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ABSTRACT

Human freedom is best understood as self-determination. Free action consists of deliberation, decision, and action. The free human person deserves dignity, that is, we each deserve to be treated as a moral end and not merely as a means to someone else's end. Neurocentrist philosophy—a form of eliminative materialism-based on neuroscience, however, threatens the extinction of the human self and, thereby, threatens to turn our experience of freedom and dignity into a mere delusion. This evacuates the moral agenda of every activist liberation theology. One task of today's public theologian is to protect Cognitive Liberty, because it conceptually undergirds political, economic, and social liberation.

KEYWORDS

Political theology; public theology; liberation theology; cognitive liberty; activism; dignity; dignitarian counterpolitics; freedom; freedom-denial; self; consciousness; eliminative materialism; neurocentrism; Alan Weissenbacher

The essential component to liberation is the conferral of dignity on those who have previously been denied dignity. Dignity, as defined by the Kantian Enlightenment, means we treat each person as a moral end and not merely as a means to someone else's end.¹ Once such dignity is conferred, the now dignified person rises up to claim it. The tacit or overt claim of dignity finds expression in self-determination, that is, in human free will consisting of deliberation, decision, and action. In sum, to liberate is to set at liberty free will understood as self-determination.

Now, what would happen if we learn that there is no self to liberate, no self capable of deliberation, decision and action? Would liberation lose its logic? Yes. This marks the conceptual disaster awaiting us if neurocentrist interpretations of neuroscience hold the field. Nevertheless, the public theologian has good reason to critique this neurocentrist position and, in the process, conceptually liberate the human self from its potential loss to neurodeterminism.²

In this exercise in public theology,³ I recommend that we construct a liberation ontology guided by an ethic of conferring dignity—called *dignitarian counterpolitics*—that presupposes the self-as-story within which human freedom is supported by efforts to maintain and extend cognitive liberty. If this seems obscurantist, please permit me in what follows to explain what this means.

1. The Threat of Neuroscience to Self-Determination, Free Will, and Human Dignity

Public theologies of activism and resistance aimed at liberation are unknowingly threatened by an earthquake rattling the foundations of human freedom. The epicenter is the conversation between neuroscientists and neurophilosophers. The seismic rumbling

begins with this test hypothesis: freedom understood as self-determination is a fiction. It does not exist. The delusion that we are freely choosing subjects is fobbed off on us by the brain's neuro-activity, allegedly. This position is flagged as *self-as-delusion*, *eliminative materialism*, or *neurocentrism*, a subspecies of *free-will-as-illusion*.⁴ If the disciples of neurocentrism prove their point, liberation theologians will be left with no one to liberate. Is it time to seismically retrofit our understanding of freedom?

Ordinarily, activist theologians with liberation and postcolonial commitments pay scant attention to developments in science. Why? Because scientific knowing only extends colonial hegemony. Postcolonial thought aims at “decentering universal and transhistorical values of Western categories of knowledge,” avers R.S. Sugirtharajah. Postcolonial activism “questions the three mainstays of the Enlightenment: objectivity, rationalism, and universalism.”⁵ With this assumption, neither neuroscience or any other science prompts even interest to this kind of theology, let alone an apologetic defense.

Nevertheless, the undeniable reality is that the scientists among us make universal claims, claims that purportedly apply to every human being regardless of social location. Therefore, I contend, in the case of neuroscience, perhaps Western science warrants apologetic theological attention. This is because neuroscience capped by neurocentrist philosophy threatens to undermine liberation's foundation by washing away the ontological concept of human freedom and its moral correlate, human dignity.

While alert to the politics of class, race, gender and even body discrimination, activist theologians are asleep when it comes to scientized biopolitics. We use the term *biopolitics* to refer to modern Western public health programs formulated according to statistics; and statistics pay no attention to the dignity of the individual person. “Biopolitics,” according to Gaymon Bennett at Arizona State University, “is centrally concerned with normalizing constructions of human life and the potential of science and technology to renormalize human life through technical and political intervention.”⁶ The biopolitics of public health are by no means demonic, to be sure; yet, the norms of biopolitical ideology need constant counter-critique to protect the individual person from statistical oppression. “Dignitarian politics ... serve as ‘ethical equipment’ ... Talk of dignity equips us: it primes our attention to the excesses of biopower ... and to biopower's limitations.”⁷ Without a robust doctrine of the human self combined with an ethic of cognitive liberty, activist theologians would have no grounding for dignitarian counterpolitics.

Sleeping activist theologians are unaware that scientized forces are eroding the very understructure upon which they have constructed their ethic of liberation. “The issue of free will is the most philosophically challenging and existentially important issue confronting belief today. Belief not only in God—but in political elections, criminal justice, creative endeavors, and hard work,” contends James Walters; “civilization itself presupposes that individuals freely choose or reject ideas about how we should live.”⁸ Without reliance on the dignity of the freely choosing person, liberation becomes a vacuous fantasy.

Paul Chung is awake. He constructs a *Postcolonial Public Theology* that makes the case for including science.

Public theology establishes worldwide relevance by seeking emancipation from violence, poverty, and injustice, while acknowledging the otherness of God in God's solidarity with

innocent victims and nature ... Public theology necessarily engages in the science-religion dialogue about ecological awareness and the scientific understanding of the Earth and creaturely life.⁹

Chung refers specifically to environmental science. Might a public postcolonial theology respond to neuroscience and the question of cognitive liberty as well? I believe it should.

2. Liberation Theology, Political Theology, and Public Theology Should Ask: What is Freedom?

The neurocentric battering ram is about to breach the self-understanding that fortifies activist theology. What fortifies today's activist vision is the renewal of our planet's life-giving fecundity combined with distributive and restorative justice for marginalized persons and peoples.¹⁰ Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor of *Tikkun*, integrates liberation and eco-ethics with Passover. "Passover must become the time to replenish our energies to become the agents of an expanded consciousness that can envision and then create a world that lives in harmony with planet Earth."¹¹ Expanding consciousness combined with liberative agency share with environmental restoration inchoate assumptions regarding what constitutes human freedom. It is time for activist theologians to get specific: what is human freedom? Here is how Hak Joon Lee cuts the current theological pie.

Liberation theology seeks liberation from oppression, while *political theology* pursues the radical interruption and transformation of society in the eschatological anticipation of God's future; *public theology*, by comparison, strives for a new social consensus and the moral renewal of civilization.¹²

2.1. Liberation Theology

I cut the pie somewhat differently. Liberation theology is the first slice.¹³ The liberation theology of the late 1960s was a sibling of the political theology of the 1960s which, as Lee rightly notes, began with a vision of God's kingdom and sought to transform today's society in light of that vision.¹⁴ Liberation theologians added to that agenda a specific observation, namely, structures of economic and political oppression combined with cultural false-consciousness should be tagged as the chains which bind the victims of oppression.¹⁵ To liberate means to set free, to break the chains, to counter constraints. To liberate implicitly means to confer dignity on those to whom dignity has been denied culturally by class, race, gender, age or by political repression. Once the chains of oppression would be broken, then individual and class self-determination would replace the previous hegemony. Dignitarian counterpolitics is the central commitment of liberation theology.

Now, this is liberation *theology*, not just liberation politics. Freedom for the theologian is much more subtle or nuanced than it is in common parlance or political rhetoric. Gustavo Gutiérrez plummets the dimensions of the self that needs liberation from the self.

Freedom is a central element of the Christian message ... It is necessary to consider a freedom *from* and a freedom *for*. The former points to sin, to greed, to oppression, to injustice, to need; conditions that all require liberation. The latter points to the reason for this freedom: love, that is communion, is the final stage of liberation. *Freedom for* gives a profound meaning to *freedom from*.¹⁶

According to the theologian, the self needs to be liberated from itself in order to love the neighbor. But, when it comes to activist political theology, freedom from restrictions on self-determination becomes the focus of prophetic political theology. “It is the intention of our political theology to transform persons from degraded objects at the mercy of external forces into free subjects of their own lives,” announces Jürgen Moltmann.¹⁷ To transform persons from being “degraded objects” requires the conferral of dignity. Now we ask: what is presupposed about freedom here? Freedom *from* might be the best that liberating praxis can accomplish. We can only pray that the liberated self will exercise freedom *for*.

2.2. Political Theology

This leads to the second slice of Hak Joon Lee’s theological pie: political theology. Here we must distinguish between *Prophetic Political Theology*, such as that espoused by Jürgen Moltmann, which places a negative social critique within the context of a positive vision of the eschatological Kingdom of God, and *Descriptive Political Theology*, the aim of which is to provide a descriptive analysis of the hidden religious dimensions present in existing structures of political power.

Descriptive political theology today has largely doused the prophetic fire that once burned in the 1960s. Back in the days of prophetic fire, Johannes Metz lit the fuse on the dynamite. “I understand this political theology to be a positive attempt to formulate the eschatological message under the conditions of our present society.”¹⁸

But, political theology has self-degraded. The mood has mellowed. Today’s leading political theologians have saturated their work with *description* while smothering the prophetic spark of *prescription*. The approach of Vincent Lloyd, editor of the journal, *Political Theology*, merely offers “an analysis of the role of religious concepts in political theory and practice—without Christian presuppositions.”¹⁹ Paul Kahn similarly says, the “political theology, as I pursue it here, is a project of *descriptive* political analysis.”²⁰ Snuffed out is the prophetic spark of liberation. Activism has been replaced with the paralysis of analysis, at least among descriptive political theologians.

One needs to go to a non-political theologian, such as New Testament historian N.T. Wright, to retrieve the fire of the previous prophetic mood.

The Christian task in the present is to anticipate this eschatology, to borrow from God’s future in order to change the way things are in the present, to enjoy the taste of our eventual deliverance from evil by learning how to lose the bonds of evil in the present.²¹

The dignity of each person today is confirmed proleptically by God’s eschatological promise of citizenship in the everlasting Kingdom of God.

2.3. Public Theology

Thirdly, public theology.²² I like the definition offered by Paul Chung.

Public theology is a theological-philosophical endeavor to provide a broader frame of reference to facilitate the responsibility of the church and theological ethics for social, political, economic, and cultural issues. It investigates public issues, developing conceptual clarity and providing social-ethical guidance of religious conviction and response to them.²³

Katie Day and Sebastian Kim provide a parallel ascription. “Public theology refers to the church reflectively engaging with those within and outside its institutions on issues of common interest and for the common good.”²⁴ According to this definition, public theology begins in the church and then engages matters of public interest in service of the common good. Public theology incorporates a component of transformation, perhaps even emancipation.

Insofar as these three schools of overlapping thought—liberation theology, political theology, and public theology—set for themselves an agenda of activism and resistance on behalf of marginalized people who are victimized by structures of oppression, they must presuppose an understanding of human freedom that includes self-determination. Once the chains of repression have been released, what remains can only be self-direction on the part of the liberated. Freedom as self-determination is the only logical goal of social transformation in these Christian traditions.

This strongly suggests that cognitive liberty should become fundamental to the theologian’s list of liberties. Cognitive Liberty should become the stalk from which leaves will sprout into political, economic, and cultural freedom. This move will mandate the theologian to pursue a carefully thought through phenomenology or even ontology of freedom, especially freedom viewed as self-determination. Such a proposal may sound Pelagian to classical theological ears; but in this modern and emerging postmodern context we must understand divine grace as empowerment of the self to determine itself within daily life.

3. Freedom as Self-Determination

With this in mind, my constructive proposal—activist theology should incorporate cognitive liberty—relies upon the following presupposition: the intentional construction of a doctrine of cognitive liberty must avoid the trap of assuming that the debate is between determinism and freedom. The contest is not between a determining external coercion, on the one side, and an undetermined internal liberty, on the other.

This ancient form of the debate is misleading, because human freedom is not a form of indeterminism. Rather, free will is a form of determinism, specifically *self-determinism*. What freedom adds to garden variety determinism is the subjective self—the whole human person—as a determining agent affecting the world. Modern libertarian *freedom is best defined as self-determination through deliberation, decision, and action.*²⁵ Liberation, in turn, is best defined as decreasing oppressive obstructions while increasing opportunities (capabilities) wherein self-determination can be actualized. The agent who determines is the self to whom we confer dignity, and the conferral of dignity is the essence of liberation.

It’s time for activist theologians to ask questions. Does a human self even exist that could be liberated? What if liberation theologians are constructing just another figurative self to compete with the self previously constructed by colonial oppressors? What if the only selves that exist belong exclusively to a complex of figurations, social constructions, social imaginaries, fictions? What if the very expectation that we have a self is itself a brand of false consciousness? Most importantly, has the self lost its ontological warrant for dignity, protection, and emancipation?

Dignitarian counterpolitics must rely upon an underlying anthropology, on belief in the intrinsic value of the human self even when the regnant biopolitics of the day denies that very dignity. Gaymon Bennett, who gives us the term *dignitarian politics*, makes this clear. “The logic of biopolitics and the logic of human dignity are sharply contrastive. The first is relative and ameliorative, the second intrinsic and invariable.”²⁶ If the human self has been kidnapped by biological science, the dignitarian activist must launch a search and retrieval effort.

4. Have the Neurocentrists Taken my Self Away?

In the conversation between neuroscientists and philosophers of neuroscience, we find the latter denying the existence of the human self. Denying the existence of the self turns neuro-philosophers into freedom-deniers.

If we define the self as a first person subject who experiences *qualia*—that is, who experiences meaningful feelings and values—then this self does not exist, according to freedom-deniers. Such a philosophical position is often tagged *mind–brain identity theory*, *eliminative materialism*, or *neurocentrism*. “The mind ... is the brain,” Tufts University philosopher Daniel Dennett says repeatedly.²⁷ German philosopher Thomas Metzinger weighs in. “Subjective experience is a biological data format, a highly specific mode of presenting information about the world by letting it appear as if it were an Ego’s knowledge. But, no such things as selves exist in this world”²⁸ Dennett and Metzinger belong to the hypocenter releasing the seismic tremors and intellectual tsunamis that will soon inundate liberation activists.

Not the laboratory scientists, but rather the philosophers embrace *neurocentrism* as “the view that human experience can be best explained from the predominant or even exclusive perspective of the brain.”²⁹ In short, because it does not exist, the conscious self cannot become a topic for scientific research.

Scientists can study the brain, of course. The brain is material, physical, chemical, and biological. Here is the key challenge: according to neurocentrists, we may reduce what we think of as the mind to its material substrate, the brain. The mind is the brain, and only the brain. What gets eliminated here is the human subject or self along with freedom understood as self-determination.³⁰

The neurotheologian protests. He or she will not accept this proposed elimination of the self. “Strictly speaking, consciousness involves the generation of a Self as an element in subjective awareness,” declare Eugene D’Aquila and Andrew Newberg.³¹

5. The Dilemma: Cartesian Dualism vs. Eliminative Materialism

Let me set up the problem anthropologically and metaphysically. There are two horns of the anthropological dilemma for the theologian: Cartesian dualism and eliminative materialism. Queer theologian Mary Elise Lowe sees the first horn but not the second. “Queer theologies reject the Cartesian model of the subject and argue that stable identity is merely an illusion. Identity—like gender and meaning—is constructed. Subjects *come to be* within and are constituted by language, discourses, and material conditions.”³² Lowe has successfully protected herself from the dualist horn. But, the menacing shadow of eliminative materialism goes unnoticed and unaddressed.³³

In this article we are asking: how might the conversation among neuroscientists and neurocentrist philosophers affect activist theologians for whom liberation is central? A seismic retrofit of the concept of the self-needing-liberation is required of today's activists, whether promulgating post-colonial, black, feminist, queer, political, or other public theologies. This is the case whether today's post-colonial theologian thinks of liberation as applying to the individual or to a marginalized group. Without a robust doctrine of the human subject or self, the entire liberation agenda will slide into a moraine of meaningless baffle-gab.

Allen Weissenbacher, currently the book review editor for *Theology and Science*, furnishes some sturdy materials that could aid in the retrofit. Specifically, it is Weissenbacher's treatment of cognitive liberty that we want to requisition. But, before we call in the repair technician, let me assess sites where neuroscience is invisibly disrupting the self-understanding of activist theology.

5.1. Site Assessment 1: Neuroscience & Neurocentric Philosophy

First, let me assess the hiatus between neuroscience as a science and the neuro-reductionist philosophy that sometimes caps the science.

Laboratory researchers study, among many things, the relationship between neuroactivity within the brain and conscious thought. Brain researcher Stanislas Dehaene in France, for example, asks the fascinating question of consciousness-access: just how does fundamental perception get filtered and selected and organized for conscious awareness? He observes that in everyday activity we fail to realize fully just how much of our activity is guided by "an unconscious automatic pilot ... We constantly overestimate the power of our consciousness in making decisions—but, in truth, our capacity for conscious control is limited."³⁴

Even though unconscious neuroprocesses frame our conscious deliberation, there remains plenty of room for conscious deliberation. This deliberation takes place in what Dehaene calls the *Global Neuronal Workspace* (GNW).

Consciousness is brain-wide information sharing ... Consciousness is an evolved device that allows us to attend to a piece of information and keep it active within this broadcasting system. Once the information is conscious, it can be flexibly routed to other areas according to our current goals. Thus we can name it, evaluate it, memorize it, or use it to plan the future. Computer simulations of neural networks show that the global neuronal workspace hypothesis generates precisely the signatures that we see in experimental brain recordings.³⁵

GNW includes both what is conscious along with the influence of what is preconscious or unconscious. It manifests globalizing mental activity.

We note in addition that some automatic brain activity is self-determined. Take habits, for example. "The more routine a behavior becomes, the less we are aware of it."³⁶ By deliberately establishing habits—perhaps as an athlete in training or an ascetic establishing habits of virtue—our consciousness gets relieved of paying attention to each detail of our activity. Our trained body automatically clicks in when appropriate. This is self-determined automaticity.

Why do we deliberately cultivate habits? By assigning certain tasks to automatic non-conscious repetition, our GNW becomes free to focus attention on selected new tasks. In both athletic training and spiritual practice, our GNW has organized our preconscious

influence so as to liberate conscious attention. This means that our conscious self—if we have a self at all—includes, in part, preconscious automation which the self itself has determined. It appears that via downward causation—via supervenience or top-down or whole-part causation—our consciousness determines at least some of what is unconscious, even some automaticity. Does this imply that the self is an agent in its own consciousness access?

By appealing to supervenience, a theologian such as Philip Clayton can avoid both substance dualism and eliminative materialism at the same time.

I advocate a form of supervenience theory, which holds that mental events are dependent on their physical substrate but are not reducible to them ... I defend a version of “weak” supervenience that allows for genuine mental causation; not all causes of human behavior are purely neuronal causes.³⁷

Even though the mind is constrained by the biology that gives it existence, the mind is not reducible to its biology. The mind influences matter.

With supervenience comes freedom, avers Nancey Murphy. An organism is a whole that is greater than the parts that make it up, greater than the chemical and biological processes which provide its physical make-up. The mental capacities we have as humans include emergent properties which exceed brain chemistry; they give us self-control, even a degree of body-control. Our mind supervenes on our body.³⁸ The human self is constituted by the quality of wholeness in the whole that we are.

What theologians Clayton and Murphy would call *supervenience*, neuroscientist Warren Brown explicates in terms of top-down agency. “*Top-down agency* refers to the ability to modulate behavior in relationship to conscious thought and intention.”³⁹ In other words, our symbolic understanding and our abstract reasoning within the GNW provide top-down influences on consciousness access and, in addition, they make possible our agency in the world.

I believe the notions of supervenience and top-down-causation support the following conclusion: the human self is a higher order agent who takes action and causes changes, even changes in the development of the self itself. That self, the self as the whole person, deserves dignity. The essence of liberation is the recognition and conferral of dignity on those to whom dignity has been socially, culturally, racially, economically, or politically denied.

However, not everyone draws this conclusion. The neurocentrists among us claim that this self is merely a delusion. They pick up on the observation that much of our activity is influenced by unconscious brain processes, by automaticity. These unconscious brain processes become reified into a doctrine of neurodeterminism, rendering the self a delusion fobbed off on our consciousness by an unscrupulous brain.

“The brain makes us think that we have a self,” writes neurocentrist Patricia Smith Churchland. “Does that mean that the self I think I am is not real? No, it is as real as any activity of the brain. It does mean, however, that one’s self is not an ethereal bit of soul stuff.”⁴⁰ Certainly Churchland has protected us from Cartesian dualism by denying that the self is a separate substance. But at what cost? Has she traded in substance dualism in order to buy eliminative materialism?

Though “real,” has the self here lost its agency? Has it lost its ontological warrant for dignity, protection, and emancipation? If such a neurophilosophy becomes widely used to prop up our anthropology, then the very foundation for any liberation political ideal will be washed away by the evening tide.

Now, look again at the logic of this eliminativist position. What has happened? Through slight of the eliminative reductionist hand, *some* acknowledged automaticity has become *exhaustive* automaticity. But, we should point out that this eliminative reductionism does not actually square with what laboratory research has revealed. Neuroscientists such as Dohaene can demonstrate empirically that many mental functions are due to preconscious and automatic brain activity. So far, so good. But, because *some* mental functions are automatic, does it follow that *all* are? No. The fallacy of hasty generalization is committed when a neurophilosopher such as Churchland leaps to the conclusion that every mental function can be reduced to automaticity in the brain. The moral is this: the theologian should listen carefully to the neuroscientist while challenging the credulity of the neurophilosopher.

Please be clear on just what erodes selfhood. Neuroscience per se helpfully illuminates the relationship between the brain and the mind, but it has no warrant to eliminate the mind entirely. Neurocentric philosophers, interpreting neuroscience, typically advance an ideology of eliminative reductionism. Here we ask: how might this affect the foundations for liberation or activist theology?

5.2. Site Assessment 2: Metaphors for the Brain

Like a spy satellite watching for military movements on the ground, postmodern and post-colonial theologians of liberation are ever alert to regnant metaphors. Metaphors can liberate and inspire new understanding. Metaphors can also function to stratify, rank, and repress.

Theologians are well aware that metaphors do not merely garnish language. Rather, they structure our very thinking, even our self-understanding. This is why Sallie McFague alerts us: "... metaphor is a way of *knowing*, not just a way of communicating. In metaphor knowledge and its expression are one and the same; there is no way *around* the metaphor; it is not expendable."⁴¹

Metaphors are just as important to science as to theology. "Metaphors change how science is done, by licensing new interpretations or inspiring new experiments."⁴² In our own era, scientific and conventional metaphors for the human brain are borrowed from telecommunications, infrastructure networks, machines, robots, computers, and the internet. The prevailing metaphor incorporates the simile: the brain is like computer hardware while the mind is like computer software. "Comparing the brain to a computer is beguiling," observes Clarkson University historian Stephen Casper, "but neglects that brains are also organs, and aware ones at that."⁴³ Remember that the brain is an organ, he says; a fact obscured by the computer metaphor. But, the theologian must still ask: where is the person?

Suppose we describe the person or self as a pack of neurons. This is what geneticist Francis Crick concludes. "You're nothing but a pack of neurons."⁴⁴ Notice the *nothing-buttery*: you are "nothing but" neurons. To be more precise about Crick's position, what makes you "you" can be found not in the matter of your brain but in the blueprint of how that matter is structured and how it behaves. "You" are not the hardware of your brain but the software that organizes it and keeps it running. The self becomes information. Is it a packet of neuronal information that activist theologians wish to liberate?

More generally, theologians should remain very wary of metaphors generated in the scientific community. As in political discourse, scientific discourse can frequently hide prejudice in plain sight.

Researchers should acknowledge that although certain word choices seem innocent, many carry malign overtones. Ideas of the brain have often embedded inequities and prejudices about race, class, gender, sexuality, and agencySeemingly innocent metaphors like “higher” and “lower” functions, or descriptions of specific anatomical structures as “primitive”, carry racialized baggage.⁴⁵

In short, theologians should not swap time-tested terms that warrant dignity – *self*, *person*, *soul*, and such – for scientifically generated metaphors about the brain.

5.3. Site Assessment 3: Capability Freedom & Prophetic Activism

Today’s postcolonial resistance and activism, like the preceding liberation theology, seeks to throw off the chains of oppression and liberate the victims of oppression for self-determination. There is a dialectic at work here between the inner and the outer, between the subjective and the objective. At the level of inner subjectivity, freedom consists of deliberation, decision, and action. At the level of outer objectivity, the removal of external restraints or coercions expands our “capability” to self-determine.

This category of “capability” comes from economist Amartya Sen, who holds that “the idea of freedom respects our being free to determine what we want, what we value and ultimately what we decide to choose.”⁴⁶

Included in a free person’s capabilities are opportunities. In an oppressive situation, opportunities are minimal. In a liberated situation, opportunities are expansive. “A person’s advantage in terms of opportunities is judged to be lower than that of another if she has less capability—less real opportunity—to achieve those things that she has reason to value.”⁴⁷ By reducing constraint or coercion, it is political or economic liberty that enhances freedom as self-determination in the social fabric.

Prophetic activist Helen Slessarev-Jamir picks it up from here. The liberative task of the prophetic activist is to increase capability, increase the opportunities to exercise the free actualization of what we value. Resistance and organizing “enhances freedom by improving the quality of and accessibility to those institutional structures that generate opportunities for upward mobility such as schools, recreational space, health insurance, job training, and decent affordable housing.”⁴⁸ Liberation consists of unchaining oppressive social structures—expanding capabilities—and setting the self free to direct itself.

It might be instructive at this point to distinguish two overlapping dimensions of freedom in our surrounding modern culture. Both belong in the liberty or libertarian camp. Type one freedom consists of making choices that alter the future, decisions based on the values of the decision-maker. Type one freedom presupposes that one could have chosen to do otherwise. “In order to be free,” claimed the late black theologian James Cone, “a [person] must be able to make choices that are not dependent on the oppressive system.”⁴⁹ Does Cone presuppose that liberated black people become their own agents making their own choices according to their own values? Yes, indeed. It appears Cone relies on libertarian freedom type one.

Type two freedom consists of the capacity to set the very values according to which future decisions will be made. Sometimes called *meta-free-will*, the human person can choose to become a certain kind of chooser. Here's how cognitive scientist Peter U. Tse puts the matter.

Assuming indeterminism, it is possible to be a physicalist who adheres to a libertarian conception of free will. On this view, mental and brain events really can turn out otherwiseImagination is where the action is in free will. It allows animals not only to consider possible courses of present action (type-1 libertarian free will), but also, at least for the case of humans, it allows us to consider what kinds of choosers we want to strive to become (type-2 libertarian free will).⁵⁰

Now, we ask: just which agent is doing this valuing and, even more audaciously, is choosing the values? The brain? The self? The person?⁵¹

To keep liberation theology coherent, I recommend defending a holistic doctrine of the human self. The late Ian G. Barbour, the individual we might call the “dean” of the Theology and Science college, provides a workable position. A holistic view of the human self ...

... is consistent with neuroscience, computer science, and a theological view of human nature to understand a person as a multi-level psychosomatic unity who is both a biological organism and a responsible self. We can avoid both materialism and body-soul dualism if we assume a holistic view of the person with a hierarchy of levelsA living organism is a many-leveled hierarchy of systems and subsystems: particle, atom, molecule, macromolecule, organelle, cell, organ, organism, and ecosystem. The brain is hierarchically organized: molecule, neuron, neural network, and brain, which is in turn part of the body and its wider environment.⁵²

6. Christian Freedom?

Before turning to the issues raised by cognitive liberty in the wider public, we need to show the relationship between freedom as everyday self-determination and distinctively *Christian freedom*. Although connected, some subtle distinctions require attention. Within western culture, freedom is understood as autonomy and unfreedom as constraint on autonomy. Herbert Marcuse of the Frankfurt School of critical social theory, for example, makes clear that “the freedom or unfreedom of man is decided on earth itself, in social praxis, and man is, in the most dangerous sense of the word, free from God and can become free to himself.”⁵³ In sum, freedom understood as autonomy requires emancipation from external social and even divine constraints.

Here, liberty for an autonomous agent consists of human freedom over against God, right along with independence from everybody else. But we ask: what would freedom *in God* look like? We ask: how can the human self elect a good which transcends the self? “Ultimately freedom is the autonomous capacity to opt for what is truly good,” avers Ladislav Orsy, S.J.⁵⁴ How do we get from a self-oriented-toward-itself to opting for what is truly good? Enter: Christian Freedom.

In the Augustinian tradition, human freedom is constrained by sin and liberated by grace. When God's grace seeks us out, we are found to be bound to sin and, perversely, free *from* justice. By placing Christ within our faith, the Holy Spirit restores “true freedom (*libertas*) to our power of free choice (*liberum arbitrium*) by granting freedom from bondage to sin and freedom to cooperate with grace in living according to *caritas* [love].”⁵⁵ Freedom *from* sin and freedom *for* loving both God and neighbor.

Distinctively Christian freedom in the Augustinian tradition is an individual experience in time and place inspired by the presence of God's eternal word that liberates the self from the self to love selflessly one's neighbor. According to Martin Luther,

Although the Christian is thus free from all works, he ought in this liberty to empty himself, take upon himself the form of a servant, be made in the likeness of men, be found in human form, and to serve, help, and in every way deal with this neighbor as he sees that God through Christ has dealt and still deals with him. This he should do freely, having regard for nothing but divine approval.⁵⁶

In such freedom the self transcends the self and, thereby, establishes the self as one who loves. This self-transcendence is precipitated historically in time and place when one hears the divine word of grace and responds in faith. "Luther's theology ... is grounded in the concrete, oral and public event of word and faith," observes Oswald Bayer, the voice of God that calls the self to transcend itself.⁵⁷

What makes Christian freedom possible, according to Karl Barth, is that it is rooted in God's freedom.⁵⁸ Our freedom is rooted in God's self-determination—that is, in divine *Sebstbestimmung*. Yes, to be sure, divine self-determination testifies to God's autonomy, sovereignty, and lordship. Yet, there is more. What we know from revelation history in Jesus Christ is that God elects to be in loving relationship with creation, with us. God is free even to use divine self-determination to surrender the Godself to creation's agenda, free to become a human partner.

In this self-surrender we see that God is free even with regard to God's own freedom (*frei ... seiner Freiheit gegenüber*). God's freedom includes becoming subject to determination by the plight and needs of us creatures, just as in Christian freedom we become determined by the plight and needs of our neighbor. The former makes the latter possible. God's freedom makes our freedom possible. In sum, our human invitation to surrender our self-determination on behalf of the needs of our neighbor is grounded in the original divine freedom of self-determination.⁵⁹ The enigmatic power of God's freedom to free us is entailed in the theological concept of *grace*.

It is divine grace that produces the freedom in neighbor love (*Nächstenliebe*). Roger Haight follows the trail.

The forgiveness of sin and opening up of freedom in self-transcending love, cooperative grace and the participation in God's life that gives human freedom a capacity for creativity that it does not have on its own—all these lead to the classical Christian virtue of love of neighbor⁶⁰

This brings us again to the conferral of dignity. Conferring dignity is one way to describe *Nächstenliebe*, sometimes called *agape* love: the love that treats the beloved as a moral end. We love by conferring dignity on the beloved.⁶¹ Love almost by definition requires that the lover seek the good of the beloved solely for the beloved's benefit. *Agape* is the New Testament word for this. *Agape* becomes effective in liberation when one loved stands up to claim and own that dignity.

With this theological background in mind, let's place the modern libertarian view of freedom in its context.⁶² The modern idea of freedom presupposes that each of us is born with an innate potential for autonomy. The task of education, then, is to actualize this potential. The task of government, then, is to protect that actualization from external

political, cultural, social, and economic coercion. If both education and government are successful, the result is an autonomous self-determining individual living a flourishing life.

This modern doctrine of freedom presupposes that we are not born with a potential for Christian freedom. Rather, today's theologian must surmise the following: distinctively Christian freedom must be produced by a historical event in the life of each person in which the word of God imparts and virtually creates the freedom to transcend the autonomous self. In short, the word of God liberates self-determination to become other-determination as an act of freedom itself.

How, then, shall we assess the threat of neurocentrism? Does neurocentrism threaten both libertarian freedom and Christian freedom? Not yet. The neurocentrist earthquake has to date shaken the foundations of the autonomous self of liberal thinking, but not the loving self of Christian freedom. Word empowered liberation would obtain regardless of the success or failure of neurocentrist philosophy. Nevertheless, it's too soon to presume that Christian freedom will be safely sandbagged from the neurocentric tsunami. It is imperative, I believe, that discussions of cognitive liberty be taken up by public theologians of activism and resistance. With libertarian freedom understood as self-determination, let us turn briefly to the pioneering work of Alan Weissenbacher.

7. Cognitive Liberty

If the denial of the human self should become a cardinal principle in a new public health initiative or biopolitical agenda, public policy could become even more repressive than previous tyrannies. In anticipation of this prospect, we turn to Alan Weissenbacher.

The first principle of *cognitive liberty*, according to Weissenbacher, affirms that each individual person has the right to mental self-determination. The right to mental self-determination is exercised practically when one changes his or her own mind, and when choosing the means by which this change occurs.⁶³ We must ask: who is the self with the right to mental self-determination? The brain? Or, the person?

Weissenbacher starts his analysis of cognitive liberty with the question of rights in the face of prescribed brain modulation in the medical context. Does an individual person have a right to cognitive liberty protected by law?⁶⁴

Weissenbacher cites University of Hamburg law professor, Johan Christoph Bublitz, who contends that the right to cognitive liberty involves two related principles. The first is that persons have the right to use or refrain from using neurotechnologies. Second, people deserve protection from coercive and unconsented use of such technologies.⁶⁵

The context for defense of this right is bioethics; and the specific principle appealed to is autonomy. The autonomous person must give consent before his or her brain can be medically altered. Now we ask again: who is the person who gives or withholds consent regarding what happens to the brain? Is the brain itself deciding what to do about the brain? Or, legally speaking, is the person more than merely the brain?

Here is the key: it is the *person* who gives or withholds consent to brain alteration. What is at dispute is whether the person—the person understood as a conscious self—even exists let alone has rights. In short, the first right of cognitive liberty is the right to give or withhold consent regarding what happens to the brain. This right presupposes and reinforces the existence of a self, a person.

Note that it is not the brain whose agency is protected by this right to cognitive liberty. It is the person. Each individual person has the right to mental self-determination, defined as the right change his or her own mind and choose the means by which brain change occurs.

The second right of cognitive liberty is the right to mental integrity. In the medical context, this is defined as the right to mental health. Note Weissenbacher's term, *integrity*.⁶⁶ It connotes an integrated self, a center around which thoughts and bodily functions are oriented and organized. Can the brain establish integrity on its own? Or, does the mind orient the brain in establishing and maintaining integrity?

A third right within cognitive liberty has to do with psychological continuity.⁶⁷ As a right in the medical context, it protects one from interventions that others deem beneficial or in your best interest (or society's interests). By invoking this right, the person preserves the continuity of one's thoughts, emotions, preferences, and related behaviors through time by insuring that any changes are not due to unwanted external modification of neural functioning. Psychological continuity is a component to the narrative self, the self with an autobiography.

More than protecting mental states themselves, this right protects the neural functioning that produces the mental states. Note what this right presupposes: each of us as an individuated self is capable of freely choosing or not choosing to interfere with our brain's functions. It is the self who decides to affect the brain, not the brain itself.

In Weissenbacher's judgment, such rights to cognitive liberty overlap; but taken together they provide well-rounded protection for one's psychological domain. Such rights protect the person not only from harm but also from unconsented intrusion. This protection ensures genuine informed consent while curtailing abuses that can result from modifying unwilling individuals if one thinks it is their or society's best interest.

Today's activist theologian with a liberation agenda should find two items in Weissenbacher's position useful in his or her conceptual retrofit. First, the protection of cognitive liberty might become the first line of defense against all threats to human liberty perceived by the prophetic political theologian.

Second, what is presupposed in the very concept of cognitive liberty is that there exists a human self and, further, that this self or person is not exhaustively reducible to the brain. The human self may be dependent on the material substrate of the brain along with the rest of the body, to be sure; but the mind includes emergent traits or qualities beyond the brain which establish an integrated self expressed in large part as self-determination.

The public theologian at this point in time needs a reliable anthropology that includes a scientifically consonant concept of the human self or person. How might we go about that construction?

8. Models of the Self in Light of the *Hard Problem* and *Really Hard Problem*

The problem underlying the problem cognitive liberty seeks to resolve is sometimes called the *Hard Problem* or the *Explanatory Gap*.⁶⁸ A gap opens up when one attempts to explain exhaustively first person subjective experience in terms of third person objective science. This is a hard problem, because

no matter how deeply we probe into the physical structure of neurons and the chemical transactions which occur when they fire, no matter how much objective information we come to acquire, we still seem to be left with something that we cannot explain, namely, why and how such-and-such objective, physical changes, whatever they might be, generate so-and-so subjective feeling, or any subjective feeling at all.⁶⁹

We think of this as a hard problem because subjective self-consciousness resists being reduced to objective explanation.

What is exasperating is that neurocentrists prematurely resolve the hard problem by eliminating the subjective self. Such freedom-denial challenges the agenda of any activist theology focused on liberation.

The neuroexistentialists add to the hard problem a second challenge, the *Really Hard Problem*. Gregg Caruso and Owen Flanagan describe the really hard problem as “the special problem for those of us living in the age of brain science of making sense of the nature, meaning, and purpose of our lives given that we are material beings living in a material world.”⁷⁰ Today’s liberation and activist theologians cannot escape this really hard problem.

With the hard and really hard problems in view, to what model of the subjective self should today’s theologian turn? Just what kind of self is worth defending? Here are five models of the self which I observe at work in current discussion.

8.1. Self Model One: Ego Continuity

Model One: *Ego Continuity*. We know ego continuity in religious tradition as the *Soul*. In his *Meditations*, Marcus Aurelius says, “it is not the body, nor the personality that is the true self. The true self is eternal. Even on the point of death we can say to ourselves, ‘my true self is free’. I cannot be contained’.”⁷¹ According to the doctrine of the immortal soul, the self is structured by a persistent self-awareness. The traditional Western doctrine of the immortal soul relies on ego continuity in this life and the next, despite what happens to the physical body. Ego continuity in this form would likely rely on substance dualism as we find it in the Platonic and Cartesian tradition.

Belief in a substantial or immortal soul distinguished from the body is brutally rejected in today’s scientific, philosophical, and even theological circles. “No one should take seriously the Cartesian myth of the ghost in the machine,” exclaim Caruso and Flanagan.⁷² Even Pope Benedict XVI, formerly Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, concurs that the soul should not be thought of as an immortal substance.

The challenge to traditional theology today lies in the negation of an autonomous, ‘substantial’ soul with a built-in immortality, in favor of that positive view which regards God’s decision and activity as the real foundation of a continuing human existence.⁷³

Any promise of life beyond death would entail divine action; it would not be the result of an immortal soul.

8.2. Self Model Two: Confused Higher Self

Model Two: the human *Self as Confused Expression of a Higher Self*. New Age guru Barbara Marx Hubbard listens to the voice of her higher self.

We may call that presence by many different names—the voice of the Higher Self, the inner guide, the Christ. If we give that inner voice our full attention, if we recognize it as our deep Self, then a momentous evolutionary change occurs. Gradually we find that we are no longer a local personality seeing the divine. Rather we become an incarnation of the divine ... I call this the shift from ego to essence.⁷⁴

Rather than the mere persistence of an immortal soul beyond death, Hubbard's temporal self becomes absorbed into a higher perhaps eternal self.

According to the doctrine of the higher self, our individual soul is but a manifestation of the over-soul, the spiritual reality that unites all things. Plato and Plotinus sought recognition of the world soul in the individual soul. In Advaita (non-dualism) Hinduism, the self (*atman*) recognizes its higher unity and dissolution in the All (*Brahman*). We find this model of the self in the American Transcendentalists of the nineteenth century and New Age Spirituality in the late twentieth century. The doctrines of the higher self and the world soul are metaphysical concepts.

8.3. Self Model Three: Delusion

Model Three: *Self-as-Delusion*. This is the model elected by brain–mind identity theorists, neurocentrists, and eliminative materialists. One science writer describes self-as-delusion this way:

neuroscientists increasingly describe our behaviour as the result of a chain of cause and effect, in which one physical brain state or pattern of neural activity inexorably leads to the next, culminating in a particular action or decision. With little space for free choice in this chain of causation, the conscious, deliberating self seems to be a fiction.⁷⁵

You're "nothing but a pack of neurons," touts geneticist Francis Crick.⁷⁶ The self here is a fiction.

If no self exists, then freedom understood as self-determination or self-sacrifice becomes a delusion. At risk of loss would be precious theological jewels such as the distinction between sin as *amor sui* (self-centered loving) and the graced life of *Nächstenliebe* (selfless neighbor love).

8.4. Self Model Four: Story

Model Four: the *Self as Story or Narrative*. "My sense of self depends upon memories and continued experiences of those in relation to whom I am defined," writes John Puddefoot. "Deny me access to those memories and those others, and my sense of self would quickly dissolve."⁷⁷

According to the story model, the self is an evolving social construction whose identity is defined by our history or biography. For a historical or biographical self to develop, it requires relationship, a set of relationships over time.⁷⁸ Do you really want to know who I am?" asks Jennifer Ouellette. "Let me tell you a story."⁷⁹

One's life story is not simply told by others; rather, it's constructed by a self who chooses to be a self and thereby constitutes the self as a self. Clayton uses person-as-a-whole over time to describe the self as a story, as a history.

Freedom exists only if, when I choose to perform a certain act, the self I imagine as the identity I am choosing—the self I imagine as the final cause of my act—becomes, in that moment, the self that chooses.⁸⁰

The story model relies on the *hermeneutic self* as story, narrative, or autobiography. The problem the hermeneutic self attempts to resolve arises from three competing forces: (1) The Cartesian cogito, the independent thinking substantial self of substance dualism; (2) the Freudian ego that cannot trust itself because it's in the grip of unconscious forces such as the id and superego; and (3) the neuroscientific brain that eliminates the self by reducing the mind to neuronal firing. “The notion of a hermenetic self is a paradigm shift from either the Cartesian cogito or the Freudian ego in that it takes neuroscience seriously and sees consciousness as *embodied*,” reports neuroscientist and theologian Michael Wong; “the hermenetic self is a *narrative self*.”⁸¹

The story or narrative model depends largely on the role of language in self-reference. “Language,” writes Michael Fishbane,

channels the flow of a sometimes inchoate reality, and coordinates the patterns of sight to rhythms of sound. In this way the subject develops a sense of self, both in relationship to worldly things and to other persons. In so doing, we build a life-world within the vastness ... The natural world we so arrest and order is thus harnessed to *the care of the self*.⁸²

Therefore, we need philosophical hermeneutics to grasp how the linguistically constructed self functions. According to the late Paul Ricoeur,

it is therefore plausible to affirm the following assertions: a) knowledge of the self is an interpretation; b) the interpretation of the self, in turn, finds narrative, among other signs and symbols, to be a privileged mediation; c) this mediation borrows from history as much as fiction making the life story a fictive history or, if you prefer, an historical fiction.⁸³

When we compare the third and fourth models, we note that for the Self-as-Delusion model the self is a fiction in the sense that it does not exist, whereas for the Self-as-Narrative model the self is a fiction in the sense that it is a construction.⁸⁴

It is interesting to note that Andrea Vestrucci, when explicating Luther's grasp of the bound will and free will, relies on the story model. “There *is* a story,” Vestrucci avers, and each of our stories is embedded in divine grace. “Life is the freedom of having meaning under God's grace as the unity and origin of all stories.”⁸⁵

8.5. Self Model Five: Experiential Self

Model Five: the *Self as Experiential Dimension*. This is the phenomenological understanding of the human subject. Here, “the self is claimed to possess experiential reality, is taken to be closely linked to the first-person perspective, and is, in fact, identified with the very first-person *givenness* of the experiential phenomena,” according to Dan Zahavi, who directs the Center for Subjectivity Research at the University of Copenhagen.⁸⁶

Zahavi follows in the footsteps of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, wherein the self or ego is that which understands itself pre-linguistically and pre-objectively as imbedded in the world. When *consciousness-of* intends an object, this experience presupposes a subjective ego who is intending that object. Consciousness requires a self to be conscious, according to this model.⁸⁷

From this list of five models, I recommend the constructive theologian give special attention to models four and five. The fifth, the experiential dimension model, combines well with the fourth, the story or narrative model. Phenomenologically, the human self exists intuitively, indubitably, and unquestionably at the level of presupposition. This experiential self gains self-confidence and character through narrative formation as well as through linguistic self-reference.⁸⁸

Brazilian liberation theologian, the late Vitor Westhelle, could benefit from model four, the story or narrative self. Westhelle wants to turn away from meta-temporal linear time with its universal history. Instead, he wants to turn to local spaces with local stories. He wants to "... focus attention ... on little stories and the space they occupy in everyday life."⁸⁹ Marginalized peoples already have their own stories, and the theologian dignifies those stories by recognizing and celebrating them. Perhaps the narrative self is the self most useful to political theologians dedicated to liberation.

Paul Tillich's disciples could benefit from model five, the phenomenal self. "A self is not a thing that may or may not exist; it is an original phenomenon which logically precedes all questions of existence."⁹⁰ By no means is this a retreat into individualism. The self is always person-in-relationship. "The self without a world is empty; the world without a self is dead."⁹¹

The basic challenge is this: do models four and five stand stable when shaken by neurocentrist seismic tremors? I believe they do. Both models are ostensive, obvious, and fundamental to experience. If it were not for the prior existence of the subjective self of the neuroscientist, we would not have the product of brain research to ponder. Perhaps it's worth retrieving Descartes here: I think, therefore, I am (*Cogito ergo sum*).

Neuroscientists and neuro-philosophers, it would seem to me, should try to *explain our daily experience with selfhood and free action, not explain it away.*⁹²

9. The Individual and Collective Self

The concept of cognitive liberty helps us retrofit the individual self needing liberation. But, activist liberation is aimed primarily though not exclusively at the collective, at marginalized groups within the larger body politic. Can we assume the collective self is the same as the individual self?

No. At least according to Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr drove a sharp wedge between the individual self and the collective ego. Concerned with distinctively *Christian freedom*—freedom *from* self *for* loving service toward the neighbor—Niebuhr observed that such freedom-from-self is a moral possibility for the individual but not for the group. No group can take non-selfish action. "The pretensions and claims of a collective or social self exceed those of the individual ego. The group is more arrogant, hypocritical, self-centered and more ruthless in the pursuit of its ends than the individual."⁹³ The group is not simply the individual writ large. The dynamics of the collective differ from the dynamics of the individual.

This observation regarding the collective self applies equally to both the oppressive class and the oppressed class. The justness of a group's cause does not accrue to the justness of that group. The Christian doctrine of sin applies universally, to both oppressors and victims. According to Niebuhr, this truth is as observable as it is doctrinal.

Like the liberation activists of our own era, eight decades ago Niebuhr strongly advocated throwing off the power of the oppressors as an act of justice on behalf of the victims. Yet, he also held that Christian realism requires honesty regarding the moral propensities of both classes.

Every victim of injustice makes the mistake of supposing that the sin from which he suffers is a peculiar vice of his oppressor. This is the self-righteousness of the weak in distinction to the self-righteousness of the powerful ... it is a vehicle of vindictive passions ... But the mistakes of a too simple social radicalism must not obscure the fact that in a given historical situation the powerful man or class is actually more guilty of injustice and pride than those who lack power.⁹⁴

What are the implications of Niebuhr's contrast between the individual and the collective for retrofitting our concept of liberation? First, we must recognize that Niebuhr is working with a different model of freedom. For Niebuhr, Christian freedom consists of transcending the self, whereas in liberation thought freedom consists of self-determination. For activist liberation, freedom consists of the capability to make choices according to one's values. Both political liberty and cognitive liberty provide the capability or opportunity for actualizing such free choice. Free choice constitutes the self; it does not transcend the self.

This distinction may rightly be ignored by the liberation theorist, because his or her concern is primarily with the marginalized group or class. At the collective level, the liberation theologian does not mandate the liberated victim to behave altruistically, to love self-sacrificially.⁹⁵ The liberation theologian does not ask for what is difficult if not impossible. What the liberation theologian asks for is justice in the form of enhanced capabilities or opportunities for a marginalized group's self-expression. Within the liberated group or class, individuals become free for self-determination regardless of the values they personally lift up for themselves.

By no means is this a negation of the liberation agenda. It is simply an attempt to specify the model of freedom which makes the concept of justice within liberation thought coherent. The model of freedom presupposed here is that of self-determination applied to both the individual and the victimized group or class. What we have tried to show is that the concept of the self within cognitive liberty could be borrowed to enhance the coherency of the liberation understanding of liberty.

10. The Self as Historical and Eschatological

Of the five models of the self listed above, those formulating public policy will be especially attracted to model five, the phenomenological model. This is because our fundamental human experience is that of a self which views the world from the self's perspective before any further analysis can be performed. The self which deliberates, decides, and takes action is presupposed in every understanding of the human person. The phenomenal self must be granted cognitive liberty as a right.

Having said this, I also believe the systematic theologian will be attracted especially to model four, the historical model. Who we are is constructed out of our life's story, our history, our destiny. It is our particular history that individuates us in relation to all that surrounds us. "History is the *principium individuationis*," writes Wolfhart

Pannenberg. “History as a formative process is the way to the future to which the individual is destined . . . only through anticipation of this [God’s] future can human beings presently exist as themselves.”⁹⁶

The person as self is temporal, relational, developmental. Despite the sense of autonomy we feel, the self is not itself self-grounding. Only God as the person’s destiny grounds the self. Only our relation to God provides the person with full quiddity. And this final identity or essence is provided by God only eschatologically, at the completion of our historical story.

Who we are today is defined not only by the accumulation of past experiences but also by our future destiny. And by our present anticipation of that destiny. In fact, God’s eschatological finalization of our personhood retroactively influences us today as we anticipate it. The whole story, including its eschatological consummation, determines who we are as a person, a self.

Eschatologically speaking, we were already liberated by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We were redeemed from death, transience, and sin. We will realize that liberation fully only in our own resurrection, only in God’s new creation.⁹⁷

This is the claim of the Christian theologian. It’s truth is not dependent on wide spread cultural acceptance. Yet, it is materially decisive for theological anthropology.

11. Conclusion

This has been an essay in dignitarian counterpolitics addressed to my activist colleagues that continue the tradition of liberation theology. Yesterday’s liberation theologians and today’s activist theologians have largely ignored the dialogue between faith and science. This may be due to the self-appointed task of science to formulate universal laws of nature, which tends to discount the local narratives and histories of marginalized peoples in specific non-Western contexts. To say it another way, the methods of science and the methods of activist theology do not coincide.

Even so, one public theologian, the Archbishop of Sweden, Antje Jackelén, strongly advocates theological engagement with natural science for the public good. “Mutually critical and self-critical relationship between faith and science is far more useful to humanity than confrontation.”⁹⁸

This is just in time to respond to an earthquake shaking liberation’s theoretical foundations. Activist theologians need a seismic retrofit; they need to construct a robust doctrine of freedom that is scientifically consonant, conceptually coherent, and socially applicable. Reliance on naiveté—oh, everyone knows what freedom is!—will not wash. Might engagement with neuroscience and cognitive liberty help secure liberation thinking?

The intentional construction of a doctrine of freedom must avoid the trap of assuming that the debate is between determinism and freedom. This ancient debate is misleading, because human freedom is not a form of indeterminism. Rather, free will is a form of determinism, self-determinism. What freedom adds to external determinism is the subjective self—the inner human person—as a determining agent affecting the world. *Freedom is best defined as self-determination through deliberation, decision, and action.* Liberation, in turn, is best defined as decreasing oppressive obstructions while increasing opportunities (capabilities) wherein self-determination can be actualized. The liberator treats the previously marginalized person with dignity, and that person rises up to claim that dignity.

Neurocentrism threatens this understanding of liberation, because it presupposes biological determinism along with eliminative materialism. Accordingly, the brain, and only the brain, is the determiner. What gets eliminated is the self, the human subject or the human person as a determiner. But, in my judgment, the self—or, better, the person—ought not be reduced to the brain. “Selfhood [is] a concept of the total person as an active, integrated system,” contends the late Ian Barbour rightly.⁹⁹ It should be the task of the neuroscientist and the neurophilosopher to explain self-determination, not explain it away.

Until we get neurophilosophers whom we can trust, we must rely on the critique of neurocentrism offered by the public theologian engaged in dignitarian counterpolitics. In this article, I have recommended that we construct a liberation ontology guided by an ethic of dignity-conferral that presupposes the self-as-story—that is, the self belonging to God’s gracious history—within which human freedom—freedom understood as self-determination—is supported by efforts to maintain and extend cognitive liberty.

A conceptual earthquake is taking place as our culture tries to grasp the implications of neuroscience along with artificial intelligence, intelligence amplification, robotics, and visions of the coming posthuman species. Activist political theologians cannot afford to be naive about their assumptions regarding human nature and prospects for the future. It is time to grasp the issues of cognitive liberty at stake and weigh in on debates over the existence of human dignity and freedom.

Notes

1. “Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end.” Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, tr. by H. J. Paton (New York: Harper, 1948), 96.
2. “The worry is this: if human choices are essentially brain events, and if brain events are governed by the laws of neurobiology, then must it not be the case that all choices and all subsequent behavior are governed by the laws of neurobiology?” Nancey Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 103.
3. “Public Theology is thus theologically informed public discourse about public issues, addressed to the church, synagogue, mosque, temple or other religious body, as well as the larger public or publics, argued in ways that can be evaluated and judged by publicly available warrants and criteria.” Katie Day and Sebastian Kim, “Introduction,” in *A Companion to Public Theology*, eds. Sebastian Kim and Katie Day (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017), 1–21, at 4.
4. In his lead theme article in this issue of *Theology and Science*, “Recalibrating the Logic of Free Will with Martin Luther,” Andrea Vestrucci presents the logic of the illusionist position. Neurocentrism provides an example of this position: free will is an illusion. In his article elsewhere in this issue of *Theology and Science*, “Theology, Free Will, and the Skeptical Challenge from the Sciences,” Aku Visala recognizes three skeptical challenges to theology: eliminativism, determinism, and epiphenomenalism. The threat of eliminativism is the focus of the present treatment.
5. R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 15.
6. Gaymon Bennett, “The Politics of Intrinsic Worth: Why Bioethics Needs Human Dignity,” in *Human Flourishing in an Age of Gene Editing*, eds. Erik Parens and Josephine Johnston (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019), 228–246, at 228.
7. *Ibid.*, 241.

8. James W. Walters, "Introduction," in *What's with Free Will? Ethics and Religion After Neuroscience*, eds. Philip Clayton and James W. Walters (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020), 1–8, at 1.
9. Paul S. Chung, *Postcolonial Public Theology: Faith, Scientific Rationality, and Prophetic Dialogue* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016), 199.
10. "Feminist, critical race, queer, animal, environmental, and many other critical theories already have begun to radically alter the way we understand religious traditions, our responsibility to human and earth others, and our place within the rest of the natural world." Whitney A. Bauman, "A third way: Developing a planetary spirituality," *Dialog* 57:1 (2018), 25–39, at 38.
11. Michael Lerner, *The Beyt Tikkun Liberation Passover Seder Haggadah* (2020); https://www.tikkun.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Beyt-Tikkun-Haggadah-2020.final_.pdf?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=d24a7a88-d4a2-482d-83ab-3ecab79fdb31
12. Hak Joon Lee, "Public Theology," in *Christian Political Theology*, eds. Craig Hovey and Elizabeth Phillips (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 44–65, at 54, italics added.
13. Critical theory should be factored in here. "Critical theory confronts the 'bad facticity' of an unjust and therefore irrational world with 'better potentialities' inherent in history and social forms." Marsha Aileen Hewitt, "Critical Theory," in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, eds. Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 455–470, at 458.
14. "Theology of liberation and political theology originated at approximately the same time, in the years 1964–1968, but in completely different circumstances: liberation theology among the poor in Latin America and political theology in the context of the cold war in divided Europe." Jürgen Moltmann, "Political Theology and Theology of Liberation," in *Liberating the Future: God's Mammon and Theology*, ed. Joerg Rieger (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 60–80, at 61.
15. Justice requires the liberation theologian to give attention to the victims of injustice, to those sinned against. "It is time for the church to think about a salvific path for the sinned-against. To do so, we need to understand the pain of the wounded, listening to their agonies and studying biblical, historical, and theological messages for their salvation," in *The Other Side of Sin: Woundedness from the Perspective of the Sinned-Against*, eds. Andrew Sung Park and Susan L. Nelson (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2001), 2.
16. Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Liberation Theology and the Future of the Poor," in *Liberating the Future: God's Mammon and Theology*, ed. Joerg Rieger (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 96–123, at 115, Gutiérrez's italics. "There is freedom *from* (a wide variety of real or imagined) constraints, but also a freedom *for* or *to*. The latter is variously described: to pursue the good, to act for reasons, for development of one's character, to pursue increasingly sophisticated understanding of the good." Nancey Murphy and Warren Brown, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 267. Freedom is more than liberty from external constraints. Freedom includes the capability of changing one's own character over time in the pursuit of virtue. "Free will we interpret as a matter of an agent's capacity, as a dynamic system, to redesign her own character through many instances of responsible action." *Ibid.*, 12–13.
17. Moltmann, "Political Theology and Theology of Liberation," 71.
18. Johannes B. Metz, *Theology of the World*, tr., William Glen-Doepel (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 107. "Political theology is dominated by and even assumed to be Christian discourse. At least, it was." Julie Clague, "Political Theologies Ten Years after 9/11," *Political Theology* 12:5 (October 2011), 645–659, at 646.
19. Vincent W. Lloyd, *The Problem with Grace: Reconfiguring Political Theology* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 12.
20. Paul Kahn, *Political Theology: Four New Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 25, my emphasis.
21. N.T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (London: SPCK, 2006), 96.

22. Ted Peters, "Public Theology: Its Pastoral, Apologetic, Scientific, Political, and Prophetic Tasks," *International Journal of Public Theology* 12:2 (2018); <https://brill.com/abstract/journals/ijpt/12/1/ijpt.12.issue-1.xml>.
23. Chung, *Postcolonial Public Theology*, 1.
24. Day and Kim, "Introduction," 2; see: Sebastian Kim, *Theology in the Public Sphere* (London: SCM Press, 2011).
25. Elsewhere I have delineated four concepts of freedom relevant to this discussion: (1) *liberty* or political freedom, that is, independence from external constraint or coercion; (2) *free will* or natural freedom, that is, self-determination or the power to choose between alternatives; (3) *moral freedom*, virtue, or Christian freedom, that is, the capacity to choose the good of God, virtue, or the neighbor over one's selfish inclinations; and (4) *future freedom*, that is, creative initiatives that influence the course of future events. Ted Peters, *Playing God? Genetic Determinism and Human Freedom* (London and New York: Routledge, 2nd ed., 2003) 17–20.
26. Gaymon Bennett, *Technicians of Human Dignity: Bodies, Souls, and the Making of Intrinsic Worth* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), x.
27. Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell* (New York: Viking, 2006), 107. Closely related to the question of the self's existence is the question of consciousness. Many analytical philosophers deny the existence of human consciousness along with *qualia* (*qualia* are meaningful subjective experiences). They further deny that consciousness with *qualia* can be a subject studied scientifically. Christof Koch at the Allen Institute for Brain Science in Seattle, in contrast, expects science to advance on this frontier. "Ultimately what we need is a satisfying scientific theory of consciousness that predicts under which conditions any particular physical system--whether it is a complex circuit of neurons or silicon transistors--has experiences. Christof Koch, "What is Consciousness?" *Nature* 557:7704 (10 May 2018), S9-S12, at S11.
28. Thomas Metzinger, *The Science of the Mind and the Myth of the Self* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 8. Neurotheologians such as Nancey Murphy and Warren S. Brown disagree. "Mental events are not reducible to brain events ... mental events are constituted in action loops in which brain processes are interlocked with environmental context, with the history of the outcome of previous action loops playing a primary causal role." Murphy and Brown, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It?*, 209.
29. Sally Satel and Scott O. Lilienfeld, "Losing Our Minds in the Age of Brain Science," *Skeptical Inquirer* 37:6:30–35 (November/December 2013), 35.
30. Neurocentric determinism is not based on empirical conclusions. Rather, it is based on retrograde physics, on the pre-quantum worldview of Newton. "*Contemporary neuroscience and philosophy of mind* largely continue to base their quest to understand human consciousness on the inadequate nineteenth century mechanical conceptualization of reality, which contrary to standard quantum mechanics, leaves our consciousness completely out of the causal dynamics." Henry P. Stapp, *Quantum Theory and Free Will: How Mental Intentions Translate into Bodily Actions* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2017), 63.
31. Eugene G. D'Aquili and Andrew B. Newberg, "Consciousness and the Machine," *Zygon* 31:2 (June 1996), 235–252, at 239.
32. Mary Elise Lowe, "Gay, Lesbian, and Queer Theologies: Origins, Contributions, and Challenges," *Dialog* 48:1 (2009), 49–61: 53. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/65653651/Gay-Lesbian-and-Queer-Theologies-Origins-Contributions-and-Challenges> .
33. The task of the hermeneutical philosopher is to conjoin meaningful first person discourse with meaning-evacuated third person scientific discourse. French neuroscientist Jean-Pierre Changeux moves silently from methodological reductionism to ontological reductionism, to eliminative materialism. "Man no longer has need for Spirit: it is enough for him to be Neuronal Man." Jean-Pierre Changeux, *Neuronal Man: The Biology of Mind*, tr. Laurence Gary (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1985), 169. Philosopher Paul Ricoeur responds by proposing a third discourse, one that bridges science with theological anthropology. "The Changeux-Ricoeur dialogue identifies a valid 'third discourse' in terms of putting different discourses of science and philosophy together without committing the errors of substance dualism, eliminative reductionism and 'semantic amalgamation' (oxymoron formulation)

- of the subjective and the objective experience.” Michael T.H. Wong, *Ricoeur and the Third Discourse of the Person* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019), xxii.
34. Stanislas Dohaene, *Consciousness and the Brain: Deciphering How the Brain Codes Our Thoughts* (New York: Viking, 2014), 47.
 35. *Ibid.*, 161.
 36. Ann M. Graybiel and Kyle S. Smith, “Good Habits, Bad Habits,” *Scientific American* 310:6 (June 2014), 38–43, at 40.
 37. Philip Clayton, “Neuroscience, the Human Person, and God,” *Bridging Science and Religion*, eds., Ted Peters, Gaymon Bennett, Kang Phee Seng (London: SCM Press, 2002), 107–120, at 108. “The emergentist anthropology ... results with the notion of human persons as *psycho-somatic* entities. Humans are both body and mind, in the sense that we manifest both biological and mental causal features, and both in an interconnected manner.” Philip Clayton, *Mind and Emergence: From Quantum to Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 143.
 38. Murphy and Brown, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It?* 196–204. “The issue is not whether neurobiological processes are themselves determinate, but whether neurobiological *reductionism* is true.” Murphy, *Bodies and Souls*, 106.
 39. *Ibid.*, 117. “Downward causation means that events at a supervening level can influence outcomes at the rootmost level.” Peter U. Tse, “Two Types of Libertarian Free Will Are Realized in the Human Brain,” *Neuroexistentialism*, 162–190, at 177.
 40. Patricia S. Churchland, *Brain-Wise: Studies in Neurophilosophy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 124.
 41. Sallie McFague, *Speaking in Parables: A Study in Metaphor and Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1975), 3.
 42. Stephen Casper, “Neuroscience needs some new ideas,” *Nature* 580:7801 (2 April 2020), 23–24, at 23.
 43. *Ibid.*
 44. Francis Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul* (New York: Scribner’s, 1994), 3.
 45. Casper, “Neuroscience needs some new ideas,” 24.
 46. Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 232.
 47. *Ibid.*, 231. Capabilities may include subjective self-esteem right along with objective opportunities. “So one aspect of the work of Deaf Liberation Theology in the Christian Church has been this focus on trying to encourage and grow and support deaf people into leadership within the church—sometimes as trained and licensed ministers, but other times simply bringing deaf people to the front of their own churches (both sign language using churches, and hearing churches with interpreted services) as much as possible, enabling and empowering participation and decision making by deaf people at many different levels ... the importance of deaf teachers as role models for deaf children in developing their confidence, esteem, pride in being deaf, social and cultural capital and strategies for dealing with a non-signing world and generally preparing them for adulthood and providing an opportunity to increase social justice through deaf adults with the confidence to ask for it and work for it.” Hannah Lewis, “Deaf Liberation Theology and Social Justice,” *Religions* 8:10 (24 October 2017), 1–11, at 10.; <http://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/8/10/232>.
 48. Helen Slessarev-Jamir, *Prophetic Activism: Progressive Religious Movements in Contemporary America* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 91.
 49. James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1970), 173. Freedom is “the potential to make decisions in the face of ambiguous situations.” M. Shawn Copeland, Dwight N. Hopkins, Charles T. Mathewes, Joy Ann McDougall, Ian A. McFarland, and Michele Saracino, “Human Being,” in *Constructive Theology*, eds. Serene Jones and Paul Lakeland (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 77–116, at 79.
 50. Tse, “Two Types of Libertarian Free Will Are Realized in the Human Brain,” 189.
 51. In this article I use the terms *self* and *person* almost interchangeably. It might be best to rely solely on *person*, because this connotes the whole of who a person is. Murphy and Brown

- "insist that the agent or chooser is the whole person, neither a self or soul nor some bit of neural tissue inside the brain. Murphy and Brown, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It?*, 271. But, because the term *self-determination* is irreplaceable, I frequently use both of these terms to make my point. By *self* I refer to the whole *person*.
52. Ian G. Barbour, "Neuroscience, Artificial Intelligence, and Human Nature: Theological and Philosophical Reflections," *Zygon* 34:3 (September 1999), 361–398, at 362 and 383.
 53. Herbert Marcuse, "Studie über Autorität und Familie," in *Studien über Autorität und Familie: Forschungsberichte aus dem Institut für Sozialforschung*, ed. Max Horkheimer (Paris: Alcan, 1936), 136–228; *A Study on Authority*, tr., Joris De Bres (London: Verso, 2008). This translation from the German by Oswald Bayer, "Marcuse's Critique of Luther's Concept of freedom," *Lutheran Quarterly* 32:2 (Summer 2018), 173–204, at 192.
 54. Ladislav Orsy, S.J., "The Divine Dignity of Human Persons in *Dignitas humanae*," *Theological Studies* 75:1 (2014), 8–22, at 17.
 55. Bernard McGinn, "The Human Person as Image of God: Western Christianity," in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, eds. Bernard McGinn, John Meyendorff, and Jean Leclercq (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 321.
 56. Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian," in *Luther's Works*, American Edition, Vols. 1–30, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing Company, 1955–1967); Vols. 31–55, edited by Helmut T. Lehmann (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1955–1986), 31:366.
 57. Bayer, "Marcuse's Critique of Luther's Concept of freedom," *Lutheran Quarterly* 32:2 (Summer 2018), 173–204, at 194. "The soul should be understood as *the totality of my self, as it lives in the duration of remembering and expectation in the countenance of the eternal God*." Oswald Bayer, "The Soul as Answer," *Lutheran Quarterly* 33:4 (Winter 2019), 399–412, at 406. "The life of faith is not something to which we come," according to Luther; "but rather that which comes to us; it is a gift of the Holy Spirit, not a matter of human effort. Through this gift human beings love God 'willingly'." Ian A. McFarland, "Sin and the Limits of Theology: A Reflection on Conversation with Julian of Norwich and Martin Luther," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 22:2 (April 2020), 147–168, at 159.
 58. In his article, "Recalibrating the Logic of Free Will with Martin Luther, Vestrucci makes it clear that, for Luther, God is the truly free one, because God alone is *a se*, a self unto itself. This is Barth's position as well.
 59. God is free to use his freedom to surrender himself, not to his own freedom, but to his human creature in need ... "*frei dazu, sich, ohne sich ihrer zu begeben, ihrer nun doch auch dazu zu bedienen, sich in jene Gemeinschaft zu begeben*." Karl Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik II/1. Die Lehre von Gott. Erster Halbband* (Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1940), 341. Barth's categorical affirmation of divine freedom repudiates a trend in theology that suggests God's gracious love expresses his own inner necessity, that God is a prisoner of his own divine compassion. Like John Calvin, Barth never compromises divine sovereignty, even in divine self-surrender.
 60. Roger Haight, "Sin and Grace," *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, eds., Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2nd ed., 2011), 375–430, at 422.
 61. Is it reasonable to think of immanent dignity as relational? According to philosopher Jürgen Habermas, "human dignity ... is, in a strict moral and legal sense, connected with this relational symmetry. It is not a property like intelligence or blue eyes, that one might 'possess' by nature; it rather indicates the kind of 'inviolability' which comes to have a significance only in interpersonal relations of mutual respect, in the egalitarian dealings among persons." Jürgen Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge, UK and Malden, MA: Blackwell, Polity, 2003), 33.
 62. Birgitta Weinhardt at the Institut für Evangelische Theologie in Karlsruhe places the question of free will (*Willensfreiheit*) within the debate between indeterminism and determinism. Quantum physics, at least according to the Copenhagen interpretation, is indeterministic. Neuroscience, however, is deterministic. A theological anthropology that affirms human free will is compatible with physics but not neuroscience. Yet, Weinhardt wants a future

- freedom; she wants to affirm our capacity to influence the course of events in an otherwise open future. “*Der illibertare Indeterminismus ist gut geeignet, als philosophisch plausible Welt- und Menschenbild auch eine Bezugstheorie für die systematische Theologie zu bilden.*” Birgetta A. Weinhardt, *Das Modell des illibertaren Indeterminismus: Lebensführung jenseits von Willensfreiheit und Fatalismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 320.
63. Alan Weissenbacher, “Defending Cognitive Liberty in an Age of Moral Engineering,” *Theology and Science* 16:3 (August 2018), 288–299.
 64. Would a lie detector connected to a suspect’s brain constitute a violation of cognitive liberty? “Freedom of thought’ as described by the courts seems to refer strictly to the unfettered exercise of thought without fear of external interference or punishment. Since the ostensible goal of deception detection technology is to determine what an individual has *done*, and the US legal system is not structurally oriented toward punishing individuals for their thoughts alone ... it does not seem that this particular sense of cognitive liberty is directly violated by the current developments in neuroscienceWhile acquisition of neurological evidence cannot yet be likened to a ‘search’ of an individual’s thoughts, the capability to perform such a search is waxing into the realm of possibility—and the court has done little to concretely define the private sphere as it relates to neuro-cognitive liberty. Calvin J. Kraft and James Giordano, “Integrating Brain Science and Law: Neuroscientific Evidence and Legal Perspectives on Protecting Individual Liberties,” *Frontiers in Neuroscience* 11 (8 November 2017) <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnins.2017.00111>.
 65. Jan C. Bublitz, “My Mind Is Mine!? Cognitive Liberty as a Legal Concept,” in *Cognitive Enhancement: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, eds. Elisabeth Hildt and A.G. Franke (New York: Springer, 2013), 309–328. “We urge that harm to mind should not be treated as tantamount to harm to brain ... Instead, the law should define the kinds of mental phenomena worthy of protection by their mental properties and introduce stand alone provisions penalizing interferences with mental integrity rather than expanding the protection of bodily integrity to mental integrity.” Jan Bublitz and Reinhard Merkel, “Crimes Against Minds: On Mental Manipulations, Harms and a Human Right to Mental Self-Determination,” *Criminal Law and Philosophy* 8 (2014), 51–77, at 57.
 66. Weissenbacher, “Defending Cognitive Liberty,” 295–296.
 67. *Ibid.*, 296–297.
 68. For the nuances of the Hard Problem, see the debate in *Nova et Vetera*. Bas C. von Fraassen, “How Can We Understand Transcendence of the Ego?” *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, 17:2 (Spring 2019), 373–389; and Ted Peters, “The Transcendence of the Self in Light of the Hard Problem: A Response to Bas van Fraassen,” *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, 17:2 (2019), 391–400.
 69. Michael Tye, “Qualia,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2015); <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/qualia/> (accessed 6/28/2017).
 70. Owen Flanagan and Gregg D. Caruso, “Neuroexistentialism: Third-Wave Existentialism,” in *Neuroexistentialism: Meaning, Morals, and Purpose in the Age of Neuroscience*, eds. Gregg D. Caruso and Owen Flanagan (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1–22, at 9.
 71. Marcus Aurelius and Gregory Hays, tr. *Meditations*. (New York: Modern Library, 2002), book 2.
 72. Flanagan and Caruso, “Neuroexistentialism,” 2.
 73. Johann Auer and Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life: Dogmatic Theology* 9, tr. Michael Waldstein (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 1450.
 74. Barbara Marx Hubbard, “Bringing God Home,” *Healing our Planet; Healing Our Selves*, ed. Dawson Church and GERALYN GENDREAU (Santa Rosa, CA: Elite Books, 2005), 9–18: 10–11. God, closer to me than I am to myself, might count as my higher self. “But Thou wert more inward to me, than my most inward part; and higher than my highest (*Tu autem eras interior intimo meo et superior summo meo*).” Augustine, *Confessions*, III:6:34.
 75. Dan Jones, “The Free Will Delusion,” *New Scientist* 210:2808:32–35 (16 April 2011), 32.

76. Francis Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul* (New York: Scribner's, 1994), 3.
77. John Puddefoot, "The Last Parochialism? Artificial Life, Intelligence and Mind: Some Theological Issues," *God, Life, Intelligence and the Universe*, eds. Terence J. Kelly, SJ and Hilary D. Regan (Adelaide: Australian Theological Forum, 2002), 111–140, at 133.
78. "The development of a sense of self relies on the regulating, reliable, and felt presence of the other." Serbern F. Fisher, *Neurofeedback in the Treatment of Developmental Trauma: Calming the Fear-Driven Brain* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2014), 21. That other could be God. "Becoming a self never takes place through my agency alone, nor can it ever take place without me. I become through my relationship to the Thou: as I become I, I say Thou." Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, tr. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2nd ed, 1958), 11. Finally, any doctrine of the self must include person-in-relationship.
79. Jennifer, Ouellette, *Me, Myself, and Why: Searching for the Science of Self* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 282.
80. Philip Clayton, "Science, Ethics, and Free Will: Why Neuroscience Doesn't Ground Freedom, and What We Might Resolve to Do about It," *What's with Free Will?*, 166–183, at 177.
81. Michael T.H. Wong, *Ricoeur and the Third Discourse of the Person* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019), 92.
82. Michael Fishbane, *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 17, author's italics.
83. Paul Ricoeur, "Narrative Identity," *Philosophy Today* 35 (1991), 73–80. Gradually, Ricoeur's views advanced from narrative identity to the reflexive structure of language, wherein the self sees itself as it sees the other. The self sees itself as a self, as the object of its own self-reflective consciousness. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). This second view comes closer to the phenomenal self model, the Self as Experiential Dimension.
84. One neurocentrist philosopher biologizes narrative interpretation. "Let's face it. We are big animals with brains that carry out every single action automatically and outside our ability to describe how it works ... Now, here comes the good news. We humans have something called the *interpreter* located in our left brain, that weaves a story about why we feel and act the way we do. That becomes our narrative." Michael S. Gazzaniga, "On Determinism and Human Responsibility," *Neuroexistentialism*, 223–234, at 223. No self exists, according to Gazzaniga, but we can tell a story about it. Gazzaniga has verbally shifted agency from what we experience as the self to a part of the brain colorfully named the *interpreter*; but he has explained nothing neurologically or philosophically. Unless one can explain the interpreting function of the left side of the brain, this amounts to nothing more than moving the pea from one shell to another.
85. Andrea Vestrucci, *Theology as Freedom* (Tübingen: Morh Siebeck, 2019), 296.
86. Dan Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First-Person Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 106.
87. The phenomenal self should be thought of in terms of the ecology ($\text{[?]}kologie$) of the entire body (*Leib*), according to Lüneberg theologian Markus Mühling, not merely the brain (*Gehirn*). "Der Leib muss daher verstanden werden als das Medium der Personalität." Markus Mühling, *Resonanzen: Neurobiologie, Evolution und Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 78.
88. See: Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, tr., Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2nd ed., 1994), Part III.
89. Vitor Westhelle, *Eschatology and Space: The Lost Dimension in Theology Past and Present* (New York: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2012), 119. See: Ted Peters, "Beatitudinal Eschatology: In Space or Time?" *Churrasco: A Theological Feast in Honor of Vitor Westhelle*, eds. Mary Philip, John Arthur Nunes, and Charles M. Collier (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 29–37.
90. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (3 Volumes: Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951–1963), 1:169.

91. Ibid., 1:171.
92. “Our thesis is that while human reasonableness and responsibility may be explained (partially) by the cognitive neurosciences, they cannot be explained away.” Murphy and Brown, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It?*, 2–3.
93. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, Gifford Lectures (2 Volumes: New York, Scribners, 1941), 1:208.
94. Ibid., 1:226. If AI (Artificial Intelligence) technology continues to advance as some forecast it will, activist theologians will need to incorporate AI cultures into their worldview. “There is no in principle obstacle that I can see to developing cumulative culture. Culture is no more mysterious than intelligence (perhaps it is less mysterious): if intelligence can be instantiated by machines (and there is no compelling reason to think that it cannot be), they can instantiate culture too. So despite my doubts about the reach of intelligence, I do not doubt that AIs can achieve intellectual mastery equal to our own.” Neil Levy, “The Earthling’s Secret Weapon: Cumulative Culture and the Singularity,” *Science, Religion and Culture* 3:1 (2016), 19–30, at 25–26, Levy’s italics; file:///C:/Users/Ted/Downloads/1468597863SRC_3_1_19-30%20(3).pdf . Can we forecast that robot culture would exhibit the group selfishness Niebuhr has identified?
95. The self is invited by God to transcend itself either by invoking virtue or by serving the needs of the neighbor at the expense of the self. Since the Lutheran Reformation, this has come to be known as *Christian* freedom. It still obtains today. “For man to be created in the image of God means that he is free. Nevertheless, he is not free in himself [*an sich*] but free for the other—free for worship of the Creator and free for other people.” Rodney D. Holder, “Modern Science and the Interpretation of Genesis: Can We Learn from Dietrich Bonhoeffer?” *Theology and Science* 6:2 (2008), 21–231, at 218. Liberation in the political, economic, and cultural sense is aimed not at *Christian* freedom but rather at freedom of the will, at self-determination.
96. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, tr., Matthew J. O’Connell (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1985), 527.
97. See: Ted Peters, “Liberation, Law, and Proleptic Dignity,” *Lutheran Theology and Secular Law: The Work of the Modern State*, eds. Ron Duty and Marie Failing (London: Routledge, 2018), 89–100; and Ted Peters, “Dignity,” in *Encyclopedia of Science, Technology, and Ethics*, ed. by Carl Mitcham, (New York: Macmillan, Thomson, Gale, 2005), 2:528–530.
98. Antje Jackelén, *God is Greater: Theology for the World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2020), 96.
99. Ian G. Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion* (New York: Prentice Hall and Harper, 1966), 312.

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