

Discernment, Ecumenical Dialogue, and the Transformation of the *Polis*

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Abstract. — *The task of ecumenical dialogue has largely been framed within the context of Christian unity. Consequently, its power to drive social transformation has always been considered secondary, even in the case of social ecumenism. In challenging this limitation, this essay argues that ecumenical dialogue ought to be interpreted as a form of political theology, with an inclusive participation that goes beyond Christian or religious boundaries. To defend such a claim, the essay (a) appropriates Pope Francis' concept of discernment with its hermeneutics of participation, (b) deploys the principle of non-dualism in establishing the relationship between ecumenical dialogue and political theology, and (c) outlines the critical criteria for the possibility of social transformation through ecumenical dialogue. Overall, the essay aims at extending the transformative value of ecumenical dialogue beyond the narrow goal of Christian unity.*

1. Introduction

It is the task of theologians to explore politics as a space for God's active presence, where decisions are made in the governance of the created world. This exploration, in itself, as long as it focuses on the question of where can God be found, namely how the Christian faith can bring about a common participation in God's grace, is also what discernment is all about. Thus, discernment and political theology find some sort of convergence within theology. Ecumenical dialogical engagement, in sharing a similar vision as political theology, remains, therefore, a theological discernment with political consequences. Unfortunately, scholars within the field of political theology have largely ignored the socio-political significance of ecumenism. In this paper, I shall explore how *ecumenical dialogue as discernment* can bring about the transformation of society.

Indeed, recent ecumenical initiatives that demand civic accountability uncover ecumenism as a form of political theology and political action.¹

1. Initiatives like *Thursdays in Black: Resistance and Resilience* as well as *Reclaiming Jesus* are some examples of ecumenical political actions. *Thursdays in Black* emerged

However, the question of the possibility of ecumenical politics – that is, the ecumenical engagement in the society or community-building – is challenged by a range of factors. These factors include ecumenical disharmony, as well as the temptation to imperialistic and sectarian dispositions from some Christian communities in their political participation.² Taking all these issues together, there is a need to explore ecumenical politics as a process of theological discernment. To do this, this paper is laid out in three parts. In the first part, I shall examine the theological concept of discernment in line with the teachings of Pope Francis. In the second part, I shall examine the relationship between discernment and political theology. Finally, in the third part, I shall explain how the political participation of the ecumenical community can lead to the transformation of communities.

2. The Practice of Discernment in Pope Francis

One central spiritual and theological theme that aptly describes the Francis papacy is discernment. Francis' programme of multi-dimensional dialogue – as evident in his commitment to ecumenism, interreligious engagement and geopolitics – are rooted and traceable to his understanding of discernment.³ Yet, the understanding of discernment is not

from World Council of Churches' 10-year programme, *Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women* (1988-1998). It was inspired by the protest and resistance put up by different groups of women in Argentina, Israel, Palestine, South Africa, Rwanda and Bosnia, against various forms of violence including rape and the kidnapping of children. The *Reclaiming Jesus* project is made up of leaders and scholars from different Christian churches in America. 'A Confession of Faith in a Time of Crisis' by the *Reclaiming Jesus* movement outlines a very strong political action that challenges the political trends in today's America, particularly white nationalism and all forms of violence and violation of human dignity. Cf. <http://www.reclaimingjesus.org> (accessed 24 January 2021).

2. In that sense, are initiatives such as *Thursday in Black* and *Reclaiming Jesus* merely attempts by the Christian community to morally dictate to the society? Or are they expressions of Christian community's legitimate participation in the society?

3. In almost all of his letters and speeches, Pope Francis refers to discernment which features prominently in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. Discernment in Pope Francis, just as in this paper, is not primarily about moral discernment or the type that is associated with charism, but a theological-spiritual discernment. In taking this concept seriously, the Pope mentions that discernment is no 'fad' of his pontificate. It is 'not an advertising slogan' nor 'an organizational technique'. Rather it is "an *interior attitude* rooted in *an act of faith*." He goes further to state that "Discernment is the method and at the same time the goal we set ourselves: it is based on the conviction that God is at work in world history, in life's events, in the people I meet and who speak to me. For this reason, we are called to listen to what the Spirit suggests to us, with methods and in paths that are often unpredictable." *Address by His Holiness Pope Francis at the Opening of the Synod of Bishops on Young People "The Faith and Vocational*

original to Pope Francis, but is traceable to his Jesuit identity, specifically in the tradition set by his ‘spiritual father’, St. Ignatius. Besides, the notion is grounded in scripture (cf. 1 John 4:1; 1 Thess 5:21)⁴ and has always been present in the life of the church.

Discernment has to do with seeking the best or ultimate value or course of action in the midst of differences or multiplicity; multiplicity of either opportunities or of interacting realities. Discernment has always played a significant part in the spirituality and governance of the church as it *listens to* and *reflects on* the message of the Gospel *vis-à-vis* the contexts and experiences of the people of God. Hence, it manifests in the understanding that “evangelization would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man’s concrete life, both personal and social.”⁵ Discernment reveals itself at the intersect between faith – expressed as both *fides quae* (the content of belief) and *fides qua* (the act of belief) – and *martyria* (witness, testimony) and *diakonia* (service), even of a political nature. It is based on the non-discriminatory nature of the salvific plan of God (cf. Eph 1:10, 1 Tim 2:4) and invariably, of the Gospel, which has a fundamentally trans-boundary character, since it is directed towards the entire creation (cf. Mark 16:15). According to Paul VI,

This is why evangelization involves an explicit message, adapted to the different situations constantly being realized, about the rights and duties of every human being, about family without which personal growth and development is hardly possible, about life in society, about international life, peace, justice and development – a message especially energetic today about liberation.⁶

Discernment” (3 October 2018), <http://www.synod.va/content/synod2018/en/news/address-by-pope-francis-at-the-opening-of-the-synod-of-bishops-.html> (accessed 23 January 2021).

4. The First Letter of John (4:1) states thus: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world.” 1 Thess 5:21 states, “test everything; hold fast to what is good.” References are taken from the New Revised Standard version. Swiss Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar would later adopt 1 Thess 5:21 as the title of his book (originally in German: *Prüfet alles – das Gute behaltet*), which is basically an interview with the Italian philosopher and theologian (now Cardinal) Angelo Scola. Balthasar’s argument is indeed a discernment of the ever-present ‘vitality’ of the Church, which he claims “manifests itself in unsuspected places” in an undeniable manner. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Test Everything: Hold Fast to What Is Good* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1989), 8.

5. Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), §29: http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html (accessed 23 January 2019).

6. Ibid.

The challenges of liberation and development constituted the predominant contexts during Paul VI's time. Today, these are not completely different from an ecumenical quest for social transformation, in the context of poverty, increasing inequality, migration, conflicts, human rights abuse and environmental crisis.

Following this trajectory, Vatican II pays attention to the 'signs of the times' (*Gaudium et Spes* §4; *Unitatis Redintegratio* §4; *Dignitatis Humanae* §15; *Presbyterorum Ordinis* §9), a term that is scripturally rooted (cf. Matt.16,3; Lk.12,56), and that highlights what it means *to discern*, whether spiritually or theologically. In fact, with respect to ecumenism, the Council Fathers had in the *Decree on Ecumenism* urged "all the Catholic faithful to *recognize* the signs of the times and to *take an active and intelligent* part in the work of ecumenism."⁷ These lines highlight the spiritual (epistemological) as well as the practical (pragmatic) dimensions of discernment.

Pope Francis draws on these two but interrelated dimensions of discernment. In *Gaudete et Exsultate*, which is perhaps one of the least known of his writings, the Pope describes discernment as a 'gift' of the Holy Spirit that supersedes "intelligence or common sense."⁸ He establishes the necessity of this *gift* in today's world of multiple contradictions, and argues that beyond the confines of private spirituality, discernment equally aids us in undertaking "the concrete means" of responding to God's mission in the world.⁹ Hence, discernment, even when considered to be primarily spiritual in nature, includes but transcends "existential, psychological, sociological or moral insights drawn from the human sciences."¹⁰ It is about "recognizing how we can better accomplish the mission entrusted to us at our baptism."¹¹ In other words, discernment

7. Vatican II, *Decree on Ecumenism Unitatis Redintegratio* (21 November 1964), §4: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html (accessed 30 September 2019).

8. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation on the Call to Holiness in Today's World Gaudete et Exsultate* (19 March 2018), §166: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html (accessed 25 January 2021). The fifth chapter of GE is dedicated to the theme of 'Spiritual Combat, Vigilance and Discernment'. The meta-intellectual character of discernment does not render it non-intelligent, rather it reveals its surrender to a superior intelligence of the Holy Spirit. By so doing, it remains a 'gift' of a superior intelligence that is received in openness, listening, and 'letting go' of one's pre-constructed truths to allow the Spirit's 'gift' to be embraced.

9. *Ibid.*, §169.

10. *Ibid.*, §170.

11. *Ibid.*, §174.

is existential.¹² As a process of openness, it admits of the flexibility of the Holy Spirit and the power of the same Spirit to bring about something ‘new’ in addressing the challenges of today. In fact, the Pope states,

It is not a matter of applying rules or repeating what was done in the past, since the same solutions are not valid in all circumstances and what was useful in one context may not prove so in another. The discernment of spirits liberates us from rigidity, which has no place before the perennial ‘today’ of the risen Lord. The Spirit alone can penetrate what is obscure and hidden in every situation, and grasp its every nuance, so that the newness of the Gospel can emerge in another light.¹³

The ‘newness of the Gospel’ is not fossilized in the cultural contexts of the ‘world of the text’, but is evident in the ‘today’ as a space where the Spirit continues to speak. The pope extends this message in other documents. In *Christus Vivit* (2019), discernment emerges in God’s friendship with young people as they grapple with their challenges and experiences. Their vocation to transform the world begins with a deep sense of self-discovery.¹⁴ Similarly, the theme is present at the divine-human love that is made palpable in human families as the pope notes in *Amoris Laetitia* (2016). The survival of families in contemporary times is not a matter of clear-cut rules and guidelines but a discernment process in which the spiritual, moral, financial, psychological and the cultural intersect. *Laudato Si’* (2015) takes up what is perhaps the most topical issue of today, namely the ecological crisis, to underscore Christian witnessing to the divine mandate of caring for the earth, ‘our common home’. Navigating the multiplicity of perspectives – scientific, scriptural, moral, economic, dialogical – *Laudato Si’* engages in a process of listening to and discerning from the experiences of today in the light of the Gospel, so as to take right actions to save our world. Meanwhile, Pope Francis’ programmatic document, *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), brings to the front burner the complexity of diversity and the needed dialogue that should guide the life of the church as she seeks to accomplish her mission, both *ad intra* (in terms of ‘purification and reform’) and *ad extra*. Discernment emerges in *Evangelii Gaudium* as comprising the acts of mutual

12. Cf. Luigi M. Rulla, “The Discernment of Spirits and Christian Anthropology,” *Gregorianum* 59, no. 3 (1978): 537-569, at 540.

13. Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, §173.

14. Pope Francis, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Christus Vivit* (25 March 2019), §§283-286: http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html (accessed 25 January 2021).

listening, in ‘letting go’ of our rigid perspectives, and in allowing oneself to align with the will of God under the authority of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

Dialogue itself is a process of discernment as long as it has to do with mutual listening, learning, and participation in the community. Pope Francis has always shown that dialogue, even of an ecumenical nature, lends itself to an engagement with the political.¹⁶ Overall, in his scathing criticism of capitalism, challenging comments on migration, and insightful proposals for the care of the earth, Pope Francis is ever guided by the Gospel that promotes the flourishing of all lives.

3. Discernment and the Politics of Ecumenical Dialogue

Discernment is the recognition of the true content of the church’s mission, and of the necessity of unity in the understanding and execution of this mission. It is about a new epistemology of an ecumenical ecclesiology, that is, a self-understanding of the church in an era where ecclesial unity is no longer possible. Considered from a fundamental theological perspective, the problem here is not just about the *possibility* of Christian mission/ecumenism but more importantly, about the *knowability* of Christian mission/ecumenism. This epistemological concern pries into the authenticity, content, extensiveness, and implications of the church’s existence in the world. Thus, it is at once an ecclesiological concern. Meanwhile, establishing the link between ecumenical engagement and community-building is as much intricate as finding a justification for the involvement of any particular church – say the Roman Catholic Church – in the ordering of society.

Leuven systematic theologian and ecumenist, Annemarie C. Mayer investigates the validity of a public theology within the context of Roman Catholic ecclesiology and missiology.¹⁷ Of course, the Protestant history

15. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), §20, 119: http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html#Star_of_the_new_evangelization (accessed 25 January 2021).

16. This point is more evident in the second and fourth of the four principles of dialogue in *Evangelii Gaudium*: ‘unity prevails over conflict’ (§226-230) and ‘the whole is greater than the part’ (§234-237).

17. Annemarie C. Mayer, “The Church in the Limelight of the Public Square: An Alternative Community?,” in *Grace, Governance and Globalization*, ed. Stephan van Erp, Martin G. Poulson, and Lieven Boeve, T&T Clark Studies in Edward Schillebeeckx (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 248-260. This does not imply any incompatibility with an ecumenical approach, but represents a specifically Catholic approach that is grounded on magisterial teachings.

and early foray into ‘public theology’ implies that a Catholic appropriation of the concept should be treated with a level of caution.¹⁸ Yet, Catholicism is never a stranger to the political order. The Roman Catholic Church has always been a critical agent in political participation, particularly in the so-called Christendom era, and even today in the various commitments of both the Holy See and local churches in both global and national politics. However, Mayer’s analysis is in the context of the secularization manifesto that sought to marginalize religion from the societal governance.

Mayer critically explores the contentions of the German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, particularly in his 1962 seminal book, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*). Contrary to the discriminatory discourses of the emerging processes of secularization in Europe, Habermas had insisted that religion ought not be marginalized from the political space. Extending Habermas’ position, Mayer argues that (a) “faith communities can become actors in the public sphere, which turns into a space of expression and communication for them”; and (b) that these communities “can be an alternative to the given or prevailing public.”¹⁹ The question remains whether the ‘alternative’ does not constitute ‘another public’. And, if this is so, another question arises as to whether there can ever be more than one public.

No dualism is implied in the ‘alternative’. The idea of a church as an ‘alternative’ does not imply an “extreme model of separating church and world”²⁰ as is evident in some theological circles.²¹ A dualistic approach excludes the church *a priori* from – and delegitimizes its agency in – the ordering of the society, and is equally symptomatic of the remnants of a fundamental theology that contrasts nature with grace (part of the scholastic tradition). As a result, a church’s engagement in community-building comes with either an imperialistic character or a situation in which it is subjected to the control of the ‘legitimate’ actors in the political space. Scriptural evidence shows that the mission of a church *in the world* precludes it from abandoning the world (*ecclesia absconditus*)

18. Ibid., 249.

19. Ibid., 253.

20. Ibid.

21. John Milbank’s ‘radical orthodoxy’ and Stanley Hauerwas’ ‘contrast model’ immediately come to mind. See, John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 381; Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 84. Both authors were equally cited in Mayer.

as if its mission is exclusively *outside* this world. A church's identity and mission integrally holds in tension its *being-not of the world* as well as its *being-in* and *being-sent into the world* (cf. John 17,14.16.18). This, however, does not mean that we cannot say something unique, separate, and exclusive about the Church.

If this non-dualistic presence of the Church in the political world of the society is roundly defensible from an exclusively Roman Catholic perspective, as Mayer does, an ecumenical presence of the Church in the public could as well be justified in a similar measure. Put differently, if the 'extreme separation of church and world' is dismissed from a Catholic theological perspective, then an ecumenical public witness (ecumenical political theology) cannot be reasonably denied. An 'extreme separation' of agents of Christian witnessing – represented by the different ecclesial communities – cannot reasonably be justified upon a denial of a similar separation between the more dissimilar entities of 'church' and the 'world'. However, beyond the frontiers of ordinary logic, the theological justification of ecumenical witness in the public, one that is aimed at social transformation, is rooted in a Trinitarian ecclesiology that reconciles diversity and unity. Indeed, it is not my intention to explore here the Trinitarian ecclesiology that undergirds diversity and unity,²² but it is important to note that every true ecumenical ecclesiology is fundamentally Trinitarian.²³ Overall, Mayer's argument remains valid, not only for the Roman Catholic Church's acting in helping to build communities, but also could be extended to the 'church-ecumenical', and be applied in a manner that is transformational.

4. Ecumenical Engagement for the Transformation of Communities

Ecumenism, in the area of community transformation, requires addressing, as Gordon Rixon puts it, "the challenge of practicing discernment in a multi-cultural context."²⁴ In a way, this is paradoxical since ecumenism itself reflects Christian diversity with limited dialogical consensus.

22. This has been sufficiently explored by many theologians such as Henri de Lubac, Jean-Marie Tillard, Yves Congar, John Zizioulas, and others.

23. In *Unitatis Redintegratio* of Vatican II, the identity of members of the 'ecumenical' movement is marked first and foremost by a Trinitarian confession, notwithstanding the Christological dimension (cf. §§1,2,12). This is also evident in the identity of the World Council of Churches membership.

24. Gordon A. Rixon, "Dwelling on the Way: Pope Francis and Bernard Lonergan on Discernment," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 84, no. 3 (2019): 305-318, at 306.

Ironically, the scenario is that of a block of plural entities participating in the diverse society. The crisis, however, is that participation as a *Grundnorm* in ecumenism is transposed to the political sphere, without the guarantee of consensus among the churches. However, non-participation cannot be a sustainable option, since it shrinks the public space by the exclusion of a church, either in part or in whole. Therefore, the question that arises is whether participation in the political ordering of the community necessarily requires *a priori* consensus among churches, since the absence of such consensus further complexifies the issues and might contribute in delegitimizing a church. As Ruti Teitel argues,

Greater participation in the political process does not necessarily signify a commitment to the development of a moral consensus. Just as political fragmentation appears to have stimulated a turn to religion, religious fragmentation has animated the turn to politics for legitimization of select religious norms and the enforcement of these religious norms.²⁵

The idea of participation does not presuppose consensus, and is not aimed at the scramble for political endorsement of particular religious views. Rather the fundamental rationale is to guarantee the inclusiveness of multiple voices in public debate. Sometimes this participation could take the form of mutual listening and mutual learning. The consciousness of participatory inclusiveness is the necessary step to the transformation of society.

Now, in this process a church must reckon with the reality that its views or norms may not be at the center of every consensus that is reached in the decision-making process of society. The fact of a church's participation, *albeit* in the plurality of its own 'voices', underscores its fidelity to its mission *in* the world. For this to happen, a set of criteria are needed. First, the *hermeneutics of humility*, or what Michael Perry would refer to as the 'virtue of fallibilism',²⁶ is required at this point, both in a church's participation in the political space, and in accepting that a politically-endorsed consensus might not always reflect its own understanding of the Gospel that it preaches. Perry argues against those who insinuate that a church's foray into politics is "only for the strategic purpose of persuasion,"²⁷ and questions why the purpose cannot just be

25. Ruti Teitel, "Critique of Religion as Politics in the Public Sphere," *Cornell Law Review* 78, no.5 (1993): 747-821, at 791.

26. Michael J. Perry, "Toward an Ecumenical Politics," *George Washington Law Review* 60, no. 3 (1992): 599-619, at 600.

27. *Ibid.*, 601. Ruti Teitel already makes such claims about the participation of religious communities in the political space, as shown in the passage cited above.

for ‘deliberation’: “Why assume that ‘the mind of the Church’ or other community is to be shaped only by internal dialogue: deliberation *within* the religious community, among its members? Why shouldn’t the mind of the Church/community be shaped by external dialogue as well: deliberation between those who are members of the religious community and those who are not?”²⁸ Despite Perry’s context of the Roman Catholic Church, his argument, just as Mayer’s, remains valid in the context of an ecumenical designation of the concept ‘church’. Second, there is the condition of ‘public accessibility’,²⁹ according to which participation within the political ordering of the society/community could be made without resorting to a self-referential authoritarianism, or a claim to an exclusive epistemological superiority. By a ‘self-referential authoritarianism’, a church would assume the exclusive right to speak from a position of authority, that is, and can only be, validated by itself. On the other hand, any claim to an ‘exclusive epistemological superiority’ would mean appropriating an exclusive access to knowledge on matters that affect humanity. This could be seen as some sort of Gnosticism in the political arena. Both approaches do not guarantee transformation of both the churches and the community. Rather they constitute a recipe for further dissension or aggression against the churches and further rejection of the Gospel message.

Ecumenical political engagement should, therefore, be allowed to be “valuable in itself” given the very reason that “it is a principal constituent of a politics valuable in itself.”³⁰ This engagement must be open to a range of possibilities including the chance ‘to reach consensus’, or perhaps ‘to diminish dissensus’, or even to shed light on the nature of the disagreements among the participants. Overall, it is important that the participants “cultivate the bonds of (political) community,” reaffirm their mutual relationships, particularly “their shared commitment to certain political-moral premises.”³¹ Now, it is possible that some consensus over certain issues, or some sort of advancement in the mutual recognition and validation of each other, may be an outcome of this process of participation. However, when these possibilities are not forthcoming, churches can still reaffirm their common bond in baptism and recognize their identity as Christian believers while witnessing together through their political participation. In that way, the decision-making process within society continues to serve an

28. Ibid., 601.

29. Ibid., 603.

30. Ibid., 610.

31. Ibid.

ecumenical purpose, whereby the non-consenting ecclesial communities mutually learn or acknowledge their common bond in a sustainable fashion, within the opportunity that is provided by their participation in the political ordering of communities.

5. Conclusion

Ecumenism involves discernment at two levels when it comes to political engagement. On the one hand, Christian churches undergo the process of recognizing and appreciating the ecumenical value of one another in the political society. This occurs even as the dividing issues are addressed in continual dialogue. Here the public *teaches* ecumenism, or rather, ecumenism *learns* from the public. On the other hand, discernment operates in the awareness that the issues in the public space are non-denominational as such, because they affect the entire community. Because the mission of a church is ‘non-discriminatory’, the society, with its political governance, becomes a legitimate place for a church’s self-disclosure as well as its mission. Invariably, to a great extent, the political society/community becomes the ultimate test ground for the legitimacy of the Christian mission and of the entire ecumenical experiment. It becomes, as it were, *a place of learning* for the Church, a space where – through participation in deliberating over the common good of the society – churches come to the realization of what they are truly called to be, the one Church of Christ. In line with this, one could conclude that an ecumenical political dialogue is rooted in ‘a politics of community’³² in which “the bonds of community are affirmed, strengthened, multiplied”³³ in dialogue. This is the surest way to the transformation of the same community – an inclusive participatory approach, rather than an imperialistic approach. Following the latter, a church can only succeed in alienating itself from the community, and as a consequence, it stands to forego the double chance of transformation and of rendering the Gospel increasingly relevant.

32. Perry, “Toward an Ecumenical Politics,” 616. Perry deploys the concept to highlight the idea of inclusivity of the diversity that makes up the society. However, it has been shown that notwithstanding the ‘epistemological framing’ of community as “apolitical, natural concept,” the concept has become “central to multiple forms of power relations.” But then, the elastic nature of the ‘politics of community’ means that it can also be rethought to promote authentic “interrelationships across differences in power,” that is “the relational thinking that accompanies multiple practices of community.” See, Patricia H. Collins, “The New Politics of Community,” *American Sociological Review* 75, no. 1 (2010): 7-30, at 9, 23.

33. *Ibid.*, 23.

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