

Lonergan’s Operations of Consciousness as a Framework in Spiritual Direction

Sally Law

Abstract: Ignatian spirituality, following the dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises, is an interior journey on which the exercitant embarks to reclaim one’s true and authentic self, and thereby to live out one’s authentic desires which are also God-given. In the Ignatian tradition, spiritual direction plays a key role as the director accompanies the directee through a series of conversions moving from inauthenticity towards authenticity. Besides empathetic ears, supporting words, giving meditations and contemplations, in what ways can spiritual direction be helpful to the fervent soul?

Bernard Lonergan’s study on the operations of consciousness provides a clear and systematic account of how the human mind and heart can operate in an integrated way. This paper explores how attention to the operations of consciousness may contribute to spiritual direction, beginning with an elaboration on Ignatian Spirituality as a journey towards authenticity, how such a journey moves through conversions, and affirms that attending to the operations of consciousness facilitates spiritual direction to accompany people on this journey.

Keywords: Ignatian Spirituality, Spiritual Direction, Bernard Lonergan, Operation of Consciousness, Conversion

1. Introduction

Spiritual direction plays a key role in Ignatian spirituality. St. Ignatius of Loyola helped many of the people he met through spiritual conversations. William Barry and William Connolly define Christian spiritual direction as “help given by one believer to another that enables the latter 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.”¹ Ignatian spirituality, following the dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises, is a journey on which the exercitant embarks to reclaim one’s true and authentic self, and thereby to live out one’s authentic desires which are also God-given. James Connor has remarked, “[i]n modern terminology, the aim of the Ignatian Exercises is to help a Christian become an authentic human being.”² In the Ignatian tradition, the director accompanies the directee on this journey through a series of conversions moving from inauthenticity towards authenticity. Besides empathetic ears, supporting words, and giving the meditations and contemplations in the *Spiritual Exercises*, in what ways can spiritual direction be helpful to the directee?³

Bernard Lonergan’s study on the operations of consciousness provides spirituality with a clear and systematic account of how the human mind and heart can operate in an integrated way, and has been of most help to

¹ William Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 8.

² James L. Connor, *The Dynamism of Desire: Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J. on the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola* (Saint Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2006), 28.

³ As a basis to the present work, I use the translation in George E. Ganss, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1992). The *Spiritual Exercises* in italics is a reference to the actual text, and Spiritual Exercises refers to the actual prayer exercises.

spirituality.⁴ According to Lonergan, it is in the autonomous human subject that self-transcendental stages of experiencing, understanding, judging, and deliberating occur. The authentic subject follows the transcendental precepts to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible. Conversion occurs when one shifts from biases and self-absorption to following these transcendental precepts. However, this transcendental method involves a heightening of one’s consciousness, which not everyone is at home with, and where spiritual direction may help. This paper explores how attention to the operations of consciousness may contribute to spiritual direction, beginning with an elaboration on Ignatian Spirituality as a journey towards authenticity, how such a journey moves through conversions, and affirms that attending to the operations of consciousness facilitates spiritual direction to accompany people on this journey.

2. Ignatian Spirituality: A Journey towards Authenticity

Human beings have a restless longing for God. The person who embarks on a spiritual journey has a desire to find and live out God’s will, to praise, reverence and serve God. However, spirituality is not something that operates independently and divorced from other realms of humanity; on the contrary, grace builds on human nature and interacts with our humanity as we struggle towards wholeness. God’s will is not a pre-determined plan which the human soul can only achieve by following commands. Rather, God’s will for us is that we respond in freedom to God’s love, which gives shape to both our individual and common lives in freedom by the choices that we make. As Saint Irenaeus proclaimed, “the glory of God is a human fully alive,” the essence of spirituality lies in the revelation of a person’s authentic self through

⁴ Raymond Moloney, “Conversion and Spirituality: Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984)” *The Way*, 43 no. 4 (2004), 123.

a personal experience of the love of God, and the person's response by choosing to live out one's meaning of life, thereby to glorify God. Instead of looking outward to seek and find God's will, spirituality is an inward journey into one's own self. As we reach into ourselves at the deeper level, we experience authentic desires which are "uniquely our own but also God-given."⁵

How do we understand authentic desire? Unlike other animals whose lives are driven by basic instincts, human lives are driven by purpose, meanings, and values. The search for meaning and purpose of one's life is the deepest desire in the human soul. Edward Kinerk proposed that such authentic desires come from a person's true-self instead of superficial false-self, and that the question "what do I want" is closely related to "who I am."⁶

Although finding God's will is coherent with living out one's authenticity, the journey is not straightforward. Our true-self is often hidden or concealed under other images, often referred to as our persona, masks, or false-self. Michael Ivens has cautioned that "even in our more seemingly innocent creative desires, radical egocentricity, values inconsistent with the gospel, crippling images of God, and elements of psychological unfreedom readily find shelter under the cover of moral neutrality."⁷ In other words, not all desires are authentic. Robert Doran described that "[a]uthenticity is achieved in self-transcendence, and consistent self-transcendence is reached only by conversion."⁸

⁵ Edward E. Kinerk, "Eliciting Great Desires: Their Place in the Spirituality of the Society of Jesus," *Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits* 16, no. 5 (1984), 4.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Michael Ivens, "Desire and Discernment," *The Way Supplement* 95 (1999), 32.

⁸ Robert M. Doran, "What Does Bernard Lonergan Mean by 'Conversion'?" (Milwaukee: Marquette University, 2011), <https://lonerganresource.com/pdf/lectures/What%20Does%20Bernard%20Lonergan%20Mean%20by%20Conversion.pdf> (accessed January 2019), 2.

3. Conversion

Ignatius described spiritual exercises as a name “given to any means of 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.”[1]⁹ Michael Ivens explained that conversion in the Spiritual Exercises is “both a ‘turning to’ and a ‘turning from’. ‘Turning to’ in the language of the *Spiritual Exercises* consists in seeking and finding the will of God, while the correlative ‘turning from’ is the process of getting free from the influence of ‘disordered’ drives and attachments that stifle love and impede integrity of intention.”¹⁰

3.1 Religious, Moral, Intellectual and Psychic Conversions

Lonergan identified three forms of conversions: religious conversion, moral conversion and intellectual conversion. Doran further suggested the psychic dimension of conversion. Conversion as turning to self-transcendence and authenticity implies turning away from some degree of self-absorption or self-enclosure.

Religious conversion is other-worldly falling in love, as one is being grasped by ultimate concern.¹¹ It frees one from the self-enclosure of radical lovelessness to a total surrender without reservations as a being-in-love. Doran remarked that conversion is a process occurring in incremental steps, and religious conversion is “a process of ever-deepening withdrawal from ignoring the realm of transcendence in which God is known and loved, and of ever

⁹ In this work, the numerated paragraph in the text of the *Spiritual Exercises* will be designated by a number in square brackets, for example [19] is paragraph 19 of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

¹⁰ Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises: Text and Commentary: A Handbook for Retreat Directors* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1998), 1-2.

¹¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, ed. Robert M. Doran and John D. Dadosky (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 226.

deeper entrance into that realm.”¹² God’s love flooding our hearts is a gift of grace, replacing the heart of stone by a heart of flesh. Ignatius described how it is the prerogative of the Creator alone to enter the soul and cause a motion in it which draws a whole person into His love.[330] Religious conversion is a twofold process: the operative grace of being loved unconditionally results in a cooperative grace as one’s own loving becomes unconditional. Therefore, religious conversion leads to moral conversion.

Moral conversion is self-transcendence in one’s decisions, opting for the objective value even if it conflicts with one’s own satisfaction. There are two kinds of questions for deliberation: the self-regarding questions that concerns what is in it for oneself or for the group one belongs to, and the moral questions that ask what is worthwhile, what is truly and not merely apparently good. There is moral transcendence when one’s basic question for deliberation regards not satisfaction but values.¹³ The Spiritual Exercises move one from the egocentricity of self-regarding deliberation to Christo-centricity when one chooses and follows the values of Jesus Christ.

Moral conversion is a shift in the criterion of decision, whereas intellectual conversion is a shift in the criterion of truth. Concerning reality and knowing, there exists a myth that knowing is like looking and the real is what is out there, which then regards knowledge as a matter of taking a good look at what is already out there. Operating from this stance is staying in the world of immediacy, but the real world is a far vaster world that is mediated through meaning. There is intellectual conversion when one shifts to regard knowledge “as a matter of raising and answering questions for intelligence and

¹² Doran, “What Does Bernard Lonergan Mean by ‘Conversion?’” 5.

¹³ Bernard Lonergan, “Self-transcendence: Intellectual, Moral, Religious,” in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 324-325.

reflection.”¹⁴ Intellectual conversion opens the horizon of questions and transforms one’s cognitional life so that questions regarding meaning and truth are pursued for their own sake.

If intellectual self-transcendence is about taking possession of one’s own mind, then psychic conversion is about “appropriating the operations of the psyche.”¹⁵ One’s inner movements provide raw materials for insights, judgments, evaluations, and deliberations. Attention to inner movements helps us to notice ways in which our psyche hinders or helps in the search for meaning, truth, and value. Psychic conversion is considered affective self-transcendence as the affective and imaginal components are being brought into harmony with one’s operations of consciousness and there is a sense of opening communication between one’s conscious-intentional orientation as a cognitive, moral and religious being, and the underlying neural and psychic manifolds. Here’s an example to illustrate psychic conversion when the retreatant’s affectivity is in harmony with her religious conversion: Lucia had a traumatic experience when she was young; therapeutic and psychological intervention could not help much.¹⁶ Whenever she recalled the experience, she was deeply trapped in the threat of the trauma and exhibited vomiting. During an eight-day retreat, she experienced a strong sense of security in the love of God to the extent that her vomiting reactions to the memory had stopped, and she was able to receive therapeutic help after the retreat. Her religious conversion of experiencing God’s love brought a change in her psyche and led to a change in somatic reactions.

¹⁴ Doran, “What Does Bernard Lonergan Mean by ‘Conversion’?” 8.

¹⁵ Neil Ormerod and Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, *Foundational Theology: A New Approach to Catholic Fundamental Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 131.

¹⁶ In this paper, pseudonyms are used in the case illustrations.

3.2 Conversions in Ignatian Spiritual Journey

The self-transcending journey towards authenticity is often not smooth but laden with fertile tensions, even capsizing the stability of self-reassurance one has built up over the years.

Although created in the image of God as a true-graced self, each individual has a unique story subject to various influences both biologically and environmentally. Psychic wounds were inevitably created through one's life journey in this world, twisting and crippling the soul since infancy. As a consequence, the human soul is far from wholeness, but rather influenced by unconsciously operating false images of self and the beliefs that I am not loved, that I am less than good or that I am insecure. Out of such wounds, survival strategies were developed to deny the lack of love in relationships, to compensate for the inferiority experienced, and to defend a sense of security. Throughout the years these survival strategies become persistent, gradually evolving into fixed beliefs and interpretations of self, others and life.

An ideal self, a picture of the kind of person one should be, is developed, and parts consistent with such image are retained and developed as one's persona, whereas those unacceptable parts we considered inappropriate are pushed into the shadow. The self is attached inordinately to masks that give an illusory counterfeit of the true-graced self. For example, instead of a healthy development of one's potential, a perfectionist lives in a myth identifying oneself with performance and pursuing excellence ceaselessly; being perfect provides a sense of recognition, worthiness, or lovability. This false ideal creates paradoxes of illusion: at a surface level, one may feel a certain sense of goodness in the masks and cover-ups, but it inevitably implies that one has to gain one's own security or recognition, which further reinforces the notion that one is not being cherished.

Religious conversion is thus a turning away from this hidden belief in radical lovelessness to an experiential knowing oneself as being loved by God. Receiving and allowing God’s love to fill up one’s heart strengthens one’s capacity to reclaim and own one’s authentic self as a true-graced person. Religious conversion frees a person from being trapped in inordinate attachments to false reassurance. Despite such a vision, to receive God’s love often involves a struggle between love and fear, approach and avoidance. Ignatius defined the contrary movements of the soul as spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation: the former describes interior movements of the soul towards God, whereas the latter movements in the opposite direction, both originating from the dynamics of love and fear respectively. William Barry described that such bipolar motivations of love and fear result in a rhythm of withdrawal and return which characterizes all our relationships, including our relationship with God.¹⁷ When the soul is dominated by fear, it withdraws into the familiar false self-images, and when fear is subordinated to love, it has the courage to step into the mystery. Ignatius introduced the rules for the discernment of spirits as “rules to aid us toward perceiving and then understanding, at least to some extent, the various motions which are caused in the soul: the good motions that they may be received, and the bad that they may be rejected” [313]. The definition implies that the discernment of spirits is highly correlated with the operations of consciousness, which will be elaborated in the following section: love motivates a person to follow the transcendental precepts in operations of consciousness while fear fuels one’s biases and leads to decline.

There are two movements in the dynamics of the Ignatian journey: one is the receiving of the gift of one’s authentic self, another is the living out of

¹⁷ William A. Barry, *Spiritual Direction and the Encounter with God: A Theological Inquiry* (New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1992), 59-72.

one's capacity to love by the giving of self in Christ and with Christ. The first movement to reclaim one's authentic self brings the second movement, to live out the capacity of love by the giving of oneself in Christ and with Christ. Authentic desires are uniquely personal but at the same time apostolic: authentic desires lead the individual out of oneself into the human community.

Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises are set to widen and challenge the retreatant's horizon, thereby initiating movement away from self-referential criteria towards objective value step by step, to be shaped by religious value. In Ignatian anthropology, the objective value and good in an absolute sense is referenced to Jesus Christ Himself and other exemplars such as Mary and Joseph. For example, some retreatants were attracted by the responses of Mary in her "fiat," but were stunned when they were invited to the same level of faith and trust in God. Mary's invitation challenges retreatants' belief that "fiat" is for Our Lady only. The contemplations and meditations are designed to bring a series of conversions to an authentic indifference. Through the dialectical processes of the Spiritual Exercises, the spiritual desires undergo further purification, mounting to a total and positive indifference, singleheartedly for the glory of God. Ivens described that the personal love of Christ is "a love which changes and re-orientates the whole person. It is the love by which we allow the loved-one to take over our lives, to lead us along his own ways towards his own objectives, the love by which we trust ourselves to the other's power to change us."¹⁸

The purification of the soul reaches an apex when the exercitant enters into a union with Christ through his passion, death and resurrection. It brings out the greatest paradoxes that the human mind cannot comprehend, such as the freedom in loving obedience, that the sacrifice of love can fill the abyss of death, and that death has no power over Jesus' powerlessness. The dialectic

¹⁸ Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 75.

confronts the greatest darkness to bring out the greatest light of humanity, enhancing one’s capacity of strength, fidelity and courage. However, this conversion is only possible through “com-passion,” standing with Jesus in His Passion. The intimate and participatory grace of compassion also brings the grace of confirmation to the exercitant.

Conversion is a vertical exercise of freedom involving a movement to a new horizon, the limit of one’s field of vision. It repudiates characteristic features of the old horizon and begins a new sequence that reveals a greater depth and breadth.¹⁹ The gift of oneself for Christ and with Christ is a choice out of the freedom to love. Reaching human authenticity is a matter of achieving self-transcendence both in the field of knowledge and in the field of action. The authentic realization of human potential takes one beyond oneself. The fruit of reclaiming one’s authenticity is the vision of apostolic soteriology, one’s capacity to see the *Imago Dei*, the supreme dignity, which is a redeemed dignity of each person within the vision of the crucified Christ.

4. The Operations of Consciousness as a Framework for Spiritual Direction

4.1 The Operations of Consciousness

Lonergan’s intentionality analysis distinguishes four levels of consciousness and intentionality beyond the states of sleeping, dreaming and waking: experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding. Experiencing includes seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, feeling, etc. Beyond sensitivity, one starts to ask questions such as what, why, how, and what for in order to understand, and the answers to these questions “unify and relate, classify and construct, serialize and generalize.”²⁰ Understanding constructs a

¹⁹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 223-230.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 100.

world by imagination and intelligence, which is mediated by words and meaning. The diversity of constructions brings questions of reflection to judge whether the understanding is real and true. Moreover, there is doing besides knowing. Therefore, beyond questions for intelligence and reflection, there are questions for deliberation when one considers objective value: namely, whether this is truly good and worthwhile.

The human spirit has its natural tendency to observe the transcendental precepts of being attentive in experiencing, intelligent in understanding, reasonable in judging, and responsible in deciding. Human authenticity is a matter of following such a built-in law of the human spirit. Such authentic upward movement from one level to another (from experiencing to understanding, from understanding to judging, and from judging to deciding) is a transcendental movement, and one's consciousness and intentionality expand as one journeys towards authenticity. Lonergan described how one's capacity for self-transcendence becomes an actuality when one falls in love, and being in love with God is the basic fulfilment of one's conscious intentionality. It "sets up a new horizon in which the love of God will transvalue our values and the eyes of that love will transform our knowing."²¹ Operations of consciousness are authentic when they are in tune with the downward movement descending from being in love unrestrictedly to experiencing. Surrendering oneself as a being-in-love, one desires to follow Christ the Lord and allows His value to take over one's self-regarding value in decision; likewise love influences the intelligent questions and reasonable questions one raises in understanding and judging, and eventually the experiences one attends to. Moloney further described that when each level of conscious intentionality comes into harmony with God's primordial gift and culminates in the fruits of the Spirit, such as love, joy and peace, "[o]ur

²¹ Ibid., 102.

affective development from above downwards is matched by a cognitive and affective development from below upwards, as we learn to understand, assess and implement our experience.”²² In other words, when one surrenders to ultimate love, the grace of religious conversion brings intelligence to understanding, reasonability to judging and responsibility to deciding.

There is progress when the transcendental precepts are observed, but the operations are also prone to decline, when transcendental precepts are violated and one becomes inattentive, obtuse, irrational, and irresponsible. Lonergan defined flight from understanding and flight from responsibility as biases which block continuous growth in authenticity and leads to inauthenticity.

Conversion happens when one shifts from the biases and blocks of self-absorption to observing the transcendental precepts in one or more domains of one’s operations of consciousness. While redemption is God’s grace, spiritual direction helps to heighten the directee’s awareness of their biases, and to enhance their openness to bring biases and blindness in prayer, which are dispositions for the grace of conversion. The operations of consciousness offer a helpful framework, by inviting attentiveness to the overlooked, raising questions of intelligence and reflection, pointing out the biases, and even challenging the flights. This framework contributes to spiritual direction in accompanying the retreatant’s conversion journey.

4.2 Self-Appropriation

Despite the fact that operations of consciousness are built into human nature, Lonergan iterated that it is quite difficult to be at home in this transcendental method, as it requires a heightening of consciousness by objectifying it, a matter of “applying the operations as intentional to the

²² Moloney, “Conversion and Spirituality,” 130-132.

operations as conscious.”²³ Such self-appropriation begins with noticing and registering one’s inner movements. This is where spiritual direction may contribute, by raising questions that focus on one’s operations to help the directee to turn from focusing on the incidents outside to self-appropriation of one’s own inner operations. To illustrate this, consider a directee, Patrick, who remembered an argument with his boss during his prayer. On the one hand, he reflected that his boss had not intended to hurt him and he desired to let the issue go; on the other hand, he felt an overwhelming sense of anger and was preoccupied with thoughts about the argument. The focus of his operations was on the external happenings: the issue, the situation, his boss, and what to do. During spiritual direction, questions focusing on his own operations were raised that helped him to shift his focus from the issue to self-appropriation, where Patrick realized there was hurt behind the anger. As he pondered the question “what were the thoughts that have aroused the feelings of hurt?”, he realized that he felt hurt when he could not convince his boss that he was right, and further noticed an inner voice that said “I am of no use unless I am right.” Focusing on his own interiority brought further questions for intelligence and reflection, such as “is this inner voice a single occurrence or a recurrent pattern?” “How did this pattern develop?” “Is this belief true? “Who am I in the eyes of God?” These questions led Patrick to embark on a journey of interiority towards authenticity that eventually gave him the freedom to forgive. Connor remarked that Spiritual Exercises are exercises in self-appropriation, being present to oneself and grasping what goes on in consciousness.²⁴

Ignatian spirituality focuses on God’s presence in and through a person’s humanity. It is quite common and helpful for people to recall issues in their lives during their prayers. However, spiritual direction distinguishes itself

²³ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 18.

²⁴ Connor, *The Dynamism of Desire*, 19.

from counseling: while spiritual directors explore with the directees their personal experiences, the focus is not to alleviate one’s problem but to unpack the human dimensions of experiences as dispositions for prayer. The emphasis of self-appropriation in operations of consciousness also serves as a reminder for spiritual directors to be attentive. To illustrate, Eva was attacked by utter loneliness and frustration as a middle-aged single woman. She shared her prayer experience when she asked God why she had to suffer such loneliness. Instead of counseling on the pressing issue of loneliness in single life, spiritual direction from the perspective of self-appropriation noticed that despite her complaints, she did not interact with God in the prayer. When this was reflected and counterchecked with her, Eva noticed that she had refused to converse with God, out of her anger and bitterness. Such reflections helped Eva to realize a contradiction: although she considered God as most important in her life, she demanded God to love her in the way she had wished. This operating blindness is powerful yet hidden. Unconsciously, she had placed her wish in a higher order than God. Realizing, understanding and judging such “dis-order” triggered her real desire for God’s love. This religious conversion started Eva’s journey to reclaim her authentic self, with the capacity to bear loneliness in life.

4.3 Framework for Spiritual Direction

Observing the transcendental precept to be attentive in experiencing encourages one to move from the concepts of God’s love to an experiential knowing. It is not uncommon to see directees “touch and go” while encountering God’s love. Spiritual directors often invite directees to stay in the experience of love and to relish it. Questions to prompt directees’ attention to their felt sensations such as sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste, as well as their inner movements such as feelings, thoughts, and beliefs are often helpful. Consider an experience of accompanying Anna who described her prayer

experiences when she shared with God the difficulties in her life, and remarked that God was present but did not respond. When she was invited to describe how she had sensed God's presence, she described a sensation that God was right next to her. Upon the spiritual director's curiosity on what God was doing, Anna replied, "God was listening to me." A further explorative question "How did God listen?" prompted Anna to pause, close her eyes for a moment and to sense before she replied, "God looked at me." The exploration continued, "and how is this gaze?" "The gaze is gentle...and reassuring...as if telling me that God does not forsake me." Attentive questions prompt the directees to notice, stay with and pay attention to God's encountering, which directees may have overlooked.

While it is natural for a person to interpret and understand one's experience, one may at one time ask intelligent questions, but other times may be biased and obtuse. Questions from the spiritual director may inspire the directee to reflect on such beliefs. Consider Linda who had experienced abuse in her childhood and became a psychotherapist specializing in child abuse. She has a long-held belief that God had allowed her to be abused in order to train her to be a therapist. As the spiritual director invited her to explore her belief, she realized that the thought offered her a reason to account for the innocent suffering. Encouraging her to listen to the inner voice "why did I have to suffer" revealed the anger that had been buried deeply. It was not easy for Linda to face the wounds covered by the false image of a tyrannical God, but this opened up a journey of healing for her.

Spiritual direction also helps by raising questions out of a different horizon. Consider sin which is a common theme in prayers. Most people would normally try to cover up the feelings of shame when facing one's sin, but Ignatius suggested that retreatants ask for the graces of shame and confusion, sorrow and tears for one's sins. [48, 55] Such graces are challenging and we naturally avoid such feelings. In this Ignatian horizon,

shedding tears of sorrow opens the person’s heart to experience God’s unconditional love at a deeper level. Spiritual direction with Tony in a retreat illustrates this. The memory of a fault that he had committed decades ago surfaced in his prayer, with an image of a big dark hole enlarging enormously. Tony was worried that all his previous efforts of repentance and confession were in vain. Shame over his sin turned into anger at God for not protecting him from falling into the sin. Instead of comforting words to alleviate the shame and reassure his repenting efforts, the spiritual director operated from a horizon which understood shame as a possible window for grace, and thus emphasized the shameful feeling. Tony stared at the spiritual director in disbelief as the latter invited him to experience God’s love in this shamefulness. In his prayer that evening, after pouring all his anger towards God, Tony suddenly experienced a peaceful “silence” and an indescribable “lightness,” he described as if he was floating on the surface of a vast and deep ocean without limit. He broke into a smile when the spiritual director asked, “in this infinity, how big is the dark hole?” The spiritual director’s understanding of shame as grace helped to dispose Tony to experience what Ivens has described, “there can be no profound sense of God’s mercy without a profound sense of sin.”²⁵

A felt knowing of one’s identity as God’s beloved challenges a person’s belief of lovelessness. Therefore, a crucial point in conversion is the judgment of who I really am, the distinction between what appears to be me and what is really so. It is not easy to make reasonable judgments: some people brush the question aside, others allow themselves to remain in a state of confusion, or make irrational conclusions. For example, one of Martha’s beliefs was “I’m not loved” as she felt neglected by her mother since childhood. At the same time, she was affirmative of God’s love as she prayed her personal salvation history. When asked who she really was, she replied, “I’m loved, and I’m not

²⁵ Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, 44.

loved.” The spiritual director clarified the difference between feeling and identity. While feelings of being loved (by God) and not being loved (by mother) are both very real to her, the identities of “I’m cherished” and “I’m not cherished” are contradictory and could not coexist. Such clarification prompted Martha to face the reflective question on what her true identity was. The criterion of truth shifted as she prayed over this question: in spite of intense emotions, feelings of not being loved were not the criteria of her identity; the word of God was gentle but firm.

Relevant questions help the directee to shift from regarding truth as what was already out there in one’s history to a fuller sense of reality through reasoned argument, allowing religious conversion to bear fruit in intellectual conversion. As Lonergan has iterated, “[f]or a judgment that this or that is so reports, not what appears to me, not what I imagine, not what I think, not what I wish, not what I would be inclined to say, not what seems to be, but what is so.”²⁶ This can be illustrated by Debbie who suffered gross neglect in childhood and also had a traumatic experience of being molested. She articulated her anguish, “I prefer to believe that God did not exist when that incident happened, I could not accept God’s presence and allowing an innocent child to suffer!” Spiritual direction, allowing her to articulate the anguish, exposed her hidden belief and disposed Debbie for God to address the question if her belief is true. Amazed that she neither died nor went astray despite all the sufferings, Debbie saw God’s grace not in the reality “out there,” but in her persistence to survive the sufferings and in the faith she had kept since childhood. God’s presence in her heart was so real that despite historical happenings that remained unchanged, Debbie chose to believe what was true for her. This freedom disposed her to experience a deeper intellectual conversion in another retreat a few years later. In a contemplation on Jesus’

²⁶ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 100.

childhood, Debbie saw herself as a young child growing up together with Jesus. Gradually, her memory brought back the incident of sexual abuse, but this time she experienced Jesus’ accompaniment. A phrase surfaced in her heart, “I was helpless but I was not abandoned,” which brought her deep consolation. Debbie experienced intellectual conversion when she could distinguish the feeling of helplessness versus the reality of not being abandoned. The power of this phrase was beyond her own capacity which proved to her this was a grace from God to free her from her anguishes.

The process of moral self-transcendence when one inquires, answers and lives by objective values is also filled with fertile tensions. Despite the desire to follow Christ to the point of poverty, humiliation and humility, directees filled with awe and fear may exhibit various kinds of reactions during the process such as avoidance, subjecting the ends to the means, rash decisions, illogical judgments, deceptions, indecisiveness, etc. The operations of consciousness are helpful reference points for accompaniment during this process. For example, Teresa, during the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises, avoided the consideration of election and convinced herself with various justifications that discerning God’s will would imply a mistrust in God, or that discernment would distract her from contemplating the life of Christ. Exploring how she understood her justifications revealed her fears, and bringing these fears to prayer disposed her to greater indifference. Another illustration on the application of the operations of consciousness is Sylvia, a teacher with tremendous love for her students who had great spiritual consolations when she saw Jesus entrusting lambs to her care. But she became confused when she recalled the frustrations and tiredness from her teaching. Questions during the spiritual direction session helped to explore the cause of the frustrations such as time management, and clarified that these issues required further attention but they were technical problems and do not weigh equally with love for students. Sylvia was able to make reasonable judgments

as she remarked, “some voices, despite their loudness, are not so important at all.” There is moral conversion when love became her referential value in decision-making, which in turn led her to ask further intellectual questions about setting priorities and making better time arrangements.

5. Conclusion

Loneragan’s cognitional theory is a practical framework for spiritual direction to accompany the directee’s Ignatian journey through conversions to authenticity. An Ignatian journey is full of fertile tensions between movements and counter-movements. Growth in relationships requires not only paying attention to the other, but also awareness of what is happening inside oneself. Similarly, in one’s relationship with God, conscious presence to oneself is a foundation for presence to the Other. By asking relevant questions in line with the transcendental precepts of being attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible, spiritual direction helps the directee to focus on the pivotal point in self-appropriation, so that one is disposed to allow “the Creator to deal immediately with the creature, and the creature with its Creator and Lord.” [15]

〔摘要〕依納爵靈修是建基於神操的動力，行神操者展開一個向內走的心靈旅程，重遇真我，並重獲和活出一己真誠的渴望，分辨天主的旨意。在依納爵靈修傳統中，靈修指導或靈修陪伴扮演著一個重要的角色，陪伴著避靜者走過連串的皈依，從不自由中釋放出來，活出真實的生命。那麼，除了同感的聆聽、鼓勵的說話、給予默想的材料之外，靈修指導可以怎樣才對避靜者更有裨益？

朗尼根對意識的操作的研究提供了一個清晰而有系統的架構，關於人的思想和情感如何整合地操作。本文探討這「意識的操作」框架對靈修指導的貢獻。文章先闡述依納爵靈修作為一個邁向真我的旅程，期間通過重重皈依，繼而討論和肯定「意識的操作」對靈修指導於陪伴路上的貢獻。

關鍵詞：依納爵靈修，靈修指導，朗尼根，意識的操作，皈依