EDITORIAL

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IDENTITIES MATTER: Personally and Socially

My/ your and our/ their personal and social identities, constructed and imagined, are inextricably intertwined and they matter in the way we live, move and have our being. Identities of self and others are plural by nature and the different strands that make up identities include but not limited to sex, colour, race, ethnicity, ancestry, class, (socioeconomic educational and professional status), nationality, etc. We learn about our own identity and the identity of others through interactions with family, peers, organizations, institutions, media and other connections we make in our everyday life, and they play significant roles in determining how we understand and experience the world, as well as shaping the types of opportunities and challenges we face. By the given and assumed identities we belong to corresponding communities, which are also interlinked. That we belong to a community also excludes us from other communities. Seeing similarities and differences of my/ your and our/ their identities unfortunately contribute to create hierarchies and discriminations, rather than leading to the realisation that we are part of each other and the identities of self and other are inextricably intertwined. The plurality of images of identity and alterity brought by the developments of global transportation and information technology, political, religious and economic immigration and emigration, and the search for safety and investment opportunities have great impacts upon the power relations among individuals, ethnic and religious communities, institutions, governments, etc. nationally, regionally and globally.

Human beings organize and collectively define themselves in terms of similarities and differences, as they are perceived and projected. Group identities, membership and belongingness are essential for human survival and well being and though we have a natural tendency to find similarities and differences and categories ourselves to groups, identities, definitions,
boundaries, and meanings of the social groups are the product of complex collective and social processes to the advantage of oneself and one’s group, often against the other. Though identities are fluid and socially constructed, once established, the influential people of our lives – family members, teachers and leaders of the society might present them consciously or unconsciously as ‘natural’, and/or even divinely sanctioned. All aspects of our personal and social lives - what we eat, how we dress, whom to marry, what to do, who would rule, etc. - are influenced and governed by these given and assumed identities. These social identities and the shared meanings and the consequent power positions influence our perceptions and relations with members of the groups, mine and yours.

Images of personal and social identities and alterities, are at the source and centre of most local, regional, national and global conflicts like racism, immigration, sectarian violence, territorial disputes and military conflicts. Human beings have a tendency to identify with whom they are grouped together and to judge members of their own group as superior, no matter how arbitrary or even silly the group boundaries may be. Hostility toward the unfamiliar or unknown is quite common in personal and social relationships, even the smallest perceived differences may generate intergroup conflicts. We have all likely experienced personally the discomfort of being in some place or with people where we did not feel that we belong. Violence against and expulsion of the Muslim ethnic minority Rohingyas from the ethnically Burmese Buddhist majority and in Myanmar in 2012, military attack on Kurds in southern Turkey in 2015, the crisis of Armenian Christians living in Nagorno-Karabakh, a region in south-western Azerbaijan, a predominantly Muslim country in 2016 and recent terrorist attacks in Paris (2015) and Brussels (2016) are examples of socio-political and national and regional nature. Armenians and Kurds are fighting for a country of their own while attacks in Paris and Brussels are traced back to lack of cultural and geographic integration of ethnic and racial immigrant groups.
It is important that we investigate critically and creatively the difference that these real and fabricated differences make. Of course the conflicts cannot be naively reduced to religious, ethnic and national identities, but they often contribute to the gravity and extent of conflicts resulting in discriminatory and exploitative positions of power and resources in the society. Appealing to nativism, racism, and xenophobia are often among electoral and ruling strategy in many democratic and totalitarian regimes. Apparent and real differences among different individuals and groups are used to stoke anxiety, resentment, and fear of the other. Activating and fostering latent prejudices they induce fear and convert it into political force to their advantage. The power hungry have always appealed to group-based identities to promote social hierarchies and to advance their power and discriminatory and exploitative programmes.

Only if we care for the alterity beyond the otherness of our own identity, can we bracket the claims of our personal and social identity for the well-being of others. Our common identity - human being - is more important than all other divisive identities and alterity. We need a vision of society that is inclusive and plural, which sees the other as partner, constructs structures of inclusion and dialogue, and expands the circle of human concern with the conviction that together we can contribute to the well-being of all.

The image of myself, the way how I view others and how they view me, profoundly influence each other. Their interaction is an essential basis for mutual respect. Thomas Kesselring in his paper “Self-Awareness, Self-Esteem, and Respect for Others: The Genetic Perspective (In Memoriam Jean Piaget, 1896-1980)” investigates their genesis from the perspective of Developmental Psychology, because it gives an overview over the intellectual and emotional prerequisites for social understanding and an insight into the underlying development principles. The analysis is based on the work of Jean Piaget, a 20th century giant in Developmental Psychology. Special emphasis is given to his considerations on egocentrism and its dissolution – decentration. It will be shown how and why
between birth and adulthood the images of self and others undergo profound changes. What initially was a “me” becomes a person and then a personality.

“Corrective Surgeries on Persons Born with Intersex Variations in India” by Sourav Mandal attempts to understand the methods deployed by the medical practices in constructing the socio-legal category of ‘sex’ only in terms of male/female. This evaluation is based on a critical analysis of five academic papers wherein, they discuss a total of 561 cases of corrective surgeries operated on persons born with intersex variations between 1989 and 2007. The Register of Births, a statutory register maintained to record all births in India under the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969 classifies all births under the binary of male and female. The paper raises ethical and policy concerns over the continued pathologisation of the persons born with intersex variations that categorise them as a disorder. Based upon its critical analysis, the paper challenges the Indian socio-legal understanding of ‘sex’ and argues a case for completely dismantling the existing identities that define ‘sex’ as male/female.

The performance of queer sexuality and gender identity is contested in Kerala where transgenders are forced to displace themselves from their homeland in search of identity and solace. However the religious space in Kottankulangara temple in Kerala offers the transient realm of transvestism. The cross-dressed males here commemorate the annual chamaya-vilakku festival, which is considered as an offering to the Goddess Bhagavati. Those gender non-conforming people who live as men due to social pressures get the chance to flaunt their gender identities at this occasion. In this sense, transgenders, “the other” who take their legitimization from various religious myths, achieve a temporary space of acceptance in the public sphere. “Subversive Gender Performance in Kottankulangara Temple Festival” by Anu Kuriakose critically analyses the images of the self and the “othering” of the transgender identity in the public sphere of Kerala in the context of gender visibility. It is also noted that besides the normalization of the subversive gender performances,
the religious ritualistic site and the worship system is transformed to a commercial space as the temple premises are filled with make-up stalls, ironically endorsing the gender idealization in terms of the patriarchal binary norms.

While contesting the normative, and existential postulates, which insinuates that self as a process of separating oneself out from the matrices of others, “Deconstructing the ‘Self’ and Empowering the ‘Other’: Visionaries in Colonial South India” by Molly Abraham examines the relationality and interdependence of ‘self’ and the ‘other’, exploring the complexity and dynamics of missionary ‘self’ and the Indian ‘other’. While tracing the intricacies of the discourse of self through the prism of theoretical and empirical analysis, the study enumerates how missionaries ventured to empower the other by transcending the boundaries of nationality, language, culture and by deconstructing their ‘selves’. The paper presents the trajectory of social construction of the missionary ‘self’ as a fluid, dynamic and ongoing process whereas the Indian ‘others’ was negotiated itself in a dialectical relationship with the socio-cultural context of their culture of origin and the host culture. It suggests that missionaries, well engaged with communities of different cultural landscapes, by teaching the socially and economically disadvantageous sections, deconstructed the conventional images of their ‘selves’ as strangers, firangis, foreigners, sojourners and resident aliens. By articulating the marginality and the profoundly ingrained ‘otherness’ of the underprivileged, they used transformative education as the most potential apparatus to create an inclusive society, which, they perceived, would instil a sense of transnational pastiche and intercultural interactions among the posterity.

Women’s stories culled from the memoirs of Holocaust survivors and the lessons to be learned from them have had no significant place in theological circles. This absence or obliteration has practically caused further oppression, suffering, and death to women victims of the Holocaust by depriving them of voice and placing them as subordinate ‘other’ to the heroic, prophesying, and valiant Jewish male victims and survivors. The absence of
feminine representation matters as the female voice would have brought a different ring to the male theologians’ consistent harping on God’s retreat, absence, or hiddenness in the Jewish Holocaust tragedy. “Shekinah: A Feminist Perspective in the Light of Holocaust” by Rica delos Reyes Ancheta attempts to offer a broader understanding of: 1) how feminist theologizing differs from masculine theologizing, 2) how documentary evidences of women stories underpin a different kind of theorizing, and 3) how theology may take shape and appear from the points of view of women victims of the Holocaust, steering a theological discussion on Shekinah.

During the latest political campaign in Kenya, both political blocks used religious metaphors to explain their aims and attract political support. Legislators know that they cannot do without religious support. They also make conscious decisions to use religious themes to their advantage. Politicians readily identify with biblical characters and event, knowing that these have a strong appeal on people. In his research paper “Going to Canaan: Biblical Identification in Kenya Political Discourse” Giuseppe Caramazza takes the position that religious leaders should clarify their position. They are not called to support one or the other side, but they can intervene and explain the real meaning of biblical images and the hazard in using sacred iconology out of context. Moreover, they could take the initiative and support political choices that move away from political gains and focus the nation on the choices needed for real development and a social transformation that interests all the citizens.

This issue of the Journal of Dharma on “Images of Self and Others: Social Implications,” thus, explores the physical, cultural and political identities and how they are inextricably intertwined with personal and social implications. With sentiments of gratitude to all the collaborators may I have the privilege of presenting to the readers this issue of the Journal of Dharma.

Jose Nandhikkara, Editor-in-Chief

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SELF-AWARENESS, SELF-ESTEEM, AND RESPECT FOR OTHERS
The Genetic Perspective
(In Memoriam Jean Piaget, 1896-1980)

Thomas Kesselring

Egocentrism (...) is the undifferentiated state prior to multiple perspectives, whereas objectivity implies both differentiation and coordination of the points of view.\(^1\) Egocentrism means simultaneously lack of self-awareness and lack of objectivity.\(^2\)

Abstract: The image of myself, the way how I view others and how they view me, profoundly influence each other. Their interaction is an essential basis for mutual respect. I’ll investigate their genesis from the perspective of Developmental Psychology, because it gives an overview over the intellectual and emotional prerequisites for social understanding and an insight into the underlying development principles. The analysis is based on the work of Jean Piaget, a 20\(^{th}\) century giant in Developmental Psychology. Special emphasis is given to his considerations on egocentrism and its dissolution – decenteration. It will be shown how and why between birth and adulthood the images of self and others undergo profound changes. What initially was a “me” becomes a person and then a personality.

\(^1\) Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder, De la logique de l’enfant à la logique de l’adolescent, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955, 345. All citations from French or German sources have been translated by myself. Additions in citations are marked by square brackets [ ].

Keywords: Adualism, Cooperation, Decentration, Egocentrism, Self-Awareness, Respect, Social Interaction, Stage Theory in Piaget.

1. Introduction: Development as a Decentration Process
The newborn baby doesn’t know anything about itself. Piaget associated this lack of self-awareness with “adualism” (a concept he adopted from Baldwin): The baby is unconscious of its being different from others, but also from its non-living environment. Babies are social beings from birth, yet they don’t know anything about social life, since they even lack awareness of the most basic relations. A baby acts sometimes as if it felt almighty and sometimes as if it were controlled from outside. So, soon after birth, it begins to scream when another baby screams next to it. The screaming concert is a collective happening, so to speak, lacking difference between “me” and “you”.

Piaget calls “egocentric” an attitude marked by lacking self-consciousness in which nevertheless the action is directed towards oneself. The genesis of self-consciousness occurs through a decentration process. Three phases merit special consideration:

i. The child becomes aware of the difference between successive views on something and starts to explore them. Yet, as long as he doesn’t remember the previous views he mingles them. Often children switch between their own and another’s viewpoints without clearly distinguishing them. Egocentrism is weakening but not yet overcome.

ii. The child distinguishes the views and succeeds in relating two (sometimes more) different views. He succeeds in coordinating them without causing confusion, but doesn’t coordinate the viewpoints or perspectives themselves.

iii. He succeeds in coordinating viewpoints by reflecting on them from an outside stand. This is the mark of a level transition. Piaget considered this stage as an “equilibration”

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Coordination of views and then viewpoints is crucial for social interaction, but also for learning processes generally.

It is worthwhile to distinguish between the following situations. First, an object is viewed or referred to simultaneously by two people from different perspectives. An example is so called joint attention (which I'll explain later). Second, a person looks at an object successively from different perspectives. An example is a baby's exploring an interesting tangible object. In both cases the views are coordinated, but not the viewpoints (perspectives). Third: A geographic map is elaborated on the basis of photographs from different viewpoints. Here the viewpoints themselves must be coordinated, and this is only possible through a view (or reflection) from outside, representing, so to speak, a “higher” level.

Decentration is a “leitmotiv” in Piaget’s work. Yet, he did not clearly distinguish between different decentration types. He started studying them when he analyzed children’s ways of thinking, reasoning, and world view. Only when in 1952-54, after the publication of twenty books, he gave lectures at Sorbonne University on the relation between cognitive and affective intelligence, he applied his knowledge about decentration processes to social understanding. On this occasion, he mentioned that self-awareness depends (to a large part) on the awareness of other persons. Yet, it was a fleeting mention, based on Baldwin’s thesis “that consciousness of the self makes a quite tardy appearance and is constructed correlatively, not with consciousness of objects, but with consciousness of other people which comes later.”

Piaget was reluctant to publish these Lectures, and his own studies on the topic remained fragmentary. Mostly he ascribed the rise of self-

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awareness to reflection processes which guide the child’s autonomous activity.

When a baby crawls through a room and explores how its views on the different pieces of furniture change, it tackles with spatial perspectives. When it explores different views and aspects of a doll, it deals with the views on a single object. When an infant studies varying arrangements of a dozen marbles, he explores different configurations of the same marble set. In social interaction, decentration processes occur, when people try to coordinate their ‘positions’, beliefs, or interests. In this case empathy is crucial, whereas in the former cases decentration doesn’t involve empathy.

In his Sorbonne Lectures, Piaget emphasized that intelligence has two sides, an intellectual and an affective, but in a simplifying way he assumed that affects served uniquely as impulses for human activity, whereas intelligence gives it its structure.6 He did not mention that emotions entail cognitive structures too, and thus resemble spontaneous, implicit propositional judgments. Fear, for instance, means: there is something dangerous! Piaget’s main interest was explaining the genesis of logical and mathematical thinking. The rise of self-consciousness remained a rather marginal research topic, and Piaget paid little attention to emotions and none to empathy.

To understand how decentration promotes self-awareness, we have to distinguish between coordinating views or aspects and perspectives. Self awareness has its origin in the latter. A motive to coordinate viewpoints arises when for resolving a problem a child reflects on his own actions and action coordinations. Self-consciousness, says Piaget, is never completely reached, since we never enter into the very centre of our act regulations.7

For the given reasons an overview on how self-awareness, self-esteem, awareness of others, and respect for others develop, can hardly be given only on the basis of Piaget’s own

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6Piaget, Intelligence and Affectivity, 7.
research. I’ll therefore also call upon other researcher’s findings, most of them published after Piaget’s death, and interpret them according to Piaget’s stage theory which I explain in the following section.

2. Piaget’s Stage Theory
Piaget postulated four levels of development: the sensori-motor (0-1½ years), the preoperative (1½-7/8 years), the concrete operations’ (7/8-12/15 years) and the formal operations’ level (from 12/16 years onwards). According to the aforementioned decentration phases, each level can be divided into three stages:

(a) a phase of strict egocentrism, in which the child does not consider different perspectives or relations whatsoever; (b) a second phase of egocentrism in the broader sense, which implies both a distinction between perspectives and a consideration of relations, yet without a coordination of perspectives or relations, and (c) a third phase of complete decentration that is marked by the coordination of perspectives.\(^8\)

To coordinate different viewpoints (perspectives), the subject must reflect them from outside. The ability to take an external stand marks a transition to a new cognitive level. The subject is now aware of his own viewpoint and by this indirectly of himself. Piaget (and before him Hegel!) called this a “reversal in consciousness”.\(^9\)

This stage sequence is repeated at each level. At its end the subject reaches a new layer of cognitive activity which marks a vertical difference. First, this layer is not clearly elaborated and remains unconscious, causing adualism and egocentrism. Then, decentration leads to its increasing reflection and integration into the subject’s ontology which thereby undergoes a fundamental reorganization.


A level transition does not imply discontinuity. The stage theory just shows the intrinsic logic of intellectual development.

In his four earliest books, published between 1924 and 1927, Piaget attributed the decentralization phases to different cognitive levels and assumed that an initial quasi-autistic world view (level 1) was followed by egocentrism (level 2) which then is overcome by perspective coordination (level 3). When in the following years he observed his own children from birth to age 2-3, he became aware of a decentering process which occurs within the first 18 months of life (level 1). From then on he regarded the three-stage sequence as a repetitive development cycle. This assumption was additionally confirmed when in the 1950s Piaget and Inhelder discovered a similar stage cycle, occurring between 11-12 years and adulthood.

Some more remarks are necessary to understand what development of abilities and underlying cognitive structures really means.

(i) In the course of development, cognitive capabilities become increasingly complex. This is also true for the meaning of concepts like "me", "self-awareness" etc. which changes fundamentally on each level. Self-awareness, e.g., is first associated with corporal identity, then with personal identity and finally with being a personality. The meaning of "other" and the ways how people perceive and understand each other change profoundly several times, too.

(ii) Development is also a source of diversification, comparable to the growth of a deciduous tree. The trunk divides into ever finer branches which finally point in all directions. Cognitive abilities differ less among babies than among infants, whose cognitive achievements again differ less than those of schoolchildren. In adulthood professional

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11 Inhelder, Piaget, De la logique, 342s.
specialization literally belongs to personal identity. Therefore, when describing cognitive and affective development, we should be aware of the risk to follow just one branch of the tree and end with the capabilities and self-image of, say, a British parliament member, an African peasant or a Chinese sailor. The following recapitulation thus concerns the development of what I have suggested to call a blueprint or plan which regulates the formation of cognitive structures.\textsuperscript{12} Piaget used the term “schème” for a behavior pattern and his underlying cognitive processes. A scheme assimilates data from the environment and accommodates itself to the environmental constraints. What I call a blueprint is a bundle of schemes which develops through “reflective abstraction”.\textsuperscript{13} It is a plan for building up abilities or cognitive structures, but not itself an ability or a cognitive structure, in the same way in which the blueprint for the bees building honeycombs is not itself a honeycomb. But whereas beehives are always built according to the same pattern, human knowledge is produced according to an evolving pattern which changes over time and becomes more and more complex. The distinction between blueprint and cognitive structures suggests itself for two reasons:

(a) An operational system (e.g., the logic of classes) does not itself develop and change into another system (e.g., propositional logic).

(b) When the blueprint has developed up to a certain stage, suitable new structures can, but not necessarily must be formed, and this can happen in all (cognitive, social, emotional, etc.) domains. Different individuals develop different abilities and specialize in different domains. The stage theory unveils

\textsuperscript{12}I have suggested to adopt this view to avoid misunderstandings related to Piaget’s stage theory: Thomas Kesselring, “The Mind’s Staircase Revised,” in The Cambridge Companion to Piaget, Ulrich Müller, Jeremy Carpendale, Leslie Smith, eds., Cambridge: University Press 2009, 371-399, 383.

just the rules according to which the blueprint, which directs the genesis of the underlying structures, itself develops.\textsuperscript{14}

In what follows, I’ll give an overview of how self-awareness, awareness of others and mutual respect arise and change their feature on the way through the four aforementioned levels. Each of them is marked by a series of cognitive tasks the developing subject masters by differentiation and coordination.\textsuperscript{15}

3. Development of Self- and Others’ Awareness

3.1. The First Level: Sensori-Motor Behaviour

The mental ambience in which a newborn baby lives can best be represented as a kind of supposed collective consciousness and collective emotional state. The initial “feeling as one” later on transforms into empathy. After 18 months, more or less, a first kind of self-awareness arises: the child recognizes himself in a mirror.

**First Stage:** In the first weeks after birth the baby neither distinguishes between itself and the external environment nor between itself and another person. "Ego-awareness is produced by a dissociation of reality".\textsuperscript{16} We don’t know the baby’s mental state when it focuses its attention on anything particular. Some invariance (or conservation) schemes are probably inborn, e.g. that of an object’s real growth independent from its apparent growth, depending on the distance from the viewer. Yet, visual,

\textsuperscript{14}Piaget described this development as cyclic and illustrated it with a suspended spiral or pyramid evolving top-down. This spiral is reminiscent of winded snail shell, but what develops is a program for building up cognitive structures - the blueprint. Development is autonomous, structures are generated by reflection, there is no structure coming from outside.

\textsuperscript{15}For describing these processes I’ll refer to the development in a certain cultural environment, that of the occident. But there is no reason to assume that there are cultures in which similar differentiation and coordination processes don’t occur.

acoustic, tactile impressions, etc. alternate without apparent order. Everything seems fluctuating and changing irregularly.\textsuperscript{17} The baby doesn’t show any specific search strategy apart from the lip movements when feeling the maternal breast. Consciousness remains, as it were, in a twilight state.

During his first months, the baby learns to imitate the emotional expression of another person who reacts to something exciting. However, it attributes emotions neither to itself nor to others and does not yet differentiate between an emotion (inside view) and its expression (outside view). Emotions are felt, but not reflected upon, and they are neither mine nor yours, but mine and yours altogether. This explains the above mentioned phenomenon of collective screaming.

From this initial adualism an important conclusion can be drawn: Human beings are not born as egoists: “[A]ll behaviour involves interest in the sense of activation”, but this “does not mean that all behaviour involves interest in the sense of selfishness. In fact, the selfish or unselfish character of activation interest cannot be judged in advance.”\textsuperscript{18}

**Second Stage:** The baby’s emotions become more differentiated. E.g., disgust is originally a reaction to an acidic or bitter taste in the mouth but then becomes a reaction to unappetizing things, such as dirt, worms, bugs, etc. Babies coordinate perceptions with emotions before they coordinate the different senses with each other and with targeted body movements.\textsuperscript{19}

Through imitation of others, the baby adapts its expression behaviour to the emotion, associating both with the given situation, e.g., of fright or pain. When it observes another person’s pain mimic, it associates with it pain feeling and

\textsuperscript{17}Daniel Stern, Diary of a Baby, New York: Basic Books, 1990, first chapter.
\textsuperscript{18}Piaget, Intelligence and Affectivity, 85.
discomfort. Later on, its emotional identification with his caregivers gets cracks, and its "feeling as one" with them breaks down. Emotional adualism diminishes, and the baby gets increasingly aware of the distinction between itself in terms of a living, sentient organism, and the other person who henceforth gains contours.

From the age of about nine months, the baby actively seeks opportunities to emotionally identify with its beloved persons. This occurs when the child and someone else, e.g., its mother, focus their looks from different perspectives on the same sensory entity. Amazing for the child is not the perspective difference, but the "joint attention," as Tomasello calls it.

At the same age, the baby lives in a world of "sensory images". These are entities it can see, grasp, take into the mouth and hear when they produce some noise. When a baby explores a sensory image and tries to combine the different sensorial impressions it accomplishes a coordination task by itself, whereas in moments of "joint attention" it does the same together with someone else.

The infant also learns directing another person's gaze by pointing something of interest. Gestures that resemble pointing

\[\text{From the combination of imitation and conditioning some psychologists derive the origin of empathy (Martin Hoffman, Empathy and Moral Development: Implication for Caring and Justice, Cambridge: University Press, 2000, 65, and Manfred Holodynski, Emotionen - Entwicklung und Regulation, Heidelberg: Springer, 2006, 87-92). Conditioning is a form of habituation, whereas imitation is usually attributed to an innate ability. This means, however, that its genesis remains a mystery. What sounds mechanistic in these theories is stated differently by German philosopher Max Scheler who associates imitative behaviour with feeling according to the other's feeling (Nachfühlung) and derives it from an original "feeling as one" (Einsfühlung) (Max Scheler, Wesen und Formen der Sympathie, Bonn: Bouvier, 1985, 29). Empathy then is a kind of reflection on what we feel when we try to adopt another person's feeling (Scheler, Wesen, 24).}


\[\text{In both cases there is no need to coordinate the perspectives.}

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acts arise already at about three months, but only at 11 to 14 months they are used for communication purposes, such as (1) sharing emotions and attitudes, (2) informing others or helping them, and (3) requesting help. For instance, an infant points to its empty glass, meaning "Fill it up!" learning from other people’s similar gestures. These early abilities indicate that human development is oriented towards cooperation.

Tomasello thinks that a one-year-old child who shows something to someone, knows that the other person knows that it wants to show her something. However, the baby does not yet reflect on anything, and certainly not on another’s mental state. His pointing gesture is just a trick to get the other’s attention and “feel as one” with him.

Matching emotions, too, is like feeling as one. Yet, it turns out to be just a special case of empathy. Often we don’t feel what the other feels: A child of age two who comforts his comrade, intuitively ascribes him other emotions than his own. A mother who empathizes with her sick child feels uncomfortable, while the sleeping child doesn’t. So empathy goes far beyond sharing another person’s emotional state.

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23Tomasello, Origins, 123.
24Tomasello, Origins, 126f., 152, 154.
25According to Tomasello this distinguishes Homo Sapiens from the chimpanzee, who understand pointing gestures almost exclusively as imperative gestures. Tomasello speculates that this holds for monkeys, too: They could never be observed sharing attention in a context of help or helpful messages (Origins, 34-38).
26Tomasello mentions repeatedly Grice's communicative rule according to which we communicate with the intention: "I want you to know that I want something of you" (Origins, 82f., 88). Tomasello associates this to 12 months old infants, but concedes an uncertainty: “12-months-olds ... seem not to have fully mastered all aspects of the Gricean communicative intention or norms of cooperation” (Origins, 144f.).
27This example is given by Adam Smith: The Theory of Moral Sentiments, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976, 12.
With about nine months, infants find suitable means for reaching a goal, and at the age of 12 months they attribute the same skill to others. The time lag is due to the fact that one can only ascribe others (and oneself) abilities one is aware of at least in a rudimentary way. So, with nine months, babies “understand others as intentional and rational agents like the self”, they know “that others have goals” and “participate with others in interactions involving joint goals, intentions and attention.”

Third Stage: At the age of one and half years, the child reaches what Piaget calls the "permanent object scheme" by coordinating sensory images. He considers an object as something existing in space and time, independently of his own actions and perceptions. Some months earlier, an object seemed to disappear, when a significant image changed. An example is Piaget's nine month old son, who tried to grasp a full milk bottle, but when Piaget turned it over so that the pacifier disappeared, stopped the grasping trials, so as if the bottle had vanished.

Meanwhile the baby reacts with search behaviour, when it accidentally loses sight of something interesting. It knows, a material object has a backside, and attentively studies its different aspects. Piaget calls this implicit knowledge "renversabilité". In a mathematical language, the "permanent object" is a function according to which by appropriate manipulations we can transform certain "sensory images" into others or make them disappear and reappear.

With 18 months, the infant has an en-active, sensori-motor knowledge of his body and limbs - hands, fingers, feet, toes -

29Tomasello, Origins, 139.
30Tomasello, Origins, 138.
31Jean Piaget, La construction du réel chez l'enfant, Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé 1937, chapter 1.5.
32Piaget, La Construction, observation, 78a.
33Piaget, La Construction, observation, 64 -66.
his impulses, perceptions, emotions, etc., and recognizes his own face in a mirror.\textsuperscript{34} He knows intuitively that his body remains the same regardless of its location, movements, and sensational changes. But he does not yet know his gender and has no idea of mental activities such as thinking or getting one's impulses under control. He realizes when others refer to himself, and in the detour via the other person refers to himself. First this reference remains intuitive, en-active. Later, with about 18 months, he refers to himself from an imagined external perspective.

The understanding of another person develops in conformity with self-awareness. According to Piaget, “imitation is necessary to first give a complete picture of one's own body and then to compare the general reactions of the other and the ego.”\textsuperscript{35} Soon after, the infant will realize that others have their own feelings and their own kinaesthetic sensations.

3.2. The Second Level: Preoperative Level

"In this second year of life ... occurs a kind of Copernican revolution: ... the body becomes embedded, as an object among others, into a space which encloses it and the other objects."\textsuperscript{36} This implies that a new ability is arising: imagination. This is, so to speak, a second order activity. The infant is aware of his sensori-motor activity, whereas imaginative activity remains unreflected. Now he thinks on absent things and remembers past experiences.

Motor skills continue developing, but dealing with symbolic function is new. The infant scribbles and draws, uses symbols, plays imitation and role games. Language acquisition accelerates, since its prerequisites – such as imagination, permanent objects as signifiers (according to Piaget), and

\textsuperscript{34}\textit{Hoffman, Empathy and Moral Development}, 69f.
\textsuperscript{35}\textit{Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder: La psychologie de l’enfant}, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1966, 4\textsuperscript{th} chap. V., 116

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awareness of a common background shared with others ("joint attention", according to Tomasello) – have previously evolved.

As for social understanding, “the other person continues existing as an affective, living active object when she is not physically present.” This knowledge “gives rise to new affects such as sympathy and antipathy to other persons and lasting self-awareness and self-esteem.” Yet, the infant acts initially “with an unconscious egocentrism, which continues that of the baby. Only in the course of time it adapts to analogous equilibrium laws.” We observe “a partial repetition of the development that the baby has already pervaded at the elementary level of sensori-motor adaptation processes.”

**First Stage:** Egocentrism marks the child’s social relations, spatial understanding, and worldview. He doesn’t clearly distinguish between reality and fantasy, individual and species, sign and signifier, thus taking a name for an appendage of the respective object. In imitation games, Piaget stated a "kind of confusion of the ego with the other" and a "lack of clear distinction between the inside and the outside." After all, from age two on, an infant no longer doubts that others can feel different than himself, and attributes wishes and feelings even to non-human beings he imitates or represents symbolically. He empathizes with a comrade who has hurt

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37 Piaget, Inhelder, La psychologie, 108s.
39 Stern, Diary, chap. V.
40 When Piaget’s daughter, Jacqueline, after discovering a slug found another slug, she commented: “Again the slug!”, and didn’t understand the question whether it was the same or another slug, as if, what she saw, was the prototype of a slug. Jean Piaget, La formation du symbole chez l’enfant - Imitation, jeu et rêve, Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé 1945, observation, 107.
41 Piaget, La représentation, 110s.
and comforts him, or intentionally annoys someone with whom he feels frustrated.

**Second Stage:** Children increasingly take account of differences or relationships. They compare things and use the comparative. The adult is big, the child is small. Now they say, The child is smaller than the adult. Yet, they fail in coordinating the results of two or more comparisons. From A < B and B < C they don’t conclude that A < C, unless A and C are present. Nor do they understand the reversibility ("réversibilité") of a relationship.

“Reversibility” or “mutuality” also lack in social understanding. With three years infants are able to hide their feelings and simulate emotions they don’t have (e.g., to show pleasure about a gift they are disappointed about), but vehemently deny that humans can hide their emotions. At age 4-5 most children distinguish correctly between left and right, but don’t understand that the left and right arms of a child sitting opposite to them are reversed. At the same age a child doesn’t realize “that he is himself the brother or sister of his brother or sister.” He ignores that people can say something they don’t believe. When he tells someone a lived adventure, he ignores the listener’s difficulties to understand, and a listener of the same age associates whatsoever with the story, without considering possible misunderstandings. Due to lacking mutuality, infants cannot understand the meaning of a secret or a surprise party.

Toddlers often cry around in a public room at full volume. Though they empathize with others, they don’t mind to disturb the people present, limiting their attention to the small circle of

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43 Harris, Children and Emotion, 138.
45 Piaget, Inhelder, La psychologie, 4th chap. VI., 122.
46 Observation by myself. At least in Europe this observation can easily be made in public transportation.
their caregivers. This circle is a part of the larger, anonymous crowd around which the child fades out. There is an analogy in cognitive development: Infants don’t understand set inclusion. When they focus on two subsets, they cannot at the same time be attentive to the whole set. When we show them a bouquet of flowers with four lilies and seven tulips and ask, whether there are more tulips (subset) or more flowers (set), they mostly say: “more tulips”, because focusing the subsets hinders them to consider the whole.

An infant feels the asymmetry in competence and power between educator and pupil or adult and child. The adult cares for the child and protects him, but gives also instructions, expects obedience, and can punish. Therefore, he evokes both, affection and fear.47 The child’s respect for his parents, a mixture of love and fear, is unilateral,48 not mutual. The caregivers don’t have the same mixed feelings towards the child, and the child doesn’t ascribe them such feelings.

Power asymmetry gives the child a sense of duty that depends on two conditions which are both necessary and together sufficient: 1. instructions ... that are unconditioned (not lying, etc.); and 2. the acceptance of these instructions, which presupposes that the one who receives the instruction has a special feeling for the person who gives it (the child does not accept instructions from anyone). Yet, “love is not sufficient to create a commitment, and fear alone will only result in a ... selfish submission.”49 In fact, the child’s respect for his caregivers contains a third, symmetric element not mentioned by Piaget, identification.50

The adult-child asymmetry can create emotional disturbances. If the educator lacks authority the basis for trust gets unstable and the child revolts. So, the “opposition crisis” of

49Piaget, Inhelder, La psychologie, 4th chap., V.1., 116s.
children of 2-4 years often reflects inadequate adult behaviour.\(^{51}\) If the relation between caregivers and child is stable and trustworthy, the child may project his parents’ authority into an “‘ideal ego’ giving rise to compelling role models and a moral consciousness.”\(^{52}\) When a child discovers that the capabilities of his supposedly almighty father are limited, he may project the idea of an almighty authority in a higher entity, thus discovering God and developing religious feelings.\(^{53}\)

Infants regard an evil act as an act that causes material damage and/ or contradicts the authority’s directive, even if the intention was good.\(^{54}\) They have intentions and know that others have intentions, but nevertheless don’t consider them when valuing actions.

**Third Stage:** The child coordinates relations (and results of comparisons). He learns to read and write, thus dealing with second-order signs. A letter sequence stands for a word that in turn refers to a signifier. The child now succeeds in the above-mentioned elementary logical inferences and the nesting sequence of natural numbers. He is able to attribute others social feelings that in their turn reflect other people’s feelings. An example is the following statement of a child with age 6-7: “Diana falls over and hurts herself. She knows that the other children will laugh if she shows how she feels. So she tries to hide how she feels”. Or in a single sentence: “She didn’t want the other children to know that she’s sad that she fall over.”\(^{55}\)

### 3.3. The Third Level: Concrete Operations

The transition from the second to the third level is structurally analogous to that from the first to the second level. Just as an infant of 18 months can imagine absent things, a child of 7-8 years uses a second-order imagination. He realizes the left-right

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\(^{51}\)Piaget, Inhelder, La psychologie 4\(^{th}\) chap., IV, 1., 109f.
\(^{52}\)Piaget and Inhelder, La psychologie, 4\(^{th}\) chap., V, 1., 116.
\(^{53}\)Piaget, Le jugement morale, 303.
\(^{54}\)Piaget and Inhelder, La psychologie, 4\(^{th}\) chap., V, 3, 119.
\(^{55}\)Harris, Children and Emotion, 139.
interchange after a 180 degrees’ rotation by imagining (from an outside perspective) the two individuals sitting in opposition to each other. To get the concept of natural numbers also presupposes a second order imagination: Children under the age of 6-7 fail to imagine nested sets, though they are familiar with Russian dolls’ being contained one in the other. The latter are material objects, while set inclusion concerns imagined entities. Second order imagination is also required to understand the invariance of a quantity, e.g. a glass of water being poured into a bowl, whereas object permanence only requires elementary imagination.

Piaget was not aware of the role second-order imagination plays in concrete operational thinking and in managing social relations. Level-3 children are able to take on someone else’s view without giving up their own view. More than that: Child A makes an image of child B and, as a part of it, an image of the image child B makes of child A. ‘I know that you know that I know’. Or, ‘I see that you see that I see you.’ This is the reciprocity Tomasello attributes to children of 18 months. It is certainly realized at the age of 7 to 8 years.

The reflection through the mirror of the other leads to a new advanced kind of self-awareness. This configuration is the basis of what Piaget called "respect mutuel". Now, in a social game and in cooperation, children supervise the other’s behaviour and expect them to fulfil their part, knowing that they do so, too. The consequences of this new view on oneself and the other are manifold:

(i) A child is now able to engage in “relationships based on mutual respect and leading to certain autonomy.” “From the age of 7-8 on, interpersonal justice outweighs obedience and

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56 In the same sense, Adam Smith wrote that people are the other’s "mirror": Theory, 110. Also David Hume: “the minds of men are mirrors to one another”, David Hume, Treatise of Human Nature, Oxford: University Press 1978, II.ii.5.


58 Piaget and Inhelder, La psychologie, 4th chap., V 4, My italics.
becomes a central norm which in the affective domain corresponds to the coherence norms in the field of cognitive operations."

(ii) The coercion implied in a norm stems from the binding force of mutual expectation. Every participant is a source of possible criticism. He represents, in a weakened form, an internalized authority. Piaget writes: "The element of fear related to unilateral respect gradually disappears in favour of the moral fear of sinking in the eyes of the respected individual: the desire to be respected is balanced with that of respecting the other." 

(iii) Interaction based on mutual respect entails acts of valuation. According to Piaget, values are (relatively) invariant schemes of feelings. Feelings are unstable, values rather constant. To be mirrored through others influences self-awareness and to be valued by others self-esteem.

Liking a person implies attributing her a relatively stable value. We find someone sympathetic, when our feelings related to him are (in the average) positive. To like someone, adds Piaget, is not only due to a feeling that emanates from him, but often derives from social interaction whereby the partners intuitively value each other: "Mutual respect entails the necessity of moral noncontradiction. One cannot simultaneously value his partner and act in such a way as to be devalued by him."

Valuing acts are directed towards an ideal equilibrium: Subject 1, by his acts, words, etc, exerts an action on Subject 2. This action ($A_1$) represents a negative expenditure for Subject 1 which will be appreciated by Subject 2. The

59Piaget, Inhelder, La psychologie, 4 V 4.
60Piaget, Le Jugement morale, 309.
61In the words of German philosopher Ernst Tugendhat: "A person can only relate to herself by relating to others and retrace the relation of others to her" – that is, by "taking the attitude of the other" towards herself. Tugendhat, Selbstbewusstsein und Selbstbestimmung, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1979, 252.
62Piaget, Intelligence and Affectivity, 67.
satisfaction ($S_2$) that Subject 2 feels will, therefore, correspond to $A_1$. The roles, of course, can be reversed. … Subject 2 … will feel a debt ($D_2$) with respect to Subject 1. Because of reciprocity, he will invest Subject 1 with a positive value ($V_1$) manifested as a feeling of goodwill.\footnote{Piaget, Intelligence and Affectivity, 45f. My italics.}

Both, subject 1 and 2, aspire a balance – subject 1 between expenditure and reward, and subject 2 between satisfaction and gratefulness.\footnote{These processes influence self-esteem (Piaget, Intelligence and Affectivity, 47ff.) and different degrees of sympathy for the other (Piaget, “Essay sur la théorie des valeurs qualitatives en sociologie,” in J. Piaget, Études Sociologiques, Geneva: Droz, 1967, 100-142, 114).}

Mutual sympathy arises, when on both sides the balances are positive without differing too much.

(iv) Concrete operational thinking is essential for understanding social agreements and norms. An agreement is based on mutual promises and accompanied by mutual expectations: I expect others not to kill, ambush, steal; and I know that they expect from me the same. Children of 8-10 years understand the Golden Rule: “Don’t do to others what you don’t want they do to you.”\footnote{Piaget, Le jugement morale, 258.}

(v) Norm awareness influences moral feelings. Piaget distinguished “normative feelings,” based on mutual respect, from “semi-normative” feelings which reflect unilateral respect. Level 3 children derive norms from agreements made in social games or cooperation. Smaller infants confound norms with instructions from an authority. Therefore, on level 2, “feelings are not yet normative,” but prepare the establishment of moral norms defined by three characteristics parallel to the criteria for [concrete] operations: (a) a moral norm can be generalized to all analogous situations, not just to identical ones; (b) a moral norm lasts beyond the situation and conditions that engender it; and (c) … [it] is linked to a feeling of autonomy. From 2 to 7 years, none of these conditions is met. … norms
are not generalized but are valid only under particular conditions.\textsuperscript{66} After the age of 8, however, children understand that a norm is valid "in any situation."\textsuperscript{67}

Remorse (feeling guilt) and resentment are another type of moral feelings that differ between level 2 and level 3 children (although Piaget did not touch them). A younger child feels guilt, when he fears to be reprimanded, and an older child, when he has broken a moral rule, even if there is no risk to be criticized. This explains why children under eight years in their majority don’t ascribe a chief negative feelings, such as remorse but, in the reverse, satisfaction and wellbeing. This phenomenon, called "the happy victimizer,"\textsuperscript{68} seems astonishing, since at the age of 3-4 infants are already acquainted with the instruction "don’t steal!" and empathize with the victim: "when you take your comrade’s toy, he will scream!" But they forget all this, when the temptation is strong and the authority absent. It is not proven, but probable, that many children who ascribe the thief happiness would themselves steal and cheat when they were unobserved.\textsuperscript{69}

According to their age, children also react differently when other people violate a norm. An older child who feels damaged by the norm violation resents the offender, while a younger

\textsuperscript{66}Piaget, Intelligence and affectivity, 55.
\textsuperscript{67}Piaget, Intelligence and affectivity, 55.
\textsuperscript{69}Nunner-Winkler, "Moralisches Wissen," 154ff.
may protest and look for the authority to "whistle" the wrongdoer.\footnote{Children who grow up in a violent environment may develop a sense of wrongdoing, but little or no sense of moral guilt, since they haven’t internalized moral norms. Instead of resenting a victimizer, they rather seek direct revenge, and instead of feeling indignation, they are more likely to feel dread when imagining that the damage could have hit them or might hit them in the future.}

**First Stage:** Piaget didn’t say almost anything on level 3 children’s social development, and he didn’t relate adualism or egocentrism to the first stage. Yet, they both occur. A cognitive example is – again – understanding natural numbers: Children at age 6-8 take a number series as something concrete (therefore the expression “natural” numbers), like a row of pearls on a string. This blocks their access to the domain of negative and irrational numbers which only becomes possible when numbers are considered as representing quantitative differences or ratios: $2 = 8-6$, and $8/4$. The relational view of numbers opens the door to the kingdom of maths, with negative, rational and (later) irrational numbers: $6-8 = -2$; and $5/4 = 1.25$ and $\sqrt{2} = 1.41421…$ The Pythagoreans absolutized the conviction that all numbers are ratios between natural numbers. When they found that this is not true for the diagonal, they were unable to decentre and plunged into a mental crisis.

As for social development, level 3 adualism occurs in different domains.

(i) At age 6-9, children believe everything an authority says. They don’t critically reflect about what others think and hardly distance themselves from the teacher’s judgment, even when he assesses their achievements and capacities. This can provoke a self-fulfilling prophecy.

(ii) Kohlberg has pointed out that children of 8-10 years identify or over-identify with their caregiver’s, adopt their values and are eager to please them.\footnote{Lawrence Kohlberg, “Moral and Moralization: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach”, in L. Kohlberg, Essay on Moral} And Kagan added that at
this age children also strongly identify with their own role. When they recognize

to which age, gender and ethnic category they belong to, they think that they have to adapt their characteristics to the corresponding category. ... So a boy thinks, 'If boys do not cry and I'm a boy, then I'm not allowed to cry.' Accordingly, a girl will feel insecure, if her behavior does not correspond with what she understands by being female.72

Second Stage: In several fields the child experiences the constraints of discrepancies:

(i) Partners who cooperate not always valuate their interaction as being just. An exchange can be imbalanced, but it can take some time to relate the suffered frustrations to this imbalance. So, prolonged cooperation with the same partners entails an intuitive balancing exercise affecting self-esteem. No wonder that children already select and sometimes change their friends.

(ii) Piaget made clear “that inferiority and superiority feelings” don’t simply result from other people’s judgments. The child “evaluates himself continuously and often independently of social relationships.” “Success and failure can influence subsequent behaviour.” Therefore, “people can have a better or worse opinion of themselves than someone else does.”73

(iii) At the first stage of level 3, the child doesn’t clearly distinguish between a person and her role. Later, he becomes aware of this distinction: mother, father, daughter, son, etc. are persons, but also roles. Gender role awareness increases and often provokes alienation between girls and boys.74 In Western societies male and female role expectations differ less than


73Piaget, Intelligence and Affectivity, 48.

74Of course, this alienation is also due to the uncertainty in dealing with one’s own libidinal strivings during and after puberty.
elsewhere, but they obviously still differ. With growing awareness that gender specific interests are complementary, the alienation weakens, and gender relations are rebuilt in a new and more reflected way. If mutual respect is lacking, however, they easily fail.

**Third Stage**: Harmonizing the motives for disagreement helps diminishing and avoiding quarrel. This requires clear awareness of the distinction between constraints and wishes and between roles and persons. I can openly criticize my superior at home, where I am a free person, but possibly not within the institution, in my role of his subordinate.

We disagree with another’s actions when they (a) harm ourselves or others we care about, (b) contradict our moral conviction, or (c) reflect another value scale.\(^{75}\) Piaget distinguished between selfish and moral approval ("approbation morale"),\(^{76}\) attributing the latter to valuations undertaken from the other’s viewpoint (→ "réciprocité morale").\(^{77}\) Of course, we then have to share the other’s moral value system and value scale, too. To coordinate our own with another person’s valuation, we should consider all these differences.

3.4. The Fourth Level: Formal Operations

In a similar way as concrete operations are based on a second order imagination, formal operations are based on second order operations – operations on operations.\(^{78}\) Examples are: dealing with combinatorics, probability calculations, integral and differential functions. On the concrete operational level children don’t think about their own thinking, but on the formal operational level they do.\(^{79}\) To tackle with proofs,

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\(^{75}\)Piaget, “Essay sur la théorie,”, 114.


\(^{77}\)Piaget criticizes Émile Durkheim’s doctrine, according to which morality derives from a "law-sanctioned set of rules" (Piaget, Le jugement morale, 4th chap., 401.

\(^{78}\)Piaget, L’épistémologie, chap. 1.6.

refutation, avoiding contradictions, etc., marks a new intellectual mentality. Thinking becomes auto-referential. “Second-order thoughts”, as Piaget calls it, allows hypothetical-deductive arguing and emancipates from given reality. A possibility is no longer considered a deviation from reality, but in the reverse, reality an intersection of possibilities.

Piaget described this change once more as a cognitive revolution: “When the cognitive field is again enlarged by the structuring of formal thought, a third form of egocentrism comes into view.” It “is one of the most enduring features of adolescence; it persists until a new ... decentering process makes possible the true beginnings of adult work.” The adolescent enters into adult society and dreams of improving the world. Together with a "life program" he develops "projects for change". Both are complementary. Formal operational thinking allows evaluating different possible life plans. Essential is an orientation to ideals, such as “humanity, social justice ..., freedom of conscience, civic or intellectual courage, and so forth.” Ideals give the life a direction. They are first incorporated in admired individuals (which marks an adualism), before they become independent.

Looking for one’s future role in society and building up a personality are two sides of the same coin. Piaget says, “personality is the decentered ego," in a threefold way: (i) “Personality is the submission of the ego to an ideal which it embodies but which goes beyond it and subordinates it.” (ii) “it is the adherence to a scale of values, not in the abstract but relative to a given task”; and (iii) the “adoption of a social role, not ready-made (...) but a role which the individual will create in filling it.”

We can define a role as a social function which reflects the relation to and responsibility for other people. To bear a role implies

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80 Inhelder and Piaget, De la logique, 340
81 Inhelder and Piaget, De la logique, 343
82 Inhelder and Piaget, De la logique 340
83 Inhelder and Piaget, De la logique 349
84 Inhelder and Piaget, De la logique 349
to have responsibility for the affected people and their needs. The reflective nature of secondary roles gives their bearers the posture of second power persons.

A child of 7-9 years is hardly aware of the distinction between primary roles referring to family and kinship, and secondary roles that stabilize the functioning of a state, an enterprise or any organized society. Between the demands on both levels, loyalty and role conflicts can occur. As Lawrence Kohlberg pointed out, the younger child’s ethics, which is related to small groups and guided by the Golden Rule, becomes relativized by an ethics related to the welfare of the whole society, guided by the rule: “Don’t do something which causes damage, if everyone does it!” Institutions require well defined relations between role bearers. Institutional meetings occur between role occupants, that is, representatives of groups or professions, specialists, lobbyists. Persons have abilities, role occupants competences, in the sense of tasks, permits and privileges. Roles provide their bearer with power (influence) and prestige (honour). Titles are signs that give role occupants or role candidates visibility. Showing off and bluff are strategies to increase one's own visibility and make one's own abilities seem bigger than they are.

Personal skills often remain undiscovered, even when they are extraordinary, unless their owner acquires a title or occupies a role that makes them visible. Conversely, a role holders’ skills do not always correspond to their function. This gap, known as Trump-Syndrome, is a popular topic for satire and cabaret.

Cooperation accompanied by mutual respect is the basis of culture, civilization, and ethics. But there are other types of interaction, too, and adolescents can’t avoid getting acquainted with them. People compete, negotiate, make exchanges, etc.

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Human relations can be peaceful or conflictive, symmetric or asymmetric, etc. Role hierarchies are not limited to feudal society. The higher a personality’s rank, the bigger is her power and responsibility. Pride and shame are associated with good or bad role exertion. Most human relations are shaped by formal or informal power constellations. A similar variety of interactions, though on another level, occur between groups (parties, clubs, companies, churches, etc.), and also, at a higher level, between states or nations.

First and Second Stage: Adolescents’ insecure self-assessment and oscillation between high-flying ambitions and experiences of own insufficiency indicate the initial egocentric phase. The dreamed-about role of prophet or reformer is not reducible to primary and secondary roles. It is, so to say, a tertiary role. In this respect, level 4 egocentrism is marked by mixing secondary and tertiary roles. Experience with social reality leads the adolescent to abandon his high-flying plans, unless he succeeds in fact to transform his society by creating something new and important. Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara’s social innovations and school foundation in 19th century Kerala is a clear example.

Third Stage: Piaget never spoke about a transition to level 5. According to the explained rules of level transition in stage 3, the structures built up in level 4 are sooner or later reflected. Second order operations are most familiar in scientific thinking which continues evolving. A reflection about scientific thinking leads us to Philosophy of Science.

As for social thinking, an important task on level 4 (and later) is to coordinate the interests, needs, ambitions etc., of different nations or cultures. At the beginning of this process egocentrism may be common again: "Spontaneously, our minds tend to either elevate our national egocentrism to an absolute, or dream of an abstract, ideal humanity. But what is needed is a whole new mental and moral attitude based on mutual

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understanding and cooperation." Even a reflected emotional attachment to one's own home country and nation can only emerge after the individual has performed the "decentration and coordination work" required "for making it easier to understand (...) other points of view as one's own." Identification with the (professional, sports etc.) team, (political) party and (religious, ethnic, linguistic) society we belong to influences our political convictions and sometimes entangles us into conflicts. Jean Paul Sartre gave a famous example: should a French resistance fighter go to war against German occupying power (national duty) or care for his sick mother (family duty)?

To negotiate a conflict solution between individuals is easier than between groups or institutions the members of which have different needs and interests that can be affected by the conflict solution. To settle interstate conflicts is still more complex, because to a state includes many ethnic, religious, economic or political groups and institutions etc. often representing conflicting interests.

4. Conclusion: What, If Piaget were Still Alive?
Piaget lived in the 20th century. He was deeply influenced by Immanuel Kant whose moral philosophy is centred on autonomy and mutual respect. Piaget sketched the child as a creative, inventive being which develops towards autonomy by learning the maximum on his own. In an interview he said: "Whatever one teaches the child, he can no longer invent or discover for himself." Educators became embarrassed with

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90 Jean-Paul Sartre, L'existencialisme est un humanism, Paris 1966, 39f.
this view, because it denies their importance. However, Piaget also emphasized that "the consciousness of the self is ... due to social factors, that is to say to the differentiation of the points of view of others and of oneself." 92 Yet, Piaget was not much interested in learning processes based on social interaction.

Another gap in his theory is the lacking reflection on how the ideas of autonomy, mutual respect and interpersonal justice fit with social hierarchies present in modern societies. Piaget lived in democratic Switzerland, before the era of "globalization" and Internet. Today, two generations later, his hints on the genesis of personality need a supplement.

To integrate into present market society adolescents have to look for (i) a niche allowing them economic survival, (ii) a role for acting in society and (iii) a trademark or brand which gives them visibility. Today the third aspect is more intrusive than in the past.

Nowaday's role models - CEOs, sport and TV stars, radio presenters, politicians, movie actresses, opera singers, etc. - are treated and considered as "super-personalities". Many of them are omnipresent in media, everyone knows their face, their social role and often their love affairs, To be a super-personality and being constantly present in the media seems to be equivalent. To identify with a super-model arouses the desire to present oneself in the media, too. Influence (power), visibility (media) and indispensability (market) - three strategies for reflecting oneself in the "generalized other" - are the holy principles for guiding an "ego enterprise".

Identification with a star is neither love nor necessarily admiration. It can turn adults into adolescents who carry their idol's portrait at their heart and dream from being loved, named and followed, similar to him, when in fact confining themselves to be present in internet, where they generate as much Facebook likes and Youtube clicks as possible.

Some people are eager to meet super-personalities, as many as possible, and take their glory from serving them as mirrors.

92 Piaget, La représentation, 112.
Others create an oeuvre and feel happy when they meet people who act as reflectors for increasing their brilliance. But many people simply feel well when working and creating something meaningful regardless of whether they get noticed or not.

Piaget knew that mirroring the others’ appreciation is not the only source of self-esteem. To assure the consent of others provides some support. Yet, to tackle with a chosen task, create something original, and accomplish autonomously an opus, is a reliable way to become a self-confident personality. Narcissistic self-mirroring or loosing oneself in social media, hardly leads to this goal. If Piaget were still alive, wouldn’t he emphatically remind us this elementary truth?
CORRECTIVE SURGERIES ON PERSONS BORN WITH INTERSEX-VARIATIONS IN INDIA

Sourav Mandal

Abstract: In the absence of any census, there is no exact number to figure out the population of the intersex persons in India. The Register of Births, a statutory register maintained to record all births in India under the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969 classifies all births under the binary of male and female. In the absence of any legal definition of what constitutes as ‘male’ and ‘female’, this paper attempts to understand the methods deployed by the medical practices in constructing the socio-legal category of ‘sex’ only in terms of male/female. This evaluation is based on a critical analysis of five academic papers wherein, they discuss a total of 561 cases of corrective-surgeries operated on persons born with intersex variations between 1989 and 2007. The paper raises ethical and policy concerns over the continued pathologisation of the persons born with intersex variations that categorise them as a disorder. Based upon its critical analysis, this paper challenges the Indian socio-legal understanding of ‘sex’ and argues a case for completely dismantling the existing identities that define ‘sex’ as male/female.

Keywords: Gender-Binary, Intersex, Intersex-Variations, Medicalisation of Sex, Queer Theory, Sex Reassignment Surgery.

1. Introduction

Generally, when a child is born, the first thing that is asked is it a boy or a girl—which means, a certain ‘sex’ within the binary of male/female becomes an identity for that child. This general

*Dr Sourav Mandal* is an MRes Candidate at the University of Reading, UK. He has successfully completed his doctoral research from the National Law School of India University, Bangalore. His research is an ethnographic study of the impact of Family Jurisprudence on the queer lives in India.
practice of attributing ‘sex’ at birth is mainly based upon a physical examination of the external genital organs.¹ Who has the authority to decide one’s sex?² Such general examinations are essentially rooted in the socio-medical systems of knowledge as the authority to decide lies mainly with the physicians and/or the members of the society.³ The medical knowledge has further enhanced the domain of its share in this authority, by developing certain additional yardsticks. First, to have the body examined of the presence of any internal genitalia (i.e., to determine whether anatomically one’s gonads could be categorised as ovaries or testes).⁴ The presence of a testes and the absence of ovaries makes a body ‘male’; whereas, its opposite is called ‘female’. Second, to genetically determine whether one’s chromosomal pattern is distributed across the body as XX or XY; as it is suggested that a combination of two X chromosomes are needed for one to be medically categorised as a ‘normal female’, and a pairing of one X and one Y chromosomes are needed for one to be called a ‘normal male’.⁵ Thirdly, by determining the proportion of hormones in a body, the assumption being that a dominant proportion of testosterone and a relatively lesser of estrogen and progesterone qualify a body to be categorised as ‘male’; whereas, a higher value of estrogen and progesterone compared with a lower proportion of testosterone would make

²Re-appropriated from Elizabeth Reis’s questions: “What did it mean to be male or female? Who had authority to answer that question, and what were the criteria?” See Elizabeth Reis, “Hermaphrodites: Intersex in America, 1620-1960,” The Journal of American History 92, no. 2 (2005): 411-441, 412.
³Reis, “Hermaphrodites: Intersex in America,” 412.
⁴Foss, “Intersex States,” 1907.
⁵Foss, “Intersex States,” 1907.
the body ‘female’. The predominant medical narrative that defines ‘normal’ over ‘abnormal’ is therefore those bodies in whom all these three yardsticks align.

When one is born with an anatomical make-up different from the “standard male or female bodies” it is not clear whether they should be regarded as male or female—medically they categorised as persons born with ‘intersex variations’. Dr Minu Bajpai of the Department of Paediatric Surgery, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi writes:

Disorders of Sex Development (DSD) have been previously known as Intersex disorders. There are misunderstandings attached with these conditions, mostly because of ignorance. These conditions are caused by genetic and endocrine imbalances in foetal life and children are born with genital appearances which do not conform to clearly male or female genital appearances. The infant may be often rejected by the parents and generally discriminated by the society. Corrective surgery is offered to these children to keep the best interest of the child.


8 Generally, the medical practice is to refer to intersex persons as ‘persons born with intersex conditions’. Since, the usage of the word ‘condition’ quite pathologises the person and marks them with an identity that is considered abnormal (by putting them under the category of a medical disorder), hence, I would prefer using the term ‘variations’ instead of ‘conditions’. See Chayanika Shah, Raj Merchant, et al., No Outlaws in the Gender Galaxy, Delhi: Zubaan, 2016, 245.


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Since, all human bodies are not identifiable under the neat and coherent biological categories of male/female, these bodies are labelled as ‘disordered’ within the existing medical epistemology. As Bell explains, “sometimes that is because the person’s genitals are ambiguous (such as when the penis is very small, or the clitoris is very large). Other times, the person’s genitals seem to indicate that they are one sex, while their chromosomes and/or hormones indicate that they are the other sex.”

Congenital Adrenal Hypoplasia (CAH) is the condition typically found in genetic females with XX chromosomes, who are commonly born with external signs of male genitalia. According to Jordon-Young, the diagnosis of this condition generally takes place during infancy, and it is medically advised that such children be socially raised in the female gender, but with the caveat that they may turn masculine or tomboyish.

Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS) is a condition typical to genetic males with XY chromosomes, who internally have testosterone producing male genitals but externally they manifest female genitals. As the name of this condition suggests, this condition makes the body insensitive to the testosterone produced by the male genitals. For these reasons such persons are generally raised in the female gender until adolescence, when their failure to menstruate calls for pathological diagnosis.

There are some genetic males with normal androgen responsiveness who are reassigned females “only in extremely rare cases.” These are children who suffer an irreparable damage/loss of their male genital organs due to reasons such as circumcision, accidents, or at birth. According to Jordon-Young, rearing such children in the female gender is generally experienced as a cultural challenge for the parents.

Additionally, there is one more category of chromosomal

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10 Bell, “Gender Essentialism and the American Law,” 175.
12 Jordan-Young, Brain Storm, 74, 258.
13 Jordan-Young, Brain Storm, 259.
14 Jordan-Young, Brain Storm, 259.
variations outside the typical XX or XY make-up.\textsuperscript{15} It is seen in some rare cases for persons to have genotypic pairings such as XYY, XXY, or XXYY (considered male); or XO, XXX (considered female).\textsuperscript{16} As these conditions occur typically from birth and sex-assignment in the male/female binary becomes problematic.

In the absence of any census, there is no exact number to figure out the population of the intersex persons in India. Also, in the absence of any medical or statutory registry for the number of intersex births in India, it is technically impossible to determine the number of such births across different hospitals. The Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969 classifies all births under the binary of male and female.\textsuperscript{17} So if a child is born with intersex variations, generally the medical practice is to operate on the child to bring them in-line with the binary sexes. In a patriarchal society like India, where the rate of female infanticide is very high and the official sex-ratio figure as per the census of 2011 was 933 females per 1000 males,\textsuperscript{18} it is highly possible that many so called ‘sex-correction surgeries’ are carried over children across India to either kill such infants or to correct them to become males.

The central question addressed by this paper is a qualitative one: in what ways, have the medical practices reified the socio-legal construction of ‘sex’ in terms only of the male/female

\textsuperscript{15}Bell, “Gender Essentialism and the American Law,” 176.


\textsuperscript{17}For example, see Forms 1, 5, and 7 of Kerala Registration of Births and Deaths Rules, 1999; or, see Forms 1, 5, and 7 of the Goa Registration of Births and Deaths Rules, 1999. This is common across all state-government-framed-rules under the Section 30 of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969.

binary in contemporary India? Critically evaluating the role of medical practices that have led to the marginalisation of the intersexed persons, this paper challenges the binary construction of ‘sex’ as an identity-category and argues a case for completely dismantling the existing identities that define ‘sex’ as male/female.

2. Problems with the Indian Medical Practice
Here, I critically evaluate five academic papers published by members of the medical fraternity between 1995 and 2009. In total, they discuss 561 cases of corrective-surgeries operated on persons born with intersex variations between 1989 and 2007 in diverse urban-locations in India. They mainly cover tier-1 and tier-2 cities from the north (Delhi and Chandigarh), west (Mumbai), and south (Trivandrum and Belgaum) of India. Also, these studies depict practices at public and private hospitals.

Using queer theory as a methodological lens for this paper, these five academic papers are chosen because their content, extent, location and function are found to be suitably addressing the central research question. In all, these five academic papers depict the larger Indian medical discourse that keeps producing and reproducing the socio-legal binary

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categories of ‘male/ female’ as against the ‘intersex’; and in this process it uninterruptedly keeps reinforcing an unequal set of power relations between the insider/ normal-sexed-body and the outsider/ abnormal-sexed-body. The paper raises ethical and policy concerns over the continued pathologisation of persons born with intersex variations that categorise them as a disorder.

As per a clinical study on 356 cases of Male Genitoplasty conducted for intersex disorders, between 1989 to 2007 at the Department of Paediatric Surgery, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, all the cases were between the age of 2.5 to 22 years with a mean of 11.5 years and median of 5.6 years. All these cases had different forms of hypospadias (a birth-condition, where the opening of the urethra is on the underside of the penis). The study concluded that correction in this penile condition is needed early “to allow phallic growth,” along with various surgical interventions “to achieve good cosmetic and functional results.” The paper acknowledges that there is a need for managing such disorders through a more robust scheme of medical interventions that involves counselling, informed consent, and careful judgment while protecting the rights of the child.

Another clinical study conducted by Joshi et.al. is based on the clinical and etiological profiles of 109 minor patients (age ranging between 5 days to 12 years) presenting with ambiguous genitalia over a period of 10 years (years 1995 to 2004) at Paediatric Endocrine Service of the B. J. Wadia Hospital for Children, Mumbai. This study reveals that 63 out of 109 patients (57.8% of total cases) were operated at a very young age ranging from five-days to one-year. The next-largest share of surgical interventions (around 20 cases) were found in toddlers ranging between one to three years of age. However, amongst all the 109 cases, the mean age of surgical intervention was 27.4 ± 38.4 months. Almost 60% of these minor patients

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were reared as males, whereas, around 20% were raised in the female gender.\textsuperscript{21} According to the paper, the rest of the patients were not assigned any gender at the time of their medical referral, which is quite possible given that most of these patients were referred upon for medical examination in the first few days/ months of their birth. Like the previous one, this paper also emphasises the need for the paediatricians to "relieve psychological distress of families and patients."\textsuperscript{22}

In a similar study conducted at the Department of Pediatrics Surgery, S.A.T. Hospital, Medical College, Thiruvananthapuram by Rajendran and S. Hariharan 35 cases were studied between 1986 to 1991. It was found that most of them presented between the age-range of one-month to two-years of age and only 2 presented in the new-born period. Sixteen were female pseudo-hermaphrodites. Eighteen out of 31 children were assigned female sex. One genetic female with congenital adrenal hyperplasia was assigned male sex.\textsuperscript{23} The authors observe in their patient profile that the need for a neonatal assignment of sex is nearly "a social emergency," which indicates the growing influence of parental pressure in medical decisions of sex assignment. The authors of this paper conclude as a part of their study that "parents prefer the intersex children to be reared as male possibly because of the less social stigma attached to an impotent male than to sterile female, and because males are socially independent."\textsuperscript{24} They report similar


\textsuperscript{22}Joshi, Rao, et al., “Etiology and Clinical Profile of Ambiguous Genitalia,” 978.


\textsuperscript{24}Rajendran and Hariharan, “Profile of Intersex Children,” 670.
Corrective Surgeries on Persons ... Intersex-Variations in India

medical experiences in other Indian studies.\textsuperscript{25} Although, they reckon that the medical judgment in assigning sex is generally a result of team-efforts from paediatric surgeons, endocrinologists, cytologists, radiologists and psychologists, in the case of one child with CAH they were forced to assign male sex “because of parental pressure”.\textsuperscript{26} They explain the basis of sex assignment in genetic males to be the size of the phallus—if it is less than 1.5 cm long and 0.7 cm wide, the child should be assigned female gender.\textsuperscript{27} Whereas, all genetic females should be assigned female sex, they reckon.\textsuperscript{28} They consider surgical interventions to be an imperative in such cases that must commence as early as three-months of infancy,\textsuperscript{29} and that there must be no effort to change the child’s sex after the second year.\textsuperscript{30}

In another recent study\textsuperscript{31} conducted by the Doctors at Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh, paediatric history of a total of 58 children were studied between the period of 2003 to 2007. The study found that all these 58 children were presented between the ages of 1 day to 144 months, with a majority (i.e., 87.9%) presented before 5 years. Out of this, almost 37% were presented in infancy; and, 12% were brought in the neonatal age-group (i.e., under 28 days of age).\textsuperscript{32} A total of 43 children (i.e., 74.1%) were reared as males by their respective families, only 39 were

\textsuperscript{26}Rajendran and Hariharan, “Profile of Intersex Children,” 668.
\textsuperscript{27}Rajendran and Hariharan, “Profile of Intersex Children,” 670.
\textsuperscript{28}Rajendran and Hariharan, “Profile of Intersex Children,” 669.
\textsuperscript{29}Rajendran and Hariharan, “Profile of Intersex Children,” 666, 670.
\textsuperscript{30}Rajendran and Hariharan, “Profile of Intersex Children,” 669.
\textsuperscript{32}Kulkarni, Panigrahi, et al., “Paediatric Disorders,” 956.
genetic males, whereas, the rest were genetic females. Based on the unbalanced gender division in the dataset (i.e., 43 of the 58 intersex children referred between 2003 to 2007 having been reared as males), the authors speculate that the absence of an equal number of females show the general neglect and the typical aversion of Indian parents for having female babies/foetuses.

In another case-study based research, Nerli et.al., at KLES Hospital, Belgaum studied three cases of genetically male children who were reassigned to male gender. They were assigned female at birth due to “severe hypospadias and micropenis.” The age of these children was 6, 11 and 13-years respectively, when they were medically referred. All of them came from lower-middle class backgrounds, but both parents and children were involved in the decision-making where they were facilitated by “psychiatrists, urologists, paediatricians and family physicians.” The authors find the parents consistently keen on changing their children’s gender to male, during the discussions; and, in two of these cases the child is also said to have effectively consented to male reassignment. Based on their post-surgery follow-up of fifteen-months, the authors reported that the children appear to have synced well in their new gender (e.g., the older ones have started having erections, and have started playing with other boys, whereas, the youngest one has reportedly overcome his shyness, but feels awkward in a boy’s dresses). All the three children had been put through rounds of counselling at various phases during the whole process.

As in majority of the cases, the subjects are not just minors but are also very young to have understood the ramifications of

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such a surgery. Minu Bajpai asks, “who is the best person to take a decision regarding nature of surgery: parents or patients? Is the decision part of the parents’ desire duly fulfilled by doctors? What is the best age of such surgeries?”

To which, I add: Are most of such sex-corrective surgeries directed to reassign male-sex to the child? And most basic, what is the need for such corrective surgeries? These aforesaid studies conducted by medical professionals indicate and thus, facilitate my understanding to arrive at a few observations that are common to all these studies.

i. Pathologisation of the intersexed body: On the part of the medical/psychiatric fraternity, and the social workers, there is a constant attempt to pathologise persons born with intersex variations by categorising them as disorder/problem—an abnormality that must be fixed on an urgent basis. A congenial or non-congenial sex variation is always seen more as a social problem than a medical urgency. Much of this problem stems from the common knowledge of gender understood as a binary of male/female, shared by members of the medical/psychiatric fraternity and the society.

ii. Androcentric parental pressures over medical decision making: Looking at the quality of the aforesaid clinical experiences of the medical/psychiatric staff dealing with such cases, one cannot dismiss the recurrent parental desire to see a male child post-surgery. Given that, the medical fraternity is dependent on parental consent to go ahead with such sex-assignment procedures, there is always a possibility for medical decision-making to be controlled by parental interests. If medical judgments are a product of patriarchal values, then certainly the genuineness of such life-changing surgical decisions must need a rethink.

iii. Issues of age and consent in medical decision-making: It is a long-standing medical practice to undertake corrective

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36 Bajpai, “Disorders of Sex Development.”

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procedures/surgeries while the child is either young or an infant. Such practices are controversial as they severely undermine the agency of the child. The medical knowledge very-well understands that such practices are problematic but, seldom plays any active role in positively changing it. Because such practices are deeply institutionalised in the socio-medical knowledge, it has had (and, continues to have) a significant impact in shaping the intersex lives. Given that, the intersexed body has no effective role in choosing such futures, the liability of any damage caused to such lives lies solely on the real decision-makers, i.e., the parents and medical professionals. The issues of age and consent of the intersex persons raise serious ethical and policy issues concerning public health—thus, making it an apt case for legal intervention.

Although this qualitative study cannot be used to draw generalisations about the overall state of corrective surgeries, or its impact over the intersex community as a whole, it shows how socio-medical knowledge has the potential to shape intersex experiences. This discussion demonstrates the ways in which the powers of ‘the medical’ and ‘the social’ work together control the mind and body of the intersex persons. The apparatuses of this socio-medical power-structure construct what is worth normalising, and what is not—thus, subjecting the intersex lives to their will and domination, constructing new meanings and realities for them. This also shows how the socio-medical actors (i.e., the members of the medical/psychiatric fraternity, and the parents and family of the intersex child) can abuse their position by taking granted the agency of intersex children.

3. Law’s Purported Role in Invisibilising the Intersex

The medical discourse above indicates at the politics and economy of the management, regulation and administration of sexes, which is an important public policy of our times. While explaining his thesis of biopolitics, Foucault quotes Claude-Jacques Herbert, the French Economist who wrote during the enlightenment years of the eighteenth century:
States are not populated in accordance with the natural progression or propagation, but by virtue of their industry, their products, their different institutions. ... Men multiply like the yields from the ground and in proportion to the advantages and resources they find in their labours.\(^{37}\)

It looks as if the story fits squarely well in our contemporary times; the production of the human is managed by the institutions of our times, the hospital and the family act like the farmer who cultivates and very meticulously cuts out the unproductive plants from his fields to enhance the quality of his yield. The metaphor quite fits as human births have taken the status of human production. Since, there is a structural interdependency between patriarchy and the modes of production,\(^{38}\) much of the factors that influence this selective (re)production of the ‘normal bodies’ is related to the way patriarchy has historically defined the economics of the Indian society. The medical literature discussed, clearly indicates the possible ways of patriarchy’s operation in medical decision-making through the parental demands for a virile male child. This way, ‘maleness’ of the body is not just defined biologically (e.g., by the presence of certain genotype, or hormonal proportions), but also through surgical procedures, such as penile-construction (phalloplasty), or fixing hypospadias. A particular shape, size, length, and depth of the penis/vagina therefore is relied upon uninterruptedly by ‘the medicine’ to determine whether the body is worthy of being categorized as ‘male’. This way, the biology of the body solely determines the destiny of a person.

But, how does law sustain this biopolitics? After all, law lays down the norm just like any social code that regulates behaviour in the society. Often, law empowers some in order to


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disempower the other and this is how the ‘queer’ is produced.\textsuperscript{39} Since, the law sustains the medico-social (re)production of the male/female binary, it has to regularly act to ensure that this production follows a flawlessly uniform pattern. This is how the intersex body is corrected at all costs, to prevent it from becoming the other—the queer. As David Halperin marks, “queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers.”\textsuperscript{40} In this case, the intersex is positioned as the queer.

Being queer doesn’t necessarily restrict its location to be always situated outside (or, in opposition to) the law. It doesn’t also mean that it is futile to have contestations within or without the law. After all, the language that the constitution provides makes law a site of democratic contestations. But, all law is not the constitution, neither all of it is constitutional. Traditionally, law has just been recognising the rights of male/female, because of which, the intersex was always located outside of the law. This piece of research thus, attempts to problematize the legal theory of binary sexual identities, and its conflation with gender roles.

Butler asks, “Can we refer to a ‘given’ sex or a ‘given’ gender without first inquiring into how sex and/or gender is given, and, through what means? And what is ‘sex’ anyway? Is it natural, anatomical, chromosomal, hormonal?”\textsuperscript{41} Invoking Foucault, she asks:

... does sex have a history? Does each sex have a different history or histories? Is there a history of how the duality of sexes was established, a genealogy that might expose the binary options as a variable construction? Are the ostensibly natural facts of sex discursively produced by various


\textsuperscript{41}Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, New York: Routledge, 1990, 6.

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scientific discourses in the service of other political and social interests?\textsuperscript{42}

Law is concerned about ‘sex’ because there is an entire structure of economy that thrives on this materiality. All this in turn produce some essentialist relations and certain functional roles for this bodily materiality (that we call sex)—which is thus, used to serve this structure of economy. For example, the heterosexual family (a constituting institution in the economy of the heteronormative structure) demands from a father, a mother, a son and a daughter, certain specific roles as per their sex. As ‘sex’ is defined by the materiality of the biology of one’s body, the male members of the family always get a privileged position in a hetero-patriarchal social-order and, in order to provide the males that space to dominate, the dominated-role is played by the male’s other, i.e. the female (as a part of that binarised hetero-patriarchal structure). This is how the heteronormative structure conflates the biology of the body (i.e., sex) with that of the assigned social role of that biological body (i.e., gender). To sustain the economy of this binarised hetero-patriarchal structure, of course, any other form of body, other than the male and female has no space and role; the other forms of non-male-non-female bodies are seen as obstructions in the re-production of this hetero-patriarchal economy. This makes all the non-binary bodily forms unproductive in this structure and hence, invisible. Since, the sex/gender-based binarised hegemony of male/female bodies signify production, heterosexuality acquires the status of ‘the norm’, whose compulsory reinforcement on the bodies (and the body’s incessant response in terms of its uninterrupted performance to those assigned roles) further naturalises this ‘norm’ as a monolithic social order—result, the entire social order gets imbued into heteronormative settings.

Of course, these givens are very powerful in their mere existence as they enable an entire structure of power and oppression to come alive. Queer theorists attempt to

\textsuperscript{42}Butler, Gender Trouble, 7.
deconstruct the power displayed by essentialist arguments that link the purported gender roles with that of the materiality of the body or simply the biological differences based on the category of ‘sex’. Butler argues, that “sex is therefore not a simple fact or a static condition of the body which is based only on some material/biological differences; but it is a process whereby regulatory norms compulsorily demand a certain performance of the body based on the category called ‘sex’.”

Why is this relation between materiality of the body problematic, thus, untenable and unstable vis-à-vis performativity of gender? The production of certain prescriptive and ideal gender roles takes place through a process of iteration and compulsory reiteration of a normative frame. What if, there is a break in the production and reproduction of these normative pressures on the body? Or, what if the body refuses to follow or practice or perform these normative roles anymore? Butler, contemplates that because of such possibilities of subversion by the bodies, such norms need to be enforced and re-enforced so that the compliance to such norms acquire the status of an absolute compulsion, something that gets etched in the psyche of the bodies as their naturalised destiny.

5. Conclusion
The critical evaluation of these five academic papers explain the ideological affiliations of the medical discourse in India, exposing its firm commitment to heteronormativity. This study tells us the fate of all those 561 bodies (most of whom were infants, toddlers and children)— how ‘the medicine’, along with its protractors of ‘the social’ and ‘the legal’ had the power to change these lives forever. It explains why these 561 bodies had no control over their own lives; and how the forces of ‘the normative’ had an incessant power to control, dictate and

44 Butler, Gender Trouble, viii.
manoeuvre their choices. The queer analysis of these medical practices enables us to understand how heteronormative values and ideals have been normalised and naturalised in our social order, culture and the law.

The politics and economy of the management, regulation and administration of sexes is an important public policy of our times. And, this is when the Supreme Court of India has held that “...no one shall be forced to undergo medical procedures, including SRS (Sex Reassignment Surgery), sterilization or hormonal therapy, as a requirement for legal recognition of their gender identity.”45 The deep-fissures between the formality and the reality of law are openly evident—fissures that need to be addressed soon if the former has to triumph over the latter.

Keeping in mind the liberal legal rights’ framework of the Indian juridical structure, it is obvious that identity-categories (old and new) are needed for any rights-based framework to operate. Perhaps this is the inherent paradox of any liberal legal regime, that on the one hand, it aims for enabling the individuals towards having control over one’s life, and on the other, it disciplines them to act according to certain pre-determined socio-legal scripts. This way, a body that fails to fit into these scripted forms/roles falls out of its cracks.46

This paper argues for completely dismantling the existing identities that define ‘sex’ as male/female or intersex. In other words, speaking from the queer political perspective, ‘sex’ as a category of identity (whether with old categories such as male/female, or with new ones, such as intersex, transgender, etc.) must be thrown out of the window (legal structure) completely. Which means the queer would seek to quite radically transform the existing rights-based juridical structure into an identity-neutral framework, which has its own inherent problems and contradictions—a discussion which is beyond the

The understanding and practice of ‘sex’ (and the entire economy based on it) runs at the cost of a routine invisibilisation of the other—the queer body (in this case the body marked as ‘intersex’) therefore needs changes in the current state of the socio-legal norms.

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SUBVERSIVE GENDER PERFORMANCE IN KOTTANKULANGARA TEMPLE FESTIVAL

Anu Kuriakose

Abstract: This paper critically analyses the images of the self and the “othering” of the transgender identity in the public sphere of Kerala in the context of gender visibility. The performance of queer sexuality and gender identity is contested in Kerala where transgenders are forced to displace themselves from their homeland in search of identity and solace. However the religious space in Kottankulangara temple in Kerala offers the transient realm of transvestism. The cross-dressed males here commemorate the annual chamaya-vilakku festival, which is considered as an offering to the Goddess Bhagavati. Those gender non-conforming people who live as men due to social pressures get the chance to flaunt their gender identities at this occasion. In this sense, transgenders, “the other” who take their legitimization from various religious myths, achieve a temporary space of acceptance in the public sphere. It is noted that besides the normalization of the subversive gender performances, the religious ritualistic site and the worship system is transformed to a commercial space as the temple premises are filled with make-up stalls, ironically endorsing the gender idealization in terms of the patriarchal binary norms.

Keywords: Chamaya-vilakku, Commercialization, Cross-dressed male, Gender performance, Kottankulangara, Public sphere, Religious space, Transgenders.

Anu Kuriakose is a PhD scholar in English at the Department of Humanities, Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology, Thiruvananthapuram, currently working on her thesis, “Troubling Gender, Contesting Identity: Reading the Regional Imaginations on Transgenders through Cinematic Practices in Kerala.” Her areas of research interests include Cultural Studies, Performance Studies and Gender Studies.
1. Introduction

Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.\(^1\)

Gender is a construction by the society and often it demands the enactment of certain role expectations from the society. It is not a mere process but a process within a regulatory framework. The freedom of an individual to choose the gender role is thus curtailed. The queer enactments cross the sex boundaries by performing a different gender role of one’s choice. The LGBTQI\(^2\) people use the acronym to self-affirm their identity which is disembodied from the binary understanding of gender and sexuality. The gender performances that deviate from the naturalized social construction have been marginalized for a long time. Queer persons lacked a space for the articulation of their voice in the social and political spheres. However, different manifestations of transgender identities and alternative sexualities are illustrated in religious scriptures in India.

Mahabharata narrates the sex change story of Amba/ Sikhandini/ Sikhandin, where Amba prays to Shiva for the “boon of manhood” to avenge Bhishma, her abductor, for thwarting of her “duties as a woman.”\(^3\) In another myth, Aravan agrees to sacrifice himself in the Mahabharata battle as long as he makes love to a woman first. As no woman was ready to marry him, Lord Krishna takes the form of a woman and marries Aravan and fulfils his desire. After becoming a widow and the subsequent mourning, Krishna assumes his male form.\(^4\) The ritualized

\(^{1}\)Butler Judith, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, New York: Routledge, 1990, 43-44.

\(^{2}\)An umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex.


enactment of this myth is held annually in Koothandavur festival in Koovagom, Tamil Nadu. Also, the same-sex procreation story of Shiva and Vishnu (as Mohini) is elaborated in the Puranas and Ayyappa (Hariharaputra) is the child of the two male gods - Hari/Vishnu and Hara/Shiva. The transgender community in India legitimises their existence with these puranic myths.

The images of the transgender self projected in the contemporary media and in the public sphere especially in Kerala is that of ‘the other.’ However, at Kottankulangara temple festival in Kerala, the male-to-female (MtF) transgender identity and the cross-dressed subversive gender performance capture certain religious significance and recognition. The MtF transgenders revisit the religious space to perform their gender identity along with other believers who participate in the cross-dressing festival. This paper explores the space of transgender performance in the Kottankulangara temple festival, and critically analyses the commercialization of the myth and the ritual.

In the first part, the paper examines the construction of transgender identity represented in the existing ethnographic scholarly inquiries and the framework of the MtF transgender identities - hijra, jogappa/jogtas, Kothis, aravani subcultures - existing in India. The next section observes the transgenders living in the fringes and the transformation in the representation of such identities in the public sphere. The final section of the study critically analyses the subversive gender performance in the ritualistic space in the Kottankulangara temple festival and how the marginalization of the transgender identity is temporarily eroded in the contentious circuits of the cross-dressing festival. The section also critiques the commercialization of the religious ritual and the binary idealization in terms of images and gendered


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markers of the body. The significance of this study lies in the effort to unearth a few spaces that offer avenues for transgenders to ‘come out’ in the public sphere in Kerala.

2. Transgenders, Cross-Dressers and the Subversive Possibilities of Identity: Framing Theories and Histories

The MtF transgenders are an integral part of Indian society and “undoubtedly related to the variety and significance of alternative gender roles and gender transformations in Indian mythology and traditional culture.”^7^ Traditionally, they dance at the weddings and the birth of a child and is seen as a blessing in these special occasions because of the way they are represented in the puranic myths. In Northern states of India, they live as a community and are known as hijras. The English translation of the word ‘hijra’ relates to the categories of eunuchs and hermaphrodites, “emasculated biological males and intersexed ‘males’ whose sexual organs are ambiguous at birth or who suffer from a genetical malformation.”^8^ Serena Nanda refers to them as “neither men nor women” in the title of her study. The terms used for hijra such as kojja in Telugu^9^ and pottai in Tamil are derogatory in nature that refer to effeminate male.

The notion of community is a key to the understanding of hijra existence as a marginalized subculture, which helps them to belong to a hierarchical frame and survive as a “parallel society.”^10^ Since they were seen as outcasts in the public sphere in the past, hijras formed their own familial structures which follow


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strict internal rules. In order to be a member of the community, an elder hijra would adopt the new transgender as her daughter.\textsuperscript{11}

Hijras worship Goddess Bahucharamata - a manifestation of Goddess Kali. They please her by undergoing emasculation and nirvan\textsuperscript{12} and are adopted by the community through a ceremony called jelsa\textsuperscript{13} in which, according to the belief, a castrated male becomes a female wholly. Unlike the hijra community, the jogappas in Karnataka do not undergo the nirvan and are worshippers of Goddess Yellamma. They are perceived with a halo of divinity and in possession of supernatural powers of healing and fortune telling. The privileged divinity of Jogappas is derived from the folklore of Renuka, the wife of an ascetic sage, Jamadagni who was ordered by her husband to be beheaded. The two sons, who refused to behead their mother, were cursed to lose their masculinity because of their ‘cowardice’. As per the myth, she became Yellamma and the cursed sons, Jogappas.\textsuperscript{14} The possession of the Goddess by a devotee requires a gender change, which gives a religious sanctity and transgenderism is framed as a divine division rather than an individual’s wish.\textsuperscript{15} Though transgenders lack the ritualistic role as performers as that of the hijra community in North Indian states, certain religious spaces like the Koothandavur temple in Koovagom (where aravanies

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{11}Resmi and Anilkumar, Transgender: History, Culture, Representation, Thiruvananthapuram: Chintha Publishers, 2016, 28.}\n
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{12}An operation that removes the genitals of a male-to-female transgender, which is also called a rebirth. Nanda, N either M an nor Woman, 27.}\n
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{13}A ritualistic adoption to the transgender community, followed by pooja and celebrations. Resmi and Anilkumar, Transgender: History, Culture and Representation, 32-33.}\n
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{14}Makepeace Sitlhou, “Jogappas, the Men who Marry a Goddess to Become Women,” The Wire, 1 December 2016. <https://thewire.in/gender/jogappas-goddess-gender> (10 October 2017).}\n
celebrate their myth), and the Yellamma Jatre in the Saudatti temple (where Jogappas celebrate their myth), in Northern Karnataka attract a number of transgenders. The MtF transgenders who lead a community life legitimise their existence through certain puranic myths: for instance, in Ramayana, while leaving to jungle, Rama blesses people who were neither men nor women. Certain myths relate the descent of the hijras from the deity of Shiva (the god of destruction), who was also called Ardhanariswar (half man and half woman). For many hijras, the quality of being half man and half woman is a source of infinite strength that endows on them the divine power to give curses just like Shiva cursed the earth. In another myth from Mahabharata, Arjuna dressed as a woman in appearance called Brihannada, and participated in the wedding ceremony of his son Abhimanyu with the princess Uttara. It must be pointed out that Arjuna’s cross-dressing is read by almost all hijras as an instance of voluntary emasculation that opens up avenues for their existence. Different transgender communities in North Indian states and certain regions in South India formed subcultural spaces by legitimising these myths and religion offered them some sanctity to a level though the public sphere marginalised them.

Considering the gender and sexuality discourse in the state of Kerala, the use of the term “transgender” is novel. The cultural and historical aspects of third gender identities in Kerala remains as a slippery terrain and certain instances can be identified on the regional imaginations and the conceptualization of gender and sexuality discussions in various media. The LGBTQI social and cultural discourse and identity politics were unfamiliar to Kerala for a long time unlike the other states in India. Among the

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18 Hiltebeitel, “Śiva, the Goddess,” 166.
Travancore-Cochin-Malabar trinity, Calicut in the Malabar region was seen as a “Mecca of homosexual expeditions.” The foundation of the same sex group Men in India Movement in Kochi was a culminating moment, and the Malabar Cultural Forum formed in Calicut in the late 90s promoted the creative expression of homosexuals and transgenders through art and culture. However, the marginalisation and ostracism in Kerala forced the queer people to migrate to other states in search of identity, livelihood and existence as the state lacked support system for the LGBTQI community like the hijra, jogappa or aravani subcultures in other Indian states. Social activism and the emergence of queer movement as intellectual and political development also contributed to the fledging of paradigm shift in gender and sexuality debates in Kerala’s recent history. The impact of Western education and post 1990 globalization process largely affected imaginations beyond the limits of hetero binarism.

While examining the marginalization of the body, identity and desires, it can be discerned that transgenders are ostracized and marginalized due to their difference from the patriarchal heteronomy. “There are no transgenders in Kerala. … There are few people in the State who come out openly about their transgender identity. Our society simply does not accept transgenders.” The news report brings out the notion that the experience of living as a transgender is filled with trauma in Kerala. The banishment and ostracism starts from the hetero-patriarchal familial system where even the cross-dressers are bullied. “Many transgenders in Kerala migrate to cities like Bangalore, Hyderabad, or Delhi as people in their home State do not accept them.”

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20 Staff Reporter, “Kerala Hounds out its Transgender Community,” The Hindu, 14 February 2013.
21 Staff Reporter, “Kerala Hounds out Its Transgender Community.”
In the social scenario of Kerala, a sudden shift happened with the 2014 Supreme Court Verdict\(^{22}\) recognizing the transgenders’ political and civic rights and the Social Justice Department of Kerala conducted a transgender survey,\(^{23}\) which covered the social and personal aspect of their life. The term “transgender” was officially documented for the first time instead of locally used derogatory terms of “Penpoosu,” “Menaka,” etc. Based on the findings in the survey, the state adopted a transgender policy in 2015.\(^{24}\) The premier university in the state, the University of Kerala for the first of its kind adopted a policy for its transgender students\(^{25}\) modelling on the state policy for addressing equal opportunity, respect and educational needs. Followed by the example set by Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have cleared the proceedings for the formulation of transgender policy. Transgenders started to get political, social and cultural recognition which is evident from events like right to cast vote in 2016 Kerala assembly election and the distribution of electoral identity cards.\(^{26}\) Besides these, the queer pride parades since 2010

\(^{22}\)National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India verdict by the Supreme Court of India declared transgender people to be a ‘third gender,’ and affirmed their fundamental rights granted under the Constitution of India <https://web.archive.org/web/20140527105348/http://supremecourtofindia.nic.in/outtoday/wc40012.pdf> (21 October 2017).


\(^{24}\)The policy document affirms the rights of transgender people in line with the Supreme Court verdict 2014 <https://kerala.gov.in/documents/10180/46696/State%20Policy%20for%20Transgenders%20in%20Kerala%202015> (21 October 2017).


too became a platform for transgender visibility. In the sacred sphere, the MtF gender performance as an offering to the deity in Kottankulangara temple festival, Kollam district in Kerala, has been observed since time immemorial and transgenders also started attending the festival.

3. Chamaya-vilakku: Subversive Gender Performance in Kottankulangara Temple Festival

Cross-dressing was highly discouraged and criminalized under the British rule in India. Transgenders were ostracized for their deviation from the norm: “transgenders being branded unclean and freakish – their marginalization was more severe than that of the Indian male who was termed effeminate and devious.” The temple festivals offered spaces of solace for transgenders where they have prominent roles. The hijra, aravani, jogappa MtF transgender identities and certain transgenders who live as males due to social pressures found the ritualistic space of the temple festivals as appropriate chances to flaunt their gender identity.

In Kottankulangara, the Goddess Bhagavati is worshipped and the festival is held annually. Though it is part of the temple festival, the cross-dressed men’s lamp holding ceremony (chamaya-vilakku), single-handedly made it a bustling site of pilgrimage. The cross-dressing and the MtF gender performance

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27 Queer Pride Keralam, From Silence to Celebrations ... <http://queerpridekeralam.blogspot.com/> (21 December 2017).

28 The pamphlet issued by the temple trust, Chavara Sri Major Kottankulangara Temple, 2017, 7.


30 In Kerala, the goddess is most often called Bhagavati, a name equivalent to the generic Devi. In the context of worship, Bhagavati is more specifically used for the benevolent and serene form of the goddess usually pictured as a young charming woman (but devotees may describe her in many different ways). Marian Pasty and Abdul Wahid, “‘Our Devi is like that’: An Ethnological Insight into the Image of the Hindu goddess Bhadrakali in Popular South Indian Belief and Temple Practice,” The Journal of Hindu Studies, vol. 9, (2016): 332.
at the Kottankulangara temple is also depicted in some Malayalam films like “Odum Raja Adum Rani” (directed by Viju Verma, 2014) and “Tamaar Padaar” (directed by Dileesh Nair, 2014) and such visualisations are significant in registering the visibility of transgenders in the sacred as well as cultural sphere in Kerala. According to the believers, the temple had a mythical past; it was a deserted place and a group of cow-herd boys got a coconut (kottan in local language), and to break the coconut, they found a stone from this place. When they hit the stone with the coconut, it began to bleed, and an astrologer suggested building a temple in the place where the stone was found. As per the belief, since there were no girls to hold the lamps as offering to the Goddess, young boys cross-dressed as girls and carried the lamps.\(^{31}\) The same is celebrated as a religious ritual in the temple:

During the month of Chaitra, thousands of men of all types dress up as women and offer themselves to Bhagavati an expansion of the Goddess Durga. In a special ceremony called Chamaya-vilakku, the cross dressers grasp tall lighted lamps and wait for procession of the Goddess in the form of sila or stone to pass by. The goddess Bhagavati then blesses the pilgrims and showers all good fortune upon them.\(^{32}\) Another version of the myth has something in common with the Bahucharamata cult worshipped by the hijra community. “The cowherds used to dress as girls and venerate a stone and playfully offer kottan to it. The Goddess was pleased by their devotion and blessed them.”\(^{33}\) During the chamaya-vilakku festival, men appropriate their body as that of women by shaving off moustaches which can be read as a ritualised castration as the way hijras undergo nirvan.

\(^{31}\) The pamphlet issued by the temple trust, 7.


\(^{33}\) Nair, “Transgendering Celebrations,” 92.
The above poster depicts the Goddess Bhagavati in the centre and cross-dressed male holding lamps on both sides of the Goddess. The festival tag is written in Malayalam reads, “historically famous male make-up lamp festival”. As per the belief, dressing up as woman and offering prayers by holding the lamp is seen as a penance: “It's believed that by dressing as a woman and offering prayers holding the chamaya-vilakku (the five-wicked lamp), Bhagavati forgives a man's sins.”

Those men who participate in the cross-dressing festival observe vratam (abstinence from meat, liquor, sex and so on). It is also seen as a nercha or offering to the Goddess. There are a few other nerchas in the temple as Kottannivedyam, Paayasam, and Panthirunaazhi by all the

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35 The pamphlet issued by the temple trust, 7.

36 A sweet made of coconut as an offering.

37 Naazhi is a rice measurement vessel in local vernacular and weighs around 200 gms. 12 naazhi measures 2.400 kg rice as offering by a devotee.
devotees and Narangavilakku and Chandrappongala exclusively by women devotees.

These offerings may be read in line with Pongala and Kuthiyottam - a few rituals observed as offering and penance associated with temples in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Traditionally, Pongala is “an offering to the Sun or the Moon for protection from disease, in menarche rituals of various communities, in rituals done at the seventh month of a woman’s pregnancy, and in Irhava and Cheruman agricultural and kavu festivals to Bhadrakali” in tribal communities. The Sanskritisation of this festival in the contemporary times has transformed the occasion to a mass cooking in open space in the Thiruvananthapuram city, where women across class, caste and creed participate. All these sacrifices are ritualised, which are “massive act of devotion in order to obtain specific boon from the deity.” As in Attukal Pongala where a large number of women turn up as devotees, in Kottankulangara the temple festival becomes the celebration of cross-dressing and transgenders began to appear at this space which demarcates a rupture in the normative gender performance.

38 The lamp made of lemon as an offering for blessing from the deity; at some places oral narratives say it is used as a relief from snake blemish.

39 A mass open cooking by the female devotees, and here the name is synonymous with the pongala on the basis of lunar calendar.

40 The ritualistic offering of porridge made of rice, sweet brown molasses, coconut gratings, nuts and raisins.


The festival has seen the participation of an increasing number of homosexual and transgender people from Kerala, for them, it is a celebration of their own identity. The temple premise offers a temporary realm of transgendering for the gender non-conforming biological male. The event gave “the freedom to dress up as woman and travel in buses without much stigma.”

Connecting with the Bhaktinian notion of carnival, during chamayavilakku, the temple space transforms to “carnival site where, under the aegis of a religiously sanctioned festival, the transgenders ‘appear’ for two nights.”

A number of events associated with the festival like the games, dances, songs and beauty pageants commercialize the space and make it a carnival. The Bhaktinian notion of carnival was evolved as a form of self expression among many communities and is understood as a “licensed affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony.” Carnival challenges the prevailing norms of those who are in power and the temple premise as a carnival space subverts and parodies the gender performance through the MtF cross dressing. The transgenders and the cross dressers in the festival deconstruct the normative gender through their physical appropriation, which is a threat to the hegemonic gender roles. In this sense, the hetero-patriarchal familial system in Kerala that shuns the transgenders and eschew their presence at home and in public places ironically let the boys and men to hold the lamp as cross-dressed to commemorate the myth concerned with the origin of the temple. The transgenders also get a religious sanction among the cross-dressed males.

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44 Arya, “This year’s Chamayavilakku,” 2017.
45 Nair, “Transgendering Celebrations,” 94.
Cross dressed male devotees holding the lighted lamps

The transgender body is looked down with aversion in the public sphere in Kerala, but the same transgenders are difficult to discern from a large number of cross-dressed males who carry the chamaya-vilakku during the festival. Interestingly, the tabooed bodies of the MtF transgenders become objects of desire then (as in the figure above) during the festival. It can also be linked to Julia Kristeva’s understanding of the “abject” in contravention to the Lacanian notion of “object of desire” or object petit a. The abject body refers to a threat of order: “what disturbs identity, system and orders” and refuses to “respect borders, positions and rules,” whereas Lacan’s idea of object petit a is an object that causes a desire. The transgender bodies are seen as taboo against hetero-patriarchal society where, the gender binaries - only male and female - are the normative. Judith Butler illustrates the tendency of the heterosexual society to disavow those who deviate from the mainstream - Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgenders - and to relegate such people to the “domain of abject beings, those who are not yet subjects, but who form the


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constitutive outside of the subject." The marginalized bodies of the transgenders become objects that fascinate the mass during the festival. The participants themselves as well as other men at the temple premise derive a scopophilic pleasure by looking at the transgressed bodies. This gender parodying is legitimized with the myth on the temple festival. As per the myth, it was the boys below 14 years of age, carried lamps as offering, and the custom is now metamorphosed to accommodate all men who wish to participate in the event.

The commodification of the body and the appropriation of the gender binary can be discerned from the large number of make-up stalls in the temple premise during the Kottankulangara festival. The social construction of feminine gender and the image of the female body in the cultural practices, including films are of wearing saree and using make-ups which include kajal, bindi and jewellery. Hence the temple festival attracts a number of males who cross-dress and MtF transgenders who join the festival as a celebration of their identity.

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51 An eye makeup, also known as kohl, endorses femininity in South Asian culture especially in dances. It also has some medical purpose. See Fawzi Sweha, "Kohl along History in Medicine and Cosmetics." History of Science and Medicine, 17.2, (1982): 182-183.

A male is dressed up as a woman by a make-up artist

Make-up stalls near the temple premise

Since the festival itself is named as chamaya-vilakku, it signifies the importance of make-up to switch from the male biological physique to the female. The figure above shows advertisements in display in front of make-up stalls during the festival which ironically endorse the feminization of the male body and evokes the sensation of gender as a social construction and performance. In Koovagam temple festival, there is a beauty pageant as part of the festival, whereas the Kottankulangara temple festival has transformed to beauty idealization and it is evident from the comments the cross-dressed males receive from
the spectators. The cross-dressed male is an amalgam of the collective imagination of the patriarchal notions of the gender binary. While analysing gender as performance, Judith Butler puts it, “the notion of an original or primary gender is parodied within the cultural practices of drag, cross-dressing and sexual stylization of butch/femme identities.”

Butler sees such parodic identities as either degrading to women in the case of drag and cross-dressing or an uncritical appropriation of sex role stereotyping from within the practice of heterosexuality. In this sense, cross-dressing is a fabricating mechanism through which the social construction of gender takes place. Gender is culturally determined as a performance rather than an innate biological function and the different gender roles created by society. In agreement with Butler, it may be adjudged that the subversive gender performance at Kottankulangara festival by the cross-dressed male as well as the MtF transgenders becomes an endorsement of the heterosexual imagination of how a female body ought to be.

The figure also indicates the commercialization of a religious ritual; cross-dressing is commercialized in market in terms of the patriarchal beauty concepts on the female body. The chamayavilakku festival is discussed in a blog article in detail; about the myth, the make-up and cross dressing of males in the festival: “men dress up as girls and all make ups will be applied on them so that they will look like a ‘real girl.’”

Modern dresses like jeans are not allowed in the temple premise, endorsing the stereotyped gendered notion of the traditional female costume in Kerala. Cross-dressing is done to show respect to the Devi for the favours and blessings received. “The boys wear set-mundu and saree or pattu-pavadai, churidharas and apply lipstick and put long hair wigs and after completing all such things these devotees will light up

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lamps and start visiting the temple as a procession.”

The emphasis given on certain ‘girly’ costumes are the society’s stereotyped notion of the feminine gender. Majorie Garber criticises the bipolar approach of the society while she discusses cross-dressing, and according to her, such approaches create “category crisis.” “Cross-dressing is a disruptive element that involves not just a category crisis of male and female; but the crisis of category itself. In this sense, cross-dressing is a commentary on our own stereotypes.”

And these stereotypes disregard the fluidity of gender. However, at the temple premise, during the festival the space is blurred between a cross-dressed male and a male-to-female transgender and this in turn becomes a blessing for the latter to easily ‘pass off’.

The blog article further states certain other instructions and information for participating in the festival:

If you want women’s wigs, it is available for hire or you can buy it near the stalls in Temple. There are lots of Makeup Stalls near the temple. The cost of simple Make Up will be about Rs. 100 or 200. You can buy bangles and flowers also from nearby shops. Wooden Lamps are normally used and is the main thing you must have for participating in this ceremony. Such lamps are available for hire. When you get inside the temple, you will have to give Rs. 10 or something to get a Coupon which you will have to pin on your dress. Remember that this is an offering to the Goddess, so you should pray very well so that all your needs are fulfilled.

These guidelines clearly show the commercialization in the worship system, where beauty and devotion is marketized. The relationship between the Goddess and devotee who calls upon her is commoditised around monetary transactions. It can be read in the context of the consumer culture, where faith itself becomes

55Shruti, “Men in Saree.”


57Shruti, “Men in Saree.”
a commodity in the market. “It is a process of re-contextualization of religious symbols, language, and ideas from their original religious context to the media and consumer culture.” During the festival season, there is a boom of make-up stalls in the temple premise besides the other festival stalls that sell Goddess as religious object. One may feel a tension between spiritualism and commodification while participating in the festival. The increasing number of professional make-up artists opening stalls at the festival venue can be attributed as a result of the commoditisation of the ritualised cross-dressing. Paradoxically, at the same time, the tabooed bodies of the male-to-female transgenders become desired spectacles in the chamaya-vilakku procession and they get the opportunity to exhibit their identity in the public sphere.

4. Conclusion
A critical analysis of the gender inversion happen at the Kottankulangara temple during the chamayavilakku cross-dressing festival proves that it is an arena of gender identity contestation by applying the theories of Butler, Kristeva and Lacan on gender performance and the body as ‘abject’ as well as ‘object petit a’. It is observed that transgender body has been marginalized and is seen as aberration in Kerala for a long time. The study is able to point out that when transgenders get the chance to flaunt their gender identity in at least the sacred space though it is temporary, may become a legitimisation for their existence in the state as they turn to be desired figures from the status of abjected bodies. The cross dressing at Kottankulangara temple festival is not a transgender religious festival like that of the Koovagam festival or the Yellamma jatre at Soudatti. The MtF transgenders take part in the religious ritual of cross-dressing to experience the freedom in performing their gender identity. The temple premise, under the aegis of a religiously sanctioned


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festival offer an exclusive and temporary 'MtF transgenders' space which has been absent in the public sphere is Kerala. This paper signifies that the gender parodying in the temple premise overturns the naturalised construction of gender identity, but the gender inversion can also be adjudged as an endorsement of the gender binary. It may be discerned that besides the normalization of the subversive gender performances, the religious ritualistic site and worship system is transformed to a commercial space and the temple premise is filled with make-up stalls. The make up for bodily appropriation to the female gender ironically becomes the gender idealization in terms of the patriarchal binary norms. Kerala marks absent spaces for transgender performance, however the MtF transgenders reconstruct a divinity in Kottankulangara to project their self. Slowly, the cross-dressing at the temple festival is transforming to a venue of transgenderism.
DECONSTRUCTING THE ‘SELF’ AND EMPOWERING THE ‘OTHER’
Visionaries in Colonial South India

Molly Abraham

Abstract: While contesting the normative, and existential postulates, which insinuates that self as a process of separating oneself out from the matrices of others, this study examines the relationality and interdependence of ‘self’ and the ‘other’, exploring the complexity and dynamics of missionary ‘self’ and the Indian ‘other’. While tracing the intricacies of the discourse of self through the prism of theoretical and empirical analysis, the study enumerates how missionaries ventured to empower the other by transcending the boundaries of nationality, language, culture and by deconstructing their ‘selves’. This paper presents the trajectory of social construction of the missionary ‘self’ as a fluid, dynamic and ongoing process whereas the Indian ‘others’ was negotiated itself in a dialectical relationship with the socio-cultural context of their culture of origin and the host culture. It suggests that missionaries, well engaged with communities of different cultural landscapes, by teaching the socially and economically disadvantageous sections, deconstructed the conventional images of their ‘selves’ as strangers, firangis, foreigners, sojourners and resident aliens. By articulating the marginality and the profoundly ingrained ‘otherness’ of the underprivileged, they used transformative education as the most potential apparatus to create an inclusive society, which, they perceived, would instil a sense of transnational pastiche and intercultural interactions among the posterity.

Keywords: Dialectical Relationship, Firangis, Inclusive Society, Marginality, Missionary, Transnational.

*Dr Molly Abraham teaches history at history department, Jesus and May College, University of Delhi, Delhi. Her areas of research interest include colonialism, education, social and cultural history of modern and contemporary India.
1. Introduction

The terms ‘missions’, ‘missionaries’ or ‘visionaries’ used predominantly in social, economic, political, religious, diplomatic, military and medical contexts, to suggest that they had/have some specific tasks to accomplish. These tasks, in many instances, could either be self imposed or empowerment oriented. Generally, missionaries are members of religious denominations sent into areas to disseminate the ideas of their religious faith. To achieve this end they had to have a series of encounters with the culture, language, faith, tradition, customs, and conventions of the ‘other’. To deconstruct their ‘selves’ they adopted three predominant modalities—cultural deconstruction by wilfully denying their own culture, structural deconstruction by disassociating themselves from colonial fabrics and ideological deconstruction by defining their own social and cultural programmes to portray themselves as a completely different entities from the very foundations of colonialism. They also tried to project themselves as agents who can empower the other by locating themselves as torchbearers upon the path of progress and empowerment by introducing a large number of social affirmative actions such as education, health care, economic development, and social justice.

Attempting to explore the relationality and interdependence of missionary ‘self’ and the Indian ‘other’ it is observed that missionaries made every effort to deconstruct their selves and to empower the people with whom they had intercultural communications. The western missionaries were not the agents of colonialism and that Christianity was in India even before the establishment of British Empire. The discourse of deconstruction of missionary self became a historical reality when missionaries openly proclaimed that there was no formal negotiation between colonialism and Christianity and Christianity developed in India by and large by Indians, for Indians and of Indians as the missionaries played largely the role of facilitators.\(^1\) The recent

scholarship on this debate explores that colonialism and missionary Christianity are two different entities as both of them followed different modalities, objectives and intentions. The missionaries were both necessary and effective in colonial India, as separate entities. The primary objective of missionary presence in India was to ‘enlighten’ and empower people to achieve their desired result—religious conversion.2

Scholars like Robert Eric Frykenberg, Andrew Porter, Geoffrey Oddie, Brian Stanley, Dick Kooiman, Richard Fox Young and others who have worked on deconstruction of missionary ‘selves’ and empowerment of the ‘other’ argue that missionary historiography has become an art of storytelling in which the narrator plays a decisive role.3 Despite the fact that there were ambiguous relationship between missionary self and the Indian other in the fields of religious conversion, domestic service and dissolution of power in the church, the ways in which these missionaries stood firmly for the cause of empowerment, egalitarianism, inclusiveness need to be critically studied.

According to some traditions St Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, was the first Christian missionary to India. Jawaharlal Nehru told in the Lok Sabha on 3 December 1955 that Christianity was as old in India as the religion itself, even before it went to countries like England, Portugal, Spain and other parts of the world.4 By and large, when the Portuguese missionaries began their evangelization processes in India in 16th century, a considerable number of the high caste Hindus remained outside the missionary fold. It was the disadvantageous communities who showed interest as the missionaries offered them a “social

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2Frykenberg, Christians and Missionaries in India, 21.
gospel of emancipation.”

The empowerment of the ‘other’ became an unambiguous and explicit phenomenon when the earliest recorded conversion in Goa and large-scale conversion among the Paravas, a fishermen caste in the southern tip of the Indian Peninsula. Missionaries maintained that these fishermen were harassed and subjugated by the Arab traders on the one side and the high caste Hindus on the other. Consequently, the Paravas sought refuge from the Portuguese, seeking protection from the influential Arab traders. This favour was extended by the Portuguese in return for their consent to adopt the Christian faith. The Portuguese utilised this favourable scenario and expressed that they had some kind of responsibility for the protection of the members of this indefensible community. Francis Xavier disseminated Christian faith in the southernmost areas, including Manappadu of the present-day Tuticorin district of Tamil Nadu, living in a cave for two years from 1542 to 1544. Being a coastal area, the Manappadu village was predominantly inhabited by the fishing community, with a considerable number of them being the so-called low caste Paravas. Already at the lowest rung of the social ladder and at the receiving end of the social order, the Paravas, over a period of time, became staunch supporters of missionaries and Christianity.

The deconstruction of missionary ‘selves’ derived its ideology largely from Jesuit missionaries such as Francis Xavier, Roberto de Nobili, John de Britto and others. They began to live like Brahmins. In fact, a very few missionaries voluntarily changed their western names and attempted inculturation. For example, Father Nobili changed his name into Thathuva Podagar, John De Britto was known as Arulanandar, Father Battori as Periya

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Paranjothinader and Father Joseph Beschi as Veerama Munivar. They learnt Indian languages and even got acquainted with the religious practices of the people. In fact there was a kind of wilful shedding of their own culture in order to embrace the culture, tradition, customs, conventions and practices of the Indian other. For example, De Nobili was determined to become an Indian to the Indians. His new approach was a reflection of his wish to adopt the religious way of life of the elite Hindu; thus, he dressed like a Brahmin sanyasi (ascetic), restricted himself to a vegetarian diet. Despite the fact that the Jesuit missionaries were criticised by some scholars for supporting the traditional usages of caste prohibitions, they, according to converts, became legendary figures in their lifetime. Consequently, the socially and economically disadvantageous communities, who embraced Christianity for both material and spiritual expectations, had a reverence for the missionaries.

Scholars who had worked extensively on missionary politics and colonialism with special reference to India do suggest that there was an explicit cultural understanding between missionaries and colonial rule in India. The Euro-centric historians argue that the missionary-colonial nexus was explicit in the field of health care. They maintain that the colonial government did support and even funded medical missionaries in Asia and Africa; missionaries did help greatly eradicating leprosy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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Historian K. N. Panikkar, who supports the Euro-centric school of thought, argues that the “aggressive missionary propaganda” against the local culture and religion were possible in large parts of the country because of the deeper connection between the missionaries and colonial officials.\textsuperscript{13} Similarly, attempting to situate the controversial missionary-imperialism connection, Parna Sengupta, who has made an extensive survey in Bengal Presidency, argues that for the ordinary nineteenth century Britons, missionary activity was one of the connections to the British Empire. On the success that the missionaries had scaled on this front, she establishes that the ultimate success was the massive imperial expansion.\textsuperscript{14} Thus, she concludes that the missionaries and the British Raj were “willing collaborators” in the spheres of religion, culture, education and healthcare with a legitimising discourse on missionary literature.

Other historians, on the other hand, who identify themselves as Indo-centric scholars, propound the theory that in the colonial period, the missionaries attempted to deconstruct their selves structurally by disassociating themselves from colonialism and its intentions. Scholars such as Robert Eric Frykenberg, Andrew Porter, Geoffrey Oddie, Brian Stanley, and others, who have contested the Euro-centric interpretation of missionary politics, argue that the missionary activities had nothing to do with colonialism and the European Empire.

Pointing out the differences between the missionaries and colonialism, Andrew Porter,\textsuperscript{15} demonstrates that the association between colonialism and missionaries are distinguished more by the sense of self-sufficiency under the divine superintendence rather than by any conscious or actual dependence on the fabrics


of their geopolitical ideologies. Subscribing to this ideological orientation, some other scholars explores the idea of autonomy in missionary politics. Geoffrey Oddie, for example, argues that missionary organisations were essentially autonomous and had little to do with colonialism. Accordingly, missionaries were in India to save souls while the colonisers had concern to acquire and maintain empire. He even appeals to historians to recognise this “essentially autonomous character” of colonialism and missionaries.\textsuperscript{16} Despite his scholarly interpretation of the missionary construction of Hinduism, his works fall short off offering adequate information on the cultural deconstruction agenda pursued by the missionaries.

Their central argument is that Christianity came to India even before the arrival of the Europeans. Therefore, colonialism and missionary Christianity are two different entities as they follow different modalities, and objectives. The primary objective of missionary presence in India, according to these scholars, was to educate, train up and enlighten all people.\textsuperscript{17} In fact, Frykenberg ably confronts the position that Christianity in India was a western or colonial imposition.\textsuperscript{18} Contesting the role of colonialism and the emergence of missionary Christianity, Frykenberg, who has an Indian vamsavali (genealogy),\textsuperscript{19} argues

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
  \item Robert Caldwell, Edeyengoody Mission, Tinnevelly, Church Missionary Society Press, Madras, 10 September 1858, 21-38.
  \item Frykenberg, Christians and Missionaries in India, 16.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
that the causal conflation between Christianity and colonialism was crudely blunt and simplistic. According to him, the emergence of Christian institutions took place in South India long before the arrival of the Europeans and the East India Company. Not just that, he disagrees to agree that colonialism and Christian missionaries have something in common with special reference to religion. For him, both are two different poles. Presenting the missionaries as agents of change, he argues that the missionaries had strived to protect their converts especially when conflicts had risen with other religious groups.²⁰

Pointing out the differences between the missionaries and colonialism, Andrew Porter, a contemporary of Frykenberg, delineates that the relationship between colonialism and missionaries are distinguished by their sense of self-sufficiency under the divine superintendence rather than by any conscious or actual dependence.²¹ Subscribing to this approach Geoffrey Oddie argues that missionary organisations were essentially autonomous and had nothing to do with colonialism. This suggests that the structural deconstruction was explicitly pronounced in colonial India.²² Emphasising the necessity of paternalistic benevolence, they suggest missionary presence became inevitable for the social, economic and intellectual development of the masses in general and the revival of socially disadvantaged people in particular.

Similarly, deconstructing the missionary selves became an explicit phenomenon in the modern period. For example, debates in the western Protestant countries were centred predominantly on the class structure. In the 18th century Britain, there was an ideological discourse in the church politics, popularly known as sandwich ideology, in which the dissenting middle class was sandwiched between the Anglican establishments and the poor classes.²³ The dissenting communities, which dominated the political life, formed the backbone of the middle classes

²⁰Frykenberg, Christians and Missionaries in India, 17-21.
²²Geoffrey A. Oddie, Religion in South Asia, 12.
accumulating great wealth during the industrial revolution. In a way, Protestant Christianity not only proved to be compatible with the western capitalist ethos but also as an important guardian of its values. This ideology, over a period of time, facilitated the western missionaries in India to accommodate both the middle and low castes in their churches. Sandwiched between the middle and low caste groups, the high caste were given central place in the missionary discourse, for the missionaries felt that it would produce a downward filtration effect.

To make their ideological deconstruction to be acceptable by the people, missionary societies evolved strategies to portray missionaries as facilitators. The missionaries were supposed to possess some special qualities with a view to reach out to the people who were in socio-economic and spiritual needs. Missionary organisations made it mandatory that the missionaries should possess the nature of the distinguished piety to educate the poor. The missionaries must be men and women of culture and of constructive thought to accommodate everyone. They tend to leave everything, even the most cherished things of life and thought. The missionary is not only meant to love the people, but appreciate them at large.

2. Empowering the ‘Other’: Social Rigidity and the Making of Egalitarian Society

Projecting the missionaries as agents of change and progress, epitome of empowerment, and embodiment of egalitarianism, Frykenberg argues that the missionaries had deconstructed their selves as ‘masters’ and strived to empower the disadvantaged people as ‘servants’ through socio-economic affirmative programmes. To empower the other, the missionaries began to portray themselves as one among the other. The rigidity of caste system, which was seen by missionaries as the chief obstacle

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26 Frykenberg, Christians and Missionaries in India, 5.
against their conversion project, underwent a series of structural changes. For instance, the newly converted Christians began to reconsider in identifying themselves with caste titles. Nevertheless, Kerala, known for its cultural symbiosis, attracted a great deal of attention of people of various creeds, races and nations. It was not uncommon for the St Thomas Christians, the most ancient Christian community in India, to bear Hindu names. Interestingly, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Jains and other religious communities lived in harmony there. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the history of Kerala witnessed a symbiotic socio-cultural context where Christians had Hindu names, built temple-like churches, and practiced Hindu rituals to a larger extent.

Similarly, caste rigidities, notions of purity-pollution, and social ranking on the basis of economic status were very common in most of the Indian states. Even after their conversion, the converts continued to follow the caste rigidity and untouchability. They continued to sit separately on the basis of caste differentiations. This rigid practice inside the church was described by converts themselves in Madras Presidency. For example, Vedanayagam Sastriar, one of the most influential Pietist and evangelical poets of the nineteenth century, described how within St Peter’s Church in Thanjavur in Madras Presidency, European Christians sat on benches, Vellalar Christians sat on fine grass mats, and Paraiyar Christians, the so-called low-caste people, sat on the stone floors or on earthen floors. At the same time, their women and children also sat apart - each group according to the ascribed social status. Indeed, in St Peter’s

29 Quoted in Frykenberg, Christians and Missionaries in India, 297; Also see Vedanayagam Sastri, ‘Jati-tiruttalin Payittiyam,’ (The Foolishness of Amending Caste) Tanjore, 1829.

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Church, built by a German Lutheran missionary Christian Friedrich Schwartz with funds provided by the Hindu king Serfoji, different castes sat in quadrants of nave and transept and had done so for generations.  

It was during this time, some of the Protestant missionaries in India sought to emphasize equality upon everyone, especially every Christian convert. For example, Bishop Daniel Wilson of Calcutta declared that the distinctions of caste must be severely dealt with and asked the chaplain of a Protestant church at Tiruchirapalli to read out his letter, on 17 January 1834, which said, among others, that the converts should sit together in church. They should come to the Lord’s Table without any caste distinction. Similarly, Henry Whitehead, Bishop of Madras asserted that Christianity with caste would be no Christianity at all. He argued that Christianity with caste would be Christianity without the body of Christ, and Christianity without the body of Christ would be Christianity without union with Christ.  

 Nonetheless, a large number of Catholic missionaries including De Nobili felt the increasing necessity of deconstructing missionary selves by Indianising Christianity in India. Attempts were made to incorporate Christianity into Indian reality, by establishing a theological and vital connection with Hinduism. The name adaptation to Indian culture, emphasis on inculturation, and closing the widening gap between Portuguese missionaries and Indian converts, allowing Hindu converts to practice Hindu customs, and his principles of consolidation and Indianisation continued to attract the attention of a considerable number of Indians towards missionary faith.

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During the colonial period, missionaries strongly believed that God permitted them to become the potential reformers of India for the exclusive benefits of Indians. They considered that it was their responsibility to impart the benefit of their just laws, rational liberty, and the knowledge of their faith. They believed that they had tremendous potentials to make India good, happy and permanently great. One of the earliest, most exhaustive and focused works on a disadvantageous community in India was successfully undertaken by Robert Caldwell as he turned out to be one of the most admirable fishers of men. In his work, he describes the socio-economic and politico-cultural condition of the Shanar community, the present-day Nadars. In his view, they converted to Christian faith on account of social pressure, rather than individual enlightenment. His genuine sympathy for the community’s cultural status, religious modality, and unlettered nature remains unparalleled among missionary scholarships.

Relying on Caldwell’s work to a larger extent, Robert Hardgrave evaluates the condition of the community with a history from below perspective. Favouiring missionary notion of empowering the ‘other’ and the material development of Nadars in India he argues that the advantages of missionary Christianity became clearly visible among the community as their material conditions improved considerably. As Daniel O’Connor sums up, the Nadars were successful in negotiating with missionaries, but refused to accept missionary move to completely eradicate caste system.

This new direction by missionaries with the teaching of egalitarian ethics opened up vistas to create new consciousness.

34Caldwell, Edeyengoody Mission, 2.
36Hardgrave, The Nadars of Tamil Nadu, 49.
among the people which made them to question the social rigidity of caste system. This, directly or indirectly resulted in the emergence of caste eradication and egalitarian movements such as Justice Party, self-respect movement and so on in the first half of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{38}

3. Empowering the ‘Other’ through Education

The notion of empowering the other, propounded by missionaries and the progress of Indian people in the field of education, need to be studied critically. In South India, for example, a large number of missionaries, both Catholics and Protestants, who established schools for both boys and girls, were from Jesuit Mission, Church Missionary Society, London Missionary Society, and Society for the Propagation of Gospel. Nevertheless, the idea of women education was not welcomed by non-Christians who explicitly expressed their discontent against missionary endeavour stating that women were like cattle and there was no use of giving education to them as they were not getting employment opportunities outside their houses. The colonial missionaries, on the other hand, viewed that the disadvantageous Indian women should be taught technical education to get involved themselves in embroidery, spinning and lace work so that they can earn livelihood.\textsuperscript{39}

In North India, education was patterned after the English tradition to train students for services in the British official establishments and in other professions. Some of the leading women religious congregations including the Religious of Jesus and Mary, established in Agra in 1842, Institute of Blessed Virgin, also known as Loretto Sisters, in Patna, 1853, Mission Sisters of

\textsuperscript{38}Christhu Doss, Protestant Missionaries and Depressed Classes in Southern Tamil Nadu, 1813-1947, PhD Thesis, Center for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2009, 148.

Ajmer of 1911 played crucial roles in the field of education, particularly women’s education.\textsuperscript{40} Visionaries from France, for instance, contributed tremendously in the field of women education in North India. Drawing a tremendous amount of enthusiastic inspiration from the foundress of the Congregation of Jesus and Mary \textsuperscript{[CJM]} Claudine Thevenet, the Sisters started serving the cause of education. The CJM educational institutions such as Hampton Court School, Mussoorie, CJM, and Jesus and Mary College, New Delhi, St Bede's College in Himachal Pradesh, St Margaret’s Training College, Bombay, and St Joseph Girls Degree College, Sardhana, to name a few, continued to impart transformative education in India. In fact, the motto of St Bede’s College, Non Nobis Solum (Not for Ourselves Alone), itself asserts how missionaries attempted to empower the other by imparting transformative education in the fields of art, science, administration, business, and social work.\textsuperscript{41}

Inaugurating the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Jesus and Mary College, New Delhi on 17th October 2017, and the 200th anniversary of the CJM, Ram Nath Kovind, the President of India, highly appreciated the total commitment of the college towards transformative education. He said: "I must note that the Christian community—whose history in India goes back 2,000 years and which has contributed so much to our shared culture- has carved a special role for itself in education. Missionary institutions such as this one have become symbols of scholarship, dedicated teaching and academic excellence.\textsuperscript{42} Truly, the President of India has valued the contributions made by Christian missionaries in India in general and the CJM in particular for a variety of reasons,


most importantly for the ways in which these institutions stood for the very idea of transformative education.

It should be noted that the CJM missionaries considered that education had a tremendous potential to liberate people from all forms of darkness and ignorance. Many schools, colleges, and other formal and non-formal educational institutions run by the CJM Sisters, and their devoted service to the poor and the needy has received a wide range of respect, recognition and appreciation. The CJM institutions continued to train the young minds and inculcated in them a deep sense of responsibility, morality and spiritual ideals together with a solid training in academic, intellectual and character formation. In fact, by emphasising on the humanistic aspect of education, and the harmonious development of all human faculties, the body, mind and spirit, the CJM institutions, had made and still have been making a very valuable contribution to the nation building.43

The CJM Institutions have been rated very high for the qualitative impact that they have had on people, society, polity, and governance. Thousands of alumni spread all over the country and abroad have repeatedly testified that a high academic standard has been maintained, spiritual and moral values stressed and a secular outlook fostered. Education, as an instrument of social change was centred on the idea of inclusive education. To improve the overall development of children, cutting across stereotyped boundaries, the CJM Sisters made it clear that admission in their institutions is open to everyone irrespective of caste, creed and language. The members of the economically and socially disadvantaged sections of society were given adequate attention. The CJM believed that a quality education imparted in time would obviously make women empowered. Empowerment, the CJM missionaries convinced, is an active process with which women realize their full capability and power, and they viewed that the empowering process as the surest way of realization of their potentials.44

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43Kanjamala, The Future of Christian Missions in India, 268.
44Kanjamala, The Future of Christian Missions in India, 268-269.
Once the poor and marginalized got education, there was a paradigm shift in social loyalties. This is to suggest that the underprivileged sections who were loyal and dependent on landlords for their day-to-day livelihood for generations, began to change their loyalties and began to rely largely on missionaries. Similarly, missionaries also felt the need of protecting these marginalized sections of the society in order to redeem them from the clutches of influential sections of the society. Secondly, missionary education also created job opportunities. It should also be noted that there are scholars who claim that the vast majority of the beneficiaries of the Christian educational institutions are the upper class and upper caste, ignoring the ways in which these educational institutions lifted the underprivileged masses from the mire of social degradation, the manner in which missionary education liberated from slavery, ignorance, illiteracy, inequality, superstitions.45

4. Empowering the ‘Other’: Social Affirmative Actions
Missionary historian Ryland demonstrates how the missionaries interrogated and deconstructed multiple representations of women in Hindu shastras, which degraded women and made the temporal and spiritual destinies of women lie not in their hands, but of men. Their husband is their god. From birth till death woman is under man’s authority, her own virtue ought to be obedience. It has never been considered necessary to educate women, because "to educate woman is like putting a torch in the hands of a monkey."46

For many people, Christianity and missionaries appeared to be a sort of spiritual opium (consolation and anaesthetic) to the people who were in poverty-stricken and debt-ridden condition. Grave economic threats were pressing in various parts of South India during the nineteenth century. Missionaries in addition to

46J. C. Ryland, The Socio Economic Development of London Missionary Society Church and its Contributions to the Inter-Church Co-operation in Tamil Nadu Area, Calcutta: London Missionary Society Press, 1909, 4; Also see Doss, Protestant Missionaries and Depressed Classes, 197-212.

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remedial efforts in time of famine, pestilence, or sudden disaster, engaged themselves in preventive work among those who ordinarily lacked means of livelihood.47

In 1818, Charles Mead was appointed by the London Missionary Society to empower the people through religious work in Travancore. He arrived at Mylaady and then went to reside at Nagercoil, in a house given for the use of mission by the Queen of Travancore. Colonel Munro, the British Resident, rendered valuable support to the extension of missionary activities. A missionary report claims that the Queen of Travancore offered material support to the cause of the expansion of missionary programmes particularly educational activities in Travancore region. The report also noted that the Queen had donated rupees 5000 to purchase paddy fields, the produce of which was utilized for a religious training centre at Nagercoil, established in 1819.48 It was about this time a large number of the people renounced Hinduism, and submitted themselves to Christian instruction. According to a missionary report there appeared to have been about 3000, chiefly of the Nadar caste. Christians were inducted into the service of the government through the influence of Colonel Munro, a pro-missionary British Resident.49

The evolution of Christianity in the nineteenth century was characterized predominantly by the economically motivated affirmative programmes. Many of the converts to Christianity were attracted and actuated primarily towards the material and other physical motives. A missionary observed that the converts thought that a connection with Europeans, who were friends of


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the powerful British Resident, would help them to get rid of their social rigidity. For instance, Charles Mead, a missionary of London Missionary Society and whose position as a judge in the District Court in Nagercoil was often sought by converts for social and economic remission. A new era of rapid progress and extension of Christianity commenced when Charles Mead paid a visit to England and pleaded the cause of Travancore mission which resulted in the increase of medical and evangelizing missionaries in 1838.50

Very often missionaries felt that those who are converted to their religion have suffered from certain civil disabilities. They noted that the disadvantageous sections, who were aspirants of Christian teaching, were not allowed to keep milk cows and use oil mills. Trade was out of bounds for them and they were even debarred from using caste titles. In 1847, missionaries gave a memorandum to the Travancore King to abolish the practice of slavery by a law, similar to that passed by the Government of Bengal, which was then in operation with regard to slaves in the Company’s territories.51

The situation worsened with the issue of the Edict of 1851 by Diwan Krishna Rao of Travancore, which prohibited the slaves from using the public roads used by the advantageous sections and forced them to use the roads and ways assigned to the disadvantageous groups. The Diwan directed that the Christian converts should not pass through the public roads, but must go through the field road, that was the path the jackals go.52 Besides, a violent assault on William Lee, a missionary of Lutheran Missionary Society, in Travancore on August 19, 1868 made the missionaries to take up the issue of disadvantageous sections very seriously more than ever before. In order to end the unrelenting oppression by the advantageous and influential Hindus,

50Lawson, Narrative of the Celebration of Jubilee, 334.
51Lawson, Narrative of the Celebration of Jubilee, 334.
missionaries appealed to the Governor of Madras to intercede on their behalf.\textsuperscript{53}

The Madras government after reviewing the case drew the attention of the Raja of Travancore to the principles laid down. Accordingly, the public streets of all towns were declared to be the property of not any particular caste, but of the whole communities. It was also confirmed that “Every man, be his caste or religion what it may, has the right to the full use of them.”\textsuperscript{54} An inquiry was soon instituted to investigate the nature of injustices suffered by the disadvantageous sections in Travancore. The Madras Government had requested the Raja to remove all impediments including the stigma of untouchability, the root cause of all caste based discrimination in Travancore.\textsuperscript{55} Charles Mead in a letter to the London Missionary Society dated 8 October 1851 stated that the missionaries in Travancore raised the status of Nadars from a civil point of view, freeing the community from unjust taxes, oppressive customs, and a grievous poll tribute.\textsuperscript{56}

With the aid of the missionaries, many social groups improved their socio-economic position. The Nadars, the numerically predominant converts, made a significant progress. The missionary intervention also facilitated the community to get rid of many burdensome taxes and the corvee\textsuperscript{57} labour demanded by

\textsuperscript{53} Mateer, Native Life in Travancore, 316.


\textsuperscript{56} Dick Kooiman, Conversion and Social Equality in India, New Delhi: Manohar, 1989, 73.

\textsuperscript{57} Forced labour or bonded labour, which was practiced in South Travancore. Missionaries like Ringletaube influenced the government to put a pull stop to this inhuman practice. For details, see, James S. Dennis, Christian Missions and Social Progress, vol. 2, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1893, 89-90.
the Travancore Government. As a result, some of the Nadars opted for trade and secured sufficient wealth to purchase their own lands. Others purchased land with financial assistance from the mission. Robert Hardgrave argues that Nadars' release from the obligation of servility and their concomitant rise in economic status aroused antagonism among the higher castes. By and large, the education and Christianity worked as torchbearers in opening up new avenues to Nadars so as to escape from their socio-economic difficulties. This, over a period of time, attracted the attention of the community towards Christianity. The Nadars, influenced by the idea of missionary egalitarianism, began to conceive that conversion to Christianity, as a safety valve mechanism to escape from social hierarchies.

The constant clash between the ideas of tradition which was deeply rooted in the rigid social order and modernity, propagated by missionaries played a crucial role in the social history of South India. As Robert Caldwell has shown, conversion that had taken place had been the result, not of spiritual motives alone but of a combination of motives partly spiritual and partly material. J. E. Kearns of Society for the Propagation of Gospel concludes that the vast improvement among those who converted to Christianity is that Christianity taught them to feel they are superior to what they originally considered to be.

Education and Christianity went hand in hand. The essential components of a missionary compound normally included a school, a church, a hospital, and a discussion centre, all of which managed to get the attention of the villagers. According to the missionaries, the Nadars were waiting to be converted along with their kith and kin. The missionaries, though confronted with a varieties of social, cultural, political and religious contentions, were able to deconstruct their ‘selves’ culturally, ideologically,

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and structurally and empower the other through social, material and spiritual means. Despite the fact that they had to undergo through a series challenges, difficulties and obstacles, they were able to empower the underprivileged masses by undermining the spirit of caste rigidity and abolishing the deeply embedded slavery system in the nineteenth century with a view to establish an egalitarian and inclusive society.61

The missionaries, endowed with an idea of equality, attempted to break the fetters of differences at social, economic, and cultural levels. Their policy of material assistance, cleanliness-cum healthcare system and conversion, commonly known as ‘soup-soap-salvation’, introduced in 1800s in London, which attempted to merge evangelism with social action, aimed at bringing social transformation in the lives of the converts, created sufficient knowledge infrastructure, educating the hitherto unlettered masses. Education as an instrument of social action was put to good use in creating level playing fields across the spectrum of society. Given the social predicament and cultural taboos, the missionaries had to deconstruct their ‘selves’ by adopting the most appropriate social and cultural methods to empower the ‘other’ by disseminating knowledge.

4. Conclusion
The binary of the missionary ‘self’ and the Indian ‘other’ in this study through the prism of theoretical and empirical analysis, enumerates how missionaries, in a stereotypically constructed cultural climate of colonialism, attempted to empower the ‘other’ by transcending the boundaries of race, language, culture, religion and nationality, by deconstructing their Eurocentric ‘selves’. Missionaries, to a larger extent, considered that their shared experiences with Indian counterparts were more significant than their actual cultural roots. These aspects were explicitly expressed in their Indianisation of church, Hinduisation of names, and inculturation. Missionaries who lived in villages among their converts expressed that Indianisation of Church was the most

61Doss, “Contextualising Missionary Engagement,” 212.
significant tool to achieve more converts for they felt that if India was to be won for Christ, it must be by her own people in their own setting through the process of Indianisation, not through Westernisation. Interestingly, as part of its Indianisation policy, a considerable number of missionaries decentralised financial responsibility transferred it to the local congregations by deconstructing the centralised and missionary-centred financial regulations with special reference to school education. The study concludes that missionaries, despite their different cultural landscapes, succeeded in deconstructing the deeply embedded images as strangers, firangis and foreigners through their social affirmative actions including anti-slavery programmes, women empowerment strategies, and inclusive education. Nevertheless, Western missionaries, particularly some of the Protestant missionaries, had to face objections not only from the people belonging to other faiths but from the so-called national Christians at large. This was partly due to Western missions’ suspected relationship towards Indian converts, and local Indian missionaries, their lack of openness, absence of devolution of responsibility and above all their spiritual and cultural hegemony. Yet, missionaries’ indigenous methods of offering to God, inculturation of harvest festivals in church, organising melas, offerings in kind, first fruits and so on attracted a great deal of attention of a considerable number of people, who slowly and steadily embraced missionary faith. By and large, deconstruction of missionary self and empowerment of the other, proved to be a crucial phenomenon in colonial South India.
SHEKHINAH: A Feminist Perspective in the Light of Holocaust

Rica delos Reyes Ancheta

Abstract: Women’s stories culled from the memoirs of Holocaust survivors and the lessons to be learned from them have had no significant place in theological circles. This absence or obliteration has practically caused further oppression, suffering, and death to women victims of the Holocaust by depriving them of voice and placing them as subordinate ‘other’ to the heroic, prophesying, and valiant Jewish male victims and survivors. The absence of feminine representation matters as the female voice would have brought a different ring to the male theologians’ consistent harping on God’s retreat, absence, or hiddenness in the Jewish Holocaust tragedy.

This article attempts to offer a broader understanding of: 1) how feminist theologizing differs from masculine theologizing, 2) how documentary evidences of women stories underpin a different kind of theorizing, and 3) how theology may take shape and appear from the points of view of women victims of the Holocaust, steering a theological discussion on Shekinah.

Keywords: Auschwitz, Birkenau, Feminist, Holocaust, Obliteration, Nazi, Shekinah, Shoah

1. Introduction
The Holocaust is not merely an aspect of a distant past. It is by far, a large part of human history that unmasks the severity of human condition. It cannot be delinked with history, albeit, with faith. When Hitler orchestrated his extermination plan for the Jews, his strategies were clear and swift. Concentration camps were established since 1940 and an estimated six million Jews were

*Dr Rica delos Reyes-Ancheta* is an Associate Professor at San Beda College, Alabang. She is currently Chair of the Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy.

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killed. The estimates have varied because the majority of men, women, and children sent in transports after 1944 were gassed on arrival, with no formal records of their names made. People who were deemed capable of work were stripped of their clothing and belongings, shaved, tattooed with a number and used as slave labour. Of the people who were given numbers, “few lived longer than six months; they died from starvation, disease, rigors of hard labor, beatings, torture, and summary execution – by shooting, hanging or gassing.”

Women and children, being the most vulnerable in a war zone, were kept in the dark about the details of the extermination plan. Commander Hoess recounted that conditions at the time in the women’s camp, were much worse than in the men’s camp: "The women’s camp, tightly crammed from the very beginning, meant psychological destruction for the female prisoners, and this led sooner or later to their physical collapse. From every point of view, and at all times, the worst conditions prevailed in the women’s camp.”

Worst conditions for women were consequent to Nazi’s structures of incarceration and psychology of terror. Women’s sufferings were ignored, and their cries muffled. Their stories received scant attention. How could one notice the absence of women when everybody else was being gassed alive? The hiddenness of women at a torturous war time was inimical to

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further turn to obliteration even of God during the Holocaust. This sets the stage to a closer look at the post-holocaust theologies.

2. Patriarchal and Androcentric Post-Holocaust Theologies
Most post-holocaust theologies authored by Jewish male-theologians have long been oblivious to the narratives (memoirs) of women survivors of the Holocaust. Even feminist literature on the holocaust has not done much to raise the issue of women’s absence in post-holocaust theologies.

Post-holocaust theologies are male constructed discourses on the logical absence of God during the Holocaust. The turn to God after the harrowing experiences of pain, suffering and death at Auschwitz would often be deemed more developed and prominent through the writings of male Jewish authors. Inquiries into the Holocaust are centred on male stories of heroic deeds—their bold acts of defiance to Nazi orders or their praise to God despite their being helplessly gassed alive and their courage in taking a bullet for another. Male stories of heroic deeds are replete in post-holocaust accounts while women narratives remain unaccounted for. After twenty years of silence, theologians began bringing in a theological discussion on the implications of the Holocaust, yet, in terms of traditional covenantal theology. Hence, male primacy and bolder presence lent a post-holocaust theological scholarship skewed towards patriarchy and androgenic orientation. Such theologies reflected the theoretical


5Raphael is careful to remind us about her use of the term ‘patriarchy’: “Contemporary feminism is, of course, highly diverse. To call Jewish theology ‘patriarchal’ is, of course, to generalize. Emancipatory, prophetic theological counter-traditions exist in complex relationship with the dominant tradition, and are produced (and often revered by) the very cultures they judge. ... it may indeed be proper to speak of patriarchies in the plural. But carefully nuanced, the noun and its adjective, patriarchal, remain a central tool of religious feminist criticism. ... patriarchy denotes an alienated social ordering that allows a powerful subject to harness the energies of the subjected
erasure of women who are already practically excluded and erased in culture—a case of "double invisibility." The effacement of women is apparently ignored in various cultures and historiography.

The overwhelming nature of the Nazi atrocities and the Jewish losses in the Holocaust has compelled the post-Holocaust generation to search for answers to the following questions: Why did this happen? How could God have let this happen? Some Jewish thinkers have found meaning in traditional Jewish responses to human suffering. Jewish sources acknowledge that tragedy happens to the Jewish people as a punishment for their sinfulness. The first turn to punishment concept appears inadequate to provide an answer to human questions. Positing God as a punisher contradicts a common understanding of a God who saves. If humans are created out of love, how can a God of love punish his children? If he came to save humans, how could he subject the Jews (unless, God is a tyrant) to such atrocities and injustice? Thereby, the concept of punishment negates the concept of love, which was made manifest in the coming of Jesus Christ.

Another view came to the fore blaming the rise of Reform and other non-orthodox forms of Judaism as the cause of the annihilation of the Jews. The third position identifies Zionism as the culprit for the Holocaust. Whether or not the post theologies object to its own end. ... the term ‘masculinist’ has also been used to indicate that it is not masculinity as such, but a set of norms and values associated with masculine practices that are religiously problematic. Men have been the primary agents of this social (dis)ordering – even men who, in their turn, are subjected to other more powerful men, but it has also been in the interests of some women to have adopted masculinist values and practices.” Melissa Raphael, *The Female Face of God in Auschwitz: A Jewish Feminist Theory of the Holocaust*, London: Routledge, 2003, 164, note no. 14.


Rose, “The Holocaust: Responding to Modern Suffering”.


Rose, “The Holocaust: Responding to Modern Suffering”.

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made sense to the families and relatives of the victims, a query remains: Where was God during the Holocaust?

When we merely compare the victims of the Holocaust to the biblical Isaac, in order to test their Jewish faith, it would be inaccurate and it perpetuates victimization as a valid act. If we take on ‘suffering’ as necessary and vital to human existence, we postulate that people have to suffer the weight of the sins of others—which is following the example of the suffering Christ. The righteousness of those who suffered are dimmed and taken for granted. The seeming passive presence of God is justified through a theological discourse on Hester Panim, or God’s hiddenness. The turn to God’s “hiddenness” gives way to human freedom, which appears valid and makes God unaccountable for all the suffering of the victims of Holocaust. Then, the turn to a biblical model of "Job" analogy seems convincing—a clear vindication of God when we acknowledge that bad things can happen to good people. Both Eliezer Berkovits and Arthur A. Cohen adopt the "free-will" defense, which states that humans have free-will to do as they please, whether good or evil, and thus it is not God who caused or even allowed the Holocaust, but human beings.10

Emil Fackenheim, although he does not remove God from the Holocaust, justifies the absence of God since the Holocaust is another Divine revelation, and that a proper response to it is the adoption of a 614th Jewish commandment: not to allow Hitler a posthumous victory by letting Judaism die out.11 Would the exclusion of God in the whole travesty of justice provide a relief and comfort to the victims’ souls? The effacement of God does not sit well with feminist thought.

In everyday life, whether in private or public, in domestic settings, in the world of work and commerce, and in religious


rituals or worship, the subordination of women can be traced back to Jewish culture. Jewish women had no status apart from the males. Their name and their role as women or mothers ensues from their father—the male, the Head of the family. Even if they are born of a Jewish mother, their title and status is attached to the father, the carrier of the covenantal promise. It would be thus, illogical to expect a different pattern to emerge in male theological treatises where, suddenly, women are given primary role and significance as producers of pronouncements and declarations about divine presence or absence. If the Jewish culture (and religion) has engendered women, in their status and role, as the “subordinate other” of men, it would be preposterous to expect that male theologians would have deferred to a feminist wish that women be given equal, if not a special, treatment for their voices as qualified sources for more appropriate theological treatment of the Holocaust.

A high context reading has to properly put a unit (male theologies) back into the broader cultural context (Jewish patriarchy) serving as the ‘whole’ that makes every ‘part’ possible. Every male Jew behaves based on the second-nature view about himself as the primary agent that brings about history. Thus, the effacement and subordination of women in male theologian’s treatise is better understood as being part of male Jew’s culturally-engendered sense of primacy, in-charge of divinely covenanted human affairs. This male sense of primacy and subordinating effect on the female must be accounted for and singly reconstructed in order to make sense of what Raphael has lamented as the female absence or subordination in Holocaust narratives. The male tendency to seek himself even in the most helpless predicament of extermination and obliteration has disposed him to be blind to the presence of his ‘complementary other’. Admittedly, there are those who seek complementary roles among the Jews. Nonetheless, in varying degrees, male-centred theologies praise male dispositions of silence and sense of awe at the incomprehensibility of the divine. Hence, this male

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disposition justifies the divine absence in the Holocaust because the divine in the female stories of presence was beyond the male’s dispositional capacity to apprehend. The theological narratives are thus, also reflections of male inclinations to be opaque to his ‘other’—a cultural obliviousness to what was actually clear and existent Jewish female presence in the shared human story of shame and death.

Raphael raised this patriarchal and androcentric orientation represented and reflected in the work of Dan Cohn-Sherbok. In Cohn-Sherbok’s work, Raphael points out that such theology, “exemplifies the gendered bias characteristic of almost all theological discussion of the Holocaust.” The introductory chapter of God and the Holocaust would already yield clear characterizations of this culturally-circumscribed male-presence and female-absence/exclusion. This male-female binary opposition would be corollary to what has been systematically critiqued by Jacques Derrida as Western metaphysic’s predicament.

Western thought, says Derrida, has been patterned in terms of binary oppositions or polarities: man vs woman, good vs evil, presence vs absence, soul vs body, truth vs error, identity vs difference, mind vs matter, positive vs negative, etc. In these polarities the first categories are prior and superior to the second. The opposition and prioritization demote the second category into subordinate positions, or into the margins, or into inferiority and obscurity. Every system, like the Jewish thought-system, has its own foundational construct; for example, patriarchy—a foundational social organization or model of governance that orders and explains things in terms of male authority, ascendancy, and priority. A patriarchal system presents reality and thought through male-disposed constructs with the consequence of neglecting other questions especially those raised


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because of its claims—questions about the place, role, status, and value of women in society. In raising this erasure or subordination of women in Cohn-Sherbok’s work, Raphael has really challenged a system that swallows and excludes the different, the absent, the other.

The following table shows the binaries culled from Cohn-Sherbok’s work. The male-female oppositions that served as the backdrop of theological formulations cannot but bind post-Holocaust theologies to the binary representations already built into a thought system that a priori enables discourse to follow a certain path.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heroic; affirming</td>
<td>Abject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honourable</td>
<td>Excised, deported, isolated,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-charge of their death, meeting it</td>
<td>Uncontrollable wailing ‘white noise’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with authority, dignity, and reason,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historically conscious</td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcend suffering/ harrowing</td>
<td>Despondent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>circumstance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male declaration — reason</td>
<td>Terrible noise — cry of distress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects: grieving and pronouncing</td>
<td>Objects of terror: shocked, screaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontline of resistance</td>
<td>Out of sight; nameless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have access to the numinous in male</td>
<td>Unreasoned wailing, thus, no access to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spaces, even in Auschwitz</td>
<td>spirit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is thus, a standard Jewish masculinity that is the hallmark of a male master who exerts dominion in public; such is complemented by a lesser feminine binary partner who must recede from public view and defer to male primacy. Raphael laments: “The Jewish ideology of femininity as properly private and modest and whose glory, according to the halakhic maxim ‘is to be out of public view’, was such that public religious utterance of the prophetic kind was culturally and religiously alien to
women in the gendered division of religious labour.” If in practice the woman is relegated to a subordinated role, it is no longer a surprise if in theory, like in post-Holocaust theology, woman’s effacement is commonplace.

3. Wo-man: a Re-look at Tsela
The obliteration of woman is contrary to the intent and meaning of the inherent link between a man and a wo-man. Woman in the Hebrew word is referred to as tsela צְלָעֹת, for she is taken from the rib of a man. “...and He took one of his sides and He filled in the flesh in its place.” Furthermore, this meaning is expanded through the texts found in Exodus 25:12. In reference to the rings of gold on the Ark of the Covenant it says, “Two rings shall be on one side (tselo - a variant of tsela) and two rings on the other side.” In another passage in Exodus 26, the Hebrew word ul-tsela is used, meaning ‘for one side’ of the tabernacle. In both accounts, tselo or ul-tsela, the term further emphasizes the union of two rings that is synonymous to an entire side.

Another interesting facet to the meaning of tsela is the term, tsalim. In 1 Kings 6:34 we see a description of folding doors consisting of two sides or panels (tsalim - the masculine plural form). These two panels are identical, each comprising the half of the assembly. Removing a panel is rendering one useless. Thus, an appropriate rendering of the word ‘side’ instead of ‘rib’ as synonymous to the word tsalim is tsela. It is logical to think that God did not just take a tiny bone from Adam to create a woman for him. God figuratively divided Adam in half to form a woman.

The etymology of the word tsela takes the meaning of the term further to underline its relevance. The being of a woman is drawn from the rib of a man, hence, a wo-man. At the very heart of a self-assured man is a woman. This clearly suggests complete equality and neither subservience nor subsidiary. Eve, a woman,
is co-equal to Adam. Besides, tsela etymologically means, “the half of Adam.” The Divine Creator fashioned a woman to be co-equal with man. This corrects a paradigm that the text highlights the prominent role of man. Rather, it gives way to a substantially capable, intelligent, adept and qualified woman.

The biblical creation stories affirm woman as a partner of man. Adam needs a woman to complete himself. This interrelation of reciprocity is implicit in the Hebrew word, azerk’negdo meaning a ‘helpmate’ or ‘counterpart’. Just as a woman is a helpmate to a man so does a man must also regard himself as a helpmate to a woman. This Hebrew term shifts from the patriarchal regard of woman serving man, to a man-woman confluence. This ‘help’ moves beyond the passive towards the active and mutually rewarding assistance. It lends credence to a woman’s help as something significant and substantial. Seen in this perspective a woman becomes man’s other ‘half’.

Nonetheless, an equally important point in this etymology is to treat woman as entirely different from a man. The biological differences are not divisive but complementary. Wholeness is affirmed by this partnership. Hence, this mutuality or reciprocity celebrates differences and the disparity between the two sexes validates the need for unity.

If the Divine Creator’s original purpose for giving a woman to a man is to provide each other the help each needs, it behoves us to overlook a woman’s obliteration. Hence, Raphael states:

How, after all, would her body have been marked by God as a covenantal partner where it bore no religious mark or clothing (circumcision, sacral facial hair, and the fringed garments – tallit and tziziot) that help male Jews remember the covenant? How would her body protest its Jewishness when, in short, that body was required to do no more than look like a woman (that is, to refrain from wearing male garments)?

Raphael establishes further the implications of this patriarchal determination. The links to the covenant subliminally embedded

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20 Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 23.
in the memory of the Jewish people favours masculine presence and ignores feminine absence, building a system’s bias for the male and bias against the female:

The textual, more than spiritual, problem with this arrangement of memory is that while the men on Kol Nidrei Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944 redeemed their physical degradation when they ‘awakened once more’ to their masculine ‘world of the spirit’ and to the power of masculine congregational prayer to engage God, women fall outside the range of audibility because of what they do not or cannot say, or are not recorded or assumed to have said. Although women did, in fact, improvise ways of marking the festivals, the textual processes of exclusion leave contemporary women apparently bereft of theological resources from which to produce a Jewish response that would be theirs.21

Even in historiographies the role of women has been persistently overlooked.22 Although many Jewish women were active in organized resistance, they did not necessarily make their presence felt in Jewish political society after the end of the war.23 The erasure of women stories, gender has largely been ignored, or seen as a possible distraction from the central features of the history of the Holocaust itself.24

4. Male Theological Constructs of Divine Absence/Presence
Raphael characterizes theological discourse (by males) on the Holocaust as patriarchal in at least five respects: 1) when it postulated a male God to secure or enshrine the sovereignty of God’s name; 2) when it promotes the interests of a male military and religious elite over all others; 3) when it assumes that

24 Reading, The Social Inheritance of the Holocaust, 35.
(masculine) free will is the essence of human personhood; that it cannot be compromised and may be safeguarded by God’s choosing to turn away from the holocaustal suffering that is the product of free human will; 4) when it is consistently marked by the androcentric model of God and historical focus; and 5) when it protests God’s failure to be patriarchal enough. These, in turn, are constructed along the divine absence-presence formula. Absence is further qualified as abandonment or withdrawal of support; while presence is characterized as a temporary or in a hidden mode, further interpreted as either a form of cruelty or respect of human freedom or exercise of divine sovereignty.

Divine absence-presence interpretations in post-Holocaust theologies are more leaning towards the divine-retreat and apparent hiddenness—emphasizing the decision of God to make way for human free will and the exercise of his own autonomy. These kinds of understanding of divine absence-presence would still make possible the expression of hope and trust in every believer. Of course, some believers would understand this divine presence as divine cruelty because they understand presence as orchestration of the Holocaust itself. Post-Holocaust theologies, however, understand absence in terms of abandonment to human agency or moral affirmation of God’s sovereignty or making way for human responsibility and care to be expressed more fully.

Even so, divine presence and absence are the central tropes by which Jews both understand and contest God’s holocaustal will and responsibility. Because hiddenness encompasses both God’s presence and God’s absence, trust in God and in a Jewish future can be sustained at precisely the same time as protesting God’s role in the Holocaust.

Patriarchal theology as a theoretical legitimation of God’s presence-absence in Auschwitz may only be formulated with

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anguish-ridden pens or tortured strokes on the keyboard. This is evident as Raphael underscores the way male theologians have made God mirror male helplessness or “absence” in the concentration and extermination camps. As God becomes depicted as theoretically “accessible” only through His absence and hiddenness amidst the horrors of holocaust, post-holocaust theologies reflect the predicament of His sons reduced to utter defilement and destruction. This is not God’s wilful retreat or surrender, it is what patriarchy has seen and represented as males saw themselves profaned, defaced, and exterminated. Thus, through patriarchal eyes, God must be understood as hidden and absent—logical creations in the image of Jewish men terribly pushed to nothingness. This formulation would thus, logically drag Jewish women along the patriarchal path, and rendered invisible in the process.

Nevertheless, God’s hiddenness must be explained well so as to be consistent with patriarchal judgment. Berkovits’ explanation appeals to a familiar model of human freedom and divine decision-making: “That man may be, God must absent himself; that man may not perish in the tragic absurdity of his own making, God must remain present. The God of history must be present and absent concurrently. He hides his presence.”28 As proponent of the human free-will defence of the non-appearance of a covenantal God in Auschwitz, Berkovits struggles with ironic formulation which, for Raphael, is nothing more than a patriarch’s play with words that, in reality, amounts to divine non-existence.29 If God was really present (even present in hiddenness), patriarchal theologies would not have reduced him to a God who has somehow resigned from his mission. But, because males could only reflect their own defenceless and non-present predicament, God must be represented similarly.

For Berkovits, “God’s love for our freedom effectively exceeds his love for those who suffer its consequences.”30 But Raphael

29Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 52.
30Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 44.
avers that this kind of freedom is actually a masculine version of freedom developed along the ‘autonomy’ line of thought which trades divine absence with masculinist human choice or becoming. This kind of autonomy that projects and affirms the modern voices of patriarchy is also constitutive of a theology that assumes the primacy or ascendancy of masculine power, freedom, rights, and sovereignty. If this is the case, God interpreted to be absent in order to give masculine autonomy a free hand is an a priori erasure, a cultural bigotry that promotes subordination, of every feminine presence.

A different kind of theoretical manoeuvre but, which still operates along the presence-absence formulation is that of Fackenheim: that even as God was hidden in the midst of Hitler’s impunity, the Jews must pay heed to the divine command to endure and survive as God’s covenanted people. Raphael does not hesitate to brand this interpretation as a patriarchal sovereignty mirrored unto God. For even if the survivors of the Holocaust persisted and tenaciously endured to respond to God’s command, Fackenheim has created a divine image closer to Hitler’s whose command was present in every movement and responsible for the disappearance of Jews in Auschwitz. The theological rendering of God’s presence as a “Commanding Voice of Auschwitz” resembles the presence of Hitler’s oppressive commands despite Fackenheim’s insistence that obedience to God’s commands was also an expression of human freedom. This overbearing presence of God who still commands and yet is


33 Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 30.
absent in the overpowering presence of Hitler stirs us to question: Is a commanding God still needed in a place where commands lead to extermination?

Levinas’ version is a divine absence-presence that intricately ferrets out human responsibility in the midst of human effacement. The discourse of divine renunciation of assistance brings in a divine-presence in God’s appeal to expressions of human sympathy. Absence is at the same time reversed by the call on ‘man’ to realize his maturity and responsibility. This is possible even in God’s absence because of the mediation of the Torah.\(^\text{34}\)

It is in the divine word, not the divine presence, that Israel achieves intimacy with its God. The holy is mediated by reason, not presence or touch: “God manifests Himself not by incarnation but by absence. God manifests Himself not by incarnation but in the Law.”\(^\text{35}\) God’s face is veiled precisely so that he can ask the ‘superhuman’ of ‘man’, that is, to love God in spite of God’s turning away.

This Levinasian logic, no matter how it pushes the ethical card, still smacks of patriarchal prerogative which is discomforting for God’s children.\(^\text{36}\) Logically, for a child to be left behind to fend for oneself facing the horrors of the Holocaust does not sit well with the knowledge of a God who cares and protects. To assign His divine duty of protection to His children is nothing but a form of masculine desertion—a husband’s and father’s desertion of his family; like a patriarch or a male who is used to enjoying male prerogatives and leaves behind his wife or daughter. This experience mirrors an image of the abandoning absence and terrifying presence of God. Pained and desolate, God’s children could only wail further as they hear Levinas exhort them towards superhuman responsibility.


\(^{35}\)Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 46.

\(^{36}\)Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 47.
Raphael purports that women have no place in the Berkovits, Fackenheim, and Levinas formulas that caricature God as present but absent in hiddenness. Such formulas do not justify the way women have recognized and represented God as Shekhinah in Auschwitz.

5. Women Stories in Auschwitz: Signifying and Mediating Shekhinah

Stories of women are as significant as stories of men. Hence, it is possible that a sacred time and sacred space for the Jews within Auschwitz was also possible for women. When one is convinced of God’s presence as Shekhinah (שכינה) — the female figure of the indwelling presence of God— one can grasp the likelihood of Shekhinah being signified and mediated by the female. While masculine sanctification of the holocaustal world was subject to the practical demands of prayer, study, and dietary purity, it was also far more cerebral than that of women, consisting not in a vestigial domesticity or the remnants of familial relationship, but above all in words and arguments committed to memory. Hence, the male model of God could only reveal an absent or hidden God, Raphael points to the mediating presence of the female to make possible the inevitability of Shekhinah.


38 Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 72.

39 Raphael relied on the memoir-testimonies of women survivors of Auschwitz-Birkenau: Andre Schwartz-Bart, Andre, The Last of the Just; Stephen Becker, London: Secker & Warburg, 1962; Sara Nomberg-Przytyk, Roslyn Hirsch, trans., Eli Pfefferkorn and David H. Hirsch, eds., Auschwitz: True Tales from a Grotesque Land, Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985. Sara Nomberg-Przytyk was a communist of Hasidic background. She was sent from Stutthof to Auschwitz in January 1944. Olga Lengyel had worked as a doctor with her husband Miklos Lengyel in the hospital that they had built in 1937 in Cluj, the capital of Transylvania. She was deported to Auschwitz with her whole family in May 1944. Of her immediate family, Lengyel was the only survivor of Auschwitz. Isabella Leitner was sent to
Memories of the Holocaust are faint and terse. We may recall from movies we have watched, the faint images of women’s emaciated, naked bodies mercilessly thrown into the gas chamber, but these were often lacking details, which, however, merit greater attention. Sara Nomberg-Przytyk\textsuperscript{40} conveyed her irritation at not being able to avenge the murder of Jewish people. It seems her desperation brought her to a condition of unbelief in the beneficent power of h\textsuperscript{esed} (covenantal love).\textsuperscript{41} For her, everything conspired to wipe out the entire Jewry from the human race. The Holocaust was a painful contradiction of the Jewish image of God who has always been part of their history. In Auschwitz, everything that they held dear—their pride for being the chosen race; their mighty experiences in Exodus, their covenanted relationship with God had neither delivered them from the wrath of Nazis nor ameliorated them in their suffering. God seemed to be ultimately apathetic.

There were also other accounts for either loss of faith in the redeeming God of Israel or a question of God’s existence. Bertha Ferderber-Salz was not even concerned about theological reflection because she claimed God had tortured her long enough.\textsuperscript{42} But she would have a repentant heart as soon a she

\textsuperscript{40}Nomberg-Przytyk, \textit{Auschwitz: True Tales from a Grotesque Land}, 64.


would hear God, as Raphael recounted in the following: In Bergen-Belsen, in the first months of 1945, Bertha Ferderber-Salz remembers listening to an old Hungarian woman softly intoning a Sabbath prayer as she lay in utter dereliction in the darkness and stench of a filth-sodden bunk. The dying woman then wished Ferderber-Salz ‘‘A good week! A good week to you, to the family, and to all the House of Israel. Amen!’’ When asked if she had been praying, the old woman replied ‘‘in a weak, barely audible voice,’’ ‘‘It is our duty to praise God at all times and in every place. God hears our prayers even when they are said from the deepest pit. And even if He does not come to our aid, there are other Jews in the world for whom we should request a good week.’’

Judith Tydor Baumel’s research on Jewish women’s structures of mutual support in pre-war Nazi Germany and during the Holocaust suggests that catastrophe strengthened ‘women’s spheres’ of influence. Long-term crisis situations aided women to enhance communal identities and developed in them a caring stance. The apparent divine self-restraint may construe God’s absence or hiddenness in order to preserve human freedom but this notion which sets God as a vacationing God dims all the more the image of God as the indwelling Shekinah. The Shekinah is a manifestation of God defined by her presentness. The God-She may have been more perceptible in the personhood of women. The knowledge that the God-She has not been absent after all, is reassuring. Her presence may just be either unknown or unknowable.

Memoir literature manifests acts of care for bodies such as washing, holding, and covering disjuncted women from the engulfing profanation that was Auschwitz itself. Abraham Joshua Heschel insists that God’s immanent presence is dependent on

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43 Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 57.
44 Judith Tydor Baumel, Kolot Mikommando Kanada (Voices from the ‘‘Canada’’ Commando), Jerusalem, Emunah, 1989; ‘‘Social Interaction among Jewish Women in Crisis during the Holocaust,’’ Gender and History 7 (1995), 64–84; cited in Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 44.
45 Baumel, ‘‘Social Interaction among Jewish Women,’’ 5.

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human partnership with God.\textsuperscript{46} Emmanuel Levinas has written that God’s self-revelation is only through ‘trace,’ discernible in the face to face human interaction. So, if their claims are right, it can be argued that the cleansing of the body (or face) can be read as a restoration of the obscured face of God.

In Auschwitz camps and ghettos, profanization of Jews was part of extermination plan. The Nazis’ degradation of everything that the Jews cherished is a demonstration that the Aryan Europe had to be protected from Jewish virus. The profanation did happen slowly. Jews were prohibited to talk with friends, acquaintances and neighbours. They imposed a form of quarantine by sending the Jews behind ghetto walls and electrified fences. They were cut off from their domestic and religious normalcy. On their way to deportation sites they were packed with about 70 to 80 bodies. Women who were still menstruating had no way of changing sanitary napkins and babies suffered the chaffing of their dirty nappies. Corpses would be with them for days and under various stages of decomposition. They were forced to overcome nausea, and bore being swarmed by thousands of flies which fed from the dead. The bearing with inconvenience, shared with each other, made the burden of living under those conditions bearable. The inhumane conditions did not kill their spirit and deadened their senses. They refused to die and to lose hope.

There were also accounts of raped women who had no choice but to abort their babies.\textsuperscript{47} A pregnant woman or a mother bearing a child was like being given a ticket to death. Sexual assaults were not also wanting: The case of Pauline, a Jewish survivor, who was molested by male relatives of the family hiding her so that they would not denounce her. Another case is that of Susan who was deported to Auschwitz at age 21 and became a ‘privileged prisoner’. A male Polish prisoner offered her sardines


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and later raped her.\textsuperscript{48} Women also wrote the agony of having to stand naked in front of men, being searched for hidden valuables, of being subjected to obscene remarks, of being shorn of all their hair, and of being tattooed.\textsuperscript{49} The erosion of self takes further step in the absence of sanitary facilities. Lewinska writes:

... to die in our filth, to drown in mud, in our own excrement. They wished to abase us, to destroy our human dignity, to efface every vestige of humanity ... to fill us with contempt towards ourselves and our fellows. Such was the PURPOSE, the IDEA behind it all! The Germans made a perfect job for it: they knew we were incapable of looking at each other without disgust.\textsuperscript{50}

Nevertheless, there were clear attempts of women to defy abuses by washing themselves even in freezing streams. These were bold expressions of defiance to what Nazis wanted them to be: filthy disposable junks. Women had to smell their unwashed bodies and bear with the foul smell of menstrual discharge or bad odour oozing from their wounds because of severe beatings. They had to bear with boils, insect bites, sunburn, frostbite and contaminated food and putrid water. Some women were given prayer shawls as underpants—an indirect assault to their religious beliefs. Hence, prayer and anything spiritual alluding to it was thrown into the mud. But, beyond religious fetish, women stood their ground and instead of throwing away their faith, they hang on and held onto each other. These acts are refracted images of Shekhinah—a caring community resisting human degradation by washing.

Some women succeeded to fight the force of ‘excremental assault’. They persisted in their acts of purification as a way of setting themselves apart. Sara Nomberg-Przytk did wash even if it means rubbing one’s face with a fistful snow. Some washed in

\textsuperscript{48}Waxman, Writing the Holocaust, 149.
\textsuperscript{49}Waxman, Writing the Holocaust, 150.
their own urine. This is an outright refusal to be broken. To attempt to remain clean is a brave stance to remain human.

6. Shekhinah—Female Construct of Divine Presence
Solidarity and mutual support are the more proper attributes to describe women’s presence and thus serving to project, as well, God who is present and one who shares in the shame and horrors of the Holocaust. This veers away from the projected autonomy of an omnipotent God who cannot suffer with such intensity as a God deep in the mud of extermination and mortal anguish. Feminine freedom is not necessarily confined within the autonomy school identified with the male Enlightenment movement or the Kantian ground of modern morality. Feminist intimations of the Holy are concrete and personal and these are gestures of relational presence—touching, ritual cleansing, and washing. These made present in the human face, the eternal Face of God (à la Levinas); care for the personhood and others as mysterium tremendum. Through the idea of covenantal sanctification, Shekinah is logical and justifiable. À la Buber, Raphael suggests that the presence of God in Auschwitz is limned through the holiness of women’s relational acts, signalling the preparation of the world for God’s immanence even in a demonic institution such as Auschwitz.

Women despite being reduced to subservience and subjected to inhuman conditions mediated the blessings of God’s love, justice, and beauty to His creation. “For to clean the self and the other is a sign and medium of welcome: a readiness to receive the other – human and divine – into the ambit of one’s obligation.” The acts of kindness, cleansing, and soothing presence to the other, even for an ephemeral moment, are themselves invitation for God’s presence. Maintaining themselves clean could be deemed part of Jewish patriarchal ritualism, but at a torturous time like the Shoah, bodily cleansing could be interpreted as a conscious rejection of succumbing to profanation that was Auschwitz itself.

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51 Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 68.
52 Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 61.
Raphael, by appealing to women survivor’s memoir literature, calls attention to a kind of freedom that maintains a capacity to respond to the needs of the other. This capacity is not to assert the freedom of the Kantian and existentialist modes but the responsiveness to the other, which was not, and could not be, a bid for freedom but for the conservation of love against the gross profligacies of hate. There, love, both human and divine, was not omnipotent but it could be indestructible. Relationship was covenantal in character: to protect the familial or quasi-familial other was often expressed in the language of promise. Human dignity lay in the preservation of the capacity to love, not in the freedom to love.53

The profanation of Jewish men and especially women, that is, their defilement, reduction to ‘numinous unworth’ and racial impurity, brought about the ground and the cause for exerting cleansing and making God’s face visible—for in the presence of faces that would render recognition, touch, relationship, and community almost impossible, efforts to recognize and restore the face is also to restore sacredness. Washing in Auschwitz was an expression of hope, preventing disorder, filth, chaos, and agony to take over life. This may seem ordinary—a natural response of any woman in a survival instinct; but, at a closer scrutiny, this meant much more for Jewish women who did not only exist to march to the gas chamber. It was a resistance to further loss of one’s dignity. Those who did not take care of themselves through washing or cleansing, even if only done with urine, or coffee, or dirty water from the sewer, died more quickly than those who refused submission to filth and degradation. Washing becomes a sign of the presence of God’s spirit vivifying the persons involved in the process of cleansing. It was, for them, a gesture of protest, a resistance against Auschwitz that breaks them even before the gas chambers could take away their life. It was the women’s way of resisting the descent into powerlessness and absence of desire for life that made God manifest in the filth and evil of Auschwitz. It

53 Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 44.

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was their way of reuniting with the Source of life, purity, and holiness.

It was not easy for the Jews to maintain their dignity and composure in the midst of extreme suffering and degradation unto death. Many would turn to being hideous, cunning, and cruel to their fellow Jews. Hierarchies among them would be created just by virtue of their places of origin or favoured occupation; and those who were on top would not be able to resist mimicking the inhumanity of the Nazis themselves. Becoming more human together was never an easy prospect in the midst of squalor, indignity, cruelty, hunger, disease, murder, indifference, and the like. Yet, a few among them clung on to their moral strength and faced evil through relational resistance and sustenance by extending caring and sharing gestures that opened up hope and togetherness—infesting others with a sense of hope and responsibility for everyone, which fanned the living out of a community. Inmates previously unconnected to one another became a family—mothers, older sisters, sisters, and younger sisters of everyone.54 Stories of women in Auschwitz highlight women’s strength and refusal to be defeated. Male prisoners were separated from females and they had their own narratives. Women’s collective caring55 emanated from their capacity to love, not from a cerebral moral compass that logically examines first the implications of such actions. Female care was a sign of an order of value that is known in the immanent realm but is other or

54“Care was not merely expedient, nor wholly a product of oppressive gender ideology, but was integral to the whole of Jewish religious, political and cultural life, as underpinned by the values of hesed (kindness).” Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 98.

55Tydor Baumel’s typology of female mutual assistance groups distinguishes types of holocaustal community which, though closely similar in function and operation, were more various than those deriving from biological relationship alone. Some groups developed from sharing a barrack block or workplace, such as that of the girls and women working in the Bekleidungskammer (garment sorting room) at Auschwitz-Birkenau during 1943 and 1944. Baumel, Kolot Mikommando Kanada, 343, 345.
transcendent in quality and origin. To refuse Auschwitz is to resist the radical pollution of its accommodation in the world which, as God’s creation, is holy.56 Surely, the darkest moments of history could not rob women of their human spirit. Auschwitz enabled the eclipse of God. The seeming absence (desertion) of God blurred the covenant made with the other. When absence takes precedence, relationship, no matter how genuine, becomes flimsy and weak. Sara Nomberg-Przytyk, emphasized the numbness that is solidified as they became accustomed to stepping over corpses as if they were ‘pieces of wood’. Women, like men, who had been in Auschwitz for even a relatively short space of time became emotionally detached from the mounds of corpses around them.57 In Auschwitz, any gesture towards the bodily well-being of self and other could keep women from descending into the blank-eyed, expressionless state of the Muselmänner58 in whom the divine spark had been extinguished. Genocide is the murder of a people not only by killing but by breaking its solidarities, erasing its past and terminating its future.59

The re-turn to “image” through the presence of women caring for each other made God knowable at Auschwitz. Rather than harping on God’s absence, the face of the seen other was produced in and as the inter/face between persons. More so, in the restoration and return of the human/divine image, a gift of presence and therefore love, passed from persons to God and God to persons. This manifests the immanent God’s indwelling in the human personhood. The divine indwelling was no longer an abstraction but a reality that was made palpable through the presence of women/mothers/sisters who made life for others more bearable and, if unbearable, rendered religiously meaningful. When their lives were later on extinguished by the SS

56 Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 60.
57 Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 61.
58 Muselmänner is a figurative term, somewhat offensive to Muslims, which describes those who had given up the will to live and were no longer concerned about their fate. They were the ‘walking dead’. 59 Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 90.
(Schutzstaffel, meaning “Protective Echelon”, Hitler’s elite paramilitary corps), others would liken their departures to a murdered God, who leaves them, like orphans.

Nomberg-Przytyk’s story evokes an elusive but providential divine female presence:

In 1943, at the age of 13 and from an Orthodox family, she was deported from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz. There her mother, described as a ‘guardian angel’, continued to give her the courage to live. She offered motherly comfort to all the girls who were alone: ‘all the girls tried to stay near to her and felt sheltered by her.’ In the women’s camp in Birkenau, Jaegarmann’s mother tore her own blanket apart and made bands to protect her daughter’s legs from the frostbite wrought by winter temperatures of minus twenty degrees centigrade. On one occasion, transported out of Auschwitz to another work camp, Jaegarmann lost consciousness while labouring in the snow. As in the moment of birth she opened her eyes to a circle of female faces above her: ‘Suddenly I felt as if someone wakes [sic] me and I saw the faces of many women over me. I overheard them saying “the little one almost froze to death.” They let me lie down for a little while longer and then many girls started massaging and rubbing me, so that I started to feel my body, hands and feet again.\(^{60}\)

Relational acts, such as ‘caring’, and ‘washing’ became revelatory of a God who cares. Auschwitz sowed brokenness, terror, and death. The presence of women carers—who chose relational connectedness and unselfish caring reimaged a maternal face of God.

7. Conclusion

To posit God’s presence as Shekinah is to present a contrary position against Berkovits, Fackenheim, and Levinas. Shekinah has nothing to do with abandonment to human autonomy, divine sovereignty, or a command to do the impossible when one is already buried in the mud. Shekinah’s presence is a power of transformation contingent upon mutuality and responsibility and thus, “dependent upon the presence and absence of conditions on

\(^{60}\)Nomberg-Przytyk, Auschwitz: True Tales from a Grotesque Land, 18ff.

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earth that invite or repel the divine; that look out for the divine and human other, or turn their backs on them.”

Shekhinah, in fact, obsoletizes the hierarchical dualism of Jewish concept of holiness as a principal locus of contention between Jewish feminism and the patriarchal tradition. While patriarchy centres on male autonomy and sovereignty, feminism affirms Shekkinah that centres on relational connection, intimacy and diversity within a communal unity. Care, therefore, is the model of discourse that will ultimately make present a God who has entered into a covenant with humanity.

Women caring for one another, reveals the likeness of God, which Auschwitz has demeaned and violated. “Female care was a sign of an order of value that is known in the immanent realm but is other or transcendent in quality and origin.” God’s power and presence is signified and mediated by interpersonal and social relation, powerful blessings that institute justice and judgement on those who violate it. Feminine presence has mediated the present God who “paces back and forth, circling the object of her concern; rather than an absent God who seems to have walked away.”

On these grounds, a patriarchal mode of discourse is insufficient to uncover a God who is omnipresent. The male theologians’ justification of God’s looking away to respect autonomy does not hold theoretically to support the foundational principles of male autonomy and sovereignty. It does in fact, obscures the face of God in human experience of pain and suffering. By introducing a different foundational principle, through the women concept of Shekkinah, in relational values and practices of women, human dignity and the divine’s caring presence are thereby, made possible.

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61 Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 70.
62 Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 60.
63 Raphael, The Female Face of God in Auschwitz, 46.
GOING TO CANAAN: Biblical Identification in Kenya Political Discourse

Giuseppe Caramazza

Abstract: During the latest political campaign in Kenya, both political blocks used religious metaphors to explain their aims and attract political support. Legislators know that they cannot do without religious support. They also make conscious decisions to use religious themes to their advantage. Politicians readily identify with biblical characters and event, knowing that these have a strong appeal on people. Religious leaders should clarify their position. They are not called to support one or the other side, but they can intervene and explain the real meaning of biblical images and the hazard in using sacred iconology out of context. Moreover, they could take the initiative and support political choices that move away from political gains and focus the nation on the choices needed for real development and a social transformation that interests all the citizens.

Keywords: Biblical Images, Kenya, Political Expediency, Religious Identity, Religious Leader, Social Transformation.

1. Introduction
The interaction of politics and religion in Kenya has been investigated by various authors. Yet, much remains unnoticed, unknown or not sufficiently explained. In a particular way, little is being said about the role of religious leaders and the citizenry facing the use of religious paradigms and imagery by politicians. This paper analyzes the use of biblical imagery in the Kenyan political discourse during the political campaign leading to the 2017 general elections and suggests possible responses to the haphazard use of religious themes and imagery by unscrupulous politicians. The paper briefly traces the relationship between

*Dr Giuseppe Caramazza,* Deputy Vice Chancellor of Tangaza University College, Nairobi, is an Italian Comboni Missionary, in Kenya since 1992. His specialisation and research interests are in the field of Religious Studies.
religion and politics in Kenya since independence, makes a deeper analysis of this relationship during the latest political campaign, and proposes ways of engagement of religious leaders and bodies with politicians.

The engagement of religious leaders, and of religious institutions, with the political discourse at national level could create the opportunity for a much needed change. In the past, the churches and Islam did engage in a political confrontation with the then dictator Daniel Toroitich arap Moi. Then it was the question of finding ways for liberation and democracy. Today, it would be the case of shaping truly democratic structures. The present process of devolvement of powers risks a needless shift of powers from the central to county governments. With powers, all the ills of corruption, mismanagement, lack of transparency, among others, also shift to county level. In real terms, the present exercise of devolvement has achieved very little. A challenge can be put before religious leaders, for they hold the key to involve their communities in awareness campaigns, thus offering the tools people need to face the political world, asking the right questions and expecting a new set of answers.

A further aim of this paper is to challenge the status quo, asking politicians to review the way they portray themselves, but also how they define their persona facing the challenges of society.

2. Religion and Politics in Kenya

In Kenya, the spiritual world - in all its intricacy - is intimately part of society and national self-perception. Various studies have shown that Kenyan religiosity is not reflected in a true participation in religious life.\(^1\) In reality - as far as participation in organized religion goes - most Kenyans live a secular life. At the same time, it is evident that Kenyans perceive themselves as religious people and the majority of citizens are ready to swear they belong to a God-fearing country, and a Christian country at

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that. The Bible has a strong influence on people, not only on Christians. It is no surprise, then, that any public meeting must include prayers and blessings. No public gathering would forego a blessing on the proceedings and on food.

The political world is not immune of this approach to religiosity. Religious themes, use of the Bible, religious imagery, prayers and blessings, church-like rhetoric, all have been part of the political life of the country since independence. Presidents Kenyatta and Moi often portrayed themselves as church elders. President Toroitich arap Moi used his membership in the African Inland Church, and his closeness to the Evangelical groups, to promote himself as the rightful leader of the nation. Today’s politicians are no less involved in the use, and manipulation, of religious feelings to enhance their own status among their followers.

During the latest political campaign leading to the August 8, 2017 elections – and the presidential re-run in November of the same year – two biblical images were used by the opposition and government’s political blocks. Mr Raila Odinga of the Orange Democratic Movement, and presidential candidate of the National Super Alliance coalition, moved the crowds telling them that they were like the Jewish runaway slaves marching towards Canaan. He, new Joshua, would lead them into the Promised Land and thus conquer the freedom which eluded Kenyans for many decades. The Jubilee camp – the party in power that had earlier absorbed all member parties of the alliance which won the 2012 elections – responded comparing their leader, President Uhuru Kenyatta, to King David.

Odinga played on his image as a man always fighting the power that be, a liberator, struggling for the good of the people.

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It was not a new scheme of thought in Kenyan politics. Kenyatta’s supporters claimed that their leader—who is left-handed and likes music—could be compared to King David who liked music—many Psalms are ascribed to him—and most probably was left-handed. That was explained with a verse from the book of Judges: “among Benjamin's elite troops, 700 were left-handed, and each of them could sling a rock and hit a target within a hairsbreadth without missing” (20:16). Since King David was also an expert slinger, they reasoned, he must have been left-handed too. President Kenyatta had the advantage of being a rain maker, and a prophet. During a visit to Nyeri on January 20, 2017, the crowds urged the sitting president to pray for rain. Kenyatta reluctantly accepted and prayed: “Ngai witunitwakuhoya, Utuhethayobururiniwitu (Our God, we pray, give us peace in our country), give us rain so that our animals can get something to eat, our land be productive, we eat and get strength...” goes the prayer. And according to the residents, after three minutes “God answered his prayers and it rained.”

3. Roots of the Problems

The religious imagery used by political contenders during the 2017 electoral campaign rests its foundations on real needs of the Kenyan community. The country experienced a relatively short colonial period, which however grew increasingly harsh in the years preceding independence. After independence, many political and social issues stemming from the colonial times were buried under the carpet. The first President, Jomo Kenyatta (1964-1978), chose to freeze any decision regarding land distribution, thus perpetuating the state of injustice created during colonial times. At the same time, those close to political game-makers were rewarded with extensive lands and other

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perks. His successor, Daniel Toroitich arap Moi (1978-2002), continued on the same line and used his powers to reward or punish political and financial partners. Once again, land was used as one of the main currencies of patronage.

With the establishment of multi-party democracy, and Moi’s retirement from active political life, the nation hoped to see their woes redressed. Kenyans expected land reforms and a new level of representativeness in the political arena. In particular, many wished to see an end to the Central Kenya-Rift Valley political alliance and a real re-distribution of resources, political and financial powers. The Central Kenya-Rift Valley political alliance – still active today – has meant that two major ethnic groups – the Kikuyu-Meru-Embu and the Kalenjin – have been in control of all aspects of political and financial life in Kenya, leaving the crumbs to other groups who feel marginalized in spite of their numerical strength and the resources present in their ancestral lands.

A second issue is that of corruption. Kenya is notorious for its level of dishonesty and crafty deals at all levels. Citizens have both being part of this system and oppressed by it. With the event of democracy, Kenyans hoped for a change, which did not materialize.

During Moi’s era, Christian institutions chose different strategies to face political challenges. The mainline churches – Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran – worked together both in awareness campaigns among the people and in publicly opposing the dictator. Some of the Evangelical churches

7 The Kikuyu are the largest ethnic group in Kenya and they originally inhabited the central region of the country, they are now spread nationwide, especially in the Rift Valley. Embu and Meru are smaller ethnic groups, also from Central Kenya, which have traditionally joined the Kikuyu to achieve clout in political and financial affairs. The Kalenjin are a loose coalition of ethnic groups not always culturally and linguistically related. However, since they share the Rift Valley environment, they have been grouped together and thus they remain to have a stronger influence on the affairs of the country.
supported Moi’s regime in exchange of financial benefits. Most Islamic leaders opposed president Moi and his policies. This fragmentation was used by Moi to hang on to power, but did not impede the growth of a new awareness among the citizenry. In particular, mainline churches acquired a moral high-ground that Moi and his cronies could not shake off.

With the election of President Emilio Mwai Kibaki (2002-2013), an economist by profession and a declared Catholic, the churches retreated from the public arena. Bishops kept writing pastoral letters touching on social issues, yet de facto avoided harsh judgements on the new political dispensation. Instead, most religious leaders sought ways to receive patronage from the political establishment either for their institution’s needs or for personal benefit.

4. Use of Images

Identification with biblical events and characters during the political campaign leading to the 2017 general elections must be seen against this background. Kenyans, especially those belonging to ethnic or social groups feeling marginalized by the establishment, expected a sort of liberation. They wished for a political leader who could and would take their plight and act on reforms that would include them in the national political, economic, and cultural discourse. Odinga did exactly that. His pounding on the ‘going to Canaan’ theme strung a cord in people’s subconscious. Odinga’s promise of a liberation appealed to them, even though - or perhaps because of - it contained the seed of a struggle. Also, Odinga portrayed himself as a political figure who always was by the side of the people, who suffered on the hand of the powers controlling the country, and so held the moral right to become the next president - liberator of Kenya.

In the other political camp, President Kenyatta did not directly applied biblical imagery to himself. However, there is little doubt that such icons used by his entourage were approved at higher level. Accepting to be depicted as King David offered the subliminal message that he was in power to stay, kings are
for life. Kenyatta certainly played the part of the political leader who claimed the right to his position - he is son of the first president of Kenya - but also the right to choose his successor. Repeatedly indicating his deputy - William Ruto, a member of the Kalenjin community - as his successor, Kenyatta emphasized the continuity of the Central Kenya/ Rift Valley political union.

The ‘new Joshua’ and the ‘new King David’ images share some features. While these images answer to felt needs, thus appealing to people in both camps, they are also self-centred icons, serving mainly the politician’s interest of the moment. Political supporters in both camps claim that their leader is a person dedicated to the people, with no personal interest but the greater good of the nation. They unequivocally state that their front-runner wishes only the best for others. This stand is to be expected, but certainly not accepted without probe.

As a case in point is the aftermath of the 2017 Kenya elections. After a long campaign, when the contenders spared no insult and malignity against their opponents, the Kenyan political scenery suddenly found a new stability. President Kenyatta and Mr Odinga held talks which resulted in a truce that has being since referred to as the “handshake”. Odinga accepted to change his stance in exchange of a semi-official recognition of his political action. He claimed to be acting to overcome division and polarization. Kenyatta underlined the importance of collaboration with all forces in society. Political commentators hinted that the handshake worked well for Odinga, certainly not for other opposition leaders. In reality, Odinga acquired only the pretence of power sharing, thus giving him the opportunity to claim that government forces had to buckle facing the strength of the opposition, but no real say in the running of the country. On the other side of the divide, with the handshake Kenyatta reshuffled political cards, neutralizing the strongest voice in the opposition and hinting to his deputy

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that his succession could be at risk, thus confirming himself as the real kingmaker able to outplay enemies and friends.

An observer is left to ask what happened to the imagery of struggle and salvation, of leadership and guidance. It is clear that, as soon as biblical references were no longer needed for political expediency, they were discarded. Being self-centred icons, politicians used them as long as they needed them. Once they abandoned them, they revealed those images for what they were: a subterfuge useful to acquire personal benefit and nothing more.

These biblical images not only are for the personal benefit of leaders, they are also based on wrong interpretations of the biblical texts. Few biblical scholars today would support a strictly historical understanding of the Exodus and conquest of Canaan saga. The flight from Egypt and crossing of the desert theme have come to serious scrutiny in the past decade. The historicity of Joshua is no longer tenable by serious archaeologists and Bible scholars. The whole story has a profound theological meaning. It functions well as foundation myth and offers a path to identity. A similar reasoning can be done about King David. There is much debate about David’s existence and action, let alone his being a righteous king. The Bible itself portrays David in both his grandeur and his levity and sinfulness. It would have been easy for religious leaders to remind politicians that the icons they chose were not exactly spot on.

We should not forget that these two images were not the only religious motif used in the political arena in the wake of the elections. Both sides of the political divide moved from church to church – and the occasional mosque – to seek approval and political support. One journalist commented how

President Uhuru Kenyatta and his deputy William Ruto, who are seeking re-election, must be suffering from sore knees, as

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they have moved from church to church kneeling before men of God, who lay hands on them and give them the anointing. Mr Ruto has been at the centre of a spiritual storm as leaders of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God try to interpret what his recent donation of 10 million Kenyan Shillings could mean. Some say it was gift for the development of the church, while others argue it was a political tithe to sway them to vote for his Jubilee Party.11 Odinga and his colleagues were no different.

The use of emotional references to biblical themes might be harmless in the mind of politicians, yet it is dangerous. History has proved times and again that ‘religious’ feelings may easily flare up in fully fledged violence and may result in bloody confrontations. Kenya is not new to this kind of violence. It is enough to remember the many religious based terror attacks suffered by Kenyans in the past decade. It is also important not to forget the violence of the 1990s, when some evangelical churches sided with then President Daniel Toroitich arap Moi thus endorsing State-run violence on citizens.12 The use of religious motifs in the political arena will always happen. However, religious leaders have a duty to intervene and clarify matters. They should not join the political debate to support either side, but they can explain the dangers in using biblical imagery out of context and, especially, following popular interpretation, so often off the mark.

How, then, did religious leaders respond to this arbitrary use of these images? I could not find any official statement by any church prior to the elections that addressed this particular aspect. In the local media, priests, pastors and scholars commented on the appropriateness or less of such behaviour. Yet, none of these could speak on behalf of a recognized religious group. Given that churches have no monopoly on the

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Bible, it could be safely argued that religious leaders have a duty to safeguard an appropriate way to read and interpret the text, at least to form awareness amongst their faithful. This would include the explanation of the right meaning of biblical texts.

The issue is not, of course, limited to religious leaders. Politicians themselves should question their peers who use religious thoughts and feelings to sway political support. The risk is that, by remaining bystanders, politicians would give ground for the radicalization of their followers. In Kenya radicalization is often a label attached to Islamic groups. In reality, there are other groups with strong religious views which also use violence and other criminal acts against persons to achieve their goals. In the past years, we have seen the rise of groups like the Mungiki. These are religious-based groups that easily turn to territorial control and crime, like in the case of the Kinkonkoro (Kisii) and Abamanyi (Maasai). In Kenya, there are more than one hundred banned groups that would fall into this category.13

In the case of the Mungiki it is easily seen how religion – in this case the purportedly Kikuyu traditional religion – is used to justify the return to ancestral practices, even if now outlawed like female genital mutilation, and the use of violence on anyone who does not agree with the Mungiki’s policies.14

4. The Way Ahead
The mixing of religion and politics in Kenya is inevitable. The idea that religious leaders may present a united front against politicians who use religion to their advantage is also wishful thinking. However, there are some possible lines of action that


could prevent the use of religious thoughts and feelings to lead to violence.

In the past, the Churches have been able to guide political activism and direct it towards the common good without falling into the traps of political activism. The Ufugamano Initiative – where Christians, Muslim and Hindus converged to support popular resistance against the then President Daniel Toroitich arap Moi - is perhaps the most known case. The initiative had also the merit to prevent mainstream politicians from using religious themes and actions. The involvement of religious leaders and activists belonging to religious groups in the process that led to the drafting of a new Constitution in 2004 – at times known as Bomas Process - is another example of how churches’ involvement may help refrain the wrong use of religious imagery and understanding.

A second path is educating political leaders to avoiding inflammatory remarks. This can be done by both punishing offenders, thus putting an end to the prevailing culture of impunity, and by helping them rediscover the values attached to religious feelings. In a recent political meeting in Western Kenya, the convener asked people to come and praise God for the many blessings and successes he had in political activities. The prayer – which was there and was strongly felt by participants - slowly turned into a political rally. Only the continuous presence of church leaders prevented its turning into a fiery political debate. When a bystander asked the convener if


17The meeting took place in Kiminini and the author is a witness of the proceedings.
it were the case to let the bishop go, the answer was “no, lest the political leaders would easily turn to provocative remarks.”

Civil society has also a role in educating citizens in the right use of religious feelings. Kenyans are naturally religious, and easily accept ‘religious’ or ‘spiritual’ reasoning. Yet, there is little criticism on their part towards anyone purportedly passing on a religious message. This is why politicians find it easy to masquerade their plotting behind the smoke and screens of religion, biblical imagery, and spiritual insights. There is need for a greater ability, from the side of the public, to detect the trickery and question the veracity of certain remarks. No one denies the importance of religious ideas and feelings, yet it would be important to educate the public to discern true religious concerns from the abuse of religious ideas to favour one or the other political side.

Ultimately, the question rests with religious leaders. Even though religion and spirituality are not to be confined within the narrow comprehension of religious establishments, it is clear that religious leaders have important roles to play. They are seen as the competent people who can have decisive views on these matters.

History has proved time and again that ‘religious’ feelings may easily flare up in fully fledged violence and may result in bloody confrontations. Religious leaders have a duty to intervene and clarify matters. They should not join the political debate to support either side, but they can explain the dangers in using biblical imagery out of context and following popular interpretations, so often off the mark.

5. Conclusion
This paper tried to highlight some aspects of the use of religious themes by Kenyan politicians and leaders during political campaigns. The analysis is incomplete, for it did not take into consideration the numerous activities dealing with religiosity, for instance participation in religious ceremonies, addressing religious gatherings, receiving special blessings and ‘commissioning’, among others. Yet, the focus on a specific use
of biblical imagery allowed the underlining of important features.

Kenyan party leaders have shown an interest in depicting themselves along biblical imagery. They project their identity as mirroring that of important biblical people as a way to describe themselves as worthy of following. However, this is not true of all political leaders in Kenya. Not all Kenyan politicians use religion to capitalize for political expediency. In a recent research, Kenyan Members of Parliament acknowledged that they regularly visit groups of various denominations every Sunday. Interestingly, only 25.8% of the respondents stated they participated in liturgies of people other than their religious group for political interest only. A larger group, 60.2%, claimed they went to visit other religious groups to pray with them, thus implying a sincere participation in a religious activity. Of the sample (n=140), 18 respondents (14.1%) specified that even when they pray with people of other faiths or different denominations, they must attend a liturgy of their own religious background. The latter group signalled at least a strong sense of identification, if not a penchant for radical views on religious matter.

All in all, these answers point to Members of Parliament who value their religious experience and do not necessarily pursue political mileage when participating in religious activities. Of course, the answers afforded by a cluster cannot be adapted to each single member of the group, thus these answers say very little when referred to the leaders of political coalitions.

A second consideration is the realization that Kenyan political leaders are willing to define their persona in relation to the expectations of people. On the one side, this is predictable. They wish to receive support and so they need to be seen as answering specific needs. On the other side, this raises the question if Kenyan political leaders are capable, and willing, to

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propose a journey, the adherence to specific values, in other words if they are ready to define their parties not because of the power-base but because of ideals. Unfortunately, the observation of political parties in Kenya today shows that they are rooted mainly on ethnic-economic divisions, not on vision and ideals.

This paper might be important also for religious bodies in that it challenges their present lack of initiative in the political arena. In the past, Kenyan churches and mosques were the hub of social transformation. Religious leaders promoted civic education at all levels and practically supported the movement to transform society through awareness campaigns that forced the political powers to give answers. It was done in the past, it can be done today, albeit with a new fine-tuning that takes into consideration the great social changes the country underwent through.
Call for Papers

Towards Knowledge Societies

In tune with the mission of UNESCO "Towards Knowledge Societies" [http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001418/141843e.pdf] Journal of Dharma (Vol. 44) proposes to investigate critically and creatively the content, scope, management and politics of the knowledge both at the local and global levels with special reference to Ethics and Values Education in Higher Education [http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/wche/declaration_eng.htm]. As we move to the fourth industrial revolution, charged by the exponential growth of innovations and inventions in the fields of mobile technology, nano-physics, internet of things, genetics, robotics, etc., blurring and merging the distinction between real and virtual, physical and mental, biological and technical, intellectual and AI, etc. fundamental questions are raised in the aesthetic, moral, political and spiritual dimension of human life. The ever increasing economic, educational, digital, information and knowledge divides and the problems involved in the knowledge management in the local, national and global communities also challenge the noble goals of living together in harmony and well being of all. Increasingly we are aware of the fact that industrial revolutions do not bring in sustainable growth, development and happiness for all. Science and technology are to be complemented by arts, humanities, social sciences, and indigenous know-how and wisdom. Journal Dharma invites scholars to present and share the fruits of their research examining and showcasing the scale, scope, and complexity in different branches of knowledge, contributing to humanity's journey "Towards Knowledge Societies".

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Vol. 44.2. Towards Knowledge Societies: Social Implications
Vol. 44.3. Towards Knowledge Societies: Philosophical Investigations
Vol. 44.4. Towards Knowledge Societies: Religious Visions
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