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Engaging Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Comparative Ethical Study:
Political Minjung and Confucian Ethics of Rectification

PAUL S. CHUNG

Abstract

A comparative ethical study in the cross-cultural context becomes an arbiter in refurbishing the tradition of Christian theology in dialogue with other traditions of religious ethics, notably in postcolonial formation. Engaging Bonhoeffer's ethics in the context of political minjung and Confucian ethics of rectification, I seek to mark the comparative ethical study as an enriched ream of creation. This aspect includes a multidimensional integrity of life for the sake of those who are fragile and vulnerable and upholds rectification of that which causes setback and predicament to the actual lives of people. The purpose of this paper is to appreciate a legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in East Asia, paving the way to a postcolonial reading of Bonhoeffer in a comparative and ethical framework.

Key Terms: comparative ethical study, archeological hermeneutics, postcolonial minjung theology, *status confessionis*, Mencius, ethics of rectification, reconciliation, post-Shoah, *theologia crucis*, *parrhesia*

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COMPARATIVE ETHICAL STUDY IN THE TIME OF MANY WORLDS

We live in the midst of worldwide cultural polycentrism, which necessarily impacts theological works and challenges the dominion of Western monocentrism. The spread of global capitalism entails economic productivity and transnational culture, while causing deadly poverty for countless numbers of people, bequeathing an ecological crisis. In the context of "global dynamics and world-making,"[1] a rereading of Western theology becomes important in developing a moral reasoning to overcome distance, tribalism, or ideology in the aftermath of colonialism.

My contention in this paper is to undertake a study of comparative religious ethics concerning Bonhoeffer, minjung, and Confucian ethics in global-critical and postcolonial perspectives. Postcolonial reason in global-critical framework is founded upon remembrance of the other's suffering and victims which is central in anamnesis reason.[2] It also engages in archeological rereading of the irregular side of history and texts which have been unproblematized and forgotten.

For an archeological hermeneutics I seek a re-reading strategy which aims at unearthing the mass suffering of the past. Its hermeneutics is guided by the memory of the suffering of innocent victims which can also be reenacted through biographical narrative and discourse among those who are fragile and vulnerable in social location. This double perspective on history and society strengthens a comparative religious study in ethical framework: responsibility, solidarity, and recognition of and learning from the other. This motivates me to reinterpret Bonhoeffer in the postcolonial direction, making his theology more amenable to the discussion of minjung theology and Confucian ethics of rectification.

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[1] William Schweiker, *Theological Ethics and Global Dynamics: In the Time of Many Worlds* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 4–5.

[2] Johann Baptist Metz, *A Passion For God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity*, ed. and trans. J. Matthew Ashley (New York: Paulist, 1998), 143. For global-critical perspective see Francis Yip, *Capitalism as Religion? A Study of Paul Tillich's Interpretation of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 130–138.

BONHOEFFER IN EAST ASIA

Bonhoeffer already occupied a special place in the first model of minjung theology and literatures starting from the 1980s in South Korea and continues to be influential in South Korea and North America. Bonhoeffer also remains an inspiring figure in the second model of postcolonial minjung theology in its irregular fashion.[3] I identify my position as a postcolonial, irregular theology in dialogue with the first model of minjung theology. Furthermore, Bonhoeffer's works arouse a renewed interest in Christian-Confucian dialogue in East Asia. In a recent study of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Sino-Theology*,[4] I read that Chinese scholars in Taiwan and Hong Kong enter into a dialogue with Bonhoeffer in appreciating his theology in a Sino-theological perspective. A comparative reading of Bonhoeffer and Confucian ethics marks a new terrain in reevaluating Bonhoeffer's ethical insights in East Asian formation.[5]

In the first model of minjung theology, Bonhoeffer's "minjung" experience in the prison remains fundamental in helping him break through his academic theology toward a post-Eurocentric theology. The minjung theology is developed in South Korea to challenge the aftermath of Japanese colonialism and later to engage in confrontation with indigenous military dictatorship allied with Japanese politics. Minjung theology situates the pain of God within the outcry of the victim. *Han* is a determining metaphor in delving into the social existential mentality or collective feeling of the victimized. It denotes the point at which a victim feels deprived of all that makes his/her life meaningful. The theology of minjung as victim articulates what the dark side of modernization and industrialization has brought to South

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[3] Paul S. Chung, *Constructing Irregular Theology: Bamboo and Minjung in East Asian Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

[4] Clifford Green and Thomas Tseng, eds., *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Sino-Theology* (Chung Li: Chung Yuan Christian University, 2008). See also Chinese translation of Andreas Pangritz's essay: Andreas Pangritz, "Penghuofei'er lunli xue de shenxue dongji" [Theological Motifs in Bonhoeffer's Decision to Participate in Political Resistance], trans. Rachel Zhu, *Regent Review of Christian Thoughts* 2, no. 2 (2005): 257–268.

[5] Tang Sui-keung, "An Ethical Case of 'The Son Concealing the Misconduct of the Father': The Postmodernity of Bonhoeffer's Ethics," in Green and Tseng, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Sino-Theology,* 365–393.

Korean society. This focuses on engaging with the social history of *han*-ridden people who cry out for freedom and emancipation.

In this light, minjung theology values Bonhoeffer's social experience which has shaped his theological reorientation toward "the perspective of those who suffer."[6] This connection between hermeneutics from below and ethical commitment to the subaltern-subject can unfold a non-Western perspective on the theology of God's suffering and the suffering of people.[7]

CHARACTERIZING POSTCOLONIAL MINJUNG THEOLOGY

For the second model of minjung theology in its postcolonial direction, I refer to the work of a Japanese theologian, Kazo Kitamori—*The Theology of the Pain of God.*[8] Kitamori utilizes Japanese cultural terms such as *tsurasa* in order to make the theology of the cross amenable to the Japanese people who were frustrated during the war and in the postwar and post-Hiroshima situation. The Japanese word *tsurasa* comes from the spirit of Japanese tragedy, and it literally denotes bitterness, sorrow, and pain of loss. *Tsurasa* becomes a grounding metaphor aptly formulating the wounded heart of God or the pain of God who embraced the un-embraceable and loved the unlovable through sacrificing God's only Son.[9] God's pain is expressed in silence.

However, my postcolonial minjung theology takes issue with Kitamori, because the latter does not problematize the real victims of WWII during Japanese colonialism. During the Japanese War of Aggression against China, Japanese troops committed a series of atrocities in Nanjing. The brutal slaughter of innocent people, as well as rape and destruction of the city, took place within six weeks in December 1937 and January 1938. Among these victims I also mention the Jewish refugees in Shanghai, who (because of German interventions) were forced

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[6] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters & Papers from Prison*, ed. E. Bethge (New York: The Macmillan, 1971), 17. Hereafter LPP.

[7] Paul S. Chung et al, *Asian Contextual Theology for the Third Millennium: Theology of Minjung in Fourth-Eye Formation* (Eugene: Pickwick: 2007), 127–145.

[8] Kazo Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, rep. (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2005).

[9] Ibid., 138.

by the Japanese allies of Nazi Germany into a Ghetto-like settlement between 1943 and 1945.

I argue that the history is not lost or deconstructed, but remembered in order not to repeat the previous mistakes and wrongdoings.

According to Walter Benjamin, "Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins."[10] Further, as he holds, "nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history."[11] This perspective upholds that "no inscription is indelible."[12] Accordingly, James Cone maintains that a painful memory of an unspeakable crime against disfigured black bodies done in the lynching tree needs to be remembered; such a memory reminds us of the cost of discipleship in reference to the crucified people of history.[13]

Given the victims in the past, I conceptualize the postcolonial minjung theology in terms of an archeological hermeneutics, which is to unearth the irregular side or underside of the history violated by the [neo] colonial authority and power. This perspective requires a hermeneutical skill of archeological rewriting concerning biblical exegesis and history of mission, while bringing its sociohistorical horizon to encounter with the social discourse of victims silenced and marginalized in cultural location. Following the lead of archeological hermeneutics, an ethics of sociobiographical practice engages with the narratives of victims in contemporary location, while promoting ethical responsibility for public issues and solidarity with those who are fragile and vulnerable in a society.

In the minjung biblical exegesis of Mark's gospel, there is an emphasis on the term *ochlos* (the common people, the multitude)—such as public sinners and tax collectors—*massa perditionis*. The occurrence of *ochlos* in Mark's gospel focuses on people without religious identity and ethnic coherence, which is in contrast to *laos* (people, particularly used of "the people of the Lord") or *goyim* (nations, non-Jews). The word *ochlos* describes people of the land (*amha'aretz*) without proper-

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[10] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (London: Pimlico, 1999), 247.

[11] Ibid., 246.

[12] Jonathan Ingleby, *Beyond Empire: Postcolonialism and Mission in a Global Context* (Central Milton Keynes: AuthorHouse, 2010), 54.

[13] James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011), xiv–xv.

ty.[14] Taking a step further, a postcolonial minjung exegesis takes into account a mixed crowd (*erevrav*) as minjung who accompanied the Israelites in the journey from Rameses to Succoth (Ex 12:37). God's *massa perditionis* in the first model of minjung theology can be reframed in the postcolonial minjung exegesis by emphasizing the connection between God's mixed crowd and Israel. Minjung is no longer defined as a counter proposal to Israel's life journey, but as its companion.

A postcolonial minjung theology is concerned to develop a sense of co-textuality or double textuality in terms of refining confluence of two narratives (i.e., narrative of God's suffering in the biblical context and the suffering of people in the extrabiblical and broader spectrum). This hermeneutics of intertextuality, which undergirds a sociobiographical sharing of victim-narrative, seeks a third place for creating a politics of new meaning and discourse in counter hegemony to the institutionalized discourse. God as the infinite horizon of biblical narrative and extrabiblical narrative continues to address and work through the lives of innocent victims in history, society, and the world. This aspect is a linguistic-creational-emancipatory turn in postcolonial minjung theology, which acknowledges the dependency of minjung consciousness on language and discourse, in other words, on our pre-given linguistic world and practices. It describes the historical consciousness of minjung-subaltern-in-formation in light of the double textuality, rather than fixating on or essentializing minjung as the subject of history or messianism.

A postcolonial notion of intertextuality surfaces in deciphering the irregular side of God's "language-event" through the face of minjung-subaltern while recovering a new horizon of meaning in its sociohistorical context in the archeological quest of the time of the lost. I do not mean this methodology as a return to lost origins or a repristination of past ideas and concepts. Nonetheless, the past has effects on the present and our life-in-the-place with the others. Postcolonial minjung epistemology seeks to decipher what confronts us as different, other, and irregular, whether it is the word of God, the face of the poor, or the historical claim of the tradition. Thus I undertake a study of history and society in terms of hermeneutical reflection and socio-critical dialectics to understand that which is different, other, and irregular through: appropriation or critical appreciation of the past, critical dis-

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[14] Ahn Byung-mu, "Jesus and Ochlos in the Context of His Galilean Ministry," in Chung et al, *Asian Contextual Theology for the Third Millennium,* 36–37.

tance from (deconstructive critique of) the hierarchically regularized element of the tradition and the present, and recovery of a new horizon of meaning for reconstruction of minjung-subaltern life by analyzing the formation of social discourse and economic material (labor, capital, and marketing).

Its ethics has a strategy of *parrhesia* (speaking faithfully and audaciously) to create a space for the subaltern to speak of and for themselves. For Foucault, discourse is a social practice or exercise, and it is productive in the way of systematically shaping the subject-matter spoken and organizing power constellations through epistemic structure and framework.[15] Critically incorporating the theory of social discourse based on the interplay between knowledge and power into the archeological hermeneutics, I do not suppress one's pre-understanding, social meaning, and ethical commitment to those vulnerable embedded within history of effect and social location. This aspect transcends Foucault's ethics of individual freedom and responses to the ambiguous and also Spivak's abstract question "can the subaltern speak?" Authenticity of meaning occurs when the subaltern are speaking of and for themselves.

POSTCOLONIAL READING OF BONHOEFFER

Postcolonial minjung theology appreciates Bonhoeffer's prophetic theology, which is grounded in hermeneutical perspective from below. Bohoeffer's *theologia crucis* in non-religious fashion may reinforce this irregular side of hermeneutics. As Bonhoeffer provocatively argues, "what does it mean when the proletariat says, in his world of distrust: 'Jesus was a good man?'" The discourse of the working class about Jesus as a good man means more than the bourgeois saying that Jesus is God.[16] Bonhoeffer's critical concern about radicalism of the gospel finds its place in postcolonial minjung theology, because Bonhoeffer expresses a politics of the gospel in protest against bourgeois self-satisfaction, or "a convenient reversal of the Gospel."[17]

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[15] Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Random House, 1982).

[16] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 35.

[17] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Touchstone, 1955), 64. Hereafter E.

Bonhoeffer's ethics sees religious others positively in light of God's reconciliation with the world. The godlessness of the world is full of promise, even in its stance against religion and the church. The godlessness of the world is closer to Christ than to the hopeless godlessness in religious and Christian clothing.[18] The world come of age is more godless, and perhaps for that very reason, it is nearer to God.[19] This perspective shapes Bonhoeffer's concept of the church as servant church to the world, because Jesus is there for others. "The church is the church only when it exists for others."[20] Bonhoeffer's view on Jesus's "being there for others" stands in effect on the masses. The encounter with Jesus Christ, beyond the faith of the church, characterizes the church's existence for others. The "church should give away all its property to those in need," and "take the field against the vices of hubris, power-worship, envy, and humbug, as the roots of all evil."[21] When "Jesus' existence for the other" is left behind, the church remains on the defensive, not taking risks for others.[22]

The experience of the catastrophe of Auschwitz informs Bonhoeffer's move beyond the framework of European Enlightenment and the self-preserving ecclesiology. A notion of alterity, the dignity of the other in the otherness, may break into Bonhoeffer's discourse about God in Jesus Christ, under whose trace the other stands. Bonhoeffer upholds the church's solidarity with the victims of the Shoah, "the weakest and most defenseless brothers and [sisters] of Jesus Christ."[23]

Bonhoeffer's non-religious interpretation critiques an excessive attachment to the power of God in the world. In such an approach God would turn out to be the *deus ex machina*. In some ancient Greek dramas an unsolvable crisis is solved by the intervention of a god who is often brought on stage by an elaborate piece of equipment. This "god from a machine" is the literal translation of *deus ex machina*. In contrast to the notion of *deus ex machina*, Bonhoeffer provocatively argues that only the suffering God can help. This implies a counter hegemony to the powerful god of those in dominion and authority. It entails a critique of the modernist notions of God according to onto-theo-logy, be-

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[18] E 104.
[19] LPP 362.
[20] LPP 382.
[21] LPP 383.
[22] LPP 381.
[23] E 114.

cause Bonhoeffer argues that "there is no God who 'is there.'"[24] God allows God's self to be driven out of the world onto the cross. Therefore, "we have to live in the world *etsi deus non daretur*" (as if there is no God).[25] Thus, the authentic meaning of God's transcendence must be found in God in human form for others. That is to say, "the Crucified, the man who lives out of the transcendent,"[26] as if there is no God.

STATUS CONFESSIONIS AND RESISTANCE

Bonhoeffer's concept of resistance, which was expressed in his challenge to the so-called Aryan clause, remains substantial in construction of postcolonial minjung ethics. Bonhoeffer's April 1933 address on "The Church and the Jewish Question" is an important example of resistance.[27] For Bonhoeffer, the church has no right to interfere directly with the political actions of the state. However, the church is summoned to act when the state does not serve to maintain law and order in a legitimate way. This summon becomes important when there is either too much or too little law and order. In the case of too much law and order, the state develops its power and deprives Christians of their rights in faith and in preaching. The church must reject the encroachment of the state in this regard.[28]

Bonhoeffer proposed three possibilities for the church's action toward the state. First, the church can ask the state whether its actions are legitimate and in accordance with its character as a state. Second, the church can help those who are victimized by the state action. The church stands under an unconditional obligation to the victims in the society, whether Christians or non-Christians. Third, the church should

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[24] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, ed. Wayne W. Floyd, Jr., trans. H. Martin Rumscheidt (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 115.

[25] LPP 360.

[26] LPP 382.

[27] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "The Church and the Jewish Question," in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Berlin: 1932–1933*, vol. 12 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, ed. Larry L. Rasmussen, trans. Isabel Best and David Higgins (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 361–370.

[28] Ibid., 365.

not just bind up the wounds of the victims beneath the wheel but seize the wheel itself.[29]

At this point, the church finds itself in *status confessionis*. *Status confessionis*[30] is the term used by the Reformers in the sixteenth century in the struggle against Roman Catholicism. It refers to a state of confessional protest where the very truth of the gospel and Christian freedom are at stake. In the Formula of Concord, we read that:

> The confirmation of open idolatry, as well as the protection of the weak in faith from offense, is at stake. In such matters we can make no concessions but must offer an unequivocal confession and suffer whatever God sends and permits the enemies of his Word to inflict on us.[31]

This term is adopted by Karl Barth, Bonhoeffer, and others to emphasize the necessity of the Evangelical Church for confessing its faith in protest to the challenge of Nazi ideology. Bonhoeffer's notion of *status confessionis* has later developed in the church's confession of guilt in the context of reconciliation, which can be understood as the politics of martyr in his prison letters. The church confesses that it has often denied compassion to the outcast and to the despised when the blood of the innocent was crying aloud to heaven. "The Church confesses that she has witnessed in silence the spoliation and exploitation of the poor and the enrichment and corruption of the strong."[32] For political responsibility Bonhoeffer argues that Christians are instruments in the hand of the Lord and share "in Christ's large-heartedness by acting with responsibility and in freedom when the hour of danger comes." They show a real sympathy springing from the liberating and redeeming love of Christ for all who suffer. They are called to sympathy and action by the suffering of those for whose sake Christ suffered[33]—thereby the politics of martyr. This politics of martyr in protest to Nazi regime is inseparably connected with a hermeneutical view from the following—that is "from the perspective of the outcast, the

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 366.

[31] "Formula of Concord," in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, eds. Robert Kolb and Timothy J.Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 516.

[32] E 115.

[33] LPP 14.

suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed, the revived, —in short, from the perspective of those who suffer."[34] The world has come of age in the reconciled world and cannot be properly understood apart from the perspective on the underside of history. This aspect provides an insight into breaking through the modernity and undergirds a theological critique of modernity for the sake of a postcolonial theology from the irregular side of history and society.

Regarding Bonhoeffer's politics of martyr, Karl Barth conceptualizes a possibility of tyrannicide. In Barth's view, Calvin, Theodore Beza, and John Knox purported extreme public emergencies in which God would raise up an avenger and deliver whose destructive work would be done in obedience to God's command. It is certain that they did not conceptualize tyrannicide as a general possibility. The strange form of capital punishment which might be the command of God is "a matter of the pure heart and clean hands and untroubled conscience."[35]

Nonetheless, in contrast to Barth, Bonhoeffer does not theologically conceptualize an issue of tyrannicide. For the sake of politics of martyr Bonhoeffer takes serious the reality of restrainer (II Thess 2:7) which takes effect under God's governance of the world, setting due limits to evil. God uses it to preserve the world from destruction. The church and the restrainer (the power of the state) are different in nature, but in close alliance facing imminent chaos.[36] This perspective is rather undertaken in Bonhoeffer's reflection on the gospel of Jesus Christ in deep dialogue with the world of the first function of the law. In the reconciled world God alone distinguishes between the world of the *primus usus* and the gospel.[37]

Bonhoeffer finds God and the world reconciled in Christ. "In the body of Jesus Christ God is united with humanity, the whole of humanity is accepted by God and the world is reconciled with God."[38] Coupled with Barth's prophetic rejection of natural theology in a politically distorted form and also his appreciation of natural-material life of humanity, Bonhoeffer retains a keen sense for the integrity of natural life on the basis of the distinction between the ultimate and the penultimate which reinterprets the Lutheran model of two kingdoms or strategies.

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[34] LPP 17.
[35] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/4: 450.
[36] E 108.
[37] E 309.
[38] E 202.

An ethical evaluation of the penultimate and its significance for human historical, social and material existence is positively undertaken in the light of the ultimate message of the gospel of justification by grace alone. Unlike Barth's universal kingship of Christ, Bonhoeffer affirms the presence of God in the suffering of Christ in which the powerlessness of God in the suffering of Christ provides a clue to overcome the closed system of modernity from the standpoint of those who suffer. Bonhoeffer's political ethics stands in complementarity with Barth's political theology.

Bonhoeffer's prophetic ethics, concerning God's reconciliation in the humanity of Jesus Christ and his solidarity with suffering Jews, challenges an attempt to draw lines between "us" and "them." It provides a larger framework for appreciating other humanist sources of religions within the framework of politics of faithful moral integrity. It invites the responsibility of other serious religious people in our time to participate in God's reconciliation and humanism in solidarity with the subaltern in our midst. This argument leads to reinterpreting the Confucian notion of people's ethics for the sake of ethical commonality and solidarity in cross-cultural and comparative study.

MENCIUS AND ETHICS OF RECTIFICATION

Bonhoeffer's ethics of resistance ushers us into a comparative study of Confucian notion of political resistance. In *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Sino-Theology*, as we already mentioned, Tang actualizes ethical self-cultivation by paying attention to Mencius's theory of four germinations or beginnings of the four basic human feelings or dispositions: commiseration, shame and dislike, deference and compliance, and right and wrong. However, Mencius's self-cultivation based on the theory of four beginnings cannot be adequately comprehended apart from his ethical consideration of people rights. In this light, Mencius provides an insight to overcome a limitation of virtue ethics, underlying an ethical relationship between moral character and social life of the people on the margin.

Mencius (371–289 BCE) lived in ancient China surrounded by disorder and intellectual confusion and continued to perpetuate the teaching of Confucius. Giving a new outlook on an existing system, Mencius's political philosophy advocates the rights of people. The ruler is the

one who is in office to serve the people. The relationship between the ruler and the ruled is based on the cooperative division of labor and Heaven's mandate. Although Heaven's mandate is unfathomable and incomprehensible, it is known through the lives of people. Thus all economic and political measures must be established on behalf of the people. As Mencius states, "the people are the most important element (in a state); the spirits of the land and grain are secondary; and the sovereign is the least. Therefore to gain the peasantry is the way to become Emperor."[39]

According to Mencius, Confucius rejected those who served to enrich the malevolent rulers and also those who waged wars for their own profit.[40] The Confucian doctrine of the rectification of names was central in striking rebellious ministers and villainous sons with terror. Mencius incorporates the disordered sovereign into this line of thought. Mencius did not eradicate the social distinction between the sovereign and the peasants nor the ruler and the ruled. However, such a distinction should exist for enabling a cooperative division of labor. Governmental office is the highest of all positions, filled by persons of the greatest virtue. The Emperor must be a sage before the Emperor may be Emperor. Thus the Emperor follows the will of the people.

Mencius emphasizes the service of authority in the direction of nourishing and enriching the lives of people and educating them.

> Do not take away the time proper for the cultivation of a farm of one hundred acres, and its family of several mouths will not suffer from hunger. Let careful attention be paid to education in the schools, with stress on the inculcation of filial piety and fraternal duty, and there will be gray-haired men on the roads carrying burdens on their backs or heads. There has never been a case of one who did not become a (real) king when (under his rule), persons of seventy wore silk and ate meat, and the common people suffered neither from hunger nor cold.[41]

For Mencius, land is public property, and the people cultivate it in a condition of liberty. Institutions enable the people to nourish their liv-

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[39] *Mencius* VII b, 14; Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy, 1: The Period of the Philosophers*, trans. DerkBodde (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 113.

[40] *Mencius,* trans. Zhao Zhentao, Zhang Wenting, and Zhou Dingzhi (Hunan / Beijing: Hunan People's Publishing House / Foreign Language Press, 1999), 165.

[41] Mencius, Ia, 3; cf. Fung, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, 1:118.

ing and bury their dead without any dissatisfaction. This is the first step of a benevolent government.[42] Confucius also admonished his disciples: "Enrich them, educate them."[43] The state should ensure a constant livelihood to the people and provide economic security. It should also establish organizations for the education of the people. This ethical reorientation for the people and its social democratic implications[44] characterize Mencius's ethics as grounded in the life and wellbeing of the people.

The Confucian slogan, "taking the people as the most important factor," is associated with the Confucian principle of rectification of names. There should not be a blindly loyal relationship between the ruler and the officials. When the ruler violates and does not rectify the name as a benevolent ruler, the possibility of tyrannicide is open. If the voice of the people is the voice of God, then the master becomes an ordinary citizen to serve the voice of the people. Mencius, who lived in an ancient system of patriarchy and hierarchal-authoritative political culture, retains the potential to correct such a mechanism through rectifying ethics and with emphasis on people's life interest. Confucian ethics did not create a hierarchical system of patriarchy, although it was developed and considerably misused to serve the powerful in that social, cultural system. Mencius's political ideas, despite their limitations built on feudal society, offer an important insight into taking people's lives and rights as the most important factors at the roots of society. This Confucian idea is in accordance with the revolutionary resonance.

In this light, Weber does not forget to contend that underlying Mencius is a charismatic leadership in which people become representatives of God's mandate. It "leads to a revolutionary reevaluation of everything and a sovereign break with all traditional or rational norms."[45] Different from Weber's charismatic interpretation, however, Fung Yu-lan insists that Mencius's economic position retains socialist implications, giving the existing social system a new interpretation in the Confucian sense of transmitting.[46]

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[42] Mencius, 7.

[43] *Lun Yu,* XIII, 9.

[44] Fung, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, 1:118.

[45] Max Weber, "The Nature of Charismatic Domination," in *Weber: Selections in Translation*, ed. W. G. Runciman, trans. Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 230.

[46] Fung, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, 1:118–119.

ARCHEOLOGICAL REASON AND ETHICAL REORIENTATION

My reading strategy of Mencius takes issue with Asian feminist's generalized attack on Confucianism as the stronghold of patriarchy and oppressive social ethical system. It is unfortunate to see that Asian feminist theologians in their orientation to Empire and transnationalism undermine a hermeneutical-archeological attempt at engaging the religious texts in Asia. They go so far as to denounce such an archeological endeavor of deciphering the irregular side of history, tradition, and text as an exercise of self-Orientalizing. Underlying this controversial argument are Derrida's asocial and ahistorical deconstruction of binary opposition and Edward Said's unilateral logic of Orientalism as colonial discourse in terms of [mis] representation.[47]

In contrast, I hold that an archeological reasoning in the project of hermeneutical reorientation for re-reading and irregularity must be seriously undertaken. Rather, the postcolonial historiography must be grounded in generating the irregular side and its authentic meaning of minjung history in a critical view of the institutionalized and dominant history. Derrida's notion of binary opposition is not a panacea which can be applied to social, cultural, political, and historical reams without reservation. Its semiotic deconstruction is vulnerable to the issue of social justice and unequal and even binary opposition within the world economy in global-critical context, despite Derrida's chameleon strategy for ethics and justice in his later stage. Edward Said's logic of representation must be critically understood with qualification in diverse ways and contexts. The colonizer creates the binary opposition in terms of black/white, center/periphery, and good/bad in terms of representation. However, the counter hegemony of the colonized also creates its own logic of opposition and representation against the colonial discourse by creating its own interest and emancipation. Colonized history must not be deconstructed for the sake of a semiotic notion of binary opposition and Orientalist logic of representation, but must be remembered and archeologically and socio-critically deciphered for the recovery of a new horizon of meaning, which can be an arbiter in demonstrating deconstructive critique of the [neo] colonial discourse of

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[47] Kwok Pui-lan et al, eds., *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North America Women's Religion & Theology* (Louisville / London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 16.

metropolis about the tradition, history, and text in the periphery. Irregularized history in the mass suffering of innocent victims must not be forgotten, nor deconstructed, but remembered.

Accordingly, I identify a locus of postcolonial minjung theology with an ethical-hermeneutical reorientation for archeological rewriting and sociobiographical engagement concerning discrepancy, rupture, and irregularity of the underside of history and social cultural location. This perspective upholds a critical analysis of society in terms of *social*, *cultural formation* and *economic-material formation*. A social cultural formation can be investigated focusing on the nexus of dominant knowledge system and institutionalized power structure through analyzing how a dominant social discourse has played the formative role in establishing and legitimizing the hidden relation between knowledge and power. It also takes issue with such a mechanism regarding how it has successfully foreclosed and excluded the social, irregular discourse of those who are silenced and victimized. Furthermore, the postcolonial hermeneutics is engaged in analyzing economic-material formation in terms of labor, capital, and marketing (productive forces and social relation in terms of rationalization, reification, and hyperreality of capitalism). This epistemology, which is engaged with the forgotten history of mass suffering and the irregular side of social life, constitutes a site of resistance in counter hegemony to the apparatus of legitimacy, dominion, simulation, and authority.

This postcolonial perspective situates Bonhoeffer in a prophetic, moral reasoning embedded with the suffering of the subaltern, as found in Bonhoeffer's vision of learning to see the great events of world history from the standpoint of those subalterized. Taking a step further, I incorporate Mencius's rectifying reasoning into the transformation of the social structure which generates mechanisms of social predicament and injustice. Bonhoeffer's insight into the theology of the other, beyond the limitations of modernity, provides a transcultural arbiter concerning a postcolonial minjung theology and Mencius's people ethics.

RECONCILIATION, BEYOND SHOAH, AND RECTIFICATION

Driven by cross-cultural and comparative study, I emphasize Bonhoeffer's insight into post-Shoah theology as an example for a pluralistic

configuration of ethics. Ethical themes, such as responsibility, freedom, and the integrity of life, cannot be deployed or reduced to any metanarrative or metaphor. To articulate the moral space of life, I undertake a pluralistic idea of freedom, responsibility, or integrity of life in rich religious traditions. This ethical pluralism considers many metaphors which actually exist in a moral lexicon, so that the meaning of life or moral integrity and worth cannot be worn out according to one form of thought or just one master metaphor. In order to grasp the deepest meaning and moral importance in the idea of integrity of life, it is important to present a multidimensional theory of moral value by using a range of metaphors about freedom, responsibility, and moral reasoning in the world of many cultures and religions.[48]

Accordingly, I hold that the theological theme "reconciliation" undergirds Bonhoeffer's prophetic, humanist notion of commitment in complementarity between "responsibility for" and commitment to those suffering during the Holocaust. Bonhoeffer's theological ethics of reconciliation emphasizes the intersection of the God of Israel, the victim, and Jesus as the Jew, and paves the way for us to reconsider ethics of recognition in a multicultural society. The Jew keeps open the question of Christ, because Jesus Christ was a Jew. This implies hermeneutical reorientation in Christian ethics for Bonhoeffer's faith journey. "Western history is, by God's will, indissolubly linked with the people of Israel, not only genetically but also in a genuine uninterrupted encounter."[49]

In light of God's forgiveness and reconciliation, people of non-western culture are positively accepted and recognized. Comparing religious ethics becomes possible, in aiming at respecting and enhancing the integrity of life and living in relation to others, especially in the reconciled world. *Fides quaerens intellectum* cannot be based on transcendentally or communicatively informed reason, but based on faith imbued with anamnestic, subversive memory and reason concerning Jesus Christ and his suffering people. Biblical Israel inspires Bonhoeffer to uncover the traces of God in the experience of the alterity of the other. A biblically and prophetically informed approach to comparative religious study became possible in Bonhoeffer's challenge to the status quo of the church and his reception of Jewish "No." Ethical maturity of humanistic atheism or moral wisdoms of other religions may find their

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[48] Schweiker, *Theological Ethics and Global Dynamics*, 214.

[49] E 90.

justification in Bonhoeffer's hermeneutics of recognition in acknowledging the traces of the God of Israel and in the otherness of innocent victims.

As F.W. Marquardt argues, a deep secret of every serious atheism and non-biblical religions is to be justified in the openness of God concerning "the Jewish No to Jesus Christ as faithfulness to the Torah."[50] God's reconciliation drives a hermeneutics of recognition of the others in their otherness, constituting "a new hermeneutical culture: the culture of the recognition of others in their other otherness."[51] Bonhoeffer's dictum, originated in Luther, is thus understood: "God would rather hear the curses of the ungodly than the alleluia of the pious."[52]

This perspective on the irregular side of God's reconciliation is valued in the postcolonial minjung theology, in which I argue that post-Shoah must be the point of departure for presenting a postcolonial minjung theology in terms of sociobiographical performance and archeological rewriting of the irregular side of history and society. Torah in postcolonial minjung theology remains an indispensable concept in the understanding of Jesus, and Jesus is understood from the perspective of Torah. Jesus's confession of Israel's Shema (Mark 12:29–30; cf. Deut 6:4–5) is striking as Jesus proclaims to the scribe who answers Jesus wisely: "You are not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34). In Luke 23:27–31 Jesus regards the suffering of Jerusalem as more important than his own suffering. Given this, my postcolonial minjung theology sharply distances itself from the first model of minjung theology, which is tarnished with an anti-Jewish pitfall in eliminating the Jewish character of Jesus. My advocacy for Torah and Israel is also in solidarity with God's blessing in embrace of Hagar and Ishmael.

This comparative, religious configuration of postcolonial ethics also upholds Mencius's ethics of rectification, which implies a structural transformation of what has caused injustice and violence to the lives of people. An ethics of rectification, beyond a dimension of virtue ethics in Aristotelian-Thomist sense, refers to ethical commitment to the ac-

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[50] Andreas Pangritz and Paul S. Chung, eds., *Theological Audacities, Selected Essays, Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2010), 19, 29.

[51] Johann Baptist Metz, "1492—Through the Eyes of a European Theologian," in Johann Baptist Metz and Jürgen Moltmann, *Faith and the Future: Essays on Theology, Solidarity, and Modernity* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), 70.

[52] E 104.

tual lives of people burdened and marginalized in the history of dominion and authority. If *Dao*-truth is known to us through the face of the people, their social discourse in outcry and distress must be an important part in shaping our ethical reorientation. This rectifying perspective, together with Bonhoeffer, may become a potential insight into reconstructing an ethical humanism in the comparative religious framework. This is in counter to modernist maximization of anthropocentrism as well as postmodern deconstructionism of humanism.

THEOLOGIA CRUCIS AND *PARRHESIA* IN POSTCOLONIAL FORMATION

As we have seen, Bonhoeffer's insight into theology of the other goes beyond the limitations of modernity and provides an entry point of dialogue with the postcolonial minjung theology and Mencius's people ethics. As Eberhard Bethge reports, Bonhoeffer, in a letter written in February 1928, expressed his interest in Gandhi as well as the world of the Buddha. The example of Gandhi posed a question to Bonhoeffer concerning why Christianity had its origin in the East. Bonhoeffer was interested in Gandhi's pacifistic method of nonviolent struggle. In another letter (May 22, 1934), Bonhoeffer provocatively argued that there is more Christianity in the world of the "heathens" than in the whole state church of Germany.[53]

Bonhoeffer's non-religious hermeneutic opens a space for a model of interreligious engagement in the universal horizon of the gospel in which Christian witness can be articulated as Christian solidarity with suffering people in the world of religions. Bonhoeffer's contribution is that theological existence, as seen in light of the gospel, implies a mode of being with others and for them in the world. For him the church serves as being for others in commitment to integrity of life, and meaning is connected with ethical solidarity with the other.

Bonhoeffer reflects on the ethical meaning of *parrhesia*, asking "what is meant by telling the truth?"[54] "Telling the truth," truthful

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[53] Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Theologe, Christ, Zeitgenosse* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1967), 138, 184, 379.

[54] E 358. Bonhoeffer's essay "What Is Meant by Telling the Truth?" is now part of vol. 16 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (2006), because it was written, when Bonhoeffer

speech of others, means something different in one's relationships at each particular time and according to each particular situation. Trustful speech is indebted to God, since the living God has set us in a living life, demanding service of us within this context of living life. Trustful speech of God and others contradicts the notion of God as a general or metaphysical principle. *Parrhesia* entails also a hermeneutical aspect, because it is "a matter of correct appreciation of real situations and of serious reflections upon them."[55]

Bonhoeffer's theological humanism, biblically and prophetically informed, promotes anamnestic reason founded upon sociobiographical sharing of the victimized lives and upholds ethics of *parrhessia*, speaking the truth audaciously for the silenced and marginalized. The word of the cross as a discursive form of *parrhesia* is "as much alive as life itself."[56] It allows us to interpret who God is from the standpoint of the subjugated and castigated. The exposed flesh of the crucified Christ uncovers any secret of self and dissolves it to God's exposure in the face of Christ. "God's truth has become flesh in the world and is alive in the real. . . The concept of living truth is dangerous."[57]

The concept of living truth in Bonhoeffer includes the possibility of (qualified) silence, whereas my emphasis is on the necessity of speaking audaciously for the silenced and marginalized. Bonhoeffer's earlier reference to Proverbs 31:8 ("Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute.") can be found in his letter to his Swiss friend Erwin Sutz.[58] In the death of Jesus Christ, God is a God who protests against the perpetrators of suffering by co-participating in the life of the victim. God's grace of forgiveness in this light bids farewell to the modernistic logic of sacrifice and scapegoating (René Girard).

Postcolonial minjung theology pays attention to Jesus's discourse of *parrhesia* (Mark 8:32) regarding his vocation of reconciliation for God's sake and the world. A *parrhesia* form of discourse in postcolonial formation expresses a spirit of resistance, questioning the institutionalized authority in the religious and political sphere. *Parrhesia*,

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was already in prison (during the interrogations in 1943). Its place in the earlier editions of *Ethics* is misleading; it is no longer part of the most recent edition of *Ethics* (vol. 6 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*).

[55] E 359.

[56] E 360.

[57] E 361.

[58] Bonhoeffer's letter to Erwin Sutz, September 11, 1934 in vol. 13 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (2007), 216–218.

speaking to each other frankly, finds political-religious meaning and discourse for the sake of the irregular side of the marginalized, the victim, and the voiceless.[59] This ethical praxis of *parrhesia* conceptualizes the irregular character of *theologia crucis* concerning the subaltern, in a passion for seeking the time lost for creating a space for them to speak of themselves. In the new deliberation of *theologia crucis* in the aftermath of colonialism, a postcolonial hermeneutics in archeological fashion goes back to the discourses of the excluded and the subaltern on the underside of the history and world, bringing a corrective to the totalizing discourse of Western metanarrative. This perspective challenges the symbol of *theologia crucis* which has been tainted with colonial images of assimilation, crusade, racial violence, and dominion. The experience of the other as expressed in the lynching tree or the crucified minjung in history could help break through colonial dominion by healing the deep wounds of racial violence. According to James Cone, the cross placed alongside the lynching tree can help people to see Jesus in a new light in contrast to the violent crosses of the crusade and the Ku Klux Klan and empower his followers to take a stand against every kind of racial supremacy, injustice, dominion, and structural violence.[60]

When *theologia crucis* in light of reconciliation comes along with discourse ethics of *parrhesia*, the non-Christian people are recognized and appreciated in bringing their religious, moral reasoning and contribution to ethics of responsibility, compassion, and rectification. This emic perspective in the comparative religious exchange supplements and renews a concept of communicative reason, in an endeavor to emphasize anamnestic reason and sociobiographical discourse of innocent victims. Thus a perspective of the crucified peoples in the history and "the cost of discipleship" sharpen a project of communicative rationality in overcoming colonization of lifeworld surrounded by the system of politics, global capitalism, and ideology of mass media.

If theological ethics is faith seeking moral understanding (*fides quarens intellectum moralem*), [61] faith and moral reasoning are grounded in the living word of God (*viva vox evangelii*). It comes to us as language-event in embodiment of the physical face of Jesus who re-presents the face of the subaltern-minjung. Karl Barth once re-

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[59] Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech* (Los Angles: Semiotexte, 2001).

[60] Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, xix.

[61] Schweiker, *Responsibility and Christian Ethics*, 5.

sponded to Eberhard Bethge's biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Barth affirmed that in Bonhoeffer's theology there is an important ethical line and direction: ethical discipleship–[democratic] socialism–the peace movement–political *diakonia* of the church—all in all, political responsibility and engagement.[62] This legacy remains an inspiration for the church to speak *parrhesia* to our time stamped by greed, violence, and injustice under dominion of neoliberalist Empire.

[62] H. Martin Rumscheidt, ed., *Fragments Grave and Gay* (London: Collin, 1971), 119.