Interdependence: Its Value and Limits for Social Ethics

By

Andrew Stone Porter

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Approved:

Victor Anderson, Ph.D.

Laurel Schneider, Ph.D.

Emilie Townes, Ph.D.

Melissa Snarr, Ph.D.

To those whose work is to break the chains of oppression
and to replace them with bonds of responsible interdependence

and

To all persons who are incarcerated, detained, remotely surveilled,
or otherwise deprived of freedom and the resources they need to flourish

and

To my beloved partner Shannon and our brilliant and courageous children,
Kristopher, Kyle, and Amelia

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This dissertation asks whether interdependence produces moral responsibility. However, the more I come to understand interdependence, the more I find instead a deep spirit of gratitude. In what follows, what insights I have gained in pursuing this question emerged through experiences of interdependent dialogue with others.

Deepest thanks go to my advisor, Victor Anderson. In one of our earliest conversations, I cited the image of the body of Christ in which "if one member suffers, all suffer together with it" (1 Cor 12:26)[1] as evidence of egalitarian strands of biblical thinking. He peered over his glasses at me. "I *know* you didn't just quote Paul to me. …You do realize there are 'lesser members,' right?" Victor proceeded to remind me that Howard Thurman's grandmother refused to have much of Paul's letters read to her, since during her enslavement they were preached to her to admonish her to stay in her place. It is possible that my hermeneutics of interdependence began to veer toward suspicion precisely at that moment. In any case, our many hours of creative exchange and creative conflict have brought me joy and sharpened my thinking. He has opened his home and his mind to me time and again. I am in debt also to my other readers. In my first semester of graduate school, Laurel Schneider graciously accepted me into her seminar on feminist theory, which was already full, thereby kickstarting a mentoring relationship and friendship that has produced a multiplicity of joyful moments. She and Emilie Townes invited me to stay with them while I was commuting from Louisville during my last semester of course work. We even waited out a tornado threat together in their garage, together with Aunt Helen and their dog, Winnie. I first read Dean Townes' book *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil* in divinity school and promptly decided I must pursue a doctorate in social ethics. She has

[1] All biblical quotations are taken from the NRSV.

been a thoughtful mentor and a courageous leader as Dean of Vanderbilt Divinity School. Melissa Snarr has been a tremendously helpful advisor during qualifying examinations and throughout this dissertation process. Although both of us were learning to care for little babies, somehow we found time to maintain a fruitful advising relationship. Special thanks to other mentors along the way, especially Ellen Armour, Dan McKanan, Gary Dorrien, and Evanthia Speliotis. My colleagues have been marvelous dialogue partners and friends throughout this journey. I offer my gratitude to Leonard Curry, Rachel Heath, Chelsea Yarborough, Kishundra King, Ali Lutz, Zac Settle, Shatavia Wynn, Peter Capretto, Kelly Stewart and Andrew Krinks. I am also grateful for the support of the Graduate School at Vanderbilt and the program in Theology & Practice, under the stewardship of Jaco Hamman. While studying in Boston, I learned about responsible interdependence from my housemates at Seedpod Cooperative, especially Rebecca Thal, Aliza Levine, Jennie Msall, and Rachel Singh. I have also witnessed justice unfolding in the work of the courageous organizers in Louisville who show me how to practice responsible interdependence: special loving thanks to Reece Chenault and my *comadre y compadre,* Karina Barillas and David Horvath. Interdependence is (at its best) a familial relationship, and for my understanding of it, I credit the loving support and example of my parents, Jean and Joey, and my sister Anna. My partner Shannon practices responsible interdependence every day through a family cooperative, a nonprofit organization that accompanies new and expecting parents, and other community efforts, which she helps to shepherd. More than anyone else, she and I have discussed interdependence continually over these last years, while raising our three wonderful children and learning together with them to be responsible persons in our community.

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INTRODUCTION

> Whether primarily ecological, liberationist, or decolonial, feminist or womanist, these relationalisms of the latter half of the twentieth century share the sense and ethic of an inescapable interdependence.
>
> - Catherine Keller[1]

"Black and White Together": A Vignette

It has been a long day, and I am waiting in line to pick up a prescription for Shannon. The line is moving slowly, held up by a gregarious middle-aged white man who is chatting up the pharmacists. He is loudly explaining to them why he is carrying a gun.

The man is trying to put them at ease, but the pharmacists are visibly uncomfortable. Carrying is a requirement of his job, he says—something to do with the government and science, but I'm trying not to listen and, along with the others waiting in line, really just hoping the man will shut up and leave. Eventually he does, but as he turns to go he abruptly stops in front of me. My shirt, which says, "Black Lives Matter," has caught this armed white man's eye. I feel the muscles in my neck and shoulders tense up in anticipation of his reaction.

"I like your shirt," he says. Not what I was expecting, clearly. He goes on: "That means a part of me matters." I cock my head to the side like a confused dog. I'm on my heels, and he is in total control of this one-way conversation. "You see, I have a heart condition," he says. "A few years ago I was fortunate to receive a heart transplant from a young African American man who was shot and killed. So, when you say, 'black lives matter,' that means a part of *me* matters." Still I am speechless. "Well, have a good day," he says, walks off.

There is very little agreement among movement folks about what white "allies" (or "accomplices" or "co-conspirators" or "comrades" or, or, or…) are supposed to do or how we

[1] Catherine Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible: Negative Theology and Planetary Entanglement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 32.

are supposed to do it. However, there is consensus on at least this one point: White allies are supposed to talk to other white people about white supremacy. It is our job to confront ignorant family members, call out(/in) former schoolmates when they make casually racist comments on social media or in person, and rebuff co-workers and strangers when they offer knowing glances and bigoted asides assuming our racial solidarity. It seems like a simple task but it is incredibly difficult to learn to do well, especially when one is afraid, as so many of us are. In this instance as in so many others, I flunked the ally test. I responded with bewildered silence and I let that armed white man walk right on out of that grocery store feeling utterly secure and at peace with himself.

I think often about what I might have said instead. I sometimes wish I had had the nerve and the presence of mind to say, "Now, this must be the worst explanation of 'black lives matter' that I have ever heard. Is it really so difficult to imagine that black lives might matter *on their own*? That they carry value independent of their ability to sustain your own white existence? If that young black man whose heart now beats in your chest were still alive, would you still think black lives matter? Or do you believe black lives matter only insofar your life depends on a black life lost? Only because one black man's beating heart toils without compensation to keep red blood flowing beneath your white skin through your blue veins? No, you cannot really believe black lives matter. You only believe in black death. I cannot imagine anything more foreign to the spirit of the #blacklivesmatter movement than a white man who carries a gun to the grocery and who is only alive because a black man was killed with a gun. A black man whose heart was apparently worthless until it was cut out from his chest and assigned a higher purpose. Please consider thinking before you speak, and consider also the possibility that you do not reside at the center of the moral universe."

But in that moment I was neither sharp nor bold enough to say any of those things. Still, as I write them now, they cause me to wonder again about that pesky, ethereal value that keeps giving me fits: *interdependence*. Everything is connected, and that is simply a social and scientific fact. But does the fact that we depend on one another, are all *part of one another*, also mean that we are *responsible* for one another? It seems to me that this strange encounter was a counterexample that symbolizes how interdependence can show up in unexpectedly dangerous ways.

This man, I presume, meant well. He made an attempt to affirm the message "black lives matter," by drawing a personal connection to his own life story. Black life, through the organ donation, was bound up together with his own white life. He meant, I imagine, to communicate a sharing in being, a sense of interracial solidarity that he felt viscerally—"deep in my heart," as the old freedom song says. "Black and white together," the song also says. In a way, this man was a living embodiment of the hope of that integrationist song, of the hope that working together we shall overcome racism. But in another way his interpretation was a distortion, a co-optation of the song of freedom. For the attempted affirmation of black life, at the end, fell back upon the violent death of the young black man. What mattered, after all, was not a black life. What mattered was instead a black organ, a heart that sustained a white life. What does it mean when "black and white together" is a black man's heart beating in a white man's chest? White lives and black lives have been interdependent—and so often, in this case as in so many others, white lives have been depending on black deaths—since 1619 when that first accursed slave ship docked on a Virginia beach. Everything is connected, and always has been. And yet all is not well in America, and still the beat goes on.

Interdependence: An Ambiguous Value

From a pair of entangled electrons, relating instantly and impossibly across a void of hundreds of miles… to one billion trillion massive stars, careening into emptiness from a vanished point of universal origin, a center which is *both/neither* nowhere *and/nor* everywhere; to the homo sapiens who, specks of the same dust that peoples the star-flecked sky, walk the earth together: all that is, is interdependent. And as the human species cleaved spacetime by turning from one millennium to another, "interdependence" was beginning to emerge as a central symbol naming our awareness that we experience not solitary stars, but constellations; not islands entire of themselves, but archipelagos. As human societies began to discern the abrasive plate tectonics that bind us together, "interdependence" rose to supplant previously regnant ideals of autonomy, self-sufficiency, and unified stable essences. From post-Newtonian science to feminist theory; from Gandhi and King to Anzaldúa and Lorde; from disability studies to engaged Buddhism; and from the most radical cooperative economics to the standard neoliberal orthodoxy: these varied thinkers and disciplines agree that all that is, is interdependent. The postmodern epoch was to be one purged of metadiscourses, grand narratives, and bedrock values[2]; instead, ours is the age of interdependence.[3]

But, is interdependence good? That is, does the awareness of interdependence produce a moral commitment to social responsibility? From the empirical fact that we are bound to one another, does the ethical value follow that we are obligated to one another? This dissertation, a meta-ethical and social-ethical study, takes up these questions.

[2] Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.
[3] Wilfried Loth et al., *Global Interdependence: The World after 1945*, ed. Akira Iriye and Jürgen Osterhammel (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press, 2014).

This dissertation examines "interdependence" in its political, economic, quanto-bio-cosmic, and moral theological dimensions in order to assess its normative value for social ethics. Many feminist, womanist, process-relational, ecological and liberationist thinkers regard interdependence as a positive ethical value. Moreover, interdependence has emerged as a paradigm for post-Newtonian science at the quantum, biological and cosmic levels. However, this dissertation shows interdependence to be a morally ambiguous symbol susceptible to hegemonic appropriation. The dissertation considers the intersectionality of three forms of co-optation[4] of interdependence: Race and interdependence as "integration," the purported solution to American white supremacy; gender and interdependence as "complementarity" in the theology of John Paul II; and capitalism and interdependence as economic "globalization." Although an ambiguous symbol (or a "grotesque" symbol using Victor Anderson's phrasing),[5] interdependence is not morally insignificant. Rather, as Jacques Derrida's deconstructive method reveals, ethical ideals are inevitably haunted by internal divisions and aporias.[6] Acknowledging these limitations as a critical task of social ethics does not render ethical values meaningless, but instead enables us to employ them responsibly.[7] This dissertation assesses the limits of interdependence for social ethics. Interdependence has most often been claimed by feminist

[4] I intend "co-opt" in Merriam-Webster's sense 2a), "to take into a group," "absorb, assimilate"; and 2b), "take over, appropriate." "Definition of CO-OPT," *Merriam-Webster.com*, accessed August 17, 2018, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/co-opt.

[5] Victor Anderson, *Creative Exchange: A Constructive Theology of African American Religious Experience* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 11; cf. Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness: An Essay on African American Religious and Cultural Criticism*, (New York: Continuum, 1995), 127-32.

[6] See, for example, Derrida's discussion of the impossibility of pure nonviolence and the inherently violent nature of language, in "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," in *Writing and Difference*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 183-85; see also Derrida's discussion of the inevitable collusion of hospitality and hostility, leading him to coin the term "hostipitality," in *Acts of Religion,* ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), 358–420, *Of Hospitality* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), and *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999). These texts are discussed in chapter I of this dissertation.

[7] Ted Smith has recently reflected on the violence of John Brown in order to test the limits of ethical systems predicated on universalizable moral laws. Cf. Ted A. Smith, *Weird John Brown: Divine Violence and the Limits of Ethics*, 1 edition (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014).

thinkers. Yet it has also been widely invoked by Christian theologians, from St. Paul to Martin Luther King, Jr. and others, who believe that the interconnectedness of creation reveals divine goodness permeating the universe. Tempered by its critical assessment of interdependence, this dissertation proceeds to recover "responsible interdependence" as a symbol and value for social ethics and social justice.

In her essay "Woman's Place in Man's Life Cycle," which first appeared in *Harvard Educational Review* in 1979, feminist psychologist Carol Gilligan argues that Western society prizes supposedly masculine character traits like independence, individuation and decision-making, and devalues supposedly feminine ones such as relationality, care and cooperation. Studies of "[t]he psychology of women" consistently demonstrate their "greater orientation toward relationships and interdependence." Where men approach moral problems in terms of rights and objective principles of justice, women instead emphasize responsibility and contextual relativism. Men are socialized from birth to be competitive and achieve separation from others, Gilligan found, while women instead learn "the interdependence of love and care."[8]

Feminist social ethicist Beverly Wildung Harrison concurs with Gilligan that patriarchal ideology relies on dualisms that artificially section human experience, associating men with the "superior" categories (such as history) and women with the "inferior" ones (such as nature). But feminist critique resolves these dualisms, enabling "a profound recovery of a sense that we are, ourselves, species-dependent, in nature, culture, and history." Further, Harrison insists, "If we do not recover a new respect for our deep interdependence as natural/historical and cultural beings,

[8] Carol Gilligan, "Woman's Place in Man's Life Cycle," in *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 1997), 207-210.

understanding our reciprocity with each other and nature as a dimension and condition of our freedom, all of us are doomed."[9]

The notion of interdependence is not strictly a white feminist value. Audre Lorde writes that interdependence harnesses the creative power of difference and directs it toward justice: "Interdependency between women is the way to a freedom which allows the I to be, not in order to be used, but in order to be creative."[10] Carolyn McCrary, in "Interdependence as a Normative Value in Pastoral Counseling with African Americans," argues from a womanist standpoint that interdependence is a positive ideal rooted in African religious traditions.[11] And Chicana feminist poet and theorist Gloria Anzaldúa captures the power of interdependent awareness this way: "With awe and wonder you look around, recognizing the preciousness of the earth, the sanctity of every human being on the planet, the ultimate unity and interdependence of all beings – *somos todos un paíz*."[12]

Feminists, black feminists, womanists and Chicana feminists have most recently thematized the ethical dimensions of interdependence. Yet interdependence also appears as an original core value in the Christian tradition. Paul writes that we are all members of the body of Christ, and that "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it" (1 Cor 12:26). Tracing the threads of interconnection from a sweltering Birmingham cell, Martin Luther King, Jr. writes, "We are caught in an inescapable network of

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[9] Beverly Wildung Harrison, *Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 230.
[10] Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, Reprint edition (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 2007), 111.
[11] Carolyn McCrary, "Interdependence as a Normative Value in Pastoral Counseling with African Americans," *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 18, no. 1–2 (1990): 119–47. See this dissertation's concluding chapter for a discussion of the South African concept *ubuntu* and its relationship to interdependence.
[12] "we are all one country" (my translation). Gloria Anzaldúa, "now let us shift … the path of conocimiento … inner work, public acts," in Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating, eds., *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*, 1 edition (New York: Routledge, 2002), 558. See the concluding chapter of this dissertation for a reflection on Anzaldúa's thinking on interdependence.

mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." King stressed that "we are interdependent" and that "all life is interrelated," and that our relatedness carries moral theological significance. The interdependence of the "inescapable network" reflects God's purpose for humanity.[13]

Paul's letter, however, warrants caution before uncritically adopting interdependence as a value conducive to human liberation. For although the weaker members of the body are "indispensable," yet some body parts are "less honorable," "less respectable," and ultimately "inferior." Paul offers those inferior members a strange consolation prize, namely, being clothed "with greater honor"—or, we might less charitably say, covered up out of shame (12:22-25; cf. Gen 2:25-3:11). Paul insists that the "greater honor" of additional clothing eliminates dissension within the body. Still, one is tempted to ask the inferior members how they feel about all of this.

Paul's letter reveals that interdependence is infused with ambiguity. It is simply a given aspect of our social world that all human beings are interconnected, interdependent with one another and with all of creation. But the mere existence of a matrix of relationships offers no guarantee that power relations within the matrix will be equitable. We are caught in an "inescapable network," to be sure, but not necessarily a network of "mutuality."

To focus only on the "interdependence of love and care" is to risk ignoring the dangers internal to interdependence.[14] Dominant actors routinely exploit social interdependencies to

[13] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham City Jail," *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches*, ed. James M. Washington (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2003), 290. Other writings of King's reveal that he viewed "interrelated" and "interdependent" as synonymous terms. See King, 254, 626.

[14] In addition to ignoring the potential for co-optation, Gilligan's essay is ambiguous about whether "the developmental differences between the sexes" (210) are a result of socialization, or a reflection of biological or genetic factors. This leaves Gilligan open to charges of gender essentialism, of reproducing John Paul II's logic of natural "complementarity" in a feminist key. Gilligan is further open to critique from queer and trans theorists, who would object to the strict binary divisions Gilligan employs. Such critiques are perhaps unfair as Gilligan wrote before the development of most queer and trans theory.

cement their hegemony. This dissertation explores three such forms of co-optation, along respective lines of race, gender, and capitalism.

Forms of Hegemonic Co-optation

Racial Interdependence and Integration

In his classic work, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, C. Vann Woodward noticed "a certain ambivalence that black people have felt all along toward integration in white America."[15] Many black nationalists warned that integration would mean assimilation into "white America" and a loss of black identity. In practice, efforts to achieve racial integration in education, housing, and employment have produced mixed results, and have not eliminated persistent socioeconomic advantages for white Americans.[16] When construed as racial integration, interdependence is predicated on a mistaken assumption that the "problem" to be solved was separation between the races. But the much more insidious problem was and is structural white supremacy and inequitable power relations.

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[15] C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, Commemorative edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), vi.

[16] For the legacy of school desegregation, see Ansley T. Erickson, *Making the Unequal Metropolis: School Desegregation and Its Limits* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2016); Marla F. Frederick, *Between Sundays: Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 110; Robin D. G. Kelley, "Into the Fire: 1970 to the Present," in *To Make Our World Anew: Volume II: A History of African Americans Since 1880*, ed. Robin D. G. Kelley and Earl Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 293–94. For the history of segregated housing, see Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, 1 edition (New York: Liveright, 2018). For a progressive critical view of affirmative action, see Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 247. On the market-driven dissolution of black communal bonds following desegregation, see Cornel West, *Race Matters*, Reprint edition (New York: Vintage, 1994), vii, 37-8; "Interview With Cornel West | The Two Nations Of Black America," *PBS Frontline,* accessed April 20, 2017, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/race/interviews/west.html; Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, Revised, 10th Anniv., 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 1999), 11; Emilie M. Townes, *In a Blaze of Glory: Womanist Spirituality as Social Witness* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 137–38.

Gender Interdependence and Complementarity

The Roman Catholic Church magisterium has been sharply critical of feminist theory, but Pope John Paul II concurs with Harrison that interdependence carries moral value. The pontiff makes a crucial distinction between "de facto interdependence" and "moral interdependence."[17] Elsewhere, John Paul advances the notion that there exists a natural "complementarity" between men and women, which culminates in the fruitful union of marriage.[18] While the Pope insisted that gender complementarity is rooted in the equal dignity of men and women, he placed his theology of women in critical opposition to feminist theory. Feminists' conceptions of interdependence challenge patriarchal values; the Roman Catholic magisterium's construal of interdependence as gender complementarity divinely ordains gender hierarchies.

Capitalist Interdependence and Neoliberal Globalization

While feminist theorists were arguing for interdependence as a moral value, the term was acquiring a very distinct meaning in the fields of economics and political science. In these fields, interdependence became synonymous with globalization and was even referred to as global "integration."[19] Scholars debated whether global interdependence would usher in an age of peace and prosperity (the neoliberal position) or entangle poor countries in ever more sinister traps of debt (the position of "dependency theorists").[20] The succeeding decades have produced ample

[17] John Paul II, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (30 December 1987)," accessed May 27, 2018, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html; "To the People of Detroit (September 19, 1987)," no. 8, accessed September 5, 2018, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1987/september/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19870919_cittadinanza-detroit.html.
[18] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of tahe Body* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2011), 10:1, 13:1, 78:4.
[19] Mark J. C. Crescenzi, *Economic Interdependence and Conflict in World Politics* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005), 2.
[20] Crescenzi, *Economic Interdependence and Conflict in World Politics*; Loth et al., *Global Interdependence,* 768; Andrew M. Scott, *The Dynamics of Interdependence*, New edition (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North

evidence that interdependence construed as globalization is not a solution to global poverty, but a form of neocolonialism that cements Western hegemony and fuels wealth inequality.[21]

These forms of co-optation of interdependence along lines of race, gender, and capitalism demonstrate that interdependence is a morally *ambiguous* symbol. However, this does not mean that interdependence is morally *neutral*, invariably *dangerous*, or *meaningless*. Instead, the recognition of ambiguity is deemed a necessary first step in recovering interdependence as a critical value for social ethics. In referring to interdependence as a "symbol," I am invoking a term with a loaded history in the study of religion. I unpack a piece of that history in the following section.

Symbols

A symbol is a special kind of sign, argues Paul Ricoeur. All signs are "expressions that communicate a meaning." But the symbol contains an additional, "opaque" meaning that is analogically related to its obvious representational meaning. The opaque meaning of the symbol has a "depth" to it, a kind of evocative power that is not conceptually translatable. Because language is for Ricoeur always symbolic, symbols in fact precede and "give rise to thought." The

Carolina Press, 1982); Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr, *Power & Interdependence*, 4 edition (Boston: Pearson, 2011); Michael Stewart, *The Age of Interdependence: Economic Policy in a Shrinking World* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1983); David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Magnus Blomström and Björn Hettne, *Development Theory in Transition: The Dependency Debate and Beyond : Third World Responses* (London: Zed Books, 1984).

[21] Neoliberal economists promised that their rising tide of economic reforms would raise all boats; but as David Harvey writes, "the main substantive achievement of neoliberalization, however, has been to redistribute, rather than to generate, wealth and income"; see Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 156–59. The concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer hands has led one Nobel Prize-winning economist to declare that neoliberalism is dead, and Thomas Piketty has recently warned that this phenomenon is unsustainable and will lead either to recurring economic collapses or revolution. See Will Martin, "Nobel Prize-Winning Economist Stiglitz Tells Us Why 'Neoliberalism Is Dead,'" *Business Insider*, accessed April 26, 2017, http://www.businessinsider.com/joseph-stiglitz-says-neoliberalism-is-dead-2016-8; Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 25–26, 297.

thought occasioned by symbols enables self-consciousness to emerge, but symbols aren't merely self-referential, argues Ricoeur: Instead, a symbol is "a manifestation of the bond between man and the sacred." The religious symbol thus serves an "ontological function."[22]

Writing from an anthropological perspective, but in substantial agreement with Ricoeur, Clifford Geertz defines religion as "a system of symbols" which "establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations" in people and communities. Symbols accomplish this by illustrating an underlying *order* to the cosmos, alleviating human existential anxiety and legitimizing certain social practices. Religious symbols establish a "congruence" between our particular lives and a governing metaphysic.[23] Geertz's approach has been sharply critiqued by Talal Asad, who regards his focus on symbol and meaning as too simplistic. Asad argues that we should understand religion and religions not in terms of cognitive "meaning" but in terms of their imbrications in networks of power.[24]

Theologian Edward Farley mediates between the conceptions of religion and symbol held by Geertz and Asad. In his book *Deep Symbols*, Farley argues that religious symbols are "words of power" that order societies by shaping their values and practices. In our postmodern capitalist society, however, these words have lost their power of "enchantment": while "remnants" of these traditions survive, the deep symbols have lost their ability to connect with sacred mystery.[25] Here, Farley sounds very close to theologians influenced by Alasdair MacIntyre such as Stanley Hauerwas, John Milbank and George Lindbeck.[26] But whereas the latter trio tend to idealize the

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[22] Paul Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 10–17, 356.
[23] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures; Selected Essays.* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 90, 108.
[24] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 35.
[25] Edward Farley, *Deep Symbols: Their Postmodern Effacement and Reclamation* (New York: Trinity Press International, 1996), 1–12.
[26] Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, First US Edition (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); Stanley Hauerwas, "The Servant Community: Christian Social Ethics," in *The Hauerwas Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 371–91; John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond*

Christian community and advocate a return to a lost era of (Christian) religious consciousness, Farley is more concerned with the ways religious traditions and their symbols are guilty of a "deep complicity with oppression."[27] Deep symbols draw their power from a particular historical community and thus often mirror the society's unjust power stratifications. Influenced by feminist and liberationist theologians, Farley stresses that religious symbols often serve as "idols and as instruments of corrupted social power."[28]

Like the present dissertation, Farley is indebted to the practice of deconstruction for exploring the ambiguity of symbols: "as a linguistic and interpretive instrument, deconstruction uncovers the hidden movements, the suppressed and unstated oppositions in texts, that keep them from having a single, fixed meaning. Deconstruction exposes the text as idol."[29] In his text Farley analyzes the symbols of tradition, reality, obligation (duty), law, and hope. In each case he asks how the symbol has been eroded or corrupted, and how it may be recovered.

This dissertation takes up essentially the same task with respect to the deep symbol of "interdependence." As we will see, interdependence has become a "deep symbol" in our postmodern[30] society: it expresses the growing awareness of interconnectedness among the

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Secular Reason (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008); George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984).

[27] Farley, *Deep Symbols*, 36.

[28] Farley, *Deep Symbols,* 7–8.

[29] Farley, *Deep Symbols,* 111.

[30] David Harvey writes of postmodernism, "No one exactly agrees as to what is meant by the term, except, perhaps, that 'postmodernism' represents some kind of reaction to, or departure from, 'modernism.'" Postmodernism entails a rejection of metanarratives, of Enlightenment optimism concerning rational progress, and of unitary and universal conceptions of meaning and history. These suspicions are accompanied, Harvey argues, by developments in philosophy, philosophy of science and mathematics. Positively postmodernism entails a celebration of difference, of shallow surface performance and irony, and commerce. However, Harvey agrees with Frederic Jameson that these developments can only be understood in the context of capitalism. Harvey proposes that we "dissolve the categories of both modernism and postmodernism into a complex of oppositions expressive of the cultural contradictions of capitalism. We then get to see the categories of both modernism and postmodernism as static reifications imposed upon the fluid interpenetration of dynamic oppositions" Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (New York: Blackwell, 1989), 7–8, 339.

nations, cultures, economies, races and all human groups in our globalizing world.[31] Further, interdependence is an "ontological" symbol in that it reflects an emerging paradigm of what it means to "be" within contemporary quantum, ecological and cosmic sciences (see chapter IV). Finally, the symbol of interdependence contains an element of "opacity," a certain allusive power that transcends the conceptual realm (see the quotes above, especially from King and Anzaldúa, for a taste of this affective power; see also chapters V and VI). Where Farley argues that in our postmodern culture values have been relativized and deep symbols eroded, I argue instead that new symbols have emerged that more aptly convey the contemporary *zeitgeist.* Among the most powerful (and "enchanting") postmodern deep symbols, I suggest, is "interdependence." This symbol carries both descriptive and prescriptive functions; it is a bedrock value in a globalizing postmodern society purportedly purged of them. And yet, we will also see (chapter III) that interdependence is morally ambiguous and susceptible to hegemonic co-optation. And so, recovering the troubled word requires first deconstructing it (a process that begins in the next two chapters).

Farley describes the task of critique and reinterpretation that this dissertation takes up:

> Words of power are corruptible, ambiguous, and potentially idolatrous. As enchantments and idealizations, they summon us to live from them and heed their eschatological call. As diminished and ambiguous, they also summon us to interpret, expose, and rethink them, subjecting their conceptual frameworks and their suppressed ideological elements to criticism. In other words, deep symbols must ever be reinterpreted. The call to reinterpretation arises from the fact that they are not the Mystery itself but something else. Their very enchantment calls for their revisioning.[32]

[31] Tellingly, when the editors of the Harvard University Press series *A History of the World* arrived at the present era, they chose to title the volume *Global Interdependence: The World after 1945.* See Loth et al., *Global Interdependence*.
[32] Farley, *Deep Symbols*, 24.

Farley shares a final point of deep resonance with the present analysis of "interdependence" in his valuation of a sphere of relation he calls the "interhuman." Whereas contemporary society has isolated human beings from each other such that our relations are framed solely in terms of competition and negotiation, the interhuman instead consists of relations of "empathy, affection, compassion, forgiveness, and communication."[33] The sphere of the interhuman connects us with one another, and also connects the deep symbols which are united by sacred power: "the words of power are not simply connected to each other by their tie to the interhuman and by their structural interdependence but also by their connection and relativization by the Creativity at work in all things."[34] With that sentence Farley concludes his text, by weaving together deep symbols, the interhuman, and interdependence.

In his book *Creative Exchange* public theologian Victor Anderson builds on Farley's work to argue that "race" is a deep symbol. Like the ones identified by Farley, race is a symbol that orders society, and is so ubiquitous as to be taken for granted. Although race is socially constructed, it is so pervasive in contemporary life that it seems to be an *a priori* feature of human existence.[35] Anderson uses the term "grotesque" to describe the symbol of race: this term refers for Anderson to the unresolved contradictions and ambiguities, the tragicomic elements which are co-present in the symbol, stand in tension, and cannot be resolved into some higher "synthesis."[36] Race is like this, Anderson argues, because it can evoke community identity, joy, myth, descent, and history—but also, of course, oppression. For these reasons, concludes Anderson, "I regard race to be a grotesquely ambiguous symbol."[37]

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[33] Farley, *Deep Symbols,* 46.
[34] Farley, *Deep Symbols,* 125.
[35] Anderson, *Creative Exchange*, 4.
[36] Anderson, *Creative Exchange,* 11.
[37] Anderson, *Creative Exchange,* 32.

In agreement with Farley and with the present dissertation, Anderson does not think that we can afford simply to dispense with our grotesque deep symbols, riddled though they are with contradiction and limitation. The task, instead, is "to find better ways of deploying these kinds of symbols."[38] And that is just what this dissertation sets out to do with the grotesque, deep symbol of "interdependence." This symbol carries immense power because of its ability to describe so many aspects of our postmodern situation. Not only that, but the symbol of interdependence carries an affective power because, as Paul Tillich recognized, it *participates* in the reality for which it stands.[39] When the symbol of interdependence is named, it "gives rise to thought"—and other somatic and affective forms of awareness—about our fundamental relatedness to one another and to the source of being. If this affective power can be wielded responsibly, this dissertation boldly argues, it has the power to change us, and thereby to change the world.

A Meta-Ethics "for" Social Ethics

Gary Dorrien notes that the major figures in the history of social ethics have paid little attention to methodological or disciplinary issues: they wanted "to change the world, not the university."[40] Yet a dissertation must address these issues. This discussion is envisioned as a meta-ethical study in the service of social ethics.

I come to this project as an aspiring scholar but also an aspiring ally to movements for social justice. I hold that, as a discipline, ethics matters to the extent that it can meaningfully contribute to those movements: for example, by demystifying the competing values and power dynamics at stake, by identifying historical patterns operative across different contexts, and by

[38] Anderson, *Creative Exchange,* 51.
[39] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 239.
[40] Gary Dorrien, *Social Ethics in the Making: Interpreting an American Tradition* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 2.

making helpful connections between philosophical and theological investigations and current situations and social problems. Because of this commitment, I am often discouraged that when people ask me what my dissertation is about, and I answer "interdependence," I am routinely met with blank stares. Is this topic in fact relevant or useful for movements for justice?

I hope to show that it is (see the concluding chapter for two case studies in "responsible interdependence"). However, this project is not strictly a study in social ethics. It is also "meta-ethical" in that "metaethics involves an attempt to step back from particular substantive debates within morality to ask about the views, assumptions, and commitments that are shared by those who engage in the debate."[41] Meta-ethics goes at least as far back as the debate between Plato's Socrates, who argued that justice is "the virtue of the soul," and Thrasymachus, who defined it as "the advantage of the stronger."[42] The question "what is justice?" is obviously a meta-ethical question: it is a philosophical question interrogating the assumptions and commitments of those who invoke an ethical value. But as a meta-ethical question, it also has obvious implications for social ethics. How we understand and respond to the question "what is justice?" will be influential for how we understand and respond to problems of social injustice. So it is with this dissertation: I investigate the many contexts (philosophy, the study of religion, race and gender studies, economics and politics, post-Newtonian science) in which this symbol appears, and the many (often conflicting) political projects for which it is deployed. While the dissertation is consistent with meta-ethical questions which are "consistently abstract"[43] (hence the blank stares), it is also deeply engaged with social ethics.

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[41] "Metaethics," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2012 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2012), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/metaethics/.
[42] *The Republic of Plato,* trans. Allan Bloom, 3 edition (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 338c2-3, 352d-354c.
[43] "Metaethics."

Dorrien argues that the discipline of social ethics has roots in the social gospel movement of the late 19th century. Concurrent with the development of sociology, modern socialism, and the concept of "social justice," the social gospel movement sought to bring the resources of the Christian tradition to bear on "the social problem" and to achieve "social salvation."[44] While the field is broad and loosely defined (Dorrien argues that the three traditions of social ethics are the social gospel, Christian realism, and liberation theology),[45] social ethics has all along been a practice of making connections between religious ideas and social problems: For instance, Walter Rauschenbusch reinterpreted the traditional Christian concept of "sin" to refer to social-structural injustice[46]; later, James Cone observed that the biblical God takes sides with the oppressed, and concluded that in 20th-century America God is black.[47] This dissertation is less explicitly rooted in "traditional" Christian theological questions of sin, salvation, and God: instead, it analyzes "interdependence," a symbol with a multiplicity of meanings and applications across a variety of fields. But it is consistent with the tradition of social ethics in that it asks how a concept which is widely employed by theologians, ethicists and philosophers is related to social problems.

This discussion, then, is a meta-ethical study whose results, it is hoped, will illuminate the dynamics of pressing social problems. For this reason, it is titled "Interdependence: Its Value and Limits for Social Ethics."

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[44] Dorrien, *Social Ethics in the Making,* 1-2.
[45] Dorrien, *Social Ethics in the Making,* 2.
[46] Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2011), 52-54.
[47] James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 40th Anniversary edition (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2010), 67.

The Argument

The chapters that follow explore the contours of interdependence as an ambiguous symbol and necessary value for social ethics. Following the symbol where it leads demands a deeply interdisciplinary analysis that will engage history, philosophy of science, the politics of race, gender and capitalism, continental philosophy, and more. While my specialization is in social ethics, the question of interdependence is vital for the trajectory of a wide array of scholarly discourses. This dissertation is thus a broadly interdisciplinary study that identifies a central symbol (interdependence), operative across a large cross-section of fields, and which is widely acknowledged as a positive value—yet this last assumption remains largely uninterrogated. The dissertation is a prismatic reflection of this symbol, of a dangerous and ambiguous yet ultimately necessary value for the pursuit of justice. What follows is not a set of linear steps processing steadily upwards toward a tidy conclusion. Instead, I invite the reader to think of the present discussion of interdependence in terms of its most commonly invoked metaphor: a *web.*[48] In the chapters that follow I attempt to weave the story of interdependence, leaping between branches, buoyed and tethered only by fragile strands of silk. As the argument develops (I hope), those disparate strands will begin more clearly to form a wheel of intersecting spokes. Finally, the dissertation will spiral inward toward its core question: what does responsible interdependence look like in practice? At that point, may we rest in the center of a sprawling but sturdy web, and await the forms of nourishment it may procure for us.

The first chapter, "Deconstructing Ethics," introduces the method of deconstruction developed by Jacques Derrida. This practice exposes implicit tensions within texts and ideas,

[48] See, for example, Michael Hogue's discussion of Bernard Loomer, who posited an "interconnected web of existence." Hogue reflects, "A web, for example, a spider's web, has order, but it is an emergent order that is precariously contingent upon the more fundamental interdependence of its threads." Hogue, *American Immanence: Democracy for an Uncertain World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 128.

revealing secret violences lurking beneath benign notions. Deconstruction is not the end of discourse, however, but a precondition for responsible action. It enables us to conduct a thorough critique so that the helpful elements of our symbol can be separated from its dangers. The discussion of Derrida is crucial for our argument because of his insight that ethics is both impossible and necessary—a touchstone for this argument to which I will return time and again.

The second chapter, "Inter-dependence and Its Inter-Others," moves to a discursive analysis of "interdependence" and its component parts by way of word studies. The etymology of the word already suggests that our symbol is morally complex. The chapter also surveys a number of adjacent "inter"-concepts with which interdependence is often conflated. Each concept represents a distinct discipline: interrelationality (feminism and process thought), intersectionality (black feminism and womanism), intersubjectivity (phenomenology), and interbeing (Buddhism). By distinguishing interdependence from its "others," we will obtain a clearer understanding of what our symbol means.

Chapter III analyzes "Three Forms of Hegemonic Co-optation of Interdependence Along Lines of Race, Gender, and Capitalism." I consider in turn interdependence construed as racial "integration," the purported solution to American white supremacy; interdependence construed as gender "complementarity" in the work of John Paul II; and interdependence construed as "globalization" in economics and political science. In each case, dominant parties identified the *dangerous value* of interdependence, which threatens to dissolve hierarchies and the artificial boundaries that sustain them. Rather than eliminate this dangerous value, however, hegemonic power *co-opted* it by mystification, evacuating interdependence of its radical critique and assimilating it into the master discourses of interracial reconciliation, gender harmony, and neoliberal globalization. And in each case, the resident hierarchies were effectively preserved, as

hegemonic power skillfully applied soft power tactics to diffuse revolutionary energies. The chapter unites its three narrative strands with a discussion of the concept of hegemony as understood by Antonio Gramsci and Emilie Townes. It concludes with a call for a "grown-up ethics" that can navigate tensions, relinquishing the urge for purity and simplicity.[49]

Chapter IV is entitled "Spookiness, Sea Sponges, Stardust and the Sacred: Ontological Interdependence at the Quantum, Biological and Cosmic Levels." The guiding question of this chapter is, what ethical lessons may be responsibly drawn from contemporary scientific paradigms of entanglement and interconnection? Across the quantum, ecological and cosmic spheres, scientists in the twentieth century abandoned previously regnant models of a mechanistic universe populated by atomized entities. In place of a Newtonian-Baconian model, scientists began to embrace entanglement, uncertainty and indeterminacy, relativity and even contradiction. In response to these developments, a number of thinkers—especially (but not only) ecologically-minded feminists—have in recent decades drawn theological-ethical insights from the new scientific paradigm. A striking number of these thinkers invoke the symbol of "interdependence" as a primary social ethical value. This chapter considers some of these efforts to draw normative conclusions from the fact of "quanto-bio-cosmic" ontological interdependence. It concludes that "theologies of nature" run up against the fact/value distinction, which we must trespass if we are to draw normative claims from our observations of nature. Yet drawing ethical lessons from nature requires us to privilege nature's "gentle" face and ignore (or rationalize) its destructive power. The ambiguity of interdependence only deepens.

[49] Chapter III is by far the lengthiest of this dissertation. It might alternatively be considered as one "unit" comprising three separate chapters. However, I have elected to organize it as a single chapter, in order to emphasize the parallels (and the interdependency and intersectionality) between the operations of hegemonic power along lines of race, gender, and capital.

The first four chapters are vertigo-inducing in their interdisciplinary scope. Chapters V and VI adopt a much narrower focus, aiming for depth in our understanding of the theological and social ethical value of interdependence. Each chapter considers the theme of interdependence as discussed in the work of a social ethicist. Chapter five is entitled "'God-in-Relation': Interdependence in Beverly Wildung Harrison's Feminist Social Ethics." Harrison was an expansive thinker who wove together radical social theory, feminism, economics, and "traditional" Christian ethical themes into a potent social ethical analysis. For Harrison, "interdependence" was not only a theological-ethical norm, but a descriptor for the divine: Sacred power *manifests* in the movement of relationships, specifically as people work together for justice. The task of social ethics, as Harrison conceives it, is to make explicit the connections—between theory and practice, theology and social theory, gender-racial-class dynamics, between the personal and the political, and between diverse populations struggling for justice. It is in making those connections—always an affective, embodied process—that sacred power emerges.

"A Network of Familial Solidarity: Interdependence and Integration in the Work of Martin Luther King, Jr." is the title of the sixth chapter. King spoke of a fundamental human solidarity extending across people of all races; he drew connections between struggles against white supremacy in America and anticolonial struggles in the third world; and he stressed the interdependence of all human beings as children of God. The political correlative of King's theological notion of interdependence was integration. Although both notions were co-opted by hegemonic power, for King integration was not a romantic mixing of the races, but was instead a demand for an equal sharing in power. King's thinking on interdependence was derived from a variety of sources, including Gandhi, Boston personalists, process thinkers, the black church,

African communalism, Buddhist metaphysics, and black social gospelers like Howard Thurman. This mélange of sources is itself a manifestation of interdependence, as King was able to weave together an astounding array of discourses in a sweeping and harmonious theological ethical vision. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the implications of King's thought for the ideas of common interest and the common good.

The seventh chapter is named "Justifying Interdependence: Responsibility Ethics." In this chapter I survey the tradition of responsibility ethics within Christian moral theology, which is dominated by H. Richard Niebuhr. I review the work of other ethicists concerned with responsibility: Harrison, Darryl Trimiew, and Marcia Riggs. All three build on Niebuhr's work, while pointing to the limitations of his perspective. I then turn to discussions of responsibility within secular philosophical ethics, focusing especially on works by Larry May and Iris Marion Young. From these sources, and from the insights gathered from previous chapters, I adumbrate the characteristics of an ethics of responsible interdependence as a value for social justice. Rather than a categorical imperative, I enumerate an extensive cluster of what Young calls "parameters of reasoning" to guide interdependence toward social responsibility.

The concluding chapter is organized around two case studies that illustrate "Responsible Interdependence in Practice." The chapter begins with a reflection on the work of Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa, who expresses what responsible interdependence means with the grace only a poet can offer. Anzaldúa advocates the posture of the *nepantlera* (one who inhabits liminal space) when working through social problems and interpersonal impasses. Then the chapter turns to its two cases: 1) Cooperation Jackson, a network of cooperatives that draws on forty years of organizing by black radicals in Mississippi and aims to transform the community of Jackson through economic democracy; and 2) the work of an organizer in my hometown of

Louisville who has reshaped an "Old Left" union organization to respond to the intersectional and international concerns of young people of color. Both of these examples illustrate that "responsible interdependence" is much more than a theoretical ideal. It is instead a powerful symbol and value for social ethics, which takes shape in the most vibrant movements for justice in our nation today. I support that claim further by considering the role of interdependence in the book *Emergent Strategy* by activist adrienne maree brown. The concluding chapter also considers two more concepts adjacent to interdependence—"mutuality" and the African concept "*ubuntu.*" These are reserved for the conclusion because they hew closer than any other concepts (excepting perhaps "interbeing") to what I mean by "responsible interdependence." Before concluding, I lay out some lingering questions and acknowledge, despite my best efforts, that the project remains unfinished. The dissertation concludes where it began—with the insight that that ethics is both impossible and necessary. Responsible interdependence demands courage in the face of the impossible.

Concluding and Beginning

In *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretations of the Bible,* Musa Dube writes of a practice of reading for "liberating interdependence." Dube is aware of the morally ambivalent features of interdependence:

> The interdependence of nations, continents, genders, races, cultures, and political and economic systems, therefore, has always been a given and remains one of the most important aspects of survival. Nonetheless, most interconnections are built on foundations that are both oppressive and exploitative. The term *liberating interdependence* is therefore used here to define the interconnectedness of relationships that recognize and affirm the dignity of all things and people involved. The crucial question, therefore, is, How can we begin to articulate a vision of liberating interdependence?[50]

[50] Musa W. Dube Shomanah, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2012), 185–86.

Respecting Dube's semantical intervention on interdependence, I will use the term "responsible interdependence" because it conveys the necessary condition for interdependence as a normative value. Although "liberating interdependence" (Dube), "moral interdependence" (John Paul II), and "interdependence in solidarity" (David Hollenbach[51]) all point in similar directions, "responsible interdependence" is to me more precise: Where the co-optation of interdependence exploits our connections to reinforce hegemonic power, responsible interdependence draws from those connections a fundamental moral responsibility to care for others. The dissertation proposes that interdependence is a morally ambiguous symbol, but social ethicists need not shy away from employing it as a critical value. Interdependence is a rich theological ethical symbol, which participates in a morally ambivalent social world teeming with difficult problems and yet points beyond it. This dissertation proposes that interdependence helps social ethicists and practitioners to think through those problems, because it interprets human being-in-the-world as being-with-others. Theologically, interdependence symbolizes that we humans are ultimately small but special pieces of a cosmic story—one that is so much bigger and richer than any story anyone could imagine all alone.

[51] David Hollenbach et al., *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 182.

I. DECONSTRUCTING ETHICS

> I am wondering, that's all, and request that it be asked, what the implicit politics of this language is.
>
> -Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*[1]

Some years ago I worked for a local food distribution company called Grasshoppers, which was owned by three Kentucky small farmers. Grasshoppers bought food products (produce, dairy, meat, etc.) from rural Kentucky farmers in bulk, at wholesale prices, and then resold them to Louisville consumers. The goal was to ease the burden on cash- and time-strapped farmers, and to make locally sourced food more consumer-friendly (many folks are unable to make it out to a farmer's market on an early Saturday morning, and/or markets do not serve their neighborhoods). However, high operating and product costs prohibited Grasshoppers from ever turning a profit, and after a few years the company closed down. The local food movement was borne of a commitment to environmental responsibility, intimate community, and social justice. It is very difficult for small farmers to adhere to these ideals while offering consumers the convenience and affordability enabled by the economies of scale operative in mainstream groceries.

Moreover, larger companies in recent years have co-opted the language of the "local" and "organic" food movements, cashing in on a fashionable trend while playing fast and loose with its ethical values. For example, while I worked at Grasshoppers a rival "local" food distributor opened in Louisville. The rival company was in fact not local at all, but operated in half a dozen cities in the regional area. The rival company's website stated that they provided local food, and then stipulated that they defined "local" as "within a day's drive." Now, if one is only paying moderate attention, this sounds like a reasonable definition. However, the definition afforded the

[1] Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship* (London: Verso, 1997), 305.

rival company so much leeway as to completely evacuate "local" of its meaning. In "a day's drive" from Louisville, for instance, one could make it to Florida in about twelve hours to enjoy some "local" oranges. If one wanted really to stretch the meaning of the word, one could even drive to Maine in eighteen hours to enjoy some fresh-caught "local" lobster—or enjoy a "day's drive" to Nuevo Laredo, Mexico in nineteen hours to procure some "local" avocados.[2]

The rival company was able to help put Grasshoppers out of business because it co-opted the language of an ethical movement, marketed it to credulous consumers, and cashed in by evacuating "local" of its common sense and its ethical demands. The example is meant as a cautionary observation about ethical language. Ethical concepts, like "local"—and, as we will see, like "interdependence"—conceal ambiguities, vulnerabilities and tensions, which can easily be manipulated by shrewd marketers and placed in the service of oppressive power. In order to maximize our chances of averting this danger, it helps to get clear about precisely what we intend when we invoke a word, and to anticipate possible misunderstandings, unintended consequences, or deceitful misapproprations. That is the purpose of this chapter, which relies on deconstruction to lay/unsettle the groundwork for a sustained analysis of "interdependence" as an ethical ideal.

The chapter introduces deconstruction as a mode of analysis that reveals implicit tensions concealed within texts and ideas. I focus particularly on Jacques Derrida's essay "Violence and Metaphysics" (1967), an extended critique of the thought of Emmanuel Levinas, as well as Derrida's later work on hospitality. These texts are singled out from Derrida's vast writings

[2] Note: the original draft of this introduction characterized the above as an exaggeration, but I recently visited the company's website and was astounded to find lobster bisque, salmon cakes and canned tuna available for purchase. The company now offers a "sustainable seafood" section which, to be fair, it does not advertise as "local." However, the company continues to market itself as offering "local, organic, and sustainable foods." They continue to stretch the definition of "local," for example in listing among my "local" dairy farms one located in the Ozarks, a seven-hour drive from Louisville; another "local" dairy farm is the cooperative Organic Valley, whose headquarters are located in Wisconsin.

because they pose a fundamental challenge for ethics. Central to them is the idea that every discursive act contains an element of violence, rendering perfect justice impossible. Yet impossibility, for Derrida, does not preclude but is rather the precondition for responsible ethics. Positioning Derrida's critique of hospitality as a political critique of the possibility of ethics itself, the remainder of the chapter lays the foundation for a parallel deconstruction/reconstruction of "interdependence."

Jacques Derrida on Im/possibility

"[I]t is necessary still to inhabit the metaphor in ruins, to dress oneself in tradition's shreds and the devil's patches."

- Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas"[3]

Incessant reminders that there is no pure ideal, no perfect ethical choice, no point of view free from contradiction, no final determinate proposition that exhausts the indeterminacy of the question, no saying that does not unsay itself: these are the hallmarks of the deconstructive method pioneered by Jacques Derrida, which has elicited comparisons to negative theology.[4] Process theologian Catherine Keller reads him alongside the Renaissance-era apophatic theologian Nicholas of Cusa, who compared the vision of God to perspectivist painting style pioneered in the Europe of his day. When viewing such paintings, it seems always that the figure on the canvas is peering directly at you, no matter where you happen to be standing. The perspectival relationship with the painting is, of course, an illusion. Still, it is a reminder that all human knowing is partial and self-referential. If a number of people are viewing the painting

[3] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 140.
[4] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 8; cf. John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion Without Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), and *Derrida and Negative Theology,* ed. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992).

simultaneously, each feels the gaze of the figure, a plurisingularity at once impossible and undeniable. So it is, Cusa argued, with the experience of God. All concepts, images and descriptors for God fail to capture God necessarily, because God is infinite and cannot be bounded within an idea. Representations of God, like perspectival paintings, lead back instead to oneself. Thus, Cusa's anti-mimesis cautions against allowing representations to become idols, even as they can invite a relation with God, although perspectival and partial.[5] For Cusa, as for Derrida, the acknowledgment that persons cannot grasp the "truth" in total is no reason for keeping silent, or ceasing to ask the question. For even our partial sayings, our incomplete depictions, our misbegotten questions, our perspectival illusions afford people tangential points of connection. And this is—infinitely—better than nothing, *provided that persons do not mistake their partial perspective for the absolute.* This sober admonition guides Derrida's work, and the qualification always carries ethico-political implications. Whether he is engaged in a critique of values such as hospitality or friendship or practices of discourse and writing, the undercutting of philosophical pretensions toward absolute expression is always tied to a critique of imperial designs to deploy that absolute knowledge as a sanction for oppressive power.[6]

[5] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible,* 87–90.

[6] Because Derrida's style is so allusive, his work is susceptible to a variety of interpretations. My reading is particularly at odds with that of Richard Rorty, who writes that although Derrida's early work was political, he gave up pretensions to unite the private and public and retreated into fanciful plays with language and private illusions. Rorty writes, "I take Derrida's importance to lie in his having had the courage to give up the attempt to unite the private and the public, to stop trying to bring together a quest for private autonomy and an attempt at public resonance and utility." But Derrida never gave up the task of political discourse analysis. He was a fierce critic of apartheid and of the policies of the state of Israel, and wrote on Marxism, the death penalty, and many other political topics. Perhaps Rorty's reading is reflective of the phase of Derrida's career during which Rorty was reading him (his book was published in 1989). See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 125. However, Derrida may be fairly criticized for confining his analysis to discourse critique without due attention to constructive ethico-political intervention. Theologian Anselm Min, for example, worries that "Derrida is more interested in unmasking hidden oppressions in a totality than in encouraging wholesome collective action." Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World: A Postmodern Theology After Postmodernism* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 43-4.

Derrida on Levinas: "Violence and Metaphysics"

This commitment to undercutting philosophical overreaches seems to have guided Derrida's critique—at once friendly and devastating—of Emmanuel Levinas. "Violence and Metaphysics" is, in one way, a scathing treatment of Levinas's thought. The extended essay, which appeared in Derrida's landmark volume *Writing and Difference* (1967), is a careful analysis of Levinas's critique of Western philosophy. Levinas had made the sweeping claim in *Totality and Infinity* (1961) that Western philosophy was guilty of "ontological imperialism."[7] According to Levinas, Western ontology presumes that the subject attains self-consciousness through opposition to an other, as the self progresses toward absolute freedom, self-possession and comprehension of Being itself. Singling out Hegel, Husserl and especially Martin Heidegger, Levinas argued that Western philosophy was premised on the idea of "totality", an over-arching system of Being that can be grasped by thought and subordinated to the ego. Having spent five years as a prisoner of the Nazis in a war camp segregated for Jews, Levinas' critique carries concrete political implications. The attack on Heidegger, who had been a member of the Nazi party, implies that philosophical systems of totality underwrite historical political systems of totalitarianism. "Heideggerian ontology, which subordinates the relationship with the Other to the relationship with Being in general, remains under obedience to the anonymous, and leads inevitably to another power, to imperialist domination, to tyranny,"[8] says Levinas.

His aim in *Totality and Infinity,* then, is to find "a situation where totality breaks up, a situation that conditions the totality itself. Such a situation is the gleam of exteriority or of transcendence in the face of the Other. The rigorously developed concept of this transcendence is

[7] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 44.
[8] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* 46–47.

expressed by the term infinity."[9] Levinas names the encounter with the face of the "other" as the site of transcendence, as that which goes beyond, exceeds, and refuses to be contained within one's system of representations. The "other" knows something foreign to the subject, and their vulnerable face is a command not to murder and a summons to responsibility. For Levinas, subjectivity is not a quest for absolute knowing or comprehension of Being, but a call to responsibility (an argument that Levinas would elaborate more explicitly in his later work *Otherwise than Being*). To exist as a subject is already to be responsible for another. Thus, at stake is not ontology but *ethics*, which is primary. "Morality is not a branch of philosophy, but first philosophy,"[10] Levinas insists.

A careful reader of the history of philosophy, Derrida systematically dismantles Levinas by showing that he has misread each of his prime targets of critique (Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger), and in fact that Levinas's argument paradoxically *presupposes* each of them. Beginning with Hegel, Derrida points out that any attempt to negate, refute, defeat Hegel is doomed at the outset, for Hegel's model of knowing depends on precisely this creative tension of agonistic relationship. Paradoxically, then, by elaborating his notion of infinity over "dialectical logic,"[11] Levinas confirms dialectical logic, thereby playing directly into Hegel's hands. Hegelianism is, in the language of Western philosophy, inescapable, so that Derrida concludes, "as soon as *he speaks* against Hegel, Levinas can only confirm Hegel, has confirmed him already."[12]

Derrida moves next to Levinas's critique of Husserl. Levinas, who had written his doctoral dissertation on Husserl's phenomenology, ultimately rejected Husserl because of the latter's notion that consciousness experiences the phenomenon of the "other" as an "alter ego."

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[9] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* 29.
[10] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* 304.
[11] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* 150.
[12] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 149.

Levinas worried that this move would "neutralize its absolute alterity": that is, by making of the other an alter ego, I am stripping the other of their otherness and assimilating them into myself.[13]

But this is not what Husserl says, counters Derrida. Instead, Husserl's point is that in order for an other to appear, they must necessarily appear *as a phenomenon for the ego*. One can only relate to the "other" as a phenomenon in terms of one's preexisting categories, yes. But the "other", in Husserl, nevertheless offers something new, expanding one's categories, exceeding and sometimes correcting one's initial grasping into consciousness the fact of the other as one like unto oneself. Derrida shows that if the ego did not proceed via Husserl's "analogical appresentation," understanding the other by analogy to one's own experience, but instead had unmediated access to the original subjectivity of the other, then "the other would cease to be other" as such.[14]

Finally, Derrida turns to Heidegger, the principal target of Levinas's attack. Paul Ricœur reflected of Levinas, "He never stopped explaining himself in terms of Heidegger. Because he was the closest stranger. This was an ontology without ethics. […] [Heidegger] was thus the perfect prey for Hitlerism. This is the flaw that had to be recognized and Levinas perceived it perfectly."[15] Derrida sees things differently. As noted above, Levinas worried that by prioritizing the question of Being over existing beings (the "ontological" over the "ontic"), Heidegger was subordinating respect for those beings to a heroic quest for comprehension of the totality of Being itself. This heroic quest, Levinas feared, was borne of an egoistic drive to consume all of existence, the very kind of voracious appetite that funded Nazism. Derrida, who like Levinas and Husserl was of Jewish heritage, insists that Levinas has also gotten Heidegger wrong. For

[13] Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* 153.
[14] Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* 153–54.
[15] Quoted in Salomon Malka, *Emmanuel Levinas: His Life and Legacy* (Duquesne University Press, 2006), 198.

Heidegger, Derrida contends, there is never any "Being-itself" to be comprehended apart from existing beings. Pre-consciousness of Being enables us meaningfully to interact with beings in the world. For Heidegger, "Being is but the *Being-of* this existent, and does not exist outside it as a foreign power, or as a hostile or neutral impersonal element,"[16] says Derrida. Again, he argues, Levinas must presuppose Heidegger for his ethics to be possible, because the Heideggerian pre-awareness of Being is necessary for one to understand that in encountering an "other," I am encountering a being worthy of respect. This awareness of Being "conditions the *respect* for the other *as what it is*: other."[17] Derrida suggests that Levinas's prime objection to Heidegger was borne not of an allergy to the ideas themselves, but, quoting Levinas, "a profound need to depart from the climate of this philosophy," namely to reject Nazism and therefore any philosophy associated with it. However, Derrida insists, it was Levinas himself who taught that the truth of the other transcends such things as "climate" and "history."[18] Therefore, Heidegger must not be dismissed notwithstanding his collaboration with Nazism.

Derrida thus mounts a comprehensive and devastating attack on the thought of Emmanuel Levinas. Indeed, one might reasonably conclude from large portions of the text that Derrida has dismissed Levinas entirely. But then, this: Emmanuel Levinas died in Paris on Christmas day, 1995, a Monday. On Wednesday his funeral was held, and Levinas was eulogized by his lifelong friend, Jacques Derrida.[19]

At the outset of "Violence and Metaphysics", Derrida explicitly states that his critique of Levinas will not entail a dismissal or even a decision. He "refuse[s] to sacrifice the history of

[16] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 170.
[17] Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* 172.
[18] Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* 181.
[19] Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*.

Levinas's thought and works."[20] Even should his account prove contradictory, Derrida refuses to "choose between the opening and the totality. Therefore we will be incoherent, but without systematically resigning ourselves to incoherence."[21] In the refusal to decide between opposites, to resolve them into a higher, coherent unity, to make sense of the nonsensical, my reading approaches the irreducible difference at the core of Derrida's non-system.

In Hegel, the essence of a substance arises via the dialectical interplay of opposing elements (black vs. white, negative vs. positive electricity, acid vs. base, Enlightenment vs. Christianity are all examples he invokes). In each case, the specific being of a thing is defined, cut and bounded, via the negation enacted by consciousness separating the thing from its opposite. In that way, for Hegel, negation is the essence of being: "in other words, the absolute antithesis is posited as a self-identical essence." For Hegel, however, this seeming contradiction (a thing *is* its opposite?) is resolved in history, through the creative dialectic of opposing forces and ideas. Human consciousness develops progressively through such agonistic interactions, as the Spirit of absolute knowing brings itself into fuller and fuller awareness. This agonistic process is called, in Hegel, "sublation," and is defined by him as the "reduction of the diversity to a pure *being-for-self*."[22]

Levinas's worry with this way of construing history is that it seems to provide philosophical sanction to dominative power, what Levinas calls "ontological imperialism"[23]: History is explicated as the unfolding of an ever-expansive power of absolute knowing, which

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[20] Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* 104.
[21] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 104. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno stage a conversation between two young people, in which one accuses the other of contradicting themselves. The other responds, "I do not deny it, but contradiction is necessary. It is a response to the objective contradiction of society." *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments,* ed. by Gunzelin Schmid *Noerr,* trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 198.
[22] G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, Revised ed. edition (Oxford University Press, 1977), 80–81.
[23] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* 44.

will in time bring all and each under the sway of one totalizing power. Indeed, Hegel himself explicitly connected his philosophy of mind with European colonialism in his *Encyclopedia.*[24] Levinas had viscerally experienced his worry borne out in the Nazi catastrophe, as he languished in a Nazi POW camp while his family were being exterminated in the name of a master race destined for greatness. So Levinas desperately sought throughout his life's work to find an escape from system-building, dialectical logic, and totalizing ontology. What Derrida shows is that such an escape is *impossible* within the language of Western philosophy. And yet, he refuses to relinquish Levinas, because he shares Levinas's ethical urgency as well as his critique that Western philosophy underwrites violence. And so it is that Derrida's refusal to decide, to synthesize opposites into a higher unity, will lead him to develop his notion of "différance"—itself a negation of Hegelian sublation, which is fully aware that as a negation it cannot escape Hegelianism and yet proceeds anyway, with caution and awareness of one's limitations.

Derrida's refusal to synthesize is fundamentally an ethico-political refusal, and in this he has deeply influenced postcolonial thinkers such as Gayatri Spivak, who penned a marvelous extended preface to Derrida's *Of Grammatology,* and who writes in her own *Critique of Postcolonial Reason,* "différance, not sublation once for all."[25] Playing on the ambiguity in French between the terms which signify "difference" and "deferral," *différance* names the refusal to locate an origin or synthetic essence for resolving contradiction, a differal of synthesis into an ever-receding future, and an option instead for further exposition and deepening of the tensions in order to reveal the subtle operations of power within ambiguous values. Spivak sums up this practice, known as "deconstruction," in this way: "To locate the promising marginal text, to

[24] G. W. F. Hegel, "'Anthropology,' from the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences," in *The Idea of Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi and Tommy Lee Lott, 1 edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2000), 43.
[25] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, 1 edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 69.

disclose the undecidable moment, to pry it loose with the positive lever of the signifier; to reverse the resident hierarchy, only to displace it; to dismantle in order to reconstitute what is always already inscribed. Deconstruction in a nutshell."[26] If that definition is still too (purposefully) elusive, one last return to "Violence and Metaphysics" should make apparent what difference *différance* and deconstruction make for ethics.

Turning to Levinas's constructive moves, Derrida challenges Levinas's idealized notions of language and discourse. In *Totality and Infinity,* "discourse" is presented as an alternative to "disclosure," which latter refers to the comprehension of an object of knowledge given to the subject for assimilation. Discourse, by contrast, refers to the encounter with the absolutely exterior other, who teaches by speaking to the subject something that the subject does not already know. Discourse is presented as revelation. "Discourse is not simply a modification of intuition (or of thought), but an original relation with exterior being," says Levinas.[27] Where rhetoric involves competition and struggle for possession of the truth, discourse instead is a peaceable relation to the other through language. Levinas concludes, "the essence of language is goodness, or again, that the essence of language is friendship and hospitality."[28]

Derrida, of course, will take a more jaundiced view. "Discourse is originally violent," he counters.[29] Where Levinas sees peace in discourse, Derrida replies that discourse cannot avoid the proliferation of representations, which since they are self-constructed are inevitably *mis*representations, of the other. Always the other must be conceptualized and assimilated into my categories, an act of violence. There is, Derrida insists, a "preethical violence" involved in

[26] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Preface," in Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Corrected edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), lxxvii.
[27] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* 66.
[28] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 305.
[29] Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* 145.

any act of relation to the other, namely the double violence of appropriation and misrepresentation. There is no escape from "the violence of the concept."[30]

And what, then? Is language to be dispensed with in complete renunciation, with discourse, with the possibility of peace? Not at all. One must rather recognize that violence is "inescapable, except by denying discourse, that is, by risking the worst violence."[31] The worst violence is that of silence and nihilism, where discourse, rather than acquiescing to a nihilistic silence or clinging to a naïve vision of an impossible pure nonviolence, should seek to accomplish "the least possible violence" in an impossible situation.[32]

Derrida's deconstructive practice is ethical insofar as it displays a certain mature resolve in the face of finitude, that is, in the face of the *certitude of the failure* of any ethical decision to achieve perfection. "We live in and of difference, that is, in *hypocrisy*,"[33] he writes in the essay's penultimate paragraph. And to recognize this, for Derrida, is not to resign oneself to inaction,

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[30] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 160, 185.
[31] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 146.
[32] Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 162. I thank Victor Anderson for pointing out the affinity between this view and that of the Christian realist theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. In *Moral Man and Immoral Society,* Niebuhr argued that realizing a truly just society is impossible, because people are riven between selfish and altruistic impulses, with the former tending to predominate as groups become larger and more impersonal. Thus, Niebuhr admitted, politics is inevitably a struggle for power, and the best one can achieve is to harness power responsibly by imposing checks and constraints on it. Nevertheless, we must not relinquish hope in the impossible, because hope inspires us to take the necessary risks to further the cause of justice. For this reason we need religion, Niebuhr thought: "Without the ultrarational hopes and passions of religion no society will ever have the courage to conquer despair and attempt the impossible; for the vision of a just society is an impossible one, which can be approximated only by those who do not regard it as impossible. The truest visions of religion are illusions, which may be partially realized by being resolutely believed. For what religion believes to be true is not wholly true but ought to be true; and may be come true if its truth is not doubted." Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics,* 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 81; cf. 18, 164, 221.

I focus on Derrida rather than Niebuhr in this dissertation because I find his method particularly useful for discourse analysis. This dissertation focuses attention on the ambiguities inherent in language which render it susceptible of appropriation by hegemonic power (Derrida's concern), rather than on the ambiguities within human nature (Niebuhr's). While the two concerns are obviously related, I am not prepared to make the kind of generalizations Niebuhr risks such as this: "In every human group there is less reason to guide and to check impulse, less capacity for self-transcendence, less ability to comprehend the needs of others and therefore more unrestrained egoism than the individuals, who compose the group, reveal in their personal relationships" (Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society,* xxix).
[33] Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* 192.

fatalism, or despair. Instead, it is simply to acknowledge, returning to Cusa and negative theology, the partiality of our perspective, the illusive grasp of elusive truth, and the tensions and aporias lurking around every corner of human knowing and doing. *And still act anyway*, with care and concern to minimize the violence that one will unwittingly cause whenever one seeks to act ethically, that is, whenever one acts on the basis of some written or unwritten law concealing all the marks of human brokenness and finitude, impossibility and certitude. Derrida's challenge, and invitation, is to relinquish the certainty of purity for the sake of the possibility of responsibility.

This dissertation adopts a deconstructive approach toward "interdependence." It thus begins with suspicion that this ethical value conceals implicit tensions, vulnerabilities, and even violences, and that it may therefore be misappropriated as a sanction for oppressive power. This suspicion will be borne out in the third chapter, which considers historical forms of hegemonic co-optation of interdependence. Yet, with Derrida, this dissertation refuses a dismissal of ethics and a retreat into nihilistic silence. It endeavors instead to live in the tensions and contradictions of moral analysis. If ethical values are ambiguous and complex, this is because they are projections of ambiguous and complex human subjectivities inhabiting an interactive social world. In what follows, I consider the case of "hospitality" for what one may learn from Derrida's deconstruction of a particular ethical value.

The Conditions of Hospitality

Gil Anidjar observes that the theme of hospitality is a "thread" coursing through Derrida's oeuvre, appearing as early as *Writing and Difference* (1967).[34] However, the two years following

[34] Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, 356.

Levinas's death saw Derrida's most prolific reflections on the subject, including the volumes *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* and *Of Hospitality,* and a 1997 course of lectures on "Hostipitality" (Derrida's neologism). Derrida even goes so far as to suggest that hospitality might be considered as "ethicity itself, the whole and the principle of ethics."[35] He notes that Levinas's *Totality and Infinity* may be thought of as "an immense treatise *of hospitality*."[36] Of course, he sets to work immediately to deconstruct hospitality as an ethical value, and thus to deconstruct ethics itself.

Hospitality, Derrida argues, emerges in the question of addressing foreigners. Following Emile Benveniste, he traces the etymology of hospitality to the Latin *hostis*, "foreigner," and *pets* (*potes, potential*), "to have power."[37] To be *hosti-pets,* to be in a position to offer hospitality, is to have power over the foreigner/stranger/guest. Derrida further notes that *hostis* can mean "foreigner" or "enemy." The foreigner "has to ask for hospitality in a language which by definition is not his own, the one imposed on him by the master of the house, the host, the king, the lord, the authorities, the nation, the State, the father, etc. This personage imposes on him translation into their own language, and that's the first act of violence."[38] The question of hospitality begins, then, with the violence of translation—but it does not end there.

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[35] Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, 50. This quotation is from a sustained reflection on Levinas's thought, and it is not entirely clear from the context whether Derrida is speaking for himself or summarizing Levinas (perhaps a little of both).

[36] Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas,* 21.

[37] Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 43–45. Merriam-Webster appears to challenge this interpretation: "It has been suggested that this *hostis* derives from *hospes,* since they both can refer to 'a stranger', but there is no evidence of this derivation." *The Merriam-Webster New Book of Word Histories* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1991), 227. However, Benveniste was not arguing that *hostis* derives from *hospes*, but the reverse—cf. "L'hospitalité, in Emile Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* (Paris: Minuit, 1969), ch. 7 (for this citation I am indebted to Gerasimos Kakoliris, "Jacques Derrida on the Ethics of Hospitality," in *The Ethics of Subjectivity: Perspectives since the Dawn of Modernity*, ed. Elvis Imafidon (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015), 144–56; for an extended reflection see Anatoly Liberman, "'Guests' and 'Hosts,'" OUPblog, February 13, 2013, https://blog.oup.com/2013/02/guest-host-word-origin-etymology/.

[38] Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 15.

Hospitality in the ordinary sense is an offer with a list of conditions attached. The stranger/guest/foreigner is at least partially known to the host, and in addition to speaking the language of the host also agrees to behave in accordance with the conditions the host imposes. Hospitality is typically offered to "integratable," that is, "assimilable" others, those who are willing to behave according to the conditions and expectations of the host.[39] *Absolute* hospitality, Derrida notes, would mean opening up my home to a completely unknown stranger without asking their name.[40] Taken to an extreme, hospitality would mean "to let oneself be overtaken," and even "violated and raped, stolen."[41] Opening oneself and one's space *absolutely* to the guest would mean giving up one's claim of ownership of one's home and one's very life. Now, Derrida is not *advocating* such a morbid practice of opening oneself to violence. Instead, his point is that, when pushed to its limit, the category of hospitality falls apart, because the *absolute host* relinquishes their claim on property and their life, and thus relinquishes their status as host. Absolute, unconditioned hospitality thus destroys the (violent) conditions that allow hospitality to exist in the first place. Absolute hospitality is, in practice, impossible.

But deconstructing hospitality, revealing its conditionality and entanglements with hostility and the impossibility of ethics, emphatically does not lead to nihilism on Derrida's account. The impossibility of hospitality, and thus of ethics, serves as a sobering reminder to act carefully and to hold our philosophical theories—and especially our ethical norms—tenuously. For if one realizes that hospitality, ostensibly a kind and humane value, always contains an element of violence, one is likely to be more sensitive to the violence that one may unwittingly cause in one's well-intended act. This does not lead to nihilism but to greater care and attention.

[39] Derrida, *Acts of Religion,* 363.
[40] Derrida, *Of Hospitality,* 25.
[41] Derrida, *Acts of Religion,* 361.

Indeed, instead of resignation, Derrida advocates building up of a "culture of hospitality" marked by "structures of welcoming, a welcoming apparatus."[42]

How does one reconcile Derrida's critique of conditional hospitality to his paradoxical advocacy of a culture of hospitality? At bottom, as usual, Derrida's deconstructive critique is revealed as a critique of power. In this case, he has in mind nation-states that jealously guard their borders from unwanted foreigners. He is sharply critical, unlike his teacher Levinas, of the state of Israel, which in his view has violated the Torah command to welcome the stranger through "the renewed support of colonial 'settlements' or the decision by the supreme Court authorizing torture." He has in mind also "Cambodians, Armenians, Palestinians, Algerians," undocumented immigrants, and "the crimes against hospitality" perpetrated through the violence of borders and detention/concentration camps.[43] Derrida's critique of the concept of hospitality is meant as a political critique of those "hosts" who treat guests as "hostages," who set strict limits on who is welcomed, and who legislate how the guests must behave once they accept the invitation. The construction of "structures of welcoming, a welcoming apparatus" would thus entail for Derrida an end to colonial settlements and state-sponsored torture, and a reform of states' refugee and immigration policies enabling people fleeing violence, persecution or poverty to enjoy bodily security and heightened quality of life.

Summary

The deconstruction of hospitality, then, leads not to dismissal but to a tempered recovery. Likewise, Derrida's broader critique of Emmanuel Levinas, devastating as it is, does not constitute a rejection or dismissal of Levinas's thought. Rather, Derrida is deeply influenced by

[42] Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, 360.
[43] Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas,* 81, 71.

Levinas's charge that Western thought is essentially imperialistic, and Derrida's own critiques of logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence display traces of Levinas's profound influence, as when Derrida asserts, "Western metaphysics, as the limitation of the sense of being within the field of presence, is produced as the domination of a linguistic form."[44] Derrida's worries with Levinas are two: 1) Levinas presupposes the arguments of the Western philosophers he critiques, and 2) failing to recognize that he has done so, Levinas naively believes it is possible to escape from thought-systems of "totality" and locate an essentially nonviolent face-to-face encounter with the other through language. The deconstructive approach, on the contrary, acknowledges the violence inherent in Western metaphysics, but also recognizes that there is no escape from dialectical logic, "logocentrism," the "metaphysics of presence" and the like, and thus no escape from contradiction. Thus, deconstruction views ontological claims of any kind with suspicion, recognizing that pretensions to absolute truth go hand in hand with pretensions to absolute power. Linear conceptions of logic inherently lend themselves to the construction of hierarchies and "the formation of ideology by the class that writes or rather commands the scribes."[45]

Deconstruction and "Interdependence"

Derrida's critique of Levinas, hospitality, and ultimately of ethics itself is a demonstration that ethics is impossible. *And yet the impossible must be done*. Guided by these sobering insights, the next chapter attempts a parallel deconstruction of "interdependence" as an ethical symbol, which is ultimately driven toward a reconstruction of interdependence in this dissertation. Just as Derrida critiques assumptions that pure nonviolence is possible, that hospitality is always charitable, that language is essentially peaceful, so this dissertation argues that one cannot

[44] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 23.
[45] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 86.

assume that "interdependence" is an unproblematic ethical ideal. Indeed, deconstructive moves encourage one to begin instead with the assumption that interdependence, like all normative values, tarries with pretensions to totality, which slide easily into pretensions of control.[46] A deconstructive mode/mood will immediately assume that "interdependence" is tinged with hostility and partakes of violence, that it is not unequivocally an avenue for relations of mutual flourishing but possibly a tool for expanding exploitative power. All this one may assume, following Derrida, *before one even begins* to probe the historical forms of hegemonic co-optation that this dissertation will turn to in the third chapter. Indeed, according to Derrida, one may indeed assume that interdependence is morally ambiguous before considering what "interdependence" signifies! On my reading of Derrida, interdependence involves violence, *because it is a concept.*

Yet, I take it that on Derrida's account, not all concepts or all violences are created equal. The next chapter begins the task of deconstructing "interdependence," preparing the way for its responsible reconstruction as an ambiguous, dangerous, and necessary value.

[46] Laurel Schneider makes a similar admission in *Beyond Monotheism.* Schneider is aware that, in challenging the "logic of the one" and commending multiplicity, she is making new ontological claims that "cannot fully escape the risks of totalization." Where Levinas thought that infinity could transcend the reach of totality, Schneider recognizes that "ontological creativity is necessary, but ontology consorts intimately with dreams of totality which reinscribe the One all over again." While acknowledging that Oneness is inescapable, Schneider suggests a theological way forward involving humility, humor, and a willingness to begin again. Laurel Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 138.

II. "INTER-DEPENDENCE" AND ITS INTER-OTHERS

> In philosophy, it is of the utmost importance to beware of the interpretative vagaries of language.
>
> - Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*[1]

If hospitality is hostile and discourse originally violent, if there is no ethically coherent position free from hypocrisy,[2] then what hidden tensions and violences are lurking within our deep symbol, "interdependence"? What irreconcilable differences simmer beneath its placid surface? This chapter takes up these questions, turning to a deconstructive analysis of "inter-dependence." What does it mean to "depend" on something? And then, how does the addition of "inter" alter the meaning of dependence? Further, how is interdependence to be distinguished from other terms with which it is often conflated? Liberation-minded theorists sometimes assume that interdependence is inter-changeable with other "inter-" words such as interrelationality, interconnectedness, intersectionality, intersubjectivity, and even interbeing. What do all of these "inters" share, and what distinguishes interdependence from the others? These precise delineations will begin to illuminate the problem and the promise that interdependence poses and offers for social ethics.

Breaking Down "Inter-dependence"

"Dependence"

Violence, immediately: If hospitality is inextricable from hostility, then dependence leads back to *hanging.*

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[1] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality,* corrected ed., David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, eds. (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 324.
[2] Derrida, *Of Hospitality,* 15; "Hostipitality," in *Acts of Religion,* ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), 358–420; *Writing and Difference,* 145, 104, 192.

We need not look long to discern traces of hostility, violence and control in our ambiguous ethical value. To "depend on" means first of all to "be controlled or determined by." The word is derived from the Latin *dependere, de-* "down" + *pendere* "hang" (think of the contemporary English "pendant," although "depend on" is still synonymous with "hang on," as in "the outcome of the election hangs on the Ohio turnout"). The secondary meaning, according to *Oxford English Dictionary,* is "be able to trust; rely on." *Merriam-Webster* adds "contingent" to the primary definition, quickly embroiling one into metaphysical questions of necessity versus contingency; that dictionary entry also adds "pending or undecided" to the mix ("it depends").[3]

Already, then, a host of entangled issues. Dependence carries tensions in its connotations of trust and undecidedness, determinacy and contingency, controlling and… hanging. To begin with the last meaning, *pendere* means "hang" but also "weigh" and "pay," because in ancient Rome payments were made by balancing weights on a hanging scale. *Pendere* is thus the source of our notion of "value" but also of "thought" (*pensare,* "to ponder," comes from "to weigh" mentally).[4] Already, then, parallels emerge with Derrida's discussion of hospitality: To question interdependence is to question not just a particular value, but also the idea of value itself. It is to recognize that if ethical talk is value talk, it has its basis not in ideals of altruism, love or goodness, but in an invested logic of material exchange. The meaning of interdependence hangs/depends on the meaning of dependence, which hangs on the scales of justice—and justice, at bottom, or at least etymologically, is a question of calculating the material worth of things[5]

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[3] "Depend," *Oxford Reference,* accessed January 22, 2019, http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199571123.001.0001/m_en_gb0217240; "Definition of DEPEND," *Merriam-Webster.com,* accessed January 22, 2019, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/depend.

[4] E. A. Andrews, *Harpers' Latin Dictionary.* (New York: American Book Company, 1907), 1328, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015020703909; "Definition of DEPEND."

[5] This problem is what leads Derrida to name ethics and justice as impossible possibilities. Ethics requires respect for the unique otherness of the other; but social ethics (politics) inevitably reduces the other to an exchangeable quantity within a mass population, not a person but a number in a system. In his *Politics of Friendship,* Derrida

(and, of course, some of the "things" for sale will have been human persons). The notion of value depends on locating a measure according to which different individual things can be made interchangeable, a calculated reduction of otherness for the purpose of facilitating market exchange.[6] One such measure is weight, but another is time, as in Marx's labor theory of value, which argues that money is an exchange-value attached to an article symbolizing "the labour-time socially necessary for its production."[7]

Dependence, hanging, weight, value, thought. The word study points to a tension at the heart of ethics between a descriptive reporting of human interactions ("interdependence" in contemporary economics simply means "globalization," the intertwined networks of exchange of capital, labor, communication and resources) versus the normative practice of stipulating the morally right ways of interrelating ("interdependence" in feminist ethics is a relation of mutuality between beings entailing responsibility for one another). Deconstruction exposes that tension while refusing to resolve it.

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writes, "There is no democracy without respect for irreducible singularity or alterity, but there is no democracy without the 'community of friends' (*koína ta philōn*), without the calculation of majorities, without identifiable, stabilizable, representable subjects, all equal. These two laws are irreducible one to the other. Tragically irreconcilable and forever wounding. The wound itself opens with the necessity of having to *count* one's friends, to count the others, in the economy of one's own, there where every other is altogether other.

But where every other is *equally* altogether other. More serious than a contradiction, political desire is forever borne by the disjunction of these two laws. It also bears the chance and the future of a democracy whose ruin it constantly threatens but whose life, however, it sustains, like life itself, at the heart of its *divided virtue,* the inadequacy to itself" (22).

[6] See also Schneider's insight that "When ethics is a metric of right and wrong it falls apart on the shores of bodies. There, where right and wrong have no basis of exchange, what is possible is *decision* and *responsibility*, but not any system of ethics. This is because of bodies. The impossibility of exchanging one body for another, one moment for another, one world for another means that each is, quite literally, *in*valuable and so inaccessible to systems, inaccessible to ethics" (*Beyond Monotheism,* 171).

[7] Karl Marx, "Capital, Volume One," in *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 302-8.

"Inter-"

It is tempting to hang the pall of violence over our prefix as well, by falsely linking it with its homonym, the verb "inter" meaning "to deposit (a dead body) in the earth or in a tomb." But such mischievousness would be irresponsible, for the latter verb traces to the Latin *interrare,* from *in-* and *terra,* "earth." The English prefix "inter-" derives instead from the Latin *inter,* which can be used either as a prefix or as a stand-alone adverb meaning "in the midst, in between" (e.g., "*primus inter pares*"). The English senses mostly follow this meaning: *Merriam-Webster*'s sense 3 is "located between" and sense 4 "carried on between"; but other senses include "reciprocal," "shared by" and "between the limits of."[8]

So, in which sense is "inter" functioning in "interdependence"? It certainly is a relation "between" things. But it is also a "reciprocal" relation in that *all* things which are interdependent depend on one another. If this were not the case—that is, if in an interdependent relationship one party was not dependent on the other/s—then the prefix "inter" would be superfluous. For indeed, "dependence" already implies a relationship: An infant is "dependent" on a caregiver for survival, but not the other way around. The HIV virus requires a living host to survive and propagate, but HIV-positive humans obviously do not depend for their survival on the virus. Life on earth depends on proximity to the sun, which radiates necessary light and warmth, but the sun hung in space before the existence of earthlings and will perhaps continue to radiate heat and light when homo sapiens are no more. A relationship of dependence, then, is (or at least can be) a one-way relationship, with no requirement that all parties depend on one another. With

[8] "Definition of INTER," *Merriam-Webster.com,* accessed January 25, 2019, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inter; Andrews, *Harpers' Latin Dictionary*, 976.

"interdependence" such is not the case, for the relationship is reciprocal. Interdependence is defined as "the state of being dependent upon one another: mutual dependence."[9]

May one assume "reciprocity" and "mutuality" to be synonymous? If they were precisely coterminous, there would be no need for two (both Latin-derived) terms. And yet *Merriam-Webster* appears to assume synonymy, for "reciprocity" is defined as "mutual dependence."[10] One could tarry indefinitely with such etymological quibbles, only to conclude at last that perfect synonymy is impossible because perfect representation is impossible, for in one's attempt to capture the essence of a thing, one will inevitably misstate the case. That is, one will inevitably do violence to what one is attempting to represent. In short, the in-terminable (inter-minable) series of ambiguities may compel one to side with Derrida.

For Derrida, however, deconstruction is not the end of speech but the beginning of responsible action. The question at hand, the question that makes a difference, is *does interdependence imply justice, right relationship?* That is the import of the question whether reciprocity and mutuality are synonymous. Certainly, King assumes the presence of justice when he writes of "an inescapable network of mutuality."[11] But this elementary word study is already casting doubt as to whether that presumption is warranted.

Summary

The etymological analysis of "interdependence" leads to the following conclusions: 1) the etymology of "dependence," which is the source of the notions of value and thought, implicates

[9] "Definition of INTERDEPENDENCE," *Merriam-Webster.com,* accessed January 25, 2019, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/interdependence.
[10] "Definition of RECIPROCITY," *Merriam-Webster.com,* accessed January 25, 2019, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/reciprocity.
[11] Martin Luther King, "Letter from a Birmingham City Jail," 290.

ethics in a logic of material exchange. This raises the question whether (if justice is about hanging the scales correctly) ethics is not at all a matter of regard, love, or responsibility for the other but simply a matter of correct calculus.[12] 2) "Inter" qualifies dependence by introducing reciprocity and mutuality into the mix. 3) Interdependence, then, can be tentatively defined as *a relationship between two or more parties in which the existence of each is contingent upon interaction and exchange with the other/s.* However, this does not settle the question whether interdependent relationships—even should they turn out to be mutual or reciprocal—are relationships of justice. Everything hangs/depends on that question.

Interdependence and Its Others

To get a little clearer on what is meant by "interdependence," it will also help to distinguish it from other words often conflated with it. A host of "inter-" words are available, and the following analysis will consider some of the most prominent in proximity to and distinction from interdependence. They are interrelationality, intersectionality, intersubjectivity, and interbeing. Each concept has currency within a particular discipline, respectively in feminism and process thought, black feminism and womanism, phenomenology, and Buddhism. It is impossible to provide an adequate introduction to any of those disciplines, or even to the operation of these concepts within the disciplines, in the space of a few pages. The following reflections are therefore offered as rough sketches for the purpose of delineating the terms' commonalities and distinctions with interdependence and the ethical implications thereof.

[12] Cf. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 159.

"Interrelationality and Interconnectedness" in Feminist and Process Thought

Interrelationality and interconnectedness are routinely conflated with interdependence, most often in descriptions of the world as a web or network. King writes, "as nations and individuals, we are interdependent," and then asserts in the next paragraph, "It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny."[13] Harrison writes that theological analysis must address "the interconnected web of all our social relations, including our relations to God."[14] Rosemary Radford Ruether writes that quantum physics has revealed a "web of relationships in which events arise in interconnection with each other."[15] But are all three terms inter-changeable? The following analysis will consider "relational" theology and philosophy to further illuminate the meaning of interdependence. A caveat: I will continue to conflate interrelationality and interconnectedness, because 1) the primary focus of this dissertation is on interdependence, and continually parsing fine distinctions between secondary concepts (e.g. between relation and connection) might steer the argument off course; 2) the distinction between interdependence and the pairing interrelationality/interconnectedness is more profound than the distinction of the latter pair from one another; and 3) there exists a body of literature on "relational" theology and philosophy,[16] but there is no corresponding body of "connectional" theology or philosophy. For these reasons

[13] King, "A Christmas Sermon on Peace," in *A Testament of Hope*, 254.
[14] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 245.
[15] Rosemary R. Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, Reprint edition (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1994), 38.
[16] C. Robert Mesle, *Process-Relational Philosophy: An Introduction to Alfred North Whitehead*, 1st edition (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2008); Lisa Isherwood and Elaine Bellchambers, eds., *Through Us, with Us, in Us: Relational Theologies in the Twenty-First Century* (London: SCM Press, 2009); *Relational Theology: A Contemporary Introduction*, ed. Brint Montgomery, Thomas Jay Oord, and Karen Winslow (Eugene, OR: Point Loma Press and Wipf & Stock Pub, 2012). The American Academy of Religion (AAR) also hosts an "Open and Relational Theologies Unit" which focuses on "open, relational, and process methods" as well as "personalist traditions." "Open and Relational Theologies Unit | PAPERS," accessed January 31, 2019, https://papers.aarweb.org/content/open-and-relational-theologies-unit.

this discussion prioritizes "relation," conflates it with "connection," and holds "dependence" in tension with that pair.

Feminist theory and process thought share a number of affinities, as Mary Daly recognized in her 1973 text *Beyond God the Father.* Like feminist theory, the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead and his followers intends to overcome dualisms and envisions a radically open future. But Daly critiqued process thought for being oblivious to women's oppression and insisted that feminist theory need not depend on men to lend it validity: "Our process is *our* process," she wrote.[17] Catherine Keller takes a more generous view of process thought, grouping it together with feminist, ecological, and liberation discourses under the heading "relational theologies."[18] Third-wave womanist theologian Monica Coleman also draws heavily on process thought. Process thinkers, according to Coleman, are those "who embrace change, process, and becoming as the foundations of our understanding of God and the world."[19]

Process thought—also referred to as "process-relational philosophy"[20]—is derived from the work of Alfred North Whitehead, who argued that "the very essence of real actuality—that is, of the completely real—is *process.*"[21] Theologians such as Coleman, John Cobb, David Ray Griffin and Charles Hartshorne have drawn on Whitehead's work to radically reconceptualize God in a postmodern world that proclaims God dead (Cobb writes, "'God is dead; long live God!'"[22]). Process thought, according to Robert Mesle, invites "thinking of the world as deeply interwoven—as an ever-renewing relational process."[23] Challenging static ontologies of

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[17] Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, Revised edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 188–89.
[18] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 8.
[19] Monica A. Coleman, *Making a Way Out of No Way: A Womanist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), ix.
[20] Mesle, *Process-Relational Philosophy*.
[21] Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1933), 274.
[22] John B. Cobb Jr., *God and the World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2000), 41.
[23] Mesle, *Process-Relational Philosophy*, 3.

unchanging objects with bounded essences (e.g. Leibniz's notion of "monads"), Cobb and Griffin write that human experience "begins as a multiplicity of relations" which are synthesized mentally.[24] Where mainstream Western thought prioritizes independence, "Whiteheadian process thought gives primacy to interdependence as an ideal over independence."[25] That argument mirrors Gilligan's feminist psychology, further illuminating the affinities between process and feminist thought. In *Process and Reality* Whitehead argues that the fundamental elements of reality are "actual entities," which are "drops of experience, complex and interdependent."[26] Whitehead's other writings stress the "essential interdependence of things" and "the general interconnectedness of things."[27]

Process thought acknowledges that beings arise in relation to and under the influence of other beings but rejects the notion of a deterministic universe. We humans are to a degree bounded by the past in that it limits the possibilities available to us in the present, but social environment and other causal factors do not wholly determine what we will do in any moment. Instead we may creatively choose to actualize any among a number of possibilities. Accordingly process thought rejects models of God as "Controlling Power" and "Unchanging Absolute."[28] God, in process thought, acts as a "lure" urging us toward novelty, flourishing and increased enjoyment (in Cobb, God is named "the One Who Calls Us Forward").[29] Drawing on insights from quantum physics, process theology re-envisions God as a kind of "energy-event"[30], calling subjects toward fuller and more complex manifestations of relational becoming.

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[24] John B. Cobb and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1976), 19-20. Whitehead writes in *Process and Reality,* "no individual essence is realizable apart from some of its potentialities for relationship, that is, apart from its relational essence" (115).
[25] Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology,* 21.
[26] Whitehead, *Process and Reality,* 18.
[27] Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas,* 112, 150.
[28] Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 8–9.
[29] Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology,* 24–26; Cobb, *God and the World*, 61; Whitehead, *Process and Reality,* 344.
[30] Cobb, *God and the World*, 71.

Process thought thus critiques the atomized, object-oriented ontology of the modern West, as well as its notion of an impassive, absolute, omnipotent God, both of which have come under fire in an emerging postmodern era that shattered Newtonian physics and proclaimed the death of God. As Whitehead perceived, scientific systems rely on metaphysical presuppositions, and "Newtonian physics is based upon the independent individuality of each bit of matter."[31] In place of these notions, process thought prioritizes relationality and views the interrelated web of life as a mutually responsive and creative whole, lured by the divine toward ever more complex forms of enjoyment. Although Anderson does not identify as a process theologian, he shares deep affinities with the process conception of God: "World is the naming of God as radically inclusive, relational, interdependent, interactive, and an interfunctional whole."[32]

Harrison writes of feminist theology that "relationality is central to its theory of reality. Everything in life *is* related to everything else."[33] A later chapter is devoted to Harrison's work. However, the purpose of the present discussion is simply to suggest that relationality is central for both process and feminist thought.[34] But is relationality synonymous with dependence? I have already shown that not all relations are dependent relations (e.g. the sun is in relation to the earth but does not depend for its existence on the existence of earthlings). Interdependence, then, is a subset of relationality, involving relationships of mutual dependence. The distinction appears in the work of disability theologian Nancy Eiesland. Interdependence has been significantly

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[31] Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas,* 154.
[32] Anderson, *Creative Exchange,* 14.
[33] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 240.
[34] I have already cited the work of Harrison, Ruether, and Keller; for a small sample of additional feminist texts addressing relationality, see Gilligan, "Woman's Place in Man's Life Cycle," 206–7; Cynthia Willett, Ellie Anderson, and Diana Meyers, "Feminist Perspectives on the Self," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2016 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/feminism-self/; Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar, *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000); Mayra Rivera, *The Touch of Transcendence: A Postcolonial Theology of God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 137.

theorized within disability studies, as persons with disabilities are said to be "dependent" on the assistance of caregivers and technology to function within society.[35] Eiesland challenges the notion that able-bodied persons are "independent," however, and urges able-bodied readers to acknowledge their interdependence with people with disabilities. Eiesland writes, "The disabled God embodies practical interdependence, not simply willing to be interrelated from a position of power, but depending on it from a position of need."[36] In interdependent relationship, for Eiesland, no party—not even God—exercises absolute power over the other. Each is also in a position of need. In this insight Eiesland is in agreement with process theology, which rejects the doctrine of God's omnipotence.[37] Thus, interdependence implies that the well-being of all parties is contingent upon and vulnerable to what others choose to do. However, vulnerability does not imply responsibility. As illuminated in the next chapter, for example, white slaveholders depended for their material well-being on the forced labor of enslaved black people. And they were willing to extract that labor by any means deemed necessary.

"Intersectionality" as an Analytic Tool in Black Feminist and Womanist Thought

Black feminists and womanists critique social theories and movements that focus solely on a single factor (e.g. race, gender, or class) to the exclusion of all others. Contemporary social life is so complex that the many aspects of identity and forms of oppression can be adequately understood only in relation to one another. Finding a home neither in a feminist movement dominated by white women or in a racial justice movement shepherded by black men, women of

[35] Kathy Black, *A Healing Homiletic: Preaching and Disability* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 34-42; John Swinton, "Disability, Ableism, and Disablism," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2011), 443–51.
[36] Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Abingdon Press, 1994), 103.
[37] Charles Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984).

color forged both new fields of study (black feminism, womanism, Chicana feminism, Asian-American feminism, indigenous feminism, and more) as well as analytical tools and methods, including "intersectionality."

The term "intersectionality" first appeared in a 1991 essay entitled "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" printed in the *Stanford Law Review.* The author, Kimberlé Crenshaw, argues that the prevailing paradigm of identity politics tends to focus only on one form of identity or oppression, conflating or ignoring the plurality within groups. Crenshaw laments that "[c]ontemporary feminist and antiracist discourses have failed to consider intersectional identities such as women of color."[38] Drawing on social research and her own field studies of battered women and rape survivors, Crenshaw traces the profound differences that class and racial factors make in experiences of "violence against women." Crenshaw probes the structural, political, and representational dimensions of intersectionality, pointing to the rape trial of Mike Tyson and the obscenity trial of the rap group 2 Live Crew to argue that, in arguments about racism and sexism, black women's concerns tend to "fall into the void."[39] Crenshaw contends that an intersectional approach enables both a more nuanced analysis of social problems and the construction of a coalitional politics.

In a recent volume devoted entirely to the term "intersectionality," Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge challenge the prevailing narrative that Crenshaw "coined" the term. Without dismissing the importance of the word or of Crenshaw's argument, Hill Collins and Bilge state, "we take issue with this view that intersectionality began when it was named."[40] Black feminists

[38] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1243.
[39] Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins," 1282.
[40] Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2016), 64.

were doing intersectional analysis long before the term became fashionable in the academy: Hill Collins and Bilge cite Francis Beal's essay "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female" (1969), *The Black Woman,* edited by Toni Cade Bambara (1970), and the Combahee River Collective's "A Black Feminist Statement" (1977) as foundational intersectional analyses. But they also point out the prehistory of black feminism, including Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman" speech of 1840s and Anna Julia Cooper's *A Voice from the South* (1892). The Combahee group, formed by a group of black lesbian socialist feminists who felt unwelcome in the homophobic National Black Feminist Organization, already noted the need for "an integrated analysis and practice based on the fact that major systems of oppression are interlocking."[41]

Hill Collins and Bilge define intersectionality as "a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences."[42] Intersectionality is first and foremost an "analytic tool"[43] which enables theorists and practitioners to grapple with the complex interactions of several dimensions of power. Intersectionality eschews "either/or" analyses of power in favor of a "both/and" lens, considering the interpersonal, disciplinary, cultural, and structural dimensions of social life and power.[44]

Intersectionality and interdependence are distinct concepts, which share some crucial features. The most salient distinction is that intersectionality is typically employed, as Hill Collins and Bilge state, as an "analytic tool" for more precisely articulating the complex dimensions of identity and oppression. Unlike interdependence, intersectionality is not normally invoked as a positive ethical value. Consider, for example, Audre Lorde's conviction that "[i]nterdependency between women is the way to a freedom which allows the *I* to *be*, not in

[41] Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality,* 65-70.
[42] Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality,* 2.
[43] Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality,* 2.
[44] Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality,* 7, 15.

order to be used, but in order to be creative."[45] In Gloria Anzaldúa interdependence takes on a mystical quality, in a moment she describes of "recognizing the preciousness of the earth, the sanctity of every human being on the planet, the ultimate unity and interdependence of all beings."[46] Intersectionality is typically used in more "hard-nosed" analytical fashion, rarely invoking such soaring moral and theological tones.

Hill Collins and Bilge insist, however, that "the purpose of intersectional scholarship lies in its contributions to social justice initiatives." They note, though, that in the years since Crenshaw's essay, the term has been widely embraced in the academy, sparking worries that its transformative power is being suppressed as it is incorporated into "acceptable" scholarly discourse.[47] They further point out that white supremacist literature also employs a kind of intersectionality, and "identifies the connections among women, blacks, Jews, 'mud people,' lesbians, and various forms of mixing as the root cause of the declining fortunes of white men (Daniels 1997)."[48] In this way, then, interdependence and intersectionality might both be understood as ambiguous ethical values, which may either transgress or reinforce hegemonic norms.

Intersectionality and interdependence are most obviously related insofar as both point to the inherent entanglement and interconnectedness of persons and powers within social life. Thus, Hill Collins and Bilge note that mass incarceration and immigration enforcement are "interdependent phenomena."[49] The authors draw nearest to the literature on ethical interdependence when they note that intersectional awareness can enable the formation of

[45] Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 111.
[46] Gloria Anzaldúa, "now let us shift," 558.
[47] Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, 84-5.
[48] Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality,* 40.
[49] Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality,* 138.

transnational coalitional politics between different groups, enabling them "to see the interconnectedness of the issues that concern them."[50] Insofar as the awareness of connectedness fosters the formation of bonds of solidarity, then, the distinction between intersectionality-as-analytic-tool and interdependence-as-normative-value is obscured, perhaps even to a vanishing point.

"Intersubjectivity" and the Phenomenon of the Other

Phenomenology might be defined as careful attention to what people normally take for granted. Alfred Schutz notes, for example, that "all social sciences take the intersubjectivity of thought for granted"—that is, they assume the existence of persons who inhabit a world together and are able to communicate, to form institutions and to create history. "But how does it happen that mutual understanding and communication are possible at all?"[51] A central insight of phenomenology is that meaning, selfhood and the life-world arise intersubjectively, through the inter-course of agents interacting with one another and with the sedimented historical world in which they live. But what ethical implications can be drawn from the phenomenological notion of intersubjectivity?

Although Husserl is normally considered the "father" of phenomenology, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* already introduces intersubjectivity in stating that "human nature only really exists in an achieved community of minds."[52] Things only emerge as things in relation to, indeed via negation from others. Substances "are only determinate in so far as they *differentiate*

[50] Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality,* 142.
[51] Alfred Schutz, *Alfred Schutz on Phenomenology and Social Relations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 55–56.
[52] Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 43.

themselves from one another, and *relate* themselves *to others* as to their opposites."[53] However, negation is only a first step, giving way to a realization that the self's being depends on the negation/boundary separating it from the opposing other. Therefore, the other belongs indispensably to the essence of the self.[54] And it follows for Hegel that self-consciousness emerges only when it is acknowledged by another self-consciousness.[55] Historically, this play of creative forces forges history, as selves, ideas, movements and nations agonistically differentiate themselves from one another. The process of advancing bodies of knowledge emerges through dialectic, an agonistic intersubjective process.[56]

For Husserl, the subject experiences the world "as an *intersubjective* world."[57] I find myself as an object in the world, but I also find the entire world constituted within me, as something I experience.[58] However, the world exists within me only by analogical appresentation. That is, I can only understand "the Other as phenomenologically a 'modification' of myself."[59] But the other transcends and corrects my representation of them as *alter ego*, opening up new possibilities of reciprocal understanding and the formation of a "community of monads."[60] For Husserl human experience of the other is possible by way of "empathy." But empathy for him does not connote an experience of emotively sharing in the suffering of another. Husserl instead is pointing out that we can only functionally understand what others experience by imagining ourselves in their place. In the experience of empathy "we project ourselves into

[53] Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit,* 69.
[54] Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit,* 80-86.
[55] Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit,* 111.
[56] Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit,* 488.
[57] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (Springer, 1973), 91.
[58] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations,* 99.
[59] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations,* 115.
[60] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations,* 120.

the alien cultural community."[61] While empathy, like interdependence, is often presumed to carry positive ethical value, statements like the above have led critics such as Saidiya Hartman to contest the "assimilative character of empathy," in which the other becomes the object of my voyeuristic fantasy.[62] Husserl's theory of intersubjectivity was intended to combat charges that phenomenology was philosophically solipsistic. Hartman, however, raises the possibility that it may also be ethically solipsistic.[63]

Heidegger certainly strikes a solipsistic chord when he defines Da-sein as "a being which, as being-in-the-world, is concerned about itself."[64] However, Heidegger also insists that people exist in *mitda-sein*, in the midst of others. "The world of Da-sein is a *with-world.* Being-in is *being-with* others."[65] The world, for Heidegger, is the whole relational field of existence, in which we find ourselves in the midst of things. We humans understand those things in terms of their relevance to us: The sun "is" for us that which provides us warmth and light.[66] Where we relate to things on the basis of their use-value, Heidegger places our relationships with other human beings in the privileged category of "concern." Yet, just as Husserl's empathy does not necessarily entail responsibility, so Heidegger's "concern" (notwithstanding associations with, e.g., "social concern"). There are a variety of ways one might be concerned about others, including being for or against another, dominating the other or freeing them. But the default mode of concern for others, Heidegger says, is "indifference." People mostly relate to others as

[61] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations,* 134–35.
[62] Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, 1 edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 35.
[63] My colleague Peter Capretto addresses the ethical problem of empathy in his dissertation, "Social Recognition and the Ethics of Empathy in Pastoral Theological Anthropology: A Phenomenological and Relational Psychoanalytic Study" (Doctoral, Vanderbilt University, 2019).
[64] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Revised edition (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 143.
[65] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 118.
[66] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 103.

an anonymous totality Heidegger calls "the they," an inauthentic crowd of others with whom people gossip and make idle talk in order to tranquilize themselves from their collective fear of death.[67] Heidegger commends shaking off the "they-self" and becoming authentically free by facing one's own mortality. However, it is not clear that the attainment of such freedom entails ethical responsibility for others.[68]

This absence of moral responsibility in Heideggerian ontology, as discussed in the previous chapter, is the basis of Levinas's critique. Levinas devotes *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence* "to the memory of those who were closest among the six million assassinated by the National Socialists, and of the millions on millions of all confessions and all nations, victims of the same hatred of the other man, the same anti-semitism."[69] In this later text, Levinas argues that subjectivity itself is "being obsessed with responsibility for the oppressed who is other than myself."[70] Signification is essentially substitution, argues Levinas, for to inscribe a predicate to a subject is to substitute one for the other ("A is B").[71] Now Hegel has already treaded over these waters, by showing that in the proposition "God is Being," for example, the predicate (Being) is the essence, and the subject (God) is expressed by and thus dissolves into the predicate.[72] Still, Levinas gives that insight moral significance. For him, the process of substitution means that signification itself is founded in giving oneself entirely to the other. The structure of meaning, for Levinas, requires a notion of responsibility for the other. He is reversing the priority of Hegel's terms, such that the meaning of subjectivity is not being "for itself" but being "for others." This realization produces "an ego awakened from its imperialist dream,"[73] driving

[67] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 121–22, 254.
[68] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 384.
[69] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, dedication [unpaged].
[70] Levinas, *Otherise than Being,* 55.
[71] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being,* 136.
[72] Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 38.
[73] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 164.

neither toward absolute knowing nor authentic freedom from death but toward responsibility for justice.

The turn to the phenomenological notion of intersubjectivity only deepens the ambiguity of interdependence. The two terms are intimately related: the above thinkers agree that subjectivity is an interdependent phenomenon, arising only in a "community of minds" (Hegel) or "community of monads" (Husserl), in "*mitda-sein*" (Heidegger), in "responsibility for the other" (Levinas). If interdependence is a subset of interrelationality, then intersubjectivity might be considered a subset of interdependence. That is, intersubjective relations are interdependent relations between self-conscious subjects. Phenomenologists argue that human consciousness arises in interaction with others. We humans arrive at self-consciousness by encountering another self-consciousness (Hegel), or we experience our intersubjective world through empathy with others (Husserl), or we struggle for authenticity by engaging others in modes of concern (Heidegger). However, in none of these accounts is it clear that intersubjectivity entails ethical responsibility for the well-being of others. Levinas is here an outlier in taking that position, while other thinkers leave the question undecided. Does intersubjective awareness produce ethical respect for difference or is the other absorbed into the self?

"Interbeing" and Buddhist Interdependent Origination

The language of interconnection does not quite capture the radical sharing in being that Thich Nhat Hanh's term "interbeing" evokes. Reflection on the being of anything will reveal that it contains the entire universe in itself, Thich Nhat Hanh writes. Radical sharing involves a call to responsibility for the alleviation of suffering. From this conviction, Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, was moved to speak against the devastating war in Vietnam. His

activism led to Thich Nhat Hanh's forced exile to France, but his witness was also the reason that Martin Luther King, Jr. nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize.[74]

Thich Nhat Hanh's reflection on "Interbeing" begins, "If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper." Clouds bring rain, which waters the soil that nourishes trees, which furnish paper. Invoking the meaning of dependence as contingency, Thich Nhat Hanh says, "The cloud is essential for the paper to exist." Looking yet deeper into the paper will reveal as well the presence of sunshine, of the logger who cut the tree, of the wheat that sustained him as bread, of his father and mother who brought him into being, of our very own selves, and ultimately of all things: "As thin as this sheet of paper is, it contains everything in the universe in it."[75]

Thich Nhat Hanh continues by drawing out ethical implications from his notion of interbeing. In Manila there are many young girls who come to the city to escape poverty and, finding no gainful employment, turn to sex work even though they do not want to. The poverty and consequent sexual violence that these girls and many others endure cannot be understood in isolation but is a consequence of economic structures, which enable a few to enjoy lives of affluence. Poverty and wealth "inter-are" just as the sheet of paper and the cloud: "We cannot just be, we can only inter-be. We are responsible for everything that happens around us."[76] And in a reflection entitled "We Are All Linked to Each Other," Thich Nhat Hanh describes the "interbeing and interpenetration of all beings," and points to "the interdependent nature of life."[77] While Thich Nhat Hanh coined the term "interbeing," in connecting it with interdependence he is

[74] Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 135.
[75] Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace Is Every Step,* 95–96.
[76] Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace Is Every Step,* 96–98.
[77] Thich Nhat Hanh, *Peace Is Every Step,* 118–19.

drawing on the notion, central to Buddhist epistemology, of "dependent origination" (*pratītya-samutpāda*), often translated as "interdependence."[78]

David McMahan reviews a growing body of literature within Buddhist thought on interdependence, which is increasingly viewed as "*the* fundamental outlook of Buddhism." The notion of interdependence within contemporary Buddhist literature contains epistemological, ontological and ethical meanings. McMahan points to Thich Nhat Hanh's work as representative of the contemporary outlook which "combines empirical description, world-affirming wonder, and an ethical imperative."[79] Many Buddhist thinkers draw ethical implications especially in the realm of ecology, tracing threads of human responsibility for environmental destruction through the tangled lines of product production, distribution and consumption. McMahan cites the Thai reformer Buddhadāsa (1906–1993), who echoes Beverly Harrison by insisting that if humans do not realize the interdependent nature of existence "we'll all perish."[80] However, McMahan argues that the contemporary Buddhist embrace of interdependence cannot be derived from classical Buddhist sources alone. Rather, he traces a process of "hybridization" from the classical Pāli literature, Mahāyāna texts and, surprisingly, modern Western sources including German romanticism, American Transcendentalism, and contemporary science and deep ecology.

In classical Pāli literature interdependence is imagined not as a celebratory web of wonderment, but as "a binding chain" of illusions and attachments. According to this epistemology, human consciousness arises through the chain of dependently co-arising phenomena, which produce the semblance of selfhood, grasping desires, and endless suffering.

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[78] Stephen J. Laumakis writes that the term may be translated as "dependent arising," "dependent origination," "conditioned co-production," "co-dependent origination," "inter-dependent origination," and "interdependent arising." See Laumakis, *An Introdcution to Buddhist Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
[79] David McMahan, "A Brief History of Interdependence," *Pacific World* 10 (2008): 131-2.
[80] McMahan, "A Brief History of Interdependence," 134–35.

The Buddha taught that life is *essentially* suffering and the ultimate goal is detachment from and "transcendence of the phenomenal world itself." Thus, Enlightenment arrives by *reversing* the causes and conditions that produce the chain of interdependence, not by *identifying* with them. Awareness of interdependence is good only insofar as it enables people to *disentangle* themselves from illusions and to compassionately extend their insights toward liberating others from suffering.[81]

Mahāyāna texts begin to introduce a more affirmative view of the world. As Buddhism migrated to China, Buddhist ideas intermingled with Daoist views of an underlying force suffusing the world, as well as poetry from the likes of China's Hanshan and Japan's Bashō, expressing awe before the beauty of nature. East Asian Buddhists began to theorize that all beings contain an inner Buddha-nature, to challenge the distinction between the phenomenal world (*samsara*) and the unconditioned (*nirvana*) and to lift up the potential of Enlightenment during human life.[82] However, it was not until these notions intermingled with critiques of (Western) Enlightenment that the contemporary appreciation for interdependence began to emerge in Buddhist literature.

European Romantics critiqued the mechanistic view of the world suggested by Enlightenment rationalism and Newtonian science. They inspired American Transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, who in turn influenced the American naturalist, John Muir. Muir writes that nature is "'one soul' and wilderness a 'unity in interrelation' that is 'alive and familiar.' 'When we try to pick out anything by itself,' he

[81] McMahan, "A Brief History of Interdependence," 134–39; Laumakis, *An Introduction to Buddhist Philosophy,* 54-5.
[82] McMahan, "A Brief History of Interdependence," 143–44.

declared, 'we find it hitched to everything in the universe."[83] Muir's view shares obvious affinities with Thich Nhat Hanh's notion of interbeing.

Contemporary Buddhist thought on interdependence has also been shaped by systems theory, complexity theory, and the deep ecology stemming from James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis. McMahan points to "countless recent theories and findings in sociology, economics, quantum physics, and life sciences, all of which seem to confirm the central insight of Buddhism—interdependence."[84] Chapters three and four of this dissertation will also address these theories and findings.

As the notion of interdependence has gained steam within Buddhist thought, some have pushed back that the "hybrid" notion is not "authentically" Buddhist. But McMahan replies that this assertion appears to presuppose the existence of bounded essences, which Buddhist metaphysics rejects. Buddhism "is" whatever Buddhists themselves happen to be doing, in a "dynamic process of tradition-in-change." However, critics such as Andrew Olendski insist that becoming more interconnected leads one only into deeper attachment and continued suffering. We need to become not more interdependent but "less connected, less entangled, and less attached."[85]

As Buddhist thinkers argue over whether it is good or bad to "inter-be", "interdependence, or interbeing"[86] in Buddhist thought displays an ambiguous character. As conceived by Buddhists, the notion may also harbor another danger that McMahan does not recognize. If interdependence is conceived as an identification of the self with others, such that

[83] McMahan, "A Brief History of Interdependence," 152.
[84] McMahan, "A Brief History of Interdependence," 154-5, 167–68.
[85] McMahan, "A Brief History of Interdependence," 169.
[86] McMahan, "A Brief History of Interdependence," 132.

"the 'I' expands to include everything,"[87] might this expansion of the ego have colonizing tendencies? Does the feeling that I contain the entire universe within my own self encourage a sense of ownership of or appropriation of others? Earlier this danger appeared emerging in Husserl's notion of intersubjectivity as empathy. Later chapters will further confirm that this tension lurks at the heart of the problem of interdependence.

Yet, Thich Nhat Hanh did not envision interdependence in this way. He instead believed that in gaining awareness that I and the other "inter-are," that we humans are not only connected or related but in fact share being in common, I will naturally feel responsible for the well-being of the other, just as I reflexively tend to my own well-being. In one way, the expansion of the conception of the self to include the whole of the universe is not functionally different from the destruction of the conception of the self. Whether the self is utterly empty or full beyond imagination, in neither case is it conceived in opposition to others. Self and others are conceived together in interbeing.

As I write, Thich Nhat Hanh has recently returned to a Buddhist temple outside Hue, once Vietnam's capital. More than five decades after he was banished by the South Vietnamese government for refusing to condone the war against Communism, the 92 year-old Thich Nhat Hanh has returned to his home to "transition" from his life as a Buddhist monk.[88] When he dies, the clinging elements that form his body will loosen their attachments to one another and become parts of new bodies—re-incarnate. His death will mark no end but a transition from one form of interbeing to another.

[87] McMahan, "A Brief History of Interdependence," 162.
[88] Liam Fitzpatrick, "Thich Nhat Hanh, Father of Mindfulness, Awaits the End," *Time,* accessed January 28, 2019, http://time.com/5511729/monk-mindfulness-art-of-dying/.

Conclusion: Impossible and Necessary

Deconstruction leaves metaphors lying in ruins, says Derrida.[89] So the metaphor of "interdependence" as a web or network begins to crumble under the analysis of the component parts of the word and of related words. A number of problems with this ethical ideal have already begun to surface. These worries will only deepen in the following chapter, which turns to consider how "interdependence" has historically been co-opted to buttress hegemonic power and to reinforce social hierarchies along lines of race, gender, and capital.

And yet, Derrida continues, the metaphor in ruins must be inhabited nonetheless, for there is no other place to dwell. The shreds of tradition and the devil's patches must be worn, for there are no seamless garments at hand. The metaphor of a "web" of interdependence might suggest that while each person alone is as vulnerable as a strand of silk undulating in the wind, each becomes strong and steady when woven together into a graceful spiral. Alternatively, the metaphor invites one to imagine this web having been woven by a predatory spider, lying in wait for an oblivious fly to careen into its invisible prison, to become increasingly ensnared as it struggles desperately to break free, and ultimately to meet its end as food. Still this is, for better or worse, how life sustains itself. If goodness is anywhere to be found, it will be found hopelessly entangled with predation and murder. Ethics is impossible, and the impossible is necessary.

[89] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 140.

III. THREE FORMS OF HEGEMONIC CO-OPTATION OF INTERDEPENDENCE ALONG LINES OF RACE, GENDER AND CAPITALISM

> What we need to do is to look at these matters as a network of interdependent histories that it would be inaccurate and senseless to repress, useful and interesting to understand.
>
> - Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*[1]

It must have been a Tuesday in late January that my stepson Kyle returned from school and opened his backpack, producing a worksheet he had completed to celebrate Martin Luther King Day. He was in first or second grade, and the worksheet instructed students to summarize the Civil Rights Movement. The exact words he used have faded from memory, but I distinctly recall the shaky lettering in which Kyle confidently declared, "Dr. King marched for equality and America is awesome now!!!" I feigned approval, inwardly wondering, "My God, what have they been teaching my child in school?" Though we had brought our kids along to #blacklivesmatter marches, engaged them in discussions of race and imperialism, and given corrective lessons each Columbus Day, it is simply hard for small children to hold complex ideas in tension. Learning to do so, to relinquish comforting notions of pure good and evil and to navigate the imperfections and limitations of embodied social life, is the challenge of growing up. Some children by necessity learn this lesson more quickly than others. Some never learn it, and so never grow up.

I begin yet another chapter with a story because Kyle's worksheet symbolizes the finished product of a process of hegemonic revision of history and of ethics. The King remembered, the dreaming liberal humanist, is a fictional character meticulously crafted to assimilate a radical critique within a hegemonic narrative sanctioning America's (ambiguously) *awesome* power. The dangerous King has given way to an innocuous unifying figure, whose

[1] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 19.

memory is lovingly invoked by parties across the political spectrum. To offer another example: the motto of King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was "To Save the Soul of America."[2] Two score and fifteen years after SCLC's founding, Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney declared that the 2012 election was about "saving the soul of America."[3] Apparently, redeeming the American soul would require unseating the country's first black president in order to award the wealthiest Americans a 20% tax cut.[4] Romney's (likely unwitting) appropriation of the SCLC motto is a fitting representation of the strategy I am calling the *hegemonic co-optation of dangerous values.* This ingenious process operates by identifying a threatening subversive discourse and appropriating it by mystification, obscuring its radical ethical critique while cranking up the sentimental imagery. The following three-part analysis considers historical forms of hegemonic co-optation of interdependence.

Methodologically, this chapter takes its cue from black feminist and womanist ethicists who insist on intersectional analysis of complex social problems. Where Martin Luther King, Jr. condemned "the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism,"[5] black feminists and womanists would instead focus on the trio "race, gender, and class." In fact, so ubiquitous is race-gender-class analysis within womanist and black feminist thought that it might prove a challenge to name an author within these traditions who *does not* claim to focus on at least these

[2] King, "A Time to Break Silence," in *A Testament of Hope*, 233.
[3] Timothy Noah and Ben Ehrenreich, "Saving The Soul Of America," *The New Republic*, January 11, 2012, https://newrepublic.com/article/99502/savings-the-soul-america. Former Vice President Joe Biden launched his 2020 presidential bid by declaring similarly, "we are in a battle for the soul of this nation." Mike Memoli, Alex Seitz-Wald, and Allan Smith, "Biden Launches 2020 Presidential Bid, Says 'We Are in a Battle for the Soul of This Nation,'" *NBC News*, accessed May 9, 2019, https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2020-election/joe-biden-launches-2020-presidential-run-n998236.
[4] Kim Dixon, "Romney Tax Plan Helps Rich, Hurts Middle Class: Study," *Reuters*, August 1, 2012, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-taxes-romney-idUSBRE8700PC20120801.
[5] King, "A Time to Break Silence," 240.

three categories.[6] Over the years theorists have expanded their analysis to include also sexuality, ability, religion, age, environmental degradation and more. The proliferation of analytical categories reflects these thinkers' conviction that no form of identity or of social oppression can be understood in isolation, for they operate interdependently. This chapter, then, considers the intersectionality of three forms of hegemonic co-optation of interdependence, along lines of race, gender, and capitalism. In each case, dominant actors appropriated the metaphor of interdependence to mystify oppressive power dynamics.

> 1. Interracial interdependence, conceived as *integration*, offers lip service to equality and freedom, extending to black people "token" inclusion into white institutions while preserving structural white dominance.
>
> 2. Gender interdependence, conceived by John Paul II as *complementarity*, asserts the equal dignity of men and women, while continuing to totally exclude women from positions of ecclesial power.
>
> 3. Finally, capitalist interdependence appears as *globalization*, a "global village" in which all are connected through rapid networks of information, transportation and commerce. This network is hardly an "inescapable network of mutuality," however—it is rather a diffuse and inescapable neoliberal web of domination.

[6] A non-exhaustive list of authors explicitly committed to (at least) race, class, and sex/gender analysis includes Emilie M. Townes, "Ethics As an Art of Doing the Work Our Souls Must Have," in Katie Geneva Cannon, Emilie M. Townes, and Angela D. Sims, eds., *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 47; Renita Weems, "Re-reading the Bible for Liberation," in *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader,* 55; Katie G. Cannon, "Unearthing Ethical Treasures: The Intrusive Markers of Social Class," in *Womanist Theological Ethics: A Reader,* 238; Katie G. Cannon … et al (The Mudflower Collective), *God's Fierce Whimsy: Christian Feminism and Theological Education* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1985), 34; Patricia Hill Collins and Margaret L. Andersen, eds., *Race, Class, & Gender: An Anthology,* 9th ed. (Boston: Wadsworth Publishing, 2015); Angela Davis, *Women, Race, & Class* (New York: Vintage, 1983); Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, Reprint edition (Berkeley, Calif: Crossing Press, 2007), 115; bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, 1st edition (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1984), 14; Melanie Harris, *Gifts of Virtue, Alice Walker, and Womanist Ethics*, 2010 edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 132; Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, "Introduction: Writing for Our Lives: Womanism As an Epistemological Revolution," in Floyd-Thomas, ed., *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society* (NYU Press, 2006), 3; Jacquelyn Grant, *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response*, 1 edition (Atlanta, Ga: Scholars Press, 1989), x; Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*, Reprint edition (Orlando: Mariner Books, 2003), 311; Marcia Y. Riggs, *Awake, Arise, & Act: A Womanist Call for Black Liberation* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1994), 1.

Where the previous chapter conducted a discourse analysis of the concept of interdependence and its others, the present chapter turns to the social dynamics of interdependence. The previous chapter already revealed that this ethical ideal conceals hidden violences. This chapter asks how these violences have operated discursively and materially. In recent decades hegemonic power has developed increasingly sophisticated methods of appropriating subversive discourses and sapping them of their revolutionary energies. Contemporary hegemonic power is most successful when it can *assimilate* (that is, *integrate!*) oppositional forces rather than exterminating them outright. This tactic allows powerful actors to claim benign governance, whitewashing supremacy with the soft veneer of inclusion.

1. Racial Interdependence as Integration

W.E.B. Du Bois' insistence that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line"[7] is cited so often that it has become cliché. Yet invocations of Du Bois' quote rarely pause to consider what he meant by the "color line." One should not assume that Du Bois' "color line" can be equated with contemporary forms of "racism" or "white supremacy" or "racial injustice," as commentators sometimes do when they muse that the "color line" will also be the problem of the twenty-first century.[8] Du Bois instead understood the color line in a historically specific sense. The chief problem, as he saw it, was "that central paradox of the South,—the social separation of the races."[9] Enslavement and failed efforts at Reconstruction had left the masses of

[7] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Unabridged edition (New York: Dover Publications, 1994), v.
[8] For examples of this conflation, see Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Chasm Between Racial Optimism and Reality," *The Atlantic*, February 20, 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/02/a-dream-deferred/552593/; David Gonzalez and Oliver Clasper, "Echoes of Lynchings in Quiet Photos," *The New York Times*, July 5, 2018, sec. Lens, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/28/lens/echoes-of-lynchings-in-quiet-photos.html; Marc Mauer, "Jeff Sessions Is Shamefully Undermining WEB Du Bois's Legacy," *The Guardian*, April 26, 2018, sec. US news, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/commentisfree/2018/apr/26/jeff-sessions-is-shamefully-undermining-web-du-boiss-legacy.
[9] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 59.

American black people in a desperate social condition. The solution to this problem, in Du Bois' view, could be found in the leadership of a "Talented Tenth" who would lift the masses out of poverty by their assistance and the force of their example. This, indeed, is how human populations advance: "Progress in human affairs is more often a pull than a push, surging forward of the exceptional man, and the lifting of his duller brethren slowly and painfully to his vantage-ground."[10] The chief obstacle to black progress was the "color line" separating black from white and preventing these leaders' emergence.

Du Bois' notion of the "Talented Tenth," and his own education at Harvard, have led some to characterize his perspective as "elite" in comparison to his rival Booker T. Washington.[11] Quotations like the above reference to "duller brethren" leave Du Bois open to such a charge. But he was also committed, through his work in the Niagara Movement and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), to full citizenship for black people, an end to segregation laws, the restoration of suffrage, and equal education for black Americans.[12] Du Bois' invocation of the "Talented Tenth" was in one way simply a practical recognition that most Southern black people did not have access to formal education and would not obtain such access until qualified black teachers arrived to teach them. A "Talented Tenth" is necessary simply because students require well-qualified teachers.[13] We might assume, then, that the "problem of the color line" is similar in that the masses of black people would never achieve justice while being denied the right to vote and equal access to education and opportunities for advancement.

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[10] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk,* 65, 59.
[11] Barbara Bair, "Though Justice Sleeps, 1880-1900," in *To Make Our World Anew: Volume II: A History of African Americans Since 1880*, ed. Robin D. G. Kelley and Earl Lewis (Oxford University Press, USA, 1994), 50.
[12] James Grossman, "A Chance to Make Good, 1900-1929," in *To Make Our World Anew: Volume II: A History of African Americans Since 1880,* 100.
[13] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 60.

However, the "color line" carries as well for Du Bois an *existential* dimension. The separation between black and white is an existential separation, which impoverishes both, because it impedes the recognition of common humanity through face-to-face encounter. Du Bois laments:

> Nothing has come to replace that finer sympathy and love between some masters and house servants which the radical and more uncompromising drawing of the color-line in recent years has caused almost completely to disappear. In a world where it means so much to take a man by the hand and sit beside him, to look frankly into his eyes and feel his heart beating with red blood; in a world where a social cigar or a cup of tea together means more than legislative halls and magazine articles and speeches,—one can imagine the consequences of the almost utter absence of such social amenities between estranged races, whose separation extends even to parks and street-cars.
>
> Here there can be none of that social going down to the people,—the opening of heart and hand of the best to the worst, in generous acknowledgment of a common humanity and a common destiny.[14]

Du Bois appears to romanticize slavery by invoking the "finer sympathy and love" shared by masters and slaves. He also appears to associate white people with "the best" and black people with "the worst" (a bit later in the passage he talks about the South's generosity toward "the black beggar"). This should raise red flags about talk of integration as the solution to the problem of the "color line." When Du Bois writes of the encounter with the other enabling us to "feel his heart beating with red blood," I cannot help but think of the armed white man in the pharmacy, the nameless black heart pumping within his chest.

In this section I present "integration" as a form of interracial interdependence. The integrationist argument contends that problem of the color line is *separation* between the races. The proposed solution, as envisioned by Du Bois, is integration as a restoration of *connection and relationship*. To formulate the "problem" in this way is to invite a sentimentalized interpretation of a material issue, leaving racial interdependence vulnerable to mystification and

[14] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk,* 111.

hegemonic co-optation. In speaking of the ethical demand for integration in terms of common humanity, brotherhood, and the inclusion of a "Talented Tenth" of black folks by respectable white society, Du Bois leaves the door open to exploitation. Dominant powers can—and did—co-opt the romantic language of racial integration, while evacuating it of its ethical demand that black Americans be afforded equal opportunities and the benefits of full citizenship. King's own dream that one day "sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood"[15] similarly expresses hope for reconciliation through recognition of common humanity. While both Du Bois and King complemented such language with a set of concrete demands and strategies for alleviating structural racism, hegemonic power is adept at cultivating the faculty of selective *forgetting.* White America remembers the quote about brotherhood, but how many remember King's insistence that southern black people "live in a police state which, paradoxically, maintains itself within a democratic republic"?[16] How many recall his condemnation of "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government?"[17] Why did my stepson not return from school to ask me why "[m]en of the white West, whether or not they like it, have grown up in a racist culture," and whether in truth, we "don't really respect anyone who is not white?"[18] The reason, I argue, is that hegemonic power cultivates what Emilie Townes calls "a studied, malicious amnesia"[19] in order to whitewash systemic human suffering and the demands for its alleviation. In this case, hegemonic power adapted to the integrationist challenge by accommodating certain demands for "civil rights" while refusing to alter the socioeconomic, carceral, and political structures of white supremacy.

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[15] King, "I Have a Dream," in *A Testament of Hope*, 219.
[16] King, "Hammer on Civil Rights," in *A Testament of Hope,* 172–73.
[17] King, "A Time to Break Silence," 233.
[18] King, "A Testament of Hope, in *A Testament of Hope,* 318.
[19] Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil* (Gordonsville, VA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 22.

The result has been the "token integration" of which the prescient King warned.[20] A later chapter will give King's notion of interdependence and integration the careful attention it deserves. In what follows, I consider instead how hegemonic power succeeded in accommodating some of the less costly demands of the civil rights movement while leaving the substance of white supremacy firmly in place, and perhaps stronger than ever (that is, more *durable*—to argue that anti-black racism is more *severe* today than in 1860 would be inane).

Du Bois' invocation of love between masters and slaves suggests that racial interdependence is in no way a post-Civil-Rights phenomenon. Instead, all along—whether they have lived in close proximity or been isolated by red lines, bus sections, gated communities and ghettos, or prisons—black and white people have always existed in interdependent relationship in America. In the era of slavery, as Deborah Gray White observes, "masters and slaves were locked in a cycle of mutual dependency that both understood."[21]

In what follows I will trace the shifting dynamics of interracial interdependence through the periods of slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and from the freedom movement through the present. I devote special attention and space to the last period, for it was here that hegemonic power was able to co-opt the integrationist challenge, adopting King's language of integration and interdependence while mystifying the dynamics of continued white dominance.

Interdependence During Slavery

> 'Cattle,' 'chattel,' and 'capital' all come from the same Latin root.
>
> - Christopher Miller[22]

[20] King, "My Trip to the Land of Gandhi," in *A Testament of Hope*, 30.
[21] Deborah Gray White, "Let My People Go: 1804-1860," in *To Make Our World Anew: Volume I: A History of African Americans to 1880*, ed. Robin D. G. Kelley and Earl Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 183.
[22] Christopher L. Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 58.

In contemporary economics and political science "interdependence" simply means "globalization."[23] As Edward Baptist shows, the seeds of modern global capitalism were cotton seeds. His *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* shows that the development of the cotton industry in the early nineteenth century was the principal driving force of the industrializing global economy. Racial interdependence in the form of American slavery, then, lays the foundation for contemporary global interdependence in the form of neoliberal capitalism. In the Caribbean and Latin America, slaves were forced into often deadly occupations such as sugarcane cultivation or mining for tin and silver.[24] In the United States, however, cotton came to dominate the market by the nineteenth century. By 1820 cotton accounted for 42% of all exports, becoming the world's most widely traded commodity. In 1800 enslaved people harvested 2 million pounds of cotton, but by 1860 the United States was producing 1.4 billion pounds of cotton, 80% of which was exported, nearly all of it to Britain. Dramatic gains in productivity allowed the inflation-adjusted price of cotton to drop by 1860 to 15% of its 1790 price, while demand increased 500%. The industrial revolution of the 1800s was a textile-based revolution, and the textiles depended entirely on a copious supply of cheap cotton produced by enslaved people in the United States.[25] The astonishing cotton revolution was driven by a massive forced relocation of 200,000 enslaved black people to Western and Southern states between 1790 and 1820, and by the development of the brutal "pushing system" of lash-driven gang labor. Slaves worked fourteen-hour days in the summer and ten hour days in the winter; during harvest time, they sometimes worked eighteen hour days.[26]

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[23] Crescenzi, *Economic Interdependence and Conflict in World Politics*, 2.
[24] Colin Palmer, "The First Passage: 1502-1619," in *To Make Our World Anew: Volume I: A History of African Americans to 1880,* 19-20.
[25] Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*, Reprint edition (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 82-87, 317; Daniel C. Littlefield, "Revolutionary Citizens: 1776-1804," in *To Make Our World Anew: Volume I: A History of African Americans to 1880,* 170-71.
[26] Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told,* 111–44; Littlefield, "Revolutionary Citizens: 1776-1804," 176.

The cotton revolution transformed not just the Southern economy, but also the Northern economy with which the South was interdependent. Northern states produced textiles, farm implements, chains, and credit, depending heavily on Southern slavery until the 1840s. The prosperity of the North, of England, and of the modern industrializing world was built on the backs of enslaved people. By the 1840s, cotton had transformed the United States into the second greatest industrial economy in the world.[27] Slavery, argues Baptist, was not a static relic of a prior, inefficient economic system. It was essential to the development of the modern global economy, and indeed was deeply enmeshed in the development of international markets, which traded textiles, credit, and people. However, this argument is controversial. Adam Smith had already argued in *The Wealth of Nations* and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* that slavery was economically inefficient.[28] Economic orthodoxy holds that slavery was "a waning mode of production,"[29] destined to die out because it was unprofitable. Baptist's point, however, is that that line of reasoning ignores how essential slavery was to the development of the contemporary global economic system. Baptist's account has not been without detractors.[30] Still, he powerfully

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[27] Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told,* 130, 316, 413-14.
[28] Littlefield, "Revolutionary Citizens: 1776-1804," 108.
[29] Miller, *The Black Atlantic Triangle,* 88. Like Baptist, Miller acknowledges that "new historians" are questioning the importance of slavery in the development of industry. He replies that the French foreign minister Choiseul regarded "this trade [with Africa] as *the motor of all others*"; and Napoleon believed that "[n]othing is of greater interest to the nation than the island of Saint-Domingue, this vast and beautiful colony which is the object of the attention and the hopes of *all our commerce*." If the slave trade was irrelevant, argues Miller, it seems strange that its importance was claimed and taken for granted by all parties economically involved. See Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle,* 47, 61. Michael West and William Martin note that prior to the Haitian Revolution, trade with Saint-Domingue comprised two-fifths of France's international trade. See "Haiti, I'm Sorry: The Haitian Revolution and the Forging of the Black International," in *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International Since the Age of Revolution* (Chapel Hell: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 80.
[30] Baptist's argument has been fiercely disputed by some economic historians who contended that he exaggerated his claims about the "torture" of the pushing system. Baptist's detractors argued that market capitalism would have developed as it did even if slavery had been abolished much earlier. For these economic historians, cotton-based textiles were not the driving factor of the industrial revolution; moreover, cotton production did not necessarily depend on slavery. Baptist has responded that the economic historians rely on a reductive analysis that falsely assumes planters would inevitably identify optimum efficiencies. I concur with Baptist that the economic historians' use of counterfactuals—e.g., "would capitalism have developed even if there were no slavery?"—is beside the point. For slavery did in fact exist in America and was a major force shaping the industrializing world. For a summary of

argues that contemporary global economic interdependence is rooted in the system that enslaved and murdered millions of African and African American people. The age of globalization is commonly presumed to have begun after 1945, but Baptist, Miller, Cedric Johnson, and Marcus Rediker insist that the story really began in 1492.[31]

At the same time, though, Baptist's account also offers a window into a different form of interdependence. Enslaved black people used the precious few moments of leisure they were afforded to develop highly innovative styles of music and dance. Dances were enacted in a ring with performers taking turns at the center, and the music often involved a familiar tune with lyrics improvised on the spot. Baptist contrasts this vivacious black art form, which would later produce the most popular genres of music in the history of the modern world, with the staid and rigid forms of dance and music popular among whites. Whites considered African culture a species of premodern cultures, which purportedly lacked a concept of the autonomous self. Baptist instead suggests that in the rings of African American song and dance, performers forged an individuality within community, distinguishing themselves by their lovely voices, graceful steps, or brilliant verses: "enslaved people chose to act in ways that reinforced a sense of individual independence through the reality of mutual interdependence."[32] Nascent black cultural forms display a kind of interdependence that stands in stark contrast to the ruthless economic interdependencies forged from their labor. Around the ring, enslaved black people enacted forms of communal belonging and interdependence that were not based on domination but on responsibility, mutuality and care.

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these debates, see Marc Parry, "Shackles and Dollars," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 8, 2016, https://www-chronicle-com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/article/ShacklesDollars/238598.

[31] Miller, *The Black Atlantic Triangle,* 90-91; Cedric Johnson, *Race, Religion and Resilience in the Neoliberal Age* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 8; Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 13, 352.

[32] Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*, 165.

Interdependence During Jim Crow

During the tantalizingly brief Radical Reconstruction period, it appeared possible that black Americans might at last achieve equal citizenship. However, white supremacist forces in the South especially reconsolidated to disenfranchise black men and relegate black Americans to servitude. With the prospect of land reparations denied, many black people were forced to return to white-owned farms as "sharecroppers," tenant farmers who must deliver a portion of their annual harvest to the landlord, were paid in "scrip" redeemable only at the farm store, and were often cheated out of their wages, for which they had had no legal recourse in white-dominated courts.[33] This produced a system of "debt peonage" where sharecroppers remained perpetually (and fraudulently) indebted to the white landlords. When they were unable to pay, black sharecroppers were forced into a "convict leasing" system which Douglas Blackmon, paraphrasing Du Bois, has called "slavery by another name."[34]

The era of Jim Crow[35] segregation, which Cornel West argues should be referred to as the era of "American terrorism,"[36] indeed enforced the "social separation between the races" lamented by Du Bois. However, the dual phenomena of segregation and lynching show that social separation masked continued interdependencies between black and white people in the South.

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[33] Grossman, "A Chance to Make Good: 1900-1929," 70–71.
[34] Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2009); Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk,* 19.
[35] The origin of the name Jim Crow is "lost in obscurity," according to Woodward. However, he and Richard Wormser note that Thomas "Daddy" Rice wrote a song and dance titled "Jim Crow" around 1830. Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow,* 7 [fn]; Richard Wormser, *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), xi.
[36] Cornel West, *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 20-21.

Jim Crow laws were in fact first passed in the North. Richard Wormser notes, however, that Northern laws "never reached the intensity of oppression and degree of violence and sadism that they did in the South." There, black people were prohibited from using any of the same public facilities as whites. They must address white people as Mr., Mrs., or "Mizz," while whites could call African Americans by their first names or by pejoratives like "boy," aunty" or "uncle." They must move out of the way when meeting whites on the sidewalk, remove their hats when speaking to whites, and enter white houses and facilities through the back door. Whites, on the other hand, could enter a black person's house without knocking, sit without being invited to, and keep their hats on.[37] Segregation became an "obsession," such that in Florida children's textbooks were housed in race-segregated storage facilities, and some courtrooms had two Bibles for swearing in witnesses.[38] A 1930 Birmingham ordinance made it unlawful for a black and white person to play dominoes or checkers together.[39]

White Southerners reinforced their dominance through lynching, executing accused criminals without a trial by jury. Angela Sims estimates that between 1882 and 1930, white Southerners lynched nearly one black person per week.[40] Emilie Townes reports that between 1889 and 1918, 3,224 persons were lynched, 2,522 of whom were black. Men were the overwhelming majority of those lynched. Lynching was "a public spectacle," often advertised in newspapers beforehand and drawing crowds of up to 20,000 spectators—after the victim was hanged (or slowly burned to death for hours), white onlookers would cut off the victim's genitals, fingers, toes and ears and take them as souvenirs.[41] The most common charge for

[37] Wormser, *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow,* xi–xii.
[38] Grossman, "A Chance to Make Good: 1900-1929," 84.
[39] Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 116–18.
[40] Angela D. Sims, *Lynched: The Power of Memory in a Culture of Terror* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 58.
[41] James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, Reprint edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), xiv, 9.

lynching was murder—for black people, a close second was rape and attacks on women (for whites, the second most common charge was miscellaneous crimes against person and property). However, in the popular white imagination, lynching "served as a severe sanction against voluntary sexual relations between African-American men and white women."[42] Since whites based their sense of self-worth on racial superiority, black equality represented an existential threat. To alleviate the threat, whites constructed a distorted portrait of black men as rapacious beasts.

The spectacle of lynching reveals the profound psychological dependencies that accompanied the continuing material dependencies of the Jim Crow era. Ida B. Wells-Barnett wrote, "The more I studied the situation, the more I was convinced that the Southerner had never gotten over his resentment that the Negro is no longer his plaything, his servant, and his source of income."[43] Just as Jim Crow became an "obsession," so lynching was in part a social-psychological purge of white resentment, directed toward black men. Whites were psychologically dependent on black people, just as they continued to be materially dependent on exploited black labor after Emancipation. The Jim Crow phenomenon, then, stems not from a white desire for independence from black people but reflects instead that whites' sense of self-worth continued to be dependent on feelings of racial purity and superiority. This material and psychological dependence was mutual. Du Bois' famous analysis of "double consciousness" describes a split psyche, as black people viewed themselves through the gaze of whites.[44] And black sharecroppers and laborers continued to depend for their subsistence on exploitative white landowners and employers. Thus, the transition from slavery to Jim Crow was not from

[42] Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope*, 1 edition (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), 137–38.
[43] Wells-Barnett, cited in Townes, *Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope,* 140.
[44] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 2.

dependence to independence, but from one form of exploitative interdependence to another. Saidiya Hartman describes the reconceptualization of the black subject from slave to rights-bearing subject not as an emancipation but as a "refiguration" of networks of subjection.[45]

As they had done during enslavement, however, black Americans responded to these developments by cultivating new ties of responsible interdependence with one another. As Sacajawea Hall writes, "Black people would not have survived the brutality of chattel slavery and Jim Crow apartheid without practicing solidarity and cooperation in organized formal ways."[46] Hall is a leader of the Cooperation Jackson movement, which is building on this powerful legacy in Mississippi (see this dissertation's concluding chapter). To survive Jim Crow, black people formed mutual aid societies, benevolent associations, fraternal orders, church groups, and women's clubs to preserve the well-being of the poorest community members and encourage the achievements of others. Club women, for example, established night schools and community facilities, cared for prisoners, the sick, and elderly ex-slaves.[47] According to Townes, contemporary womanists draw inspiration the club women's "spirituality rooted in community and concerned for the individual."[48] Marcia Riggs makes the same point using the language of interdependence: "black women understand their individual autonomy to be interdependent with the collective position of Blacks in this country."[49] Riggs concludes in her study of black club women's groups like the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) that "The motto of

[45] Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 6–10.
[46] Sacajawea ('Saki') Hall, interviewed by Thandisizwe Chimurenga, "Coming Full Circle: The Intersection of Gender Justice and the Solidarity Economy," in *Jackson Rising: The Struggle for Economic Democracy and Black Self-Determination in Jackson, Mississippi*, ed. Kali Akuno and Ajamu Nangwaya (Daraja Press, 2017), 198. For a detailed history of black cooperatives, see Jessica Gordon Nembhard, *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014).
[47] Bair, "Though Justice Sleeps: 1880-1900," 26, 40-42.
[48] Townes, *In a Blaze of Glory*, 1995, 43.
[49] Riggs, *Awake, Arise, & Act*, 2.

the NACW, 'Lifting as We Climb,' reflected the black women's understanding of the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of Blacks as a group."[50] Black communities in the South also raised money from within their communities as well as from Northern white philanthropists to construct private schools throughout the South.[51]

In this period, too, then, the interdependencies between black and white people, and within their particular communities, took on shifting and ambiguous forms. In the mid-twentieth century dreams of black equality crystallized in the movement for integration. Here, the notion of integration as interracial interdependence is made explicit for the first time as a social-ethical value, especially in the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Howard Thurman (see chapter six of this dissertation). Integrationists' heroic efforts produced mixed results, undeniable successes and dreams deferred. The promise of integration was co-opted by hegemonic power, which shifted the terms of interdependent relationship once more.

Interdependence and Integration

> We ponder the wisdom and relevance of integration and its moral vision of the beloved community. To many of us, it seems that integration, at least in its present form, is morally bankrupt.
>
> - Marcia Riggs[52]

In 1955, JoAnn Robinson of Montgomery suggested that that city's black residents boycott the public bus system after Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white person. The subsequent campaign, led by Montgomery Improvement Association president Martin Luther King, Jr., culminated nearly a year later with the Supreme Court's ruling that

[50] Riggs, *Awake, Arise, & Act,* 79.
[51] Grossman, "A Chance to Make Good: 1900-1929," 97–98.
[52] Riggs, *Awake, Arise, & Act*, ix.

segregated city buses were unconstitutional.[53] Inspired by the success in Montgomery, activists across the nation began to organize boycotts, sit-ins at segregated lunch counters, marches, freedom rides, litigation strategies, voter registration drives, and political campaigns. Their sacrifices produces astonishing successes, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. From 1964-69, black voter registration rose from 19% to 61% in Alabama and from 7% to 67% in Mississippi.[54]

Despite these undeniable triumphs, by the mid-60s black Americans were grappling with "the recognition that ending Jim Crow was not enough to win full equality or political power."[55] This frustration boiled over in riots in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles, Detroit and elsewhere, with rioters citing concerns about police brutality, discrimination and deprivation.[56] Black nationalist movements, fueled by the immense popularity of Malcolm X, enjoyed a resurgence in the late 1960s, and the rallying cry "Freedom Now!" was challenged by the more radical slogan "Black Power!" Movements such as the Nation of Islam, the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), the Black Panther Party (BPP), and others rejected the emphasis on Christian love, nonviolence, reconciliation and integration that had fueled King's SCLC. And the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) became steadily more militant after 1965 under the leadership of Stokely Carmichael. King was slow to appreciate the shift, calling Black Power "an unfortunate choice of words."[57] However, in the late sixties, he became increasingly critical of United States imperialism, especially regarding the war in Vietnam, and called for a global "revolution of values."[58]

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[53] Harding, Kelley, and Lewis, "We Changed the World: 1945-1970," 183–92.
[54] Harding, Kelley, and Lewis, "We Changed the World: 1945-1970," 238–39.
[55] Harding, Kelley, and Lewis, "We Changed the World: 1945-1970," 240–41.
[56] Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 189–91; Harding, Kelley, and Lewis, "We Changed the World: 1945-1970," 245.
[57] Harding, Kelley, and Lewis, "We Changed the World: 1945-1970," 240.
[58] King, "A Time to Break Silence," in *A Testament of Hope,* 240.

While Southern white supremacists were virulently opposed to integration, hegemonic power shrewdly learned to accommodate in principle black people's demands for equality without relinquishing white material dominance. King's message of love, nonviolence and brotherhood was benign enough to be tolerated, at least until he began to critique American imperialism. Marxist organizations such as the Black Panther Party were another matter, however. The Panthers were threatening, not simply because they carried loaded firearms in public, but because they called for "full employment, decent housing, relevant education, black exemption from military service, an end to police brutality, freedom for all black prisoners, and trials with juries of their peers."[59] The FBI worked diligently to destroy the BPP, killing leaders Mark Clark and Fred Hampton in their beds, and infiltrating the organization in order to arrest 348 of its members in 1969. The FBI's operation was part of a larger surveillance of black nationalist movements known as the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO).[60]

The movement for integration produced mixed results. In many instances efforts to integrate were met with fierce white racist resistance. White-dominated legislatures declared the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision "null and void"; vicious mobs harassed and threatened black children attempting to integrate previously all-white schools. Racist governors called in National Guardsmen and closed public schools rather than integrate.[61] Other Southern cities adopted more shrewd approaches. In Nashville, for instance, educational officials created something they called "intelligent zoning" to achieve compliance with the *Brown* decision. They asked principals of segregated schools to create a "census" mapping where their present students

[59] Kelley, "Into the Fire: 1970 to the Present," 279.
[60] Harding, Kelley, and Lewis, "We Changed the World: 1945-1970," 255–57; Kelley, "Into the Fire: 1970 to the Present," 267.
[61] Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 157–58; Harding, Kelley, and Lewis, "We Changed the World: 1945-1970," 196.

lived. Then they created geographic "zones" based on the results. Thus, the administrators preserved almost totally segregated schools, disingenuously claiming race-neutrality by relying on racially segregated geographic zones. Desegregation historian Ansley Erickson concludes, "New school zones thus used segregation to locate and define their boundaries, and then called the results desegregation."[62]

White suburban neighborhoods were often exempt from busing for school desegregation because of their geographic distance from city centers. Many such programs left white suburban districts segregated, while integrating urban poor white and black student populations. While some districts achieved statistical desegregation, they rarely offered "equality of educational opportunity." Black students were often relegated to lower academic tracks and vocational classes (often without any prior consultation), and schools remained internally segregated. The burdens of busing were not equally shared as black students were more often bused long distances to majority-white schools than the reverse. Black students were seen as "black paint to mix into the white base of the suburban comprehensive schools."[63] Many white children of means left the public school system for private schools, and by 1980, white students comprised just 4% of the public school population in Washington, D.C., 8% in Atlanta, and 12% in Detroit. White parents viciously opposed court-ordered busing programs, most notoriously in Boston, which was mandated in 1975 to bus children from Roxbury, a poor black neighborhood, to Charlestown, a working-class Irish neighborhood. The Boston police was called out to protect children from white mobs who shouted racial slurs and violently attacked them.[64]

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[62] Erickson, *Making the Unequal Metropolis*, 74.
[63] Erickson, *Making the Unequal Metropolis,* 8, 75, 226-28, 266.
[64] Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

The decline of busing student assignment programs led to a re-segregation of school districts by 1980. Today, schools are more segregated than they were in 1970.[65] Erickson challenges the narratives of "white flight" and "de facto segregation" that ascribe these shifts to personal preference. White outmigration from cities was facilitated by coordinated efforts of school boards and administrations with real estate officials to secure the construction of new public schools in the suburbs. White middle-class families benefited from access to redlined neighborhoods and federally subsidized mortgages. Meanwhile, black urban neighborhoods were fractured by highway construction as well as by "urban renewal" efforts that razed black business and residential districts and replaced them with white-owned businesses and housing projects.[66] White parents' unwillingness to send their children to schools in black neighborhoods led to numerous closures of predominantly black schools, leading in turn to sharp declines in the number of black principals, administrators and superintendents in American public schools.[67] Busing programs generally had a positive effect on test scores for black students without harming white students' test scores. Additionally, such programs did expose white and black children to persons outside their racial group and facilitated interracial relationships. However, some worried that busing plans emphasized the benefits that black students gained from learning in proximity to white students, thereby reinforcing feelings of black inferiority. Just as Hartman argues that emancipation led to a "refiguration" of networks of subjection, so Erickson concludes that busing for desegregation "*remade* educational equality."[68] In 2007 the U.S. Supreme Court overturned decades of legal precedent to determine that public schools may not seek to maintain or achieve integration through policies based on students' race. Chief Justice John Roberts,

[65] Kelley, "Into the Fire: 1970 to the Present," 293–94; Rothstein, *The Color of Law*, 179.
[66] Erickson, *Making the Unequal Metropolis,* 125, 25, 36.
[67] Frederick, *Between Sundays*, 110.
[68] Erickson, *Making the Unequal Metropolis,* 211, 251-2, 15.

calling the Louisville and Seattle student assignment plans "extreme," summarized the court's simplistic view: "The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race." In a concurring opinion, Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote that Louisville's plan focused too heavily on race, which he nevertheless argued could be one among many factors school systems might consider in their student assignment plans.[69]

Desegregating neighborhoods has been a similarly mixed endeavor. Previously, because black Americans had been prohibited by redlining, blockbusting and other racist policies from settling in white neighborhoods,[70] black communities by necessity contained a great deal more internal socioeconomic diversity. Following desegregation, however, black elites left those communities to settle in more affluent neighborhoods. As a result, Townes observes, neighborhoods that were once robust centers of civic, political and economic engagement have been largely depleted of those resources: "Communities that once consisted of the affluent, the poor, the criminal, and the working class now have three major groups—those working to get out, those too poor to ever get out, and the criminal element."[71] Townes laments a breakdown of moral institutions that had instilled values like courage, risk, and placing the needs of others alongside our own.[72] Patricia Hill Collins concurs with Townes that despite the oppressive policies that created racial segregation, still "these all-Black neighborhoods simultaneously provided a separate space where African-American women and men could use African-derived ideas to craft distinctive oppositional knowledges designed to resist racial oppression."[73]

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[69] Sarah Garland, *Divided We Fail: The Story of an African American Community that Ended the Era of School Desegregation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2013), 186-90; Linda Greenhouse, "Justices Limit the Use of Race in School Plans for Integration," *The New York Times* June 29, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/29/washington/29scotus.html.
[70] Cf. Rothstein, *The Color of Law*.
[71] Townes, *In a Blaze of Glory,* 133.
[72] Townes, *In a Blaze of Glory*, 137–38.
[73] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 11.

In an interview with Henry Louis Gates Jr., West reflects, "We had a much deeper sense of community in '67 than we do in '97. This is important to say that not in a nostalgic way because it's not as if '67 was a time when things were so good. Materially speaking, we were much worse. But culturally speaking in terms of social connection, they were much better."[74] Thus, in West's view, school and housing desegregation programs, when uncoupled from corresponding efforts to remediate structural economic inequality, led to the dissolution of previously vibrant black communities, neighborhoods, and business sectors. In terms of the present analysis, paying special attention to West's language of "social connection," one might say that the hegemonic co-optation of *inter*-racial interdependence as token integration sapped black communities of the *intra*-racial ties of responsible interdependence that had previously vivified them.

Neoliberalism provided the economic rationale for dismantling a range of social programs that had benefited black people. Ronald Reagan began this work, which was continued under the Clinton administration. Clinton's 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act promised to "end welfare as we know it." Clinton and the act itself blamed black poverty on unwed mothers.[75]

Even black voting rights have recently come under fire, notably in the 2000 presidential election, which was decided by several hundred votes in the state of Florida. There was evidence of widespread voter suppression of black Floridians, which led to nearly 200,000 votes being discarded, mostly from counties from substantial black populations. About two million votes

[74] "Interview With Cornel West | The Two Nations Of Black America."
[75] Kelley, "Into the Fire: 1970 to the Present," 296–97; "The End of Welfare as We Know It," *The Atlantic,* accessed May 27, 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/04/the-end-of-welfare-as-we-know-it/476322/; Traci C. West, *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 105.

nationally were discarded because of malfunction or other problems and about half of these were cast by black people.[76] Whites achieved a new avenue for black voter suppression and labor exploitation through mass incarceration. By 2016, nearly 2.2 million Americans were ineligible to vote because they were incarcerated. Among these, black men were disproportionately represented: black men are six times as likely to be incarcerated as white men.[77] Mass incarceration of black Americans since the 1970s, especially after Reagan declared a "War on Drugs" in the 1980s, has led to another "refiguration" of power, which Michelle Alexander calls "The New Jim Crow."[78]

"Integration" As Hegemonic Co-Optation

As I write, in my city of Louisville a plan is being considered to raze a housing project in the predominantly black and poor Russell neighborhood of West Louisville and to replace it with an affordable housing complex in the wealthy white neighborhood of Prospect. Residents in Prospect are incensed. "It smells like socialism," says one. Others claim to be concerned that the new project would cause traffic problems and displace local wildlife. One resident is slightly more transparent: "It is nice to integrate neighborhoods and have multiple socio-economic levels in (the) area, but basically destroying property values seems really unfair." This is precisely the logic that fueled the "blockbusting" campaigns of real estate agents fifty years ago, stoking white fears that black people would soon overrun their neighborhoods, persuading whites to sell their houses cheaply, and then reselling at inflated prices to black buyers.[79]

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[76] Kelley, "Into the Fire: 1970 to the Present," 337–38.
[77] "Criminal Justice Facts," The Sentencing Project, accessed May 27, 2018, https://www.sentencingproject.org/criminal-justice-facts/.
[78] Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*.
[79] Sarah Ladd, "Prospect Affordable Housing Project Stirs Residents' Anger," *The Courier-Journal*, July 26, 2019, https://www.courier-journal.com%2Fstory%2Fnews%2Flocal%2F2019%2F07%2F26%2Fprospect-affordable-

For King, the struggle for integration demanded "recognition of the solidarity of the human family." For him this solidarity was fundamentally based on the interrelated nature of humanity.[80] Integration was not simply a political program but was theologically based in the reality of human interdependence.[81] But King was equally clear that "Integration is meaningless without the sharing of power. When I speak of integration, I don't mean a romantic mixing of colors, I mean a real sharing of power and responsibility."[82] This distinction is paramount, for it is only by mystifying it that hegemonic power was able successfully to co-opt interracial interdependence as integration. As Erickson writes, mystification obscures the complex interactions between state and corporate power, rendering decades of specific and coordinated policy a "magician's box" of mysterious factors like "personal preferences." Demystification entails "clearing the fog to recognize the political economy."[83]

In the end, the very government that King condemned as "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today"[84] managed masterfully to appropriate his message and his person. It did so by adopting the mantle of interracial interdependence, integration and reconciliation, while ignoring the ethical demands for equal sharing in power. King's insistence that integration required structural equity was studiously ignored. As the sixth chapter shows, "interdependence" was a central theological ethical symbol for King, and "integration" was its political correlative.

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housing-plan-stirs-residents-anger%2F1806125001%2F&usg=AOvVaw3s14EEPoxUeDofFe76zbRD; cf. Rothstein, *The Color of Law*.

[80] King, "The Ethical Demands for Integration," in *A Testament of Hope*, 121-22.

[81] King, "A Chrsitmas Sermon on Peace," 254.

[82] King, "A Testament of Hope," 317.

[83] Erickson, *Making the Unequal Metropolis,* 313, 315. In her critical study of the rise of pluralistic "world religions" discourse in relation to colonialism and refigurations of power, Tomoko Masuzawa examines a transition "from the overtly exclusivist hegemonic version (Christian supremacist dogmatism) to the openly pluralistic one (world religions pluralism)—and at the same time makes this process of transmutation very hard to identify and nearly impossible to understand." Thus, in the realm of religion just as in those of race, gender, and capital, the process of mystification is an essential strategy for preserving power. Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 326-7.

[84] King, "A Time to Break Silence," 233.

In a masterful strategy of hegemonic co-optation, then, a dangerous value was sentimentalized and its ethical challenge mystified.

A shining monument now stands in King's honor on the same national mall where he insisted, "We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one."[85] At the King memorial, a number of less threatening quotations portray him not as "radical"[86] but as a liberal humanist ("Out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope," reads one inscription). The *only* reference to race anywhere on the monument is a minimization of its importance, namely, King's insistence that "our loyalties must transcend race."[87] And standing at the center of it all, facing out across the Tidal Basin toward the monument to the slaveowner Jefferson, is a statue of King. He stands 30 feet tall, and the stone from which he is sculpted is dazzlingly *white.*

2. Gender Interdependence as Complementarity

> It is typical of rationalism to make a radical contrast in man between spirit and body, between body and spirit. But man is a person in the unity of his body and his spirit.
>
> - John Paul II[88]

In the previous chapter, I suggested that relationality is a central concept in feminist thought. Its prominence is matched in feminist studies perhaps only by the notion of embodiment.[89] Sallie

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[85] King, "I Have a Dream," 218.
[86] See Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Radical King*, ed. Cornel West (Beacon Press, 2016).
[87] US National Park Service, "Quotations - Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial," accessed February 19, 2019, https://www.nps.gov/mlkm/learn/quotations.htm. Vincent W. Lloyd makes a similar critique of the monument and the general sanitization of King's image in his *Black Natural Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Lloyd writes, "The King who is remembered today by countless tourists, schoolchildren, politicians, and at many Martin Luther King Day events annually is a thoroughly secularized, post-racial figure. Offensive to none, all this King wants is to fill the world with love" (118).
[88] John Paul II, "Letter to Families Gratissimam Sane (February 2, 1994" 19, Accessed September 25, 2018, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families.html.
[89] Cf. Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury, *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western*

McFague summarizes a classic argument made by feminist theologians that the Western Christian tradition effects a dualistic split of mind from body, in which the mind is associated with the rational male, and prized over a devalued body associated with nature and the female. The artificial dichotomization of mind and body, argues McFague, has been employed by Christian theology to reinforce male dominance. In the modern period these ideas were given scientific sanction by a Baconian model of a mechanistic universe subject to human control. In place of this distorted model, McFague commends a return to a premodern vision of "organic interdependence."[90]

In their recovery of embodiment and the ideal of interdependence (between body and soul, men and women, human and non-human beings), feminists challenge patriarchal structures of domination. However, neither the recovery of the body or the challenge to mechanistic Enlightenment rationalism nor the value of gender interdependence necessarily promotes women's liberation. Indeed, each of these notions was masterfully co-opted by the antifeminist Roman Catholic theologian, Pope John Paul II, who set forth a notion of gender "complementarity" to redeploy these ideas against the feminist project. Just as hegemonic power disarmed the black freedom movement, co-opting interdependence as integration in order to re-inscribe white dominance, so the Catholic magisterium adapted to the challenge of feminist theology by appropriating its central critiques and manipulating them to justify the status quo.

Culture, and the Body (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004); Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick, *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Londa L. Schiebinger, *Feminism and the Body* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits Of "sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).

[90] McFague, *The Body of God*, 14–16, 33–36.

Christian ethicist Cristina Traina makes the analogy between racial and gender politics explicit, critiquing the "separate-but-equal complementarity evident in the writings of John Paul II."[91]

In his translator's introduction to John Paul II's *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (hereafter TOB), Michael Waldstein situates the work as a critique of the Enlightenment conception of a disembodied, rational self. John Paul II is opposed to the Cartesian dualism that severs mind from body, as well as the Baconian ambition to acquire total power over nature by grasping the fundamental laws and mechanisms governing the universe.[92] The Enlightenment vision, for John Paul II, is tainted by a lustful ambition toward total human mastery over nature. The hideous consequences of this unbridled appetite erupted in the twentieth century, resulting in genocide and the threat of nuclear annihilation.[93] However, John Paul II also worried that the lust for technological mastery over nature had degraded the human person and the human family so as to reduce other people to objects for human satisfaction and consumption. Abortion and "artificial" birth control are prime examples of this misguided lust, in which the procreative and spousal meaning of the human body is forgotten and the act of conjugal union is reduced to the mere satisfaction of sexual urges. For this reason, John Paul II refers to TOB as "a rereading of *Humanae Vitae*,"[94] the papal encyclical of Paul VI forbidding the use of "artificial" forms of birth control. In the face of the rationalist assault on the human person, John Paul II mounts a vigorous defense of the body as a divine gift that makes visible the invisible presence of God. Waldstein summarizes the project thus: "John Paul II's main concern

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[91] Cristina L. H. Traina, *Feminist Ethics and Natural Law: The End of the Anathemas* (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 1999), 31.
[92] Cf. Susan Bordo, "Purification and Transcendence in Descartes' Meditations," in *The Feminist Philosophy Reader*, ed. Alison Bailey and Chris J. Cuomo (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 672–87; Susan Bordo, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of René Descartes* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).
[93] Waldstein, "Introduction," 37–44, 95–96.
[94] Waldstein, "Introduction," 100; John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them,* 119:5.

in TOB is to help overcome the body-spirit dualism that emerged from placing nature in the position of an 'object' for human power."[95]

John Paul II's critique of Enlightenment dualism, his rehabilitation of the body, and his recovery of an ethical meaning of human relationality and interdependence are all strikingly consistent with feminist theory. However, John Paul II positions his theology of the body in direct opposition to feminist ethics. His construal of interdependence as complementarity is a form of hegemonic co-optation, because it purports to eliminate all forms of domination but in fact mystifies and reinforces male supremacy.

The Redemption of the Body

> The body, in fact, and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It has been created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden from eternity in God, and thus to be a sign of it.
>
> - John Paul II[96]

John Paul takes as his starting point Jesus' dialogue with the Pharisees, who have asked him whether divorce is lawful:

> He answered, "Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." They said to him, "Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?" He said to them, "It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. (Mt 19:4-8)

From Jesus' "appeal to the beginning," John Paul surmises that before the historical state of human sinfulness, there was a "prehistory" in the Garden of Eden, which John Paul calls "the

[95] Waldstein, "Introduction," 44.
[96] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 19:4.

state of original innocence."[97] In the second creation account of Genesis 2, the first man (*ha'adam*) exists in a state of "original solitude" before God decides he needs a "help" to accompany him. The first man is not even defined as male (*'is*) until the creation of woman (*'issa*). Man becomes the image of God not by himself, but "*through the communion of persons*."[98] As two "ways of being a body," then, masculinity and femininity are "complementary" which means "*reciprocally completing*." The body thus has a "spousal meaning", which is realized in the conjugal act (that is, unprotected vaginal intercourse between two cisgender, heterosexual married partners). This act is a "*reciprocal self-gift*" that expresses the relational communion that is at the heart of being human.[99] (Recall that Merriam-Webster defines both reciprocity and interdependence as "mutual dependence."[100])

But the Fall of original sin transported humanity to its historical state, that of sinfulness, shame, and concupiscence. The latter is a lustful reduction of the other person to the status of an object for one's enjoyment, rather than a subject and a person. In the state of concupiscence, "*The relationship of the gift changes into a relationship of appropriation.*"[101] Concupiscence—lust, understood as a "mere" sexual urge to consume the other—is a betrayal of the body's inherent meaning, which is both spousal and procreative. Human beings must ward off concupiscence by achieving mastery over their inner impulses, "like a watchman who watches over a hidden spring"[102] (what this means is not altogether clear).

In its proper context, the conjugal act prefigures the resurrection in two ways: 1) the unitive and procreative functions of sex point toward the heavenly communion, "the *rediscovery*

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[97] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them,* 4:1.
[98] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them,* 9:3.
[99] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them,* 10:1-4, 15:5.
[100] "Definition of INTERDEPENDENCE"; "Definition of RECIPROCITY."
[101] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them,* 32:6.
[102] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them,* 48:3.

of a new, *perfect intersubjectivity of all*"; and 2) the self's mastery over concupiscent impulses links with the resurrection in which "the spirit will gain a *just supremacy* over the body, spirituality over sensuality."[103] [The Pope's suggestion that there could be such a thing as a "just supremacy" is both puzzling and telling.] The complementary union of man and woman embodied in the sexual act points toward their eternal union with God and with all persons in a perfected intersubjectivity, that is, a perfected individuality and community.

The Pope continues with an extended meditation on Ephesians 5:21-33, in which the author—John Paul II acknowledges that the Pauline authorship of Ephesians is in question, but he hypothesizes that Paul handed down concepts to "his secretary" for completion[104]—admonishes wives to be subject to their husbands, and husbands to love their wives as their own bodies. While he acknowledges that the author "is not afraid to accept the concepts that were characteristic of the mentality and customs of that time,"[105] John Paul insists that the author of Ephesians is not suggesting that the husband is the "master" of his wife or that the marriage contract is one of domination. Indeed, the Pope insists, "Love excludes every kind of submission by which the wife would become a servant or slave of the husband."[106] The submission to which Ephesians refers is instead a "mutual submission" in which both the wife and husband engage in an act of reciprocal self-giving.[107] And just as a wife completes her husband, so the Church unites with Christ.

John Paul II draws his TOB to a close with a reflection on *Humanae Vitae,* harmonizing his personalist theology of the body with the natural law approach of that encyclical. Sexual

[103] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them,* 68:4, 72:4; italics added.
[104] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them,* 87:3 fn 87.
[105] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them,* 89:5.
[106] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them,* 89:4.
[107] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them,* 89:3.

intercourse has both "unitive" and "procreative" meanings, and "artificial contraception" is a violation of the natural law because it separates those two meanings, which are inextricably linked. John Paul II (along with *Humanae Vitae*) equivocates between the classical understanding of the natural law as the order of nature accessible to all human beings through reason, and the magisterium's insistence that it alone is competent to interpret the natural law.[108]

De Facto Versus Moral Interdependence

Man and Woman He Created Them does not employ the term "interdependence" to describe gender complementarity. Rather, John Paul II prefers to speak of "reciprocity," "perfect intersubjectivity," and "communion" between persons.[109] The Pope does, however, theorize interdependence elsewhere, mostly in reference to the contemporary globalizing world. In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis,* John Paul speaks of "the need for a solidarity which will take up interdependence and transfer it to the moral plane."[110]

In the next section, I discuss that in the 1970s and 80s, "interdependence" began to gain currency in economics and political science to describe the phenomenon now more commonly known as "globalization." John Paul II notes that the First, Second, Third and "Fourth" Worlds, while fragmented, are nonetheless linked the one to another. However, the Pope warns that "When this interdependence is separated from its ethical requirements, it has disastrous consequences for the weakest."[111] What John Paul calls "*de facto* interdependence"[112] is viewed by elites as providing new opportunities for trade and development, but for many among the

[108] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them,* 119:3, 124:6.
[109] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them,* 23:4, 68:4, 71:5, 73:1.
[110] John Paul II, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis," 19.
[111] John Paul II, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis," 17.
[112] John Paul II, "To the People of Detroit," 8.

poorer nations, this is simply a new form of domination. John Paul insists that interdependence must be linked to an awareness of the common good, to a sense of responsibility for one another, and ultimately to a practice of solidarity. He sounds at once like King and Harrison when he writes that human beings are "linked together by a common destiny, which is to be constructed together, if catastrophe for all is to be avoided."[113]

Sollicitudo Rei Socialis completes the implicit link between interdependence and complementarity by invoking Genesis 2:18-20 to explore what solidarity means. Just as Eve was created as a "help" to Adam, John Paul II argues that interdependence as solidarity requires that we view the other as a neighbor, not as an object to be manipulated. This is, of course, also the key distinction between the authentic conjugal act, which anticipates the resurrection by a total gift of self to the other, and concupiscent sex, which degrades persons by reducing them to an object of pleasure.[114] In John Paul II's personalist theology—a theology shared, incidentally, by King[115]—the ultimate ethical criterion is to treat the other as a person and a subject, rather than as an object to be manipulated. Upon that criterion rest both authentic gender complementarity and moral interdependence.

"Complementarity" as Hegemonic Co-optation

My argument that John Paul II's theology of the body shares important points of resonance with feminism may seem controversial. Indeed, I was quite surprised to notice areas of agreement. Rather than attempt a comprehensive survey of feminist theory to demonstrate my point, I can

[113] John Paul II, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis," 26.
[114] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 32:4.
[115] See *God and Human Dignity: The Personalism, Theology, and Ethics of Martin Luther King, Jr.,* ed. Rufus Burrow, Jr. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006); also *Personalism in Theology: A Symposium in Honor of Albert Cornelius Knudson*, Edgar Sheffield Brightman, editor (Boston: Boston University Press, 1943).

only here gesture toward the similarities. To do so, I lay some passages from TOB and other papal texts alongside some parallel arguments from a landmark text in feminist theology, McFague's *The Body of God.*

	John Paul II	**Sallie McFague**
Critique of Enlightenment Rationalism and Mind-Body Dualism	In his translator's introduction, Waldstein positions TOB against the "Baconian program" which attempted to grasp the fundamental mechanisms governing the universe. John Paul II approvingly cites *Humanae Vitae's* call for a balance between "*domination… of the forces of nature'* (HV2) and *'self-mastery'* (HV 21). Elsewhere, the Pope critiques the rationalist split of spirit and body.[116]	McFague specifically critiques Bacon and other "fathers" of modern science, who conceived of the universe as a machine over which human beings can exert control. Mind and spirit in the "mechanical model" are artificially split from and elevated over nature and body.[117]
Centrality of the Body for Theology	"The fact that *theology also includes the body should not* astonish or surprise anyone who is conscious of the mystery and reality of the Incarnation. Through the fact that the Word of God became flesh, the body entered theology—that is, the science that has divinity for its object—I would say, through the main door."[118]	McFague critiques the "full-blown distrust of the body" within Christian theology, noting that because of Jesus, "Christianity is the religion of the incarnation *par excellence.*"[119]

[116] Waldstein, "Introduction," 39, 96; John Paul II, "Letter to Families Gratissimam Sane," 19, accessed September 25, 2018, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families.html; *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 123:1.
[117] McFague, *The Body of God*, 33–34.
[118] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 23:4.
[119] McFague, *The Body of God*, 14.

	While humans cannot be reduced to the other bodies in creation, "man too is a body."[120]	"We do not *have* bodies," McFague insists, but "We *are* bodies, 'body and soul.'"[121]
Interdependence	Human survival depends on our recognizing "the ethical character of the interdependence of peoples," and cultivating a sense of responsibility and solidarity based on the common good of all.[122]	McFague suggests an organic model for viewing the universe, based on an "organic interdependence" of human life with all nonhuman life and, indeed, with all of creation. Using the terms "interdependence," "interconnectedness," and "interrelationality" interchangeably, McFague argues that the organic model of interrelationality will lead us to act ethically: if I envision the universe as God's body I will treat it with care.[123]

The agreements are profound, but unfortunately they do not extend much past the theoretical level. For McFague's critique of disembodied theology is an historical ideological critique, attentive to how Enlightenment efforts to divorce mind from body have also worked to ensure male supremacy by associating men with spirit and women with body, utilizing theological images such as Christ as the (male) head of the Church's (female) body. By contrast, John Paul II praises that image as a "great analogy" and a "very eloquent" metaphor.[124] While he occasionally admits that biblical writers operated using the mentality of their time, he nonetheless uncritically cites passages from the prophetic literature that portray God as a jealous

[120] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 2:4.
[121] McFague, *The Body of God*, 16.
[122] John Paul II, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis," 19.
[123] McFague, *The Body of God*, 33, 85.
[124] McFague, 36; John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 91:2, 92:2-3.

husband and Israel as a "whore" of a wife.[125] He notes that Ephesians 5:21-33 addresses the three pairings of husbands-wives, parents-children, and masters-slaves, yet he insists against the plain sense of the text that "the author does not intend to say that the husband is the 'master' of the wife" but that the relationship is instead one of mutual submission.[126] The Pope's argument simply cannot hold when the author of Ephesians explicitly says, "Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church" (Eph 5:22-3).

While he insists that complementarity is rooted in an equal dignity, John Paul cautions that "*equality of dignity* does not mean 'sameness of men.'" Such sameness would be a "deforming" betrayal of "the unique richness and inherent value of femininity." He objects to efforts toward "the masculinization of women." In the Pope's "separate but equal" theory of gender, "the personal resources of femininity are certainly no less than the resources of masculinity: they are merely different."[127]

John Paul II assumes an archaic set of essentialist gender stereotypes for women (having surprisingly little to say about men's own "essential" qualities). For instance, he praises women for "your sensitivity, your intuitiveness, your generosity and fidelity"; women's bodily features have a "power of a perennial attraction" and "*are in strict union with motherhood*"; women have a "*beauty*—not merely physical, but above all spiritual," and this beauty makes woman a "*great treasure*"; "The female personality" is fulfilled in "virginity and motherhood"; this motherhood affords women a distinct sense of paying attention and caring for others, and they "see persons

[125] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 104:6.
[126] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them* 89:3-4.
[127] John Paul II, "Letter to Mrs. Gertrude Mongella, Secretary General of the Fourth World Conference on Women of the United Nations," 3, accessed September 26, 2018, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19950526_mongella-pechino.html; "Mulieris Dignitatem," 10, accessed September 26, 2018, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html.

with their hearts"; women exhibit a "yearning for peace", which they express in times of tragedy "by the silent eloquence of their grief"; and while their social progress is good, "the public role of women should not however detract from their unique role within the family."[128]

John Paul II's praise for women stands in obvious tension with his insistence that women cannot be ordained priests because Jesus appointed only men as disciples. He argues that this exclusion is not a form of discrimination, and offers as evidence the fact that even Mary, Mother of God, was not ordained by Jesus. Ordaining women would offend the symmetry of the biblical imagery of the male priest, who acts "*in persona Christi*" celebrating the Eucharist, so that the symbol of Christ/priest/bridegroom can join with the Church/Eucharist/bride.[129]

Feminist pioneer Lucretia Mott says, "Woman is now sufficiently developed to prefer justice to compliment."[130] John Paul II's construal of interdependence as gender complementarity is a form of hegemonic co-optation. For all his insistence that complementarity is rooted in an equal dignity between the sexes, for all his paternalistic "compliments" to women lauding their essential dignity, John Paul II deploys the interdependence/complementarity of men and women in order to reinforce women's total exclusion from positions of power within the hierarchical Church. Women are constructed as silent in order to be silenced, and John Paul II can only praise "the silent eloquence of their grief." He does not explore the possibility that Catholic women's silence might not be a voluntary silence or that women might in fact have something to say. In an especially patronizing moment, the Pope throws women the bone of

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[128] John Paul II, "Mulieris Dignitatem (Augu," 10, 17, 18; "Letter to Women," 2, 12, accessed September 26, 2018, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_29061995_women.html; *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 21:5; "XXVIII World Day for Peace 1995,Women: Teachers of Peace," 4, 9, accessed September 26, 2018, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_08121994_xxviii-world-day-for-peace.html.

[129] John Paul II, "Ordinatio Sacerdotalis," 3, accessed September 26, 2018, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19940522_ordinatio-sacerdotalis.html; "Mulieris Dignitatem (August 15, 1988)," 26.

[130] Cited in Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 199.

identifying them with Mary, Mother of God: "After all, was it not in and through her that the greatest event in human history - the incarnation of God himself - was accomplished?"[131] Women should be content with their subordinate role, because a woman's body was the vessel through which God, the Son of Man, came into being. A poor consolation prize, indeed.

For those yearning for a progressive shift in Roman Catholicism, the election of Pope Francis occasioned a great deal of optimism. While Francis has eschewed much of his predecessors' polemics on gender and sexuality and emphasized the need for "a stronger presence of women in the church," he has also expressed wariness of a solution he called "masculinity in a skirt." He cautioned a group of women that a woman is to be "a mother and not an old maid (spinster)," and even referred to women theologians as "strawberries on the cake."[132] Further, Francis has confirmed that John Paul II closed the door definitively on the question of women's ordination. For the foreseeable future, the antifeminist gender theology and politics of John Paul II remains regnant as Roman Catholic orthodoxy.

Thus far this chapter has considered racial interdependence as integration and gender interdependence as complementarity. In what follows, I turn to consider a final form of hegemonic co-optation, namely "interdependence" in economics and political science, where it is synonymous with "globalization" and even referred to as global "integration."[133]

3. Capitalist Interdependence as Globalization

The familiar term "globalization" denotes the increasing interconnection of the world via economic, political, and cultural networks made possible by the availability of cheap and rapid

[131] John Paul II "Mulieris Dignitatem," 31.
[132] Rita Ferrone, "Francis's Words About Women: What Does He Really Think?" *Commonweal,* accessed August 16, 2019, https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/francis%E2%80%99s-words-about-women.
[133] Crescenzi, *Economic Interdependence and Conflict in World Politics,* 2.

transportation of goods, services, people, and information. The term was introduced into scholarly literature by Harvard Business School professor Theodore Levitt in 1983, and has been popularized in part by Thomas Friedman, who authored the bestsellers *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (1999) *The World is Flat* (2005).[134] Readers will perhaps be less familiar with the usage of the term "interdependence" to denote this same process, but even before Levitt's publication, a body of literature in political science and economics was already emerging to theorize about our "interdependent" globalizing world.

The History of Global Interdependence

For most of human history, Andrew Scott points out, human beings could not move any faster than a running horse. But the pace of technological advancement in the twentieth century accelerated such that, in the space of a single lifetime, a person might have witnessed the first powered flight in 1903 and lived to ride on an intercontinental supersonic passenger flight in the 1980s.[135] The pace of international migration skyrocketed in the twentieth century as people crossed national borders for tourism, seeking employment, or as refugees fleeing military conflicts or political persecution.[136] International political and economic activity was increasingly coordinated after 1945, with the formation of the United Nations, as well as the Bretton Woods agreements, which eventually produced the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB).[137]

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[134] Barnaby J. Feder, "Theodore Levitt, 81, Who Coined the Term 'Globalization', Is Dead," *The New York Times*, July 6, 2006, sec. Business Day, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/06/business/06levitt.html; Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*, Second Edition, Revised edition (New York: Anchor Books, 2012); *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, 1st edition (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).
[135] Scott, *The Dynamics of Interdependence*, 4.
[136] Loth et al., *Global Interdependence*, 740–41.
[137] Scott, *The Dynamics of Interdependence*, 100.

Multinational corporations (MNCs) proliferated, to take advantage of the free trade policies championed by those organizations. In 1970, there were less than a hundred MNCs, but a decade later there were over 900.[138] The "information age" opened transnational flows of communication, accelerating the diffusion of information, news, and cultural products and practices worldwide. The general editors of the series *A History of the World,* published by Harvard University Press, titled the final volume in the series *Global Interdependence: The World After 1945.* It is significant that in a series attempting to tackle "the history of the world," the term chosen by a team of world-renowned scholars to describe the present era is "interdependence." Akira Iriye begins his chapter on the making of a transnational human consciousness by recalling the lunar landing of Apollo 11 in 1969, and Neil Armstrong's famous declaration, "that's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." For Iriye, the moon landing symbolizes a growing awareness that human beings are living aboard "spaceship Earth," a home we share with people from all cultures as well as nonhuman life forms.[139] While he acknowledges that transnational connections do not necessarily foster peace or justice, Iriye remains compelled by "the growth of the realization that men, women, the spaces they inhabit, and animals, birds, fish, and plants are all interdependent beings."[140] However, does either the *reality* or the *awareness* of interdependence produce ethical outcomes? This is one of the central contested questions in the literature, as it is for this study.

In the nineteenth century, liberalism was the regnant economic doctrine. It stipulated that free-markets were the most efficient engines of economic growth, that laws of supply and demand would naturally set prices, that competitive advantage would ensure that goods and

[138] Loth et al., *Global Interdependence*, 748.
[139] Loth et al., *Global Interdependence,* 727–28.
[140] Loth et al., *Global Interdependence,* 8.

services would be produced wherever they could be produced most cheaply and efficiently, and that employment would reach optimum levels when governments simply stayed out of markets' way. Then came the Great Depression of the 1930s, shattering liberal optimism, and countries jettisoned their free-market commitments in favor of protective tariffs, regulatory controls, and Keynesian stimulus policies. After the Second World War left Europe devastated, the United States seized the opportunity to fill a vacuum of global leadership. It did so in part through advancing global free trade policies, through GATT and the other Bretton Woods institutions, over which the U.S. exerted outsized influence.[141] The U.S.'s position that free trade would promote postwar recovery and economic growth for developing nations was buttressed by "monetarist" economists led by Milton Friedman, Friedrich Von Hayek and others of the "Chicago School." Where Keynesian economic theory holds that governments can increase effective demand through various macroeconomic measures, monetarists like Friedman argued that markets are self-stabilizing and will arrive at a national equilibrium of optimum employment if left to themselves.[142] From Friedman's perspective, government intervention should be limited to balancing the budget, securing property rights, and maintaining a stable money supply. While Keynesian ideas were still heavily influential in the postwar era, in the second half of the twentieth century the political establishments of the United States and Great Britain would increasingly adopt monetarist ideas, ushering in the age of "neoliberalism."[143]

In 1973, the Organization of Petroleum-Exporting States (OPEC) collectively set oil prices at four times their previous level and imposed an oil embargo on the United States and

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[141] Stewart, *The Age of Interdependence*, 21.
[142] In fact, as Adam Kotsko has recently argued, neoliberalism requires constant and dramatic governmental and military intervention to protect corporate interests and open markets. Far from the laissez-faire noninterventionism of 19th-century liberalism, neoliberalism in fact requires governments to exert considerable influence to influence economic outcomes. See Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons: On the Political Theology of Late Capital* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 12.
[143] Stewart, *The Age of Interdependence,* 8–12; Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 2, 20–24.

other Western nations as retaliation for their support of Israel in the 1973 Yom Kippur War. The oil crisis led to a worldwide financial panic and runaway inflation in the United States, with devastating consequences especially for black Americans, who lost many of the financial gains they had earned during the previous decade.[144] The United States prepared to invade Saudi Arabia if necessary to free up oil supplies, but the embargo was eventually lifted after negotiations. Meanwhile, thanks to the increased oil prices, Saudis and other OPEC nations accumulated vast surpluses of petrodollars, which they invested in private banks, including U.S. banks. The banks, in turn, were in need of investment sources for their new wealth, and their solution was to invest heavily in developing countries and lobby aggressively for liberalization and development loans. In tandem with the IMF and World Bank, the banks contributed to the heavy indebtedness of global South nations in the 1970s and 1980s.[145] When the loans came due, debtor nations—now *dependent* on the discretion of the lending parties—were forced to undergo "structural adjustment" programs, removing trade barriers, privatizing utilities and industries, inviting foreign investment, and cutting social spending so as to service their debts.[146]

During this period, many voices from the global South began openly to question whether global interdependence was a good thing after all. Economists from poor countries critiqued the Bretton Woods system, which had not delivered the economic growth that free trade was promised to deliver. They began to wonder, "Could it be that the principles on which the economic order was based actually served to impede the development of poorer nations?"[147]

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[144] Kelley, "Into the Fire: 1970 to the Present," 282–83.
[145] Stewart, *The Age of Interdependence*, 25; Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 28.
[146] Gary Gereffi, "China and Mexico in the Global Economy: Comparative Development Models in an Era of Neoliberalism," in *Globalization and Beyond: New Examinations of Global Power and Its Alternatives*, ed. Jon Shefner and Patricia Fernández-Kelly, 1 edition (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 72; Stan Duncan, *The Greatest Story Oversold: Understanding Economic Globalization: Understanding Economic Globalization* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014), 100.
[147] Scott, *The Dynamics of Interdependence*, 105.

Such questionings were the focus of "dependency theory," pioneered by the Argentine economist and statesman Raúl Prebisch. Prebisch noted that foreign aid often arrived with strings attached [as predicted by Derrida's model of hospitality], as donor governments assumed they could secure loyalty or trade concessions from recipient nations. The aid and global trade generally, argued dependency theorists, drew recipient countries into the international financial network, within which they would function as subordinate actors dependent on the more powerful nations for their survival. These radical economists argued that poor nations should exit these relationships of dependency and servitude and form autonomous institutions. Frantz Fanon likewise observed that "[t]he formerly dominated country becomes an economically dependent country."[148]

However, these radical critiques, and the leftist governments that drew economic guidance from them, proved no match for the consolidating forces of elite power fueling the neoliberal revolution. The elections of Ronald Reagan to the U.S. presidency and Margaret Thatcher as U.K. prime minister assured the inevitability of neoliberalism's triumph. Marshalling their massive economic, political and military sway, Western elites ensured that in the 1980s neoliberalism would morph from one economic theory among others to the regnant orthodoxy. It is not too much to suggest that neoliberalism has taken on the mystique of doctrine, as Thatcher used to say, "There Is No Alternative" (economists would transform her dictum into the acronym TINA).[149] David Harvey notes that, when signing a regulatory reform bill, U.S. President Richard Nixon declared, "we are all Keynesians now." By the time of the Clinton-Blair years in the 1990s, however, one could just as easily declare, "we are all neoliberals now."[150]

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[148] Loth et al., *Global Interdependence*, 768; Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 98.
[149] James M. Cypher and Raúl Delgado Wise, *Mexico's Economic Dilemma: The Developmental Failure of Neoliberalism*, Reprint edition (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 33.
[150] Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 13.

Is Interdependence Good or Bad? A Scholarly Debate

Political scientists and economists have argued whether economic interdependence promotes global peace or conflict. *Power and Independence,* released in 1977 by Robert Keohane of Stanford and Joseph Nye of Harvard Kennedy School, argues that political realists, in viewing international politics as a struggle for power, tend to make a number of questionable assumptions: 1) that the principal actors in geopolitics are coherent nation-states, 2) that military force is an effective instrument of policy, and 3) that geopolitical conflicts are primarily about national security issues, with economic and social affairs playing at best a secondary role. The realist paradigm can be useful, but Keohane and Nye argue that in contemporary geopolitics a model of "complex interdependence" may be more appropriate. For in practice, communications often include state and non-state actors, including elites and multinational corporations; topics of discussion are not ordered hierarchically, with security at the top, but involve multiple intersecting issues; and military force often plays a minor role, having been replaced by "[i]ntense relationships of mutual influence." The use of force is costly and often ineffective, and global conflicts can be resolved by other means. Surely the threat and the use of force will still be effective in certain situations, but the authors cite American military defeat in Vietnam and the collapse of colonialism in Africa as evidence of the declining effectiveness of superior military power. A situation of complex interdependence is not the zero-sum struggle for power that realists imagined. Instead, "economic and ecological interdependence involves the possibility of joint gains, or joint losses."[151]

[151] Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, "Power and Interdependence," in *Conflict After the Cold War: Arguments on Causes of War and Peace,* ed. Richard K. Betts, fifth edition (New York: Routledge, 2017), 167-73; Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr, *Power & Interdependence*, 4 edition (Boston: Pearson, 2011).

Twenty years after the publication of *Power and Interdependence,* Keohane and Nye reflected on how their argument had held up in the "information age." They concluded that the nation-state had proven more resilient than expected by some modernists, who predicted that global economic interdependence would render wars and nation-states obsolete. Nation-states had adapted to the information age by learning to manipulate "soft power." Whereas "hard power" means getting others to do what you want through threats or rewards, "soft power" is getting others to do what you want through attraction—convincing them it is what they want, too. Where hard power is direct, soft power operates through persuasion. Examples include the appeal of American culture, which convinces others to adopt "American ideals" and "values." The interdependence of the information age has not had a leveling effect, so that all actors may equally share in the benefits of the communications revolution. Instead, nation-states and other powerful actors have used it to cement their advantage.[152]

Mark J.C. Crescenzi notes that liberals since Kant have held that economic ties reduce conflict, and that "interdependence fosters cooperation and a utopian world." Realists, on the other hand, emphasize the imbalance inherent in those ties and identify new sources of conflict.[153] Crescenzi mediates between the two positions by distinguishing "high-level" (military) conflict from "low-level" (economic or diplomatic) conflict. Like Keohane and Nye, Crescenzi thinks that military force is sometimes necessary, but in most cases, nations have concluded that economic power is more effective. Crescenzi uses game theory to "highlight the strategic manipulation of economic interdependence"[154]: Crescenzi's argument relies on highly technical equations accounting for the various factors at play in interstate conflicts, such as "*p*(-

[152] Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, "Power and Interdependence in the Information Age," *Foreign Affairs* 77, no. 5 (October 1998): 81–94.
[153] Crescenzi, *Economic Interdependence and Conflict in World Politics*, 2, 7, 46.
[154] Crescenzi, *Economic Interdependence and Conflict in World Politics,* 59.

$V_T - e_T - c_T) + (1 - p)(-e_T - c_T) = -V_T - e_T$."[155] Engagement with such analyses is beyond the scope of this study. Of more interest are Crescenzi's qualitative analyses of conflicts where he puts his model to work, especially the conflict between the United States and South Africa over apartheid.

Noting that trade with the U.S. accounted for about 20% of South Africa's international trade but only about 3% of that of the United States, Crescenzi observes that conventional models of interdependence would predict that the United States would have decisive leverage over South Africa. Yet, oddly, the United States never attempted to force an end to apartheid by imposing an embargo on South African minerals, by far the country's most important export. The reason: South Africa holds 77% of the world's reserves of chromium, manganese, and platinum, three essential materials in the production of steel. The United States elected not to embargo these minerals because the "exit costs" of doing so would have been too high. Thus, the United States vetoed numerous UN resolutions for mandatory sanctions on South Africa, and instead instituted an uneven and indecisive set of policies, from the Johnson to the Reagan administrations. While the United States likely could have brought about the end of apartheid much more rapidly by imposing an embargo on South African minerals, the availability of cheap steel in the end outweighed the moral concerns at hand.[156] In Crescenzi's view, then, economic interdependence neither promotes peace nor conflict but, instead, reduces "high-level" military conflict and increases "low-level" economic conflict.

Andrew Scott also is suspicious of the assumption that interdependence is "an unqualified good": Normally we take for granted that it produces "cultural enrichment, improved understanding between peoples, and, perhaps, toward peace as well. The dark side of

[155] Crescenzi, *Economic Interdependence and Conflict in World Politics,* 64.
[156] Crescenzi, *Economic Interdependence and Conflict in World Politics,* 86–90.

interdependence—its 'cost'—is being perceived only slowly."[157] Scott notes that the globalizing world is an undirected process, an "apurposive" aggregate of individual actors, each pursuing their own self-interest with no thought to cascading effects and unintended consequences [here again, Derrida's warning about the unintended consequences of ethical projects is pertinent]. Most historical processes are like this, Scott notes: the formation of the nation-state system, the Great Depression, environmental pollution and depletion of natural resources, and technological development are all examples of undirected cumulative processes. However, since 1945, the pace of interaction and technological development has accelerated such that catastrophes are likely.[158]

Heading off catastrophe—whether nuclear war, environmental collapse, or economic crisis—will require international cooperation and the formation of "constraint systems" to regulate global society. However, Scott notes that "asymmetrical" constraint systems—those which exclude subordinate actors from decision-making—will not be perceived by those actors as legitimate. Scott's description of constraint systems is perfectly appropriate as a descriptor of the constraint systems of white supremacy, from slavery to Jim Crow to contemporary mass incarceration: "When a constraint system has a low level of perceived legitimacy, the component units cannot be relied upon to administer themselves but must be closely supervised by the dominant actor. A fairly elaborate set of controls will be needed, including a readiness to use violence if need be."[159] Scott notes that our interdependent world requires a symmetrical constraint system that is perceived as legitimate, but dominant actors can always be counted

[157] Scott, *The Dynamics of Interdependence*, 11.
[158] Scott, *The Dynamics of Interdependence,* 23–37.
[159] Scott, *The Dynamics of Interdependence,* 76. Scott's description of the operation of constraint systems will be familiar to readers of Michel Foucault. See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

upon instead to form asymmetrical constraint systems to maximize their power. From Manifest Destiny to free-market capitalism, Scott argues, dominant actors always construct ideologies that serve their interests and justify their appropriation of resources.[160]

Human flourishing in the context of increasing global interdependence necessitates a broadened understanding of both "self-interest" and "national interest" (King arrived at the same conclusion; see chapter six). However, such a shift is not necessarily forthcoming: "A natural harmony of interests will not emerge out of interdependence and advanced technology."[161] What is needed, then, is a sense of obligation for "the collective good." Scott writes, "Living with interdependence requires a sense of obligation to the community as a whole"; in order to develop that sense, "[w]e must begin to develop an ethic of responsibility."[162] Here Scott anticipates the need to develop an ethics of responsible interdependence, which is the cumulative hope of the present project. But what will such an ethics entail and require? Scott offers little guidance here. However, he provides a succinct summary of the problem with the attempt (whether made by political scientists, philosophers or social ethicists) to claim interdependence as a positive ethical value: "Conditions of interdependence make essential a sense of community but do not automatically engender that sense."[163]

Interdependence in Post-World War II Central America: Krenn's Case Study

Historian Michael Krenn observes that after the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, Western leaders have adopted the rhetoric that our world is "a 'global village,' in which goods, people, and ideas intermingle with little regard for national borders and identities. Interdependence is the new

[160] Scott, *The Dynamics of Interdependence,* 82.
[161] Scott, *The Dynamics of Interdependence,* 135.
[162] Scott, *The Dynamics of Interdependence,* 179, 204.
[163] Scott, *The Dynamics of Interdependence,* 205.

buzzword used by the pundits to explain this development."[164] However, Krenn points out that this buzzword is not simply a post-Cold War phenomenon but was used in Washington in the wake of World War II as well. His book *The Chains of Interdependence: U.S. Policy Toward Latin America, 1945-1954* examines how U.S. government officials sought to put the idea of interdependence into practice to impose a new world order on Central America.

As the U.S. assumed the mantle of world leadership following the Second World War, U.S. officials proclaimed that a world of economic, political, and military interdependence would bring peace and prosperity to all. The U.S. would enjoy expanded access to raw materials to produce industrial goods, as well as postwar markets for consumption of those goods. Meanwhile, Central American countries would reap the benefits of economic development, self-sufficiency, and liberal democracy. In practice, however, this idealistic rhetoric would subside, as the U.S. found itself supporting dictators and sponsoring right-wing military coups in the name of "national security."[165]

This deterioration must be understood in the context of the Cold War, as U.S. officials unanimously viewed the Soviet state as expansionist and were concerned to head off potential efforts of Communist infiltration. U.S. officials were particularly concerned about Communist currents in Guatemala, Cuba, and Chile. However, the line between Communism and "economic nationalism" proved difficult to draw, as many Latin American countries sought industrialization as a means of achieving economic self-sufficiency and prosperity and wished to escape their dependent status as exporter of raw materials.[166] It is here that military and economic concerns overlapped, as the prospect of Central American industrialization was considered a threat to U.S.

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[164] Michael Krenn, *The Chains of Interdependence: U.S. Policy Toward Central America, 1945-54*, 1 edition (Armonk, NY: Routledge, 1996).
[165] Krenn, *The Chains of Interdependence,* 6–11.
[166] Krenn, *The Chains of Interdependence,* 47–64.

economic interests. The U.S. relied on the logic of comparative advantage to justify its strategic need for Latin American minerals (e.g. Bolivian tin and silver) and goods (Central American bananas, coffee and petroleum). The U.S. government was willing to use all available means to keep this steady supply of raw materials freely flowing. If this meant supporting right-wing dictators like Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua and Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, or ousting democratically elected leaders such as Guatemala's Jacobo Arbenz when his modest land reform threatened the interests of the United Fruit Company, so be it.[167]

U.S. officials' view of the Latin American geopolitical sphere was also colored by racism. U.S. officials in their internal communications referred to racial "breeds" internal to Latin America; opined that Costa Ricans were "not a logical people and have short memories"; chided Latin Americans for their "naughty" behavior; compared them to kindergartners attempting to study trigonometry; considered them savages "just out of the palm trees"; and chalked Latin American underdevelopment up to a legacy of Spanish colonial misrule combined with cultural laziness produced by a "hot and unhealthful climate."[168] U.S. officials relied on white supremacist assumptions to justify their paternalistic stance toward Latin Americans, who in their view were incapable of understanding complex economic or geopolitical matters, and were therefore ill-suited either for equal partnership or democracy.[169]

Motivated variously by altruism, economic and military self-interest, and racism, all of the justifications of interdependence offered by U.S. officials shared the common feature of insisting on "the need for U.S. guidance and leadership to fully achieve the benefits of

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[167] Krenn, *The Chains of Interdependence,* 22–24; Stephen Schlesinger et al., *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala,* revised and expanded, 2 edition (Cambridge, MA: David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2005).
[168] Krenn, *The Chains of Interdependence*, 44, 55, 103, 154–55.
[169] Krenn, *The Chains of Interdependence,* 163.

interdependence."[170] The rhetoric of international cooperation and ideals of liberal democracy were employed insofar as they were useful. When they were not, the U.S. was willing to use any means necessary to secure a "stable, pro-U.S. Latin America"[171] that would advance U.S. material interests. Echoing John Paul II's logic regarding gender complementarity, Krenn notes that economic interdependence between the United States and Latin America required that "the 'proper' roles be played by both parties."[172]

"Globalization" as Hegemonic Co-optation

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves," says the Matthean Jesus. "You will know them by their fruits" (7:15-16). What are the fruits of interdependence as neoliberal globalization? Proponents have at the ready an array of statistics purporting to prove the superiority of their ideology. Martin Wolf has cited a host of enormous gains since 1900: a quadrupling of world population along with a quadrupling of world real incomes; 30-year gains in life expectancy in the United States and, even in the poorest countries, a male life expectancy of 62, higher than that of high-income countries in 1900. Pointing to eighteenfold growth in world exports from 1950 to 1988, Wolf concludes, "the dynamic growth in trade has been the engine of the longest and strongest period of sustained economic growth in human history."[173]

However, it is by no means clear that these gains are attributable to neoliberal policies. Harvey notes that in the 1980s and 1990s, precisely as neoliberalization swept the globe, global growth rates *declined* to 1.1%. In his estimation, "the reduction and control of inflation is the

[170] Krenn, *The Chains of Interdependence,* 205.
[171] Krenn, *The Chains of Interdependence,* 92.
[172] Krenn, *The Chains of Interdependence,* 114.
[173] Rebecca Todd Peters, *In Search of the Good Life: The Ethics of Globalization* (New York: Continuum), 56–57.

only systematic success neoliberalization can claim."[174] Although free-market fundamentalism has raised marvelous skylines in London and Tokyo, Harvey concludes that the main achievement of neoliberalism has been wealth *redistribution,* rather than creation.[175] Economist Thomas Piketty shows that from 1977-2007 in the United States, the richest 10% appropriated ¾ of the total growth, with the richest 1% absorbing 60% of the increase in national income. Meanwhile, the bottom 90% experienced an annual growth rate of only 0.5% per year in wages during this period. The U.S. minimum wage peaked in 1969 at $1.60/hr (equivalent to $10.10 in 2013 dollars), and at the beginning of 2013 the minimum was at $7.25, a third below its level in Europe (it remains at that level in 2020).[176] Cedric Johnson notes that between 1983 and 1989, during the heyday of "trickle-down" Reagonomics, the top 1 percent of American households enjoyed a 66% increase in their net worth. Meanwhile, the net worth of four out of five households *decreased* during that period.[177]

Piketty believes that current U.S. levels of income inequality—the highest in the history of the world—are unsustainable and will produce escalating crises and possibly revolution.[178] In writing his survey of neoliberalism, Harvey warned that the "saner voices within the capitalist class" were worried that "there is a high probability of a serious financial crisis in the next five years."[179] Harvey's prophetic analysis was published in 2005, three years before the collapse of U.S. stock markets sent the global economy into a tailspin.

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[174] Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism,* 156.
[175] Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 159.
[176] Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, 309.
[177] Cedric C. Johnson, *Race, Religion, and Resilience in the Neoliberal Age* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 37.
[178] Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, 25–26, 265, 297.
[179] Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 153.

Perhaps the time has arrived to ask whether neoliberal capitalism is dead, and one Nobel laureate economist has recently concluded just this.[180] A movement that stormed the world triumphantly proclaiming its own inevitability has left a wake of disastrous economic crashes, spiraling wealth inequality, widespread unemployment and ecological destruction. The most recent and perhaps most disastrous fallout of neoliberalism is a global wave of right-wing ethno-nationalist authoritarianism, which fueled the "Brexit" movement and the rise of Boris Johnson in the U.K., the election of the far-right autocrat Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, and the installation of Donald Trump as the forty-fifth President of the United States.

The body of literature on interdependence from the fields of political science and economics—two fields that, on this question at least, seem to have fused since 1945—contributes a further dimension of ambiguity to our grotesque symbol. Can the awareness of interdependence, of the global economy, of people of different genders and races, of all humanity, of all living things, of the planetary ecosystem, of the expanse of the cosmos, produce a sense of responsibility for one another? Or is the awareness of interdependence instead simply a cutting-edge superconductor for the exploitation of asymmetrical connections, the extension of hegemonic power, and the cementing of historic imbalances and systems of domination? Both are live possibilities.

Hegemony: Connecting Three Forms of Co-optation

> The formation of [the Italian ruling] class involved the gradual but continuous absorption, achieved by methods which varied in their effectiveness, of the active elements produced by allied groups—and even of those which came from antagonistic groups and seemed irreconcilably hostile.
>
> -Antonio Gramsci[181]

[180] Martin, "Nobel Prize-Winning Economist Stiglitz Tells Us Why 'Neoliberalism Is Dead.'"
[181] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers Co, 1971), 58–59.

A prison cell is an excellent place to develop a critique of power, as the Apostle Paul, King and Malcolm X can attest. Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci spent part of his imprisonment developing the concept of "hegemony." Gramsci challenges vulgar materialist permutations of Marxism, which focused solely on economic and military power but ignored the way states wield ideology to influence public opinion. Hegemony is the application of "educative pressure" through the channels of civil society, to influence "individuals so as to obtain their consent and their collaboration, turning necessity and coercion into 'freedom.'"[182] Gramsci realized (long before Keohane and Nye) that the most effective dominative power operates not through brute force, but through persuasion (backed by the threat of force). As the epitaph above suggests, hegemonic power operates via assimilation of allied and even threatening discourses. This chapter has revealed three historical instances in which hegemonic power co-opted the dangerous value of interdependence in order to disarm subversive discourses.

Building on Gramsci, Emilie Townes argues that hegemonic power operates by seizing our imaginative capacity and cultivating the faculty of forgetting. She observes "a studied, malicious amnesia that is calculating and precise in obscuring the decimation of large parts of humanity and nature and the unctuous images that are its lethal tools."[183] It was a carefully studied amnesia that produced the popular memory of King and the black freedom struggle, which is now memorialized in national monuments (and, it appears, elementary school lessons) as a step toward the perfection of the American liberal democratic project. The radical demands of the oppositional movement are forgotten; the shifting permutations of dominative power are mystified; and the resultant ongoing human misery is obscured. Townes insists that developing

[182] Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks,* 242.
[183] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 22.

counterhegemony requires cultivating "countermemory,"[184] by telling the stories and attending to the words of persons whom hegemonic power would have us forget.

Attending to the operation of hegemony and its co-optation of a dangerous value has been the focus of this three-part chapter. Across the intersections of race, gender, and capitalism, hegemonic power has learned to disarm subversive discourses by speaking the sentimental language of invitation, inclusion and interdependence while preserving material supremacy. Hegemonic power celebrates a certain King and allows for racial "diversity" and "reconciliation," proclaims women a "*great treasure*" and "strawberries on the cake," and affirms the globalizing world as a "global village" and "Spaceship Earth." White power responded to the threat of the black freedom struggle with a combination of hegemony and force, incorporating those discourses it could effectively disarm (King) and eliminating those it could not (the Panthers). The Roman Catholic magisterium appropriated feminist critiques of dualism and values of embodiment and interdependence, while mystifying feminist demands for equal sharing in power and silencing Catholic feminist theologians who would not be assimilated.[185] Capitalist nation-states squashed insurrections at home and abroad by learning to wield "soft power" (Keohane and Nye), to wage "low-level conflicts" (Crescenzi) and to manipulate complex "assymetrical constraint systems" (Scott). In each case, hegemonic power recognized the interdependence of the social network not as an "inescapable network of mutuality" but as a sprawling web of *control.*

[184] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil,* 21.
[185] See, for example, the Vatican's censure of Catholic moral theologian Margaret Farley for her book *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Ethics.* Laurie Goodstein and Rachel Donadio, "Vatican Scolds Nun for Book on Sexuality," *The New York Times,* accessed July 16, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/05/us/sister-margaret-farley-denounced-by-vatican.html.

Very well; but what will be the "countermemory"? Townes writes, "to understand evil as a cultural production is to recognize, from the outset, that the story *can* be told in another way."[186] The first two chapters deconstructed interdependence discursively; this chapter does so on a material-discursive level. The first chapters left the ethical ideal of interdependence lying in ruins; this chapter reveals interdependence resurrected as the sturdy foundation of the contemporary white male neoliberal hegemon. How might the story of interdependence be told differently? The following chapters will begin this task.

Conclusion: "Grown-Up Ethics" and Responsibility

> For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.
>
> - 1 Corinthians 13:9-12

> Evil does not hide from us nor does it come in pristine forms. Like goodness, it is messy and rather confusing. Writers often appreciate this more than ethicists I think.
>
> - Emilie Townes[187]

This chapter began with a reflection about childhood and growing up. The toughest lesson of growing up, I suggested, is learning to deal with complexity, contradiction, finitude, imperfection, tragedy. To become a grown-up is to recognize that "we know only in part," and to relinquish dreams of perfect knowledge or pure goodness. This dissertation may be considered an ethical exercise in growing up. It is a sober analysis of a troubling ethical value, one which is ambiguous, flawed, susceptible to misappropriation, partaking of subtle violences, deep and hidden cuts. "Interdependence is an ambivalent process and has many sides to it," admits

[186] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil,* 7.
[187] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil,* 9.

theologian Anselm Min.[188] And yet, as Derrida shows, this is the case with all ethical values. Ethics is impossible. Similarly, growing up means realizing that nothing and no one in life is simply "good" or "bad." Living in the complexities, navigating the tensions of grown-up life demands instead careful attention to the unintended consequences of our best-laid plans, the inevitable limitations of our purest intentions. Interdependence is, as we have seen, not perfect, even profoundly dangerous. But to therefore relegate it to the trash heap of social ethics would be irresponsible because it would deprive ethics of a precious resource. In a way, then, this project, that asks whether interdependence can be responsibly recovered, is also an invitation for ethics itself to grow up.

Being a grown-up—once more to invoke womanist ethics ("You trying to be grown"[189])—has many context-dependent meanings. For me, being a grown-up quite simply means caring about other people and not only about yourself. That is, to be a grown-up is to be *responsible*.[190] This dissertation is therefore beginning to approach its primary question: "what does it mean for interdependence to be *responsible?*"

[188] Min, *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World,* 112.
[189] Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, x.
[190] Walker's sprawling definition continues by describing womanist as "Responsible. In Charge. *Serious.*"

IV. SPOOKINESS, SEA SPONGES, STARDUST, AND THE SACRED: ONTOLOGICAL INTERDEPENDENCE AT THE QUANTUM, BIOLOGICAL, AND COSMIC LEVELS

> The general character of physical reality seems to correspond to a web-like character of interconnected integrity.
>
> If electrons are counterintuitively entangled with each other, we may need to contemplate the possibility that persons participate in some greater solidarity than atomized Western society is able to recognize. Such an insight is surely consonant with the Christian understanding of the community of the faithful as the Body of Christ, constituting a web of relationality vastly more comprehensive than the one-to-one exchange of I and Thou.
>
> - John Polkinghorne[1]

Until now this study of interdependence has been confined to the discursive level. The first and second chapters conduct a discourse analysis, deconstructing "interdependence" via etymology and examining related words with which it is often conflated. The third chapter moves to the rhetorical level, examining how "interdependence" has been marshalled by hegemonic forces to cement existing power differentials along lines of race (integration), gender (complementarity), and class (globalization). The present chapter moves to the ontological level, taking up the following two questions: 1) How do contemporary scientific paradigms of interdependence upend our understanding of what it means to *be* in the world? And 2) What, if any, are the theological and ethical implications of ontological interdependence?

The twentieth century witnessed the eclipse of a Newtonian-Baconian model that posited a mechanistic universe of atomized entities, whose interactions were purportedly governed by universal and intelligible laws. Instead, in the last century, scientists were forced to reckon with uncertainty and indeterminacy, relativity and entanglement, bafflement and contradiction. This paradigm shift occurred at all levels of scientific observation, encompassing the quantum,

[1] John Polkinghorne, *Science and the Trinity: The Christian Encounter with Reality* (New Haven: CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 74, 75.

biological and cosmic spheres. Quantum physicists such as Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg observed that at the subatomic level, classical assumptions (such as particle/wave duality) break down; that even the most sophisticated scientific measurement techniques cannot resolve a certain measure of uncertainty (or, as Bohr would have it, indeterminacy); and that electrons once entangled with one another remain in a "spooky" relationship of mutual influence, even when separated by vast distances. At the biological level, ecologists became aware of the interdependence of life forms with their environing ecosystems and of the destructive role of human interventions upon these fragile ecosystems. And at the cosmic level, Albert Einstein discovered that space, time and matter are not separate entities but are interdependent and relative the one to another; and the contemporary scientific picture of the cosmos suggests that planets like ours and the carbon-based life forms that inhabit them were formed out of stardust from explosions which occurred billions of years ago. Across all levels, contemporary science sees a universe more fundamentally relational than previously imagined.

Words of Caution

Three caveats are in order from the outset. First, this chapter will not attempt a comprehensive overview of the history or contemporary state of scientific paradigms of quantum mechanics, biology or astrophysics/cosmology. Such an undertaking would be impossible within the scope of this chapter, requiring several books to accomplish, and would be written by a scientist. Besides, many excellent books intended for non-specialists are already available.[2] This chapter is

[2] See, for example, Bruce Rosenblum and Fred Kuttner, *Quantum Enigma: Physics Encounters Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Louisa Gilder, *The Age of Entanglement: When Quantum Physics Was Reborn* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009); Jim Baggott, *The Quantum Story: A History in 40 Moments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Brian Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos: Space, Time, and the Texture of Reality* (New York: Vintage, 2005); Greene, *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the*

informed by those accounts, but its main focus is how philosophers, ethicists and theologians have interpreted these new paradigms to draw normative conclusions.[3] That is, if scientists are making "first-order" claims regarding observed patterns of natural phenomena, and if philosophers/theologians/ethicists are making "second-order" claims about the ultimate meaning and ethical implications of those patterns, then this chapter attempts a "third-order" appraisal of those normative claims, especially as relate to "interdependence."[4] Thus, in a sense, this chapter still does not depart from the "discursive level" to inhabit a separate "ontological" realm.

The second caveat follows from that conclusion. "Ontology" is weighted with a great deal of philosophical and theological baggage. In theology, for instance, it carries associations with Anselm's and Aquinas' "ontological" proofs for the existence of God. In philosophy, it evokes the existential phenomenology of Martin Heidegger. My own doctoral advisor penned a book critiquing "ontological blackness" in the work of liberation theologian James Cone.[5] So I use the term with due caution. Critiques of ontology, such as those offered by Anderson and Emmanuel Levinas, challenge the assumption that objects have static "essences," which may be grasped in their being and assimilated into a totalizing system of knowledge.[6] But contemporary science rejects such notions of bounded objects and separable substances. At the quantum level, particles remain "entangled" even when separated across vast differences. As the Columbia

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Ultimate Theory (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000); Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Bantam Books, 1998).

[3] In fact, the present chapter does not even attempt to summarize that vast body of literature. A survey of "eco-theology" and "new cosmology" would be a significant undertaking in its own right. This chapter is more narrowly focused on the literature that draws normative conclusions from quantum, biological and planetary interdependence. This theme emerges most strongly in the work of theologians who engage both science and feminism, such as Karen Barad, Catherine Keller, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Sallie McFague, and Barbara Holmes. Thus the chapter devotes particular attention to their work.

[4] Theologian George Lindbeck differentiates the "first-order" claims of Christian faith (e.g. "Jesus is Lord") from the "second-order" claims made by theologians, which interpret first-order claims. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*, 67 ff.

[5] Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness*.

[6] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*.

physicist Brian Greene writes, "Space, even a huge amount of space, does not weaken their quantum mechanical interdependence."[7] In agreement with process and feminist thought, quantum physics adheres to a "relational ontology"[8] collapsing rigid distinctions between nature and observation, "wave" and "particle," being and knowing, and between self and other. Physicist and philosopher Karen Barad considers herself to be doing "ethico-onto-epistem-ology."[9] Thus, contemporary science obscures the division between "ontological" and "discursive" levels of analysis with which I began this chapter. The "ontological" question of what it means to "be" in the world, according to the contemporary picture, is not separable from discourse, from observation, or from relation.

A final caveat concerns the structure of the chapter and is related to the preceding two. Artificial though conceptual distinctions (such as "ontological" vs. "discursive") may be, they are indispensable for coherent rational thought. This chapter is structured around three levels of being—the quantum, biological, and cosmic arenas—which in fact are interdependent and inseparable. This will become evident when selected literature is considered, since many of the authors in question engage all three of these arenas. The quantum world, the "everyday" biological sphere, and the cosmic picture are interdependent. Nevertheless, a chapter requires some kind of structure, and so this one moves progressively from the smallest things (we know of) to the biggest.

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[7] Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, 122.
[8] Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2007), 332; Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 224; Hogue, *American Immanence,* 128. It was in part the discoveries of quantum mechanics that led Whitehead to conclude that "no individual essence is realizable apart from some of its potentialities for relationship, that is, apart from its relational essence." Whitehead, *Process and Reality,* 115.
[9] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 90.

Quantum Physics and Entanglement

Introducing the Quantum World

> There is, in principle, a universal connectedness whose meaning we have yet to understand.
>
> -Bruce Rosenblum and Fred Kuttner,
> *Quantum Enigma: Physics Encounters Consciousness*[10]

The subatomic world seems a strange place to be looking for the foundations of social ethical principles. Quantum physics has been most stunningly successful not in *establishing* truths to help make sense of the world, but in *undercutting* our commonsense assumptions about reality. Consider the following ridiculous propositions: 1) An object can be in two places at once. 2) Two entities, separated by vast distances, can instantaneously affect one another without any physical force involved. 3) Physical reality is created by observation. All of these impossible and baffling assertions have been empirically demonstrated and are commonly accepted by contemporary physicists (see below).

Yet, quantum physics may indeed at least provide a helpful analogy if not a foundation for ethics. The analogy emerges *via negativa.* Quantum mechanics rejects the assumption of objects' essential *separateness.* Therefore, objects are *connected.* Quantum mechanics rejects the assumption that things have individual *autonomy.* Therefore, objects are *interdependent.* Quantum experiments evidence, "Any two objects that interact become entangled. After that, whatever happens to one instantaneously influences the other no matter how far apart they are."[11] While this is an empirical observation and not a normative claim, it shares obvious affinities with King's insight that "Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly."[12] Of course, quantum

[10] Rosenblum and Kuttner, *Quantum Enigma*, 189.
[11] Rosenblum and Kuttner, *Quantum Enigma,* 199–200.
[12] King, "Letter from Birmingham City Jail," 290.

mechanics cannot venture further with King to speak of "destiny," "mutuality," or "justice." But it can at least show that King's image is analogically continuous with the way the universe operates at the most fundamental level presently imaginable.

The "classical" model of physics, represented in the work of Isaac Newton, depicts Nature operating rationally according to a set of universal laws, intelligible and predictable as clockwork. Born in 1642, the year of Galileo's death, Newton built on the emerging paradigm of modern experimental science developed by his predecessors. Where Aristotelian science assumes that heavenly bodies move in "natural" circular orbits, Newton theorized that motion was governed by forces, and that if undisturbed by contravening forces (e.g. friction, gravity) objects would continue moving in straight lines indefinitely. Newton elaborated a universal law of motion according to which an object's force is the product of its mass and its acceleration. He also discovered the force of gravity. Newton's laws were apparently universal, applying equally well to the motion of everyday objects (e.g. apples falling from trees) and planetary orbits. Finding the available mathematical methods inadequate to his purposes, Newton simply invented calculus.[13]

Newton's mechanistic model established a paradigm across the sciences. Auguste Comte, inventor of the term "sociology," referred to the discipline as "'social physics,' in which people were 'social atoms' motivated by forces"; Adam Smith described the universal law of supply and demand; Marx attempted to "lay bare the economic law of motion." Newtonian physics posits a deterministic universe, an independent physical reality of separable objects whose interactions obey predictable laws.[14] The world as described by Newtonian physics made perfect sense. It was too good to be true.

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[13] Rosenblum and Kuttner, *Quantum Enigma*, 29–31; Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 233.
[14] Rosenblum and Kuttner, *Quantum Enigma,* 32–37.

Newton believed that light was a stream of tiny particles, but nineteenth-century experiments conducted by Thomas Young demonstrated light's wavelike properties. At the turn of the twentieth century, however, Max Planck discovered the constant *h* according to which the energy of light is transferred in chunks ("quanta," hence "quantum mechanics"); Einstein built on this research with photoelectric experiments demonstrating the existence of light-particles called "photons."[15] Initially, although Einstein was awarded the Nobel Prize for his research, the physics community disregarded his notion of the photon, which was inconsistent with the wavelike properties already observed. Eventually, however, physicists would be led to the baffling conclusion that whether light is a particle or a wave depends on how you choose to look at it (more on that momentarily).

Einstein complicated Newton's laws of motion by elaborating the "special" theory of relativity, which argues that matter is a form of energy and that, while the speed of light is constant, time is relative to the motion of the observer. If one is moving very fast, time will pass more slowly than if one is at rest. Einstein's "general" theory applies relativity to the law of gravity, showing that space, time and matter are mutually constituted, "interconnected in a kind of integrated package," and that they influence or "curve" one another's paths.[16] Newton's laws of motion and gravity work very well in "normal" situations. But when things are moving very fast, "F=ma" will not yield accurate results.[17]

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[15] John Polkinghorne, *Quantum Physics and Theology: An Unexpected Kinship* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 16; Rosenblum and Kuttner, *Quantum Enigma*, 40–42, 58–65.
[16] Polkinghorne, *Science and the Trinity*, 72–73; Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 181.
[17] Brian Greene describes relativity in an astonishingly simple but mind-boggling way by analogy to motion through space. Imagine you are traveling due north at 65 mph, but then merge onto a highway heading northeast. Your northward motion is now less than 65 mph, because some of your motion is diverted toward the eastern direction. Relativity is just the same: Imagine a parked car which (from your point of view) is entirely stationary. It is moving forward only through time. If it should peel off and speed away, however, some of its motion through time will be diverted as it moves through space. Therefore it moves more slowly through time. This is why, for objects moving very fast, time passes more slowly than for objects which are comparatively at rest or moving at lower speeds. Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, 48.

Nor do classical mechanics work well when things are very small. Erwin Schrödinger developed a complex equation that accurately describes motion at the atomic level; on a larger scale, it functionally becomes Newton's law. But the problem goes deeper than precise calculation. Twentieth-century experiments began to produce spooky results. In a "box-pair" experiment, an atom is sent along a path leading to one of two boxes, and it will be trapped inside one of them upon arrival. If we then "look" directly inside the boxes, we will inevitably find the atom in one box and the other box empty. *If,* however, we conduct an "interference experiment" and open a slit in each box exposing a detection screen, we will see an interference pattern, proving that the atom (or elements of the atom) was(were) in *both* boxes. The conclusions of the experiment are astonishing: the atom had no definite position before it was observed. The act of observing the atom established its position. The so-called "Copenhagen interpretation" developed principally by Niels Bohr, which remains the standard view, holds that observation *produces* reality.[18]

The most well-known quantum mechanical formula is Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, which states that the more we know about the position of an object, the less certain we can be about its momentum, and vice versa.[19] The reason for this, according to Heisenberg, is that our methods of determining an object's position (e.g. "shining a light" by directing photons at the object) disturb its momentum, and vice versa. For Heisenberg's teacher Bohr, however, uncertainty is no mere "epistemic" principle but the result of an "ontological indeterminacy" prior to observation: The object did not *have* a definite position or speed prior to being measured.[20] More recently, physicists have experimentally verified Bohr's position, showing that

[18] Rosenblum and Kuttner, *Quantum Enigma*, 78, 83–84, 90–98, 126.
[19] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 7; Rosenblum and Kuttner, *Quantum Enigma*, 130.
[20] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 175.

uncertainty persists even if we ensure no disturbance of momentum when measuring position.[21] For Bohr, position and momentum are "complementary" aspects of microscopic objects; likewise for "particle" and "wave," which are ultimately "abstractions" convenient for conceptualizing quantum phenomena. "Complementary," for Bohr, means "mutually exclusive."[22]

[A momentary pause from the narrative: Recall that the third chapter named the hegemonic co-optation of gender interdependence as "complementarity," and of racial interdependence as "integration." Now, in a separate context, these words appear again: "quantum complementarity" names two mutually exclusive aspects of particle behavior (just as "gender complementarity" means mutually exclusive gender identities for John Paul II); and Einstein's general relativity reveals that space-time-matter is an "integrated package," because motion through space and motion through time are likewise "complementary."[23] I thus begin to track a strange synchronicity in discussions of interdependence across disciplines.]

Quantum mechanics eschews the deterministic laws of classical physics, asserting no more than the *probability* that an object will be observed at a particular place and time.[24] Although Einstein's own research also challenged many assumptions of classical physics, he could never fully accept the framework of quantum mechanics. Einstein insisted that the uncertainty and randomness of quantum experiments simply revealed that quantum theory was incomplete. He would never relinquish his belief in deterministic laws: "God does not play dice," Einstein famously remarked.[25] Further, the implications of quantum theory seem to contradict his theory of special relativity. Quantum theory suggests that any objects that interact become

[21] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway,* 307–8.
[22] Rosenblum and Kuttner, *Quantum Enigma*, 134; Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 296.
[23] Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, 49.
[24] Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, 11.
[25] Rosenblum and Kuttner, *Quantum Enigma*, 85.

"entangled," such that anything that happens to one *instantaneously* influences the other, regardless of how far the objects are separated. This proposition, if true, would violate Einstein's law that nothing can travel faster than light. Further, it would violate the classical law of locality that objects can only affect other objects in direct proximity.[26] However, experiments have now demonstrated instantaneous influences, at a distance of over five hundred miles.[27] Even today, physicists are still searching for a "unified theory" to synthesize relativity and quantum mechanics.[28]

Today fully a third of our economy depends on technologies derived from quantum theory, which is responsible for the development of transistors, lasers, MRI scanning, and promising new technologies including quantum computing. While the implications of the theory are baffling, it is remarkably accurate: not one of its predictions has ever been disproven.[29] Einstein was wrong about entanglement, which he derided as "spooky action at a distance." But in another way, he was "the theory's most prescient critic," because he early perceived its radical implications for how we understand our being in the world.[30]

Quantum mechanics, Einstein recognized, poses a fundamental challenge for our understanding of "reality." For Rosenblum and Kuttner, "reality" ordinarily connotes "the existence of physically real properties *not* created by their observation. Quantum theory does not include such reality."[31] This definition is akin to that offered by pragmatist philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, who defined "*real*" as "being as it is regardless of what you or I may think about

[26] Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, 80.
[27] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 149; Rosenblum and Kuttner, *Quantum Enigma*, 199–200, 188.
[28] Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, 16. Greene and other "string theorists" argue that string theory is a prime candidate for a unified theory.
[29] Rosenblum and Kuttner, *Quantum Engima,* 115–23, xi.
[30] Rosenblum and Kuttner, *Quantum Engima,* 3, 10.
[31] Rosenblum and Kuttner, *Quantum Enigma,* 187.

it."[32] Quantum theory appears to deny the observer-independent existence of objects. What, then, are the implications of its entangled theory of reality for social ethics?

Karen Barad and the "Delicate Tissue of Ethicality"

Karen Barad is a feminist philosopher who holds a doctorate in theoretical particle physics. Barad views the quantum problem as simply the latest iteration of the ancient debate between realism and idealism. Bohr, Einstein and others were grappling with the same question that perplexed Plato, Descartes, Kant, Hegel and so many others: Does the material world objectively exist, or is "reality" merely a projection of subjectivity? Barad draws on Bohr's philosophical-scientific writings, as well as the work of Judith Butler and others, to advance a performative account, which she calls "agential realism."[33] The phenomena we experience are neither representations of a preexisting set of bounded substances or "noumena" nor are they fabrications of the mind. Instead, the phenomenal world emerges through material-discursive practices: that is, "reality" requires agents engaged in practices of knowing. The "spooky" discoveries of quantum mechanics, showing that at the subatomic level "reality" is inseparable from observation, demonstrate that "[m]atter and meaning are not separate elements."[34] Barad is careful to distinguish her account from those of Bohr and Butler, both of whom espouse a humanism she finds problematic. Bohr arbitrarily confined his speculations to the laboratory, placing the human experimental observer in a privileged role with respect to the phenomena observed, and Butler seems to regard matter as a "passive product of discursive practices,"

[32] Charles S. Peirce, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), 265.
[33] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 32.
[34] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway,* 3.

emerging wholly as a product of the performance of social scripts.[35] Barad instead espouses a "post-humanism" according to which nonhuman and even nonliving beings participate in agential performance of knowing: "The universe is agential intra-activity in its becoming." Here Barad is in agreement with process thought, which holds that all entities (including non-living beings) partake in gradations of "experience," with consciousness emerging as the pinnacle or "crown" of experience.[36]

In illustrating her difference with Bohr, Barad points to his argument that in analyzing the results of an experiment we must account for the measuring apparatus used in the experiment, which cannot be considered neutral or external but affects the results. Barad pushes Bohr's assertion, asking where the boundary of the apparatus ends: What if the apparatus is wirelessly connected to a computer, measuring the results? Is the computer then part of the apparatus? What about the printer connected to the computer? The paper fed into the printer? The person who reads the marks on the paper? The scientists who design and run the experiment, or those who judge its results? Barad's pattern of questions is analogous to Thich Nhat Hanh's suggestion that this piece of paper contains the entire universe in it. From that observation, as I have shown, Thich Nhat Hanh develops his notion of "interbeing," which for him involves an ethical imperative.

Barad makes essentially the same move, invoking "the ethical call that is embodied in the very worlding of the world."[37] Because matter and meaning are intertwined, and because we humans are entangled and co-constituted with all of the other beings in the universe, we are called to be responsible for all that is.[38] Building on Emmanuel Levinas' notion of responsibility

[35] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 151.
[36] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 141; Whitehead, *Process and Reality,* 56, 267.
[37] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 160.
[38] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 178–79, 182.

as proximity to the Other, Barad argues, "Matter itself is always already open to, or rather entangled with, the 'Other.'"[39] In the deep interconnections pervading the universe, Barad discerns a "delicate tissue of ethicality" that "runs through the marrow of being."[40]

Barad's account runs up against a problem that by now is becoming familiar, for it appears in many accounts that valorize interdependence (what she names "entanglement"). Barad asserts but does not show that connectedness entails responsibility. Early in the preface, she conflates the two, writing that the book is "about our connections and responsibilities to one another—that is, entanglements."[41] From the empirical fact of entanglement, connection, interdependence, Barad infers that "[e]thicality is part of the fabric of the world."[42] However, it is now clear that there is nothing inherently ethical about connection. Masters and slaves were interdependent; men and women are interdependent in the Roman Catholic hierarchical economy of gender; our globalizing world is an interdependent web. Barad admits that it is facile to look to nature as an ethical guide. This move both wrongly presumes that humans are not part of nature and ignores the heinous acts that have been supposedly modeled on nature throughout history. Barad points to the Wright brothers' invention of the airplane modeled on bird wings, noting that airplanes were dropping bombs eleven years after they first took flight. She also notes that military camouflage is inspired by the ingenuity of the natural world.[43] Barad cites these facts as minor cautionary note, but I find them to be potentially devastating to her ethical argument.

[39] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 392–93.
[40] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 396.
[41] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, xi.
[42] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 182.
[43] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 368.

Barad's argument is lured toward a process theology for completion. We cannot empirically study the universe and discern in it a "delicate tissue of ethicality" that she eloquently evokes. The tissue is so delicate because ethicality is not experimentally detectable. Barad flirts with theological language in speaking of a "call" implicit in the universe; at these and other moments, she sounds positively like a process theologian. However, talk of an ethical call, of the marrow of being, of fundamental responsibility, points toward theological questions.[44] It points even beyond so precarious a word as "ontology." That is, such talk points beyond being.[45]

Catherine Keller and Mindfulness of Relation

Fittingly, feminist process theologian Catherine Keller draws heavily on Barad in constructing an argument at the intersection of relational ontology, apophatic theology, deconstruction and process thought.[46] Where Barad sticks to the language of entanglement and connection, Keller's account is explicitly based on planetary interdependence. Keller pithily synthesizes what the present argument is spending chapters endeavoring to show: "Whether primarily ecological, liberationist, or decolonial, feminist or womanist, these relationalisms of the latter half of the twentieth century share the sense and ethic of an inescapable interdependence."[47] Keller invokes

[44] Here, as in the discussion of responsibility ethics in chapter seven, by "theological" I am not referring to "traditional" systematic theological questions organized around loci such as God, creation, sin, and the like. Nor am I arguing that such questions must presume the existence of a supernatural being or entail a commitment to a religious tradition. Instead, I have in mind Tillich's definition of the object of theology as "that which concerns us ultimately." Where Barad speaks of "the marrow of being," Tillich referred to God as "the ground of being" (235). Talk of a fundamental responsibility for others appears to presuppose an ultimate purpose.
[45] See the opening epigraph to the seventh chapter, from Levinas: "Responsibility goes beyond being" (*Otherwise than Being,* 15).
[46] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 6.
[47] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 32.

King's notion of the "inescapable network of mutuality," which she claims as the most important articulation of her relational ontology.[48]

Keller fuses insights from quantum mechanics with the apophatic theology of Nicholas of Cusa. Like negative theology, quantum physics squarely faces the partiality of our limited perspective. The comforting theological doctrines enumerating the attributes of the divine nature, and the classical Newtonian paradigm purporting to pinpoint the universal laws of physics, collapse in the face of the unspeakable void at the horizon of human understanding. But the recognition of the depth of human ignorance also enables the emergence of a profound respect for difference and consciousness of interhuman and planetary interdependence. Where Cusa posited a "radically interrelated universe," quantum physics provides evidence of a cosmos "apophatically entangled."[49] At the quantum level, crucially, is found "*indeterminacy enfolded in interdependence: nonknowability and nonseparability conspire."*[50] Quantum mechanics both delineates the limits of our knowledge of the subatomic world and shows that every atom in the cosmos is intricately entangled. The encounter with difference, with what is Other and beyond the reach of our understanding, is at once the end of the individual self and the beginning of an infinite relationality. Further, a humble respect in the face of the Other can enable an opening for political solidarity based on undeniable interdependence.

Unlike Barad, Keller squarely faces "the problem of all relational thought: it is not that relation itself is good or responsible."[51] Economic globalization has produced a world in which Bell Telephone adopts the slogan "We're all connected." Keller is keenly aware that connection all too often becomes a convenient tool to tighten the knots of oppression. She is insistent that

[48] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 35.
[49] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 89, 132.
[50] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 148.
[51] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible,* 255.

idealizing relationality is a mistake. Relationality may be harnessed to bolster oppressive structures, and "interdependence sliced into the gross asymmetries of independence and dependence."[52] Keller attempts to resolve the problem by arguing that, while relation itself is not good, *mindfulness* of relation is what makes the crucial difference. Economic globalization is "corporate *mindlessness* of entanglement," in which a global economy is carelessly intertwined in networks that ensnare rather than enfold.[53]

Keller's ethical distinction between mindful/mindless interdependence is difficult to sustain when, as Krenn shows, U.S. economists and government officials were explicitly invoking "interdependence" as a tool for cementing U.S. hegemony after 1945. These officials were clearly "mindful" of interdependence—it was *the* tool which, they claimed, would usher in an age of global capitalism promising international security and prosperity. Perhaps Keller has a different kind of "mindfulness" in mind. In any case, neither the bare empirical/ontological fact of interdependence, nor awareness of that fact, necessarily generates social responsibility.

Biological Interdependence and the "Gaia Hypothesis"

Introducing the Biological World: Kriti Sharma

Kriti Sharma came to graduate school to study algae and became fascinated with the ability of microorganisms to disaggregate and reaggregate in response to external circumstances. For instance, a sea sponge passed through a fine sieve will disintegrate into an array of individual cells, which will afterwards find one another and re-form into an(other?) operating sea sponge. Was the sea sponge, then, one organism or a community of separate cells? What was driving the scientific community, and herself, to assume that the sea sponge after the sieve was the *same* as

[52] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 4, 8.
[53] Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 254–55.

the sea sponge that entered the sieve? Sharma realized that her observations about microbial life were testing the limits of her basic assumptions about identity and being, and that the answers she sought were philosophical ones: "I began searching for and contemplating ways to think about the real world that do not assume its existence independent of perceptions. That's when things started to get *really* interesting."[54]

Interdependence: Biology and Beyond is Sharma's fittingly inter-disciplinary exploration of the constitution of objects and subjects in the world. She argues that the contemporary scientific community, and the modern world view generally, rely on a range of "dubious" assumptions about the "inherent" existence of objects. Sharma summarizes the conventional understanding of reality (which she calls "essentialism") in the same terms as Rosenblum-Kuttner and Peirce: "It is what it is, no matter what you, I, or anyone else sense, think, or say about it."[55] Sharma argues instead for a thoroughgoing empiricism, which she calls "contingentism," to explain how objects "arise" in the midst of a network of mutually constituting beings. On the contingentist view, things only attain stability—only become "really real"[56]—in the process of being intersubjectively experienced as stable by a community of observers.

Not only "lay" people but biologists reflect a worldview that assumes that "organisms are radically separate from an external world with which they interact."[57] We commonly assume that objects are inherently bounded and separated from an external world, that they are composed of component parts which are similarly bounded, that objects are substances with essences and properties, that the identity of objects is continuous across time and independent of human

[54] Kriti Sharma, *Interdependence: Biology and Beyond*, 1 edition (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 10.
[55] Sharma, *Interdependence,* 11.
[56] Sharma, *Interdependence,* 37.
[57] Sharma, *Interdependence,* 3, 55.

observation, that objects "interact" with the external world while remaining essentially distinct from it, and that these interactions are governed by natural laws operating via causal mechanisms. However, none of these assumptions is supported by scientific evidence. Indeed, each has been radically challenged by twentieth-century science. Notwithstanding this, Sharma contends, most people and even scientists continue to think, speak and act as if these assumptions were true.[58]

Sharma critically examines the notion of "signal transduction" to demonstrate her point. Signal transduction, a notion that gained scholarly currency in the 1980s, denotes the process of sensation whereby a signal—a form of energy (e.g. light, or the smell of baking bread)—is converted into information for the brain via a cascading chain of chemical processes. While the concept of signal transduction is useful, it stabilizes the sense that what is outside (the signal) and what is inside (the transducer) are essentially separate. To trouble the distinction, Sharma notes that certain fish use chlorophyll in order to see certain wavelengths of light: plants also use chlorophyll in order to transfer light into energy, but we do not say that plants "see" light.[59] The supposed difference is that while the fish are merely processing "information," plants "assimilate" light, metabolizing it into energy that they use for food. Sharma counters that sensing changes physiology as well: the smell of food produces gastric juices, just as ingesting food does; scary movies elevate the heart rate. Sharma argues that the notion of signal transduction is symptomatic of a larger paradigm, which indefensibly holds that objects have essences that subsist even as they change in form (whether via sensing or metabolism). Sharma

[58] Sharma, *Interdependence,* 21–22. Indeed Whitehead had already recognized this in *Process and Reality:* "The simple notion of an enduring substance sustaining persistent qualities, either essentially or accidentally, expresses a useful abstract for many purposes of life. But when we try to use it as a fundamental statement of the nature of things, it proves itself mistaken" (79). Whitehead noted that the Greeks based their philosophy of perception on the science available to them at the time, but that contemporary philosophers still use categories derived from the Greeks, even ones that have been refuted by modern science (117).
[59] Sharma, *Interdependence,* 54.

notes, however, that in reality, substances are constantly engaged in a process of mutual transformation. All things are constantly "arising anew," and "this 'arising anew' occurs *dependently*—that is, phenomena bring each other newly into being in each instant."[60]

Sharma marvels at the cognitive work it takes to construct a world of stable essences, "how much is required to create the sense that an organism is *one thing changing* instead of *many events arising.*"[61] And yet, this is precisely how human cognition works, observing regularities, making distinctions, what Sharma calls "practices of patterning."[62] These processes allow observers to make sense of the world, allow subjects to arise as subjects and objects as objects. And while it is tempting to seek an epistemological foundation for these patterns, to posit stable essences, natural laws, or metaphysical principles of causation, Sharma argues that it is precisely the *contingency* of phenomena that secures their stability. Existence is contingent—that is, dependent—on a network of mutually transforming substances, continually arising anew each moment, even as subjects and objects are contingent upon a community of observers who collectively bring the world into being. Ecosystems function via "*ecological interdependence*," molecules interact via "*regulatory interdependence,*" and parts and wholes relate as "*hierarchical interdependence*." Sharma proposes further that objects as such exist in "*ontological interdependence*," that all things at the biological level are mutually co-constituted.[63]

[60] Sharma, *Interdependence,* 69.
[61] Sharma, *Interdependence,* 71.
[62] Sharma, *Interdependence,* 98.
[63] Sharma, *Interdependence,* 102–3.

Rosemary Radford Ruether and the "Built-in Limits" of Interdependence

While Sharma contends that interdependence has ethical dimensions,[64] her book leaves moral questions unexplored. Rosemary Radford Ruether takes these up in her book *Gaia & God*, which builds off the "Gaia hypothesis" developed by planetary biologists James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis. Lovelock and Margulis invoked the name of Gaia, the ancient Greek earth goddess, to suggest that the planet may be considered as a complex organic system, even as a unified living being. The image of Gaia, Ruether argues, offers a vision of a "healed society" free of dominating relations between human beings. Such a society reflects "the interdependence of all life in the living system that is Gaia."[65]

Ruether argues that contemporary ecological devastation, militarism, patriarchal and capitalist oppression alike have their roots in classical narratives of creation, destruction, sin and evil. These include the Hebrew and Christian scriptures but also narratives from ancient Babylonian and Sumerian societies, Platonic dialogues and Christian theological texts. These foundational narratives underwrite the patriarchal and ruling-class hierarchies, which structure contemporary society and are lately threatening world destruction. While some elements of these narratives are valuable and worthy of recovering, such as the Hebrew prophetic and covenantal traditions, Ruether argues that they must be supplemented by new insights from ecology, quantum physics and cosmology if humanity is to survive and flourish. These disciplines all point to universal interrelatedness, which is "one of the most basic 'lessons' of ecology for ethics and spirituality."[66]

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[64] Sharma, *Interdependence,* 1.
[65] Rosemary R. Ruether, *Gaia and God*, 4–5, 31; Keller, *Cloud of the Impossible*, 272. Keller also speaks of "the interdependent life of Gaia" (276).
[66] Ruether, *Gaia and God*, 48.

Ruether points to a number of biological cycles of interdependency, including the water cycle and the nitrogen cycle, food chains and other natural cycles of production-consumption-decomposition. Biotic diversity creates a system of checks, which maintain the various species populations within reasonable limits. This "complex feedback system" is maintained between species "through their interdependency on each other." Ruether is not romantic about this system, however. She freely admits that it is sustained through predation. But she also insists that the "survival of the fittest" jungle logic, which holds that competition is the principle of life, is only part of the story. Plants provide most of the food in nature, and ecosystems are maintained through interdependent cycles of competition *and* cooperation. The key ethical takeaway from these cycles of biotic relationality is "mutual limits in interdependency." Human society has run amok because of a fundamental refusal to acknowledge and accept the built-in limits that sustain living ecosystems.[67] This arrogant refusal has produced rampant militarism, patriarchy, ecological devastation and crushing poverty. The ethic of pure competition produces mutual destruction, the "negative face" of interdependence. Echoing Thich Nhat Hanh, Ruether notes that the exorbitant consumption of the wealthy and the indigence of the world's poor majority are "not separate, but interdependent, realities."[68]

Ruether's focus on acceptance of *limits* as the key to distinguishing ethical from dominating forms of interdependence is helpful. Yet, its moral force obtains mostly as a negative injunction, for it is not clear that the "built-in limits" of natural cycles can fund Ruether's positive communal vision. On one hand, Ruether states, "all life forms exist through an interdependency of consuming and being consumed."[69] A few pages later, she argues for a

[67] Ruether, *Gaia and God*, 49–57, 141.
[68] Ruether, *Gaia and God*, 57, 89.
[69] Ruether, *Gaia and God,* 223.

covenantal vision in which "humans and other life forms are part of one family, sisters and brothers in one community of interdependence."[70] But do sisters and brothers *consume one another*? I identify this tension not so much as a critique of Ruether's work. Rather, Ruether's frank assessment of the "negative face" of interdependence points toward the fundamental ambiguity at the heart of this analysis. After all, this dissertation assesses the "limits" of interdependence. Do *limits* themselves found community? Do limits engender responsibility?

Where Ruether's text raises worries is her concluding synthesis of Gaia and God. Earlier in the text, she rejects any suggestion that females are "better at mutuality" than males.[71] Yet, she concludes by suggesting that, in Christian traditions, there are "two voices of divinity from nature." One is a divine lawgiver who speaks with a masculine authority (God). The other "speaks from the intimate heart of matter" (Gaia). While she has long been silenced, Gaia is now finding her own voice, which "does not translate into laws or intellectual knowledge, but beckons us into communion." Ruether insists that both voices, "of God and of Gaia, are our own voices."[72] While Ruether is clear in her rejection of gender dualism, it slips back into her conclusion, with a synthesis of the masculine rational lawgiver and the feminine nonrational nurturer. Her conclusion, that "masculine" and "feminine" qualities differently express the divine nature, shares important similarities with John Paul II's notion of gender complementarity, albeit with a crucial difference over whether the image re-enshrines or explodes hierarchy.

[70] Ruether, *Gaia and God*, 227.
[71] Ruether, *Gaia and God*, 143.
[72] Ruether, *Gaia and God*, 254.

Sallie McFague and the Limits of Metaphor

Where Ruether suggests an intervention into the *stories* we tell about the divine and the cosmos, Sallie McFague argues for a change in *metaphors.* Both agree that the way Christians think and talk about God has underwritten historic programs of violence and must be radically reimagined if humans are to survive. McFague insists, "all attempts to speak of reality are metaphorical."[73] In this assertion, she enjoys the company of many physicists, who point out that terms like "particle" and "wave" are merely convenient abstractions that help us make sense of what we experience.[74]

In the modern West, McFague argues, the central metaphor for the cosmos is the machine. Bacon and the other "fathers" of modern science conceived the universe as a mechanistic entity over which we humans can exert complete control. Under this model, nature and the body are devalued (and feminized) in favor of a mechanistic (masculinized) rationality. God becomes the great "fixer" of the cosmos. (Ruether points out that in Bacon's writings nature is feminized to the point that the scientist "penetrates" her.[75]) In place of the model of "mechanistic control," McFague shifts the metaphor for the cosmos to "organic interdependence." Under this model, God appears not as the Mind that controls the universe but as the Breath that is the source of its life—not control, but relation.[76]

Where Ruether conceives of earth as a living system called "Gaia," McFague expands the reaches of the metaphor by asking, "What if we dared to think of our planet and indeed the entire universe as the body of God?"[77] This model, affirming the interrelationality of all things, will

[73] McFague, *The Body of God,* 93.
[74] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 296.
[75] Ruether, *Gaia and God*, 195.
[76] McFague, *The Body of God*, 33.
[77] McFague, *The Body of God*, 19.

lead one to act ethically, such that if one views the universe as God's body, then one will treat it with care.

The notion that all of human and nonhuman creation is interdependent is no new idea. McFague points out that this truth has been known for centuries by indigenous communities, being a feature of ancient goddess traditions and even Christianity before the scientific revolution.[78] In the last century, organic interdependence has been scientifically affirmed by a "common creation story." The story of the universe moves from absolute unity (before the Big Bang) toward a dazzling diversity of bodies, which subsist in interrelation, because they share a common origin.[79]

Aware that environmentalists are often dismissed as sentimental and unpractical, McFague insists that her theology "does not emerge merely from a fondness for charming panda bears or baby seals. It is simply the truth about who we are according to the contemporary picture of reality. We are profoundly interrelated and interdependent with everything living and nonliving in the universe and especially on our planet."[80]

McFague's model helpfully suggests that imagining the universe as sacred and interdependent can inspire people to treat God's body with care. However, as the previous chapter showed in juxtaposing McFague's work with John Paul II, the recovery of embodiment alone does not necessarily challenge patriarchal or other oppressive structures. Roman Catholic magisterial theology co-opted the feminist value of embodiment to cement hegemonic gender

[78] McFague, *The Body of God*, 30–31. Testing the veracity of this claim is beyond the scope of this study. However, for example, an introductory world religions text book summarize the main points of Australian aboriginal beliefs in this way: "Because all things share a common ancestral life force that is sacred, everything is interconnected, the living to the non-living, the sentient to the non-sentient, within a sacred geography that provides visual evidence of ancestral presence." Lynne Hume, "Australian Aboriginal Religions," in *Introduction to World Religions,* third edition, ed. by Christopher Partridge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018), 145.
[79] McFague, *The Body of God*, 47.
[80] McFague, *The Body of God*, 109.

relations. John Paul II was equally skeptical of Baconian machine-talk and human pretensions towards control and mastery over the universe. This is not to say that the recovery of the body, the principle of "organic interdependence," or the critique of mechanistic logic are not valid and *necessary* projects. It is simply to say, they are not by themselves *sufficient* to advance an ecofeminist liberation agenda.

Another possible limitation of McFague's account stems from her insistence that all talk of reality is metaphorical. Paul Tillich argued instead that all language about God was "symbolic" (the only exception to this rule being the statement that "God is the ground of being"). For Tillich, symbols point beyond themselves, but also *participate* in the reality for which they stand.[81] Tillich's language of symbol is somewhat stronger than McFague's notion of metaphor, which conveys similarity but not necessarily participation. In her *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language*, McFague defines metaphor as "an assertion or judgment of similarity and difference between two thoughts in permanent tension with one another, which redescribes reality in an open-ended way but has structural as well as affective power."[82] However, it is not clear that metaphors so defined, that is, rational comparisons of similarity and difference, are sufficient to command the affective power McFague hopes to marshal (recall that Farley calls deep symbols "words of power"). As McFague's student (and my teacher) Laurel Schneider points out, the rational skepticism of metaphoric language needs to be balanced with the "experiential confession" of religious experience, or "revelation."[83] Affective power involves rational comparison, perhaps, but also requires visceral experience. It

[81] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 239.
[82] Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Fortress Press, 1982), 42.
[83] Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism*, 153.

is not enough, perhaps, to *imagine* the universe as God's body. What would it mean to *experience* the universe as sacred?

The "New Cosmology"

Introducing the Cosmic Picture

This chapter commenced with an acknowledgment that its structured divisions between "quantum," "biological" and "cosmic" spheres are misleading. To separate the universe into "small," "bigger" and "biggest" things, as this chapter does, belies the interdependence of all three supposed "levels" of being. After all, Aristotle and Newton and Einstein and Hawking gave considerable attention to the universe at all scales. Contemporary cosmology makes this point more evident with (yet another) baffling discovery about conditions just before the "Big Bang" sent the universe hurtling through billions of years and light-years of expansive history. Approximately 14 billion years ago, just before the Bang, the entire universe was compressed into a "nugget" measuring 10^{-26} centimeters across, far smaller than a single atom.[84] From such unimaginably miniscule beginnings cascaded forth hundreds of billions of galaxies, many of which in turn contain hundreds of billions of stars. How could one separate the quantum from the cosmic realms, when the "biggest thing"—the universe itself—was once tinier than an atom? And to think, Jesus thought the mustard seed was impressive.

The primordial quantum nugget is thought to have "inflated" nearly instantaneously to the size of a grapefruit, in an expansion faster than the speed of light. This does not conflict with relativity, however, because objects in space were not in fact moving faster than light: the fabric

[84] Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, 17, 313; Rosenblum and Kuttner, *Quantum Enigma*, 263. Greene reports that before the big bang, "all the mass and energy responsible for spawning the observable universe is contained in a speck that's less than a hundredth of a billionth of a billionth of the size of a single atom" (338).

of *space itself* was expanding. The Bang was incredibly hot: the temperature 10^{-43} seconds after the Bang is believed to have been around 10^{32} Kelvin. Since that initial faster-than-light fireball, space has continued to expand, and the universe has been cooling off. Just a second after the Bang quarks were already combining to form the first protons and neutrons, which a few minutes later would join up to form the nuclei of the simplest elements like hydrogen and helium. After a few minutes the universe was permeated by a near-uniformly distributed hot gas. These conditions lasted for a billion years, until gravity began to pull clumps together to form stars. From the nuclear furnaces within these stars were formed the more complex elements such as carbon and oxygen that would eventually enable the emergence of life. When these earlier-generation stars exploded in supernovas the heavier elements were released into space, where they would form later-generation stars and planets, including our own Earth which was formed four billion years ago. Life on earth is interdependent with the expansive cosmos not just because everything has a common origin, but because we are literally stardust.[85]

As with quantum physics, the more we learn about the cosmos, the stranger it becomes. The laws of physics stipulate that the observable matter within galaxies *should not* generate enough gravitational force to hold them together. As galaxies spin, based on what we see, some of the outlying stars should be flung out into space. There must therefore be some kind of "dark matter" holding galaxies together, which neither emits nor absorbs light. Physicists estimate that dark matter accounts for 25% of the content of the entire universe. No one knows what it is.

The astronomer Edwin Hubble observed in 1929 that the more distant a galaxy was from its neighbors, the faster it moved away from them. Therefore, the universe must be expanding, and at some point in the past everything must have been clumped together. The idea of a Big

[85] Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos* 173-74, 257; Rosenblum and Kuttner, *Quantum Enigma*, 262-66; Polkinghorne, *Science and the Trinity*, 68-70.

Bang grew out of this observation. But just as a stone thrown into the air must return to earth, astronomers reasoned, the force of gravity must eventually pull the universe back together into a "Big Crunch." Thus, in recent years astronomers set out to find the rate at which the universe's expansion was slowing. By observing supernovae, they found instead that expansion was *accelerating.* Physicists have been forced to conclude that the attractive force of gravity must be overpowered by a countervailing "dark energy" driving the galaxies apart. Dark energy is calculated to comprise 70% of the content of the universe. Again, no one knows what it is.[86]

For all the advancements in scientific knowledge, then, we presently find ourselves able to account for a mere 5% of the stuff that makes up our universe. Further, even the most powerful telescopes possible can glimpse only a fraction of what the universe is thought to contain. According to some contemporary cosmological models, if we scaled down the entire universe to the size of planet Earth, the part which is visible to us would be smaller than a grain of sand.[87] Like deconstruction, contemporary science exposes the limitations of human knowledge (although it does so in a different way).

Further, even the most advanced scientific theories cannot help us approach the fundamental existential-theological question posed by Martin Heidegger: "Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?"[88] Or, as Stephen Hawking puts it, "Why does the universe go to all the bother of existing?"[89] Science can indeed offer an explanation for the curious presence of galaxies. Greene resorts to the uncertainty principle, noting that the primordial "nugget" contained quantum irregularities, "quantum jitters," as he calls them. The Big Bang scaled up

[86] Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, 275, 295–99; Rosenblum and Kuttner, *Quantum Enigma*, 261–62.
[87] Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, 285.
[88] Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Professor Richard Polt, New edition edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 1.
[89] Rosenblum and Kuttner, *Quantum Enigma*, 265.

these irregularities, such that miniscule quantum wrinkles were magnified as cosmic "clumps" around which gravitational forces would in time gather the galaxies. As Greene puts it, "the more than 100 billion galaxies, sparkling throughout space like heavenly diamonds, are nothing but quantum mechanics writ large across the sky."[90] Quantum irregularities are woven into the fabric of a fundamentally interdependent cosmos. The smallest things and the biggest things are part of ourselves: We are quarks and stardust, formed from the clay of exploded stars that were once tucked away in a space smaller than an atom. Physics can offer explanations, like the above, that elucidate the efficient and material causes for what we see. But final causes remain elusive. Scientists cannot tell us the "meaning" or "purpose" of quantum-bio-cosmic interdependence—and very likely neither can philosophers or theologians. Of course, that has not stopped them from trying.

Thomas Berry and Cosmic Forgetting/Remembering

William Nathan Berry was named after his father. Upon his ordination, however, he changed his name to Thomas because of his fondness for Aquinas. The medieval scholastic conceived of human life as a participation in a divine cosmological vision.[91] Likewise for Berry, "everything exists in relationship to the universe. Everything participates in everything that happens in the universe."[92] Like Ruether, Berry credits the contemporary crisis of exploitation of the earth's resources and people to a failure of getting the story right. But for Berry, getting the story right is

[90] Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, 305–7, 308.
[91] Thomas Berry, *Selected Writings on the Earth Community*, ed. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2014), 1, 7, 54.
[92] Berry, *Selected Writings on the Earth Community,* 189.

not a matter of concocting a narrative, but of *listening:* "This story is the story that the universe tells of itself."[93]

A historian of world religions trained in Western history, Berry critiques Western civilization and religion for its emphasis on self-differentiation and election. Like McFague, Ruether, and John Paul II, he assails the mechanistic worldviews of Descartes and Bacon. The emphasis on the uniqueness of the self has created a fundamental alienation from the larger human community, from the "Earth community," and from the universe itself.[94] It has not always been so. Here, Berry is in agreement with McFague that indigenous cosmologies often name deep intercommunion of human beings with other creatures and with the cosmos. He draws inspiration from the Iroquois prayer, which offers a litany of "returning thanks" to earth, rivers and streams, beans and squashes, to the moon, stars, sun and great Spirit. Earlier indigenous cultures, which had to contend with constant threats to survival from the natural world, were aware of "the intimate dependence of the human on the integral functioning of things."[95] Berry notes as well that Confucian spirituality conveys an "interrelatedness" grounded not in covenants or social contracts but in the very structure of the universe.[96]

Berry thinks a new sacred story will emerge from our contemporary awareness of the origin and development of the cosmos and of life on Earth. In the 14-billion-year cosmic story, from the formation of helium from hydrogen, to the gathering of the solar system from the dust of exploded stars, human beings at least appear "as the moment in which the unfolding universe becomes conscious of itself." A wonderfully emergent process allowed Earth to find just the right distance from the sun so that life could flourish; to develop a radius of the perfect size

[93] Berry, *Selected Writings on the Earth Community,* 119.
[94] Berry, *Selected Writings on the Earth Community,* 44, 16, 74.
[95] Berry, *Selected Writings on the Earth Community,* 34-35, 187.
[96] Berry, *Selected Writings on the Earth Community,* 95.

between gaseous giants like Jupiter and smaller, rocky planets like Mars; and to establish a precise distance from its moon such that the tides would gently caress the shores, coaxing creatures onto dry land. Berry's notion of emergence is influenced by the geneticist Theodosius Dobzhansky, who theorized emergence neither as a "rational, deductive process," nor as undisciplined randomness, but as a force of mysterious creativity that allows "the blossoming of a field of daisies out of the dark earth."[97]

Berry synthesizes the three arenas of the present chapter, noting that interrelatedness is a feature of atomic behavior, of biological ecosystems, and of cosmic emergent patterns. The universe is an emerging process in which all beings are interrelated, bound up in a common origin and destiny. If humanity is to survive, "This new story of the universe is now needed as our sacred story." We must develop a profoundly ecological perspective, one attuned to "the interdependence of all the living and nonliving systems of Earth."[98]

Berry offers a sweeping narrative of cosmic history and insists urgently that human survival depends on our recovery of a lost awareness of our connection to the universe. In places, his story is so comprehensive that it threatens to elide complexity. While he is deeply formed by indigenous traditions, attentive to their wisdom and critical of "Western" traditions, at times Berry seems to collapse human history into a grand narrative of forgetting and remembering. The problem, in his telling, is that "we" have "forgotten" our connection to the universe, and "we" must recover it. For example:

- "We thought that we were improving the human situation; in reality we were devastating human life along with all the other components of the Earth community."[99]

[97] Berry, *Selected Writings on the Earth Community,* 16-21.
[98] Berry, *Selected Writings on the Earth Community,* 84, 157.
[99] Berry, *Selected Writings on the Earth Community,* 74.

- "We have lost sight of the fact that these myriad creatures are revelations of the divine."[100]
- "We, and our children, are becoming unresponsive to the natural world. We live in a world of computers, cell phones, digital photography, television […]"[101]
- "We no longer realize that the universe is a collection of subjects."[102]
- "We live too deeply alienated from the cosmological order."[103]

Assertions like these, ubiquitous in Berry's writings, raise the obvious question, "*Who is the 'we'?*"

Berry is obliquely critical of colonialism, as in "When we first arrived as settlers, we saw ourselves as the most religious of peoples […] and the most prepared to exploit every economic advantage."[104] Here as elsewhere, Berry seems to assume his audience is white but does not name whiteness or colonialism as a problem. Instead, for him, the problem is simply a "forgetting" of what "we" used to know. "We" failed to see that the primary locus of relationality is not human-divine or interhuman but *human-Earth relations*: "This failure has led to the plundering of the planet by good persons, even deeply religious persons, for the supposed temporal and spiritual benefit of the human."[105] This formulation lets white Western Christian colonialism off the hook altogether too easily. As Berry would have it, European settler colonialists were not rapacious plunderers who justified genocide and enslavement by claiming racial-cultural-religious supremacy. Rather they were "good," well-meaning, "deeply religious" people who were genuinely concerned for the spiritual benefit of humanity, but unfortunately they simply held a mistaken cosmology. Berry is insistent on the need to get the story right, while ironically getting history terribly wrong in his telling of a "forgotten" truth that needs

[100] Berry, *Selected Writings on the Earth Community,* 78.
[101] Berry, *Selected Writings on the Earth Community,* 79.
[102] Berry, *Selected Writings on the Earth Community,* 79.
[103] Berry, *Selected Writings on the Earth Community,* 55.
[104] Berry, *Selected Writings on the Earth Community,* 44.
[105] Berry, *Selected Writings on the Earth Community,* 81–82.

recovery. Nevertheless, it is indeed crucial to get the story of *history* right, that is, to diagnose the problem of interhuman exploitation in order to move toward solutions.

Ultimately for Berry human well-being appears to be secondary. He informs readers that his ethics is based on a childhood experience he had of amazement in viewing a meadow across the creek from his boyhood home. He concludes, "Whatever preserves and enhances this meadow in the natural cycles of its transformation is good; whatever opposes this meadow or negates it is not good. My life orientation is that simple."[106] This maxim suggests that Berry's primary concern is for the well-being of the natural world as such, not for the well-being of human communities who inhabit it. Undoubtedly, he might retort that the two are interrelated and what is good for the meadow is ultimately good for human beings. But since the converse is also presumably true, it is telling that Berry bases his ethics entirely on the meadow. It's "that simple."

Berry's editors, likely aware that his work is vulnerable to critique for its lack of power analysis, explain in their introduction that "Berry was academically formed before the postmodern penchant for uncovering power dynamics and concealing rhetoric."[107] This explanation apparently presumes that power analysis began with Foucault when in fact Berry would have had access to Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, Du Bois, Fanon and Cesaire. Moreover, his contemporary Thomas Merton penned the trenchant critique "Letters to a White Liberal" in 1961.[108] Wendell Berry explained the environmental crisis in stark terms of capitalist power dynamics in his *The Unsettling of America* in 1977.[109] So the argument that Thomas Berry's

[106] Berry, *Selected Writings on the Earth Community,* 186.
[107] Berry, *Selected Writings on the Earth Community,* 10.
[108] Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Destruction* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980).
[109] Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture*, Revised edition (San Francisco: Serra Club Books, 1977).

writings are lacking in analysis of power and rhetoric because such methods were unavailable to him is not sustainable.

Berry's reflections on the Earth community and the emergent story of the universe are nonetheless compelling. Moreover, his reflections on indigenous wisdom are the careful observations of an historian of religions. He points out that those traditions contained an ethic of cosmic interdependence, which is indispensable for the thriving of contemporary human communities. It is not the case, however, that white supremacy, patriarchy and colonialism can be chalked up to well-intentioned forgetting. If the present section seems unduly critical of Berry, this is because holding these elements in tension, indigenous wisdom and postcolonial self-critique, the "natural" and the human, mutuality and exploitation, human unity and difference is crucial. The environmentalist movement is saddled with an unfortunate reputation for romanticizing the beauty of nature, fetishizing native wisdom, and remaining inattentive to white supremacy and other intersecting forms of oppression. In short, it carries the reputation of being dominated by a white liberal mentality (but see my discussion of Cooperation Jackson in the concluding chapter for an alternative vision).[110] Berry's writings bring the promise and dangers of interdependence in "eco-spirituality" into full focus.

Barbara Holmes and Cosmic Insights Post-Integration

Barbara Holmes' *Race and the Cosmos* shows how racial and other power dynamics might intersect with cosmic-theological thinking. Holmes specifically thinks that awareness of an

[110] The shortcomings of environmentalism are addressed by the "environmental justice movement," which grew out of the Civil Rights movement and is primarily led by people of color. The environmental justice movement links ecological devastation, structural racism, and economic injustice. See *Environmental Justice and Environmentalism: The Social Justice Challenge to the Environmental Movement,* Ronald Sandler and Phaedra C. Pezzullo, eds. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007).

"interdependent and dynamic cosmos"[111] offers an avenue out of the racial impasse left by the failures of civil rights advocates and liberationists to secure justice for black Americans. Where the Civil Rights movement sought social and legal remedies, "We have yet to reintegrate fractured spirits and psyches."[112] Romantic talk of racial reconciliation has forced the dream of equality into the futuristic realm of "someday." Meanwhile, liberationists uncritically "borrowed" their idea of freedom from the dominant culture, and their vision of human potentialities was constrained by a narrow focus on struggle.[113] Holmes thinks the discussion of liberation would be enriched by incorporating the insights of contemporary quantum and cosmic science.

Holmes holds that the Newtonian worldview, based on individualism and mechanized hierarchy, sanctions oppressive structures. However, quantum physics and cosmology reveal instead a universe characterized by holism and interconnection.[114] The contemporary cosmic picture suggests that the universe has no particular center,[115] and Holmes thinks this model militates against efforts to centralize and thereby privilege one human group. Instead, she writes of an "omnicentricity" where everyone and no one occupies center stage. Racial divisions belie the fundamental oneness of the universe.[116]

The recent discovery of the overwhelming presence of mysterious "dark matter" in the universe can provide a powerful symbol to the "dark peoples" of the earth, showing them as "metaphorically connected to a darkness that is predominant in the universe." Darkness is the

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[111] Barbara A. Holmes, *Race and the Cosmos: An Invitation to View the World Differently* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 145.
[112] Holmes, *Race and the Cosmos,* 19.
[113] Holmes, *Race and the Cosmos,* 30–31. Holmes' last assertions draw on Anderson's critique in *Beyond Ontological Blackness.*
[114] Holmes, *Race and the Cosmos,* xvi–xvii, 54-58.
[115] Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, 236.
[116] Holmes, *Race and the Cosmos,* 110, 147.

primordial womb and genesis of creation.[117] Like Barad, but with an explicit focus on oppression and divinity, Holmes insists that matter and meaning are entangled: "There are intricate interconnections between the space that we live in and the meaning that we seek."[118]

Further, like Ruether and McFague, Holmes thinks religious consciousness needs new language, symbols and stories to become adequate to the pressing social needs of our time. Where those authors focus on gender and ecology, Holmes broadens the discussion by examining how cosmic insights might vivify a racial justice movement sorely in need of a new paradigm. Romantic language of integration supposed that "[p]eople of all colors would live and work together in peace and harmony, racism would end, and opportunities would be available to all who wanted to participate in the dream."[119] The previous chapter showed how such imagery was susceptible to co-optation and mystification by hegemonic forces (even though, as the sixth chapter will show, King's own language, though soaring and theological, was grounded in a concrete awareness of oppression and the need for its immediate alleviation). Yet the present analysis has also cast suspicion on Holmes' supposition that the cosmos itself contains unequivocal normative aspects, and that awareness of connectedness to others produces moral obligation for others.[120] Holmes doubts that the God who creates the mysterious and powerful dark matter can be seen as "an exclusionary symbol of white racism."[121] But looking to nature for evidence of God's justice is a perilous task. One can certainly find in the natural world evidence of cooperation, relatedness and mutuality, but one can just as easily, if not more easily, find abundant evidence of predation, destruction, and absurdity. James Gustafson rightly

[117] Holmes, *Race and the Cosmos,* 103, 106.
[118] Holmes, *Race and the Cosmos,* 156.
[119] Holmes, *Race and the Cosmos,* 160.
[120] Holmes, *Race and the Cosmos,* 22, 144.
[121] Holmes, *Race and the Cosmos,* 34.

observes that "[t]he history of human culture is in part the history of the development of human defenses against the threats of nature."[122]

Holmes argues that dark matter serves as an inspiration for "dark peoples," but what about black holes? As I was preparing a draft of this chapter, astronomers released the first photo ever taken of a black hole, in a galaxy some 55 million light years from Earth. The black hole has a mass 6.5 billion times that of our sun. Reporting on the discovery, the *New York Times* compared the visual to the eye of the villainous Sauron from Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*: "The image, of a lopsided ring of light surrounding a dark circle deep in the heart of the galaxy known as Messier 87, some 55 million light-years away from here, resembled the Eye of Sauron, a reminder yet again of the power and malevolence of nature. It is a smoke ring framing a one-way portal to eternity."[123]

The ambivalence becomes even more evident if one considers human history. As William R. Jones writes, if one were to judge God's character based on present social conditions for black people, one would be forced to conclude that God is a white racist.[124] Even James Cone, whose notion of blackness was critiqued by Jones, Anderson and others, writes that black theology relies on "symbol" and "analogy."[125] It may not be possible to look to nature for unequivocal norms, but there are indeed many helpful theological metaphors, analogies, and symbols operative in the universe. As shown in the work of Holmes and others surveyed in this chapter, interdependence is surely among the most powerful symbols available to us.

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[122] James Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: Theology and Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 105.
[123] Dennis Overbye, "Darkness Visible, Finally: Astronomers Capture First Ever Image of a Black Hole," *The New York Times*, April 12, 2019, sec. Science, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/10/science/black-hole-picture.html. The *Times'* moral evaluation of the black hole has since been redacted, and the text now describes "the implacable power of nature." Perhaps the *Times* received letters from readers taking exception to their dismal view of the viciousness of nature!
[124] William R. Jones, *Is God A White Racist?: A Preamble to Black Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997).
[125] James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 8; *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 31.

A Theology All Too Human: James Gustafson's Perspective

Before concluding, I offer a brief reflection on the work of James Gustafson. In agreement with the authors considered in this chapter, Gustafson argues in his two-volume *Ethics in Theological Perspective* that "the relations of interdependence between human life and the rest of the natural world are also a basis for ethics."[126] But where the others are concerned with drawing normative conclusions regarding human practices from ontological interdependence, Gustafson's concern is rather to displace the human from the center of theological reflection. In his view, theology has been entirely too anthropocentric, assuming that humanity is the center of the moral theological universe and that the ultimate divine purpose is human happiness. But these assumptions are untenable and even arrogant in light of modern science: "we have a Ptolemaic religion in a Copernican universe," Gustafson says.[127] Contemporary religion serves mostly a utilitarian and even therapeutic function, assuring us that we can serve our particular interests with a clear conscience. Modern religion and theology, says Gustafson, is "superficial Easters" and "instrumental pieties." Even liberation theologies do not escape Gustafson's blanket charge of anthropocentrism, for they identify a particular ideology or political program with the cause of God.[128] Such theologies deny God *as* God; the deity is reduced to an instrument for human purposes. Gustafson commends a Reformed approach to theology, updated according to modern scientific discoveries and historical biblical criticism. In Gustafson's theocentric perspective, God is reclaimed as the object of theological reflection, while "*[m]an (individual persons,*

[126] Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: Ethics and Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 133.
[127] Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: Theology and Ethics,* 190.
[128] Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: Theology and Ethics,* 21-22.

communities, and species) is a participant in the patterns and processes of interdependence of life in the world."[129]

Like the present dissertation, Gustafson is attentive to the *limits* of interdependence: human life is constrained by the "fundamental limitations" of "being dependent upon and interdependent with other persons, institutions, and culture, and the natural environment around us." He takes the argument a step further: "to be human, in spite of the vastness of human achievements, is to be limited."[130] And like the present chapter, Gustafson points out that theologies of nature cannot responsibly infer from natural patterns a divine beneficence toward humanity, or unambiguous ethical principles: the natural world brings and sustains life, but equally inflicts suffering and death.[131] For this reason, argues Gustafson, our conception of the good valued by God, of the "common good," must be enlarged beyond our own particular interests, and beyond the interests of our particular community and even our species. Instead, Gustafson offers a fundamental moral principle based in his interactional view of human beings in creation: "we are to relate ourselves and all things in a manner appropriate to our, and their, relations to God."[132]

It is not always clear in Gustafson's work, however, how that imperative is to be understood in relation to social problems. Although the second volume of his work devotes successive chapters to the issues of marriage and family, suicide, population and nutrition, and the allocation of biomedical research funding, these chapters are often vague in their normative conclusions: Marriage teaches us that "we are not self-sufficient beings as individuals and that we come to some completion in binding ourselves in interdependence with others"; suicide calls

[129] Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: Ethics and Theology,* 145.
[130] Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: Theology and Ethics,* 13-14.
[131] Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: Theology and Ethics,* 92, 210.
[132] Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: Theology and Ethics,* 306.

attention to our moral responsibility "to be participants in the patterns and processes of interdependence that sustain and support the lives of others."[133] Gustafson's work does not always illuminate how the fact of interdependence is to be brought to bear on social problems: indeed, he concludes in the second volume that interdependent processes are only signs, not proofs, and "are not a sufficient basis for ethics."[134] These limitations, however, are at the same time the chief strength of Gustafson's work, for in his view the task of ethics is precisely "to call attention to limitations and possibilities."[135] We cannot overcome the finitude, ambiguity, risk, and tragedy inherent in any ethical symbol, human action or social program—we can do no better than to recognize our limitations and humbly offer our best attempts to minimize harm. In this regard Gustafson's position is identical to Derrida's.

Despite the ambiguity of interdependence, Gustafson suggests that it remains a *necessary* although insufficient basis for theological ethical reflection. Processes of interdependence "are 'facts' which ground values, though what is valued is not derived simply from their facticity."[136] The problem of this chapter ultimately boils down to that distinction, a very old problem in ethics.

Conclusion: The Interdependence of Fact and Value

Scientists are terribly prickly about nonscientists' penchant for cherry-picking scientific theories for their own purposes. Barad is quick to distinguish her careful philosophical-scientific approach from "a host of analogical (mis)appropriations of quantum theory that are more

[133] Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: Ethics and Theology,* 173, 212.
[134] Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: Ethics and Theology,* 294.
[135] Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: Ethics and Theology, 276.*
[136] Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: Ethics and Theology,* 295.

common in the literature than physicists (including this one) would wish."[137] Polkinghorne slams the "lazy indulgence" of writers from other fields who cash in on "quantum hype," using uncertainty or unpredictability to justify this or that unwarranted generalization in their own field: "no facile kind of direct transfer is possible between physics and theology," he insists.[138] Rosenblum and Kuttner condemn the "misuse" of claiming that one's ideas are "derived" from quantum physics, "rather than merely analogies suggested by it."[139] And while Greene admits that while he finds talk of universal connectedness appealing, "such gushy talk is loose and overstated."[140] These cautions provide an additional sense to this dissertation's search for something called "responsible interdependence." At issue here is not moral but intellectual responsibility. Interdependence is a quantum-biological-cosmic fact. What, then—ontologically, ethically, theologically—can be *responsibly* claimed from this fact?

The question is not new, but is a quanto-bio-cosmic restatement of the familiar "fact/value distinction" identified by philosopher Hilary Putnam and others.[141] In the stark terms of natural law theorist John Finnis, the dichotomy insists that "[n]o value can be deduced or otherwise inferred from a fact or set of facts."[142] While Finnis is associated with a "new" natural law tradition, he derides natural law as a "rather unhappy term" because it suggests that we can deduce the moral order from observing the natural order.[143] Instead, Finnis bases his ethics on a common good, or rather a set of "basic goods" which are universal across cultures and will be

[137] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 70.
[138] Polkinghorne, *Quantum Physics and Theology*, ix.
[139] Rosenblum and Kuttner, *Quantum Enigma*, 252.
[140] Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, 122.
[141] Hilary Putnam, *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy, and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).
[142] John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, 2 edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 66.
[143] Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, 374.

self-evident to "any sane person."[144] Finnis appears unbothered by the fact that the identification "sane person" and the privileging of such a person's judgment already implies a normative preference. Moreover, Finnis' preferred values, the "basic goods," are still derived from "facts"—they are simply derived from the "social" facts of human practices/preferences, rather than "natural" nonhuman patterns. The fact/value distinction is exceedingly difficult to uphold, as even supposedly "objective" accounts often conceal implicit values.[145] Observing the fact/value distinction strictly would likely entail having nothing whatsoever to say about ethics.

The American pragmatist tradition gets around the problem by denying that "facts" have any meaning outside their relevance toward concrete purposive ends.[146] Josiah Royce makes the point explicit: "facts are never known except with reference to some value they possess for our present or intended activities."[147] Yet, if Barad is right, this philosophical dispute has now been resolved *scientifically,* in favor of the pragmatists. The phenomena of quantum entanglement and indeterminacy signal that matter is inseparable from *mattering,* that purposive intentionality is already present in the agential performances of organic and nonorganic beings in their intra-actions.

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[144] Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, 30. Finnis is actually summarizing Aquinas' view in this passage, but it is one which he endorses.

[145] Thomas A. Tweed, "Valuing the Study of Religion: Improving Difficult Dialogues Within and Beyond the AAR's 'Big Tent,'" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 84, no. 2 (June 1, 2016): 287–322, https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfw019.

[146] Peirce, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce,* 253; William James, *Pragmatism* (New York: Dover Publications, 1995), 30.

[147] Josiah Royce, *The Philosophy of Josiah Royce*, ed. by John K. Roth (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1982), 138. Michael Hogue challenges the fact/value distinction from a process-relational perspective: "Value is inherent, relational, and emergent. Thus Whitehead's relational ontology […] leads to the rejection of the fact/value dichotomy, which has segregated modern Western moral philosophy from other forms of inquiry. Just as there are not some kinds of things that are subjects and some kinds of things that are objects, neither are there some kinds of things that are facts and some kinds of things, or properties of things, that are values. Subjectivity and objectivity, facticity and value are relationally dynamic aspects of each thing, occasion, or entity, at different moments in their unfolding as events in relation to other events" (Hogue, *American Immanence,* 145).

Yet the pesky fact/value distinction will not be vanquished so easily: for even granting that all knowing includes purposes, there is no scientific or philosophical mechanism enabling us with certainty to distinguish *good* or morally praiseworthy purposes from *bad* ones. The pragmatist/quantum mechanical rejection of the distinction does not resolve the moral ambiguities of natural interdependence. We cannot *derive* with certainty normative values from nature, but this does not preclude us from drawing ethical *analogies* from natural processes.

Polkinghorne and McFague navigate the tension between irresponsible misappropriations of scientific fact, on one hand, and a rigid separation between religion and science, on the other, with a distinction between "natural theology" and "theology of nature." The former attempts to infer the existence of God as the best explanation for the observed order of the universe. The latter, a more modest method, seeks instead to identify analogies between the natural and the moral order. In McFague's approach, this involves constructing metaphors from nature to say something about divinity. Theology of nature seeks not evidence for a religious belief, but merely "coherence or compatibility" between science and religion.[148] For Polkinghorne, a theology of nature gives studied attention to the improbable emergence of an intelligible order and self-conscious life over billions of years and responds in wonder, "Might there not be some purpose behind it all?"[149]

Whether one calls it natural law, natural theology or theology of nature, however, it is clear that one is dealing with a theological-ethical practice of constructing analogies between what one observes and what one values. However, the fact/value distinction collapses when one attempts what Barad calls "ethico-onto-epistemology." But not all collapses are created equal. One may think of metaphors and symbols as two species of analogy, which respectively make

[148] McFague, *The Body of God*, 76.
[149] Polkinghorne, *Science and the Trinity*, 61, 66.

weaker and stronger ontological claims. In McFague's sense, as I have shown, a metaphor is a judgment of comparison between two things. The aim of a metaphor is coherence, compatibility without any necessary ontological connection between the constructed image (metaphor) and the reality which it purports to express. A symbol, as understood by Tillich and Farley, makes a stronger claim. Somehow, the symbol participates in the reality to which it points.

Interdependence is a "fact" in that it denotes something empirically observable at the quantum, biological and cosmic levels. It is a "value" in that it signals a preferred way of organizing human practices. It is an "analogy" when the first sense is imaginatively connected to the second. Whether interdependence is a "mere metaphor" or a "deep symbol" depends on how far the analogy can be *responsibly* extended.

V. 'GOD-IN-RELATION': INTERDEPENDENCE IN BEVERLY WILDUNG HARRISON'S FEMINIST SOCIAL ETHICS

> In feminist terms, God is not the one who stands remotely in control, but the One who binds us and bids us to deep relationality, resulting in a radical equality motivated by genuine mutuality and interdependence.
>
> - Beverly Wildung Harrison, *Our Right to Choose: Toward a New Ethic of Abortion*[1]

> It is true that, like everything else in late capitalism, 'relationship' becomes transformed into a commodity to be packaged and exchanged at a price. To speak of the primacy of relationship in feminist experience, and to speak of a theology of relation, however, is not to buy in on the latest capitalist fad. It is, above all, to insist on the deep, total sociality of all things. All things cohere in each other. Nothing living is self-contained; if there were such a thing as an unrelated individual, none of us would know it. The ecologists have recently reminded us of what nurturers always knew—that we are part of a web of life so intricate as to be beyond our comprehension. Our life is part of a vast cosmic web, and no moral theology that fails to envisage reality in this way will be able to make sense of our lives or our actions today.
>
> - Harrison, *Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics*[2]

Previous chapters perhaps seemed to be moving at light speed (even though Einstein insists this is impossible), tracing the threads of interdependence through etymology and philosophy, twentieth-century histories of race, gender and class analysis, theology and science. This chapter and the next one "pump the brakes" a bit. Each is instead devoted to how the theme of interdependence is developed by particular social-ethical scholar-activist (the next chapter considers King's thought on interdependence). We have witnessed the breathtaking breadth of "interdependence" as it manifests in an astounding array of contexts. Now the task is to plumb its theological-ethical depths. As the epigraphs above show, Beverly Wildung Harrison was fully aware of the many sides of interdependence, of its capitalist, ecological and feminist

[1] Beverly Wildung Harrison, *Our Right to Choose: Toward a New Ethic of Abortion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 99.
[2] Harrison, *Making the Connections,* 16.

interpretations. The present chapter (on Harrison) and the next (on King) begins to ask what all of this means for theological and social ethics.

"Feminist religious ethics really started with Beverly Wildung Harrison," writes Mary Hunt, feminist theologian and co-founder of the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER).[3] Historian of social ethics Gary Dorrien calls her "the mother of feminist social ethics."[4] Christian social ethicist Melissa Snarr, encouraging scholars to attend not only to Harrison's "breaks" with tradition but also the continuities, considers her instead "one of the generative mothers of Christian social ethics" as a whole.[5] Harrison was an expansive thinker who wove together radical and liberal social theory, economics and feminist theory, and wrote on a variety of social topics from abortion to gay and lesbian rights, racial justice to ageism; and, as Snarr notes, her work also critically engages and develops "traditional" Christian moral questions of deontological, teleological, utilitarian, natural law and responsibility ethics.[6]

The present chapter, of course, takes an interest in "interdependence" as a theme in Harrison's social and theological ethics. Harrison conceived of the divine as "God-in-relation"[7] and believed that the theological task was to expose "the interconnected web of all our social relations, including our relations to God."[8] At the same time, like Ruether and Keller, Harrison did not romanticize interdependence or relationality. She was deeply aware of the interstructured and interdependent networks of oppression and believed that the task of radical social theory was to demystify, expose and disrupt the operations of those networks.

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[3] Carol Robb et al., "In Memory of Beverly Wildung Harrison," WATER – Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual, accessed April 9, 2019, https://www.waterwomensalliance.org/in-memory-of-beverly-wildung-harrisonwith-carol-robb-pamela-brubakerm-emilie-townes-and-mary-e-hunt/.
[4] Gary Dorrien, *Social Ethics in the Making,* 424.
[5] C. Melissa Snarr, "A New Discipline? Beverly Harrison and 'Malestream' Christian Ethics," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 25, no. 2 (2005): 79.
[6] Snarr, "A New Discipline?"
[7] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 226.
[8] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 245.

As Dorrien notes, Harrison's outsized influence on the field of feminist social ethics stands out of proportion to her published body of work; she published only one book-length sustained argument, a Christian feminist defense of abortion, amidst pressure regarding her promotion to full professor.[9] Harrison's other two sole-authored books are collections of essays, presentations and interviews edited by others. Harrison's first collection *Making the Connections: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics* was produced with the prodding and assistance of students, especially its editor, Carol Robb.[10] Editors of Harrison's *Justice in the Making: Feminist Social Ethics* say of Harrison that they learned "a multidimensional approach to feminist social ethics that privileges critically appropriated experiences in dialogue with traditional sources of theological traditions and scripture, read through critical social theory."[11] For Harrison, ethical insights take shape in a relational context as people struggle to envision and enact justice in the world. According to Harrison, insights, arguments, and lives take shape always in relation. In what follows I'll lay out some of Harrison's major contributions, while focusing attention especially on her theology of relation and interdependence. The chapter also considers Harrison's work on political economy and the dialectic of knowing-doing.

Political Economy

While she is best known as a feminist social ethicist, Harrison understood herself primarily as an ethicist of political economy.[12] She laments that Christian ethicists normally consider economic questions apart from the political contexts in which they take shape. For Harrison, economics

[9] Dorrien, *Social Ethics in the Making*, 424-27.
[10] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, v.
[11] Beverly Wildung Harrison, *Justice in the Making: Feminist Social Ethics* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), xv.
[12] Harrison, *Justice in the Making,* 157.

and politics are two interstructured ways of organizing power. As a socialist feminist ethicist, she understands socialism as "economic democracy," in which decisions about the allocation of resources are made by everyone and not only the rich (see the conclusion of this dissertation for a discussion of Cooperation Jackson, which also conceives of its project as promoting "economic democracy").[13] She insists that economic questions are inseparable not only from political questions but also from issues of race, gender, sexuality and culture.[14]

Harrison adopts a Marxist power analysis to address interstructured oppressions, even as she acknowledges the many shortcomings in the work of Marx and his followers and the revolutions they inspired. Radical theory helpfully identifies forms of violence and social antagonism operative in capitalist societies.[15] Such societies are structured into "classes," which are not merely economic "strata" but mutually antagonistic groups organized according to their relationship to a society's means of production.[16] Harrison thinks Reinhold Niebuhr is largely to blame for Christian ethicists' ignorance surrounding Marx. Christian ethicists uncritically accept Niebuhr's characterization of Marx as a crass economic determinist and scientific positivist. But even as a seminary student in Niebuhr's classes, Harrison was aware that Niebuhr had only read a small part of Marx's corpus, and later she realized that Niebuhr had misread even this small part. Marx never claimed to be providing a set of ironclad predictions about future economic or political events. Instead, Harrison argues, Marx intended to lay bare a "*critical description of what exists*" so that his readers would become aware of mystified structural forces and thereby

[13] Harrison, *Justice in the Making,* 162.
[14] Harrison, *Justice in the Making,* 202–3.
[15] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 76; *Justice in the Making*, 159–60.
[16] Harrison, *Justice in the Making*, 192.

be empowered to "increase the self-direction of their lives."[17] This is the task of radical social theory, for which Harrison thinks Marx is still a valuable resource.

Consistent with the title of her book, Harrison makes the connections between capitalist and patriarchal logics. Advanced industrial capitalism deploys gender tropes about the "special nature and place" of the woman in order to exclude women from the labor force and the labor movement. Theologies of "complementarity"—like that examined in the second chapter—are in fact strategies of mystification. "Whenever it is claimed that women are 'opposite' or 'complementary' to men in their human nature, whether or not the implication is that women are therefore best suited to reproductive and domestic functions, such mystification is at work."[18] Thus, Harrison shows how various discursive strategies of hegemonic power, three of which were outlined in the second chapter, work in tandem to advance multiple agendas.

Connections between economics and issues of gender, race and class must be recognized in order to disrupt the mystification process. Here, Harrison's political economy intersects with her notion of interdependence. Neoclassical economists recognize that "everything is interconnected," but in fact their theory presumes that economics can be separated from other domains of human activity. Economics is treated as a discrete sphere separable from cultural, political and religious life. The theory is thus unable to account for capital's interconnections with race, class and gender.[19] Further, capitalist society bases human value on productive capacity and thus treats children and elderly people as problems. In so doing, Harrison writes, "our political economy denies actual interdependence and disguises our mutual victimization."[20] Marxist theory, which recognizes social spheres of production (of goods and services) and

[17] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 60–61, 76; Dorrien, *Social Ethics in the Making,* 429.
[18] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 241.
[19] Harrison, *Making the Connections,* 78.
[20] Harrison, *Making the Connections,* 163.

reproduction (training and transference of ideology to the young to ensure cultural survival) is able to demystify economic logic by recovering these connections.

Unfortunately, Harrison writes, the Marxist tradition has been dominated by a Euro-male perspective that fails to account for the interstructured nature of oppression. Socialist-feminist, black and Hispanic liberationists and others rightfully charge that "the Euro-centered Marxian academic traditions have produced neither theory nor strategies adequate to genuine social transformation."[21] Just as Harrison understands feminism as a critique of all forms of oppression, which takes women's experience as a starting point,[22] so any political-economic analysis that considers only class is woefully inadequate. And the awareness of the interconnectedness of forms of oppression, Harrison insisted, emerges only in the context of struggle.[23]

Knowing and Doing: In the Struggle

Recall that for Barad, the entanglement of matter and meaning entails an integrative discursive practice, which she calls "ethico-onto-epistemology."[24] Harrison employs a different methodology to arrive at the same conclusion. Harrison contends that "We only begin to understand justice if we engage in the struggle for it, the struggle for better relations."[25]

To understand the force of Harrison's claim, it may help to place it in tension with a prominent "mainstream" view. Stanley Hauerwas, in a 1997 essay lamenting the

[21] Harrison, *Justice in the Making*, 202–3. Harrison herself has received critique on this front, however. In an address on the occasion of Harrison's retirement from Union, Emilie Townes (who was coming onto the faculty as Harrison's replacement) delivered a critique of "solidarity" that was obliquely directed at Harrison. While she did not name Harrison directly, Townes later reflected that the implication was clear, particularly to the black women present [personal communications, April 4 and May 8, 2019]. See Townes, "Women's Wisdom on Solidarity and Differences (On Not Rescuing the Killers)," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 53:3-4 (1999):153-64. The address was later expanded and published in *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil,* 150-58.
[22] Harrison, *Justice in the Making*, 189.
[23] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 236.
[24] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 90.
[25] Harrison, *Justice in the Making*, 12.

professionalization and secularization (or, more specifically, de-Christianization) of "religious ethics," seems to have Harrison in mind when he dismisses Union Theological Seminary students as impatient with philosophical questions and "wanting to get on with the business of making the world more just or at least less evil." Such graduates insist "only by taking part in the fight can you learn what the world is like."[26] Hauerwas' characterization is squarely in line with Harrison's theory-praxis ethical dialectic, and Harrison was a professor at Union. Hauerwas laments that liberation theologies "simply do not comport" with the traditional ethical giants like the Niebuhrs, John Ramsey, and James Gustafson. Yet, as Snarr points out, this assertion ignores that Harrison wrote her dissertation on the ethics of H. Richard Niebuhr (see the seventh chapter of this dissertation) and that she was highly engaged with Reinhold Niebuhr's as well as Gustafson's thought.[27]

Harrison is not so much "impatient" with philosophical questions as insistent that they can only be rightly understood in relationship to practice. Professional ethicists often operate at the theoretical level, for instance in distinguishing deontological from teleological frameworks. Harrison thinks those distinctions are significant, but they seem to exclude the practical ambiguities which we must daily navigate. Harrison contends, "you can be said to be doing ethics when you drop what you are doing in your kitchen and rush to the side of a neighbor whose child has been taken suddenly ill."[28] Moral selves take shape in communal contexts, in which someone might call a friend for advice on how to explain a difficult moral problem to a

[26] Stanley Hauerwas, "Christian Ethics in America (and the JRE): A Report on a Book I Will Not Write," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 25, no. 3 (1997): 64.
[27] Hauerwas, "Christian Ethics in America (and the JRE)," 72; Snarr, "A New Discipline?"; Dorrien, *Social Ethics in the Making*, 617.
[28] Harrison, *Justice in the Making*, 32.

child. Through the daily ethical struggles in which people are immersed they come to develop moral frameworks to better understand, communicate, and live with one another.

On this point Hauerwas' and Harrison's positions are in fact closely aligned, which makes his rejection of "Union ethics" all the more surprising. In his essay "The Servant Community: Christian Social Ethics," Hauerwas writes, "a Christian ethic is always a social ethic." This is because "the self is fundamentally social," and in fact, "the 'self' names not a thing, but a relation."[29] For Hauerwas and other proponents of narrative theology, persons are ethically formed in particular historical communities of moral discourse, which rely on stories and ritual practices to interpret and negotiate shared values and commitments and pass these along to younger generations.[30] But Hauerwas and Harrison differ on the question of the proper context for such moral formation. For Hauerwas, Christian ethics should take the church as the primary moral community to which believers are accountable. The task of the church is not to make the world more just, as liberationists believe. Instead, the church is called simply "to be the church," engaging in ritual practices and acts of service.[31] Hauerwas agrees that knowledge of justice depends on engaging in concrete action: however, Christians should not direct their primary energies toward public policy. Such efforts legitimate the coercive power of the state, at odds with Jesus' message of peace and love. Instead, Hauerwas recommends acts of mercy towards the poor, orphans and widows. "Unless we take the time for such care," Hauerwas contends, "neither we nor the world will know what justice looks like."[32]

[29] Hauerwas, *The Hauerwas Reader*, 372.
[30] James M. Gustafson, *Varieties of Moral Discourse: Prophetic, Narrative, Ethical, and Policy* (Calvin College and Seminary, 1988), 19–20.
[31] Hauerwas, *The Hauerwas Reader*, 374.
[32] Hauerwas, *The Hauerwas Reader,* 375.

Harrison refuses to split justice and service, to rely solely on Christian vocabularies, or to restrict moral formation to ecclesial contexts. She insists:

> Morality is the work of our *common* life, and the particularities of my convictions and my participation as a Christian, grounded in the way I have experienced revelation in my community, must answer not only to my community's sense of narrative and vocation but also to the sensibilities, principles, and values that inform the conscientious efforts of other morally serious beings. Not to acknowledge this is to me sheer Christian chauvinism of the sort which is indefensible in a pluralistic world.[33]

Harrison implies that Christian narrative theology à la Hauerwas is chauvinistic in its exclusion of non-Christian persons, sources and communities from the sphere of relevant moral reflection. However, their accounts clearly share important affinities, lending further credence to Snarr's argument that Hauerwas was wrong to suggest that liberationist themes "do not comport" with the topics of traditional Christian ethics.

Hauerwas thinks that only through engaging in loving acts of service can we know what justice means. Harrison argues just the reverse: "we learn what we are to know of love from the struggle for justice." Liberation theologies contend that authentic faith emerges "only out of the crucible of human struggle."[34] In the struggle for justice, persons become aware of the interconnected nature of their lives and social oppressions, opening them to receive the good news of God, as Harrison says, "in our time." Christian hope is "the power to sustain the struggle" even in the bleakest moments.[35]

Invoking the feminist rallying cry "the personal is political and the political personal,"[36] Harrison views our daily moral struggles and questions of structural justice as an integrated

[33] Harrison, *Justice in the Making*, 17.
[34] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 8.
[35] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 236, 262–63.
[36] Harrison, *Justice in the Making*, 25.

whole. Feminism is intrinsically committed to social justice because of feminists' awareness of "the fundamentally relational, interdependent, and finite character of life."[37]

Relation and Interdependence

> Awareness of our interdependence with God and others forms the foundation of Harrison's ontology and ethical methodology.
>
> - Melissa Snarr[38]

> For me, God is wherever there is real desire, real longing, for connection.
>
> - Beverly Harrison[39]

Like many of the thinkers thus far considered, Harrison is committed to a relational ontology that discounts the existence of isolated, atomized, self-sufficient individuals. As feminist and process theorists argue, and as contemporary science shows, there simply is no such thing as an independent object (whether an electron, a concept, or a human self). Harrison reflects that both she and the German liberation theologian Dorothee Sölle were immersed in the problem of "how you rethink divine transcendence in an Einsteinian conception of the universe which exploded assumptions about separation and hierarchy."[40] Harrison's work, again indicated by the title of her first essay collection, is about *making the connections* between theory and practice, theology and radical social theory, gender-racial-class dynamics, people's personal struggles and the social structures that reproduce them, and diverse marginalized populations who would be strengthened by mutual solidarity. Making these connections is for Harrison the very task of theological reflection: "an analysis is theological if, and only if, it unveils or envisions our lives as a concrete part of the interconnected web of all our social relations, including our relations to

[37] Harrison, *Justice in the Making*, 38.
[38] Snarr, "A New Discipline?," 85.
[39] Mud Flower Collective, *God's Fierce Whimsy: Christian Feminism and Theological Education* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1985), 111.
[40] Harrison, *Justice in the Making*, 147.

God."[41] Liberation struggle presupposes "reciprocal, interdependent social relations" and envisions justice as "rightly ordered relationships of mutuality."[42]

Yet, Harrison was not naïve about relationality and connection. The second of this chapter's opening epigraphs shows that she was well aware of the hegemonic co-optation of relationality by the forces of "late capitalism." She shares dependency theorists' critique that regnant theories of economic development simply ensnare poorer nations into traps of dependency at the cost of political autonomy.[43] But she insists, "our political economy denies actual interdependence and disguises our mutual victimization."[44] While Harrison speaks approvingly of the "healing power of eroticism rooted in mutual dependency,"[45] she also acknowledges that patriarchal Christian ecclesial structures are reinforced by "deeply erotic" male bonding between bishops and priests.[46] Thus, Harrison is under no illusions that relationality (or the erotic) is somehow intrinsically just. Indeed, she insists that it is precisely because feminists hold relationality in such high regard that feminist liberation theologians insist that "oppression is interstructured."[47]

What makes Harrison's social ethics *theological,* however, is her conviction that God names the power that drives those connections toward mutuality, responsibility and respect. Harrison helps to clarify our theological understanding of interdependence by arguing that this divine force is mediated through the *body* in modes of *affection.* In the previous chapter, I argued that McFague's notion of metaphor as "an assertion or judgment of similarity and difference" is insufficient to marshal the "affective power" that she rightly recognizes as necessary to sustain a

[41] Harrison, *Making the Connections,* 245.
[42] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 253.
[43] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 183.
[44] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 163.
[45] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 151.
[46] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 142.
[47] Harrison, *Justice in the Making*, 240.

theological vision.[48] Affective power is emotional, passionate and embodied, and does not inhabit the mode of disinterested, assertive comparison. In suggesting this, I am careful not to reify the false thinking/feeling, rational/affective, mind/body dichotomies, which are the subject of so much feminist critique. Neither Harrison nor I argue that affect is inherently antirational or even wholly nonrational. Instead, the point is precisely that affect and reason, mind and body are inseparable.

In her essay "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love," an expansion of her inaugural lecture as Professor of Christian Ethics at Union, Harrison argues that "all our knowledge, including our moral knowledge, is body-mediated knowledge."[49] Unfortunately, Harrison observes, "Many people live so much in their heads that they no longer feel their connectedness to other living things." Feminist ethics as a "spirituality of sensuality"[50] attempts to transcend the dichotomy of body/mind, reclaiming affect as our primary mode of connection to others and therefore an indispensable source of ethical reflection. Even anger is not a sinful or immature emotion but a visceral recognition that something is amiss in our social relations. Far from a destructive feeling, anger is a mode of caring, whereas disinterestedness and indifference are far more destructive.[51] Harrison commends taking the moral power of anger seriously as a form of love, for "love's work *is* the deepening and extension of human relations."[52] She is clear that feeling is not to be idealized as many contemporary Christians do when they emphasize

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[48] McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 42.
[49] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 13.
[50] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 8.
[51] Harrison's argument here shares important parallels with Audre Lorde's essay "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches,* 124-34. Lorde writes, "The angers between women will not kill us if we can articulate them with precision, if we listen to the content of what is said with at least as much intensity as we defend ourselves against the manner of saying. When we turn from anger we turn from insight, saying we will accept only the designs already known, deadly and safely familiar. I have tried to learn my anger's usefulness to me, as well as its limitations" (131).
[52] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 12.

subjective loving devotion to God in Christ uncoupled from a program of liberative action. "The moral question," Harrison contends, "is not 'what do I feel?' but 'what do I do with what I feel?'" Feminist moral theology neither ignores nor romanticizes feeling. Instead, it recognizes it for what it is, namely, "the basic ingredient in our relational transaction with the world."[53]

Through the affective experience of caring for others and acting to rectify interpersonal and social relations, we experience God. "To love God is to love that concrete power that, through us and the cosmos (always reciprocally), transforms nature, history, society, and human personal life toward community, toward relations of mutual respect. God is personal because God is richly related to all that is, and so we must be," says Harrison.[54] As seen in the previous section, for Harrison we come to know God in the struggle for justice. Likewise, when that passion burns out, God is forgotten. Transcendence emerges as an ecstatic power in connection and through struggle. "Passion for justice, shared and embodied, is the form God takes among us in our time," says Harrison.[55]

Conclusion: At the Heart of All Things

Harrison's relational ethico-onto-epistemology is centered on affective embodiment, supplying a key ingredient to the discussion of what distinguishes responsible from hegemonic forms of interdependence. Neither the bare fact of human and cosmic interdependence, nor even the awareness of it, is sufficient to enable the emergence of responsibility. Instead, Harrison argues, interdependence takes on ethical value through relational experiences of "love," "anger," "passion," "eros," "desire," "longing," and "respect."

[53] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 14.
[54] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 260.
[55] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 263.

Does the addition of affective and embodied elements to the equation resolve the ambiguity of interdependence? Surely not. Harrison allows that affection and embodiment, like relationality and interdependence, can also be manipulated to reinforce hideous forms of interpersonal and social abuse and oppression. So, I find myself, at the close of this discussion, facing the same set of ambiguities, plus a couple more to boot. Theology cannot dispatch ambiguity, as a grand tradition of failed proofs for the existence of God surely attests. We have no greater chance of finding a "pure" ethical value, and from it demonstrating that social responsibility is an absolute ethical imperative, than we have of proving God is "out there somewhere." Harrison writes, "a feminist moral theology insists that relationality is at the heart of all things."[56] How could such an assertion ever be demonstrated? Has anyone empirically located "the heart of all things"? Statements like that are *theological* statements in that they are neither verifiable nor falsifiable propositions, but moral appraisals of the meaning of existence, arising from affective, embodied religious experience, and in this case, from the "heart."

The proposal that relationality is at the heart of all things is the theological equivalent of a Copernican revolution. If not quite a displacement, it is a radically different spin on the idea of a "theocentric" perspective where God appears as "the center of value."[57] To place relationality at the heart of all things is, perhaps, to dispense with the notion of a spatial "center" altogether. Looking for the "core," the "essence," the "heart" of all things, Harrison finds it in between, in the midst of all things. In that sense this is not properly a Copernican revolution, in which one center is exchanged for another, but a post-Einsteinian revolution, in which the universe has no

[56] Harrison, *Making the Connections*, 15.
[57] James M. Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: Theology and Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); C. David Grant, *God the Center of Value: Value Theory in the Theology of H. Richard Niebuhr* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1984). However, Gustafson and Niebuhr are weak examples of traditional "theocentrism"—someone like Karl Barth would probably be more appropriate. See chapter seven for Niebuhr's theory of relation, which deeply informed Harrison's own view.

center.[58] This is an ethics of "a-centered relation," in Laurel Schneider's phrasing,[59] or in Barbara Holmes' formulation, a cosmic perspective of "omnicentricity."[60] The great gift of Harrison's contribution to Christian social ethics is her insistence that looking for God "out there somewhere" is a waste of time in the first place. God *happens* in interactive moments of connection, such as when two friends or lovers, each of whom has spent their day in frustrating interactions with colleagues and superiors, swap stories and feel the gracious rush of release when they know that they have finally been heard and understood. Who needs proof of that which is always before us?

[58] Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, 236.
[59] Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism*, 10.
[60] Holmes, *Race and the Cosmos*, 110.

VI. A NETWORK OF FAMILIAL SOLIDARITY: INTERDEPENDENCE AND INTEGRATION IN THE WORK OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.[1]

> Yes, as nations and individuals, we are interdependent. […] It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. We are made to live together because of the interrelated structure of reality.
>
> - Martin Luther King, Jr.[2]

On the fourth Sunday after Donald Trump was elected President of the United States, I was scheduled to preach at my church. In the lectionary for that day, the voice of John the Baptist is crying out in the wilderness, insisting on repentance and proclaiming that "every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Mt. 3:1-12). In my homily, I noted that 81% of white evangelicals and 60% of white Catholics had just voted for a man who gleefully repeated at rallies a false story about American soldiers killing Muslims with bullets dipped in pig's blood.[3] I called my mostly white liberal congregation to repentance and insisted that faithful discipleship at this moment required us to resist this president and dismantle whiteness—or America, bearer of strange and bitter fruit, would rightly be cut down and thrown into the fire. A week later, I received an indignant e-mail from a parishioner who felt that I had abused the sacred privilege of the pulpit. I was inciting hatred, the parishioner claimed, when I

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[1] This chapter has been adapted with permission from "Demystifying Brotherhood: Interdependence, Integration, and the Dangerous Ethics of a Co-opted Thinker," *The Other Journal* no. 32 (Oct. 2020), https://theotherjournal.com/2020/10/05/demystifying-brotherhood-interdependence-integration-dangerous-ethics-coopted-thinker/.

[2] King, "A Christmas Sermon on Peace," 254. I elide a section of this quote simply because of its length, not because it detracts from my argument. Indeed, King goes on to say that his trip to India taught him that the overwhelming poverty in Bombay and Calcutta is directly related to the vast food surpluses in the United States. King's insight is squarely in line with Thich Nhat Hahn's discussion of the interbeing of wealth and poverty.

[3] Tessa Berenson, "Trump Repeats False Pig's Blood Story at California Rally," *Time,* accessed July 20, 2019, http://time.com/4312131/donald-trump-pigs-blood-muslim-story/.

ought to be focused on building consensus. The parishioner cited Martin Luther King, Jr.'s view that "a genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus, but a molder of consensus."[4]

I was astounded that the parishioner would invoke King, among the most powerful critics of white supremacy in American history, in order to protect Trump from criticism from the pulpit. Later, as I researched for this chapter, I discovered that King used that quote in a 1968 speech entitled, "Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution." In that same speech he also said, "It is an unhappy truth that racism is a way of life for the vast majority of white Americans, spoken and unspoken, acknowledged and denied, subtle and sometimes not so subtle"; condemned the war in Vietnam as "one of the most unjust wars that has ever been fought in the history of the world"; and lamented that America was rightly viewed as an "arrogant nation."[5] The line about being a molder of consensus, in fact, was King's defense against criticisms that he was being *too divisive* in politicizing the war in Vietnam. To marshal that quote in order to admonish a preacher for critiquing white supremacy is painfully ironic.

But as we saw in the third chapter, for better or worse, such misappropriations are part of King's legacy. His image has been co-opted by hegemonic power, evacuated of its ethical content and trenchant critique. As Cornel West laments, the "radical King" was and remains largely unknown.[6]

As I read over King's speech again, I came across a familiar passage that helps to explain how the radical message of King was sanitized for white popular consumption. The passage, which appears in various forms throughout King's speeches and writings in the 1960s, is this:

> Through our scientific and technological genius, we have made of this world a neighborhood and yet… we have not had the ethical commitment to make of it a brotherhood. But somehow, and in some way, we have got to do this. We must all

[4] King, "Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution," in *A Testament of Hope*, 276.
[5] King, "Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution," 270, 275-6.
[6] King, *The Radical King*, ed. Cornel West.

> learn to live together as brothers. Or we will all perish together as fools. We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality. And whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. For some strange reason I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. And you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the way God's universe is made; this is the way it is structured.[7]

The parishioner was able to invoke King to shield Trump from criticism because King's central theological-ethical symbol is ambiguous. Our world, in King's theological ethics, is a neighborhood, a brotherhood, a network of mutuality, an interstructured, interrelated, interdependent community. Hegemonic power seized on that insight, because it is susceptible to a depoliticized, romanticized interpretation. One can "feel" brotherhood, or at least claim to, without relinquishing power. But, this chapter will argue, King understood interdependence very differently.

This chapter explores the theological symbol "interdependence" and its political correlative, "integration," in the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. Both concepts are rooted in King's sense of the fundamental "solidarity of the human family." Hegemonic power has co-opted all three notions, as King's image has been whitewashed and appropriated by the U.S. political establishment. King is popularly remembered as a liberal humanist dreamer who envisioned a reconciled post-racial society. However, this chapter shows that interdependence, integration, and family were not apolitical or romantic notions for King. Instead, King adhered to the gospel teaching that familial love is based not in blood but in solidarity, that "brotherhood" is primarily a matter of morally responsible action (cf. Mt 12:46-50). Interdependence in King's thought was not a gushy ideal but a moral necessity for human survival. Integration, for King, was not a saccharine mixing of colors, but a substantive sharing in political power.

[7] King, "Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution," 269.

A Politically Contested Intellectual Biography

Like all world-historical figures, the life of King can be and has been told in a variety of ways. The framing of these narratives has great importance for how a historical figure's legacy will be interpreted—and thus, in the service of which concrete political projects the figure will be mobilized. For instance, Jesus of Nazareth has been variously depicted as apocalyptic preacher, as Cynic philosopher, as Jewish prophet, as liberator of the poor, as Friereian pedagogue, and as proto-feminist.[8] In each case, Jesus is claimed as a representative of a particular historical tradition, with accent placed upon certain aspects of his thought that align with the author's particular purposes. When we narrate history we are not seeking disinterested knowledge of the past, but instead mining resources with which to make sense of our interhuman conditions in order meaningfully to shape the future.

The case of King is analogous: Noel Leo Erskine depicts King as a theologian in dialogue with Paul Tillich, Karl Barth and James Cone; Michael Nojeim interprets him as a prophet of Gandhian nonviolence; Vincent Lloyd situates King as the last major figure of a forgotten black natural law tradition; Cone claims him as the first liberation theologian; Gary Dorrien reads King as the towering figure of the black social gospel; West, in agreement with Dorrien, describes King as a radical democratic socialist.[9] One could proliferate examples. The point is that

[8] See, respectively, Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, trans. W. Montgomery (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1910); John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (New York: HarperOne, 2009); David L. Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet: Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew 23* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015); Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993); William R. Herzog II, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed*, 1st edition (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994); Leonard J. Swidler, *Jesus Was a Feminist: What the Gospels Reveal about His Revolutionary Perspective* (Lanham, MD: Sheed & Ward, 2007).
[9] Noel Leo Erskine, *King Among the Theologians* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1994); Michael J. Nojeim, *Gandhi and King: The Power of Nonviolent Resistance* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004); Lloyd, *Black Natural Law*; James H. Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America, a Dream of a Nightmare*, Second edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books,

narrations of experience—what anthropologist Michael Jackson, drawing on Hannah Arendt, calls "the politics of storytelling"—are never fixed or neutral expressions of intellectual "meaning." Instead, they are intersubjective contestations, power-charged and often laced with violence, in which persons navigate the "fields of interrelationship that constitute their lifeworlds."[10]

Thus, while this chapter considers King as a theorist of interdependence, I begin by acknowledging that the way we interpret a life is already a way of configuring interdependence. That is, the way in which we narrate King's life in interrelation with other representatives of a particular tradition has political consequences. For example, on the National Mall, King is an American statesman in a grand tradition of freedom-loving patriots, including Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Roosevelt. This King, as this dissertation's third chapter argued and as West wryly observes, was carefully "Santa-Clausified—tamed, domesticated, sanitized, and sterilized."[11] What I called in the third chapter the hegemonic co-optation of interdependence is a domestication process, a de-radicalizing of King's life and political agenda. As a corrective to the appropriation of King by the American establishment, scholars such as West, Cone and Dorrien accent his radical critique of white supremacy, imperialism and capitalism.

Dorrien notes that the first generation of King scholars accepted the story King told of his intellectual and moral formation, which highlighted white theologians and philosophers he read in seminary and graduate school, but was silent about his moral formation in the black church. These accounts reflected his emphasis on Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, Henry Nelson

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1991); Gary Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Black Social Gospel*, 1 edition (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018); King, *The Radical King*, ed. Cornel West.

[10] Michael Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression, and Intersubjectivity* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2002), 39.

[11] Cornel West, "Introduction: The Radical King We Don't Know," in King, *The Radical King*, 74.

Wieman, Walter Rauschenbusch and others, while having comparatively little to say either about the black church or black social gospel traditions. This was, Dorrien acknowledges, a misleading narrative likely intended to win over white liberal audiences.[12] Despite King's telling, Dorrien writes, "It strains credulity that a black son of the South who had struggled not to hate white oppressors had to be convinced by Reinhold Niebuhr that idealistic versions of liberalism underestimated the ravages of human evil."[13] However, when revisionists came along in the 1980s and 90s to rectify these accounts, they rightly privileged the black church while unduly minimizing King's graduate education, an equally misleading overcorrection: "This claim that King only pretended to care about his graduate education diminished his intellectual seriousness and achievements."[14] Here, Dorrien has in mind writers like Cone, who argued in his 1991 book *Martin & Malcolm & America* that "What King really thought about God is not found in the essays or even the Ph.D. dissertation he wrote in graduate school. He was merely trying to meet the expectations of his professors, which is the reason much of what he wrote reflects standard texts on the subject."[15] I am persuaded by Dorrien's view that such dismissals undervalue the complexity and seriousness of King's thought. Dorrien himself situates King as the culmination of a black social gospel tradition, which he traces through founders Reverdy Ransom and George Woodbey to W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Mordecai Johnson, Benjamin Mays, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Howard Thurman, and others. However, Dorrien also gives due attention to the influence of white social gospelers, Chicago naturalists, Boston personalists and process theologians, as well as the tradition of Gandhian nonviolence.[16]

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[12] Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy*, 19.
[13] Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy*, 266.
[14] Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy*, 19.
[15] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America,* 123.
[16] Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy*, 501, 262, 104-13, 272-74, 19.

King's views on interdependence and integration, the focus of the present chapter, militate for such a balanced reading of King's intellectual history. King held the operative theological assumption of a fundamental human solidarity extending across people of all races. As King's public stature grew as a global figure, he traveled extensively and spoke increasingly as a "citizen of the world."[17] He drew connections between the struggle for racial justice in America and struggles to throw off European colonialism in the Third World. At the same time, he insisted to the end of his life on the goal of integration as "black and white together," not as a romantic ideal, but as a moral and pragmatic necessity for human survival. So it seems that honoring King's guiding theological symbols of interdependence and integration demands that we attend to the global influences that shaped his global perspective.

While Cone perhaps too hastily dismissed the influence of non-black thinkers upon King's thought, his book does helpfully argue for the importance of a figure not often considered a primary influence: Malcolm X. Cone argues that King and X represent two great traditions of black history and culture—integrationism and nationalism, respectively. Cone argues that the two traditions represent "two different but interdependent streams of black thought."[18] Malcolm X's radical critique of white supremacy and American imperialism pushed King further to the left; meanwhile, after his break with Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad, X expressed his desire to throw himself fully into the civil rights movement and to work for policy changes to benefit black Americans. Especially after his visit to Mecca, he began to develop a global perspective, renounced racism and came to share King's view that all human beings deserved

[17] Lewis V. Baldwin, "Living in the 'World House': Martin Luther King, Jr. and Globalization as Theory and Praxis," in Baldwin and Paul R. Dekar, eds., *"In an Inescapable Network of Mutuality": Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Globalization of an Ethical Ideal* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013), 4.
[18] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America*, 4.

respect regardless of skin color.[19] Further, X and King were politically interdependent: X believed that if he expressed his critique in the most extreme terms possible, King would appear moderate by comparison, convincing white liberals to hear and accept King's message.[20] King, who although he had experienced racism nevertheless enjoyed a middle-class upbringing and stable family, needed to hear X's harsh critique of structural racism, which X developed through immense struggles in his early life including a years-long prison sentence. Malcolm and Martin "*complemented* and *corrected* each other; each spoke a truth about America that cannot be fully comprehended without the insights of the other."[21] Again the language of complementarity appears, as Cone expresses the ambiguous interdependence between King's integrationism and X's nationalism.

Sources of King's Thought on Interdependence

Roy Money's Assessment

The recent volume *In an Inescapable Network of Mutuality: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Globalization of an Ethical Ideal*, edited by Lewis Baldwin and Paul Dekar, considers King as a forerunner of globalization theory. Indeed, the phrase "the globalization of an ethical ideal" might serve as an adequate subtitle to the present dissertation on interdependence. Noting that in his last book King spoke of a "world house," a "worldwide neighborhood," and a "human family," Baldwin observes that these descriptors aptly characterize the "integration" processes of globalization, the increasingly intertwined networks of information, resources, markets, nations and peoples of our contemporary society. "The world is now interconnected in ways King could

[19] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America,* 110, 206–7.
[20] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America,* 210.
[21] Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America,* 246. Emphasis in the original.

only have imagined in his time," according to Baldwin.[22] Globalization is an ambiguous phenomenon: positively it breaks down barriers between people and in many places advances universal human rights and opportunities for women; negatively it increases wealth inequality and structural racism.[23] Perhaps most importantly, globalization processes enable us to form a global moral worldview: King was deeply impacted by travels to India, Africa, Jamaica and Brazil, coming to understand that peoples of color worldwide were facing the same struggle for liberation from white supremacy. He called for a "massive, sustained Marshall Plan" for third world peoples.[24]

Roy Money contributes to the volume an essay crucial to this discussion, focused on the sources of King's ethics of interdependence. Money argues that King's view was deeply influenced by Gandhi, Boston personalists, process thinkers, the black church, African communalism, and Buddhist metaphysics. Gandhi wrote,

> Interdependence is and ought to be as much the ideal of man as self-sufficiency. Man is a social being. Without interrelation with society he cannot realize his oneness with the universe or suppress his egotism. His social interdependence enables him to test his faith and to prove himself on the touchstone of reality.[25]

As Dorrien shows, not only King but a wide range of black social gospelers were deeply influenced by Gandhi, including Du Bois and Marcus Garvey; Mordecai Johnson, Benjamin Mays, Howard Thurman and others had personal encounters with Gandhi that influenced their view of nonviolence and social change. King was influenced by all of these thinkers, and learned the theory of nonviolence directly from Glenn Smiley and Bayard Rustin.[26] But the quote

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[22] Lewis V. Baldwin, "Living in the 'World House,'" 4–6.
[23] Baldwin, "Living in the World House," 13–19.
[24] Baldwin and Dekar, "Becoming a 'Single Neighborhood': Martin Luther King, Jr. on the 'White' and 'Colored' Worlds," in Baldwin and Dekar, eds., 33–34.
[25] Roy Money, "A Network of Mutuality: Martin Luther King, Jr., Interdependence, and Ethics," in Baldwin and Dekar, eds., 220.
[26] Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy*, 9–10, 266.

supplied by Money suggests that the theory of nonviolence was also linked to a Gandhian notion of universal interdependence.

Boston personalists shared with the black church tradition a language of interrelatedness, enabling King to reach both black and white liberal audiences. Money quotes the liberal Baptist minister Henry Emerson Fosdick:

> We are interrelated. We flow into one another. We are members of one another, and as individuals and nations our woes, problems and tragedies spill over from one into the other's life. We are intermeshed in an inescapable mutuality.[27]

Money follows Keith Miller in identifying this sermon, published in a 1958 collection, as a source in King's thinking on mutuality. King began to use similar language at least as early as 1961:

> All life is interrelated. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.[28]

King was similarly influenced by Whiteheadian process theology and the notion that reality is constituted through relationships. Henry Nelson Wieman, whose theology (along with that of Tillich) was the subject of King's dissertation, speaks of "the swift and irresistible tightening of the bonds of interdependence among all peoples all cultures, all the faiths and nations and classes and races on earth"; notes that each person is "dependent upon millions of others, not only for material goods, but also for his sense of security or insecurity, for his happiness or distress"; and declares that "the whole of humanity must find a way of life which all can live together." Rather than suggesting that King stole his ideas of interdependence from these thinkers, Money argues that King and the others were alike responding to new streams of thought and scientific discoveries (such as complexity science, network theory, and ecology)

[27] Money, "A Network of Mutuality," 220–21.
[28] King, "The American Dream," in *A Testament of Hope,* 210.

revealing the interrelated character of the world. In the end, it was King who was most successful in communicating these insights to a popular audience.[29]

Money also invokes, without citing specific thinkers or traditions, the "communalism of African cultures" as well as other native cultures the world over that sense the basic interconnectedness of humans with one another and with the natural world[30] (see the conclusion to this dissertation for a brief discussion of the African philosophy of *ubuntu,* and its affinities with interdependence).

Finally, King's notion of interdependence bears the marks of Buddhist metaphysics. Money notes the close friendship between King and Thich Nhat Hanh after their 1966 meeting in Chicago. King nominated the Vietnamese monk for the Nobel Peace Prize, and Thich Nhat Hanh's witness for peace was likely among the factors pressuring King to speak out against the war in Vietnam.[31] As discussed in the second chapter, interdependent origination stipulates that self-consciousness emerges through a chain of co-arising phenomena and that the existence of separate essential selves is an illusion. For the Dalai Lama as for Thich Nhat Hanh, "all Buddhist philosophy rests on two basic principles: understanding the interdependent nature of reality, and applying that understanding to do our best to help others."[32] The Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF) published a Declaration of Interdependence, citing the reality of interconnection as leading to "a reverence for the preciousness of all sentient life." The Fellowship was founded in 1978 with encouragement from the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), which brought Thich Nhat Hanh to the U.S. and was involved in King's Montgomery work and nonviolence trainings.

[29] Money, "A Network of Mutuality," 221.
[30] Money, "A Network of Mutuality," 220, 223.
[31] Money, "A Network of Mutuality," 226.
[32] Money, "A Network of Mutuality," 228.

The interconnection between the FOR and the BPF is itself a sign of the interdependence King preached.[33]

Money's article is an indispensable resource for understanding the global sources of King's thought on interdependence. However, in addition to skating over the "the communalism of African cultures," his account seriously undervalues the influence of black American thinkers on King's thought. As Dorrien shows, King inherited a rich tradition of black social gospel theology. Dorrien places particular emphasis on the mark left by Howard Thurman and Benjamin Mays: "American Christianity has no greater legacy than what King got from Thurman and Mays," he insists.[34] The mystic Thurman in particular developed a substantive ethics of interdependence, which I discuss briefly in what follows.

Howard Thurman

Thurman was a prolific writer, publishing more than twenty books. His view of interdependence is most clearly distilled in *The Search for Common Ground,* written in the aftermath of King's death. In this book Thurman makes a powerful case for the unity of human beings with one another, and with all of life. He writes that it is not possible for a person to be separate from their fellows, "for mutual interdependence is characteristic of all life."[35]

Human self-consciousness, Thurman argues, is characterized by a reflective self-awareness which is the result of an individuation process. Humans achieve self-consciousness by separating from other persons, and from other "lower" life forms, and even by severing the mind from the body. The sense of separateness enables remarkable human achievements, but when it

[33] Money, "A Network of Mutuality," 230.
[34] Dorrien, *Breaking White Supremacy,* 171.
[35] Howard Thurman, *The Search for Common Ground* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1986), 2–3.

is absolutized it produces destructive self-defensive behaviors. Thurman interprets white supremacist practices such as lynching and segregation as expressions of such self-defensive aggression. He also worries that black separatist organizations are susceptible to this same isolationism, although he is more sympathetic to the reasons for their appeal for many black people, especially after King's assassination.[36]

Yet there is another tendency within the human spirit, writes Thurman, which runs in the opposite direction: a "whole-making tendency," an "intuitive human urge for community."[37] This is in fact the tendency of all life, which seeks organic harmony and integration. Thurman echoes many of the theologians of nature cited in the third chapter, writing that recent scientific investigations of the universe reveal "a vast, almost incomprehensible interrelatedness tying all together." The interrelatedness is visible not only on the cosmic level, but in the many systems that work together to sustain animal life. The circulatory, lymphatic, immune, and nervous systems all work together—Thurman points out that blood replenishes the lungs by providing needed nutrients, while the lungs in turn replenish the blood by supplying oxygen. The body's systems are "subtle interwoven and interdependent structures of varied kinds and functions."[38] The whole-making tendency is discernible also in a certain "affinity" between human consciousness and other forms of consciousness. Thurman describes the process of trying to connect with his friend's German shepherd. Initially the dog barked furiously at him, and Thurman found himself fighting a reflexive aversion gained from having been attacked by a dog as a child. Patiently and gently, however—"I am in no hurry, it is up to you," Thurman reassured the dog—the two grew in familiarity and trust, and the dog let Thurman scratch him under his

[36] Thurman, *The Search for Common Ground,* 62–63, 95–104.
[37] Thurman, *The Search for Common Ground,* 77, 5–7.
[38] Thurman, *The Search for Common Ground,* 31-38.

collar and massage his ears. There is, Thurman believes, a "common consciousness" shared by humans and other life forms—he dismisses the claim that animals are less intelligent or unable to communicate. He even tells the story of a father who discovered his little daughter playing with a rattlesnake. The father did not rush in to retrieve the girl, fearing that doing so would cause the snake to strike. Instead he watched as the rattlesnake would circle around the girl, and let the girl pick it up, turn it on its side and back again: "it was apparent that they were playing together." When the game ended and the rattlesnake slithered away, the father blasted it with a shotgun. For a brief moment, though, "it was as if two different expressions of life, normally antagonistic to each [other], had dropped back into some common ground and there reestablished a sense of harmony through which they were related to each other at a conscious level."[39]

It is this common ground which Thurman desperately seeks to locate and promote at the level of interhuman relations. For a tantalizingly brief period, it seemed that Martin Luther King, Jr. was offering to black and white people this hope—"that for better or for worse they were tied together."[40] And yet, following King's death, Thurman reveals his own anxiety and uncertainty, asking,

> Is the pull toward community both within myself and the world of men indigenous to life, or is it a mirage, a delusion? To state the question a little differently: Is there some basis external to ones-self for the hopes and dreams of harmonious relations between men of whatever kind, state, or condition? Does the validity of the whole-making tendency in human life rest finally upon empirical sanction, or is it really against the drift, the movement of life as we experience it?[41]

With these questions, Thurman has his finger on the pulse of our ambiguous deep symbol.

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[39] Thurman, *The Search for Common Ground,* 57–63.
[40] Thurman, *The Search for Common Ground,* 95.
[41] Thurman, *The Search for Common Ground,* 78.

Because *The Search for Common Ground* was published after King's death, it may not be possible to claim Thurman as a definitive "source" for King on this particular topic (even though, as Dorrien shows, Thurman was an important influence for King generally). Instead, King and Thurman both responded to the emergence of "interdependence" as a profound social symbol in twentieth-century thought, and employed it to think about the problem of race in America. Having considered the sources that informed King, the discussion now turns to his own writings.

Familial Ethics of Interdependence

"Yes, as nations and individuals, we are interdependent," King was fond of saying. He often cited his trip to India as a turning point in his globalizing consciousness. King was shocked at the extreme and pervasive poverty he encountered there, which was far beyond anything he had seen in the United States. He was depressed by the knowledge that in Bombay, a million people sleep on the sidewalk every night; and he was convicted that his own nation, which spends so much money to store surplus food, had a moral obligation to store it in the stomachs of the world's poor.[42]

A preacher who accepted hundreds of engagements each year, King often employed and retooled variations of familiar tropes and recycled sermons. A favorite insight, apparently adapted from Fosdick and most famously expressed in the Birmingham letter, was King's conviction that "all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."[43] In his Christmas sermon on peace, King elaborated further on the interstructured nature of reality. He reminded his audience that they cannot leave for work in the morning without depending on

[42] King, "A Christmas Sermon on Peace," 254.
[43] King, "Letter from Birmingham City Jail," 290.

most of the world. They wash up with a bathroom sponge provided by a Pacific islander; drink coffee "poured into your cup by a South American," or tea by a Chinese person, or cocoa by a West African; and enjoy toast produced by an English-speaking farmer. "And before you finish eating breakfast in the morning," King declared, "you've depended on more than half the world. This is the way our universe is structured, this is its interrelated quality. We aren't going to have peace on earth until we recognize this basic fact of the interrelated structure of reality."[44] King here has simply expressed the empirical fact of globalization, already a powerful force in his time. But as Baldwin as well as the third chapter of this dissertation argued, one cannot derive an unproblematic ethics from the fact of economic globalization. For it is likely that the "Pacific Islander" and the other makers of our household products were not justly compensated for their labor, and the distribution chains that bring them conveniently across the globe are presently causing environmental catastrophe. The fact of interdependence, as manifest in economic globalization, more clearly evidences cutthroat market logic and structural oppression, rather than mutuality or responsibility. King's speech points to a fundamental moral ambiguity: For as we have seen, globalization, in economics and political science, is synonymous with "interdependence" and is even referred to as "integration."[45]

Elsewhere King employs the symbol of "brotherhood" to express the love ethics of interdependence: "In the final analysis, *agape* means a recognition of the fact that all life is interrelated. All humanity is involved in a single process, and all men are brothers. To the degree that I harm my brother, no matter what he is doing to me, to that extent I am harming myself."[46] This statement combines process thought and *agape* theology, making the point that familial ties

[44] King, "A Christmas Sermon on Peace," 254.
[45] Crescenzi, *Economic Interdependence and Conflict in World Politics,* 2.
[46] King, "An Experiment in Love," in *A Testament of Hope,* 20.

are ties of identity. Brotherhood symbolizes a universal sharing in being, such that an injury to my brother harms me, too. In his last book King puts it in economic terms: "In a real sense, all life is interrelated. The agony of the poor impoverishes the rich; the betterment of the poor enriches the rich. We are inevitably our brother's keeper because we are our brother's brother. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly."[47]

King's symbol of familial interdependence turns out to found responsibility for the other upon a deepened and expanded conception of self-interest (in Christian ethics, this is closely related to the idea of "the common good").[48] King challenges the assumption that self-preservation is the first law of life. *Other*-preservation is primary, King insists, because "we cannot preserve self without being concerned about preserving other selves." In caring for others, we care also for ourselves: "We are in the fortunate position of having our deepest sense of morality coalesce with our self-interest."[49] The preservation and fulfillment of selfhood depends on the preservation and fulfillment of other selves. There can be no separation of my interests from yours: we are bound together, sharers in precious family and precarious fate.

King also recognized the interdependence of forms of social suffering. He condemned racism, economic exploitation and militarism as "triple evils that are interrelated."[50] His awareness of the interrelatedness of oppressions anticipates the black feminist and womanist idea of intersectionality, although King was no feminist. King understood the struggle for freedom for black people in America as inextricably linked to the struggles of colonized peoples in America,

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[47] King, "Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community" [book selection], in *A Testament of Hope,* 626.
[48] Compare King's view to that of Andrew Scott, discussed in the first chapter. Scott, *The Dynamics of Interdependence,* 135, 179, 204-5.
[49] King, "Where Do We Go from Here?" [book selection], 625-6. Whitehead makes a similar point in *Process and Reality*: "The antithesis between the general good and the individual interest can be abolished when the individual is such that its interest is the general good" (15).
[50] King, "Where Do We Go from Here?" [SCLC address], in *A Testament of Hope,* 250.

Africa and Asia.[51] All struggles against racism, imperialism, and other forms of social domination were interdependent, since all human beings are tied together in an inescapable network.

Integration Beyond Tokenism

Integration is the political correlative to King's theological notion of interdependence. When people of all races at last achieve a "recognition of the solidarity of the human family," a completely integrated society will emerge.[52] The third chapter showed how hegemonic power co-opted the integrationist argument, adopting the romantic language of a post-racial society and retiring the most egregious forms of state-sponsored racial discrimination, while refusing to alter the socioeconomic structures that secured continued white dominance. But King's own understanding of integration was far more complex and morally serious. King grew to understand well the promise and limitations of integration, and he worked diligently to mitigate the dangers and to achieve a genuinely integrated society. That he failed to do so speaks less to King's own shortcomings and more to the entrenchment and durability of white supremacy and the concerted efforts of shrewd and powerful people determined to preserve it.

King's notion of integration carried interior, interpersonal, and political dimensions. He reflected on the ten-year protest phase of the black freedom movement, from Montgomery to Selma, as a necessary first phase in a broader effort to dismantle American racism. King acknowledged the limitations of this phase while insisting on its importance: black people "came out of this struggle integrated only slightly in the external society but powerfully integrated

[51] King, "An Experiment in Love," 24.
[52] King, "The Ethical Demands for Integration," 121.

within. This was the victory that had to precede all other gains."[53] Grinding racial oppression had left black people "forever fighting a degenerating sense of nobodiness"[54]; by organizing against unjust racist laws, black people began to experience a "new sense of somebodiness and self-respect."[55] The interior dimension of integration meant seeking wholeness in a society that fractures black psyches, leaving black people struggling with the "double-consciousness" of which Du Bois wrote—measuring themselves through the eyes of white people and battling a tension of "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."[56] Before social integration can be possible, King believed, black people must achieve interior, spiritual integration. As Lauryn Hill would later put it, "How you gonna win when you ain't right within?"[57]

Secondly, King understood integration as "true intergroup, interpersonal living."[58] Explicitly connecting integration and interdependence, King writes that America is "a multiracial nation where all groups are dependent on each other, whether they want to recognize it or not. In this vast interdependent nation no racial group can retreat to an island entire of itself."[59] This statement applied equally to white supremacists and black nationalists: the latter group, he thought, were unrealistic in their dream of a separate black society and misguided in their call for a race war they could never win. Black and white people, for better or worse, were bound

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[53] King, "Where Do We Go From Here?" [SCLC address], 250.
[54] King, "Letter from a Birmingham City Jail," 293.
[55] King, "An Address Before the National Press Club," in *A Testament of Hope,* 101. Compare King's understanding of the beneficial effects of nonviolent protest, however, with Frantz Fanon's view of revolutionary violence as "a cleansing force." Where King believes nonviolence engenders interior integration and fosters self-respect, Fanon argues that violence "frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect." Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 94.
[56] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 2.
[57] Lauryn Hill, "Doo Wop (That Thing)," *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (Sony Legacy, 1998).
[58] King, "Where Do We Go From Here?" [book selection], 595.
[59] King, "Where Do We Go From Here?" [book selection], 594.

together in a multiracial society, and therefore it was imperative that all persons "learn to live together as brothers, or we will all perish together as fools."[60] Integration as interpersonal reconciliation was both a pragmatic and a moral necessity, an expression of fundamental human solidarity based on our familial ties as children of God.

Finally, integration was a political program for full inclusion for black people into the benefits of American citizenship. Here King distinguished between *desegregation*—a negative term connoting the removal of legal barriers discriminating against black people—and *integration,* a creative term signaling the positive inclusion of black people into the full range of American life.[61] Such inclusion, King clearly insisted, requires a "mutual sharing of power."[62] As early as 1959 King rejected mere "token integration," which included a few middle-class black people while leaving substantive conditions for most black people unchanged.[63] In an essay published posthumously, King showed that he was aware of the hegemonic co-optation of integration, and insisted that "[i]ntegration is meaningless without the sharing of power. When I speak of integration, I don't mean a romantic mixing of colors, I mean a real sharing of power and responsibility." In the same essay King admitted that integrated schools tended to combine the problems of segregated black and white schools, rather than solving them.[64] Integration was, in his view, a necessary but insufficient condition for liberation.[65] Yet while he acknowledged the limitations of integration, King continued to the end of his life to preach the goal of integration and the method of nonviolence: "We have not given up on integration. We still believe in black and white together."[66]

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[60] King, "The American Dream," in *A Testament of Hope,* 209.
[61] King, "The Ethical Demands for Integration," 118.
[62] King, "Where Do We Go from Here?" [book selection], 594.
[63] King, "The Social Organization of Nonviolence," in *A Testament of Hope,* 31.
[64] King, "A Testament of Hope," 317, 321.
[65] King, "Where Do We Go From Here?" [book selection], 594.
[66] King, "Nonviolence: The Only Road to Freedom," in *A Testament of Hope,* 70.

King's understanding of integration contributes significantly to our developing understanding of responsible interdependence. Integration, King specifies, requires "a real sharing of power and responsibility." Similarly, a key factor distinguishing responsible from hegemonic interdependence is the question of whether and how power is shared. Whose voices are heard and heeded in discussions of how to remediate racial inequities, or "women's proper role" in ecclesial power structures, or how the global economy is structured? Hegemonic interdependence honors only the voices of the powerful; responsible interdependence requires not merely "token integration" but a substantive sharing in decision-making power.

So far, this chapter has interrogated the politics of narrativizing King's life; discussed the sources of his thinking on interdependence; and considered how interdependence and integration function in King's thought as guiding theological symbols and political principles. King's thought on interdependence and integration adds rich texture to our developing understanding of responsible interdependence, even as his view was susceptible to hegemonic appropriation by forces determined to co-opt dangerous values.

The Ambiguity of Family

The symbol of family is morally ambiguous. Anderson argues that family is a "grotesque" symbol, in which deep joy and lasting trauma are often co-present. The symbol of family ideally conveys feelings of loving companionship, responsibility, and delight. But for very many who have experienced sexual, physical, emotional, and/or psychological abuse at the hands of family members, the symbol may also trigger painful memories of those traumatic experiences.[67] Further, as Derrida observes, the political rhetoric of nation-states almost always invokes familial

[67] Anderson, *Creative Exchange,* 151.

language, but especially *fraternal* language.[68] The emphasis on "brotherhood" erases women, nonbinary and genderqueer persons, while also marshalling affective imagery in the service of masculinized hegemonic (often military) power—for example, "brothers in arms." And Iris Marion Young worries that, in addition to eliding difference, "brotherhood" presumes a preexisting origin in the mother, simply there to be relied upon: instead, Young insists, "solidarity must always be *forged* and *reforged.* Solidarity is firm but fragile."[69] Thus, just like King's symbols of interdependence and integration, the symbol of family is morally ambivalent and susceptible to hegemonic co-optation.

However, *all* symbols are morally ambivalent. As Farley reminds us, religious symbols are "words of power" which are "corruptible, ambiguous, and potentially idolatrous." The task as Farley sees it is not to dispense with them, but to analyze and expose their corruptible elements, in order to mitigate those dangers and reinterpret the symbols to promote human flourishing.[70] Anderson agrees: what is needed is "to find better ways of deploying these kinds of symbols."[71]

King was seeking a world where everyone is treated in accordance with the infinite worth of their personality. As Lloyd argues, "[t]he best model for such treatment that we have in our current world is family, specifically brotherhood, a metaphor also evoking shared divine parentage."[72] While interdependence, integration, and family are corruptible deep symbols, they are nonetheless among the most affectively evocative images available to us—which is doubtless why they are routinely employed in the service of both oppressive and liberative power. The task, then, is not to relegate these symbols to the social ethical waste bin, but to seek out the

[68] Derrida, *Politics of Friendship,* viii.
[69] Iris Marion Young, *Responsibility for Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 120.
[70] Farley, *Deep Symbols,* 24.
[71] Anderson, *Creative Exchange,* 51.
[72] Lloyd, *Black Natural Law,* 117.

"responsibility between separated beings" to which, as Levinas writes, the symbol of family calls us.[73]

Conclusion: Common *Inter-est,* and Benignly Dangerous Symbols

Interdependence was a guiding theological-ethical symbol for Martin Luther King, Jr. His belief in the fundamental solidarity of the human family sustained him through periods of severe depression and enabled him to ward off despair in the face of the intransigent racism of white America. Integration was the political correlative of interdependence; it was love in action, mutuality made manifest as real sharing in power. For King, the failure of white Americans to accept the ethical demand for integration was simply a refusal to recognize a fundamental truth about the world. Authentic human fulfillment cannot be found in hoarding wealth or dominating others. Instead, we can become most fully who we are only when others are similarly able to flourish. We have discussed the many sources of King's thought on interdependence: Chicago naturalism, process thought, personalism, Gandhian nonviolence, Buddhist metaphysics, African communalism, the black church, Howard Thurman, and even Malcolm X influenced his thinking. But the idea that our individual joys and sufferings are linked is not a twentieth-century innovation. The conviction is already present in the ancient insight that "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it" (1 Cor 12:26). King would depart from the spirit of Paul's letter only in his insistence that there are no "lesser" or "greater" members; all are instead to be accorded equal dignity as children of God.

King's notion of interdependence, I contend, entails an expanded awareness of self-interest, where "other-preservation" is inextricably linked to self-preservation. Although King

[73] Levinas writes, "Fraternity, conceived with Cain's sober coldness, would not by itself explain the responsibility between separated beings it calls for" (*Otherwise than Being,* 10).

did not make this connection explicit, the very term "interest" derives from the Latin *inter-esse,* to be one among others.[74] What Thich Nhat Hanh called "interbeing" is in fact the etymological foundation of interest. Responsible interdependence, the ethics of interdependence, is an ethics of interest, where interest is not isolated competition for finite resources, but simply a common share in being. All life is interrelated; all good is common good; all interest is common interest. Strangely enough, on this definition, "self-interest" turns out to be a contradiction in terms!

King's theological ethics, then, entail radical political changes; however, his central symbols are often deployed in the service of the status quo. In his 2016 book *Democracy in Black,* religious historian Eddie Glaude argues that white supremacy is sustained through the "racial habits" of white people who believe in a "value gap"—they think, consciously or unconsciously, that white lives simply matter more than black ones. Whites buttress the value gap, ironically enough, with a sanitized version of King: "This whitewashed King often gets in the way of frank and fearless discussions of black suffering, because his words, in the hands of far too many, are used to hide racial habits and sustain the value gap."[75] I learned this firsthand, as that angry white parishioner quoted King to admonish me for speaking so harshly about Trump.

And speaking harshly is sometimes necessary. Thanks in large part to religious critics like West and Glaude, and to mobilizing efforts like the revived Poor People's Campaign, the whitewashed portrait of King is beginning to fade. Americans are more and more reminded of King's deeply controversial opposition to the Vietnam War, his socialist politics, and his harsh critiques of white moderates. However, this chapter has adopted a somewhat different strategy: I

[74] Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling*, 11; "Definition of INTEREST," *Merriam-Webster.com,* accessed May 28, 2019, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/interest.
[75] Glaude, *Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul* (New York: Penguin, 2016), 95-6.

have examined some of King's ideas that are generally taken to be moderate and harmless, and revealed that they carry radical political implications. Were human communities to take King's notion of familial interdependence seriously—valuing our responsibility to all of our siblings as dearly as we value our own lives—our world house would shift beyond our capacity to imagine. Were King's notion of integration to be implemented—not "token" integration, but the interior, interpersonal, and political transformations it implied for him—the structures of white supremacy would come crashing down. Integration, interdependence, brotherhood: these seemingly benign ideas were and remain politically extreme, despite their having been co-opted by hegemonic power. And after all, one could say the same of the ideas of that radical Teacher whom King strove to emulate, even to his death.

VII. JUSTIFYING INTERDEPENDENCE: RESPONSIBILITY ETHICS

Responsibility goes beyond being.

- Emmanuel Levinas[1]

In the *Republic*, Plato's Socrates explains the elusive idea of the Good by analogy, using the image of the sun. The sun is not vision itself, but is the source of light that enables vision, empowering human beings to discern the forms, colors and characteristics of objects within their view. In like manner, the Good is neither truth nor knowledge nor being itself, but the source of being, which enables human beings to participate in and understand the world in which they are immersed. "The good isn't being," Socrates says, "but is still beyond being, exceeding it in dignity and power."[2]

In his work *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence,* Levinas builds on Plato's image, noting that if the Good is beyond being then it is also beyond representation. It may be spoken, but not without a certain betrayal, since to confine it within the representations of language is to domesticate it within a stable essence. To speak transcendence already renders it immanent. But the transcendent (the Good) is beyond being, essence, and language. Levinas's own insight is that, like goodness, responsibility goes beyond being. To be a human subject, he insists, is already to be responsible for others. I find myself responsible when I encounter the face of the other person, which shatters my ego's pretensions to self-sufficiency and commands me in an infinite responsibility. In this very act of "losing oneself" through relinquishing egoism, one succeeds in "finding oneself" in responsibility for others. At this point the reader may wonder if I have left the sure-footed terrain of philosophical discourse and entered the vertigo-inducing void

[1] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being,* 15.
[2] Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, 509b.

of theology. And Levinas indeed blurs the boundaries between the two disciplines, with suggestive statements like, "In the approach of a face the flesh becomes word."[3]

I begin this chapter with the quasi-theological musings of two philosophers in order to provide some context for an argument I make in this chapter, in partial agreement with the Christian ethicist William Schweiker, namely, constructing a normative ethics of fundamental responsibility inevitably involves one in theological questions.[4] And by "theological" I am not referring to a particular religious tradition but invoking what H. Richard Niebuhr called a "center of value," an organizing meta-principle from which other values derive their potency: in short, what Plato called "the Good."

This chapter explores the meaning of responsibility by considering traditions of responsibility ethics within Christian moral theology and secular philosophy. I turn to responsibility because, as the preceding chapters have hopefully made clear, interdependence is an ambiguous ethical value that stands in need of qualification and justification if it is to be (responsibly) employed in the service of justice. In his book on responsibility ethics, Schweiker notes that there are five dimensions of ethics, guided by the questions, "what is going on? what is the norm for how to live? what are we to be and to do? what does it mean to be an agent? and how do we justify moral claims?" These five questions, Schweiker elegantly argues, correspond to the "interpretative, normative, practical, fundamental, and meta-ethical dimensions of ethics."[5] This present discussion of interdependence has considered (although not systematically) all of these questions in the preceding chapters. But the ultimate focus of the dissertation is on the fifth, meta-ethical question about how to justify moral claims. I have argued that interdependence is a

[3] Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, 11, 94.
[4] William Schweiker, *Responsibility and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 189.
[5] Schweiker, *Responsibility and Christian Ethics,* 35.

powerful ontological symbol that extends over the dynamics of race, gender, and capitalism, is discernable at the quantum, biological, and cosmic levels of the universe, and is central not only for feminists but also for a great many ethical thinkers across traditions. Further, I have also maintained that interdependence is ambiguous and susceptible to co-optation by hegemonic forces. What is needed, then, is a guiding force of the Good to *justify* this troubled value. This guiding force, I argue, can be found in the concept of responsibility. If one confronts the fact of one's interdependence with a commitment to responsibility for others' well-being, I submit, then the notion of interdependence becomes a powerful ethical value in the pursuit of justice.

As Schweiker argues, in "an age of global interdependence," the value of responsibility has taken on increased scope and significance. This is because "technological power and the increasing globalization of political, economic, and cultural power means a radical increase in human responsibility for human and planetary life."[6] In our contemporary globalizing world, the increase in human power has occasioned a quantum leap in human responsibility. Our responsibility for one another has grown exponentially in the past century, as we have become so deeply interdependent with persons across cultures, nations and continents. Responsibility and interdependence are thus inextricably linked in our planetary age.

Schweiker arrives at an "integrated" theory of responsibility, which produces the following categorical imperative: "*in all actions and relations we are to respect and enhance the integrity of life before God.*"[7] He even makes the claim that all purposive human action affirms the reality of God, by implicitly endorsing the value of being against its negation.[8] I find this claim dubious: am I affirming the value of being when I concentrate the sun's rays through a

[6] Schweiker, *Responsibility and Christian Ethics,* 191.
[7] Schweiker, *Responsibility and Christian Ethics,* 125.
[8] Schweiker, *Responsibility and Christian Ethics,* 207–8.

magnifying glass to torture a scrambling ant, or when I press a button to launch a nuclear strike incinerating the human race? My purpose in the present chapter, however, is not to refute Schweiker's theory of responsibility. Instead, I briefly mention his approach in order to signal that my own approach to responsibility will be somewhat less heavy-handed. I am not convinced that categorical imperatives and proofs of God's existence are helpful in the globalizing age Schweiker so helpfully depicts. Instead, I argue that in an age of planetary interdependence, the concept of responsibility needs to be guided by what Iris Marion Young calls open-ended "parameters of reasoning."[9] Categorical imperatives do not help one to respond effectively to the exceedingly complex and fluid networks of interdependence in which human communities are presently immersed. Rather, what is called for is a context-sensitive "responsiveness" that presupposes listening and careful attention to the face of the other before us.

In what follows, I introduce the tradition of responsibility ethics within Christian moral philosophy, over which H. Richard Niebuhr casts a long shadow. Next, I survey the work of several secular philosophers, some more analytical and others more politically focused. Finally, I synthesize key insights from responsibilists with some of the ethical principles from previous chapters in order to offer a preliminary sketch of "responsible interdependence," the *telos* of this dissertation.

Responsibility in Christian Ethics

H. Richard Niebuhr's Responsibility Ethics

H. Richard Niebuhr intended to devote his retirement to writing a three-volume treatise on Christian ethics but died shortly after retiring in 1962 from Yale, where he had taught for 31

[9] Iris Marion Young, *Responsibility for Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 144.

years. The book for which Niebuhr is best known, *The Responsible Self,* was envisioned as the first volume of that tripartite series, which was to contain a second volume on principles of Christian action and a third on applications of his ethics in the realms of family, economics, war, and domestic and global politics. *The Responsible Self* contains only passing references to many of the core themes his students encountered in his lectures, since Niebuhr intended to elaborate on these further in the second and third volumes.[10] Nevertheless, in that single volume Niebuhr managed to put forth a transformative paradigm for Christian ethics. In what follows I focus mainly on Niebuhr's ethics of responsibility as elaborated in *The Responsible Self,* before turning to examine how responsibility is related to interdependence in his book *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture.*

In agreement with feminists, process thinkers, phenomenologists and other proponents of relational ontology, Niebuhr held that human subjectivity arises from a particular standpoint in relation to a given historical community. Human beings are not self-contained rational individuals; sociality is primordial to selfhood.[11] But the paradigms of Christian ethics have traditionally assumed an isolated autonomous individual. Therefore, Niebuhr reasoned that an anthropology of social relations demanded a new interactional ethical paradigm. Niebuhr's notion of moral responsibility reflects his view that "all life has the character of responsiveness."[12]

Christian ethics, Niebuhr argues, has traditionally been defined by the paradigms of teleological and deontological ethics. Teleological ethics mobilizes the symbol "man the maker," drawing on Aristotle's insight that all action is designed toward an end. Ethics on this model is

[10] H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 1–9.
[11] Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self,* 45–46, 69–71.
[12] Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self,* 46.

an art like bridle-making or horse-riding—but ethics is a *techne* "whose material is human life itself." The teleological model understands human activity in terms of its purposiveness in achieving a given end. Deontological ethics interprets humanity as "man-the-citizen," living under a system of laws and obligations. This kind of ethics is more political than the teleological variety, asking to which republic of laws persons will submit themselves. Both paradigms, argues Niebuhr, assume that the fundamental ethical question is "What shall *I* do?" or "What shall *we* do?"[13]

The theme of responsibility offers a new symbol of "man-the-answerer," dialogically engaged in practices of response to actions upon the self. Human actions are responsive because they are predicated on interpretations of the actions upon them. In that case, prior to asking what I should do, Niebuhr argues that the fundamental ethical question is "What is going on?" Teleological ethics is oriented toward human purposiveness and therefore asks what is *good*; deontological ethics is law-based and therefore is concerned with what is *right*; responsibility ethics is interactional and relational and therefore asks what is *fitting* for this given moment.[14]

Niebuhr's analysis of what is going on is complex. Before I make a response to an action upon me, I anticipate how my response will be received, how it relates to the interests of the other responsible party/ies, and how they will interpret and respond to my response. Niebuhr writes:

> An agent's action is like a statement in a dialogue. Such a statement not only seeks to meet, as it were, or to fit into, the previous statement to which it is an answer, but is made in anticipation of reply. It looks forward as well as backward; it anticipates objections, confirmations, and corrections. It is made as part of a total conversation that leads forward and is to have meaning as a whole.[15]

[13] Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self,* 48–55.
[14] Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self,* 56–60.
[15] Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self,* 64.

Responsibility, for Niebuhr, has four essential components: 1) an action is a *response* to actions upon the agent; 2) the response is informed by the agent's *interpretation* of that prior action, as well as 3) an *anticipation of response* to the agent's action; and 4) this process takes place within a context of *social solidarity*, a community of persons.[16] Ultimately this community extends outward, toward moral accountability to a "universal community."[17]

Human subjects are always being acted upon by many other agents within an historical community. Ethics, for Niebuhr, is a process of interpretation and response to the actions of the many. But persons also seek a sense of internal unity, a coherent "self" uniting all the various social roles and relationships that comprise life. Now theology comes onto the scene, as Niebuhr evokes "the One beyond all the many," the creative power of being that unites the self and all persons in a universal moral community. Faith, in Niebuhr's view, consists in trusting this ultimate power, relying upon God rather than suspecting that ultimate power is evil. Here Niebuhr unfortunately generalizes "the way of the East," which views the self as a harmful illusion, thereby misperceiving ultimate power as an enemy. In contrast to this "faith in its negative form of distrust," Niebuhr argues that trust in ultimate power accomplishes self-integration: "I am one within myself as I encounter the One in all that acts upon me."[18] From this point Niebuhr formulates his central ethical imperative: "God is acting in all actions upon you. So respond to all actions upon you as to respond to his action."[19]

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[16] Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self,* 61–65.
[17] Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self,* 88.
[18] Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self,* 117–23. While Niebuhr's comments about "the way of the East" are chauvinistic, yet he recognizes even "among our companions who refuse to take the name of Christian" responses that are seemingly informed by the trust and love for being that Niebuhr has found only through Christ. "We believe that the reinterpretation of existence has come into the world and that it is not confined to those who say, 'Lord, Lord,' nor even necessarily best represented by them" (143).
[19] Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self,* 126.

Jesus Christ is depicted by Niebuhr as the one who responded most perfectly to all actions as a response to God's action, trusting in the signs of nature as assurances of an omnificent creator. A student of modern psychology, Niebuhr acknowledges that human beings are more "symbolic" than "rational" animals, and that languages are "symbolic systems" by which we convey meaning and describe our communal picture of reality. This is also the case in religious life: Niebuhr describes "the symbolic form of Jesus Christ." Along with Tillich, Niebuhr conceives of symbols as *participating* in reality, not merely as a "figure of speech."[20] It is through the symbol of Jesus that Christians participate in the One beyond all the many, attaining self-unification and unification with the rest of creation. There appears to be a certain universalist ethic shared by many theorists of interdependence: Just as King began to speak of himself as a "citizen of the world,"[21] so Niebuhr conceives of universal responsibility as "citizenship in the country of being itself."[22]

Niebuhr's responsibility ethics links up with his view of interdependence in an essay called "The Center of Value," among the supplementary essays that accompany his book *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture.* In that essay Niebuhr propounds a "relational theory of value" which defines the good by reference to a given being that orders and determines goodness of other beings. A relational theory of value is objective (rather than relative) in the sense that there is a definite good for humanity which is not contingent upon the desires of individual persons. However, it is relative (rather than objective) in the sense that value does not have independent existence but emerges only in relations between beings.[23] Value appears in the encounter

[20] Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self,* 155.
[21] Baldwin, "Living in the 'World House,'" 4.
[22] Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self*, 176.
[23] Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture: With Supplementary Essays* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 100–103.

between two or more beings, each of whom carries capacities or potentialities. In the encounter, one being may actualize, limit, or complement the potentialities of another. "Good" is whatever facilitates the realization of potentialities of a being, and "evil" is what thwarts that process. Meanwhile, the "right" is "that relation in which beings that are actually bound together in their interdependent existence consent to each other, actually further each other, in the realization of their potentialities." The right is "the goodness of relatedness in action."[24] Finally, the "ought" denotes what one owe to one another, as in sentences like "'A man ought to pay his debts to his creditors,' since he is bound to his creditors in an actual community of interdependent life." What is good, what is right, and what one ought to do emerge in "the realm of interdependent values, that is, of interdependent beings."[25]

All relational theories of value are religious, argues Niebuhr, whether the theorist acknowledges this or not. This is because one must dogmatically posit a "center of value" around which other values and beings are organized and from which they derive their value. For Niebuhr, then, the true center of value is God, the transcendent One beyond all the many.[26] However, in arguing that "every theory of value, so far as it is relational, is religious in character,"[27] Niebuhr does not have in mind a "traditional" sense of "religious." That is, he is not arguing that all relational value theories are monotheistic or Christian or that they proclaim a transcendent Creator (though this is of course Niebuhr's own view). Instead, he is pointing out that invocations of value—if one asserts that something is good, another may respond, *good for what?*—must begin by assuming that something is intrinsically good and the source of value (whether this is God, or "man," or knowledge, or science, or something else). "Dogma,

[24] Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture,* 105–7, 108.
[25] Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture,* 109.
[26] Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture,* 110–12.
[27] Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture,* 112.

doubtless, there must be, since the analysis of even of value cannot begin in the void but must start with an act of decision for some being as value-center," Niebuhr writes.[28]

Niebuhr contributes to the discussion of "responsible interdependence" in a number of ways. First, he importantly recognized that doing ethics demands a process of context-sensitive interpretation. It is not possible to elaborate an ethical system or prescribe the correct action absent a careful inventory of the complex historical social situation that sets the context for the decision, and an anticipation of possible responses to our response. The full import of an action cannot be fully understood if the action is considered in isolation. To offer a contemporary example: when decontextualized, the phrase "all lives matter" appears to be an unproblematic ethical statement, since it simply affirms the intrinsic value of life. However, its meaning changes when it is placed in the context of how it has in fact been used in the United States since 2014, namely, as a defensive retort intended to subsume and thereby silence a prior claim that "black lives matter." In that context, the statement is not in fact an innocuous affirmation of the value of life. Instead, it is generally deployed to shield white people from the consequences of the process of self-interrogation that follow from an inquiry into the differential treatment of black and white people in U.S. society. In the Kantian universalist ethical system, "all lives matter" passes the test of the categorical imperative: it is a maxim of the free will which can serve as a principle of universal legislation governing all actions between persons (perhaps to qualify as a "maxim" it would have to be reformulated as, e.g., "treat all lives as if they matter").[29] Niebuhr's responsibilist ethic is able to grasp the import of "all lives matter" because it questions the efficacy of categorical imperatives: viewed as "a statement in a dialogue" rather than in isolation, the reactionary and exclusive intent behind "all lives matter" is made plain.

[28] Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture,* 112.
[29] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 46.

Niebuhr's method enables the ethicist to grasp the full contextual import of an action embedded in a relational field of historical social beings.[30]

Second, Niebuhr shows that an ethics based in responsibility and relational value theory (e.g., an ethics of "interdependence") must be religious in character. As I hope to show later in the chapter, this insight is not always fully grasped by theorists of responsibility who regard themselves as secular philosophers. Fundamental responsibility is inherently a religious notion— where "religious" refers broadly to "ultimate concern"[31] rather than a particular religious tradition or belief— because it is organized around a center of value posited as the source and organizing principle of all other values. Whether or not the name of "God" is invoked, the responsibilist makes a claim that a fundamental responsibility for others resides at the core of what it means to be human, and this is a theological-anthropological claim.

Finally, Niebuhr connects responsibility and interdependence by invoking a universal solidarity among all human beings, a citizenship in a commonwealth of mutual responsibility and interdependence. By invoking universal accountability and social solidarity, Niebuhr invites ethicists to view themselves as participants in the struggle for social justice. Since accountable to all, it should follow that persons are responsible for securing the basic needs of all persons, removing any existing structures of oppression, and building up a society in which all persons can flourish. However, respondents to Niebuhr have pointed out that he failed to arrive at this conclusion. Niebuhr's ethics of responsibility is thus an unfinished project, both because Niebuhr did not foreground social injustice, and because he did not live to see his work through to completion.

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[30] Of course, Niebuhr did not reject categorical imperatives entirely. Indeed he developed a categorical imperative in *The Responsible Self*: "God is acting in all actions upon you. So respond to all actions upon you as to respond to his action" (126).

[31] Tillich, *Systematic Theology,* 14.

Responses to Niebuhr's Responsibility Ethics: Harrison

As Beverly Wildung Harrison labored intermittently for eight years on a dissertation on H. Richard Niebuhr's Christian moral philosophy, it was perhaps inevitable that "certain of his ideas, convictions, images have become part of *my* way of seeing the world." Indeed, Harrison acknowledged, she regarded Niebuhr as "*my* intellectual companion"[32] even as she argued that his work is bedeviled by "equivocations" and static typologies that sap its relevance to social problems and movements for social justice. She would demur from his insistence on "dispassion and objectivity," arguing herself that the divine is experientially accessible only through passionate engagement in struggles for justice.[33] Yet, Niebuhr's reconceptualization of the self as social, his insistence on historicity and context for ethics, and his notions of responsibility and interdependence were all pivotal in Harrison's development as an ethical thinker.

Harrison argues that Niebuhr's most important contribution to Christian ethics is his "phenomenology of the social self."[34] As discussed in chapter II, phenomenologists argue that the experience of the self emerges in "intersubjective" relations with others. So, for Niebuhr, "the rich intersubjectivity of self-critical existence"[35] occurs in historical communal contexts. An agent becomes self-aware through interpersonal and communal processes of *interpretation*. Niebuhr described a threefold process in which 1) I encounter an other who is interpreting my act; 2) this encounter evokes in me a "sense of the *otherness* of the *interpreter*"; 2) finally, through discovery of the "thouness" of the other, I come to awareness of "I-ness."[36] The

[32] Beverly Wildung Harrison, "H. Richard Niebuhr: Towards a Christian Moral Philosophy" (Doctoral thesis, Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1974), 1–2.
[33] Harrison, "H. Richard Niebuhr," 27–28; *Making the Connections,* 8.
[34] Harrison, "H. Richard Niebuhr," 162.
[35] Harrison, "H. Richard Niebuhr," 230.
[36] Harrison, "H. Richard Niebuhr," 206. Harrison acknowledges here that Niebuhr conflates social phenomenology with Martin Buber's "I-thou" relation.

experience of selfhood is always mediated through others. We exist in relational dependence on others, on communal interpretative processes that enable us to understand what we are doing and to self-correct when necessary, and on the sustaining power of the divine.[37]

Human sinfulness is, for Niebuhr, a denial of this fundamental interrelatedness. Human beings are prone to egotism and solipsism, to slough off the restraints imposed by others and to careen recklessly toward self-deification. However, Niebuhr writes, egotism is unsatisfying and ultimately breeds existential fear: "But this self is never an adequate god for a self. We are forced to recognize that many things bring satisfaction into our lives from the outside, as it were, and we are so interdependent on all the beings about us that we inevitably admire, adore, and look to others as sources of value and meaning to ourselves."[38] Relation to otherness (both human and divine) is the source of all being, and in turn the source of all value. Nothing exists or has meaning except in interdependent relationship. Our lives are lives of *response* to that which confronts us.

As a theological ethical symbol, responsibility signals that our assessment of what is taking place around us conditions our response and is thus the source of the moral quality of our actions. Thus, it is impossible for Niebuhr to judge the rightness or wrongness of an act apart from knowledge of the context: "no action taken as an atomic unit is responsible."[39] Egotism and its attendant existential fears stem from the illusion of separateness.

As a feminist social ethicist, Harrison is nearest to Niebuhr in the view that solipsism "asserts a specious form of autonomy which belies the actual foundational interdependence of being."[40] Yet, several factors inhibited Niebuhr from bringing his insights to bear on social-

[37] Harrison, "H. Richard Niebuhr," 266.
[38] Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture,* 119; cited in Harrison, "H. Richard Niebuhr," 251.
[39] Harrison, "H. Richard Niebuhr," 316, 178.
[40] Harrison, "H. Richard Niebuhr," 228.

ethical issues. He was disillusioned by perceiving the pitfalls of various political strategies of resistance to evil, whether active opposition or appeasement. Because of this, despite his insistence on the necessity of decision, Harrison notes that Niebuhr was often reluctant to advocate a particular political position, rendering his ethics remote and "formalistic."[41] Second, Niebuhr constructed a set of universal and static typologies of faith ("monotheism," "henotheism," "polytheism"), contradicting his view that faith and action are always context-dependent, historically conditioned and socially responsive. His backward-looking typologies stifle the dynamics of future-oriented self-critical reinterpretation that he elsewhere commends and are therefore "disastrous" for social ethics.[42] Finally, Niebuhr was so intent on distancing himself from his brother Reinhold's approach to ethics that he failed to develop a theory of power. He insisted on the need for "neighbor love," while neglecting to ask how that love might be realized institutionally through "the actual social *praxis* of human communities and movements."[43]

Attention to making those connections, of course, would be Harrison's own signal contribution to Christian social ethics. After eight years of living with Niebuhr, Harrison expressed her appreciation for both the poetry and the insights of his theological voice, while indicating that considerable work was left to do:

> Those of us who have been instructed by Niebuhr's struggle to lay out the lines of an approach to Christian ethics which embraces historicity and sociality cannot but try to envisage more concretely than he was able to do how the dynamics of the struggle for faithfulness of social selves are conjoined to the socio-political and economic dynamics of the present.[44]

[41] Harrison, "H. Richard Niebuhr," 239.
[42] Harrison, "H. Richard Niebuhr," 294, 297.
[43] Harrison, "H. Richard Niebuhr," 301–4.
[44] Harrison, "H. Richard Niebuhr," 348–49.

Responses to Niebuhr's Responsibility Ethics: Darryl M. Trimiew

Like Harrison, Darryl Trimiew is compelled by Niebuhr's model of the relational self and by his insight that God is always acting upon us and that therefore we should act in response to God's action. However, Trimiew points out that this approach poses a theodicy problem, compelling one to view even oppressive actions as the providential will of God. How are we to reconcile Niebuhr's ethics with a world in which forty thousand people starve to death daily, and in which a woman somewhere is raped every five seconds? Niebuhr never addressed these questions, Trimiew suggests, because he was an "empowered self" who did not consider marginalized selves as valid conversation partners. God as conceived by Niebuhr is not necessarily opposed to oppression: "Niebuhr's God, then, is not a God of liberation."[45] However, Trimiew does not think Niebuhr's project is opposed or irrelevant to theologies of liberation or the struggle for justice for black people. Instead, he finds in Niebuhr a valuable resource, and considers his book "an attempt to criticize, correct, and to extend Niebuhr's basic approach by a marginalized writer working from a different social location than that of Niebuhr."[46]

Trimiew considers three case studies of responsible selves in marginalized communities: Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, the abolitionist who advocated for repatriation for black Americans; Ida B. Wells-Barnett, the journalist and crusader against lynching; and race leader Francis J. Grimke, a founder of the Niagara movement who called both black and white people to accountability. Trimiew acknowledges that each figure had a distinct approach to moral responsibility not synthesizable with the others. However, a benefit of Niebuhr's ethics is that it allows for a variety of appropriate responses to any given situation. What all three individuals

[45] Darryl M. Trimiew, *Voices of the Silenced: The Responsible Self in a Marginalized Community* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1993), xi–xii, 83, 8.
[46] Trimiew, *Voices of the Silenced,* vii.

shared was a commitment to securing the basic needs of their people while insisting on dignity and self-respect.[47]

It is precisely this commitment to meeting basic needs that is missing in Niebuhr's ethics, argues Trimiew. Niebuhr's notion of moral responsibility must be supplemented by a "basic human needs approach," which interprets responsibility as a concrete call to ensure that every human being is free from oppression, has their basic needs fulfilled, and is recognized as a child of God. This is implied but not explicitly stated by Niebuhr's notion of humanity as the covenanted community, which leads him to espouse an ethics of universal moral responsibility. With regard to oppressed persons, this ethic should imply that "their deprivation or oppression cannot be understood to be theirs alone, and their suffering is an affront to the God we worship and serve and therefore must be an affront to us."[48] Trimiew writes that the responsible marginalized agents he studies shared Niebuhr's critique of the individualistic self. Echoing King's ethic of an inescapable mutuality, they lived "with the understanding that their own respective destinies would rise and fall with that of the community. As such, they fought for others as much as for themselves, if not more so." Trimiew's marginalized responsibilists understood that they could become fully human insofar as they worked to realize the full humanity of all.[49]

Responses to Niebuhr's Responsibility Ethics: Marcia Y. Riggs

In developing her "mediating ethic for black liberation," womanist ethicist Marcia Riggs relies on both Beverly Harrison's sociohistorical ethical method and the responsibilist ethics of H.

[47] Trimiew, *Voices of the Silenced,* 63–66.
[48] Trimiew, *Voices of the Silenced,* 86–87.
[49] Trimiew, *Voices of the Silenced,* 98–100.

Richard Niebuhr. Riggs utilizes their insights to confront a particular historical problem: the dissolution of intra-group transclass moral responsibility among black people following integration. Riggs turns to the reformers of the black women's club movement for moral lessons as she develops her mediating ethic. Their analysis "agrees with and/or extends the meaning of responsibility in Niebuhr's ethic."[50]

Class antagonism within the black community is nothing new, Riggs shows. There were intragroup stratifications in the antebellum North and South, both within free and enslaved groups. Often these stratifications were aligned with factors such as lightness or darkness of skin color, social standing, proximity of slaves to the big house, or owning a business or land. In all of these cases, black people of higher social standing sought to preserve and advance that standing within the white power structure, fracturing solidarity with their fellows of lower class.[51] However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries groups of black women began to form clubs to advance the interests of all black women as well as black men, regardless of class. Riggs allows that black women's clubs such as the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) were led by middle-class women who accepted the "Cult of True Womanhood" and ideals of white middle-class respectability, and that they often sought to prepare women for domestic jobs. However, she denies that therefore black club women hewed to the accommodationist line of Booker T. Washington. Instead, these women simply understood the factual situation of black women, which was such that even educated black women were often unable to access "skilled-labor" jobs. Thus, they pragmatically aimed to assist their sisters in making a living the best way possible. Riggs interprets the motto of the NACW, "Lifting as We Climb," as a reflection of "black women's understanding of the interconnectedness and

[50] Riggs, *Awake, Arise, & Act,* 5.
[51] Riggs, *Awake, Arise, & Act,* 25–28.

interrelatedness of Blacks as a group."[52] Their work may not have been radical, but Riggs insists there was a "latent liberative intent" in the Club Movement.[53]

The black women's club movement was deontological insofar as leaders evoked a duty to uplift their race; it was teleological in that club women aimed to cultivate certain virtues and good character traits. Above all, Riggs argues, black club women constructed what Niebuhr would call a "fitting" response to their social situation. They eschewed dogmatism, mediating between the accommodationist line of Washington and the protest line of W.E.B. Du Bois: "The women understood that in order to respond to their situation they needed to be flexible, holding in tension the specific aims of racial elevation, amelioration of gender and class oppression, and comprehensive reform of society for the good of all its citizens."[54] Riggs extends Niebuhr's ethical maxim, paraphrasing him from club women's perspective: "God is acting out of God's justice in all actions upon you. So respond to all actions upon you as to respond to God's justice."[55] As Harrison and Trimiew recognize, Niebuhr had an insufficient commitment to social justice, so his ethic needs to be "extended" to serve the needs of the black community today. Riggs' extension of Niebuhr's maxim, however, runs into the same problem Trimiew identifies: it suggests that God is acting out of God's justice in all actions (which would include oppressive actions).

Riggs' mediating ethic denotes "the *process* of acknowledging seemingly diametrically opposing positions and *creating* a response that in effect interposes and communicates *between* the opposing sides"; the goal is not compromise, but rather "*living in tension.*"[56] Drawing on the

[52] Riggs, *Awake, Arise, & Act,* 79.
[53] Riggs, *Awake, Arise, & Act,* 71–72.
[54] Riggs, *Awake, Arise, & Act,* 82, 80.
[55] Riggs, *Awake, Arise, & Act,* 86.
[56] Riggs, *Awake, Arise, & Act,* 77.

lessons of club women, Riggs recommends that black people today seek liberation by mediating between extremes of integrationism and nationalism, accommodative and aggressive activism, progress for individuals and progress for black people as a group, particularity and universalism, denominationalism and ecumenism, and so on.[57] Club women confronted "an interacting dialogue between realities and their faith that enabled them to discern their fitting response to be the formation of a movement."[58] Emulating them will require middle- and upper-class black people to renounce a degree of privilege and power, but in doing so they will access a "liberative interconnection," a sense of "moral responsibility based in sociohistoric relationality."[59]

More recently Riggs has expanded her mediating ethic, now writing of a pedagogical process of "Religious Ethical Mediation (REM)."[60] This process recognizes "energies of conflict," manifest in the omnipresence of violence in society, as well as "energies of the Spirit," manifest as omnipresence of justice. Riggs stresses that conflict can be creative, as interlocutors courageously confront one another to mediate between seemingly irreconcilable positions.[61]

Like Niebuhr, Riggs helpfully connects the themes of responsibility and interdependence: "black women understand their individual autonomy to be interdependent with the collective position of Blacks in this country."[62] However, where in Niebuhr's ethics responsibility and interdependence are envisioned as vague ideals, in terms of citizenship in a universal commonwealth, Riggs provides historical case studies that show how these ideals have been meaningfully enacted and offers counsel regarding how the successes of black club women

[57] Riggs, *Awake, Arise, & Act,* 90–91.
[58] Riggs, *Awake, Arise, & Act,* 97.
[59] Riggs, *Awake, Arise, & Act,* 84.
[60] Riggs, "'Loves the Spirit': Transformative Mediation as Pedagogical Practice," in *Conflict Transformation and Religion: Essays on Faith, Power, and Relationship*, ed. Ellen Ott Marshall (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 111.
[61] Riggs, "'Loves the Spirit," 117.
[62] Riggs, *Awake, Arise, & Act*, 2.

might be replicated. Secondly, Riggs builds on Niebuhr in constructing a mediating ethic that is more flexible than his austere radical monotheism wherein God is the "center of value." To Niebuhr, Riggs' focus on the intragroup responsibility of the black community would likely have smacked of "henotheism," a belief system he criticized for giving ultimate loyalty to a social group or nation, rather than to God, the appropriate object of monotheistic loyalty.[63] But Riggs is averse to rigidly dogmatic belief systems, insisting that authentic ethical reflection must ever be open to challenge and reevaluation. Riggs commends an approach to Christian ethics that is "more constructive than dogmatic—a mediating process of engaging and reengaging, interpreting and reinterpreting, traditional and new sources for ethical reflection and moral agency."[64] This may be considered a positive development of Niebuhr's responsibility ethic, a more agile approach—what Laurel Schneider calls a "supple posture" of multiplicity[65]—characterized by a willingness to engage, be challenged by, and learn from a variety of opposing and seemingly incommensurable viewpoints. Given the hydra-headed behemoth of hegemonic power—in its white supremacist, patriarchal, cissexist, heterosexist, classist, ableist, imperialist, Christian chauvinist, xenophobic, and other forms—perhaps such an adaptive, pragmatic and nondogmatic approach represents humanity's best chance to retain and attain the most basic of womanist values: survival and quality of life.[66]

Thus far I have considered the discourse of responsibility within Christian ethics, where H. Richard Niebuhr looms large. However, there is a parallel discourse concerning moral responsibility within philosophy, from which Niebuhr is almost entirely absent. In order to

[63] Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture*, 25.
[64] Riggs, *Awake, Arise, & Act*, 98.
[65] Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism,* 82.
[66] Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), 5.

provide a fuller picture of the concept of responsibility, I offer a reading of some of that literature below.

Responsibility in Philosophical Ethics

The editors of the 2018 volume *Social Dimensions of Moral Responsibility* observe that much of the philosophical literature on moral responsibility is preoccupied with metaphysical debates about free will versus determinism.[67] Such debates misleadingly presume the existence of atomized individual agents, and ignore the influence of social factors such as identity markers and structural oppressions.[68] These models do not work well in the "non-ideal social contexts" that we actually experience. The editors commend instead a "relational autonomy" approach (not unlike the "relational ontology" considered in the fourth chapter), which considers human agency within a socio-culturally embedded context, rather than in a universalist vacuum.[69] The contributing authors helpfully point out that adjudicating the question of moral responsibility requires attending to "the structure-agency problem," or the "agency dilemma": Namely, how can we acknowledge that structural injustice constrains the agency of oppressed persons, without thereby denying autonomy and personhood to such persons?[70] The essays in this volume consider a variety of responses to this question, as well as the related question of whether

[67] Katrina Hutchison, Catriona Mackenzie, and Marina Oshana, "Introduction: Moral Responsibility in Contexts of Structural Injustice," in *Social Dimensions of Moral Responsibility*, ed. Katrina Hutchison, Catriona Mackenzie, and Marina Oshana (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 2. For an example of this kind of debate, see John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000); K. E. Boxer, *Rethinking Responsibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Fischer and Ravizza aim to "show how our conception of ourselves as persons can be protected from the charge posed by the possible truth of causal determinism" (16). Similarly, Boxer's book "is about moral responsibility and whether such responsibility is compatible with causal determinism" (1).
[68] Catriona Mackenzie, "Moral Responsibility and the Social Dynamics of Power and Oppression," in Hutchison, Mackenzie, and Oshana, eds., 59; Neil Levy, "Socializing Responsibility," in Hutchison, Mackenzie, and Oshana, eds., 185; Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 23.
[69] Hutchison, Mackenzie, and Oshana, "Introduction," 9.
[70] Manuel Vargas, "The Social Construction of Agency and Responsibility: Oppression, Politics and Moral Ecology," in Hutchison, Mackenzie, and Oshana, eds., 112; Levy, "Socializing Responsibility," 233.

oppressors can rightfully be blamed for reproducing hateful (e.g. racist or sexist) attitudes if such attitudes are a result of their socialization (and therefore not "freely chosen").[71]

These questions are vital, but they remain confined within the free will-determinism debate. They consider only the "backward-looking" problem of whether and how it is appropriate to assign praise or blame to agents' actions when they are not completely free. The contributors mostly do not consider the "forward-looking"[72] constructive question, given that human agency is enacted in a context of social oppressions, what are our responsibilities to remediate those injustices? Michael McKenna, for instance, writes that both his proposal and that of the influential ethicist P.F. Strawson are useful as "descriptive" and "diagnostic" appraisals of how one actually structures responsibility. But as a "prescriptive resource," both accounts are "completely silent."[73] And Elinor Mason, after arguing that we "should" take certain responsibilities in order to be decent members of society, quickly qualifies that "the 'should' here is normative, but it does not indicate a moral duty". That is, Mason only intends to argue that *if* we claim to be committed to certain relationships, "we must act in certain ways" in order to fulfill those commitments.[74]

Some of the contributors, such as Marina Oshana, explore more practical social implications of their theories. Oshana notes that responsibility practices are often characterized by asymmetries of power, with disparities in who sets the rules, decides what kinds of evidence are admissible, and renders verdicts regarding responsibility. Oshana cites her own experience,

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[71] Elinor Mason, "Respecting Each Other and Taking Responsibility for Our Biases," in Hutchison, Mackenzie, and Oshana, eds., 163.
[72] The distinction between "backward-looking" and "forward-looking" senses of responsibility is prominent in Iris Marion Young's analysis of Hannah Arendt in Young's book *Responsibility for Justice.* I discuss Young's book later in this chapter.
[73] Michael McKenna, "Power, Social Inequities, and the Conversational Theory of Moral Responsibility," in Hutchison, Mackenzie, and Oshana, eds., 53.
[74] Mason, "Respecting Each Other and Taking Responsibility for Our Biases," 176–77.

as a black woman philosophy professor, of being disrespected by students who constantly question her qualifications. She also considers the case of Trayvon Martin, who was unfairly judged as guilty and murdered by George Zimmerman. Overall, however, the volume's contributors shy away from exploring the practical implications of their guiding insights, or from making constructive normative proposals. Perhaps they are worried (as theological ethicists generally are not) that taking a normative stance would jeopardize their "objective" posture. Still, what, one wonders, is the purpose of broadening the question of moral responsibility to include the influences of social injustices, if one is going to remain "completely silent" about what ought to be done to remediate these injustices? Remaining silent, quite ironically, is itself an abdication of the "social dimensions of moral responsibility" with which the authors are purportedly concerned. In the remainder of this section, I will consider the work of two moral/political philosophers who venture constructive normative proposals, Larry May and Iris Marion Young. Not incidentally, both thinkers derive moral responsibility from the fact of interdependence.

Larry May and Organic Solidarity

May does not mention Niebuhr anywhere in his book *The Socially Responsive Self,* but his approach shares a number of features with Niebuhr's (beyond the similar book titles). May notes that he is uncomfortable when people ask whether he is a deontologist, utilitarian or virtue ethicist. He commends instead an approach to ethics focused on "individuals in relationships," in which he de-emphasizes rules and obligations and focuses instead on responsiveness to particular persons and situations, meeting the needs of concrete individuals, and attending to the emotions that drive moral action. May is concerned with how people actually make decisions, which is almost never by reference to a categorical imperative: This is not how a "responsive parent

would think about the concrete needs and desires of the child"[75] (I quoted a similar example in Harrison's conception of "doing ethics" in chapter V). May draws on the social phenomenology of Alfred Schutz to argue that in a social relationship I am aware not only of the other's presence, but also of the way in which the other regards me. Niebuhr, who was also informed by phenomenology, had arrived at the same conclusion. Selfhood, for May as for Niebuhr, is not an essence but a relational social "process" deriving from group memberships. The self is "a group of commitments that are all interrelated."[76]

May is concerned with how to foster more profound bonds of social solidarity, which he argues happens most naturally at the local level. Although fundamental human solidarity is the ultimate goal, we are unlikely to feel strong bonds of attachment with others (at least at first) solely by virtue of our common humanity. Instead, drawing on the sociologist Emile Durkheim, May argues that solidarity develops "organically" in the organization of communities. Communities develop a division of labor, yielding an "ensuing interdependence which provides social cohesion."[77] If this sense of social solidarity can be gradually extended, May argues, a sense of global solidarity and thus of global responsibility can be achieved.

May shares with nature-minded theologians an appreciation for the ethical lessons of the natural world. He notes that people instinctively respond to crying babies, and that dolphins have been known to rescue tuna, other dolphins, and even people in distress. These facts, May surmises, "lend support for some kind of natural feeling of responsiveness to the needs of others."[78] However, May's example, as well as his valuation of interdependence and social

[75] Larry May, *The Socially Responsive Self: Social Theory and Professional Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 2, 88-89.
[76] May, *The Socially Responsive Self,* 14, 16, 24.
[77] May, *The Socially Responsive Self,* 44–46, 28–29.
[78] May, *The Socially Responsive Self,* 1.

solidarity, runs into the same set of problems encountered throughout this study. I can easily produce examples in which human beings have been non-responsive or vicious towards crying babies; dolphins are carnivorous predators; some forms of solidarity (e.g., most forms of white racial solidarity) do not seem susceptible of being extended outward to encompass a feeling of responsibility for the whole of humanity. May could avoid these problems by naming his ultimate commitments. That is, he might argue that white racial solidarity is irresponsible because it disregards the intrinsic value of human life. But such pronouncements are perhaps too close to theology for comfort. May does invoke the "intrinsic value" of political participation, but he does not offer a philosophical justification for the invocation of intrinsic value. Perhaps Niebuhr is correct that all relational theories of value are religious, whether explicitly or implicitly, because they require a "center of value" from which other values are derived.[79]

Iris Marion Young and Social Structure

Like Niebuhr, Iris Marion Young's book on responsibility was to be the last book of her life. She died of esophageal cancer in 2006 while revising *Responsibility for Justice,* the central question of which is, "how should we as individuals think about our own responsibility in relation to social injustice?"[80] Young critiques the discourse of "personal responsibility" that has become politically fashionable since the 1980s. This discourse, accepted by liberals and conservatives alike, assumes that the cause of poverty is the irresponsible behavior of poor people. Nonpoor people are held to be simply more responsible (where responsibility means taking care of oneself and one's family). Welfare policies of the mid-twentieth century were founded on the idea that

[79] Even relational theologies that resist hierarchical metaphors for God cannot dispense with a kind of "center of value." Harrison's "God-in-relation," Schneider's "a-centered relation," and Holmes' "omnicentricity" all eschew a localized center of value: Instead, they place the "center of value" in the relation itself.
[80] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 15.

modern subjects are "interdependent" and connected through complex socioeconomic networks, and that therefore "people owe one another a certain measure of reciprocal care because of these interdependencies."[81] Such thinkers as Charles Murray and Lawrence Mead argue that such "entitlements" foster undue dependency on government and erode personal responsibility. In their view, the Civil Rights movement removed all vestiges of discrimination from American life, and American society since that time has provided the same basic freedoms and opportunities to all. But, Young replies, this position completely ignores the presence of social structures that constrain opportunities for poor people and privilege the nonpoor, often along lines of race and gender. While she admits that "structure is notoriously difficult to define," Young defines the concept as a processual construction of a macro social environment that constrains and enables actors and operates via the "accumulated outcomes" of masses of individuals enacting private projects. These uncoordinated accumulations produce consequences unintended by these masses of individuals.[82] (Recall Andrew Scott's discussion of this phenomenon in the third chapter: the globalizing world is an undirected process, an "apurposive" aggregate of individual actors, each pursuing their own self-interest with no thought to cascading effects and unintended consequences. Scott cites the formation of the nation-state system, the Great Depression, environmental pollution and depletion of natural resources, technological development, and more as examples of undirected cumulative processes. But since 1945, the pace of interaction and technological development has accelerated such that catastrophes are likely.[83])

[81] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 9.
[82] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 10-21, 52–63.
[83] Scott, *The Dynamics of Interdependence,* 23–37.

What, then, are persons' responsibilities relative to social structures? Young observes that a traditional "liability model" of responsibility cannot answer this question. On this model, blame is assigned to the person who directly causes harm. However, social structures are unintended consequences produced by the uncoordinated actions of masses of individuals. No actor self-consciously caused the structures to arise, and thus on the traditional model no one is responsible. For this reason, Young proposes a "social connection model of responsibility," in which anyone who participates in the processes that produce structural injustice shares responsibility for those outcomes. Social responsibility means that we have an obligation to intervene to alleviate injustices. What someone's particular obligations are depends on their social position relative to the injustice. Where many moral philosophers confine themselves to a backward-looking model of liability, Young proposes a forward-looking conception of shared responsibility for justice. Like May, she derives responsibility from interdependence: "Our responsibility derives from belonging together with others in a system of interdependent processes of cooperation and competition through which we seek benefits and aim to realize projects."[84]

Social responsibility is discharged through collective action, which requires solidarity. Solidarity names not homogeneity or symmetry of power, but a relationship across difference and a decision to stand together. Further, solidarity is not given but must be continually nurtured: "solidarity must always be *forged* and *reforged.* Solidarity is firm but fragile."[85] Young offers the anti-sweatshop movement as an example of collective action in solidarity. The sweatshop industry, like so many social-structural processes, involves a complex chain of production in which *at every level* actors can claim, with some legitimacy, that they have no choice but to act

[84] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 96–97, 104-105.
[85] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 120.

as they do. Factory managers can claim that they must suppress wages, or else the competition will undercut their prices and they will be forced to lay off workers. Suppliers argue they have no choice but to seek out the cheapest factories with which to do business, or they risk passing higher costs on to retailers and losing contracts. Retailers will claim that market forces require them to provide clothing at discount prices, and that furthermore they are not responsible for the labor practices of the factories that supply their materials across the globe. Governments in poor nations can claim that they cannot regulate these industries because their citizens desperately need jobs, and they do not have a sufficient tax base to fund effective regulatory agencies immune from corruption. All these factors and more combine to produce a feeling of "vertigo" in the face of intransigent social structures, such that facing our social responsibilities becomes an immensely challenging task. Yet, the anti-sweatshop movement, led by students who protested their universities contracting with companies that utilize sweatshop labor to produce university apparel, has achieved some measurable successes through collective action in global transclass solidarity.[86]

Young's intervention helpfully moves the philosophical debate about social responsibility past the impasse of blame and guilt, and beyond the question of free will and determinism, toward a constructive appraisal of shared accountability and solidarity for justice. Like May, however, she problematically accepts that the bare fact of interdependence is the ground of solidarity. Young makes assumptions such as "most people are ready to agree that human beings have some moral obligations to other people just because they are human."[87] Is this assertion obviously true? If it is, then why do human communities fail over and again to honor those moral obligations? Why do the basic human needs of so many remain persistently unmet?

[86] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 125–34.
[87] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 136.

Synthesizing Insights from Christian Ethicists and Philosophers

This chapter has asked whether the concept of responsibility provides for a way to *justify* interdependence. Responsibility, as Levinas says, reaches beyond being, enthusing values with dynamic moral force. What then are the salient features of responsibility that can guide interdependence toward the good?

The Christian theological ethicists considered here have offered a nuanced portrayal of responsibility. From Niebuhr, one learns that ethics is relational, responsive, and context-sensitive, and that selecting the fitting response demands a prior interpretation of what is going on. Further, one learns that relational theories of value (such as an ethics of interdependence) require an ultimate center of value. Harrison shows that responsibility ethics can be usefully placed in the service of collective efforts for justice and need not be reduce to formal typologies of faith. From Trimiew, one learns that the character of people's social responsibilities varies according to their social location, and that the primary social responsibility is to ensure that the basic needs of all persons are met and that their dignity is recognized. Riggs shows that the "fitting" response mediates between dogmatic extremes, persisting amid tension and contradiction to ensure the well-being of our communities.

The philosophical responsibilists taken up in this chapter have also offered important insights. The contributors to the volume *Social Dimensions of Moral Responsibility* show that assessing agents' capacity to be responsible requires an assessment of the "non-ideal social contexts" in which they live. Proper assessment of these contexts demands a balance between acknowledging the constraints of social structures and valuing the agency of persons seeking to navigate those structures. From Larry May, one learns that responsibility emerges politically as

solidarity, which is best cultivated at the local level and expanded outward from there, ideally encompassing the entire human community. Young helps to conceive of responsibility in relation to complex social structures, which are not possible under the traditional "liability" model. On her social connection model, responsibility for one another derives from participation in interdependent social processes.

According to Schweiker, the meta-ethical task is the justification of values. Perhaps, then, rather than responsibility justifying interdependence, the two concepts dialectically justify one another. *Interdependence justifies responsibility,* because responsibility cannot be adequately conceived in terms of atomized, autonomous, rational agents plugging in categorical imperatives. Instead, responsibility takes shape within dynamic and interactive networks of agents in interdependent relationship. And likewise, *responsibility justifies interdependence,* because the bare empirical fact of interdependence (whether of race, gender, or economy, or whether at the quantum, biological, or cosmic level) is by itself ethically ambiguous. For interdependence to serve as an ethical value for social justice, it must be wedded to a feeling of responsibility for others, of solidarity and commitment to meeting basic needs and honoring dignity. Responsible interdependence is thus a two-way street.

Conclusion: Responsible Interdependence

It is now possible to offer a provisional synthesis of the features of "responsible interdependence" that have emerged over the course of this dissertation. By enumerating these features, I do not dictate a categorical imperative or lasso "the Good" with a domesticating

definition. Instead, I offer these insights as "parameters of reasoning,"[88] within which interdependence tends to operate *responsibly* in the service of social goods.

An ethics of responsible interdependence will be *reflexively self-critical*. It will be adept at assessing the pitfalls and aporias of ethical systems and ethical values (chapter I). It will operate with a *relational ontology and intersubjective epistemology,* an *intersectional social analysis,* and the *spirituality and social concern of interbeing* (chapter II). It will be a *"grown-up ethics"* that lives in the tensions, navigates the ambiguities of ethical social life, and has a keen sensitivity to the subtle operations of hegemonic power (chapter III). Emulating the responsible networks of marginalized persons including enslaved communities, mutual aid societies and black club women, responsible interdependence begins with a *commitment to the well-being of oppressed peoples* (III). It draws lessons from the entanglement of our universe, viewing the *quanto-bio-cosmic ontological interdependence* of things as a sign of our sharing in being and moving toward a common purpose. Then again, it does not do so naively, but recognizes as well the malevolent face of the natural world (chapter IV). Responsible interdependence is *affective and embodied*, connecting to the transcendent power of relation as it manifests in the visceral feelings that draw persons toward one another (chapter V). Politically it involves more than "token integration," but *demands a real sharing in power*, and invites an *expanded sense of self-interest*, so that one's conception of one's personal interests will be coextensive with the common good (VI). Finally, responsible interdependence requires *listening to develop a context-sensitive interpretation of what is going on, guided by an analysis of power and a solidaristic commitment to justice* (chapter VII).

[88] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 144.

These are the parameters of reasoning that inform a social ethics of responsible interdependence. When these parameters guide ethical action, the moral ambiguity of interdependence is substantially mitigated. I dare not say "eliminated," for the responsible skepticism of deconstruction informs me well about the impossibility of ethics. The parameters surely contain pitfalls of their own. Taken as dogma, they will doubtless calcify into static strictures, stone tablets just begging to be smashed. Instead, it is hoped that these reflections on interdependence can themselves be interdependent with other streams of thought, new, contrasting (yes, even "complementary") insights. For "responsible interdependence" to be responsible, it can only be envisioned as a statement in a dialogue, as one momentary interpretation, offered in the hopeful expectation of a cooperative response yet to come.

VIII. CONCLUSION: RESPONSIBLE INTERDEPENDENCE IN PRACTICE

> With awe and wonder you look around, recognizing the preciousness of the earth, the sanctity of every human being on the planet, the ultimate unity and interdependence of all beings – somos todos un paíz.[1] Love swells in your body and shoots out of your heart chakra, linking you to everyone/everything—the aboriginals in Australia, the crows in the forest, the vast Pacific Ocean. You share a category of identity wider than any social position or racial label. This conocimiento motivates you to work actively to see that no harm comes to people, animals, ocean – to take up spiritual activism and the work of healing.
>
> - Gloria Anzaldúa[2]

This passage from borderlands poet-theorist Gloria Anzaldúa was read at my wedding to my partner Shannon. At the time I selected the passage, I was not yet theoretically interested in interdependence. A year later, I cited the first sentence as an opening epigraph for my statement of purpose in applying for doctoral studies in ethics. The guiding question of that statement was "how do we practice interdependence?" At that time, I did not yet have a critical view of interdependence, but assumed it as an unqualified ethical value. Now, reading back over the passage once more, I consider Anzaldúa's the most apt expression of responsible interdependence that I have witnessed.

Anzaldúa and the Liminality of *Nepantla*

The experience of "conversion"[3] Anzaldúa describes is in fact only the fourth of seven steps along the path of *conocimiento* (awareness). The twisting path is marked by ruptures and bouts of depression and despair, and conflicts and reassessments. All of the steps are expressions of *nepantla*, a Nahuatl word meaning "liminal, transitional space."[4] *Nepantla* is itself a step along

[1] "We are all one country" (my translation).
[2] Gloria Anzaldúa, "now let us shift," 558.
[3] Anzaldúa, "now let us shift," 545.
[4] Anzaldúa, "now let us shift," 544.

the path of *conocimiento*, but it also marks the transition between steps, which overlap and retrace one another. The journey along the path, Anzaldúa writes, is precipitated by a traumatic experience of rupture, which causes the seeker to question their faith in the normative values of Western culture, and to realize that their personhood is not confined to static categories of identity like race, class, gender, and sexual identity. "Nothing is fixed," the seeker realizes, because "the pulse of existence, the heart of the universe is fluid. Identity, like a river, is always changing, always in transition, always in nepantla."[5]

The realization of interdependence, in Anzaldúa's telling, is an experience of awareness that is not only rational but somatic, creative, emotional, and spiritual. *Conocimiento* enables Anzaldúa to perceive that "the world, from the depth of the sea to the highest mountain, is alive, intelligent, ensouled."[6] The spiritual experience Anzaldúa describes leads to an active commitment to healing social suffering. What does this look like in practice? For Anzaldúa, the *nepantlera* is one who inhabits "the in-between place,"[7] a liminal space beyond the boundaries of the body, beyond static identity categories and narratives of supremacy. This awareness perceives the human worth of each person, even those whose minds and hearts have been distorted by supremacist logics (although this acknowledgment does *not* mean that we must remain in relationship with persons committed to perpetuating such abuses). In Anzaldúa's experience, being a *nepantlera* meant navigating conflicts over white racism within the feminist movement, mediating between intransigent white women bent on dominating academic conferences and women of color whose initial reaction was to walk out. Being a *nepantlera*, in

[5] Anzaldúa, "now let us shift," 556.
[6] Anzaldúa, "now let us shift," 560.
[7] Anzaldúa, "now let us shift," 569.

her experience, meant using her skills of perception and communication to forge alliances between disparate groups working for compatible goals.[8]

The awareness of interdependence, for Anzaldúa, is a consciousness of relatedness that enables one to slough off traditional categories, but does not therefore impose a *sameness*, some generic "humanity" to which all must conform. Instead, *conocimiento* enables persons to gather the best from their traditions while learning from and incorporating others, in a *mestizaje* (mixture) process of constructing new forms of identity. Anzaldúa claims that with this awareness, even "some whites embody a woman-of-color consciousness, and some people of color, a 'white' consciousness."[9] This assertion may be too strong—surely there are many forms of "woman-of-color consciousness," with which white persons can empathize and understand to an extent, but for whites to "embody" the consciousness of people of color may tend toward appropriation. Nevertheless, Anzaldúa cuts to the core of responsible interdependence for privileged persons when she writes, "Conocimiento of our interconnectivity encourages white women to examine and deconstruct racism and 'whiteness.'"[10]

I begin this final chapter by reflecting on the work of Anzaldúa because she addresses the question that has continued to haunt my undulating path toward *conocimiento*, from that experimental statement of purpose to the conclusion of this dissertation: how do we practice interdependence? I have been considering this question all along, developing from the insights of a great many ethicists, theologians, and activists a *mestizaje* or pastiche definition of responsible interdependence as a value for social ethics. In this final step along this dissertation's journey toward *conocimiento*, I will consider two successful emerging attempts to put interdependence

[8] Anzaldúa, "now let us shift," 563–68.
[9] Anzaldúa, "now let us shift," 570.
[10] Anzaldúa, "now let us shift," 571.

into practice in the service of justice: the Mississippi cooperative network Cooperation Jackson, and a new vision for international labor solidarity in Louisville, Kentucky. The chapter finds further support for the claim that interdependence is fundamental in contemporary social movements in the book *Emergent Strategy* by adrienne maree brown. I then consider two remaining values adjacent to interdependence: "mutuality" and the African concept *ubuntu.* Finally, I will name some lingering questions this dissertation has failed to address, and bring the discussion to an end. The aim of this concluding chapter is to show that responsible interdependence is not just an ethereal idea. It takes shape in the praxis of organizers who are committed to enacting the impossible.

Cooperation Jackson

Economic cooperatives have been a central feature of African American communal life through the history of this country.[11] In 2015 a group called "Cooperation Jackson" emerged with the ambitious aim of transforming the economy of Jackson, Mississippi through a network of cooperatives promoting "sustainable community development, economic democracy, and community ownership."[12] This is a formidable task, as the median household income in Jackson is just over $35,000 and the poverty rate is nearly 29%. The Jackson community, which is more than 80% black,[13] has battled "decades of economic divestment, deindustrialization, and suburban flight fostered by structural racism and major shifts in United States and global economy following World War II." During the Jim Crow period Mississippi was a hotbed of

[11] See Jessica Gordon Nembhard, *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice*.
[12] "Cooperation Jackson," Cooperation Jackson, accessed July 4, 2019, https://cooperationjackson.org.
[13] "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Jackson City, Mississippi," accessed July 4, 2019, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/jacksoncitymississippi.

white terrorism, with 534 black Missippians lynched between 1882 and 1940—the highest total of any state during that period.[14] With these realities in mind, Cooperation Jackson is constructing a diverse network of cooperatives to organize and galvanize poor residents, especially black and Latinx communities. The organization believes that empowering these populations "will be a catalyst for the democratization of our economy and society overall."[15]

The work of Cooperation Jackson is grounded in forty years of organizing by black radicals including the New Afrikan People's Organization, the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, and the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Africa. Organizers produced an ambitious "Jackson-Kush Plan" to revolutionize the economy and succeeded in 2013 in electing the civil rights attorney Chokwe Lumumba as mayor of Jackson (with 90% of the vote). Lumumba died unexpectedly after serving just seven months in office. His son Antar was later elected mayor with 93% of the vote in 2017. In the minds of organizers like Kali Akuno, the principal author of the Jackson-Kush plan, Cooperation Jackson is a phase of a larger revolutionary struggle against white supremacist neoliberalism and "the United States settler-colonialist state." The organizers ambitiously envision the experiment in Jackson as a seedling of global transformation toward socialism, *by means of cooperatives and radical democracy*.[16]

Akuno writes, "Cooperation Jackson is the sum-total of four interconnected and interdependent institutions": A worker cooperative federation, an incubator for new cooperatives, a center for education and training, and a cooperative financial institution. In place of the ruthless neoliberal capitalist system, the organization hopes to foster a "solidarity economy" based in the values of "cooperation and sharing, social responsibility, sustainability, equity and justice." They

[14] Rukia Lumumba, "Foreword: All Roads Lead to Jackson," in Akuno and Nangwaya, eds., xii.
[15] "Cooperation Jackson."
[16] Akuno and Nangwaya, *Jackson Rising*, 3, 24, 44–45, 167, 245, 279.

look for inspiration to the work of the Mondragón network of cooperatives in Spain and the Italian Emilia-Romagna network, as well as Fannie Lou Hamer, a founding leader of the Freedom Democratic Party and the Freedom Farm Cooperative.[17]

Cooperation Jackson has achieved astounding successes in its brief existence. The organization formed a community land trust (which it named in Hamer's honor), by purchasing vacant lots and abandoned homes and commercial properties. The organization presently controls more than 40 properties in its target area.[18] The goal is to rehabilitate these into housing cooperatives along the "Eco-Village model," which is largely energy self-sustaining and virtually waste-free. Cooperation Jackson's Freedom Farms cooperative offers shares of fresh, naturally grown produce to local residents. Its Center for Community Production facilitates the work of local artisans and manufacturers. And a Green Team lawn care service generates income. The organization's 2018 year-end drive hauled in nearly $300,000 toward the expansion of the Community Land Trust and Eco-Village. In 2019, Cooperation Jackson launched a $500,000 fundraising drive toward creating "a multipurpose space that will house a) a hydroponic and aquaponic growing operation, b) a café and catering operation, c) a venue to host local artisans and d) a venue to host weekly and/or monthly farmers markets and swap meets." The organization has hosted an array of community events including a training on the "Trueke system," which organizes the exchange of products, labor, and knowledge without the need for money. There are also plans in the works to launch cooperatives in the areas of construction, waste management/recycling, auto detail, health care, child care, food service/catering, day-labor/temp workers, security services, arts and cultural production, and more.[19]

[17] Kali Akuno, "Build and Fight: The Program and Strategy of Cooperation Jackson," in Akuno and Nangwaya, eds., 15; "Cooperation Jackson."
[18] Akuno, "Build and Fight," 25.
[19] "Cooperation Jackson."

Cooperation Jackson has also begun to reach out beyond the borders of Mississippi. In 2018, it hosted the first North American meeting of the EcoSocialist International; participated in the Finnish Social Forum; shared best practices with the Solidarity Economy Initiative in Boston, MA; and participated in a "Fearless Cities Municipalist Summit", which battles gentrification and promotes community development. This remarkable network of cooperatives has already made significant progress toward its goal to provide affordable, green housing and offer fulfilling living wage employment to all residents. Ultimately, Cooperation Jackson hopes to transform the economy through cooperatives, replacing cutthroat capitalism with economic democracy. Akuno admits that the vision of Cooperation Jackson might be fairly criticized as unrealistic and utopian. "But, we make no apologies for our approach," he insists. "We firmly believe that we must demand the impossible, both of the world and of ourselves, in order to change both subjects."[20] No reference is made here to Derrida's philosophy of the impossibility and necessity of ethics. But the Jackson cooperators are an embodiment of that poignant paradox.

The work of the organizers of Cooperation Jackson offers a template for putting responsible interdependence into practice. As I concluded in the previous chapter, an ethical posture of responsible interdependence is reflexively self-critical; is guided by a relational ontology and intersubjective epistemology, an intersectional analysis and a social spirituality of interbeing; is a "grown-up ethics" that lives in the tensions and attends to the subtlety of hegemonic power; is committed to the well-being of oppressed persons; draws inspiration from the ontological interdependence of the quanto-bio-cosmic spheres of nature; is affective and embodied; demands a sharing in power; invokes an expanded sense of self-interest and a commitment to the common good; and requires listening to develop a context-sensitive

[20] "Cooperation Jackson"; Akuno, "Build and Fight," 11.

interpretation of what is going on with concrete actions in solidarity for justice. Cooperation Jackson shows that this definition is no mere laundry list of ethical ideals. The movement expertly critiques and navigates structures of hegemonic power, envisioning itself "serving as a counter-hegemonic force with the capacity to democratically transform the economy."[21] Organizers are only too aware of the danger of cooperatives "being co-opted"[22] by hegemonic power (see chapter III). Cooperation Jackson is an "eco-socialist" [23] movement, both committed to environmental sustainability and envisioning its network as an interdependent "living system."[24] The organizers perceive "the *ecological limits of the capitalist system*": The dream of endless growth is impossible, since the planet's resources are finite.[25] The organization is determined to "give full power to the owner-workers to control the co-ops," and ultimately to "place the ownership and control over the primary means of production directly in the hands of the Black working class of Jackson."[26] Further, Cooperation Jackson is guided by a vision of the common good, insofar as it defines a cooperative as "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise."[27] The organizers believe that by empowering the most marginalized persons, the entire society can be transformed for the benefit of all. Cooperation Jackson operates with an explicit intersectional analysis and

[21] Akuno, "Build and Fight," 7.
[22] Akuno and Nangwaya, "Toward Economic Democracy, Labor Self-Management and Self-Determination," in Akuno and Nangwaya, eds., 59.
[23] Akuno, "Build and Fight," 3. Akuno writes, "The central dynamic in our quest is to upend the old aims, norms, processes and relationships of capitalist development, which have little to no regard for the preservation of the environment and ecology, and replace them with new norms that are fixed first and foremost on repairing the damage done to our environment and ecosystems, and creating new systems that will ultimately regenerate the bounty of life on our planet, in all its diversity" (5).
[24] Akuno, "Build and Fight," 25.
[25] Akuno, "Build and Fight," 11.
[26] "Cooperation Jackson"; Akuno, "Build and Fight," 3.
[27] "Cooperation Jackson."

commitment to decolonial practice and gender justice.[28] While the organizers do not use the language of ontology or epistemology, it is clear that they are invested in a process of communal discernment, listening, and power-sharing in which all persons are valued as part of an interconnected whole. As I noted above, they even invoke "interdependence"[29] in their long-term vision for their institutions. Cooperation Jackson shows how the awareness of interdependence, when wedded to a commitment to social responsibility, provides a concrete and potent vision for the economic and social transformation of a community.

A New Vision for Labor Solidarity[30]

For the suggestion to consider Cooperation Jackson as an example of interdependence in practice I am indebted to a friend, Rex Champagne, a local activist and labor organizer. In addition to working locally to advance the long-stalled discussion of reparations for black Americans, Rex is the former national coordinator of U.S. Labor Against the War (USLAW). He devoted his tenure to transforming that organization from an "Old Left" traditional union organization dominated by aging white men, into an intersectionally- and internationally-focused group open to a variety of tactics and strategies, and led by young black and brown people.

USLAW was built in 2003 to respond to the Iraq invasion. Rex recalls that the country was in a "hard right" shift as the Homeland Security Department was being formed and a War on Terror declared. Rex describes the labor movement at the time as a "grass-tops" hierarchical

[28] Hall, "Coming Full Circle," 197–204.
[29] "Cooperation Jackson"; Akuno, "Build and Fight," 15, 16, 21, 22, 29. Akuno, while aware that all forms of supply chains are "interlinked and interdependent," stresses Cooperation Jackson's "emphasis on intentionally creating mutually interconnected and interdependent cooperatives and solidarity networks" (21).
[30] Interview, October 9, 2019. This interview was approved by the Vanderbilt University IRB on September 19, 2019. The study application, #191453, was deemed to meet the requirements for 45CFR 46.104 (d) category 2) for Exempt Review. In accordance with IRB policies, a pseudonym is being used for the interviewee.

movement totally devoted to the Democratic party. The idea behind USLAW was to "move labor's foreign policy to the left"—but as national coordinator, Rex pushed the organization further. He perceived that the labor movement desperately needed 1) a more versatile strategic approach, 2) a leadership more reflective of the working people it claimed to represent, and 3) a praxis of international solidarity.

1) The labor movement has traditionally focused on trade unions securing contracts with employers within established legal parameters.[31] But Rex suggests that this establishment-driven approach has limited transformative potential and in fact tends to uphold larger economic and social structures. In his view, the election of President Trump was not merely indicative of a hard-right political shift, but has also opened the door for more radical political thinking and action. Socialism is more popular in the United States than it has been in decades,[32] and Rex thinks Trump's election has pushed the rest of the world left as well. He points to uprisings in Burkina Faso and the Sudan and mass protests in Hong Kong as examples, and notes that in China there are thousands of wildcat strikes (not officially sanctioned) every day. In the United States, Rex points to the Sunrise movement which is working to stop climate change. None of these tactics are "polite" or establishment-friendly: Sunrise protestors in Louisville, for example, recently disrupted a speech by Sen. Mitch McConnell at the University of Louisville. But the

[31] In fact, "the labor movement" is a contested term, as there are broad and diverse coalitions of people who envision labor organizing in very different ways. Rex noted that his colleagues would often "talk about 'the labor movement' to define themselves and themselves alone, only trade unions." But in fact Rex's work was to give voice to the fact that this is an extremely restrictive way of defining the movement. As Melissa Snarr notes, for example, the majority of faith-based community organizers are women, and their organizations provide women with needed opportunities for expanded agency, leadership roles and alliances across race and class. See Snarr, "Working Women's Poverty: Feminist and Religious Alliances in the Living Wage Movement," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 115, No. 1 (2011): 75-93.

[32] Ewan Palmer, "Popularity of Socialism Spiking in U.S., with 43 Percent Now Saying It Would Be Good for the Country," *Newsweek*, May 21, 2019, https://www.newsweek.com/socialism-america-gallup-poll-1431266.

labor movement as presently constituted is so entrenched in existing political, legal and economic structures that it is unable to participate in movements for transformative change.

2) The labor movement has traditionally been and remains dominated by old white men. As national coordinator of USLAW Rex encouraged the staff to transition to a leadership structure that reflected the membership. His insistence that young people of color be placed in leadership positions was met with "animosity and revanchism" by the white men who had grown accustomed to being in those positions. When in 2017 Rex organized a USLAW delegation to visit both North and South Korea, he handpicked a team of mostly young black people to make the trip. The "Old Guard" was suspicious, asking racially-coded questions like "Are they educated? What is their political stance?" Yet Rex's leadership enabled USLAW to transition to a new board led primarily by youth of color.

3) The labor movement in the United States has not traditionally placed substantial focus on international solidarity. But in addition to the North Korea trip, Rex has organized delegations to Colombia and Hong Kong. A labor delegation plans to visit Palestine in the near future. The new leadership has been invited to audiences in 23 countries around the world. When organizers visited Hong Kong, they joined a coalition called "The International League of People's Struggle" representing 100 countries. The U.S. delegation members were ecstatic when at the coalition's event, an introductory video played featuring their own actions with the #blacklivesmatter movement in Washington, D.C. They had traveled to Hong Kong to join with and learn from those in struggle there, but discovered that they, in turn, were models for Hong Kong protestors. "We all kind of need each other in that way," Rex mused.

One of Rex's struggles in cultivating international solidarity is that he is recognized as 1) a representative of an oppressive government, and thus receives the frustration and anger of

persons who have suffered abuses at the hands of the United States; but he is viewed also as 2) a young black man, and is thus often treated disrespectfully (anti-black racism is of course not a phenomenon confined to the U.S.). Rex has learned to navigate these tensions calmly, for example in North Korea: "They made me sit and listen to every treaty we had broken for an hour and a half. It was the worst time I've ever had in a foreign country." However, rather than feel defensive on behalf of a nation that had wronged him, too, Rex learned instead how to hold the grief and anger he was receiving. Knowing the subject of my dissertation, Rex reflected, "[p]art of what interdependence requires is an understanding of how you've hurt someone and how that hurt has impacted them, because you're not really connected to someone if you don't understand where that person's pain is." This is a lesson that the "Old Guard" leadership of his organization struggled to learn.

Like the cooperative movement, labor has a rich tradition in the United States: Both movements showcase the collective power people can marshal when they work together interdependently. However, both movements can and have been co-opted by hegemonic power: *Jackson Rising* notes that after the Depression, a number of powerful utility cooperatives emerged, but they were white-led and undemocratic.[33] The same was true for unions in the late 19th and early twentieth centuries: Barbara Bair notes that "even unions that claimed biracial principles were dominated by white leadership and weakened by segregated practices."[34] But just as in the past, contemporary black organizers like Rex and the cooperators in Jackson have resisted the hegemonic co-optation of their people's movements.

Like Cooperation Jackson, Rex's new vision for labor is squarely in line with the parameters of responsible interdependence. This vision demands a sharing in power; is sharply

[33] Akuno and Nangwaya, *Jackson Rising*, 184.
[34] Bair, "Though Justice Sleeps, 1880-1900," 22.

attuned to subtle hegemonic forces; centralizes the concerns, voices, and leadership of young people of color; is urgently committed to ecological restoration; adopts an intersectional and international focus; and is affective and embodied, even to the point of placing one's body on the line. On this last point, Rex recalls that student protestors in the Sudan faced down the military government, stating, "you'll just have to kill all of us." Tragically the military forces responded in that case in murderous fashion.[35] But the protestors faced the impossible with implacable courage. Finally, Rex poignantly reflects that interdependence requires listening—specifically, to the pain of others, especially when one shares responsibility for causing that pain. Responsible interdependence is not romantic or idealistic in the face of pervasive social suffering. This kind of ethics creates expansive and intimate space to hold the pain of others. Social ethics is basically about recognizing and alleviating suffering. Only thus can we even begin to imagine healing the world.

Emergent Strategy

As this project was taking shape, Rex and a number of other friends recommended that I read adrienne maree brown's book *Emergent Strategy.* Where many of the thinkers considered in this dissertation are writing for an academic audience, brown is an organizer writing to share with other organizers insights she has gained through years of action for transformative justice, balanced with study and reflection. Of the practice she calls emergent strategy, brown writes: "Based in the science of emergence, it's relational, adaptive, fractal, interdependent,

[35] Richmond Danso, "After Another Attempted Coup, What's next for Sudan?," *Washington Post,* accessed July 13, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/07/13/after-another-attempted-coup-whats-next-sudan/.

decentralized, transformative."[36] brown's book lends further support to my claim that the symbol of interdependence is presently funding the most exciting movements for justice in our world.

The idea of emergence, which (as referenced in chapter four) also influenced Thomas Berry and others, denotes the formation of complex patterns from relatively small interactions. brown writes, "Emergence […] is another way of speaking about the connective tissue of all that exists—the way, the Tao, the force, change, God/dess, life. Birds flocking, cells splitting, fungi whispering underground."[37] Like many of the theorists encountered in this project—recall Barad's "delicate tissue of ethicality"[38]—brown wants to apply lessons from observing the "natural order" to transform our ways of interacting interpersonally, within organizations and as a society. This practice, which brown and others call "biomimicry," takes cues from the development of natural life forms including ants, dandelions, and starlings (flocks of birds).[39] In these natural phenomena, communities of living beings exist in mutual dependence, listen and respond reflexively to one another, and direct their varied skills, resources and capacities toward a common purpose—namely, their survival and mutual flourishing. brown expresses "the desire for a society where there is more interdependence—mutual reliance and shared leadership, vision," instead of competition and autonomy.[40] In the realm of social movements, brown notes that as a person with charisma she herself must continually ward off the temptation to become a "charismatic leader" who unilaterally determines the vision, message and strategy of the group. Instead, she points to the most transformative social justice movements she has lived through—Occupy and Black Lives Matter/Movement for Black Lives—as examples of the kind of

[36] adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017), 56.
[37] brown, *Emergent Strategy,* 3.
[38] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 396.
[39] brown, *Emergent Strategy,* 45-6.
[40] brown, *Emergent Strategy,* 87.

emergent leadership she wants to cultivate. Both of these movements have eschewed charismatic centralized leadership in favor of an organic, decentralized structure, a devotion to consensus and listening, and a commitment to cultivate a broad base of leaders with a variety of gifts.[41]

In the face of widespread black trauma, brown finds herself amazed at her community's capacity for resilience: "we get together and celebrate and love on each other, we laugh, we find the pleasure of community, of interdependence. It feels good together."[42] Thus, on the interpersonal, organizational, political, and cosmic levels, brown lifts up interdependence as a symbol and "sacred path"[43] that funds the emergent strategy she hopes will transform the world.

Two More Kindred Concepts: Mutuality and Ubuntu

Chapter VI considered the notions of interdependence and integration in the thought of Martin Luther King, Jr. For King, the notion of interdependence was closely related to the "inescapable network of mutuality." And Roy Money suggests, without delving into specifics, that King's thought on interdependence was informed by African communalism. In what follows, I briefly discuss Dawn Nothwehr's work on mutuality, and Michael Battle's work on *ubuntu.* Both concepts are closely related to and in important ways synonymous with interdependence.

Dawn Nothwehr on Mutuality

Nothwehr, a Catholic feminist ethicist, wrote her doctoral dissertation on mutuality (later published as *Mutuality: A Formal Norm for Christian Ethics*). Similar to the argument made in the present dissertation, Nothwehr observes that Christian feminists almost universally regard

[41] brown, *Emergent Strategy,* 106.
[42] brown, *Emergent Strategy,* 22.
[43] brown, *Emergent Strategy,* 88.

mutuality as a moral value, but they do not tend to offer a precise definition of the term. The first sentence of Nothwehr's book conflates the two notions: "Notions of interdependence and mutuality have been a significant element in recent developments in the natural sciences, human sciences, and philosophy."[44] It seems strange to begin a dissertation on mutuality by conflating it with interdependence and leading with the latter term. In her dissertation, Nothwehr surveys the work of four Christian feminists (Ruether, Harrison, Carter Heyward, and Elizabeth Johnson) to elaborate an ethics of mutuality with cosmic, gender, generative and social dimensions. She also finds antecedents for the feminist notion in the work of Christian medievalists such as Hugo of St. Victor, Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas, as well as the contemporary thinkers Martin Buber and H. Richard Niebuhr.

The argument from Christian feminists about mutuality will be by now familiar to readers of the present dissertation: Johnson, for example, argues that the love commandment will be fulfilled when "humans realize their living, ongoing, and interdependent, mutual kinship with the earth."[45] The feminists rely on evidence from astrophysics, ecology, and quantum physics to demonstrate a "foundational kinship"[46] among all things in the cosmos (recall the structure of this dissertation's third chapter on quanto-bio-cosmic interdependence). And the medieval theologians she cites, while generally not promoting gender or social mutuality, nevertheless assumed "a profound sense of the interdependence of the entire cosmos."[47] Nothwehr synthesizes from her sources the following definition of her normative ethics: "*Mutuality is the sharing of 'power-with' by and among all parties in a relationship in a way that recognizes the*

[44] Dawn M. Nothwehr, *Mutuality: A Formal Norm for Christian Social Ethics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005), xviii, 1.
[45] Nothwehr, *Mutuality,* 79.
[46] Nothwehr, *Mutuality,* 92.
[47] Nothwehr, *Mutuality,* 101.

wholeness and particular experience of each participant toward the end of optimum flourishing of all."[48]

While Nothwehr's discussion of mutuality shares obvious similarities with this present study of interdependence, she does not develop a critical lens attuned to the *limits* of mutuality as a formal norm. She argues, for instance, that mutuality requires a "balance of power" between parties. While she admits that ordinarily the phrase "balance of power" connotes a stasis/stalemate situation wherein adversarial nation-states each command a relatively equal share of destructive capability, Nothwehr simply states that she has elected to use another definition that stresses "dynamic homeostatic relationship."[49] However, the ambiguity of the phrase "balance of power" points to a deeper ambiguity within "mutuality" itself. Like interdependence, the concept of mutuality is morally ambivalent. One can certainly speak of a "mutual love between persons," but it makes equally good sense to speak of a "mutual contempt" or "mutual disgust." Like "balance of power," the term "mutually assured destruction" denotes a military stalemate strategy. Specifically, this is a theory of nuclear deterrence that assumes that if both powers possess nuclear weapons, neither will launch a nuclear strike, knowing that doing so would trigger a counterstrike leading to the annihilation of everyone. How can a term that is used to refer to a nuclear holocaust incinerating the entire human race be treated as an unproblematic ethical value?

I pointed out in the first chapter that interdependence is often conflated with related terms such as "interrelationality" and "interconnectedness." Nothwehr appears to assume synonymy between interdependence and mutuality, and there is not a great deal of daylight between the two concepts. However, in that earlier chapter I defined interdependence as "a relationship between

[48] Nothwehr, *Mutuality,* 96.
[49] Nothwehr, *Mutuality,* 6–7.

two or more parties in which the existence of each is contingent upon interaction and exchange with the other/s." It is not clear that "mutuality" implies so strong a relationship. For instance, a married couple could make the mutual decision to terminate their relationship; two former friends could display a "mutual disregard" for one another. The notion of mutuality is similar to interdependence (recall that Merriam-Webster defined interdependence as "mutual dependence"), but it does not always entail the relational entanglement conveyed by interdependence. *Ubuntu,* however, is a different story.

Michael Battle on Ubuntu

Battle's book *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me* is a reflection on this African theological concept, which was widely popularized by the South African Episcopalian Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a leader in the struggle against apartheid. After receiving his doctorate from Duke, Battle spent two years living and studying with Tutu. Battle writes, "Ubuntu is an African concept of personhood in which the identity of the self is understood to be formed interdependently through community."[50]

The concept *ubuntu* comes from a family of "Bantu languages" common to sub-Saharan African peoples, which Battle argues share a "Bantu ontology" in which selfhood arises interdependently. The *-ntu* root conveys both "being" and "human being."[51] The notion of *ubuntu,* according to the Kenyan theologian John Mbiti, means, "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am."[52] For Mbiti this means that anything that is done to the individual affects the group, and vice versa (compare this with King's notion that "whatever affects one directly

[50] Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me* (New York: Seabury Books, 2009), 1–2.
[51] Battle, *Ubuntu,* 4–5. The similarity between *-ntu* and the Greek *ontos* (being) is striking.
[52] John S. Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy,* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Heinemann, 1990), 106.

affects all indirectly"[53]). Battle contrasts this way of conceiving selfhood with the maxim of Rene Descartes, "I think, therefore I am," which he argues characterizes the individualism of Western culture. The materialistic, rationalistic, and individualistic cultures of the West must learn from the communalistic African cultures to be "communal selves," to envision a "cooperative self-identity." If we do not, our planet will not survive (compare this with Harrison's claim that unless we accept our interdependence, "all of us are doomed"[54]).

Tutu and Battle interpret *ubuntu* as an African theological concept through the lens of Christian theology. Tutu writes, "God has created us for interdependence as God has created us in his image—the image of a divine fellowship of the holy and blessed Trinity."[55] The theological notion of *perichoresis*, illustrating the mutual interpenetration of the persons of the Trinity, is for Battle consistent with the interdependence of *ubuntu.* In particular, Battle writes, "Jesus is the mediator of a new identity of interdependent relationship," which restores wholeness to our distorted identities.[56] For Battle and Tutu, the aim of the Christian life is reconciliation, where humans become reconciled to one another and to God through the consciousness of interdependence in Christ. Battle cites the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in which the white perpetrators of hate crimes under apartheid came face to face with the families of their black victims to share their stories and heal the wounds of that nation.

Battle's text is arguably more invested in Christian theological questions (e.g. about the procession of the Trinity) than in concepts deriving from non-Christian African religion. There are long stretches in the book where only Euro-American theologians and their ideas are

[53] King, "Letter from Birmingham City Jail," 290.
[54] Battle, *Ubuntu,* 92, 16, 8, 6; Harrison, *Making the Connections,* 230.
[55] Battle, *Ubuntu*, 32.
[56] Battle, *Ubuntu,* 64–65.

considered. Perhaps he would respond that the notion of *ubuntu*, the hybridity of contemporary African religions, and his own position as an African American Christian theologian require him to think across traditions and make interdependent connections. There are certainly points where Battle's text raises questions, however. Looking over the work of Simone Weil and her theory of suffering, Battle writes that Christianity "is the only religion that finds a use for (or meaning in) suffering instead of trying to escape from it."[57] This statement seems to privilege Christianity over other religions, a curious move in the context of a discussion about Weil, who stalwartly refused to be baptized so long as non-Christians were deemed excluded from salvation. Further, the claim does not ring true: eschatological passages such as Revelation 21:4 promise that God will "wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more." Christianity, like all religious traditions and like all responsible social ethics, does indeed seek to eliminate (rather than Battle's loaded term "escape") suffering. One might legitimately argue that Christianity accords to suffering a more substantial instrumental value, insofar as suffering is held to perfect the soul or encourage humility before God. But it is not clear that suffering has intrinsic value even in Christianity; in the life to come, Christians hope, suffering will be no more.

Further, Tutu in his invocations of *ubuntu* sometimes approaches the pitfalls of interdependence considered in the third chapter. Discussing the story of Adam in the Garden, Tutu says, "[s]o God puts Adam to sleep and out of his rib he produces this delectable creature Eve, and when Adam wakes, he says, 'Wow,' so this is just what the doctor ordered. But that is to say, you and I are made for interdependency."[58] Here Tutu expresses the hegemonic co-optation of interdependence construed as complementarity. Eve is not a person but a "delectable

[57] Battle, *Ubuntu,* 93.
[58] Battle, *Ubuntu,* 82.

creature" who was needed to alleviate Adam's loneliness. Gender interdependence, in Tutu's hands as in John Paul II's, does not appear to entail social equality. So, in this sense, *ubuntu* is perhaps not immune from the dangers intrinsic to interdependence.

Yet *ubuntu* enjoys a theological meaning and social commitment that "interdependence" does not carry on its own. Indeed, from the perspective of this dissertation, *ubuntu* is not merely interdependence but is always already *responsible* interdependence, insofar as it is inherently committed to the well-being of all persons in community.

Lingering Questions, Dreams Deferred

> I have more questions than answers, more problems than solutions, and from these gifts I freely share.
>
> - Dale Andrews[59]

As the discussion of *ubuntu* suggests, this discussion of "interdependence" has left a lot on the table. A great many questions remain unanswered. I have ambitiously striven for interdisciplinary breadth and am keenly aware that in so doing I have failed to do justice to the complexity of many of the issues I have taken up. Even so, keeping the argument reasonably concise has required me to leave other fascinating issues out of the discussion entirely. Chief among my lingering wishes is a comparative study of interdependence across religious traditions.

Two hours before his death, in the last talk he ever gave, the mystic Trappist monk Thomas Merton said, "the whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all these living beings, which are all part of one another and all involved in

[59] In graduate seminars, Andrews would offer this motto at the end of each class. When you heard these words, you knew that class was concluded. The phrase "From These Gifts" was the theme around which Andrews' friend and colleague Dr. Herbert Marbury organized a poignant eulogy for Andrews in August of 2017.

one another."[60] Merton made the point in addressing a conference on East-West monastic dialogue. I imagine that a comparative theological study of interdependence across world religions would prove a useful companion volume to the present social ethical study. This deep symbol has purchase in a great many traditions. As Battle's book shows, the notion of interdependence is central for the African religious notion of *ubuntu.* McFague argues that a variety of indigenous religions honor organic interdependence. The first chapter briefly surveyed the Buddhist doctrine of interdependent origination. Although I am a social ethicist working out of the Christian tradition, I have offered very little reflection on interdependence within the Christian or Hebrew Scriptures. I signaled but did not develop the argument that interdependence is a key value in disability theology. If I had a second dissertation to write and were better schooled in the practice of comparative theology, I would love to pursue a comparative study on interdependence in interreligious perspective.

Second, Anzaldúa's characterization of *nepantleras* as inhabiting "liminal space" and "the in-between place" invites an investigation into how interdependence intersects with the notion of liminality. Here, the work of anthropologist Victor Turner could be immensely helpful. In *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure,* Turner identifies "liminality" as the vivifying energy that binds communities through periodic enactments of social rituals to mark life stages and yearly communal festivals. For Turner, these "liminal" (boundary-dissolving) events secure legitimacy for social structure, serving as both an escape valve for potentially revolutionary energies and a matrix of social meaning for participants.[61] Turner's analysis underscores the ambivalent character of interdependence, for if liminality functions to reinforce

[60] Thomas Merton, quoted in Matthew Fox, "Spirituality Called Compassion," *Religious Education* 73, no. 3 (May 1978): 292.
[61] Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine Transaction, 1995).

structure, it is difficult to imagine it having any liberating value. And yet, for Anzaldúa, *nepantla* liminality signals an awareness of selfhood beyond the boundaries of the body and categories of identity which can animate the struggle for justice. Anzaldúa's influence within contemporary queer theory and postcolonial/decolonial studies invites as well a further investigation into the links between interdependence/liminality and the challenge to binaristic logics within queer theory, feminist critiques of dualism, as well as the postcolonial notion of hybridity (I have already signaled the affinities of the concept with the black feminist and womanist notion of intersectionality in chapter II). Insofar as liminal space is sacred space, a discussion of interdependence and liminality could yield promising theological and social ethical insights, and unearth interconnections linking the bedrock values of a variety of radical theories and theologies. Alas, these questions must be postponed for future projects. The present analysis must be drawn to a close, before the "binding" breaks.

Conclusion: Courage in the Face of the Impossible

Somewhere right now out in the forest, trees are whispering to each other.

…Underground, the root systems of trees are connected via networks of fungi, which produce sprawling fine threads called mycelia. The mycelia consume the excess sugar the trees produce in photosynthesis, and the fungi in turn secrete nutrients that the trees require. The mycelium filaments connect the trees, forming a vast underground *web*—a symbiotic network of mutuality. The web in fact serves as a communication network, enabling trees to exchange water and nutrients, nurture seedlings, and even send out warning signals in the presence of a threat.[62]

[62] "How Trees Secretly Talk to Each Other in the Forest," *National Geographic,* accessed July 18, 2019, https://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/decoder/00000165-61d1-d3b2-a17d-e9f9571f0000. My thanks to Aliza Levine for this reference.

…And somewhere else at this moment, a honeybee is performing an intricately choreographed dance, as her sisters gather round to learn the precise location of a field of sunflowers awaiting pollination. Somewhere someone else's sun is readying itself to go nova, its nuclear fuel finally exhausted from shining faithfully for four billion years. Somewhere an old woman is dying, crossing over to someplace, while her daughter caresses her hair. And somewhere, a toddler is learning to navigate competing instincts to share their snack with their friend, or to clutch it to their chest, lowering their eyes and retreating inward and backward. Somewhere in all these frayed interconnections a voice is speaking. If we listen carefully perhaps a pattern begins to cohere.

Beverly Harrison notes that the Latin root of the word religion "reveals our deepest sense of bondedness, that is, our most basic sense of connectedness."[63] Harrison is referring to the common derivation of religion from *religare, "*to bind." As ligament (a related word) binds bone onto bone, so religion is that which binds us to the source of life, to a particular cluster of beliefs and practices, to one another. This derivation is also etymologically kin to "obligation," so that a religion conveys our understanding of what we owe to one another and to the divine.[64] The essence of religion, on this interpretation, is that we are bound together. In this way, the present dissertation, as a study of interdependence, has all along been asking a question about the meaning of religion.

Yet, here again, as a good deconstructionist, I must note the moral ambiguity contained in the word "bind/bond." When Michelle Obama in her 2008 Democratic convention speech recalled that her parents taught her, "Your word is your bond," she was invoking a tradition of

[63] Harrison, *Our Right to Choose*, 17.
[64] Sarah F. Hoyt, "The Etymology of Religion," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 32, no. 2 (1912): 126–29, https://doi.org/10.2307/3087765.

black communal moral wisdom grounded in biblical faith. When in 2016 Melania Trump plagiarized Obama's speech and that familial lesson, she was engaged in a practice that by now will be familiar to the reader: the hegemonic co-optation of dangerous values.[65] "Bonds," after all, are not necessarily good: one need only ask a "bondsman" (slave), or a prisoner. The ties that bind us may be bonds of fellowship or they may be chains of oppression.[66] Or they may be both simultaneously. Rediker writes that in the bowels of slave ships emerged an "alchemy of chains mutating, under the hard pressure of resistance, into bonds of community. The mysterious slave ship had become a place of creative resistance for those who now discovered themselves to be 'black folks.'"[67]

Moral ambiguity resides at the heart of what it means to be religious, of what it means to be human. This study has been an effort to recognize and unearth the ambiguity of interdependence, in order to better navigate that ambivalence by mitigating its dangers and harnessing the transformative and liberating power of this dangerous word.

This dissertation is an assessment of the value and limits of interdependence for social ethics. Most of the discussion has obviously focused on "interdependence" as a value. However, the term "limits" functions in at least six related senses in this title:

1) *Epistemic limits:* the first chapter interprets Derrida as cautioning against the impulse toward epistemic arrogance. Deconstruction exposes the limitations of language to adequately express what it is intended to signify. It reveals the violence of the concept, the inevitability of incoherence and moral hypocrisy, and the impossibility

[65] Katy Waldman, "Where Does 'Your Word Is Your Bond' Come From, and Why Did Melania Steal It?," Slate Magazine, July 19, 2016, https://slate.com/human-interest/2016/07/your-word-is-your-bond-history-and-origins-from-matthew-to-hip-hop.html.
[66] See, for example, Michael Krenn's *The Chains of Interdependence: U.S. Policy Toward Central America, 1945-54*, which was discussed in the third chapter.
[67] Rediker, *The Slave Ship,* 307.

of ethics. "Limits" in this sense cautions us to realistically appraise the finitude of our capacity for knowing, saying, and doing.

2) *Social-ethical limits:* interdependence is a morally ambiguous postmodern deep symbol. One cannot assume that interdependence is an unproblematic ethical good: the second and third chapters show that it is infused with violence and susceptible to appropriation by hegemonic power. "Limits" in this sense cautions one to view ethical values with measured suspicion.

3) *Natural limits:* the fourth chapter appraised numerous attempts to draw moral theological insights from patterns in the natural world. Ruether points to the symbiotic relationality of life cycles, including the water and nitrogen cycles and food chains. Life is sustainable only within reasonable limits, and because human beings have trespassed these limits, we are presently causing the extinction of countless species while threatening the extinction of our own. As Gustafson writes, to be human is to be limited: and our very participation in processes of interdependence, our reliance on others for survival, is itself a mark of finitude.[68] Michael Hogue expands, "[t]o live is to be subject to decay and interdependent," and religions express aspects of human vulnerability.[69] "Limits" in this sense caution one that the interdependence of living systems requires one to impose checks on one's impulses to consume and hoard resources and to control others.

4) *Intersubjective limits:* in the second chapter I reviewed Husserl's concept of empathy and its attendant dangers, philosophical and ethical solipsism. In relating to others, we inevitably assimilate them by interpreting them as an *alter ego.* Interdependence

[68] Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective: Theology and Ethics,* 13-14.
[69] Hogue, *American Immanence,* 139.

carries this danger as well, since viewing the world as an interconnected network threatens to dissolve the boundaries between self and others. This move potentially overlooks the differences that distinguish persons and cultures, absorbing all otherness into the self. The symbol of interdependence tends to overemphasize connection to the point of ignoring difference, leading us to construct what Levinas calls "totalities," and what Schneider calls "the logic of the One."[70] "Limits" in this sense cautions one against deploying interdependence to illustrate the "unity" of the human race or the cosmos, implicitly privileging the self while ignoring (or sublating, or exterminating) difference.

5) *Responsible limits:* the seventh chapter adumbrated a set of "parameters of reasoning" to guide interdependence toward moral responsibility. Now "parameters" are nothing more than limits. If the symbol of interdependence is to generate moral responsibility, it must be wedded to numerous ethical parameters/limits that stipulate the conditions of moral responsibility. "Limits" in this sense signals the parameters of reasoning that define responsible interdependence.

6) *Relational limits:* the term "liminal space," as it appears in the work of Anzaldúa and Turner, points to the "in-between" spaces, the fluid and shifting boundaries that define persons and beings in relation to one another. That which relates humans to one another also distinguishes us from one another. Difference is a relation; as Hegel shows, the act of negation defines the self by distinguishing it from the other. While this move is intended to separate the self from the other, it also weds the other inextricably to the self, for the definition/boundary that produces the self also binds it

[70] Cf. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity;* Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism.*

to the other. "Limits" in this sense points to the liminal space that enables selves to emerge, always interdependently.

This dissertation stresses the "limits of interdependence" because limits are essential for sense making. These six dimensions reveal that "limits" are what enable the symbol of interdependence to be intelligible. Unmoored from epistemic, social-ethical, natural, intersubjective, responsible, and relational limits, interdependence would be meaningless and useless. But within such limits, interdependence is a potent symbol for social ethics.

Friedrich Schleiermacher famously defined the experience of God as "a feeling of absolute dependence."[71] In this post-Newtonian, postcolonial, postmodern world of ours, perhaps religious experience may be more aptly defined as "a conviction of responsible interdependence." As this study draws to a close, it is now possible to define responsible interdependence succinctly as *moral awareness of the fundamental interrelatedness of all things, which produces a conviction to alleviate social suffering and join in the collective imagination and creation of a more just world.*

Interdependence and responsibility are theological symbols. As theo-logy, as speech about God, these are social constructions. As concepts, Derrida tells us that they fail to express adequately what they intend to signify and even partake of violence. Faith, says the author of Hebrews, is the "conviction of things not seen" (11:1). We cannot even "see" physical entities like electrons or black holes: visual representations can be made of the former with scanning tunneling microscopes, and recently we have "seen" (via a compilation of images) light that escaped from a black hole 55 million years ago. Much less can we "see" love or responsibility. They emerge from our relational encounters with others. To theologize is to draw on these highly

[71] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith (Two-Volume Set): A New Translation and Critical Edition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 26.

inter/personal, tenuous experiences to make a sweeping claim about the meaning of existence. And to do social ethics is to ask how such claims might be brought to bear on social problems. As Schneider puts it, theology "speaks of nothing but the unspeakable—nothing but barely concealed expectations, longings, loyalties and obsessions, nothing but visions and dreams."[72] Theologically, interdependence names the dream that the web of our social relations, at its heart, is a network of mutuality, that *ultimately* the ties that bind us are familial-mycelial threads of love, rather than shackles. Can this be proven? Of course not. Perusing an honestly-written history book or taking a passing glance at the news renders such attempts ridiculous. As Townes writes, "to speak of solidarity / to conjure standing *anywhere* together / is, then, to tempt the agony of the absurd / but frankly, i simply don't know what else to do / and remain faithful."[73]

With each passing day the task of keeping faith becomes more difficult. As I was revising this dissertation, the planet was met with a deadly reminder of our inescapable interdependence. The COVID-19 pandemic is a tragic manifestation of the dangers intrinsic to humanity's relational networks, and of the catastrophic costs when people attempt to ignore or deny the facts of interhuman interdependence and shirk their attendant responsibilities. Although initial reports indicated that the outbreak was contained in the Wuhan province of China, the virus was meanwhile silently spreading along the networks of rapid transportation that comprise our globalizing world. The uninvited guest took up residence within various hosts (a reversal of Derrida's view of the violent host/guest relation), hitching supersonic rides across oceans, and methodically infiltrating every corner of the globe. Over a breathtaking span of days in mid-March, the way of life to which people in the U.S. and worldwide were accustomed was totally upended.

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[72] Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism,* 13.
[73] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 156.

People from every station of life responded valiantly to try to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Schools rushed to implement online learning programs, retired health care personnel again donned scrubs and returned to virus-infested hospitals, public health officials scrambled to understand how the virus spreads and disseminate guidelines to the public, underpaid and overworked grocery store clerks worked overtime restocking shelves. Young parents like Shannon and me made the heart-wrenching decision to cut off physical contact with our parents, depriving them of treasured hugs and sleepovers with grandkids in order to keep them and others safe. Neighbors crafted yard signs and wrote messages in sidewalk chalk saying, "we're all in this together." So many successfully recognized the ties of interdependence binding them to one another, and responded by accepting moral responsibility. As Judith Butler writes, the relational networks in which humans are immersed expose our mutual vulnerability and the precarity of human life. Like so many of the thinkers considered in this study, Butler wants to imagine a world in which "an inevitable interdependency becomes acknowledged as the basis for global political community."[74] The pandemic presented an opportunity for such collective acknowledgment.

But of course this response/ability was not universally recognized or accepted. President Trump once again willfully disregarded the counsel of his expert advisers, referred to the novel coronavirus with the racist terms "Chinese virus" and "Kung Flu," assured Americans that his administration had the virus "totally under control" and that the virus would one day disappear "like a miracle," downplayed the severity of the outbreak, refused to wear a mask, or to encourage the public to do so, or to consistently warn the public about the dangers of the virus,

[74] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2006), xii-xiv.

or to offer the slightest indication that he is capable of empathy, decency, or moral leadership.[75] At this writing, the number of deaths from COVID-19 in the United States has just passed 500,000. Although just 4.25% of the earth's people live in the United States, 20% of the global deaths from COVID-19 have occurred in this country.[76]

The U.S. president's utter failure of leadership is surely the most important reason why the pandemic has been especially disastrous in this country. The largely unnecessary mass death and prolonged disruption of social life are tragic examples of what happens when people in power attempt to deny the reality of precarious interhuman interdependence and to deny their responsibility to safeguard others' well-being.

The widespread effort to quarantine to halt the spread of the virus also provided an opportunity for many to pause from their routines and mundane concerns and reflect in new ways about differential social conditions and priorities within the United States. The pandemic coincided with a spate of brutal police killings of unarmed black people, including George Floyd in Minneapolis, Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, GA,[77] and Breonna Taylor in my hometown of Louisville. As in the aftermath of previous police killings of Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, and others, #blacklivesmatter protests erupted in cities across the country. However, this moment appears to be singular. Floyd's murder was recorded on video, and millions watched as Officer Derek Chauvin kneeled on Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes, even as Floyd pleaded that he could not breathe, and called out in desperation for his mama. In the space of a few weeks, public opinion on the #blacklivesmatter movement drastically changed. By July 2020 American

[75] Cameron Peters, "A detailed timeline of all the ways Trump failed to respond to the coronavirus," *Vox,* accessed 30 July 2020, https://www.vox.com/2020/6/8/21242003/trump-failed-coronavirus-response.
[76] Lucy Tompkins, Mitch Smith, Julie Bosman and Bryan Pietsch, "Entering uncharted territory, the U.S. counts 500,000 Covid-related deaths," *The New York Times,* Feb. 22, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/22/us/us-covid-deaths-half-a-million.html.
[77] George McMichael, who along with his son Travis has been charged with Arbery's murder, served as a police officer for 37 years, but retired in 2019.

voters supported the movement by a 28-point margin; and the *New York Times* reports that "[a] Monmouth University poll found that 76 percent of Americans consider racism and discrimination a 'big problem,' up 26 points from 2015."[78]

When public opinion shifts in this way, powerful people take notice. Former Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney marched with protestors, Congressional Democrats donned traditional African kente cloths and kneeled to show their solidarity, giant corporations like Amazon and Netflix declared that "black lives matter," and the NFL announced that the song "Lift Every Voice and Sing," known by many as the "black national anthem," will be played before "The Star-Spangled Banner" at every game.

For advocates for structural changes to dismantle white supremacy, these developments arouse conflicting feelings. On one hand, it is certainly a welcome sign that so many are declaring their support for this movement. The fact that so many powerful forces have now publicly affirmed that black lives matter may and should be claimed as evidence of the movement's success in applying sustained public pressure for long-overdue social change. On the other hand, though, these moves may and should be understood as efforts toward what I have called the hegemonic co-optation of dangerous values. One certainly does not hear Romney joining in protestors' calls to abolish the police, the NFL has yet to make reparation for ruining Colin Kaepernick's career,[79] and Amazon in recent years has sold its facial recognition software to police departments across the country and also enjoys sustained business relationships with

[78] Nate Cone and Kevin Quealy, "How Public Opinion Has Moved on Black Lives Matter," *New York Times,* accessed 30 July 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/10/upshot/black-lives-matter-attitudes.html.
[79] Deena Zaru, "NFL apologizes for 'not listening' to players about racism as Colin Kaepernick remains unsigned," *ABC News,* accessed 30 July 2020, https://abcnews.go.com/US/nfl-apologizes-listening-players-racism-colin-kaepernick-remains/story?id=71122596.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).[80] The corporate and political declarations of solidarity are rightfully being viewed with measured suspicion by veteran activists, as a desperate tactic to co-opt a radical movement, to appropriate its slogans while mystifying its demands for substantive material change. As discussed in the third chapter, hegemonic power masterfully succeeded in co-opting King's movement for integration. Whether this strategy will be similarly successful this time is not clear at this writing.

In order to stave off crass cynicism and despair, however, it remains necessary "to conjure standing *anywhere* together," even "to tempt the agony of the absurd."[81] Surveying the historical evidence perhaps offers few reasons to hope[82] that responsible interdependence has a chance against hegemony. Achieving a community of social justice appears impossible.

It follows that we need an impossible ethics. As Akuno writes of Cooperation Jackson, "we must demand the impossible, both of the world and of ourselves, in order to change both subjects."[83] An ethics of responsible interdependence does not shy away from a task, for the paltry reason that the task happens to be impossible. Such an ethics instead prepares us to face the impossible, emboldened by our loving relationships with one another to venture forward together, and chastened by a dose of humility and humor in the face of the absurd. It was King who wrote that the point of life is not happiness, or pleasure, but instead "to do the will of God, come what may."[84]

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[80] Kari Paul, "Amazon says Black Lives Matter. But the company has deep ties to policing," *The Guardian,* accessed 30 July 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/jun/09/amazon-black-lives-matter-police-ring-jeff-bezos.
[81] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil,* 156.
[82] See Miguel A. De La Torre, *Embracing Hopelessness* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017); Karen Bray, *Grave Attending: A Political Theology for the Unredeemed* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2020); see also the "Afro-pessimist" approach of Amaryah Armstrong, "Blackness and the Problem of Belonging: Political Theological Readings of the Family" (Doctoral thesis, Vanderbilt University, 2019).
[83] "Cooperation Jackson"; Akuno, "Build and Fight," 11.
[84] King, "The Most Durable Power," in *A Testament of Hope,* 10.

In that case, perhaps the most important thing is not hope, but courage.

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