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Toward a Micro-Political Theology:

Revisiting Liberation Theologies from the Perspective of Michel Foucault

by

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God's mercy endures for ever. (Psalm 118)

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation attempts to explore a very significant question in the tradition of liberation theologies: 'What can the theology of liberation do if social movements and revolutions cannot maintain the fruits of freedom and liberation?' or 'What is the next stage in the development of liberation theologies?' The dissertation seeks to examine the future threshold of the theologies of liberation and proposes a new micro-political theology based on the work of Michel Foucault.

In the introduction, I provided evidence to demonstrate my argument that social movements and revolutions do not bring permanent freedom and liberation to the oppressed. 'Political theology' does not help to bring about a radical change of liberation because it assumes that the church or the theological is separated from the public and political spheres. I argue that we need a micro-political theology to overcome the division between spirituality and political theology and overcome the limits of liberation theologies.

Based on my reflections on this phenomenon, in Chapter one, I examined the methodology of liberation theologies, shared by Latin American liberation theology, feminist theology and womanist theology. I pointed out that liberation theologies put overemphasis on the analysis of social structure and neglect the lived-experience of the individual subject. They also lack an understanding of the project of subjectification, relying on social structure to define the groups of sufferers.

In response to this situation, in Chapter two, I introduce Michel Foucault's theory of power relationships in order to rethink the exercise of power, which works not only at the level of social and political structure but on the individual's body, desire and sexuality. Foucault's theory enlarges the vision of political theology and liberation theologies to show that political resistance cannot be a limited act in the political realm. Political resistance must consider the process of subjectification, which means examining how the subject is constructed by society and all kinds of power relationships through shaping desire, sexuality and the body.

In Chapter three, I go on to examine the current political theology that concerns itself with sexuality and desire (Marcella Althaus-Reid's indecent theology, Jung Mo Sung's liberation

theology and Daniel Bell's Radical Orthodoxy theology). Even though they all consider human sexuality and desire, their approaches are limited and cannot produce a political theology that addresses the micro-political dimensions (as Foucault suggested). For example, Althaus-Reid fails to recognise that the existence of the perverted, who are praised and honoured by indecent theology, is entirely socially constructed and is the invention of heteronormativity. This failure is a weak point in her theology and makes it less effective at criticising and subverting heteronormativity. In addition, I argue that Sung and Bell have different opinions on human desire. Sung is pessimistic about desire, which he sees as the creation of capitalism. The result is that he cannot take desire into fully into consideration, apart from considering the refutation of desire to be an ethical decision. Bell fairly judges the creation of desire as part of God's creation in human beings, but his theology does not really offer political action. In other words, the chapter shows that the division between Sung and Bell is the division between ethics and ontology.

The introduction of micro-political theology attempts to achieve the balance of ethics and ontology, following the assumption that who we are (an ontological question) leads to what we do (an ethical question). The model of micro-political theology states that spirituality, such as asceticism, itself is political. This is because when we discern who we are and how we are constructed within all power relationships, we have already begun recognising how power relationships exert themselves on us. This recognition is the first, but the most important step, of political resistance. In this way, I argue that the micro-political, considering spiritual practice as constructing the self, should be the next stage of developing liberation theologies.

Contents

INTRODUCTION The Theology of Liberation and its Crisis

This dissertation seeks to examine the future threshold of the theology of liberation and proposes a new micro-political theology based on the work of Michel Foucault. The theology of liberation has been developed over the last sixty years and faces a serious challenge because of the narrow understanding of political theology. Liberation theology has exerted an influence on Catholic and Protestant Christian theology, on the churches of different denominations, and even on secular societies, particularly in Latin America and other Third World countries. The theology of liberation encourages church priests and ministers and Christians to cooperate with, or to become, social reformers and revolutionaries in order to participate in political reformation. Theology, in this sense, is liberated from its academic ivory tower and from its role of serving the Church alone by interpreting the Bible and maintaining Church tradition for explaining the Truth. The development of the theology of liberation starts to recognise the social influence of the Church through its political participation. The terms of liberation and freedom in the Bible and Christian teaching are no longer an abstract concept. They mean taking practical actions that are closely connected with social transformation and even with a political revolution. In other words, the theology of liberation directs theology to be wholly engaged with society and the political, rather than the knowledge of Christian doctrines. The important issues of how the theology of liberation interprets liberation and freedom and how it defends political and social actions will form a key part of this dissertation.

If the purpose of the theology of liberation is to take a political action to deliver social justice, another question then should be scrutinised: Does the theology of liberation deliver liberation and freedom to the oppressed effectively? This question can also be illustrated in other ways: 'Does the theology of liberation fulfil its promise of being a deliverer of liberation in the social and political field rather than merely providing an eschatological vision of the world to come, which comforts the suffering of the oppressed?' or 'Is the theology of liberation truly able to deliver liberation and freedom to the oppressed through any social and political revolution?'

I insist that these questions should be answered from the empirical observations, such as that which truly happens in society after a social and political revolution, rather than any theological or abstract philosophical debate, since changing society on the empirical and experiential level is the method used by the theology of liberation. If the theology of liberation claims itself to be able to deliver liberation and freedom, then the justification of the theology of liberation is to prove that it truly delivers liberation and freedom by its method. Based on this re-examination of whether the theology of liberation can justify itself by proving that liberation and freedom are brought after a social and political revolution, it would be helpful to rethink the future of the theology of liberation.

In order to rethink the future of the theology of liberation, I would like in this introduction chapter to focus on showing the real context that theologians and social activists face and to examine whether a social and political revolution can bring liberation and freedom from the empirical and experiential perspective. In the first part of the chapter, I will demonstrate how a social and political revolution is considered to be the way to liberate the oppressed in the development of a social movement. In the second part, I will show that even after social and political revolutions, the oppressed and the marginalised (in terms of economic, race, gender, and sexuality) remain in oppression. These social movements in various fields do not deliver a permanent state of liberation and freedom to the oppressed. It means that, in the light of our empirical experience, a social and political revolution fails to achieve its goal. The third part will shift the concern back to the field of theology. I will argue that theology is trapped in being unable to propose an alternative liberation agenda to other social and political revolutions.

A Revolution as the Way to Liberate the Oppressed

Karl Marx is one of the most important figures in terms of seeing social and political revolution as the only way to set the oppressed free, not least in *The Communist Manifesto* of 1848.[1] He insists that human history, or the history of society, is the history of social class conflict, involving an on-going clash between the proletariat, who do not own the means of

[1] Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," *Marx/Engels Selected Works, Vol. One* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969[1848]).

production, and the bourgeoisie, the owners of the means of production.[2] This continuous conflict between social classes drives the evolutionary development of human society but, eventually, it will be ended by social and political revolution when all proletariat stand together to fight for their lives.[3] The revolution, fighting against the exploitation by the bourgeoisie, will create a new equal society by means of destroying the division of social class. This society will concentrate all production in the hands of the state.[4] That is, Marx and his followers believe that the revolution of the oppressed will bring social liberation and freedom, when the oppressed, whose benefits have been stripped away, eventually resolve on solidarity with each other for gaining the benefit to themselves. This revolution will make society more equal through removing the difference between the people with benefits and ones without benefits. There is no divide between the proletariat, who contribute its physical labour, and the bourgeoisie, who own the means of production and who exploit the proletariat. They both 'equally' need to do labour to gain what they want to gain. This equal society, brought about by revolution, is the way to achieve liberation and freedom. This is the case particularly for the proletariat, since they are not only liberated from being slaves working for the benefit of the bourgeoisie but they are also free from being exploited to gain what they deserve to gain. The ultimate goal of revolution is to treat the proletariat 'and' the bourgeoisie equally and fairly. The consequence of revolution, in the end, is for the benefit of humanity.[5]

In the twentieth century, the thought of Marx and later Marxism brought about a huge change in thought and politics. In the arena of international politics, communist activists, inspired by the thought of Marx and Marxism, strove for a new society that respects human dignity and equality in social and political revolution. Their activism had created an alliance of communist countries, including the Warsaw Pact in Eastern Europe

[2] Marx and Engel were influenced by the concept of the Darwinian revolution and even they 'sent a copy of the volume of *Capital* to Darwin, who thanked him politely but only cut the first 105 of its 122 pages. Moreover, it [the emergence of the place of humanity] was not just process, but *progress*: lower forms … gave way to higher ones.' Peter Worsley, *Marx and Marxism: Revised Edition* (London: Ellis Horwood and Tavistock Publications, 2002[1982]), 59.

[3] Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto (a Norton Critical Edition)*, ed. Frederic L. Bender (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988), 66.

[4] Ibid., 75, 86.

[5] Worsley, *Marx and Marxism: Revised Edition*, 78.

and parts of East Asia during the Cold War.[6] In the field of Christian theology, revolution-triggering Marxist theory has been used to stimulate the wave of the national independent movement in the Third World in the twentieth century and beyond. This theological trend, for example, which has a great influence in Latin America, is called 'Latin American liberation Theology.'[7] Latin American liberation Theology, strongly echoing Marx's political agenda, which links redemption with social transformation, argues that if social oppression causes the total devaluation of humanity, liberation means the total redemption of humanity.[8] Revolution in society and politics should be included in the action of redemption. In this vision, the Kingdom of God in justice and peace is not somewhere to go after death but a place established in the world where we are living. Revolution is also the way to enable the Kingdom to come. Here we see how the broad Marxist tradition that triggers revolution for social transformation has an influence in secular and religious fields and in politics and theology.

Not all social movements are under the influence of revolution-triggered Marxism, although Marx and Marxism have a major impact on establishing a link between revolution and liberation. For example, in the United States, the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s and the Stonewall Riots in 1969 for the equality of homosexual people both strove for the equality of the oppressed and the marginalised. However, they were not part of the movement of communist revolution because these movements do not consider social class conflict as the primary inequality.

In the Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King called for a non-violent social revolution against racial segregation policy. The movement, targeting a specific unequal law, successfully put pressures on passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which abolished the racial discrimination policies and continues to protect the equal civil rights of African Americans.[9]

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[6] See, Robert Service, *Comrades!: A History of World Communism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[7] In this dissertation, the term 'the theology of liberation' refers to the general category of liberative Christian theologies and this term can be in a plural form to include the various trends under this umbrella term. When the specific trend of liberation theology in Latin America is referred, the term 'Latin American Liberation Theology' is used as a proper noun with capital letters.

[8] Karl Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction (1843-4)," in *Early Writings* (London: Penguin and New Left Review, 1975), 256. Also see, Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, trans. Paul Burns (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Burns & Oates, 1987).

[9] The first-hand history of African-American grass-roots movements can be seen: William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University

This movement is seen as the greatest example of a social movement that has achieved its purpose through non-violent means.

From one perspective, the Stonewall riots caused a series of violent demonstrations against discriminatory laws and resulted in conflict with the government. From an alternative perspective, these conflicts brought gay culture into the public eyes.[10] This change encouraged more sexual minorities to come out to express their identity freely and to challenge stigmas that result from misunderstanding and ignorance of homosexuality. The drive to recognise the discrimination against homosexuals and stigmatisation of homosexuality, eventually, brought the de-criminalisation of homosexual acts (so-called 'sodomy law') in many countries.

These two social movements are similar in that they both targeted a legal system that was discriminatory towards the oppressed and the marginalised. The strategy used by both movements was to flout the law first and then to appeal the law. These two movements did not challenge the existence of the state but put their efforts to adjust the oppressive legalistic system. In this way they instigated cultural change. Their achievements passively assert the belief that equality and freedom can be achieved by social movements and that an intensive and violent communist revolution are not required.

Another important example of a social movement bringing about liberation and freedom is the women's liberation movement, or feminist movement. As Engels has prophetically mentioned, the exploitation of women is part of the exploitation of labour, since the women were, and even are, regarded as the property and labour of men.[11] Although women fought for recognition of their equal rights (legal, cultural, and social) for

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Press, 1980). Also, considering the broader context such as political Cold War background, and the black winner at the 1968 Olympic Games, see: Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*, First Holt Paperbacks edition. ed. (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 2007).

[10] About the history of a series of Stonewall riots, see, David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked the Gay Revolution*, 1st ed. ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004). Some discussions about gay rights (particularly of marriage equality) and its movement in the United States, from the legalistic perspective, see: Walter M. Frank, *Law and the Gay Rights Story: The Long Search for Equal Justice in a Divided Democracy* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2014).

[11] Engels' account, based on evolutionary anthropology of L. H. Morgan, demonstrates the relationship between family form and class. He argues that the unequal relationship between husband and wife is the material foundation of the bourgeois family. And wife and monogamy support the transmission of property. Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family* (Boston, Mass.: New England Free Press, 1970). Also, in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx calls for the abolition of the family too.

centuries, women were still far from being treated and considered as men in terms of their capacity in workplace. However, the women's liberation movement made a dramatic step in 1943 during the Second World War. The impressive poster, called 'We Can Do It!' –more popularly known as 'Rosie the Riveter'—was designed by J. Howard Miller, recruited by Westinghouse Electric's Internal War Production Coordinating Committee, for promoting jobs in factories (see Appendix 1). It propagated the image that women can work in factories as stongly as males labour in industry, so that factories can confidently recruit more women to produce war goods for the government's need.[12]

The figure of female labour, represented in 'Rosie the Riveter,' turned out to be an iconic political symbol of the women's liberation movement, virally spreading at that time. This is because this poster positively asserts that there is no difference between women and men in a factory, which was traditionally regarded as a place dominated by men.[13] Even after seventy years, an American pop singer, Beyoncé, posted online a picture of herself wearing a denim shirt and red bandana—the same as Rosie the Riveter (see Appendix 2). Building on the image of Rosie the Riveter, she advocates equality and autonomy in a 'girl power' stance.[14]

What we can see here is that the image of Rosie the Riveter, whether in wartime or in a contemporary setting, turns out to be the model of heroic women, showing that women are as strong as men. She becomes a symbol of gender equality, showing the same capacity of work as men. The story of Rosie the Riveter not only shows the break-down of the separation of domestic women and industrial men but also empowers and encourages women to leave their home to work in industry. In this sense, the story can also be seen as a call for a silent revolution, challenging the stereotype and tradition which insists that

[12] Miriam Frank, Marilyn Ziebarth, and Connie Field, "Rosie the Riveter," *Society* 21, no. 3 (1984); Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1987).
[13] For example, 'Women laid off in 1945 at the Ford plant in Highland Park, Mich., fight back against the company's discrimination'. In the photo from National Archives, female demonstrators hold various placards saying, 'Stop Discrimination because of Sex,' 'Ford Hires New Help We Walk the Streets,' 'How Come No Work for Women'. Frank, Ziebarth, and Field, "Rosie the Riveter," 78.
[14] This Instagram post has been 'loved' by more than one million people and also raised many criticisms and discussions about whether this icon is a feminist icon. For example, Rebecca Winson, "Sorry Beyoncé, Rosie the Riveter Is No Feminist Icon. Here's Why," *The Guardian* https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jul/23/beyonce-rosie-the-riveter-feminist-icon (23 Jul 2014). And Gillian Orr, "Bey Can Do It: Beyoncé Re-Enacts Rosie the Riveter's Pose," *Independent* http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/features/beyonc-poses-as-rosie-the-riveter-the-wartime-poster-girl-who-became-a-feminist-pin-up-9624381.html (23 Jul 2014).

women can only stay at home for housework. Women are liberated from domesticity and are free to choose their career beyond being a homemaker. The poster of Rosie the Riveter shows and records the public recognition of women and men as equal at that time, which is the great step of the women's liberation movement. Chapter two will provide more examples of the women's liberation movement in theology.

With these examples, I have briefly demonstrated different styles of political revolution and social movements in terms of their scale and the intensity of violence. These activists and revolutionaries share a similar belief that the call for political revolution and social movement that change an unequal social environment and the discriminatory legal systems, is 'the way' to liberate the oppressed and the marginalised from exploitative conditions. The action of calling for social movements and political revolution assumes, at various levels, scepticism about the prospect for change. In addition, revolutionaries in particular recognise the impossibility of equality and opportunity for the oppressed. To subvert and disobey the social rule and regulation, in their view, is the only path to the future. Total despair about the prospect for change and the existent social structure turns out to be the hope and the motivation for revolution.

Social Movements' Betrayal of the Oppressed

In order to demonstrate the problems of liberation theologies in association with revolution and social movements—for which liberation theologians call—I will present some scenarios that show the failure of revolutions and social movements. My aim here is not to offer a complete account of each social movement, but provide through each scenario a way of opening up the issues around liberation and freedom. I am seeking to highlight the limits of these movements, despite the significant achievements they made historically.

The political revolutions and social movements that we mentioned in the last part brought about liberation and freedom of the proletariat, African Americans, homosexuals, and women, which met the expectation of activists and revolutionaries. However, I argue that these revolutions and social movements do not achieve their goal in the end. They eventually fail to liberate and set free the oppressed because the fruits of revolution and

social movement are temporary and are not retained for good. The long term success of these revolutions and social movements should call us to think whether revolution and social movements are still the best and most assured pathway to liberation and freedom of the oppressed, or whether the oppressed will never be liberated. In this part, I will reflect on the histories of these revolutions and movements and attempt to explain the disappointments and the predicaments of the oppressed after the temporarily 'victorious' achievement of liberation and freedom.

The Defeat of the Communist Revolution. Communist revolutionaries achieved great success in 1922 when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was established. By the late 1940s, the Warsaw Pact countries were in solidarity against the United States and other Western liberal countries. This confrontation caused the huge tension between liberalism and communism during the Cold War. However, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 gradually ruined the dream of communist solidarity. They signified the end of communist revolutions in a dramatic way and symbolised the triumph of capitalism and liberalism.[15] This historical outcome also echoes and even fostered the belief, exemplified by Francis Fukuyama, an American scholar of international politics, that democracy will win the whole world finally, because democracy is the most reasonable political system to humanity.[16] All humans, Fukuyama assumes, are driven by their desire as a calculative economic man and this desire to be satisfied also drives the direction of human history.[17] The prediction made by Fukuyama has helped to create a mindset in the West that there will be no more communist countries, that Marxist theory will not save the world and that economic liberalism will justify itself as the Truth. It deepens the disappointment with communism and related Marxism. This prompts us to ask

[15] Many philosophers and social scientists want to rethink the failure of communist countries and the crisis of liberalist countries, particularly after Cold War. The development of Continental social democrats and the Tony Blair's and Hill Clinton's appropriation of 'third way' can be seen as parts of this wave. This wave is supported strongly by Anthony Giddens, a famous British sociologist: Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998). Other scholars such as Noam Chomsky also tried to mingle liberalism with socialism. Chomsky argues that a libertarian socialist vision as 'the proper and natural extension-of classical liberalism into the era of advanced industrial society'. This is because 'the classical liberal ideals as expressed and developed in their libertarian socialist form are achievable. But if so, only by a popular revolutionary movement, rooted in wide strata of the population and committed to the elimination of repressive and authoritarian institutions, state and private'. See, Noam Chomsky, *Government in the Future* (New York: Seven Stories, 2005).

[16] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan, 1992).

[17] Ibid., 135, 338.

a question and puzzle: Shall we keep our faith in Marxism if we are keen to liberate the oppressed? History tells us that revolution might not be the pathway to liberation.

Continued Racial Discrimination. In 1964, the African-American Civil Rights Movements successfully put a pressure on the Federal Government to abolish the racial segregation policy. It also motivated the reform and the bilateral negotiations of apartheid in South Africa between 1987 and 1993 and it finally achieved the release of Nelson Mandela who had been detained and the abolition of apartheid legislation. It was a peaceful and non-violent revolution and a victory for human dignity. However, racial discrimination has not ended in South Africa or indeed anywhere else. The Charlottesville Rally in Virginia in 2017 and contemporary white supremacism are clear signs of the manifestation of hatred against non-white people.[18] There was another controversial and less unnoticed case of racial discrimination, where Asian American applicants sued a university for considering their racial background in the name of diversity and increasing admissions requirement.[19] This means that Asian applicants are requested to show higher marks than students from other ethnicities, including white people. The policy of diversity became a new barrier to exclude Asian students, who used to be considered as people, who should be protected and are disadvantaged. The case challenges the stereotype that non-white is always disadvantaged and points out the blind spot of the educational policy of diversity. These new challenges of racial equality remind us that racism has not been defeated and has never been far away. That prompts us to ask a question: What is the political victory of

[18] After the Civil Rights Movement, many scholars continued to reflect what 'racism' is and what kind of action entails racism. Scholars prefer to consider racism in the context of racialisation so that racism becomes a thing in itself, a social relation. In this sense, we can recognise how a new racism gives birth in 1960s in the US. See, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001); Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018). I am also surprised by recognising that 'White supremacy' is not a new term in the US and South Africa. One of the most important works was published in the 1980s. George M Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

[19] The issue of anti-Asian American discrimination can be seen: Rosalind S. Chou, *The Myth of the Model Minority: Asian Americans Facing Racism*, ed. Joe R. Feagin, 2nd ed. (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2008). Except for some 'typical' examples of being disadvantaged in society, I noticed that the advantage of Asian American students who are educated and have excellent studying outcomes becomes another (controversially) 'racial' issue: Scott Jaschik, "The Numbers and the Arguments on Asian Admissions," *Inside Higher Ed* https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2017/08/07/look-data-and-arguments-about-asian-americans-and-admissions-elite (7 Aug 2017).

equality and civil rights if racial discrimination has not been defeated? What more can be done to liberate people of all races after discriminatory laws have been abolished?

The Abuse of Identity Politics. After the Stonewall riots, sexual minorities were encouraged to 'come out' as part of a strategy of liberation by means of showing the identity of the heterosexual and the homosexual. That also helped to fight against the stigma of HIV and homosexuality.[20] The coming-out movement meant the lives of people from sexual minorities were more transparent and hopefully better understood by the general public. It also builds up the community of LGBT people, overcoming various geographical, social, and racial barriers, and breaking down the social and psychological isolation of LGBT people.[21] For example, the first Gay Pride, continuing the spirit of the Stonewall riots, called on sexual minorities to stand up and speak out for equal rights. This spirit of Gay Pride is far from being a merely festive carnival—it is a political parade aggressively and subversively challenging the mainstream social values of heterosexuality.

However, London Pride has lost the spirit of the Stonewall 'riots,' due to the fact that a large multi-national bank (Barclays) is sponsoring the event. That an economic privilege group becomes the leading group of Gay Pride means the death of the subversiveness of LGBT resistant movement.[22] As LGBT people in Britain have become less oppressed in overall terms, so gay culture has become more and more 'mainstream' in public and popular culture. These mainstreamed values, including capitalism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity, are incorporated, embraced, and even reproduced in the development of 'pink capitalism.'[23] Commence has been quick to recognise the potential profit that has

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[20] Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (London: Quartet Books 1977); Vivienne C Cass, "Homosexuality Identity Formation: A Theoretical Model," *Journal of homosexuality* 4, no. 3 (1979). Coming-out politics also influences the early stage of developing gay liberation theology. For example, Robert Goss, *Jesus Acted Up : A Gay and Lesbian Manifesto*, 1st ed. ed. (San Francisco: Harper, 1993).

[21] Michele J Eliason, "Identity Formation for Lesbian, Bisexual, and Gay Persons: Beyond a 'Minoritizing' View," *Journal of Homosexuality* 30, no. 3 (1996). Also, coming-out has a positive impact on mental health and the development of the self, see Margaret Rosario et al., "The Coming-out Process and Its Adaptational and Health-Related Associations among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youths: Stipulation and Exploration of a Model," *American journal of community psychology* 29, no. 1 (2001).

[22] Colin Clews, *Gay in the 80s: From Fighting for Our Rights to Fighting for Our Lives*, Gay in the Eighties (Kibworth Beauchamp, Leicestershire2017), 116-24.

[23] Alan Sears, "Queer Anti-Capitalism: What's Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?," *Science & Society* 69, no. 1 (2005); *Homo Economics Capitalism, Community, and Lesbian and Gay Life*, ed. Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed (New York: Routledge, 1997); Ladelle McWhorter, "Queer Economies," *Foucault Studies*, no. 14 (2012); Shannon Winnubst, "The Queer Thing About Neoliberal Pleasure: A Foucauldian Warning," ibid.

been made by the LGBT community, who are often high-spending and voracious consumers of luxurious goods. This new festive experience of gay pride is contrary to the spirit of original Gay Pride, which was against social mainstream values, such as capitalism, and which expressed solidarity with other oppressed people, such as striking miners.[24]

Initially, identity politics as applied by LGBT activists, which aim to build up the LGBT community and free the oppressed, was meant to bear and share the suffering of the excluded and stigmatised sexual minorities. A further aim was to empower the marginalised to subvert social norms and order. However, ironically, the identity of LGBT people has been appropriated by consumerism, in pink capitalism, to stimulate profit-taking and to shape the desire to consume. The LGBT community now supports pushing up the sale volume rather than empowering the weak and other minorities.[25] In this respect, this inspires us to ask: What have the Stonewall riots given to the oppressed? Is identity politics always good for the marginalised?

The Capitalist Control of Women's Bodies. The story of Rosie the Riveter was the backdrop to the release of women from domestic areas into manufacturing industry at time when labour policy was discouraging women from working and most employers in the United States before the 1950's preferred not to recruit married women.[26] The Second World War opened up opportunities to recruit women for work in industries where there was high demand, but the labour pool had been reduced in size due to the need for men to go into the army. These women gained not only 'blue collar' positions, as one might be expected, but also 'professional/managerial positions, substantially crowding-out their male

[24] Sarah Perrigo, "Gender Struggles in the British Labour Party from 1979 to 1995," *Party Politics* 1, no. 3 (1995). This article about the misogynist culture of British Labour Party in 1979 before LGSM can be a comparative study to understand the masculine culture in Labour Party. More discussions about LGSN cab be seen: Diarmaid Kelliher, "Solidarity and Sexuality: Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners 1984–5" (paper presented at the History Workshop Journal, 2014), 246 56. In addition, the research about how the construction of masculinity can contradict capitalism can be seen: Nigel Edley and Margaret Wetherell, *Men in Perspective: Practice, Power and Identity* (London Prentice Hall, 1995).

[25] 'The Pink economy' in China is currently valued at £210 billion per annum, making it the world's third largest after Europe and the U.S. (Globally, the LGBT community is estimated to spend more than £2 trillion each year.) See: Charlie Campbell, "How China's Pink Economy Is Leading the Country's Battle for Lgbt Rights," *Fortune* http://fortune.com/2017/01/11/china-lgbt-pink-dollar-gay-market-business/ (11 Jan 2017).

[26] Claudia D Goldin, "The Role of World War II in the Rise of Women's Employment," *The American Economic Review* 81, no. 4 (1991). Cited from Andriana Bellou and Emanuela Cardia, "Occupations after WWII: The Legacy of Rosie the Riveter," *Explorations in Economic History* 62 (2016): 1.

counterparts.'[27] Due to the war, women had more opportunities to work in a variety of fields that previously had been male-dominated. For some women, these experiences, which liberated them from domestic jobs and being housewives, were not just about gaining a position where they could earn money but also a way to empower the self. Betty Jeanne Boggs, a riveter working in a plane factory at age seventeen, described her experience:

> I worked on a war plant and it was one of the things you did when your country was at war, and it had been an enjoyable experience. Even today, I am very proud of that (war) job. I can always say, 'Hey, I was a riveter during World War II.'[28]

However, does the story of Rosie the Riveter truly transform and change the employment situation of women? The gender wage gap remains an issue that women still earn less than men.[29] The more important but ignored fact behind the iconography of Rosie the Riveter is that these women, who had patriotic passion for their work, were still needed to do their household chores and children-caring functions after work. They did not work less than men in the same paid employment but they bore additional responsibilities of unpaid work at home.[30]

At this point, we can begin to see how women working out of the domestic field, like Rosie the Riveter, are doubly exploited by the capitalist industry and the householder. Susan Willis criticises the work women were doing in factories as just like doing a gym work-out in a nautilus machine. This is because 'nothing is produced but the body itself,' she comments.[31] The body of women becomes a labour force and is appropriated and controlled by the need of capitalism and war even though the exploited women were still proud of

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[27] "Occupations after WWII: The Legacy of Rosie the Riveter," 1-2, 24.
[28] Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change*. Cited from María Cristina Santana, "From Empowerment to Domesticity: The Case of Rosie the Riveter and the Wwii Campaign," *Frontiers in Sociology* 1 (2016): 1-2.
[29] 'One of the widest gender pay gaps is in financial occupations. ONS data show, for example, that female financial institution managers and directors earn 26.2% less, on average, than men in the same occupation'. The Office for National Statistics, "Explore the Gender Pay Gap and Test Your Knowledge," https://visual.ons.gov.uk/explore-the-gender-pay-gap-and-test-your-knowledge/#interactive (2017).
[30] Frank, Ziebarth, and Field, "Rosie the Riveter."
[31] Susan Willis, "Work (Ing) Out," *Cultural studies* 4, no. 1 (1990).

themselves. On the other hand, unpaid domestic labour underpinned the capitalist exploitation of women. As I have mentioned before, outside their regular paid occupation, women continue to bear the bulk of responsibilities in domestic work. The patriotic vocation of female labour discreetly and unrecognisably forces women to be overexposed to the exploitation by capitalists, including the owners of factories and machines, and the nation-state that supported the capitalist.[32] The propaganda poster, produced by the Office of War Information and the War Manpower Commission, shows a soldier cajoling a man and a woman into working and says, 'I can't win without you. STAY ON THE JOB and FINISH THE JOB.'[33] This clearly demonstrates how women were encouraged to keep production high, in disregard of their non-negotiable domestic work and how women therefore fell into the situation of double exploitations.

The success of the story of Rosie the Riveter is to liberate women from their home and give them access to work in the traditional male-dominated industries. This liberation appears to open up more opportunities for women to work in the public sector. But, at the same time, it forces women to be exposed directly and vulnerably in the exploitative capitalist system. In this sense, we should ask: What ultimately does the story of Rosie the Riveter contribute to the women's liberation movement? While it celebrates the autonomous, equal, and liberated body of women, the fruit of the success of women's equal right to work has been seized by the interests of capitalism, which control women's bodies to produce more and to serve their benefits. In the story of Rosie the Riveter, did women achieve liberation when they were free to work in a factory industry?

In this part, I examine, in retrospect, whether revolutions and social movements for the proletariat, the poor, sexual minorities, and women retain the liberation and freedom that they brought about and what the oppressed achieve after social movements and revolutions. The history and empirical experience show that these revolutions and social movements do not bring about a permanent state of liberation and freedom to the oppressed, even though they temporarily reached their purpose and make some significant

[32] Two classic books have pointed out how women are exploited by capitalism and their domestic responsibilities. See: Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1972); Pamela Abbott, Melissa Tyler, and Claire Wallace, *An Introduction to Sociology: Feminist Perspectives* (Oxford: Routledge, 2006).

[33] The poster can be found in Frank, Ziebarth, and Field, "Rosie the Riveter," 76.

steps forward. In other words, I argue the point that these revolutions and social movements cannot 'maintain' the fruits of their revolutionary changes. These revolutions and social movements can bring about a dramatic change to liberate the oppressed from a specific oppressive condition, but they cannot give the oppressed freedom for good, or even for 'sustained' liberation. The oppressed are eventually captured again by another new form of oppression. Chapter two will explain in more details why these revolutionaries and social activists eventually failed to maintain a state of liberation and freedom for the oppressed.

Constraints on Christian Theology when Responding to Oppression

How can Christian theology respond to oppression? The focus of this dissertation is on the limits of the various liberation scenarios that I have mentioned in the last part of the introduction. It shows that the fruits of various revolutions and social movements are inevitably seized and appropriated for another purpose. If we consider the situations that the oppressed face after revolutions and social movements, political theology and theologies of liberation must reconsider the meaning and the strategy of liberation and freedom that theology is striving to achieve. Before moving on to demonstrate these ideas in the following chapters of the dissertation, I will briefly maintain that theology has been constrained by a binary theory in two ways: the first is 'the theory of secularisation,' which is the binary between the secular and the scared; the other is 'the privatisation of spirituality,' which is based on the binary between spirituality and ethics. These constraints prevent Christian theology from responding to oppression effectively.

The belief that theological voices in the public sphere should be silenced is supported by the widely accepted theory of secularisation, which was initially proposed and promoted by Max Weber, a classic sociologist. He claims that the evolutionary progress of rationality in the world will replace religion. This indicates that society will eventually become 'secular,' that it will gradually grow up by itself and dispose of religion.[34] However, the implication from Weber's theory does not mean that religion will wholly die out. Instead, religion will become a 'private' and 'personal' thing rather than a public issue. In

[34] Max Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," in *From Max Weber: Readings and Commentaries on Modernity*, ed. Stephen Kalberg (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 340-44.

this view, a society that is secular and rational is opposed to religion and the church that are defined as the sacred. Theology then is disconnected from the public sphere and is regarded as the knowledge of private faith.[35]

The validity of Weber's theory of secularisation has been challenged by the revival of some religious movements, which are counter-trends to the separation of religion and society, the exclusion of religion from society. Religion, as Talal Asad argues, participates in the governance of civil society (in Poland), motivates the public debate about the value of liberalism (in the United States), challenges the foundation of civil society (in Egypt) and devalues individualism (in Iran).[36] These forms of public engagement by religion cannot be evaluated or easily recognised in the increase and decrease of the percentages of attendance in places of worship. They indicate the vibrant ambition of religion wanting to retrieve its power and authority in the public sphere in a negative or positive way. According to Graham Ward, there are three strategies which are defined as 'the new visibilities of religion' for resisting secularisation and for making religion 'alive': 'fundamentalism,' 'de-privatisation,' and 'the commodification of religion.'[37]

On the other hand, these forms of strategy for resisting secularisation, I argue, do not overthrow the principle of secularisation, which assumes the competing relationship between religion and society. Rather, they reproduce and assume the principle of secularisation. For example, religious fundamentalism uses strong and directing engagement to re-capture their followers and impose their power on society and legal system. In comparison, religious de-privatisation and commodification of religion use a 'softer' method to engage with society through supporting the function of religion that has been separated from society by the work of capitalism. These ways to resist secularisation

[35] In this sense, many American public theologians such as Max L. Stackhouse develop their 'public' theology based on the assumption of secularisation so that their contribution is to improve (private) theology into the public field. Some 'public' theologians influenced particularly by Schillebeeckx refute secularisation-assumed public theology. This is because, according to Schillebeeckx's Christology, Christ's natures challenge the separation of the sacred and the secular. And the public life itself could be theologically seen as a sacramental practice of witnessing. Theology, therefore, is not disconnected from the secular and this should be the new starting point of rethinking 'public' theology. See: "Grace, Governance, and Globalization," ed. Stephan van Erp, Martin G. Poulsom, and L. Boeve (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017).

[36] Talal Asad, "Secularism, Nation-State, Religion," in *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam Modernity* (Stanford, 2003), 182.

[37] Graham Ward, *Politics of Discipleship: Becoming Postmaterial Citizens* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 135-53.

attempt to retrieve its power and authority in society but, at the same time, they uncritically accept, rather than reject, the principle of secularisation. The horizon of the imagination of these counter-trends to secularisation has been narrowed so that the agenda they propose can one be 'anti-secularisation.' They cannot all get rid of the whole package of the theory of secularisation in order to build up the profile of the politics of religion. They merely put more emphasis on the way to retrieve a secular society rather than to reflect on the nature of religion itself, which means that religion is essentially 'political.'

This concept of the political project of the church must be revisited. Ward explains that the church must be political within the mode framed by secularised society since the church is unavoidably situated in the society in which it has been secularised or has been assumed as a secularised environment. At the same time, the church and the Christian should not belong to this world or tamely obey the kingdom of this world but keep walking in the journey of discernment with patience and humility. Here, I am not proposing a theory of two kingdoms, meaning that the secular power is completely separated from God's power and we should belong to either God's kingdom or a kingdom of humankind. This two-kingdom Augustinian theory has been misunderstood, particularly when it is interpreted in an approach of political realism that refers the earthly city and the heavenly city to a real social entity in the world. For example, R. A. Markus, as a historian of medieval period, believed that the earthly city referred to by Augustine was Rome, which became the representative of Babylon in his time.[38] This interpretive approach draws us to find a real kingdom, the heavenly city, and to give up the real world where we live. It leads the Church to be away from the real world, or as I said, not to be 'political' if this world has been defined as an earthly city.

However, I argue that two cities in Augustine's language should be defined by their respective virtues, in terms of the recognition of love from God or love from humans.[39] The difference between two cities is more eschatological rather than a realistically political goal. That is, all Christians live 'between' two cities. They must maintain the process of discerning

[38] R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine*, [Rev. ed.]. ed., History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 46.

[39] The non-realistic approach to read Augustine's *the City of God* is well-discussed in the Anglican theological circle, particularly Oliver O'Donovan and Rowan Williams. See: Oliver O'Donovan, *Bonds of Imperfection: Christian Politics, Past and Present*, ed. Joan Lockwood O'Donovan (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2004). Rowan Williams, "Politics and the Soul: A Reading of the City of God," *Milltown Studies* 19-20 (1987).

the city to live in, and in which they will remain in their whole lives. The political of the church is to keep this process going. In this sense, the politics of the church is to disclose worldly power. This is a passive way to follow Jesus and to bring God's kingdom to earth because when limited power of the world is exposed, Jesus's unlimited power that opposes to that power will be revealed.[40] When we recognise the heavenly city, we—at the same time—recognise the earthly city. The work of Graham Ward offers an alternative way to reflect on the politics of the church, which is different from previous agendas in the new visibilities of religion, which restore their authority through regaining the power and reversing the autonomy of society.

In other words, the strategy of the politics of the church, suggested by Ward, is to expose the politics and power of the world, including the consideration of the theory of secularisation, as a way to 'disarm' religion, and to discern the function and deployment of the worldly power. Ward calls this practice of discernment and disclosure 'discipleship'—the word he uses in his book's title.[41] This practice of discipleship, in the political way, draws our attention to the responsibility of every individual self, which I consider as subjectification and the construction of the self in spirituality, for political resistance. The issue of subjectification and political resistance will be explored in chapter two when I introduce the philosophy of Michel Foucault in order to scrutinise the concept of liberation and freedom.

Theology, furthermore, also faces the second restriction of the binary of spirituality and ethics, which regards spirituality as a private and psychological issue. The division appears at least in two levels: the first is at the categorical level that spirituality is regarded as private and de-institutionalised practices, especially in Oriental traditions, such as Yoga and Buddhist meditation, in opposition to 'religion,' defined as Western Christian churches.[42] The second is, at the theological level, that spirituality is overemphasised as a practice where an individual has a mystical relationship with God. It relates to how we pray, contemplate, and meditate, rather than how we live out a Christian life in this world. The former is about Christian spirituality and the latter is about Christian ethics. In this sense,

[40] Ward, *Politics of Discipleship: Becoming Postmaterial Citizens*, 288-93.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Jeremy Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2005).

spirituality is always de-politicalised and is seldom considered as a practice about politics. Spirituality, therefore, separated from Christian ethics, as political theology defined it.

Jeremy Carrette and Richard King have critically explained the division with the category and concept of 'private spirituality': not only is spiritually consumer-orientated but it also reveals the culture of "the triumphalist celebration of modernity as 'enlightened' and 'liberating' for the individual."[43] Private spirituality, in this sense, is a celebration of secularisation, which sets people free from the traditional circumstance under the power of religion and the Christian church. It gives individual agency to seek and trace their belief and spirituality. It also regards exploring faith within any institutional religion as captivity, being restricted in the tradition and being subject to another authority. This idea of contemporary spirituality attempts to maximise the degree of individualism and privatisation. Moreover, Carrette and King, in their work *Selling Spirituality,* criticise the fact that contemporary spirituality is supported by popular individualism-assumed psychology, which has produced the wider ideology of privatisation in the capitalist context. Individualism-assumed psychology turns out to be a new form of social control to nourish and sustain the shape of the ideal consumer's subjectivity.[44] These facts explain why the term and concept of 'spirituality' is understood as a set of private and apolitical practices. The reason for this understanding of spirituality is because it has been redefined and appropriated by the overwhelmingly mainstreamed culture of business and capitalism. As Carrette and King sharply comment, spirituality has already been appropriated by the business culture to sustain the interest of capitalism and to serve the altar of neo-liberalism.[45]

Christian theologians face double restrictions when they come to build a theology that considers the political, liberation, and freedom. The first restriction is that the theory of secularisation not only is an academic assumption proposed by sociologists but one that turns to the reality that people think about in the relationship between religion and society. Religion and the discourse of Christian theology, therefore, are expected to withdraw from the public sphere. Theologians are discouraged from giving too many opinions on social issues or intervening in any social policy. The action to withdraw religion from the public

[43] Ibid., 27-28.
[44] Ibid., 56-57.
[45] Ibid., 28.

sphere, moreover, meets up with the expectation of contemporary spirituality, which has been privatised and individualised. Religion, the church, and Christian spirituality are private and individual. These personal practices of knowing God are framed as having nothing to do with the political and the public.

Considering the failure of several revolutions and social movements from empirical experiences and the double restrictions of Christian theology in the binary of secularisation and of privatised spirituality, I propose in this dissertation the concept of 'micro-political theology.' Micro-political theology, in comparison to a macro-political theology that actively participates in transforming society with revolutionaries and social activists, points out the different levels of political resistance in spirituality through discerning the power deployments and construction of the self and the process of subjectification. It also attempts to rescue Christianity and Christian theology from being fragmented in the privatisation of religion and secularisation in order to restore the wholeness of society and humanity. Christianity itself should not be considered as an isolated realm from other dimensions of the world, such as the social, political, and economic sphere.[46] In addition, 'spirituality is *always* bound up with political questions, even when the term is defined in apparently apolitical terms.'[47] The retrieval of theology and spirituality, situating them in the public political sphere, is the first and alternative step of political resistance.

The Structure of the Dissertation

The introduction has mapped the social context of contemporary Christian theology and provided scenarios and questions to open the issue of the limits of liberation. The following chapters will address the problem of liberation within theology in three steps: first, the critical limits of liberation theologies; second, Foucault's alternative approach; and third, a new micro-political theology.

In chapter one, I will focus on Christian theology itself, particularly the development of the classical texts of liberation theologies (as a plural noun). I argue that, along with other revolutionaries and social activists, liberation theologies (including Latin American Liberation

[46] Ibid., 4.
[47] Ibid., 172.

Theology, feminist theology, womanist theology from the Third World and queer theology) attempt to bring about liberation and freedom to different groups of the oppressed. They proposed a new theological methodology to shift the focus from the doctrinal concern of God to the empirical experience of humanity. However, I will argue that liberation theologies, even though they keep adjusting their theologies within the whole tradition, repeatedly fall into the same problems: the definition of the oppressed, the overemphasis on social structure, and the neglect of individual empirical experience. These problems force liberation theologies into a lack of understanding of the political, which does not appear or function in social structure alone, but works and imposes itself on the human body, on sexuality, and on desire.

The criticism of liberation theologies from the reconsideration of body, sexuality, and desire is based on the philosophy of Michel Foucault. In chapter two, I will introduce Foucault's philosophy of power relationships to scrutinise the traditionalist concept of liberation and freedom, which has been widely accepted and assumed in the mind of revolutionaries, social activists, and liberation theologians. Foucault reminds us that the work of power relationships is dynamic, flexible, and productive. Power relationships do not even need to work 'within' a social structure. When we consider liberation and freedom, we also need to consider how power relationships re-capture the fruits of liberation and freedom in a new form of power deployments. Foucault's thought draws a picture for us of political resistance that is an endless and continuous battle with flexible, living, and dynamic power relationships. This resistance never ends in a final settlement. On the other hand, Foucault's concern with sexuality, body, and desire also opens the way of micro-political theology to consider subjectification, which is the process of the construction of the self, a strategy of political resistance.

My proposal of micro-political theology, however, is not the first theology that concerns sexuality, desire and body. In chapter three, I will examine three Christian theologians who have already proposed a theology in relation to sexuality, desire and body: Marcella Althaus-Reid, Jung Mo Sung, and Daniel Bell. Althaus-Reid and Sung are from the background of Latin American Liberation Theology. However, Althaus-Reid's indecent theology contends that liberation theology, without criticising its cooperation with

heteronormativity and colonialism, keeps reproducing dominance over poor women and sexual minorities. This results in liberation theology being unable to bring about liberation and freedom to the most oppressed. Sung's criticism is more traditionally rooted in Latin American Liberation Theology, which considers economic exploitation and capitalism. He points out that capitalism has become the worship of idolatry and that it is all about money and greed. He also points out that capitalism takes God's people away from desiring and worshipping God. Sung's criticism echoes Bell's theology, from its Radical Orthodoxy background, emphasising an ontological concern about how capitalism has distorted and shaped human desire. For Bell, recognising and orientating human desire is not the work of capitalism or economic theory but the goal of Christian theology. Christian theology, in this sense, has to take the responsibility for disciplining human desire.

These three writers point out the significance of sexuality, desire, and body in the construction of liberation theology but they also ignore how the self is still in the process of becoming a subject. The subject of the self is the place where sexuality, desire and body can be embodied. That is, in terms of Foucault, sexuality, desire and body cannot be regarded as a fixed or stable substance.

In the concluding chapter, I will come back to the question: 'What is the next step for the theology of liberation?' My answer is that micro-political theology should concern the process of constructing the self within the deployments of power relationships in order to recognise the delicate and complicated work of oppression. This approach does not mean that revolution and social movement at the level of political-economic level are unimportant or useless. It means that the future of liberation theology must consider the subject of the self, because subjectification has already been constructed by power and politics. The transformation must work at both levels of social structure and of individuality. In this view, the practice of spirituality, related to the discernment and construction of the self within power relationships, is political and politically resistive.

Appendix 1: We Can Do It, made by J. Howard Miller.[48]

Appendix 2: We Can Do It, photographed by Beyonce[49]

[48] J. Howard Miller, "We Can Do It!," in *National Museum of American History* (1942).
[49] Beyonce, "We Can Do It," (Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/p/qwWCsgPw7N/?modal=true, 22 Jul 2014).

CHAPTER ONE The Failure of Liberation Theologies

The Critical Review of the Theology for the Oppressed

In the introduction, I raised the main research question: 'Can revolutions and social movements bring liberation and freedom?' I then pointed out that these socialist revolutions and social movements of civil rights and gender equality have failed to maintain the 'fruit' of liberation. While making advances, there remain key limitations. In this sense, I am not convinced that revolution and social movements can bring permanent liberation and freedom to the oppressed. In this chapter, I will argue that liberation theologies have reproduced the assumptions and strategies which are proposed by revolutionists and social activists so that they fall into the same trap, failing to maintain the liberation and freedom of the oppressed people.

In order to show the development of liberation theologies and the reason for its failure, I will ask the same question in this chapter, 'whether liberation theologies successfully bring liberation and freedom to the oppressed.' I will start with a discussion of the birth of liberation theologies, when self-identified liberation theologians proposed a 'new' political theology that differed from the 'old' political theology of Carl Schmitt. I will then review different branches of liberation theologies (Latin American liberation theology, feminist theology, womanist theology, and queer theology) and consider some of the foundational texts within these different critical traditions as a way to unpack the concerns of the thesis.[50] I consider the development of these branches of liberation theologies as an evolutionary process, within which they self-criticise and revise the problems and correct the mistakes of each other. This means that different branches of liberation theologies are not independent but are in a conversation to build up the theology of liberation to the different groups of the oppressed and to challenge oppression.

Based on this consideration of the evolutionary development of liberation theologies, I will point out that although different branches of liberation theologies have

[50] In this chapter, I will discuss the works of some key liberation theologians from different branches by examining the selected texts. It is not my aim to survey the whole literature of any individual liberation theology. My aim is to show and review the methodology they share and apply within the bigger picture of liberation theologies and within various branches.

proposed various dimensions of liberation, they all share the same methodology. The outcome of this methodology is that all liberation theologians replicate of a narrow understanding of power relationships and oppression. They lack the consideration of the experience of a subject within the whole development of liberation theologies. In order to demonstrate the failure of liberation theologies, which causes the failure to set the oppressed free, I will start to review the birth of the tradition of liberation theologies.

In the **first** part, I will point out that the birth of liberation theologies is the opposition of an old political theology, which was concerned with how politics of the state and authority becomes theological. The focus of the old political theology is on the justification of society and the state. However, liberation theologies, dubbed 'a new political theology,' shift the focus of political theology from the consideration of society and the state to the consideration of the churches. This is about how the church acts politically to liberate and set people free from oppression. In the **second** part, I will examine the methodology that was founded by Latin American liberation theology, one of the most fundamental branches of liberation theologies. Latin American liberation theology affirms the ecclesiological responsibility of the church in the secular sector and emphasises the experience of human suffering within social structure. Particularly, it prioritises the experience of the economic poor.

The priority of the experience of the poor is criticised by feminist theology from the methodological point of view. Feminist theology, discussed in the **third** part, prioritises the experience of women's oppression and calls for the building of an inclusive community to subvert patriarchy, which has been taken for granted in Latin American liberation theology. However, in the **fourth** part, I argue that womanist theology, whose voice come mainly from the Third World, is not satisfied with the criticism of (White) feminist theology. This is because White feminist theology ignores that oppression can be multiple. Women in Asia and Africa, for example, suffer from other structural oppression in terms of race, social class, and colonialism. This womanist revision enlarges the scope of the analysis of social structure, which recognises the entanglement of various dimensions of social oppression. It also allows the theology to continue to listen to the stories about diversity of human

experience rather than to reduce them simultaneously to a consequence of social structural analysis.

At the end, I insist that the revision within the development of liberation theologies is not radical enough if liberation theologies merely focus on a definition of the poorest people within the social structure. Political theology must recognise, in the view of Michel Foucault, how the oppressed suffer and how oppression works within social structure and beyond the analysis of social structure. This critique will be discussed more in the next chapter.

A New Political Theology: Liberation Theologies

The attitude towards the relationship that exists between the secular state and the church—the main issue of political theology—has been under debate since the twentieth century, due to opposition to the political theology of Carl Schmitt.

Schmitt's political theology is more 'sociological' rather than 'theological.' In his time, when the country fell into the chaotic political situation in Post-War Germany, he attempted to explain the way authority and sovereignty function. He believed that the church and the state share the same role as representatives of a juridical person. He argued that political power 'rests neither on economic nor on military means but rather on the absolute realization of authority.'[51] When the state wants to replace the power of the church, the state must build up its own authority and sovereignty, which can always justify its power and defend against all threats. The contemporary system of the law of the state, in this sense, is just a replacement for the church's canon law.[52] Schmitt revealed the concealed connection between traditional religious power and contemporary secular power. He pointed out that the authority and sovereignty of the secular state is constructed in the support of the theology of the state, which justifies its power.

[51] Carl Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, trans. G. L. Ulmen (Westport, Conn. : Greenwood Press, 1996), 18-19.
[52] Michael Hollerich, "Carl Schmitt," in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, ed. Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 112.

In other words, Schmitt affirms that the viability of politics and the stability of the state are based on the use of political language, which is translated from theology, and they themselves eventually become theological.[53]

> All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development – in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver – but also because of their systematic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concepts.[54]

Schmitt's political theology, which reveals the way the state translates theology for building up its power, is a cultural analysis. It examines how society and the state justify themselves by means of the theology they constructed. It also explores how Christian theological concepts have been secularised and appropriated by the secular power. The creation of the mythology of the state by creating its own god and by replacing the power of religion, is its strategy for control over society.

Schmitt's political theology introduces the concept that all social dimensions are penetrated by politics and that there is no non-political field.[55] This approach defines the subject dubbed 'political theology' in the twentieth century in Europe. However, it has been challenged by the new theological project proposed by Latin American liberation theologians. This is because Schmitt's political theology puts too much emphasis on the political rather than on Christian theology, as well as on the authority and sovereignty of the

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[53] Carl Schmitt's 'theological politics' in comparison with 'philosophical politics' has been discussed by Heinrich Meier. See Heinrich Meier, *The Lesson of Carl Schmitt: Four Chapters on the Distinction between Political Theology and Political Philosophy*, trans. Marcus Brainard (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Also, Andrew Norris, "Carl Schmitt's Political Metaphysics: On the Secularization of" the Outermost Sphere"," *Theory & Event* 4, no. 1 (2000).

[54] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty (1922)*, trans. George Schwab, University of Chicago Press ed. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 36.

[55] *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 23-25.

state rather than the responsibility of the church.[56] The new political theology, including liberation theology,[57] draws attention back to an ecclesiological issue, which concerns the nature of the Church and the political practice of the Church.[58] This is in response to the Ten Commandments, broadly summarised as loving God and your neighbours, and the church's engagement in social transformation in the reality of secularised societies. Jürgen Moltmann highlights a contrast between old and new political theology and he comments:

> [The political theology is] not about a metaphysics of the state or an apocalyptic rationale of permanent world war, but rather the political engagement of the church in the world of the poor and Christian commitment to 'justice, peace and the integrity of creation'.[59]

The birth of the new political theology reminds the Church that it has a significant political duty of being a witness of the love of Christ through 'participating' in social transformation. Liberation theology, in this sense, is not a 'philosophy of consciousness,' which constructs itself from the view of transcendental God looking into the world. Instead, it is a call for action, 'proceeding in line with a dialectical concept of temporality.'[60] This is an anthropological shift. It engages in active movements, which are more practical in response to human conditions. The competition with secular power by means of restoring the authority and sovereignty of the Church is not a concern for the new political theology anymore. The Church, on the contrary, is regarded as an autonomous body that is free from all secular powers rather than a server or a governor of them. The Church even inclines

[56] Agamben also argues that sovereign power has its own 'theology'. It is because that sovereign power claims to be the purpose of all human actitivies and gives us the possibility of creating new and different purposes for ourselves. At the same time, ironically, sovereign power itself is fundamentally empty and void. See, Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government (Homo Sacer Ii, 2)*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa and Matteo Mandarini (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011).
[57] Here, I refer 'liberation theology' in a singular style to Latin American liberation theology, which is regarded as the primary form of liberation theologies.
[58] Johann Baptist Metz, "Two-Fold Political Theology," in *Political Theology: Contemporary Challenges and Future Directions*, ed. Michael Welker, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013).
[59] Jürgen Moltmann, "Political Theology in Ecumenical Contexts," ibid., 4.
[60] Johann Baptist Metz, "Two-Fold Political Theology," ibid., 14.

towards being a counter to an oppressive government, especially when it is free from pursuing any power in the secular sector. This concern of the new political theology reveals the different understanding of the relationship between the Church and the secular world. In the later part, I will discuss the development of the new political theology.

The ghost of Schmitt's political theology has not yet died out, particularly in the Global North. I argue that the theology of development is a version of the revival of Schmitt's political theology. Thia Cooper, in her creative work *Controversies in Political Theology: Development or Liberation* (2007), points out that the contribution of political theology is debatable. She reflects on its responses to the changing context of capitalist expansion and unstable political relations.[61] For instance, in the 1960s, the activities and policies that supported any form of development in Latin America had been involved and engaged, but its theological reflections have been missed.[62] The Church and political theologians put considerable efforts into supporting the notion of development, which was based on the dominant and mainstream economic theory that was accepted by most countries at that time. Christians were also encouraged to believe that economic growth is positive and to assist fairer trade and increased aid. Their supports of fair trade and aid continue to this day.[63] This, in the view of Cooper, is categorised as 'the theology of development' which sustains economic development policies directed by states and which turns out to underpin capitalism. Under such circumstances, the Church is silenced and loses its agency that should be independent from the authoritative direction of the state. It ends up backing the mythology of capitalism and of secular sovereignty.[64] The theology of development appears to be a theology that 'theologises' politics by means of supporting the policies of capitalism-influenced states.

The ghost of Schmitt's political theology has also been resurrected in another form, which is called 'public theology'. Max Stackhouse, an important defender of public theology, argues that previous approaches to political theology are deeply rooted in Constantinianism

[61] Thia Cooper, *Controversies in Political Theology: Development or Liberation?* (London: SCM Press, 2007).
[62] Ibid., 33.
[63] Ibid.
[64] In Cooper's argument, the self-reflection of the theology of development gave birth to liberation theology. Ibid., 38-41. For example, Ronald Preston suggested that because of our being made in the image of God, 'perhaps the underlying Christian concern is to insist that "economic growth is made for man and not man for economic growth"' ibid., 38.

(policies favoured by Constantine the Great in the 4th century). As a result, the Church attempts to offer a political solution to solve the social crisis.[65] Public theology, in this sense, considers the public rather than the politics. This is not only because it believes that the category of the public covers a wider range of human life but also because 'it wants politics to be the limited servant of the other institutions of society.'[66] Public theology maintains that its duty is to encourage Christians to address the world by developing a theology 'that is able to access and reform the institutions of civil society.'[67] That is, its duty is not to challenge or to discipline the politics but to firstly accept, or 'to access', in Stackhouse's words, the structure that is given by the state and then to reform it. Public theology, in practice, ends up joining the alliance of the state through backing up its ideology, which pretendedly calls 'public' value, which is proposed by the state.[68] At this point, we can see how the ghost of Schmitt's political theology still haunts various branches of political theology, including public theology.

Therefore, I argue that public theology and the theology of development are a continuation of Schmitt's political theology because they are all still concerned with the theologising and consecration of secular powers and public value. This is different from the attitude of the new political theology, which is liberation theology, towards secular powers and capitalism. They prefer to challenge the state and the secular powers rather than to back them up or to theologise them, in terms of the autonomous subjectivity of the Church. This revolutionary attitude is shared by the whole tradition of liberation theologies, which is the main theme of this chapter.

[65] Max Stackhouse, "Civil Religion, Political Theology and Public Theology: What's the Difference?," in *Christian in Public: Aims, Methodologies, and Issues in Public Theology*, ed. Len Hensan (Stellenbosch: African Sun Media, 2007), 83-84.
[66] Ibid., 88.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Public theologians attempt to value various concepts of public value, usually arguably considered as Western political values. For example, the significance of democracy in relation to human image of God is discussed in Max L Stackhouse, *Public Theology and Political Economy: Christian Stewardship in Modern Society* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987). The theological justification of human rights can be seen: David Hollenbach, *The Global Face of Public Faith: Politics, Human Rights, and Christian Ethics* (Georgetown University Press Washington, DC, 2003).

The Foundation: Latin American liberation theology

Latin American liberation theology is regarded as a foundation stone of liberation theologies, known as the 'new political theology,' but this does not mean there had been no theology striving for liberation, such as the early wave of feminist theology.[69] The contribution of Latin American liberation theology, I argue, is to 'systematise' the methodology of the theology of liberation, or, in other words, to 'define' what the theology of liberation is for the following developing traditions. There are four contributions of Latin American liberation theology to liberation theologies: an ecclesiological concern, the action in the present context, the focus of human experience, and the priority of the poor. I will explore each of these in turn.

First, Latin American liberation theology triggers **an ecclesiological concern**. It means that the subject of doing political theology is the Church. This concern is significant in Latin America where Christianity is the majority religion. However, the Church in Latin America did not sufficiently respond to its oppressive context in politics, economy and global marginalisation.[70] The Church, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, was spiritualised merely as a religious organisation so that the mission of the Church was narrowed to save people's spirits to go to Heaven after death by means of providing 'spiritual' breads. This theology ignored the significance of serving a real bread that feeds people's physical bodies. Additionally, as Kee and Sugirtharajah criticise, the churches in Latin America, which accepted the assumption of secularisation and reproduced the theology from imperialist Europe, remained powerless in the oppressive situation.[71]

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[69] The first-wave feminism, usually defined in the nineteenth century, focuses on the equal participation of women in the male-dominant world and religion; for example, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Seneca Falls Convention published *The Woman's Bible* (1895) to read the Bible from the women's perspective. The further discussion will be developed in the next part of the chapter.

[70] Christian Smith, a sociologist, has a good introduction and analysis about the relationship between the development of liberation and its historical context since 1930 via Vatican II council in 1960s. See, Christian Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology: Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[71] The Church in Latin America has an inseparable relation with European colonists since its development worked with the expansion of the imperialism and colonialism. The theology being taught in the Latin American churches inherited the European theological tradition which was standing with the colonists. This critique has been noticed by Althaus-Reid who strongly criticises the influence of colonialism in Mariology. This point will be discussed in the latter part of the chapter. Also, Kee and Sugirtharajah criticise that liberation theology is not enough aware of colonialism which is the root of Latin American liberation theology. See, R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Alistair Kee, *Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology* (London: SCM

William Cavanaugh, a Roman Catholic theologian of 'Eucharistic politics,' gives a good example of a Church that lacked power to challenge the oppressive political system in Chile, by showing the relationship between political torture and the dysfunction of the Eucharistic body.[72] He argues that when the reign of Pinochet forced the people to be dominated by the power of the state through the appropriation of abuse, terror and torture, the Church did not stand up for fighting against the dictatorship. This is because the Church as the Body of Christ was so 'handicapped' by the secular state that she lost her body in which the Church embodies and functions.[73] Cavanaugh furthermore explains that this inclination towards the dysfunctional Body of Christ resulted from the theology of Jacques Maritain, which was the most popular and mainstream Catholic theology at that time. In the view of Maritain, the Church exercises an indirect power over the temporal only in the form of 'counsels' or 'direction,' specifically as a director of morality and a saver of spirits and souls.[74]

Cavanaugh's theology provides us with the background knowledge of understanding why Latin American liberation theology needs an ecclesiological concern, which means that the Church, as the Body of Christ, is the subject and agent of political theology. When the Church was under the threat of the power of the state, she was not concerned with physical bodies experiencing pain, hunger, and cold. The secular state, simultaneously, slides into the replacement of God by claiming itself as an omnipotent governor of the world. This overemphasis on the spiritual body of the Church has been considered by many Latin American liberation theologians, particularly Roman Catholic theologians who are more interested in sacramental practice, such as Rafael Avila. Avila emphasises that the nature of the Church is the 'Body' of Christ, which is a real body that is able to function, to be a live presence and to freely act in society.[75]

Press, 1990).

[72] William T Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998).

[73] Ibid., 21-71.

[74] Ibid., 161; Jacques Maritain, *The Things That Are Not Caesar's*, trans. James Fr Scanlan (New York: C. Scribner's sons, 1931).

[75] The body of Christ manifests in the Eucharistic body of Christ and in the body of the Church. The further reading about the Eucharistic body of Christ in the world can see: Rafael Avila P, *Worship and Politics (1977)*, trans. Alan Neely (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981). He argues that the Eucharist itself is political 'in itself' and occurs necessarily in a political context in the context of Latin America (in the book's chapter 3).

In this sense, Latin American liberation theology's ecclesiological concern is resistance against the secular power, which attempts to silence the voice of the Church, separate her from society, and restrain her subjectivity. Latin American liberation theology deeply suspects the theory of secularisation and old political theology. Its ecclesiological concern encourages the political participation of the Church to respond to contextual issues because, in the Eucharistic celebration, the ecclesiological Body of Christ is instituted in the world.

The second contribution to liberation theologies is to remind theologians of doing theology as **an action in the present context**. Raul Vidales, a Mexican liberation theologian, points out that liberation theology 'conducts a hermeneutic process regarding the present from within the context of the present, ever remaining open to the future as it does so.'[76] Liberation theologians shift its focus from a doctrine-oriented and doctrine-constructed paradigm to one that is practice-oriented. This is known as a 'praxis-based' paradigm. They criticise European and Northern American academic theology for being obsessed with the interpretation of transcendental God and creating God in philosophical doctrine.[77] However, the philosophising of God is problematic because this is misled by 'the first moment of modernity characterised by the thought of Descartes and especially Kant.'[78] This is also supported by a Thomist preference to systematise Christian doctrine.[79] European and Northern American academic theologians, who introduce a set of philosophical concepts such as rationality and subjective responsibility, construct their theology in an abstract way, which is remote from people's daily life.[80]

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[76] Raul Vidales, "Methodological Issues in Liberation Theology," in *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*, ed. Rosino Gibellini (London: SCM Press, 1979), 36.

[77] See, Ivan Petrella, ed. *Latin American Liberation Theology: The Next Generation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2005).

[78] Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992), 64.

[79] For example, systematic theology and philosophical theology are subjects in European faculties of theology. This is as what *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, which has been updated for five times as the bestselling theological textbook in English-speaking areas, mentions that the architecture of theology includes Biblical studies, *systematic* theology, *philosophical* theology, historical theology, pastoral theology, and spirituality or mystical theology. See, Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology : An Introduction*, 5th ed. ed. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 104-10.

[80] For example, in the field of Christian ethics, Banner criticises this kind of abstract moral theology so he proposes 'everyday ethics' or 'the ethics of everyday life,' considering the real context of moral decisions. See, Michael C. Banner, *The Ethics of Everyday Life: Moral Theology, Social Anthropology, and the Imagination of the Human* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Latin American liberation theologians criticise academic theology and argue that 'rationality or intellectual knowledge was not enough to constitute genuine knowledge.'[81] They put emphasis on 'praxis,' which implies an action connecting what we believe with what we practice in the process of theological reflection. Doing theology has to be involved with taking an action, because truth, as Vidales said, 'is not simply something that can be known or talked about but something that must be acted upon and realised in deeds.'[82] Liberation theology challenges any theology that lives in an ivory tower and is distant from the reality of human life. In this sense, we can conclude that doing theology is not merely to 'interpret' but to 'change.' This statement is rephrased from Marx's critique of Feuerbach that 'the philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it.'[83] Doing theology involving an action to change makes Latin American liberation theology different from European and Northern American academic theology.

The third contribution of Latin American liberation theology is to **focus on the experience of human suffering**. Recognising the experience of human suffering is a tool for making theological reflection more contextual and a strategy for rejecting doing abstract theology from above, like academic theology.[84] Latin American liberation theologians say the recognition of human suffering is caused and defined by an oppressive system. However, doing theology from human experience is not meant to be anthropocentric, the prioritisation of human over God. On the contrary, it means opening its space of having a 'dialectical relationship' between human experience and the word of God.[85] Theology, in this view, is a journey and the process of knowing God and God's action, because God's people keep reading the word of God interactively and encountering God in person rather than receiving a one-way revelation from God, which seems to be objective and absolute.[86]

The focus on the experience of human suffering, for Latin American liberation theologians, is not to rationalise the suffering but to listen to the voice of sufferers. Gustavo

[81] Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 65.
[82] Vidales, "Methodological Issues in Liberation Theology," 38.
[83] Cited from Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 65.
[84] Vidales, "Methodological Issues in Liberation Theology," 43.
[85] Ibid., 44.
[86] This criticism has been well developed by John A.T. Robinson in his controversial book, *Honest to God*. He rejects to think God from 'up there' and argues that we need to think about God through our existence and the culture we situate in. God continues to reveal God-self but not necessarily in religion or the Church. See, John A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (London: SCM Press, 1963).

Gutierrez, in his book *On Job*, points out that Job, who was a righteous person, disputed all reasons that were given to rationalise his suffering. Job refused to repent for sins he has not committed. This experience of Job is shared by all sufferers and it encourages them to 'make a plea' to God the Judge.[87] It is paradoxical that when the sufferers ask God about why they suffer, they are in fact encountering God. This questioning is the first step of 'doing' theology. As Job responded to God, 'I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you.'[88] Job met and saw God in person when he questioned God and made his pleas and complaints rather than tamely bearing his suffering in silence. The experience of Job, who had experienced huge suffering in his life, teaches Latin American liberation theologians that the recognition of the experience of suffering yields a space for listening to the sufferers and observing the real situation of the sufferers as it happens. The focus on the experience of suffering draws the attention of theologians to the reality of human life and to the on-going conversation between God and God's people.

On the other hand, the concern with human experience does not mean that a psychological approach showing sympathy and compassion to the sufferers is a right one. This concern points to the critical viewpoint of political-economic structure, which is the cause of suffering. Liberation theologians assume the existence of social structure and all human beings situated in the structure. This structure is the cause of the suffering so it cannot be ignored when liberation theologians would like to listen to the voice of suffering. For example, economic dependency theory is widely used in Latin American liberation theology to analyse the socio-economic reality of Latin America.[89] 'It made possible,' as Gutierrez argues, 'a structural analysis of the evils present in this reality, and suggested courses for remedying them.'[90] The view of social structural analysis, originally as a

[87] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1987).
[88] Job 42: 5
[89] 'An initial wave of dependency thinking was triggered by the work of the Argentine economist Raúl Prebisch (1901–1986). He introduced the idea of an industrial, hegemonic centre and an agrarian, dependent periphery as a framework for understanding the emerging international division of labour between North and South. Prebisch argued that the wealth of poor nations tended to decrease when that of rich nations increased due to an unequal exchange of industrial versus agricultural goods in the North-South trading relationship'. See, William A. Darity, Jr., ed. *Dependency Theory*, 2nd ed. ed., vol. 2, International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2008), 300.
[90] Gustavo Gutiérrez, "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 22.

supportive tool for understanding human experience, helps liberation theologians to grasp the broad picture of the context that explains why people suffer. This reliance on structural analysis in order to understand the suffering is initiated by the motivation to focus on the human experience. This application of sociological structural analysis will be examined later in the chapter.

The final contribution provided by Latin American liberation theology is **the priority of the experience of the poor**. This contribution is built from a fundamental question that is asked by liberation theologians: who suffers the most? The answer of Latin American liberation theologians is that it is poor people, especially those who are in economic poverty. A group of Latin American liberation theologians open the Bible and realise that Jesus has given, in the Beatitudes, a clear and simple teaching that 'blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'[91] God particularly blesses the poor and reveals God's self within them.[92] Latin American liberation theology criticises the previous theology, particularly European and North American academic theology, which is too privileged to accept this simple teaching. It furthermore argues that theology, as Christopher Rowland concludes, must be 'rooted in ordinary people's everyday experience of povert.'[93] If theology cannot give up the privilege inherited from European colonialism and to listen to the suffering, as Gutierrez argues, it will never be able to approach God and know God's teaching; since God is revealed in the cry of the sufferers.[94]

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[91] Matthew 5: 3. Also, liberation theologians prove that the poor has privilege according to the Bible. The related discussions can be seen: Norman K. Gottwald, ed. *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983).

[92] I prefer using the term 'God-self' over 'Himself' in order to avoid the masculine pronoun for God and to reject imposing sexuality on God. The term, 'God-self,' has been adopted in the liturgy of some inclusive churches. For example, since 1981, *Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC) Inclusive Language Policy and Guidelines* has declared: 'Where possible, replace pronouns with non-gendered nouns, or use balanced gendered pronouns or words such as "who", "whom", "one", and "God-self".'
However, this term is not perfect always. For example, Nancy A. Hardesty pointed out that the word God-self works in a sentence such as 'God made us for Godself.' It does not work as well in a sentence like 'God himself is at work in our lives.' Therefore, she proposed that 'one suggestion here is to adopt the language of Scripture and creed to say "God, very God, is at work in our lives." Or one can achieve the same emphasis by doubling the names of God as in "God Almighty is at work in our lives."' Nancy A Hardesty, *Inclusive Language in the Church* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1987), 57-58.

[93] Christopher Rowland, "Introduction: The Theology of Liberation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1-2.

[94] The meaning of poverty is amplified to include at least three concepts in 1967: material poverty, spiritual poverty and poverty as a commitment to be assumed by all Christians. And this amplified understanding of poverty is accepted by Gustavo Gutiérrez too. See, Gustavo Gutiérrez, "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology," ibid. (2007), 25-26.

The priority of the experience of the poor, in the process of constructing liberation theology, challenges the long theological tradition that has been dominated by intellectual theologians and church-elites. Latin American liberation theologians do not believe that educated expert theologians 'have a privileged position in the understanding of God as there is emphasis on the insight of the poor as interpreters of the word of God,'[95] even though they might be able to read the Bible in Greek or in Hebrew and with the strong background knowledge of ancient Jewish tradition. They devalue the theology that is based on the experience of rich people. Gutierrez insists that 'what runs like a thread through all liberation theology is a commitment based on contemplation of God in the suffering Christ whose presence is hidden in the poor.'[96] And this understanding of a hidden God in the presence of the poor has been concealed.

Moreover, the priority of the experience of the poor is not knowledge that leads to action, but knowledge that comes from action. Latin American liberation theologians do not propose a theological methodology that reproduces academic theology, which initiates the intellectual philosophical thinking. They argue instead that theological knowledge is based on the reflection on their action in society and politics. The first and primary step of doing theology is to be in solidarity with the poor; that is, action is prior to thinking and praxis is prior to theory. For example, Latin American liberation theologians do not 'conceptualise' sin but regard sin as segregation in society and between God and all creatures.[97] As Gutierrez argues:

> [Sin is] the break in our friendships with God and in our fraternity with humans …the refusal to accept another as a brother and sister, in oppressive structures built up for the benefit of a few, in the despoliation of peoples, races, cultures and social classes.[98]

[95] Christopher Rowland, "Introduction: The Theology of Liberation," ibid. (1999), 11.
[96] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1990), 3.
[97] This concept of salvation regarding sin as isolation is developed by queer theology in liberation agendas. See, Patrick S. Cheng, *From Sin to Amazing Grace: Discovering the Queer Christ* (New York: Seabury Books, 2012).
[98] Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Faith as Freedom: Solidarity with the Alienated and Confidence in the Future," *Horizons* 2, no. 01 (1975): 48-49.

The action of being in solidarity with the poor is, in the theological sense, the action of salvation to redeem the poor from sin. It allows the poor to vocalise their experience and requires theologians and the Church to hear their voice. This free and creative expression of the poor, who share their suffering in poverty in society and in the people of God, is the foundation of an authentic theology of liberation.[99] It shows that the ultimate purpose of doing liberation theology is not to build an abstract theology in an academic ivory tower, but, as Rebecca Chopp comments, to 'guide the transformation of all human beings into new ways of being human'.[100] The priority of the experience of the poor helps Latin American liberation theologians to participate in social transformation, including through being in solidarity with the poor. This listening to the cry of the sufferers is the starting point for bringing about change. The journey itself is doing Latin American liberation theology.

Apart from these four contributions of Latin American liberation theology, I want to critique its theological methodology, which might be inherited or revised in later development of liberation theologies. Firstly, although Latin American liberation theology has pinpointed how academic elites control the power of constructing theology, it does not elucidate the issue of '**the power of interpretation**' well. Who owns the power of interpreting the experience of the poor? When liberation theologians claim to prioritise the suffering of the poor, especially those who are illiterate or uneducated, can these poor people tell their own stories? Or do the elites and theologians still get involved in the process of interpreting the experience of the poor?[101] This is not a question of whether the poor are 'allowed' to speak, but of how educated and academic theologians can truly understand and learn from their situation and story. Liberation theologians have made efforts to organise 'Christian Base Communities,' which are sharing groups where theologians and poor people can read and reflect on the Bible together; however, this does not mean the gap between the poor and academics is removed.[102] In the process of

[99] Ibid., 51-52.

[100] Rebecca S. Chopp, "Latin American Liberation Theology," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century, Volume Ii*, ed. David Ford (Oxford, OX, UK: B. Blackwell, 1989), 174.

[101] Thistlethwaite has a similar observation and critique. See, Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, "On Becoming a Traitor: The Academic Liberation Theologian and the Future," in *Liberating the Future: God, Mammon, and Theology*, ed. Joerg Rieger (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 25.

[102] Christian Base Communities established in different countries in Latin America to gather people to read the Bible together and think how to act in our everyday life. And this kind of gathering and organisation fosters the development of democracy in Brazil and Chile, see James C Cavendish, "Christian Base Communities and the

producing theology from the experience of the poor, the experience of the poor becomes new materials to be 'used' and 'appropriated' by theologians. Although the cry of the poor starts to be listened to, their cry still must be mediated and translated by theologians to serve in the academic circle. In other words, the poor are 'alienated' from their story and experience.[103] The experience of the poor, from the perspective of academic theologians, is merely a theology of 'the other,' which is something of a novelty.

In addition, the poor become those who need to be listened to rather than writers to be read, because they do not know how to write and present their suffering. It is vitally important to listen to their experience, but it is treated as an 'objectified text,' whose authors are assumed to be dead and whose readers are actively alive. The poor can never be the authors of their own story. Liberation theologians keep seizing the power to interpret the story and insist that the experience of the poor must be explained and understood in the view of political-economic structure, which points out the cause of their suffering. For example, Latin American liberation theologians collect and listen to the story and experience of the poor 'in order to' prove the validity of economic dependency theory, which has been applied by theologians to explain the phenomenon of oppression. The experience of the poor is used to challenge unjust social structures rather than to listen to their story properly. 'In the name of bringing about liberation and freedom to the poor,' liberation theologians re-gain the power of building the theology 'of' the poor by means of interpreting the experience of the poor. The poor, in this view, are objectified as 'useful' and 'valuable' others.

My second critique is **the neglect of the diverse experiences of the poor**. For Latin American liberation theologians, there is an only one singular experience of the poor, which is defined by their position within a political-economic structure. On the one hand, structural analysis helps to define and recognise the function of oppression within social

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Building of Democracy: Brazil and Chile," *Sociology of Religion* 55, no. 2 (1994).

[103] Here, I use the term 'alienation' to criticise how Marxist-influenced liberation theologians alienate the experience of the poor. In Marx's thought, alienation occurs when labourers are separated from what they produce so that a product will not belong to its producer anymore. That is, capitalism reduces the labour of the worker to a commercial commodity in order to trade it in the market. See, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2009[1844]). In this sense, Latin American liberation theologians also grab the experience of the poor and separate the poor from their experience in order to 'trade' them in their academic market.

structures. On the other hand, it simplifies and generalises all individual experiences into one model, which is easier for social activists and revolutionists to be in solidarity with. For example, the diverse experiences of the poor in Mexico or in Brazil, or even in India, are not important for Latin American liberation theologians because they are all categorised as 'the poor.' The poor share the same structural position (they are all in peripheral and underdeveloped countries, where they are exploited, according to economic dependency theory, by the wealthy core countries). The structural position of the poor 'describes' their experience. In the name of being in solidarity with 'all the poor,' the generalisation of the diverse experiences of the poor becomes 'acceptable,' regardless of race, religion, sexuality and nationality.[104] However, this overemphasis on the 'universal' experience of the poor in Latin American liberation theology influences the development of future liberation theologies; for example, the debate between feminist theology and womanist theology.

The Challenge: (White) Feminist theology

Feminist theology poses a challenge to Latin American liberation theologians in the debate of the representation of the sufferer. Latin American liberation theologians believe that the experience of the poor is the most representative of the sufferer in general. However, feminist theologians, like Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, insist that sexism is the most fundamental and primary oppression in human history—women suffer the most.[105] In comparison to the situation of the poor, who can easily find Biblical quotes and reclaim and re-discover the Biblical texts to empower them, the suffering of women is more implicit and less recognisable because women are oppressed even by their religious faith and spirituality. Mary Daly, in common with many feminist theologians, feels very disappointed and powerless while reading the Bible to empower and liberate herself. The Church has a long history of normalising sexism and patriarchy 'under the guise of the name of God.' The

[104] For example, Ivan Petrella, one of the most important young liberation theologians, makes a bridge between his own context in North America and the original context of liberation theology in Latin America. He argues that the context of poverty and economic oppression is not unique or distinctive but is a shared phenomenon all over the world. He regards the world as a zone of social abandonment, or called 'Vita.' Ivan Petrella, *Beyond Liberation Theology: A Polemic* (London: SCM Press, 2008), 5-45.

[105] Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "Critical Feminist the*Logy of Liberation: A Decolonizing Political the*Logy," in *Political Theology: Contemporary Challenges and Future Directions*, ed. Michael Welker, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 27.

Bible and the formation of the church tradition are entirely misogynist.[106] The authors of the Bible were too biased to see the valuable participation of women close to Jesus. They even attempted to conceal the glorious presence of women and rewrite the stories about women. For example, Mary Magdalene's role as the first witness of Jesus's Resurrection and as the first Apostle sent by Jesus to proclaim the good news, is not given the prominence it deserves.[107]

Here we can see how the Bible and the Church tradition have been accomplices in sexism, silencing the voice of women and continually forbidding women from articulating their suffering and disclosing the oppression. Women who suffer oppression even have difficulty finding support in Christian faith and spirituality. This is because Christian theology is constructed on the basis of the experience of men to replace the position of God.[108] Images of God are almost exclusively male. In this sense, feminist theologians challenge Latin American liberation theology's assumption that the poor, regardless of their gender, are the most oppressed. The situation of women, who are ignored and humiliated by the Bible and by Church tradition, is not 'comprehensible' to men.

Feminist theologians criticise Latin American liberation theology, which is blind to sexism and its patriarchal basis, for not redeeming or liberating women. As Marcella Althaus-Reid argues, Latin American liberation theologians are too obsessed with political-economical liberation to recognise and even to challenge the privilege of the poor who are given to representing Jesus and God using 'masculine' images.[109] They have been empowered by sexist ideology and they then kick the ladder of liberation away from other oppressed groups, especially women. Catherine LaCugna attempts to explain why a sexist theology cannot bring about women's liberation and freedom. She said that liberation theology will not make any difference because:

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[106] See, Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father : Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (London: Women's Press, 1986).

[107] Mary Magdalene was considered as the first witness of Jesus's Resurrection. Hippolytus of Rome referred 'to the women at the tomb of Jesus as "apostles," which developed into Mary Magdalene often being called the *apostola apostolorum*. Yet others like Celsus, Renan, and in our own time even a staunchly orthodox writer like Ricciotti have downplayed her importance.' Gerald O'Collins and Daniel Kendall, "Mary Magdalene as Major Witness to Jesus' Resurrection," *Theological Studies* 48, no. 4 (1987): 632.

[108] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology: With a New Introduction* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).

[109] Marcella Althaus-Reid, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology: Readings on Poverty, Sexual Identity and God* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 1-15.

> [It] has seen masculine experience as normative for women's experience, has imaged God in predominantly masculine metaphors, or has used the Christian message to support violence against women.[110]

Although Latin American liberation theology concerns only the experience of the poor, it does not attempt to give consideration to the suffering of women in poverty. It confines itself to the experience of men. Women are excluded from the discourse of Latin American liberation theologians in the concern for suffering. Feminist theologians warn that women are doomed to submit to the authority of men, if it is not possible to subvert the distortion of the theological tradition, which is supported by the Bible and by the Church tradition, which sustains oppressive systems of manipulating women.

I argue that feminist theology makes two contributions when it launches a challenge to Latin American liberation theology: the first task is to liberate women from the patriarchal structure. The second task is to rebuild an inclusive community of the Church.

Patriarchal structure remains in the Biblical text and the Church tradition. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a pioneering the 19th century theologian, suggested re-reading the Bible from women's perspective. In *The Woman's Bible*, she offered a fresh perspective and a complete rethink on the canonical history of the Bible. She insists that the Bible is not a neutral text expressing and recording God's oral revelation but a text that has been constrained by and is written in patriarchal ideology.[111] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, a Biblical scholar of the 20th century, calls this patriarchal ideology 'kyriarchy,' which means 'rule of the lord, master, father, and husband.' [112]

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[110] Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "Introduction," in *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*, ed. Catherine Mowry LaCugna (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 2.
[111] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible: A Classic Feminist Perspective* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2002[1895-1898]).
[112] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 5.

> [Kyriarchy is] an analytic category in order to be able to articulate a more comprehensive systemic analysis, to underscore the complex interstructuring of domination, and to locate sexism and misogyny in the political matrix or, better, patrix of a broader range of oppressions.[113]

Feminist theologians assert that androcentric Christianity, which has been shaped and formed by a misogynist context of ancient culture, cannot reveal the image of God or correctly interpret the Word of God. Therefore, the mission of doing feminist theology is to recognise the male dominant structure and then to set women free from that misogynist tradition.

Based on this mission, feminist theology must 'reconstruct' the understanding of the origin of Christianity in order to see the nature of the Church community that Jesus taught at his time. This reconstruction is a journey to 'uncover' because the whole Church tradition we receive has been hijacked by kyriarchy and most women's stories are hidden by the male-dominant narrative.[114] This 'uncovering' of the women's experience in early Christianity is resistant to kyriarchy, which is authorised by men to support male dominance over women. The 'restoration' of the presence of 'patristic' women from their original reality breaks down male-constructed mythology and undermines the male claim that the male image represents God.

Phyllis Trible is another feminist theologian who is determined to restore the silenced voice of women in the Bible. She points out that there are plenty of voiceless women hidden in unnoticed narratives of the Hebrew Bible such as the exiled slave woman Hagar, the raped princess Tamar, the young sacrificed daughter Jephthah, and the raped and murdered nameless concubine.[115] These oppressed, silenced, and suffering women must be liberated from Biblical texts, which have been dominated and manipulated by misogynist culture and by men. This liberation starts with the re-interpretation of the Bible that restores the value and presence of women. For example, Trible states the fact that

[113] Ibid.

[114] *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

[115] Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror : Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). Also, see James L. Crenshaw, *A Whirlpool of Torment: Israelite Traditions of God as an Oppressive Presence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

Miriam was honoured and respected by the people of Israel as the first female prophet in the journey of exodus. However, at the end, the written-down narrative of Miriam is distorted and misrepresented. She has been described as a woman who disobeyed male authority in the person of Moses, resulting in her punishment. The credit for Miriam's devotion and leadership is given to Moses in order to emphasise his power and sustain and justify the tradition that prophets were exclusively male.[116] In Trible's word, these Biblical texts, which attempt to repress and oppress women, are 'terrifying.' Therefore, the Bible is unable to empower women without restoring the images of Biblical women.

Apart from the 'restorative' interpretation of the Bible, feminist theology also scrutinises the formation of Church tradition. This, in particular, is accepted without any criticism, but it is usually regarded both as the protection of God's revelation and as the unique expression and continuation of it.[117] Feminist theologians argue that the exploration of Church tradition is the 'excavation' of the acts of women in the tradition by means of asking where they were at Jesus's time and why they were silenced in history.[118] This excavation, called 'historical experience' of women,[119] has itself shaken the patriarchal authority of Christian faith. This is because the disclosure of how the Bible and tradition were formed by male perspectives has undermined its authority, justifying the power of men. As Susan Frank Parsons, a Christian feminist philosopher, argues, 'to give attention to women's experience' is 'to throw open to question the unchallenged assumption that men's experiences speak for everyone and are thus, by default, normative for all'.[120] This

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[116] Phyllis Trible, *如何和聖經摔跤：從婦女和修辭學的觀點詮釋聖經 (How to Wrestle with the Bible: From the Perspectives of Women and Rhetoric)* (Taipei: Taiwan Theological Seminary Press, 2010). Also see: Athalya Brenner-Idan, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015).

[117] Ratzinger, the former Pope, for example, maintains that the Tradition 'is ultimately based on the fact that the Christ event cannot be limited to the age of the historical Jesus, but continues in the presence of the Spirit.' See, Joseph Ratzinger, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation: Origin and Background," *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* 5 (1969). Cited from Mary Catherine Hilkert, "Experience and Tradition: Can the Center Hold?," in *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*, ed. Catherine Mowry LaCugna (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 68.

[118] Not all feminist theologians maintain their respect for the Church tradition; Mary Daly and Daphne Hampson are such figures. Daly was from Catholic theological background but, in her later life, she thinks that the Church tradition is hopelessly patriarchal and misogynist so that she abandons the theology. See, Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985).

[119] Anne E. Carr, "The New Vision of Feminist Theology," in *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*, ed. Catherine Mowry LaCugna (San Francisco, Calif.]: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 23.

[120] Susan Frank Parsons, "Feminist Theology as Dogmatic Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology*, ed. Susan Frank Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 116.

questioning of the invisibility of women is the subversion of patriarchal culture in the Church. The Church tradition that we have followed for thousands of years, which we call 'apostolic tradition,' is the product of androcentrism, which selects, interprets and edits what Jesus really taught, which was to welcome and embrace women.[121] Therefore, feminist theology places the voice and experience of women 'at the centre rather than the periphery so that their speech and presence become normative.'[122] The restoration of women's experience, presence and voice enables theology to end the exclusion of women.

The second contribution feminist theology makes is **their construction of an inclusive community**. Feminist theologians have voiced the concern about the experience of all human beings, rather than the poor alone, because 'God is to be discovered in human experience.'[123] This is the argument put forward by Mary Hilkert, a feminist Catholic theologian. Another feminist Catholic theologian, Catherine LaCugna, also states that feminist theology 'draws its strength of conviction from women whose experience tells them that the kingdom of God preached by Jesus promises a different order of relationship among persons than what prevails today.'[124] In this sense, feminist theology aspires to build up an inclusive community, which is not exclusive to women or to poor people but is for 'everyone.' Anne E. Carr further clarifies the purpose of feminist theology, stating:

> The goal of feminist theology cannot be simply to reverse the distortion by making men or certain classes and races or nonhuman creation subordinate. Rather, feminist theology must search for a new mode of relation that is inclusive of all.[125]

The liberative agenda of feminist theology is not the construction of a female-dominant society in order to turn the structure of gender discrimination upside down. Its goal is to embrace all creation into the community of God and avoid applying any method that might

[121] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, 56.
[122] Carr, "The New Vision of Feminist Theology," 17.
[123] Mary Catherine Hilkert, "Experience and Tradition: Can the Center Hold? ," ibid. (San Francisco), 60.
[124] Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "Introduction," ibid., 2.
[125] Anne E. Carr, "The New Vision of Feminist Theology," ibid. (San Francisco, Calif.]), 14.

exclude anyone from their relationship with God.[126] This is an eschatological hope and image, which are not only for humans, both men and women, but ultimately for the whole ecology and environment.[127]

Feminist theology, in this view, is not a theology 'for' women or a theology of women. It is a theological project based on women's experience for the rights and equality of all human beings. This revision of the standpoint resulting from feminist theology consciously attempts to avoid the same old trap that the male-dominant theology has failed in—namely, that 'the (male) experience' represents the whole of humanity. The truth is that it neglects one half of humanity—the experience of women. As Ann Loades insists:

> We require a radical reconstructing of thought and analysis which comes to terms with the reality that humanity consists of women and men; that 'the experiences, thoughts and insights of both sexes must be represented in every generalisation that is made about human beings'. In other words, only half the story has been told. The half that now needs to be given prominence concerns women.[128]

Here, it needs to be clarified that, for Loades, feminist theology, as a theological reflection from women's experience and voice, is not a theology for women alone but for both women and men. This is similar to Latin American liberation theology, but this is different from it in that 'women's experience can be used as a resource in feminist theology, though it cannot be a norm.'[129] Otherwise, feminist theology will reproduce the same problem that previous male-dominant theologies created. It has a strongly eschatological hope of building up an inclusive community of faith, including all creations, by means of placing women's experience and voice at the centre in order to transform the relationship between women

[126] The concept of inclusiveness will be developed well in queer theology. For example, Cheng points out that the inclusiveness showing God's radical love is a main spirit of queer theology. See, Patrick S. Cheng, *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology* (New York: Seabury Books, 2011).
[127] See, Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology: With a New Introduction*.
[128] Ann Loades, "Introduction," in *Feminist Theology: A Reader*, ed. Ann Loades (London: SPCK, 1990), 2.
[129] Carr, "The New Vision of Feminist Theology," 21.

and men. This community of 'the *ekklesia* of women' (as Schüssler Fiorenza called it) will be fulfilled when the structural-patriarchal dualism is overcome.[130]

Feminist theology makes an effort to resolve some of the problems caused by Latin American liberation theology. But I will also offer two critiques in order to argue that feminist theology has not yet adjusted the assumptions inherited from the tradition of liberation theologies.

The first critique is **the abstraction of experience** in feminist theology. The experience of women, I argue, is abstracted as a methodology that is intended to provide a unique 'standpoint' of thinking and reflection from the perspective of women. What is meant by the experience of women in the construction of theology is the way women think, rather than what they 'experience' and 'feel.' The prioritising of this standpoint results in the neglect of a proper concern about the experience of women's feeling and suffering. This problem of abstracting the experience of women has also been noted by Moltmann-Wendel, a German feminist theologian. She points out that the women's bodies have been neglected when feminist theologians attempt to access the experience of women through establishing a 'standpoint.' However, this neglected body is a real physical and experiential body through which they feel and sense the suffering.[131] It concludes with the outcome that women's bodies are not recognisable to theologians, although the standpoint of women's experience makes the presence of women 'visible.' For example, we cannot recognise what these women look like, where they come from, or what they experience in their daily life.

The second critique is **the homogeneity of experience**. It is the repetition of the mistake made by Latin American liberation theologians, whereby they generalise diverse experiences into 'one experience'. Feminist theologians do not recognise this problem of generalisation. This was particularly the case in the early stages of the movement, when they overemphasised 'structural oppression' rather than the recognition of individual experiences of suffering. They have continued to believe that if the structure of oppression

[130] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, 343-51.
[131] Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel has noticed the significance of the body in constructing theology. She argues that 'If the body begins to stop functioning, we make those around us insecure. And in such crises we have another experience, namely we *are* bodies. The instrument which copes with life and gives pleasure in life gives us another experience: that is our prison.' Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *I Am My Body: A Theology of Embodiment* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 1.

can be defined and named then the experience of women can be understood. This belief implies that women who are situated in different social positions share a common experience. Devoting the time to hearing various experiences from individual women of suffering, in this light, becomes unnecessary. This is because this devotion is not up to the job of analysing and naming the oppressive power and of portraying the reality of the oppression structure. In other words, feminist theologians just rephrase what male Latin American liberation theologians did by means of substituting the poor with women.

The failure of the reconsideration of human physical and bodily experience in feminist theology, like in Latin American liberation theology, has been criticised and discussed in the circle of feminist theologians. Pamela Sue Anderson, a British feminist theologian, states that 'we need to articulate the interplay of bodily, material, and social differences using a revisable conception of the sex-gender distinction.'[132] The recognition of the body of women who are afflicted by the suffering they endure due to oppression enables feminist theology to become more realistic and down-to-earth. It also offers a basis that is 'greater understanding of the factors of sex-gender, including sexual, gender, racial, class, ethnic, and religious orientations.'[133] When we recognise that the experience of women is not homogenous but is instead hugely varied, we will also recognise that human experience cannot be understood or determined by social structure and sexuality alone. This narrow understanding of women's experience has limited the vision of feminist theology to a focus on the diverse experiences of women.

Linda Hogan offers a further criticism of the homogeneity of experience in feminist theology. She insists that the concern with difference has to be incorporated into the basic methodology of feminist theology. Feminist theology has to place the 'hermeneutic of difference' at the core of theological construction; otherwise, feminists, in particular 'white' feminists, will repeat the crime of patriarchy by elevating a particular experience which is defined as normality and which marginalises the experiences of women of colour.[134] This emphasis on the diversity of women's experiences is crucial in order to prevent feminist

[132] Pamela Sue Anderson, "Feminist Theology as Philosophy of Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology*, ed. Susan Frank Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 47.
[133] Ibid., 47-48.
[134] Linda Hogan, *From Women's Experience to Feminist Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 166-67.

theology from replacing male-dominant theology with white-women-central theology. It warns us, in the course of the narrative of women's suffering, that we cannot avoid examining the power of white women and the dominance of the experience of women when feminist theologians challenge other forms of power. This criticism is further developed by women from the Third World when they start to articulate their experiences from their own contexts.

The Revision: Womanist Theology from the Third World

Womanist theology[135] draws on the voices of women's experiences and stories from the Third World. It is different from feminist theology, which has been regarded as a theology of educated white women in North America and Europe.[136] Womanist theologians redeem feminist theology from the generalisation of women's experience. This movement is strongly supported by women from African and Asian backgrounds even though some feminist theologians have taken part in and have received nourishment from the movement.[137] They assert that feminist theology is too 'white,' and too Eurocentric, to empathise fully with the suffering of non-White women; that is, feminist theology is incongruent in the context of non-White women.[138]

[135] There are different understandings of 'womanist', compared to 'feminist'. The word was popularised by the use of Alice Walker. She, as an African American, emphasises that African American women have different experiences from white women. This recognition of the difference is just to emphasise different dimensions of women rather than to simply distinguish or divide women by their race. In 1983, Walker defines a womanist as 'a black feminist or feminist of colour'. Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*, 1st ed. ed. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), xi. Also, see Nyasha Junior, *An Introduction to Womanist Biblical Interpretation*, First edition. ed. (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), xi-xxv.

[136] Feminist/womanist theologians from the Third World have various levels of the identity that identifies themselves as a womanist theologian; for example, Kwok Pui-lan, a Hong Kongese female theologian, still prefers to use 'feminist theology' in her writing. But in order to reduce the confusion, I would consistently call feminist/womanist theologians from the Third World as 'womanist theologians,' in contrast to feminist theologians who are White in North America and Europe, even though they have mutually learn from the voices of each other.

[137] Asian theology and African theology I mentioned here are defined by ethnic identity of individual theologians rather than by geographical differences. Here, it is not necessary to differentiate African-American theology from the theology in the African Continent.

[138] Further see, Ursula King, ed. *Feminist Theology from the Third World : A Reader* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994). This book collects articles from many feminist theologians representing the voices of women in Africa, Asia, and Latin America as well as those working among minorities in places such as Israel, the USA, and the Pacific.

I argue that womanist theology, as the revision of feminist theology, has proposed three agendas, which attempt to solve the theological methodology problem within the long tradition of liberation theologies. Due to the limits of this dissertation, I will put more emphasis on how womanist theology contributes to solutions in response to the problems of liberation theologies that we have mentioned before. In this part, I highlight especially the works of two theologians: Delores S. Williams, an African-American womanist theologian, and Chung Hyun Kyung, a Korean womanist theologian.

The first revision is the concern with **the women who suffer multi-oppressions**. Womanist theology does not see the issue of oppression as being confined to only one social group (whether social class, poverty, sexuality or race). This is because the experience of African-American women has shown that they suffer from multi-oppressions of social class 'and' of sexuality from white and black men and 'white women.' African-American women are betrayed both by black men, with whom they share the same race, and by white women, with whom they share the same sexuality. For example, they have no voice in the history of black liberation.[139] Black male theologians placed their masculine experience of slavery at the centre of re-reading and interpreting the Bible. They claimed that the experience of black men and women, rather than white missionaries who taught them theology, were best-placed to understand the story of Israel's liberation. The story of Exodus was identical to the story of God who led the black community from being slaves to being free men. As Cecil Cone, a black male theologian, says, 'what [Old Testament's Almighty Sovereign] God did for the children of Israel was in harmony with the slaves' own understanding of the divine'.[140]

At this point, it is becoming clear that black (male) theology copies and shares the same methodology as Latin American liberation theology. But there is a difference in that black (male) theology maintains that black slaves are especially privileged when it comes to understanding God. Delores Williams further criticises the history of black enslavement because it excludes the stories of black women, due to the reproduction of a system of

[139] See, Dwight N. Hopkins, *Introducing Black Theology of Liberation*, Black Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1999).
[140] Cecil Wayne Cone, *The Identity Crisis in Black Theology* (Nashville, Tenn.: The African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1975), 36.

masculine language.[141] This forces African-American women to lose their identity as part of black liberation—a movement dominated by black men. She maintains:

> Any aspect of African-American people's experience and of African cultural sources used to shape resistance doctrine must be 'de-coded' of all androcentric, gender, homophobic, class and colour bias.[142]

Delores Williams argues that black theology should not focus solely on the challenge of white dominance. The subversive project of the de-construction of male-dominant ideology that oppresses black women must be incorporated, because the previous agenda of black liberation was still so androcentric that it did not include sexual liberation. For Williams, if black women cannot be liberated from sexual oppression, this black liberation will be far from completion.

On the other hand, African-American women have difficulty sharing the identity and experience of white women, including (white) feminist theologians. This is because white females traditionally were part of the system of oppression and their experiences were therefore different—one was the master and the other the slave. The oppression which African-American women suffer exposes the fact that women can be oppressors and, according to their experience, their life, body, freedom and rights are dominated by female masters. Based on this, Williams enlarges the definition of patriarchy 'as a term to describe black women's relation to the white (male and female) dominated social and economic system governing their lives.'[143] Womanist theologians insist that when we criticise patriarchy, we should not neglect the fact that white women themselves are oppressors and slave masters. Womanist theology should not be like the old feminist theology that was blind to female oppressors. This broader understanding of patriarchy sets a new direction

[141] Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2013[1993]), 136-43.
[142] Ibid., 192.
[143] Ibid., 164. Also see Delores S Williams, "The Color of Feminism: On Speaking the Black Woman's Tongue," *The Journal of religious thought* 43, no. 1 (1986).

for liberation theologies – one that insists that sexual liberation must work hand in hand with other liberations, including the liberation of race and of social class.

The second revision is that the purpose of the construction of womanist theology is **to form women's experiences**, rather than to interpret God's story from the constructed standpoint of feminist theologians. For womanist theologians, the stories of other women's experiences are not 'other' stories, which should be heard, but ones which 'we' all can relate to. For example, Williams gives the example of the story of Hagar as one that is sympathetic to African-American women's stories. This is because they both face the same predicament of 'poverty, sexual and economic exploitation, surrogacy, domestic violence, homelessness, rape, motherhood, single-parenting, ethnicity and meeting with God.'[144] The story of Hagar becomes the symbolic key figure of African-American womanist theology rather than the story of Exodus, which has been appreciated by (male) Latin American liberation theology and (male) black theology. Additionally, the story is very much from the perspective of Hagar, who herself was a slave, rather than from the perspective of her masters, Sarai and Abram.

Williams makes use of the story of Hagar, who encountered God in the wilderness, to advocate an opening space, like a wilderness, for displacing African-American women to encounter God in their darkness. The way that Hagar encountered God in her suffering shows the way that God encounters the oppressed and the displaced. To be noticed in the construction of womanist theology, it is important that this retelling of the story is not intended to justify the privilege of a woman who shares the same character, figure, or the position of Hagar in the social structure. But rather it shows how God initiates God-self sympathetically and empathetically to meet the oppressed in person. Firstly, this encounter is intimate and directly empowers women, rather than pointing towards the hermeneutical process of understanding God. Secondly, this encounter is important because Hagar and African-American women both bear the responsibility of rearing their children by themselves. They have nothing but God to support the journey, which can be a tough and difficult one.[145] Moreover, Williams highlights that Hagar's meeting with God in her 'wilderness experience' 'represents a near-destruction situation in which God gives personal

[144] Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*, 5.
[145] Ibid., 31.

direction to the believer and thereby helps her make a way out of what she sought was no way.'[146] That is, the empowerment of the oppressed women is not achieved by means of the Biblical interpretation, which is concern with how God 'knows' and 'understands' their suffering and predicaments. Instead, it is achieved through a real encounter with God, who sides with them and opens a way for them.

Womanist theology points to a revolutionary method to apply human experience in its theological construction. It is different from the previous method, shared by other liberation theologies, that the experience of the oppressed, in the first instance, shapes and defines the perspective from which we read and interpret the Bible. In this hermeneutical process, all experiences are generalised and simplified in order to fit into the box of liberation theologies. However, womanist theology reverses the process of reading the Bible. Its first step is to re-tell the Biblical story. The second step is to shape and form the interpretation and understanding of their suffering. This process of shaping and forming envisions the oppressed and helps them to see and encounter God in their story. Women, in this light, are empowered by the Biblical story that shapes their own stories of suffering and invites them to encounter God. In this light, Williams criticises feminist theology, stating:

> While some feminist theologians claim the prophetic tradition significant for the biblical foundations of feminist theology, they give little or no attention to the way in which the wilderness figures into the work of making the prophet and making a people.[147]

In other words, the main concern of womanist theology is 'making' God's people rather than making a theology of women from the Third World. The experiences of women's suffering are not fixed knowledges for establishing a standpoint from the perspective of women's perspective. Rather, the experience will be shaped and understood while encountering God in their wilderness experience.

The third revision of womanist theology is that the purpose of doing theology is to **express the experiences and feelings of sufferers**. This point has been well expanded by

[146] Ibid., 96.
[147] Ibid., 142.

Chung Hyun Kyung. She argues that Korean women suffer from multi-oppressions of Confucianism, colonialism, patriarchy, poverty, domestic abuse, sexual inequality, and labour exploitation. The burden of these sufferings is so intolerable that what most Korean women do, including Chung's mother, is to nurse a grudge for their whole life. Under such circumstances, she affirms that 'I want to do theology in solidarity with and in love for my mother so as to resurrect crucified persons—like her—by giving voice to their hurts and pains.'[148] Doing theology, for this purpose, liberates the oppressed from the hopeless position of being silenced and living without a voice. It also offers an escape from feelings of outrage, hatred and hurt. Being in solidarity with the oppressed, including her mother, therefore helps 'them' to articulate their experience of oppression and speak of their feeling of suffering, rather than enables theologians to construct the theology based on the testimony of the oppressed. In this sense, not only does womanist theology, as expounded by Williams, shape the experiences of the oppressed by forging the wilderness experience through which God encounters God's people, it also creates a liberative space for the oppressed by enabling them to articulate their anger and to accept their feeling of hatred.

Chung proposes to employ a ritual of *kut* from Korean Shamanism in her womanist theology.[149] *Kut* is practiced by women alone. The rite of *kut* allows silenced ghosts to articulate their *han* (meaning 'hatred') and encourages women to articulate their feeling and experience of hatred and suffering. Eventually, these hatreds of oppression can be heard and released in this traditional rite. Chung further explains that this release of hatred, dubbed *han-pu-ri*, can be understood as the liberative power of Jesus who frees oppressed women from injustice and suffering.[150] She then believes that the end of injustice, followed

[148] Hyun Kyung Chung, *Struggle to Be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1990), 5.

[149] Some Western theologians have noticed the distinction of Asian theology rooted in the multi-religious and less Christian influential area so Asian theology has to deal with its relationship with other religions or naturally appropriates some resources from other religions. Moltmann, "Political Theology in Ecumenical Contexts," 10. On the other hand, in the journey of fighting for gender equality, Asian womanist theologians need to recognise the complexity of cross-cultural and inter-religious contexts. Kwok Pui-lan argues that, for example, '[how religions] have influenced gender construction will help Asian womanist theologians to understand in a nuanced way the religious and cultural legitimation of patriarchy'. Kwok Pui-lan, *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 49

[150] Hyun Kyung Chung, "'Han-Pu-Ri": Doing Theology from Korean Women's Perspective," in *We Dare to Dream: Doing Theology as Asian Women*, ed. Virginia Fabella and Sun Ai Lee Park (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1989), 145.

by peace, results from the action of verbally naming and defining oppressors and of exposing their experience and feeling of suffering.[151]

In this sense, Chung's womanist theology exemplifies a theology that causes the oppressed 'to speak,' rather than one which entitles theologians 'to listen.' It also empowers the oppressed to discern and reflect on what they suffer, rather than entitling theologians to define what their suffering is and why they suffer. The experiences, stories and feelings of the oppressed themselves become the focus rather than tools of social analysis or theological interpretation. They cannot be reduced to any abstract concept or standpoint. In this view, we can finally see how the power of interpreting the experience of the oppressed can be maintained by oppressed women, rather than being seized by theologians, including academic theologians and other liberation theologians.

Womanist theology, at least in the case of Chung's *han-pu-ri*, challenges the method of previous liberation theologians who are listening to the story of the oppressed 'for the purpose of underpinning their theology.' It proposes a new methodology to cover the experience of continuing the journey of listening to the stories and feelings of sufferers. It rejects any reductive method of social analysis. It also allows feelings and experiences, which might not be consistent or systematic, to be respected, accepted and recognised, rather than to be generalised. All details of how the oppressed feel and experience are significant because they cannot fit into any category of understanding or knowledge.[152] In this sense, womanist theology of *han-pu-ri* is a theology 'from' and 'for' women's experiences rather than 'of' women's experience. These experiences, stories and feelings are the 'places' or 'locus' of doing theology rather than the 'foundations' or 'materials' of constructing theology. I will continue to explore this new way of doing theology in the following chapters.

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[151] Ibid., 143.

[152] Within the circle of Asian womanist theologians, the self-criticism of simplifying the diverse experiences of women from the Third World into one model of the 'poorest' people has been warned and raised. Mohanty, an Indian womanist theologian, asserts that the 'Third World Woman' is not 'a singular monolithic subject.' The experiences and contexts of the women from Third World are plural and diverse. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Feminist review* 30 (1988): 61-88. Also see: Wai-Ching Angela Wong, *The Poor Woman: A Critical Analysis of Asian Theology and Contemporary Chinese Fiction by Women* (New York: P. Lang, 2002).

Overview

Liberation theologies shift political theology from doing theological politics (influenced by Carl Schmitt) towards the Church taking responsibility for fighting for liberation and freedom. This shift affirms that the mission of the Church is to be active in society and to respond to oppressive structures. The social action, called 'praxis,' further shapes liberation theologies.

Liberation theologies reverse the motto of old political theology –politics is theological —to the new motto—theology is political. That is, although the theology is about politics, it is not 'for' politics, like public theology or the theology of development. For liberation theologians, it is 'against' politics. On the other hand, the methodological shift draws attention of theologians from the 'from-above' portrait of the nature of God to the 'from-below' understanding of God who encounters the sufferers and the oppressed. To liberate sufferers from their oppressive situation and to subvert the oppressive structure, as a result, means both become the mainly practical concern for liberation theologies. This concern paralleled and echoed social movements and revolutions in secular contexts.

However, I argue that the methodology that is applied by various forms of liberation theology has put the task and strategy of liberation on unstable foundations, which incline it to the collapse of freedom and liberation. This chapter has illustrated that the failures of liberation theologies are chiefly about two issues: **the involvement of the subject** and **the theological application of human experiences**.

The involvement of the subject, in fact, is not seriously considered. This is because the sufferers do not hold the power of the interpretation of their experiences, stories and feelings. They are objectified by liberation theologians to be those who are silenced and cannot speak. These sufferers in different oppressed situations are compartmentalised by liberation theologians. Petrella calls this phenomenon 'monochromatism,' which is obsessed with only 'one' either-or scope of oppression. In the case of black theology, he states critically:

> [Monochromatism] dramatically limits the pool of resources they can draw upon to actually engage the task. In the end, colour of memberships and membership in a professional guild takes priority over liberation from material blight.'[153]

The involvement of every individual subject and even the affirmation of their existence as a human being are not important. The consideration of the social category of subjects obscures the individual and personal experience of the oppressed.

Diverse human experiences, additionally, are neglected. Firstly, the experiences of the oppressed are generalised to become a collective one, which is abstract, theoretical, and homogeneous. The diversity of the experiences of oppressed sufferers have been underemphasised in order to demonstrate the theories of social analysis of liberation theologians.[154] Briefly speaking, the experiences of the oppressed are merely heard and collected by theologians for the purpose of supporting their social analysis, such as dependence theory and gender theories. As a result, the experiences are eventually replaced with the conclusive statement of an analysis. All experiences can be defined and 'understood' depending on their position within social structures. This theological methodology abandons the initial purpose of the concern with the suffering. The experiences of the oppressed are no longer prioritised.[155] Liberation theologies do not care about what the sufferer truly experiences, either in a physical or experiential sense. They now only collect and appropriate their experiences in order to support the theory and their political agenda.

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[153] Petrella, *Beyond Liberation Theology: A Polemic*, 84-85.

[154] Petrella has a similar criticism of the application of social theory in liberation theologies. This overreliance on social theory is referred to as 'gigantism,' which has two type of deprivation: 'abstraction' and 'demonization.' 'In the former, the theologian identifies the cause of material poverty with such abstraction that they are impossible to tackle. Thus the poor suffer from evils produced by 'capitalism,' 'neoliberalism,' or 'globalisation,' terms that are used as place markers for the cause of oppression but which are rarely carefully examined and concretely defined'. Ibid., 102-03.

[155] Petrella uses the term 'amnesia' to criticise how liberation theology forgets their purpose of fighting against poverty at the beginning of constructing the theology. Ibid., 93. He criticises that the theologies of the colour pay their attention to 'ethnic identity' and they neglect the issue of poverty. However, I cannot entirely agree with his criticism because I argue that the birth and the context of the theologies of the colour are for ethnicity rather than for poverty. This failure of seeking the priority is repeated in all liberation theologies.

Womanist theology has finally recognised the issue of multi-oppressions and has refuted the under-emphasis of the experiences of sufferers. However, these revisions are not critical or thorough enough to concern the presence of suffering subjects and the locus of a human body which experiences and senses oppressions. I argue that the next stage of liberation theologies must involve another shift in order to take serious recognition of the existence of subjectivity. That is, they should consider 'how' the oppressed suffer, rather than 'why' they suffer alone. This movement is not meant to be a move away from political resistance or social transformation, to which liberation theologies have made a major contribution. It rather means that liberation theologies should be more radical and critical in order to create liberation and freedom for the oppressed.

In the next chapter, I will introduce the work of Michel Foucault, as a path to understanding oppression and liberation, and scrutinise how the oppressed suffer. This broader understanding explains why liberation theologies are not radical enough to maintain the fruit of social revolutions and to avoid their failures.

CHAPTER TWO The Construction of the Self as Political Resistance

From the Perspective of Michel Foucault

In the last two chapters, I demonstrated that, in the secular sector, social movements and revolutions could not, in the end, maintain the fruit of liberation. In theological circles and the Church, theologians repeated a similar methodology—overemphasis on the analysis of social structure and neglect of concern for individual subjects—which meant they could not bring about liberation and freedom of the oppressed. In this chapter, I would like to explain further why and how liberation theologies cannot bring about liberation and freedom. I wish to demonstrate this in the light of the critical conversation between Marxism and Michel Foucault. This critique will also point towards the way to reflect on the possibility of freedom and liberation in my theological proposal, which I have named 'micro-political theology.' In other words, I suggest that liberation theologies have to shift from the previous Marxism-influenced paradigm to a new consideration of power relationships, which means that, in Foucault's sense, subjectivity is constructed within power relationships. Foucault's works offer a concise approach to consider both social structure and individual subjectivity. This is an important foundation to recognise how power relationships work and how they shape oppressive structures and then how political resistance can grow under such circumstances.

In order to show Foucault's reconsideration of freedom and liberation, I will firstly clarify what I consider to be one of Foucault's most important points, a point which is usually neglected by many observers. That point is that while Foucault is concerned with the significant influence of capitalism in modern society he does not fall into the trap of economic determinism. Secondly, I will argue that while Foucault refutes economic determinism, or any form of determinism, he develops a distinctive perspective from which to understand the function of society. This perspective is called 'functionalist holisticism.' From this perspective, the web of power relationships is a way to maintain society as a unit of the whole and to connect different parts of society together. In the third part, I will further demonstrate how subjects are situated in society 'within power relationships.' In Foucault's words, subjects are not essential, nor can they be defined or determined by any

essence. In his example of the construction of sexuality and desire, Foucault explains how subjectification and power relationships are strongly connected and related. In the final part, I will argue how Foucault's theory enlightens us to understand liberation and freedom, in terms of the consideration of subject-within-power-relationships. Based on this perspective, I will show how the self in the process of becoming a subject can be seen as an act of political resistance.

Foucault's Refutation of Economic Determinism

I suggest that Foucault's theory should be read within the tradition of Marxism. It does not mean that Foucault was a Marxist, as Foucault himself always rejected being defined as a follower of any 'ism,' or indeed any thought movement. However, reading Foucault in the view of Marxism is helpful when it helps us to recognise how Foucault inherits, consciously or unconsciously, the critical philosophy from Marxism, particularly French Marxism, and how he refutes and revises Marxist tradition. In this sense, as Étienne Balibar comments, Foucault's conversation with Marxists is 'an internal debate about the juridical representation of power.'[156] Foucault's theory should be regarded as part of a wider understanding of the Marxist movement, in terms of his concern with power and oppression, as well as with freedom and liberation. Foucault shows another dimension of 'the other side of economic exploitation and the other side of juridico-political class domination.'[157]

On the other hand, I would like to clarify that Foucault's shift of the concern with micro-power—discipline and power relationships—does not mean that he does not concern himself with political-economic structures of dominance. Foucault's shift is to introduce the perspective of asymmetrical relationships, rather than symmetrical relationships, in order to understand the bonds of the oppressed and oppressors. He suggests that the assumption of the binary and symmetrical bond of the oppressor and the oppressed must be forbidden. He proposes a new vision of understanding of power and freedom, which I refer to as a 'holistic perspective' in this chapter, to overcome the limitation of previous theories, which assume

[156] Étienne Balibar, "Foucault and Marx: The Question of Nominalism," *Michel Foucault, Philosopher* (1992): 50.
[157] Ibid., 51.

a series of binary and symmetrical dichotomies, such as of the oppressor and the oppressed, of micro-power and macro-power, as well as of structure and agency.

In order to demonstrate the conversation between Foucault and Marxism and discuss Foucault's responses to Marxist theory of exploitation, I would like to pose an important first question: does Foucault still care about economic exploitation in capitalism, as other Marxists do?

Does Capitalism Still Matter?

In *Capital: Critique of Political Economy* (1867), Karl Marx painted a picture of capitalism in terms of the cooperation of commodity, labour and market. However, this portrait of capitalism is not Foucault's research interest. Foucault, when considered as a Marxist, does not hesitate to believe that capitalism has a decisive impact on modern society. He amplifies the Marxist concern with capitalism by recognising the subtle involvement of capitalism. In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucault argues that the birth of prisons and the exploitation of wage-labour are 'historical twins'.[158] It is not that these two phenomena have a causal relation but rather that they are both shaped by the same cause, that is, capitalism.[159] Foucault notices that the commonly shared experience of being a prisoner and being a labourer is the management of time. Capitalism, in these contexts, enables time to be a measurable object, which is calculated, valued and possessed, in order to support the function and the benefit of capitalism. In this view, labourers' time is exchangeable with money. 'Time' becomes a calculable thing rather than an abstract concept.

Foucault, in this sense, amplifies the Marxist discussion of capitalism by figuring out how time has become the exploited property of labourers. In traditional Marxist theory, proletariats have nothing but their physical labour; therefore, they can only contribute their labour in exchange for money and salary. But Foucault observes that, apart from their physical labour, the property proletarians also have is 'their time'.[160] Proletarians can then

[158] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (1975)* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
[159] Stuart Elden, "A More Marxist Foucault?," *Historical Materialism* 23, no. 4 (2015).
[160] Ibid.

make use of their time to earn their salaries. The measurement of physical labour that is provided by proletarians is no longer the only criteria for calculating how much money they can gain. After introducing the time measurement technique, the system of calculating a wage has been changed. In this light, the involvement of capitalist control becomes subtler because capitalism aims not only to manage the production of physical labour but also to calculate the use of time. This was not considered by Marx.

In a similar way to the calculated time of labour, imprisonment is also applying time measurement techniques to regulate the property of prisoners.[161] Under capitalism, which enables time to be a calculable property, a method of punishment to deprive criminals of their property can be applied. The length of the period of incarceration is calculated on the scale of their criminal behaviours. Therefore, we can say that time measurement techniques in the labour market work in the same way as those applied in prisons. This is a modern technique that has been appropriated by capitalism in order to create benefits.

In this example, we can see that Foucault's analysis, which is still based on the Marxist analysis of political economy, shifts to put an emphasis on what Foucault calls 'the genealogy of capitalism,' by which he means the deep association of capitalism with the modern world and our daily life.[162] On the one hand, Foucault rejects Marxism since he is not concerned with the main theoretic focuses of Marxism, such as commodity, labour and market. On the other hand, Foucault can be regarded as a 'committed' Marxist follower because he holds onto some features of the theory of Marxism, but he broadens the scope of understanding the technique in capitalism. Foucault's perspective requires Marxists to accept that capitalism has developed a more complicated, complex and subtle technique of calculation and evaluation in order to accumulate the benefit. For Foucault, capitalism still matters. He puts an emphasis on the impact of capitalism and considers it to be a decisive influence on modern society. But his observation and analysis of the technique of capitalism is new to Marx and traditional Marxist followers.

[161] Ibid., 154.
[162] Michel Foucault et al., "Considerations on Marxism, Phenomenology and Power. Interview with Michel Foucault; Recorded on April 3rd, 1978," *Foucault studies* 14 (2012): 100.

If capitalism still has a decisive influence, then the next question should be: does Foucault believe 'economic determinism,' as most Marxists do? Does he believe any form of determinism?

Foucault's Rejection of Marxist Economic Determinism

Foucault indeed rejects all kinds of determinism, including Marxist economic determinism. The strategy to be used in the fight against class struggle, for Foucault, is not exclusively to contest, or to seize back, the means of production from the bourgeoisie. This is because, as Foucault has pointed out, we cannot attribute all exploitation in the system of capitalism to the sole fact that proletarians do not own the means of production. This old Marxist idea of the cause of exploitation is too narrow to recognise that capitalism has forced people to sell out their physical labour *and* time. The impact of capitalism cannot be reduced to the division between owners and non-owners of the means of production. This classical perspective of the 'narrowly-conceived economic' has been rejected by Foucault.[163]

Furthermore, I argue that Foucault is not even interested in answering any of the questions that stimulated the followers of Marxism; for example, 'why are proletarians oppressed and exploited?' This question does not bother Foucault. Foucault is not interested in asking the question 'why.' Similarly, Foucault does not attempt to explain 'why' sexuality was repressed, or 'why' time started to be calculated in the way he described. Rather, Foucault is much more interested in a question about 'what and how modern society dominated by capitalism is.'[164] Foucault's approach is to compare modern societies in different periods, rather than to 'explain' why these societies developed in the way they did. Foucault fundamentally differs from other Marxists, in terms of the newness of the question he asks.

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[163] Elden, "A More Marxist Foucault?," 151.

[164] Foucault has shown his critique of capitalism and neoliberalism in his final work: Michel Foucault, "The Birth of Biopolitics " in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997); "Security, Territory, and Population," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997). Also, see: Jana Sawicki, "Queer Feminism: Cultivating Ethical Practices of Freedom," *Foucault Studies*, no. 16 (2013); Shannon Winnubst, "The Queer Thing About Neoliberal Pleasure: A Foucauldian Warning," ibid., no. 14 (2012); Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage publications, 2010).

Marxism differs from Foucault's view in that it is interested in building a universal history of all humans in order to explain how the bourgeoisie takes an advantageous position and why all proletarians should revolt to change their oppressed situation. The Marxist concept of history assumes that there exists a society that has not yet been manipulated by capitalism. It is 'contingent' that capitalism, in this specific kind of market-based society, emerged in modern Europe, and it spread all over the world, and then became the dominant system of economic analysis.[165] Marxists believe, in a positive way, that this system of capitalism is not an inevitable consequence of human history that we cannot change. They also believe that the exploitation of capitalism is not inevitable.

Therefore, this economic system, which distributes materials unfairly and unequally, and which causes an exploitative society, does not have the last word. If oppressed people are willing to stand up for revolution, society will eventually achieve economic equality when history comes to an end. In other words, Marx's economic determinism provides a metaphysical answer to the condition of class struggle and of labour exploitation. This echoes what Marx and Engels said: 'the history of all hitherto existing history is the history of class struggles.'[166] In this view, the meaning of economic determinism is that the economic system determines the way that society goes forward in history. If we desire to change society, we must then change its economic system, because the function of society is determined by its economy. Economic determinism, which answers the metaphysical question, builds up a solid foundation to evaluate and target the impact of capitalism. This is what determines the shape of modern society.

Foucault's criticism of economic determinism is thus based on the tradition of Marxism, particularly on Marxism's internal debate concerning the binary division of the base and superstructure. Foucault's refutation of narrowly-conceived economic determinism is a refutation of determinism of the economic base, which in its turn determines superstructure such as religion, art and culture. This determinism is firmly believed by traditional Marxists. The criticism of the division of the base and superstructure is Neo-

[165] See, Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001[1944]). Many economic anthropologists, in particular the Marxist anthropologists, follow and continue the discussion of Polanyi. They attempt to answer questions such as whether capitalism, or market-based society, is the only destination in the evolutionary process of human history.
[166] Marx and Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party."

Marxist—it is not Foucault's original thought. Raymond Williams, for example, has mentioned that superstructure and the base are interdependent and interactive, inasmuch as superstructure includes various cultural practices, rather than merely a reproduction of the economic base. In addition, the base is not just a notion of fixed economic abstraction. It exists in the mutable process of having relationships with social and cultural activities.[167] This Neo-Marxist criticism of Marx's economic determinism, I argue, is the primary basis for Foucault to move his theory away from economic determinism.

Furthermore, for Marx, there is 'the base', which is a singular and universal unit. However, for Foucault, the base is not a singular noun, which refers to economic structure exclusively. This is because various dimensions of social formation, including economic and non-economic ones, need to be examined together. As Althusser has argued, 'the non-economic practices have a *specific effectivity*, which means that they are determining as well as determined, just as economic practices are determining as well as determined.'[168] Whether the economic base is metaphysically prior to the non-economic base still seem to be under debate. However, Foucault's theory, in this sense, aims to argue that 'the economic base is not the totalising centre of the social formation.'[169] The whole dynamic relationship between the base and superstructure must be revisited.

I argue that Foucault does not reject the existence of the economic base. Instead, Foucault figures out that the economic base is not always the *only* cause of oppression. The considerations of determinism, as Althusser described, are complex and multiple, when it comes to all levels of the social formation, rather than a singular point-to-point causal relation.[170] This criticism can be in parallel with Foucault's criticism of 'total history', or a 'total description', in his *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969):

> A total description draws all phenomena around *a single centre* – a principle, a meaning, a spirit, a world-view, an overall shape… it is supposed that between all the events of a well-defined spatio-temporal area, between all the phenomena of which

[167] Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays* (London: Verso, 1980), 34.
[168] Mark Olssen, "Foucault and Marxism: Rewriting the Theory of Historical Materialism," *Policy Futures in Education* 2, no. 3-4 (2004): 456-57.
[169] Ibid., 458.
[170] Ibid., 457.

> traces have been found, it must be possible to establish *a system of homogeneous relations*: *a network of causality* that makes it possible to derive each of them, relations of analogy that show they symbolise one another or how they all express one and the same central core; it is also supposed that one and the same form of historicity operates upon *economic structures*, social institutions and customs…[171]

This explains why Foucault is not interested in Marx's metaphysical argument, which reduces the whole of human history to one of material and economic-based class struggle. The alternative perspective proposed by Foucault refuses to reduce any phenomenon to any single factor, or to assume the existence of a homogenous system. Foucault's perspective explains how economic exploitation and political domination are formulated, rather than why capital accumulation and state power function.[172] It is about 'how' rather than 'why'. In this view, I conclude that Foucault's theory makes a shift from building up a metaphysical theory to illustrating an ontological understanding of social formation. This is the significant difference between Foucault and Marxism.

Foucault's Holistic Perspective on Power Relationships

From a holistic and non-reductive perspective, the feature of society upon which Foucault deliberates is the binding together interdependently of various social dimensions which underpin capitalism in modern society. This is his starting point. Foucault goes back to two basic ontological questions, which are: 'what is modern society?' and 'how can this society function?' In order to answer these questions, Foucault explores the history of the marginalised as well as hidden history, such as the history of madness and the history of sexuality. Here, it is noteworthy that Foucault never intended to construct a history with continuity. His analysis is closer to comparative studies of ancient and modern societies, rather than to the explanation of chronological changes from the past to the present. The purpose of his analysis is to break our stereotypes of the evolution of history, which was

[171] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. AM Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 9. (emphasis added)
[172] Bob Jessop, "From Micro-Powers to Governmentality: Foucault's Work on Statehood, State Formation, Statecraft and State Power," *Political geography* 26, no. 1 (2006): 40.

shared by Marx's theory, for the purpose of explaining why and how society transited from stage to stage.[173]

In this view of Foucault's theory, we will notice that Foucault regards functionalism as a method to refute Marxist tradition. As Neil Brenner has argued, if power is considered as a functional system, resistance can then be seen as a force of counter-functions that supports the function of this social system.[174] However, it is noteworthy that Foucault is interested in the 'question' that is asked by functionalism rather than the 'theory' of the functionalist system itself. The fundamental difference between Foucault and functionalists is that Foucault does not assume that society must function as a singular whole unit, or that all social organisations function together in order to maintain society as an undivided unit. Conversely, for Foucault, *how* society can be a whole unit is his core research question.

Rather than regarding the relationship between various social organisations as the determined objects of the economic base, Foucault examines the process of social formation in order to re-define them. Arnold Davidson accurately illustrates:

> [Foucault's analysis] is characterised, first, by anti-atomism, by the idea that we should not analyse single or individual elements in isolation but that one must look at the systematic relations among elements; second, it is characterised by the idea that the relations between elements are coherent and transformable, that is, that the elements form a structure.[175]

Foucault's theory considers different social phenomena and dimensions in a holistic way so that we cannot reduce them to a homogeneous theory, or overemphasise any single factor. Foucault's analysis, more precisely, is about 'how' society can be a unit, in which all intertwined social dimensions function and are deployed to serve the benefit of capitalism.

[173] This is similar to Durkheim's researches of comparative sociology. We can also consider Durkheim's books as the history of modern society since Durkheim illustrates different modes of society in different times and spaces. This is what Foucault does in his writings on history. See: Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (London: Macmillan, 1984); Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York: Collier, 1915).
[174] Neil Brenner, "Foucault's New Functionalism," *Theory and Society* 23, no. 5 (1994).
[175] Arnold Ira Davidson, *Foucault and His Interlocutors* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

This is how Foucault alternates a Marxist metaphysical question with his ontological question.

If Foucault's question opposes such ideologies of determinism in the Marxist tradition, what kind of method will he develop? Foucault suggests that theory of the deployments of power relations would help us to recognise 'mechanisms of power, that is to say, extraordinarily varied fields of mechanisms of coercion, of domination, of exclusion, etc., the catalogue is definite.'[176] Foucault's notion of power relations enlarges the recognition of dominance and the function of oppression.

Is the Theory of the State Useful?

In order to enlarge the understanding of dominance and oppression, Foucault reflects on the older theories of the state—a topic that has been leading the related discussion within Marxism for decades. For example, a key consideration for Marxists is the means by which the concrete and external institutions of oppression continually function as the deployments of power for the benefit of capitalism and for the maintenance of any form of sovereignty. In the view of Althusser, these institutions include government, military, the church, and family. These institutions are categorised as 'the apparatus of oppression.'[177] Althusser believes that the role of the state is decisive in the deployment of power structure even though he has expanded his theory to consider other kinds of deployments of dominance.

Foucault, however, offers his critiques of the theory of the state in two ways. Sharing the insight of Althusser, he clearly recognises that the theory of the state is not the only factor to consider while analysing power. Classical Marxism, for Althusser, has discussed the state in many words but most of them remain at the level of the description of the state. This results in a failure to explain the complex functioning of power dominance.[178] Althusser, on the one side, accepts the Marxist category of the State Apparatus, which is operated by

[176] Foucault et al., "Considerations on Marxism, Phenomenology and Power. Interview with Michel Foucault; Recorded on April 3rd, 1978," 105.
[177] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (1970)," in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays* (London: Monthly Review Press, 2001[1971]).
[178] Ibid., 141.

means of repressive violence and physical repression—the Government, the Administration, the Army, the Police, the Courts, the Prisons, etc.[179] On the other side, he proposes an additional category, dubbed the 'ideological state apparatus', which is operated by means of ideology—religion, education, family, media and culture, etc. These two categories reinforce each other through 'the reproduction of the relations of production, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation.'[180] Althusser's consideration of ideological state apparatuses enable us to comprehend how the state 'operates' its power at different levels and on various social dimensions. This approach does not ignore the significance of the state but enlarges the classical Marxist theory of the state by considering various apparatuses of power. This insight of Althusser is the foundation of Foucault's theory.

On the other hand, Foucault rejects a 'general' theory of the state, which has been the direction of much of classical Marxism. It is not that, for Foucault, the role of the state is totally useless and unproductive. It is that, for him, in the light of his functionalist perspective, the foundation of the theory of the state is, as Jessop illustrates, based on 'a priori assumptions about its essential unity, its pre-given functions, its inherent tendency to expand through its own power dynamic, or its global strategic development by a master subject.'[181] The theory of the state, for Foucault, is so abstract that it narrows our view and our recognition of the reality of the function of the state. Foucault's theory of dominance shifts away from the theory of the state, as well as away from any theory of power-from-above. It is also less concerned with a specific apparatus. It puts more emphasis on how power comes from below. As Foucault himself argues:

> That is, there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations, and serving as a general matrix – no such duality extending from the top down and reacting on more and more limited groups to the very depths of the social body. [182]

[179] Ibid., 142-43, 45.
[180] Ibid., 154.
[181] Jessop, "From Micro-Powers to Governmentality: Foucault's Work on Statehood, State Formation, Statecraft and State Power," 36.
[182] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge (1976)*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 94.

The term ‘power from below’ that Foucault uses does not mean that power is from ‘the people’ or from ‘the base’ of a structure. It is a rhetorical phrase that expresses a contrast to power-from-above; the latter is mainly based on the assumption of the theory of the state.

Foucault argues that the role of the state needs to be included in any consideration of power relationships. The theory of power relationships, which encompasses the theory of the state, is to analyse the function of all forms of power in a whole and holistic way. In the words of Althusser, all forms of power include both the ‘repressive state apparatus’ and the ‘ideological state apparatus’; that is, including the government, the army, prisons, schools and churches. This ‘shift’ does not replace or reject the previous Marxist discussion. It means that, for Foucault, the role of the state needs to be perceived in the broader context of the deployments of power relationships. Althusser’s insight prompts Foucault to discuss how the state functions rather than what the state is.

However, if we consider the function of the state, we will recognise that its existence depends on how it displays its power. The state is defined by the process of deploying its power and performing its functions. The governmental state is recognised by the governmentalisation of the state rather than the functional statisation of society.[183] In other words, the role of the state, for both Foucault and Althusser, remains the prioritisation of the function of power deployment. The importance of the state and the recognition of class struggle and ideology are both, as Nicolas Poulantzas notes, significant for both Foucault and Althusser.[184] The method and perspective proposed by Foucault is to challenge and deconstruct an abstract and ambiguous understanding of the state by recognising the function of the state. For Foucault, the state comes alive only when it is functioning and deploying its power. This is as what Jessop say:

[183] Jessop, "From Micro-Powers to Governmentality: Foucault's Work on Statehood, State Formation, Statecraft and State Power," 38.
[184] Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (London: NLB, 1978). Cited in Andrew Ryder, "Foucault and Althusser: Epistemological Differences with Political Effects," *Foucault Studies*, no. 16 (2013): 148.

> The idea of government as strategic codification of power relations provides a bridge between micro-diversity and macro-necessity and, as Foucault argues, a focus on micro-powers is determined by scale but applies across all scales.[185]

Foucault avoids discussing the role of the state. This is because he prefers to use the notion of power relations to overcome the limited vision of the abstract description of the state.

Foucault's theory is centred on the notion of power. However, I argue that Foucault's notion of power should be understood in relation to his conversation with Althusser about the function of the state, rather than his definition of a conceptual theory of the state. Foucault does not propose a new theory of the state or re-define the concept of power. His focus is on the function of the state and power in real contexts rather than on giving any description of the state. As Foucault himself declares:

> I am the most radical enemy that one can imagine of the idea of power, and I don't ever speak about power, and I speak from the possibilities of *intelligibility given by the analysis of mechanisms of power on the condition that … speaks of different instructions, tools, relations, techniques, etc.*, that allow for domination, subjectification, constraint, coercion, etc. I hate power, I hate the idea of power, and that is what people don't understand you get these completely naïve critiques that say "aha, he doesn't define power." I say, *power is not to be defined; it is not to be defined because it does not exist*.[186]

Foucault firmly states that power can be defined only when it functions, or when it is deployed. The definition of the state and power is a matter of understanding and recognising how the state and power function. Power only exists when we can recognise its

[185] Jessop, "From Micro-Powers to Governmentality: Foucault's Work on Statehood, State Formation, Statecraft and State Power," 39.
[186] Foucault et al., "Considerations on Marxism, Phenomenology and Power. Interview with Michel Foucault; Recorded on April 3rd, 1978," 106. (emphasis added)

mechanisms, which, in Althusser's words, are deployed by the 'repressive and ideological state apparatuses.'

For Foucault, the deliberation of the notion of power is meaningless and eventually will be in vain unless this power can be discerned and recognised. This is the reason why Foucault discards the idea of power itself and why he contends that this kind of power does not exist. He clarifies that 'the point of view of power is a point of view of method, that there was no substantification of power and, that it was a way of approaching things.'[187] The essential issue about power is not what power is or how to define power but rather what power *looks* like and how it functions. Foucault's holistic perspective on society asks us to consider not what power is but instead how power is perceived.

The Notion of Power Relations as an Alternative Approach

Foucault rejects the idea that we can understand the notion of power itself without considering the context in which power is situated. Taylor's cautious evaluation of Foucault's theory is that power is not an independent entity. In fact, power must co-exist with an object on which that power imposes.[188] Power cannot exist without objects on which to project itself, nor can it exist without context or without a relationship to others. Power can only be perceived when it interacts with an object. In this sense, we can understand why Foucault rejects assuming the existence of power, which is undefined or undefinable. Therefore, I conclude that, according to Foucault's epistemology, being in existence relies on being recognised. All forms of power reveal themselves in the form of power relationships because power can only be recognised in its relationships with other objects. This helps us to understand why Foucault defines 'a power relationship' as:

> a relationship between someone who is looking to dominate or is dominating, or has some instruments of domination, and then somebody else, or a series of other people that are, with respect to this power, in a situation of being dominated, of refusing this

[187] Ibid.
[188] Charles Taylor, "Foucault on Freedom and Truth," *Political Theory* 12, no. 2 (1984).

domination, to flee from this domination, to do battle with it, or to the contrary to accept it too.[189]

In Foucault's view, there is no autonomous *power*. There are merely *power relationships* whose functions can be recognised. Power and power relationships are not identical as nouns in singularity or plurality. If we are blind to the recognition of power relationships, we cannot see the power itself.

Furthermore, it is not necessary for the interaction of power in a symmetrical form or in a point-to-point relationship. Rather, according to Foucault's holistic perspective of society, this power relationship needs to be considered in a different way—one which takes the perspective that various power forces are interconnected and interdependent within the whole of society. Or, more precisely, Foucault would argue that these power forces are interconnected within the whole of society. The purpose of this cooperation is not to sustain, in the sense of functionalism, the coherence of society, but rather to be coherently organised and directed by capitalism in various socially formative ways. These power relationships appear everywhere because power relationships themselves are the adhesives, which glue different parts of society together as a whole unit. Foucault's picture of power deployments is systemic, like a neatly interwoven web, from which no one or one place can be free. All connected points of power construct the whole web of power relationships, which holds the function of power deployments, and which spreads over the whole of society.

Thus, we can understand why Foucault argues that power is omnipresent. This is because power is produced at every point and it comes from everywhere in order to support making society *whole*. Foucault contends that 'when I say that power, that relations of power are omnipotent, it means precisely the opposite of the affirmation that *power* is omnipotent.'[190] Foucault refutes any false interpretation about the theory of power relations from the perspective of previous theories of the state, which regarded power as an autonomous and independent entity. Foucault was not saying that there are innumerable

[189] Foucault et al., "Considerations on Marxism, Phenomenology and Power. Interview with Michel Foucault; Recorded on April 3rd, 1978," 107.
[190] Ibid. The emphasis is added in the original text

individual institutions and power centres, which spread all over society. He insists that the strategy of deploying power relations is 'over-all' and 'all-pervasive'.[191] The strategy and the coverage of power relations incorporate all parts of social formation with all forms of the state apparatus, as defined by Althusser, as well as with human sexuality and desire, which we will discuss in the next part. Foucault again makes use of the holistic approach to understanding the strategy of power relationships. All power relationships are not only connected neatly but strongly linked with every single part of society in order to serve the benefit of capitalism.

However, if power relationships, as Foucault claims, are omnipotent, can we say that 'power is everything,' or 'everything is power'? Is it possible for us to resist power? Foucault's answers will be 'no' to the first question and 'yes' to the second one.

Firstly, Foucault would reply to the first question by criticising it as a flawed starting point. This is because, in Foucault's words, power relationships rather than power itself are omnipotent. Power cannot be everything, or appear everywhere, if we cannot define its existence by means of seeing its function.

Secondly, Foucault says, 'these relations [of power] would not have been established if power was omnipotent, or if there was such a thing as omnipotence.'[192] Foucault does not intend to claim that 'everything is power' or 'power is everything'. Conversely, power can be recognised *only* when it is functioning; therefore, the appearance of power relationships must be in a specific context, a recognisable situation, or a definable locus. Foucault further mentions that these relationships can be 'effectively found at each instant, in family relations, in sexual relations, in pedagogical relations, in relations of knowledge, etc.'[193] The theory of power relationships, as a method to recognise their deployments, has assumed that power relations appear only when they can be perceived. We should not generalise the appearance of power relationships as 'everything.' They exist only when they can be defined.

[191] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge (1976)*, 99.
[192] Foucault et al., "Considerations on Marxism, Phenomenology and Power. Interview with Michel Foucault; Recorded on April 3rd, 1978," 107.
[193] Ibid

Thirdly, Foucault's answer to the first question is that resistance appears when power appears, even though power relationships are omnipotent. As Foucault famously writes about power:

> Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power…. [The existence of power] depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the roles of adversary, target, support, or handles in power relations. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network.[194]

Foucault's theory of power regards counter-power as part of power relationships, in terms of its functioning relationship. The existence of resistance is defined by its relationship with the power. Therefore, when we recognise the existence of resistance, it must mean that there exists a power that is opposed to this resistance. The power cannot be defined but it is revealed in the relationship with the counter-power. As Foucault emphasises, the interaction between resistance and its counter-power shows the existence and locus of the power. The place where the power is recognised is the place where resistance is revealed and created. Power and resistance, in this way, always coexist.

By way of further explanation, the cooperation between power and resistance can be comprehended in two dimensions. Epistemologically, the presence of resistance discloses the trajectory of power, which shows the contrasting interaction between power and counter-power. This interaction also shows a trajectory of power relationships. If the power is revealed by its resistive counter-power, then the power relation will be defined by its related resistance. In this sense, resistance is not the consequence of its functioning. On the contrary, as Foucault said, 'resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the other forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with the resistance.'[195] Resistance is the cause. It 'creates' power because power is created for the purpose of controlling and dominating over resistance.

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[194] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge (1976)*, 95.

[195] *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1997), 167.

If the creation of power relations is for the purpose of maintaining and constructing the unity of the whole of society, then the appearance of resistance, which seems to threaten the wholeness of society, is producing the need for the creation of power. In this sense, resistance is not a negative reaction to thwart the dominance of power. Resistance, conversely, is an active and positive force to constitute power itself. As Foucault commented in an interview, 'to resist is not simply a negation but a creative process: to create and recreate, to change the situation, actually to be an active member of that process.'[196] Resistance is not impossible. Resistance appears when power is revealed and created. Resistance and power are inseparable twins. They are coexistent and interconnected.

Finally, Foucault makes use of the example of sexual liberation to demonstrate that the deployments of power are flexible, continually varied and constantly modified. Even though power is everywhere, it cannot be simplified to a claim that power is everything. The theme of *The History of Sexuality* (1976) is to show the complicated and meticulous deployments of power. Foucault is suspicious of the propaganda against sexual repression. This propaganda claims that sexuality has been repressed in modern society, so it needs to be liberated. However, Foucault discloses that the practice of sexual liberation has already been incorporated into the system of power control. Power deployments are so flexible that power can engage in the practice of sexual liberation immediately, although the purpose of sexual liberation initially is against the repression. Foucault clarifies that the question should be 'why do we think that we are repressed?' rather than 'why are we repressed?'[197] Foucault reminds us that the relationship between liberation and repression is not fixed in a binary relationship. Liberation and repression are not a permanent condition that can be achieved once and remain forever.

There is no ever-lasting condition of liberation. In the past, human sexuality had been repressed in the form of silencing sexuality; therefore, people believed that sexuality can be liberated by means of bravely articulating it. This, however, was tabooed and repressed. But Foucault argues that the practice of liberation does not necessarily result in freedom; conversely and ironically, the articulation of sexuality, which was encouraged by the

[196] Ibid., 168.
[197] *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge (1976)*, 8-9.

movement of sexual liberation, provides a foundation for the construction of the medical knowledge of sexuality. In Foucault's view, this medical knowledge of sexuality builds power by means of categorisation of normality and abnormality.[198] When people start talking about sexuality, their sexual practices have been controlled by the engaged deployments of power again and immediately. At this point, Foucault challenges the notion of liberation. In his view, this misrecognition— that sexual liberation is appropriated by other forms of power relationships—results from the narrow understanding of repression, which is considered as a practice of being free from restraint, restriction, and confinement. It also results from the narrow understanding of liberation, which is achieved merely by the removal of all restrictions on freedom.

In order to recognise the re-appropriation of power deployments after liberation, Foucault suggests considering the relationship between repression and the work of the 'polymorphous techniques of power.'[199] This means that we need to discard the assumed analysis, which establishes a binary dichotomy between repression and liberation. Foucault demonstrates that:

> My main concern will be to locate the forms of power, the channels it takes, and the discourses it permeates in order to reach the most tenuous and individual modes of behaviour, the paths that give it access to the rare or scarcely perceivable forms of desire, how it penetrates and controls everyday pleasure.[200]

Foucault points out that the practice of sexuality, power and knowledge is related to a flexible complexity of power relationships. Even though he is regarded as the father of queer theory, Foucault doubts that sexuality is something that should be liberated. He also doubts that sexual liberation can be achieved by the freedom to articulate one's sexuality.

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[198] Foucault also makes use of the history of madness to demonstrate how medicine, particularly psychic knowledge, defines and excludes madness. See *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason (1961)*, Vintage Books ed. ed., History of Insanity in the Age of Reason (New York: Vintage Books, 1988).

[199] *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge (1976)*, 11.

[200] Ibid.

In other words, sexual liberation, I argue, is not what Foucault is ultimately trying to achieve. For him, it is problematic to claim that our sexuality needs to be liberated from repression. Conversely, Foucault endeavours to point out that the claim of sexual liberation has become a new support, one which is appropriated by new power relationships to oppress, rather than to bring about liberation or freedom. The practice of sexual liberation has become incorporated into the new deployments of power relationships. At this point, we can see that Foucault's research project is not only intended 'for instances of discursive production, of the production of power and of the propagation of knowledge.' Its purpose is also 'to write the history of these instances and their transformations.'[201] The purpose of reading *The History of Sexuality* is not to understand the history or sexuality. Instead, it aims to understand the way that power relationships work and how they manipulate sexuality and human body.

The Construction of a Subject with Sexuality and Desire

Foucault's shift of focus arose from his insight that power relationships have to find an object to display their power so that a subject, which is objectified by power relationships, becomes definable. Foucault examines the history of sexuality and madness to demonstrate that people's sexuality and madness are defined within power relationships.[202] Foucault's writings on sexuality and madness are not his liberative agenda. They should be read as a reflection on how these individual people become subjects, defined by knowledge and bodily discipline within power relationships. In this light, I argue that Foucault's research focus is to analyse the impact of power on sexuality and desire, rather than to describe the power of the state and other repressive apparatuses, or to propose a manifesto of liberating the marginalised. This is not because Foucault disregards the significance of these repressive apparatuses at the level of macro-structure, nor that he does not care about the oppression of the excluded. Foucault's theoretical concern with sexuality and desire strongly connects the deployment of power relationships with the construction of the self, dubbed 'subjectification.' His concern is based on a holistic approach, which views how power

[201] Ibid., 12.
[202] Lynne Huffer, *Mad for Foucault: Rethinking the Foundations of Queer Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

relationships deploy at the level of individual bodies, such as sexuality and desire. Foucault's concern with sexuality, desire and the body, therefore, is intended to assist with an understanding of the process of subjectification within power relationships.

Sexuality and Desire in Relation to Power Relations

Foucault clarifies that there are two forms of deployment of power relationships: the one is the deployment of alliance; the other is the deployment of sexuality.[203] The former is based on some given relationships and social organisations, including families. This deployment concerns social influence. Its control is mainly exercised by means of 'a system of rules defining the permitted and forbidden, the licit and the illicit.'[204] However, the latter form of deployment is based on the 'technologies of power.' It focuses on 'the sensations of body, the quality of pleasure, and the nature of impressions.'[205] The human body, pleasure and sexuality are loci on which power relations exert pressure. In this sense, Foucault argues that all power strategies, which operate on every individual body, should be viewed as 'a major factor of sexualisation,' rather than 'a powerful agency of prohibition'.[206] These power strategies cause 'sexuality' to become a living and meaningful concept; this is contrary to what sexual liberationists have claimed, which is that power strategies repress sexuality. Foucault moves on from this point to concentrate on the production of sexuality and the deployments of power that serve bourgeois hegemony.[207] What he means to say is that the analysis of sexuality and desire on which power impose must be considered in relation to power relationships and its purpose of supporting capitalism.

The existence of sexuality and desire, in the view of Foucault, is created by and in the deployments of power relationships. Sexuality and desire are not biological entities that are purely driven by our physical lust and passion, although Foucault does not reject this biological connection. However, I would like to clarify that this understanding of the biological foundation of sexuality is widely and influentially accepted in English-speaking academic circles. And it has led English academic circles to misunderstand, or only partially

[203] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge (1976)*, 108.
[204] Ibid., 106.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid., 114.
[207] Ibid.

to comprehend, Foucault's concept of 'sexuality.' For example, Gayle Rubin, who introduced Foucault into English-speaking queer theories, narrowly defined *le sexe* as being about biological sexual desire, or so-called 'sex'.[208] *Le sexe*, however, in French, or at least in Foucault's context, is a word with ambiguous meanings. It includes all meanings of sexuality, sex and gender that we generally use in English. It means as such "sex-as-organs, sex-as-biological-reproduction, sex-as-individual-gender-roles, sex-as-gendered group-affiliation, sex-as-erotic-acts and sex-as-lust".[209] Therefore, the consideration of sexuality (*le sexe*) is not in sharp contrast to the concept of gender, which is ideally more 'fluid' and 'unfixed' than 'sex' in English academic circles. Here, it is noteworthy that Foucault's notions of sexuality and desire cannot be understood simply as a biological urge at an individual and biological level.

On the contrary, Foucault argues that human sexuality and bodies must be considered in their interaction with power relationships. He therefore insists that:

> We must not make the mistake of thinking that sex is an autonomous agency which secondarily produces manifold effects of sexuality over the entire length of its surface of contact with power. On the contrary, sex is the most speculative, most ideal, and the most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organised by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures.[210]

The practices of sexuality and desire, which are shaped for satisfying the demand of capitalism, have been incorporated into power deployments. The accumulation of capital and the sufficiency of reproduction both rely on disciplinary techniques, which shape and form 'productive bodies'.[211] In *the History of sexuality*, sexual behaviours do matter when it comes to sustaining procreation as a part of reproduction—they serve to supply the

[208] See, Janet E. Halley, *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006); Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michele Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993).
[209] Huffer, *Mad for Foucault: Rethinking the Foundations of Queer Theory*, 47.
[210] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge (1976)*, 155.
[211] Elden, "A More Marxist Foucault?," 161.

labourers of the future. Similarly, in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault explores the concept of the 'political economy of bodies'.[212] He demonstrates that prisoners' bodies are disciplined to be deviant in order to be sufficient enough for the use of capitalist reproduction.[213] The disciplinary system in prison enables and forces these prisoners' bodies to be docile and not subversive. In the view of Foucault, in order to maximise the benefit of capitalism, capitalism needs to 'invest' in the process of forming and disciplining the body. In the first instance, this investment should be made for the purpose of sustaining economic production and maintaining economic exploitation.[214] In other words, in Foucault's understanding, the body, sexuality and desire are intended to support the function and the benefit of capitalism.

Furthermore, the process of forming sexuality, desire and the body is not shaped by a *single* discourse but by a multiplicity of discourses. These are 'produced by a whole series of mechanisms operating in different institutions.'[215] Foucault's focus on intertwined discourses as the tools of the bourgeois for the purpose of controlling bodies and pleasures, and for creating interests and benefits of economics, is similar to Althusser's theory of ideology. For example, 'the people' becomes not an object that needs to be controlled. It is represented in gradations by the measurement of 'the population.'[216] This is because the size of the population is an important factor in economic growth and industrial production capabilities. Foucault demonstrates that the linkage that connects the discourses that form sexuality, desire and the body have the purpose of creating capitalist economic interests. He explains why the discourse, which is supposed to serve the benefits of capitalism, becomes more involved with sexuality, desire and the body. This is because the purpose of the control of sexuality and pleasure is to provide the 'infrastructure' of economic production. The discourse concerning sexuality and pleasure is part of the knowledge, which is used for monitoring the population.

In this light, the discourse is not about forbidding or repressing sexualities. Instead, it is about 'orientating', 'refining' and 'utilising' bodies and pleasures. As Foucault explains, 'a

[212] Ibid.
[213] See, Jessop, "From Micro-Powers to Governmentality: Foucault's Work on Statehood, State Formation, Statecraft and State Power," 39.
[214] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (1975)*, 25.
[215] *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge (1976)*, 33.
[216] Ibid., 25.

policing of sex is not the rigour of a taboo, but the necessity of regulating sex through useful and public discourses.'[217] Foucault does not lose his doubt concerning *the discourse* that regards articulating sexuality as a strategy of sexual liberation. In his own words, this is considered a *hypothesis* of repression. On the other hand, Foucault argues that the discourse, which has already intruded on individual minds at the deepest level, has heavily influenced people to 'confess to acts contravening the law' and 'to seek to transform your every desire.'[218] It is not easy to recognise this force, as it is hidden under the cover of liberation. Every individual, influenced by the discourse, firmly believes that their articulation of sexuality is an active behaviour of freedom that is directed by their 'pure' desires that have not yet been manipulated by any discourse or by external authorities. Consequently, sexual behaviours, which are assumed to be private and personal, are encouraged to be exposed *to* the public and *for* the public. So they are all now under the examination and supervision of medical knowledge and in tune with the public consensus.

Foucault's critique demonstrates that sexuality does not result from any individual natural pleasure. Rather, it corresponds to the control of the population and economic growth. All articulations of sexuality are, as he says, 'orchestrated from all quarters, apparatuses everywhere for listening and recording, procedures for observing, questioning, and formulating.'[219] This is the only way to interpret Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* without losing its core argument and casting doubt on the hypothesis of sexual repression. Foucault reminds us that the articulation of sexuality is a ruse by which power gains access to our private life and controls our bodies. Sexuality is not repressed but is 'defined' within power relationships by the discourses. Sexuality and desire, which are objectified in bourgeois-dominated society, then both become controllable and calculable. In the eyes of Foucault, sexuality and desire are defined by and within power relationships, which are constructed through discourses and knowledge.

[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid., 21.
[219] Ibid., 33.

The Birth of Perversions in Foucault's Theory of Power Relationships

Sexuality and desire are not supposed to be homogeneous or to be regulated entirely by power relationships. In Foucault's perspective of society, there is no society which is coherent, or which exists without any conflict within power relationships. Power relationships create counter-power to support the power itself. Power and counter-power are created together, and both work together. The work of discourses, for instance, defines what 'perverse' and abnormal sexualities are. As Foucault clarifies:

> The growth of perversions is not a moralising theme that obsessed the scrupulous minds of the Victorians. It is the real product of the encroachment of a type of power on bodies and their pleasures.[220]

This is because, when various styles of sexualities and orientations of desires are articulated and confessed, sexual perversions cannot be easily recognised, compared and defined. The birth of perversions starts with the verbalisation of sexuality and desire. Perversion has never been ignored in the establishment of a medico-sexual regime.[221] Conversely, through recognising and defining perversion as 'an analytical, visible and permanent reality' and 'a natural order of disorder,' the machinery of power relationships can start to monitor and regulate perversion. Eventually, power relationships can impose themselves onto human bodies.[222] These perverse behaviours and people who are gazed at become the loci in which power relationships display themselves. This occurs 'through the isolation, intensification, and the consolidation of peripheral sexualities.'[223] That is, when we start to talk about sexuality, bodies (including sexuality and desire) end up being objects that can be measured, monitored and controlled within power relationships.

Foucault has noticed the paradox that the more sexuality and desire are 'enabled' to disclose and articulate, the more it becomes impossible to eliminate defined sexual

[220] Ibid., 48.
[221] Ibid., 42.
[222] Ibid., 44.
[223] Ibid., 48.

perversions. Power, which is supposed to oppress, repress and control, turns into a force for the creation of pleasure and excitement. The interaction between power and pleasure forms a spiral curriculum:[224] firstly, power enlarges and intensifies pleasure; this enlarged pleasure then creates greater desire and makes it easier for people to disclose their sexualities. The more disclosure of sexualities there is, the more power is enlarged. What then happens is that it stirs up the next spiral to intensify pleasure. In this spiral, sexual perversions are discovered and revealed. Once they are revealed, power can be observed in action, getting involved and implanting itself onto perversions in order to regulate them. (Ironically, this process of exerting itself is carried out in the name of sexual liberation.) Perversions motivate the creation of pleasure; in other words, power, which defines perversion, creates pleasure.

In this view, perversion is merely a fuse that connects power with sexuality and desire. More accurately, perversion discourages rebellion against the exertion of power. However, the existence of perversion is necessary to power because perversion is resistance and power and its deployments are based on the co-existence of resistance and power. In Foucault's understanding, power relationships, to all appearances, create the illusion of bringing about freedom by allowing the articulation of sexuality and desire. But the reality is that they impose themselves onto the body, sexuality and desire. Foucault warns us that we cannot see the gain ahead without seeing the dangers behind.

Foucault establishes a new paradigm of power analysis, but he does not wholly discard the whole previous Marxist theory of the state. Instead, he enlarges the analytic scope that concerns both the macro-political of repressive apparatuses and the micro-political of human bodies, including sexuality and desire. Here, I would like to offer three points about Foucault's theory of power relations, which maps out the dynamic interaction between the state, capitalism and power relationships. Firstly, capitalism, which cooperates with the state, continues to be the dominant source of control, although the state is not the only apparatus of repression. Secondly, power relationships play a major role in building society up. The web of power relationships covers the whole of society so that we can say that power relationships are omnipotent. They not only maintain the whole society as a unit, but they also support capitalism to gain benefits by means of cooperating with the state to

[224] See, ibid.

dominate society. Thirdly, not only are these forces of power relationships deployed by repressive institutions, but they also impose and exert themselves on every individual body, sexuality and desire. The whole society, including social structure from above as well as the body practice from below, is created and maintained by the condensed web of power relationships.

In other words, in Foucault's theory, the definition of political economy is not just about the relationship between capital and labour exclusively. It 'encompasses power *dispositifs* that amplify the whole range of relations between the forces that extend throughout the *social body*.'[225] This holistic approach implies, as Michael Mann argues, that the focus of Foucault's theory is 'polymorphous crystallisation'.[226] According to Foucault's view, power should be construed as a flexible, non-symmetrical, dynamic and productive force.

However, it is not that these power forces are so divergent and omnipotent that their purpose and direction cannot be recognised. Foucault, on the contrary, repeatedly reminds us that we must consider these power relationships *within* society and recognise them as living and practical forces, which are orientated towards capitalism. Power is not a singular force from a rigid centre and escaping this power regime brings about liberation. Foucault then argues that:

> If we assume things [like]… an omnipotent sovereign whose orders, injunctions, commands would effectively be followed to the letter, this would exclude from the social body through which he exercises this sovereignty the existence of these thousands of relations of power that establish themselves between people that rebel, that contest, etc.[227]

[225] Maurizio Lazzarato, "From Biopower to Biopolitics," *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy* 13, no. 8 (2002): 102-03.
[226] Jessop, "From Micro-Powers to Governmentality: Foucault's Work on Statehood, State Formation, Statecraft and State Power," 36. Also see, Michael Mann, "The Sources of Social Power, Vol. I: A History of Power from the Beginning to 1760 Ad," (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
[227] Foucault et al., "Considerations on Marxism, Phenomenology and Power. Interview with Michel Foucault; Recorded on April 3rd, 1978," 107.

Resistance is not something that is unachievable in terms of the meticulous recognition of power relationships. Resistance happens when power is recognised. The existence of power supports resistance rather than undermines it. Foucault suggests that resistance always happens, even though power will quickly stamp resistance out.

For example, in the case of sexual liberation, we have already noted that liberation is an endless process of interacting with the forces of power relationships. Freedom in sexuality cannot be achieved through sexual liberation, including sexual exposure and the articulation of sexuality. Sexual liberation, in the first phase, might help to provide strategies to subvert the Victorian fear of talking about sexuality but it will immediately be incorporated into the new deployments of power relationships. This re-appropriation of power relationships victimises the practice of sexual liberation.

Briefly speaking, the birth of perversions and the practice of sexual perversions cannot be naively considered as a settled solution, or strategy, to subvert sexual normativity. In other words, to resist is not to seek a concrete or stable situation, which is free from all kinds of power relationships. There is no such thing as a 'power-free' situation. On the other hand, sustaining an understanding that sexuality is precarious, in terms of sensing its relation to the control and manipulation of power relationships, is a better resistive strategy.

Foucault's theory of power relationships shows how dynamic and flexible power relationships work on sexuality, desire and the body. This process of normalising sexuality, orientating desire and disciplining the body corresponds with the construction of the subject. The subject in Foucault's view is defined within various power relationships when their sexuality, desire and the body are defined. Therefore, the analysis of understanding how sexuality, desire and the body are constructed and then excluded itself is the analysis of knowing how the self becomes a subject. This process of becoming a subject, called 'subjectification,' should strongly correspond with the web of power relationships.

Subjectification: Seeking Liberation and Freedom

Foucault's theory of power relationships connects macro-politics concerning governmentality with micro-politics concerning sexuality and desire. This paradigm shift means that individual practices and social structures are interdependent, defined and orientated by each other. Power relationships are changed by the object that interacts with them. This object is also defined by the power relationships in which it is situated. The object and power relationships work mutually with each other. In other words, Foucault does not think that the human individual is merely an object that is passively shaped by power. Conversely, individuals are subjects of freedom within power relationships. This is because it is only when subjects are free to act that power exerting itself over subjects can be recognised. The freedom of individuals pre-exists power relationships although power relationships seize the freedom of individuals.

Is Foucault an Essentialist in understanding the Existence of the Subject?

In Foucault's theory, individuals are not objectified by power as passive and dead beings. Individuals are active and living subjects, which have their freedom, though they are conditioned by power relations. Therefore, a subject cannot be considered as having a predetermined nature, but is instead a being in the process of becoming a subject in the web of power relationships.[228] Foucault uses the word 'subjectification' to describe this process of the construction of individual subjects. This word play not only means that the subject is constituted. It also means 'the way in which we impose on a subject relations of domination.'[229] Foucault challenges the binary of freedom and restriction as well as the binary of repression and liberation.[230] For him, the first stage toward achieving the freedom of individual subjects is not to liberate people entirely from all power relationships of 'power-over'. In Foucault's view, the first step is to be free from all power relationships; therefore, he considers subjectification to be a liberative strategy of 'power-to.' This

[228] Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 290.
[229] Foucault et al., "Considerations on Marxism, Phenomenology and Power. Interview with Michel Foucault; Recorded on April 3rd, 1978," 110.
[230] Thomas Lemke, "Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique," *Rethinking marxism* 14, no. 3 (2002): 59.

broadens and enlarges our understanding of liberation, which used to be considered as being free from 'power-over' alone.

Foucault redefines the notion of freedom. His emphasis on the dynamic of power relationships has successfully overcome the separation between freedom and anti-freedom. This is because freedom is not a rigid thing that can be permanently seized. Freedom is so fragile and vulnerable that it is easily incorporated into the new deployments of power relationships. In Foucault's view, freedom is not a tangible object. Instead, it is an act from which a subject is able to discern how the exertion of power relationships works on their body. Foucault defines this act as 'self-regulation' or 'technologies of the self.' The process is intended 'to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of ends, through relations of self-mastery or self-knowledge.'[231]

Concern with subjects of the self is Foucault's chosen starting point. Similarly, Descartes finds that our rational self is a concrete, solid and unchallengeable foundation. He believes that, apart from this rational self, we can doubt and suspect everything. However, it does not mean that Foucault falls back to essentialism or rationalism, as Descartes did. Foucault is dissatisfied with the extreme of constructivism that ignores the basic foundation of materiality, which regards everything as constructed, and which believes nothing exists truly.[232] Foucault reminds us that the material is not reducible, and that can be used as a solid foundation for resistance. Our bodies do exist, and they become the locus of the deployment of power relationships. For Foucault, if constructivism leads to the negation of the existence of the material and bodies, it will also be dispossessed of their foundation to resist. Foucault does not convert to essentialism. He considers that the material, as a true and irreducible element, is a starting point of resistance. It involves the construction of the subject and its subjectification in relation to the practice of their bodies.

The Practice of the 'Self' as Subjectification

What does 'the construction of the self' mean? For Foucault, to know who you are is a practice of the self. The subject is more related and expressed in 'the self' rather than 'I.'

[231] Foucault, *Ethics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, 87.
[232] Lemke, "Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique," 61.

Grammatically, the subject, which acts from the first person, is a sovereign active centre. But the concept of the self is a reflexive pronoun. This subject-self 'is the subject actualising the return of every action toward the self.'[233] In this sense, subjectification is a process of seeking the truth about ourselves, and of objectivising the self by the self.[234] For Foucault, Christian confession is an example of this practice.

> Each person has the duty to know who he is, that is, to try to know what is happening inside him, to acknowledge faults, to recognise temptations, to locate desire; and everyone is obligated to disclose these things either to God or to others in the community and, hence, to bear public or private witness against oneself.[235]

Individuals find their subjectivity by means of knowing who they are and what they have done. They also find it by means of punishing and denying themselves in penitence for sin. However, this process of subjectification is not something that is practiced through the exploration of their identity and nature but through the revealing of their subjectivity.[236]

Foucault argues that, in ancient Greco-Roman culture, there was a similar practice of the self. The figure of the 'master' played an important role at that time. For example, mature or adult men were afraid of being enslaved. They trained themselves to be masters and not to have any desire for beautiful boys or girls.[237] Foucault appreciates the practice of the self in Greco-Roman tradition, which is not to indulge themselves in sexuality and desire, particularly towards any beautiful person. The Greco-Roman practice of the self is to orientate one's desire to be under control. At this point, we can see Foucault's ironic attitude towards sexual liberation, the irony being that sexual liberation is not a way for people to indulge themselves freely and be themselves without any restriction.

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[233] Sergey S. Horujy, *Practices of the Self and Spiritual Practices: Michel Foucault and the Eastern Christian Discourse (2010)*, trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing 2015), 21.
[234] Foucault, *Ethics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, 195.
[235] Ibid., 242.
[236] Ibid., 244-45.
[237] Foucault thinks that, in ancient Greek culture, people could tolerate men having sex with female and 'young boys' because it showed their mastery over other slaves. So, it is not permitted for mature males to have sex with other mature males because both of them are masters and do not want to be slaves. Ibid., 260.

Moreover, Descartes 'succeeded in substituting a subject as founder of practices of knowledge for a subject constituted through practices of the self.'[238] In his *Meditations*, or his journey of understanding himself, he recognised himself as a subject who owns rationality, who is able to be suspicious of his feelings. Although Foucault is probably not convinced by Descartes's discovery of the practices of the self, he accepts that there are different kinds of technologies of the self that are related to self-knowledge, and the constitution of the subject. But he further argues that the construction of the subject is not isolated from others. Instead, it must be in relation to objects, in particular in the case of the Christian practice of confession and of practices in the Greco-Roman masculine culture.[239] As Sergey Horujy argues, for Foucault, by practising the self, humans are in the process of reaching the boundaries of the horizon of their consciousness and existence.[240] They are open to that which is beyond the boundaries; at the same time, they 'are formed by interacting with it.'[241] The process that Foucault points out can be seen in the theology of Kierkegaard, a Danish theologian. Horujy considers the process of the practice of the self as the paradigm of unlocking oneself, which constitutes the subject by choosing themselves and becoming their true self.[242] The self, or the subject, is not an isolated autonomous entity. It is defined by an 'other' to which the subject is open.

On the other hand, it is important to emphasise that self-knowledge is not an autonomous practice of self-affirmation within a power-free context, because power has already engaged in the whole process of constructing the self. Those in society whose bodies are subjected to disciplinary process (such as the insane, prisoners and homosexuals) are examples of this involvement. In the field of medical treatment, physicians constitute the subjectivity of the insane by means of defining and diagnosing them as suffering from 'madness'. Those who are defined as mad require themselves to accept this identity of the insane by self-examining their own behaviours. 'The physician's power enables him to produce the reality of mental illness characterised by the ability to reproduce phenomena

[238] Ibid., 278.
[239] See, 'The object is to arm the subject with a truth it did not know, one that did not reside in it' ibid., 102..
[240] Horujy, *Practices of the Self and Spiritual Practices: Michel Foucault and the Eastern Christian Discourse (2010)*.
[241] Ibid., 8.
[242] Ibid., 9.

completely accessible to knowledge.'[243] Medical knowledge is involved in the process of subjects identifying themselves as insane. In this sense, the process of subjectification includes three dimensions: self-knowledge, self-definition and self- examination.

Foucault suggests that subjectification is for all people, rather than exclusively for the 'abnormal,' or the 'insane'. We need 'to know what is happening inside him [and us], to acknowledge faults, to recognise temptations, to locate desire.'[244] The consideration of the practice of subjectification shifts the focus on our 'self' by means of examining what we do and what directs our desire and sexuality. The new focus on examining the self can be seen as resistance to power. This is because the practice of subjectification can re-orientate power relationships by recognising what tempts us and what we desire if the drives of sexuality and desire are orientated by power relationships.

Indeed, techniques of dominance and techniques of the self have to be considered together in the analysis of the subject. Foucault thus regards 'government' as a key point for this incorporation, though Foucault's notion of government is broader than the government of the state.[245] Power relationships are not only dispersed, as opposed to remaining in central, but they have also engaged in the complexity of the construction of the subject.

> Governing people is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself.[246]

In other words, in Foucault's theory, a subject itself has manifested in a figure that is shaped by the deployment of power relationships. By subjectification, the subject has interiorised social formation and the deployments of power; therefore, power and structure are not external objects. Power and structure become inseparable if we consider how they are both

[243] Foucault, *Ethics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, 44.
[244] Ibid., 242.
[245] "About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two Lectures at Dartmouth," *Political Theory* 21, no. 2 (1993): 203.
[246] Ibid., 204.

displayed on the bodily practice of the subject. Bodily practices, conversely, are not just the practice of the self. They also reproduce the power structure. As Foucault argues, 'in governing people there is always a structure inside those who are governed that make them governable by others.'[247]

Foucault's Practice of Freedom

If the marks of the exertion of the power are already on the body and the subject, how can freedom be achievable? Foucault suggests pursuing 'a practice of freedom.' Foucault positively believes that power is not necessarily evil but that it is a 'game of strategy'; therefore, it is possible to find a new ethic against power abuse.[248] In this sense, Foucault precariously points out that 'our freedom is found not in our transcendental nature but in our capacities to contest and change those autonomous practices that constitute our nature,' as Rajchman comments.[249] Freedom is a capacity to change rather than a situation to maintain or a right to exercise. When considering sexual liberation, Foucault suggests that we need to pursue 'freedom of sexual choice' rather than 'freedom of sexual acts' because the latter may include rape.[250] The freedom of choice is giving freedom to everyone to choose to do or not to do, rather than to force all people to maintain a specific kind of freedom such as the freedom of a liberated sexuality. When we regard the articulation of sexuality as freedom to maintain, or to liberate, from sexual repression, this 'freedom' then becomes the 'force' that enables people to lose their ability to choose. In this sense, when Foucault discusses homosexuals and their freedom, he does not argue that homosexuality should be re-introduced into society, or to be normalised. He states that, on the contrary, homosexuals have to maintain their situation out of a desire to continuously reverse social structures.[251] This is the freedom by which queers can choose to be incorporated into normativity.

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[247] Colin Gordon, "The Christian Art of Being Governed," *Foucault Studies* 20 (2015): 258.
[248] Foucault, *Ethics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, 298-99.
[249] John Rajchman, *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 105.
[250] Foucault, *Ethics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, 143.
[251] Ibid., 138, 60.

It is noticeable, therefore, that Foucault has placed his emphasis on the politics of the body and the practice of the self in subjectification. Political resistance needs to go down to the level of the body and the self. The previous theory of liberation paved the way for a new power relation to recapture freedom, so this new way cannot bring an end to the power contest. In this contest, the new power will be established after the previous power is removed. This is the reason why the strategy of liberation is not to remove all power relationships, and even this removal cannot guarantee freedom. Liberation cannot 'give rise to happy human beings imbued with a sexuality to which the subject could achieve a complete and satisfying relationship.'[252] The practice of freedom has firstly to recognise that this strategy is not to seek a space that is entirely free from power relationships. Conversely, the practice of freedom is consciously to create new power relationships and then to know how to maintain its own freedom within them. Freedom can be practiced in various forms such as resistance, insubordination, counter-conduct, and ethical subjectification.[253] When the forms of power relationships are varied, the forms of resistance are varied too.

On the point of this mutual relation between power, resistance, and freedom, Foucault argues that we are not entirely 'trapped' within power relationships. We always have capacities to change them even though we cannot fully escape from these relationships.[254] It is not necessary to believe that staying in power relationships is to be doomed to domination by others.[255] To choose not to remove all power relations, in Foucault's view, does not mean to choose to be dominated. Foucault is pessimistic about there being a space without power relationships. This might lead one to believe that Foucault does not desire freedom. Foucault suspects that the elimination of power relationships of 'power-over' necessarily leads to the freedom of 'power-to'. Therefore, Foucault considers the priority of the practice of freedom and thus moves on from struggling with the problem of liberation from any form of power and dominance.

Foucault's theory of 'subjectification' has double meanings. The construction of the self is deeply rooted in resistance to power relationships if the practice of the self, which is

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[252] ibid., 283-84.
[253] Jon Simons, "Power, Resistance, and Freedom," in *A Companion to Foucault*, ed. Christopher Falzon, Timothy O'Leary, and Jana Sawicki (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2013), 314.
[254] Foucault, *Ethics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, 167.
[255] Simons, "Power, Resistance, and Freedom," 314.

achieved by means of knowing and examining the self, is to recognise how power relations impose on our body in order to construct the subject. The process of subjectification itself is entirely political, because it offers a method of resistance, namely, techniques of the self. Foucault thinks this political resistance is a new ethic. This ethic is 'not the ethic of transgression, but the ethic of constant disengagement from constituted forms of experience, of freeing oneself for the invention of new forms of life.'[256] The new ethic displays the subjects that are constructed and engaged within new power relationships. Above all, Foucault develops a new scope of political resistance and freedom. He states, 'freedom is the ontological condition of ethics. But ethics are the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection.'[257]

Overview

In the last chapter, I argued that social and political revolutions cannot promise permanent liberation and freedom. By means of reviewing the tradition of liberation theologies, I pointed out that they are too obsessed with the analysis of social structures to the extent that they cannot perceive the existence and agency of a subject (even though they have claimed that the methodology of liberation theologies is the consideration of the suffering subject).

In this chapter, I argued that Foucault's theory helps us to strengthen the Marxist critique, which is widely shared by all liberation theologies. Foucault's theory shows the possibility of political resistance, which is used in a broader sense of structural analysis. Political resistance occurs in the process of constructing the self to be a subject. This is because, in Foucault's view, power not only works from institutions but also from all kinds of relationships that define who we are and which construct the self. Foucault uses the examples of the construction of madness and sexuality to explain the process of subjectification. Following Foucault's theory, I argue that subjectification, as the way of recognising the deployments of power relationships, should be regarded as a strategy of political resistance. In the next chapter, I would like to examine how liberation theologies

[256] Rajchman, *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy*, 37.
[257] Foucault, *Ethics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, 284.

have discussed sexuality, desire and the body in their liberative agenda and how Foucault's theory will challenge their theological premises.

CHAPTER THREE The Failure of Political Theologies of Sexuality and Desire

The Work of Marcella Althaus-Reid, Jung Mo Sung and Daniel Bell

In the previous two chapters I argued that the methodology of liberation theologies has placed an overemphasis on the analysis of social structure and has ignored the significance of the individual subject. In the light of Michel Foucault's theory, I suggested that liberation theology should be concerned with power relationships in terms of sexuality, desire and the body. This is because the deployments of power relationships are not only displayed at the level of social structure but also at the individual level of the human body, through sexuality and desire. The exertion of power relationships can be observed in the process of subjectification, which is about how the self becomes a subject. In this sense, liberation theology should not be obsessed with political revolution and seeing it as the only liberative way. Liberation theology has to consider sexuality, desire and the body, which are the locus of political resistance against power and dominance, especially capitalism.

In fact, sexuality, desire and the body have already been considered by some liberation theologians, such as Marcella Althaus-Reid, Jung Mo Sung, and Daniel Bell. For example, Althaus-Reid makes the criticism that Latin American liberation theology ignores sexual oppression, which inherits the power of Western imperialism and colonialism. Her theological proposal, which is called 'Indecent Theology', requires liberation theology to open their eyes to the oppression of poor women, whose bodies are perceived as dirty, filthy and sexually abused. Sung, as a Brazilian liberation theologian, points out how capitalism creates human desire to support it. He suggests that liberation theology should consider the creation of human desire, which seeks to obtain fulfilment from idolatrous capitalism. Bell's insight is similar to Sung's. He focuses on how capitalism manipulates desire and orientates desire to move away from desiring and loving God, the Creator of human desire. Bell suggests an ontological shift, which is to consider what human desire actually is. Based on this new shift, theology itself is seen as the remedy for oppression by capitalism.

However, in this chapter, I will review these theologies of sexuality, desire and the body from the perspective of Foucault's theory of resistance and power relationships, which I discussed in the last chapter. I will argue that the liberation theologies they proposed remain current and repeat the same theoretical failures. Even though they have considered the individual's sexuality, desire and body, it does not mean that they avoid over-relying on social analysis or that they consider the subject itself. Firstly, I will examine Althaus-Reid's Indecent Theology, which is the one of the most important books concerned with the complexity of poverty and sexual exploitation. However, I will criticise indecent theology as it simply shifts the theological concern, rather than gets involved in any subversion of structure. This failure results from Althaus-Reid's ignorance of the process of subjectification and from her lack of understanding of dynamic power relationships.

Secondly, I will examine Jung Mo Sung's criticism of capitalism as idolatrous, creating desire and exploiting the basic need of humans. His criticism leads to a call to liberative action, to fight against the creation of desire. His proposal takes an ethical approach. But I disagree with Sung's understanding that human desire is created by capitalism in order to take over the drive of basic human needs. In my view, desire existed before the birth of capitalism—it was created by God. It is oversimplifying the issue to label desire an invention of capitalism. More accurately, desire and its orientation are taken over by capitalism rather than invented by capitalism.

Thirdly, Daniel Bell accurately points out that the distortion of human desire is an ontological issue. Human desire should be redeemed from capitalism and this redemption is part of the liberative works of the Church.

The conversation between Althaus-Reid, Sung and Bell will point towards the micro-political theology I propose. Foucault's discussion reminds us that sexuality, desire, and the body need to be concerned with the recognition of *how* sexuality, desire and the body *become* what they are. This concern should go further than merely recognising sexuality, desire and the body in theological understanding. In other words, the issue is how subjects are defined within power relationships and how these power relationships direct and drive sexuality, desire and the body. My micro-political theology is different from liberation theologies with regard to sexuality, desire and the body. It considers that the process of

subjectification itself, which re-orientates sexuality, desire and the body, is resistive and political. Subjectification brings about an ontological change of subjects and liberates subjects from the dominance of capitalism. This ontological change is the foundation of an ethical change, the consequence of which is practice of political resistance.

Marcella Althaus-Reid's Theological Consideration of Sexuality

Althaus-Reid makes the criticism that Latin American liberation theology cannot be liberative because it inherits and reproduces Western colonialism. This cooperation with economic oppressive structures can be discerned in her criticism of sexual oppression and patriarchal heteronormativity in Latin America. It is argued by Kwok Pui-lan, a postcolonial feminist theologian, that if Latin American liberation theology does not concern sexual oppression or decolonisation, it must turn out to be an accomplice of economic exploiters by means of reproducing the privileged position of Western colonialism.[258] Althaus-Reid, who shares the insight of Third World womanist theology,[259] points out that poor women suffer multi-oppressions from *both* political-economic and sexual oppressive structures. For example, women who are economically deprived not only suffer the disadvantages of a lack of social mobility, but are also subject to domestic and sexual abuse.[260] If poverty is not disconnected from sexual abuse, the subversion of sexual oppression will be important for political-economic liberation. This is what Althaus-Reid proposes in her 'Indecent Theology.'

[258] Post-colonial theology criticises imperialism and it is relatively sensitive to how colonial governance controls and manipulates people in colony psychologically and physically; however, how sexual norms impose on the oppressed, particularly on women, and then are appropriated to support imperialism has been ignored. Kwok Pui-lan, "Theology as a Sexual Act?," *Feminist Theology* 11, no. 2 (2003): 153.

[259] Black women in North America also experience similar multi-oppressions by their male and female White masters and also by their husband and father. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*. The exploitative structure of multi-oppressions is the main theological focus for womanist theologians, particularly from the third world. Walker has mentioned why womanist theology needs to be differentiated from (White) feminist theology. Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*.

[260] Marcella Althaus-Reid, "From Liberation Theology to Indecent Theology: The Trouble with Normality in Theology," in *Latin American Liberation Theology: The New Generation*, ed. Ivan Petrella (New York: Orbis, 2005).

Imperialism, Decency, and Christianity

Althaus-Reid explains how imperialism works with sexual oppression and Christianity in Latin America. For instance, Latin American women's Mariology demonstrates how the Virgin Mary cannot be a liberator of women. Ironically, the Virgin Mary becomes a founder of decent morality, which oppresses poor women. Althaus-Reid agrees with the belief—held by some feminist/womanist theologians—that the veneration of Mary is Goddess worship, which orientates and constructs women's solidarity. They believe that the Virgin Mary, as a woman, is more sympathetic to the suffering of women than any male deity.[261] However, Althaus-Reid is critical of the fact that this naïve belief ignores the colonial context that shapes the image of the Virgin Mary in Latin America.[262] In reality, the image of the Virgin Mary in the mind of Latin American women is the representation of a historical figure of Mariana. Mariana was Latino but she was a notorious traitor. Not only was she the lover of and collaborator with the Spanish conqueror, she was also unable to be in solidarity with her people, due to the abandonment of her Latino identity. Mariana served the interest of colonisers instead.[263]

This Virgin Mary, shaped by the image of Mariana, is definitively not someone who stands with oppressed women. She is a traitor who knows how to act as a mediator to figure out what the oppressors want and help them to exploit the colonised. The way that the Virgin Mary 'comforts' women who pray to her is to require and convince the oppressed women to accept their suffering tamely and humbly. In this sense, the Virgin Mary is far from being a liberator of poor women. Instead, she is 'a woman who oppresses women.'[264] This is particularly the case when the Virgin Mary is put forward as a perfect role model for mothers, and as a perfect example of an obedient woman, one who suffers but who tamely accepts her suffering.[265] These women's bodies are disciplined by a system of decency and sexual norms, which is offered and supported by Christianity. The system of decency and

[261] In feminist theologian tradition, Goddess religion or theology is still controversial. Some discussion can see Ruether's discussion: Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, 1st ed. ed. (San Francisco]: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992)..

[262] Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000), 50.

[263] *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology: Readings on Poverty, Sexual Identity and God*, 40.

[264] Ibid., 41.

[265] Ibid.

norms, in accordance with normativity, is established through colonialism and political-economic oppressions.

Althaus-Reid explains this cooperation between decency and social control in relation to imperialism and political-economic oppression. She argues that the governance strategies of European colonisers include not only guns and weapons but also the notion of 'civilisation'. Latin American local culture was regarded as 'savage' so that it had to be governed and civilised. When evangelisation ministries, which were part of colonialist strategies, introduced the Christian God to the local people, they also imposed North American and European moral culture on Latin American native people. They did this by means of standardising Christian moral values, in accordance with North American and European moral culture, as civilisation and the norm of life.[266] This is how civilisation and moral norms connect with colonialism and the system of oppression sustained by the church and Latin American liberation theology.

Althaus-Reid warns that the theology of liberation cannot be incorporated into social norms; otherwise it is impossible to bring about liberation. She introduces the hermeneutic of suspicion as the foundation of her Indecent Theology, sharing this method with other Latin American liberation theologians.[267] Thus, she insists that theology should continue the process of self-examination in order to check whether it has already been incorporated into the system of normativity, which standardises and disciplines society. As Althaus-Reid clarifies:

> My purpose is not to demolish Liberation Theology *a la Europea* (in a European academic fashion), but to explore the contextual hermeneutical circle of suspicion in depth by questioning the traditional liberationist context of doing theology.[268]

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[266] "'Let Them Talk...!' Doing Liberation Theology from Latin American Closets," in *Liberation Theology and Sexuality*, ed. Marcella Althaus-Reid (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006).

[267] See: Hugo Córdova Quero, "Risky Affairs: Marcella Althaus-Reid Indecently Queering Juan Luis Segundo's Hermeneutical Circle Propositions," in *Dancing Theology in Fetish Boots: Essays in Honour of Marcella Althaus-Reid*, ed. Mark D. Jordan and Lisa Isherwood (London: SCM Press, 2010).

[268] Althaus-Reid, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology: Readings on Poverty, Sexual Identity and God*, 5.

Indecent Theology against Decent Norms

Furthermore, Althaus-Reid uses the word 'decency' to refer to all forms of colonial civilisation, moral norms, normalities and so on. All political-economic structures in Latin America are 'based on the naturalisation of sexuality following a western Christian notion of "decency."'[269] Decency secures everything 'under the governance of norms.' It excludes all subversive dangers, which create uncertainty, marginalisation, and perversion. According to this theological tradition of decency, the Virgin Mary is expected to wear beautiful and 'proper' clothes to cover her body and breasts. That is, the Virgin Mary should never be seen as a woman who breast-feeds the Son of God. Jesus should never be imagined as a naked man on the Cross, redeeming human sin. Or, the church should never be thought of as a place that is full of smelly, dirty, filthy and unclean people (women).

Althaus-Reid insists on the construction of a theology founded on the experiences of the lives of poor women, such as 'lemon vendors.'[270] These women are too poor to wear underwear. They have to breast-feed their children in the street. They are smelly. They beg passers-by to buy their lemons. What these poor women do in their daily life subverted and offended the decent norms of Christian theology so that they are excluded from the Church. Having observed the condition of poor women, Althaus-Reid further calls for a more radical and more progressive liberative revolution. This is because the subversion of the structure of 'decency' cannot be achieved by means of turning the Virgin Mary into a liberator. (This is similar to other Latin American liberation theologians who redefined the image of God as a liberator).[271]

Althaus-Reid insists that if we do not entirely doubt the whole system of theological language, which makes us feel comfortable, and if we do not subvert the present structure of theological norms, then what we try to do will be in vain. We will not even be free from 'old patriarchal/parental metaphor of god-fathers'.[272] It does not matter whether you are a feminist/womanist theologian or a Latin American liberation theologian. Therefore, to 'indecent' Christianity (Althaus-Reid uses 'indecent' as a verb) by means of articulating and

[269] Ibid., 87.
[270] *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics*, 17-19.
[271] Gottwald, *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics*.
[272] Althaus-Reid, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology: Readings on Poverty, Sexual Identity and God*, 77.

disclosing what is considered to be indecent, marginalised, and perverse is itself a subversive strategy. She argues that:

> I deliberately use the term *indecenting* here in relation to the unmasking of ideologies. *Indecenting* is a term that reminds us that Liberation Theology's first act was that of troubling the status quo and that it was part of provocative and heavily contested transgressive discourse.[273]

Althaus-Reid encourages theologians to review the reasons why they only focus on decent women and on those who are sexually pure and chaste. Also, she encourages theologians to speak out on topics that people are normally unwilling to mention, due to the fact that they are perceived as indecent, or even taboo.[274] Indecent Theology insists that black women, LGBT people, drag queens and all perverse characters, those who are unable to fit in with the 'typical' image of the poor, have to be included in its theological construction.[275] Indecent Theology is a kind of resistance, in that it gives a voice to those who are excluded from the social norms, established under colonialism, Christianity and political-economic oppressions.

Indecent Theology's Concern with Sexuality and the Body

Althaus-Reid's recognition of the cooperation of oppressions with the construction of social norms leads her on to observation of resistive practice in relation to sexuality and the body. There are two main strands to her Indecent Theology: the first includes women's physical bodies in her theological reflection; the second challenges social norms by means of articulating the erotic and sexualised experience of our bodies.

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[273] "From Liberation Theology to Indecent Theology: The Trouble with Normality in Theology," 25.
[274] Marcella Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood, *Controversies in Feminist Theology* (London: SCM, 2007), 36.
[275] Claudio Carvalhaes, "Oppressed Bodies Don't Have Sex: The Blind Spot of Bodily and Sexual Discourses in the Construction of Subjectivity in Latin American Liberation Theology," in *Indecent Theologians: Marcella Althaus-Reid & the Next Generation of Postcolonial Activism*, ed. Nicolas Panotto (California: Borderless Press, 2016), 167.

Indecent Theology has drawn attention to the body as the locus where power relationships can be observed and tracked. The bodies of women and men, for instance, are 'inscribed' by gender roles and burdened under patriarchy.[276] The body, in this view, is where social norms inscribe and impose themselves. It is also an agent that reproduces—intentionally or unintentionally—the practice of normalities. The body offers a space which keeps these normalities 'alive.' On the other hand, in the same process, the human subject is constructed by normalities. The subject is not a mind-based being, as recognised by Descartes, but a body-based being found in the material and physical practices of everyday life.[277] Indecent Theology challenges previous feminist/womanist theologies, which focus on women's bodies in order to oppose male mind-centric theology. Its strategy is to criticise any form of binary separation of mind and body. What does this concern with the body mean in Indecent Theology? I argue that, for the early feminist/womanist theologians discussed in the last chapter, the concern with the body merely means *listening* to the experiences and stories of the suffering of women. Instead, they should be considering 'a physical body' with a vagina.[278] Indecent Theology is pioneering recognition that the body is not just an exponent symbolising the locus of 'experience' that needs to be listened to. Instead, the body is a physical space, which has been victimised by external powers of normalisation. The body should be looked at again as a possible resistive locus against the inscription and imposition of social norms, such as the morality of our sexuality and the body practice.

Another strand of Indecent Theology is the *articulation* of our sexuality and erotic desire, which have been taboo in society. This casts doubt on the reasoning of the Enlightenment, which is considered to be a bastion of the power of decent theology. It does this by dubbing it 'rationality.' Indecent Theology criticises the reasoning of the Enlightenment, pointing to its support of patriarchy, which itself springs from the assumption that the voice and viewpoint of men is more authoritative, more scientifically

[276] Althaus-Reid and Isherwood, *Controversies in Feminist Theology*, 22.
[277] Ibid.
[278] The reproduction of the methodology from other male mind-centric theology can still be seen in the writings of Pamela Anderson and Grace Jantzen. Pamela Sue Anderson, *A Feminist Philosophy of Religion: The Rationality and Myths of Religious Belief* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997); *Revisioning Gender in Philosophy of Religion: Reason, Love and Epistemic Locatedness* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012); Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

objective, and more rational.[279] This theology avoids talking about erotic desire and sexuality because they are dangerous and uncontrollable, in terms of their non-conformity to social norms of decency. However, for Indecent Theology, this phobia implies the hidden truth that talking about erotic desire and sexuality is transformative and resistive enough to subvert the whole system of social norms. This is the reason why decent theology stifles the articulation of sexuality and desire. Therefore, Althaus-Reid urges people, especially women and the perverted, to articulate their erotic desire and sexuality in order to shake the stability of the decent social norms and to resist the authority of patriarchal decent theology.

Indecent Theology, furthermore, insists that non-heterosexual erotic desire and sexuality have to be encouraged and articulated. This is because heteronormativity considers heterosexuality to be the only permissible erotic pleasure, and it further oppresses other non-heterosexual people by means of condemning them as indecent and perverse. All forms of 'perverse', 'deviant' and 'queer' desire and sexualities are subversive to heteronormativity and are not compatible with heteronormativity. This is just as Foucault suggests:

> [Foucault] advocates seeking new pleasures which liberate our desires from the male genital discourse, for him fist-fucking, S&M and fetishism could be viewed as ways to dislocate this discourse as they all place desire and satisfaction in other and unexpected parts of the body.[280]

In my view, Indecent Theology successfully pinpoints the cooperation of political-economic power systems, including imperialism, colonialism and capitalism, and multi-oppressions of sexuality and erotic desire, of women and the perverted. Based on this analytic insight, Althaus-Reid insists that the theology of liberation has to be decolonised through liberating itself from the conformity to decent social norms and heteronormativity. On the one hand, I agree with Indecent Theology for including the physical body, erotic

[279] Althaus-Reid and Isherwood, *Controversies in Feminist Theology*, 26.
[280] Ibid., 23.

desire and sexuality in its theology. On the other hand, in my view, Indecent Theology lacks both a detailed analysis of dynamic and flexible power relationships and the consideration of the process of subjectification. In this, therefore, I agree with Foucault. Indecent Theology, which reiterates the same pattern of theological methodology that it criticised, is merely a 'counter-decent' theology. I will set out my criticisms of Indecent Theology in the following sections.

The Binary of Decency and Indecency

Indecent Theology criticised the binary structure of decent theology, which it inherited from Latin American liberation theology and feminist/womanist theology. This results in Indecent Theology replacing heterosexuality with non-heterosexuality in its theological construction. In other words, Althaus-Reid only considered the experience of poor women and the perverted when she used the method of 'serious doubting', which I have discussed above.

In the first chapter, I mentioned that the theology of liberation has fallen into a methodological loop of moving from one oppressed subject to another in terms of their theological focus. This methodological loop results from an overemphasis on structural analysis, which sees the definition of the subject of the oppressed as the first and most important step in constructing theology. This has the effect of neglecting the exertion of power relationships, which is dynamic and is not fixed in any specific structure of oppression. For instance, Wai Ching Wong, an Asian womanist theologian, was critical of the fact that Asian women gradually come to be defined as the 'poorest' women in the loop of finding a theological subject of the oppressed. Asian women are crowned as the oppressed people who are, among all oppressed groups, most worthy of being listened to and cared for.[281] In other words, the alternation of a theological subject, at the level of methodology, turns out to be merely an academic pursuit intended to produce different theologies which all have different names depending on which oppressed group they are concerned with. Indecent Theology does not take a different methodology. It simply 'entitles' poor women and the perverted to become new 'objects' of theological debate.

[281] Wong, *The Poor Woman: A Critical Analysis of Asian Theology and Contemporary Chinese Fiction by Women*.

In the field of alternating between the theological subjects who are oppressed, Indecent Theology is very clear in pointing out how patriarchy and heteronormativity work together to oppress poor women and the perverted. It is good that the experience of LGBT people and poor women is included to subvert the experience of heterosexual men. But it is not good that the experience of heterosexual men is excluded. Here I argue that, if Indecent Theology attempts to avoid assuming a binary theory, then Indecent Theology should not neglect the experience of heterosexual men, who also suffer from heteronormativity. To do this, we should, in a broader view, consider heteronormativity to be a source of oppression. This point brings up an even more fundamental issue: who is oppressed by heteronormativity?

Althaus-Reid uses the dividing line of decency and indecency to yield a space to indecent people who have been ignored, but at the same time this division ignores the experience of non-indecent people, who are also forced to become 'decent' in the heteronormative structure. For instance, Raewyn Connell, an Australian sociologist of gender, points out that 'hegemonic masculinity,' which she defines as a normative concept of gender role and expression, is in fact only exhibited by a minority of men. Hegemonic masculinity also oppresses all people who cannot fit into their normativity, regardless of their gender, male or female.[282] Men are also vulnerable to heteronormativity, which works with hegemonic masculinity, because of the demands on them to fulfil the normativity of being a 'successful' man, such as wealthy, muscled, heterosexual, masculine and even 'White.' The various pieces of research on hegemonic masculinity do not lessen the concern with women's suffering, but they do remind us that heteronormativity oppresses women and the perverted as well as heterosexual men.

Althaus-Reid demonstrates how the dominance of decency, which is defined by heteronormativity, oppresses women and the perverted. However, Althaus-Reid is blind to the means by which heteronormativity oppresses men and fails to overcome the dichotomy between men and women, which works with dynamic power structures.[283] In this light, Indecent Theology becomes an 'inversion' of heteronormativity alone. It turns the original

[282] Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell, and John Lee, "Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity," *Theory and society* 14, no. 5 (1985). Then, further discussion about masculinity can be seen in Robert W Connell and James W Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender & society* 19, no. 6 (2005).
[283] See the discussion of patriarchal dividend in "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept."

structure of heteronormativity on its head. But at the same time, she excludes from her discussion men who are defined as 'decent.' This exclusion by Althaus-Reid emanates from her underestimation of the oppressive effect of heteronormativity and from its narrow understanding of power structures, which are assumed to be fixed in order to define decency and indecency.

Perversion and Power Relationships

My second criticism is that Althaus-Reid fails to give sufficient consideration to the fact that the existence of the perverted is socially constructed and defined by heteronormativity. Being indecent is an outcome of the effect of power relationships, rather than an identity that is fixed and inbuilt. This weakens her argument and undermines her goal of doing theology that embraces the perverted in order to subvert social norm and normativity.

Althaus-Reid firmly contends that perverted and indecent people should not be required to be 'converted' into saints, or to be normalised as decent people. God and the Church love them for who they are, despite their indecency (even though these perverted people are defined and constructed by heteronormativity). Althaus-Reid applies the same methodology of Latin American liberation theology to replace poor (men) with the perverted.[284] The perverted, the marginalised and the oppressed should 'stay' at the indecent margin. This is because God is willing to walk with poor women and 'into' slums (this 'walk', *caminata* in Spanish, is the goal of doing theology).[285] As Althaus-Reid herself says:

> [Doing theology is] not to make God an occasional and compassionate visitor to the margins of the margins but to rediscover that God is truly marginal God. This is a God who has never left the marginal because this God belongs to them.[286]

[284] Carvalhaes, "Oppressed Bodies Don't Have Sex: The Blind Spot of Bodily and Sexual Discourses in the Construction of Subjectivity in Latin American Liberation Theology," 195.
[285] Althaus-Reid also argues that 'the reality is that the Virgin Mary has become a white, rich God who, being depicted in many statues, cannot walk and was never imagined as having to walk. As such, Mary is the symbol of the anti-*caminata*.' See, Althaus-Reid, *From Feminist Theology to Indecent Theology: Readings on Poverty, Sexual Identity and God*, 13.
[286] Ibid., 146.

God will not purify or cleanse God-self after 'the visit to slums' in order to fulfil both the expectations of the rich and those of decent people. God will not stay 'outside' the slums and shout to the oppressed to leave them. God will not require them to purify themselves in order to become closer to a holy and decent God.

On the contrary, God becomes part of the indecent people. As Althaus-Reid said, 'this queer God is the God who went into exile with God's people and remained there in exile with them.'[287] The God who walks with oppressed women rejects being normalised. God is queer, and he is naked. He does not wear a suit and tie. There is nothing decent about Jesus being nailed to the Cross. God's love for the perverted, and embracing of them, regardless of who they are and whether they are clean or decent, is radical. This unconditional acceptance offers a challenge to decent theology, which demands that the poor and the oppressed fit into their normativity.

However, Althaus-Reid does not recognise why the perverted are labelled as such and how the group of 'the perverted' to be excluded is constructed by heteronormativity. When Althaus-Reid claims that the perverted do not need to make themselves decent, does this mean that she also accepts the oppressive structure of heteronormativity, which compartmentalises the perverted as 'perverted'? Does Indecent Theology still attempt to bring about subversion and liberation? Indecent Theology falls into a dilemma between the welfare of the perverted and subversion of the structure of heteronormativity. The former implies the acceptance and maintenance of heteronormativity. The latter leads to destroying the identity of the perverted, whose subjectivity is based on heteronormativity.

Obviously Indecent Theology accepts and embraces heteronormativity in order to see the identity of the perverted as a status that is natural and fixed. In this light, Althaus-Reid is, ironically, doomed to ignore the fact that these perverted are not born in perversion but are defined and excluded as the perverted. The existence of the perverted itself is the manifestation of heteronormativity, whose power deployments are more complicated and dynamic than Althaus-Reid's understanding of oppressive social structures.

[287] Ibid.

The Subjectification of the Perverted

If the identity of the perverted is not fixed or natural, what does that mean? This question draws me on to my final criticism of Indecent Theology, which is that Althaus-Reid fails to recognise that all subjects are in the process of becoming a subject. Judith Butler argues that a perverse behaviour can be seen as a kind of resistance only when this perversion is seen as a 'performative action' expressed in order to resist the order of heteronormativity.[288] This resistive performativity is based on the understanding that the subject is shaped in the process by what they do.

Through perverse performance, the subject can choose to refuse to become a being they are required to be. That is, their subversion results from the 'performativity' of the perverted, which is practiced consciously and intentionally to be resistive, rather than a behaviour of the perverted, which is passively defined by heteronormativity. In this sense, perversion is not an 'identity' of people but an action of expression and performativity. Althaus-Reid's misunderstanding can be recognised when we see that she confuses the concept of perverse performativity (in Butler's sense) with the suffering experience of the perverted (in the reality of human experience). In addition, her misunderstanding leads to regarding human sexuality and desire as energy, which originates from human nature.

I suggest that the understanding of the process of constructing sexuality and desire in Foucault's view would be helpful to show the blind spot of Indecent Theology. Foucault suspects that our sexuality and desire are natural biological and psychological needs. Human sexuality is constructed by power relationships to support capitalism.[289] The reason why non-heterosexuality is excluded and forbidden is because homosexuality cannot produce children who will be future workers to support economic growth (this applies when a birth rate is a key component of the potential power of a country). All non-productive non-heterosexual behaviours are defined as perversion, because they do not accord with heteronormativity serving the benefit of capitalism.[290] Foucault reminds us that society makes all efforts to discipline our body, sexuality and desire for capitalism. The constructive

[288] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999).
[289] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, I (1976)*, ed. Michel Foucault, 1st American ed. ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).
[290] Ibid.

definitions of the criminal, the mad, the homosexual, and the disordered are strategies of disciplining these perverse bodies to obey and conform to the normative and to make them docile.[291] That is, our desire and sexuality have already been defined and constructed before we explore them or recognise them. They are not natural or *apolitical*, as Althaus-Reid believes.

Furthermore, Foucault points out the paradoxical relationship between the existence of perversion and the existence of heteronormativity.

> The growth of perversions is not a moralising theme that obsessed the scrupulous minds of the Victorians. It is the real product of the encroachment of a type of power on bodies and their pleasures.[292]

Through recognising them as 'an analytical, visible and permanent reality' and 'a natural order of disorder,' we can come to understand that the machinery of power firstly monitors and regulates perversions and then it eventually exerts itself into bodies.[293] These perversions are the loci of power deployments 'through the isolation, intensification, and the consolidation of peripheral sexualities.'[294] Bodies, including sexuality and desire, are entirely measured and monitored by power relationships. They are also under control within power relationships, particularly when we start to articulate them.

Indecent Theology underrates the omnipotence of power relationships, which have constructed our desire, body and sexuality, and which have been involved in the subjectification of the perverted. These power deployments have been exerting themselves before we are able to recognise our subjectivity. In other words, Althaus-Reid fails to understand the exertion of power relationships and their relationship to the construction of perverse sexuality and desire; a problem, as Carrette's review of *Indecent Theology*

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[291] *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (1975)*; Huffer, *Mad for Foucault: Rethinking the Foundations of Queer Theory*.
[292] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, I (1976)*, 48.
[293] Ibid., 44.
[294] Ibid., 48.

indicates, of not engaging with Foucault's *History of Sexuality*.[295] Althaus-Reid was pioneering, in the tradition of liberation theologies, a conversation between political-economic oppressions and heteronormativity, and the consideration of power and sexuality. However, I argue that her understanding of sexuality and perversion are too essentialist to consider sexuality, body and desire to be the loci on which power relationships exert themselves and, at the same time, the loci of power resistance. In the view of Indecent Theology, the consideration of sexuality, desire and body is assumed to be subversive, but its subversion cannot bring about any political change.

Jung Mo Sung's Theological Consideration of Desire

The relationship between capitalism and the construction of desire is neglected by Althaus-Reid but it is has been well considered by Jung Mo Sung, a Korean Brazilian liberation theologian. Sung's evaluation of desire and need in capitalism expands our understanding of how capitalism shapes and constructs our desire.

Unlimited Desire and Limited Need

Sung's critique starts with the recognition of capitalism as an inventor and manipulator of unlimited desire. He argues that, due to the influence of Karl Marx, Latin American liberation theology does not contain the notion of 'unlimited desire.' This is because Marx only has an idea about human 'needs.' When Marxists mention the object of commodity, it generally means everything that is produced by human labourers to be sold, or exchanged, in the market. The production of commodity is not an evil thing that has been created by capitalism to exploit labourers. As Marx explains in *Capitalism* (1887), commodity itself is necessary in order to satisfy human want. It does not matter whether human beings are motivated by basic need or by desire for luxury.[296] In other words, Marx contends that things that exchange in the market meet the needs of daily living. Human beings get benefits from

[295] Jeremy Carrette, "Review: Radical Heterodoxy and the Indecent Proposal of Erotic Theology: Critical Groundwork for Sexual Theologies: Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics by Marcella Althaus-Reid," *Literature and Theology* 15, no. 3 (2001).
[296] Cited from Jung Mo Sung, "Commodity Fetishism and Critical Metaphysics " in *Socialism in Process*, ed. Justin Heinzekehr and Philip Clayton (Anoka: Process Century Press, 2017), 89.

this system of commodity exchange. At this point, I insist that Marx and his theory have assumed that human need and what they want are basic human nature.

Sung argues that we have to distinguish between 'desire' and 'need'. Marx has recognised unintentionally that there are degrees in terms of what 'necessities' are most important to human beings. For instance, Marx clearly argues that things that satisfy people's need are derived not only from the stomach, and from organic survival needs, but also from fancy, or imagination, or *Phantasie*, to use Marx's own word.[297] Based on the different derivations, Sung describes the characteristic of desire as 'limitlessness,' or as an unlimited desire, in comparison to need that is basic, necessary and able to be satisfied. 'We human beings need more than material goods to survive and we need to feel that it is worthy to live.'[298] Human beings are motivated not only to meet their basic and minimal need to survive but also to feel and recognise the value and the worth of being alive. Need and desire, at this point, are inseparable and undeniable because they are part of the nature of human beings with needs and desires.

This confusion of need and desire is a strategy of capitalism. Capitalism reduces all desires to the needs of our survival. Philip Kotler points out that people use two ways to solve their unsatisfied 'need'. The first way, particularly in industrial societies, is to develop an object that satisfies their desire. The other way, usually in poor societies, is to reduce their need.[299] Liberal and neoliberal economic theories regard desires as the continuation of human needs and they reduce desires into needs. If the main task of economics is the satisfaction of needs, then this should also include the satisfaction of desire.

However, if desire is unlimited, as Sung argues, can it be satisfied? Clearly, the answer is 'no.' He replies:

> When one thinks from the standpoint of desires there are no limits. One pursues the limitless. And when one desires the limitless there is never anything left to share. There

[297] Ibid.
[298] Ibid., 70.
[299] *Desire, Market and Religion* (London: SCM Press, 2007), 32.

> is never enough. Therefore, one does not accept a dialogue on income and wealth redistribution.[300]

The confusion of basic need and unlimited desire masks what we truly *need* and our *desire* to have more. People always think that their needs cannot be satisfied. But the reality is that what they cannot satisfy is their desire rather than their basic need. People need food to fulfil their need, but people do not 'need' to have a meal in a Michelin three-star restaurant to fulfil their basic need. People are misled by capitalism to believe that what they desire is the same as what they need. This is the 'magic' of capitalism. By means of confusing need with desire, capitalism transforms desires to needs. As Friedrich Hayek says, 'the luxuries of today are the necessities of tomorrow.'[301]

Sung dubbed this desire 'mimetic desire,' which is created by capitalism. The desire is the energy that circulates throughout the whole capitalist system.

> The basic structure of mimetic desire consists in the fact that I desire an object not for the object itself but because another person desires it. Thus, desired by both, the object is always scarce in relation to the subjects of the desire. It is because it is scarce that it is the object of desire.[302]

In the view of Sung, mimetic desire cannot represent what people really need. This is because our basic need can be estimated by our physical fulfilment. For example, we feel that we are not hungry when we do not want or need to eat anymore. Mimetic desire, however, shifts our focus from what we truly feel to what we believe we feel. We believe we need it when we realise that other people have needed it and have wanted it before us. This attempt to convince ourselves of the importance of our needs does not come from what our true needs actually are, but from our perception and observation of the needs of others. This mimetic desire, therefore, enlarges the need of production and accumulation.

[300] Ibid., 33.
[301] Cited from ibid., 36.
[302] Ibid., 37.

Our desire cannot be fulfilled and satisfied because we cannot always gain everything that other people have, need and desire. Desiring what others desire causes us to fall into a vicious circle of pursing the unattainable. Thus, attempting to satisfy our desire becomes an endless road on which our desire can never be truly fulfilled.

The Pursuit of Desire and the Development of Modernity

In this process of pursuing the desirable, capitalism convinces people to believe in the progress of modernity. People believe that capitalism, as the best system of distribution, can provide them with what they desire, even though these desirables are so scarce that not all people can have them. Capitalism creates an illusion that production will be increased and will then become so efficient that our needs will be fulfilled. This fulfilment comes about through the progress of development, which means that demand will be met by supply. However, capitalism does not tackle the real issue, which is that things we desire are not necessarily what we really need for survival. This desire originates from a feeling, which is aroused when we notice that other people own something that we do not have. It grows from scarcity. Jung Mo Sung argues that scarcity is the characteristic of every desirable object. If everyone can have it and own it, this object will lose its scarcity and uniqueness. It will then no longer be a desirable object.[303] In other words, the progress of development, which occurs by means of increasing production, is still unable to satisfy gradually increasing desires and expectations. The economy of desire does not follow the economic principle of supply-demand. The increase of the supply of production does not decrease the degree of desire. Thus, development is never a satisfactory remedy for unlimited desire.

On the other hand, the purpose of capitalism and its development are not to overcome poverty but to re-distribute scarce resources through maximising production and profits.[304] Capitalism, particularly neoliberalism, persuades nation-states and people to hand over their power in order to achieve the 'best' distribution, based on economic rationality. The proponents of capitalism emphasise that the economic system (the market) must maintain

[303] "Greed, Desire and Theology," *The Ecumenical Review* 63, no. 3 (2011): 257.
[304] "Save Us from Cynicism: Religion and Social Class," in *Religion, Theology, and Class: Fresh Engagements after Long Silence*, ed. Joerg Rieger (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

its own freedom in order to operate without any restrictions or barriers.[305] In other words, capitalism requires people to 'trust' their system whole-heartedly. It also requires the removal of any intervention in its operation and means of distribution. What people can do is to believe, like a religion, in the magic of the progress of development, which will balance supply and demand through economically rational distribution. When you believe in capitalism and the way the market operates, it means that you have faith that development, followed by distribution, will give people a better life in the end.

The relationship between mimetic desire and development is in mutual enlargement and expansion. People have a false belief that development can solve the problem of their unsatisfied 'need.' But the reality is that development is never a medicine for desire. Due to the on-going development of production methods, people own more possessions than before. However, desire does not cease, because people will continue to observe that other people have more and better possessions than they have. Thus, when people desire more, they will have a stronger belief in development and its potential for satisfying their desire. In this sense, mimetic desire in the capitalist system is neither repressed nor fulfilled. Instead, it is encouraged and enlarged. Development grows and 'inflates' with growing desire, but it can never satisfy that desire.

Having, Being and Religion

Sung points out that human happiness does not come from the value of material possessions. The relationship with their possession varies the understanding of the self. This is because what human beings 'own' is used to define the self and who they 'are'.

> The opposition commonly placed between 'having' and 'being' makes no sense. For the 'having' has become the only way to achieve being. Whoever has, is; whoever does not have, is not. The being that a person looks for to feel more human is not in the people or the direct human relation, but in the commodities of luxury that we desire to buy.[306]

[305] "Greed, Desire and Theology," 256.
[306] "Commodity Fetishism and Critical Metaphysics " 95.

The status of human beings is defined by our relationship with material possessions; even other human beings are regarded in the same way. This is because what they have, rather than who they are, makes them happy. Happiness is the foundation of human fulfilment. Capitalism drives people to seek temporary happiness by pursuing their acquisitions and possessions. But the process of pursuing the value itself does not, in the end, lead to any real happiness.[307] Thus, if value is what is most important to human beings, then obtaining possessions that are of personal value to the individual will be of primary importance. The value of commodity items can come to define the worth and status of a person who pursues and obtains them. In this light, if humans are value-pursuers who are driven by value, capitalism has altered what it means to be human.

Sung criticises capitalism because it creates mimetic desire and shapes humanity in its relationship with commodity objects. It is a new 'religion'. Capitalism turns people away from God. However, if people would like to pursue the most desirable thing, God should be the most desirable thing that people can pursue.

> Nowadays, the place to be in contact with the sacred forces, which give back 'being,' are not longer churches but the shopping malls, 'real' or 'virtual'. That is why many shopping malls have architecture reminiscent of temples, cathedrals, or other sacred places.[308]

People lose the meaning of their life and the value of being human, when they start to profess the 'creed' of capitalism. Capitalism indoctrinates people to go shopping to find their 'desirables'. It then causes them to believe that they will be 'healed' by owning these commodity items. While buying these items, the new relationships with the items are created and then people gauge their personal sense of their own value through owning these objects. In this sense, capitalism is a religion, which replaces the position of God, who gives meaning through being desired and worshipped by humans. In this sense, the reason

[307] "Greed, Desire and Theology," 257.
[308] "Commodity Fetishism and Critical Metaphysics " 91.

why capitalism is idolatrous is not merely because mammon as a deity is worshipped, it is because the possessions that people desire to obtain become the most desirable thing, over and above any relationship with God. Having recognised that capitalism has become a god, which controls the world and manipulates human desire, we should seriously consider resistance to capitalism to be an economic issue as well as a theological issue.

Sung's Approach to Practical Realism

The term I use to describe Jung Mo Sung's liberation theology is 'practical realism.' I use this term because it uncovers the dark side of capitalism and bursts the bubble of ideology created by capitalism. Christian faith and theology have a duty to show both the truth and the reality of human nature—it is created by God and should be orientated by the Spirit of God.

Human beings are defined by their relationship with God, and not by possession of a commodity item. Although Sung makes a distinction between unlimited desire and the basic need to survive, he does not cast doubt on the existence of desire. Thus, he argues that this desire to 'be' can be fulfilled *only* in the process of loving God, who freed the oppressed from slavery, and in love for our neighbour.[309]

From the standpoint of capitalism as an economic system and as an ideology of understanding of the self, the strategy of subverting capitalism is the discernment of the process of the capitalist shape and distortion of humanity. As Sung has pointed out, under the influence of capitalism, human beings are driven by their desires and are identified by the object they desire. Sung's theological premise wants to restore humanity to how it worked at the beginning of God's creation. This is because human desires are distorted by their relationship with commodity objects and are orientated by mimetic desire. This insight implies that we need subversion to challenge capitalism and this subversion is deeply rooted in the goal of restoring humanity to 'factory settings.'

[309] "Greed, Desire and Theology," 261. The italic is added.

> To become godlike is to become truly human – to become reconciled to the constraints inherent in the human condition. It is the recognition of the insuperable limit that leads Christianity to state that salvation (the complete fulfilment of the deepest human desires) can happen only by a free act of God's grace.[310]

In Sung's view, to be human means to follow and imitate God. However, it does not mean that human beings either need to, or will be, identical with God. The creed of capitalism is to become a potential God who controls and transcends everything. It offers the hope of and faith in becoming like a god. Conversely, Christian faith challenges the arrogance and egomania of humanity by means of the practice of the confession of sin, which requires people to examine themselves and learn their limits. Confession itself implies that human beings are not perfect, and that they cannot achieve perfection. It also means that all human beings are subject to limit and restriction. Based on this, the reality of humanity is that it is impossible to access everything we want and to own everything we desire. Capitalism has given people the illusion that it is possible to satisfy all their desires.

Furthermore, I suggest that when we accept the self is limited and also realise that our desires are unlimited, we are triggered to look for something else to fulfil our desires. That 'something else' is God. This acceptance of human limits and realisation that it is impossible to fully satisfy all our desires together lead us to approach the salvation of God. Capitalism is unable to offer any road to happiness or the life well lived, with meaning and true value. The only way that human beings can have all their desires truly fulfilled is to have a relationship with God. Theology has to resist the idolatry of capitalism, which has distorted humanity and has misdirected human desire. Sung concisely argues that:

> We human beings cannot attain the infinite (to see God) but we are able to experience the presence of God among us, to find fulfilment of our infinite desire, as far as is possible, in relationships of love and solidarity.[311]

[310] Ibid., 258-59.
[311] Ibid., 261.

The mission of the church is 'to give visibility to the lives of those living on the periphery or outside the system, and then to make it possible for their voices to be heard by the privileged.'[312] Capitalism attempts to create a pristine bubble of economic development, which supports a belief in the progress of human happiness, as well as in the regress of human suffering. But this myth hides the weakness of capitalism. This enables people to believe that the doctrine of capitalism remains true and sufficient to pursue the common good.

However, as Sung suggests, the development capitalism lays claim to and the system of capitalist distribution do not distribute wealth equally and justly. Under the yoke of capitalism, people are still in poverty and in hunger. Therefore, liberation theology should take the cry of sufferers seriously. This consideration leads to the concise understanding of the relationship between 'their desire to improve their standard of living, their pattern of consumption and the suffering of the poor.'[313] It allows liberation theologians to express their anger when they face injustice. It also encourages people to seek a humane way of living together in order to subvert the dehumanisation of capitalist modes of consumption.

On the other hand, Sung argues that liberation theology must reject the theological concepts that would support capitalism. For example, the capitalist theology of sacrifices justifies the suffering of the poor because 'all social problems are seen as "necessary sacrifices" demanded by the market.'[314] Capitalism, as a religion, not only maintains its unshakable authority and its belief in the free market but also rejects all interventions that try to undermine the principle of the free market. In the capitalist creed, evil 'is wanting to do good, thus wanting to direct, or intervene in, the market.'[315] Instead, in this way 'pursuing the common good' itself becomes an evil thing if it disobeys the law of capitalism, or if it starts to cause people to lack faith in the magical power of the free market. What Sung is showing in this analysis is the complex value-system and idolatry within capitalism.

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[312] Ibid.

[313] Ibid., 261-62.

[314] *Desire, Market and Religion*, 90.

[315] Ibid., 16. In Sung's critique, he regards capitalism as a religion that creates the profession of its faith (creed). Ironically, in order to maintain the dominance of capitalism, the creed of capitalism always claims and requires its believers to believe that any intervention is evil and bad. Trust in capitalism is not to intervene as trust in God is not to intervene God's work. In this sense, a thought of 'wanting to do something' (regardless of good or bad things) is an evil and sinful act.

Recognition as an Ethical Act

In Sung's theology, the recognition of human suffering and giving it visibility is the second resistance strategy, which will lead to social transformation. This recognition can be shown in two ways: the first way is to feel angry that the suffering is there in the first place. The second way is to be outraged by the condition of those suffering, especially the poor. In this sense, an act of resistance unveils the truth that the suffering is still there and has not yet been brought to an end—contrary to what capitalism claims. Sung offers clarification:

> Opening the Church to the poor, being a Church of the Poor, is to give public witness that God is no respecter of persons, to affirm the dignity of the poor and to live a non-idolatrous faith. And the public affirmation of this dignity is a necessary condition for more people to become angry at the situation of the poor and for their sufferings to become a priority for society, with more political will and energy to bring about the necessary transformations.[316]

This 'transformation' means the abandonment of the current system of economic distribution, which has failed to share equally and justly.[317] The failure of this system, for Sung, is caused by the profession of the doctrine of capitalism itself, which forces people to believe and not to question their belief. The problem is not caused by the dysfunction of capitalism but by capitalism working with the creation of mimetic desire and the distortion of humanity. Therefore, the goal of Christian theology, which bears social responsibility and raises ethical awareness, is to establish a new order that reduces and restricts the unlimited accumulation of wealth.[318]

In the light of Sung's premise, fighting against capitalism is an ethical issue because liberation theology must consider how capitalism appropriates and manipulates human

[316] "The Poor after Liberation Theology," in *Globalization and the Church of the Poor*, ed. Daniel Franklin Pilario, et al. (London: SCM Press, 2015), 73.
[317] "Save Us from Cynicism: Religion and Social Class."
[318] Ibid.

desire and basic need. Sung's criticism of capitalism focuses on the disclosure and recognition of a capitalism that forces human desire away from God and toward commodity objects. Therefore, the responsibility of liberation theology is to discern the right-or-wrong that capitalism brings; for example, whether capitalism leads us to worship God or idolatrous materialism. Sung's theology aims to establish an ethical principle in order to help people to live more moral and fulfilling lives in the capitalist society. Sung's solution is to chart an ethical course with the aim of challenging, or even fixing, humanity in the capitalist society.

However, my concern is that Sung's theology risks bringing political resistance to an end. This is because Sung's theology does not and cannot show any real alternative solution to capitalism if capitalism cannot be truly abandoned. Even though Sung's premise seems to be practical and ethical, he fails to set up a credible agenda that puts his criticism and premise into practice. What can people do after they have recognised the desire shaped by capitalism? I argue that the core issue of Sung's ethical solutions, like the issue that most liberation theologians face, is to show *how* people can have different desires from those shaped by capitalism. What does having 'another' desire mean? How can we, based on capitalist desire, desire something that we do not know how to desire? More precisely, if human desire is shaped and constructed by capitalism, where is the alternative desire for God going to come from? How can people have a desire for God that is not constructed by capitalism?

Based on these above considerations, I argue that we need to move on to the consideration of an ontological issue which has not yet been covered by Sung. Taking an ethical approach is not enough because, surprisingly, it takes us only as far as the dead end of political resistance. I argue that practical agendas should be rooted in the deeper principle, 'what we do is from who we are.' In the next section, I will move on to the work of Daniel Bell, a theologian of the Radical Orthodoxy Movement, whose theology, in my view, sets out the solution to the weakness of Sung's ethical approach. This approach is based on an ontological shift.

Daniel Bell's Theological Consideration of Desire

Like Jung Mo Sung, Daniel Bell argues that the focus of resistance to capitalism is not merely one of rejecting its economic system of exchange, but also one of recognising how capitalism shapes humanity in terms of the shape of desire. He thinks that capitalism attempts to control the order of the world by means of managing the order of 'beings,' which is the most basic arrangement of the power of reality. The consideration of the work of capitalism is also an ontological issue.[319] If we lack an ontological dimension in the consideration of political resistance to capitalism, we will fail to recognise how capitalism entails manipulating human desire and making use of the created order.[320]

The different focus explains why Bell does not propose any alternative social policy based on Christian ethics or indeed on any ethical principle. Bell puts all his emphasis on regarding theology, or Christianity itself, as the healing of desire and liberation from sin. Christian faith itself is a therapy for healing in the social-political-economic sphere. The role of Christian faith is not to suggest an ethical standard for examining the economic system, but rather a medicine for curing desire, which has been distorted by capitalism. In other words, for Bell, Christian faith is not a moral system which supports society in order to evaluate people's behaviour and which stays outside of the social, political and economic realms. Christian theology, which attempts to 'suggest' what society can do, is not a collection of 'non-political' knowledge, but neither is it 'apolitical.'[321] In Bell's view, theology itself is politically and socially engaged. Theology is the guiding light and the direction of society, far superior to any theory of the social sciences.

Bell's Shift to an Ontological Perspective

[319] Daniel M. Bell, *The Economy of Desire: Christianity and Capitalism in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 38.

[320] Ibid., 87.

[321] Daniel Bell shares a similar perspective on the political with other theologians in the Radical Orthodoxy Movement, particularly with William Cavanaugh. See: Mary Doak, "The Politics of Radical Orthodoxy: A Catholic Critique," *Theological Studies* 68, no. 2 (2007). Doak argues that Bell and Cavanaugh can be categorised into 'the anarchic oppositionalism' because they refute the privatization of Christianity and sectarianism. They both regard the state as a hopeless evil institution so 'this thoroughgoing rejection of the state allows for a boldness and consistency in their vision of the church as an alternative to the status quo in its witness against the injustice of the world.' (378) In this sense, for Bell, 'the political' is not only a matter of society but of the Church. And the political can be everywhere rather than any specific issue about society.

Bell, like John Milbank, doubts the value of Marxism. He does not believe that social theory is able to transform society. This is because social theory assumes the separation of religion and the state and it forces theology to forfeit its value in the public realm. He argues:

> The root of the crisis of liberationist social theory lies in their ecclesiology. The ecclesiological innovations inaugurated by the liberationists to overcome the failures of the New Christendom ecclesiology dominant in the 1960s falter insofar as those innovations remain embedded in the modern narrative that divorces religion from the socio-political-economic dimensions of life.[322]

As Bell continues:

> The serving of any direct relationship between the theological and the political realms of life does not leave the realms unrelated, thereby repeating the errors of idealist or spiritualist theologies. The wall between the realms is bridged by means of what Gutierrez calls a 'social appropriation of the gospel,' which amount to a correlation of faith and history, a translation of faith into political activity.[323]

The Church, in the light of Bell's theology, cannot save or transform society if it is excluded from society. He argues that theology becomes voiceless when it cannot embed as a real political activity, due to the division between the theological and the political. Thus, theology works within the restriction of being purely a spiritual ideology.[324] Under these circumstances, the difficulty liberation theologies face is that theology has to cross the dividing boundary between the theological and the political by means of applying other

[322] Daniel M. Bell, *Liberation Theology after the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering* (London: Routledge, 2001), 3.
[323] Ibid., 61.
[324] Ibid., 60.

social theories—if it wants to be political. (This is what all liberation theologies have done when they introduced social theories wholesale into their theological constructions.)

Bell furthermore suggests that theology must take over the social-political-economic realm. In order to bring about peace and justice, theology must also take more 'radical' action to subvert the separation of the theological and the political. He points out that, without concern for social justice, it is impossible for the free market to bring about justice.[325] In this sense, it is impossible either to repair or to fix a system that has gone wrong and has created injustice. A theology working with social theories or with other secular knowledge, which accepts the separation of religion and the state, cannot truly subvert capitalism. For Bell, finding a way to resist capitalism is not about finding an alternative economic system, along the lines of the proposed agenda of Jung Mo Sung. It should rather provide an ontological imagination, which can overcome capitalism and its power deployments.

Daniel Bell suggests that it is through retrieving human desire that theology can offer the tool of resisting capitalism. Political resistance, in his theology, is an ontological issue, rather than a social issue alone. The damage and distortion brought about by capitalism cannot be addressed as a social-political-economic issue, excluding theology from the discussion. As Bell says, theology must engage:

> Where capitalism constitutes a veritable way of life that exercises dominion by capturing and distorting desire, resistance must take the form of an alternative way of life that counters capitalisms by liberating and healing desire.[326]

The damage caused by capitalism results in the distortion of human desire. Capitalism deeply disfigures both humanity and human desire. Daniel Bell adopts the theory of Deleuze in his assessment of desire and capitalism. He argues that the foundation of capitalism, which supports the operation of the economic system of production and exchange, is the production of desire. Desire creates production. Desire that is productive sustains the

[325] Ibid., 119.
[326] Ibid., 72.

operation of the mode of production, which is correspondent to a specific desire of production, even though productive desire itself is not a mode of production.[327] In this way, desire is not a passive energy waiting for fulfilment. Instead, desire itself is positive and active in stimulating and motivating and even producing. For example, in capitalism, desire is territorialised again and again to fulfil the purpose of capitalist production, according to the principle of the market.

Even though it appears that desire is sometimes achieving liberation, the fact is that freedom and deterritorialisation (in Deleuze's word) are never being achieved.[328] Desire produces and creates. But desire does not produce or create for itself. Deleuze contends that 'desire is not a desire for something; it is not a matter of acquiring or grasping an object. It is not about possession.'[329] It is about a flow, a way to go, and a process of becoming. We have lost our vision that we can make a difference within the confines of the capitalist system.[330] The fact that we can no longer imagine any possibility of bringing about positive change forces us to restrain the desire to subvert the reality. This reality 'is constituted by desire, by dynamic flows of desire by an infinite multiplicity of becomings.'[331] All beings that are created by the flow of desire are defined by politics. This is what Deleuze means when he says that 'politics precedes being.'[332]

Basing his theory on Deleuze's understanding, desire is productive: it shows how Bell's concern with capitalism is not the same as Jung Mo Sung's, which regards desire as an invention of capitalism. Bell considers human desire to be something that is related to God's work and God's presence. From the medieval monastic tradition, such as Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) and the Cistercians, Bell learns that human desire will not come to an end in heaven. This is because 'we find a desire to penetrate deeper which is never quenched, yet which has no sense of unrest about it' in heaven.[333] In the Christian tradition, desire is a kind of love and self-giving force, which comes both from God and from the perfect nature of humanity.

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[327] Ibid., 33.
[328] Ibid.
[329] Ibid., 14.
[330] *The Economy of Desire: Christianity and Capitalism in a Postmodern World*, 42.
[331] Ibid.
[332] Ibid., 40.
[333] *Liberation Theology after the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering*, 90.

Human desire is not the result of a lack of need, nor has it come about because of human deficiency or the Fall. Instead, it results from 'an excess,' from abundance. It also comes from the fact that human beings are made in the image of God.[334] Therefore, desire is not a sinful power. The nature of desire itself is perfect and beautiful, even though it is usually lacking direction. In this sense, we can only see this as an ethical issue when the direction of desire is misguided; for example, when desire is used to find joy and pleasure.[335] Desire needs to be redeemed and saved. It does not need to be abandoned. When human desire can be redeemed, it means that human beings can be saved from the limitation and restriction of the political that has been involved in shaping our desire.

Desire and Justice-Building

This reconstruction of desire, or the redemption of desire, builds the foundation of the restoration of justice and righteousness. 'Recognition of the bondage of desire is a prerequisite of "sowing righteousness," repentance, prayer, and works of mercy.'[336] That is, right and just desire produces righteousness and justice because, as we have noted, desire is not merely about waiting but about shaping and creating. The potential for righteous action has to be based on motivation, which means the desire to produce righteousness. Desire in captivity will be disabled to produce goodness before desire is redeemed. In this light, Daniel Bell criticises liberation theologians for merely focussing on the kind of righteous thing that needs to be done. For example, they regard the exercise of justice as the routine application of a value or rule such as 'respect human rights.'[337] Seeking justice and righteousness becomes a series of superficial practices of doing things that look righteous and good. It is disconnected from any deep concern about human desire, which has potential to produce goodness.

Liberation theologians, including Jung Mo Sung, neglect the most fundamental issue, which is *how* can people do justice and righteousness? They 'lack sustained attention to the

[334] Ibid.

[335] Ibid., 91. For example, in Bell's words, 'Desire … lacks direction.' This lack is an ethical rather than ontological matter.

[336] Ibid., 95.

[337] Ibid., 124.

host of technologies of desire necessary for the formation of just persons.'[338] If justice is produced by desire that is shaped by the political, how can desire produce any justice that is able to challenge the political? If desire cannot be shaped in a just way, there can be no justice. Therefore, the restoration of justice must begin with the formation of a more just form of desire. The way to seek justice, in this sense, means to discipline and direct desire. As Bell argues:

> The formation of just persons is not primarily a matter of getting their value right; it is a matter of redirecting desire, with all that involves, so that it flows the way just persons' desire flow.[339]

Furthermore, Bell makes the criticism that the concept of justice in liberation theologies is unjust to the poor and the unprivileged. This concept of justice perfectly fits into the ideology of capitalism because the original purpose of this concept of justice was to protect the property and wealth of the rich and the middle class. The concept of justice is not for the purpose of standing with the poor in order to obtain justice for them. The concept of 'rights' is co-related to the concept of justice, because originally it was about asserting rights over property in order to maintain the wealth of the owner of the property. 'Rights were first and foremost about removing obstacles not to human fulfilment but to trade and commerce.'[340] If we have recognised rights and justice according to capitalism and market principles, how can rights and justice of this kind be powerful enough to subvert capitalism?

Daniel Bell believes that God's justice must differ from the justice of the political, which is practiced in accordance with capitalism. The economy of God's work is different from any economic theory justifying capitalism. For instance, from the perspective of political and capitalist economics, God's salvation itself is 'unjust' because human beings do not and in

[338] Ibid.
[339] Ibid.
[340] Ibid., 126.

fact cannot do anything to achieve it.[341] God's incarnation and salvation give grace that people never deserve to receive. This giving, including God's self-giving, does not follow the logic of capitalism. Unlike the economics of capitalism and its co-related concepts of justice and rights, God's economy of salvation contradicts market economics. Bell regards this economy of God's salvation, of Christianity, as the politics of forgiveness, which is therapy for desire.[342]

Forgiveness: The Healing of Desire

The economy of forgiveness does not work in the same way as other social theories that propose 'justice,' which eventually bring violence. This is because the latter cannot, in Foucault's words, produce a new power relationship even though they claim to challenge injustice. Bell argues that 'forgiveness renounces the power of violence to bring it into being. Recall that justice is transformed into terror when it is linked to the violence to enforce it.'[343] This understanding challenges the concept of justice, for which liberation theologies strive, by means of reversing oppressive structures and re-allocating the oppressed to the position of the oppressors. Instead, forgiveness refuses to transfer the suffering to others.[344] It refuses to replace one oppressed group with a different one. Forgiveness means stopping the transfer of an oppressed state. It creates a new relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed, which is not revenge. The oppressed no longer stay in the oppressed situation when they give the oppressors the gift of forgiveness; at the same time, the oppressors renounce 'the option for the wealthy that characterised their previous lives' through an act of repentance.[345] This relationship becomes mutual and reciprocal.

However, it does not mean that forgiveness no longer looks for justice. From the perspective of capitalist economics, the accusation can be made that the politics of forgiveness promotes a 'cheap' action of forgiveness. This accusation is based on the concern that justice is defined by the recognition of who has rights and how the rights can

[341] Ibid., 131.
[342] Ibid., 144.
[343] Ibid., 149.
[344] Ibid.
[345] Ibid., 178.

be maintained equally. Such an evaluation is judged from the perspective of human beings rather than from God's perspective. On the other hand, justice and forgiveness are 'two names of the single love of God that desires to draw humanity into communion.'[346] They both 'share a single end – the return of all love, the sociality of all desire, in God.'[347] As Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) says, God's justice can be seen and fulfilled in God's forgiveness.[348] Forgiveness produces justice and justice also includes forgiveness.

Bell provides a distinctive understanding of redeemed justice. This is about a relationship between God and human beings, rather than what people do or what righteous people do. The practice of redeemed justice is based on a group of people who have a relationship with God, rather than on an individual who protects its rights. As Daniel Bell argues:

> It [justice] seeks to maintain communion by fostering cooperation in the pursuit of holiness, by nurturing solidarity in a common good much more substantial than anything modern rights language. … Redeemed justice is not a matter of protecting the rights of strangers but of nurturing the communion of saints.[349]

To seek justice is what God calls God's people to do—it then provides them with support for living in God's forgiveness and generosity. Justice liberates God's people from the mode of desire that transfers suffering to other oppressed groups. Desire of empowerment by means of terror and violence, which is usually proposed by social theories and liberation theologies, must cease. God's people's desire to receive forgiveness prevents them from using the notion of justice in order to protect our advantage in terms of rights. God's people in this sense are referred to as 'crucified people'.[350]

Crucified people accept the therapy of forgiveness, which leads to the healing of desire. Some people may be suspicious enough to ask whether being crucified would rationalise a

[346] Ibid., 187-88.
[347] Ibid.
[348] Ibid.
[349] Ibid., 188.
[350] Ibid., 190.

ceaseless acceptance of suffering. Bell clarifies that the therapy of forgiveness requires patience because it may be a lengthy process. But this does not mean that forgiveness condones the suffering of crucified people.[351] The therapy of forgiveness not only calls for social action, it also restores and heals the nature of being at the ontological level. The therapy of forgiveness breaks the previous mode of understanding the structure of desire, which cannot lead to justice and righteousness. If sinning means turning away from goodness, the therapy of forgiveness will help us to resist sin by means of generosity, hospitality, and embracing enemies.[352] Such practices do not adhere to the principle of the capitalist mode of desire. Therefore, this disobedience, in accordance with God's economy of salvation, can be regarded as resistance to capitalism:

> Redemption entails our participation in the divine economy of ceaseless generosity and superabundance. The economy of salvation is about the healing of desire – the creative, filiative power of love – as it is taken up into the communion of charity that is the divine life.[353]

If the therapy of forgiveness, which heals desire, is the restoration of our ontological being, what does that mean for understanding the nature of human beings, and humanity itself? Bell argues that, in terms of human nature, we should be worshipping beings (*Homo Adorans*) rather than economic beings (*Homo Economicus*). The right thing to do is to worship the Christian God, who is generous, forgiving and self-giving, rather than to worship money and power. When people are healed by the therapy of forgiveness, they can be free from the mode of desire to gain power and to protect their own rights. From that point onward they have the capacity to consider justice based on God's mercy, rather than on the benefit of men's rights. Considering the core ontological issue, the purpose of being will be redefined as 'to worship and enjoy the divine love that provides all that we need.'[354]

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[351] Ibid., 191.
[352] Ibid.
[353] *The Economy of Desire: Christianity and Capitalism in a Postmodern World*, 153.
[354] Ibid., 168.

This solution shifts our focus from one of promoting social action on justice and rights to one of healing the nature of our ontological being and restoring the relationship with God. This is the most desirable end-state for all human beings to aspire to. The nature of being—perhaps the most fundamental issue of all—has not yet been properly explored by liberation theologians and social theorists. Ontological issues have been ignored for a long time in the development of social science. However, Bell raises a question about his ontological strategy: is it too abstract and philosophical to organise any real political resistance?[355] Furthermore, how can this ontological shift be related to any ethical and practical action? At the end of his book, *Liberation Theology after the End of History* (2001), Bell himself states:

> The therapy of desire that is forgiveness may fund resistance to capitalism. It may embody a crucified power that amounts to suffering against suffering. But how do we know if this is true?[356]

Bell's answer to his own question is 'No theory can verify it.'[357] This answer seems to be a humble one, but disappoints if the theology of liberation is so obsessed with an ontological argument that it ignores proposing political and ethical applications for the purpose of resistance. In this sense, I argue that it is not possible to separate an ontological argument from an ethical application, because ethical practices have to be rooted in the foundation of an ontological concern. Thus, ontology eventually helps with the practice of ethics. Here, I would like to help Jung Mo Sung to find his ontological roots and also to help Daniel Bell to explore how ethical and political action can be taken.

An Ontological Concern and its Ethical Applications

Jung Mo Sung and Daniel Bell are similar in that they both recognise the construction of human desire, as shaped by capitalism. But they focus on different levels. Briefly

[355] *Liberation Theology after the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering*, 124.
[356] Ibid., 194.
[357] Ibid.

speaking, Sung takes an ethical approach whereas Bell takes an ontological approach. On the face of it, it seems that there is little common ground between them, particularly when one considers Bell's criticism of the whole methodology of liberation theologies upon which Sung's theology is based. However, I argue that the apparent separation of ontology and ethics is an illusion, because what we do is correspondent to who we are and desire is the linkage between them.

I agree with Bell's refutation of the idea that the church and the state are separate, but I do not think it is necessary to refute all social theories in order to prioritise the significance of theology. The knowledge of the political, including social theory, and the knowledge of theology are not mutually exclusive of each other.[358] This is because they both provide different and complementary dimensions for the understanding of God's creation and order. That is, social theory and theology may use different languages and ways to describe what we see in God's creation, but, in fact, they both describe the same thing. It is helpful when theology includes, or 'cooperates' with social theories, because this helps us to know *more* about God's creation, rather than diminishing the theological understanding of God. For example, theology points out the nature of human desire and what human desire 'ought to' be in God's salvation and creation. Social theories then show what it means to be human in the contemporary context and how human desire is shaped and distorted by capitalism and oppressive structures. They both show different dimensions of God's work and creation and neither of them can lay claim to sole truth about God's work and creation.

There is another binary and another division, both of which need to be overcome. When the only way to liberation is by means of proposing ethical transformation, as in Sung's theology, it is impossible for human desire to bring about any justice or righteousness if human desires have all been distorted. When the way to liberation is merely a means of understanding human beings at the ontological level, as in Bell's theology, it is also impossible to propose any social action of political resistance. Sung and Bell have both fallen into the divide between ontology and ethics, with the result that they cannot see the connection between ontological beings and ethical practices.

[358] Robin Gill, *Theology in a Social Context: Sociological Theology Volume 1* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2012).

I argue that desire is the bridge between two levels of the human being. What desire produces depends on the nature of being, because our ontological being is not disconnected from our ethical practices. In this light, we can see how knowing about ourselves, dubbed 'subjectification' by Foucault, can bring about political resistance. In my micro-political theology, I urge that a real transformation starts with transformation of our 'being' at the ontological level (which is the root of our human desire) and ends with complete transformation of society and all ethical practices. This is because the ethical practice of liberation, which is motivated by redeemed desire, can only be assessed when the nature of human desire has been healed (in the sense of Bell's theology). For example, this new co-relationship of ontology and ethics drives us to ask a deeper question: how can any individual who has been shaped by capitalism desire God? Human beings who are shaped by capitalism cannot sense or discern that they 'should' worship God. They cannot even recognise that there is another god who is more desirable and worthy of worship. This is not an ethical question about what human beings 'should' do. It is an ontological question about what human beings can do when acting in accordance with their natural desire. This example shows how the ontological transformation produces the ethical change.

Overview

In this chapter, I have evaluated the current theologies of sexuality and desire, outlining examples from Althaus-Reid, Sung and Bell. Assisted by Foucault's theory, I also highlighted two main failures in their theologies. These failures show why these theologies of sexuality and desire cannot bring about liberation and freedom as part of their agenda of political resistance. This further points towards the proposal of my micro-political theology.

The first failure is that Althaus-Reid repeats the methodology of Latin American liberation theology—a methodology that is also shared by other liberation theologies (we discussed this in chapter one). Her Indecent Theology reverses the structure of heteronormativity by means of prioritising the experience of the perverted. However, she does not efficiently recognise that perverse sexuality is constructed by heteronormativity. She does not see that the identity of the perverted is not fixed, but is in fact in a process of becoming the 'perverted.' The failure of Indecent Theology demonstrates the significant

point that the process of becoming a subject, dubbed 'subjectification,' has to be concerned with the interaction between the subject and its external power relationships.

The theologies of Sung and Bell have both thoroughly examined the issue of the subject and capitalism, in terms of the shape of desire. More accurately, they have both drawn attention to the manner in which capitalism, which is a manifestation of the exertion of power relationships, gets involved in the process of subjectification by means of forming, shaping and orientating human desires. However, the debate between Sung and Bell draws out the second failure, which is that they both assume the division between ontology and ethics. This division limits the ability of Sung and Bell to understand why distorted desires cannot lead to liberation and freedom without ontological transformation taking place beforehand. I argue that any application of ethical practice has to be based on the transformation of desire at the ontological level. In my micro-political theology, I call this an ontological shift that echoes the consideration of subjectification. It is about who we are and what we are becoming.

Conclusion: Toward a Micro-Political Theology

Based on my observation of the current struggles of many social and political liberation movements, my dissertation began with the question: what can the theology of liberation do after social and political revolution? Social campaigners have provided the impetus for social and political revolutions, such as the Civil Rights movement for African American equal rights, the LGBT movement opposing the stigmatisation of sexual minorities, and the feminist movement fighting against gender discrimination. However, in the introduction, I pointed out that these movements do not bring about liberation or freedom—or at least they cannot maintain the fruits of their social and political revolution. This is because these revolutions oversimplify 'to liberate' by giving it the meaning 'to gain freedom from a particular discriminative social structure by means of a subversive political revolution.' These movements reached their goal at the initial stage but the oppressed groups who had been liberated have fallen into a new oppressed situation. The oppressed groups again are caught by new power relationships. These failures of liberative movements and revolutions are proved by the empirical evidence that the poor, women, non-white people, LGBT people remain oppressed. Once the conclusion has been drawn that social movements and revolutions are unable to bring about permanent freedom and liberation, another question immediately arises. That question is: why is it not possible to maintain the fruit of liberation and freedom?

Furthermore, in the Introduction, I argued that Christian theology lacks the creative theological imagination to construct an alternative agenda for liberation. Christian theology has been trapped by the theory of secularisation and by the privatisation of spirituality so that spiritual practice is ruled out from the considerations of political and liberation theologies. The theory of secularisation regards Christianity as a private practice, which should be separated from the public realm, and which is opposite to public politics. Thus, the birth of political theology merely reinforces the ideology of the separation of state and church, because it assumes that theology itself is not related in any way to the political. Spirituality has also been 'privatised' so that it has become a private, individual-focused, psychological practice. De-institutionalised spirituality thus becomes the substitute for

institutionalised religion. This kind of popular concept of spirituality ignores the truth that spirituality is always practiced in a political context. It misleads people into believing that spirituality and spiritual practice must always be purely 'apolitical.' Therefore, the theory of secularisation and the privatisation of spirituality—which have been widely accepted, intentionally or unintentionally, by liberation theologians and social activists—both result in the struggle to bring about and maintain liberation and freedom.

In chapter one, I went on to review the tradition of liberation theologies. I argued that even though liberation theologies attempt to regard the Church as the driving force behind political change, they have placed an overemphasis on analysing social structures, and they fail to properly acknowledge the process of subjectification. These are the reasons for the failure of liberation theologies to bring about freedom and liberation. For example, Latin American liberation theology takes an ecclesiological approach, focusing on the responsibility of the Church in society and on its action in the present context, rather than on an abstract idea of the Church as the Body of Christ. It also places its focus on the experience of the oppressed, in particular, the suffering of the poor. However, I argued that Latin American liberation theologians repeat two mistakes, even though they claim to fix them. Firstly, academic theologians still have a monopoly when it comes to interpretation of the experience of the poor, while the experience of poor people as recounted by themselves is ignored. Secondly, the diversity of experience of poor people is not considered, due to an overreliance on the analysis of social structures. Latin American liberation theology makes use of structural analysis to define poor people and to understand their experience of oppression. The consequence is that Latin American liberation theologians, when constructing their theology, are concerned with structural analysis rather than the diverse experience of the poor.

White feminist theologians and Third World womanist theologians criticise Latin American liberation theology even though they take their methodology from it. Feminist theologians characterise the primary oppression as sexual oppression and prioritise the experience of women's suffering over that of the poor—although women's suffering is entirely silenced and ignored in the canonical process of Scripture, which is discriminatory toward the value of women. Thus, white feminist theologians attempt to restore the

authentic message of God and to reconstruct an inclusive community, in which everyone is equal, and where all are embraced as who they are. However, feminist theologians reiterate the same mistake of generalising the diverse experience of women (the 'standpoint' perspective). They continue to assume the dichotomy between women and men. Based on that dichotomy, the experience of women is defined simply as opposite to that of men. In the view of white feminist theology, the experience of women becomes homogenous, even though women come from different backgrounds.

Third World womanist theologians offer their own criticism of white feminist theology. They argue that the empirical and physical experience of women, including their body, sexuality, and emotions, should be taken into consideration. They start to realise that the suffering of women does not spring from any single factor or structure of oppression, but from different oppressive systems working together— dubbed 'multi-oppressions.' For instance, African American women suffer in terms of their sexuality, social class, and poverty. In response to this, womanist theologians illustrate how Biblical characters shape the experience and identity of African women. The experiences with which they are concerned are not derived from an abstract or universal idea. Women's experiences are still in their formative process, and it is through this that women of colour are able to connect their own experiences with those of women in the Bible, including Hagar. In this sense, the methodology of womanist theology rejects the reduction of women's experiences (in plural) to a single generalised experience determined by social structures. Womanist theology draws our attention to what women definitely feel and suffer in body, mind and spirit. Chung´s theology of *han-pu-ri* is a typical example and experiment of this approach.

I have raised the contention that liberation theologies struggle with two key issues, which doomed them to fail in their mission to liberate the oppressed. The first issue is the recognition of subjectification; the second issue is how theologians make use of human experience in forming their theologies. Liberation theologies claim that they have considered the subject when constructing their theological standpoint, but they rely so heavily on the analysis of social structure to define the situation of the poor that the effort they make to listen to the stories of oppressed people is insufficient. Liberation theologians do not, in fact, treat people's experiences as seriously as they claim to. In addition, diverse

human experiences are so abstracted and conceptualised that they cannot be understood empirically, or as happening in a real social and political context. Liberation theologies do not care about the stories from sufferers concerning what they truly feel and experience. Briefly speaking, subjects and their experiences are conceptualised and are extracted from their real contexts. Those who suffer become beings without emotion, sexuality, body or desire.

In chapter two, I demonstrated how Michel Foucault's theory helps us to revisit the meaning of liberation and freedom, because his theory is a bridge that connects the political agenda of liberation with the consideration of the subject and their empirical experience. His philosophy also suggests that political resistance should be based on the construction of the self—known as 'subjectification'—within the power relationship. Foucault rejects all the forms of determinism, economic or otherwise, used by the majority of liberation theologies when conducting structural analysis. Although Foucault criticises Marxist economic determinism, this does not mean that capitalism has no relevance in his theory.

Firstly, I argued that Foucault's holistic perspective regards power as a functional system, which maintains society as an undivided unit. Foucault challenges the theory of the state, which holds that the state and its related apparatus are the core power centre that dominates and controls society from above. He enlarges the theologian's understanding of dominance and oppression, emphasising an institution or a visible organisation, to become a broader understanding of power relationships on display everywhere, including from below. This means that, in the view of Foucault, power relationships can be deployed in all forms of relationships, including the non-state apparatus. Foucault suggests that considerations of power functions should not be narrow, whether they are concerned with the state, an economic system, or even a patriarchal system on its own. Power exists in all forms of relationships—dynamic, flexible, and creative. The theory of power relationships expands the understanding of the theory of the state and any form of determinism. It draws our attention to power relationships that are created when resistance happens, and which permeate the whole society.

In the light of Foucault's philosophy, the self—defined as the subject together with both their sexuality and desire—is constructed within power relationships. Sexuality and

desire are not derived from the innate or neutral power of the self. Conversely, they are the loci on which power relationships exert themselves. According to Foucault's analysis, the practices of sexuality and desire are constructed within power relationships for the purpose of serving capitalism. For example, sexual liberation does not set people free from sexual repression. Instead, it encourages people to articulate their sexuality in order to bring their sexuality under control and into a place where it can be manipulated. When people articulate their sexuality, their sexuality begins to be supervised and controlled. The control of sexuality does not stem from any moral or religious motive, it is for the purpose of the control of population and economic growth. Sexuality is not private pleasure but a product of politics and of power relationships. In this sense, the existence of perversions and 'abnormal' sexualities depends on the exertion of power relationships. Useless and unproductive sexualities are marginalised because they cannot support or sustain productivity. Foucault reminds us that the existence of perversion does not result from resistance but from control. The subject, together with sexuality and desire, and irrespective of whether they are 'perverse' or 'normal,' is constructed within power relationships, rather than grown in an apolitical context.

When the omnipresence of power relationships is fully recognised, we will further question whether there is any possibility of achieving freedom. Although Foucault seems very doubtful about the potential for a power-free environment, he expresses the hope that the subject can be found within power relationships, notwithstanding that the subject is constructed within this context. If liberation means to set people free from all power relationships to a power-free zone, this work would, in the end, be in vain.

This important contention is the foundation for my micro-political theology, which offers fundamental criticism of social-political and theological liberation agendas. Such a micro-political theology sees social movements and revolutions as incapable of securing freedom and liberation from power relationships.

Foucault further suggests that resistance should be rooted in the process of subjectification, which includes the understanding of the self (who we are) and the discernment of the process of becoming the subject (how we are shaped). This is because this recognition of the self will be the recognition of its relationship with power.

Subjectification is not a process of finding the psychological self (in Cartesian terms). Instead, it is about the constitution of the subject through self-knowledge of its relationship with power and through the practice of the self within power relationships. This subject of the self is not a conscious being, but a being with body, sexuality and desire. (How the body, desire and sexuality are constructed manifests how power relationships construct the subject.)

In this sense, I argue that Foucault's political resistance is an ethic. This ethic is not one of transgression, but of constant disengagement from the constituted experience. It means that we have free capacity to change. This approach draws our discussion of resistance away from the previous paradigm (doing structural analysis as the first methodological step) and toward the consideration of the process of subjectification. I argue that this approach can avoid making the mistakes of liberation theologies, which, as I mentioned in chapter one, put an overemphasis on social structure and neglect the empirical experience of body, sexuality and desire.

In chapter three, I further examined three political theologies of sexuality and desire (Marcella Althaus-Reid, Jung Mo Sung, and Daniel Bell) in order to frame my micro-political theology. I looked at these from the perspective Foucault takes on power relationships.

The first example was Althaus-Reid's Indecent Theology. Although she is a liberation theologian, she subverts and criticises the heteronormativity absorbed into Latin American liberation theology and feminist theology. Indecent Theology requires theology to be indecent in order to subvert the oppressive structures, which have cooperated well with the system of decent morality. In the same way as other liberation theologies, it prioritises the experience of the indecent and the perverse, which have been excluded by heteronormativity. Her Indecent Theology is concerned with the unconditional acceptance of perversion and indecency but, at the same time, this concern itself weakens the potential for the subversion of social structures. I argued that this is because Althaus-Reid does not recognise that a perverse subject is produced and defined by heteronormativity.

When the existence of perversion is allowed, it means that the power of heteronormativity—which defines perversion—is also permitted to exist. In the view of Foucault, if Indecent Theology assumes that the perverse subject is pre-existent, it will never

be able to identify the involvement of power relationships in the process of becoming a subject of perversion. Although Indecent Theology successfully challenges the taboo of decent theology and bravely articulates sexuality and all things indecent, it fails to recognise the crucial fact that the perverse subject is constructed within power relationships.

The second example was Sung's liberation theology in Latin America. Sung criticises the way that capitalism has been idolatry. He insists that capitalism is the inventor and creator of unlimited desire, which is distinct from the basic need that is a key tenet of traditional Marxism. Capitalism confuses basic need with unlimited desire in order to motivate people to take an endlessly unsatisfactory journey in pursuit of the unreachable and the unattainable. This pursuit of the desirable also justifies the belief in the progression of modernity, because modernity promises to produce more to fulfil such desire. Furthermore, Sung recognises that the pursuit of the desirable items, propelled by unlimited desire, has distorted and undermined the value of humanity. This is achieved by means of turning people away from God, who should be the most desirable thing that people can pursue. Capitalism claims its own 'theology,' which offers the self-justification that it can satisfy all human desires.

Sung's liberation theology aims to demonstrate how capitalism distorts humanity and how its ideological bubble can be burst. It suggests that, by giving visibility to human suffering, the wickedness of capitalism can be laid bare. This results in anger about injustice and suffering. Thus, I argued that Sung's approach is practical and ethical, particularly because it has sensed that desire is constructed by capitalism for the purpose of the maintenance of consumption and productivity. However, if we take Foucault's perspective on subjectification and power relationships, it will help to prompt a deeper discussion—one which considers not only the distortion of humanity but also the process of subjectification in the construction of sexuality and desire.

Bell's theology was the third example I examined. This theology regards subjectification as an ontological issue. In contrast to the theology of Althaus-Reid and Sung, Bell distrusts Marxism, which assumes the separation of church and the state in its attempt to silence the voice of Christian theology. Bell's argument is that Christianity, or the knowledge of theology itself, is the remedy for humanity, but it has been distorted by capitalism.

Therefore, a theology concerned with the quest for human liberation does not have to be based on any social theory. Bell's criticism of liberation theologies is that they neglect a fundamental question—how can people who have been distorted by capitalism actually desire justice and righteousness? His response is that human desire is created by God and comes from God. God's healing of desire, by means of disciplining and directing desire, is the first step on the road to social justice. He also reminds us not only that forgiveness does not accord with the economic principle of capitalism, but also that renunciation of violence and revenge itself produces justice.

Through forgiveness and healing of desire, this transformation acts as a siren call to God's people to gather together as the community of crucified people. Bell highlights the point that an ontological change in the subject—subjectification—is fundamentally important for political resistance to succeed. However, I disagreed with Bell's 'radical' rejection of the value of all social theories, because this causes his theology to remain stuck in an ontological argument and it lacks the stimulation necessary for political action and all other practical solutions. In this sense, I insisted that the theology of both Sung and Bell complement rather than contradict each other.

The Pathway to a Micro-Political Theology

In the context of the above argument, we need to return to our central question: what can the theology of liberation do after social and political revolution? I suggested that liberation theologians should move on from the paradigm of doing theology based on identity politics—firstly, defining an oppressed group by means of analysing social structures and then attempting to liberate them from oppression. Identity politics cannot help liberation theologies, because it does not share their vision of power and dominance working dynamically and productively. In the light of Foucault's theory of power relationships, we can begin to see how power relationships exert themselves on human subjects, together with sexuality, desire and the body. However, my argument is that, when formulating a political theology, it is not enough to take sexuality and desire into consideration, as Althaus-Reid, Sung and Bell have done. We cannot regard sexuality, desire and the body as things that are stable and unchanged. Otherwise, we will fall into another

trap set by new power relationships, which appropriates the old liberative agenda and adapts them to become part of new power-deployments.

Following on from the above contention, my micro-political theology moves on to consider a deeper level of political resistance: spirituality, which Foucault calls 'subjectification.' Foucault argues,

> By spirituality, I understand … that which precisely refers to a subject acceding to a certain mode of being and to the transformations which the subject must make of himself in order to accede to this mode of being.[359]

Spirituality is a practice of constructing the subject by knowing the self and by the way 'individuals are driven towards the moral obligation, inside the self-forming activity.'[360] This is different from Descartes' mode of 'knowing thyself,' which is based on the intellectual thinking.[361] Through inner self-examination, the being of the self can examine how they are shaped as a subject and how they are influenced by society, culture, environment and daily interaction with other people, on which power relationships exercise and exist. Ironically, this spiritual practice of self-examination seems very individual and personal but, in fact, it is entirely political and related to the examination of power deployments (if we recognise that subjectification has engaged with the deployments of power relationships).

In this sense, spirituality leads my micro-political theology to break down the dichotomy between private spirituality and public political theology. Spirituality itself is political. This spiritual discernment widens our vision to discern our desire (constructing

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[359] Michel Foucault, "The Ethic of the Care of the Self as a Practice of Freedom (1984)," in *The Final Foucault*, ed. James Bernauer and David Rasmussen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 14.

[360] See: "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1991), 352-55.

[361] Jeremy Carrette, "Rupture and Transformation: Foucault's Concept of Spirituality Reconsidered," *Foucault Studies* 15 (2013): 58. This article has compared and reviewed Foucault's concept of 'spirituality' in his different periods and it clearly shows the tension Foucault held between theology and philosophy, modernity and Christianity. However, as a Christian theologian, I do not see these tensions are inevitable. Conversely, I see these tensions are the strategies to transform Christian spirituality into political theology.

sexuality and shaping our bodies),[362] from which we can see how power relationships exert themselves. In spirituality, subjects examine where their desire is orientated towards. They explore and liberate their sexuality and body by means of self-mastery—self-restraining or self-emancipating from their sexuality and body, or somehow between these two ways.[363] By means of rejecting the temptations of materialism and capitalism, they undertake self-examination of who they are and how they become a subject of the self. In other words, spirituality helps an individual subject to re-orientate themselves around becoming the subject of the self, who is a being with desire, sexuality and body. This re-orientation itself can be seen as 'political resistance', because it exhibits the counter-power to our identity which is shaped by society, culture and power relationships. I consider Foucault's critique of sexual liberation to be a deep and careful discernment of spirituality because he has sensed that the sexual liberation movement, which encourages articulation of our sexual behaviours and sexuality, can be deployed by power relationships to control and manipulate perversion. Thus, asceticism is subversive.[364]

Two Proposals for Constructing the Micro-Political Theology

In the light of Foucault's insight into power relationships and subjectification, I see the theology of liberation needs to be done in two ways.

[362] According to Foucault, Quaker spirituality is a good example of paying attention to bodily and physical control and its relation to individual conscience. See, *Foucault and Religion* (London: Routledge, 2002), 120-22. Furthermore, Carrette has highlighted that 'Quaker spirituality was not an internalisation of the architectural structure but a reflection of the religious techniques of self-examination. The internal-panopticon, as Foucault's later work on John Cassian indicates, preceded the architectural forms. It was "vigilance" through self-examination, the process of "discrimination," which controlled the body, a theological imperative and not stone.' ibid., 121.

[363] The tension between freedom and self-governance/self-mastery and the tension between agency and social/cultural construction have been already under debate in broader academic circles, such as in religious studies and anthropology, particularly in non-Western non-Christian contexts. See: James Laidlaw, *The Subject of Virtue: An Anthropology of Ethics and Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); James D Faubion, *An Anthropology of Ethics* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 2011); Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

[364] I will explain more in the second proposal for constructing the micro-political theology.

Firstly, liberation theology should turn back, in order to rethink 'spirituality,' or so-called 'political spirituality' in Foucault's sense.[365] Foucault does not give a clear explanation of 'the spiritual' or 'spirituality' because he tries to remove the discourse of Christian spirituality in his agenda. Nevertheless, he persistently uses the term.[366] However, for my micro-political theology, which is based on Christian theology and would like to retrieve the deep root of Christian tradition, Foucault's personal concern with keeping his distance from religion or Christianity is not a problem at all. Thus, I agree with Foucault's sharp evaluation of spirituality, when he says:

> […] I think we could call 'spirituality' the search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself in order to have access to the truth. We will call 'spirituality' then the set of these researches, practices, and experiences, which may be purifications, ascetic exercises, renunciations, conversions of looking, modifications of existence, etc., which are, not for knowledge but for the subject, for the subject's very being, the price to be paid for access to the truth.[367]

In spiritual practice, the subject can explore themselves in order to transform and shape themselves by means of giving themselves a space where they can pause to reflect on the things in life that they take for granted. As James Laidlaw argues, for Foucault, freedom takes form when it is informed by reflection, which is equivalent to 'thought' (in Laidlaw's view) and to 'spirituality' (in my view). But this thought/spirituality is not just 'representations that inhabit conduct,' which is the 'stuff in which anthropology often deals, the taken-for-granted cultural representations, or habitus, or "discourse".'[368] About this thought/spirituality, Foucault explains:

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[365] Carrette, *Foucault and Religion*.
[366] "Rupture and Transformation: Foucault's Concept of Spirituality Reconsidered," 70.
[367] Michel Foucault, *La Hermeneutica Del Sujeto/the Hermeneutics of the Subject: Cursos Del College De France, 1981-1982/Lectures at the College De France, 1981-1982*, vol. 237 (Ediciones Akal, 2005), 15.
[368] James Laidlaw, "For an Anthropology of Ethics and Freedom," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 8, no. 2 (2002): 324.

> It is what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and to question it as to its meaning, its condition, and its goal. Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem.[369]

This also echoes Foucault's argument, in *The Use of Pleasures* (1984), that subjectification, which is perceived as part of spiritual practice in my micro-political theology, is 'the way in which an individual establishes his relation to the rule and recognise himself as obligated to put into practice.'[370]

Therefore, the micro-political theology should take spirituality into consideration if spirituality helps to recognise how power relationships exert themselves omnipresently, if spirituality provides a foundation for going beyond what we have known in order to reach out into the field of the unknown. For example, keeping the Sabbath in the Ten Commandments is supposed to be an act of doing nothing and of self-restriction on our personal freedom. But the reality is that, as Walter Brueggemann critically points out, the practice of 'remembering the Sabbath day and keeping it holy' is entirely political and resistive when contemporary social and cultural values force us not to take a rest or to stop moving. The pause that the Sabbath makes subverts the undercurrent of capitalism which attempts to consume all our time and labour. It is resistance and a visible insistence that our lives are not valued or defined by production for the purpose of capitalism.[371] Keeping the Sabbath, in this sense, is a perfect example of showing how the spiritual practice of doing nothing can be resistive and subversive.

This is the reason why I suggest the micro-political theology needs to consider 'political spirituality' (in Foucault's view). Here, Carrette's words are a good summing up of my point:

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[369] Foucault, *Ethics: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, 117.
[370] *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2* (New York: Vintage, 1985), 27.
[371] Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014).

> There is, as Foucault makes clear in his use of spirituality, always too much at stake to base our truth on what we already know. The discourse of spirituality at least opens up the politics of continual transformation by holding up what we can be and what is not yet seen.[372]

Secondly, I argue that the practice of asceticism should be considered in constructing the micro-political theology. What does 'asceticism' mean? As Oscar Hardman defines,

> The ascetic undertakes the regulation of his body and all its powers in all their use of those things for which they have an appetite; and his method consists largely of restriction, surrender, renunciation.[373]

The purpose of these ascetic practices is to attain a higher, purer, and holier state of spirituality, or it is for the purpose of 'more thorough absorption in the sacred.'[374] This is achieved through denying their self, which is seen as an unclean, wild and sinful soul, and which needs to be disciplined in order to be orientated toward a proper and holy direction.[375] Therefore, asceticism, by definition, is a practice of self-restriction and self-denial. If, as we have discussed in this dissertation, the self, through the process of subjectification, is constructed by society and power relationships, asceticism opens a space where we can reflect on the 'self' that will be denied in the ascetic practice.

Asceticism 'raises the issue of culture by structuring an opposition between culture and its opposite.'[376] It transgresses the cultural trend and 'normativity,' which assert that our sexuality is so repressed that we should be bold when talking about it. It does not instruct us

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[372] Carrette, "Rupture and Transformation: Foucault's Concept of Spirituality Reconsidered," 71.
[373] Oscar Hardman, *The Ideals of Asceticism: An Essay in the Comparative Study of Religion* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1921), 10. Cited from Richard Valantasis, "Constructions of Power in Asceticism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63, no. 4 (1995): 794.
[374] "Constructions of Power in Asceticism," 794.
[375] Ibid.
[376] Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), xii, original emphasis.
Cited from Valantasis, "Constructions of Power in Asceticism," 795.

to follow the desires created by capitalism; for example, our identity and subjectivity are shaped by our consumption. Asceticism manifests the potential of negativity by establishing an ethic (in Foucault's words), which makes it clear that we have capacity to choose 'not' to do. This differs from previous notions of freedom, which focuses only on agency and 'what we can do.' Asceticism reminds us that the capacity not to do is the other side of freedom—a side that is indispensable. Furthermore, the practice of asceticism also draws Christians to recognise that God is the only and the most desirable being to pursue.[377] This pursuit cannot be carried through by inflating the value of the self, but by denying the self, in the likeness of Christ's *kenosis*.[378]

Furthermore, in addition to *passive* resistance in the recognition of how power relationships work on the subject of the self, *active* resistance in the spiritual process of constructing the subject is significant. Sergey Horujy, a Russian Orthodox theologian, has pointed out that the reconstruction of hesychast experience and practice, engaging with both self-knowledge and self-transformation, renders the foundation of synergic anthropology on an ontological practice. The process of hesychast practice is 'an ascending progress toward the Other-being, toward communion and union with Christ, by means of holistic self-transformation.'[379] This transformation of individuals is not in the material composition but 'in the energies'. As Horujy explains, the final goal of the transformative practice is to reach the other energies and to have the perfect union of two ontologically different energies. In this progress, 'an individual performs the going-out of their ordinary existence, of the "world".'[380] At this point, Horujy demonstrates how the spiritual practice of the self is able to undergo an ontological change. Thus, this ontological change will bring

[377] Sarah Coakley makes use of the term, dubbed 'new asceticism,' to rethink sexuality and desire in the contemporary context. She has pointed out the significance of directing our desire towards God to help Christians to be in holiness. However, her discussion has not yet considered any issue which is related to political resistance or politics; therefore, I did not have too much discussion about her movement of new asceticism. See: Sarah Coakley, *The New Asceticism: Sexuality, Gender and the Quest for God* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015).

[378] In the conversation with (secular) feminist theologists and feminist theologians, Sarah Coakley has demonstrated the tension between 'empowerment' and 'kenosis.' She opens a new perspective on seeing 'vulnerability' and 'self-denial' to be empowered. See: "The Eschatological Body: Gender, Transformation and God," in *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy, and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002); "Kenosis and Subversion: On the Repression of 'Vulnerability' in Christian Feminist Writing," in *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy, and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

[379] Horujy, *Practices of the Self and Spiritual Practices: Michel Foucault and the Eastern Christian Discourse (2010)*, 104.

[380] Ibid., 105.

about the ethical change, leading to political action and resistance. This goes beyond the division between Daniel Bell's and Jung Mo Sung's theology, which I discussed in Chapter three.

For all of the above reasons, I propose that micro-political theology should integrate political spirituality—in Foucault's sense—and the practice of asceticism because political resistance cannot be limited to subversive action in political-economic structure alone. Political resistance, which the new development of liberation theologies needs to embrace, should be engaged with how the subject of the self resists the manipulative effects of power relationships.

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