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The Value of Spiritual Conversation in the Digital Age

by Soo Young Theodore Park S.J.*

Introduction

As the 21st century begins in earnest, the whole world is now facing an era of an unprecedented newness. It is being described in various ways, such as the "Fourth Industrial Revolution," "Artificial Intelligence," "Dataism," "Post-COVID," and "Post-humanism (Trans-humanism)," etc. These diverse expressions of this new era are commonly based on digital technology; ironically, it makes the predictability of the future more difficult and complicated. Above all, the COVID-19 pandemic is now functioning as a catalyst for accelerating this new era's implementation. The realm of religion is no exception. Due to the pandemic, online Masses have increased, as the Catholic Church canceled in-person parish assemblies, under quarantine law. In such an irreversible digital environment, religion has the task of integrating its spiritual traditions with relevantly interpretative flexibility.

In *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis highlights that "the digital environment is no longer merely a question of using instruments of communication," but a culture that "has had a profound impact on ideas of time and space, on our self-understanding, our understanding of others and the world, and our ability to communicate, learn, be informed and enter into relationship with others."[1] Within this substantial cultural transformation, people can obtain "an extraordinary opportunity for dialogue, encounter, and exchange between persons, as well as access to information and knowledge including social and political engagement and active citizenship."[2] At the same time, Pope Francis is also concerned about the dehumanization of online relationships, which includes "the risk of addiction, isolation, exploitation, violence,"[3] and "the loss of contact with concrete real-

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[1] Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, [86] "Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God (25 March 2019)," accessed December 5, 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html.

[2] Ibid, [87].

[3] Ibid, [88].

ity, creating mechanisms for the manipulation of consciences and the democratic process, fomenting prejudice and hate that has lost its sense of truth."[4] Facing the challenge of "digital migration," the pope exhorts us to "find ways to pass from virtual contact to good and healthy communication as if setting foot on an undiscovered global continent."[5]

In line with *sentire cum ecclesia* this study pays attention to the pope's pastoral concern for the digital communication culture, recognizing its significance as a sign of the times. What status does Christian spirituality's tradition, especially that of the Ignatian spiritual conversation, hold in the current digital communication culture? Is its value valid and, if so, in what way? How can it be applied in practice? These are the working questions to which this study seeks to respond.

Recognizing and responding to new features, challenges, and crises in digital communication culture is one of the pillars of this study. At the same time, discovering, recovering, and growing human relationships within authentic conversations and an unbiased view of the world's reality are the other pillars. In here, the hermeneutical area between the two pillars, this study aims to focus and infer the correlation with a spiritual conversation among the various modes of communication. Therefore, it neither suggests that spiritual conversation is the only alternative, nor that the long-standing traditional discourse of spiritual conversation should be adapted and applied to a particular digital technology-based platform. Instead, the critical question pursued by this study is how the conventional methodology of spiritual conversation and its essential internal components can overcome the crisis of the digital age.

Having focused the main point of this argument, this paper will search the changing perceptions of people regarding religious issues, and confirm with the survey results that the expression and sharing of faith and spiritual conversation still have valid religious values for the digital generation. It will then address the characteristics of the challenges and crises caused by the digital-networked self, which is the core concept of the digital communication culture, and investigate the validity of spiritual conversation, in particular, in the Ignatian tradition, as an alternative remedy corresponding to each challenge and crisis. Furthermore, it will assess how we can relevantly apply the Ignatian spiritual conversation to the digital communication culture in a pastoral perspective.

This study argues that digital communication culture should fulfill an authentic conversational relationship embracing otherness. As the ultimate-transcendent mode of authentic conversation, a spiritual conversation is valid as a remedial alternative in response to the crises: dehumanization and cognitive bias, caused by the digital-networked self. In particular, Ignatian spiritual conversation as a spiritual legacy will be pastorally encouraged to the digital generation.

The investigation is conducted in three parts. The first one, refers to Shoji's Behavioral Psychological survey and the Barna Group's Religious-Sociological quantitative statistical survey on the change in the perception of religion and faith by the young gener-

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[4] Ibid, [89].
[5] Ibid, [90].

ation of U.S. in the digital age. In particular, the latter, as a comparative follow-up survey for 25 years, can likely be used effectively to grasp the trend of the times on the topic. In addition, it will analyze the digital communication culture's crises by studying journal literature related to the communication culture of the digital age.

The second part, based on Martin Buber's theory of relationship, will search the theoretical foundation to examine whether the approach of spirituality to an authentic conversation culture is appropriate. Through the research of the literature on spiritual conversation, especially Ignatian and Jesuit literature, it will verify the adequacy of discourse on the relevancy of the Ignatian spiritual legacy to the digital communication culture.

Finally, in the third and last part, the study will discover how spiritual conversation can be applied to the area of real life in a pastoral and relevant way, as well as its practical-corresponding potential, by its spiritual conversation components.

This study expects the following effects and significance within the two perspectives.

On the one hand, from a pastoral perspective, this study introduces the legacy of spiritual conversation as a remedial vision for individuals and society suffering from the various phenomena of dehumanization and cognitive bias. People may enjoy a healthier and more orderly communication culture by being interested in spiritual values. In particular, this study may provide seeds for the creative development of spiritual sharing, dialogue culture, and essential guidelines for sound use of digital platforms in the youth ministries of the Church.

On the other hand, from an academic perspective, this study may evoke the need for in-depth analysis and research on the anthropological, theological, and sociological aspects of the digital communication culture. Furthermore, it may produce the materials for further studies as a counter to digital-reductionism, as represented by *Dataism*,[6] through an integrated examination of the Ignatian spirituality regarding the theme of spiritual conversation's status and relevant positive function.

1. Sign of The Times in the Digital Conversation Culture

We are experiencing that digital communication technology has freed us from space and time constraints in our daily lives. Changes in the realm of religion are no exception. However, such technical liberation cannot be easily returned to the question of its

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[6] "*Dataism* is a term that has been used to describe the mindset or philosophy created by the emerging significance of Big data. It was first used by David Brooks in *The New York Times* in 2013. More recently, the term has been expanded to describe what social scientist Yuval Noah Harari has called an emerging ideology or even a new form of religion, in which 'information flow' is the 'supreme value.'" "Dataism," Wikipedia, last modified December 28, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dataism; The philosopher Han Byung-chul borrowed this term from David Brooks in his book "Psychological Politics" in 2015, describing it as "Dataismus." It is used as an expression of concern about 'data omnipotence', emphasizing the meaning and tone of 'meaningless' and 'nihilism' of the ideology. Byung-Chul Han, *Simni chŏngch'i: sinjayujuŭi ŭi T'ongch'isul = Psychopolitik*(Sŏul: Munhak kwa Chisŏngsa, 2015), 84.

positive or negative values when it comes to religious matters. It is necessary to examine how people practically sense and respond to changes within digital circumstances before evaluating their religious values more elaborately. Furthermore, it is also worth observing digital communication technology development's interactive features and paying critical attention to its shadows in the real world.

1.1. The Status of Faith and Spirituality in the Digital Communication Culture

There is yet not much data on the correlation between digital communication technology and conversation culture, especially in the areas of faith and religion. There are only a few survey results, such as Shoji's research[7] on the change of religious perception during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Barna group's report,[8] which is also relevant. Thus, this section tries to approximate spiritual conversation in the digital communication culture based on these two statistical data.

1.1.1. Increase of interest in deinstitutionalized spirituality

According to a quantitative statistical survey by Shoji, interest in spiritual practices has relatively increased amid the COVID-19 pandemic while interest in institutional authority has relative decreased. Furthermore, digital technology has brought about the evolution of spiritual, religious practices in social environments, characterized by liquid modernity and a multiple religious changes process.[9]

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[7] Rafael Shoji and Regina Matsue, "Digital Spirituality as Paradigm Shift? Religious Change during the COVID-19 Epidemics in Brazil," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2020, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3650566. Rafael Shoji is an independent researcher at the Center for the Study of Oriental Religions (CERAL) at the Pontifical University of São Paulo, and Regina Yoshie Matsue is an Anthropologist and professor at Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP). Through their collaboration, the research tried to discover and predict general aspects of the digitization of religions in Brazil during the COVID-19 pandemic and this will be described, and some quantitative data from this period will be presented.

[8] Barna Group, ed., *Spiritual Conversations in the Digital Age: How Christians' Approach to Sharing Their Faith Has Changed in 25 Years* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2018). The research was carried out through active collaboration between Barna Group and Lutheran Hour Ministries in line with "the methodologies of both an in-depth survey (qualitative), which performed an exploratory, open-ended, online survey conducted among 102 Christians to understand more about their spiritual conversations as well as online interactions. This survey was conducted between April 20 and May 15, 2017. and nationally representative survey (quantitative), which includes the primary source of data in the survey of 1,714 U.S. adults, comprised of an over-sample of 535 Millennials and 689 Practicing Christians, conducted online June 22–July 13, 2017; Respondents were recruited from a national consumer panel, and minimal weighting was applied to ensure representation of certain demographic factors, such as age, gender, ethnicity and region. The sample error for this data is plus or minus 2.2% at the 95% confidence level for the total sample. A subgroup of participants had either: 'shared my views on faith or religion in the last 5 years' or 'someone has shared their views on faith or religion with me in the last 5 years.'" See Barna Group, *Spiritual Conversations,* 91.

[9] Shoji, 3.

This change has been foreseen since the advent of radio and television in the early 20th century. The Catholic Church declared that the church could only perform sacraments in the mode of in-person communication with the priest.[10] On the other hand, alternative religions and the New Age Movement actively embraced internet technology development and extensively applied it to their message exchange, virtual community formation, and even online rituals.

Shoji hints at religious deinstitutionalization during the COVID-19 pandemic through a comparative analysis of the pandemic's severe timing with trends, through a Google trend search of various religious terms in quantitative statistics. Of course, because of its regional limitations to Brazil and the lack of evidence that search terms reflect the qualitative dimension of human religious mind, the reliability of the analysis can be questioned. However, 86% of Brazilians are Christians (Catholic 64.6%, Protestant 22.2%). So considering that the digital age internet search term is a cover (standard) that quickly reveals people's emotions and interests, it may be possible to infer to some extent a correlation between the COVID-19 pandemic and religious interest.

According to the analysis, while the term "prayer," "God" and "Jesus" have increased considerably since the outbreak of COVID-19, the term "Church (the Cathedral)" has receded in the search queries. This shows an interpretational possibility for a detachment from the traditional form of spirituality. Furthermore, the changes in religious search terms worth noting during this period show more obvious differences in religious practices, between the individual level and an institutional level. Terms such as "meditation" and "yoga" have also shown remarkable increases since the pandemic.

Shoji interprets these statistical results as follows: Just as e-mails are not a substitute for hand-written letters but rather a new mode of communication, online religion is not a modality or alternative form of religious practice. At the individual level, the digitalization of religion tends to promote more private aspects of practice, in the direction of the self's spirituality. On the other hand, on the traditional-institutional religious level, a significant correlation between digitalization and deinstitutionalization of religion is revealed.[11]

1.1.2. Affirmation of faith sharing

According to the Barna group's survey of spiritual conversation as a way of expressing faith, many young Christians in the United States feel a more personal responsibility for sharing their faith than in previous generations. Millennials (65%) and Gen X (67%) Christians are most likely to agree that sharing one's faith is every Christ-follower's responsibility, as compared to Boomers (60%) and Elders (55%).[12] Looking at the phenomenon of youth's being unchurched, some may find this statistic is hard to believe.

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[10] Pope Benedict XVI. *Sacramentum Caritatis* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana (Vatican Press), 2007), [57].

[11] Shoji, 15

[12] Barna group,19.

Nevertheless, while it is true that the proportion of millennial Christian youth is significantly lower than that of other generations, the enthusiasm and commitment of the youth who remain in the church are significantly higher than that of other generations.[13]

Whether advances in digital technology promote one's life in religion is unclear. More than half agree that "technology and digital interactions have made sharing my faith easier" (53%). In comparison, similar proportions (55%) pointed out that digital technology's flood has increased the tendency to avoid real spiritual conversation. In particular, the Millennial generation is aware of relatively more in-person or face-to-face conversations. Moreover, they also recognize that in-person spiritual conversations are challenging to achieve because of the excessive use of digitalized communication.[14]

The Barna report summarizes the implications of these results in four aspects, as follows.[15] Firstly, the entirety of generations admits that face-to-face meetings are the preferred means of sharing faith at present. Of course, although the overall population proportion of Generation Z and Millennials will increase as time goes by, the ability to have meaningful real-life conversations is still recognized as an essential skill that Christians need to develop more. Secondly, it shows that digital faith interaction will become the standard for spiritual conversations in the near future. The more our communication is mediated by digital technology, the more inevitable this prospect is. Therefore, it requires the wisdom of creating a meaningful virtual communication for Christians by which to bear spiritual fruit, in order to enrich in-person faith conversation culture in the future. Thirdly, it reveals a growing need to help Christians of the older generation to learn the school of online communication manners. Most older generations have learned how to communicate in in-person settings only. While an in-person conversation is immediate, reciprocal, and informed by physical presence and body language, online communication is much simpler and one can engage in communication while doing something else. Also, it is challenging to grasp the tone, intention, and context of the conversations. Fourthly, young people struggle in their own way in the internet world, where there are many temptations, conflicting opinions, and intense disagreements. It has been called a digital Babylon. Here is the space where the church community is requested as a guide.

As we have seen, interest in faith sharing and spiritual conversations do not recede, even in the digital age. Rather, it evokes the urgent need for pastoral preparation for proper guidance in digitalized settings. To this end, we should first pay attention to today's digital communication culture's challenges and ensuing crises.

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[13] "Is Evangelism Going Out of Style?" Barna.com, accessed November 1, 2020, https://www.barna.com/research/is-evangelism-going-out-of-style/

[14] Christian generations on sharing faith in the digital age: "It's harder to have a private, one- on-one conversation now than in the past because people are so busy with phones and technology." (Millenials 69%: Gen X 69%: Boomer 60%); "People are more likely to avoid real spiritual conversations than they were in the past because they are so busy with technology" (Millenials 64%: Gen X 60%: Boomer 45%) Barna group, 39.

[15] Barna group, 42-43.

1.2. Digital Communication Culture Crisis

Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook CEO, proudly advocates his business as a social mission that connects people, builds community, and brings the world closer together. This argument was his defense in the April 2018 hearing of the Senate Judiciary & Commerce Committees, in the case of intervention in vote manipulation through a user data leakage. It seems right that human relations in today's networks have increased as significantly due to its extensibility.

Lee Rainie analyzes that the development of digital communication technology induces (a) An expansion and diversification of personal networks; (b) A rapid rise in internet information gathering and analytical capabilities; and (c) An assurance of high mobile accessibility, thereby transforming itself into a networked individualistic self.[16] Although it is similar to the past in that "humans are animals of the relationship," network technology has drastically shifted its quality. Past networks could be dichotomously divided between vertical-bureaucratic institutions and small groups with intensive intimacy. On the other hand, in the digital age individuals turn into entities that freely participate in various networks according to personal interests and zeal, rather than being fixed in any particular group in the digital age.

The qualitative level of crisis in the communication culture, caused by the digitally networked self who has consumed digital media and reproduced, can be seen in two dimensions: relationship-oriented and information-oriented networks.[17]

1.2.1. Crisis of Dehumanization in the Relationship-oriented Networked Self

The relationship-oriented networked self is bringing about unusual changes and challenges in communication culture. These variable challenges invite us to reflect beyond temporary social phenomena to the realm of the question of humanity's matters. Here is a summary of the challenging issues related to dehumanization in the digital communication culture.

Firstly, a new understanding of intimacy is being formed that in the human relationships by the online communication technology. The more easily it is formed by digital technology, the more easily it can be dismantled. Physical exchanges of the message are inevitably excluded because virtual communities presuppose mediation through the machine. Unsympathetic communication, the so-called "soulless words," prevails, which reduces emotional ties. Nevertheless, the digital generation's intimacy cannot be unilat-

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[16] Lee Rainie and Barry Wellman, *Networked: the New Social Operating System* (Cambridge: MIT Press Ltd, 2014), 13.

[17] Relationship-oriented network media are represented by Facebook and KakaoTalk, while Twitter and YouTube represent information-oriented network media. However, this simple distinction cannot be regarded as an essential criterion in that it does not permanently show the changing aspects of the living digital-ecosystem. The recent explosive use by Gen Z of platforms such as TikTok disproves this with the emergence of a new area of relationship building through creative information production.

erally devalued by the criteria of the analog generation's intimacy of the past. Today's digital generation's intimacy is defined, not by how long any message content information is exchangeable, but by how often and how easily it can be recognized and confirmed to be interconnected with one another.[18]

Secondly, the avoidance of face-to-face communication is strengthened. The digital generation enjoys and prefers free online conversations without any strict formality. However, when they encounter face-to-face situations with others unexpectedly, they might be easily embarrassed. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the face-to-face avoidance of the digital generation. As a parallel, Korean restaurants kiosk systems have already been in operation for two to three years, in support of a culture of avoiding face-to-face interactions, it is now used everywhere in this pandemic. This lack of physical interaction within the virtual world has evolved into a technology that guarantees anonymity. When it comes to the message itself, personal background information, such as sex, age, occupation, school ties, and appearance, which were valued and frequently the cause of discrimination in the real world, will affect the message much less now. In short, non-discriminatory recognition of objects on the network as an out-of-boundary convergence allows them to participate in the dialogue in an equal capacity and free from prejudice. In this respect, democratic principles work positively. However, as common courtesy toward one another decreases, emotional expressions become extreme and the irresponsibility of the message claimed and the bystander attitude toward others' claims are both reinforced. This dramatically undermines the credibility of communication. Although in face-to-face situations one can see in real-time (even if not understanding), in non-face-to-face digital communication, the message recipient can arbitrarily choose to control the response time. The message bearer may then become anxious about whether his/her intentions are being well-delivered, or whether they are being rejected or ignored.[19]

Thirdly, conflict avoidance increases. The Barna group's report clearly shows why people hesitate and avoid religious conversations and communication. About 45 percent said the religious issue conversations cause tension and controversy, or turn political. On the other hand, 31 percent said they are not interested in religious dialogue simply because they do not belong to any religion or think religious expressions themselves are tacky or outdated.[20] These figures show that the main reason for communication avoidance is the burden and fear of conflict and disagreement caused by conversation and communication, rather than indifference to the communicative message itself.

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[18] Park Seong-chul, "Digital Media Sidaeeui Ingan Communication Yiron" 디지털 미디어 시대의 커뮤니케이션 이론 [Human Communication Theory in the Digital Media Age], *Dokohhak* 38 (December, 2018), 134.

[19] Of course, this is the same as when communicating by letter, snail mail, or phone during the analog era. However, digital technology has doubled the ability to control the autonomous psychological distance from the others.

[20] Barna group, 53.

This phenomenon is also related to one of the information-oriented networks' features, where disagreements, discords, and conflicts among dialogue participants have changed qualitatively. In the past, people made efforts in order to coordinate and resolve the differences among dialogue participants.[21] However, digital communication technology makes it easier to disconnect or log out with one push of a button, even in shutting an opponent down by blocking them. In real-life communities, conflicts and disagreements could be opportunities to recognize how they are different and to coordinate the matter among dialogue participants, thereby strengthening the resolution and solidarity of deeper community conflicts. However, in virtual communities, patience, conflict alleviation, and resolution decrease so that the ability to reconcile also decreases significantly.[22] Eventually, all that remain are connections with groups who are homogeneous with their own opinions. The resulting irony is uniformity, rather than diversity brought on by expanding the network between individuals.

1.2.2. Crisis of Cognitive Bias in the Information-oriented Networked Self

Artificial intelligence technology collects and analyzes information users' big data, selects information that users may be interested in, and provides it according to recommended algorithms. In June 2015, DAUM, a portal site based in Korea, introduced its AI system called "Luvix" which automatically recommends content optimized for individual interests by continuously learning each user's content consumption patterns. Large platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Netflix and domestic companies provide "personalized content" that suits users' interests.

Personalization of information brought by digital algorithms reduces the time and effort of users in collecting information. Additionally, it renders obsolete the dispute over political fairness when human hands have editing control, as well as increasing the amount of news exposure. Kakao says that the amount of news content exposed on the first screen increased 250 percent after the introduction of customized news recommendation services.

However, dark shadows behind the information delivery efficiency of algorithm systems are emerging as social problems. June-man Kang points out five cognitive biases that affect today's anti-intellectualism, of which confirmation bias and negativity bias seem to be linked to the uncritical acceptance of digital media in an information-oriented network.[23]

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[21] Cho Seong-dae, "Hyundaisahoiwa Ingangwangyeui Wegee" 현대사회와 인간관계의 위기 [Modern Society and the Crisis of Human Relationship], *Hangookingangwangyehakbo* 5. no. 1 (October, 2000), 127.

[22] Seong-chul, 134.

[23] Kang June-man, "Whe Daejoongun Banjisungjuuie Meryodoinunga?" 왜 대중은 반지성주의에 매료되는가? [Why the Public Is Captivated by Anti-intellectualism?], *The Journal of Political Science & Communication* 22, no.1 (February, 2019), 44-47.

Firstly, "confirmation bias" tends to both accept information consistent with one's beliefs and ignore information inconsistent with one's beliefs. It makes one assume that it is easy to find information that fits one's beliefs, while evidence of the information in the real world is complicated and unclear. For example, YouTube's main screen is personalized according to users' search and viewing records. During political election seasons, information between biased people is mainly exposed. Given that access to information other than the user's interest is limited, opinions formed previously are likely to be corroborated and reinforced. Therefore, the better the digital information-oriented network's personalization service, the more biased the information provided to those with the bias, which is likely to strengthen the confirmation bias. Closed and exclusive phenomena such as dividing parties and polarization of ideology can be easily found around us these days.

As a matter of fact, no one can be entirely free from confirmation bias. Because every human being seeks a basis that confirms one's own beliefs, we try to justify our own beliefs. However, if someone continues to respond to the rational counterargument or criticism with confirmation bias, that could be considered problematic. While collecting information to support one's confirmation, one might not realize that one has already manipulated the information. This confirmation bias appears strongly in areas primarily dominated by emotions (religious, political, feminism) and becomes stronger when "the sunk cost effect"[24] appears. Therefore, it is crucial to secure a self-reflection ability and communication potential to not fall into confirmation bias.

Secondly, "negativity bias" is the phenomenon of processing information with more emphasis on negative information than positive information when evaluating people or issues. This means that negative things have a more significant inducement effect than positive things. According to the information-oriented network market's discourse principle, which is that "bad things are stronger than good," a degenerative phenomenon replaces communication – which should be bilateral – with a unilateral "enemy-making." It also meets the "politicized" public's demand to secure their identity through opposition to the people and groups they fear or detest.

According to evolutionary psychologists, negativity bias is the result of evolution, developed to make wise decisions in high-risk situations, to survive longer. Furthermore, negativity causes greater activations in the brain than positivity, as a mechanism to better protect us. People give more credibility to negative news than positive news, even if it is fake news. No matter the evolutionary justification, it is not free from the fact

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[24] "In economics and business decision-making, a sunk cost (also known as retrospective cost) is a cost that has already been incurred and cannot be recovered. Sunk costs are contrasted with *prospective costs*, which are future costs that may be avoided if action is taken. In other words, a sunk cost is a sum paid in the past that is no longer relevant to decisions about the future. Even though economists argue that sunk costs are no longer relevant to future rational decision-making, in everyday life, people often take previous expenditures in situations, such as repairing a car or house, into their future decisions regarding those properties." "Sunk cost," Wikipedia, last modified December 1, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunk_cost.

that an indiscreet bias of information distortion, exaggeration, and manipulation promotes and amplifies a culture of hatred and division.

1.3. Conclusion

Amid our unprecedented digital civilization, this first part of the investigation began to analyze the digital communication culture based on statistical data and research. Shozi's statistical results (2020) showed that people are becoming more interested in religious matters such as faith and de-institutionalized spirituality, in using non-face-to-face digital communication media, further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, the Barna group's religious-sociological survey (2018) indicates that digital generations have a greater need for spiritual conversation and proper pastoral guidance in their digital environment than older generations. To sum up these two reports, even in a digital civilization, people show religious-spiritual interest, even in changed forms, which is what has motivated this study.

However, this study noted the alarming opinions of communication scholars who point out that, as the influence of digital communication culture increases, people are experiencing a change in the self, which is the very subject of communication, and not just a change in mode of communication tools. In other words, amid the overwhelming digital communication culture, the human self turns into a digital-networked self. Digital communication media has been developing mainly on two types of platforms: a relationship-oriented network represented by "Facebook" and an information-oriented network represented by "Twitter." Both show the challenges of spreading a type of dehumanization which arises from a superficial intimacy, disordered attachment to non-face-to-face communication, conflict avoidance, and strengthening confirmation bias, negativity bias, and – in particular – "cognitive bias." These challenging phenomena of digital communication culture call for an awareness of the crisis, especially reminding pastoral leaders of Pope Francis' recommendation to find an authentic communication culture.

2. Spiritual Conversation as a Corresponding Remedy

This part of the research will examine the in-depth theoretical foundation of an authentic communication requested by the signs of the times, and the Christian/Ignatian spiritual tradition to seek the possibility of spiritual conversation as its remedial value. As mentioned above in the introduction, this study is by no means proposing spiritual conversations as an absolute condition for authentic communication. The categories of spiritual conversation vary, and setting specific technical requirements within the digital communication culture that changes day by day is beyond the scope of this study. Rather, this study will reveal that the two risks categorized as digital communication culture crises are not just aspects limited to the change of communication means and its phenomenal transition. In other words, concerning both the subject and the content of communication, it is crucial to know how to pursue and implement an essen-

tial orientation for authentic communication. In this regard, a more detailed understanding of literature materials on spiritual conversations, which has been passed down in Christian tradition through a long history, is essentially required. Simultaneously, it is not merely about theoretically coherent arguments, but also about confirming the very common-sense for truth, goodness, and beauty at the fundamental level between human and human, and between culture and culture.

2.1. Restoration of authentic conversation

As we saw above in the first part, the interest and demand for faith sharing or spiritual communication are still considerable, even among the digital generation. Yet at the same time, the risk of dehumanization and cognitive bias in the digital-networked selves amid the digital communication culture is real. If we look at these risks only through conversation, which is our typical mode of communication, we can discuss how to overcome those risks with intersubjectivity and unbiased cognition within the conversational structure.

To this end, this section first looks at Martin Buber's theory on relationship, particularly on intersubjectivity among conversation participants, and finds resilient value for unbiased cognition in authentic conversation.

2.1.1. Authentic Conversation Discourse based on Martin Buber's theory

Gabriel Marcel states that "Buber is a revolutionary philosopher who has been conscious of and demonstrated the meaning and reality of 'You' in an era of philosophy that is defined and absorbed only by 'It' in today's threatening technological civilization."[25] Although this is an assessment from half a century ago, Buber's theory of dialogue still remains valid in the current situation where digital technology threatens communication culture's humanity.

Martin Buber, a German-born Jewish philosopher of the last century, recognized all beings as relationships. A relationship begins from the encounter of two beings. There are only two kinds of relationships being formed through this encounter: "I-You" and "I-It." Here the relationship between "I-You" and "I-It" depends on my attitude toward the object, the other. The object does not define me, but the relationship itself defines me. In an "I-It" relationship, the "I" is emotionally detached, not involved. The "I" uses "It" only as a means. But in the relationship of the "I-You," "I" am emotionally connected, and "I" am the one who cares for "You," who is devoted to "You," who gives and receives vitality from "You." The object is not used as a means, but is within the relationship, and I respect "Your" autonomy and freedom.

The relationship between "I" and "You" takes place in three areas: The first is life with nature, the second is life with humans, and the third is life with spiritual beings.[26]

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[25] Paul Arthur Schilpp and Maurice Friedman, eds., *The Philosophy of Martin Buber* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1991), 42.

[26] Buber, *I And Thou*, 56-57.

In the first area, all creatures face "I," but they are unable to come to us, and one finds it hard to cross the language barrier, even if one calls such things "You." You can move on to forming relationships with a tree or a natural landscape. The tree is not "It" anymore but "You" to me, and this makes me feel vital and alive. In the second area, when you have a relationship with another person, the words begin to work. Here relationships take the form of words. Language is completed consecutively in the exchange of words, and words formed in language are reciprocated. In the third area, the relationship is covered by clouds, but it appears on for itself, and although it is silent, it produces words. "I" don't hear "You," but I answer, feeling addressed. I respond by creating, thinking, and acting. In this third area, "You" is "eternal You." Buber's understanding of God is also an extension of the relationship between "I-You." Buber stresses that the "eternal You" cannot be "I." God can only be approached by listening to the "I-You" relationship. Like the "I-You" of the second area, the relationship of "I-eternal You" can maintain intimacy. It is not by an ascetic mysticism that has turned against the world, but through a momentary "I-You" relationship encountered daily. Ultimately, the extension of all relations encounters with the "eternal You." Each "You" is like a window through which we look into the "eternal You." Through "You," step by step, I move forward to the "eternal You."

What Buber emphasizes in his conversation theory are both "the otherness" and "reciprocity." First of all, "In an authentic conversation, you have to stand facing the other person."[27] In other words, the conversation's primary condition is to perceive the other person, and to acknowledge and accept the other person.[28] This does not mean that you fully agree with the other person's message, but that you affirm the other person's personhood. At the same time, the participants of the authentic conversation thoroughly trust and accept the reciprocity, which is an inherently innate area before the relationship of "I-You." In fact, it is a category and element that exists "between" the

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[27] Buber, *Zwiesprache*, 23.; Martin Buber, "Elements of the interhuman," in M.Buber, *The Knowledge of man: Selected essays*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 85. Buber views the relationship between "I and You" as a conversational one comparing three types that make up an interactive relationship. First, it is an authentic conversation. It is a conversation in which, by word or silence, the conversation participants acknowledge the other person in their existence and essence as they are, listen to their intentions, and create a lively interaction between the two. Second, it is a technical conversation, one in need of understanding and questioning the facts. Third, it is a monologue disguised as a conversation. Here, two or several people take turns talking to each other in one space, talking to everyone, and thinking that they are saying something to one another. Martin Buber, *Zwiesprache Traktat vom dialogischen Leben* (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider Verlag, 1978), 43.

[28] While the criticism regarding relevancy to the digital environment will be addressed in the next part of the research, here we address the question of the adequacy of Buber's assertion in the mid-20th century. Still, this study assumes that in the current digital environment of the COVID-19 pandemic, where non-face-to-face communication is reinforced, the space of "otherness" and "reciprocity" claimed by Buber may be extended to apply to virtual space. Despite the fact that Buber had never experienced or predicted a digital communication platform, it is clear that he intended that an authentic communication depends on the transformation in the subject's internal disposition rather than its external environment base.

two individual subjects. The two standing facing each other for the conversation is the space where reciprocity resides and the essential element of human existence is manifest. This reciprocity is not an auxiliary component but an actual place and embodiment of events occurring between humans.[29] In contrast, a monologue is a person who talks to someone very kindly but never goes beyond his or her boundaries.[30]

Overall, Buber's relationship theory refers to a qualitative leap in the relationship between "I and You." Using the language of Buber, the characteristic of the digital age relationship-oriented networked self seems to be defined by the relationship of "I-It." Although the new aspect of digital media's relationship promotes the emotional connection and invigorating presence required by the "I-You" relationship, the quality of care and dedication to the other person seems significantly lower than in previous times. The phenomenon of the avoidance of conflict best illustrates the relationship between "I-It," rather than the preference of the new intimacy or non-face-to-face. Indeed, various digital communication apps and devices in social isolation of the COVID 19 quarantine situations are causing a psychological pathology called "digital depersonalization."[31]

This leap to an authentic conversation culture is a matter of the subject's attitude, rather than a digital technological evolution. In other words, it requires respect for other people's sharing, an open mind, and the courage to share and face the truth as it is. Furthermore, under the outlook of "I-eternal You," the ultimate third area of "I-You," God is our beginning, always present in our history. As such, we must have great trust in the moment of dialogue itself and the existence of it. In this sense, Facebook, the flagship platform of the relationship-oriented network, should ask itself whether its alleged social mission – connecting people, building community, and bringing the world closer together – has degenerated relationships to the level of "I-It" and spreading superficiality. At the same time, digital media users should also reflect on whether their relationships with others through media are turning into "I-It."

2.1.2. Spiritual Conversation as a model of authentic conversation

How can we take root in the digital-networked self to grow a genuine "I-You" relationship as an inner attitude, in order to restore an authentic conversation culture? This study recognizes spiritual conversations covering all three areas of "life with nature," "life with humans," and "life with spiritual beings" as an authentic model, according to Buber's "I-You" relationship. Since the "I-You" relationship is based on encounter and

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[29] Buber, *Das Problem des Menschen*, 166.

[30] Buber, *Zwiesprache*, 45.

[31] "Digital depersonalization is closely linked to a lack of "wholeness of perception" and "wholeness of relatedness." Digital imagery is always incomplete. An object in a cyber world is a partial object. Relationships with partial objects are experienced as partial, insufficient, and lacking. This constitutes the depersonalization quality of unreality." Elena Bezzubova, "Digital Depersonalization in the Time of Social Isolation," Psychology Today, accessed March 26, 2021, https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/the-search-self/202005/digital-depersonalization-in-the-time-social-isolation.

its source based on "grace,"[32] the "I-You" relationship will be achieved ultimately under the prospect of the "I-eternal You" relationship. Based on this, we can discuss spiritual conversation as the ultimate model of authentic communication. "The You encounters me by grace-it cannot be found by seeking. But that I speak the basic word to it is a deed of my whole being, is my essential deed. (…) The concentration and fusion into a whole being can never be accomplished by me, can never be accomplished without me. (…) All actual life is encounter."[33]

A "spiritual conversation" can be defined either in a narrow or broad sense, depending on how we understand the meaning of each of the two words. When it comes to a narrow interpretation, it indicates a conversation in which spiritual topics are related to its motivation, procedure, and result as such. It also means that the way the conversation takes place is seen as spiritual as its wide interpretation. In this regard, various kinds of dialogues can be called spiritual conversations,[34] ranging from typical spiritual counseling at a retreat, to sincere faith-sharing, to a dialogue between two souls filled with love for God, to conversations among good-willed spirits, to conversations at communal discernment of specific apostolate, and even to pleasant chats during ordinary breaks.[35]

According to Luz Marina Diaz, a spiritual conversation is a form of a dialogue between two or more people that involves sharing personal experiences of finding God in daily life, while paying attention to one's desires, dreams, and emotions.[36] Further, they seek to identify what God is saying in every life circumstances, as narrated by someone within the conversation. In other words, a spiritual conversation can be perceived as a kind of practical process of finding God, the ultimate realm of the "I-eternal You," within the intersubjective sharing of godly experiences within the "I-You" relationship. In line with this point, Buber confirms as follows:

> Some would deny any legitimate use of the word God because it has been misused so much. Certainly, it is the most burdened of all human words. Precisely for that reason, it is the most imperishable and unavoidable. (…) For whoever pronounces the word God and really means You, addresses, no matter what his delusion, the true You of his life that cannot be restricted by any other and to whom he stands in a relationship that includes all others.[37]

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[32] While the "grace" Buber uses here cannot be identified with Christian grace, it can be inferred that it is not an encounter achieved by a person's efforts or initiative, but rather an encounter presented by the absolute or divine existence; as such it symbolizes the sacredness of the encounter.

[33] Buber, *I and Thou*, 62.

[34] Charles Baumgartner, *Dictionnaire De Spiritualité* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1953), s.v. "Conversation Spirituelle."

[35] This study uses the term "spiritual conversation" not only for its narrow meaning being focused on Ignatian spirituality, but also for its broad interpretation extended to the spiritual sphere in general usage. In this regard, this study's research context aims to address the validity of spiritual conversation within the digital communication culture, which encompasses nonreligious and atheistic worldviews.

[36] Luz Marina Diaz, "Spiritual Conversation as the Practice of Revelation," *The Way* 55, no. 2 (April 2016), 43.

[37] Buber, *I And Thou,*123-124.

2.2. Spiritual Conversation in the Ignatian Tradition

Spiritual conversation's legacies have been passed down from the various Christian spirituality traditions in the form of discourse and practice. Almost all the saints have emphasized the value of spiritual conversation in the faithful's spiritual life and have presented their own methodologies and practice norms under their spiritual traditions. In the field of the discourse of spiritual conversation, especially in the digital communication culture, which faces an unprecedented situational challenge, the Ignatian tradition provides a positive outlook for discourse effectiveness.

2.2.1. Relevance of Ignatian Tradition as a Participatory Spirituality of the Times

Digital communication culture has been forming quite a trend throughout this era, and Ignatian spirituality has never neglected the matter of souls among the world's realities for the past 500 years or so. During the revolutionary era as the pre-modern feudalism and post-modern world systems interchange, Ignatian spirituality showed the most exemplary internalization of the Catholic tradition encompassing Benedictines, Franciscans, and Dominicans.[38] At the same time, Ignatian spirituality oriented towards the world outside the walls of the cloister.[39] As James Martin summarizes, "instead of seeing the spiritual life as one that can exist only if it is enclosed by the walls of a monastery, Ignatius asks you to see the world as your monastery."[40] Ignatian spirituality has always responded or adapted faithfully to contemporary situations and demands. It is even called a "frontier spirituality," for those who want to be active on those risky frontiers, where the church meets our secular and pluralistic world.[41] These points are very characteristic of Ignatian spirituality, which distinguish it from other traditional spiritual heritages. It is represented by its participation and intervention in social realities, the declaration of a prophetic message to the world, and the emphasis on discernment and decision-making involved in apostolic action. Discernment and decision-making are a correlation between internal reflection, or contemplation, while pursuing external action.[42]

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[38] "Ignatius' era was an important turning point in the world's civilization, comparable to the so-called 'Axial Age,' the historical term suggested by Jaspers, where the world's major religions and ideologies, such as those of Buddha, Confucius, and Socrates were active." Shim Paek-seop, "Oh Neul, Inyasio Young Sunge Joo Mokhaneun Iyu," *Jigum Yeogi* 오늘, 이냐시오 영성에 주목하는 이유, 지금 여기, ["Today, Why we pay attention to Ignatian Spirituality," *Now and Here*] July 31, 2013, http://www.catholicnews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=10179; When it comes to comparison the historical connotation of modernity with Jasper's axial age, see Cotesta Vittorio, "The Axial Age and Modernity: From Max Weber to Karl Jaspers and Shmuel Eisenstadt," *ProtoSociology* 34 (2017): 233.

[39] Patrick Nullens, "From Spirituality to Responsible Leadership: Ignatian Discernment and Theory-U," *Leading in a VUCA World. Contributions to Management Science* (Springer, 2019): 194.

[40] James Martin, *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything: a Spirituality for Real Life* (New York: HarperOne, 2012): 165-166.

[41] Fredrik Heiding, *Ignatian Spirituality at Ecclesial Frontiers* (New York: Lulu, 2012): 150.

[42] Paek-seop, "Oh Neul"

In short, Ignatian spirituality values will and action externally, as it targets specific lives and changes in the world through the *Spiritual Exercises*. Still, internally, the process of discernment takes a large part, so that it can follow evangelical values and make decisions consistent with God's will. The discernment of spirits – which recognizes whether it experiences consolation or desolation on the spiritual and internal level, and how a good or evil spirit influences it – is the key to determining whether the individual and community are moving toward true happiness in the contemporary context.

2.2.2. The Ends of Ignatian Spiritual Conversation: "good of souls"

Like other saints, Ignatius lived a conversational life, blooming from his faithful spiritual relationship with God and sharing his whole life for the salvation of his neighbors' souls. He valued godly conversation, as a means of fulfilling every Christian's mission to proclaim the Good News.[43] As Fleming explains, Ignatius developed his spiritual life "based on conversation with God in prayer. It is developed through conversation with others—spiritual directors, confessors, like-minded friends who share one's ideals and way of life. It is expressed in conversation as ministry—sharing the gospel with others."[44]

First of all, the word "spiritual conversation" represents a technical term which implies an apostolic method essential to the Ignatian charism.[45] This official meaning was often used in Ignatius's work. The root word 'converse' in its two forms (*conversar* and *conversacioìn*) appears 39 times in Ignatian literature (*Spiritual Exercises, Constitutions and Autobiography*) and his letters 316 times.[46]

Meanwhile, Ignatius' use of the term "spiritual conversation" also includes the broad definition given above.[47] When it came to recalling his engagements with ordinary people in his everyday life, Ignatius generally mentions in his Autobiography "to speak about things of God (*hablar de las cosas de Dios*)" in a more familiar way. Though it is not used exclusively, the term he preferred in the *Spiritual Exercises* seems to be *to converse*, in comparison to official preaching, which he officially distinguished as "*speak of*," as a more casual form covered in the broad meaning of spiritual conversation. Therefore, if we include a broad definition of spiritual conversation, we can say much more than that.[48]

The papal bull, *Exposcit Debitum*, issued by Julius III in 1550, known as *The Formula of the Institute,* which Ignatius had drawn up as a statement of Society's identity and basic purpose, and which is the most fundamental charter of the Society of Jesus, does

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[43] Thomas H. Clancy, *The Conversational Word of God* (St Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1978): 6.

[44] David L. Fleming, *What Is Ignatian Spirituality?* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008): 51.

[45] German Arana, "Spiritual Conversation: A Privileged Apostolic Instrument of the Society of Jesus," *Review of Ignatian Spirituality* 36, no. 1 (2005): 22.

[46] Ibid.

[47] See above 2.2.1.

[48] Rolphy Pinto, "The Mystagogical Dimension of Spiritual Conversation: An Ignatian perspective," *GreGorianum* 101, no. 2 (2020): 397.

not directly mention the word, "spiritual conversation" itself. But Jeronimo Nadal, who was one of the closest collaborators in Ignatius' life, interpreted the second and third sentences describing the Jesuits' work in *the Formula*, "any other ministration whatsoever of the word of God (*aliud quodcumque verbi Dei ministerium*)"[49] as indicating the ministry of spiritual conversation as their chief ministry.

In the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, Ignatius listed the means of helping one's neighbor such as good example [637] and prayers and holy desires [638], the administration of the sacraments [640-642], sermons and instruction in Christian doctrine both inside and outside of church, [645-647] and finally, "… They will endeavor to be profitable to individuals by spiritual conversations, by counselling and exhorting to good works, and by conducting *Spiritual Exercises.*" [648][50]

In other words, Ignatius recognized and used spiritual conversation as a vital tool for the apostolic purpose of saving neighbors' souls, and not just a means of governing the institution of the Society. Still, through history, practical effects have been generated as a means of salvation and benefit for all neighbors' souls, so-called "good of souls" in the world, wherever God's love and the joy of the Good News are desired to be conveyed.

As such, spiritual conversation for Ignatius had a clear direction within the sense of mission of the imminence, "good of souls" in his life. When he was a penitent, he decided to curtail his penances and move out of the cave for spiritual conversation, to promote the good of the old woman's soul in a nearby village.[51] Later, Ignatius also had to confront the Inquisition more than once in Salamanca because of his enthusiasm for sharing the fruit of the *Spiritual Exercises* through spiritual conversation.[52]

To sum up, the core value of spiritual conversation, which encompassed both broad and narrow definitions for Ignatius, is the "good of souls," the spiritual benefits of the other(s) participating in the spiritual conversation, in the context of one's participation in Christ's salvific history. In other words, Ignatius perceived spiritual conversation as a tool for the proclamation of the word in salvific ministry, through a genuine-personal relationship with God.

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[49] "He is a member of a Society founded chiefly for this purpose: to strive especially for the defense and propagation of the faith and for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine, by means of public preaching, lectures and any other ministration whatsoever of the word of God, and further by means of the *Spiritual Exercises*, the education of children and unlettered persons in Christianity, and the spiritual consolation of Christ's faithful through hearing confessions and administering the other sacraments." *Exposcit Debitum* of Pope Julius III. Antonio de. Aldama, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus: The Formula of the Institute, Notes for a Commentary*, trans. Ignacio Echániz (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1990).

[50] Clancy, 3.

[51] "Autobiography," no. 21. All translations of the "Autobiography" are taken from Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean, trans., Saint Ignatius of Loyola: *Personal Writings,* (London: Penguin Books, 1996).

[52] "Auto," no. 65.

2.2.3. The Uniqueness of Ignatian Spiritual Conversation

Likewise, as other spiritual conversations under various spiritual traditions have their characteristics, Ignatian spiritual conversation also has its own uniqueness. When it comes to hermeneutical correlation with the digital communication culture, we may consider four unique points in Ignatian spiritual conversation: Ignatian understanding of the conversation participants (as a conversation partner), the dimension of contents emphasized particularly, the sense of intimacy, and the tension of conflicting values in the spiritual conversation.

First, Ignatian spiritual conversation for the sake of salvation for the other is not a one-sided admonition by the spiritual guru (the one with spiritual authority). Instead, those who receive spiritual help have autonomy and subjectivity as main agents. Ignatius clearly states in in Annotation [18] of the *Spiritual Exercises* that the measure of what one should give as exercises is determined by taking into account "the one who wishes to be helped." "The *Spiritual Exercises* should be adapted to the disposition of the persons who desire to make them, that is, to their age, education, and ability. (…) Similarly, exercitants should be given, each one, as much as they are willing to dispose themselves to receive, for their greater help and progress."[53]

Ignatius underscores the employment of the *Exercises* for those who *they* themselves want to be helped, instead of those *he* wants to help. This implies that whoever it is that comes seeking help voluntarily comes first in the relationship of spiritual conversation.[54] Therefore, the subject of Ignatian spiritual conversation presupposes reciprocity in respecting others as autonomous beings who choose to receive help for himself/herself, not as passive beings relying on temporal and unilateral service.

Second, Ignatian spiritual conversation's contents are not things "about" God, but rather "things of God (*cosas de Dios*)" and its experience. In other words, the conversation is not about what has been discursively learned about God, but about what one has experienced directly.[55] Hence, Ignatius's spiritual conversation has less conceptional language with logically well-organized vocabularies. Instead, it is a rather descriptive language, spontaneously sharing godly experiences and with an awareness of God's activities and interventions on one's daily life. Of course, he/she, by no means, should exclude knowledge obtained from other forms of learning, such as academic and ecclesiastical propositions. After the Inquisition in Salamanca, Ignatius seriously realized the significance of systematic theology for public preaching for the sake of "the good of souls." But, "things of God" were knowledge that he experienced directly through his life and learned within a unique and personal relationship with God. In this regard, he

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[53]   SpEx. 18. All translations of the "Spiritual Exercises" are taken from Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean, trans., Saint Ignatius of Loyola: *Personal Writings,* (London: Penguin Books, 1996).

[54]   Patrick Goujon, "Helping Others: The Role of Conversations and of the Spiritual Exercises," *The Way*, 59/3 (July 2020), 81.

[55]   Pinto, "The Mystagogical Dimension," 400.

constantly emphasizes an experiential knowledge of God in the *Spiritual Exercises*: "For it is not so much knowledge that fills and satisfies the soul, but rather the intimate feeling and relishing of things."[56]

Furthermore, Ignatius valued the process of spiritual transformation while being conscious of a God-experience. He experienced God, who was constantly active in his soul and he became gradually aware of the changing mode of his experience. Its beginning was at the time of his recovery, lying down in bed in the Loyola Tower, with a sense of powerlessness, reading and reflecting by himself. The consciousness of his God-experience eventually came at the end of his life, at a level where "every time and hour he wanted to find God, he found him."[57]

Third, Ignatian spiritual conversation is an art of intimacy. Ignatius clearly distinguished preaching from spiritual conversation in the Word ministry. The criteria for this differentiation are the way of delivering: formalities or intimacy. This distinction cannot be attributed to the motive of avoiding the Inquisition at the time. It is reasonable to say that it was because of the model of the Word ministry of Jesus Christ Himself, for which Ignatius deeply desired an intimate knowledge of the Lord.[58] Indeed, looking at God's people's responses to Jesus' Word ministry in Scripture, there is also admiration and awe for the holy prophets sent by God; though in fact, it is clear that they became fully inspired by Jesus, a good shepherd who diffused a sense of attraction and intimacy. Similarly, Ignatius was also more converted by reading about the lives of Christ and the saints than by preaching.[59] What Ignatius understood of the Word ministry of Jesus is both the public proclamation represented by the scene of reading the book of the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue of Nazareth,[60] and an intimate daily conversation with individuals and groups. It is evident that it is in these intimate daily conversations that Jesus himself spent the most time during his public life. In the sense that Jesus tried a very conscious pedagogical effort on his part in the conversations, he showed the figure of a teacher rather than a preacher.[61] Therefore, the art of the intimacy of Jesus' Word ministry comes from the effort of pedagogy or accompaniment. It is well expressed through one-on-one encounters with Andrew, Peter, Mary, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the man born blind in the Gospel of John, and the Emmaus story as the model of group conversation in the Gospel of Luke.

Fourth, Ignatian spiritual conversation has an open system in the sense that it does not provide a fixed prescription nor a norm; hence, sometimes it brings about creative tension. Ignatius's understanding of spiritual conversation was not a fixed entity. So, it may include seemingly contradictory values and attitudes within itself. Surely, these con-

[56] SpEx. 2.5.
[57] "Auto," no. 99.
[58] SpEx. 104.
[59] Clancy, 8.
[60] Cfr. Lk 4:16-21.
[61] Clancy, 5.

trasting elements cause various tensions, but they are dialectically integrated again within the ultimate direction of its end, "the good of souls."

For example, two contradictory statements about other participants of spiritual conversation coexist in the Ignatian tradition. On the one hand, it guides us to meet and welcome more people and lead them to spiritual progress in their lives. On the other hand, we must be extraordinarily prudent in choosing our conversation partner and select those who are expected to be more fruitful in apostolic effectiveness. While the former, a universal accessibility, is as easily understandable and agreeable as it is in line with Paul's confession: "*omnia omnibus factus sum* (I have become all things to all),"[62] the latter, the selective approach, has actually often caused the Jesuits to face harsh criticism for its social snobbery or at least elitism.[63] As another example, in his public letter, Ignatius strictly stressed refrain from using vain words, even including a witty attitude for keeping virtues of prudence and humility.[64] It can be read as if he seems to forbid even a sense of humor, which is considered an essential communication skill in the contemporary sphere.[65] However, such tensions can be deliberated and discerned, keeping pace with the changing times in line with its ultimate purpose, "the good of souls." According to the "First Principle and Foundation" of the *Spiritual Exercises*, it needs to be discussed in a more creative and flexible sense, integrated with a more dialectical discourse, and practiced based on openness and sincere desire to give God the Creator greater glory.

2.3. Conclusion

In this second part of the research, the study sought to understand the theory of conversation and the literature foundation related to spiritual conversation, in order to establish pastoral or spiritual theological arguments in response to the digital communication culture crisis.

It has been noted that an authentic communication culture can be achieved only based on the qualitative leap of relationships from "I-It" to "I-You" in the conversational structure. According to Martin Buber's theory, authentic conversation means a conversation in which – by word or silence – the conversation participants acknowledge the other person in their existence and essence as they are, listen attentively to their

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[62] Cfr. 1 Cor 9:22b.

[63] Clancy, 22.

[64] "Let no one seek to be considered a wit, or to affect elegance or prudence or eloquence, but look upon Christ, who made nothing at all of these things and chose to be humbled and despised by men for our sake rather than to be honored and respected." See *Letter of Ignatius to the scholastics at Alcalá*. [Unpublished Historia de la Assistencia de España, Book 1, ch. 6. 1543] https://www.library.georgetown.edu/woodstock/ignatius-letters/letter5.

[65] "Today a sense of humor and an ability to see the non-serious side of things is regarded as a very attractive quality in a person. The apostle, therefore, who reads the signs of the times should be able to laugh at himself and at others as long as charity and decency are preserved. This should be an essential part of the personal graciousness that characterizes the ministry of spiritual conversation." Clancy, 44.

intentions, and create a lively interaction between the two. Buber argues that the total acceptance of otherness and intersubjectivity of the participants is inevitably required. Ultimately, the authentic conversation should be directed toward the transcendental relationship between "I" and the "eternal You," who can never be reduced to anything else. At this very point, this study confirms the status of spiritual conversation as the ultimate model of authentic conversation. In other words, the spiritual conversation assumes and validates, not just as an exclusive means of traditional religious dialogue nor the mystical-secret transmission of a particular religious group, but as an ultimate alternative of a healthy conversation culture in the secular world, and even as a healing alternative within the digital communication culture.

To this end, the attention turned to the discourse of spiritual conversation in the Ignatian tradition, which has formed a social-participating spirituality in the ecclesiastical context throughout the history of Christian spirituality. In today's turbulent world, Ignatian spirituality preserves the charisma of a "frontier spirituality," to be active on risky frontiers where the church meets our secular and pluralistic world, beyond the monastery fence. The most significant feature of Ignatian spiritual conversation is its "end" orientation. It does not hold a self-centered or utilitarian purpose, but rather seeks to save the neighbors' souls through constant self-emptiness and, ultimately, seeks to glorify God. In Ignatian spirituality, spiritual conversation is an essential instrument of the apostolate for the word ministry, proclaiming the word in Christ's salvific ministry through a genuine-personal relationship with God.

The Ignatian spiritual conversation includes characteristic elements that are distinct from and relatively unique from other spiritual traditions. First of all, it presupposes the conversation participants' subjective interaction; hence, emphasizing reciprocity in respecting others as autonomous beings. Second, it has the participants' autobiographical and existential sharing of their own experience of God and the reflection of salvific history in their lives as its content. Third, it pursues the art of intimacy in the accompaniment and pedagogical approach, as revealed in the gospel in Jesus' words. Fourth, it embraces the tension of various controversies and directions on the conversation itself by interpreting it more creatively and flexibly, in line with the ultimate criteria expressed in the "First Principle and Foundation" of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

3. Relevant Application of Ignatian Spiritual Conversation

While the previous part, the second one, set the foundation of the literature discussion on the conditions for an authentic conversation based on the Buber relationship theory and posited spiritual conversation as the ultimate-transcendental mode, this third part will reveal spiritual conversation's validity as a remedial alternative to the digital communication culture. To this end, it analyzes how the internal components of the spiritual conversation itself correspond to the crises caused by the digital-networked self and suggests how the Ignatian spiritual conversation can be applied in a relevant contemporary way within a pastoral perspective.

3.1. Corresponding Components of Spiritual Conversation
to the Digital Communication Culture Crisis

Now we will look at the question "how does spiritual conversation help overcome the problems of digital communication culture?" Before immediately answering, we should recall the principal agent of spiritual conversation. In other words, an authentic spiritual conversation is a meaningful communication between two or more people in which "God" is present and active.[66] Most critical is God's presence among the participants, as it plays an essential role in remedying problems.

When it comes to spiritual conversation components, we can see it from both background and foreground. As background, it has "Silence" based on prayer, and discerning "Reflection." It indicates not only the temporal process of preceding and following the conversation participants' actions, but also the totality of the conversation context. In addition, spiritual conversation has "Listening and Speaking" as foreground and in the real space where the participants are actually engaged. Spiritual conversation has a dynamic in which its intersection of background and foreground circulates and deepens its quality under God's presence.

The level of the background of spiritual conversation, "Silence" and "Reflection," corresponds to the problem of cognitive bias, into which the information-oriented networked self can easily incline. This, above all, requires understanding the revelatory dimension of spiritual conversation. As Gabriel Moran points out, the revelation cannot be merely considered as one into an ended historical event if we understand "the revelation" as the participation of present-day people in the revelatory experience.[67] Instead, it is a continuous process and can be experienced in different contexts, whether within the walls of our own religious tradition or beyond those walls.[68] In fact, since God is present in every life experience, participants in spiritual conversation share and analyze these experiences in order to find God in them. As such, we can say spiritual conversation is an activity of faith-revelation as long as revelatory experiences orientate the life of those who participate in them.[69] In this regard, "Silence," as the background of spiritual conversation, becomes an act that directs participants' will to God's activities and downplays their own initiative. It provides an inner space for the conversation to be led by God's initiative. Meanwhile, "Reflection" is the process of looking back on what is said and heard in the conversation and recognizing the Holy Spirit as active in it. "Silence" and "Reflection" present the direction to move forward through spiritual conversation and to provide the inner conviction of its direction. Thus, "Silence" and "Re-

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[66] Ray, Sheri Juanita, Carolyn Tennant, Lois E. Olena, and John Battaglia. "Transforming Conversation: Engaging God and Others in Authentic Spiritual Dialogue," n.d. 56.

[67] Gabriel Moran, Uniqueness: Problem or Paradox in Jewish and Christian Traditions (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992), 46.

[68] Diaz, 50.

[69] Moran, 52.

flection" as the background of spiritual conversation can transform participants, from a self of cognitive bias (such as confirmation bias, negativity bias), who is easily controlled or manipulated by the overflowed data of this digital communication culture, to a self that uses the wisdom of prudence and discernment with the illumination of the Holy Spirit, which is revealed and presented in an authentic conversational life.

On the other hand, the foreground of spiritual conversation, "Listening and Speaking," corresponds directly to the dehumanization caused by a relationship-oriented networked self, as a digital age communication crisis. Like any conversation, spiritual conversation also presumes encounter and interaction between "I and You." But spiritual conversation requires an inner attitude that listens more actively and attentively than any other conversation, not only to the content of the words but also in order to affirm and accept the other's life and existence as a whole. Although "I" am listening to "You" following my subjective point of view, "I" am not reducing "You" under the supervision of my perception, but rather respecting "You" as "You" are and trusting "You" without giving admonishment, advice, judgment, or evaluation. "Speaking" is not just a demonstration of one's righteousness or justification, but an honest sharing of the voice from the heart, feelings and thoughts, the movements of one's mind, and even a disclosure of the vulnerability that has bloomed through the genuine conversation with an eternal You.

To sum up, a spiritual conversation can be applied through its four corresponding values – "Silence" and "Reflection" as a background, and "Listening" and "Speaking" as a foreground – to the digital communication culture crisis, which can be represented as dehumanization and the problematic cognitive bias.

3.2. Relevant Application and Recommendations in Spiritual Conversation of Ignatian Tradition

Now it is worth thinking more creatively about how we can apply Ignatian spiritual conversation regarding its related remedial efficacy amidst the digital communication culture crisis, in a more practical and pastoral dimension.

3.2.1. On Silence and Reflection

The issues can be divided into two, when discussing silence as the background of the Ignatian spiritual conversation. One is the issue of silence formed within the question regarding the spiritual conversation's viability in the digital age. The other is silence as an activity time associated with listening and speaking, which more directly connects to the Ignatian spiritual conversation foreground.

Indeed, at first glance, "Digital Communication Culture" and "Silence" seem contradictory and even incompatible somehow. The British Cambridge Dictionary added a new word for 2018, "Nomophobia," which is the abbreviation for "No mobile phone phobia." SNS's notifications continually alert people, regardless of time and place, and many people are showing symptoms of addiction amid the flood of noise. The 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases enacted by the World Health Organization also has a

newly registered category of "gaming disorders (Disease Code: 6C51)."[70] Meanwhile, neuroscience has revealed that our exhausted bodies and brains can only be regenerated by silence.[71] In this reality, is spiritual conversation impossible in the digital age, where silence is essential as a background component of conversation? Or should we first organize an ascetic no-noise environment, completely deviating from the digitalized setting?

In the Ignatian spiritual conversation, silence does not just mean "mute" nor a static monotone. Ignatius gradually experienced the significance of silence after his conversion in Pamplona. He came to love the life of silence and contemplation, to the extent that he considered joining the Carthusian order, which lives a mystic, contemplative life in great silence. However, even in the deep silence at Manresa, Ignatius realized that his vocation was in line with an apostolic purpose. This came from his growing more sensitive to silence, gaining more awareness of the urgency of "good of souls" through the word ministry, including spiritual conversation.[72]

In fact, absolute external silence is an essential condition in the Ignatian retreat. Still, at least under the tradition of Ignatian spirituality, where God is found in everyday life, the fundamental rejection of digital noise-circumstances during the conversation is neither realistically possible nor appropriate. Nevertheless, it is not that we must adapt unconditionally to the realistic environment either. The question is how to attain proper balance in a conversational environment. Psychiatry experts suggest a "digital detox" in life, along with a self-diagnosis regarding a digital device addiction.[73] It is essential to check our digital device patterns and practice some recommendations,[74] one by one.

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[70] "International Classification of Diseases 11th Revision The global standard for diagnostic health information," World Health Organization, accessed November 26, 2017, https://icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en#/http%3A%2F%2Fid.who.int%2Ficd%2Fentity%2F1448597234

[71] Rtam, "The Sound of Silence In Today's Digital Age", Illumination, last modified May 26, 2020, accessed Nov 26, 2020, https://medium.com/illumination/the-sound-of-silence-in-todays-digital-age-63231f24467c/. See Kirste I, "Is Silence Golden? Effects of Auditory Stimuli and Their Absence on Adult Hippocampal Neurogenesis," *Brain structure & function (U.S. National Library of Medicine)*, 2020, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24292324/.

[72] José García de Castro Valdés, "Silent God in a Wordy World. Silence in Ignatian Spirituality." *Theologica Xaveriana* 66, no. 181 (2016), 182.

[73] In the following self-diagnosis of smartphone addiction, three to four positive responses constitute a risk of addiction, five to seven suspected problems, and eight or more, are considered addictive: (1) Without a smartphone, my hands shake, and I feel uneasy; (2) When I lose my smartphone, I feel like I lost my friend; (3) I use my smartphone for more than two hours a day; (4) There are more than thirty apps installed on smartphones and most of them are used; (5) I take my smartphone to the bathroom; (6) I check my smartphone first thing in the morning; (7) The speed of writing smartphone characters is faster than others; (8) When I hear the sound of my smartphone while eating, I run right away; (9) I regard smartphones as my No. 1 treasure; (10) I fall asleep while using my smartphone until I go to sleep. Internet Addiction Prevention Center, accessed Nov 26, 2020, https://www.iapc.or.kr.

[74] Recommendation for Digital Detox in Life: (1) Delete unnecessary applications, Powering off time; (2) Call rather than messenger, meet more than call; (3) Log out of your email account or turn off mobile messenger's notifications function; (4) Increase the time we spend reading paper books; (5) Give the brain a break. "Spacing out;" (6) Do not take smartphones to bed. G. Golding "Digital Detox for Lawyers: 5 Steps to Help You Switch Off," *2015 Law Society Bulletin* 36 (2014), 30.

But most important is a dispositional attitude against the environmental tendency, or in the Ignatius term, *Agere Contra*, literally meaning "act against." But Ignatius's context was far more robust and implies acting actively against the desire towards a disordered attachment. For example, when you are overwhelmed by temptation, you go beyond praying to get rid of it and practice the counter-virtue against it with all your will. Digital technology, which makes everything possible with fingers or a mouse, has also reduced the willful human response-ability to resist temptation. As Jim Manney says, "*Agere contra* illustrates the vigilant assertiveness that permeates the Ignatian outlook by being alert for the next thing the Lord is calling you to do."[75]

Assuming that external-environmental balance has been achieved, the Ignatian spiritual conversation's silence determines the overall quality of listening, speaking, and reflection, the other components of spiritual conversation. As Michael Hansen mentions, "Spiritual conversation begins and ends with silence. Silence creates the space for listening. Silence also allows one to simply be, to simply be in the now, to simply be in the presence of the other. Contemplative silence is simply being in the presence of God. This is the 'better part' that Mary chose over Martha's activity in the Gospel of Luke. (Lk 10:38-42)"[76]

In addition to silence, reflection is also essential as background for an Ignatian spiritual conversation. These days, people are increasingly complaining of digital dyslexia, likely because people can read only stimulating and simple data through small smartphone screens. Studies show that if only the first and last letter of a word are exact, most people cannot find the mistake even when the middle letters are mixed up. Experts are concerned that human-specific cognitive abilities, such as memory, evaluation, and discernment, are in decline as digital technology has made our entire lives convenient.[77] As stated above, digital information-oriented networks are strengthening the human cognitive bias, but Ignatius pointed out that such irrationalities and biases hinder the decision-making process.[78] After all, the key is how obviously we can perceive our ultimate goal: to love God and serve our neighbors. Discernment is required to determine and select the means to implement this obvious goal. For this, Ignatius said that the person making the decision should be willing to pray, weigh factors carefully, achieve self-knowledge, and strive to be free of disordered affections. Ignatius assumed that the person could use the tools of Ignatian discernment.[79]

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[75] Jim Manney, *Ignatian Spirituality A to Z* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2017), 6.

[76] Michael Hansen, *The First Spiritual Exercises: Four Guided Retreats* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2013), 359.

[77] Yoon Seok-man, "Yoon Seok-manui inganhyoukmyoung:500nyun dui jiguen baboman namnunda, whe," *Joins* 윤석만의 인간혁명:500년 뒤 지구엔 바보만 남는다, 왜, 중앙일보, ["Yoon Seok-man's human revolution: 500 years later, there will be only fools left on Earth, why?"] January 11, 2018, https://news.joins.com/article/22262967

[78] Manney, 55.

[79] Ibid, 56.

This study confirmed that "Reflection" as the background of spiritual conversation is the time and space where the Ignatian discernment is made. The critical point is to pay attention to the Holy Spirit's presence, which is active in the conversation within God's revelatory dimension. Thus, it is more important for the reflection of the Ignatian spiritual conversation to be awed and moved by paying attention to the movements of the good spirits who have been active in each participant in the conversation, rather than by analyzing or evaluating the conversations shared by others. Arana sets out two main criteria, applying the general rules of discernment introduced in the *Spiritual Exercises*, especially the first and second week's discerning rules, to Ignatian spiritual conversation. One is "a description of the general strategy of conversation, which is curiously enough in the enemy's strategy (as described in the second week of the *Spiritual Exercises*) with the 'end' inverted."[80] This rule means the disposition of discernment about the results or fruits of spiritual conversation must lead us in a better direction. We need awareness of the fact that, no matter how the process pleases us, if the enemy comes to us, its end is always the destruction and ruin of our souls. In other words, just as an enemy uses our means for its ultimate goal, we should also embrace that we can use the means in line with other's tastes while keeping our ultimate goal in mind. Further, in the context of digital communication culture, it also means information-driven networks seem to provide people with great convenience and ease. Still, we should reject it if the final destination led by the information provides results in cognitive bias.

The other is the discernment rule that draws attention during the first week of the *Spiritual Exercises*, which Arana summarizes as "the proper pedagogic behavior to be observed in situations of consolation or desolation."[81] It is the spiritual hermeneutics of interior movements of both oneself and the others in the first, middle, and end of the conversation. Here, "Movements" (in Spanish, *mociones)* mean the mode of God's present activities in the spirit of each conversation participant. God speaks to us through our deep desires and invites us through those paths to Him/Herself. Hans Zollner states that the movements are inner sensations of a very diverse character that "arise quite spontaneously, i.e. feelings and thoughts, likes and dislikes towards intentions, things, persons, institutions."[82]

Finally, Ignatius' wisdom to refer to in the reflection on spiritual conversation is based on the presupposition in the Annotation [22] of the *Spiritual Exercises*: "(…) It is necessary to suppose that every good Christian is more ready to put a good interpretation on another's statement than to condemn it as false.(…)"[83]

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[80] G.Arana, 43.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Hans Zollner, "Making Life-Decisions According to the Ignatian Method of Discernment (Criteria)," Review of Ignatian Spirituality, 110 (November 2005): 108-109.
[83] SpEx. 22.

This presupposition is often called the Ignatian "plus sign," meaning, as much as possible, to put a positive interpretation on another's statement[84] and assume the best. When we are troubled by what someone says or does, we do not just give them the benefit of the doubt, but give the best possible interpretation to the situation.[85] This "plus sign" can be an effective remedy for the so-called "negativity bias" and not just an irresponsible attitude that says, "All is well that ends well." Rather, it emphasizes mutual respect in the relationship between "I" and "You." Reflection of the spiritual conversation based on "this plus sign" can lead to mutual interior growth and a discovery of God's will, by correcting it in the spirit of humility and charity, even if the conversation participant's content is filled with errors.

3.2.2. On Listening and Speaking

As stated above, listening in spiritual conversation corresponds to a remedy for the dehumanization problem amidst the digital communication culture crisis. As in the case of silence, we can discuss the theme of listening in spiritual conversation in two dimensions: One is the other's existence matters regarding the crisis of dehumanization, and the other is the focused contents of listening in spiritual conversation.

First, Ignatian spiritual conversation is about active and attentive listening. As St. Paul wrote, "faith comes from hearing (Rom 10:17)" and listening is an active agent of existential conversion. As the ultimate end is "the good of souls," the basic premise of active listening is affirming the other's existence, welcoming the other, and admitting the other's differences. Just as the premise of an adequately balanced external environment is silence for spiritual conversation within the digital communication culture, the essential condition of the inner attitude for Ignatian spiritual listening is absolute acceptance of the other's existence. Of course, it seems impossible to accept someone I have never met, someone connected by Facebook's Algorithm-recommendation for "People You May Know"- or even someone who makes the exact opposite argument to mine. However, accepting the other's existence depends on my own decision, rather than on the other's condition. In Buber's theory, we see that "I" can transit myself from the "I-It" world to the "I-You" world. Even though "I" live where reality digitally prevails, at least I can prevent my conscience from resigning others to merely some available data.

Second, Ignatian spiritual listening's critical feature is the movement of the other person's mind, emotions, and underlying motivations, rather than just the content of what the other person conveys. Unlike analog communication, digital communication promotes extended and impersonal connections. If there is no otherness, communication degenerates into an accelerated exchange of information, which has only a connection, but no neighborhood and no friendship. In the exchange of information, there has

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[84] Kevin O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure: Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius in Daily Life* (Chicago (IL): Loyola Press, 2011), 43.

[85] Manney, 201.

no sharing of pain, and so making it private and individualized. Everyone comes to be ashamed of their weaknesses and fragility.[86] Young people in the digital age find it hard to reveal their weaknesses and are used to a culture of appearing strong, so that performance pressure is severe. Social media's proliferation of superficial relations reinforces the unrealistic self and material pride by sharing only beautiful and often digitally manipulated pictures.

However, listening is very different from exchanging information. Hence, the active and attentive listening of Ignatian spiritual conversation in the digital communication culture is more appropriate for developing a sense of empathy for the other person's pain and weaknesses. As much as my words are actively listened to, and my existence is sufficiently accepted, empathized, and assured of its safety, I can begin to share my genuine innermost thoughts, my vulnerable weaknesses, and even painful memories.

There are some stellar examples in social media, though only a few, that show people's courage to share pain and weakness, and the spirit of people's sympathy and solidarity throughout society positively affecting each other. The public demand for political reformation in Korea when the Sewol Ferry disaster happened and the rapid spread of the "Me Too" movement by the victims of sexual abuse by the hierarchy were a good example of the fruits of the digital communication culture. It is the realization of the Kingdom of God within the themes of love, salvation, and life. Although it is based on an anonymous public digital literacy, the focus of Ignatian spiritual listening is the cultivation of this sense of empathy and solidarity, and its practical capacity.

Additionally, the responsibilities of digital media companies should also be identified. Personal privacy, especially around shameful and traumatic memories, should be protected from unlimited exposure online with proper security. Thus, as far as the topics related to society's common good are concerned, the digital media companies must create and provide a digital environment within which the voices of victims or the marginalized can be protected while being shared safely and freely.

Ignatian spiritual conversation can also be discussed in two areas regarding digital communication culture. One is the discussion of spiritual conversational speaking's remedial effect. In other words, how can the fruit of spiritual conversation, set in an environment created solely and purely for spiritual conversation itself consciously excluding the digital environment, promote the subject's internal growth to live out in the digital age communication culture? The other is the discussion of the concrete application of spiritual conversational speaking to the digital communication culture. That is to say, what is the possibility of spiritual conversation taking place within the digital environment while allowing adequate balance in its intervention according to the above criteria on silence?

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[86] Han Pyŏng-chʻŏl and Yi Chae-yŏng, *T'aja ŭi Chʻupang = Die Austreibung Des Anderen* [The expulsion of the other society: perception and communication today] (Sŏul Mapʻo-ku: Munhak kwa Chisŏngsa, 2017),114.

First, spiritual conversation essentially takes all that is shared within the relationship with God as its content. Its main goal is to share personal prayer experiences or frankly share the process of reflection and life-discernment, rather than an intellectual or abstract theory about God. William Bausch states that even though someone does not explicitly speak of God, all human stories can be considered religious within the following four types: "stories that signify self-discovery, stories that reveal life's mystery, stories that signify mystical experience and stories that signify a conversion experience."[87] Diaz adds, "These stories have a single purpose, which is to help the speaker recognize God in his/her own story, to identify what God is saying, and finally to respond adequately in a way that could help oneself and others."[88] Thus, through sharing, the participant of spiritual conversation enters into a close relationship with God again, and naturally gains the generosity of the mind to help the neighbor as well. The experience of spiritual self-sharing protects the speaker from being easily swayed spiritually and psychologically, and from the self-alienation and loneliness caused by the dehumanization of the digital communication culture. Through spiritual conversation, the experience of sensing God's presence in an ordinary life story can instill a firmer faith that might persevere gratefully in any harsh external environment, and further foster with an apostolic intention the sense of care and service for others who are suffering.

Second, according to Ignatian spirituality's *Tantum Quantum*[89] spirit, digital media can also be used as a means of spiritual conversation. In particular, the non-face-to-face dialogue environment, which has been further promoted by the COVID-19 pandemic, strongly demands we think about digital media's spiritual use. In consideration of the importance of storytelling, we can also think about "digital storytelling." Digital storytelling refers to storytelling in which digital technology is made in the media environment or as a means of expression. The most distinctive feature of digital storytelling is interactivity. In comparison, other media's features are various: a Novel has a narrative, a Cartoon has both a narrative and an image. A Movie has narrative, image, and motion. Still, digital storytelling embodies all these elements, even adding interactivity in itself. This interactivity is characterized by strengthening the subject's participation in the communication process and, above all, reinforcing mutual immersion within the communication. There are games, mobile films, interactive dramas, web advertising, web Edutainment, Web BI (Business Intelligence), interactive non-fiction, etc. which are actively evolving as practical applications of digital storytelling. Some priests and religious in Korea are currently using social media in faith sharing. They effectively post their narra-

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[87] William J. Bausch, Storytelling: Imagination and Faith (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications), 193.

[88] Diaz, 44.

[89] It literally means "so much as." The term in St. Ignatius' Principle and Foundation of the *Spiritual Exercises* referring to the right use of creatures: "We are to use them in so far as (*tantum quantum*) they lead us to our last end, and be rid of them in so far as (*tantum quantum*) they hinder us in the pursuit of the end for which we were created." SpEx. 23.

tive or photos, focusing on their relationship with God and the world, reflecting on their lives. It is not the provision of intellectual information, but rather confessional writings, photographs, and brief meditations of one's own life. Of course, 500 years ago, there were also countless examples of human spiritual growth through spiritual admonitions and recommendations by letters. That is exactly what Ignatius did, writing over seven thousand letters. However, digital technology has made people respond more freely and spontaneously, and it has even created a new "reply culture." As this expression of empathy and feelings resonates and spreads to another person, the gospel message can be more effectively proclaimed and delivered. In particular, digital storytelling is contributing to evoking issues and promoting solidarity for the common good.[90]

3.3. Conclusion

The last part of the investigation mainly focused on how we can relevantly apply Ignatian spiritual conversation to the digital communication culture on a more practical and pastoral horizon.

The inner mechanism of the dynamic operation of spiritual conversation in the hermeneutical context of the background and foreground has been categorized. In other words, the internal components of spiritual conversation consist of the background elements of "Silence and Reflection" and the foreground elements of "Listening and Speaking." Assuming that spiritual conversation is an activity of faith-revelation, as long as revelatory experiences orientate the life of those who participate in them, "Silence" becomes an act that directs participants' will to God's activities and puts down their initiative. It provides an inner space for the conversation to be led by God's initiative. "Reflection" is the process of looking back on what was said and heard in the conversation and recognizing the Holy Spirit's activity in it. On the other hand, "Listening" as the foreground is an attentive activity to affirm and accept the other's life and existence as a whole. "Speaking" is an honest sharing from the heart, the feelings and thoughts, the movements of one's mind, and even a disclosure of vulnerability that have ultimately bloomed through the authentic conversation with an eternal You.

Another relevant point is the application of Ignatian spiritual dialogue based on the remedial corresponding points of spiritual conversation. Regarding silence, it is recommended that we diagnose potential digital device addictions and practice a proper "digital detox" in daily life, in the spirit of *Agere contra, which is* the vigorous human will against disordered attachment, even if it is not at the level of absolute silence. Concerning reflection, emotional training must be moved and amazed by the Holy Spirit's presence, which is active in and enlightens the process of spiritual conversation. Based on the mystical sense, the participants reflect on what they heard during the conversation, referring to

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[90] Greta Thunberg, a Swedish girl, spoke wholeheartedly with ecological urgency about the environmental protection of her beloved "common home," the earth. Surprisingly, her message brought about actual reverberations for decision-makers and political leaders worldwide, primarily through digital media.

discernment rules in the first and second week of the S*piritual Exercises.* When it comes to listening, the practice of unconditional acceptance is recommended, respecting the speaker's presence in front of me, welcoming him/her with goodwill, and recognizing her/him as different from me. This is the essence of Buber's "I-You" conversation theory and the countercultural effort for this digital civilization, which regards otherness as a mere collection of data. Furthermore, the most critical point that active and attentive listening should pay attention to is the movement of the other's mind, emotions, and underlying motivations, rather than only informational content of what the other person conveys. In particular, empathic listening to weaknesses and fragility is needed. We have confirmed that the culture of empathy may create a small ember to kindle a blaze for justice and peace, for both individuals and society as a whole, through the example of the digital generation's participation in Korea's democracy and gender equality issue. Lastly, it is worth noting the religious implications of one's heart-felt storytelling narrative in speaking. As Bausch stated, all human stories, even though they may not explicitly speak of God, can reveal a kind of religiosity insofar as the stories signify self-discovery, revealing life's mystery, mystical experiences, and conversion experiences. Therefore, the basis of spiritual conversation speaking is the expression of integrity flowing from one's heart. For this reason, the practice of self-confessional and self-expressive language, such as "I-message" addressing, may be helpful. In terms of practical applications, although the digital media platform has not provided comfortable circumstances for sharing personal issues in depth, it is worth noting that digital storytelling's interactivity enables the expression of empathy and feelings. It is worthwhile to get used to digital storytelling, which could help to create a sense of solidarity for the common good and resonance, and to spread the Gospel message.

General Conclusion

This study opened its first part analyzing the current digital communication culture with the question of how authentic communication is possible, in line with Pope Francis' particular sense of pastoral care and outlook, for today's digital environment. It found that the digital communication culture has the phenomena of duality. On the one hand, people desire communication among people, especially in expressing or sharing their religious faith and spiritual beliefs, even though it is de-institutionalized or new formed; on the other hand, nevertheless, since the self in the communication becomes digitally networked, the risk of dehumanization and cognitive bias is still present.

Based on Martin Buber's theory of relationship, an authentic communication culture may be realized by a qualitative leap of relationship from "I-It" to "I-You" in the conversational structure, esteeming both otherness and reciprocity. The authentic relationship of "I-You" should transit to the ultimate and transcendental relationship of "I-eternal You." At this point, this study paid particular attention to the value of spiritual conversation as a form of a dialogue between two or more people that involves sharing one's personal experiences of finding God in daily life, and attentively focusing on one's desires, dreams, and emotions.

Among the various spiritual conversation traditions, the Ignatian spiritual conversation, which has a remarkable spirit of participatory frontiers for the times, gives hope that it can guide an authentic communication culture even in this digital age. The Ignatian spiritual conversation's specific features, such as its apostolic end, and the emphasis on autonomy and reciprocity of the conversation participants, the heart-felt content of the God-experience, the art of intimacy, and creative tension, correspond to the characteristics of the contemporary digital generation. To sum up, the Ignatian spiritual conversation still expresses its validity in this contemporary digital world, through its corresponding values of four components – silence, reflection, listening, and speaking – as a remedial alternative, to the digital communication culture's crises, characterized by a dehumanization problematic cognitive bias. In a more practical approach, creating a proper silent environment through a digital detox, reflecting with the discernment criteria of the *Spiritual Exercises* and the disposition of positive interpretation, attentive listening to the movement of inner space, and using the interactivity of digital technology, storytelling from one's true-heart can be a proper guideline for implementing Ignatian spiritual conversation to the digital communication culture.

This study was able to gain insight in both pastoral and academic areas that digital communication culture can be both a crisis and an opportunity for authentic communication among human beings. Overall, from a pastoral point of view, spiritual conversation can be recognized in its role and value as a countercultural alternative to digital-networked selves and more complex social structural selves. In particular, it emphasizes setting guidelines in youth ministry for the sound use of digital communication platforms, not merely by being limited in means, but rather by an essential dimension of promoting the recovery of humanity and a revelatory sense of truth in the secular communication culture. Moreover, it confirms the positive function of spirituality in the academic field's digital communication culture, evoking further interdisciplinary research on this theme. Primarily, it expects that convergence studies, concerning topics such as compatibility between post-humanism and spirituality in the digital age with the methodologies of fundamental theology, anthropology, behavioral sociology, robotics, and neurosciences, will be actively carried out.

Closing this study inevitably exposes various limitations. First, it is an ambiguous task to confirm the signs of the times. As stated above, due to the regional and target-scope limitations of both the Shoji and Barna group research materials referenced, a more general and extensive phenomenon analysis was not plausible. Above all, even though Part 1 seriously highlights the challenges and crises of the digital communication culture, it is too difficult to accurately predict the specific aspects of that culture in the future, as Yuval Harari notes.[91] Second, this study lacks substantial statistical results

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[91] "As I repeatedly emphasized, nobody really knows what the job market, the family or the ecology will look like in 2050, or what religions, economic systems or political structures will dominate the world." Yuval N. Harari, *Homo Deus: a Brief History of Tomorrow* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2018), 396.

regarding an investigation into behavioral and psychological experiments on spiritual conversation's remedial effects. Technically speaking, it only raises an assumption. Further research is requested for verifications in this regard.

Some warn of the digital communication culture's crises, but others care little. It also seems reasonable to say that the real challenges of our lives may be the secularization, marketization, and politicization of religion itself, rather than external factors. But even with such an unpredictable future, if we can simply trust the Holy Spirit's presence, connecting all creatures in all circumstances, and practice Ignatian spiritual conversation in our daily communication, we will be able to enjoy an authentic communication culture, as encouraged by Pope Francis. In that way, we would live grounded on a rock, rooted and unshakable within the ultimate relationship of "I and eternal You."

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