th century.

Care of the world is a mystical habit, a way of breathing forth the Spirit we have received, the Spirit which has already made us creatures but which places in our hands the responsibility of freely continuing a *process* of creation. The Spirit guarantees that she will be present in us *realizing* (the participle is important) in us all the constructive, creative life processes which are advancing throughout the world (growing, feeling, understanding), and she is patiently but dynamically awaiting us in all creation.

4. “Pouring forth a thousand graces...”²

Where does all this leave us? Ignatius’ unique conception of mystical experience does not seek to remove the religious subject from history or from the world, evoking perhaps the prayer that Jesus uttered for his disciples on that Holy Night: “Do not take them out of the world” (Jn 17:15). To the contrary, Ignatius places us in the heart of Creation; we are Creation; I am Creation. I am not a “being facing” the world, labouring effectively and competently for its welfare. If such were the case, I would end up situating myself in an ontological state superior to that of the rest of Creation, and I might even be in danger of considering myself superior to other beings, including humans, that I consider less perfect than I am. The experience of the love that *draws me on*, getting me out of myself as the only way to lead me deeper into myself, is what we might call an experience of religious *worldliness*. Through such *worldliness*, all is unveiled and revealed with that excess of being that

² St. John of the Cross, *Canticle* [5].

emerges only when its sacred condition is allowed to be seen: “and all things appeared new to him” [Autobiography 29-Cardoner].

* * *

As I see it, speaking of ecology from this perspective confronts us with questions about the poverty and modesty of those who inhabit the face of this earth and who are invited to contemplate themselves as humble parts of the environment. I believe that the Mystery of the Incarnation teaches us to become part of the world, one thing among so many, and yet one thing in the midst of *so much*. Only when we have attained the viewpoint of the Creator (consolation) do we discover the thousand graces already poured out on *God's* world, which he had only to look upon to leave it “adorned in beauty” (Saint John of the Cross, *Canticle* 5).

〔摘要〕聖依納爵·羅耀拉（Ignatius Loyola）的經驗以及由此而產生的靈修，使我們能將世界和歷史闡釋為天主啟示的地方。依納爵在卡多內爾河兩岸的經驗[Autob. 29]，他對神慰的理解[*SpEx* 316]和他提出「默觀以獲得愛」的目標[*SpEx* 230-237]可以幫助我們理解事物的聖潔。我們對創造的承諾來自天上。神慰作為天主之愛的「平凡而神秘的」感覺，揭示了照顧地球母親的每項行動的基礎。

關鍵詞：行動，神慰，生態，聖潔，愛

約稿

為強化大中華地區和國際間對華人天主教團體的學術研究工作，雙語性質的《天主教研究學報》接受以中文或英文的投稿，並附以相對語文的摘要。《學報》偶爾或包括書評及本中心的活動簡訊。本刊每年出版一次，主要以電子方式發行。我們鼓勵讀者及作者以本刊作互動討論的平台，並歡迎對本刊批評及提出建議。

《天主教研究學報》以同儕匿名審稿方式選稿以維持一定的學術水準。本刊的性質大體屬於人文學科，以社會科學方法研究天主教與中國及華人社團，同時著重文本及實證考察的研究。本刊歡迎個別投稿及建議期刊專題。本刊下期專題為「靈修」。

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《天主教研究學報》〈依納爵靈修與當代世界〉

叢書編輯： 林榮鈞、譚偉倫

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出版： 香港中文大學天主教研究中心
香港·新界·沙田·香港中文大學
電話：(852) 3943 4277
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承印： 4a Colour Design (香港葵涌金龍工業中心第四座六樓 C 室)

ISSN： 22197664

Hong Kong Journal of Catholic Studies

Issue no. 11: Ignatian Spirituality and the Contemporary World

Centre for Catholic Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Series Editors: Anselm LAM, TAM Wai Lun

Chief Editor: Stephen TONG, SJ

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Publisher: Centre for Catholic Studies, the Chinese University of
Hong Kong, Shatin, New Territories, Hong Kong.
Tel: (852) 3943 4277
Fax: (852) 3942 0995

Website: www.cuhk.edu.hk/crs/catholic/

Email: catholic@cuhk.edu.hk

Printer: 4a Colour Design (Flat C, 6/F, Block 4, Golden Dragon Industrial Centre,
Kwai Chung, Hong Kong)

ISSN: 22197664

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