CHARITY, HOMELESSNESS, AND THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION

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CHARLES S. C. PEMBERTON

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Abstract

This thesis explores Gustavo Gutiérrez's and John Milbank's articulations of the doctrine of creation, with a view to developing a criterion that can be used to inform our understanding and evaluation of Christian charities that address homelessness and operate in contemporary British civil society. Milbank and Gutiérrez's works both ask questions of the peace or life that can be instituted through charitable practices. They also develop, from the doctrine of creation, their own theological accounts of social and political orders, normative anthropologies, and accounts of the interpersonal. For both Milbank and Gutiérrez, the doctrine of creation maintains a paradox: the internality and externality of the created world in relation to God. Part One of this thesis explores these respective accounts of charity and creation, noting the strengths and limitations of each position. Part One ends with a qualified endorsement of Gutiérrez's theology and defends the utility of the criterion he deploys in his work to judge the task of theology and praxis of the church: integral liberation.

The second part of this thesis progresses in three steps. First, I put forward a theological methodology which is attentive to the logic of theo-political language *and* our current neoliberal socio-political order. I argue that it is prudent to think of political theology as a counter-hegemonic discourse, and in dialogue with Ernesto Laclau and Chantel Mouffe, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and Gutiérrez, I explore and endorse political theology as spiral in character. I go on to extend Laclau and Mouffe's analysis of neoliberalism by developing and defending the hypothesis: 'charities are dual'. By engaging with the work of Frank Prochaska, this section argues that charities are both religious and political, as well as being both internal and external to the state apparatus. Furthermore, I contend that charities constitute and ameliorate the social exclusion attributed to homelessness, and that selfless giving, under the current circumstances, is internal to a process of volunteer self-making. By attending to the dualities of homelessness charities, this part of the thesis sets charities in their current context and proposes an elective affinity between current charitable practices and the hegemony of neoliberalism.

At the end of the thesis, I return to the doctrine of creation and ask how attention to this doctrinal locus can help us to move homelessness charities beyond their dependence on the existence of homeless people, and their embeddedness in our current neoliberal arrangement. I argue that charities, and civil society more broadly, have an important role to play in envisioning and establishing a theo-politics of common life.

To do so, I contend that we need to articulate a robust account of the role of the state, must defend human rights, nurture egalitarian and non-hierarchical charitable practices, be attentive to what the homeless can teach charities and volunteers about our current order, and reform aspects of charitable law. In each of these cases, I defend a paradoxical politics of integral liberation. In summary, this thesis aims to make an original contribution to the growing body of literature that explores homelessness and theology by coordinating the paradox of creation, the duality of charity, and the double truths of neoliberalism.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Life does not end at the borders of the campus, though sometimes it feels that way: to my family and friends outside of the University I owe immeasurably much. To my friends Tom Carter, Jack and Amy Footman, Wan Wei Hsien, Doug Cridland, Dan Luck, Kelli Blanchet, Phil, Max and Johnny Rawlings, and Andrew Brower-Latz – thanks for so plausibly maintaining the chimera of 'another life'. And to my family: sprawling, ungainly and disordered as you are, I would have you no other way. Dad, Jax, Arabella, Olivia, Katharine and Gwenelle, thank you for the life, laughter and light. Thank you Irene, you diligent reader, confidant, friend and re-orderer of my life, I am so thankful for all that you are and what we have.

I dedicate this thesis to two people: to the homeless people of Manchester and Canterbury who have put up with me, sat with me, sharing their hopes, concerns, stories and struggles. Some of you now will now be beginning your 10th, 15th, or 20th winter sleeping rough on the streets of our shared northern town: I always hoped I could do more for you, I am thankful for all the countless things you have done, taught and given to me. Secondly, to my Mother, Vicki Pemberton, who showed us all how to love, and is sorely loved in her absence.

The Author

Charles Pemberton studied Theology and Religion as an undergraduate at the University of Durham (2004-2007), before moving to Manchester to work with the inner city youth charity, The Message Trust. While in Manchester, he applied for the MA program 'Theology, Culture and Society' and was awarded a full tuition bursary by the University of Manchester for Postgraduate Study. He completed this course, while also working part time at a local primary school, writing a dissertation on the appropriation or repudiation of Karl Rahner's transcendental anthropology in the political theologies of Johann Baptist Metz and John Milbank.

On completion of his masters, he entered a proposal on 'Theology and Homelessness' to the Lincoln Theological Institute. He was awarded the Mark Gibbs and Henry Lucas scholarships, and began his research under the supervision of Prof. Peter Scott. During this time, he also volunteered at a Manchester homelessness charity, taught theology to undergraduates at the Universities of Chester and Manchester, ran a series of conferences on theology, religion, popular culture, and politics, contributed written pieces to the journals 'Anvil' and 'Journal of Eighteenth Century Studies', and presented research papers at the Universities of Oxford, Edge Hill, Brighton, Chester, Leuven, Belgium, and Radboud, Netherlands.

Chapter One

Charity, Homelessness, and the Doctrine of Creation

Introduction

In this thesis I am going to explore the ways that John Milbank and Gustavo Gutiérrez's articulations of the doctrine of creation can inform our understanding and evaluation of Christian charities that operate in British civil society, and analyse how this relates to the social exclusion connected to homelessness. In this introduction, I will address the key terms that are employed in this brief (civil society, charity, homelessness and the doctrine of creation), elaborating them in relation to the terrain of political theology, and the preoccupation in contemporary political theory and theology with 'neoliberalism'.

Before turning to political theology and the doctrine of creation, my understanding of charities is that they are institutions that operate in civil society in pursuit of the public good, are animated by, sustained by, and formative of, 'volunteers', and depend on and provide a means for selfless giving. None of this happens in abstraction, and this thesis will not, therefore, attempt to articulate the timeless essence of charities, or those who act through them, but place charities in their current context, while taking their history into account. According to John Milbank and Ivan Petrella, two of my key interlocutors in this project, our current context is dominated by the aims and logic of 'neoliberalism'.[1] This thesis will go on to contend that charities both reinforce neoliberalism's account of society, state, and the person and contest them.[2] In short, this thesis will argue that charities are dual: both pillars of neoliberal society and a crack in its hegemonic wall. I will return, later in this introduction, to develop this notion of 'duality', as it is central to the argumentative thrust of this thesis.

A Brief Introduction to Political Theology

Political theology, broadly: 'the analysis and criticism of political arrangements… from the perspective of differing interpretations of God's ways with the world', is a vibrant

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[1] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), xi. Ivan Petrella, *Beyond Liberation Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2008), 127.

[2] John S. Dryzek, Bonnie Honig, Anne Phillips, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 363–381.

area in contemporary theology.[3] However, a brief review of the history of political theologies suggests that it has faced significant theoretical and practical obstacles in the past, not least: how adaptable it has been to a range of social and political ends and contexts. This adaptability has rightly led those like Francis Schüssler Fiorenza to ask whether we can talk about 'political theology' as a coherent discipline, and to interrogate its claim to be a rigorous theology. In an essay called 'Political Theology and Foundational Theology', Fiorenza surveys a range of historical examples of political theology (Augustine's Two Cities, Modern Civil Religion, the Catholic Restoration and Liberation Theology) and notes 'a certain ambivalence in the notion and use of political theology.'[4] 'Political or societal utility appears to be a criterion of truth' in political theology and this need not be problematic, Fiorenza says, because it can be based on 'an insight into the historical and social nature of truth.'[5] However, this has led political theology to endorse 'radically different societal orders.'[6]

Given this indeterminacy, Fiorenza suggests a twofold path, a route I will follow in this thesis. First, political theology must attend to 'the pragmatics of religious symbols.'[7] Drawing on linguistics, Fiorenza argues that political theology is the study of how 'religious symbols are generated, used and what effects they have.'[8] It requires an attentiveness to the 'societal and political horizon' in which they occur, but also an 'analysis of the symbols themselves in relation to correctness and appropriateness of such usage.'[9] Secondly, 'political theology's methodology should be more than purely descriptive or hermeneutical', it should also be, Fiorenza says, 'reconstructive.'[10] This involves the reflective and (self) critical, but goes beyond these into the positive or normative. Fiorenza says that

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[3] Peter M. Scott, William T. Cavanaugh, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 2.

[4] F.S. Fiorenza, 'Political Theology as Foundational Theology', *CTSA Proceedings*, 32 (1977), 142–177, at. 171.

[5] Ibid, 171.

[6] Ibid, 65.

[7] Ibid, 172.

[8] Ibid, 172. Ground breaking work has already been conducted in this area, preparing the way for Milbank's work, particularly in the influential: G. A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine, Religion and Theology in a Post-Liberal Age* (London: Westminster John Know Press, 1984).

[9] Fiorenza, 'Political Theology', *CTSA*, 174.

[10] Ibid, 174.

it is asserted in linguistics that there is something like an implicit set of rules that govern the appropriate ways of using an expression. Such rules are not immediately evident nor can they easily be formulated. Nevertheless, a skilled speaker can discriminate ways of using a language that are correct and appropriate from those that are not.[11]

Fiorenza gives an example here: the various deployments of the Hebrew Bible narratives in the history of political theology. The Exodus from Egypt, influential in Liberation Theology, the African American Civil Rights movement, and the ongoing politics of Israel, has, Fiorenza tells us, 'been appropriated as a symbol to support political liberation from oppressive situations.'[12] It is also important to note that 'in the nineteenth century, the religious symbol of the conquest of Canaan had also been used to support the colonial take over of certain lands and peoples.'[13] Fiorenza continues: 'it is not enough to simply argue that the liberation from exploitative oppression is more moral than the colonial conquest… it would also be necessary to appeal to theological reasons to explain why liberation is more consonant with the Christian experience of God and the Christian preaching of Jesus than conquest is.'[14] This returns Fiorenza to the question of criteria, or a criterion, which can be reconstructed from religious symbols and deployed to assist political theology in the discernment of theo-politically legitimate and desirable practices, institutions, and reforms, or, alternatively, affirmative theological substantiations of what is already occurring. In his book *Foundational Theology*, Fiorenza gives this example, which goes right to the heart of this thesis and my research question: 'some Christians might argue that social welfare legislation and the reform of political structures represents the drawing out of the implications of the Sermon on the Mount. Others might argue that personal almsgiving expresses the meaning and truth of the Sermon on the Mount; therefore, personal charity rather than social reform represents what is paradigmatically Christian' and that, to decide on which, both, or neither is most consonant with Christian teaching, one must appeal to 'additional criteria'.[15]

To the list of political theologies laid out by Fiorenza, a case can be made for the inclusion of the work of John Milbank, given its widespread influence. The influence of

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[11] Fiorenza, 'Political Theology', *CTSA*, 175.
[12] Ibid, 176.
[13] Ibid, 176.
[14] Ibid, 176.
[15] F.S.Fiorenza, *Foundational Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 306.

Milbank's writings can be seen on both sides of the contemporary political spectrum.[16] He is one of the founding figures, along with Catherine Pickstock and Graham Ward, of the Radical Orthodoxy school of theology. In a co-authored introduction to *Radical Orthodoxy*, Pickstock, Ward and Milbank say that 'in the face of the secular demise of truth, [Radical Orthodoxy] seeks to reconfigure theological truth.'[17] This theology is orthodox because it is committed to a 'coherent Christianity which was gradually lost sight of after the late Middle Ages.'[18] These theologians reject the 'modern bastard dualisms of faith and reason, grace and nature', while setting centre stage 'participation as developed by Plato and reworked by Christianity.'[19] They say that participation 'refuses any reserve of created territory' from the Creator, 'while allowing finite things their own integrity.'[20] In chapter five, this paradoxical schema, of creation internal and external to God, will be examined in Milbank's work.

Time and again, Milbank deploys the metaphor of music to explain his theology. Culture, tradition, personhood, and language are all notes in a single song, and the correct ordering of these distinct notes is exemplified by the church, which is itself 'difference in a continuous harmony.'[21] There is a second complementary metaphor used in Milbank's work, and that is the Platonic hierarchical ordering of goods and of society, retaining its co-constitutive notion of virtue. Radical Orthodoxy is radical 'in the sense of a return to patristic and medieval roots' and 'second, in the sense of seeking to deploy this recovered vision systematically to criticise modern society, culture, politics, art, science and philosophy with an unprecedented boldness.'[22] This includes, in Milbank's work, a critique of democratic egalitarianism, or, more precisely, a supplement to democratic egalitarianism

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[16] Phillip Blond, director of the think tank *Respublica* and author of the book *Red Tory* studied with Milbank at Cambridge, Milbank also sits on the board of directors of *Respublica*. Milbank has also influenced the work of Adrian Pabst, editor of the recent book on 'Blue Labour'. They have co-authored, and Blue Labour, or Blue Socialism, is closer to Milbank's own position according to *The Future of Love*. John Milbank, *The Future of Love* (London: SCM Press, 2009), xvii. Phillip Blond, *Red Tory* (London: Bloomsbury House, 2010). Ian Geary, Adrian Pabst, eds., *Blue Labour: Forging a New Politics* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015).
http://togetherforthecommongood.co.uk/viewpoints/opinion-pieces/articles/john-milbank-and-adrian-pabst.html accessed 20/06/2015.
[17] John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy* (London: Routledge, 1999), 1.
[18] Ibid, 2.
[19] Ibid, 2, 3.
[20] Ibid, 3.
[21] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 422.
[22] Milbank, Pickstock, Ward, *Radical Orthodoxy*, 2.

drawn from the aristocratic ordering of society hierarchically. Milbank is deeply suspicious of the flattening of social life by the state, and he argues for an interweaving of civil society, state, and economy in the unity of the church.

The full critical evaluation of such an ambitious project, conducted and defended by some of the most significant contemporary theologians, is beyond the bound of this thesis. So, why refer to Milbank? Throughout Milbank's *oeuvre*, he repeatedly points to the failings of the modern through the example of modern 'charity', or benevolence, and the assistance they claim to be offering.[23] For Milbank, modern charities entrench and act out a series of anti-theological or heretical theological norms. The transition from pre-modern to modern is seen, by Milbank, to include a delineation of the social realms alien to the theo-political whole of a single and medieval *societas Christianas*. With religious life allocated to the private sphere, the political and the economic became areas subject to their own 'natural' logics, neither subject to God nor capable of legitimising themselves. For Milbank, it is only through the articulation of a narrative (often about the pre-modern, or, in the nineteenth century, about the *ancien regime* of the eighteenth century restoration)[24] in which modern institutions rationalised or curtailed fundamental violence through violence that the modern state can justify its existence. Secondly, for Milbank, modern charities are sustained by volunteers, and volunteers are those who choose to give. Although volunteers choose to give, Milbank argues that for modern charity being able to give and possessing something to give tend to become pre-eminent, and our being first gifts from God, and the value of those who cannot express their self-disciplining will and capacity to give, become obscured.[25] Because giving occurs in a context in which people are thought of as individuals, and selfless giving ironically goes on to reinforce this 'possessive individualism', Milbank goes on to say that charity, in modernity, has become about securing a certain kind of result in the other, and forgoes the classically Christian *telos* of good relationship, or friendship.[26] As Ivan Petrella says, Milbank understands 'God

[23] Slavoj Žižek, John Milbank, *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectics?* (London: MIT Press, 2009), 200. John Milbank, *The Future of Love* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 197–207. John Milbank, *Being Reconciled* (London: Routledge, 2003), 77

[24] J.C.D. Clark, *English Society 1660 – 1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 501–564. William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[25] Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, 77.

[26] Milbank, *Future of Love*, 198. The phrase 'possessive individualism' comes from the widely cited work of C. B. Macpherson. See C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

as a God of peace' and he makes peace, our analogical and harmonious participation in each other and God, into the criterion of adjudication and aim of his theology, as God is the God of peace.[27] In chapter five, I will consider Milbank's account of the doctrine of creation in relation to his hierarchically ordered account of peaceful co-operation, and in chapter four I will examine his account of pre-modern and modern charity. There are distinct strengths to Milbank's work, notably a consonance between his articulation of who God is and the peaceful co-existence of people, while his work repeatedly gestures towards the intermingling of practice and discourse and the need for a radical discontinuity in both if a new oppositional, meta-narrative (to that of nihilist, neoliberal capitalism) is to be substantiated. Before undertaking this investigation, I will first introduce the theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez, my second key interlocutor.

The first sustained theological investigation in this thesis will be into the work of the twentieth and twenty-first century Roman Catholic theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez. Born in Lima in 1928, Gutiérrez initially studied medicine in Peru before turning to philosophy, psychology and theology. A member of the Dominican order, Gutiérrez was later awarded a doctorate for his collected writings by the Institut Pastoral d'Études Religieuses at the Université Catholique de Lyon, 1985. Gutiérrez has spent much of his life working with the poor in Peru, and this can be seen very clearly in his writings. In 1971 he published *Teología de la Liberación* which was translated into English in 1973 as *A Theology of Liberation*. Building on many key tenets of the Second Vatican Council, Gutiérrez's work is marked by a series of central concerns: God's preferential option for the poor, the relationship of orthodoxy and orthopraxis, the unity of history and the underside of history (the experience of the poor), the relationship of liberation to salvation, and the incorporation of the social sciences into the method of theology. Along with a number of predominantly Roman Catholic theologians, Gutiérrez is one of the founding fathers of a movement that cuts across public, political and practical theologies called 'Liberation Theology'.

Like the aforementioned proponents of Radical Orthodoxy, Gutiérrez is also concerned with the relationship between nature and grace and dedicates a significant portion of his most well known text, *A Theology of Liberation*, to highlighting the various political effects of contrasting emphases or inflections in the articulation of nature and

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[27] Ivan Petrella, *The Future of Liberation Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 130.

grace. For Gutiérrez, 'the temporal-spiritual and profane-sacred antitheses are based on the natural-supernatural distinction', but because 'there is no one who is not invited to communion with the Lord, no one who is not affected by grace' and because 'there is no pure nature and there never has been' a significant portion of *A Theology of Liberation* is committed to arguing that the natural-supernatural binary distinction cannot be maintained.[28] This leads Gutiérrez to argue that 'the frontiers between the life of faith and temporal works, between church and world, become more fluid' and to assert that 'the single vocation to salvation' (the oneness of the world before and in God) 'give religious value in a completely new way to the action of man in history, Christian and non-Christian alike.'[29] He continues: 'the building of a just society has worth in terms of the Kingdom, or in more current phraseology, to participate in the process of liberation is already, in a certain sense, a salvific work.'[30] The overlapping of salvation and liberation, Gutiérrez goes on to argue, occurs at three levels, or 'planes': social and political orders, at the level of the person or individual, and in the interpersonal or in communion and covenant.

All three levels of liberation have a theological corollary in the doctrine of creation: God made and makes the world (and thus all orders) out of nothing, God makes humans in God's own image, and God makes and moulds humans for covenant with God and each other, all of which Gutiérrez affirms.[31] God, for Gutiérrez, is repeatedly referred to as the 'God of life', the God who lives and makes a living world.[32] This defence of God, the God of life, launches his theology down a twofold path: on the one hand it legitimises the defence of the human vocation as 'integral liberation' – both dependent on God as source and end of all being, and as the human 'come of age' and taking up a new responsibility for our history as free beings. Secondly, Gutiérrez juxtaposes the God of life with the current prevalence of death, poverty, disease and the plight of the 'non-person' – those who are not recognised as bearers of worth and are superfluous to the 'progress' and unequally shared profits of history.

Witnessing, often first hand, the exploitation of South America and its people by capitalism and colonialism, Gutiérrez's early works, in particular, call for an overhaul of our current political and economic orders. Gutiérrez advocates the transition to a socialist

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[28] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. Sister Caridad Inda, John Eagleson (New York: Orbis, 1983), 69, 70.
[29] Ibid, 72.
[30] Ibid, 72.
[31] Ibid, 153 – 160, 295.
[32] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (London: SCM Press, 1991).

order for theological reasons. God is the God of life and capitalism brings death - this world isn't big enough for the two of them.[33] Following Paulo Freire, Gutiérrez is also suspicious of charity and generous donation as forms of social amelioration. Suggesting that the context in which an action occurs can inform its meaning, Gutiérrez asks if charity, conducted in an individualistic context becomes more about the volunteer conducting the selfless act than the client receiving it.[34] Made subservient to the moral identity of the charitable actor, the ultimate Christian virtue and characteristic of the divine, love, becomes liable to bounded expression in the private sphere and is stripped of its true political, economic and social import.[35] Twenty years later, Milbank makes almost exactly the same point.

Yet, this thesis does not progress, armed with Gutiérrez's theological concepts and concerns, straight into a critical reconstruction of contemporary British charities orientated towards homelessness. Partly, this is due to the success of the Liberation model of theology in general and Gutiérrez in particular; the inclusion of the experience of marginal groups and 'non-peoples' gave confidence and rationale to a range of black, womanist, disability, and sexuality theologies which proliferated in the second half of the twentieth century. However, it is also due to concerns with Gutiérrez's project itself. Socialism, once the solution to many of the problems analysed by Gutiérrez, has become increasingly distant as a political possibility (with the 'end of history' and the fall of the Berlin Wall). While Rebecca Chopp and Ivan Petrella argue that Gutiérrez needs a stronger and more integrated account of the social sciences, John Milbank and Daniel Bell claim Gutiérrez has given up theology to the prejudices and presuppositions of the social sciences (i.e. Marxism).[36] I therefore read Gutiérrez as a theologian sensitive to systematic theology, and with concerns (particularly: the place of the poor in theology, the relationship of nature to grace, and the use of the social sciences) which are close to my own in this thesis. I opt, ultimately, for the work of Gutiérrez over that of Milbank, though I do use Milbank's work to inform the direction of this thesis, and subject Gutiérrez's work to a series of revisions and

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[33] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells Our Own Wells*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (London: SCM Press, 1984), 10. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Orbis, 1990), 158.

[34] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 200.

[35] Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 15

[36] Petrella, *Future of Liberation Theology*. Rebecca Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering* (New York: Orbis Publishing, 1986). D.M. Bell, *Liberation Theology after the End of History* (London: Routledge, 2001). Milbank, *Theology and Social*, 207-210.

developments, particularly in chapter six. Now, I will turn to those recent theologians who are working with the threefold topics of homelessness, charities and theology.

Homelessness, Charity, and Theology: The State of the Art

A number of studies have been published recently in the area of theology, homelessness and charity, addressing at least two of the three.[37] These works touch on a number of common themes, including: the biblical basis, or justification for, charity;[38] the prioritising and dignifying of homeless people's voices, often conjoined with empirical methodologies and action research approaches to the subject;[39] the influence of socio-political and linguistic contexts on understandings of the problem of homelessness, with a particular concern with the homogenising implications of the term 'homelessness';[40] an understanding of homelessness in relation to our shared but changing understanding and

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[37] See: Gary. A. Anderson, *Charity* (London: Yale University Press, 2013). David Nixon, *Stories from the Street: A Theology of Homelessness* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013). Rebecca Anne Allahyari, *Visions of Charity: Volunteer Workers and Moral Community* (London: University of California Press, 2000). L. Stivers, *Disrupting Homelessness* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011). Paul Cloke, Jon May, Sarah Johnsen, *Swept Up Lives?: Re-Envisioning the Homeless City* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010). Justin Beaumont and Paul Cloke, eds., *Faith Based Organisations and Exclusion in European Cities* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2012). Timothy Jackson, *The Priority of Love: Christian Charity and Social Justice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). Steven Bouma-Prediger, Brian J. Walsh, *Beyond Homelessness: Christian Faith in a Culture of Displacement* (Grand Rapids: WM B. Eerdmans, 2008). Robert J. Myles, *The Homeless Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014). Church Urban Fund, *Tackling Homelessness Together: A Study of Nine Faith-based Housing Projects'* (2011). Available at: http://www.cuf.org.uk/sites/default/files/PDFs/Research/Tackling_Homelessness_Together_Full_Report.pdf. Catherine Duce, 'Church-Based Work with the Homeless: A Theological Exploration of the Practices of Hospitality', *Practical Theology*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2013), 87–103. Thia Cooper, *Controversies in Political Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2007). Sam Wells, Anglican vicar of St Martin in the Fields and lecturer at the London School of Economics, has informed me that he plans to publish in this area soon.
[38] Anderson, *Charity*, 69, 143–161. Stivers, *Disrupting Homelessness*, 125. Nixon, *Stories from the Street*, 19, 20. Allahyari, *Visions of Charity*, 11. Beaumont, Cloke, *Faith-Based*, 107, 112. Because Biblically informed responses to homelessness have already been extensively conducted, this thesis considers charity and homelessness in relation to the 'iconoclastic resources' of doctrine. However, it is also worth noting that sophisticated versions of Biblical Theology, like that pursued by Walter Moberly, also draw attention to the importance of discernment, criteria of judgement, and praxis. Walter Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 12-15, 23, 225-222, 232-233. On the 'iconoclastic resources' of theology, see Nicholas Lash, *A Matter of Hope* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981), 158.
[39] Stivers, *Disrupting Homelessness*, 9, 10, 68–104. Nixon, *Stories from the Street*, 67–138. Cloke, *et al*., *Swept Up*, 2.
[40] Stivers, *Disrupting Homelessness*, 12, 108. Nixon, *Stories from the Street*, 39. Cloke, *et al*., *Swept Up*, 22–60. Myles, *Homeless Jesus*, 14–51, 176.

experience of 'the home';[41] a concern with the mission and calling of the church in relation to the lives of homeless people and contemporary inequality;[42] the changing relationships between church and state, or, more generally, between civil society and the state, in the delivery of welfare services;[43] an enduring concern with anthropology, particularly with questions of agency, empowerment, exclusion and the transformation of homeless people, often associated with theologically derived notions of human dignity;[44] and, with the giving or exchanging of gifts, and interpersonal manifestations of power.[45] While there is significant overlap of themes here, there is little consensus in regards to conclusions.

Take, for example, the double bind of agency, and its relation to the status of homeless people. On the one hand, Laura Stivers frames her research by asking 'whether typical Christian responses to homelessness… are empowering for those who are being offered help and hospitality'.[46] She argues that homeless people are hurt by debilitating forms of dependence and need freeing from this servitude (though she also argues they express significant forms of resistance). Her aim is the extension of the agency of homeless people, and maximising their choice making capacity and autonomy. On the other hand, Robert J. Myles argues that contemporary neoliberal responses to homeless people and to the homelessness of Jesus ('And Jesus said to them, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head."')[47] lead us to read into the Matthean text Jesus Christ's choice of an itinerant lifestyle. For Myles, it is the agency of the homeless (like Christ's) which is referenced to justify the denigratory and marginal status of homeless people. Jesus 'choosing' his homelessness underscores 'the neoliberal discourse of the individual, free-roaming, moral agent, able to make isolated economic choices' which also leads to 'downplaying structural and systemic factors'.[48] Here, unlike Stivers, homeless people are allocated an agency analogous to that of Jesus Christ, and this

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[41] Stivers, *Disrupting Homelessness*, 21–67. Myles, *Homeless Jesus*, 27–30. Bouma-Prediger, Walsh, *Beyond Homelessness*, 56 – 66.

[42] Stivers, *Disrupting Homelessness*, 3, 18, 99. Nixon, *Stories from the Street*, 178. Church Urban Fund, *Tackling Homelessness*, 5-10, 34.

[43] Stivers, *Disrupting Homelessness*, 118. Nixon, *Stories from the Street*, 154. Allahyari, *Visions of Charity*, x. Beaumont, Cloke, *Faith-Based*, 265–278. Jackson, *Priority of Love*, 29–69. Church Urban Fund, *Tackling Homelessness*, 3, 31, 36, 37.

[44] Stivers, *Disrupting Homelessness*, 43 – 67. Cloke, *et al.*, *Swept Up*, 61–91.

[45] Anderson, *Charity*, 3, 169, 182–189. Stivers, *Disrupting Homelessness*, 117. Nixon, *Stories from the Street*, 181. Beaumont, Cloke, *Faith-Based*, 160. Myles, *Homeless Jesus*, 186. Jackson, *Priority of Love*, 10, 51. Duce, 'Hospitality', *Practical Theology*, 94.

[46] Stivers, *Disrupting Homelessness*, 2.

[47] RSV Matthew 8:20.

[48] Myles, *Homeless Jesus*, 12.

allocation is a significant constitutive feature of contemporary responses to homeless people and reading of the New Testament texts. Presuming that homelessness is problematic, is it a problem fundamentally of lack or excess of agency? Before going on to position my own work and outline what this thesis will contribute to this growing area of theological investigation, I will now outline my understanding and use of the terms 'charity' and 'homelessness'.

'Charity'

Charities are notoriously hard to define, and, as I will go on to argue in chapter seven, part of their appeal lies in this indeterminacy. So, why have I decided to continue with this term, and what do I mean by it? Firstly, as Williams Shawcross, the chair of the Charity Commission said in December, 2012 in a talk in London, 'charity' is a vague term which refers to a diversity of organisations. He suggested: we 'should consider whether a single definition of charity can continue to accommodate so many wonderful, diverse models of non-governmental organisation.'[49] Calling for a debate over the definition of charity, Shawcross furthermore argued that we should have this debate now while 'levels of public trust in charities are high and public support for charities is strong.'[50] Charities are hard to define for it is a term that covers a great diversity of institutions with contrasting practices, financial sources, norms, goals and methods but they are, Shawcross suggests, in vogue.

The first reason for my retaining of the term is mentioned by Shawcross: charities retain legitimacy and *cachet* in the popular imagination. This status is itself loaded, and is related, by the advocate of charities Frank Prochaska, to two further questions: the causes of poverty, and, secondly, the ideal/real relationship of the state and civil society. Firstly, Prochaska notes that whether poverty is presumed to result from individual failings or from structural causes influences our varying views on the ameliatory potential of civil society and the state respectively. For Prochaska, when poverty is understood to be the result of personal fallibility, charity, rather than state assistance, will be the *de facto* realm of social

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[49] http://www.thirdsector.co.uk/go/news/article/1220981/charity-commission-chair-calls-debate-definition-charity/ Accessed: 18/11/2013
[50] http://www.thirdsector.co.uk/go/news/article/1220981/charity-commission-chair-calls-debate-definition-charity/

service.[51] The second issue is ancillary to the first, and relates to the arrangement of the state and civil society post-Thatcher and post-fall of the Berlin Wall. As a number of authors, including Prochaska again, have argued, Thatcher in the UK and Reagan in the USA stand at the watershed of a new political order, in which the realm of civil society has been given an extended remit for the delivery of welfare services.[52] This neoliberal ordering of state and civil society has proved itself to be enduring and resilient and both Blair (The Third Way) and Cameron (The Big Society) have cleaved to the emancipatory potential of civil society and a streamlined state as hallmarks of this mixed economy of welfare. However, during the same period, the state has also become a significant source of civil society funding and regulation, professionalising the charitable industry and asking for new standards of accountability (which some have argued are secularising for religious institutions) through the works of the Charity Commission. This poses a number of significant questions, which I will take up in chapters three, four, seven and eight, including: should we begin our analysis with civil society internal or external to the state? What theo-political resources are there for legitimising and critiquing civil society and the state, and is a distinct civil sphere theo-politically desirable, and on what grounds?

There are distinct dangers inherent in the use of the term 'charity', not least because it may occlude the significance of the current tendencies and overlaps of the state-civil society nexus. I will continue to use it, nevertheless, as 'charity' does refer to a distinct set of institutions (regulated and recognised by the Charities Commission) and enshrined in the particular field of charitable law. Charities are defined by the Charities Commission as 'voluntary organisations which benefit the public in a way the law says is charitable.'[53] 'Benefit the public' is an elusive and contested term, subject to perennial revision, and can include the 'prevention or relief of poverty,' the 'advancement of citizenship or community development,' the 'advancement of human rights,' the 'advancement of environmental protection or improvement' and the 'advancement of religion.'[54] This broad definition of charity covers a range of active charities, from private public schools and private hospitals

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[51] Frank Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain, The Disinherited Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 13.

[52] See, for example, Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land* (London: Penguin Books, 2010). Ed Howker, Shiv Malik, *Jilted Generation* (London: Icon, 2013). Sarah Glynn, eds*., Where the Other Half Live: Lower Income Housing in a Neoliberal World* (London: Pluto, 2009).

[53] http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/About_us/About_charities/default.aspx accessed 22-03-2012.

[54] Charities Act 2011, http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/25. Accessed 17/05/2011.

to soup kitchens and food banks. Those characteristics that mark charities that work with homeless people in particular, or against homelessness in general, require a further word.

Paul Cloke and Justin Beaumont avoid understanding homeless charities through the definition of an 'ideal type'.[55] This elucidation of a charitable 'essence' tends, in Cloke and Beaumont's analysis, to the extraction of charities from history, rending mute their variousness and diversity in time and their distinctiveness and tendency to social innovation.[56] They prefer the term 'Faith Based Organisations' (FBOs), as this draws attention to the 'post-secular' role of religious groups in public life.[57] However, as these authors go on to note: 'FBOs should not be regarded as homogenous in their motivation or approach' as there are both 'traditional, evangelical and controlling FBOs, those more innovatively dedicated to reconciling virtue with difference and those acting as umbrella organisations for faith-motivated and secular people within a contested and differentiated postsecular context'.[58] On the one hand this book is very helpful for grounding and legitimising theological engagement with public social services, as it attests regularly to the present and past place of religion in public life, at times examining innovations in contemporary theology as they related to the work of British civil society.[59] These FBOs maintain a 'vociferous discourse of an alternative to the neoliberal hegemony extremely useful in positioning postsecularism within the postpolitical, "there is no alternative" (TINA) condition that we take as this current, neoliberal moment', or so these writers claim.[60] I will return to this text in chapter seven. However, while 'charity' remains the key organising, legislative, and popular term for public benefit practices conducted in civil society (and there are significant overlaps between charity and 'FBOs', and 'FBO' itself refers to a significant diversity of institutions and norms) I will continue with this term in this thesis.

In this thesis, charity will be used as a cipher to designate those institutions which meet three criteria: operating in civil society, depending on volunteers, and manifesting a form of selfless giving. I will also limit my study by discussing charities in relation to 'homelessness' and its associated issues. My approach to charities is to treat them as a

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[55] Beaumont, Cloke, *Faith-Based*, 10.
[56] Ibid, 37–81.
[57] Ibid, 38–42.
[58] Ibid, 10. For a good critique of the supposed neutrality of the terms 'FBO', see Luke Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 37–45.
[59] Beaumont, Cloke, *Faith-Based*, 59–80, 105–126.
[60] Ibid, 59.

bundle of non-necessarily related institutions, agents, relationships, forms of practice, symbols and knowledges which display a continuity sedimented in their progression through time, while open to innovation and the future (stemming from their non-necessary character, and diversity of elements), and, finally, formed in important (but non determinative) ways by the discursive horizon in which they operate. The three key areas of investigation this thesis will return to throughout are: one, charities as institutions that operate in civil society in complex and changing relationship with the state. Two, they are marked by 'volunteerism' (the willing activity of individuals and communities for the good of their society) and various attempts to 'transform' the 'socially excluded' homeless.[61] And, three, that charities provide an institutional vehicle for the expression of benevolence, generosity, and selfless service, 'an action or inclination which promotes the well-being of others.'[62]

My approach to understanding what charities are has also been influenced by the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantel Mouffe. In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, they argue that language and politics exist in a dynamic and reciprocal relationship, our use and understanding of language shaping what we perceive to be there, and what 'is' folding back into our political language and orders.[63] They make 'discourse' central to their social theory, arguing that discourses (like neoliberalism) ossify our definition of what terms like 'freedom' mean, thus fixing (though always provisionally) the social into a particular order.[64] Their term for this is hegemony, and appropriating aspects of this theory allows me to argue that charities have been shaped by the neoliberal discourse in which they occur. Secondly, it helps me to say that charities are an arranged series of diverse actors, institutions, practices etc that are not necessarily related, nor definitive in and of themselves, and that charities are therefore also open to change and innovation. And, thirdly, recalling my opening comments on the work of Fiorenza, that political theology can be considered as a discourse, one that contests and opposes the orders and definitions of neoliberalism and leads us to think and position charity (with its affiliate moments) in a quite different way, Laclau and Mouffe's work gives me the tools and the terms to articulate theology as a counter-hegemonic discourse within a liberal democratic context.

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[61] J. Steven Ott, Lisa A. Dicke, eds., *The Nature of the Nonprofit Sector* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2012), vii, viii. Fitzpatrick, *et al., Homelessness 2011*, 27.

[62] Frank Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse: Philanthropy in Modern Britain* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), 2.

[63] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 2, 95, 98.

[64] Ibid, x.

This process of understanding, evaluation and repositioning is the key task of chapters six through eight.

'Homelessness'

Like charity, homelessness is also a difficult and contested term, and in this thesis I focus on the 'social exclusion' allocated to homelessness, and the ways in which 'social exclusion' is linked to inclusion in society demonstrated by and dependent upon working and laboring in legitimate avenues. However, here in the introduction, I will lay out recent trends in understanding homelessness and what homelessness is more generally.

Firstly, contemporary literature tends to differentiate between four different types of homelessness. Firstly, there are rough sleepers; secondly, 'single homeless people living in hostels, shelters and temporary supported accommodation', thirdly, statutorily homeless households, those 'households who seek assistance from local authorities on grounds of being currently or imminently without accommodation.'[65] Fourthly, 'hidden homeless', a hard to measure group including 'households subject to severe overcrowding, squatters, people "sofa-surfing"' around friends or relatives houses, those involuntarily sharing with other households on a long term basis, and people sleeping rough in hidden locations.'[66] These are also worrying times for the homeless and vulnerably housed as 'officially estimated rough sleeper numbers have continued to grow, with the 2013 national total up 37% on its 2010 level,' from 1,768 to 2,414 in that period.[67] Statutory homeless numbers have risen as well. '"Homelessness acceptances" by local councils were 12,000 higher across England in 2013/14 than in 2009/10', standing at 52,000.[68] If one adds to this number 'informal "homeless prevention" and "homelessness relief"' activity undertaken by local authorities there were some 280,000 local authority homelessness case actions in 2013/14, 9% up on the previous year (and 36% higher than in 2009/10).[69] Prevention activity alone constituted some 228,000 cases in 2013/14 - 12% higher than the previous

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[65] Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Hal Pawson, Glen Bramley, Steve Wilcox, *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2012*, (London: Crisis, 2012), ix.
[66] Ibid, ix.
[67] Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Hal Pawson, Glen Bramley, Steve Wilcox, Beth Watts, *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2015* (London: Crisis, 2015), vii, ix. These authors argue that local councils are reneging on their obligation to collect rough sleeping numbers, given the significant rises. Their independently constructed estimates put the number of rough sleepers between 4,000 and 8,000 on a regular night in 2010/11, when official estimates were at 2,000. Ibid, x.
[68] Ibid, xi.
[69] Ibid, vii.

year and 38% up on 2009/10.[70] So too with temporary accommodation places for single homeless people, which 'rose 6% during 2013/14, and are up 24% since their low point in 2010/11.'[71] This recent report refers to the 2013 estimate of 2.23 million households that concealed a single homeless person, 'in addition to 265,000 concealed couples and lone parents. On the most recent (2012) figures 685,000 households (3.1%) were overcrowded in England, maintaining the higher levels seen over several years.'[72] In total, they suggest that the last four years there has been a 31% increase in homelessness numbers, and that this is a conservative estimate.[73]

These writers attribute the rising numbers of homeless people to a range of factors, notably the pressures within the UK housing stock (including a lack of new build and changes in the patterns of household formation) along with changes in the British, particularly English, welfare benefits regime, such as 'the ratcheting up of the sanctions regime under Jobseekers Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance' and 'The Localisation of the Social Fund' and the 'Spare Room Subsidy' i.e. 'The Bedroom Tax'.[74] Though less significant than housing availability, or the social welfare net, poverty, the economy and labor trends are also important.[75] For these scholars, while the 'the UK economy has now recovered to pre-credit crunch levels' and 'unemployment is falling' it is also the case that 'average real earnings [have] also fallen over the last few years'.[76] Exacerbated by pressures in the housing market and cuts to benefits, the vulnerably housed have been hit by a triple whammy.

These authors take an approach to the causes of homelessness which takes into account the structural and the individual.[77] This approach recognises a range of factors that have the

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[70] Fitzpatrick, *et al.*, *Homelessness Monitor 2015*, vii.

[71] Ibid, vii.

[72] Ibid, vii, viii.

[73] Ibid, 61.

[74] Ibid, xiii, xiv. They note that 'the same welfare reform factors that are ''"pushing" benefit-reliant households out of rental accommodation, especially in London, make it ever harder for local authorities to rehouse them, with not only private landlords but also some social landlords reportedly increasingly risk averse in accommodation homeless and potentially homeless households'. Ibid, xv.

[75] Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Hal Pawson, Glen Bramley, Steve Wilcox, *The Homelessness Monitor: Tracking the Impacts of Policy and Economic Change in England 2011 – 2013* (London: Crisis, 2011), 19, 20.

[76] Fitzpatrick, *et al.*, *Homelessness Monitor 2015*, 12.

[77] Fitzpatrick, *et al.*, *Homelessness Monitor 2011 – 2013*, 14. Fitzpatrick *et al* trace the oscillation in scholarship on this subject from individualistic/behavioural to social/structural accounts of why homelessness happens and what causes homelessness. They conclude by noting that both factors are significant, and that this is the current consensus in this field. This thesis accepts that both of these

'tendency to cause homelessness without "actually" causing it on every occasion, because other (contextual) factors may often – or even always - intervene to prevent correspondence between cause and effect.'[78] Secondly, this approach works with the complexity and variety of routes into homelessness. 'Constellations of inter-related causal factors are likely to "explain" homelessness in any particular case, and the challenge is to identify common patterns that can be explained by the "qualitative nature" of recurring antecedents – i.e. what is it about these factors that could tend to cause homelessness.'[79] Poverty, mental illness, and substance abuse tend towards homelessness, but there are of course many poor people, people with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those who drink or take drugs, who are not homeless. When a series of toxic factors combine, in cases of poverty mixed with labour marginality and domestic violence, for example, prompted by a particular trigger, homelessness is more likely to occur.[80] 'Buffers', like strong social relationships, and social, cultural, human and material capital, play a factor but it is also important to note that often 'risk taking' behaviours 'implicated in some people's homelessness (particularly amongst those sleeping rough) are themselves rooted in the pressures associated with poverty and other forms of structural disadvantage.'[81]

While much of this view on homelessness will be continued in this thesis, this useful review published by Crisis attempts to uphold a charitable apolitical impartiality, which leads Fitzpatrick *et al* to neglect or downplay the various formative contexts in which charity and homelessness occur, particularly that 'neoliberal' character of our current arrangement that Cloke and Beaumont identify.[82] James D. Wright would agree with much of what has already been said about homelessness but adds a further dimension to the debate. He notes that 'even to speak of "the" homeless is to imply a unity of experience, a commonality of need that does not exist'.[83] The last 30 years of research has taught Wright

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elements are important, while it adds to the current literature on this subject by considering how the *institutional* (charities) mediates the individual and the social.

[78] Fitzpatrick, *et al*., *Homelessness Monitor 2011 – 2013*, 14.

[79] Ibid, 14.

[80] Fitzpatrick, *et al*., *Homelessness Monitor 2011 – 2013*, 14-16.

[81] Ibid, 17.

[82] For example, writing with Anwen Jones, Fitzpatrick is explicitly political in her assertion that 1990's and 2010 Conservative and Labour policy put social cohesion before social justice, and very sceptical about the current practices of 'inclusion'. Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Anwen Jones, 'Pursuing Social Justice or Social Cohesion?: Coercion in Street Homelessness Policies in England', *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (2005), 389-406.

[83] James D. Wright, 'Introduction: Homelessness and the Politics of Social Exclusion', *American Behavioural Scientist*, Vol. 48, 2005, 925–927, at. 925–6.

'that homelessness is not one problem but many different kinds of problems involving many different kinds of people, each of them homeless for different reasons or who have become homeless in different ways'.[84] 'Homelessness', Wright contends, is not simply a descriptive term but a constitutive or creative one; it does not simply describe someone's housing status but, Wright says, 'exists as a social condition' created 'through processes of stigmatisation and social exclusion'.[85] 'People', says Wright, '"become" homeless because they are socially constructed as unworthy of the rights of citizenship that others enjoy, because their very being is defined as an existence at the economic, social, cultural, or political fringe' and it is this that 'is the defining link between the pierced and tattooed gutter punk and the reeking, alcoholic panhandler, that theirs is a life outside the margins… somewhere "out there" beyond the normative middle-class pale'.[86] This thesis will occupy itself primarily with the 'social exclusion' which both legitimates charitable work with homeless people (in the double sense of both making selfless service of the homeless a valid thing to do and making these actions with homeless people meaningful and communicable actions) and, as Wright suggests, is constitutive in the formation of the group 'homeless' in the first place. And, this thesis will also add to the studies of Fitzpatrick *et al* by considering in detail the role that charitable institutions play in mediating the individual and the social, and enacting the tasks implied by the concept 'social exclusion'. Before considering the current neoliberal context in which charity occurs and the exclusions of neoliberalism, this thesis will be positioned in relation to two important texts on charity, homelessness and theology which have already been published.

Placing this thesis

David Nixon's *Stories from the Street: A Theology of Homelessness* is closest to this thesis in terms of analysis, aims, and context. Nixon, drawing on interviews with homeless people at a Devon drop in centre, co-ordinates the stories of homeless people with the story of God in three persons.[87] Nixon's book is 'an investigation into how marginalised people comprehend God, and what they can teach us, the wealthy, about life, about ourselves and about God – their part in our conversion.'[88] He collects and orders these stories because of

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[84] Wright, 'Homelessness', *American Behavioural*, 925.
[85] Ibid, 926.
[86] Ibid, 926.
[87] Nixon, *Stories from the Street*, 174.
[88] Ibid, 1.

his concern that the church's ability to hear 'is so often impaired' by 'centuries-old accretions of comfort and affluence.'[89] These, I believe, are well founded and delicately handled concerns, and, secondly, like Nixon this thesis is also broadly aligned with the aims and methods of Liberation Theology. This thesis draws on the resources of Liberation Theology because Liberation Theology is one of the most historically significant theological movement which addresses both social/structural and individual factors, and homelessness is caused by both these elements. To Nixon's work, this thesis will make a number of elaborations and developments. Firstly, Nixon argues that stories can function as metanarratives which shape people and the church. He quotes positively from the work of John Milbank: 'the task of such a theology… is to tell again the Christian *mythos*.'[90] But Milbank does not end here. Milbank goes on to say in *Theology and Social Theory* that stories themselves presume *praxis*, and encode and sustain their own accounts of what 'is'. In Milbank's terms it is 'at the ontological level' that the 'framework of reference implicit in the Christian story and action' comes fully to the fore in its distinctiveness (though always provisionally).[91]

To develop Nixon's work, I am going to explore this 'ontological level' through an extended discussion of two accounts of the doctrine of creation (Gutiérrez and Milbank's respectively). Gary A. Anderson, attempting the retrieval of an ancient near east worldview on charity, makes this link (one already intimated - and questioned - by Fiorenza, Milbank and Gutiérrez) quite explicitly for me: 'the emphasis' on charity, in Proverbs and Ben Sira, 'is not on moral agency but on the nature of the created order (in other words, a matter of *ontology*).'[92] Or, again in the same book, Anderson says that these aforementioned authors attest 'that the world is a place formed and guided by charity', so that to do charity is to make 'a declaration about the metaphysical structure of the world itself. Charity, in short, is not just a good deed *but a declaration of belief about the world and the God who created it*.'[93]

Moving from the created to the ontological, Peter Scott has argued that to attend to the doctrine of creation is to think and reflect on the material (being and becoming - ontology) in a theological vein. For Scott, 'matter matters to Christianity', and the doctrine of

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[89] Nixon, *Stories from the Street*, 178.
[90] Ibid, 5–31. Milbank quoted in Nixon, *Stories from the Street*, 30.
[91] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 383.
[92] Anderson, *Charity*, 32. Emphasis in original.
[93] Ibid, 4. Emphasis in original.

creation 'addresses the issue of the organisation of bodies' including 'the authority of political governance: the exercise of the legal, administrative, executive and parliamentary, and enforcement powers of the modern nation-state.'[94] It also, Scott says, 'raises the problem of *order* in Christian perspective: how that order is to be understood, in what sense that order is settled or alterable, and against what norms such order is to be judged and developed.'[95] By attending to Milbank's and Gutiérrez's account of the composition of nature and grace, particularly as disclosed in the created world internal to (dependent upon) and external to (distinct from) God, Scott's questions about the ordering of our society and the norms whereby it might be judged will be broached. Finally, Scott also suggests, in *Theology, Ideology and Liberation*, that language itself is also a kind of 'matter' or material.[96] To develop these questions of ontology, 'ordering' and norms of judgement, I use 'discourse' as a link to explore the fixing of order in respective political and theological articulations. I prepare the ground for this project in chapter two through five, and lay out my approach and its conclusions in chapters six through eight.

It is important to say more about the connections that I make between ontology, the political, and the methodology of Liberation Theology. If discourse, language, is a kind of 'matter', then the examination of language is also an exploration of the ontological (the being of words). Read with Fiorenza's comments on method in the discipline of political theology, this thesis proceeds by developing a clear understanding of the distinctiveness of theological language (in particular: the relationship of theological language to its 'object', God). I draw attention to the paradoxical character of Christian theology, developing this characteristic to put forward a distinctive account of how society should be ordered and the government's role in this ordering. How society is ordered, how it should be ordered, and what a theological account of order looks like, are both complicated, problematic and necessary questions to ask. They are necessary to pose because it is only by addressing how society is structured (ordered) and how this structure, or these structures, are a significant cause of homelessness (as the last section noted) that political theology can engage the current homelessness crisis. They are problematic because of the recourse political theologians and political parties have made in the past to the essence of groups, the nature of the person or the being of God to ground their accounts of order and defend

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[94] Scott, Cavanaugh, *Political Theology*, 333.
[95] Ibid, 334.
[96] Peter M. Scott, *Theology, Ideology and Liberation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 15, 44-45.

their projects of conservation, revolution or reform.[97] Against this tendency, I agree with John Milbank when he says that 'theology is on the side of indeterminacy, and of a certain authentic and inescapable vagueness, because if we live in a created universe which only reflects in multiple finite ways an infinite plenitude of meaning, then there is a sense in which everything is always somewhat partial and uncertain, veiled, fragmentary and never foreclosed.'[98] The connections between meaning (language), creation (ontology) and politics (order), which Milbank draws together here, are crucial to this thesis, especially chapters six and eight.

I employ a number of strategies in this thesis to engage how society is currently ordered without lapsing into a trans-historical account of the essence of things on the one hand, or a relativist acquiescence to how things currently are on the other. First, in chapter two, I develop a criterion that can assist me in judging whether an order is theologically legitimate. From a detailed reading of Gutiérrez's work, I draw on the idea that a society is theologically valid to the degree that it ensures and protects the freedom of all people, I use Gutiérrez's phrase 'integral liberation' to express this. Second, I resist defining the essence of charities and reject methodologies which could bring me to a disclosure of such an essence.[99] Instead, I opt for an understanding of charities which identifies their key features by attending carefully to those elements which repeat themselves regularly in their history (chapters four and seven). Third, in chapter six, I develop an analogy between liberal democracy and political theology. Both, I argue, are structured in similar ways. Yet, unlike

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[97] Along with the example of colonialism, already cited by Fiorenza, other examples of problematic political arrangements that depend on this kind of logic abound. The identification of the essence of the social (relations of production) in strands of communist thought, the nature of the Jewish people, homosexuals and gypsies by the German National Socialists (amongst many other instances of anti-Semitism) and the inherent competitiveness of the human by contemporary capitalists are some well known examples of this kind of logic.

[98] Interestingly, Milbank's comments here follow on from him saying: 'if one takes the linguistic character of thought yet more seriously and recognise that the linguistic mediation of reality always exceeds any determinations of a priori structures, including those which try to fix what language is capable of, then it becomes at least possible to suppose that our mode of knowing is continuously reshaped by what there is to be known.' This supposing is crucial, for it enables Milbank to hold a position, paradoxically, in which communication is *possible* because of the responsiveness of words to things that constantly exceed them, and yet never *final* because of the plenitude of the real in relation to what is sayable. John Milbank, Simon Oliver, eds., *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 31.

[99] Clodovis Boff and Daniel Bell's works, which are reviewed in chapter three, offer me alternative routes to 'discourse' based on the bible and the church respectively. I reject both of these approaches. Against Boff, I question the hierarchy he discerns within the Biblical texts and how this functions to ground his theology. Against Bell, I question the coherence of drawing on two postmodern, secular theorists in the development of his particular methodology and the political implications of his work.

the hegemony of contemporary neoliberal democracy, which works hard to hide its blemishes (what I call, following Laclau and Mouffe, 'antagonisms'), holes and naturalise its operations of power, political theology testifies to another way. Political theology, I argue, is an articulation which produces different antagonisms, works to maintain the visibility of its lacks (the non-identity of its terms with their 'object', God) and depends on an explicit, public and historically disclosed power. The difference between neoliberal democracy and the order testified to by political theology, as defined in this thesis, is that they hegemonise their various elements according to distinct master-signifiers: they are formally similar and substantively distinct. Neoliberalism defines freedom as self-possession and is distinct from the theological understanding of freedom as the reception of ourselves as gifts from God. In the last two chapters, this thesis argues that those who ascribe to an orthodox theological position and aspire to the end of homelessness should work within the parameters of contemporary democracy (accepting its checks and balances and diverse sources of power) to reform, or reorder, our current civil, economic, and political realms. By disclosing a different way, I argue that political theology makes it possible to imagine and enact a better kind of collective being (a better kind of society); I go on to say that this being is also a deeper self, a truer way of existing with each other because it is harmonious with how we were made by God and with what we were made for. The substance of these changes, their theological rationales, and how they relate to the current roles of civil society and the state are laid out in chapter eight.

Rebecca Anne Allahyari's *Visions of Charity: Volunteer Workers and Moral Community* also has parallels with this thesis. She set out to explore homeless people's experiences of social control but ended up writing about 'how the competing moral visions in two Christian social service agencies take on meaning for volunteers doing the work of feeding the poor'.[100] Like this thesis, Allahyari is interested in the place of volunteers and voluntary institutions in relation to homelessness. Unlike this project, Allahyari is first concerned with a 'sociology of morality' exemplified by the volunteer, with the volunteer enacting a kind of 'moral selving' in their giving.[101] We are both trying to illuminate 'how the intersecting politics of volunteerism, faith-based charities and social movements, and the welfare state shape the day-to-day work of feeding the poor', but my concern is with

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[100] Allahyari, *Visions of Charity*, ix.
[101] Ibid, ix, 4.

the neoliberal hegemonic horizon in which these actions occur and gain their meaning and unlike Allahyari this project includes an extended examination of theories of civil society, how they relate to theology, and the relationship of civil society to the state in the British neoliberal context.[102]   So, while Allahyari is right to draw attention to what she calls the possibility that 'particular contexts may construct moral personhood and social relationships quite differently within organisations dedicated to similar ends', i.e. social context does not 'determine' institutional responses to a problem, so that even within neoliberalism there are a range of charities with different characters, she is weaker on sustaining the possibility that one socio-linguistic hegemonic order may incorporate diverse and sometimes distinct institutions within it, and draw strength from these legitimate 'alternatives'.[103] Along with an examination of civil society, chapter six of this thesis takes up this possibility and explores it in conversation with the work of the radical and plural social democrats, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe.

It is possible, furthermore, to situate my work in relationship to an aspect of Allahyari's study that is not central to the investigation of her book. Namely, whether charities '"reproduce the dependence in their clients they hope eventually to remove."'[104] Allahyari also quotes from Joel Blau, who stated that 'organised private charity espouses an ideology of individualism, self-reliance, and minimal government'.[105] He continues by endorsing 'the social movement to house the homeless' because social movements, like Housing First,[106] see 'homelessness as a social problem rather than as a private trouble. Politics replaces charity. Food, clothing, and shelter are no longer donations to the less fortunate. Instead, in this social movement, advocates see the necessities of life as a basic human right.'[107] Allahyari does not pursue this end, partly because she is not concerned with the 'evaluation of either organisation and its effectiveness in helping the homeless.'[108] Because I am trying to develop a theologically sourced norm for the evaluation of charitable practices, I will be including homeless people's perspectives on charities and society more generally (in chapter seven), though the emphasis in this thesis will fall on

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[102] Allahyari, *Visions of Charity*, x.
[103] I'm indebted for this point to Raymond Williams' excellent essay on the base/superstructure metaphor in his account of marxist analysis of the social. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Materialism* (London: Verso, 2005), 39.
[104] Charles Hoch and Robert A. Slayton quoted in Allahyari, *Visions of Charity*, 219.
[105] Joel Blau quoted in Allahyari, *Visions of Charity*, 219.
[106] http://100khomes.org/read-the-manifesto/housing-first
[107] Ibid, 219.
[108] Ibid, 9.

understanding and evaluating 'volunteer and staff endeavour to help others out of poverty and despair through hard work and self-discipline' and 'into a work ethic that values sobriety and productivity'.[109] I will argue that there is, to use Max Weber's phrase, an 'elective affinity' between charitable practices orientated towards homeless people and the social-linguistic and hegemonic context in which they currently occur.[110] To plot how this will be achieved, I will now turn to the area of neoliberalism.

A Working Definition of Neoliberalism

This thesis will work with an understanding of neoliberalism as a 'double truth', nicely captured in Slavoj Žižek's account of neoliberal doctrine as: 'You are free to do anything as long as it involves shopping.'[111] Žižek is being a little pithy here, but nevertheless in his suggestion that neoliberalism depends on and defends certain freedoms, but enforces the acting of these freedoms in normative ways, this quote nicely illustrates the form of analysis this thesis will pursue. Fittingly, given this doubleness, it is hard to say something accurate about neoliberalism that accounts convincingly for its complexity, embeddedness and ubiquity. Take, for example, Robert Myles' understanding of neoliberalism as the post-Thatcher 'established ideological framework of the centre, in which governments of Western democratic nations perceive their role as concerned primarily with economic administration and management'.[112] Undoubtedly, neoliberalism includes a theory of the state, but it is also an anti-state theory, of state mismanagement and of the failure or inability of any state to 'administer' the economic. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe make it even more complex here, by arguing that quotidian frustrations with modern bureaucracy have been drawn upon by neoliberal advocates (in the name of 'autonomy' and self-determinism) to foment popular malcontent with the post-World War 2 classical welfare state (neatly tying, like Žižek, neoliberalism into everyday practices and experiences).[113] What Laclau and Mouffe suggest is that neoliberalism's critique of the state depends on widespread notions of the good life and the person who leads it.

We might approach neoliberalism another way, by discussing it as an economic project of deregulation and privatisation designed to maximise the utility of competition

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[109] Allahyari, *Visions of Charity*, 11.

[110] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 2001).

[111] Žižek, quoted in Phillip Mirowski, Dieter Plehwe, eds., *The Road from Mount Pèlerin, The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* (London: Harvard University Press, 2009), 426, 421.

[112] Myles, *Homeless Jesus*, 2.

[113] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 169.

and bring machine like efficiency to a growing set of spheres, and the market itself as that which delivers and embodies these ends: the most sophisticated means for information collection and the adjudication between desires of often anonymous individuals.[114] Ivan Petrella gets close to this when he refers to neoliberalism as encoding 'sin' and 'sacrifice'. For neoliberals, Petrella says that

> the greatest of economic sins is the pretension of knowledge that lies behind market intervention, the belief that government knows how to allocate resources better than the free market; neoliberalism demands sacrifice; insofar as the market is the one and only path toward the development of humankind then the sufferings of those excluded from the market are but the necessary sacrifice required for the progress of humanity as a whole.[115]

Taking neoliberalism as primarily free market economics can also be seen in Beaumont and Cloke's understanding of neoliberalism as 'reactionary political agendas associated with the shrinking of the state, the privatisation of welfare and the strengthening of market logics'.[116]

Neoliberalism as market deregulation and economic liberalisation is widely associated with the policies and politics of Thatcher in the UK and Reagan in the USA, however the authors of *The Road from Mount Pèlerin, The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* argue that neoliberalism has a longer history than this. These writers contend that the Mount Pèlerin society, which included in its members Milton Friedman and Friedrich von Hayek, inculcated neoliberalism intentionally. This group acted as a "thought collective": 'a community of persons mutually exchanging ideas or maintaining intellectual interaction'.[117] This review of the rise of the Mount Pèlerin society suggests that 'neoliberalism has not existed in the past as a settled or fixed state, but is better understood as a transnational movement requiring time and substantial effort in order to attain the modicum of coherence and power it has achieved today.'[118] Through attending to the particularity of this society, and the influence of its members, they hope to shed light on

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[114] Mission and Public Affairs, *The Church and Capitalism* (2011), https://www.churchofengland.org/media/1355764/churchandcapitalism.pdf Accessed 07/07/2015
[115] Petrella, *Beyond Liberation*, 127.
[116] Beaumont, Cloke, *Faith-Based*, 270.
[117] Miroski, Plehwe, *Mount Pèlerin,* 4, 428.
[118] Ibid*,* 426.

this opaque term. Concluding this set of essays, Phillip Mirowski suggests that neoliberalism attempts to 'have it both ways':

> To warn of the perils of expanding the purview of state activity *while simultaneously* imagining the strong state of their liking rendered harmless through some instrumentality of "natural" regulation; to posit the free market as an ideal generator and a conveyor belt of information *while simultaneously* prosecuting a "war of ideas" on the ground strenuously and ruthlessly… asserting that their program would lead to unfettered economic growth and enhanced human welfare *while simultaneously* suggesting that no human mind could ever really know any such thing, and therefore that it was illegitimate to justify their program by its consequences…to portray the market as the *ne plus ultra* of all human institutions, *while simultaneously* suggesting that the market is in itself insufficient to attain and nourish the transeconomic values of a political, social, religious and cultural character[119]

I have quoted Mirowski's work at length because I think it points in a number of interesting directions and suspends any simple monolithic identification of neoliberalism. His work maintains that an examination of neoliberalism requires an account of a number of forces which are both economic, political, anthropological, historical, and epistemological. Crucially, Mirowski also embeds in his approach a scepticism about neoliberalism's account of itself, noting a tendency in neoliberalism to say one thing and do another. By analysing key characteristics of modern charity (chapter four of this thesis), neoliberalism as a hegemonic discourse (chapter six) and the recent history of charities in England (chapter seven), this thesis will continue and develop Mirowski's account of neoliberalism as a 'double truth', primarily through an extended discussion of charities that are orientated to homelessness. Through examining three interlocking levels – social and political orders, personhood, and the interpersonal, this thesis will argue that the duality of charities mirrors and reinforces the double truths of neoliberalism. I will now expand on the hypothesis 'charities are dual', thus drawing together the preceding sections on charities, homelessness and neoliberalism.

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[119] Miroski, Plehwe, *Mount Pèlerin,* 442, 443.

The Duality of Charity

The ramifications of this charitable duality are various and sometimes contradictory, but, nevertheless, I will argue that 'duality' is an illuminating lens through which to view contemporary charities. So, on the one hand, charities have done much good for homeless people by stepping in to fill service gaps left by the shrinking of government and the reign of capital power over labour power. On the other hand, the cost efficiency, availability and the innovative character of charities is part of the rationalisation of anti-state rhetoric in politics. Taken together, the current popularity of charities helps to legitimise state service being withdrawn from homeless people. Charities are both inside and outside of the political.[120] Second, Christian charities predominantly set out to help homeless people overcome their social exclusion, primarily though helping homeless people to overcome their personal barriers to work.[121] They do so by enlisting the resources and capacities of volunteers – active contributing and responsible citizens. Work is crucial to dignified participation in English society, and in promoting work and volunteerism charities are vehicles that carry directly and explicitly a widely touted facet of the neoliberal –the work ethic.[122] Yet, as Mirowski suggests, we should not take neoliberalism's publicity at face value. We should seek to account as much as possible for its interlocking elements and possibly hidden or downplayed aspects. I therefore go on to argue that charities not only directly endorse the 'transformation' of homeless people and provide an institutional space for the expression of public agency, activity and responsibility, but also that they are liable to strip homeless people of their dignity because this shirt, this soup, and these walls around me and roof over my head were not earned but (passively) received by the homeless client. Charities both mitigate and entrench social exclusion because the volunteer needs need in order to be generous, while the homeless person's social exclusion is both prerequisite for help and proved again in the reception of that help.[123] Thirdly,

[120] Kerry O'Halloran, *The Politics of Charity* (London: Routledge, 2011). Charles Mitchell, Susan R. Moody, eds., *The Foundations of Charity* (Oxford: Hart, 2000).

[121] Church Urban Fund, *Tackling Homelessness.* Jay Wiggan, 'Telling Stories of 21st Century Welfare: The UK Coalition Government and the Neoliberal Discourse of Worklessness and Dependency', *Critical Social Policy*, Vol. 32 (2012), 383–405. Approached as a question of individual agency, homelessness is at once depoliticised *and* factored into a particular kind of politics. See Susan Hutson, David Clapham, eds., *Homelessness: Public Policies and Private Troubles* (London: Continuum, 1999), 31–39.

[122] Zygmunt Bauman, *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* (Maidenhead, Open University Press, 2005), 12–21.

[123] Joerg Rieger, eds., *Liberating the Future: God, Mammon, and Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1998), 9.

charities are orientated to the other but see the other as a lacking self, so, I conclude, while they set out to overcome otherness they also help to constitute it and misrecognise it.[124] Charities depend on a 'selfless' giving, but as John Milbank has already suggested, this selflessness depends on the possessions of the self, on having something as a pre-requisite for being able to give it away. Homeless people have nothing to give according to this economy of the gift, and so become entrapped in this schema of the interpersonal: they both need the gift, thus demonstrating their lack of self-possession, and are not able to return anything of value back to the giver. When I say charities are dual, this is what I mean: they are both political and civil (extra-political) institutions; they overcome social exclusion and they help to create it; they are orientated to the other but the other as a subsidiary of the self.

Taken cumulatively, I think these dualities result in charities maintaining a high action but low impact state, in which institutions and volunteers desperately act to help homeless people while the number of people who are homeless increase and many of the causes of homelessness go unchanged or become exacerbated. The contemporary 'homelessness industry' is stuck on a treadmill, running very, very fast in order to stay in exactly the same spot.[125] This tension is nicely illustrated by Lord Nat Wei, David Cameron's 'Big Society Tsar', who gave up his voluntary work because it was making an unsustainably busy life even busier.[126] To say that charities are dual and therefore prone to a ineffective busyness is one thing, but to go on and argue that this is detrimental or anti-theological and that we stand in need of a new order, or account of what it is to be a person, or of how to give and receive gifts, is something different. It is with these normative questions in mind that I will turn, in the next chapter, to Gustavo Gutiérrez's account of the doctrine of creation.

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[124] William T. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Michegan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 91–97.

[125] On charity as a 'homelessness industry' see G. Daly, *Homeless* (London: Routledge, 1996), 197. On the links between 'order', the weariness of perennial striving, and theologically legitimate 'rest', see Peter M. Scott, *Anti-Human Theology, Nature, Technology, and the Postnatural* (London: SCM, 2010), 133.

[126] Will Hutton, *Them and Us* (London, Abacus, 2011), 34. http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2011/feb/01/big-society-lord-wei-volunteering Accessed 27/07/2015.

Structure of the Thesis

Before doing so, I will first briefly lay out the structure of the thesis. In chapter two, I review Gustavo Gutiérrez's account of salvation as liberation on three levels, with particular reference to his orthodox account of the doctrine of creation. In chapter three, I introduce 'civil society' as an important aspect of contemporary political theology, and draw upon the works of Ivan Petrella, Daniel Bell, and Clodovis Boff to address some limitations in Gutiérrez's work.

In chapter four, I substantiate my broad outline of civil society proposed in chapter three with a specific account of modern British charities, drawn from the critical work of John Milbank. In chapter five, I take Milbank's account of the doctrine of creation and one of his key terms, 'analogy', and ask whether at the level of order, personhood and the interpersonal, Milbank balances in paradox two analogical elements. Because Milbank's work does not sustain its own criterion (the peaceful coexistence of difference), and cannot account for the diversity of contemporary civil society, I conclude part one with a qualified acceptance of the method, theology and politics of Gutiérrez.

Part Two extends and develops my preferred choice of political theology: Liberation Theology. Liberation Theology, as Ivan Petrella argues, is not without its faults and neither, I argue, is Petrella's work itself. In chapter six, I lay out my own account of a theological methodology attentive to (1) the place of the theological in relation to the political (2) our contemporary social situation, (3) the role of the social sciences. In chapter seven, I ask: in terms of (1) order, (2) subjectivity and (3) intersubjectivity, what relationship between the state and civil society, normative agent and form of the interpersonal do charities support and endorse in our current society? In chapter eight, I return to the doctrine of creation, exploring the idea of *ex nihilo*, *imago dei*, and the contention that people are made for relationship, as the grounds for a new positioning of contemporary charities oriented to homelessness.

PART ONE

Chapter Two

Gutiérrez, Creation and Charity

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to critically examine Gustavo Gutiérrez's articulation of the doctrine of creation with a view to elucidating a criterion that can be used in the adjudicating of Christian charitable practices with homeless people. The task this chapter sets itself is not a review of Gutiérrez's theology, as I believe these are already available at a very high level in the secondary literature, but the analysis of Gutiérrez as a systematic theologian with particular concerns that are analogous to my own in this thesis.[1]

The findings of this chapter can be clearly stated: Gutiérrez judges theology and action (praxis) according to the degree they inculcate life because God is the 'God of life'.[2] The overlap here is obvious: Gutiérrez's theology springs from the consonance or conflict between our collective lives (particularly the lives of the poor) and God's life in three persons. To the degree that human being and becoming is conducive to life in its fullness, integrity, forgiveness, and freeness Gutiérrez ascribed to it theological merit as it is harmonious with who God is, and the word Gutiérrez uses for this is *caridad* - charity.[3]

Of course this brief summary of Gutiérrez's position raises a number of questions. Two important ones are: what does Gutiérrez mean by 'life', and, second, what protocols should be observed if human action and thought based on divine character and action are to be appropriately human and not hubristically mimetic (i.e. 'playing God')? These questions are key to the whole thesis, and a significant part of this chapter will be taken up by addressing them in relation to the doctrine of creation as expressed by Gutiérrez.

What does Gutiérrez say about the doctrine of creation, and how will it be expressed in this chapter? Gutiérrez develops his account of creation in negotiation with three primary sources: the Biblical account of the Exodus, the orthodox teachings of the Catholic Church and the experience and praxis of the Latin American poor. For Gutiérrez, Israel's experience of liberation from Egypt is paradigmatic for God's saving action in history and

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[1] On Gutiérrez as a systematic theologian see Rebecca Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering* (New York: Orbis, 1986), 62 - 63. For an introduction to Gutiérrez's work, see Robert McAfee Brown, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: An Introduction to Liberation Theology* (New York, Orbis, 1990).

[2] Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 10. Gutiérrez, *Truth Shall Make You Free*, 158.

[3] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología de la Liberación*, (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1972), 27.

the revelation of the God who saves and makes a new community in the life and death of Jesus Christ. These narratives testify to the inauguration of a people – Israel and the church – who are called from sin, the non-existence of slavery and death into the freedom of the promised land and the Kingdom of God respectively. Gutiérrez ties the event and the interpretation of the event into a narrative whole, a shorthand for which is doctrine.

Gutiérrez weaves this narrative in negotiation with an orthodox theology carried by the tradition of the church. As with other Liberation Theologians, Vatican Two interpreted in the light of Medellín and Puebla (that is, read in the light of the poor) marks a notable dogmatic and ecclesiological gain for the life of the church and the practice of theology. Gutiérrez demonstrates a notable fidelity to the teachings of Vatican Two and draws upon the spirit and letter of the Papal Encylicals published at the time to question previous models of church - State relation. He poses two questions simultaneously: did these past paradigms of theology and church practices coherently account for the mutuality of nature and grace, and were they conducive to liberation? For Gutiérrez these questions are mutually implicated, and it is at this stage of the chapter that I will begin to develop Gutiérrez's account of 'integral liberation' as a politically expedient and theologically justifiable criterion which can be used to judge the manifest plurality of forms of religious and secular life. It is the balance and tension of the parts of integral liberation that allows Gutiérrez to say that there is a positive secular and autonomous world and that history is one, that grace is ubiquitous and that man is called to be free and learn what that means.[4]

The third source of Gutiérrez's articulation of the doctrine of creation are the experiences of the poor and their collective strivings for liberation. When the church partakes in the lives of the poor in their struggle for justice, the term Gutiérrez uses to describe this is praxis. Gutiérrez takes very seriously the spirituality of the poor and sees in their call for justice the rebellion of God against those things which curtail life. In the poor bubbles God's desire for life, antithetical to capitalism and colonialism's precipitation of death. The priority of the experience of the marginalised in the production of theology is one of Gutiérrez's most significant achievements, yet it has begged a series of subsequent questions. For example, what does Gutiérrez mean by 'the poor'; are the poor bearers of a homogenous or spontaneous experience of God or justice (and how would we know); what

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[4] Rebecca's Chopp characterisation of Gutiérrez's understanding of anthropology as 'humanity's historical nature' carries well the time variant and invariant aspects of the person. Chopp, *Praxis of Suffering*, 49.

do we mean when we use the word 'experience'; and what about the experience of gay people, black people, women, Hispanics, and disabled people who have also been excluded?

As I will show, Gutiérrez's theology does not depend on one source, and so we cannot think of 'experience' as the foundation of Gutiérrez's work which, if found deficient, would lead to the collapse of his theology. However, this is a crucial component of Gutiérrez's work and I am in agreement with Rebecca Chopp when she says that Gutiérrez 'must now develop a social theory, that is, a new way of conceiving human praxis that considers an anthropology of human agency and social structures.'[5] This task will be taken up extensively in chapters six and seven, though in chapters three and four inroads will be made in this direction as I consider the 'volunteer' in relation to charities (as social institutions) operating in civil society with and for the socially excluded.

As I consider Gutiérrez's understanding of liberation, I will also begin relating Gutiérrez's work to contemporary charities. As this introduction has already noted, *caridad* points to a particular meshing of divine and human agency, but this does not lead Gutiérrez to any simple unilateral affirmation of current charitable practices. Instead, Gutiérrez notes that the horizon in which charity (as generosity) occurs influences its efficacy for the oppressed, its political import and also its theological desirability. For Gutiérrez, charity conducted in a highly individualistic context is in perennial danger of slipping into an action which surreptitiously reinforces the identity and purposes of the giver while obscuring the otherness of the other and truncating their liberation.

Method and Creation: Exodus, Church Tradition, Praxis, Experience

Liberation Theology began as a distinctive theological movement in Latin America during the 1960's and 1970's, responding to the changes wrought by Vatican Two, particularly as viewed through the 1978 conference of Bishops at Medellín, Colombia. Vatican Two is an important moment in twentieth century Roman Catholic history. During the conference the Roman Catholic Church intentionally opened itself to the issues of modernity, faced new ecumenical issues and, through Pope John XXIII and Cardinal Lercaro, brought the issue of poverty into the theological and ecclesiological ambit of the Roman Catholic Church. Though Vatican Two opened new avenues for dialogue between modernity and Catholicism it was only at Medellín, according to Gutiérrez, that the

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[5] Chopp, *Praxis of Suffering*, 144.

'underside of history,' the victims of modernity's progress, became central to the identity and theology of the church through the 'preferential option for the poor'.[6] In theological terms, Vatican Two promoted 'the universality of salvation, the profound unity between creation and salvation and between salvation history and human history, and the church as the sacrament of salvation in the world' which Medellín read 'from the perspective of the impoverished and oppressed' around a centripetal focal point 'the intrinsic link between Christianity and the poor based on God's will and manifested in Jesus Christ' and finally via the methodology: 'to see-judge-act.'[7]

Though the history of Liberation Theology can be traced to the reforms of Vatican Two, both the early twentieth century lay movement 'Catholic Action' and *la nouvelle théologie* had an impact on Gutiérrez's theology. Catholic Action, an initially autonomous movement combining worker priests, lay workers and students, set about, through the 'inductive method' ('to see, to judge, to act'), to transform their environments and places of work in accordance with Catholic values.[8] *La nouvelle théologie* was also attentive to the growing significance of the laity.[9] According to Hans Boersma, the theologians of *la nouvelle théologie* also rejected the 'neo-thomist separation between nature and the supernatural', arguing instead for 'the sacramental presence of supernatural grace in natural realities.'[10]

The Christian motivation for participation in the 'liberation of oppressed people and exploited classes' is a 'radical incompatibility of evangelical demands with an unjust and alienating society'[11] says Gutiérrez. Gutiérrez begins with the irreconcilability of the integration of the norms of theology and the norms undergirding and precipitated by the current social and political order. In this section, Gutiérrez's account of the doctrine of creation in relation to three theological sources – the Biblical texts, the life and teaching of the church, and the experience and praxis of the Latin American poor – will be considered, concluding with Gutiérrez understanding of 'integral liberation' or 'life'. I will also note

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[6] Gasper Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God* (London: Continuum, 2001), 109.

[7] Ibid, 108, 110.

[8] Gerd-Rainer Horn, *Western European Liberation Theology: The First Wave* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 18.

[9] Ibid, 81-89.

[10] Hans Boersma 'Nature and Supernatural in *la nouvelle theologie*: The Recovery of a Sacramental Mindset', *New Blackfriars,* 93(2011), 1043, 34-46, at 34.

[11] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 145.

some problems in Gutiérrez's account, particularly around the use of the Bible and the terms 'experience' and 'praxis'.

In his discussion of the relationship between salvation and liberation in *A Theology of Liberation* Gutiérrez prefaces his remarks on the Exodus narrative by noting the universal character of salvation and the ubiquitous presence of God's grace. Gutiérrez begins with 'the idea of the universality of the salvific will of God' and the 'presence of grace – whether accepted or rejected – in all people'.[12] The first inference that Gutiérrez draws from these theological precepts is that 'we can no longer speak properly of a profane world' but rather, of degrees of communion between God and humanity relative to the renunciation of selfishness and the endeavour to shape 'an authentic brotherhood among men.'[13] The second inference that Gutiérrez draws is that 'there are not two histories, one profane and one sacred, "juxtaposed" or "closely linked." Rather there is only one human destiny, irreversibly assumed by Christ' though Gutiérrez is not convinced that contemporary theology has 'yet fashioned the categories which would allow us to think through and express adequately this unified approach to history.'[14]

Gutiérrez's assertion of 'one history' sustains his rejection of a secular/religious dualistic history and sources his integrated reading of 'creation and salvation'.[15] This 'link is based on the historical and liberating experience of the Exodus', says Gutiérrez. Firstly, Gutiérrez argues that the Bible testifies to 'a God who reveals himself through historical events, a God who saves in history' which is given an important expression for Gutiérrez in the events of the Exodus.[16] In calling Israel out of slavery, God inaugurates the history of the people of Israel while also creating them as a holy nation. For Gutiérrez, creation is not a single past event and the doctrine of creation does not address solely the origins of the world. Instead, and in reference to the universal presence of God's grace, creation is an ongoing and unfolding work in the present, a constant recreation is at work which finds its ultimate goal in 'the creation of a new man', 'the suppression of disorder and the creation of a new order' reaching its zenith in the 'construction of a just and fraternal society': Israel.[17] Gutiérrez notes that in some Biblical passages 'the words and images refer

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[12] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 150, 151.
[13] Ibid, 151.
[14] Ibid, 153.
[15] Ibid, 153.
[16] Ibid, 154.
[17] Ibid, 146, 155.

simultaneously to two events: creation and the liberation from Egypt.'[18] Creation occurs and reoccurs and is directed towards a goal, 'Yahweh liberates the Jewish people politically in order to make them a holy nation.'[19] Gutiérrez considers Israel to be a holy nation, 'a society free from misery and alienation', who were called to be the special possession of Yahweh's through obedience to God's covenant.[20]

While I will continue this analysis of Gutiérrez's understanding of Exodus in relation to creation shortly, his use of the Bible to source his theology does face two problems that are worth noting. The first concerns the historicity of the Exodus events, the second, the normative application of these texts to contemporary theo-political concerns. While twentieth century scholars such as John Bright argued for the primacy and authority of the Hebrew Bible's witness to the life and works of Moses, recent scholarship has seriously questioned the validity of the Exodus events as portrayed in the books of the Pentateuch.[21] While Gutiérrez holds to the Exodus as a historical event and as a part of God's self-revelation, the Bible is also authoritative to Gutiérrez because of how it has been read by the poor; he says:

> We reinterpret the Bible, from the viewpoint of our own world – from our personal experience as human beings, as believers, and as church. This approach is more radical. It goes more to the roots of what the Bible actually is, more to the essence of God's revelation in history and of God's judgement on it.[22]

The second problem with the normative use of the Biblical texts was already noted in the introduction: what, Fiorenza asks, makes the Exodus authoritative politically, and not the conquest narratives?[23] We need criteria to help us adjudicate in the theo-political use of the biblical texts. This requirement will be taken up in this current chapter by considering Gutiérrez concept of 'life'.

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[18] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 155.
[19] Ibid, 157.
[20] Ibid, 157.
[21] Bright says 'the Bible's own witness is so impressive as to leave little doubt that some such remarkable deliverance took place. Israel remembered the Exodus for all time to come as the constitutive event that called her into being as a people.' John Bright, *A History of Israel* (London: SCM Press, 1972), 120. For a critique of the historicity of the Exodus narrative, see Megan Bishop Moore, Brad E. Kelle, *Biblical History and Israel's Past* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2011).
[22] Gutiérrez quoted in Jeffrey S. Siker, 'Uses of the Bible in the Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez: Liberating Scriptures of the Poor', *Biblical Interpretation*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1996), 40–71, at. 50.
[23] Fiorenza, 'Political Theology', *CTSA*, 176.

For Gutiérrez it is the covenant that 'gives full meaning to the liberation from Egypt' for 'the covenant and the liberation from Egypt were different aspects of the same movement.'[24] Nor is this event external to the production of theology, for Yahweh is remembered 'throughout the history of Israel by this act which inaugurates its history, a history which is recreation and finds its fulfilment in Jesus Christ.'[25] If the call to covenant and the participation of Israel in this covenant are also a part of creation, then there is a place for the activity of wo/men in the ongoing creation of the world. Gutiérrez says that 'the need and the place for man's active participation in the building of society' is not effaced in divine Creation but imbued with a greater depth and infinite meaning.[26] Gutiérrez quotes positively from the work of Andre Neher who stated that the Exodus is marked 'by the twofold sign of the overriding will of God and the free and conscious consent of men' whereby God stirs Moses' vocation, the 'mediation of this self-creation' which authorises a 'synthetic account of salvation and creation' while maintaining a complementary agency of both the human and the divine.[27] 'To work, to transform this world, is to become a man and to build the human community. It is also to save' says Gutiérrez, for 'building the temporal city is not simple a stage of "humanisation" or "pre-evangelism"' but a 'part of a saving process which embraces the whole of man and all of human history.'[28]

In summary, the Bible is an authority for theology in a complex sense. Firstly, theology begins with the God who calls something out of nothing. In this sense the liberation of Israel from slavery in Egypt is a repetition of the logic of creation *ex nihilo*. This, Gutiérrez argues, the Bible records accurately as a historical document. As well as being historically representative the Bible continues to be politically formative - in its provision of a socio-political program orientated towards the instigation of a liberative political order, an injunction or imperative Fiorenza rightly finds problematic. Finally, Gutiérrez asserts that what is known about creation is known through participation in the covenantal relationship, by fulfilling the covenant. It is the 'historical and liberating experience' of the Exodus that sources Gutiérrez's account of the unity of history and

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[24] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 157.
[25] Ibid, 158.
[26] Ibid, 158, 159.
[27] Neher quoted in Ibid, 159.
[28] Ibid, 160.

launches the history of Israel, an order or community of remembering and repetition. Does this limit theology to those within the liberated community? Is the Exodus narrative authoritative as far as it is experienced or participated in? Is this a theology deduced from the Biblical texts or an authority generated through a correlation between a contemporary experience, the liberation of South America's poor, and a Biblical narrative? These pressing questions will be taken up again in a consideration of experience and *praxis* in the third of Gutiérrez's theological sources.

The second source of Gutiérrez's doctrine of creation are the Papal Councils and the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. As with Gutiérrez's work on the Exodus story, there are two sources intertwined in Gutiérrez's account of the church as an authentic theological resource: one is the developing history of Christian thought and *praxis* in relation to the political which includes regular reference to the changing relationship between the church and the secular world as articulated in the works of Vatican Two. This development Gutiérrez links to the theological development of neo-Thomist accounts of nature and grace which are the theological horizon within which the changing disposition of Church towards the world, in the documents of Vatican Two, find their conceptual basis. The church is authoritative in a double sense: first, as a history of *praxis*, and second, as the bearer of a theological orthodoxy in perpetual renewal. These two are theoretically differentiated in order that they may be properly re-integrated.

Gutiérrez delivers with brevity a history of the changing relations between the Church and the world, while noting its ongoing intractability as a theo-political problem.[29] Gutiérrez lays out a series of distinct paradigms through which the relations between Church and the world have moved. Augustine's work, for Gutiérrez, is representative of the 'Two Realms' model which is explicated by Augustine as the two cities. In *A Theology of Liberation*, this is followed by the model of 'Christendom' and the 'New Christendom' theologians, which are also critiqued.[30] While Gutiérrez is critical yet sensitive to the characteristics of the very tangible histories of these epochs (which are more than abstract conceptualisations), he argues that the nature of the relationship between the Church and the world has been altered by the work of Vatican Two and by 'the social praxis of

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[29] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 46, 70, 71, 72.
[30] For Gutiérrez these are negative towards the secular, denigrate the world and are apolitical. See Ibid, 50-54.

contemporary man' which has 'begun to reach maturity.'[31] Gutiérrez's definition of maturity needs to be expressed with the qualifications and nuances that he provides as it does not connote a simple or *a priori* liberation of the man from the tutelage of the church or from his true *telos* in God. It serves, rather, an ethical and political function in Gutiérrez's work and, crucially, is justified with theological credentials.

What then is 'maturity'? Gutiérrez draws on his reading of creation from the Biblical texts to support his elucidation of maturity. Appealing to the first theological source referenced above, Gutiérrez says that 'biblical faith does indeed affirm the existence of creation as distinct from the Creator'.[32] He continues: it is therefore 'the proper sphere of man' offering 'man the possibility of being more fully human.'[33] Before moving on to consider this account of creation, two brief points need to be made. Firstly, it is worth asking whether this idea of contemporary man finding a new maturity is a modern and progressive account of the legitimate autonomy of the world, and by extension of the secular. Gutiérrez says that 'the values and irreversibility of the process to which we now refer as secular have become more obvious' to theologians.[34] This is, at the very least, a contentious point on both the counts of 'value' and 'irreversibility' and opens Gutiérrez to the charge of a pseudo-Whig account of historical progress.[35] The second point is more positive. The affirmation of human freedom stems from a serious and pastorally considered attempt to assert the importance of man's responsibility in the creation of his own history. The 'world come of age' is a world in which humanity recognises, in part through the contribution of the social sciences, our own forming of history and society. In Gutiérrez's mind, this arrests, root and branch, those human proclivities to political quietism and religious fatalism which have been exhibited by the church in the past.

This account of the world and its secularity is not sustained according to either a political goal or a pragmatic acquiesce to 'current reality' but according to what Gutiérrez asserts are judicious theological rationales. Gutiérrez's work on 'maturity' and secularity are tied to his reading of the Papal Encyclicals (a constant point of reference in Gutiérrez's work) and the documents of Vatican Two. Though Vatican Two affirmed that 'even in secular affairs there is no human activity which can be withdrawn from God's dominion',

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[31] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 46.
[32] Ibid, 67.
[33] Ibid, 67.
[34] Ibid, 66.
[35] See Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 206–256.

it also argued that 'the temporal sphere is governed by its own principles, since it is properly concerned with the interests of this world', and that the Catholic laity must 'distinguish between their rights and duties as members of the church and of human society.'[36] This Council noted a new found awareness of men and women as themselves the 'authors of the culture of their community', and a growth 'in the combined sense of independence and responsibility' which is important for 'the spiritual and moral maturity of the human race' and is culminating in the 'birth of a new humanism.'[37] This is not simply an acquiescence to a newly found secular confidence but, as the documents of Vatican Two suggest, in harmony 'with the will of the Creator'.[38] 'For by the circumstance of their having been created, all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order', though the documents continue on to note that if 'the independence of temporal affairs, is taken to mean that created things do not depend on God, and that man can use them without any reference to their Creator, anyone who acknowledges God will see how false such a meaning is. For without the Creator the creature would disappear.'[39]

As with the documents of Vatican Two, Gutiérrez's positive founding of the secular is not based on a nature/grace theological dualism, it is instead legitimised according to 'a distinction, not a separation, between the natural and supernatural orders.'[40] This organising principle, that balances unity and distinction, recurs throughout Gutiérrez's work and in the Vatican Two documents cited above. Gutiérrez notes, and structures his anthropology around, an account of 'the unity, without confusion, of man's various dimensions' which in his account of man and sin includes the fissures within man himself.[41] Although this is reaching ahead to a theme that will be discussed later in the chapter it is worth mentioning here because it brings to the fore how crucial integration and difference, mutually articulated, are to Gutiérrez's work. Gutiérrez provides two phrases which maintain this balance. He refers in his work to 'the Chalcedonian rule' and 'integral liberation'.[42] *La nouvelle théologie* used 'integralism' to refer to the natural/supernatural

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[36] Walter M. Abbott, eds., *The Documents of Vatican Two* (London: Geoffrey Chapman 1966), 63.

[37] Abbott, *Documents of Vatican Two*, 261. Though this is an ambiguous development as progress can fold back on human as a new kind of entrapment, see Ibid, 202.

[38] Ibid, 233.

[39] Ibid, 234.

[40] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 69.

[41] Ibid, x.

[42] Ibid, 168 - 174. Gutiérrez, *Truth Shall Make You Free*, 122–147.

integration in the theological shorthand, Gutiérrez draws on this tradition while adding 'liberation' - the freedom and responsibility of humanity.[43]

Gutiérrez's account of the secular is not a conflation of nature and grace nor a total bifurcation but a positive theological positing of an other; a generous theological contraction allowing for a gratuitous secular difference. For Gutiérrez it is in maintaining the balance of this conceptualisation that it is possible to give religious value 'in a completely new way to the action of man in history.'[44] The secular realm is a sphere to which the theologian can accord a degree of autonomy in the name of theology. The mark of an 'integral liberation' theology is balancing 'on the one hand… an ever more autonomous world' and 'on the other hand… this single vocation to salvation which values human history in Christian terms.'[45] This is a way that Gutiérrez believes that he can avoid the twin dangers of collapsing either side of this balance: the dangers of a privatised Christianity that effaces the political outworkings and embeddedness of church activity *and* a social/political order deduced directly from church teaching.[46] This paradoxical balance of distinct parts is, furthermore, consonant with the doctrine of creation, for Gutiérrez affirms that nature depends on grace, and that creation is distinct from the Creator.

While William Cavanaugh is right to note there is a tension in Gutiérrez's work as 'the world is autonomous, yet permeated by God's grace', I do not agree that this is a 'contradiction' as he suggests, as it is the distinction and integration of liberation and salvation that Gutiérrez is at pains to show maintains the tension between God's presence and absence in the world, history, and human existence.[47] Cavanaugh is therefore wrong to say that for Gutiérrez 'the world has absorbed the church into itself' (though Gutiérrez regularly points to historical instances, particularly capitalism and colonialsm, where this has been the case) for Gutiérrez draws our attention to a series of serious theological reasons for saying quite the opposite: in the calling of the creative Father, the faithfulness of the incarnate Son testified to in the life and teachings of the church, and in the prompting of the pioneering Holy Spirit, God is calling the world into the church.[48]

So when Gutiérrez appeals to the documents of Vatican Two as a source of authority it should be noted that he develops these documents in accord with pragmatic

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[43] For the importance of 'integralism' see Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 69-71.

[44] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 72.

[45] Ibid, 72.

[46] Ibid, 224.

[47] William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 180.

[48] Ibid, 180. See, for example, Gutiérrez account of eschatology in *Theology of Liberation*, 160–168.

political or pastoral qualifications. To say, then, that the Church is a source of authority in the development of Gutiérrez's theology is only partially representative of the manner in which Gutiérrez works. The church itself is submitted to both theological and pragmatic criteria and its history of mission and teachings are not in any simple way reproduced or reasserted. It should inform us, as well, that Gutiérrez is comfortable, when necessary, drawing on the history of Christian *praxis* and that, finally, *praxis* in Gutiérrez's work defies any simple recapitulation or authoritative affirmation. The church is read in the light of the experience of the South American poor and with a view to bringing about their integral liberation.

The centrality of praxis to the method of Liberation Theology is noted by Gutiérrez himself when he says that 'discourse on faith is a second stage in relation to the life of faith itself. This methodological statement is a central one in the theology of liberation.'[49] However, there remains a significant set of questions, which will be addressed directly in chapter three, over the consistency of the variously used and deployed terms 'praxis' and 'experience' in the work of Gutiérrez. Does praxis provide a norm for theological reflection or is it simply the recognition of the inevitable place in which all theology occurs?

Both Gutiérrez's account of the Biblical texts and of Christian tradition are co-ordinated with an account of praxis or experience. For Gutiérrez, the occasion which has elicited Liberation Theology is the 'irruption of the poor' and the 'experiences and reflections' of those Christians committed to liberation.[50] From this *locus theologicus* there has emerged, Gutiérrez argues, a refashioning of theology in accord with the times.[51] It is only as a second step, as a reflection on a preceding experience or praxis that theology is a critical reflection. In his later writings in *We Drink from our own Wells*, Gutiérrez repeats the same formulae in the following guise: 'authentic theological reflection has its

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[49] Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 136.

[50] Gustavo Gutiérrez, 'Option for the Poor', in Jon Sobrino, Ignacio Ellacuría, eds., *Systematic Theology* (New York: Orbis, 2001), 22 – 27, 22. Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, ix.

[51] Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 136. The originality of Gutiérrez's methodology, and of Liberation Theology more widely, should not be over emphasised here. Richard Gillingham is right here when he says that 'In terms of theological methodology the method of progressivist and liberation theology remain the same' for 'whilst Gutiérrez does pose a challenge to the accepted method of theology it is not, contrary to Gutiérrez's claims, innovative… while the context-dependent subject matter of theology may be different there are distinct similarities between Gutiérrez's and Bonhoeffer's theological method so that while Bonhoeffer does not use the language of praxis his use of the rubric of culture' plays a comparable and 'key role.' Gillingham, http://www.quodlibet.net/articles/gillingham-Gutiérrez.shtml, accessed 07/11/2013

basis in contemplation and in practice.'[52] Are contemplation and practice interchangeable, is contemplation a form of practice or a temporary withdrawal from practice?[53] Maybe one further step back methodologically can clarify this.

In *We Drink from our own Wells*, Gutiérrez affirms that the point of departure for theology is first 'an encounter with the Lord': this encounter itself springs from the Lord's initiative and is a 'spiritual experience.'[54] Encountering the Lord, primarily in the person of Jesus Christ, requires a response, Gutiérrez asserts, of one's whole life which means that 'our method is our spirituality.'[55] The emphasis that Gutiérrez lays on the response of the whole person is a significant piece of twentieth century theological polemic, and makes a similar point to a central passage in *A Theology of Liberation* in which Gutiérrez argues we must 'modify the emphasis, often obsessive, upon the attainment of an orthodoxy which is often nothing more than fidelity to an obsolete tradition or a debatable interpretation' and stress instead the importance of 'doing this truth' from which has 'recently been derived the term orthopraxy.'[56] Gutiérrez's assertions concerning the centrality of 'spiritual experience' to the method of Liberation Theology and a normative Christian spirituality set the stakes high. Yet it comes with little clarification of what an experience of God is and how we might judge whether it has occurred. In short, experience is a highly problematic term for it can be taken uncritically to imply something 'immediate, personal and evidential.'[57] While experience carries these popular connotations Fiorenza notes that 'experience is primarily an act of interpretation' that draws on memory and 'is embedded within a cultural tradition and a network of social interaction and mutual interpretations.'[58] To experience something, then, is as much a dynamic process of interaction between 'memory, tradition and interpretations' as it is a phenomenon of 'consciousness, sensation, or feeling.'[59] In reference to an experience of God Fiorenza argues that this experience is 'mediated through the paradigms of cultural religious history as to what is the meaning of God and what counts as an experience of that meaning.'[60] If experience is as complex a

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[52] Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 136.
[53] For an excellent introduction to contemplation in Gutiérrez's work, see Roberto S. Goizueta,
'Gustavo Gutiérrez', in Scott, Cavanaugh, *Political Theology*, 288-301.
[54] Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 35.
[55] Ibid, 136.
[56] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 10.
[57] Fiorenza, *Foundational Theology,* 296.
[58] Ibid, 296.
[59] Ibid, 296.
[60] Ibid, 300.

phenomenon as this, if it is already burdened with meaning and interpretation, then it seems problematic as an *a priori* ground of a theological method.

In *A Theology of Liberation* the stress falls rather on praxis than on experience. At the beginning of *A Theology of Liberation* Gutiérrez stresses praxis, of both individuals and the church, as a context in which 'theology follows; it is the second step.'[61] Theology is both 'man's critical reflection on himself' and a reflection upon a privileged point: the life of the church and the pastoral activity of Christians which 'it reflects upon.'[62] Yet Gutiérrez is at times highly critical of the activity of the church, most notably when it supports unjust orders explicitly, or through neglect. This leads to problem: at once the church is the privileged point of departure for Christian theology, while at the same time it is a set of institutions and practices that is strongly critiqued (from what other praxis or position would it be possible to turn on the church for the sake of the church?) In Gutiérrez's own words 'it is meaningless… to say that praxis is to be criticised "in the light of praxis".'[63]

Both praxis and experience are key terms for Gutiérrez, yet in his use of both there is, in the terms I will be using in the next chapter, a tendency to essentialise the praxis or experience of God demonstrated by the poor. In Gutiérrez's work the poor's experience of God is essentially a religious and liberative one, but taking this as the primary point of departure for theological reflection is problematic in a number of ways. As I suggested in my introduction, the development and proliferation of Liberation Theologies has been in part motivated by the observation that there are many experiences of poverty influenced by the different but overlapping exclusions caused by racism, sexism, homophobia and xenophobia. 'Experience' is a heterogenous category when applied to a group like 'the poor.' While Gutiérrez begins with the religiosity of the poor's experience and striving for liberation, Fiorenza notes that this 'experience' of God is always already an interpretation of an experience, mediated through language, history, memory, symbols, and society. 'Praxis' too requires a horizon of meaning to be rendered intelligible, so it seems that both praxis and experience cannot be thought of as a 'beginning' in any simple sense. Shorn of these essentialising and homogenising tendencies, Gutiérrez's attention to lived Christian existence, reflected on in negotiation with the resources of theology, will be carried on in

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[61] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 11.
[62] Ibid, 11.
[63] Gutiérrez, *Truth Shall Make You Free*, 101.

the workings of this thesis. I agree with Gutiérrez when he says: 'the life of faith is not only a starting point, it is also the goal of theological reflection. To believe (life) and to understand (reflection) are always part of a circular relationship… orthopraxis and orthodoxy need one another, and each is adversely affected when sight is lost of the other'.[64]

In this section I have traced three sources of Gutiérrez's theology, and returned repeatedly to the theme of integrated but differentiated parts of a whole. Key for this thesis, and to Gutiérrez's work, is the theme of 'integral liberation'. As I have argued, 'integral' refers to universal salvation, ubiquitous grace, and 'one history', which in theological terms is related by Gutiérrez to being made *ex nihilo*: the dependence of all creation on the Creator. But, for Gutiérrez, humans are both 'integral' – knit into each other and God – and also 'liberated'. By 'liberated', Gutiérrez means free and responsible for our history. This is not the secular 'autonomy' of the world, or a theological dualism (nature vs grace as different substances), but a way of approaching the appropriate theological difference of the world from the God who made it. Both these elements, in complementary tension, are key to understanding Gutiérrez's work and, as I will now show, his normative theo-political project.

Creation and Liberation in Three Parts: Order, Personhood, Charity

For Gutiérrez, the poor are not external to capital or modernity but the 'underside of history' (i.e. part of one history) and sustained as non-people by dependency.[65] In this section, I will examine how liberation can be brought about (at the level of order, the person and the interpersonal), its rationale in creation, and Gutiérrez's concerns with almsgiving. One of the crucial structural and didactic developments that functions repeatedly through Gutiérrez's oeuvre is his outworking of three cumulatively developing moments of 'liberation'. This division recurs in part due to its centrality in his responses to those who critiqued Liberation Theology for reducing salvation to liberation.[66]

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[64] Gutiérrez quoted in Gillingham http://www.quodlibet.net/articles/gillingham-Gutiérrez.shtml.

[65] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 26, 27. Gutiérrez, *Truth Shall Make You Free*, 24.

[66] The claim, made by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, that Gutiérrez falls foul of a 'temporal messianism and reduces the growth of the kingdom to the increase in justice' is palpably false. The logic of this interplay of salvation and liberation is not reductive but seductive. Gutiérrez affirms that in our opening to the immanent Other we are seduced by a transcendent God, and in our movement towards God on pilgrimage, laid bereft of our barriers to the other. Alfred T. Hennelly, eds., *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History* (New York: Orbis, 1990), 349.

Gutiérrez says that 'total liberation' operates on 'three inseparable planes: our relationship to the world as its master, to other persons as brothers and sisters, and to God as God's children.'[67] First, I will consider freedom from unjust orders, second, the change of people necessary to bring this about, and third, God's offering to humanity of full communion.

Taking his point of departure in the Medellín documents, Gutiérrez contends that the current situation in South America is marked by 'institutional violence' directed primarily towards the materially poor.[68] He quotes extensively from the document *Peace,* one of the Medellín documents, stating that

In many instances Latin American finds itself faced with a situation of injustice that can be called institutional violence, when, because of a structural deficiency of industry and agriculture, of national and international economy, of cultural and political life, "whole towns lack necessities…," thus violating fundamental rights. Such a situation demands global, daring, urgent, and profound renovative transformations.[69]

Noting the uneven development of the global economy, Gutiérrez contends that current inequalities marking the lives of the poor 'are caused by a type of relationship which often has been imposed upon them.'[70] Gutiérrez juxtaposes this to rights carried by or attributed to people. In his election of liberation over development Gutiérrez argues that development has failed on two counts: first, it has not been successful in achieving the aims which it purported and second, it 'did not attack the roots of the evil,' nor the root of the order.[71] Gutiérrez therefore dismisses development in his early work for its reformist tendencies. This dismissal is a rejection of a fundamentally unjust order with the concomitant assertion of an alternative order: socialism. Gutiérrez states that 'only a radical break from the status

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[67] Gutiérrez, *Truth Shall Make You Free*, 127.

[68] Gutiérrez, *Truth Shall Make You Free*, 128.

[69] Medellin in ibid, 128. The theological justification of 'human rights' in negotiation with a normative anthropology, creation and Christian charities working with homeless people will be considered in greater depth in chapter eight.

[70] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 22.

[71] Ibid, 26. This point is still debated; Amartya Sen, for example, uses Gutiérrez terms but inverts the argument and posits a directly contrasting conclusion: development can bring freedom. Rejecting 'limited indicators of development such as the growth of GNP per head', Sen explores and endorses 'a particular approach to development, seen as a process of expanding substantive freedoms that people have.' Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 289, 297. Like Gutiérrez, Dambisa Moyo is much more suspicious of the development agenda and its effects. She takes questions one significant aspect of development - aid – saying: 'across the globe the recipients of this aid are worse off; much worse off. Aid has helped make the poor poorer, and growth slower.' Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid* (London: Penguin, 2010), xix.

quo, that is, a profound transformation of the private property system, access to power of the exploited classes, and a social revolution that would break this dependency would allow for the change to a new society, a socialist society – or at least allow that such a society might be possible.'[72] In the next chapter the absence of the possibility of socialism will be considered in relation to the methodology of Liberation Theology and its account of 'order'.

This analysis of the current situation, to be authoritative, requires justification and this raises the contested use of the social sciences in the development of Liberation Theology. Gutiérrez has addressed this question explicitly: 'for the sake of a better knowledge of this social reality and in the interests of commitment to those living in that situation, we may look to the social sciences for help', for 'these sciences allow us to gain a more accurate knowledge of society as it really is and so to articulate with greater precision the challenges it poses for the proclamation of the Gospel and thus for theological reflection as well.'[73] This is very close to Clodovis and Leonardo Boff, who in their *Introducing Liberation Theology* quote Aquinas: 'An error about the world redounds in error about God'.[74] Note that Gutiérrez does not say that the social sciences can provide a comprehensive plan for the development of a new just society, nor does he say that the social sciences can provide an account of the reasons why the current situation is to be theologically deployed and practically opposed by the church. Instead, he limits the preview of the social sciences to a description of the problems of the current situation.[75] Whether a description of a problem inevitably changes the problem (and thus the possibility of a neutral/representative social sciences) will be considered in chapter six. However, the same logic of balanced differences recurs here as well, for in using the social sciences to 'understand the social situation' but limiting 'this analysis in the study of matters more strictly theological' there is an appropriate and implicit 'respect for the so-called human sciences and their proper

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[72] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 26.

[73] Gutiérrez, *Truth Shall Make You Free*, 129, 55.

[74] Aquinas, quoted in Leonardo Boff, Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, trans. Paul Burns (New York: Orbis, 2011), 25.

[75] When the social sciences exceed these parameters Gutiérrez can be highly critical of their logics and presuppositions. He questions any monolithic account of an achieved and ossified scientific body of knowledge for 'scientific does not mean that their findings are apodictic and beyond discussion'. Furthermore, Gutiérrez rejects Marxist analysis which 'embodies an all-embracing view of life and thus excludes the Christian faith and its requirements'. Dismissing 'atheist ideology and any aspirations in the social sciences towards a 'totalitarian vision' Gutiérrez states his preference for Antonio Gramsci, arguing that 'Marxist analysis or the scientific aspects of Marxism are not inseparably linked to "metaphysical materialism".' Gutiérrez, *Truth Shall Make You Free*, 58, 61, 62.

spheres, and for the legitimate autonomy of the political order.'[76] Gutiérrez both brings the social sciences into his theological project and properly differentiates between their spheres of application, another unity with distinction.

Yet why the election of socialism? Gutiérrez's choice of the order of socialism over the order of capitalism is a theologically based decision. Capitalism is dehumanising, 'the dispossessed exist because of those who direct and govern this society.'[77] The capitalist system does not then simply exclude or marginalise, in Gutiérrez's analysis. Rather, it overdetermines the identity of the poor, including them as the dead ones and denying them their 'fundamental rights'. These poor are 'non-people' because their existence is for another – the rich. Capitalism precipitates poverty. And poverty, in Gutiérrez's first definition of the term,[78] is material poverty and a 'subhuman situation' in which the poor are denied access to the cultural, social and political.[79] In *We Drink From Our Own Wells* Gutiérrez says that poverty 'means physical death to which is added cultural death, inasmuch as those in power seek to do away with everything that gives strength to the disposed of this world… we are confronted with a reality contrary to the reign of life that the Lord proclaims' for God is, according to Gutiérrez, the 'God of Life'.[80] Along with a change in order, Gutiérrez says we also need flourishing people freed from this system, and converted people who will help us move beyond it.

The third prerequisite, and deepest meaning of liberation, is defined by Gutiérrez in the negative as freedom from sin and selfishness and, in the positive, as communion with God and others. We are, says Gutiérrez, 'free to love'.[81] The apotheosis of Gutiérrez's explication of liberation is *caridad*, love, or 'charity'. Charity is the normative vocation of man. And it is marked by the same logic of unity with distinctions as those drawn from the

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[76] Gutiérrez, *Truth Shall Make You Free*, 64, 58. One of the most trenchant critiques of this use of the social sciences by Liberation Theology can be found in Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory*, 206-256. He rejects the notion that the social sciences can be neutral, and therefore ground objectively the practice of Liberation Theology, though he does, in later work, say he is 'concerned to learn from social theory in its more historical, ethnographic and less ideological aspects.' Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, xi. Milbank's work will be the major subject of chapters four and five, and I will suggest a reading of theology with social theory in chapter six.

[77] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 274.

[78] Ibid, 287–306. Gutiérrez carefully distinguishes this from 'spiritual poverty' which he identifies as a disposition towards God and the world, which includes a view on material objects but is no coincident with material deprivation.

[79] Ibid, 289.

[80] Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 10. and Gutiérrez, *Truth Shall Make You Free*, 158.

[81] Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 91–94.

doctrine of creation. Charity sustains a dual movement: towards the independence *and* integration of people with each other and humanity with God. As Gutiérrez believes that 'faith is the total response of man to God, who saves through love' so Gutiérrez argues that 'love is the nourishment and the fullness of faith, the gift of one's self to the Other.'[82] Set in this light, Gutiérrez suggests that faith is more than the affirmation of truth, and instead 'a commitment, an overall attitude, a particular posture toward life.'[83]

If love is the character of God and the call of man, Gutiérrez also relates it to sin and freedom. Freedom is interpreted at this third level as a liberation from 'selfish turning in upon oneself.'[84] Taking guidance from Bonhoeffer, Gutiérrez defines freedom as a dynamic going towards the other. He quotes Bonhoffer to the effect that 'freedom is not something man has for himself but something he has for others…. Being free means "being free for the other"'.[85] Free, we are bound for God and bound by God. True freedom can then be juxtaposed to sin which is to 'refusal to love one's neighbour' which is also a refusal to love 'the Lord himself' and a 'breach of friendship with God and others.'[86] Unforgiveness, Gutiérrez tells us, is not allowing 'the Other' their otherness.[87]

If the deepest level of liberation is loving, does Gutiérrez affirm charity (selfless service and giving)? For Gutiérrez, in love and in loving there is an analogical displacement from wo/man to God and from God to person. In loving people, Gutiérrez affirms that we are drawn up into the infinite while, in loving God, we are commissioned and compelled to love humans. Gutiérrez says that 'love of God is unavoidably expressed *through* love of one's neighbour.'[88] 'Nevertheless', Gutiérrez continues, 'the neighbour is not an occasion, an instrument for becoming closer to God', for it must be a 'real love of man for his own sake.'[89] This is an important addition by Gutiérrez for it serves as a proviso against 'the pitfalls of an individualistic charity.'[90] Gutiérrez's work is informative here, because he notes that there remains, even in the articulations of the love of God by wo/man, the possibility that one is 'more interested in the charitable action *he* was

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[82] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 7.
[83] Ibid, 7.
[84] Ibid, 35.
[85] Bonhoffer in ibid, 36.
[86] Ibid, 35.
[87] Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 100.
[88] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 200.
[89] Ibid, 202.
[90] Ibid, 202.

performing than in the concrete *person* for whom it was done.'[91] In *We Drink From Our Own Wells*, Gutiérrez warns that in a highly individualistic social context, in which the church has either laid aside or neglected 'the community dimensions inherent in all Christian life', charity is liable to 'be regarded as simply another Christian virtue to be cultivated.'[92] What does Gutiérrez mean? He means that generous giving can never be reduced to a means for the development of the self. Gutiérrez's views on charity are similar to those of Paulo Freire, who said that 'in conjunction with a paternalisitic social apparatus, within which the oppressed receive the euphemistic title of "welfare recipient"' the poor are regarded 'as the pathology of the healthy society, which must therefore adjust these "incompetent and lazy" folk to its own patterns by changing their mentality'.[93] Freire lambasts 'false generosity' for 'in order to have the continued opportunity to express their "generosity," the oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well. An unjust social order is the permanent fount of this "generosity"'.[94] True generosity, for Freire, 'consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity.'[95] Like Freire, Gutiérrez begins with the poor internal to a system that treats them as non-persons, and warns, therefore, of the possibility of charity repeating the logic of the unjust premise (or premises) on which it is based.

However, Gutiérrez presents no simple definitive account of charity (as selfless giving). On the one hand in *A Theology of Liberation* we read that the South American church has questioned 'as insufficient those partial and limited measures which amount only to palliatives and in the long run actually consolidate an exploitative system', suggesting the limitations of piecemeal charitable giving.[96] This is also Rebecca Chopp's understanding of Gutiérrez on charity. She quotes Gutiérrez saying: 'the poverty of the poor is not a summons to alleviate their plight with acts of generosity but rather a compelling obligation to fashion an entirely different social order.'[97] On the other hand, Gutiérrez also affirms that 'to offer food and drink in our day is a political action; it means the transformation of a society structured to benefit a few who appropriate to themselves the value of the work of others' suggesting that even limited giving signifies to an eternal

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[91] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 200.
[92] Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 15.
[93] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 55.
[94] Ibid, 26.
[95] Ibid, 42, 27.
[96] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 110.
[97] Gutiérrez, quoted in Chopp, *Praxis of Suffering*, 50.

signifier and is of merit.[98] The direct application of Gutiérrez's work to the current practices of British charities is problematic, he is concerned with the particularity of the Latin American poor and their experience. Given how complex this task is, on the above analysis, Gutiérrez develops some problems that may be implicit in charitable giving, but not the right materials for a full critical and constructive account of current British benevolence. If charity is in danger of being co-opted by a conservative order, and securing of that order through the repetition and public performance of inter-subjective roles, as Gutiérrez has suggested is possible, then what does a liberating relationship look like?

Instead, Gutiérrez proposes friendship as a normative model of the interpersonal. This includes a number of elements: the exchange of gifts,[99] conversion to the poor,[100] and un/forgiveness. Just as Gutiérrez's account of creation balanced creation inside and outside of God, so his account of the interpersonal balances the integration and distinction of friends. In his explication of friendship as a gift, Gutiérrez implies an active offering to the other and a secondary level of active reception, which, in turn, requires a distinct subject who can receive and respond to the gift. Gutiérrez's writings on conversion are also concerned with becoming like and establishing the difference of the Other, especially the poor. Conversion to the poor is 'not possible apart from a certain integration into their world and apart from bonds of real friendship with those who suffer dispossession and injustice.'[101] Those dispositions, or aporias, that arrest the possibility of encounter, even a false piety, must be expunged. Gutiérrez puts this beautifully in *The Truth Shall Make You Free* when he says that we must be 'converted to the Other in others.'[102] Finally, not forgiving is, for Gutiérrez, to 'fixate the past', ossifying the historical life of the other in the self and holding the other perennially to account (this is a bad form of interdependence or relationship).[103] 'Pardon', Gutiérrez says, is not only 'an inherent characteristic of the Christian community' but also actively creates 'possibilities for persons to change and to realign the courses of their lives'; to let them be free, to allow them as other the dignity of choice and activity liberated from the overdetermining constructions and the human proclivity to reduce the other to the utility of the self.[104]

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[98] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 202.
[99] Ibid, 206.
[100] Ibid, 205.
[101] Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 104.
[102] Gutiérrez, *Truth Shall Make You Free*, 13.
[103] Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 100.
[104] Ibid, 100.

Conclusion

In Gutiérrez's work 'integral liberation' refers to the process of distinguishing in order to unite. This can be seen in a number of examples: men and women are both 'free' and 'social'; the world (including the secular, natural and social scientific) is distinct from the church and yet still part of one shared history; and for friends to exchange gifts they must also exist separate to this reciprocity. In all these cases, Gutiérrez balances different faces of a totality without collapsing their difference, as 'integral liberation', as a cipher for 'life', is a balance of the appropriate integration and liberation of the person.

However, this chapter also noted a series of problems in Gutiérrez's theology, particularly in his account of experience and praxis, though in the next chapter I will also argue that the early Liberation Theologians' (including Gutiérrez's) advocacy of socialism may also be problematic in the current context. This chapter also noted that what Gutiérrez has written on almsgiving is insufficient for a full analysis of contemporary British charitable practices with homeless people. Gutiérrez seems unsure of the theological and political merit of charitable practices, though he normally errs, with Freire, on the stifling consequences of charitable generosity. This was due to an instinct Gutiérrez shares with Freire: a tendency to identify the poor within the social, to consider the function they play in the maintenance of an unjust order (or 'normality'), and to attribute to them, as their own dignified people, the agency necessary to bring about their own liberation and our salvation.

In closing this opening chapter I want to step back and ask: what, for Gutiérrez, is theology? The obvious place to begin is with his phrase 'theology is the second step' - reflection on praxis. But this, for Gutiérrez, is only one particular, formal, kind of theology, because the spirituality of the poor and their cry for justice are themselves theological – the irruption of the poor in history is the interruption of time by God (to borrow a term of Johann Baptist Metz).[105] For Gutiérrez, theology, more generally, is a discourse, not just words but an amalgam of symbols, historical events, experiences, institutions, hermeneutics, and ideas that defend the possibility of response. Taken in their whole, these elements are constitutive of a world view: being in the world as becoming free in response to God's actions in history. Methodologically, theology sets these elements in dynamic

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[105] Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and* Society, trans. David Smith (London: Burns & Oates, 1980), 171.

relationship with each other: both progressing and deferring from one to another (like 'steps') and repeating and refining each other (like a 'cycle'). The image I will use for envisioning this method in chapter six is the 'spiral'. However, I will first turn to the changing social and political landscape in which Liberation Theology has occurred.

Chapter Three

Liberation Theology and Civil Society

Introduction

In this chapter I will develop my account of Liberation Theology by introducing civil society as a contested but important aspect of contemporary social and political theory and praxis. As this thesis will examine Christian charities that work within civil society, and as civil society has become a significant part of contemporary Liberation Theology, this chapter will assist me in developing a critical but constructive account of charitable work with homeless people in its political and theological aspects.

In the analysis of Ivan Petrella, the first generation of Liberation Theologians, including Gutiérrez, face a series of problems that stem from a common root.[1] For Petrella, Liberation Theology's method has been widely appropriated, yet with the fall of the Berlin Wall, socialism, these theologians' political goal, has become increasingly distant. For Petrella, the dislocations sustained by the four-step methodology (particularly the distinction between the social scientific and theological) has curtailed the ability of Liberation Theologians to instigate and inform the liberative, historical projects they desire.

Petrella also notes that civil society has become an important arena for contemporary political theorists and theological radicals, as a range of new antagonisms have arisen which draw on frustrated identities (gender, sexuality, ethnicity), new experiences, neglected histories and arenas of human action as the basis for new calls for liberation. In the terms of the last chapter, the experiences which Gutiérrez presumes to be central to Liberation Theology (the experience of the poor) has become increasingly multiple and Liberation Theology's political *telos* – socialism – has become unrealisable.

The early Liberation Theologians' failure to articulate a theology adequate to these changing circumstances is traced to a dissonance between Liberation Theology's goal and its method by Petrella. While he seeks to stand in solidarity with this tradition, Petrella attempts to repair Liberation Theology's method in a new political context. This context is the 'end of history': a period in which neoliberal capitalism has come to the ascendancy

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[1] The distinction of 'generations' of Liberation Theologians is a concept I have taken from Mario I. Aguilar, *The History and Politics of Latin American Theology Volume One* (London: SCM Press, 2007).

(defeated its counter-part, socialism) and civil society has become the location in which much emancipatory action is conceived.[2]

Yet civil society is not a simple term, or homogenous space. This chapter will therefore outline some of the most significant accounts of what 'civil society' is, before giving an account of why it is currently seen to be so important. Discussing civil society will also move this thesis closer to British charities, as charities are voluntary associations that operate in civil society. Once civil society has been outlined, this chapter will progress, in the second half, to an examination of three particular relationships of the social sciences to theology: those of Clodovis Boff, Daniel Bell, and Petrella.

Clodovis Boff, a significant member of the first generation of Liberation Theologians, provides in his *Theology and Praxis* one of the most systematic and total accounts of the relationship between theology and social sciences. His position will then be compared to the work of Daniel Bell who, writing under the auspices of Radical Orthodoxy, contends that Liberation Theology is insufficiently ecclesiological. Boff and Bell, I will argue, offer essentialised accounts of the theological and the social respectively, thus Petrella's work, as a double refusenik, receives a qualified commendation. Qualified, for though Petrella's work on the failings of Liberation Theology's canonical method, his anti-essentialism and his positive recommendations on historical institutions and 'Vitas' are all strong, his response to identity politics is constructed around an under-theorised account of 'class' and he is reticent to engage with the theological source of the Liberationists' ideals.

What is Civil Society

Civil society has a long history, commonly traced to Aristotle's account of the *polis* as an 'association of associations'.[3] For Michael Edwards, who offers a helpful

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[2] The term 'end of history' was made popular by Francis Fukuyama in his book *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 2006). While he later disavowed it as a useful designator, it recurs throughout the twentieth century in a series of interesting places, in the works of Fredric Jameson, Jean Baudrillard and Alexandre Kojève, for example. See Jean Baudrillard, *The Illusion of the End* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994). Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991). Michael S. Roth, 'A Problem of Recognition: Alexander Kojève and the End of History', *History and Thought*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Oct., 1985), 293–306. For a good review of British politics, civil society and the 'end of history' see A. Dinham, *Faiths, Public Policy and Civil Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillian, 2009), 105.

[3] Michael Edwards, *Civil Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 6.

introduction to this subject, the enduring significance of civil society for philosophers, theologians and political theorists resides in their concern with

> the nature of the good society, the rights and responsibilities of citizens, the practice of politics and government, and, most especially, how to live together peacefully by reconciling our individual autonomy with our collective aspirations, balancing freedom and its boundaries, and marrying pluralism with conformity so that complex societies can function with both efficiency and justice.[4]

Such complex, significant and varying concerns have drawn some of the most sensitive and serious thinkers to engage with civil society as an area of research. As Edwards notes, individuals such as Alexis de Tocqueville and Edmund Burke in the eighteenth century, Georg Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx in the nineteenth century and Antonio Gramsci and Jürgen Habermas in the twentieth century have all made significant contributions to our understanding of what civil society is and in what its importance abides.

In response to a triumvirate of democratic revolutions (British, French and American), eighteenth century writings on civil society usually distinguished it as a realm from both the economy and the state. Edwards notes that for de Tocqueville civil society was viewed 'as a defence against unwarranted intrusions by the state on newly realised individual rights and freedoms, organised through the medium of voluntary associations.'[5] For these thinkers 'civil society was a self-regulating universe of associations committed to the same ideals that needed, at all costs, to be protected *from* the state in order to preserve its role in resisting despotism.'[6] Jeffery Alexander argues that this is '"Civil Society 1", a rather diffuse, umbrella-like concept referring to a plethora of institutions outside the state' which includes 'capitalist markets and its institutions, but also what Tocqueville called voluntary religion… private and public associations and organisations, and virtually every form of cooperative social relationship that created bonds of trust – for example, currents of public opinion, legal norms and institutions, and political parties.'[7] Edwards also picks up on the significance of voluntary institutions in this period, as they supposedly curbed 'the power of centralising institutions, protecting pluralism and nurturing constitutive

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[4] Edwards, *Civil Society*, 6.
[5] Ibid, 7.
[6] Ibid, 7.
[7] Jeffery C. Alexander, *The Civil Sphere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 24.

social norms, especially "generalised trust and cooperation"'.[8] For Edmund Burke, watching the events of the French Revolution unfold, it was the distinctive shared tradition of British social associations that ensured the continuity of liberty and individuality.[9] What is interesting in both Alexander and Edward's account of these writers is that civil society is both plural and an area of social norms, combining both uniformity and difference.

Another writer who was watching closely the events in France, but this time across the Franco-Prussian border, was Hegel, who explores civil society 'as the sphere that is produced by the *exercise* of our immediate and our moral rights' and sets it in dialogue with the historical realisation of freedom.[10] Stephen Houlgate says that for Hegel 'civil society is the sphere of activity generated by free individuals who both assert their rights to own and exchange property and insist on their right to cater for their own welfare by satisfying their own needs and interests through their own activity and labour.'[11] It is the social exercise of 'bourgeois freedom'.[12] For Hegel the free exercise of economic man in civil society generates wealth but also poverty, for there are varieties of ability between people, divisions of labour necessary for the maximisation of efficiency and the perennial danger of overproduction. For Hegel, 'it is not the malfunctioning of civil society which causes poverty, but the smooth functioning of the free market itself' for 'some degree of structural unemployment, and the poverty and hardship which unemployment brings with it, are permanent dangers in an economy based on free, fair but otherwise unregulated production and competition, and the resulting fluctuations in demand.'[13] As the Hegel scholar Raymond Plant noted, 'poverty in general is a structural phenomenon in society, the result of the operation of civil society when it is in a state of "unimpeded activity" and not the result of some *personal* failing on the part of the poor'; or, in Houlgate's words: 'a flourishing civil society is *too* rich and *too* productive to deal with the problem of poverty,

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[8] Edwards, *Civil Society*, 7.

[9] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Richard Boyd, 'The Unsteady and Precarious Contribution of Individuals: Edmund Burke's Defence of Civil Society', *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (1999), 465–492. Christopher Insole, *The Politics of Human Frailty: A Theological Defence of Political Liberalism* (London: SCM Press, 2004).

[10] Stephen Houlgate, *An Introduction to Hegel, Freedom, Truth and History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 198. G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), 220–274. Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979), 109.

[11] Houlgate, *Introduction to Hegel,* 198.

[12] Ibid, 198.

[13] Ibid, 202.

since its own wealth and productivity are themselves the prime cause of poverty.'[14] The ongoing significance of Hegel's work resides in its influence and in 'his avoiding both a transcendental critique of *civil* society and an apology for *bourgeois* society,' as Hegel's work sought to 'reconcile dimensions of the ancient, homogenous, unified political society with the late medieval plurality of autonomous social bodies.'[15] Civil society and the 'system of needs' was developed by Marx and his followers, while 'the idea of civil society as the central terrain of social integration and public freedom', a place of integral liberation, was to be continued by Gramsci and Durkheim with varying emphases, while Hegel's work on public opinion would also inform the work of Habermas.[16] Before turning to the reasons for the revival of civil society thinking, Habermas and Gramsci deserve a brief introduction.

The Gramscian notion of civil society has proved to be of enduring significance as it 'reversed the reductionist trends of the Marxist analysis by concentrating on the dimension of associations and cultural mediations and by testifying to modern equivalents of Hegel's corporations and estates.'[17] Written while under arrest in Italy, Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* distinguish between two levels: 'the one that can be called "civil society", that is, the ensemble of organisms commonly called "private", and that of "political society" or "the state"'.[18] These two levels, Gramsci continues, 'correspond on the one hand to the formation of "hegemony" which the dominant exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of "direct domination" or command exercised through the state and "juridical" government.'[19] These two do not totally coincide, for 'civil society' is a fissured sphere partially fixed by hegemonic exercises in organisation by elites but also tending to entropy and counter-hegemonic resistances. While civil society is liable to buttress, enforce and legitimise the state (on these grounds Gramsci notes that if the 'state trembled, a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed' for 'the state was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and

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[14] Raymond Plant quoted in Houlgate, *Introduction to Hegel,* 200, 203.

[15] Jean L. Cohen, Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (London: MIT Press, 1999), 96, 91.

[16] Ibid, 116.

[17] Ibid, 117.

[18] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quintin Hoare, Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2007), 12.

[19] Ibid, 12.

earthworks').[20] He also drew his readers attention to 'the struggle between civil society and political society in a specific historical period.'[21] Interestingly, Gramsci refers to this as '"the perpetual conflict between church and state"', here taking the church 'as representing the totality of civil society (whereas in fact it is only an element of diminishing importance within it), and the state as representing every attempt to crystallise permanently a particular stage of development, a particular situation.'[22] Though Gramsci does note that 'the church itself may become state, and conflict may occur between on the one hand secular (and secularising) civil society, and on the other state/church (when the church has become an integral part of the state), of political society monopolised by a specific privileged group which absorbs the church in order the better to preserve its monopoly with the support of that zone of "civil society" which the church represents.'[23] This is an observation concerning the contingent organisation of church/state relations in history which I also noted in the work of Gutiérrez. Gramsci's account of civil society is nuanced, willing to consider varying manifestations of social action and association in this diverse realm. For Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Gramsci is of enduring significance because he contributed to twentieth century Marxist analysis 'a new arsenal of concepts – war of position, historical bloc, collective will, hegemony, intellectual and moral leadership.'[24]

Jürgen Habermas has also contributed to our understanding of civil society. In his seminal book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* he traces the rise of the 'bourgeois public sphere' which he suggests 'cannot be abstracted from the unique developmental history of that "civil society"'.[25] Pointing to the French coffee houses and debating clubs in the eighteenth century, Habermas notes the creation of privacy in the nuclear family home, the significance of property rights and public opinion in 'rational debate', law and the press, all of which have contributed to the modern form of civil society. Habermas notes a series of transitions in this text, generated by new elective affinities, the consonance, for example, of the 'autonomy of property owners in the market' with the 'self-presentation of human beings in the family', though 'the family' itself undergoes a number of changes during this period, becoming a place of 'purely human'

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[20] Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 245.
[21] Ibid, 245.
[22] Ibid, 245.
[23] Ibid, 245.
[24] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, ix.
[25] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), xvii.

relations.[26] 'The sphere of the market', Habermas says, 'we call "private", the sphere of the family, as the core of the private sphere, we call the "intimate sphere". The latter was believed to be independent of the former, whereas in truth it was profoundly caught up in the requirements of the market'.[27] Two points are interesting about these observations: one, the site of these intimate relations is 'the home', which is perceived to be distinct from the economic and political but from its genesis has been intertwined with them. Secondly, for Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere was constituted on an analogy between the 'human being pure and simple' existing in family relations of intimacy and affections and modern 'property owners', though aspects of 'being human' were always perceived to be exogenous to identity given by the market.[28] This second point is interesting as it suggests a non-reductionist character of human life which is believed to be, or resistant, to total political, economic, social (or even religious) description. Habermas went on to develop these early insights to advocate "communicative action", "discursive democracy", and the "colonialisation of the life world" by combining 'the Marxist tradition that exposes domination in civil society with the liberal tradition that emphasises its role in guarding personal autonomy.'[29]

The prominence of civil society in contemporary political theory and rhetoric depends on a series of recent social and political change. Edwards lists

> the fall of communism and the democratic openings that followed, disenchantment with the economic and political models of the past, a yearning for togetherness in a world that

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[26] Habermas, *Public Sphere*, 46–48.

[27] Ibid, 55.

[28] Ibid, 88, 56.

[29] Edwards, *Civil Society*, 9. Habermas' account of the public sphere has been hugely influential, however it has also faced significant critiques and stands in need of descriptive and proscriptive support if it is to remain informative. John Keane, for example, has argued that 'civil society is established after the image of the civilised [European] male individual… it rests on a foundation of excluded women, who are expected to live under conditions of household despotism.' Quoted in Bent Flyvbjerg, 'Habermas and Foucault: Thinkers for Civil Society?', *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (Jun. 1998), 210–233, 211. The work of Nancy Fraser has also advanced our understanding of public spheres (in dialogue with Habermas) as she notes there are many publics, overlapping and distinct. Bent Flyvbjerg summarises Habermas' limitations as an analyst of civil society when he says that 'a more differentiated conception of political culture than Habermas' is needed, one that will be more tolerant of conflict and difference, and more compatible with the plurazation of interests.' Bent Flyvbjerg, 'Habermas and Foucault: Thinkers for Civil Society?', *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (Jun. 1998), 210–233, 229. Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actual Existing Democracy', Craig Calhoun, eds*., Habermas and the Public Sphere* (London: MIT Press, 1992), 109–142.

seems ever-more insecure, and the rapid rise of non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
on the global stage

as some of the most significant factors in this rise and rise of civil society.[30] The fall of the
Berlin Wall in 1989 was a watershed for civil society advocates, as were the resistances to
authoritarian regimes in South America and Africa.[31] Along with these historical events,
Edwards attributes the ascendancy of civil society to our understanding of three respective
realms of human amelioration and empowerment – state, economy and civil society – and
he believes that the current paradigm is Antony Giddens' model of 'Third Way' state and
market mediation through a strong civil society, an approach to politics, social action and
market regulation which typified Tony Blair's New Labour government and their mixed
economy of welfare.[32]

Yet the current import of civil society depends on a series of other sources, and
cannot be reduced to the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the success of 'Solidarity' in
Poland. Jeffery Alexander, for example, has argued very persuasively that the African
American civil rights movements, identity politics more broadly, and 'new social
movements' more generally (women's movements, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament,
environmental groups, LGBT rights)[33] have all contributed to the current popularity of the
idea of civil society. In his book *The Civil Sphere*, Alexander notes an indeterminacy in our
use of the term civil society, elisions of the empirical and the normative (as Edwards also
traces the slippage of civil society from the 'good society' into 'associational life',
resulting in all associational life being deemed 'good').[34] For Alexander, real existing civil
society is 'contradictory and fragmented', capable of 'legitimising not only inclusion but
exclusion.'[35] However, for Alexander, the civil sphere is capable of repair and
development as it is animated by 'solidarity', an orientation in people 'to the ideal, to the
transcendent, to what they hope will be the everlasting', a kind of 'common secular
faith.'[36] Alexander says:

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[30] Edwards, *Civil Society*, 2.
[31] Ibid, 12, 15.
[32] Ibid, 11. Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).
[33] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 159.
[34] Alexander, *Civil Sphere*, 3. Edwards, *Civil Society*, 10, 107, 108.
[35] Alexander, *Civil Sphere*, 4.
[36] Ibid, 3, 4, 7.

social movements are rooted in subjectivity and dependent on symbolic communication. Anchored in the idealised discourses and communicative institutions of the civil sphere, social movements have one foot in some particular injustice and the other in promises about the general good. This reflects the duality of social position in complex social systems and fragmented civil spheres.[37]

This 'duality' of civil society will be very important in chapter seven, when I will argue that charities that operate in civil society are not only double but tending towards duality.

While Alexander's text is concerned primarily with symbolic communication and the law, he places himself 'between transcendent and the particular', a tension that 'cannot be avoided' for, in his words, 'there is no going back from abstraction; it defines the very essence of not just modern but all post-axial time. But neither is there a place for homogeneity. There will always be fragmentation in the post-Axial age.'[38] Along with the integration/differentiation of civil society with other spheres (politics, state and religion), Alexander has contributed to our understanding of civil society as the site of a balance between universal aspiration and particular historical location, the transcendent value of solidarity partially achieved immanently in everyday acts and institutions.

Alexander is also right to note that 'out groups' (such as Jewish people, black people, homosexuals and women) are often characterised by those on the inside (the pure/impure dichotomy) as deserving of their exclusion due to some lack. He observes 'members of the host [primordialising] these historically arbitrary characteristics into "essences"' as 'citizens make judgements about who should be included in civil society and who should not, about who is considered friend and who an enemy'.[39] Alexander sees this being done through a process of drawing on and creating 'a systematic, highly elaborated symbolic code.'[40] Alexander correctly points out that essentialist thinking, and the imputation of 'essences' to groups, is prone to neglect historical contingency, though he himself is liable to designate 'solidarity' as the transcendental characteristic of civil society itself.

'Politics', Alexander tells us, 'is a discursive struggle', and it is an attentiveness to the structure and structuring of language in the constitution of hegemonic order which lead Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe to write *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. I am

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[37] Alexander, *Civil Sphere*, 7.
[38] Ibid, 22.
[39] Ibid, 417, 55.
[40] Ibid, 417, 55.

introducing this text now as it will be crucial to the development of the argument of this thesis, for it will lead the analysis of neoliberalism in chapter seven, as well as help me develop a theological methodology appropriate to contemporary charity in chapter six. Edwards, as I noted earlier, pointed to sociality and the overcoming of anomie as a motivation for involvement in civil society. Laclau and Mouffe note that individualism is also a significant part of the rise of civil society along with anti-statist arguments predicated on a deep aversion to bureaucratic administration. These two writers argue that the expansion of the bureaucracy of the state, tied to the widespread proliferation of forms of vigilance, observation and regulation in a growing range of arenas has generated a back-lash against state solutions *and* the expression of individual identity expressed in civil society. Laclau and Mouffe understand the relationship of civil society to individuality as a part of the twentieth century rise of the welfare state in the UK, but it can also be seen online, in the use of sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to report one's own participation in civil society. Signing a letter for a campaign one believes in can be exhibited in these spaces to show what kind of person one is, as well as what kind of individual one wants to present to the world.[41]

Liberation Theology's Civil Turn

Having outlined what civil society is, and some points which will be important for the future analysis of this thesis, I will now turn to three contrasting accounts of Liberation Theology's methodology in our contemporary political and social context. I will be drawing particular attention to their account of the relationship between theology and the social sciences, and to their designation of essences to these relative disciplines and social phenomena, as both my subject (charities) and first theological interlocutor (Gutiérrez) suggest an inter-disciplinary line of approach. Essentialist arguments, I will show, are significant, but liable to unbalance these methodological and political concerns.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, Liberation Theology came under increasing theological and political scrutiny while concomitantly playing an influential role in the birth of a series of contextual theologies across the globe. Recently theologians, such as Ivan Petrella, an Argentinean, have sought to articulate a vision, drawing heavily on but revising where necessary the work of the first generation of Liberation Theologians, around which these contextual theologies can crystallise. Petrella begins *The Future of*

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[41] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 162.

Liberation Theology: An Argument and a Manifesto by elucidating what he takes to be particular and definitive about Latin American Liberation Theology. For Petrella, Liberation Theology has two key organising facets, first a 'rereading of Christianity from the perspective of the oppressed' and second 'the construction of "historical projects"', that is: the instigation and reformation of institutions which bring liberation, in its multiple forms, about.[42] Petrella distinguishes between the method and the goal of Liberation Theology. The method is a rereading of theology from the perspective of the poor which, in its canonical form, includes four 'stages'.[43] The goal of Liberation Theology is liberation. Drawing on Clodovis Boff's 'Epistemology and Method in Liberation Theology' in *Mysterium Liberationis*, Petrella argues that the four stages are: first, praxis with the poor; second, a socio-analytic stage (seeing); third, a hermeneutical mediation (judging) and fourth, a practical mediation (acting).[44] These require further explication.

These four stages which move from commitment to the poor to the use of the social sciences and on to the 'properly theological' hermeneutical mediation culminate, ideally, in historical projects and institutions which liberate. In the first stage the theologian must share with the poor in the liberation process, 'be committed to the oppressed.'[45] Liberation Theology is not impartial, it has sprung from and returns to the experience of the poor. The second stage, the 'socio-analytic stage,' involves 'using the social sciences to understand the root causes of oppression.'[46] Boff carefully qualifies the contribution the social sciences can make to theology. In Boff's work, the social sciences are a tool for delineating the causes of poverty and neither contribute to, infringe, nor seriously critique, theology proper. Theology proper, or the hermeneutical mediation, is the third stage. This is Gutiérrez's 'second act', a rereading of the Bible and Christian tradition from the perspective of the poor who are 'the privileged agents of biblical reflection.'[47] Finally there

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[42] Petrella, *Future of Liberation,* vii.

[43] The 'Marginal position,' represented by theologians such as Jung Mo Sung, believes 'the hermeneutical mediation is unnecessary' for 'reality is already interpreted in accordance with Liberation Theology's values and goals.' Based on two moves, a closer relationship between theology and the social sciences and the theological assertion that God is a 'God of life', the marginal position promotes a unified anthropology (body/soul) and a unified conception of history (creation/salvation). Petrella, *Future of Liberation*, 30-33.

[44] Ibid, 26.

[45] Ibid, 26.

[46] Ibid, 27.

[47] Ibid, 28.

is a practical mediation in which a new theology is constructed which, ideally, 'involves the development of new plans of action.'[48]

The transition from the second socio-analytic to the third hermenutical stage finds one of its most sophisticated and systematic formulations in Clodovis Boff's *Theology and Praxis*.[49] The social sciences furnish Liberation Theologians with 'the object of this theology: the political' or the 'positive, contextual and concrete knowledge of society' it needs to proceed conscientiously.[50] They 'inform theology about what it is to treat,' the injustice which afflicts the poor which the liberation theologian is committed to understanding and alleviating.[51] The social sciences (or 'sciences of the social', as Boff prefers) are a 'constitutive part of the total process of the production of this theology' though 'formally speaking this step can be considered pretheological.'[52] Theology is the primary organising rhetoric of Boff's account and 'is both autonomous and dependent', both internally self constituting and externally informed.[53] The word 'autonomous' refers to the manner in which theology 'is self governed, or moves according to its own law'; it is auto-nomous.[54] But theology is also dependent, historically contingent, as it functions in the parameters of a language and praxis. This is its 'extrinsic relationship', for theology is structured in a 'complex network of material and historical determinations that situate it in a particular location and historical dating' and subject it to 'multiple conditions of production: materials, cultures, policies and politics'.[55] The autonomy of theology, when not adequately qualified, is the tendency in theology towards idealism but also provides a freedom of abstract thought and political praxis; a means for appropriating the object of the social sciences which remains true to its own internal laws.[56]

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[48] Petrella, *Future of Liberation*, 28.
[49] Boff, Clodovis, *Theology and Praxis*, trans. Robert R. Barr (NewYork: Orbis Books, 1987)
[50] Ibid, xxiv, xxi.
[51] Ibid, 31.
[52] Ibid, xxiv.
[53] Ibid, 15.
[54] Ibid, 15.
[55] Ibid, 16.
[56] John Milbank, in *Theology and Social Theory*, reads Boff's 'autonomy' as 'abstraction.' Boff's work is symptomatic of theology as an 'a priori transcendental horizon' premised on either a Weberian or Cartesian ethical account of the individual (and an uncritical advocacy of the ethical imperative to 'love' or 'freedom' without asking 'how is this love of the neighbour to be socially instantiated') and the universality of the Kantian categories. In accepting this modern conceptualisation Liberation Theology also fatally concedes to the 'conflict and alienation' of secularism, as well as it's inevitable 'heterogenesis of [its] ends.' Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 239, 247-249.

While the 'sciences of the social enter into the theology of the political as a constitutive part', there is also, for Boff, an 'epistemological breach' between them.[57] Boff holds theology and the social sciences at a distance, a move justified by his access to 'the original sense' of the Christian Bible and his contention that it is possible to discern a 'certain hierarchy' in the Biblical texts. [58] It is the little word 'the' which suggests, though Boff intends to avoid 'the "essence of Christianity", or the "essence of the faith"' which is to 'fall victim to the illusion of essentialism', he does depend on a strategic biblical essentialism to ground his theology and, by extension, his methodology.[59]

To understand Petrella's concerns regarding the canonical methodology Liberation Theology needs to be set in its changing historical context, a context in which civil society has become more important. Petrella notes that the political goals of first generation Liberation Theologians have been widely frustrated and, in some cases, disintegrated. The collapse of socialism, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the 'End of History,' are, in Petrella's mind, crucial to the changing geo-political landscape in which Liberation Theology now finds itself. Socialism was often held as the 'practical alternative to capitalism' to which Liberation Theologians aspired.[60] Hence the decline of socialism, along with a 'perceived decline in the nation state's ability to control economic activity within its own boundaries,' has led to the 'upsurge of culture as a politically contested site.'[61] This fits Mario Aguilar's typology of generations in Liberation Theology, whereby the second generation of Liberation Theologians have turned to civil society as the pre-eminent soteriological site while the significance of the 'traditional political sphere,' the remit of the first generation (so embroiled in Cold War politics), has continued to decline.[62] Yet while Liberation

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[57] Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 31. This 'epistemological breach' suggests, to Milbank, an idealistic theology of 'the noetic order' which 'seeks to evade the historicist abyss' and impose its own theoretical elaborations on praxis thus rending 'the contents of Christianity essentially theoretical' and preventing 'a unity theory of practice altogether.' Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 254, 255.

[58] Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 132, 133.

[59] 'Strategic essentialism' is a term deployed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak to describe various 'anti-human' trends in late modern philosophy, social theory and semiotics (including Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault). These writers used this tactic, Spivak says, as it 'allows them to use the critical force of anti-humanism, in other words, even as they share in its constitutive paradox: that the essentializing moment, the object of their criticism, is irreducible.' We should read these writers, Spivak suggests, as '*strategically* adhering to the essentialist notion of consciousness.' See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography', *In Other Words* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 1998), 270–304, 282, 284.

[60] Petrella, *Future of Liberation*, 2.

[61] Petrella, *Future of Liberation*, 2.

[62] Aguilar, *Latin American Theology Volume One,* 6-10.

Theology's political goals have been perpetually thwarted, its methodology has seen widespread appropriation.

The widespread success of Liberation Theology's method raises new concerns, notably, that its terminology has been emptied of its radical content. Thus, for example, while Liberation Theology's preferential option for the poor was adopted by the Vatican under Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI,[63] the Vatican simultaneously silenced prominent Liberation Theologians and repeatedly replaced progressive Bishops with conservative ones.[64] But Liberation Theology's method has also been influential beyond the immediate bounds of the church. David Cameron, in a speech following his election to head of the British Conservative party, said: 'I think the test of all our policies should be: what does it do for the people who have the least, the people on the bottom rung of the ladder?'[65] This echoes the preferential option for the poor. Franz Hinkelammert argues that opposition to Liberation Theology now 'takes the form of co-opting its understanding of the relation between God's kingdom and history as well as its basic terminology.'[66] Hinkelammert offers the example of Michael Camdessus, then head of the IMF, who, in a talk to a congress of French business men, presented a unified history, justified on theological grounds, and endorsed the theological preference for the poor.[67]

Deprived of actually existing socialism as an alternative to capitalism and witnessing the co-option of its terminology (by individuals like Camdessus and Cameron), Liberation Theology is caught in a stasis which, Petrella argues, can only be overcome by a radical overhaul of its methodology. This 'political paralysis' and the ongoing 'co-option of its vocabulary' is due, in Petrella's analysis, to a dissonance between Liberation Theology's goal and its method. These, he argues, have been sundered and it is his intention to recover 'this link between ideals and institutions.'[68] The clear demarcation ('epistemological breach') in the canonical method between the second, socio-analytic, and the third, hermeneutical mediation, 'disables Liberation Theology from moving from a discourse about liberation to the pursuit of liberation as a social reality,' its explicit theological and

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[63] As a preferential but not exclusive option for the poor.

[64] Including, the admonishing of Jon Sobrino in 2007 by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Ivan Petrella, *Beyond Liberation Theology: A Polemic* (London: SCM, 2008), 115.

[65] Cameron in Slavoj Žižek, *Violence* (London: Profile Books Ltd, 2008), 75.

[66] Petrella, *Future of Liberation*, 8.

[67] Ibid, 8,9.

[68] Ibid, viii.

historical goal.[69] The social sciences are 'only allowed to play the role of reading reality' and can contribute nothing to either the third stage, which is theology proper, nor the fourth practical stage; left with only theological resources Liberation Theology is incapable of envisaging or instigating material liberation.[70] Instead of the 'constructive use of the social sciences in the imagination of historical projects that can lift people out of their need' the Liberation Theologian is left offering, in Boff's words, 'broad lines of change' which are left vulnerable to co-option and misinterpretation.[71] As well as the argument from utility this delineation seems theologically problematic, for 'where we look,' as well as 'what we see,' are questions with a distinctly theological hue. The 'internal deficiency' which Petrella identifies is based on an internal dichotomy, that between theology and the social sciences.[72] In holding these asunder the critical resources of Liberation Theology are seriously curtailed and it is incapable of imagining the instigation or renewal of historical projects which can bring about material liberation. Though Boff's work also has something to say to Petrella, he seeks to hold open the internality and externality of theology, to draw our attention to its own logic, and to consider the source of our ideals if we are to resist theological and political relativism.

The history of Liberation Theology was briefly portrayed to outline the context in which theology has been read concomitant with the social sciences. This relationship was considered in greater detail in the work of Boff, who utilised a strategic biblical essentialism to ground his project, and in the work of Petrella who, responding to a different historical context, proposed a revision of the dissonance between theology and the social sciences *via* an intentionally limited but nuanced account of institutions, to which we must now turn. 'Historical projects' or institutions are crucial to Petrella's argument because of their role in mediating the transition between theory and praxis. They are the means by which theology becomes social, and, in regards to charities (in this work), the social becomes theological. Drawing on the work of José Bonino, a first generation Protestant amongst a notably Roman Catholic cast, Petrella identifies four functions historical projects play in Liberation Theology. First, historical projects are the 'material and social' means by which liberation can be 'incarnated in political and economic

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[69] Petrella, *Future of Liberation*, 29.

[70] The social sciences can serve a critical but not constructive function and the constructive primacy falls on the third stage, the hermeneutical mediation, rather than on the fourth practical stage in which real existing social liberation was supposed to be achieved.

[71] Ibid, 28.

[72] Ibid, 144.

institutions that make up society.'[73] Secondly, in giving contents to Liberation Theology's terms historical projects also provide 'a greater degree of specificity' which arrest the easy co-option of Liberation Theology's language and, thirdly, assist it in the 'differentiation between groups that at face value [hold] the same ideals but [differ] in the understanding of their practical import.'[74] Finally, they provide a means for avoiding the total displacement into either future utopian fantasies or immanentist realised social soteriologies of the believers' hope. To Bonino 'historical projects are 'a midway term' between 'a utopia... and a program.'[75]

Following Robert Unger, Petrella endorses a nuanced account of historical institutions proposing a critical stance termed 'alternative pluralisms' in relation to social and political systems. According to Petrella, Unger advocates an approach to social and political institutions known as 'alternative pluralism'. Unger does so, Petrella says, because abstract and essentialised accounts of capitalism, socialism and civil society, which claim to disclose a 'necessary' content and directly cause supposedly 'natural' derivatives, fail, in Unger's analysis, to recognise the variety of contingent historical forms these systems can assume.[76] Upon this premise, Unger argues for an engagement with the 'institutional imagination', an acceptance that 'society is made and imagined, that it is a human artefact rather than the expression of an underlying natural order',[77] and develops this point by noting that society is 'frozen politics'[78] and that capitalism cannot be considered as a monolithic whole. Once these pluralisms have been established the evaluative process of 'mapping and criticism' can begin.[79] Accepting the contextual parameters of theoretical description 'mapping' is 'the attempt to construct a picture of a particular society's institutions' and to 'understand the existing institutional situation as the complex and contradictory structure that it really is, as the strange and surprising settlement that you could never guess from abstractions'.[80] For Petrella, mapping should precede highlighting 'the "deviant" cases that reveal the contingent nature of institutions.'[81] Criticism, the latter

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[73] Petrella, *Future of Liberation*, 11.
[74] Ibid, 11.
[75] Ibid, 11.
[76] Ibid, 96.
[77] Unger quote in Ibid, 97.
[78] 'Frozen politics' for society is the temporary, contained and conditional suspension of political contest for the sake of a provisional communal peace. Ibid, 97.
[79] Ibid, 104.
[80] Ibid, 104.
[81] Ibid, 104.

step, 'is the moment when we focus on the disharmonies of institutions and the way in which ideal conceptions such as "democracy" are truncated in their development by their institutional realisation.'[82] In mapping and criticism 'an intimate link between thinking about ideas and thinking about institutions' is established for 'institutions embody our ideals, but our ideals are never fully exhausted by existing institutions.'[83]

To substantiate this claim Petrella holds 'democracy', as a representative and egalitarian ideal, up against the contemporary institutional form of democracy before conducting a similar comparative analysis between democracy and capitalist representation (conspicuous in its absence is a discussion of the origins of an/the ideal).[84] A more limited but directly relevant example, sourced in a recent controversy in homelessness provisions, will suffice, however, to demonstrate Petrella's exercise of 'mapping and criticism'. The free provision of meals to homeless people on the streets, colloquially named 'soup runs', has come under repeated and continued criticism most notably in a recent controversial measure proposed by Westminster City Council to ban soup runs on the streets of their borough.[85]   A report from Laura Lane and Anne Power from the London School of Economics, called *Soup Runs in Central London*, noted 'a clear and consistent religious motivation for the provision of food' which led faith inspired volunteers to minister to the body and soul of the homeless service users.[86] As the expression of social agency repeated throughout modern history, soup runs display an institutional character orientated to the protection of the sanctity of the homeless individual. Yet a 'common criticism of soup runs is that they help to sustain a potentially damaging street lifestyle' leading 'some policy actors' to 'criticise soup runs as outdated and damaging.'[87] These critics contend that the ideal soup runs sought to enshrine as institutions, the inherent value of homeless men and

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[82] Petrella, *Future of Liberation*, 104.

[83] Ibid, 104, 105.

[84] The question of the origin and formation of ideals, above and beyond those taken from a common presupposition, is one Petrella fails to properly engage. What is distinct about the theological ideals Liberation Theologians brought to their understanding of God's work, the church's mission and political and social revolution? Can Petrella really return to the project of the first generation of Liberation Theologians without the theology?

[85] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/8350563/Westminster-to-outlaw-sleeping-rough-and-soup-kitchens.html#. http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/nov/02/westminster-council-homeless-sou Accessed 14/06/2012.

[86] Laura Lane, Anne Power, *Soup Runs in Central London, the right help in the right place at the right time?* (London: LSE Housing, 2009), 2. http://www.homelesslondon.org/details.asp?id=LP382. Accessed 02-06-2012

[87] Lane, Power, *Soup Runs in Central London*, 3-5. http://www.homelesslondon.org/details.asp?id=LP382. Accessed 02-06-2012

women, is undermined by the institutional form soup runs currently assume. In this case a dissonance is present between ideal and institution which institutional mapping highlights and which can be immanently critiqued by turning, in a moment of inflection, the ideal back onto the institution.

Along with the process of mapping and criticism, supplemented by an engagement with the 'institutional imagination', Petrella argues for the ongoing importance of 'class' as a coalition building concept and rallying point. For Petrella, politics substantiated on identity positions hides 'the primary role of class oppression in determining life choices' and any Liberation Theologian who neglects this forgets the 'material and geopolitical context of oppression.'[88] He continues: 'the upsurge of race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality as organising axes for Liberation Theology has blurred the fact that material deprivation, that is, the deprivation that comes from one's class standing in society, remains the most important form of oppression.'[89] Two observations and one question follow on from this. First, the observations: Petrella believes that class is a more basic category than race or identity in determining oppression. However, Petrella is not ignorant of the importance of race, sexuality and gender but argues that set within these categories Liberation Theology lacks a 'viable social movement and a viable vision of an alternative society.'[90] His complaint is that identity politics lacks a broad enough vision to engender a strategic hegemonic political coalition of the oppressed. For this to be attainable identity positions must be seen as 'political acts rather than as an essential positions' which garner their

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[88] Petrella, *Beyond Liberation*, 81.

[89] Ibid, 82. Marcella Althaus-Reid also engages the problems of the canonical method as the progression from shared experiences with the poor, to the social sciences, to theology but has no intention of jettisoning the centrality of class. Arguing that in practice the progression from Social Sciences to Theology were reversed, Liberation Theology in fact 'starts from the criterion of Sexual Orthodoxy, that is sexual/political dogmas first,' and considers 'reality as only rearranged to fit this model' which results in the poor being the hidden or displaced subjects of Liberation Theology. Althaus-Reid begins this text by recounting the story of returning miners who 'witnessed how their wives were forced to have sex with their bosses', an example of the links between possession and sexuality in a continent in which 'women's oppression was to continue as part of an economic exchange.' 'Of course', Althaus-Reid says, 'we must not leave class analysis aside'; sexual categories do not transcend economic categories, instead what is needed is an 'economy of bodies' which demonstrates the 'intimate connections between the sexual and socio-political hegemonic constructions to be found at the base of capitalism' and 'considers the basics of what we need, while intimacy and distance are to be seen in the way society is organised and how the mechanisms of production for meeting those needs are regulated.' Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology* (London: Routledge, 2000), 62, 16, 134, 166.

[90] Petrella, *Beyond Liberation*, 117.

progressive political nature from drawing chains of analogical equivalence between a variety of marginal experiences articulated under the rubric of a new politics of common opposition.[91] My question to Petrella here is: is his alternative to identity politics, 'class', also a 'political act' or is it a 'material', or empirical, deprivation? Following Laclau and Mouffe, political theorists Petrella commends,[92] my concern is that 'class' is no more basic, obvious or neutral than 'identity' as the ground on which radical politics should be built, because it is 'politico-hegemonic articulations [that] retroactively create the interests they claim to represent.'[93]

A third articulation of the relationship between theology and the social sciences, which engages explicitly with the work of the Liberation Theologians is the work of Daniel Bell, who approaches Liberation Theology informed by the critical gaze of Radical Orthodoxy. Bell offers a second 'end of history' account of the potential and demise of Liberation Theology in his book *Liberation Theology after the End of History*.[94] To Bell, capitalism and Christianity stand in binary opposition. The 'conflict between capitalism and Christianity is nothing less than a clash of opposing technologies of desire.'[95] Capitalism is more than a mere economic system but a way of generating, structuring and controlling desire, it is, in the final analysis 'not merely economic, but ontological.'[96] Following Foucault and Deleuze, Bell argues that capitalism 'depends on social machines for the organisation of the social basis of production' which it achieves by 'enlisting the assistance of the state.'[97] The modern state 'serves capitalism by organising and combining the various domains in which capitalism is realised' and, according to Bell, does little else.[98] The state is conceived of as only 'govermentalism' and 'statecraft' and is collapsed, in its totality, into capitalism. Nor does civil society escape this idolatrous monolith, but is

[91] Petrella, *Beyond Liberation*, 146.
[92] Petrella, *Future of Liberation*, 97.
[92] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, xi. If 'class' is a term inherently related to political articulation Petrella has a series of further questions to resolve such as: how does the political articulation of 'class' relate to an empirical experience of deprivation and according to what norm (or ideal, sourced where?) is this current social hierarchy unsustainable? Which implies an earlier question I raised concerning Petrella's ideals.
[93] Daniel M. Bell, *Liberation Theology after the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering* (London: Routledge, 2001).
[94] Ibid, 2.
[95] Ibid, 3.
[96] Ibid, 15.
[97] Ibid, 17.
[98] Ibid, 70.

itself 'a form of discipline and control'[99] which exerts 'a pastoral power...that insures that individual freedom is exercised in ways appropriate to the optimal functioning of the economy.'[100]

Liberation Theology, to Bell, is insufficiently radical for it has conceded its theological mandate, material liberation, to the machinations of the state and consequently to the denigrating effects of capitalism. In doing so it has failed to recognise the only legitimate site, or moment, of resistance is the church. For Bell, though Liberation Theology reinterpreted its Catholic Social Action heritage, its innovations 'remain embedded in the Modern narrative that divorces Religion from the socio-political-economic dimensions of life.'[101] When Liberation theology 'turned to the state as the principal agent of resistance to the capitalist order' the church was left only indirectly political.[102] This, in Bell's mind, fails to recognise the true calling of the church which is 'the exemplary form of human community...the true politics which is the fellowship of the saints' and 'a public in its own right.'[103] Bell 'locates both the cause and potential solution to the crisis in the Liberationists understanding of the church' which, rather than pursuing human rights or justice, which both perpetrate modernity's cycles of violence, should persevere as a community of resistance through forgiveness.[104] Considered within the four stages of the canonical method Bell, like the first generation of Liberationists, also believes that the third stage, the hermeneutical mediation, offers all the resources necessary for the fourth stage, the practical mediation. Theology has recourse to a social theory and a social critique from its own internal resources, from the social life of the church. There is no need for the secular social sciences nor the secular state, which have both, in Bell's analysis, been co-opted by savage capitalism.

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[99] Bell, *Liberation Theology after the End*, 29.

[100] Ibid, 3.

[101] Ibid, 44.

[102] Ibid, 72.

[103] Ibid, 42. How are we to envisage this 'political abstinence'? Slavoj Žižek offers a comparable proposal for, under the guise of a 'Bartlebian politics,' he advocates a strategic withdrawal from political life for in psychoanalytic terms 'Verwerfung (forclosure, rejection/repudiation)' is 'a more radical move than repression (Verdrangung).' Citing Badiou's provocative thesis: 'it is better to do nothing than to contribute to the invention of formal ways of rendering visible that which Empire already recognizes as existent', Žižek argues that 'the threat today is not passivity, but pseudo-activity, the urge to "be active," to "participate," to mask the nothingness of what goes on,' instead 'the truly difficult thing is to step back, to withdraw.' This, as a strategy and critique of charitable activity, remains a possibility this thesis does not rebut, but instead insists should be held open and seriously considered. Žižek, *Violence*, 180-183.

[104] Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 51.

Whose Theology, Which Politics?

As this analysis has argued, Liberation Theology faces two significant problems: one, a methodological problem (essentialism in Boff and the essence of the experience of the poor in Gutiérrez, in relationship with the social sciences) and a political/social problem – the end of history (which is related to the turn to civil society by contemporary social movements). In the remainder of this chapter I will argue that Petrella presents the most salient model for the praxis of Liberation Theology in negotiations with contemporary civil society.

Bell's work is problematic for a number of reasons. One relates to the manner in which Bell establishes his conclusions, a question in method; the second refers to the content of his terms, his object. How, for example, does Bell establish the total consumption of state and civil society in capitalism? Bell substantiates this claim through the work of Foucault and Deleuze, in effect turning secular social theory on secular social institutions. But neither Foucault nor Deleuze are ecclesiologists and Bell fails to offer a clear rationale for why we should trust secular theorists if we cannot trust secular institutions. Bell fails to interrogate at length the philosophical presuppositions which are operative in Foucault and Deleuze's respective works. Ironically, in Bell's work Foucault and Deleuze, through their exposition of the state in capitalism, become the basis for a critique of Liberation Theology's theology (its truncated ecclesiology); here the social sciences serve not merely a preliminary or constructive function but are a critical interlocutor for theology proper. The dichotomy of theology and the social sciences emerges again in the form of an ontological opposition between the church and capitalism which proceeds, in Bell's work, to promptly consume itself. In the terms suggested in my analysis of civil society at the beginning of this chapter, Bell can only think civil society in one of its aspects (its modern, capitalist complicity) but not as the place of civil resistance, dissent or exteriority. While Petrella offers us a program of 'gradual steps that will democratise access to political and economic opportunity'[105], Bell's work only suggest that the church 'refuse to cease suffering'.

Boff's work is also problematic because he employed a form of strategic essentialism constructed around a harmonised biblical text, used to epistemologically ground his theology. This staged construction left Boff with broad lines of change or theological

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[105] Petrella, *Beyond Liberation*, 84.

principles for application but little critical purchase on institutions that mediate material liberation. Theologically, Boff's work fails Fiorenza's test of the adjudication of normative theo-political applications of the biblical materials – why exodus, and not conquest? Coupled with the limitations of the orthodox Liberation Theology method as noted by Petrella, I will not be taking up Boff's work in this examination of civil society, charity and homelessness.

Instead, I will be working with the account of Liberation Theology offered by Petrella. This is because Petrella's work is partial but nuanced, directly relevant and comprehensive within the parameters it sets. First, at the level of method, Petrella's work avoids essentialism at the level of theology and at the level of social theory and consequently can offer a sophisticated post-structuralist account of society as well as the importance of 'institutions' as a mediation between theory and praxis and, finally, as sites of social reform and material liberation. I will also be taking up his account of the 'institutional imagination', though I will be dealing with the rationale and position of charities in relation to 'hegemony', not the imaginary. This is crucial in establishing a theoretical approach capable of engaging with the variousness of modern civil society, for examining charity (situating charity in a variety of social and theological frames) and for proposing alternative options if charity does not embody the ideals to which it appeals.

Conclusion

While Petrella offers the most engaging account of the contemporary state of Liberation Theology and viable avenues for escaping this malaise his work has received a qualified endorsement and stands in need of support and amendment. These concerns have been explored in the extended discussion of Petrella's work presented above, but they bear repetition. Petrella builds his critique of second generation Liberation Theologians around the concept of class. Yet 'class' remains a problematic term in contemporary radical thought and, in the sixth chapter, a post-structuralist account of class based on the 'Radical and Plural Democracy' of Laclau and Mouffe will be sourced to develop Petrella's position. The second problem Petrella fails to consider is the source of our ideals. Institutions embody ideals and can be reformed according to ideals, and even help in forming ideals, but can they engender ideals – be sufficient in terms of cause and legitimisation? Petrella rarely considers the source of ideals, particularly the ideals that are

provided by strands of Liberation Theology's theology.[106] These issues: class and ideals, will be taken up again in lieu of the rejection of foundationalism and importance of discourse in contemporary social and theological thought.

This chapter and the last have presented a constructive review of Liberation Theology under changing circumstances. This review concluded with a partial endorsement of Petrella's work, and in this conclusion I will outline the progress that has been made so far with a view to an analysis of British charitable work with homeless people informed by Liberation Theology.

In respect to the relationship of theology to the social sciences we now have a double problematic, on the one hand considering the social sciences as external to theology generates, in Petrella's analysis, a cleavage in the realisation of Liberation Theology's goals. On the other hand Gutiérrez warned, as we saw in the former chapter, that the full incorporation of social sciences into theology would be disrespectful to the appropriate difference of the secular and the social scientific, and to the detriment of theology itself, which has its own logic. John Milbank attempts to overcome the externality of the social scientific to the theological by locating the social in the theological, basing his theology on the realised 'social theory' of the church in the world. Milbank's account of the modern, and of creation, will be taken up in the next two chapters, but I will argue that this account faces its problems too, and in chapter six I will offer an account of the internality and externality of theology to the social through an extended reading of the work of Laclau and Mouffe, guided by Gutiérrez's Liberation Theology.

In regards to the realisation of Liberation Theology's goals, Petrella has made a number of useful observations. Not only is Petrella an advocate of a theology of life, he also rightly warns against the recurring tendency to endorse essentialist accounts of capitalism, theology, the secular and, based on the analysis laid out in this chapter, civil society. None of these possess an ahistorical, trans-social essence. In Gramsci's words

It is not a question of discovering a 'metaphysical' law of 'determinism', or even of establishing a 'general' law of causality. It is a question of bringing out how in historical

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[106] Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, xxiv, xxv.

evolution relatively permanent forces are constituted which operate with a certain regularity and automatism.[107]

I think this is well said and pertinent. Therefore, instead of attempting to distil the nature of charity, this thesis will undertake an analysis of recurring features of charity, the agents who sustain and practice it, and the forms of interpersonal agency that it depends on and reinforces. The recurring of these elements can be seen in their historical repetition, and while they are thus open to innovation and improvement it should be noted these elements are liable to become 'relatively permanent forces' and reproduce themselves, becoming independent of any particular social subject and culturally and socially autonomous (as in, formative, self standing and reproducing). Charities shape what we understand to be 'love'/charity (what Gutiérrez calls *caridad*), as charitable actors mould the charities themselves. The next chapter will begin to flesh out these elements through an analysis of Milbank's account of modern British charity. For Milbank, the agent of charity is the 'volunteer', the kind of relationships charities enshrine is selfless service of the other, and the context in which it currently occurs is liberal society. To these I will now turn.

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[107] Gramsci, in Leonardo Salamini, *The Sociology of Political Praxis: an introduction to Gramsci's Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 56

Chapter Four
John Milbank and Civil Society
Introduction

The task of this chapter is to begin fleshing out some of the historically repetitive elements of modern charity, and I am going to do this by engaging with the work of the British theologian John Milbank.

Working in the late 1980s, John Milbank says that his landmark text, *Theology and Social Theory*, 'was written in the middle of the Thatcherite era, out of the conviction that a theological vision alone could challenge the emerging hegemony of neoliberalism.'[1] For Milbank, there is a strand of the modern, a particular British, Platonic and Catholic heritage, which is uniquely important for the establishment of a new (Christian) socialism, the disclosure of the truth and resistance to post-modern nihilist strands of political theory, philosophy and social theory. It is 'only the church', Milbank says, that has 'the theoretical and practical power to challenge the global hegemony of capital and to create a viable politico-economic alternative.'[2] For Milbank, this project is not simply in opposition to the modern, defined as the seventeenth and eighteenth century, transition to capitalism, with a supplementary liberal ideology (as though that alone would be simple), but the repudiation of a deviation (heresy) from twelfth and thirteenth century Christian theology, the Scotist lineage, within which the later modern, secular, univocal and liberal politics find the conditions of the possibility of their occurring. Elaborated and defended by a series of influential theological voices (including Graham Ward, Catherine Pickstock, Adrian Pabst, Charles Taylor and, in the previous chapter, Daniel Bell, some of whom have come to be known as the 'Radical Orthodoxy' school) and influential in both contemporary 'Blue Labour' and 'Red Tory' political pressure groups, Milbank's account of the theological virtues is one of the most demanding, expansive, ambitious and creative of contemporary communitarian political theologies.

In this chapter and the next I will not be assessing the full persuasiveness of Milbank's undertaking Instead I will be limiting myself to an analysis of Milbank's theology in relation to charities that operate in civil society. While Milbank is an advocate of civil society as a devolved sphere of public action and education, differentiated from but

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[1] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory,* xi.
[2] Milbank, *Future of Love*, xi.

hierarchically in relation to the ecclesial whole (including state and economy[3]), he can be highly critical of current forms of charity. For Milbank, the social and political order within which charities currently operate is neoliberal, the agents who sustain them are 'volunteers', and the form of the interpersonal they sustain is dis-interested, non-reciprocal service (sometimes the word he uses for this is 'altruism', but not uniformly). Volunteerism, selfless service, and civil society are three historically repetitive features of charities that I will identify through Milbank's work, though their analysis will be continued after this chapter has finished. To be clear, 'dis-interested' does not mean apathetic giving, but a form of *donum* in which the effects generated in the receiver are prioritised over the affect of giving. When he says dis-interested, Milbank broadly means 'selfless'.

Like Gutiérrez, Milbank is deeply suspicious of these forms of modern charity. They are liable, he believes, to entrench the position of donor and recipient, while the (voluntary) ability to give reinforces a capacity account of the (liberal) subject and by extension a longstanding liberal understanding of the person as primarily will and self-possession. While selfless service might be considered in juxtaposition with another form of modern inter-personal relation, namely the contract, Milbank sets himself to show that selfless giving slips away from itself and supports the logic of contract, as both are premised on the presupposition of autonomous, pre-social individualism.

This brings us to one of the key points of Milbank's work. Milbank argues that before we have ourselves as possession we receive ourselves as gifts from God. There is then, for Milbank, no 'natural' basis for the self-legitimising rationalisation of the state; no neutral, objective social scientific atheological object that can be impartially known without recourse to God; and no sufficient philosophical generation of knowledge summoned out of its internally predicated resources. This ambitious task sets Milbank on a complex road, though the key tenet of his theology can be quite simply stated: God is not a being in relation to the world as another 'being'; God is replete being and beyond being, and the whole world analogically participates in God.

While many of these theological concerns will be taken up in the next chapter (as ecclesiology, theology and ontology), it is in this chapter that I will consider Milbank's critique of the liberal/modern, the volunteer and selfless service, while also noting what

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[3] Milbank, *Future of Love*, xii. For an example of this, see Milbank's defence of 'The Big Society', http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2010/11/30/3080680.htm Accessed, 27/07/2015.

are, I think, serious problems in his work and in its application to charity with homeless people. Briefly, these include: first, as liberalism and the social scientific emanate from a false theology, Milbank treats them as diminished theology, either Roman paganism or heresy, which means he has no theologically informed means for recognising or endorsing what might be innovation, development or the good in these. There is, I will suggest, a dangerous homogenisation of the multiple liberal traditions in Milbank's work. Secondly, Milbank's work has been profoundly informed by Augustine's 'Two Cities' model, and with the aforementioned comments in mind, Milbank therefore tends to treat the secular as essentially violent and the orthodox or ecclesial as essentially peaceful.[4] This limits drastically what the modern and social sciences might contribute to theology[5], the emancipatory potential of the state in relation to civil society and the economy, and the generous collaboration of church and non-church groups in the pursuit of shared goals.[6] Thirdly, Milbank develops peace (analogical participation in the ongoing creative work of God) as an important criterion for deliberation in civil society. This is informative for charitable work for the homeless to the degree to which homeless people are prone to violence and difference. If, however, homelessness is a problem of proximity, subordination and a return of the same (as I am going to argue) then the theology we need, to address the silenced lives of homeless people, must be capable of thinking through conflict, distance and freedom. My concern, in short, is that difference hierarchically ordered by the one is not politically adequate for a plural civil society, as the creation of the world internal to God is not sufficient to an orthodox understanding of the world as made by, and yet distinct from, God.

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[4] Milbank tends to avoid the language of 'essence', though he does, revealingly, refer to it here: Milbank, *Future of Love*, 175.

[5] This suspicion of the modern social sciences also renders Milbank's comments in the introduction to *Being Reconciled*, where he says 'I am concerned to learn from social theory in its more historical, ethnographic and less ideological aspects' while 'nothing here is being retraced' from his analysis in *Theology and Social Theory'*, inconsistent. Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, xi. Arguably, as Milbank's work has developed, he has cultivated a new generosity to the liberal, as implied in his comments at the beginning of his most recent book *Beyond Secular Orders*, here he says: 'what is salutary in voluntarism and its heir, political liberalism, is admitted, since if freedom is once again integrated with teleology, ends themselves are now more constructed in terms of the freely creative.' John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Orders* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 18.

[6] On this, Milbank's 'counter-empire', he says: 'we may do this alongside many secular co-workers: socialists, communists and anarchists. We should not refuse their co-operation, yet we should insist that they have little grasp of the counter-empire, since for them it is still a matter of simply unleashing more undifferentiated liberty, going yet further beyond the Law.' Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, 210.

A Problem both Discursive and Practical

The problem that John Milbank seeks to address is at once socio-political and theological for, as he says, the 'genesis of discourse is intertwined with the genesis of a new practice'.[7] The theological problem, or discourse, is for Milbank to be found initially in the work of Duns Scotus. Scotus is significant for Milbank for it is in the writings of Scotus that a theological transition can be found, from patristic and medieval analogical participation (the creation discussed in the context of the Trinity) to a univocal, proleptically secular account of difference (creation and Trinity standing equivocally over against one another under 'being').[8] Milbank argues that when 'finite and infinite being are seen as equally and univocally "in being"' then '*esse* threatens to become greater than God and God to be idolatrously reduced to the status of a partner with his creation in causal process'.[9] For Milbank this is '*the* crucial shift within western thought'.[10] This deviation is problematic for it is, in Milbank's account, a divergence from orthodoxy.

Univocity is also, for Milbank, the frame in which the secular can be. The emergence of the secular is 'constituted in its secularity by "heresy" in relation to orthodox Christianity, or else a rejection of Christianity – that is more "neo-pagan" than simply "anti-religious"', Milbank says.[11] Heretical secularism, in its predominant modern form, is first formed in the 'discourse of liberalism' and 'complicit with an ontology of violence' which gives the primacy to force (will to power) and the mitigation of its effects through the deployment of counter-force or, to change idioms: atomistic individuals competing through markets only tragically constrained by illegitimately self-founding states.

Milbank begins *Theology and Social Theory* with the injunction, 'Once there was no secular.'[12] The secular, for Milbank, did not spontaneously occur as the nebulous lot of the Jewish and Christian traditions, instead the secular had to be imagined or created, a thesis that stands in direct contrast to the equivocations of those nineteenth and twentieth

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[7] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 3.

[8] In the next chapter, Milbank and Creation, I will ask if there ever was a consistent, single Christian orthodoxy which can be juxtaposed with modern and proto-modern heretical forms of Christianity. For the authors of *Interpreting the Postmodern: Responses to "Radical Orthodoxy",* Orthodox Christianity itself was coercively secured through the authority of the Roman Empire. Rosemary Radford Ruether, Marion Grau, eds., *Interpreting the Postmodern: Responses to "Radical Orthodoxy"* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), vii.

[9] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, xxiv.

[10] Ibid, xxv. Emphasis in the original.

[11] Ibid, 3.

[12] Ibid, 9.

century sociologists who defined the secular in purely negative terms as desacralisation, which the Jewish and Christian traditions ironically instigated.[13] This theological imagining occurred during a period in which 'late medieval nominalism, the Protestant reformation and seventeenth century Augustinianism' were in the ascendancy, which 'completely privatised, spiritualised and transcendentalised the sacred, and concurrently re-imagined nature, human action and society as a sphere of autonomous, sheerly formal power.'[14] With the advent of this medieval nominalism the 'trinity loses its significance as a prime location for discussing will and understanding in God and the relationship of God to the world.'[15] Milbank continues: 'no longer is the world participatorily enfolded within the divine expressive Logos, but instead a bare divine unity starkly confronts the other distinct unities which he has ordained.'[16] Crucial to the development of Milbank's position and to his account of the relationship between theology and the social sciences is his contention that 'the institution of the "secular" is paradoxically related to a shift within theology and not an emancipation from theology.'[17]

This is a complex notion to understand because, if Milbank is correct, we bear the heritage of this heresy. Nicholas Lash says 'it is almost impossible to overestimate the importance of the massive shift in language and imagination that took place, in Europe, in the seventeenth century'.[18] The shift in, for example, the use of the term 'supernatural' in the description of divine life and action; for 'until the seventeenth century this term…had been used adjectively or adverbially, to indicate the difference that is made when someone is enabled to behave in ways above their ordinary station. You come across a rabbit playing Mozart? That rabbit is performing supernaturally… So also (things being the way they are since we were barred from paradise) is the human being whom one finds behaving generously, justly, truthfully.'[19] Yet in the seventeenth century, for the first time 'supernatural, the substantive, began to connote a realm of being, a territory of existence, "outside" the world we know. With "nature" now deemed single homogenous and self-contained, we label "supernatural" that "other" world inhabited (some said) by ghosts and

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[13] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 9.
[14] Ibid, 9.
[15] Ibid, 15.
[16] Ibid, 15.
[17] Ibid, 28.
[18] Nicholas Lash, *The Beginning and the End of 'Religion'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.168.
[19] Ibid, 168.

poltergeists, by demons and angels and suchlike extraterrestials – and by God.'[20] Until this time the term "supernatural" could never be applied for God for 'who elevates the nature of divinity?'[21] So, for 'sixteen centuries, Christian discipleship had been understood as creaturely dependence transformed into friendship' yet 'by the end of he seventeenth century, "believing in God", which, for Augustine and Aquinas, had been a matter of setting as our hearts desire the holy mystery disclosed in Christ towards whose blinding presence we walk in company on pilgrimage, had become a matter of supposing that there is, outside the world we know, a large powerful entity called "God"'.[22] Or, as Lash says in an alternative essay: 'God is not a thing, an object over against us, silently lurking in the metaphysical undergrowth.'[23]

The instigation of the secular set in the horizon of this theological shift is tied up with an object, according to Milbank, supposedly 'autonomous' from the theological, an object (the world) that can be set in contrast to a distinct alternative object (god). This distinction set the context in which, according to Milbank, 'the new science of politics assumed and constructed for itself a new autonomous object – the political – defined as a field of pure power' and decreed that 'this autonomous object was, first of all, "natural"'.[24] There is for Milbank furthermore a continuity of 'ius naturalis of the new science of politics and the ius naturalis of political economy'; thus Adam Smith can write: '"by nature" every man is 'principally recommended to his own care.'[25] If public interest becomes the 'securing of the private interests of life, property and contract… justice has only a negative concern with violations of these instances of possession,'[26] Milbank sees a negation of the 'distributive justice of classical political theory' or 'justice first and foremost concerned with the common good.'[27] In Milbank's account 'political economy is founded specifically upon that area of morality which is to do with self-interest', while 'pure benevolence' is elevated to a non-dependent being, such as God, and the sphere of human sociality must be content with the more self-interested virtues of 'propriety' which 'entail habits of

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[20] Lash, *The Beginning and the End of 'Religion'*, 168.
[21] Ibid, 168.
[22] Ibid, 169.
[23] Ibid, 86.
[24] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 10.
[25] Smith quoted in ibid, 30.
[26] Ibid, 30.
[27] Ibid, 31.

economy, industry and discretion, the judicious spending of one's own resources.'[28] For Milbank political economy 'defines itself at the outset by obliterating the Christian sphere of public charity' by relegating 'benevolence and charity…to a private and familial world.'[29] For Milbank, Sir James Stewart (b. 1713 – d. 1780) is representative of this tradition for he

> Scorns the Catholic practice of Spain where the surplus of public wealth is given to the needy. This, he says, is like the miracle of manna from heaven, whereas political economy advocates a more regular and invariable providence: 'the regulation of need', and not charity, is a more reliable means of social control and increasing the population. By not distributing the surplus in an act of charity, but instead concentrating it and investing it in future industry, the element of need among workers is constantly preserved and thereby the stimulus to work with the possibility of a continuous, organized discipline.[30]

In Milbank's account of Smith's thought a harmonious social space can be constituted through the mutuality and sufficiency of the 'heterogenesis of ends' that find resolution in the market place.[31] Conflict and competition are rewritten as no longer detrimental to social order and are instead considered fundamental to bringing about order and maintaining a degree of social collaboration. Milbank suggests that 'providence' and the 'hidden hand' of the market find a synchronicity in a form of natural theology which sought to show that 'self-interest was frequently not anti-social'.[32] Milbank notes that 'the "hidden hand" of the marketplace is somewhat more than a metaphor, because God-Nature has placed self-interest and the 'trucking dispensation' in individuals in such a way that their operations will result in an overall harmony.'[33]

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[28] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 31.

[29] Ibid, 31.

[30] Ibid, 31. This argument, which defends the reinvestment of profits and the expansion of markets as the best means for alleviating poverty (rather than charity) is still popular, especially in the United States. See Peter Singer, *The Life You Can Save* (London: Picador, 2009), 37, 38.

[31] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 38.

[32] Ibid, 39. There was also a clear epistemological, practical and economic dividend to the divisions natural theology could "legitimately" sustain, for 'the division of labour was thought of as a natural and providential process, which ensured social connection and cohesion without any human plan' and could be related to 'the endless subdividing of tasks' that 'was regarded as a necessary instrument for an equivalent subdividing or analysis of nature.' Ibid, 39.

[33] Ibid, 41.

This modern topography comes concomitant with a new form of subjectivity. This secular, liberal person is linked to the emergence of democratic politics and capitalist economics; in Milbank's work, '"unrestricted" private property, "absolute" sovereignty and "active rights", which compose the "pure power" object of the new politics' are the emanation 'of a new anthropology which begins with human persons as individuals and yet defines their individuality essentially as "will" or "capacity" or "impulse to self-preservation".'[34] What has been lost from the pre-modern account of the person which Milbank prefers is the suspension of people in God. This autonomous, univocal, liberal subject, Milbank contends, is 'being' understood qua 'being', oblivious to *de facto* participation in the divine. The basic difference or autonomy of these anthropological monads, which we might refer to as the agents of political atomism, sits in accord with Milbank's account of the modern social topography as a fundamentally fissured social space. Sustained by individuals the form of the modern is an order of difference; the social is an aggregate of individuals.

How are we to judge the aforementioned comments on modern political orders, the evacuation of theological norms from public life and economics, its relationship to a theological worldview, new forms of anthropology and its designation 'liberal'? On a series of points here, Milbank is clearly right. R. H. Tawney pointed out in the early twentieth century the truism: '"trade is one thing, religion another"… was commonly accepted by the England of the nineteenth century' and this has continued almost uninterrupted to the present day.[35] On the transition from pre-modern to modern as the move from a theo-political order to a practical demarcation of realms, Tawney says

> The rise of a naturalistic science of society, with all its magnificent promise of fruitful action and of intellectual light; the abdication of the Christian Churches from departments of economic conduct and social theory long claimed as their province; the general acceptance by thinkers of a scale of ethical values, which turned the desire for pecuniary gain from a perilous, if natural, frailty into the idol of philosophers and the mainspring of society – such movements are written large over the history of the tempestuous age which lies between the Reformation and the full light of the eighteenth century. Their consequences have been worked into the very tissue of modern civilization. Posterity still stands too near their source to discern the ocean into which these streams will flow.[36]

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[34] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 15.
[35] R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (London: Butler & Tanner Ltd., 1969), viii.
[36] Ibid, 271.

Though it stems from many streams, Tawney too sees amongst the causes 'the contraction of the territory within which the writ of religion was conceived to run' and here Milbank's work seems to be very much correct.[37]

On the link of a new form of subjectivity (individualism) to the creation of a new social order, Milbank's work is also useful. The volunteer, the human capacity for willing and the expansion of self-discipline throughout society are important themes this thesis will continue to develop and elaborate. So is the connection between a historically contingent but nevertheless normative anthropology with a particular social period that Milbank develops. For other political philosophers, such as Michael J. White, it remains useful to 'step back and think about what metaphysical, ethical or religious assumptions concerning a normative anthropology are presupposed (or ruled out)'.[38] When we analyse particular political issues and orders, the premise of White's book is that 'we shall always find relevant fundamental assumptions' about the person at work.[39]

On 'individualism' and its theological frame, Milbank's work also seems to be broadly correct. The modern is 'individual' in a way pre-modern societies were not. Read along with the recent work of Charles Taylor in *A Secular Age*, a piece of work that tends to support Milbank's and to which Taylor refers to as the 'Intellectual Deviation Story' in relation to his own as the 'Reform Master Narrative' (narratives Taylor sees 'as complementary'), we know much more about individualism in secularity and in theology.[40] While *A Secular Age* develops an account of secularity as a mass phenomenon (one which even frames the choice of theists), stemming from 'the modern self as "buffered"' (disenchanted and atomistic) 'and the earlier mode of existence as that of the "porous self"' (enchanted cosmos, social), I am not convinced that this analogy (between Milbank and Taylor) holds up.[41] Taylor's work stresses, in a way Milbank's does not, the order and morality of liberal individualism.[42] Taylor is also more open to what was innovative and

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[37] Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, 272.

[38] Michael J. White, *Political Philosophy: A Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 10.

[39] Ibid, 10.

[40] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007), 774, 775.

[41] Ibid, 41. For longer introduction to the 'porous' and 'buffered' selves see Taylor, 'The Bulwarks of Belief', ibid, 25–89.

[42] For example, in *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Taylor questions the assumption which sees modern '"individualism" at the expense of "community"' for 'the new understanding of the individual has as

positive in the modern. Pre-moderns 'tended to see society as articulated into orders, hierarchically ranked and at the same time complementary in their functioning.'[43] In this society 'the poor, while being succoured by the fortunate, were also an occasion of the salvation of the later', yet 'within this way of understanding, it was unthinkable that one try actually to abolish poverty', a modern inclination Taylor attributes to utilitarian contributions to ethical thinking (minimising suffering) in *Sources of the Self*.[44]

Unlike Taylor then, Milbank is right to name much of this modern 'liberal' but wrong to treat it so monolithically. There were a variety of modern liberalisms. This is important in two further fields. First, as Christopher Insole has argued, the defence of tradition against innovation sometimes took on the guise of the defence of individualism in the modern period, as can be seen in the work of Edmund Burke. Insole suggests that for Burke, 'a passion to protect the individual within liberal institutions arose not from an illusionary sense of self-sufficiency, but from an insight into our fallen condition, characterised by frailty, vulnerability, yet also a hope for, and intimation of, redemption and an eternal divine order.'[45] Secondly, concerning Milbank's contention that the public was 'de-ethicised' and atrophied of Christian values, and that atomistic individualism became the measure of (non)sociality, an obvious and timely candidate presents itself for consideration: public benevolence, sympathy and charity. To these I will now turn.

Towards Participation – Univocal and Analogical Charity

In *The Monstrosity of Christ*, a debate between Slavoj Žižek and Milbank, Milbank moves from an explication of the paradox of creation to the paradox of the gift.[46] In his explication of the 'gift' Milbank notes that 'finite existence is gift without remainder, gift without contrast to something else'.[47] Milbank uses the example of modern charity for it functions, he says, according to the divisive logic of a gift that requires contrast and remainder, an assumption born of the liberal presupposition that 'for a gift to be received,

its inevitable flip side a new understanding of sociality, the society of mutual benefit, whose functional differentiation we are ultimately contingent and whose members are fundamentally equal.' Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (London: Duke University Press, 2004), 17, 18.

[43] Taylor, *Secular Age*, 123.

[44] Ibid, 123, Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 331.

[45] Christopher Insole, *The Politics of Human Frailty: A Theological Defence of Political Liberalism* (London: SCM Press, 2004), vii.

[46] Slavoj Žižek, John Milbank, *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectics?* (London: MIT Press, 2009), 191-196. m

[47] Ibid, 199.

the recipient must stand on an autonomous basis that does not depend upon any generosity.'[48] Arising in the age of the property owner, Milbank suggests that 'the landless pauper…can only receive "charity", now reduced to modern "benevolence", which is but the pseudo gift of the guilty trying to render a belated justice in meagre form under the guise of a dutiful generosity.'[49] Writ theologically, the difference giver/receiver when the gift is not total 'gives us the notion that all human creatures are replete as regards nature, yet like indigent paupers as regards grace.'[50] If this is correct then one of the fallacies of modernity is the theological worldview which structures the person primarily in accordance with a natural univocity without innate divine grace or a fundamental dependence (analogically related) to God/others *and* that charity, operating within this discourse, is a tragic phenomenon. Tragic, for the bestowal of the voluntarily elected gift obliterates the mutual suspension of both parties by the primary gift of God's grace and the concomitant (theological) interdependence/equality of the two involved parties.

With these theological observations in mind we can continue Milbank's account of the workings of modern charities, as developed in dialogue with Jennifer Herdt. In response to the violence of univocal modernity, Milbank proposes that 'one's only resort at this juncture…is to return to the demonstration that nihilism, as an ontology, is also no more than a mythos' which can be countered only by endeavouring 'to put forward an alternative mythos, equally unfounded, but nonetheless embodying an "ontology of peace", which conceives differences as analogically related, rather than equivocally at variance.'[51] As Milbank notes, 'the question of the possibility of living together in mutual agreement, and the question of whether there can be a charitable act, therefore turn to be conjointly the question of whether there can be an "analogy" or a "common measure" between differences which does not reduce differences to mere instances of a common essence or genus.'[52] Milbank's conclusion is necessarily that there can be no charity in the secular for it is essentially and necessarily a place of difference, univocity and violent heterogenesis of ends to which the only option is an equally baseless assertion of the Christian ontology of peace.[53]

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[48] Žižek, Milbank, *Monstrosity*, 199.
[49] Ibid, 200.
[50] Ibid, 200.
[51] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 279.
[52] Ibid, 290.
[53] There are questions of method that could be raised here: on whether conceding baselessness of both positions becomes concession to basic anarchy, see Gavin Hyman, *The Predicament of*

An alternative, critical reading of modernity and charity is proposed by Jennifer Herdt in her essay 'The Endless Constructions of Charity, On Milbank's Critique of Political Economy'.[54] Herdt, in two distinct modes, argues against the decline of 'public charity' outlined by Milbank. First, Herdt examines the modern upsurge in charities and second she considers the new found place of 'sympathy' in modern thought. The aim of Herdt's essay is to 'recover lost possibilities for productive collaboration with the secular' by legitimising a secular notion and methods of redistribution and demonstrating the continuity between pre-modern and modern forms of charitable giving.[55] Her positive conceptualisation of modern charity and sympathy will allow, she contends, the new modern discourse of charity as a possible 'occasion for theological insight and development.'[56] She begins by noting that in Milbank's work 'political economy… appeared to de-ethicise human action by lifting strictures on the pursuit of private wealth', due to the supposed consensus on the public as a sphere of pure, autonomous power; yet, she continues, 'the period nevertheless also witnessed rising sensitivity to human suffering, particularly the suffering of the poor.'[57]

Herdt initially draws our attention to the distinction of public/private which functions in Milbank's work as a delimitation of modern space. Yet Herdt finds this application of public/private to the study of history problematic. Firstly charity does not sit well within such simple demarcations. The Whig, progressive account of the inevitable development from ad hoc charity provision to welfare state, which fits a clear binary transition from 'private' charity to 'public' welfare has been found wanting, not least because 'Protestants in the sixteenth century may have repudiated any salvific merit for charitable work, but they retained the motivation of charity as a primary Christian responsibility.'[58] That is to say, a private motivation remained key to the maintenance and promulgation of a public charitable act. Secondly, the public as sheer power negates, according to Herdt, the ongoing modern role of parish provision of relief in co-operation with the government, or civic, administration, in England. For 'the parish system served both as the basic religious

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Postmodern Theology: Radical Orthodoxy or Nihilist Textualism (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).
[54] Jennifer A. Herdt, 'The Endless Construction of Charity: On Milbank's Critique of Political Economy', *The Journal of Religious Ethics,* Vol. 32, No. 2. (Summer, 2004), 301–324.
[55] Ibid, 301.
[56] Ibid, 302.
[57] Ibid, 307, 308.
[58] Cricklow, Parker quoted in ibid, 312, 313.

unit of organisation and as the basic unit of civil government' which 'meant close interaction between the two in the administration of relief to the poor.'[59] Rather than the distinction public/private, the key early modern trend is the move towards centralisation continued in the 1834 Poor Laws which 'did not represent a dramatic departure from previous responses to poverty.'[60] Instead 'both governmental and non-governmental sectors of charity grew tremendously in the nineteenth century.'[61]

Herdt does concede that the upsurge in charities occurred against the backdrop of seismic social shifts that led to the loss of pre-modern aspects of Christian charity in the work of charities. Herdt notes the 'rise of the money economy' with concomitant decline of the manorial system, as well as the Plague which led to 'labour shortages… enticing many to leave their ancestral homes in search of higher wages and subject to 'fluctuations in the labour market'.[62] These 'vagrants or able-bodied poor represented a new form of poverty' Herdt says, 'exacerbated by mass unemployment and, towards the end of the eighteenth century population growth and inflation.'[63] Herdt asserts that 'this new social context was not itself something to be deplored' though modern charity did, Herdt concedes, become 'increasingly impersonal' as it lost the 'reciprocal claims and duties' of the feudal system.[64] In sum Herdt argues that the fundamental continuity between pre-modern and modern forms of charity, as well as the proliferation of charities and enduring presence of the parish in the modern period, meant there remained a significant trend of public charity in the modern period which, consequently, cannot be considered a totally de-ethicised space.

Milbank responded to Herdt's article in an essay entitled 'The Invocation of Clio'.[65] Herdt's work is, though informative, not convincing to Milbank (he argues it 'does not affect the substance of my genealogical case'[66]) for, he contends, the 'changes in historical circumstance and social structure' which contextualise modern charity, are portrayed by

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[59] Herdt, 'Endless Charity', *Religious Ethics*, 313.
[60] Ibid, 315.
[61] Ibid, 315.
[62] Ibid, 310, 313.
[63] Ibid, 314.
[64] Ibid, 315. Problems with feudal system itself, as Herdt and Milbank both note, as the poor were considered to 'naturally' occupy their social position and there was never a concerted attempt, nor was it truly conceived possible, to alleviate their lot in this life. Ibid, 311, 315. And Charles Taylor, above.
[65] Milbank, 'The Invocation of Clio', *Future of Love*, 175–220.
[66] Ibid, 197.

Herdt as 'inevitable and innocent'.[67] While they may have been almost inevitable Milbank finds them far from 'innocent', while Herdt also, according to Milbank, neglects the 'history of mentalities' in presuming that the 'notion of charity has remained the same while the organisation of charity has changed.'[68] There is an advocacy of medieval, rather than modern charity, in Milbank's work, for pre-modern charity isn't 'doing good to those in need' but 'forging or restoring bonds of mutuality between donor and recipient'[69], a social analogy of an ontological participation. The transition from pre-modern to modern is a story of gathering rupture for Milbank, whereas for Herdt it is one marked by significant continuities. Picking up on the lost reciprocity of modern charity, which Herdt also noted in passing, Milbank advocates charity not as a deed but 'charity as exchange' which establishes relationship as the intended *telos*, rather than result.[70] This, Milbank says, means 'the poor recipient had a far higher status' in the pre-modern world of charity which the 'festive and ritual character of medieval charity' sustained through a religious excess over the ethical.[71] It is only this excess and interest, according to Milbank, that can defend against the instrumental reduction of charity to utility in the modern mentality.

With these changes in mentality came the changes in context noted by Herdt. To these, a money economy, the plague, wandering vagrants and population growth, Milbank adds enclosure and urbanisation.[72] Yet, Milbank asks, while the plague may be considered natural or inevitable, can the same be said of the rise of a money economy? This, according to Milbank, involved 'an entirely new set of social relationships and a new conception of economic value' that was anything but neutral.[73] Within this horizon Milbank notes a change in charities amounting to a 'rationalisation of charity' as, following Foucault, charitable institutions 'started more and more to acquire sinister disciplinary and classificatory aspect that perverted charitable shelter into coerced confinement.'[74] Along

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[67] Milbank, *Future of Love*, 198.
[68] Ibid, 198.
[69] Ibid, 198.
[70] Ibid, 198.
[71] Ibid, 200, 199.
[72] Ibid, 203.
[73] Ibid, 202.
[74] Ibid, 203, 204. Something started, according to Milbank, in the 12th century. For Foucault, this change comes later, He 'sees the spread of disciplinary procedures, not in the form of enclosure institutions, but as centres of observation disseminated throughout society. Religious groups and charity organzations had long played this role of "disciplining" the population.' Philanthropy institutions, Foucault says, are inter-disciplinary objects for 'their aims were religious (conversion and

with a 'shift towards a less festive notion of charity construed now as a one-way gift meeting a need that we must severely judge' the once rich notion of charity is debased as 'a merely calculated contract' and the 'new stress' falls 'on the (always futile and morally dubious) attempt to discriminate between the worthy and unworthy poor (as disastrously revisited in our own day by both Clinton and Blair)'.[75] While 'the church continued to promote and administer "charitable enterprises"' due, in part, to the changes of mentality, these 'were now less festive, less mutual, and less protective, while they were conversely more distant, judgemental and incarceral.'[76]

It is within this fissured topography that Milbank places disinterested giving, a form of ethical gift giving orientated to the other which is publicly commended for its ability to overcome difference (or mitigates the worst of its effects). This ethic, says Milbank, is a 'sacrifice of the self for the other, without any "return" for, or of the self, in any guise whatsoever'.[77] Arguably disinterestedness, for Milbank, purifies 'your giving as "unilateral" and self-sacrificial'.[78] Yet, Milbank refers to this as a 'unilateral' gift, as opposed to a Christian, or ecclesiological, asymmetrical, reciprocal giving. There is in modern morality, according to Milbank, 'a loss of a sense of participation' which is 'a loss also of a sense of exchange between infinite and finite'.[79] Milbank continues: 'God becomes more of a one way giver and, significantly, this unilateralism of the gift seems here to be a consequence of a reduction of God to one ontic pole within a common univocalised being.'[80] Milbank is right to note the dangers of dis-interested volunteerism if it tends towards forgetfulness about the self. In Milbank's words 'Mere identification with a victim as victim confirms victimhood and diminishes us all'.[81]

Selfless charity faces some of the same problems, also deriving from its modern context. Firstly in its orientation towards the other, selflessness is in danger of lending tangential support to this fissured social order. In short: disinterested selflessness is predicated upon the difference of the other. At his most polemical, Milbank suggests that selfless charity, divested of a wider orthodox theology and ecclesiological *telos*, is

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moralization), economic (aid and encouragement to work) or political (the struggle against discontent or agitation).' Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish (*London: Penguin, 1991), 212.
[75] Milbank, *Future of Love*, 206.
[76] Ibid, 207.
[77] Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, 139.
[78] Ibid, 141.
[79] Ibid, 77.
[80] Ibid, 77–78.
[81] Ibid, 98.

structurally alienating for if self-sacrifice 'alone proves the good, then we need the misfortune of others in order to demonstrate our worth'.[82] Milbank continues: 'and therefore this seemingly ethical self is utterly lost in its secret longing for the sorrow of others as the occasion of its own heroism.'[83] This is William Blake's 'pity would be no more if we did not make someone poor'.[84] Modern charity expresses succinctly a liberal contradiction in the person, an oscillation 'between absolute promotion of one's own freedom... and absolute sacrifice to the freedom of others'.[85] For selfless generosity is, as Milbank argues and Blake suggests, both a self-effacing orientation towards the other and a means for the constitution of the self.[86] This contradiction is not limited to the self, but is enacted collectively, Milbank says: 'Writ large at the level of the state the same paradoxical logic produces a giant scale oscillation between a present collective identity as an end in itself and the endless sacrifice of individuals for the sake of a better future'.[87] Milbank continues: 'we work harder and harder towards obscure ends, while surplus populations of the young, the old, the cultural misfits and the poor are increasingly marginalised, disciplined, put to degrading work or simply destroyed'.[88]

One final point needs to be made here about altruism and the constitution of the self. Milbank says that unilateral giving 'makes absolute one's inalienable self-possession of a will to sacrifice'.[89] If this 'self-possession' is related, as Milbank suggested earlier, to a person considered primarily as 'will' or 'capacity', a 'volunteer', then serious questions need to be asked about a group of peoples who are consistently 'denied' the exercise of their will or capacity in the passive reception of the charitable gift or *donum*. If homeless people, as recipients, are denied the chance to respond to the gift, or if in receiving it their lack of capacity is constantly re-inscribed, then charitable generosity could be construed as a mechanism for the destruction of the agency of homeless people.[90]

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[82] Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, 144.

[83] Ibid, 144.

[84] From William Blake's 'The Human Abstract'.
http://www.poetryloverspage.com/poets/blake/human_abstract.html accessed 26/01/2015.

[85] Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, 24.

[86] This self-making through moral actions in civil society is currently being refereed to as 'ethical citizenship'. See Beaumont, Cloke, *Faith-Based,* 47.

[87] Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, 25.

[88] Ibid, 25.

[89] Ibid, 155.

[90] Also see, Beaumont, Cloke, *Faith-Based*, 160. J. Kunz, A. Kalil, 'Self-esteem, Self-efficacy and Welfare Use', *Social Work Research*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1999), 119–126.

Milbank's contention that the 'sphere of charity was abolished' is not, consequentially, a denial of the continued operations of charities but rather the denial of a modern ontology for 'the idea that charity was the primary purpose of economic and social circulation was explicitly abandoned, in contradiction of the gospel.'[91] For the 'link between social justice and sacral control of the economic surplus… had been broken' thus 'with the advent of the workhouse, the supposed assistance of the neighbour was exposed as being a means to control the population in general', the 'disciplinary perversion of charity.'[92] Charity cannot be systematised and deliminated in its purview, as Milbank suggests modern political economy did, for 'true religion declares nothing more than this - that charity is its own ground, since it is the supreme reality.'[93] Milbank continues: 'for Christianity, charity must suffuse all political ruling, all economic distribution, as well as all private activity' while in a society that is 'built mainly upon justice and accumulation – not on benevolence' charity is inevitably 'confined to the margins' where 'as marginal, as unilateral, or as non-festive' it becomes a 'fake substitute for charity' proper.[94] Hence Milbank's question: 'where now, in modernity, is agape?'[95]

Tragic State

Milbank rejects modern charity and modern economics. Given the tripartite division noted in chapter three (state, economy and civil society), Milbank's account of the state is also important for this thesis. However, as I have already noted, Milbank, like Bell, limits the role of the state and can, from the resources of his theology, offer no positive account of its theological legitimacy. Milbank does endorse a 'Christian emperor' and, given the Christian doctrine of the fall, a role for the state in justice and punishment.[96] However, because this is the 'curbing of sin by sin', the state is consequently prone to fail and foster resentment, Milbank says.[97] The position endorsed in this thesis will follow Laclau and Mouffe, for whom the state is ambiguous but capable of establishing real goods. They say:

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[91] Milbank, *Future of Love*, 207.
[92] Ibid, 207.
[93] Ibid, 212.
[94] Ibid, 212, 213.
[95] Ibid, 206.
[96] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 411.
[97] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 411.

> Under pressure from workers' struggles, the state has intervened to assure a new labour policy (minimum wage, length of the working day, accident and unemployment insurance, and the social wage). If we can accept… that this state-plan intervenes in the reproduction of the labour force in order to subordinate it to the needs of capital, thanks to the practice of the collective contract and the negotiated agreements which link pay rises to those in productivity, it is no less the case that these are gains which have brought real and important benefits to the workers.[98]

The late John Hughes offers a position much closer to mine when he says: given 'the social effects of the remodelling of the welfare state represented by the political agenda of cuts and austerity in the light of global recession', we 'need both to articulate a more confident account of [the state's] Christian ethical and theological foundations and to recognise and reform the weakness of its bureaucratic non-participatory structures, so as to be more genuinely empowering and socially and economically sustainable'. [99] Milbank's work tends against this balance of critique and endorsement, in the next chapter I will argue that this is due to a theological decision he makes.

Conclusion

Returning to the dialogue between Herdt and Mibank: Herdt's aims are consonant with the thrust of this thesis. Her nuanced approach to the secular and advocacy of charity as a significant arena of public ethics and of theological reflection is pertinent for my work. However, Milbank's analysis does raise serious concerns with modern 'liberal' charity. How to square this circle? My suggestion, which I will go on to develop in the next chapter, is that Milbank's critical work (though informative) lacks nuance and an openness to the multiplicity of the modern, and in the next chapter I will argue this is linked to a proclivity in his account of the doctrine of creation to collapse one side of the paradox of creation in favour of another. While contemporary charities might trend in directions Milbank suggests, there is the possibility that they *do* aim for relationship. Alternatively, they may generate autonomy *and* be legitimately (and theologically) lauded for it. As Taylor noted, relationship itself can be problematic and generate forms of deprivation and complex alienation. This question to Milbank echoes a theme Peter Scott isolates in his

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[98] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 162.

[99] John Hughes, 'After Temple? The Recent Renewal of Anglican Social thought', in Malcolm Brown, *et al.*, *Anglican Social Theology* (London: Church House Publishing, 2014), 74–101, at. 97.

account of the doctrine of creation, when he says 'the political task is to tell the difference between good and bad dependencies.'[100]

The sheer counter-intuitive force of Milbank's observations concerning charity should not be neglected. Nor should the creativity of Milbank's work be passed over quickly, for he shows the theological importance of human giving and possession. I have held open in this thesis the question of the externality of theology to the neoliberal order in which it is currently practiced. Milbank presents one model for approaching this problem, as the social sciences are just bad theology, theology surrounds and engulfs the social sciences and the liberal order in which they are enmeshed. Theology, Milbank has argued, is more positivist than the positivists, more nominal than the nominalists, more philosophical than the philosophers and more radical than the radicals. While I have held back on judging the coherence of this totalising (surrounding) project, Milbank's suggestion that theology is external to the 'liberal' and the 'modern' because it was a life world that proceeded it, and to which many key early liberal writers addressed themselves, will be taken up and worked through in chapter six. To Milbank's theology, with these comments in mind, we should pay further attention, as we will do in the next chapter.

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[100] Peter Scott, 'Creation', Peter Scott, William T. Cavanaugh, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 333-347, at. 345.

Chapter Five
Milbank's Doctrine of Creation
Introduction

The task of this chapter is to consider Milbank's alternatives to 'liberal' order, individualism and selfless service in relation to his account of the doctrine of creation. The majority of this chapter will be given over to Milbank's account of (1) order, (2) personhood and the (3) interpersonal, which in Milbank's terms are: (1) ecclesia, or hierarchy (2) 'trans-organicity', and (3) friendship, gift or participation. These will be prefaced by Milbank's account of creation, for, I shall argue, it is the doctrine of creation, in Milbank's work, that provides the operational logic of order, personhood and the interpersonal while also most clearly illustrating the nature of this logic, a logic that is paradoxical. Paradox, because for Milbank God can not make anything that is separate to God, for God is all, and yet creation is in the overflowing of God's Trinitarian plenitude. Economically (as opposed to immanently), humans participate analogically in God. Analogy is a realised creaturely aspect of a larger paradox: humans who are nothing and non-God nevertheless participate in God's life and have life as such.[1] The logic of creation, of paradox and analogy, is to sustain two elements at the same time and the point Milbank attempts to shows us, again and again, is that these elements sit naturally together.

The first question this chapter seeks to address is: how does Milbank's account of the doctrine of creation shape his account of personhood, order and the interpersonal? Secondly, is this account of creation consistent within Milbank's own prescribed demands for paradoxical expression of the doctrine and its material *praxis* and embodiment? Thirdly, if Milbank collapses an internally predicated (paradoxical) demand, how does this skew Milbank's political proscriptions, and limit the possibility of drawing Milbank's theology and contemporary civil society into a mutually beneficial dialogue?

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[1] A full account of this would, of course, also require an account of the 'impossibility of sin' and the 'impossibility of salvation' which are overlapping and cumulative doctrinal loci, for Milbank. As I will not consider all three here, I would like to re-iterate the comments I made at the beginning of the last chapter: that I am not undertaking a full review of Milbank's work, but reading Milbank on creation with a view to developing a theological account of Christians working with homeless people. I am not asking 'is Milbank right?' but 'can Milbank's work help us untie the knot of rhetoric, practices, ideals and agents in which charities and homeless people are currently enmeshed'? See Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, 63. On the distinction of 'economic' and 'immanent', see Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (London: Continuum, 2001).

To develop answers to these questions, this chapter will first lay out Milbank's account of the doctrine of creation. Here I will consider the doctrine of creation as the presumed and formative horizon of a story told by the church. This is Milbank's account of ontology and doctrine in relation to ecclesiology. This presumed and enacted cosmology maintains 'whole' and 'part' in tension, a balance of elements which animates Milbank's defence of hierarchy in politics and the church, the ecclesiological origin and *telos* of the person and the meshing of civil society, state and economy into the church. The problem here is whether the charitable positing of an other, implicit in creation, is maintained. Again, in relation to personhood, I will show that Milbank's account of 'trans-organicity' sustains two elements in integrated tension. In this case (against historical, social and economic alienation), the creative person, and the person destined for beatific vision are theologically normative. The problem here resides in Milbank's emphasis on 'integration' and the lack of a robust account of 'freedom' – or unpredictable but justified creativity. For Milbank, art is mimesis and not the creation of the new. Finally, I will turn to 'gift' as the mode of Christian social being and relationship. Elaborating on Milbank's account of the 'non-gift' of contemporary charitable service, I will go on to argue that both Milbank's account of gift and by extension his critique of contemporary charity, are seriously (and possibly fatally) lacking; limited by his prioritising of the creation of identity internal to the circulation of the gift and neglectful of an autonomy (in Catherine Keller's terms this is Milbank's tendency to deny all 'intrinsic worth to the creature'[2]) necessary for consensual reception, participation and non-identical return of the gift.

In all three instances, I will argue that the paradox of creation Milbank rightly seeks to sustain collapses in favour of the hierarchical whole in ecclesiology and politics, divine mimesis in anthropology and subsumption in the gift in reciprocity. This chapter will close with some reflections by Kenneth Surin (critical friend of Radical Orthodoxy) on the logic of analogy, before I suggest that for this thesis and its stated goal, Milbank's account of the doctrine of creation obscures as much as it illuminates.

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[2] Catherine Keller, 'Is That All? Gift and Reciprocity in Milbank's Being Reconciled', Rosemary Radford Ruether, Marion Grau, eds., *Interpreting the Postmodern: Responses to "Radical Orthodoxy"* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 18–35, 29.

Creation

The doctrine of creation is one of the best examples of Milbank's balance; he is, at his best, a theologian of a robust poise, who brings paradox constantly to the fore. In *Being Reconcile*d Milbank takes up the task of an explication of forgiveness as a relational form of the interpersonal, normative in Christians' lives in the world. In a chapter on the Incarnation, he gives an account of forgiveness's 'ontological foundation'.[3] Theology, Milbank continues, is grounded on an impossible ontology. The

> impossibility that anything else should exist outside of God, who is replete being. For this to be possible, God must have gone outside of himself, and yet there is no exterior to God, no sum which might add to his amount.[4]

I take this definition to be correct yet, without total concession to pantheism, it cannot be the last word on creation. Taking up the baton from Aquinas, in opposition to Duns Scotus, Milbank continues: 'just because there is no outside to God, God can most freely and ecstatically exceed himself; just because God cannot share anything, he can share everything.'[5] This 'paradox', as Milbank refers to it, is that 'Creation is in one sense an entirely one-way gift, in another it is an absolute exchange, since the gift is only received in its return to God.'[6] All of these elements, the reception of the gift by creation, the gift that is creation, and the returning of the gift as the gift's only mode of realisation, must be maintained as the suspension of the impossibility of creation. In Milbank's words: 'this seems highly strange yet it is really an outcome of the same old impossibility of something being outside God when there is no outside of God. God… is not really related to the creation, and yet the creation is real, and really participates in him.'[7] Again this sense of balance in the doctrine of creation is affirmed when Milbank suggests that 'God's goal is the existence of creatures outside himself, yet since there is nothing outside God, all creatures suspire… only in returning to God and attaining an outcome in excess of their first occasioning.'[8] In this chapter I will be asking if Milbank sustains this balance in his normative account of the Christian church as it relates to a plural civil society. In short: can

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[3] Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, 62.
[4] Ibid, 63.
[5] Ibid, 66.
[6] Ibid, 66.
[7] Ibid, 73.
[8] Ibid, 69, 70.

the difference and diversity of civil society be integrated with the doctrine of creation as Milbank explicates it?

A fuller account of creation is laid out in *Theology and Social Theory*, an articulation which sets itself to maintaining the same balance. Milbank considers the church to be a 'social ontology (which is really a description of, and prescription for, the church)', which 'is grounded in a general ontology (concerning the ratio of finite and infinite).'[9] This balance, infinite and finite, sustains God's transcendence to and immanence within all creation. God is, we are told, 'the infinite series of differences... the reality which includes and encompasses in his *comprehensio* every difference, God is also the God who differentiates.'[10] Milbank is here arguing that every aspect of the world is created by God, no matter how different these various aspects may appear to be from each other, while God is also distinct from every bit of creation and thus transcendent to the world. Finally, though creation being totally separate from God is impossible, God does differentiate himself from creation. So, Milbank can continue, 'God is superabundant Being, and not a Plotinian unity beyond Being and difference' while 'He is also nevertheless… a power within Being which is more than Being, an internally creative power.'[11] These brief comments on the doctrine of God fit analogously with and precede Milbank's account of the doctrine of creation.

Milbank's account of the doctrine of creation in *Theology and Social Theology* follows the same formal arrangement. Milbank says that 'the created world of time participates in God who differentiates; indeed it is this differentiation.'[12] As God is no 'substance' ('nothing fundamental underlying everything else') 'so also there are no absolute self-standing substances in creation… one can think of the elements of creation as inherently interconnected "qualities" which combine in all sorts of ways… as "seeds" or "monads"... or numerical, sometimes "seminal" ratios… which participate in the divine creative power/act, and themselves continuously propagate ex nihilo, in the sense of continuously re-providing their own "matter" which is the condition for their mutual externality… through time.'[13] 'Creation', Milbank confirms, 'is therefore not a finished

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[9] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 429.
[10] Ibid, 429, 430.
[11] Ibid, 430.
[12] Ibid, 431.
[13] Ibid, 431.

product in space, but is continuously generated ex nihilo in time.'[14] While 'God's love for what He creates implies that the creation is generated within a harmonious order intrinsic to God's own being.'[15] Creation is 'not an appearance, a mix of truth and untruth, related to God by a minus sign (nor yet an Aristotelian hierarchy of identity), but is rather the serial occurrence of differential reality in time, and related to God by a mysterious plus sign which construes methexis as also kenosis: God who is "all" being nonetheless "gives" a finite being which he is not.'[16] God, in conclusion, we might say, is He who is paradox, it is He 'who includes difference, and yet is unified.'[17] I have started with Milbank's account of Creation as it clearly formulates the organising logic of Milbank's work. This logic is neither didactic nor dialectic but paradoxical, maintaining two elements analogically. In this case: the unity and difference of Creation in and from the divine as God is one/multiple. I will now turn to Milbank's presentation of order, the person and the interpersonal, to ask whether the balance of dependence and autonomy of Creation is maintained.

Order: Ecclesiology

Having outlined Milbank's account of the doctrine of creation, in order to demonstrate the paradoxes which animate Milbank's schema, I will now turn to his normative, theologically informed account of order. Briefly, I will first consider how Milbank moves from theology to ecclesiology, and how this relates to the aforementioned ontology laid out above. In the church itself, balance again will be brought to the fore.

Milbank's constructive, normative work develops endogenously out of complementarity, real through only partially realised; an exposition of the interdependence between the social life of the church and the teachings of Orthodox theology. He rejects any theological method that 'borrows from elsewhere a fundamental account of society or history' for he seeks to demonstrate, in *Theology and Social Theory*, 'that no such fundamental account, in the sense of something neutral, rational and universal, is really available.'[18] The onus therefore falls upon theology to ground its own endeavour within its

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[14] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 431.
[15] Ibid, 437.
[16] Ibid, 438.
[17] Ibid, 438.
[18] Ibid, 382.

social and philosophical resources. For Milbank 'there can only be a distinguishable Christian social theory because there is also a distinguishable Christian mode of action, a definite practice.'[19] 'The theory', says Milbank, 'is first and foremost an ecclesiology' and an account of other human societies to the extent that the church defines itself 'in its practices as in continuity and discontinuity with these societies.'[20] In this sense Milbank construes 'ecclesiology as also a "sociology"'.[21]

In developing this account of theology as ecclesiology, which is its own distinct social theory, Milbank situates the doctrine of creation: a 'framework of reference implicit in [the] Christian story and action.'[22] The church is 'an allegorical representation of an idea, a speculation, which practice itself both promotes and presumes as "setting"'.[23] In this speculation, always already envisaged and enacted in Church life and narration, the church's social ontology – its practice – is grounded in a general ontology – the doctrine of creation – and 'a "counter ontology" is articulated.'[24] As Milbank's general ontology has already been laid out I shall now move on to consider Milbank's social ontology so as to complete this investigation into the possibility of Milbank's counter ontology within contemporary civil society.

What was in the doctrine of creation infinitude and finitude is, in Milbank's presentation of the church, unity and difference, or equality and hierarchy. Milbank follows Augustine in counterpoising a 'certain kind of limited peace, apparent peace, consequent upon the victory of a dominant force over other forces, and a real peace, which is a state of harmonious agreement, based upon a common love, and a realisation of justice for all.'[25] Milbank continues: 'the church provides a genuine peace by its memory of all the victims, its equal concern for all its citizens and its self-exposed offering of reconciliation to enemies.'[26] In relation to the whole/part difference and complementarity, Milbank believes that the 'whole' is Jesus Christ, while the part is each person, members of this body. Yet

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[19] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 382.
[20] Ibid, 382.
[21] Ibid, 382.
[22] Ibid, 383.
[23] Ibid, 429.
[24] Ibid, 429.
[25] Ibid, 393. Milbank's reading of Augustine has been questioned, see, for a useful introduction, Elizabeth Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012), 107–126.
[26] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 394. Like Althaus-Reid, there are a number of theologians who have questioned strongly the church's remembering of female victims.

they cannot be dichotomously opposed for the 'part belongs to the whole, and each part transcends any imaginable whole, because the whole is only an infinite series which continues indefinitely towards an infinite and unfathomable God.'[27] In a preceding passage in *Theology and Social Theory*, Milbank says that 'there is a structural parallel between "the whole" and "the unit"' for '"the 'whole" is in some sense present within the unit, because the unit exists in a position fully defined by the unfolding of a infinite sequence.'[28] For Milbank 'Christianity is therefore… something like the 'peaceful transmission of difference', or 'differences in a continuous harmony.'[29] This is Christianity's 'unique and distinctive structural logic for human society. And this is what ecclesiology is really all about.'[30]

The aforementioned 'fully defined' unit within the ecclesiological whole muddies any clear distinction between the bounds of the political state and the worshipping community. In Milbank's work the church is itself a 'political reality', the true polis.[31] Whereas the secular, modern state and the state of antiquity are 'imperfectly social, because they contain elements of compulsion and of mere compromise', the church is the 'true society' which 'implies consensus, agreement in desire and harmony amongst its members'.[32] In short it is 'the church community' which is 'able to realise the political objectives of justice and virtue which the polis could not arrive at' because it can agree on a common good sourced in a common life and sustained by a common ontology.[33] Because the church

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[27] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 410.

[28] Ibid, 409.

[29] Ibid, 422.

[30] Ibid, 410. When questioned concerning *which* particular church has satisfactorily fulfilled Milbank's ecclesiological account of harmonious difference, Milbank responded saying that it was not the purpose of *Theology and Social Theory* to imagine the church as 'utopia', nor 'to discover in its ramified and fissiparous history some single ideal exemplar' for this would 'have been to envisage the church in spatial terms – as another place, which we might arrive at, or *as this* identifiable site, which we can still inhabit' when , in fact, the church 'exists, finitely, not in time, but *as* time, taken in the mode of gift and promise'. But what is the relationship, then, between the quite abstract 'gift and promise' and the particular history of the church instigated by Christ, spread by the Apostles, with Creeds, reconciliations, wars, and divisions to its name? Milbank says the Eucharist is both the achieved and responsive back and forth of the church, tying gift to history, but the Eucharist is the invitation to come and eat at a table, and I'd like to see Milbank's example of a non-spatial table. Milbank, *Future of Love*, 133, 134. Sympathetic to aspects of Milbank's work, William Cavanaugh has also raised this question of the ecclesiological space in relation to Milbank's work. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist,* 269.

[31] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 407.

[32] Ibid, 406.

[33] Ibid, 414.

presumes a fundamental ontological peace without necessary or dialectic passage through difference or violence, it is the only tradition that can source social justice, Milbank argues. In *Being Reconciled* Milbank says that 'without truth there is no peace of true consensus' while equally 'without peace there would be no truth… If there is truth, then it must apply universally, and the truth of one thing must be compatible with the truth of all other things. But this is peace.'[34] This social consensus, which is not uniformity but agreement on a common good, must also be paradoxically posed: as hierarchy and equality mutually sustained and sustaining.

For Milbank there are 'necessary and educative' and 'architectonic hierarchies' which sustain the 'transmission of harmonious life which no culture can ever truly dispense with', or so it is said.[35] Both political and economic communities are grounded in this same account of hierarchy, which, Milbank argues, sustain both 'aristocratic' and 'democratic' aspects. Firstly, though, Milbank asserts that 'there is but one hierarchy of the Eucharist and ecclesial corpus mysticum which is at once mystical and political'[36], he also says that this hierarchy also involves levels of equality, for 'all gifts, however hierarchically diverse, equally come from God.'[37] Taking a cosmological example, Milbank continues by stating that the 'levels' (of hierarchy) are 'a comparative notion', that 'equality of men follows upon their elevated dignity within the cosmos and... at the same time upon their sub-angelic common genus.'[38] The 'level', therefore, is non-ideological for it is 'in fact the very invisible interruptive convention which sutures (both breaks and constitutes) the hierarchy' in contrast to a democratic order which 'accords value to a factor of equality only by ignoring all differences of degree.'[39] To defend a theological account of hierarchy is therefore, paradoxically, to defend democracy, for Milbank.

Intermediary Institutions

Contemporary democracy is deeply problematic in Milbank's eyes. In response to the aforementioned elected blindness of contemporary democracy to all 'differences of degree' or the importance of educative hierarchies, Milbank advocates 'intermediary institutions' which variegate the monotonous harmony of 'sovereign state and sovereign

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[34] Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, 106.
[35] Ibid, 103.
[36] Ibid, 107.
[37] Ibid, 107.
[38] Ibid, 108.
[39] Ibid, 108.

individual'.[40] This is the endorsement of 'complex space', supposedly a distinguishing mark of Christian social thought and a trait that Milbank tells us is coming to the fore in 'secular radical' circles.[41] The 'complex body' that sits analogous to this composition plays again on the interchange of whole and part. In another register, but repeating the same point, Gothic space is that 'wherein parts are in turn wholes, and not simply subordinate to the greater whole' which 'exhibits a way in which medieval examples were thought to manifest a crucial aspect of freedom - the freedom of groups - that modernity tends to obliterate.'[42] Here the 'constant recognition of imperfection, of the fragmentary and therefore always 'ruined' character of Gothic structures' expresses 'the Christian imperative of straining for the ultimate at the risk of thereby more comprehensively exhibiting one's finite and fallen insufficiency' analogously finds supposed purchase in the associations of civil society.[43] For the 'multiple associations cease to "mediate" between part and whole, but become themselves a new sort of context, a never "completed" and ramifying "network" involving "confused", overlapping jurisdictions, which disperses and dissolves political sovereignty'.[44] This is not a 'natural hierarchy' (here Milbank is speaking against the medieval) but a 'hierarchy in time' in the educative dimension of sovereignty, for an elite which nevertheless seeks to 'cancel itself' by passing on wisdom 'which does need to be reaffirmed, just as democracy must be complemented by a consensus with objective truth and justice.'[45] Hierarchy, finally, is also the place of charity as 'charity is originally the gratuitous, creative positing of difference, and the offering to others of a space of freedom which is "existence."'[46] Yet charity is hierarchical for 'charity does not lay down a fixed, as opposed to an educative hierarchy, and every "positive" it establishes is of equal importance, and of equal necessity to all the other positions'.[47]

The simple juxtaposition 'hierarchy/equality' is misrepresentative of Milbank's position as for Milbank it is only through hierarchy that equality may now be realised, however hierarchy has been picked up as a political problematic account of the all in

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[40] John Milbank, *The Word Made Strange* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1997), 271.

[41] Ibid, 271. Milbank does not specify here who he is referring to, should it be read with the 'thinkers on the left' cited in the preface to the second edition of *Theology and Social Theory*? Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, xiv.

[42] Milbank, *Word Made Strange*. 276.

[43] Ibid, 276.

[44] Ibid, 276.

[45] Ibid, 285.

[46] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 422.

[47] Ibid, 422.

Milbank's work. Firstly, in the *Monstrosity of Christ* Žižek notes Milbank's tendency for an alternative, Catholic modernity based on a 'proportional order of cosmic hierarchical balance.'[48] This 'hierarchic proportional order in which each member is in its own place' is a 'rejection of 'democratic equality as an appearance sustained by a "deeper" hierarchic order' in favour of 'a hierarchical phenomenal order sustained by a "deeper" equality with regard to the unknowable origin.'[49] Žižek maybe misconstruing the vertical hierarchy proposed by Milbank but he does raise the serious concern that 'what gets lost here is nonetheless the very core of democracy.'[50] Adam Kotsko who, in a review of *Theology and the Political, the New Debate*, observes that the writers of Radical Orthodoxy do not 'try to obscure this need for hierarchy, but it remains the case that the authors in this movement do not particularly try to foreground it' which 'from a public-relations stand point… makes perfect sense' (an intuitive repetition of one of Žižek's concerns) and identifies a further problem with politically informed hierarchical solutions.[51] For while hierarchy can account for all possible social positions there remains a concern about the attributed and legitimatised status of those at the base of a hierarchical stratification. Milbank may be right, Kotsko continues, that 'socialism…requires our solidarity in the name of the project of positive affirmations of life and more abundant life: we are to love others as active expressive affirmers and not, or not primarily, as victims' but he is deeply concerned when Milbank continues: 'As theology puts it, we are to love people because- and even only insofar as, they display the image of God.'[52]

In summary: Milbank's account of the order of the church draws strongly on his analogical account of creation and the divine for it is through the mediation of the church that this analogy is sustained and its thinking resourced. This order takes difference seriously in three modes; in the ratio of whole to part which is person in the church; in the difference of the aristocratic from the democratic element in society; and in the diversity of intermediary institutions - neither state nor individual - demonstrated in the guilds and associations of the medieval. Yet, while difference is significant, Milbank always pulls difference back into analogy. The church takes on the polis as the aristocrat exists for the order of a hierarchical society; the difference of the person is only coherent within the

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[48] Žižek, Milbank, *Monstrosity*, 249.
[49] Ibid, 251.
[50] Ibid, 251.
[51] Adam Kotsko, '"That They Might Have Ontology": Radical Orthodoxy and the New Debate', *Political Theology*, Vol. 10, No. 1. (2009), 115–124, at. 118.
[52] Milbank quoted in ibid, 118.

whole of the ecclesia, intermediary institutions overflow and complete the inter-nesting of church and State.

Personhood

In *Beyond Secular Order* the theme of personhood is made central to the development of Milbank's argument.[53] In continuity with the paradox or balance of analogy, modern liberal anthropology is rejected for the sundering 'of human life from human reason... the sundering of human nature from human society... the sundering of human nature from human culture' and the 'sundering of human nature from supernatural grace.'[54] This is directly antithetical, says Milbank, to Christian thought which 'defined man as a rational animal, as a social animal, as a fabricating animal (*homo faber*), and as destined to the beatific vision.'[55] Milbank says that in Christian theology 'one is dealing with an "addition" that is seen as paradoxically essential: this is what I dub "trans-organicity."'[56] In this next section I want to concentrate on two of these forms of trans-organicity: the 'fabricating animal' and wo/man as 'destined to beatific vision' as these return us to a key contention in Milbank's account of the modern and his articulation of nature and grace. Trans-organicity, I will go on to argue, refers to Milbank's way of understanding the person as both natural and cultural, natural and supernatural.

The fabricating animal is Milbank's cipher for the creativity of the person which repeats the creativity of God. The works of wo/man's hands is not analysed in relation to an exogenous category because the work of the hand, or mind, is neither the belonging of the individual or truly different to him or herself.[57] The authenticity of artifice and art is key not only to Milbank's account of the person, politics and the story of theology, but his presentation of the paganism or heterodoxy of the modern more generally.

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[53] Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 5.

[54] Ibid, 5.

[55] Ibid, 5.

[56] Ibid, 5.

[57] Hence Milbank's long section on Blondel's theory of action, and John Hughes' application of Milbank's work to capitalist patterns and norms of capitalist work. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 210–220. John Hughes, *The End of Work: Theological Critiques of Capitalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

To briefly recap, one of the most significant failings of the modern paradigm for Milbank was, or is, the tendency, in theory and practice, to fissure the human from the divine, the person from their self and, here, wo/man from his or her constructs; in short, alienation. In response to this rupture, or sundering, even the assertion of positive difference fails for Milbank, in his words 'radical positivism which seeks to actively affirm the ungrounded "mythical" content of difference beyond mere formal tolerance' is precisely this, ungrounded.[58] Its ungroundedness ruptures the harmony of difference with essence and is achieved, Milbank believes, on the grounds of assertion which is by necessity, due to its baselessness, violent. The orthodox response to this remains 'choice', both election and free consent, but 'is not really an ungrounded decision, but a "seeing" by a truly-desiring reason of the truly desirable.'[59] The veracity of this vision affirms an 'innate' preference in humans for 'peace over violence' and a human 'bias towards reason rather than unreason.'[60] With aforementioned qualifications, Milbank is here elliptically expressing human nature in an orthodox setting and re-imagining an aspect of the modern itself, a rearticulation of 'reason'.[61] What Milbank means when he says 'reason... "goes all the way down"'.[62]

How does this relate to creativity? Milbank here wants to show that 'the discovery of the human construction of the cultural world... does not necessarily mark out an autonomous human space.'[63] Were it to do so then political economy, human autonomy, industry, production and art would all be realms strictly beyond the theological because they were at once fabrication (read here as falsehood) and alienation; intractably different from ourselves and God. This critique of the modern finds its bite in Milbank's contention that 'human art [is] in some measure "like" divine creation.'[64] The problem with Milbank's account, I will go on to argue, is that human creativity must, therefore, be in some way

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[58] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, xiii.
[59] Ibid, xvi.
[60] Ibid, xvi.
[61] Milbank's supposed demonstration that Radical Orthodoxy is more 'modern' than modernity is interesting. Not least, this engagement with a definitive modern theme poses the possibility of the 'movements own modern contamination' and asks us to consider whether it is as 'negligible and without consequence' as Milbank seems to propose. For the 'modern' of Radical Orthodoxy consider Milbank's contention that 'Radical Orthodoxy, although it opposes the modern, also seeks to save it. It espouses, not the pre-modern, but an alternative vision of the modern'. John Milbank quoted in J. F. Hoffmeger, 'Charitable Interpretations', Radford, Marion, *Interpreting Postmodern*, viii, 12.
[62] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, xvii.
[63] Ibid, 4. Italics own.
[64] Ibid, xxiii.

'unlike' divine creation, but that Milbank does not present this 'unlikeness' as anything but heresy.

The fabricating animal, the person, is destined to deception when creativity cannot be expressed in concert and concord with his or her nature; when correctly, which is to say orthodoxly, expressed the person is capable of harmonious creation analogous to divine creation.[65] For Milbank fictions are not always fabrications. Human creativity is not indicative of independence but essentially in continuity with the divine under varying conditions. Thus, faced with a range of creativities, an adjudicating criteria or criterion must be introduced to assist in a critical differentiation between modes of creativity (or Milbank would be left to baptise the innovation of the modern *tout court*). Here Milbank says 'the real and genuine strenuous spiritual task... is constantly to sort out which of the entertained "fictions" one is naturally fit to inhabit by virtue of natural personal endowment, cultural situation and their genuine desirability.'[66] The repetition of 'nature' is interesting. The former 'nature' suggests my previous comments concerning Milbank's definition of nature as supernatural desire, personhood considered without 'remainder', this 'nature' would have no place in Milbank's schema were it a 'nature' defined in contrast to the supernatural. The second nature is somewhat problematic though, for it suggests both a uniqueness of individuation and an unequal differentiation of role, a place in the hierarchy of Milbank's Christendom.[67]

In this section I have stressed Milbank's account of the creative person, as this is a significant aspect of Milbank's account of modernity, radical politics or ecclesiology and the natural orientation to the divine. In Milbank's words:

> Homo faber is only human through making things and "making things up", yet this "artificial" character which belongs to the individual through artefacting is an aspect of that individual's integral nature. Finally, human nature paradoxically is that which

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[65] The fabricating nature of the person is also the means for Milbank to defend the historicity of the person, he says humans are 'integrally natural and "artistic" (or poetic) and also that it is just this which guarantees human historicity'. The creation of Christian orthodox dogmatics, although creation, would not, for Milbank, be 'transcendental' or 'abstract' from history but a part of seeing 'certain contingent human deeds or sets of deeds as true *events* in the sense that they redefine our intellectual and emotional horizons, despite the fact that they are rooted in very specific and non-repeatable circumstances.' Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 184, 185.

[66] Ibid, 76.

[67] Ibid, 75,76.

exceeds itself in receiving the gift of the supernatural end; yet, this "deification" is only possible as the fulfilment of human created nature, and not as its destruction.[68]

In a key passage in Milbank's work, he continues: political modernity 'questionably deconstructs a peculiar '"trans-organicism", an oddly ruptured and yet healed human integrity. Instead of an integral politics... it enters on a politics which is dualistic and so sundered between animality and reason, nature and culture (or the individual and the state), fact and fiction (or reason and the imagination) and finally the political and the ecclesial. Instead of the trans-organicism, it posits a ruptured organism'.[69] Like Gutiérrez's account of the person, Milbank also argues for a form of integralism, trans-organicity (in Gutiérrez's work this was 'integral liberation'), and he also argues for a form of human creativity or necessary making (though Gutiérrez uses the word 'freedom'), while both Gutiérrez and Milbank also suggest that there is something 'natural', or 'living', about this dualness. Unlike Gutiérrez, Milbank forecloses in advance expressions of this doublessness that fall outside Orthodox Christianity.[70]

So, what has been expressed here? That the person, as understood by Milbank, is deeply - essentially - conditioned by his account of the doctrine of creation; that this person is normatively creative, or fabricating; and that this rejection of alienation has political, or social, implications (though I have not had the time to explicate these here).[71] That for Milbank, while there are legitimate forms of human creativity and uniqueness, these must, as with difference in harmony, be folded back into an Orthodox setting which is their only authentic place of realisation. This is what allows Milbank to say: 'we give up everything, but not for the terrestrial city, and not even primarily for others: here we give up everything "absurdly" to God in order to confess our inherent nothingness and to receive life in the only possible genuine mode of life, as created anew.'[72] Finally, that the trans-organicity of the person is the 'natural' placing of the person, what is still required, and I shall consider

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[68] Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 136.

[69] Ibid, 136, 137.

[70] Gutiérrez, for example, explicitly opens himself to a range of spiritualities drawn from the diversity of human experiences of the divine. See Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 72–89.

[71] To develop this line of argument one would have to consider Milbank's contention that socialism is 'the theorisation of society as the *work* of human personhood manifest as free labour'. What is key here is that socialism gives political priority to the fabricating person. This is demonstrated again in Milbank's work when he argues for the 'mutual realisation of individual flourishing', a '"personalism" which defends the "originality" of each person, the 'creative capacity of all, this "personality", which socialism aims fully to release.' Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 262–264.

[72] Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, 161.

next, is how Milbank elucidates a judgement on this naturalness. Again, however, in relation to creation, analogy trumps difference.

Interpersonal: Gift

There are a variety of terms that can be used for the interpersonal. What can be expressed as interdependence is in the work of Milbank 'participation', reciprocity or friendship. In Milbank's account of the doctrine of creation a lot is said of participation as the exchange of 'gifts'. Here I will consider the relevance of the doctrine of creation for participation between people, and some limitation in Milbank's account of gift, again it is the folding of one side of Milbank's account of paradox that is problematic.

Coming from and returning to God, the notion of covenant expresses the natural orientation to the divine normatively expressed. In relation to Milbank's account of knowledge, the same path is pursued: 'knowledge is borne by desire for relation with the thing known, both intrinsically (since even God desires to know) and provisionally (since in knowing we are always returned to the thing known as not yet adequately known).'[73] Properly understood the person is, for Milbank, intrinsically directed to the divine and the covenant is the provisional working through of origin and *telos* in Christ. If Christ 'substituted for us, in the face of our lack, then this is only to re-create us by bringing about and disclosing a new yet eternal marvel: the God-man who is both created and uncreated.'[74]

In the previous section I asked how we are to differentiate between contrasting forms of creativity. Milbank answers this by saying 'orthodoxy', yet we can, in Milbank's work, substitute 'orthodox' for 'charity' (recalling here what I said about charity as ontology in the previous chapter). He therefore continues: 'love, for Christianity, is not simply an optional attitude of mind, but the supreme practical mode in which new temporal realties are to be brought into being. Love is categorical because it is also an ontological category coincident with being itself.'[75] Love is not, for Milbank, emotion; it is both being and ethics, the 'command of love' must be understood as 'also a social command, a command

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[73] Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, 60.
[74] Ibid, 78, 225.
[75] Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 120.

to establish a true polity of friendship.'[76] So love, on this reading, is 'still a matter of "order" and therefore of justice, of "economics" and of "politics."'[77]

The normative interpersonal of gift exchange is 'charity', a total coincidence of Milbank's ontology and account of the person's praxis. The modern is, for Milbank, the refusal of gift and a grasping of the self.[78] *Being Reconciled* is concerned with the meta-theological category of donum or gift. A key theme is forgiveness and its possibility within and between the worship community and God. The logic of Milbank's writings is at work here again in that 'forgiveness... perfects gift exchange as fusion.'[79] In Milbank's work this coincides with fortune, for luck is re-written in *Being Reconciled* as reception and grace, and 'is only possible on a collective level as the ecclesia.'[80] Forgiveness as gift and exchange between people is further qualified, lest it fall into commodified equivalence. In Milbank's words 'what distinguishes gift from contract is not the absolute freedom and non-binding character of the gift... but rather the surprisingness and unpredictability of gift and counter gift, or their character in space as asymmetrical reciprocity and their character in time as non-identical repetition.'[81] The gift implies the counter gift, reciprocity, but it is also premised on an antecedent gift (divine and interpersonal) 'because a true gift must be a considered gift appropriate to its donee; hence one must already have entered into exchange with her.'[82] So not only is the gift before the giver but the

> giver is in the gift, he goes with the gift. Precisely for this reason, a return on the gift is always due to the giver, unlike our modern 'free gift'. Yet this gift is still a gift and not a commodity subject to contract, because it returns in a slightly different form at a not quite predicable time, bearing with it also the subject of the counter-giver.[83]

In one of his strongest and clearest statements on the interpersonal Milbank asserts that 'gift giving is a mode (the mode in fact) of social being.'[84]

Unlike modern charity and unilateral giving, Milbank's account of the theological interpersonal is primarily concerned with the interdependence of person with person.

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[76] Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 121.
[77] Ibid, 121.
[78] Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, ix, 155.
[79] Ibid, 70.
[80] Ibid, 153.
[81] Ibid, 156.
[82] Ibid, 156. Italics own.
[83] Ibid, 167. Italics own.
[84] Ibid, 156. Italics own.

Alternatively expressed, it is the circulation of the gift (human and divine) that is constitutive of the person and the interpersonal. This is given its doctrinal *modus operandi* in 'charity' which bridges the theological and social categories, holding these facets together while revealing their complicity. Again, what is primary is analogy; the illumination of human relationships through divine norms of creation and participation. And again what is jettisoned in this account is difference, whether necessary or contingent. Assuming that the impossibility of creation is structurally and substantively normative as paradox, or balance, what Milbank's account of friendship, or gift giving, fails to maintain is an account of the otherness inherent in the exchange of gift and, secondly, that this gift giving both overcomes and secures this otherness from each other.[85] Milbank fails to ask how the receiver is before or after the gift (i.e. not fully identified in gift), as constitutive of the possibility of non-identical repetitive giving as such.[86] If the impossibility of creation is the silver thread running through Milbank's account of order, personhood and the interpersonal, then the possibility of the active reception of the gift must be considered in the same way as the difference of the creation to the divine should be, in some form, maintained.[87]   If there is an inconsistency here, the inconsistent maintenance and application of a paradoxical schema, it is in collapsing the tension of balance by failing to systematically maintain its necessary doubleness.

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[85] Milbank does get close to saying this when he argues that 'charity as personal must express our uniquely personal self-giving response towards equally unique others who give themselves to us in return' but argues consistently that this is only something that can be secured in the church. See Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 224.

[86] The reflections of Simone Weil on friendship have been very useful to me here. She says that friendship is a 'union of opposites', that is to say, 'necessity and liberty, the two opposites God combined when He created the world and men'. For Weil, in friendship, 'there is equality because each wishes to preserve the faculty of free consent both in himself and in the other', but a faculty of consent requires and autonomy and exteriority to the gift, one that Milbank does not posit, nor seeks to maintain. Simone Weil, *An Anthology* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 284, 286.

[87] I am indebted, for this point, to Catherine Keller's article 'Is That All? Gift and Reciprocity in Milbank's Being Reconciled', which argues that while Milbank 'rightfully points out human participation in the work of forgiveness' he does not 'sufficiently contemplate the depths of such a reciprocity' for 'asymmetrical gift does not generate dependence on an absolute unilateral power but stimulates an active mutuality.' For Keller, the problem is finally located in the 'incapacity of [Milbank's] doctrine of God to accommodate a robust reciprocity', the paradox of 'both the radical gratuity of grace *and* the sensitivity of God to its reception.' Finally, it is not simply Milbank's doctrine of God but a certain reading of Creation *ex nihilo*, Keller suggests, which, in a reading like Milbank's, can 'not so much radicalize as compromise the creation-affirmative faith of Genesis… by denying all *intrinsic* worth to the creature.' Ruther, Marion, *Interpreting Postmodern*, xi, xii, 21, 29.

Surin on Analogical Ontology

In this section I will ask whether Milbank's account of creation can help us think modern civil society, especially considering the importance that was laid, in my account of civil society in chapter three, on difference, diversity and pluralism. As I have sought to show, difference is central to Milbank's account of the person, of order and the interpersonal. This difference is both a difference internal to the theo-politically desirable order, in the person from themselves – trans-organicity – and, supposedly, between those who exchange gifts. Working this way, Mibank's account could secure both reason and difference, claiming that they are at one in nature properly, that is to say theologically, understood. And this difference is also key to Milbank's account of the person's place in the ecclesia, which is difference in harmonious order. I now want to consider, by turning to the writings of Kenneth Surin, the implications of the logic of Milbank's account of difference secured through analogy.

Surin considers Radical Orthodoxy a prime candidate for the renewal of radical thought because of its ability to practically and theoretically work outside of neoliberal hegemony, yet he is concerned with 'Radical Orthodoxy's reliance on the via analogia'.[88] For Surin, 'with analogy there is always a primary and secondary analogate, so that some kind of via eminentiae becomes absolutely unavoidable, with one subject (the primary analogate) "producing" the other (the secondary or derivative analogate).'[89] Milbank's tactical mitigation of this concern, the sidestepping of the "sad passions" and resentment, is the maintenance of '"peaceability" so that the eminence of the primary analogate does not ensue in a violence of intractable "difference" between it and its derivative analogates.'[90] This is something Surin sees, here in particular and more widely in the Christian faith, in the 'incorporation into Christianity of a version of the doctrine of pre-established harmony.'[91] He continues: '"Peaceableness" is thus guaranteed only when there is logically prior commitment to the ontological requisites of a pre-established harmony... since this is

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[88] The exteriority proposed by Radical Orthodoxy is the rejection of both left and right contemporary political options as damned in their modernity (the 'left' and the 'right' are modern categories, which means that 'the left' is not more 'modern' than 'the right') so that 'a certain initial appeal to the 'pre-modern'... is not of a 'traditionalist' or 'reactionary' nature, because it is precisely to appeal outside the framework in which such terms make any sense.' Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 261. Kenneth Surin, 'Rewriting the Ontological Script of Liberation: On the Question of Finding a New Kind of Political Subject', Creston Davis, John Milbank, Slavoj Žižek, eds., *Theology and the Political: The New Debate* (London: Duke University Press, 2005), 240 – 266, 257.

[89] Surin, 'Rewriting', *Theology Political*, 258.

[90] Ibid, 258.

[91] Ibid, 258.

the only way to pre-empt absolutely the occurrence of the sad passions... because hierarchy necessarily imposes difference.'[92] There is a significant question here concerning difference and peace, for it is possible that 'difference in itself is not necessarily to be identified with an inevitable ontological violence', yet I want to focus on a further implication, one stemming from foundational, pre-established harmony.[93]

Surin says that 'it has to follow from [a doctrine of pre-established harmony] that difference as difference will be peaceable only when all become Christians, for only then will there be the possibility of peaceable acceptance of difference.'[94] The *via analogia*, so central to Milbank's account of order, personhood and the interpersonal, 'can plausibly serve as the basis for Christianity's "universal pacified myth" only when the whole world is converted or somehow drawn towards the Christian *mythos*.'[95] My concern, hinted at here by Surin, is not that knowledge requires commitment (and in this communitarian schema 'conversion' as well) but that 'analogy' limits what Milbank can say with and about those beyond the boundaries of the *ecclesia*. Analogy forces the trajectory in Milbank's work towards Christendom, and the identification of the boundaries of the social, along with legitimate difference, with the limits of the church.[96] While Milbank is right to question the diversity of contemporary civil society, Milbank's inclusion of analogy along with paradox forecloses possible theological avenues for the defence of a desirably diverse civil sphere.[97]

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[92] Surin, 'Rewriting', *Theology Political*, 258.

[93] Ibid, 258. To pursue the first line of argument would be to ask whether Milbank's account of 'violence' is complex enough. Can we not ask: is there not a theological difference between deliberation in debate in a liberal public sphere (in a coffee house, for example) and labour bought in a market at a price at which is cannot reproduce itself (the case in many contemporary British subsistence jobs)?

[94] Surin, 'Rewriting', *Theology Political*, 259.

[95] Ibid, 259.

[96] Of course, for Milbank, the limits of the church are potentially infinite, but this leads Milbank into the problem of identifying the overlap of the 'church' with the actual historical and institutional church, as already noted in earlier in this chapter. See Milbank, *Future of Love*, 133–144. For Laclau, this communitarian failing can be seen as far back as Plato. Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, (London: Verso, 2007), 61. Christopher Insole makes this argument historically, by suggesting that early nineteenth century liberal reforms made catholic defences of integralism possible, and that Milbank's work therefore undercuts the historical conditions of its own plausible articulation. Christopher Insole, 'Against Radical Orthodoxy: The Dangers of Overcoming Political Liberalism', *Modern Theology*, Vol. 20, No. 2. (2004), 213–241.

[97] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 318.

Conclusion

I turned to the work of John Milbank for a series of reasons. He has some significant and arresting things to say about contemporary charities; and as Surin notes, he is also attempting to defend and espouse a sometimes neglected modern tradition as the basis of an alternative social imaginary that is external to our current neoliberal order. However, as Surin also argues, the logic of analogy tends to weigh towards one analogate, and I agree with Surin when he suggests that we need a better term for (non)participation, a term which foregrounds equality and difference (i.e. not 'hierarchy').

I have sought to show in these last two chapters that this imbalance, in Milbank's work, generates two interknit problems that (due to the extrapolation of the endogenous workings of the *ecclesia*) are inflections of each other, namely: a political problem which is also a theological problem, or *vice versa*. A neat synthetic summary of Milbank's position can be found in *Beyond Secular Order* when he says that the failing of modern Christianity is that it 'no longer sees the cosmos as sacred, nor regards our human moral nature as continuous with our biology and with cosmic order in general' because of the 'late medieval collapse of a participatory, analogical or "symbolic realist" worldview.'[98] I agree with this, but for it to be a meaningful (theo-political) statement it requires a serious addition: that this Christian *mythos*, this lost but created worldview, cannot be modelled exclusively, as Milbank repeatedly tends to do, on human participation in the creativity of God, for this would be a false identification of the agency, causality, potentiality and boundaries of human creativity. My suggestion is that just when Milbank's theology gets interesting – by making some of these links, and showing modern idolatry for its failure to abide to these links – it betrays itself, for if the person naturally is creative like God, but cannot create like God (and the order of statements is important here) then along with participation we also need a theology that questions the 'naturalness' of human creativity, one appropriate to human limitations in response to (primary) divine initiative and generous in relation to a plural civil sphere.

In this chapter 'paradox' has been used as a means for showing the theological promise of Milbank's work and its limitations according to its own success criteria. This approach allows me to read Milbank in a novel way, on the one hand certain aspects of Milbank's critique of the modern and of charities (as part of theological paradox) can be maintained and carried forward into the second half of the thesis (as the world is internal to

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[98] Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 116.

God, human creativity is participation in divine creation, and as God gives gifts so human relationship is also a kind of exchange of gifts). On the other hand, because Milbank's work does not sustain this paradox consistently, part of his work (his rejection of the secular *tout court*, his repudiation of modern 'nature', and consequently his denigration of the state and the social sciences) will be jettisoned. Reading Milbank in this way, I am not obliged to agree that 'the idea of Christianity without Christendom is a self-deluding and superficial illusion.'[99] Or, again, in the same text: that 'a genuine ecumenical project is inseparable from the project of establishing a global Christendom, the distinction of Christianity from Christendom being rejected as semantically and theologically confused.'[100] I am, to use Milbank's phrase *vis-à-vis* Marx and Hegel, 'for and against Milbank'.[101]

In short, the second part of this thesis will read and repair Liberation Theology as articulated by Gustavo Gutiérrez in dialogue with contemporary charities, not further the critical tradition of Radical Orthodoxy. It is to the radical and *plural* democracy of Ernesto Laclau and Chantel Mouffe that I will next turn, once I have concluded this first half of this thesis with a brief final reflection on Milbank's methodology.

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[99] Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 233.
[100] Ibid, 257.
[101] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 145 – 205.

Conclusion to Part One

In the second part of this thesis, I will continue and elaborate Gutiérrez's theology of creation in relation to the field of civil society and topic of homelessness, only drawing selectively from the work of John Milbank. Given the problems I have noted in both theologians, this choice deserves elaboration.

As noted in the Introduction, Radical Orthodoxy has set itself a twofold task: to demonstrate the dependence of all created things on God, while simultaneously defending the intrinsic value of the made. In the last chapter I asked whether this task has been successfully undertaken, and concluded that it has not. My concern with Milbank's theology is that the value of the created world is saved by relating creation to the Creator (so far, so good), but, due to the repeated emphasis in his work on analogy, my argument is that the conceptual vocabulary necessary to identify and affirm the 'intrinsic' value of the made is at each turn foreclosed or significantly curtailed (as can be seen in Milbank's approach to the social sciences, the state and the secular). Milbank's theology does not uphold the paradoxical character of creation in the way he hopes it will, and this is especially problematic when considering a diverse and plural sphere like civil society.

Milbank's substantive theological commitments are buttressed, secondly, by his methodological commitments; Milbank's method will now be discussed before moving on to the second half of the thesis. On the one hand, Milbank depends on the insights of Nietzsche, Deleuze, Foucault and Derrida, while simultaneously denying the plausibility of their account of history, locating them squarely within the secular modern, and repudiating their constructive utility for Christian theology.[1] Take, for example, Milbank's discussion of power, politics, post-modernism and 'difference' in *Theology and Social Theory*.[2] Milbank begins with an understanding of Foucault: 'the essence of all politics is power', moving on to Carl Schmitt: 'all politics invents power by proclaiming a religion which channels the mythical power of a fictive God or gods'.[3] He continues: 'one can only oppose Nietzsche and his followers by invoking a counter-mythology and a counter-ontology, not by trying to reinstate a humanism founded upon "universal reason", nor by

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[1] These theorists both bring to our understanding the political as *mythos*, while they all are undermined (in varying degrees) by their dependence on Kant, Milbank says. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 318.

[2] Ibid, 318-327.

[3] Ibid, 324.

seeking a level of narrated "reality" beneath the play of *simulacra*.'[4] This is doubly problematic: first, because Milbank's work (as I argued in the last chapter) depends on the disclosure of a natural coincidence of knowledge and praxis (occurring solely in the *ecclesia*) and, secondly, because the only avenue left for opposing Nietzsche is, in Milbank's understanding, by accepting much of what Nietszche and his 'followers' said. No wonder *Theology and Social Theory* was critiqued for being both too liberal and too conservative.[5]

Here my critique of Milbank's account of creation and his methodology meet: Milbank's paradoxical project requires a stronger qualification *apropos* the world's externality to God *and* a rationale for working with and building upon the work of philosophers and social scientists who are not ecclesiologists, as Milbank does. Given these problems, I am going to continue in this thesis with Gutiérrez's method and political theology. For, while Gutiérrez shares Milbank's paradoxical structuring of creation in relation to the Creator, his work is open to the social sciences, which he can justify *theologically*, while he also takes a qualified but generous attitude towards the secular 'maturity of man' and creation as the realm of human freedom - based on his understanding of the world as willed by God in its difference to God. Gutiérrez is more paradoxical than Milbank. In the next chapter, I will lay out my understanding of theological methodology, one which draws more on Gutiérrez than on Milbank.

What has been established in the first half of this thesis? First, I have noted the importance of civil society in terms of both political tactics (in the pursuit of liberating or peaceful societies and politics), and in terms of theological reflection. Second, turning to charities more specifically, I have picked up on three recurring historical facets of modern charity: volunteerism, selflessness, and the (dis)integration of civil society and the state. Third, in both Milbank and Gutiérrez's work, the recipients of charitable generosity are not considered 'external' to the social, but are utilised, deployed and exhibited by the socially included in the defence of particular ends. The problem with modern charity, for Milbank and Gutiérrez, is therefore one of difference and distance (the non-person, or carceral discipline of the other), but also of a bad infinite (or recurrence of the same in an unrecognised form). Milbank puts this very, very, well when he says: 'the new spaces of permitted creativity, segmentation and indeterminism are only differences which secure yet

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[4] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 324.
[5] See the introduction to the second edition of *Theology and Social Theory*. Ibid, xi-xxiv.

more strongly the dominance of the same, the univocal: the same basic car, house, restricted language, conformist behaviour, conjoined with the same individualistic narcissism.'[6] Fourth, the doctrine of creation sustains correct human reference to the divine by maintaining in tension two elements: the dependence of creation on the creative God, and the character of this creative God who wills the difference of creation from His or Herself, i.e. the difference of creation to God. Fifth, Milbank and Gutiérrez put forward history and revelation as sources of this doctrine, working with their dynamic interaction as the rationales for their respective projects. Finally, both Milbank and Gutiérrez propose criteria which sustain this tension of integrated but different elements in the doctrine of creation (peace and life, respectively), but, in this piece of work, it is Gutiérrez's work which I will continue and embellish, for the reasons stated above.

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[6] Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 318.

PART TWO

Chapter Six

Discourse, Hegemony and Antagonism; On Theological Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter I will put forward an account of Liberation Theology as a discourse, and the model I will use to illustrate the discursive character of theology is the spiral. Considered as a discourse, theology is the practice of bringing all language into relation to the term God. In my introduction, I noted that Fiorenza argues for a particular theological grammar, 'rules' which will be developed by engaging again with the work of Gutiérrez and Fiorenza in dialogue with the social theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantel Mouffe. The key theme of this chapter is the logic of theology in dialogue with the logic of the social, and, as such, theological methodology and social theory will be its principal areas of investigation.

So far, this thesis has already examined the theological method of Gutiérrez, Milbank and Petrella. All had their respective lacunae, yet it is the tradition of Liberation Theology I am working in, and in this thesis it is Petrella's work that took me furthest in the investigation of this tradition of theological method and aim. However, in my review of Petrella's work, I noted these issues: an uncritical account of 'class', and, second, a jettisoning of the theological aspect of Liberation Theology (as a source of 'ideals'). Surprisingly, while class is a key term in Petrella's work, he does not put forward an extended engagement with that school of social theory for which 'class' is a key concept and reality – Marxism.

While Petrella endorses the work of the 'post-marxists' Laclau and Mouffe, this chapter will demonstrate that Laclau and Mouffe's work has much to offer to Petrella's schema. Laclau and Mouffe's writings repeatedly open spaces for the investigation and inclusion of the theological in the constitution of the social. In the work of Laclau and Mouffe two currents of analysis coincide – a post-structuralist account of language drawn (primarily) from the work of the French psychoanalyst Lacan, and an assessment of the Marxist heritage of critique and political aspiration – which they synthesise by putting forward and investigating the social as a discursive space. As Mouffe's writings, in particular, make clear, their collective work accepts and works within the parameters of

liberal democracy.[1] Consequently, this chapter explores 'antagonism' in a plural, social and liberal democratic space, and politics as the 'creation of unity in a context of conflict and diversity'.[2]

For Laclau and Mouffe, as for Lacan, the first form of alienation is the self's subsumption in language. In learning to speak the symbolic order, language, is internalised. In doing so an 'Other' (and the other's desires) are incorporated into the self.[3] Language is not neutral; languages structure social elements (including subject positions) and in articulation attempt to fix these various aspects of the social into a hegemonic order. This 'fixing' is achieved through chains of equivalence which link distinct signs to a central nodal point – a Master Signifier. Approaching the social in this way has certain strengths, it allows Laclau and Mouffe to put forward a theory of the social which is also a theory of power, and therefore stress within their work that our current neoliberal hegemonic order is not necessary or natural but a contingent hierarchy, depending on a particular organisation of symbols, institutional assemblages, agents, knowledges and practices. For these theorists there is a social whole (as there are definitions of words, and not infinite displacement of meaning along a chain of signification) and a relatively unified mainstream social imaginary, but it is constantly in the process of disassociation and re-assembly.

Laclau and Mouffe approach the social as a multiple space, with complex and overlapping discourses that contest the definition of key terms and are both internal and external to each other within a realm of floating signifiers. So, while neoliberalism is contingent (stemming in part from its hegemonising of liberal and conservative elements), the precariousness of a hegemonic order is also part of its power. It produces and depends on elements beyond the boundaries of its original occurring and can suture them or sustain them in their alterity. If hegemony brings together as a whole elements that are not naturally pre-disposed to relation, then there is an important distinction that must be sustained between alternative positions which are still internal to the symbolic order, and oppositional elements that defy the symbolic order. This schema of analysis holds open the

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[1] Chantel Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 1993), 318-323,

[2] Ibid, 323. While I will go on to argue that neoliberalism is a hegemonic hybrid of liberal and conservative elements, it is important to note that liberal democracy is also a non-necessary integrated articulation of diverse elements. Norberto Bobbio, *Liberalism and Democracy* (London: Verso, 2005).

[3] Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 7 – 12.

possibility that actions that seem to defy the logic of neoliberalism can still be subsumed unproblematically by neoliberalism.[4]

At this point, with this theory of language and the social, I move to a consideration of doctrine as an ordering of language and God as the Master-Signifier of theology. I do this by considering Laclau and Mouffe's comments on metaphor in the production of the social. Expanding on this with Laclau's essay 'On the Names of God', reference to God is explored as a process of articulating a chain of equivalence between terms that support correct naming of God – in theology this chain is called doctrine. We have come across a number of names for God that could already be postulated to play this function – God the creator, God of life, God who is replete being, Father, Son and Holy Spirit – names which draw God into relation with all words, peoples and times. Stated alone, this form of doing theology would be too simple, in danger of undergoing a replacement of one of God's names with God's person(s). For Laclau, as with John Milbank in the last two chapters, God transcends God's names, as God is more than 'life', 'being', 'beginning' or 'end'. This means that within God's name 'Father' there is a depth, a transcendence, that the term 'Father' cannot fully embody. Laclau is again helpful here, as the ineffable though expressed in language (and therefore sayable) remains ineffable and unsayable; God is God just because God is God, a particular sign that manifests a '"sublimity" that transcends its own body.'[5]

This chapter ends with some reflections on theological methodology. Arguing that theology takes its point of departure in both revelation and experience and that it is not foundationalist, I conclude by considering the methodology pursued in this thesis and suggest that the image 'spiral' is helpful for thinking the circular and progressive character of theological methodology.

The first half of this chapter develops a model for analysing neoliberal society which will be developed in the next chapter. The second half of this chapter suggests that theology is potentially a counter hegemonic discourse, and the discursive character of theology in relation to the charities and homelessness will be further developed in chapter eight, when I ask: what does saying 'God the creator' mean for current charitable work with homeless people? The continuity of these two parts resides in my recurring concern

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[4] Williams, *Culture and Materialism*, 39.
[5] Ernesto Laclau, 'On the Names of God', Hent de Vries, Lawrence E. Sullivan, eds., *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 13–147, at 147.

with the logic and plausibility of theo-political articulation within a contested liberal democratic society.

Hegemony

Laclau and Mouffe's approach is 'grounded in privileging the moment of *political* articulation, and the central category of political analysis is… hegemony'[6]. As with Petrella, Laclau and Mouffe address themselves to a plural social landscape (a proliferation of social antagonisms stemming from the rise of New Social Movements and identity politics), arguing for 'the need to create a chain of equivalence among the various democratic struggles against different forms of subordination,' a politics that engages issues 'of both "redistribution" and "recognition."'[7]

Laclau and Mouffe's account of the social needs to be outlined as hegemony occurs in a particular kind of space. Laclau and Mouffe's approach is constructed around the 'notion of the social conceived as a *discursive* space.'[8] Jettisoning 'society as a founding totality', Laclau and Mouffe instead argue that 'society and social agents lack any essence, and [that] their regularities merely consist of the relative and precarious forms of fixation which accompany the establishment of a certain order.'[9] Laclau and Mouffe abandon 'the premise of "*society*" as a sutured and self defined totality' for there is 'no single underlying principle fixing - and hence constituting - the whole field of differences.'[10] Society, they say, is the 'field of identities which never manage to be fully fixed', 'the field of overdetermination.'[11]

For Laclau and Mouffe there appears to be one society because of the operations of power – discursive hegemony: they say, it is '*articulatory practice* which constitutes and organises social relations.'[12] These authors pass from the deconstructive to the constructive through the concept of 'articulation': a 'practice establishing a relation among elements

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[6] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony,* x.

[7] Ibid, xviii.

[8] Ibid, x.

[9] Ibid, 2, 95, 98.

[10] Ibid, 111.

[11] Ibid, 111. Italics own. 'Overdetermination' is a term they use to describe subjectivity in plural space, for if all fixing of identity fails due to the 'affirmation of the incomplete, open and politically negotiable character of every identity' then we can say that 'the sense of every identity is overdetermined inasmuch as all literality appears as constitutively subverted and exceeded; far from there being an essentialist *totalisation*, or a no less essentialist *separation* among objects, the presence of some objects in others prevent any of their identities from being fixed.' Ibid, 104.

[12] Ibid, 96.

such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice.'[13] These relations are complex and constructed out of 'aggregates of institutions, forms of organisation, practices and agents.'[14] The 'structural totality' resulting from the articulatory practice Laclau and Mouffe refer to as a 'discourse.'[15] The 'differential positions' as they appear articulated within a discourse Laclau and Mouffe term as 'moments.'[16] These 'moments' are not externally fixed, nor totally self present, but, drawing on Foucault, can be known only through a 'regularity in dispersion' for each 'moment is subsumed from the beginning under the principle of *repetition.*'[17]

While repetition is important for hegemony, difference and diversity are also crucial. Only if there is a difference between hegemonically ordered objects and the identity of these objects, and a difference between distinct objects themselves, can hegemony operate.[18] Laclau and Mouffe say: 'in a closed system of relational identities, in which the meaning of each moment is absolutely fixed, there is no place whatsoever for a hegemonic practice.'[19] Within a closed system there would be no possibility of an outside and, consequently, no possibility of the fissure or dissonance which hegemonic practices can mediate. In a closed system 'the principle of repetition would dominate every practice within this system and there would be nothing to hegemonise'; a total recurrence of the same.[20] Furthermore, and building on the last point, the 'articulating subject' must be 'partially exterior to what it articulates' but must also be internal for 'only the presence of a vast area of floating elements and the possibility of their articulation to opposite camps...is what constitutes the terrain permitting us to define a practice as hegemonic.'[21] To clarify this last observation, two points need to be explored. The first, and briefer, point refers to Lacanian post-structuralism, particularly the 'master signifier.' Every discourse, for Laclau and Mouffe, is subject to 'partial fixations' for 'even in order to differ, to subvert meaning, there has to be *a* meaning.'[22] To achieve this even partial embedding of meaning 'any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the

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[13] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony,* 105.
[14] Ibid, 103.
[15] Ibid, 105.
[16] Ibid,, 105.
[17] Ibid, 106. Italics my own.
[18] Ibid, xii, 96.
[19] Ibid, 134.
[20] Ibid, 134.
[21] Ibid, 136.
[22] Ibid, 112.

flow of differences, to construct a centre' and it is these 'privileged discursive points of this partial fixation' Laclau and Mouffe, drawing on Lacan, refer to as 'nodal points' or master signifiers.[23] It is only when these master signifiers are contested by 'opposite camps' in a common 'terrain', as suggested in the above quote, that we can speak of 'hegemony.'

Hegemony brings to the fore a series of issues Laclau and Mouffe believe are key to the development of a new politics of the left and the renewal of the socialist imaginary. Hegemony is the 'logic of the social'[24]: all accounts of the social whole are hegemonic totalities which are never complete but marked by their own internal lacks – antagonisms which defy symbolic inscription. This theory shows how a 'social imaginary' or a common sense can become deeply enmeshed and enmeshing because it is not just a 'political vocabulary' – though it includes this - but a process of defining of the person, of institutions, of normative practices which are tied into the quotidian, the ordering of everyday life. This relationship between a social discourse and everyday acts and definitions is reciprocal as 'politico-hegemonic articulations retroactively create the interests they claim to represent', Laclau and Mouffe say.[25] Peter Scott, discussing ideology and theology, also makes this point when he says '"Reality" is misunderstood but in an "interested" way – that is to say, to the benefit of the dominant order'.[26] Scott endorses Raymond Williams' point that hegemony

> is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and of our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values – constitutive and constituting – which as they are experiences as practices therefore appear as reciprocally confirming.[27]

The social, while ordered, is also dynamic as it is constantly undergoing contestation and re-definition by varying agents (who are inside and outside the current order); hegemony is quite simply 'a political *type of relation*, a *form*, if one so wishes, of politics; but not a determinable location within a topography of the social.'[28] Hegemony is the organisation in

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[23] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 112.
[24] Ibid, 3.
[25] Ibid, xi, 4.
[26] Scott, *Theology, Ideology*, 49.
[27] Raymond Williams, quoted Scott, *Theology, Ideology*, 49.
[28] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 139. 'Topography' as a metaphor is very dangerous here if it is taken as an accurate representation/map (cartography) of a common terrain. There are, Laclau and Mouffe's

articulation of non-essentially related elements, operative within, but creative of, the social; which when perceived without power are (with all its conservative and normative force) 'just the way things are'.

While hegemonies attempt to suture as many diverse elements as possible (to secure their dominance and reproduction) something always falls through the cracks. These cracks in the hegemonic wall are what Laclau and Mouffe mean by 'antagonisms'. Antagonisms are aberrations thrown up by discursive orders that cannot be re-inscribed back into the order that precipitated them.[29] Antagonisms are the 'relations which reveal the limits of all objectivity' or in which the 'limits of every objectivity are shown.'[30] 'Objectivity' may seem a word out of place in a post-structuralist formulation but it refers to the repetition of identity and the social imaginary (the 'common sense' of liberty and equality, more on this in the next section) which are 'limited' for antagonisms show both the 'impossibility of fully constituting' society (how 'society never fully manages to be society') and, in regards to identity, how 'no social practice, not even the most humble acts of our everyday life, are entirely repetitive' (or: how 'the presence of the "Other" prevents me from being totally myself').[31] Antagonisms are thus both internal (objective, common sense and repetitive) and exterior (the limit of objectivity, the impossibility of the social and non-repetitive). Before moving on to explore how the social order is fixed by master signifiers, I will review one of Laclau and Mouffe's examples of hegemony and antagonism: neoliberal discourse.

British NeoLiberal Discourse

For Laclau and Mouffe, the hegemonic character of British neoliberalism resides in its combination of both Conservative and Liberal politics. In doing so it also depends, for its force, on popular experiences and perceptions which are not 'naturally' neoliberal but have been hegemonised by neoliberalism. Firstly, for Laclau and Mouffe neoliberalism and New

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work makes clear, many topographies which overlap and intersect as partial representations of an infinite social field.

[29] I will go on to explore Laclau and Mouffe's understanding of 'antagonism', for theorists working in comparable paradigms who draw explicit links between 'excluded' groups like homeless people and the Lacanian 'antagonism' see Ernesto Laclau, Judith Butler, Slavoj Žižek, Contingency, Hegemony and Universality (London: Verso, 2000), 322-323. Terry Eagleton, 'Tragedy and Revolution', Creston Davis, John Milbank, Slavoj Žižek, eds., *Theology and the Political: The New Debate* (London: Duke University Press, 2005), 7-21.

[30] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, xiv, 125.

[31] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 125, 127. Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (London: Verso, 1990), 184. Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 125.

Social Movements are modern phenomena. They were only possible when the 'democratic principle of liberty and equality' imposed themselves 'as the new matrix of the social imaginary; or, in our terminology, to constitute a fundamental nodal point in the construction of the political.'[32] Laclau and Mouffe continue: 'this break with the ancient regime, symbolised by the Declaration of the Rights of Man… [provided] the discursive conditions which made it possible to propose the different forms of inequality as illegitimate and anti-natural, and thus make them equivalent as forms of oppression.'[33]

The success of contemporary neoliberalism, Laclau and Mouffe continue, depends, in part, on the ability of Thatcher and Reagan to position themselves as the heirs and defenders of 'the' modern tradition. These politicians succeeded in combining 'the resonant themes of organic Toryism - nation, family, duty, authority, standards, traditionalism' with liberalism's themes of 'self-interest, competitive individualism, anti-statism'.[34] This, they say, is 'a new hegemonic project, that of liberal-conservative discourse'.[35] This neoliberal hegemonic articulation depends on and develops an 'antagonism', one 'constructed between two poles: the "people", which includes all those who defend traditional values and freedom of enterprise; and their adversaries: the state and all the submissives.'[36] This hegemony, Laclau and Mouffe continue, 'seeks a profound transformation of the terms of political discourse and the creation of a new "definition of reality", which under the cover of the defence of "individual liberty"… [legitimises] inequality and [restores] hierarchical relations.'[37] For Laclau and Mouffe, neoliberalism operates through, and gains its purchase by, redrawing of the boundaries of the social, changing our understanding of 'difference': 'a series of subject positions which were accepted as *legitimate differences* in the hegemonic formation corresponding to the Welfare State are expelled from the field of social positivity and constructed as negativity – the parasites on social security (Mrs Thatcher's "scroungers")'.[38] What it means to be named a 'scrounger' under these neoliberal circumstances will be a key topic in the next chapter.

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[32] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 155,6.
[33] Ibid, 155.
[34] Ibid, 169-170.
[35] Ibid, 175.
[36] Ibid, 170.
[37] Ibid, 176.
[38] Ibid, 176. Italics own.

The dynamic character of hegemony means that neoliberalism could never be simply imposed 'top down' but must be also analysed as a 'bottom up' phenomenon, as hegemony is nestled in perceptions of 'reality'. Laclau and Mouffe posit a number of these: post-World War Two bureaucratisation, with new forms of vigilance, surveillance and regulation; the subordination of an increasing number of spheres to the 'logic of production for profit', i.e. the expansion of areas judged according to their profitability and efficiency; and aspects of New Social Media, which both interpolate individuals as equals while 'uniforming' them equivalently.[39] Laclau and Mouffe see the 'increasing homogenisation of social life itself', which, in turn, explains to them why New Social Movements 'frequently manifest themselves through a proliferation of particularisms, and crystallise into a demand for autonomy itself,' including the desire to be more 'individual' and free for the interventions and machinations of the state.[40] Laclau and Mouffe model an analysis of hegemony which puts the 'everyday' and the explicitly 'political' into dialogue. Chapter seven will later conduct this type of analysis on charities.

Not mentioned by Laclau and Mouffe, but exhibiting a hybridity of liberal and conservative elements in a similar way to the neoliberalism they identify, are the politics of British home ownership.[41] One of Thatcher's most iconic pieces of policy was the 'Right to Buy', a policy which allowed social housing tenants to buy their homes at a discount from local councils. Although originally proposed in the Labour Manifesto of 1959, 'Right to Buy' was brought in by Thatcher in the 1980's Housing Act. It has remained a flagship policy of the Conservative party ever since, renewed by David Cameron in the form of a 'right to buy' for Housing Association stock in 2015.

The economically secured extra-economic (private) status of the home was already commented on in the work of Habermas in chapter three. What Laclau and Mouffe's description of aspects of post-World War Two society can help us to see is why 'Right to Buy', and the British home more generally, might have such cachet. As Michael Heseltine, then UK secretary for the Environment, said at the time: 'Right to Buy' was inspired by the motivation 'to give people what they wanted, and to reverse the trend of ever increasing

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[39] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 162, 160, 163, 164.
[40] Ibid, 164.
[41] Sarah Glynn, eds, *Where the Other Half Live: Lower Income Housing in a Neoliberal World* (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 38-71.

dominance of the state over the life of the individual.'[42] In Laclau and Mouffe's terms, 'Right to Buy' secures for people an exteriority to bureaucracy, observation, forms of vigilance and the intrusion of the state, thus maximising 'freedom'.

Home-ownership also depends on politicised Tory nationalism. Kathleen Arnold reinforces Habermas' point when she says 'the home both allows for and represents an individual's ability for self-preservation and thus represents the capacity for reason. More broadly, the home is a precondition for citizenship just as the homeland is a pre-condition for political autonomy and action.'[43] Buying a home is having a stake in the land, in the materiality of the nation: for Arnold this (imagined but also physical) 'unity of the country' is particularly dangerous if the nation is mis-recognised as a homogenous space.[44] For Arnold, an essentialised national identify will *de facto* in operation form political communities which differentiate themselves internally and externally from 'the Other' (antagonisms), those who inhibit the full realisation of the homeland/home experience of completion.[45] Arnold's book suggests that the homeless unsettle 'being at home': as refugees unsettle the availability of the nation to the nationalist, each must be punished respectively for their uncanny status.[46]

Arnold's book also hints at the economic utility of the home, and its location as a source of identity. If Laclau and Mouffe's comments are right, that the individual in late-capitalism is faced with massification and growing uniformity (or perceives this to be the case), then the home may also provide one with a space in which to create individuality. The home is one of many sites for the production of individuality, an individuality established through consumption (of renovations, extensions, interiors, designs and home improvements). Ironically, as Habermas was aware, the home as a site of autonomy and individuality is demonstrated through complicity in consumption and the performance of the self. While Heseltine's comment depends on a widely perceived verity: autonomy, security and individuality achieved through home ownership, it also stands in need of

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[42] Michael Heseltine, quoted in Tommy Anderson, Lars Ehlers, Lars-Gunnar Svensson, 'Transferring Ownership of Public Housing to Existing Tenants: A Mechanism Design Approach', Lund University, Department of Economics, Working Paper, 2014: 23, 2.

[43] Kathleen R. Arnold, *Homelessness, Citizenship and Identity* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004), 47.

[44] Arnold draws on the excellent work of Benedict Anderson in her discussion of Nationalism and the creation of horizontality and flat time in the shared 'social imaginary' of the modern nation. See Arnold, *Homelessness,* 36. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006).

[45] Arnold, *Homelessness,* 37, 59, 60.

[46] Ibid, 71.

reversal: buying a home demonstrates full acquiescence to the state, as one has taken on the responsibility for the low-cost reproduction of one's own labour, so as to create surplus value for the state and economy more generally.

Discourse, Metaphor, Theology

Like Laclau and Mouffe, Petrella argues for the deepening and development of the trajectories of the modern democratic imagination. Unlike Laclau and Mouffe, Petrella does not explore language as a political phenomenon. Before moving on to consider political theology as a hegemonic discourse, I will return to two problems noted in Petrella's work in chapter three: class and ideals, illuminated by Laclau and Mouffe's account of politics as discourse.

As Petrella himself notes, poverty is a relative concept that can be measured either by an 'absolute standard': 'a basic subsistence standard' or 'the amount of money required to survive'; or, by 'a relative standard', which considers the 'condition of comparative disadvantage' or 'economic marginalisation'.[47] However, this distinction disappears in Petrella's work when he states the 'fact that material deprivation, that is, the deprivation that comes from one's class standing in society, remains the most important form of oppression.'[48] But, because of the centrality of articulation in Laclau and Mouffe's work, a centrality that implies a 'major enlargement of the field of those categories which can account for social relations', this equivalence between a 'fact' and 'oppression' mediated by the term 'class' must be questioned.[49] For Laclau and Mouffe, 'synonym, metonym, metaphor are not forms of thought that add a secondary sense to a primary, constitutive literality of social relations; instead, they are part of the primary terrain itself in which the social is constituted.'[50] What Petrella forgets, in Laclau and Mouffe's terms, is that 'literality is… the first of all metaphors.'[51] This means, in response to Petrella, that there is no apolitical account of class, and that the choice of 'class' language must be buttressed by the defence of a wider hegemonic, discursive project.[52]

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[47] Petrella, *Beyond Liberation*, 53.
[48] Ibid, 82.
[49] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 110.
[50] Ibid, 110.
[51] Ibid, 111.
[52] This thesis will take up the term 'social exclusion', and will not be pursuing 'class' based analysis. However, 'class' is currently on the theo-political agenda, and while I am concerned with Petrella's use of this term in this instance, there are many common themes between those advocating for class

Petrella does articulate a wider political position, one which draws upon the democratic modern imagination, however, in doing so, he argues that Liberation Theologians should move away from theology into other disciplines. Firstly, this is problematic because, as I suggested in my analysis of Milbank's work, there are multiple modern traditions. Secondly, in Petrella's second book, he postulates that 'perhaps the future of Liberation Theology lies beyond theology' where the 'Liberation Theologian need not carry the label of "theologian" and works best under a different disciplinary guise.'[53] A part of Petrella's aim in this text is to '[disentangle] the "liberation" from the "theology" in Liberation Theology'.[54] In Laclau and Mouffe's terms this is problematic because it is metaphors themselves that build 'reality'. In Gutiérrez's language: it is God's commitment to the poor, because God is the God of 'life', which begins Liberation Theology as a political theology, not the ideal of democracy.[55] Both of these problems in Petrella's work (class and theology) circle the importance of language in politics and theology, and his lack of attention to these fields.

Given these problems and my broad commitment to Petrella's work and Liberation Theology more generally, I will now lay out, in dialogue with Laclau and Mouffe, an account of political theology as a hegemonic discourse. First, I will consider the logic of theological language, arguing, with Laclau, that theology depends on the articulation of a chain of equivalence between terms that is potentially infinite in its range. Second, theological language also depends on particular terms that transcend their particularity and come to define the whole chain of displaced signification. Theology examines reference to God expressed in language and is, therefore, paradoxical: a discipline both 'integrated' into all terms and 'free' from full identification with one term in particular or the discourse that one particular term comes to define. Through attention to the logic of theological language itself, I will argue, it is possible to see the coherence of counter-hegemonic political theology as a discourse and discern protocols for the correct articulation of theo-politics. Once this has been explored, I will conclude with some comments on theological

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analysis and the theo-political position advocated in this thesis. See, for example, Joerg Rieger, *Theology, Religion, and Class: Fresh Engagement After Long Silence* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan: 2013)

[53] Petrella, *Beyond Liberation*, 150.

[54] Ibid, 150.

[55] Joerg Rieger, also working within the Liberation Theology tradition, makes the same point here: Joerg Rieger, eds., *Liberating the Future: God, Mammon, and Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1998), 135.

methodology and justifications for including the social sciences and this social theory in theology.

God the Master Signifer

In Gutiérrez's theology it is in reference and response to the 'God of life' that theology begins. Although Laclau and Mouffe organise their account first around 'non-fixity' and move on to 'fixity', to draw links between Gutiérrez's account of theology and Laclau and Mouffe's social theory I am going to invert the argument here and begin with the notion of 'caption' (fixity) – the dependence of theological language on God. Recapping briefly: Laclau and Mouffe, in developing their notion of discourse, argue that 'there have to be partial fixations – otherwise, the very flow of differences would be impossible.'[56] They continue: 'even in order to differ, to subvert meaning, there has to be *a* meaning' for 'any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre.'[57] This arresting of the flow of difference, or the 'privileged discursive points of this partial fixation', they refer to as 'nodal points'.[58] Here, turning to a theological discourse, the privileged discursive point is 'God', the one who fixes meaning by nature of the dependence that theological terms and religious actions have on their source. Theological language would disintegrate without reference to the divine. In Laclau and Mouffe's terms, God is the 'privileged [signifier] that [fixes] the meaning of [the] signifying chain.'[59] Theological language addressed to or about God is consonant, furthermore, with post-structuralism's rejection of 'any return to a conception of unities whose demarcation was given, like nomenclature, by its reference to an object', an innovation which meant that 'the resulting conception was of a relational space unable to constitute itself as such – a field dominated by the desire for a structure that was always finally absent.'[60] I suggest that this is harmonious with theological language about God for God is no 'object' and any theological structure though developed in relation to the divine cannot identify its key term or this structure with God's

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[56] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 112.
[57] Ibid, 112.
[58] Ibid, 112.
[59] Ibid, 112.
[60] Ibid, 113.

self. God is always absent, or transcendent, to thematic or social structural accounts of God.[61]

Before continuing, I will consider the definition of articulation as given by Laclau and Mouffe. Laclau and Mouffe define articulation as 'the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity.'[62] In the form of the political theology that I am developing this would read: the practice of political theology consists in an account of God which provides a criterion or criteria for the normative adjudication of practice and language; and the partial character of these criteria proceed from the multiplicity of political theologies that have been developed, a result, in its turn of the constant overflowing of every theology by the infinity of the field of God. As Laclau and Mouffe say, the difference of the signifier and the signified is not the result of the 'poverty of signifieds' but due to the 'proliferation of signifieds'.[63] The problem on this account is not the difference of 'God' from God but that 'God' in political theology has been normatively deployed to reinforce or support antithetical accounts of social order, personhood or the interpersonal. It is 'polysemy that disarticulates a discursive structure.'[64]

While the term 'Master Signifier' is drawn from a hybrid branch of linguistics and psychoanalysis, Laclau and Mouffe are aware that the naming of God and who God *is* are interknit issues in theology. Laclau says, for example, that a recurrent feature in the history of Christian mysticism is 'a distortion of language that deprives it of all representative function' which 'is the way to point to something that is beyond all representation.'[65] In a similar vein, he maintains the balance of naming and character when he notes 'we want to maintain the ineffable character of the experience of the divinity, and we want at the same time to show through language such an ineffable presence.'[66] Because, as Laclau observes, God is transcendent, God goes beyond any positive descriptive term, even 'master

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[61] This is a point taken from my reading of Gutiérrez's non/identification of salvation and liberation, and Milbank's rejection of God univocally understood as being in 'being' equal to people.

[62] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 113.

[63] Ibid, 113.

[64] Ibid, 113.

[65] Laclau, 'Names of God', *Political Theologies*, 138.

[66] Ibid, 138.

signifier'. This is a crucial qualification drawn from the history of the '*via negativa*' in Christian theology, but it is not, as Laclau rightly concludes, the end of theology.[67]

For Laclau, this is not the end of theological language for in the choice of equivalence drawn in the *via negativa* (in 'The Names of God' these include: 'not soul, not intellect, not spoken, not thought'[68]) a particular logic can be discerned. In this 'equivalential enumeration… I can perfectly replace "not imagination", "not logos", and "not intellection" with the equivalential succession "imagination", "logos", and "intellection".'[69] In both cases one is saying the same thing for 'if I have to concentrate – in order to establish the equivalence – on what "imagination", "logos", and "intellection" have in common, I have to drop the particularised meaning of each of these terms, and if the chain of equivalence is extended enough, it can become the way of expressing something that exceeds the representational context of all its links – that is, the "ineffable".'[70] The suitability of the designator 'master signifier' is not, therefore, in its representative particularity but comes instead from its relation, like 'God', to the chain of the all. In Laclau's terms 'we can conclude that to say "God" is something different from any particular attribute that we can predicate of Him and to say that He expresses himself through the *totality* of what exists is to say the same thing.'[71]

Thinking God as a 'nodal point' anchoring a hegemonic discourse is valid for two reasons: firstly, theologically and linguistically, it reminds us of God's transcendence to any positive term, name or metaphor while, secondly, it maintains the relation of God to all things, names and metaphors as unitary totality. This is an important point because it is God's transcendence to any of God's names which means it is not possible to defend totalitarian total fixity of an order on theo-political grounds. Secondly, it is important because the transcendence of God makes *critique* possible: the externality of God to any order means all orders can be critiqued through reference to the God who is beyond any one order. However, two further problems do present themselves here: the first is that it appears that no determinate name of God can be substantially valid. This is because God, as God, transcends any name of God, which can also be expressed: there is a depth to

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[67] A crucial qualification particularly for a theo-politics which seeks to consciously engage with a plural social, cultural and political context.

[68] This is a short indicative set of equivalential particulars taken from a longer list in the work of Dionysius Areopagite. Laclau, 'Names of God', *Political Theologies*, 138.

[69] Laclau, 'Names of God', *Political Theologies*, 140.

[70] Ibid, 140.

[71] Ibid, 140.

God's names which no human can fully understand. The second is that though the chain of equivalence is related to the all the full achievement of this difference of signification would be an identity of all particular terms. In Laclau's words: 'we would have destroyed the equivalential relation and made it collapse into simple identity.'[72] Laclau continues: 'if the equivalence becomes absolutely universal, the differential particularism of its links necessarily collapses. We would have an undifferentiated identity in which *any* term would refer to the totality, but in that case the totality – the absolute – could be named in an immediate, direct way, and its transcendent dimension, which is essential to the mystical experience (and discourse) would have been lost.'[73] While on the other hand, 'if the equivalence remains an equivalence and does not collapse into identity, it will be *less* than universal.'[74] To this point, the necessary but insufficient particularity of religious experience and language, the Orthodox response is to consider revelation and the history of Christian responses to revelation. For, as Gutiérrez repeatedly notes, theology cannot do without history or the church. Revealed religion, the address of God to wo/men, primarily in the person of Jesus Christ, is a particularity that sustains the possibility of transcendence and universality. This was brought to the fore in the links Gutiérrez draws between the historical liberation of Israel from Egypt and the development of the doctrine of YHVH as the creative God in chapter two.

While Laclau does not appeal to revelation, he does make an interesting further step in his argument: he suggests that mystical experience and experience in general display analogical features. For Laclau, the particular and the universal exist in a dynamic relationship. Taking Lacan's analysis of the mirror stage, Laclau suggests that the person is suspended between an awareness of their own lack or finitude and the image in the mirror of a complete person who appears to posses a fictional wholeness. In the mirror we appear complete. This experience of 'fullness' becomes the quintessential expression of human striving for ultimate fullness beyond split finitude – a maintenance of the transcendent and immanent in the quotidian. For Laclau 'the object that would bring about such an ultimate fullness is the beyond that the mystic claims he or she is directly experiencing. As such, it is something that accompanies *all* possible experience.'[75] Secondly, Laclau defends the particular in support of the possibility of the universal. He says 'the differential

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[72] Ibid, 143.
[73] Laclau, 'Names of God', *Political Theologies*, 143.
[74] Ibid, 143.
[75] Ibid, 144.

particularity of its terms must be weakened, but not entirely lost. What are the effects of the remaining particularity? The main one is to put limits on those links that can become part of the equivalential chain.'[76] Or, again, 'the only possible conclusion is that the very condition of the "beyond" is not indifferent to the differential contents whose equivalence is the condition of its representation.'[77] In this way Laclau suggests that transcendence is not simply an external referent for political theology as a hegemonic discourse, but is internally necessary to the experience of lived life. The distinction between natural and revealed religion is therefore blurred in the continuity of religious experience and quotidian experience. However, the choice of a particular – such as revelation, or orthodox dogmatics – will inform one's understanding of completeness, wholeness, totality or the Absolute – the person(s) of God. And, what we name God is always linked to our understanding of who S/He is. In the terms of Gutiérrez: the 'experience of the poor' is key to the chain of theological equivalences that changes and makes possible talk about God. Yet this 'experience' can not be separated from 'theology' for they are reciprocal, one cannot identity a 'first' but it is the first in a chain as it affects what succeeds it.

Finally, following Gutiérrez's example of the poor, we cannot say a priori that this is a correct theological particular. For if 'there were an a priori logic linking the experience of the absolute to particular contents, the link between the incarnated absolute and its incarnating contents would have become a necessary one, and the absolute would have lost its dimension of beyond.'[78] We would be able to 'name God in a direct way' or have 'discursive mastery of his essence.'[79] Instead, theology takes place at the junction of two paradoxes: 'an absolute that can only be actualised by being something less than itself, and a particular whose only destiny it to be the incarnation of a "sublimity" that transcends its own body.'[80] Read with Gutiérrez, Laclau's work suggests that there is something particularly important about the experience of and praxis with the poor for theology, *and* that the church cannot know before hand that turning to the poor will bring it closer to God, as the poor cannot be sure that their cries for justice are the rumblings of the divine. Both the poor and the church must take a risk on God, stake something on the unknown while being led by what they do know of the divine: God's historical address to humanity.

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[76] Ibid, 144.
[77] Laclau, 'Names of God', *Political Theologies*, 145.
[78] Ibid, 147.
[79] Ibid, 147.
[80] Ibid, 147.

Why have I laid out, at length, Laclau's understanding of theology as a discourse? Firstly, this is because Laclau's essay broaches, justifies and begins to substantiate the links I am developing (in lieu of a number of problems noted in existing Liberation Theology) between society as language and theology as language, thereby legitimising my exploration of theology as counter-hegemonic political discourse. Secondly, Laclau's insightful theological reflections (though unfortunately brief) show that different master signifiers give discursive orders distinct shapes: in this instance, reference to God demands the critique of any claim to totality (as God transcends creation) *and* the possibility of every 'element' being included in a discursive whole (because God as creator continues to participate in all of creation). Both of these must be paradoxically maintained. Thirdly, Laclau's essay blurs, like Gutiérrez's work more generally, any clear or final distinction between 'revelation' or 'experience' as the sole foundation of theology, or unitary point of departure for theological methodology. The purpose of a 'theology of liberation', Gutiérrez tells us, is to 'let ourselves be judged by the Word of the Lord' and to 'give reason for our hope from within a commitment' (to the poor, as the preceding lines make clear) 'which seeks to become more radical, total, efficacious.'[81]

Theological methodology, in the light of these comments, begins with the reception of God's disclosure of God's self in the history and activity of Word and church (along with church teachings) *and* an account of the person who is capable of receiving, experiencing and responding to this revelation of God: demonstrated quintessentially for Gutiérrez in those people who 'hope', those people who are 'committed'. Both are necessary conditions that must be met if theological methodology is to be pursued; Laclau's work holds open this double beginning because he attends to both the structures of human knowing (the transcendent in the immanent) and the importance of particular historically transmitted, but ineffable, signifiers – theology occurs at the juncture of two paradoxes. In closing this chapter, I will suggest that thinking theological methodology as 'spiral' is a helpful image for imagining this theology.

Spiral

The cyclical relationship of orthodoxy and orthopraxis in Gutiérrez's work, evident in a more immanent and limited sense in Petrella's advocacy of juxtaposing the praxis of institutions with their ideals, is complemented by a second image: theological methodology

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[81] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, ix.

as 'steps' (see chapters two and three for reviews of these writings). The 'steps' metaphor does have a palpable strength: it begins with the experiences and voices of the poor, draws in academics and church, and ends with an enlarged conversation, a greater solidarity, with new forms of praxis.

The spiral, already a popular way of exploring theological method[82], retains both the 'cyclical' and the 'progressive' (it is both ascending and returning) while not depending on a first step. Fiorenza says theological methodology is 'spiral' in character as 'through a back and forth movement the method seeks to bring into equilibrium the principles reconstructed from practice with the practice itself.'[83] Like Gutiérrez, Fiorenza says that theological methodology should begin with 'the historical manifestation of the religious dimension of life as it is exhibited in a particular religious tradition'[84] but that it cannot end there because 'a religious tradition does not exist as a self evident identity, but rather needs to be interpreted so that its identity can be discerned.'[85] In continuity with this methodology, this thesis began, in the introduction, with the commitment of Christian charities to work with and for homeless people, but moved on from this to an exploration of theology, particularly the doctrine of creation. Like Gutiérrez, Fiorenza argues that the social sciences do have a place in the production of theology. They provide 'background theories' such as 'relevant background notions about human nature, or human society.'[86] Methodologically, then, the spiral rises and returns back over itself in non-identical repetition, and social sciences, when incorporated into political theology, must be shown to be both 'relevant' (returning back over the theological, lead by the theological curve) and non-identical: distinct from the theological and not determining in advance the content of theology or its own grammar. Laclau and Mouffe's work helps us name this 'spiral': discourse, while exhibiting a model which maintains the dynamic interplay of the elements (which become 'moments') 'principles' and 'practices'.

Finally, how do we know that this theology is 'progressive', moving towards a legitimate theological end? For Gutiérrez, the four step methodology returns to new forms of praxis which bring about integral liberation. Fiorenza argues that the theological spiral

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[82] See Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 142–147. Ray L. Hart, *Unfinished Man and the Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001). Fiorenza, *Foundational*, 301.

[83] Fiorenza, *Foundational*, 302.

[84] Ibid, 305.

[85] Ibid, 304.

[86] Ibid, 310.

also includes certain 'warrants'. Retroductive warrants are distinguished from 'inductive' and 'deductive' warrants in Fiorenza's work. While deductive justifications move from axioms to theorems and inductive warrants 'generalises particular cases', retroductive warrants are a weaker form of proof and work on the premise that 'argument is accepted because the hypothesis generates illuminating inferences.'[87] A theory is valid if is it 'more successful than others in explaining more data, more problems, and more conundrums… moreover, a theory is more warranted to the degree that it can guide praxis.'[88] Praxis is a key part of legitimisation for if a theory can guide praxis it 'generates consensus, leads to further development, and is a warrant that corroborates the theory', says Fiorenza.[89] In the next chapter the hypothesis 'charities are dual' will be tested according to its ability to explain the problems confronted by contemporary charities, and in the last chapter I will suggest that the doctrine of creation can guide praxis. In both these instances, the warrant for taking up theological methodology, imaged as 'spiral', is the same as that warrant suggested by Gutiérrez in chapter two: the ability of theology to generate solidarity.

Conclusion

By arguing that an investigation of the social is also an exploration of language, and that both are fields in which power is exercised, assented to, or redefined, this chapter has sought to show that institutions, like charities, operate within a wider horizon that shapes their aims, objectives, methods and rationales. This social theory, garnered from the work of Laclau and Mouffe, also opened an avenue for the beginning of an enquiry into theology as a particular discourse, one which conceives of itself as hegemonic in relation to the signifier God. As the next chapter will deepen and develop my analysis of charities as institutions operating in a neoliberal context, it is worth reiterating what has been noted concerning neoliberalism in this chapter.

This chapter has identified four traits of contemporary neoliberalism. First, neoliberalism is a hegemonic arrangement of disparate parts which are not inherently predisposed to sit harmoniously together (it is conservative-liberal). In the next chapter I will therefore investigate the inclusion or differentiation of civil society from the state and neoliberalism, asking: is civil society autonomous from the contemporary state, or a

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[87] Fiorenza, *Foundational*, 307.
[88] Ibid, 307.
[89] Ibid, 307.

tributary of the state, and are charities oppositional to the current neoliberal order or an alternative internal to neoliberalism and thus a surreptitious means for its self-legitimisation? Secondly, neoliberalism draws on and produces particular subjects and experiences, it depends on a particular articulation of 'freedom' – important in contemporary politics and economics is the freedom to sell one's labour. In the next chapter I will ask whether the charitable volunteer and the neoliberal worker are linked, and, if so, whether the 'selflessness' of the volunteer substantiate the dignity of homeless people, or re-enforce the normativity of the volunteer and the labourer? Thirdly, neoliberalism is not simply 'anti-state' but a politics of state reformation, now orientated to the generation of a particular kind of populace and economy (the maximising of profit and efficiency). This will lead me to ask: how do state mechanisms (including the use of language) factor in the creation of the work force, and how do antagonisms manifest in this articulation? Fourthly, if hegemony influences what one can know and the location of knowing ('the market knows what the state doesn't'), then how does 'knowledge' of homelessness and homeless people influence the relative allocation of tasks to the respective fields of civil society, state and economy? These will be key areas of investigation in the next chapter.

The second half of this chapter took up theological methodology, developing the four step methodology in the direction of the theological spiral. Using Laclau's reflections on theological language, I argued for God as the Master-Signifier, while identifying the distinction/relation of signifier/signified as an important protocol for all reference to God. In conclusion to this section I will make a series of suggestions: firstly, that considering God as the Master-Signifier would lead to a discourse distinct from neoliberalism, to a different social arrangement, antagonisms, definition of contested terms (e.g. freedom), delineation of spheres, legitimate ends and subject positions. Secondly, that as the Master-Signifier (quilting point) God relates to all and theology is thus directly political: the articulation of the whole world in relation to God. Thirdly, with the aforementioned linguistic/theological protocol, political theology must include strong provisos against the identification of theo-political discourse with the complete realisation of God's kingdom (this is the return of Gutiérrez's distinction/integration of liberation and salvation). There will always remain work to be done, because God remains transcendent to any order justified, or action undertaken, or gift given, in his or her name(s). To the paradox of creation (inside and outside of God), this chapter has added a second layer: theological

language is paradoxical; 'God' refers to God, while everywhere and always falling short of God.

Chapter Seven
The Duality of Charity
Introduction

In this chapter I will argue that charities are dual, both conducive to, and inhibiting of, the lives of homeless people: a 'spectacular failure', to use the phrase of David Owen, the historian of English charities.[1] This hypothesis will be developed through the examination of three interlocking spheres: the changing relationship of civil society and the state in Britain, the volunteer who seeks to transform the social excluded homeless person, and the selfless bestowal, and varying reception of, charitable donations. Through exploring these three fields, I will attempt to show a consonance between the double truths of neoliberalism and the duality of charity. This leads me to the conclusion that contemporary charities tend to reinforce the current neoliberal arrangement. Although I will engage with a range of authors speaking for and asking questions of charitable practices, it is the work of popular historian and charitable advocate Frank Prochaska to which I will repeatedly turn.

This chapter is split into three sections, each a short section on one of the aforementioned topics. In the first section, I will chart the rise, fall and return of civil society as a popular sector in the delivery of British welfare services – arguing that the shadow state of civil society is the extension of state authority, though it is presented and defended on the grounds of its autonomy and independence.[2] In the second section, charities which orientate themselves to transformation, in a context organised by the narrative of 'social exclusion', will be examined, and I will argue that charitable services for homeless people uncritically substantiate the normativity of the neoliberal person thereby reinforcing the exclusion they seek to help overcome. In the third section, I will argue that a common ideal type of gift giving, donation conducted 'selflessly', occludes what can be gained in charitable giving, and, secondly, that repetitive generosity is liable to entrench power and agency differentials, to not really empower. What gives these three spheres their coherence is a continuity of aim – to elucidate the duality of charity – and of themes: the legitimacy and authority of neoliberalism, its mechanisms of power/coercion; the formation of the workforce and its relationship to 'the Other'; links or dissonances

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[1] David Owen, *English Philanthropy, 1660 – 1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 6.
[2] A longer history than the one presented here, but raising comparable questions can be found in Martin Dauton, eds., *Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in the English Past* (London: UCL Press, 1996). Or: Lee Davison, eds., *Stilling the Grumbling Hive* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1992).

between empowerment and agency; social inclusion and social exclusion enacted in norms concerning what it is to be human, to love and to be free.

From Civil Society to the State

Prochaska makes an important observation in his account of the British state and its relationship to charity. Prochaska notes that when poverty is understood as primarily an issue associated with personal failing, civil society has traditionally been perceived to be the most expedient realm of social amelioration and the reduction of suffering, resulting in the state's responsibility and capacity being rolled back. This, I will suggest, is doubly problematic. First, the volunteer who acts on this basis, although they are addressing a 'moral' failing through an action beyond/outside the remit of the state, also thereby reinforces a particular kind of political order, and a theory of the state. This ethical/religious action spills over into an anti-state, more specifically, pro-political, act: charity promotes a tangible kind of politics. Laclau and Mouffe's work allows me to develop this further, if homeless people are an 'antagonism' and the allocation of the task of inclusion is given to charities then homelessness as an issue becomes apolitical, not one related to the composition of the social and of politics more generally.[3] Yet, for Laclau and Mouffe, antagonisms are the recalcitrant precipitate of hegemonic orders, created in the definition and sedimentation of discourses (i.e. homelessness is related housing and the current political and economic importance of home ownership). Charitable works distinguished from state assemblages inadvertently lead to the tightening of the hold of neoliberalism, paying dues/deference, indirectly, to the social order which creates homelessness, though it takes the form of an address to the homeless directly. One further point on this, the devolution of a state safety net on the basis of third sector provision can exacerbate homelessness itself and the numbers of those in this terrible condition, as the last five years have shown[4]; helping homeless people in this way lends credence to the very thing that hurts them. Herein lies the duality of current charities: the presumed autonomy of civil society from the state (and of homeless people from the hegemonic), which lends weight to a certain, specific political civil society/state arrangement and kind of politics.

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[3] Thia Cooper, writing about development charities and Liberation Theology, makes a comparable point about a similar topic when she says that charities exhibit a tendency towards 'unreflexive praxis'. Cooper, *Controversies*, 172.

[4] Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Hal Pawson, Glen Bramley, Steve Wilcox, Beth Watts, *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2015* (London: Crisis, 2015).

Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain, the Disinherited Spirit traces what are for Prochaska the associated decline of church activity in civil society and social provision with the increasing secularisation of society as the state takes over the roles that were once within the remit or bounds of the church. [5] This thesis is implied in the subtitle, the 'Disinherited Spirit', for Prochaska contests that a Victorian spirit of individual and communal activity in civil society, which is, for Prochaska, necessary to the maintenance of a healthy and plural democracy, will be curtailed if British Christianity continues to decline. Prochaska describes *Christianity and Social Service* as a contribution to 'the history of social service, religious decline, and democratic tradition', matters 'worth revisiting in their own right' but ones that 'also resonate in the current debate on the future of British social democracy.'[6] Prochaska's text is both historically orientated and the defence of a political discourse, a contribution directed towards a particular form of the tripartite constitution of state, market and civil society.

In Prochaska's analysis, the Victorian period's emphasis on charity was formed in relation to the widespread proliferation of the Evangelical societies and their concomitant social attitudes. Although some Evangelicals chose to give intermittently and sporadically, Evangelicals ran, according to Prochaska, 'perhaps as many as three out of four voluntary sector societies in the second half of the nineteenth century.'[7] Prochaska notes the concurrence of this social activism with the inculcation of certain social views and expectations about the person, a view comparable with David Owen who says that 'British Philanthropy, like Victorian society as a whole, became tinctured with the Evangelical spirit.'[8]

The transformation of the poor or homeless person in charity, articulated in a context deeply affected by the prevalence of Evangelical attitudes, found its purchase in the reformation, materially and spiritually, of the individual, in a certain kind of 'conversion'.[9]

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[5] Frank Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain, The Disinherited Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[6] Ibid, vii, viii.

[7] Ibid, 12.

[8] David Owen in Ibid, 12.

[9] For the importance of 'conversion' to the Evangelical tradition, see David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989). Bebbington's text is an important book which suggests that the four key characteristics of the Evangelical tradition during the modern period are (1) Biblicism (2) Crucicentrism (3) Activism and (4) Conversionism.

Prochaska finds in the work of Samuel Smiles (b. 1812 – d. 1904) a writer representative of the Victorian times and one for whom the amelioration of poverty 'consists not so much in altering laws and modifying institutions, as in helping and stimulating men to elevate and improve themselves by their own free and independent action… no laws, however stringent, can make the idle industrious, the thriftless provident, or the drunken sober.'[10] Here charity seeks to elicit a transformation that 'can only be effected by means of individual action, economy and self-denial, by better habits, rather than greater rights.'[11] Prochaska notes in this milieu an inclination 'to attribute the source of social problems to individual failings' from which was inferred 'that the remedy must be found in personal reformation, assisted by discretionary charity.'[12] Derek Fraser sees these trends exhibited in the Charitable Organisation Society, formed in 1869, which aimed to 'devise and execute scientific methods of social casework and to educate and reform the recipients of charity so that they might become once more independent, self-respecting individuals.'[13] The inclusion of new social scientific methods for the extension of knowledge and knowing into charitable endeavours and its results was executed to rebut accusations that charity was 'counterproductive, helping to promote that very poverty it sought to alleviate.'[14] C.S. Loch (b. 1849 – d. 1923), secretary of the Charitable Organisation Society from 1875 – 1913 said 'we must use charity to create the power of self help', the kind of agency that would allow them to be 'capable of engaging in market exchange and participating fully in civil society', as a recent historian of the Charitable Organisation Society has said.[15] For Prochaska, and this is where there is a vacillation between the historically descriptive and the politically normative, while personal transformation is seen as integral to the emancipation of the poor, charity, rather than state provision, will be the *de facto* arena of social amelioration; in Prochaska's words: 'charity would prevail over state assistance only so long as moral reformation was thought to be the best remedy for

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[10] Samuel Smiles in Prochaska, *Christianity*, 10.

[11] Smiles in Ibid, 10.

[12] Ibid, 6.

[13] Derek Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 156.

[14] Ibid, 154.

[15] C.S. Loch in ibid, 158. Jane Lewis, *The Voluntary Sector, The State and Social Work in Britain* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1995), 11.

indigence.'[16] It is the construal of the problem of poverty as individual failing that reinforces the charitable solution.

Yet charity as the solution to poverty would, at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, come under increasing and ultimately unbearable scrutiny. Prochaska notes that 'from the late nineteenth century the persistence of poverty became increasingly embarrassing in a society of obvious wealth that prided itself on social improvement.'[17] Charities were critiqued for 'their patchiness and lack of co-ordination'.[18] And there were increasingly those who believed that 'benevolence was not scientific enough nor comprehensive enough to address the causes of poverty.'[19] By 1948, with the rise of the welfare state, Prochaska quotes from an opinion poll that 'found that 90% of people no longer thought that there was a role for charity in Britain.'[20]

In the post-World War 2 boom years, charity was considered to be ancillary to the alleviation of poverty, it was 'the oil crisis of the mid -1970s' and the perceived 'spending limits of state social services', says Prochaska, that 'propelled a revival of interest in the charitable sector.'[21] Fraser again: until the late 1970s both major British parties contested to be seen as the progenitors and protectors of the 'classic welfare state', a '"social and democratic" policy consensus, which also included the adoption of Keynesian economics, a commitment to full employment and a high level of government intervention, expenditure and planning.'[22] In Prochaska's analysis it was under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher that 'central government became a reluctant patron of the welfare state, and the emphasis in health and social services shifted to the pursuit of efficiency, private-sector expansion, and pluralism', goals that the charitable sector could supposedly deliver due to its 'diversity, innovation and cost effectiveness.'[23] Interestingly, Prochaska suggests these were sentiments that 'had been little commended since the heyday of Victorian Liberalism.'[24] Thatcher's success was built, in part, on her advocacy of a small state and a commendation of volunteerism, in a speech to the Women's Royal Voluntary service she spoke of 'the voluntary movement… at the heart of all our social welfare provision' while

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[16] Prochaska, *Christianity*, 13.
[17] Ibid, 24, 25.
[18] Frank Prochaska, *Schools of Citizenship, Charity and Civic Virtue* (London: Civitas, 2002), 27.
[19] Ibid, 28.
[20] Prochaska, *Christianity*, 149.
[21] Ibid, 161.
[22] Fraser, *British Welfare*, 287.
[23] Prochaska, *Christianity*, 161, 162.
[24] Ibid, 162.

reminding the audience that 'we politicians and administrators must not forget that the state has a limited role.'[25]

But this was not Thatcher's work alone. The demise of the classic welfare state – the end of a consensus across the British political spectrum concerning the state's roles and aims - and the ascendancy of British neoliberalism was brought about by a range of actors who extended their influence throughout the 1950s, 1960s and into the 1970s. Lionel Robbins (member of the MPS), and Professor of Economics at the London School of Economics (LSE) from 1929 to 1961, brought Hayek to LSE 'to fortify the intellectual efforts against Keynes' in 1931.[26] The LSE would go onto become a bulwark of British neoliberalism, influencing young economists in the UK and across the empire through its external degrees in commerce and economics.[27] Another primary institution for the inculcation of neoliberal ideas was the Institute for Economic Affairs (founded in 1955), which worked 'chiefly in the field of economic journalism, publishing pamphlets and seeking influence on public opinion, opinion formers, and politicians.'[28] Thatcher, 'perceiving the academic establishment to be arrayed on a spectrum from left liberal to socialist', turned for advice 'to individuals associated with the Institute of Economic Affairs and the Adam Smith Institute' on her appointment as Prime Minister.[29] For Keith Tribe, this was when 'think tanks and external advisors became a fixture in public administration', marginalising the university economic mainstream (as can be seen in the rejection of the letter signed by 364 academic economists in 1981 which argued that government policy would lead to rising unemployment and factory closures). Tribe closes his essay in *The Road to Mount Pèlerin* with this observation: 'neoliberal "economism" increasingly dominated the public domain, a discourse of markets and liberty whose lack of intellectual credibility was no obstacle to its propagation and execution. When a New Labour government at last returned in 1997, it would extend and deepen this trend.'[30]

This project, the reintegration of charities into mainstream social services, also received a significant impetus from the collapse of the Soviet project in 1989, bringing back to the fore the end of history and ascendancy of neoliberal capitalism noted by some Liberation Theologians in chapter three. For Prochaska '1989 effectively changed the

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[25] Thatcher in Prochaska, *Christianity*, 162.
[26] Mirowski, Plehwe, *Mount Pèlerin*, 28.
[27] Ibid, 69.
[28] Ibid, 89.
[29] Ibid, 90.
[30] Ibid, 90, 91.

language of politics, reshaping the context in which charity was understood. In the 1990's charity came to be elided with notions of civil society or community service, which made it much more palatable.'[31] It was in this political context that Tony Blair could state, in 1994, that it was in 'casting aside the rigid dogmas of the past… that we can begin to see a new and exciting role for the voluntary sector – not an optional extra but a vital part of our economy.'[32] This is New Labour's 'Third Way' a 'devolved form of government control that turns the intermediary institutions of civil society into agencies of the state through contracts and financial control', Prochaska says.[33] This can be seen, for example, in that during the mid 1980's 10% of charitable revenue came from government sources, while ten years later 'the figure stood at 45% while donations from individuals declined.'[34] The 're-placing' of charities in the last thirty years can be seen in their numbers and growing income streams. Three points are notable here: firstly, there has been a huge increase in the number of charities registered, up from 56,000 in 1948 to around 180,000 today (including a huge growth in the number of environmental and conservation groups). Secondly, the character of these charities has altered dramatically, the older models 'replaced by ones in which large-scale NGOs have emerged that rely less on the face-to-face interaction of members'.[35] International institutions have monopolised the charitable field, fuelling a sector that has become 'an economic powerhouse in its own right.'[36] Thirdly, 'the total income of all charities has risen from around £12 Billion in 1970 to over £50 Billion today', holding general assets that have tripled in 30 years, from 'just over £30 Billion in 1980 to one of around £100 Billion today.'[37]

Under the leadership of Tony Blair, these variant trends – the separation *and* integration of civil society into the state apparatus – have continued. As Anthony Giddens, a key thinker of Tony Blair's 'Third Way' made palpably clear, voluntary groups had an important role to play in the British social landscape and in the life of the polis.[38] The authors of *A Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain* make the same point: 'from the 1980s,

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[31] Prochaska, *Christianity*, 164.
[32] Ibid, 164, 5.
[33] Ibid, 165.
[34] Ibid, 166.
[35] Matthew Hilton, Nick Crowson, Jean-François Mouhot, James McKay, *A Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain, Charities, Civil Society and the Voluntary Sector since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 31.
[36] Ibid, 31.
[37] Ibid, 27 – 31.
[38] Antony Giddens, *The Third Way, The Renewal of Social Democracy* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2000), 69–98.

despite many in the [third] sector having concerns over the ideological climate, they found themselves being co-opted into service provision as the state looked to reduce public expenditure and lured organisations with grants from government bodies'.[39] For homeless people, the Blairite years were ambiguous. The Social Exclusion Unit, inaugurated in 1997, was set up to join up provisions for the inclusion of the socially excluded, overseeing a drop in the numbers of (visible) rough sleepers. In 2001 they stated they had met their target of reducing rough sleeping numbers by two thirds by 2001, though in 2008 they recognised that homelessness remained a significant problem and, in the report *No-one Left Out – Communities Ending Rough Sleeping* set the ambitious but laudable target of ending rough sleeping 'once and for all'.[40] These Labour years also saw significant falls in statutory homelessness (due to developments in preventative measures) and improvements in legal protection for youth homelessness.[41] Yet, housing prices continued to climb, there was a lack of affordable housing, the punitive use of benefits sanctions was increased[42], migration from eastern Europe drove up numbers of rough sleepers and Blair did little to de-link dignity from paid work.

Developed in opposition, David Cameron's 'Big Society' was a key facet of his compassionate Conservative re-orientation of the party (before moving to a narrative built around austerity, when in office).[43] Playing on Thatcher's 'there is no society', Big Society melded the Conservative sense that 'the state had become too large… stripping people of their sense of personal and social responsibility' with liberal concerns with surveillance and the state being 'no longer accountable to its citizens': liberal-conservative hegemony.[44] In lieu of (perceived) state failure, that 'social mobility and progress had stalled' despite increased spending by the state drawn from the taxation of citizens, Big Society expressed the conviction that 'the means for social invigoration were to be found in social

[39] Hilton, *et al.*, *NGOs in Britain*, 41.

[40] Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Hal Pawson, Glen Bramley, Steve Wilcox, *The Homelessness Monitor, Tracking the Impacts of Policy and Economic Change in England 2011 – 2013* (London: Crisis, 2011), 4. Communities and Local Government 'No-One Left Out – Communities Ending Rough Sleeping' (London: CLG, 2008). And, Fitzpatrick, *et al.*, *Homelessness 2011*, 4. This task was taken on by the Coalition Government, though they were reticent to specify a timescale.

[41] Fitzpatrick, *et al.*, *Homelessness 2011*, 30.

[42] Manchester Citizens Advice Bureau Cluster Group, *Punishing Poverty: A Review of Benefits Sanctions and their Impacts on Clients and Claimants* (Manchester: Manchester CAB Services, 2013), 4.

[43] On the Big Society, see Jesse Norman, *The Big Society: The Anatomy of the New Politics* (Buckingham: University of Buckingham Press, 2010). Or: Phillip Blonde, *The Red Tory* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010).

[44] Hilton, *et al.*, *NGOs in Britain*, 283.

entrepreneurs, community activists, and by giving people once again the means and encouragement to participate in the running of their country.'[45] Recalling a golden age of citizen agency the Big Society is more than representative, 'the Big Society is normative in that it takes a particular time and place, real or imagined, and argues that diversions from this norm are necessarily wrong.'[46] Mostly welcomed, there was, nevertheless, the widespread concern articulated that Big Society was merely an ill-defined means for dissolving governmental responsibilities and sugar-coating the cuts brought about by the 2010 – 2015 Coalition, that the Big Society is 'aspirational waffle designed to conceal a deeply damaging withdrawal of the state from its responsibilities to the most vulnerable', to use the words of Rowan Williams.[47]

In this context, of funding, regulation and promotion of civil works by the state, the Coalition introduced 'The Lobby Bill' (Transparency of Lobbying, Non-party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014). Partly in response to the Falkirk Scandal, and though amended slightly in its final readings, The Lobbying Bill (popularly known as 'The Gagging Bill') stipulated a series of changes in the reach and means of British Charities in their operations. Opponents of the Bill claimed only 1% of Lobbying activity would be monitored by it (as it only effected professional lobbyists).[48] Opposed by Friends of the Earth, Oxfam, The Royal British Legion, Action for Children, Countryside Alliance, Islamic Relief UK, National Federation of Women's Institutes, the RSPB, the Salvation Army and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, and others, and questioned by the cross bench Lord Harris, chair of the Commission on Civil Society, the Bill mandates that organisations spending more than £5,000 in England (£2,000 in Scotland) on 'non-party campaigning' would be forced to register with the Electoral Commission. Non-governmental organisations, who could previously spend up to £989,000 before general elections could now only spend £390,000; the sting, however, resided in the tail, as 'non-party campaigning' was 'so vague that it covered pretty much any issue, ranging from calling for more resources for treating cancer to dealing with the

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[45] Hilton, *et al.*, *NGOs in Britain*, 284.

[46] Ibid, 284.

[47] Rowan Williams, 'Big Society – Small World', *Faith in the Public Sphere* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 265–278, at. 266. John Milbank on Big Society http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2010/11/30/3080680.htm accessed /08/05/2015. Despite their concerns, both Williams and Milbank leant their qualified support to the Big Society concept.

[48] http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/oct/20/lords-lobbying-gagging-bill

affordable-housing crisis',[49] while the range of activities that counted as campaigning were equally vague: rallies, events, media work, polling research, transport, and staffing costs.[50] Whether this Bill compromised the right to free speech was debated, yet its effects were clear: the Bill seriously curtailed, in election years, the ability of civil society groups to question the state and conduct public debate. Not only was the Bill swiftly passed into law, the Electoral Commission, now charged with policing charitable involvement in electoral politics, remains unsure about how it is to be enforced, given the baggy definitions and lack of clear motive that drove the Bill in the first place.[51] For most observers, the motive of the British state was clear though, in the words of Labour MP Angela Eagle this piece of legislation '[sought] to silence critics of the Government in the run-up to the general election, while letting vested interests operate out of sight'.[52]

The Lobbying Bill is an excellent example of British neoliberalism in action. Firstly, the Bill protects the vested and monied interests it was supposed to limit, sustaining the profit maxim. Secondly, this goal is not achieved by minimising or bypassing the government's apparatuses but through the mechanisms of the state, its legislation and subsidiary bodies (in this case the Electoral Commission). Thirdly, aimed at maintaining the autonomy of the state from the operations of the market and civil society respectively, and the state's legitimacy more generally, this Bill massages civil society, rendering it mute and internal to the propagation of an unquestionable norm. Neoliberalism is not asocial, or anti-state, but an articulation aimed at the production of the society and the state in the pursuit of defined aims.

So far, I have traced the complex and shifting relationship between civil society and the state in recent, modern, British history. Briefly stated, British history exhibits the Victorian rise, early twentieth century fall, and the late twentieth century return of civil society as a popular and politically expedient realm of welfare provision and social amelioration. However, this return of civil society is not merely the repetition of a

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[49] Owen Jones, *The Establishment* (St Ives: Penguin Books, 2015), 80.
[50] British Unions, already some of the most carefully observed in the EU, and according the European Court of Human Rights, unlawfully regulated by the British State, also did badly out of this Bill: they were hugely limited in the amount of spending they are allowed to commit during an election year.
[51] http://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/2013/09/03/the-electoral-commission-says-the-governments-lobbying-bill-is-bad-law-thats-unenforceable-and-a-massive-burden-on-free-speech/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+org%2FlWWh+(Tax+Research+UK+2) accessed 07/05/2015
[52] http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm131009/debtext/131009-0003.htm#13100979000736 Accessed 07/05/2015

Victorian (let alone natural, or British) norm but a non-identical return in a new context, a context in which the value of the state facilitated welfare is widely debated and often cut-back or curtailed. So too has returned the language of lazy, feckless and idle poor (as will be analysed in my next section on exclusion, transformation and volunteerism), along with the articulated necessity of civil society autonomy. This leads me to my point concerning the duality of charity: that civil society is being co-opted by the state, as my analysis of the Lobbying Bill suggested, while the state justifies the importance of civil society on the basis of civil society's autonomy.[53]

I concluded the last chapter by posing a series of questions implied by the work of Laclau and Mouffe; in relation to our current political order, I asked whether civil society is distinct from or part of the state, and noted that this is significant for thinking the oppositional or alternative character of contemporary charities. On the basis of the aforementioned analysis, charities are dual in relation to our current order: both internal and external to the state, as charities both support neoliberalism and are sites from which neoliberal order can be critiqued. Internality/externality also requires careful expression, as the (celebrated) autonomy of civil society may be a chimera generated by neoliberalism (part of the problem), while the internality of civil society to the state (as opinion forming, campaigning, and policy forming) might be the basis of their appeal and legitimacy. So too with the oppositional/alternative works of charities, that they operate beyond the bounds of the state, testifying to an oppositional order, is, as I have argued, part of what makes them problematic *and* appealing. The possibility must be held open that charities practice a bad form of inclusion, and that they are involved in the wrong kind of othering.

Transformation, Social Exclusion and Neoliberal Volunteering

The second question that I asked at the end of the last chapter concerned the links between political agency expressed in volunteerism and the entrenchment of neoliberal subjectivity. In this section I will argue that charities are dual as the active, responsible citizen volunteer serves the homeless other with the aim of transforming them (overcoming their social exclusion), that is, making them more like the voluntary self. Not only is this

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[53] Paul Cloke, for example, treats charities as exhibiting 'ethical' rather than 'political' citizenship, and argues that they tend to be oppositional rather than alternatives within neoliberalism. While his work has been very helpful for the development of this thesis, I am not persuaded by these claims and his emphasises. See Beaumont, Cloke, *Faith-Based*, 127–152, 270. Also, Paul Cloke, Jon May, Sarah Johnsen, *Swept Up Lives?: Re-Envisioning the Homeless City* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

'other orientated' and 'self-aggrandising', it leads the volunteer, orientated towards transformation, into a series of problems: the volunteer's expression of will/capacity comes at the cost of the recipient's agency and public empowerment. Secondly, even if the volunteer assists the homeless person in overcoming their dependence on state and charitable welfare, neoliberalism requires active, contributing citizens and this transformation is not necessarily, therefore, the securing of emancipation.[54] Thirdly, this transformation, the extension of the self through the other, is in danger of reinforcing the current order as it can lead to a forgetfulness about the self (since its operation is based on the mythopoeic heteronomy of the other).

Expressed in a context in which inclusion is linked to the dignity secured through work, this litany of dualities leads me to conclude that homeless people are not the socially excluded but the 'included excluded', not too far from the volunteer but too close, utilised by the volunteer as a means for self-creation through a process of differentiation.[55] Secondly, that addressing homeless people as the 'socially excluded', in need of transformation, is both a means for overcoming homeless people's destitution and a mechanism that defines and creates exclusion itself. I will address these concerns by turning again to the work of Proshaka. I will conclude this section by suggesting that both the included and the excluded are judged in relation to one social symbol: work (as homeless are defined negatively in relation to the dominant symbol – home).

As Prochaska argues, the hey-day of British Victorian charity was tied to the promotion and propagation of a particular account of the person. Prochaska went further than this, though, in the suggestion that the association of personal culpability with deprivation reinforces charitable solutions to poverty (in our political, social and economic order) and depreciates the possible role and remit of the state. The abiding import of volunteerism to contemporary charitable practice has been well documented. Kirsten Gronberg, in her introduction to *The Nature of the Non-profit Sector*, argues that charities are marked by five heterogeneous elements: including 'volunteerism'; being concerned with the instigation of goods for their own sake; and being preoccupied less with 'producing goods and services, but rather '[seeking] to change people – their views, values,

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[54] Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage, 2010), 82.
[55] Not only differentiation, but various senses of well-being and positive self-affirmation, see David Gerard, *Charities in Britain* (London: Bedford Square Press, 1983), 21, 22.

behaviors, and/or knowledge'.[56] Charities are then, on this definition, intractably involved in eliciting a certain kind of transformation, a transformation primarily orientated towards the individual.

The centrality of transformation to the works of homelessness charities and some of what is implicit in charitable 'transformation' can be seen in the preponderance of the 'interventionist' agenda of contemporary charities. As Suzanne Fitzpatrick *et al* argue in *The Homelessness Monitor: England 2012*, under the New Labour government charities were encouraged to be 'places of change' that operated with an 'interventionist' attitude which 'focused on re-integrating their service users into mainstream society rather than supporting them in homeless lifestyle'.[57] Fitzpatrick continues by noting that 'this interventionist thinking is now mainstream within homelessness services which receive public funding, though it remains controversial in some quarters.'[58] The role of charities in this context, is the transformation of homeless people from a position of marginal dependence into mainstream production, the overcoming of their 'social exclusion'. While forms of volunteerism have diverged, away from face-to-face models, towards more individualistic and irregular/spontaneous forms of giving, both transformation and the capacity to give money or time remain key facets of charitable practices. In mainstream charitable work, transformation depends on an understanding of who needs to be changed and an account of why they need to be transformed. These are issues which have been shaped by the rhetorical and institutional arrangements built around the concept 'social exclusion'.

Under the New Labour government the responsibility for rough sleepers, the most visible if numerically smallest of the groups of homeless people, was taken on by the

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[56] J. Steven Ott, Lisa A. Dicke, eds., *The Nature of the Nonprofit Sector* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2012), vii, viii.

[57] Fitzpatrick, *et al., Homelessness 2011*, 27. A stress also evident in the Anglican Church Urban Fund, *Tackling Homelessness Together* (2011) http://www.cuf.org.uk/sites/default/files/PDFs/Research/Tackling_Homelessness_Together_Full_Report.pdf. Accessed 12/05/2015. Because of this current trend, I will not be addressing unconditional hospitality as a definitively theological way of approaching charitable work with homeless people, though interesting work has already been pursued in this direction. See, for example, Catherine Duce, 'Church-Based Work with the Homeless: A Theological Exploration of the Practices of Hospitality', *Practical Theology*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2013), 87 – 103. Luke Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell-Wiley, 2010). Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

[58] Fitzpatrick, *et al., Homelessness 2011*, 27.

'Social Exclusion Unit'.[59]   Social exclusion was 'identified and understood as a circumstance of being 'shut out' from cultural, economic and political systems deemed to determine the integration of a person in society.'[60] It is related to multiple needs, as the 'Social Exclusion Unit's' definition in 1997 notes: social exclusion, they said, is 'a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown.'[61] According to Julie MacLeavy, the language of social exclusion is consistently related to the notion of an 'underclass' and 'subjects identified and understood through "stigmatising discourse" in which (only) they are seen as responsible for enhancing their own well-being in contemporary economic circumstances.'[62] MacLeavy's goal in this essay is to show through a 'discourse-based approach' how 'policies – their texts, discourses and implementation strategies – construct subjectivities' which, if successful, can become 'ingrained', over time, 'in "common sense"'.[63]

As Prochaska noted earlier, when personal fallibility is considered to be central to poverty the remit of civil society will expand and the purview of the state will decline. For MacLeavy there was, running concomitant with this language of social exclusion, a movement by the Labour government away from welfare towards new forms of governance. In her words, a 'shift in the relationship between the state and civil society which results in social exclusion being addressed through the increased involvement of individuals, communities and local organisations in the governing of social life.'[64] This reformulation of the relationship between state and civil society came with 'an explicit promotion of paid work as the primary or sole means of integrating individuals of working age into society… an employment-orientated approach' which was a move away from earlier more holistic understandings of the term social exclusion.[65] This can be seen, for MacLeavy, in the 'Welfare to Work' program which prioritised achieving work through personal transformation. In her research on individual consultations between the social

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[59] Fitzpatrick, *et al., Homelessness 2011*, 393.
[60] Julie MacLeavy, 'Neo-Liberalising Subjects: The Legacy of New Labour's Construction of Social Exclusion in Local Governance', *Geoforum*, Vol. 39 (2008), 1657–1666, at. 1658.
[61] Ibid, 1659.
[62] Ibid, 1658
[63] Ibid, 1657, 1658, 1665.
[64] Ibid, 1659
[65] Ibid, 1659.

advisor and the unemployed client in Bristol, MacLeavy notes that the 'prime objective for the advisor is to identify the client's *personal barriers to the labour market*' which she concludes lends, in the long term, 'support to the inculcation of a series of values such as individualism, responsibility, flexibility and adaptability in policy subjects'.[66] For MacLeavy, these practices are a conscious 'privileging of a certain type of citizen, whose economic productivity symbolises their value to society' which, secondly, 'lends support to the removal of a universal right to welfare.'[67]

But how does the nexus 'work – dignity' inform the forms of agency expressed through and formulated by charities? Prochaska argues that the 'revival of interest in charitable service' testifies to 'a tradition in which citizens are seen as having duties as well as rights.'[68] For Prochaska, the appeal of charities is that they promote a 'moral environment in which individual rights and civic virtues, essential to social well being, may be expressed.'[69] He continues: 'associational philanthropy carries forward the ancient obligation of civic duty within a commercial society, with its accent on individual autonomy.'[70] Following Max Weber, Prochaska refers to this as an 'elective affinity' between the individualism necessary for both capitalist contract and subjective self-discipline and the public expression of agency and personality in charitable activity, balancing each other as charity '[provides] the human face of capitalism, addressing the social and individual ills that capitalism created.'[71] Both contemporary work schemes and civic volunteerism depend, as Milbank's critique in chapter four suggested, on the expression of the person's capacity for will.

A series of significant points have been made here which return the analysis to the notion of duality. Firstly, that the idea that homeless people need transformation has returned to the fore within a particular normative neoliberal context, a supposition which only makes sense if homeless people are 'socially excluded'. But 'social exclusion' itself is not a neutral term as it is a part of the production of the identity of homeless people (as

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[66] MacLeavy, 'Neo-Liberalising', *Geoforum*, 1661.

[67] Ibid, 1661. Jay Wiggan notes many similar traits in the 2010 – 2015 Coalition Government's policy documents: behavioural explanations for poverty linked to government/bureaucratic failures, and hidden premises or 'common senses' that depend on or reinforce uncritically appropriated notions of worklessness is dependency. Jay Wiggan, 'Telling Stories of 21st Century Welfare: The UK Coalition Government and the Neo-Liberal Discourse of Worklessness and Dependency', *Critical Social Policy*, Vol. 32 (2012), 383–405, at. 383-388, 400.

[68] Prochaska, *Schools*, 3.

[69] Ibid, 5.

[70] Ibid, 14.

[71] Prochaska, *Christianity*, 8.

Bright and MacLeavy suggested) and is furthermore enacted (through policy, public rhetoric and government/charitable services) in a context in which a particular neoliberal account of the person is dominant. The value of the person in a neoliberal context is related to activity, production, autonomy, self-discipline and regulation. Thus, to endorse volunteerism –which as Prochaska noted is a key facet of liberal democracy – is dangerous in that the dignity of homeless people as passive receivers of welfare can only be depreciated. Milbank already made this point when he noted that identifying with the victim *as* victim can destroy both volunteer and recipient. Charities address themselves to the 'different', for which they should be commended, but they do so only after assuming a neoliberal validation of the same. Three further points can be made here. Firstly, that in their orientation to the other, charities may be in danger of absconding from a critical examination of themselves, towards instigating a collective forgetfulness of the self. What economic conditions made possible the generation of an excess of leisure time, or economic capital, for example, that make volunteering possible? Secondly, that homeless clients receive assistance on the basis of their difference but that this can entrench their difference as it identifies them as such. Charities can be doubly exclusionary. Operating on the socially excluded but working with them only insofar as they are socially excluded, marginality is the condition of being treated as such. Thirdly, in stressing the individual(as the giver of time or money), charities may be in danger of perpetuating an amnesia over the structural causes of homeless people's denigration and depreciate the viability – or perceived plausibility – of more systemic solutions to the problems that homeless people face.

As I suggested in my introduction, the aim of transformation and the organisation of the problem of homelessness under the rubric 'social exclusion' display an elective affinity with successive British government's articulation and recognition of the dignity of the person on the basis of their capacity to work. Operating in this neoliberal context, charities which give public expression and shape public action in and through volunteering lend tacit support to an individualised account of the causes and remedies for homelessness,[72] the importance of will, the nexus 'public agency – status', the meshing of inclusion and work, and (with the observations made above on order) the hegemony that they operate within. Gutiérrez made this point in chapter two: in an individualised context charity is liable to become about the charitable agent.

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[72] Hutson, Clapham, *Homelessness*, 31-39.

As dignity is linked to autonomy (freedom), rewards to self-discipline and (for charities) volunteering to good citizenship, all of which the homeless, workless and dependent recipient lack, I have suggested that homelessness is not a problem of the difference of the other – the excluded – but the return of the same in an unrecognised form. The implicit distance and difference sustained by the notion of 'social exclusion' are deeply misleading, part of the means for the entrenching of a narrative of cause, justification of the self, and legitimacy of the solution: transformation. Homeless and volunteer are not the 5p coin and 10p coin respectively, but the two faces of the same coin: the Queen's head and the portcullis and chains.

The pieces are now in place to return to a question I posed at the end of the last chapter, concerning the allocation of 'knowing' and the production of neoliberal knowledge. As this analysis has argued, the innovative and responsive character of charities is part of their appeal, charities know in local contexts, and can act upon/respond to, what the state does not know. Yet, if neoliberalism is best thought as a kind of 'double-truth', then, firstly, not only is neoliberalism not just the expression of corporate power, big business and state authority, but a hegemonic discourse animated by quotidian acts of generosity, compassion and hospitality. Furthermore, charities know what the state does not, so the 'nanny state' can be rolled back and people are free to choose to act on the issues they care about, but this should not diminish the fact that the state also knows charity – what it should aim for (the extension of the work force and the observation of those on its fringes) and will monitor, regulate and professionalise it accordingly; neoliberalism is a mix of populism and elitism, hegemonising the 'knowing' of both. Gordon Brown's about face on charities is interesting here. Critical of them in the late 1980s, he said at the launch of campaign to invigorate charitable service in 2001: 'politicians once thought the man in Whitehall knows best. Now we understand that the… mother from the playgroup… might know better.'[73]

Charity and Selfless Service, on the Interpersonal

In this section, charity as a model of the interpersonal will be explored and I will again argue that charities are dual. In relation to the interpersonal, I will suggest that charities are dual in three ways: firstly, I will suggest that the popular presentation of charities as modelling exemplary selfless love and sacrifice occludes the function charities

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[73] Brown, quoted in Prochaska, *Schools,* 42.

play as a means for the securing of self-possession, and the accruing to oneself of identity. Prochaska's historical work, particularly his account of the relationship between the emancipation of women and their involvement in nineteenth century public charitable works, testifies to this, though he stresses the other orientated nature of the enterprise. Secondly, I will turn to charity as *donum* or gift giving, a gift which is both beneficial, while also capable (over time) of causing harm. I will here ask: does it alter our evaluation of the charitable *donum* if the gift is needed, not elected to by consent? Thirdly, through the work of Laura Stivers, who suggests that proximity to the other can retroactively contribute to the formation of negative views on the other, I draw on two pieces of ethnographic field work with homeless people to suggest that homeless people are not passive, dependent receivers but creative and resistant agents who often perceive charities as vehicles for the limiting or abolishing of their freedom, not the breaking of their dependence. The duality of charitable relationality resides in a selflessness that is about the self, a generosity that degrades the other, and the transitioning of homeless people from autonomy to dependency.

There is an erroneous modern proclivity to presume that selflessness purifies love, that it is not real love if the lover gains something in their loving. Prochaska defines philanthropy (though he uses this term interchangeably with charity) as 'love of one's fellow man, an action or inclination which promotes the well-being of others.'[74] Prochaska, as I will go on to show, draws back from characterising this sacrificial service as selfless. Nevertheless the links between self-effacement and love are recurring concerns amongst a number of authors who have addressed modern love and charity. For example, Simon May notes the popular distinction between *philia*, *eros*, and *agape*, and that *agape* is understood as 'self giving – the altruistic and unreserved placing of oneself at the disposal of the other' typified by parents love for their children, and 'charity towards strangers.'[75] Reflecting on the elevated status of love in contemporary, western society and its platonic, Christian and Jewish roots, he lists a series of key beliefs concerning love: that it is 'a spontaneous gift that seeks nothing for the giver', that it is 'fundamentally selfless: a disinterested concern for the flourishing of loved ones for their own sake.'[76] Although his concern is primarily with the ontology implicit, and the metaphors deployed in the inter-testamental and early

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[74] Frank Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse: Philanthropy in Modern Britain* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), 2.

[75] Simon May, *Love: A History* (London: Yale University Press, 2011), 25.

[76] Ibid, 2.

church accounts of almsgiving, Gary Anderson notes a similar modern concern with love and selflessness. The idea of return on the gift as it is harmonious with the donated and created nature of the world is uncomfortable to modern ears. Anderson says: 'most people are far more comfortable with the teaching of the ancient Jewish sage Antigonus of Socho (second century BCE), who said: "Be not servants who serve their master on condition of receiving a gift."'[77]

Yet, as Prochaska notes, charities sustain complicated historical forms of interpersonal benefice. In his survey of the history of British charities, Prochaska notes the social, political and economic goods that can be achieved for the giver in the act of selfless giving. In his discussion of the working class philanthropy Prochaska turns to the involvement of women in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century charitable activities. For these women, Prochaska notes, 'philanthropy was a form of self-expression, a readily available way of breaking out of the domestic routine and wielding social influence.'[78] Not only did this form of legitimate public action broaden 'the horizons of women' but it furthermore 'pointed out the limitations of their lives' in such a manner that 'women trained in philanthropic societies, particularly those focusing on moral reform and education, were prominent among those who petitioned the House of Commons praying for the enfranchisement of their sex.'[79] A significant good, the emancipatory credentials of charitable activity can be clearly seen here as they 'diffused the idea of participatory democracy by providing ideas and recruits to political campaigns.'[80] However, the normative inter-subjective patterning of selfless service suggested in Prochaska's initial definition seems to be inadequate here, as the emerging political voice and freedom of women in public life is clearly a goal and good for both men and women.

There is social capital to be gleaned in selfless service, as there is capital itself. For Prochaska there is an economic utility to charity, as 'clearly, active benevolence justified the social standing and increased the authority of the propertied', though he continues: 'but this is a partial view.'[81] 'Partial' because it neglects the significance of working-class charity and mutualism, which were undoubtedly significant, as Friedrich Engels noted 'although the workers cannot really afford to give charity on the same scale as the middle

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[77] Anderson, *Charity*, 67–69.
[78] Prochaska, *Schools*, 20.
[79] Ibid, 20.
[80] Ibid, 20.
[81] Ibid, 20, 21.

class, they are nevertheless more charitable in every way.'[82] But also partial because while it secures the individual social standing of the philanthropist, it also reinforces and retroactively justifies the reproduction of a particular economic system or order which transcends any particular individual. As Prochaska notes, it secures the legitimacy of property. Prochaska does deploy the vivid life of working-class charity to question the assumption that philanthropy was the preserve of the middle-classes, but he does also note that these forms of charity factored in the self-identity of working-class people as the poor who 'knew the difference between "deserving and undeserving"', and who 'did not need to be reminded that fitness, decency and self-help were wholesome.'[83] The neutrality of these qualities has already been extensively critiqued.

Charity as a means of 'ethical selving' and retroactive justification for the accumulation of greater wealth continues in the present. Chrystia Freeland, author of the 2012 book *Plutocrats, The Rise of the Superrich and the Fall of Everyone Else*, refers to this as 'philanthro-capitalism'.[84] Freeland continues by noting that 'the super-wealthy have long recognised that philanthropy, in addition to its moral rewards, can also serve as a pathway to social acceptance and even immortality.'[85] Freeland suggests that 'arguably the most converted status symbol isn't a yacht, a racehorse, or a knighthood; it's a philanthropic foundation – and, more than that, one actively managed in ways that show its sponsor has big ideas for reshaping the world.'[86] What Freeland points to here is the multiple ends implicit in altruism, that charity can be used as a means for the creation of identity and for social differentiation, it is a part of an ethical self-making, financial justification *and* the means for the accumulation of status. Taken together, the ethical justification of the plutocrats and personal creation of character in charity, have resulted in a (elite) social group who believe 'that the common good is better served when the wealthy "self-tax" by supporting charities of their own selection, rather than paying taxes to fund government spending.'[87] With a pinch of salt, Freeland asks whether we should 'think of capitalism as a Liberation Theology – free markets equals free people'?[88]

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[82] Engles in Prochaska, *Schools*, 21.
[83] Ibid, 23.
[84] Chrystia Freeland, *Plutocrats: The Rise of the New Global Super-Rich and the Fall of Everyone Else* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 71.
[85] Ibid, 71.
[86] Ibid, 70.
[87] Ibid, 246.
[88] Ibid, 56.

Charity, it seems, is not unilateral, as the initial definition implied, but multiple as 'charity heightened status and self-esteem and offered a measure of respectability' to those who conducted it.[89] The obvious question here is: if you cannot give, but only receive, are you still respectable? This is a question I will come on to in a moment. Prochaska concludes by asking 'where should the balance lie between the "right" to welfare and the "virtue" of charity?'[90] For him, the answer is clear: the 'continuing debate over social policy needs to be based on a better understanding of charity's contribution to civic democracy.'[91] He confronts us with the simplified alternatives: 'which is more subversive – and corrosive – to believe in altruism or to see it simply as a cloak of self-interest?'[92]A dichotomy his own - at best nuanced - account of charity undermines only a few sentences later when he says 'it is sensible to see [charity] in its variety and contradictions, as an expression of a pluralistic society.'[93]

The possible atrophying of the dignity of the receiver of the charitable gift provides a frame in which the mixed experience of homeless people in the reception of the benevolent gift is made cogent. As a series of writers reflecting on homeless people's status and responses to charity have noted: selfless service can be demeaning. Danielle Dierckx, Jan Vranken and Ingemar Elander say, for example, that the common mission of FBOs, 'to help people', can be counterintuitively understood as harmful if it is conducted in a 'strongly paternalistic way, which keeps people in a dependent, disempowering relation.'[94] They point to research which shows that 'the long-term implications of receiving material aid had a negative effect on decisions regarding education, work, marriage and childcare.'[95] They continue: 'over a period of time, the so called welfare stigma broke down self-esteem and self-efficacy because of the humiliation of being receivers of welfare and "hand-outs."'[96] In a different context, Laura Stivers, in the USA, notes that 'while most Christians find such actions' – volunteering – '"Christlike", there is rarely any reflection on whether such actions are empowering for the people whom the

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[89] Prochaska, *Schools*, 23.
[90] Ibid, 45.
[91] Ibid, 45.
[92] Ibid, 45.
[93] Ibid, 45.
[94] Danielle Dierckx, Jan Vranken and Ingemar Elander note this in their essay 'Changing Policies: How Faith Based Organisations Participate in Poverty Policies' in Beaumont, Cloke, *Faith-Based*, 160.
[95] Beaumont, Cloke, *Faith-Based*, 160. And Kunz, Kalil,'Self-esteem', *Social Work*, 119-126.
[96] Beaumont, Cloke, *Faith-Based*, 160.

volunteers are helping.'[97] Later, in her book *Disrupting Homelessness*, she continues by suggesting that because volunteer and social workers often see homeless people 'only at their most vulnerable… as a consequence their stereotypes can be reinforced rather than challenged.'[98] Also noting the influence of evangelical cultures and ideas on modern charitable actions, Stivers suggests, ironically, that sometimes it is the proximity of volunteers to the homeless people they seek to serve which accounts for the sedimentation of volunteer's perceptions that 'the majority of people are homeless due to addiction and/or mental illness.'[99]

Even the 'vulnerability' of homeless people requires careful deliberation and attentive exposition. After spending extensive time with rough sleepers in Oxford, Chatel Butchinsky notes, for example, that they are 'constantly and routinely transforming the meanings of things through their skills in using spaces creatively, though fleetingly, and also through their control over how they present themselves to domiciled parties and individuals.'[100] These rough sleepers exhibited 'talents, resourcefulness and aspirations to freedom' seen in their ability 'to transform places, to reinterpret seemingly mundane, almost non-places (doorways, small stretches of pavement, a ledge on the outside of a shop, a bin area, for example) as sleeping places, socialising places, living places where talking, smoking, drinking, drug taking, eating, can take place'; agency that the association 'homelessness – dependency' belies.[101] The same action, 'identity techniques', presented to the domiciled public (humble bearing, looking downwards, speaking very quietly or politely, thanking and complimenting charity or service workers) are capable of vastly different interpretations: subservience and the recognition of power/status differentials, or intentional deployment for the securing of a personal aim.[102] She goes on: for rough sleepers, homelessness is acted, an image rendered to the public of being 'down on their luck', when, as Kite, a rough sleeper befriended by Butchinsky said, 'the truth is much worse': often personal lives of survival through great suffering, abuse prior to becoming rough sleepers, and the conviction for some that 'the streets were a more friendly and

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[97] Stivers, *Disrupting Homelessness,* 2.
[98] Ibid, 59.
[99] Ibid, 110.
[100] Chantal Butchinsky, 'Identities of Rough Sleepers in Oxford', M. Seal, eds, *Understanding and Responding to Homeless Experiences, Identities and Cultures* (Lyme Regis: Russel House Publishing, 2007), 10–26, 11.
[101] Ibid, 11.
[102] Ibid, 18.

trustworthy place to be than the family or marital homes they had left behind, even though they might have been attacked there, at times severely, by total strangers.'[103] The unpalatable truth suspended tactically by rough sleepers (but known by many women, predominately, throughout history) is that, in some circumstances, the home is more brutal than the street.

Another important point raised by Butchinsky's work is that rough sleepers often viewed those turning to official services and charities as having given up their independence. For those who were repeated rough sleepers, Butchinsky noted a correlation of rough sleeping with a strong sense of independence: 'for them, becoming street homeless was a way or returning to social inclusion, rather than being socially excluded.'[104] There is the widely circulated perception amongst rough sleepers that charities foster dependency and curtail autonomy. David Wagner, also drawing on ethnographic work undertaken with homeless people, notes that 'either consciously or unconsciously, street people developed strategies of resistance to the family, employers, and state bureaucracy.'[105] Wagner observed a dissonance between middle class and street people's perception of low paid, starvation wage work. They spoke to him openly about 'how they had been exploited at low-wage jobs and treated as chattel', about their experiences of deindustrialisation as not 'just miserable jobs at poor wages, but as a loss of control at work.'[106] Agnes, a 23 year old episodically homeless woman, said to him that in low paid service work 'you're treated like a slave… we may be poor, but we have some pride… I can do a lot of things rather than work there.'[107] Equally, state services involved humiliating '"degradation rituals"' as 'subjects consciously weighed the intrusions, humiliation, and possibility of coercion from social welfare institutions against the physical dangers of the street and the amount of power they perceived themselves as having as a group.'[108] Wagner concludes

> The views of street people support those of us who feel that dealing with homelessness is
> not a matter of incremental changes in the system, such as building more housing and

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[103] Butchinsky, 'Identities', *Understanding*, 23.
[104] Ibid, 26.
[105] David Wagner, 'Reinterpreting the "Undeserving Poor": From Pathology to Resistance', Mary Jo Huth, Talmadge Wright, eds., *International Critical Perspectives on Homelessness* (London: Praeger, 1997), 55 – 68, at. 58.
[106] Ibid, 61.
[107] Ibid, 61.
[108] Ibid, 64.

providing more jobs. Instead, the homelessness problem is a deep structural crisis in modern capitalism which will probably change only through more widespread oppositional social movements among the very poor. To the homeless, more minimum-wage service jobs, more shelters or tiny dilapidated rooms, more charity, and "family values" are not the answer. Rather, these so-called solutions are at the heart of the problem.[109]

In this section I have argued that charitable duality in the area of the interpersonal (the giving of gifts, and service of the other) stem from a selflessness which actually brings something for the self, while obliterating the otherness of the other. The ethics of charities help legitimise their ongoing existence, while they in turn lend legitimacy to the personal fortunes gained and reputations built by modern day plutocrats. This is a selflessness very much tied up in an economy of the self, as Milbank already suggested in chapter four. Yet, this was not the only kind of duality sustained by charitable forms of relationality, this section also highlighted accounts of selfless giving which caused harm to homeless people and stripped them of the dignity and autonomy they bestowed upon themselves.

Conclusion

Wagner's conclusion is somewhat bombastic but nevertheless arresting. The analysis laid out here allows me to say something slightly more nuanced: a survey of the history of British charities, attentive to their ongoing activity, must be capable of coherently accounting for both their beneficial contributions to civic and individual life, and their co-option and legitimising of our current neoliberal political order with its associated, founding exclusions. Working class philanthropy, campaigning for the recognition of complex issues like mental health (post-World War Two by the charities like Mind) not addressed by the state, used as a vehicle for the training and empowerment of nineteenth and twentieth century women, and as the means utilised for the creation, ferment and expression of public malcontent at debilitating poverty, now and in the past, charities have much to be proud of. Yet, as this more limited analysis of charities working with homeless people has argued, there also remains much to do, and pronounced dangers for charities and homeless people in the illusions deployed in the policing of the

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[109] Wagner, 'Reinterpreting', *International Critical*, 66.

maintenance of neoliberal norms, norms which charities play a significant part in propagating.

Charities face pronounced double binds at the beginning of the twenty-first century. For example, they gain legitimacy and support due to their distinction from the state, but also depend on the state for regulation, funding and the implementation/achievement of their goals. Secondly, aiming at transformation repeats the 'dignity – work' matrix alien to many charities' stated goals of welfare, housing, and dignity for all. In their other orientated aim of inclusion via work, they lend tacit support to a structure that produces homelessness, while leaning on a narrative of individual culpability and thus doubling down a social imaginary/common sense which presumes the difference of homeless people from the housed. Thirdly, ethical practice, enacting 'love' through charitable work, is a key part of charities' appeal. But here there are also at least two problems: one, whether homeless people view these services this way, and, secondly, how charities can sustain their ethical import, while also recognising the personal gains that can be made, politics endorsed, and othering reinforced through this selfless morality. How, in short, can charities that address homeless people disentangle themselves from dependency on the existence of homelessness?

This chapter has also argued that the stark alternatives faced by the third sector are (at least in part) due to the discursive (which is also to say: political) context in which they currently operate. I've termed this context, following Petrella and Milbank, neoliberal: a contingent historical articulation of our political/economic aims (profit maximisation), their means of realisation (small state; active, free citizens/workers), the delineation of our social spaces (public/private, home/work, civic/political), production of subject positions (working-independent-dignity/idle-dependent-without value), production of knowledge (markets and expert managers) and definition of key terms (free to work, freedom from bureaucracy). As this chapter has sought to show, almost all of these can be problematised: neoliberalism is not small state, but the extension of the state through a range of mechanisms (policy, law, regulatory bodies, civil society) to enforce norms; it enlists the apolitical, private and 'home' to sediment politics, the public, and to organise labour; it denies the autonomy of homeless people in the name of autonomy; it is not just the exercise of elite, management power or the 'natural' operation of the market, but something we (all?) do everyday, and therefore also a kind of populism; its definitions of freedom, agency, and exclusion give coherence to our actions, while depending on the

denial of freedom, agency and the externality of the antagonism *vis-à-vis* the homeless. I have argued that it is prudent to think neoliberalism as a 'double-truth'.

In expressing these problems, my conclusion is that what is needed is an oppositional (not alternative) account of civil society and the state's *shared* ends, the solidarity of volunteer and charitable recipient stemming from an *oppositional* normative anthropology that breaks the link 'work-dignity', and a model of service that puts reciprocity *before* selflessness. However, in each case, I also suggest that there is the pressing need to justify and defend the difference of civil society from the state, the difference of volunteer from homeless people and the externality of mutual agents to the gifts they should (but currently can not) exchange. I argued for this because the voices of charities, their ability to inform public opinion and critique state and market are in danger of being lost, and because the included-excluded homeless person is currently not different enough to the housed, hard-working and active neoliberal subject (still overdetermined). These will be the key problems taken up in the next chapter, the questions with which I will turn back to the theological articulation of the doctrine of creation.

Chapter Eight

Creation and Charity

Introduction

Successive British Governments have set themselves the task of ending homelessness. In this chapter, I am going to argue that the *articulation* of the doctrine of creation can ground, inform, and legitimise that aim. In doing so, the doctrine of creation can be read as consonant with a number of current charitable practices while, at the same time, envisioning a repositioning of the civil sphere in general and homelessness charities in particular. Rudimentarily, my argument in this chapter is that homelessness degenerates the lives of homeless people, and this stands opposed to the life that God speaks to the world and gives to *all* people. Britain is undergoing a housing crisis. As the history of housing struggles demonstrates, the most successful housing campaigns have been fought under wider political banners.[1] This chapter therefore proposes a 'theo-politics of common life' as a prudent, plausible and plural counter-hegemony to the reigning discourse of neoliberalism.

With the aim of ending homelessness and reforming homelessness charities in mind, this chapter marshals a number of arguments and locates them in relation to the doctrine of creation. I argue, in the first section, that a robust theological legitimisation of state service delivery, housing provision, job creation and intervention in markets and labour relations is needed *and* that the distinctiveness of an enduring and independent civil society is theo-politically desirable.[2] The theological justification for this position comes from two sources. First, God reveals Him or Herself to be one who makes a preferential option for the poor, and because of the limited impact current charitable solutions to homelessness are having this chapter therefore argues that the state still has an enduring role to play in

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[1] Glynn, eds., *Other Half Live*, 281-282.

[2] Rent controls, the provision of widespread social housing, the ability to buy rented accommodation, the defence of labour and rolling back of punitive trade unions laws, and the delivery of quantity and quality work are all objectives which will require degrees of state intervention. The funding of these aims will require progressive taxation, and the *end* of state subsidised subsistence labour and private landlords through housing benefit, i.e. the state's current support of particular business interests. Jones, *Establishment*, xvii, xviii, 50, 169, 303. Will Hutton argues that our current tax system is 'regressive', rather than progressive, because those in higher tax bands pay lower percentage tax deductions. Hutton, *Them and Us,* 303. Capital flight from the UK was £490 billion in 2008, given the regulation and observation of those at the bottom of society, it is possible to argue, on the grounds of 'fairness', that the same systems of observation, even capital controls, should be instigated by the British state on those with the greatest wealth and international mobility. Jones, *Establishment*, 307. Freeland, *Plutocrats*, 38-87.

providing for homeless people. Securing the flourishing of the other is a theologically legitimate aim. Second, the state is an existing part of God's creation. As such, the state depends on God's grace for its being and can, subsequently, participate in God by aligning its purpose, aims and methods with God's. However, given the provisions about theo-political language in chapter six, I am not arguing that Christians should aim for the re-establishment of Christendom or a Christian state. Instead, within a liberal democratic framework, this chapter proposes that Christians should take up a political position which reserves and envisions theo-political tasks for the relative spheres of civil society, the state, and the economy. However, they should do so without prioritising one sphere over others as the sole vehicle through which God works in the world.[3] The first section therefore concludes with a defence and exploration of the enduring role of civil society, having explored the theological role of the state.

In the second section, I draw attention to the diminished material lives of homeless people, and contend that highly stratified societies reduce economic growth, curtail life expectancy, degrade social trust, and atrophy individual health.[4] Because the doctrine of creation maintains that we are all made in the *imago Dei*, I present a defence of necessary minimum standards for dignified living (an equality of outcome argument), while proposing that human rights are a viable way of articulating and enacting this insight into the value of all people (an equality before the law argument). I draw attention to the work of housing charities in a recent case brought before the British High Court. This leads to the third section, in which I argue that charities have an important role to play in critiquing the current neoliberal order, and in enacting egalitarian and reciprocal practices. The foremost task here is the volunteer's recognition of the goals they share with the homeless

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[3] There are four reasons, already broached in this thesis, for why this chapter begins with the common, universal and interdependent before moving onto differentiation, the particular and the independent: first, Gutiérrez begins with the integration of nature and grace, before promoting the freedom and maturity of humans. Second, the master-signifier God redefines all elements through a chain of equivalence, but this chain can never reach fixity. Third, neoliberalism unifies all spheres under one maxim: profit. Fourth, neoliberalism promotes and depends on a normative anthropology which constitutes and overdetermines the other.

[4] The evidence for this claim is not only compelling but widely known. The publication of *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better* developed this argument, and was followed, in the UK, by the establishment of 'The Equality Trust' to promote and develop the insights of this important book. Richard Wilkinson, Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone* (London: Penguin, 2010). Comparable arguments can also be found in Wendy Wheeler, *The Whole Creature: Complexity, Biosemiotics and the Evolution of Culture* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2006), 124-127. And in T. J. Gorringe, *Furthering Humanity: A Theology of Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 157.

people (in the terms of Liberation Theology: the conversion of the volunteer), and not the transformation of homeless clients into good, neoliberal subjects.

This chapter defends three paradoxical things: the (in)dependence of people in relationship, the integration and difference of civil society and state, and the dignity of all people which can only be achieved by distinguishing within the category 'human'.[5] To marshal these paradoxes, and coherently and consistently explore them in relation to the doctrine of creation and the current state of British neoliberal charity, I will be judging practices, people and institutions according to 'integral liberation' – being integrated in to God, and being free.

Ex Nihilo Order

Because God made and continues to make the world 'out of nothing', there is nothing that does not (though at various stages of removal) depend on the actions and character of God. Civil society and the state have their origin in the creative work and willing of God, and, on these theological grounds, civil society, state, and economy share in the pursuit of common ends. The logic of *ex nihilo* tends towards receiving creation as a gift, neoliberalism leads to the ownership of creation as a possession.[6] As Gutiérrez says: 'unmerited love is the foundation of the world'.[7]

The phrase '*ex nihilo*' relates to God's calling something from nothing. It is not, therefore, an act executed on a pre-existing substance but pure summons into being from non-being. It is not an act in time that creates space (or an act in space that creates time) for

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[5] A number of 'paradoxical' political positions have been, or are, currently under deliberation, including the 'Red Tory' position of George Grant, and the 'Blue Labour' discourse of Lord Maurice Glasman. Glasman, for example, notes the 'paradox' that Germany, the European country with 'the greatest degree of labour representation in its corporate structure, the most intense system of vocational interference in labour market participation, the greatest degree of constraint on finance capital in its banking system' is also the country that 'generates the greatest value and is the most competitive within the international economy.' Maurice Glasman, 'Politics, Empowerment, and the Young Generation', Nicholas Sagovsky, Peter McGrail, eds., *Together for the Common Good: Towards a National Conversation* (London: SCM Press, 2015), 174. Grant, the Canadian theorist and philosopher, advocates socialism as also a form of conservatism: George Grant, *Lament for a Nation* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 57. Both of these writers advocate, at various moments, allegiance to, and the defence of, particular party positions. Because this thesis includes no extensive review of any of the British Political Parties' history, philosophies or policies, it would be disingenuous and baseless, at this stage, to advocate a party position. Instead, this chapter will articulate the lineaments of a counter-hegemonic theo-political discourse with particular reference to the lives of homeless people and the charities that work with them.

[6] I am indepted to this point to the juxtaposition theology and capitalism in T. J. Gorringe, *A Theology of the Built Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 238.

[7] Gutiérrez, *God of Life*, 158.

it is the calling into being of time and space themselves.[8] As God is not subject to time but brings this too into being, the act of creation both has occurred and continues to occur. Creation, as both Milbank and Gutiérrez contest, is an ongoing act and also, as Gutiérrez notes, the first soteriological act. As God does not give form to a substance which exists before or along side Him/Herself, creation is radically contingent and dependent on God. All creation depends on God, and it is not possible therefore to speak of a 'pure nature' without reference to the 'supernatural'. Here Gutiérrez's contention that creation and self are gifts must be endorsed, for nature is shot through with gratuitous grace and cannot adequately (in a theological discourse) be considered otherwise. This, first, means that politics, economics and the civil sphere all stand equally under the divine. Only an account of political and economic orders which takes 'the all' seriously – as constitutive – can be endorsed in relation to the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. To speak about the all, and the whole in relation to God, is also, therefore, to speak of a universal. Gutiérrez endorses this when he says: 'creation itself is an expression – the first expression – of God's love. God's love is a free and unmerited love, which the Lord makes the root of all being.'[9]

The second consequence of this *ex nihilo* position is that the theo-political and neoliberalism are oppositional hegemonic orders. Neoliberalism depends upon dispositions and actions orientated towards what God has made. These actions are based upon the normative, unproblematic possession and use of 'natural' resources in the pursuit of profit: what can be owned (this has been a recurrent feature of my analysis of neoliberalism as home ownership, willed self-possession, and privatisation). For Gutiérrez, 'God's speech is a forceful rejection of a purely anthropocentric conception of creation', because 'the world of nature expresses the freedom and delight of God in creating,' which means that a theo-political hegemony must begin with the reception of the world as a gift, not an object of possession, which one cannot have mastery and unfettered ownership of.[10]

Milbank's point about charity as a theological virtue and the delineation of realms is important and valid here. For while, as I suggested above, charity has been incorporated into a neoliberal hegemonic order and discourse (these being worryingly mutually self-reinforcing), charity, the Christian virtue of love, has become a virtue limited to one realm. Instead of this curtailing of divine action, the requirements for universality stipulated in

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[8] Hugh J. McCann, *Creation and the Sovereignty of God* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2012), 13, 24.
[9] Gutiérrez, *God of Life*, 18.
[10] Gutiérrez, *God of Life*, 160.

this articulation of *ex nihilo* would demand that love be universal in its applicability; that 'charity' is as crucial to the economic and the political as it is to the realm of civil society. It cannot be limited in its purview for it is infinite in its range. Milbank and Gutiérrez both agree that charity can never be satisfactorily understood as just 'another Christian virtue' to be cultivated individually but the highest virtue that can only effect all or be denatured.[11]

The suspension of the world in God, its dependence on God's gratuitous act, means that state, economy and civil society are all realms dependent on the workings of the creative God. As spheres open to God, they derive their ongoing existence from God, and their justification depends on their consonance with divinely ordained aims and character. The foremost amongst these, denied to homeless people, are conditions conducive to dignified life. At the most basic levels, state, market and civil society are subject to God (and are means through which God can work and be met), and are thus to be judged according to their inculcation of life. More specifically, because I have been working with the association 'life – integral liberation', state, markets and civil society can be judged to the degree that they set provisos and implement the integral liberation of their subjects and agents: their freedom and equality. Creation, the ongoing work of God, internal to God, presupposes the workings of God in human action and language. Developing the point made by both Adam Smith and Ivan Petrella concerning 'relative poverty' (what a society deems minimum in terms of need), the 'life' that God gives is a social life and therefore requires those things necessary for dignified participation in the public sphere, namely: secure housing and associated privacy, dignified work conditions, leisure time and access to health care, education and culture.[12] The articulation of the doctrine of creation e*x nihilo* which I am developing forces the theological question: how can state, market and civil society implement these, given that they are legitimate ends consonant with who God is and the ontological foundations of the world? How are these resources to be distributed, and by whom?

With these comments in mind, it is possible to see the theological rationale for the state delivery of services that charities cannot guarantee. A further important aspect of this

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[11] Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 15.

[12] Will Hutton draws attention to the links between housing and health, Hutton, *Them and Us*, 31. As does the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, *Faith in the City* (London: Church House Publishing, 1985), 229, 251.

argument, is to draw attention to the economic utility of such a theo-political program.[13] First, Britain needs more homes, irrespective of whether it is deemed profitable; the denigration of those in social housing, the lack of replacement of social housing stock, the current lack of rent controls, and the state subsidised support given to home buyers and the housing market in general are all issues the state can and should act upon.[14] Along with cutting into the Government's current housing benefit payments (a significant amount of which goes to affluent 'buy-to-let' landlords)[15], raising government funds through selling the houses government and local councils build together[16], creating work for the construction industry[17], building homes would also reduce domestic violence rates, particularly among young men[18]. Homelessness incorporates more than just issues of housing, and the state as a possible guarantor of work is also due extensive deliberation.[19]

However, given the current integration of civil society and the state, one of the first crucial steps towards a theo-politics of common life is the defence and development of a robust and autonomous civil society.[20] My reasons for saying this are tactical (how a theo-politics of common life is to be realised), pragmatic (as a check on sovereignty or the dominance of one sphere over the others), and theological. Theologically, God's making of the world is marked by God's willing of the life and existence of the other. Imagining this in relation to the delineated spheres of state, economy, and civil society (while also taking up the observation that no human making or willing can ever be 'like' divine willing), I argue that all spheres can be judged according to the degree they will and are positively disposed towards the external others around them. State, civil societies and the economy all

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[13] In this instance, the economic utility of a theo-politics of common life is linked to the persuasiveness of a proactive fiscal policy and social spending by the state. Hutton draws attention to economic research which demonstrates that over a two hundred year period 'those countries with the highest social spending as a share on national output achieve the highest and most sustained economic growth.' Hutton, *Them and Us,* 374, 375, 286, 287.

[14] Ibid, 283, 284, 296. 314, 315. Jones, *Establishment*, 299, 303.

[15] Glynn, *Other Half*, 32. Howard, Malik, *Jilted*, 89. Hutton, 379, 380.

[16] HSBC estimated that the British state sold assets worth £80.74 billion through 'right-to-buy', of which only £45.32 billion was recouped by the government. Howard, Malik, *Jilted*, 76.

[17] 425,000 homes were built in the UK in 1968. 182, 700 in in 2008, and just under 100,000 in 2012. Howard, Malik, *Jilted*, 82.

[18] Ibid, 100, 101.

[19] One engaging proposal for this can be found here: Hutton, *Them and Us,* 306. Hutton balances both the demands of work autonomy, transferable skills, with the protection of labourers.

[20] Edwards, *Civil Society*, 20, 110.

make and recreate themselves. To be 'like' divine making they must also seek the good of those other spheres which they are in relationship with.

As God is radically free it is possible for God to go beyond God in the acts of creation. This can be construed as either a plenary overflowing or a contraction of God; God's ability to freely limit God's infinity, or overcome infinity in an act of will and in the creation of a finitude. This contraction of the infinite is also the act by which God creates the place/time where creation could be, a place and time different from the transcendent Father/Mother God. While God's being entails the dependency of creation on God and the world's contingency as created, this second moment of creation brings to the fore the continuity of creation with God's will for God consistently desires that something other than God be. Therefore, creation is emblematic of a God who is positively disposed towards the other *and* seeks that that other (the world) have life in liberation and freedom, as God is free. In Peter Scott's words: 'against pantheism, we may conclude, the world is contingent, that is, not necessary; it is thereby truly other to God. When God wills to be not-God, creation comes to be.'[21] God's will brings us to the freedom and difference of creation from God. It requires us to ask how it is possible to live well in the finite while recognising the finite and its dependence on the infinite.

God's contraction, limiting Him/Herself so that there is pluralism - something different to the totality of God - is the way God creates and the rationale for a diversity of spheres in which power is dispersed. How is this the case? As the product of God's will for creation to be, creation is free because God wills that it exists separate to God's self. It is very important to draw attention to the question of continuity and discontinuity here: on the one hand, human willing and freedom have a model here for *how* humans are to will and be free. While, on the other hand, human willing and freedom can never be 'like' divine willing and the *limits* of the human capacity to will and boundaries of human freedom are also therefore crucial to theo-politics. Exploring this question in relation to order, state, civil society and the economy, the idea of creation *ex nihilo* sustains a protocol and a warning. First, the warning: none of the three listed spheres can identify itself uniquely with God's works as human making can never be 'like' divine making. As a measure for distributing powers across society, and a check and balance on human pride, the

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[21] Scott, Cavanaugh, *Political Theology*, 337.

distinctiveness of the three aforementioned spheres is important theo-politically.[22] Second, as human willing depends on God's willing (a necessary condition of possibility for human will, *ex nihilo* must maintain) and takes its point of departure in God's willing (God's willing the life and freedom of the other) the theological legitimacy of state, civil society and economy can be judged according to how they create space for and support the flourishing of the other respective realms.[23] In relation to a complex problem like homelessness – which incorporates aspects of state welfare, volunteerism, and questions of post-industrial labour – it is important to maintain the insight that all spheres have a role to play, while also allocating responsibility to different spheres given their respective strengths.

'Hegemony' is still an appropriate term to describe this unified order that is also, desirably, diverse. For 'hegemony', as defined in chapter six, describes the process of unifying diverse elements into a discursive totality. Yet, as I also argued in chapter six, hegemony does not mean monolithic order, but the coalescence of distinct elements which also gives these distinct moments new meaning. The term hegemony recognises difference, and keeps open the space, theoretically and practically, for the collapse of a hegemonic order and the articulation of hegemonic elements to an alternative discourse. The problem posed by contemporary British neoliberalism is not the difference of civil society to the state, but the success of the neoliberal hegemonising of these elements into a discursive totality. In this context, to assert the autonomy of civil society is to ask for something radical, the delinking of civil society from the maintenance of neoliberal norms. A number of civil society coalition groups have made exactly this point; the National Coalition for Independent Action (NCIA), which brings together 'individuals and organisations to promote independent voluntary and community action in order to engage and contest the

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[22] To further this point, and the position laid out in this chapter, one would have consider the liberal divisions of power, particularly the distinction maintained in liberal polities between the state and the judiciary. A good place to start would be with Oliver O'Donovan's defence of liberalism and the law: Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 65.

[23] This argument is similar to the contentions of Will Hutton and R.H. Tawney, who both, in varying ways, argue for the 'socialisation of the British economy'. Hutton, *Them and Us*, xiv, 17. For Tawney, 'As long as men are men, a poor society cannot be too poor to find a right order of life, nor a rich society too rich to have need to seek it', the right ordering of industry being its 'subordination to the community in such a way as to render the best service technically possible'. Tawney continues: 'those who render that service faithfully should be honourably paid, and that those who render no service should not be paid at all, because it is of the essence of a function that it should find its meaning in the satisfaction, not of itself, but of the end which it serves.' R.H. Tawney, *The Acquisitive Society* (London: Fontana Books, 1961), 13, 14.

public sphere' released a report entitled 'Here We Are: Inquiry into Local Activism and Dissent' which said

> Activism without the capacity for dissent will not have sufficient force. Without this capacity, the democratic role of voluntary action (or civil society) is fundamentally undermined. This is already the case for many voluntary and community services co-opted by funding regimes and marketisation. The role of the dissenting activist, of whatever form or style, has now become critical for our collective health and wellbeing.[24]

Pragmatically, the distinctiveness of civil society and its exteriority to the coercion of state and market are very important, but they are also important *tactically*. Laclau draws our attention to the chains of equivalence drawn between groups as they articulate demands. As civil society groups advocate greater rights and protections for homeless people, they may come to realise that there are other battles against injustice with which they share common ground, and a new political agent comes onto the scene. Laclau says: 'a plurality of demands which, through their equivalential articulation, constituted a broader social subjectivity we will call *popular* demands – they start, at a very incipient level, to constitute the "people" as a potential historical actor.'[25] A number of these kinds of groups are already in action in the UK. Along with the aforementioned NCIA, Citizens UK have very successfully mobilised myriads of local community groups, articulating their demands and dispersing throughout their network desirable and emancipatory ends.[26]

The tradition of *ex nihilo* holds open two variant tendencies at the same moment: the world's dependence on God because it is God's creation, and the world's freedom to be the world because it is not God. Sustaining both of these imperatives, the political theologian's task is to account for both the integration of state, civil society and economy because they all stand in relation to God, and to think and defend their differences from God and from each other. Co-ordinating this with those questions posed by contemporary

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[24] Quoted in Paul Bunyan, John Diamond, *Approaches to Reducing Poverty and Inequality in the UK: A Study of Civil Society Initiatives and Fairness Commissions,* available here: http://www.webbmemorialtrust.org.uk/download/publications_&_reports/CS-1452%20Civil%20Society%2036pp%20A4%5B1%5D.pdf, at. 9.

[25] Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 74.

[26] See http://www.citizensuk.org/citizens_uk_manifesto_2015 and Saul D. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

homelessness, the lacunae of neoliberalism and the concomitant duality of charities, I have argued for a 'theo-politics of common life'. This theo-politics incorporates all spheres in tackling homelessness, the collective task of discerning the boundaries and responsibilities of each respective realm, and a measure for judging the relative health of each area: the degree to which state, civil society, and the economy serve life, and support those spheres beyond their immediate bounds. By moving to *imago Dei*, I will now argue that civil society still has an important role to play in forming law, educating or converting people, and challenging public opinion, while the state is responsible for securing those goods necessary for dignified participation in contemporary society. In the next section, I will explore theological anthropology and human rights.

Imago Dei Personhood

Homeless people are 13 times more likely to experience violence than the average British citizen, 9 times more likely to commit suicide, with an average death age for rough sleepers of 47 for men and 43 for women – almost 30 years below the national average.[27] These do not result primarily, I have argued, from the differences of homeless people from 'normal' people, but from the dominance of neoliberal assumptions about dignified and legitimate participation in public life, stable housing, and the labour force. However, if, as Timothy Gorringe suggests, 'all human beings are made in the image of God Christian theology cannot, like liberal political theorists, dismiss the demands of egalitarianism as rhetoric', then opposing the normative anthropology of neoliberalism with an anthropology sourced in theology is a viable possibility.[28] By linking God's recognition of people as bearers of the *imago*, this section argues in defence of 'human rights', and the pursuit of this commonality and universality through conversion to the poor in particular.[29]

The book of Genesis and the Christ event are two of the most significant sources for the articulation of theological anthropology. God 'created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them' according to Genesis

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[27] Seal, *Understanding and Responding*, 113. Crisis, *Homelessness: A Silent Killer*. Available here: http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/Homelessness%20-%20a%20silent%20killer.pdf Accessed 12/07/2015.

[28] Gorringe, *Built Environment*, 250.

[29] Another possibility here would be to locate rights in the British history of common property rights, not in theology. See, for example, Gorringe, *Built Environment*, 50-78. Steve Hindle, '"Not By Bread Only"? Common Right, Parish relief and Endowed Charity in a Forest Economy, c. 1600 – 1800', Steven King, Alannah Tomkins, eds., *The Poor in England 1700 – 1850: An Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 39-75.

1:27, though this is preceded by a prior indeterminacy, first articulated in the Christian tradition by Irenaeus, between 'man in our image' and man 'after our likeness' and is followed, in Genesis 2:7 by: 'the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.'[30] This range of themes and emphases have vexed those inclined towards theological anthropology; Kevin Vanhoozer, for example, in his introduction to theological anthropology, asks: 'is the *imago Dei* something humans have, do, or are?'[31] Gutiérrez's account transgresses these dimensions, as the human works, is free and has rights.

In *A Theology of Liberation* Gutiérrez gives an exegesis of Genesis 1:26. Arguing that slavery and exploitation go 'against the *mandates of Genesis*' Gutiérrez says that 'man fulfils himself only by transforming nature and thus entering into relationship with other men.'[32] He continues: 'only in this way does he come to a full consciousness of himself as the subject of creative freedom which is realised through work.'[33] This is an ownership of work and the products of labour which stands in direct contrast to all 'alienated work'.[34] 'Image' here refers not to man as the 'object' of divine creative freedom but as a 'subject' who can act autonomously in continuity with God's freedom, unsurprisingly, for the foremost advocate of a theology of liberation, what definitively characterises man is freedom.[35]

The elucidation of something basic and irrevocable to the person returns Gutiérrez to 'fundamental rights' which are shared by all people.[36] Although this is a phrase drawn from the Medellín documents, Gutiérrez envisions the universal political deployment of these rights as a positive prerequisite for the exercising of freedom. Although Gutiérrez does not assert a right to housing directly, he does quote generously from a document produced by clergymen in Santiago, Chile. Here 'solidarity' is understood as 'just another

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[30] Genesis 1:27, NRSV.

[31] Kevin Vanhoozer, 'Human Being, Individual and Social', in. Colin E. Gunton, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 158–188, at. 164.

[32] Gutiérrez, *Liberation*, 295.

[33] Ibid, 295.

[34] Ibid, 295.

[35] There are serious problems with this passage. Firstly 'nature' refers exclusively to something external to humanity when the term 'nature' often transgresses human and non-human boundaries. Second is the idea that humanity should dominate the world and there are associated problems in the idea of stewardship. There is, finally, nothing on the creation of people 'male and 'female' in binary categories, though the double marginalization of poor women is a theme that comes to the fore in Gutiérrez's later writings. See for example Gutiérrez, *God of Life*, 167.

[36] Gutiérrez, *Truth Shall Make You Free,* 128.

name for the ancient commandment the church has received from Jesus Christ' and includes giving 'food to the hungry… drink to the thirsty… clothing to the naked… shelter to the homeless…and welcome to the stranger.'[37] Later, in the same chapter, Gutiérrez suggests that Vatican Two has instigated in Roman Catholic social thought a 'new approach to the human body' which in Latin America has been read as a revived Christian concern with corporality emerging from 'a breakthrough of the material because of the vast majorities in urgent need of bread, medicine, housing and so on. The physical in question is located at the level of the basic human necessities of the human person.'[38] Gutiérrez argues that there are basic necessities for the flourishing of people, conditions that must be met. If they are not, the human is disfigured and God's image, the freedom of the creative person, is depreciated. Although, in Gutiérrez's terms, liberation and salvation are not to be elided, a nuanced and generous tactical deployment of theologically sourced rights orientated towards a particular form of political utility is in evidence here.

Milbank questions 'rights' discourse, but does note: 'often when we speak of rights we are really indicating a more fundamental correlative duty – the duty of the state to provide free health care, for example', an excellent example of which is the claim upheld, in the British Supreme Court, of two individuals' rights to housing.[39] The defence of rights depends on the plausibility of the dignity of all people, a presupposition which non-theological defences of human rights see as desirable, dangerous and hard to theoretically substantiate.[40] Because theology maintains that all people have been made in God's image, it is possible to postulate the utility of rights language and defend the theo-political legitimacy of the state as that institution which is responsible for all people within its boundaries. To achieve this end, civil society still has a crucial role to play: both informing

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[37] Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 101.

[38] Ibid, 102.

[39] John Milbank, 'Against Human Rights'. http://www.theologyphilosophycentre.co.uk/papers/Milbank_AgainstHumanRights.pdf. Accessed 10/07/2015. Milbank thinks that rights discourse reinforce individualistic and state sovereignty, and that they are unworkable. However, as Peter de Bolla has made clear, there are multiple modern rights discourses, which draw on and relate diverse sources. Peter de Bolla, *The Architecture of Concepts, The Historical Formation of Human Rights* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 244, 282. http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/may/13/homeless-people-almost-impossible-accomodation-test-local-authorities. The supreme court ruled that 'a homeless man who had multiple physical problems and psychotic symptoms should not have been turned away by Southwark council.'

[40] See, for example, Véronique Pin-Fat, *Universality, Ethics, and International Relations: A Grammatical Reading* (London: Routledge, 2010). Slavoj Žižek has rejected rights language, while affirming the necessity of an *ega-liberty* concept to progressive politics. Slavoj Žižek, 'Against Human Rights', *New Left Review*, Vol. 34, No. July-August (2005).

and contesting public perceptions of homeless people, critiquing Government policy, coordinating and educating activists and volunteers and, as I will now argue, in promoting equality in all of its activities.

Rights discourse gives to volunteer and recipient a common end while substantiating their equivalent being. In the example cited above, 'human rights' gives substance to a collaborative end shared by state, local government and the courts, and to a common end participated in by homeless people and charity workers. In Manchester, the Boaz Trust organises an inter-denominational network of churches which opens at night for a meal, before providing emergency accommodation space to asylum seekers, international migrants and homeless people. For volunteers with Boaz, the norm is to stay in the church and sleep together with those using the service in a common space. In short, both parties are sustained by the hospitality of the church, which is not owned by either party (though access to the church and its resources and food will often be mediated by the volunteer). Another example of innovative praxis instituting an egalitarian account of the volunteer and the recipient are a series of Contextual Bible Studies (CBS), carried out by David Nixon and Susannah Cornwall. Their intention was to 'draw out homeless people's reflections on biblical texts' and investigate 'whether they might have a uniquely "homeless" perspective"'.[41] Aware of the complexities of presuming a unitary homeless view, these authors nevertheless 'were also confident of the theological value in affirming these particular "voices from the margin" and hearing the contributions made to the provisional, ongoing bricolage of biblical interpretation.'[42] CBS methodology values both the process and result of these sessions. The facilitator's role 'is to empower the group participants during the Bible study process to discover, acknowledge and recognise their own identity, and the value and importance of their contributions'.[43]

Reiterating the context in which these comments on *imago* were phrased in Gutiérrez's *Theology of Liberation*, his work can also provide a rationale for the defence of the particular and the different, the choice of the non-person. Gutiérrez was referring to the de-humanising alienation of the poor and therefore first stressed the universality of man

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[41] Susannah Cornwall, David Nixon, 'Readings from the Road: Contextual Bible Study with a Group of Homeless and Vulnerably Housed People', *Expository Times,* Vol. 123, No. 1 (2011), 12 – 19, at. 12.
[42] Ibid, 12.
[43] Gerald West, quoted in ibid, 13.

created in God's image and creative of him or herself and the world. But this argument can be inverted and expressed equally as polemically: it is only because of God's love for and image in all people that Gutiérrez suggests the church must choose a particular people to stand with in solidarity, as God chose the non-people of Israel as a means for the salvation of all mankind (see chapter two). In Gutiérrez's words: 'the universality of Christian love is only an abstraction unless it becomes concrete history, process, conflict; it is arrived at only through particularity.'[44] The particularity that Gutiérrez's work stresses is the non-person. Here the choice of charities to address themselves to the lives of homeless people and seek their betterment should be fully endorsed. The choice of solidarity with the most marginalised is an impulse and praxis that Gutiérrez's theology would endorse. It is the choice of the different, of the person for the non-person as God chooses the poor quintessentially demonstrated, for Gutiérrez, in God's choice of the slave people Israel and Jesus Christ's expression of his vocation in Luke 4: 17-18.

Putting these two sides of 'integral liberation' together, the charitable choice to work with and for the homeless non-person is absolutely right, but charities should not rationalise or defend their work on the basis of the 'difference' of homeless people but on the grounds that homeless people are not different enough. And, second, that it is the 'difference' of the volunteer from the homeless person that primarily needs to be overcome. This is in accord with Gutiérrez's assertion that we must be converted to the poor. This also chimes with a series of points made by Laclau and Mouffe. It brings to the fore the overdetermination of homeless people by charities and state services, it is consonant with the current 'valorisation of difference' in our contemporary social and political context[45] and it also allows for a radical reading of liberal individualism and the importance of personality.[46]

Firstly, then, we need an account of rights that substantiates the difference of people and defends the right to conditions which will allow for flourishing personality. This Laclau and Mouffe do, seeking to draw on the 'egalitarian imaginary constituted around the liberal-democratic discourse' as a means for the perpetuation and extension of

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[44] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 275.

[45] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony,* 164.

[46] Ibid, 164. For an excellent discussion of theological anthropology, and the coherence of Christian defences of personality, see Léon Turner, *Theology, Psychology and the Plural Self* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008).

the 'democratic revolution'.[47] This includes a defence of liberalism, for 'it is not liberalism as such which should be called into question, for as an ethical principle which defends the liberty of the individual to fulfil his or her human capacities, [liberalism] is more valid today than ever.'[48] What is needed today, they say, and this is the tactical redoubling of difference, is 'the production of *another* individual, an individual who is no longer constructed out of the matrix of possessive individualism', which I read as the production of another individual who is not normatively shaped by the active volunteer.[49]

How can this be substantiated? One key aspect of modern personhood, as analysed by Habermas is 'privacy', and this means considering again 'the home'. Mike Seal suggests that homeless people invade the public with the private.[50] On this reading, homeless people do not need to be 'more public' but acquire those things necessary for genuine privacy. This sits well with Laclau and Mouffe's re-imagining of rights: 'rights which involve other subjects who participate in the same social relation.'[51] Laclau and Mouffe refer to these as 'democratic rights' which can be called upon to provoke for 'the social agent', the right 'to equality and to participation as a producer and not only as a citizen'; for the house has and continues to be, along with work, a significant site of production and reproduction.[52] Homeless people, in this account of rights, are lacking in a difference (privacy as the condition of participation and the nurturing of personality) that is theologically desirable.[53]

Because God's image is in all people, Gutiérrez argues for distinctions within the category 'human' and commitment to the poor in particular. Charities that work with homeless people already do choose the poor (so far, so good), yet for Gutiérrez and those influenced by the same authors as Gutiérrez in the UK, like the Rev. Sam Wells, commitment to the poor means solidarity with the poor. Gutiérrez says that we must give

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[47] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 160.

[48] Ibid, 184.

[49] Ibid, 184.

[50] Seal, *Understanding*, 114.

[51] Laclau, Mouffe, *Hegemony*, 184.

[52] Ibid, 185.

[53] Urban planning and the history of twentieth century housing are both, as the historian Leif Jeram argues, tied into these questions of space, autonomy, and privacy. On newly built estates, like Wythenshawe in Manchester, Jeram notes 'the keenness with which the upper working class took up the bourgeois model of the inward-looking, self–contained home, luxuriating in a privacy never before available to them' and how important this was for reducing rates of typhoid, tuberculosis, scarlet fever, polio, nits, lice, child abuse and incest. Leif Jerram, *Streetlife: The Untold History of Europe's Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 357, 317, 321.

up all those things that stand in the way of our encounter with the poor, be they social, political, economic or cultural obstacles. The choice of the poor is also the transformation of the church, a conversion both personal and institutional.

This call to conversion needs to be institutionalised. One option for this is the instigation of a 'Kenosis Clause' for homelessness charities. For St. Paul the *kenosis* of Christ consists in his being 'in the form of God', but 'not [counting] equality with God as thing to be grasped', Christ 'emptied (ἐκένωσεν) himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.'[54] Prefaced by St. Paul's command that the church 'look not only to [our] own interests, but also to the interests of others', Christ's kenosis testifies to Christ's limiting, or giving up of his all, so that God's will will be done.[55] This is very similar to God's contraction in creation, noted above, and the theological basis for a model in which charities give up their own existence if they cannot bring homelessness to an end (making space for others), or, if they do succeed in ending homelessness, their justification for their existence will abate too and they can come to a close. Charities could propose a timetabled plan, listing their stated goals. If these are achieved there would be no need for the charity, if they are not there might be good reasons to end the charity and channel the charities' resources into alternative means. Gramsci leans in this direction when he says: 'in reality, only the social group that poses the end of the state and its own end as the target to be achieved can create an ethical state.'[56]

Converting the volunteer from powerful provider of services to empowering enabler of homeless people synthesises Gutiérrez's theological insight into the value of all people with chapter seven's contention that volunteers depends on the 'difference' and existence of homeless people. As Peter Scott says, the 'political task' implied by the doctrine of creation 'is to tell the difference between good and bad dependencies.'[57] Moving from the dignity of all people because of their *de facto* bearing of God's image, to our collective

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[54] RSV, Phil 2: 6 – 8.

[55] RSV, Phil 2:4.

[56] Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 259. A practical means for nurturing difference, which charities could enact, is suggested in Lemos & Crane's *The Potential for Empowering Homeless People through Digital Technology* (London: Lemos & Crane, 2013). This research shows how responsive homeless people are to digital technology and how it can 'enable vulnerable people to voice their opinions, enhance their capabilities and facilitate communication.' Given the closure of many British libraries, charities which have the space could provide these kinds of important socializing and personality building resources.

[57] Scott, Cavanaugh, *Political Theology*, 345.

dependence on the state as that sphere allocated the responsibility for the defence of human rights, this section ended by addressing the dangerous co-constitutive mutuality of contemporary volunteerism and homelessness. The volunteer depends on the needs of homeless people as a condition of possibility for his or her expression of generosity, homelessness charities depend on the existence of homeless people as a justification for their existence, homeless people increasingly depend on charities for the provision of basic goods which are often insufficient given the complexity of homeless people's 'exclusion' and the multiplicities of their marginalisation.[58]

Giving, Receiving, and Forgiving

Gutiérrez argues that the end for which creation was made is communion, friendship or covenant, the deepest level of liberation. However, Gutiérrez continues: 'God does not force a covenant on us; it is a gift, and therefore requires a choice on our part. A choice of life.'[59] In this section I will argue that the first consequence of this is that Charities should put reciprocal giving before disinterested giving and suspend the notion that disinterested giving is the ideal to which charities should aspire. So, by including homeless people in the preparation of meals, or having the volunteers at soup kitchens eat together with homeless people, conditions conducive to friendship and reciprocal giving could be nurtured by charitable institutions which seek to intentionally undermine the tendency towards sedimented 'volunteer' (active) and 'homeless client' (passive) subject positions.

However, while friendship is the end towards which volunteer and homeless person should be orientated, there is an independence, or externality of one to the other, that is necessary for friendship to grow. This is in continuity with God's giving that makes the difference of the world, and its possible non-identical return in friendship, possible and poses two further questions: one, how can the volunteer give in a way that brings to the fore their identity in front of God as someone who first *receives* life before giving life? And, two, how can charities establish the autonomy of the homeless person while also becoming places that are sensitive to those gifts that homeless people can bring? I have already attempted to answer the second question by considering the role charities play in

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[58] The most recent report by Fitzpatrick *et al*, for example, argues that councils are outsourcing their responsibility to help homeless people by sub-contracting to 'external' (third sector) providers. This, furthermore, allows the councils to claim that homelessness numbers are dropping, when in fact councils are no longer officially 'recognising' the actual existence of homeless people. Fitzpatrick, *et al*., *Homelessness Monitor 2015*, 61, 62.

[59] Gutiérrez, *God of Life*, 5.

the allocation of respective roles to different fields (such as campaigning for the state's responsibility to provide housing), I will now turn to the first question by putting forward the need for independence as a part of interdependence.

The importance of difference in this account of charitable reciprocity needs to be set in dialogue with Milbank's work on *donum* or gift. I drew on this work above in reference to the problems implicit in unilateral giving, but these must also be qualified in line with my analysis in chapter five and these comments on the active reception of the gift. Milbank sought to undermine univocal, selfless, giving on the grounds of the 'non-identical' reception or return of the gift. A non-identity or asymmetry which Milbank sees in creation as the gift of God and in the return of creation to God in a distinct form, though these are, in the end, analogous. I asked whether 'non-identical return' could be adequately conceived within a schema that stresses hierarchy and analogy. If gift and counter-gift are both unanimously fused (to use Milbank's term) or analogically related, then is there really any return of the different, the non identical? God, in Catherine Keller's terms, is the gift giver but is also sensitive to the reception of the gift and therefore to the intrinsic worth of the creature.[60] If we extrapolate from this a logic of gift giving, Keller is arguing that gift giving, to be reciprocal gift giving, requires the participants to be external to the gift itself. Externality is a condition that must be met if the gift is to be capable of returning non-identically. And this is where Milbank's account falls short assisting us to think radical reciprocity with homeless people, for homeless people often depend on the gift and cannot constitute themselves (bodily, economically) outside of it. The gift is not chosen, it is required, and as required it misses what is prerequisite for emancipatory non-identical return, the consensual and intentional reception of the gift by those who can live outside of it and can therefore freely chose it. For gift giving there must be consent and for consent there must be the possibility of being either before or after the gift, which is to say: independence.

In Gutiérrez's terms, to foreclose or deny the otherness of the other and their independence is analogous to unforgiveness: to 'fixate the past' in the other.[61] In the current neoliberal context, charities institutionalising unforgiveness makes uncomfortable if counter-intuitive sense. Those who do not fulfil the demands of self-discipline, autonomy and independence necessary for participation in the work force do not deserve anything,

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[60] Radford Ruether, Grau, *Interpreting the Postmodern,* 29.
[61] Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 100.

what they do receive is therefore 'unfair' and only adds to the debt they owe to the producer, the consumer and the generous. In a way, every charitable gift only adds to the guilt of the recipient. 'The new way that conversion and pardon opens up takes the form of an option in behalf of life', Gutiérrez says.[62] Whether homeless people are guilty or not, charities and the volunteers who participate in them must paradoxically set friendship and autonomy as the goals to which they aspire, which, under the current circumstances, will involve a process of forgiving and letting go of past debts so that new forms of 'debt' (but this time solidarity, responsibility, cooperation and mutual reception and interpersonal giving) can flourish. The gift, I would suggest, must be freely given and freely received.

The Rev. Dr. Sam Wells' work with volunteers who eschew the delivery of services, preferring, instead, to spend time 'being with' homeless people on the streets, is an excellent example of how the volunteer needs conversion, and of what the volunteer stands to learn from homeless people. In a talk given in 2013, at the University of Glasgow, Wells asked what it means to just sit and be with homeless people, to 'gradually locate the questions they really want to ask and the wisdom they deeply have to share.' He continued: 'in this approach the physical posture is as significant as what is actually said. No longer does the person with the 'problem' sit while the person with the 'solution' stand: now the two sit together, and what they are talking about is not the deficit in the one and the surfeit in the other, but matters of common concern to both.' Wells advocates 'close listening and deep appreciation of the perspective, experience, and wisdom that comes from all participants.' What is needed is like a conversion: 'the conversion from seeing oneself as the Samaritan to realising one is the person in the ditch, and learning to accept the abundance that comes from the despised person rather than assuming all good can only come from oneself.' Freire is one of Wells' inspirations for this, and we can see, when Freire says that teacher and student 'become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow' the paradigmatic model of externality and internality which destabilises the capacity of the giver to give, while upholding their ability, surprisingly, to receive.[63]

Conclusion

I asked, at the end of chapter seven, how charities orientated towards homelessness can break their dependency on the existence of homeless people. In one sense, they can

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[62] Ibid, 100.

[63] Freire, *Pedagogy*, 61.

not: only the ongoing plight of homeless people could legitimise their existence, and this chapter has therefore repeatedly drawn attention to theologically legitimate means for going beyond charity (institution) for the sake of charity (love). In the meantime, while a politics of common life ascribed to by state, civil society and market remains a possibility, not an actuality, I have outlined theological justifications for, and examples of, charitable best practice.

In relation to each form of contemporary duality, I have drawn on Gutiérrez's articulation of the paradoxical doctrine of creation to suggest ways beyond the energy expended but lack of lasting change secured by contemporary charities. Working collaboratively with other groups in civil society, through the uptake and implementation of a *kenosis* clause, critiquing and differentiating from neoliberal norms, breaking down the difference of homeless person from the volunteer, and defending the dignity of all people irrespective of their work capacity, there are ample grounds for defending theologically and politically the credentials, credibility and import of charities.

As a discourse external to that of neoliberal hegemony, I have explored the doctrine of creation as both contesting aspects of our current hegemonic order, but also oppositional to that order (as proposed in chapter six). While neoliberalism quietly gathers to its bosom civil society, state, and market, while vocally asserting their difference, the doctrine of creation postulates their difference from each other because of their common origin, end and ongoing existence in God. The cleavage in the social between volunteer and recipient, drawn on and reinforced by neoliberalism, occludes the function homeless people play as the aberrant exception constitutive of the norm, while in the discourse of creation, the equality of volunteer and homeless person, both bearers of God's *imago*, call for the extension of freedom for the latter, and the choice of the particular for the former. For neoliberalism, the willed choice to give to the other as an other makes possible their 'freedom' to be the same and my autonomy as a self, considered from the perspective of the doctrine of creation, it is our being made in reception and exchange which mandates a self that is never exactly mine, and the homeless other as the bringer of a gift I cannot predict, did not earn, and cannot forgo.

Chapter Nine

Conclusion

Summary of Position

To conclude this thesis I will return to my research question, before suggesting some areas of study which require further attention.

I asked: in what ways can John Milbank and Gustavo Gutiérrez's articulations of the doctrine of creation inform our understanding and evaluation of Christian charities operating in British civil society, and how social exclusion is connected to homelessness?

My answer to this question is multifaceted: the doctrine of creation is 'informative' because it sustains and supports a normative account of liberation on three planes: order, personhood, and the interpersonal. In the work of Gutiérrez, we can also see that God creating, and this being God's creation, implies a rule for measurement or a criterion for use in discernment: this order is good, that person exhibits the *imago*, these forms of the interpersonal are communion, *to the degree they bring about life*. Maintaining these three interlinked facets, the doctrine of creation is informative in a second sense: it provides a schema in which to examine charities that work with homeless people – it legitimises a framework which examines charities as operating on these three levels. In this thesis the doctrine of creation, read from the work of Gustavo Gutiérrez, is both formally and substantively informative.

Secondly, Gutiérrez's account of creation, and his reading of the documents of Vatican Two, legitimise his inclusion of the social sciences in the praxis of theology, and his 'understanding' of our current situation. Being created is important for theological methodology and grounds my theologically informed understanding of charities as 'dual', a conclusion I needed the work of social scientists to reach. By dual, I mean something both broad and specific. Specifically, homelessness charities are both political and religious institutions, they help to overcome and entrench social exclusion, and they are other orientated and self-aggrandising. More broadly, they are both liberating and oppressive for homeless people, and also, consequently, vehicles for the maintenance and (potentially) change of neoliberalism.

This neoliberalism must be rejected, as it is particularly dangerous for homeless people. The immediate future for homeless people looks bleak; since a low point in the 2000s, homelessness numbers have been consistently rising. Small state politics and the

expansion of marketisation are problematic for homeless people because homeless people are not only rendered superfluous to the standing labour reserve, but also because neoliberalism makes coherent a form of willed based ethical amelioration (charity) to this problem. This thesis is important because it draws attention to a recalcitrant antagonism in our current neoliberal hegemonic order (homelessness), and problems with a popular solution to that stated problem: charity. In part, I have located charity in the discipline of political theology, and not that of theological ethics, because charity is problematic *because* it is widely considered to be a viable and unproblematic ethical praxis. Under these circumstances, I have argued that it is right to think of homeless people as doubly excluded, or the included excluded, because they are marginal to economic and political life, and have been made marginal again in the way this economic and political marginality is overcome.

To 'evaluate' charitable duality, I compared and contrasted the paradox maintained by the doctrine of creation, with the 'duality' of contemporary charity. This led to a nuanced final evaluation: theologically, charities are both timely, important and potentially emancipatory – a means for the realisation of the kingdom (to use Gutiérrez's language from the introduction of this thesis); while they are also oppressive, limiting and deceiving as they embody and secure the neoliberal world of profitability and utility: securing subservience to a master signifier that is not God. Given their complexity, varied history, and past achievements, I think only a complex and balanced evaluation of charities is possible: neither their total denigration, nor their uncritical celebration, are appropriate theological responses to the current charitable phenomena.

I set out to strengthen David Nixon's argument: that the stories Christians tell about the sociality of the Trinitarian God necessitate the conversion of the church to the poor and the liberation of homeless people from those structures and stereotypes that stifle their life. This thesis is supplementary to that contention in this way: the justification for the reform of our current orders, 'conversion' of Christian charities, and rethinking and overcoming the 'social exclusion' of homeless people resides not only in who God *is* but in the very 'nature' of this created world. Charities are currently insufficient because they fail to embody fully a theological account of what 'is'. Milbank's argument concerning volunteerism, despite the lacks I noted in his work, exemplifies this beautifully: the voluntary expression of will to dominion over self and the world, even when expressed in benevolent selflessness, compartmentalises the activity of God, tends to neglect the

primacy of the reception of ourselves as gift, and obscures what the other can bring to me of the divine. Here, juxtaposed, as I have argued throughout this thesis, are the self-made human of neoliberalism, and the made human of theology.

While I did not continue Milbank's constructive theo-political aspirations into the second half of this thesis, there is still a 'Milbankian' trend running through this piece of work. My reading of Gutiérrez as the proponent of a paradoxical discursive worldview that begins with the activity and character of a living, saving God, as a theologian who gives particular attention to ecclesial tradition, history, dogmatics, and language, is, undoubtedly, a reading informed by the questions, concerns and insights of Milbank's theological writings. Furthermore, my substantive critique of charities and my hypothesis - that charities are dual - have been led by Milbank's reflections on this subject. Methodologically, I agree with Milbank that there is no neutral, simple, foundation for theo-politics that can be found in the social sciences. Unlike Milbank, I have argued that there are good theological reasons for positing legitimate extra-ecclesial spaces, and defending them on theological grounds (including, to various degrees, the secular, the social scientific, and the state). Finally, John Milbank has been an engaging and sympathetic interlocutor on those occasions we have been able to meet and talk. In conversation, he has expressed his admiration for Gutiérrez's work, and I hope this thesis will contribute to the development of a more generous *rapprochement* between the 'Liberative' and 'Radical' traditions of theological orthodoxy.

Reviewing Integral Liberation

I will now retrace the theological position developed in this thesis by reviewing the concept 'integral liberation' and how it has been put to work in this text. I will look again at Gutiérrez's work on nature and grace, and ask whether this is like or dislike a natural law argument

First, I asked in the Introduction whether the doctrine of creation could be used as a resource to inform contemporary charity and advance the lives of homeless people. I suggested that one of the strengths of the doctrine of creation is that it combines elements of the supernatural and the natural. One of the dangers inherent in this form of theology, as Peter Scott rightly observes, is the tendency of political theologians to defend static

accounts of a (particular, contingent) historical order on the grounds that it is mandated by the nature of this creation or God's character, creation's maker. Nevertheless, this thesis has suggested that the theological and political questions made possible by engaging with the doctrine of creation are very promising, I therefore turned to relationship between nature and grace as articulated by Gustavo Gutiérrez.

So, how does 'integral liberation', an important facet of Gutiérrez's work, combine the natural and the supernatural? For Gutiérrez, integral liberation is a term which expresses the ideal synthesis of humanity's origin and *telos* with their historical practice. Gutiérrez says that 'Integral liberation (a theme present in Liberation Theology from its beginning) is, in the final analysis, the acceptance of the Kingdom of life.'[1] 'Life' includes 'all dimensions of the human, in keeping with the all embracing will of God' and is, second, 'contrary to the situation of death in which the poor and oppressed are currently living.'[2] Gutiérrez clearly states that the poor are living but do not have life: integral liberation is normative and not simply descriptive. Integral liberation combines aspects of the scholastic position (that grace perfects nature, it does not transcend or overcome it)[3] with the Second Vatican Council's theologically grounded respect for the autonomy of the world (as I highlighted in chapter two). Integral liberation concerns all life, but this oneness of life and history is a 'complex unity'[4] and theology must work to sustain and articulate a 'unity without confusion, distinction without separation.'[5] Gutiérrez continues: 'Only in this way is it possible to preserve both the unity that the free and unmerited initiative of God has bestowed on every area of human history, and the relative autonomies without which the coherence of human action and the gratuitousness of grace cannot be asserted with sufficient clarity.'[6]

Drawing on Gutiérrez's scholarship, supernatural grace is distinct from the natural, but it is also nature fulfilled, lived and expressed as it should be (they are not, as Gutiérrez says, 'two juxtaposed "orders"').[7] In Gutiérrez's theology, to talk about nature is to talk about a secondary or derivative sphere, that which follows on from the supernatural. To understand nature correctly, the theologian must first attend to the character of the God

[1] Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free,* 12.
[2] Ibid, 12.
[3] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 55.
[4] Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free,* 125.
[5] Ibid, 14.
[6] Ibid,14.
[7] Ibid, 125.

who made it, and take into account the limits of human knowledge of God as God is in God's self. Engaging 'order' again, which is necessary given the structural production of homelessness, a theological account of order which develops Gutiérrez's position must maintain both the integral oneness of creation, liberative politics for the poor, and the transcendence of God and God's grace. It must be a theo-political position capable, in short, of articulating the identity of human 'nature' with grace (and particular human substantiations or institutions of this coincidence) while defending particular protocols related to human freedom and God's particular concern for the death of the poor. Expressing these two tendencies as parts of a single theo-politics without blurring their differences or forgetting their links is the challenge posed by integral liberation. The logic of this is apparent when Gutiérrez advocates this kind of balance:

> The challenge is to maintain the distinctions that allow us to understand the various levels of gratuitousness, while at the same time not separating human life into watertight compartments, as if there were areas of life into which the love of God, which is always free and unmerited, does not enter.[8]

To rid our society of homelessness would be a supernatural achievement. It would also bring us into greater accord with our personhood, give us a greater capacity for relationship, and bring us one step closer to the realisation of God's order.

A theo-political order should aim to safeguard the freedom of all its people because all people are willed by God. Second, it should be guided by an exploration of what the human needs to fulfil and live up to that freedom, and it should be aware that any one sphere exercising a monopoly over the social, economic or political spheres of power is in grave danger of inhibiting freedom. The theo-political order articulated in this thesis therefore defended civil society, state and economy as distinct but overlapping spheres.

Milbank is not held back by the same concerns: his account of 'order' is too static, I argued, tending towards the establishment of a hierarchical Christendom, the disestablishment of a distinct extra-ecclesiological state, and a monotonous civil sphere. This can be seen in Milbank's own discussion of integralism. In his account of 'integral humanism', the 'new Christendom' of Jacques Maritain, Milbank says that 'true

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[8] Gutiérrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free,* 123.

integration has to sustain an element of hybridity which allows that supernatural concerns cannot be politically administered, while also allowing that sheerly political matters involving temporary compromises with human disagreement and imperfection... the Church as such must eschatologically refuse - in this sense true integration is *never* "perfect" integration and this imperfection even helps to define its "integrity"'.[9] This sounds quite like Gutiérrez's position, defending as it does the overlap but distinction of the natural and the supernatural and the relationship without confusion of the church and the political. Yet, this apparent difference of realm based on Milbank's paradoxical theology is offered with one hand and withdrawn with the other. Milbank directly follows the above passage by saying: 'nevertheless, the supernatural virtues should inform the natural ones in the political domain and the endeavours of the latter must finally be measured by the assistance which they give to the supernatural society which is the Church.'[10] The ecclesiological approach that Milbank shares with Daniel Bell begins with the church and ends with the church and in so doing it is liable to obscure the church's 'others'. That said, the imperfection of order addressed here by Milbank is an interesting point theologically. Again 'nature' is a key term and I will now ask: is there a link between the position developed in this thesis and the tradition of natural law reasoning?

Gutiérrez's work points towards the articulation of orthodox Christian doctrine and discernment of God's actions in distinct historical contexts. He lodges his theology in the teachings of the church, the experiences of the poor, and his account of the person in God's charity - for we 'have been made by love and for love.'[11] Natural law is an important tradition in Christian thought and according to Lisa Sowle Cahill it can furnish a number of useful solutions to theoretical and practical problems, including: are there 'basic goods and equality', how does 'practical moral decision making occur' and is there a role for 'religious commitment and community in forming ethical insight and practice', but it is not central to Gutiérrez's work.[12] According to Cahill, the natural law tradition is capable of meeting these questions because it can provide us with a teleology, basic moral values that are '"objective"', a 'moral epistemology of inductive, experience-based, critical practical reasoning', and justify attention to 'contingent contexts' and their relevance to the

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[9] Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*, 136.

[10] Ibid, 136.

[11] Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, 110.

[12] Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Global Justice, Christology, and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 248, 249. The exception to this is Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003).

discernment of goods.[13] If this is so, natural law – the existence of universal, if culturally pliable, moral principles which can be regarded as the basis for all human conduct - undoubtedly deserves further attention and development in dialogue with homeless people and theology.

While I am sympathetic to a number of these concerns and have explored homelessness and theology in relationship with Christian ontology (the traditional ground of much Thomistic natural law reasoning), I have taken an approach that begins with Gutiérrez's understanding of theological and ecclesiological tradition. I chose this route for a number of reasons, aware that one potential 'problem with a tradition-based approach is that it forfeits epistemological universality and, with it, the possibility that equality can be understood as a generally compelling social and political ideal.'[14] First, given the history of political theology I argued that political theology must attend thoroughly and at length to the grammar of its own language. Cahill argues that to discuss the doctrine of creation is to talk about nature in a theological way.[15] However, I decided to use the theological term creation, not nature or natural law, because of the theological character of this investigation. Second, this thesis does not speak directly to the universal; instead it is concerned with addressing the particular issues associated with homelessness and Christian charitable responses to this problem. I identified and critiqued a common political hegemony, not a common nature, in this thesis. Finally, I defended theological methodology as spiral in shape and judged theological progress to have occurred when dialogue, insight and conversation proliferated. Reflecting on the relationship between theological knowledge and political participation at the end of *A Theology of Liberation,* Gutiérrez says

> we will have an authentic theology of liberation only when the oppressed themselves can
> freely raise their voice and express themselves directly and creatively in society and in
> the heart of the People of God, when they are the protagonists of their own liberation.
> For now we must support that process, which has barely begun.[16]

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[13] Cahill, *Global Justice*, 250, 251.
[14] Ibid, 262.
[15] Ibid, 247 – 289.
[16] Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 307.

Is it the case that we will only know an authentic theology when the poor are the agents, subjects, and creations of their own freedom? Gutiérrez's comments here could also be developed into a question for natural law: will we only know the natural law when the poor are free? In this thesis I have defended the strength of a tradition based approach: its attention to a particular and historically contingent way of speaking and acting. Unlike natural law arguments, which derive their rhetorical and conceptual force from their universality, a tradition or discursive methodology can put forward a universal, but to do so responsibly the tradition must be aware of and state publically the partiality of its articulation. Theology is, as I argued in chapter six, a paradoxical discourse spoken by a living tradition.

At the beginning of this thesis, I drew attention to a problem posed by F.S. Fiorenza: 'some Christians might argue that social welfare legislation and the reform of political structures represents the drawing out of the implications of the Sermon on the Mount. Others might argue that personal almsgiving expresses the meaning and truth of the Sermon on the Mount; therefore, personal charity rather than social reform represents what is paradigmatically Christian'.[17] The answer presented in this thesis, drawn from an examination of homelessness and twentieth century Christian political theology, is that Christians must do both. While the state continues to secure the hegemony of neoliberalism, charities offer us an important and humanising alternative that bears witness to a different order. If, on the other hand, the will of the state can be bent back into the service of theological ends, then it is possible, desirable even, for us to move beyond charities because of their dangerous dualities.

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[17] Fiorenza, *Foundational Theology,* 306.

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