



# Critical Theory and Political Theology

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The Aftermath of the  
Enlightenment

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## FOREWORD: ON THE THEOLOGICAL PROGRAM OF PAUL S. CHUNG

The publication of Paul S. Chung's new work, *Critical Theory and Political Theology: The Aftermath of the Enlightenment*, provides not only an occasion to commend to readers this latest contribution to the corpus of Chung's writings but offers an opportunity for appreciative reflections on the methodology of this creative and provocative scholar. Dr. Chung brings to his projects an astonishing mastery of theological, religious, and ethical themes. His breadth of sources ranges expansively across both space—from Europe, the Americas, and East Asia—and time, including not only authoritative texts of Judaism, Christianity, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism but especially key thinkers representing these traditions in intellectual history. Moreover, Chung is conversant with critical voices that challenge traditional assumptions, in this book especially those posing troubling questions in the wake of the Enlightenment. To engage the thought of Chung is to enter deeply and intensely in a lively conversation.

This is hermeneutical method at its most challenging. Chung strives for a “fusion of horizons” (Gadamer) within an expansive diversity of perspectives. The author probes the genealogy of thought by introducing and critically engaging intellectual history with vigor and originality. For example, in this book the faults and fractures within modernity and postmodernity are explored from the perspective of postcolonial political theories. The author privileges the prophetic dimension, always asking about the consequences of thought for the material world and implications for the poor and marginalized. Chung is so fully conversant with the literature that he can engage each author not only with an eye to the originality of

the contribution but by assessing how and to what degree each one provides usable material for the purpose of instantiating more just political and economic power relationships across the globe.

To enter Chung's world is to become engaged in a passionate and sustained argument about things that matter. It is impressive to what degree his work turns to unconventional sources for theological reflection, in order to generate prophetic encounter. The thoughts of the Frankfurt school (Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin), post-Holocaust theologians (Gollwitzer, Marquardt), radical philosophers (Marx, Nietzsche, Foucault), and post-colonial theorists (Fanon, Spivak, Bhabha) raise suspicion about the interests veiled in theological discourse and insist on examining truth claims to unmask their ideological implications on behalf of liberating praxis (Gramsci).

Chung's method also demonstrates rare interreligious sensibilities, which are imperative for theological discourse in our global era. Here the perspective of Orientalism (Said), the context of Korean colonization by Japan, and especially comparative religious studies (as formulated by Troeltsch) provide crucial perspectives for clarifying the way forward. His interpretation of Troeltsch exemplifies Chung's capacity to affirm innovation, the incorporation of comparative religion into theological method, while also critiquing Troeltsch's historicizing tendencies as characteristic of the Enlightenment. Despite the limitations, Chung demonstrates how fragments of usable tradition can be rehabilitated from Troeltsch for critical social ethics, religious humanism, and alternative modernities.

Finally, Chung's method is in service of constructive theology. In this book, for example, the point of departure involves analysis of the implicit self-interest (Eurocentrism) and thereby distorted claims by key representatives of the Enlightenment (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Mill, Habermas). Only by critiquing the universalizing claims of the Enlightenment can the project of constructing a liberating, postcolonial political theology bear fruit for subaltern peoples at the periphery of the world's power structures and for an endangered creation. The Jesus movement, which accords with God's purpose of bringing forth the kingdom, continues to summon a "confessing church" in this moment, even as earlier witnesses (Barth, Bonhoeffer, and various liberation theologians) provide us direction in relation to their own contexts.

These elements of method constitute the hermeneutical project of Paul S. Chung, who issues readers a challenging call for theological *metanoia* and *parrhesia* in our postcolonial context. Chung undertakes this method

to articulate a constructive theology for our time that integrates political ethics, solidarity with the co-humanity of others, religious humanism, and discipleship according to the dangerous memory of Jesus. These constitute fragments of a usable tradition for the activation of a servant church, which is committed to democracy, social justice, and shalom.

Wartburg Theological Seminary  
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Transfiguration 2019

Craig L. Nesson

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

An imitation must not be necessarily reprimanded. In my study of critical theory and political theology, I have a memory—albeit a sad memory—of my colleague, Professor Vítor Westhelle at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, who passed away during the writing of this book. He has stimulated my intellectual quest in developing *Postcolonial Imagination* in terms of an archeological theory of interpretation and comparative religious ethics. My study of critical theory and political theology in the aftermath of Enlightenment respects Dr. Westhelle's keen insight in his *After Heresy* in which liberation theology remains a source of inspiration for the development of postcolonial theologies.

I give my thanks to Professor Craig Nesson who has honored me by way of a Foreword. A public ethicist committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he has become a faithful companion in solidarity with my life as a scholar and a pastor. I extend my thanks to Professor Thomas McCarthy who helped me to improve understanding of his own position of genealogical inquiry within the tradition of critical theory. Peter Watters must be thanked for his careful proofreading and valuable comments. Lastly, I extend my gratitude to Philip Getz, editor at Palgrave Macmillan, for accepting my study of critical theory and political theology into the book series of philosophy and religion.

Easter, Berkeley, CA, 2019

Paul S. Chung

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## CHAPTER 1

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# Introduction

“How can one dare blame the sciences before one of Europe’s most learned Societies, praise ignorance in a famous Academy, and reconcile contempt for study with respect for the truly learned? I have seen these contradictions, and they have not rebuffed me.”<sup>1</sup>

This famous statement is in response to the question proposed by the Academy of Dijon in the year 1750: “Has the restoration of the sciences and arts tended to purify morals?” It is Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) who argues that human souls have been corrupted as the sciences and arts advance toward perfection. There is a relationship between corruption and Enlightenment. Ancient politicians talked about morals and virtue, while politicians of today talk only of business and money.<sup>2</sup>

The European notion of Enlightenment, literally known as the century of lights (*Le Siècle des Lumières*), or *Aufklärung* in Germany, refers to an intellectual and philosophical movement during the eighteenth century. Its chief proponents, the *philosophes*, challenged the prejudices and narrow-mindedness of those in power. They were convinced that the people could be enlightened in terms of education and rational reasoning. Progress on earth was their slogan. Belief in Enlightenment and progress was featured in the massive *Encyclopedia* edited by Diderot.

However, in Rousseau’s view, virtue and Enlightenment are in apparent contradiction. Inequalities were thus created among people to the degree that the society has developed out of the egalitarian independence of the state of nature. In fact, natural human beings were endowed with

self-preservation or self-love and compassion. Hobbes' "war of all against all" has little to do with the true state of nature, but was the product of historical development. Its warlike last stages of the state of nature led to establish a social contract in civil society. When one follows the progress of inequality in different evolutionary stages, the establishment of the law and the right of property are the first stage. The institutions of government and the magistracy are the second. The last stage of inequality is the change of legitimate power into arbitrary power.<sup>3</sup> The powerful oppression of the weak under an illegitimate and despotic government is likened to a "war of all against all," which is to be overthrown by revolution.

In social life, Rousseau holds, the institution of property and the growth of wealth led to inequality, crime, and oppression, which may become a necessary means of establishing civil society. Civil liberty or freedom in the social contract takes precedence over virtue. His paradox lies in a return to the classical principle of virtue in the *First Discourse*, while at the same time pursuing the modern principle of civil liberty against virtue in the tradition of the antiquity in the *Second Discourse*.

### INCOMPLETE PROJECT OF MODERNITY AND IRON CAGE

In the present study of critical theory and political theology, I take Rousseau's view of Enlightenment as the point of departure. In dealing with the aftermath of the Enlightenment, I still remain in the unfinished project of modernity, especially in accordance with critical theory. The project of modernity undergirds the relentless development of natural sciences and propels the universalistic foundations of morality, law, and art. It also undertakes and specializes in the rational organization of social relations and dominates cultural life.<sup>4</sup>

But, it is not finished yet, despite its pathologies. One is leaving Enlightenment behind, while the other is in pursuit of its incomplete project in terms of an alternative form of modernity. Europe began to comprehend its emergence of hegemony, coping with the crisis and challenges announced by the Reformation (1517). Then Europe's hegemony came to fruition, along with the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and the French Revolution; Industrial Revolution subsequently accompanied the expansion of European powers in the colonies. European global dominance began around 1500 CE: the communication breakthrough with Gutenberg (1390–1468), Columbus' discovery and Spanish colonial conquest of the Americas (1451–1506), the Scientific Revolution with Copernicus (1473–1543), and Martin Luther's (1483–1546) Reformation.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, we need to consider that the historical turning point emerged in the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries during the Renaissance. Social technology in the form of Italian bookkeeping emerged in the cities of Venice and Florence and revolutionized the entire economic system. This rational breakthrough known today as double-entry bookkeeping offered the foundation for shaping the whole of modern society. This calculating rationality characterizes modernity in terms of a functional mechanism instilled with cost and utility. The functional mechanism is best found in the cost-and-profit calculation of the new capitalist enterprise in terms of utility and efficiency. To the degree that the utility calculation has been transformed into a legal system and its codification, Puritans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries regarded the social system as the divine will.<sup>6</sup>

In dealing with the incomplete project of modernity, it is significant to advance the analysis of Enlightenment and modernity in connection with critical theoretical argument. *Hic Rhodes, hic salta* (“here is Rhodes, here you will jump”).<sup>7</sup> We know that the ancient story in a proverbial Latin expression was made in the island of Rhodes in the Aegean Sea. For instance, someone was boasting about a record of long jump in an overseas competition. The islanders wanted accountability and responsibility for this claim, responding that the bragger had to prove the island of Rhodes.

To have a critical look at the complex reality of late modernity, I take Enlightenment to be the springboard for analyzing the incompleteness of the modernity narrative, in both its positive and its negative aspects. In this sociological, hermeneutical study, I find that the socioeconomic analysis of capitalism remains crucial in its historical development. An ethical, theological endeavor is undertaken in correlating critical theory with political theology. Here, an ethical vision is to pursue the common good based on recognition, justice, and solidarity in the life of the margins.

In a different context from Rousseau, a sociological study of rationalization and capitalism has been taken up by Max Weber. In his analysis of the process of disenchantment of the world, Weber draws attention to a notion of purpose rationality, which is based on employing appropriate means to a given end. The rise of purpose rationality leads to the disenchantment of the world, making Western people dependent upon technological control of nature and society. It has unleashed the exercise of instrumental reason that has caused a loss of meaning and freedom. It results in human domination over the natural world and ecological devastation. In his conclusion

of the study of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, Weber argues that the modernity falls into the trap of the 'iron cage.'<sup>8</sup>

Weber's analysis of the rational side of capitalism cannot be properly comprehended apart from his political sociology in dealing with the irrational and gloomy side of capitalism. Most of Weber's critics tend to undermine his critical analysis of the non-rational and colonial side of imperial capitalism in the political sphere, which includes Marx's basic concern of the capitalist economy. However, Weber's major concern is to analyze the rational side of economic sphere in the field of relation of production in regard to religion, society, and culture. Thus, Weber's elective affinity between Protestant asceticism and capitalist ethos contradicts an a priori, idealist approach, unveiling problems and limitations of "the liberal Protestant metanarrative."<sup>9</sup>

Unlike John Milbank's account of the liberal Protestant metanarrative, Weber's sociology calls into question the process of disenchantment of the world and its outcome of the secularization fallen into the reality of iron cage. It is not credited as betraying and subverting the modern history of the Enlightenment and rationalization; instead, it is to interpret history in a sociological model or types in seeking elective affinity between religious ideas and material interests in the historical course of development. His concern is not to essentialize the metanarrative of the liberal Protestantism, but to analyze it by challenging its cul-de-sac.

In Weber's account, the Puritan ethic, based on its aristocracy of salvation, has renounced the universalism of love and deviated the direction of a universal brotherhood. It has been trapped in an iron cage. In order to overcome this phenomenon, Weber takes into account religious ethic of conviction or reciprocity. In 'Religious Rejection of the World and Their Directions,' Weber calls for the religious ethic of brotherliness or reciprocity among the prophetic religions in contrast to the unbrotherly, inner-worldly orders of life. The religious ethic of brotherliness remains the fundamental imperative of all ethically rationalized religions: to help widows and orphans in distress, to care for the sick and the poor brother and sister of faith, and to give alms.<sup>10</sup>

But Weber sees the sign of a new polytheism since reason was split up into a plurality of value spheres and threatened to ruin its own universality.<sup>11</sup> Although the grandiose rationalism of an ethical and methodical conduct of life has dethroned this polytheism in favor of the one thing that is needful, he holds, "many old gods ascend from their graves. They are disenchanting and hence take the form of impersonal forces."<sup>12</sup>

Against this reality of polytheism, a millennial, socialist attempt is undertaken to send the old gods back to their grave; it would fail at establishing heaven on earth. Indeed, modern structures of consciousness emerged out of disenchantment with religious-metaphysical worldviews. It has brought technological progress and liberation, while falling into the inevitable bondage of the iron cage.

However, Weber has not fully managed to develop his religious ethic of reciprocity to combat the reified reality of impersonal forces, nihilism, and polytheism. He expects that new prophecies will arise at the end of the tremendous development, creating a powerful rebirth of old ideas and ideals. Weber's conclusion in expectation of the last men of this cultural development sounds a negative tone: "Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved."<sup>13</sup>

### CRITICAL THEORY: ENLIGHTENMENT AND RACE

In line with Weber, critical theory by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno seeks to uncover the mythical face of Enlightenment. They developed two theses: "Myth is already enlightenment," while "enlightenment reverts to mythology."<sup>14</sup> This double thesis traces the dialectic of myth and Enlightenment in the figure of the Odyssey, who is represented as one of the earliest representative documents of bourgeois Western civilization. Elevating human beings as masters of nature, the Enlightenment program has dispelled myths and overthrown fantasy through knowledge. Knowledge is not exempt from the influence of wealth and power, while establishing human beings as the masters of nature.

They argue that the dialectic of Enlightenment and power is intertwined with the dual relationship of progress to both cruelty and liberation. The myth of modernity goes hand in hand with the domination of a totalitarian order, as seen in the cruelty of National Socialism and the Shoah. In "enlightenment revealing itself as mythology," the new order of fascism reveals itself as the destruction of it. The unreason manifests itself in the makeup of the assimilated Jews; its control adapted Jews and effaced them within themselves through the painful scars of domination.<sup>15</sup>

Horkheimer and Adorno develop a critical theory of Enlightenment in debunking its racial thinking and the Odyssey's cunning and trickery. Following in the tradition of critical theory, Thomas McCarthy puts his genealogical analysis of racial thinking within the idea of human development.

He takes a stance in terms of the correlation between racism and imperialism. One of his major contributions lies in incorporating the genealogical inquiry of progress and racial thinking into critical theory.

The Enlightenment program, predicated in modernization, took the form of a hierarchical ordering of races and cultures in the nineteenth century. The conception of a Eurocentric universal history has been fundamental to the self-understanding of modern Europe in its outlook of the rest of the world.<sup>16</sup> According to McCarthy, it is of fundamental significance to contribute to the critical history of the present through revealing various forms of neoimperialism and neoracism in the postcolonial world.<sup>17</sup>

In a similar vein, Dipesh Chakrabarty noticed that contestation in the now global discourse of modernity derives from the relation between the margins and the center. In this polycentric and multivocal discussion, it is untenable for 'us' and 'them' to propagate the monological, monocultural Eurocentrism.<sup>18</sup> A new form of modernity can be sought to transcend the Eurocentric form of modernity.

Actually, in Charles Taylor's account of alternative modernities, the universal modernity (European colonialism) cannot be actual without the particular modernity. For example, a Japanese modernity, a Chinese modernity, an Indian modernity, or various modulations of Islamic modernity and the like are not homogeneous with one another. Their different cultures would be constituted as alternative forms alongside Western modern societies.<sup>19</sup> Grounded in different cultures and different histories, they interact with European imperialism; they should engender quite different modern cultures and societies through plurality and hybridity.

## POLITICAL THEOLOGY AND ETHICAL REASONING

Along with the sociological and critical theoretical trajectory about the Enlightenment, racial thinking, and modernity, I am concerned with advancing political theology and its ethical reasoning. Political theology in the European context has emerged out of a crisis of Christian faith 'after Auschwitz.' It has developed the public testimony of faith in terms of the political discipleship of the Gospel. It challenges a notion of religion as a private affair. It has the primary task of making public use of faith in a politically critical and publicly responsible manner.<sup>20</sup>

If theology agrees that God is not to be objectified as a thing under human manipulation, it takes into account God as the wholly other. Hence, a theological construction remains partial, being approximate on the way to the truth of God: contextual, dialectical, and hermeneutical. Theological talk of God and divine command (ethical discipleship) is socially located and politically bound.

Moreover, if ethics is defined as “the theory of the conduct of human life,”<sup>21</sup> ethical questions imply life questions in response to and with responsibility for the reality of life. It is called forth by concrete life situations in eliciting ethical questions, validity, and judgment, and involving in the ethical meaning of the social reality. Ethical reasoning entails the human experience of social reality but in a theologically and sociologically intensified manner, because it is “intertwined with the institutional life of families, schools, churches, and political and social institutions.”<sup>22</sup>

Ethical theology classifies the publics into political realm, social and cultural institutions, academy, church, and religious communities. Political theology has the self-critical task of introducing into ethical discourse a sociological frame of reference, one that is appropriate and proper to the reality of human life.

This shapes the contextual character of theology, which is undertaken by critical reflection of the Word of God in correlation with the concrete life situations. A dialectical unity between political theology and ethical reasoning takes issue with an attempt at accommodating the Gospel to the interest of the powerful and the structure of oppression and injustice. It develops political responsibility and emancipation for practical solidarity with the socially weaker and the margins.<sup>23</sup>

This perspective leads to explaining and developing the theological doctrine of God explicitly as ethical theology. For Barth, the teaching of grace of justification is integrated with the ethical framework of sanctification (doing the Word and the call to discipleship)<sup>24</sup> and vocation (responsibility and liberation).<sup>25</sup> Within the integrative framework of justification, sanctification, and vocation, theology and ethics stand in connection, underlying political theology through social, ethical guidance in terms of forgiveness of sin, human practice of the Torah, responsibility, and emancipation.

Given this relation, political theology has special ethic, because the commands of God are not general, but have specific and definite directions in a social, historical context. The contextual character of theology views God’s commandment as the speech of God in a concrete form to human

beings in a concrete time and place. Moreover, special ethic needs hermeneutical significance, since the radical character of the living Word of God can only be approximately described and comprehended in human words—allowing for a certain breadth and openness.<sup>26</sup>

In the understanding of human beings in light of the Word of God, it can always be conditioned and affected practically by human self-understanding and its framework, as well as language and categories.<sup>27</sup> Barth's theology is on the threshold toward ethical theology through the Word of God and its special ethical component.

Hermeneutical inquiry strengthens the special ethic in a contextual and socio-critical manner, while incorporating a socio-critical and political dimension into theological reflection and construction. The contextual character of theology, which is of political and ethical character, comes along a hermeneutical inquiry. This helps to take into account the sociological study of religion, historical-critical method, and comparative study of religion, in particular as proposed by Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923).

#### COMPARATIVE STUDY OF RELIGION AND LIFEWORLD

Unlike Barth, Troeltsch stands along with sociological, historical sociology that Weber takes initiative in his study of Puritan ethic and the spirit of capitalism. Troeltsch makes a methodological contribution to ethical theology and the study of religion, which comes along the lines of Weber's sociology of religion. The liberal awareness of modernity shapes his ethical theology and comparative study of religion within the universal history of religions. Troeltsch contends that the Enlightenment broke down a European culture dominated by the church and theology. First of all, it shaped and developed the impulses and consequences of political, social, and economic secularization, bringing the intellectual legacy of Renaissance and the great philosophy of the eighteenth century into a power in influencing and conditioning "public life, a way of life, a culture, and an educational system."<sup>28</sup> It required "a complete reorientation of culture in all spheres of life."<sup>29</sup>

The supernatural powers of church and theology are driven out into the background, reduced to the narrower private practical sphere. Nonetheless, the Enlightenment was in part a religiously inspired process of liberation (Reformation) that discovered the autonomous self-legislating individual as the most important feature of the modern world.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, Troeltsch's historical-critical inquiry undertakes the comparative study of religion within the framework of universal history. Sociological study of social ethic and historical, critical inquiry become an undercurrent in shaping my theoretical endeavor of conceptualizing political theology in connection with the religious ethic in the current sociological study of multiple modernities in the Axial Age of 800–200 BCE. The Axial Age is the period in which the profound change occurred as an intellectual, religious breakthrough in the parallel transformation in distant cultures like Israel, India, Persia, China, and Greece. It should include Christianity and Islam.

According to Troeltsch, religion is firstly expressed within a historical context, since it is not separated from history at all. It is expressed from the standpoint of historical consciousness. Secondly, he develops Christian thought and life in frank interaction with the contemporary world. His historical-critical method intersects with social location, in which he emphasizes a mutually reciprocal relationship between the historical development of Christianity and its social environment.

The method of correlation presupposes that all phenomena in the history of civilization can in no way reach beyond correlative involvement and mutual influence. Christian ethics is to be renewed constantly in search for the involvement and the compromise with contemporary questions, as well as in encounter with other religious traditions.

Religions have sources for moral principles and ethical ways of life in culture and society, facilitating a practical construal of the world for moral aspirations. A religious tradition is more complex and diverse than comprehended in terms of one ground metaphor or one universal metanarrative. Rather, many metaphors co-exist in religious moral lexicons, so that the meaning of life and its dignity cannot be reduced to one single metaphor of Western modernity or Eurocentrism.

Ethical theology within a comparative, religious framework presents more practical and persuasive rationale, critical inquiries, and conceptual clarities; it underlays responsibility and solidarity in public spheres for the integrity of life, religious humanism, justice, and peace. Ethic is influenced by tradition, and a cultural way of life includes a specific worldview and ethos influenced by history, language, and culture. Historical relativity can be seen in terms of lifeworld, which is pre-given to all of us. Human beings are among the components of the lifeworld, which facilitates an ethical theology in cutting through the limitation of Troeltsch's method of correlation and historical relativism.

Thrown into an alien sphere, we may discover the truths in Europeans, Africans, Hindus, or Chinese. Their truths are fixed and generally verified or verifiable for them, although by no means the same with one another. The phenomenology of lifeworld embraces and guides the inquiry of the interpreter in correlation with historical relativity. Despite all relativity, the objects of the lifeworld are common to all and identifiable for them and for us, operative as a general structure in all its relative features and their relative conceptions.<sup>31</sup>

Along with the phenomenology of the lifeworld, a sociological study of comparative religion can provide a larger framework for ethical theology to develop a multidimensional-ethical component in everyday life in the interreligious context of mutual learning and renewal. Comparative ethical thinking takes into account a morally pluralist world and articulates the basic mode of human life as a moral being. It provides religious humanism for ethical theology to improve on the impoverishment and malnutrition of the modern moral subject, since religious sources have been elicited by the modernist banishment of it from moral reasoning.

It also is directed against the modernist extremity of over-humanization, as seen in the figure of the Odyssey or Descartes' *cogito* excluding the other and mastering nature. Religion and morality are aspects of human experience that are of a deeply social character. Language and symbols are socially meaningful and necessary in sharing events in society and the world in terms of explanation and communication. Theology as rational reflection is in search of understanding God and human experience as a moral being. If theology is a way of construing the world by interpreting it in light of the mystery of God, ethical theology can be featured in a hermeneutical inquiry of construing the world. If theology as a construing project intends to relate all events to their belonging to God, religion and morality are brought in a unity. For James Gustafson, "[t]heology primarily is an activity of the practical reason. This it shares with ethics."<sup>32</sup>

### HERMENEUTICAL REALISM AND CULTURAL SEMANTIC

I take into account the theocentric reflection of theology as practical reason and its aspect of world construal, while having reservation about its limited reflection of hermeneutical significance.<sup>33</sup> Rather, I take a path of hermeneutical realism, which concerns the semantic intentionality of the text with attention to the interpreter. Realistic reading or interpretation is anchored in epistemological procedure by way of appreciation, critical

method of problematization, and recovery of meaning through the immanent critique and fusion of horizons. This epistemological procedure is undertaken in appreciation of the effectiveness history and culture, while problematizing knowledge/power relations, which distort religious ideas by material interest, as well as the dialogical situation.

The text presents a world of meaning in front of itself, and an interpreter engages in the complexity of the text. In the event of understanding, such fusion of horizons between the text and the reader makes interpretation possible in a specific and contextual manner.

In the phenomenology of the lifeworld, however, a fusion of horizons can be carried out in many and diverse ways. First, it transpires in correlation between tradition and one's historical consciousness in reading and understanding the texts. Secondly, in the process of understanding, one's historically effected consciousness is co-shaped by one's place in social location, in which language as social discourse (power, knowledge, and dominion) influences and also deflects one's identity. It is also conditioned by socioeconomic formation through labor, capital, and market. Thirdly, religion is not merely subsumed under an institution or material formation, but guides and influences human ethical life. Diversity, difference, and plurality in religious, cultural worldviews are important factors in shaping and characterizing our understanding of morality and religious ethic in a comparative manner. Such a notion of fusion of horizons intersects with a phenomenology of thick description, in which cultural description comes along with hermeneutical reflection and inquiry.

Thus, the culture or religion becomes a semiotic model within hermeneutical realism. The human being is an animal, suspended in webs of significance that he/she has driven and reinvigorated. Culture is a context, in which those webs of significance inhibit, and in the analysis of it, we undertake an interpretive description in a thick and intelligible manner. This description searching for meaning becomes a part of hermeneutical inquiry in a realistic and contextual manner. Culture is of public significance, because there is meaning in culture.<sup>34</sup>

For example, a regime of cultural practices (the Balinese cockfight) can be texts of semantics, which means 'saying something of something.' "The culture of a people is an ensemble of texts," since "societies ... contain their own interpretation."<sup>35</sup>

This perspective facilitates our location of religion and moral reasoning in social-cultural reasoning beyond the confinement of historical relativism and religious individualism. Religion is an eminently social and cultural

entity. It is social, because there is ethical meaning in a humanly shaped world. Religions seek a practical construal of the world in different cultural settings for moral aspirations. The other religion can be regarded as the ensemble of the texts, in which people in other traditions have their own interpretation and validity. Hermeneutical realism articulates critical, mutual correlations, and it recognizes similarity, attending to its alterity and appreciating its power of transformation. But it does not discard difference, definitely.

### ARCHEOLOGICAL THEORY OF INTERPRETATION AND CRITICAL THEORY

Phenomenological inquiry and description, characterized as hermeneutical realism, remain crucial in developing an archeological theory of interpretation. In this, I attempt to complement ontological hermeneutics in terms of Foucault's theory of archeology. The latter is grounded upon genealogical analysis of the interplay between knowledge and power. An analysis of discourse as a formal statement does not necessarily defeat or overwrite the hermeneutical reading of the text. Moreover, the theory of discourse as dialogue or a social speech activity can also be elaborated in its connection with the knowledge-power nexus.

In Foucault's resistance to the Western form of humanism, the Cartesian subject comes into focus, since it is laid bare as the locus of absence and exclusion of the Other. The Other is silenced in the Cartesian 'man,' in which the man's Other turns into the Same as himself.<sup>36</sup> In such non-thought in the *cogito* remains a potential candidate for a hermeneutic of otherness. In the Western notion of human being, man and God belong to one another in the sense of onto-theo-logy. Against onto-theo-logy, Foucault's choice falls upon genealogy of power and knowledge in terms of discourse, following in the footsteps of Nietzsche. Thus, it has less to do with a hermeneutic of alterity than sociological analysis of power relations through genealogy.

In Foucault's genealogy, however, there is a paucity in debunking the underside in the appearance of *man* as a quite recent creature, less than 200 years old.<sup>37</sup> It was full of ideology as dominion, false consciousness, and exploitation, which were connected with the three regimes of language, labor, and life. The history plays a decisive role in effecting one's pre-understanding; the latter is considerably shaped under the influential

domain of history, tradition, and language that Gadamer rightly elaborates. Along with hermeneutical realism, archeological inquiry asks the extent to which the system of dominant knowledge has marginalized and foreclosed groups or communities in the field of religion, labor, and politics through the historical singularity of universal uniformity.

Given Foucault and Gadamer, Walter Benjamin's anamnestic reasoning deserves attention for archeological theory of interpretation. Archeology in Benjamin's mode of remembrance contrasts with Foucault's structuralist archeology, and it helps me to place hermeneutical realism within social-historical inquiry of those under colonial dominion.<sup>38</sup> A critical theory of remembrance must be in search of humanity in the face of social reification and the destruction of humanity by the totalitarian dominating system of late capitalism. In the history of victors, the historical process appears to be unitary or homogeneous in exclusion of the irregular, the different, and the displaced. The vanquished do not see the historical process in terms of progress and development in the modernist fashion.

Likewise, Horkheimer and Adorno express a critical reasoning of remembrance of the horrible destruction of humanity in the past. This "creates the correct relationship with the dead: unity with them because we, like them, are the victims of the same conditions and the same disappointed hope."<sup>39</sup> This anamnestic reasoning guides an ethical inquiry and its critical import in rewriting and rereading a forgotten history of mass suffering. It speaks out against a foreclosed narrative by colonial authority upon the indigenous history and its religious resources. It argues against dominion, racism, and civilizing mission overwriting on them. Such critical theory underlying political significance reinforces and sharpens hermeneutical realism in dealing with postcolonial challenge and inquiry. Foucault finds an interest with the framework of the critical theory

## REALISM IN EPISTEMOLOGY AND POSTCOLONIAL INQUIRY

Hermeneutical realism deals with the extent to which the statement or text would be useful or in service to people or groups in dealing with the relation between ideas and material interests. It explicates the reciprocity of influence and the conditions between the social-cultural realms (politics, culture, religion, ideology, and the like) and material realm (material force of production steered by the rational organization). Social-cultural formation intersects with material formation, and such an interpretation of

society and history is bound with social location, in other words, an 'ensemble of social relations' (Marx).

Archeological theory of interpretation incorporates an epistemological-theoretical realism in recognition of the role of knowledge of the world for humankind. This refers to a realistic exegesis or interpretation in working out and explicating the relevance of the text for the real basis of the authors and recipients. It also elaborates the significance of the reciprocity between religious cultural life and political material life in order to come to an understanding of the text, society, and history. It seeks to overcome Nietzsche's thesis: "Christianity is the Platonism for people."<sup>40</sup> Hermeneutical inquiry in an archeological-anamnestic frame integrates epistemological realism with the critical analysis of social-cultural as well as material realms.

The idea disgraces itself, in so far as it is separated from practical interest. An effect of disgrace or blamage occurs in this separation, and an archeological strategy focuses on this blamage effect in problematizing the social function of every religion: a critique of religion turns into a critique of the ideology of those in power. This epistemological, realistic inquiry shifts the question from 'for what purpose did human beings create religion?' to 'what do they undertake with religion?' What did, then, European Christianity do with the Gospel during the colonial time?

A blamage effect also occurs, when the biblical idea of the Gospel is disgraced by the hands of the powerful in pursuing the political, economic interest of dominion and exploitation in the course of historical development. The disgrace of the idea can be overcome, as it becomes practical. It also functions as an immanent critique of the wrong and dangerous directions in the historical course. Theory lives in dialectical unity with praxis, while such interplay resists ideological misuse in accommodating the theory to the service of the privileged.<sup>41</sup>

A social, critical theory of language and discourse helps me better understand the mutual dependence of culture, power relations, and language. Social, contextual issues, such as ethnic stratification, gender, race, social inequality, and political representation, are all connected with social judgments of language and language contacts. As social discourse, language in correlation (or intertextuality) with a social contextual problem should be considered in reference to historical effectiveness and social location in the sense of an ensemble of social relations. Social discourse is embedded with knowledge-power relations and social reification (social-cultural formation),

while it is divided politically and economically in stratification, say economic material formation (labor, capital, and market).

A lifeworld is entangled within the process of colonization in terms of rationalization and international division of labor. Colonization of lifeworld, steered by politics, money, and the discourse of mass media, is disseminated in the intersection between social-cultural formation and material formation within the public sphere and on a global level.

Against this colonialization, archeological inquiry in sociological, hermeneutical framework, or sociological hermeneutic in a generic sense acknowledges postcolonial critical methodologies. The specific characters of the latter are outlined in terms of interpolation (or contextual translation), mimicry (or mimesis), extraordinary realism, and re-presentation. Archeological theory of interpretation seeks to rewrite and re-present the history lost and buried under the dominant historical narrative; it corrects the limitation of Edward Said's provincial logic of Orientalism in his wholesale attack on the discourse of representation. Even Foucault does not undermine an ethical activity of re-presentation in terms of discursive activity of *parrhesia* (speaking the truth with audacity). This creates a larger space for the subaltern to speak for themselves.<sup>42</sup>

Insofar as archeological theory is framed within anamnestic reasoning, it entails a renewed interest in critically investigating the history of Eurocentrism by deepening traditional religious resources, and enriching cultural diversity. Such a project of interpretation has to do with the project of immanent critique for metanoia, turning away from wrong steps and direction. Such metanoia can be heard in Marx's categorical imperative: "to overthrow all circumstances in which man is humiliated, enslaved, abandoned, and despised."<sup>43</sup>

With emphasis on anamnestic reason over communicative rationality, a hermeneutical archeologist is committed to the anamnesis of Jesus as the innocent victim. With a dangerous memory in mind, he/she does not forget the mass suffering of innocent victims in colonial time and its continued form in the phase of late capitalism. Within a sociological archeologist remains a conviction or passion for igniting the spark of hope: "*Even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious."<sup>44</sup> In the apocalyptic vision, we read that God will wipe every tear from the face of innocent victims, dwelling in their life. "Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

## DECONSTRUCTION OR POLITICAL DISCOURSE ETHIC

In the aftermath of colonialism, scholars have endeavored to present post-colonial reasoning and its critical theory, placing a theological belief system and its new construction within the global, postcolonial context. What is at issue in this framework is a representative mode of Orientalism (Edward Said *a la* Foucault), the epistemological incapability of representing the subaltern (Spivak *a la* Derrida), or psychological analysis of mimicry and ambivalence (Homi Bhabha *a la* Franz Fanon).

In critical engagement with these significant achievements, however, my concern is to provide an archeological, hermeneutical frame of reference in dealing with the 'problematic' of the current postcolonial scholarship and with developing the significance of political, religious ethics. Therefore, I seek to articulate the significance of political theology and critical theory through social, ethical reasoning and guidance.

A hermeneutical archeology takes issue with a deconstructive close-reading, which breaks through a set of binary oppositions inscribed within the text. This deconstruction strategy can be seen still in Said's critical project of Orientalism as territorialism, with no hermeneutical reconstruction. It can also be seen in Spivak's non-verbal notion of subaltern that has no capacity of speech activity for resistance. Moreover, Bhabha's psychological notion of mimicry undermines the complex reality of ambivalence occurring in the process of resentment, forgetfulness, and accommodation in the colonial context.

On the whole, the deconstructive strategy focuses on setting up the contradiction (masculine/feminine, true/false, center/periphery, or West/non-West, among others). The first term, for instance masculine or center, is given privilege, then the subordinate term retains its primary reality by putting the privileged term 'under erasure.' Deconstruction means reversal, displacement, and overthrowing of the hierarchy between the pairs. The origin is taken as a trace, and the authority of the text is provisional. A theory of deconstruction grants the promise to the marginal text, disclosing the undecidable moment. It reverses the resident hierarchy; thus, it is "to dismantle the text in order to reconstitute what is always already inscribed."<sup>45</sup> This strategy of deconstruction is surrounded in a passion of reversal or overthrowing the main text in terms of 'under erasure,' by giving the privilege onto the margin.

However, it is hard to divide the text in terms of binary contradiction, because it entails more diverse and complex moments and directions,

including the undecidable moment. It requires a phenomenology of thick description rather than sheer deconstruction or destruction of indigenous cultural practices and customs.

Against the direction of postcolonial deconstruction, I utilize the postcolonial inquiry as an umbrella term in order to cover a broader number of functions in the discussion of the modernist values of democracy, freedom, and human rights. It does not take a path of artificial fabrication of binary opposition or contradiction. Rather, it takes into account a critical analysis of ‘for what purpose’ and the extent to which the dominant knowledge system is successfully capable of subjugating and excluding the unprivileged regime. An archeological-anamnestic inquiry is framed with sociological, hermeneutical realism rather than underlying a strategy of ‘under erasure.’ The latter lacks in investigating the cultural life as an ensemble of the texts or human life as an ensemble of social relations.

This said, the term *postcolonial* is delineated as a critical and analytical epistemology. It facilitates an attempt to problematize the Western project of Enlightenment imbued with Eurocentrism and its captivity to the iron cage in late capitalism, neoracism, and neoimperialism. The expansion of European powers has established colonial imperialism through the international division of labor in justifying the formation of a center-periphery relation. The postcolonial theory, therefore, entails a character of trans-modernity, exploring a project of multiple or alternative modernities.

This perspective distinguishes a postcolonial significance of political theology and critical theory via archeological interpretation and its project of religious humanism in solidarity with the margins. Postcolonial political theology turns into undergirding discourse ethics in terms of *parrhesia* in which the margins are allowed a larger space to speak for themselves. I read this standpoint in Bonhoeffer’s reorientation toward “the perspective of the outcast, the suspect, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed, the reviled—in short, from the perspective of those who suffer.”<sup>46</sup>

For political discourse ethic, I learn from critical theory and political theology. Thus, postcolonial theology needs to be rearticulated by addressing the significance of archeological inquiry and comparative religious ethics in cutting through the limitations of Western representation of non-Western religions.

In fact, Levinas deserves attention to underpin the discourse ethic in his phenomenological distinction between ‘saying’ and ‘said.’ His ethical phenomenology contributes to elaborating the linguistic dimension of God’s saying or speech act in the otherness of the Other. *Dabar* in Hebrew