



Masters thesis

Could Mary have said “no?” a contemporary feminist analysis of consent, examined through the context of Marian representations that originate from the Annunciation

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Could Mary Have Said “No?” A contemporary feminist
analysis of consent, examined through the context of
Marian representations that originate from the
Annunciation.

**A Thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Theology (MTH)**

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Abstract

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Could Mary Have Said “No?” A contemporary feminist analysis of consent, examined through the context of Marian representations that originate from the Annunciation.

Master of Theology

Middlesex University/London School of Theology

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Providing a framework for consent analysis, this research primarily focuses on Mariology derived from the Annunciation as interpreted by Mary Daly. Daly's representations of Mary as a Model for all Women, a Marionette, a Rape Victim, and a Goddess are considered in turn. Through an exploration of these Mariological images, this research explores the intricate factors influencing an individual's capacity to provide consent, with a focus on limitations to an agent's autonomy and voluntariness. Specifically, this study emphasises the significance of characterising interactions between agents as competitive or non-competitive. This research indicates that in situations where interactions between agents are competitive, the ability for an agent to give consent is severely limited. In contrast, in scenarios where interactions between agents are non-competitive, the capacity for consent is higher. This research highlights the need for a movement towards non-competitive interactions to protect and empower women's consent. Additionally, a reimagining of the Marian image as a model of non-competitive collaborative agency is proposed as a guide to further discussions of consent, moving towards a more equitable and inclusive relationality.

Keywords: Annunciation, autonomous agency, collaborative agency, competitive agency, consent, cooperative agency, Daly, female archetype, Mary, non-competitive agency, voluntariness.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

But we are told of meek obedience. No one mentions
courage.

The engendering Spirit
did not enter her without consent.
God waited.

She was free
to accept or to refuse, choice
integral to humanness.¹

For a few years in my early twenties, I had the privilege of living in Mexico City working in a range of churches across the city. The vibrant worship, warm hospitality, and powerful working of the Holy Spirit that I experienced during that time were profoundly formative for my own Christianity. I was also introduced to a ubiquitous figure hovering on the fringes of sanctioned Protestant practice, this was the figure of Mary. Having hitherto experienced a Protestant Evangelical ecclesiology up until this point, Mary held no significance for me beyond a taught wariness of anything vaguely Roman Catholic.² Yet in the Latin American church, I saw Mary as a focal point in the lives of everyday believers, transcending denominational boundaries. Mary was alive and well amongst the people. Her picture hung in taxis, homes, and brothels alike; her shrines, filled to overflowing, graced every street corner. And the Basilica of Guadalupe soared above the Zócalo, the beating heart of Mexico City. When I returned to the Western Protestant Church, I was struck by a strange Marian silence. A towering figure of feminine power and understanding had all but disappeared, and for many years was lost to me. A decade later, I feel as though I have rediscovered Mary, although not on the street, but within feminist theology.

Within theological scholarship one of the most significant women in terms of her impact and influence is the Virgin/Mother/Mediatrix/Queen of Heaven/Goddess/Mary. Indeed, Pelikan summarises that, 'Because of the role that she has been playing for the history of the past twenty centuries, the Virgin Mary has been the subject of more thought and discussion about what it means to be a woman than any other woman in Western history.'³ Therefore, it is possible to examine many issues pertaining to womanhood in the contemporary Christian

¹ Denise Levertov, "Annunciation," Accessed December 1, 2022, URL:

<https://allourstrength.wordpress.com/2011/12/21/annunciation-a-poem-by-denise-levertov/>.

² To consider the impact of Mary in Catholic and Protestant relations see Thomas P. Rausch, "Catholic-Evangelical Relations: Signs of Progress," *One In Christ* 32, no. 1 (1996): 40–52.

³ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 219.

community through a Marian lens.⁴ Mary crystallised as a central figure in feminist theology especially during the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960s and 1970s.⁵ Also designated as the second wave of feminism, this period of feminism introduced a focus on women's experiences that has become a pillar in contemporary feminist practices. Accordingly, one of the primary features that differentiates feminist theology from other theological disciplines is the high value attributed to women's experience which this research will also adopt.⁶

In relation to Mary's experience, it is hard to overstate the magnitude of the Annunciation for Mary's life, it has immediate implications for her body, relational identity, and even her historical legacy. The Annunciation refers specifically to the announcement given by the angel Gabriel to Mary declaring that she would conceive a son through the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:26–38). Gabriel's proclamation 'And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.' (Luke 1:31), is met eventually with Mary's response, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38). As one can imagine, due to the significance of the Annunciation as a pinnacle text entailing women's experience, it is the seat of much feminist debate.

There is specific concern within feminist theological circles as to whether Mary expresses consent within the Annunciation.⁷ Understanding consent is a crucial issue for women in contemporary Christian community that is highlighted by recent issues such as the 2017 #MeToo movement,⁸ and reproductive rights debates.⁹ As such, within this research I will turn to an exploration of Mary's choice in the Annunciation to work towards a model of agential interactions which enable consent. Consent will be defined as a two-part construct

⁴ Ann Loades, *Grace Is Not Faceless: Reflections on Mary*, ed. Stephen Burns (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2021), 34.

⁵ Voichita Nachescu, "Radical Feminism and the Nation: History and Space in the Political Imagination of Second-Wave Feminism," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 3, no. 1 (2009): 29-59, DOI: 10.1353/jsr.0.0012; I would note that female scholarship undoubtedly looked to Mary before the Women's Liberation Movement, for example within mediaeval female monastic circles. However, a differentiation made by Hamington is that during the Women's Liberation Movement feminist theologians were remarkably well situated to bring a new consideration of Mary to the forefront of theological discourse due to the emerging analytical tools available to them see Maurice Hamington, *Hail Mary?: The Struggle for Ultimate Womanhood in Catholicism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1995), 47.

⁶ For the historical development of experience within feminist theology see: Margaret D. Kamitsuka. *Feminist Theology and the Challenge of Difference* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2-10.

⁷ For example, see Blake Hereth. "Mary, Did You Consent?" *Religious Studies* 58, no. 4 (2022): 677-700; and Sarah Jane Boss. *Empress and Handmaid: On Nature and Gender in the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (A&C Black, 2000), 62-75.

⁸ S.R. Tracy and A. Maurer, "# MeToo and Evangelicalism: Shattering Myths about Sexual Abuse and Power," *Cultural Encounters* 14, no. 2 (2019): 2-20, DOI: 10.1177/1536841819868913.

⁹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Women, Reproductive Rights and the Catholic Church," *Feminist Theology* 16, no. 2 (2008): 184-193.

consisting of autonomous agency and voluntariness.¹⁰ Both components of consent will be considered with the course of this study, however, a primary focus will be given to autonomous agency.

This research cannot consider every area of Mariology, a scope so vast it has encompassed the life work of countless Marian scholars. Therefore, I will limit my research in accordance with the Mariological representations constructed through the Annunciation as interpreted by Mary Daly. I argue that Daly's personal faith and academic journey profoundly influenced her exploration of Mariology, resulting in diverse interpretations that resonate with various feminist concerns regarding the theological construction of Mary. Daly's representations of Mary appear to align with a wide range of feminist theologians at different points. Her initial readings of Mary embrace the significant archetypal role of Mariology and are mirrored the works of theologians such as Ruether, Beattie, and Storkey.¹¹ Daly later moves towards a rejection of traditional images of Mary alongside theologians such as Warner and Hampson,¹² establishing a Goddess image of Mary alongside feminists such as Christ¹³ Therefore, through her unique lens, Daly illuminates different aspects of the feminist discourse surrounding Mary's portrayal, making her a compelling representation of broader feminist voices. I find in her a strong platform for my own engagement with Mariology.

Hence in this research, I will consider if Dalian Mariological images can be read as having the agential capacity to say 'no.' The images being explored in the research are respectively, Mary the Model for All Women,¹⁴ the Marionette,¹⁵ the Rape Victim,¹⁶ and the Goddess.¹⁷ I will explore each of these images in turn and analyse the potential capacity for consent each one presents. As such, through an exploration of Daly's Mariological images my research will engage with the numerous factors shaping an individual's ability to provide consent.

¹⁰ Tom L. Beauchamp, "Autonomy and Consent," in *The Ethics of Consent: Theory and Practice*, ed. Franklin Miller and Alan Wertheimer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 55.

¹¹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Mary- the Feminine Face of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 11-12; Tina Beattie, "'Woman full and overflowing with grace': The Virgin Mary and the contemporary Church," *The Way*, 54-55, <https://www.theway.org.uk/back/s093beattie>; and Elaine Storkey, "The Significance of Mary for Feminist Theology," in *Chosen by God: Mary in Evangelical Perspective*, ed. David Wright (London: Marshall Pickering, 1989), 188.

¹² Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Quartet Books, 1978), 338; Daphne Hampson, *After Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1996), 175-176.

¹³ Carol P. Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological and Political Reflections," in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 273-87.

¹⁴ Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1975), 157.

¹⁵ Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (London: The Women's Press Ltd, 1986), 90.

¹⁶ Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (London: The Women's Press Ltd, 1991), 84.

¹⁷ Daly, *Beyond*, 90-92.

Central to this inquiry is an examination of the constraints imposed on an agent's autonomy and voluntariness.

Furthermore, this research places particular emphasis on understanding the nature of interactions between agents, specifically, whether they are seen to be competitive or non-competitive. My findings illuminate a critical distinction: in agential interactions marked by competitive dynamics, the capacity for consent is severely limited. Conversely, when interactions are understood to be non-competitive the potential for freely given consent flourishes.

This study underscores the pressing need for a paradigm shift towards cultivating non-competitive interactions, especially concerning women's autonomy and consent. I advocate for a transformative approach that prioritises the empowerment of women in decision-making processes. Furthermore, I propose a radical reimagining of the Marian image, one that celebrates her as a human model of non-competitive collaborative agency. This conceptual reframing serves as a guide towards a more equitable and inclusive relationality in discussions surrounding consent. Furthermore, throughout this research I will often seek to recontextualise issues surrounding autonomous agency and voluntariness into a modern framework so that I might address the pressing need to reexamine female agency within the Christian community today.

Chapter 2: Feminist Methodology

When I discovered feminist theologians for the first time, I encountered a branch of theological scholarship that I felt would finally allow my voice to be heard. Widely multidisciplinary, feminist theologians seek to give voice to the voiceless, the marginalised, the vulnerable, the forgotten, and even me.¹⁸ To adopt Ruether's own words 'Basically I don't like injustice and I don't like to see religion used to justify injustice and oppression.'¹⁹ In my mind, feminist theology has taken on the mantle of John the Baptist declaring 'in the words of Isaiah the prophet 'I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Make straight the way for the Lord."' (John 1:23). The current and evolving phase of the feminist movement, which

¹⁸ These areas of focus are not held by feminists alone, similar motivators are found at the core of many Contextual theologies. The interconnectedness of marginalisation across a broad range of contexts such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and physical ability, is defined in feminism as Intersectionality. See Brittney Cooper. "Intersectionality," in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, eds. Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth (Oxford: Oxford Handbooks, 2016): 385-406, DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199328581.013.20, Accessed September 18, 2023.

¹⁹ Rosemary Hinton, "A Legacy of Inclusion: An Interview with Rosemary Radford Ruether," *Crosscurrents* 52, no. 01 (2006), 29.

emerged mid 2010 is termed fourth wave feminism.²⁰ While fourth wave feminism aligns with earlier waves in numerous goals, it possesses distinct focuses and concerns, including addressing sexual violence, body shaming, and rape culture.²¹ In my pursuit to advance the objectives of fourth wave feminism, I will delve into each of these three key areas during this research, with a sustained emphasis on experience.

Although feminist methodologies vary widely there are key unifying factors that act as guides when feminist theological research is undertaken. Firstly, the topics of feminist research advocate for the advancement of women's positions in society.²² An associated element of feminist theology is that it seeks to advance female centred research topics beyond theory into practice. Althaus-Reid, champions feminist theology as a vehicle for positive change. She writes that 'Feminist theology remains a praxis-based theology and as such needs to maintain unique and challenging links between theory and praxis.'²³ Accordingly, my research methodology is 'not just on women, but *for* women.'²⁴ The goal then is to exercise a methodology which allows for the practical advancement of women in the Protestant Evangelical Church and beyond. Approaching the Scriptural texts with this focus on utilising the text in the contemporary Christian community, as opposed to say a focus on its original purpose, can be seen as employing a later theological development termed as a Reader response method.²⁵ Hence, this research is more concerned '[with] the reader of today than [with] the reader the original author had in mind.'²⁶

²⁰ Kira Cochrane, *All the Rebel Women: The Rise of the Fourth Wave of Feminism* (Guardian Books, 2013), ch. 1.

²¹ See Diana C. Parry, Corey W. Johnson, and Faith-Anne Wagler. "Fourth Wave Feminism: Theoretical Underpinnings and Future Directions for Leisure Research," in *Feminisms in Leisure Studies*, ed. Diana C. Parry, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 1-12. Routledge, 2018; Elinor Burkett, and Laura Brunell. "Feminism," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Accessed April 20, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/feminism>.

²² Geoff Payne and Judy Payne, *Key Concepts in Social Research* (London: SAGE Publications, Ltd, 2004), 89, DOI: 10.4135/9781849209397.

²³ Marcella Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood, *Controversies in Body Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2008), 134.

²⁴ A. Doucet and N. S. Mauthner, "Feminist methodologies and epistemologies," in *21st Century Sociology: A Reference Handbook*, eds. Clifton D. Bryant and Dennis L. Peck (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2007), 40.

²⁵ Chris Maunder, "Mary in the New Testament and Apocrypha," in *Mary: The Complete Resource*, ed. Sarah Jane Boss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 15-16.

²⁶ Maunder, *Mary*, 15.

A primary defining guide of feminist theological scholarship is an emphasis on understanding women's experiences,²⁷ especially as it pertains to women in the biblical text.²⁸ McGaughey defines experience as 'a set of convictions with respect to what we consider to be the truth of reality past, present and future [...] Experience is important with respect to our truth claims not because of its particular content but because of its universal structure.'²⁹ Therefore, experience is not solely defined by a momentary occurrence, rather it is the cumulative expression of one's reality, which an occurrence may feed into.

Ruether articulates the importance of integrating women's experience into theological scholarship to overcome what she sees as a primarily male led theological tradition. Ruether argues, 'The uniqueness of feminist theology lies not in its use of the criterion of experience but rather in its use of women's experience, which has been almost entirely shut out of theological reflection in the past. Thus, the use of women's experience in feminist theology explodes as a critical force, exposing classical theology, including its codified traditions, as based on male experience rather than on universal human experience.'³⁰

The foundational principles of feminist theology as envisioned by Ruether are therefore inclusive of all humanity. Women's experiences are valued for the integrated role they play in a re-demarcation of an inclusive human experience. Following the feminist tradition my research gives a prominent place to the validity of experience in grounding my hermeneutics in Mary's experience. Hence through approaching Mary, I acknowledge women's experiences in anticipation of the end of gendered inequality and as an 'appeal to the future'³¹ advancing towards an equal value appraisal of universal human experience.

A further feature uncommon in most theological disciplines is the incorporation of autoethnographic narration, which is common throughout feminist work.³² This

²⁷ Experience-based theological practices have developed from the broader feminist Standpoint Theory. See Dorothy E. Smith. *The Everyday World As Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (Lebanon: University Press of New England, 1987); Experience is further applied to an examination of all marginalised groups by Patricia Hill Collins. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000). Collins work is credited as producing a significant shift in feminist literature towards the inclusion of all marginalised experiences; For a collection of essays by the founders of Standpoint Theory see Sandra G. Harding. *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004).

²⁸ Kamitsuka, *Feminist*, 9.

²⁹ Douglas R. McGaughey, *Religion before Dogma: Groundwork in Practical Theology* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 75.

³⁰ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 13.

³¹ Letty M. Russell, *Household of Freedom: Authority in Feminist Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 18.

³² Tony E. Adams, Carolyn Ellis, and Stacy Holman Jones, "Autoethnography," in *The International Encyclopaedia of Communication Research Methods*, eds. J. Matthes, C.S. Davis, and R.F. Potter (Wiley Online Library, 2017), 1-11.

autoethnographic method places value on the experience of the researcher and is useful as a contextual framework and as a reflexive practice.³³ As the field of autoethnographic research is a relatively new and rapidly evolving methodology, I have chosen to follow the methodology presented by Chang, specifically focusing on the use of personal stories. Chang states, 'Personal stories become vehicles for social critiques through which readers gain understandings of autoethnographers' social realities and of the social forces contextualizing their experiences.'³⁴ Following this autoethnographic method, I have included personal narration throughout my work. I acknowledge that narrative insertions cause an ebb and flow between high and low academic tonality, however, they are employed intentionally to stylistically mirror other contemporary feminist work. I am particularly inspired by the narrative introduction provided by Barr in *The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel Truth*, and I seek to emulate the openness and vulnerability she portrays.³⁵ I diverge from Barr in that I include a number of small personal examples in my research. Furthermore, in recognition of the established writing styles of numerous feminist theologians, I have often employed the first-person perspective throughout my study. In doing so I take ownership of my place as the researcher of this piece of work and the benefits and limitations this entails.

Additionally, feminist scholars embrace the subjectivity of knowledge representing an inherently interpretivist philosophy, determining that methodologies centred on source work are predominant within the discipline.³⁶ This research exhibits an interpretivist philosophy, similarly, birthed out of a subjective understanding of reality which enables a sympathetic reimagining of Mary's consent.³⁷ Accordingly, as it is suitable for this research topic a predominantly source-based study has been undertaken.³⁸ To maximise the depth of this study, sources will not be limited to feminist scholarship; instead, sources from a range of theological disciplines will be analysed from the feminist perspective. As such, within this research, philosophical elements will also be considered allowing for a philosophical

³³ Jan Berry, "Writing the Self: Using the Self in Feminist Theological Research," in *Researching Female Faith: Qualitative Research Methods: Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology*, eds. N. Slee, F. Porter, and A. Phillips (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 203-216.

³⁴ Heewong Chang, "Individual and Collaborative Autoethnography as Method: A Social Scientist's Perspective," in *Handbook of Autoethnography*, ed. Stacy Holman Jones, Tony E. Adams, and Carolyn Ellis (New York: Routledge, 2013), 109.

³⁵ Beth Allison Barr, *The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel Truth* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2021), 1-10.

³⁶ Anne Phillips, "Introduction," in *Researching Female Faith: Qualitative Research Methods*, 1st ed., eds. Nicola Slee, Fran Porter, and Anne Phillips (London: Routledge, 2017), 5.

³⁷ G. G. Jansen and D. Rae Davis, "Honoring Voice and Visibility: Sensitive-Topic Research and Feminist Interpretive Inquiry," *Affilia* 13, no. 3 (1998): 289-311, DOI: 10.1177/088610999801300303.

³⁸ Raymond M. Lee, *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics* (London: Sage, 1993), 15.

consideration of autonomy to take place within a theological framework. Interdisciplinary study as demonstrated within my research is a celebrated feature within feminist theology.³⁹

Finally, upon entering an area of research that is gendered in its consideration I acknowledge that definitions of gender are evolving.⁴⁰ Being imprisoned in many ways by the limitations of existing language structures, the binary language of female and male, man and woman, will be used throughout this work.⁴¹ However, in terms of the lived experience of women, a binary representation of gender has often been lamented in feminist theology. Arguably, gendered language is problematic and could be conceived as dangerous in that it isolates experience far more than it includes.⁴² I recognise that utilising binary gender terms represents a simplification of gender and what constitutes a female body is nuanced. Isherwood and Stuart rightly caution that any discussion surrounding the female experience is only a 'partial knowing since we do not experience what it is for all women to have and be judged through the possession of their particular body.'⁴³ I approach this research as a cis-gendered woman, and I recognise my understanding of womanhood has natural boundaries consistent with my personal experience of womanhood.

Within my own experience as a woman, I have personally encountered numerous instances of discrimination and alienation due to my gender in the Christian community and beyond. Perhaps many of these instances could be viewed as seemingly insignificant, such as being told I look tired or unwell by male colleagues when I choose not to wear makeup, but many have been overtly insidious. I still remember the moment I was informed by Church eldership that I would be allowed to preach only while I remained an unmarried virgin. I have bled through my trousers when I have been refused breaks to seek out sanitary products. I have been groped and leered at on public transport. I have been paid less than my male counterparts whom I worked with daily. My experiences are far from uncommon. Each woman that I have engaged with throughout my life has had similar stories of her own, and she has been shaped by them.

³⁹ See Kate Conway-Turner, Suzanne Cherrin, Kathleen Doherty Turkel, and Jessica Schiffman (eds.), *Women's Studies in Transition: The Pursuit of Interdisciplinarity* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998).

⁴⁰ For further discussion on gender see L. A. Gilbert, J. A. Waldroop, & C. J., Deutsch. "Masculine and Feminine Stereotypes and Adjustment: A Reanalysis," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 5, no. 5 (1981): 790-794; and D. Blum. "The Gender Blur," *Utne Reader*, October 29, 2007.

⁴¹ A full gender study falls outside of the scope of this research and therefore will not be undertaken.

⁴² Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1993), 263.

⁴³ Lisa Isherwood and Elizabeth Stuart, *Introducing Body Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 9.

From small instances to large, I recognise that there is often an unspoken weight that comes with being a woman. When I consider the weight that is carried by women and I look outward to the numerous injustices women face globally, I am deeply grieved. The term that I apply to this feeling of grief, of weight, and injustice is "gender grief." As such, I experience gender grief when I consider the inequalities women face, and I experienced a similar gender grief in approaching certain Mariological representations.

I recognise, therefore, that my personal gender grief has shaped this research both at its inception and during the research journey as I engaged with Mariological images. This influence can be seen as both positive and negative. For example, I am more inclined to be highly critical of theological scholarship that appears to be androcentric, even though it may have been consistent with cultural views at the time. However, by critiquing these views, I would argue that the pervasive, yet often unrecognised, historical roots of gender grief can be revealed. I acknowledge, therefore, that within myself as a researcher, and at the core of this work, is the desire to address perceived gender injustices, which has shaped the way in which I engage with sources.

In summary, although no one standard feminist theological methodology exists, my research offers a synthesis of key feminist methods portrayed across the breadth of feminist research. At the centre of this interpretivist research lies experience, which includes the usage of autoethnographic features. Ultimately, this research is formed and guided by women's experiences with the goal of empowerment.

Chapter 3: Daly's Representations of Mary

3.1 Mary: The Model for All Women

Mary Daly is a key feminist scholar who widely analyses Mary's experience throughout her scholarship. Daly's work has been highly influential in the development of contemporary feminism and as such it can be reasoned that her views on Mary will be similarly influential.⁴⁴ Daly's first published work is *The Church and the Second Sex*.⁴⁵ At the time of publication, Daly remained a practising Roman Catholic. This work applies Simone De Beauvoir's philosophical work in *The Second Sex* towards an exploration of women's experiences in the Church. Utilising De Beauvoir's ideology, Daly asks the question 'Why do Christian traditions

⁴⁴ Marilyn Frye and Sarah Lucia Hoagland, "Introduction," in *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Daly*, eds. Sarah Lucia Hoagland and Marilyn Frye (University Park: Penn State Press, 2010), 1-26.

⁴⁵ Daly, *Church*.

and practices conspire together to oppress women and to accord them second-class status in the church?⁴⁶ Hence in the work, she outlines the development of a subordinate view of women in the Church through biblical text and tradition. Perhaps in keeping with her personal faith, Daly's representation of Mary in the original publication of this work is by far the most moderate of her writings. Daly recognises that in Catholicism in particular, Mary becomes 'the model of all women,'⁴⁷ and as such Daly labels Mary as 'the Eternal woman'⁴⁸ In fact, Daly argues that a submissive identity has been placed upon all women. Indeed, the eternal model for woman Daly establishes through Mary is a womankind which is 'passive, abject, relative and irrelevant.'⁴⁹ This imaging of a passive female gender is cumulative, established first in Daly's exploration of the Patristic Period.⁵⁰ She further notes the link made by the Early Church Fathers between Eve and Mary, and through this comparison Daly suggests all female bodies are labelled as sinful.⁵¹ Furthermore, Daly argues that the establishment of an inferior view of womanhood relegates all women in the Church to the role of submissive motherhood.⁵² Hence, in Daly's understanding Mary is not portrayed as an active agent. Daly sees in Mary the limitation of all women as a representative of submission.

Furthermore, Daly recognises that Mary is not seen as an autonomous agent, but in Catholicism she is represented primarily in her relation to Christ. She interprets this connection to Christ as creating a relationship in which Mary is 'hopelessly inferior.'⁵³ Hence, in regard to the ongoing relational dynamic 'Submission and self-effacement are her lot.'⁵⁴ Mary's intrinsic relational positioning is therefore perpetually one of submission first demonstrated in the Annunciation and continued into her inferior status to her divine son. Daly places greater emphasis on submission as attributed to gender as opposed to divine authority; however, this may be a result of the overtly masculine image she sees attributed to God. In this case, the divine and male agent are synonymous.⁵⁵ Mary as a woman is inferior to the male God, and man as the human image of the male God, is superior to woman.

⁴⁶ Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex: With the Feminist Postchristian Introduction and New Archaic Afterwords by the Author* (Boston: Beacon Press Ltd, 1985), 5.

⁴⁷ Daly, *Church*, 157; See also J. Lenore Wright, *Athena to Barbie: Bodies, Archetypes, and Women's Search for Self* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2021), 7.

⁴⁸ Daly, *Second*, 170.

⁴⁹ Daly, *Second*, 170.

⁵⁰ Daly, *Church*, 85-90; See also Ruether, *Sexism*, 18-19.

⁵¹ Daly, *Church*, 86-88.

⁵² Daly, *Church*, 110-116; See also Hampson, *After*, 175-176.

⁵³ Daly, *Church*, 162.

⁵⁴ Daly, *Church*, 163.

⁵⁵ Daly, *Second*, 38.

In summary, Daly sees mirrored in Mary the negative and submissive ideologies placed against women throughout Church history. In this way, Mary is used in Daly's estimation to reinforce an inferior and submissive position of women in relation to men. I find Daly's proposition to be compelling in terms of how she links a submissive Mary to a submissive gender identity. I will therefore explore this link further to consider the potential problems for agency that Mary as a model for all women presents.

3.1.1 *Mary as a Female Archetype*

As indicated by Daly's recognition of Mary as a model for all women,⁵⁶ a unifying factor amongst feminist theology from both Roman Catholic and Protestant denominational backgrounds is that historically both recognise the power of the Marian image.⁵⁷ Subsequently, Wright defines Mary as a female archetype.⁵⁸ The prominence of this status and the significance it attributes to Mary is defined by Wright as follows, 'Archetypal ideals weigh heavily in women's search for self. Female archetypes produce idealised standards of womanhood that discipline the body and shape the mind. Archetypal ideals also weigh heavily in religion, politics, society, economics, and ultimately, in the status of women themselves.'⁵⁹ By affording Mary the status of an archetype the power of her influence extends beyond her personal experience and into the sphere of others. Therefore, Mary can be associated with the production of female-gendered ideals, both within the individual and societally.

There are two streams of negative feminist criticism regarding this archetypal role. From Gray's perspective, Mary has been glorified and her body afforded unique graces to the extent that she is essentially superhuman and as an icon, she is 'an impossible one for ordinary women to follow.'⁶⁰ Mary in this perspective represents an image of womanhood that could never be attained, with possibly devastating impacts on an individual's view of self. On a communal level, all women will fail to meet the standard of womanhood set by Mary amounting to the perceived failure of the gender. This perceived failure holds the potential of being used against women as a method of gender shaming, which in itself is a method of gender oppression.⁶¹ Alternatively, Wright argues that Mary is not representative of a superhuman but rather 'Mary represents a theology of repressed female subjectivity, a

⁵⁶ Daly, *Church*, 157.

⁵⁷ Storkey, "Significance," 188.

⁵⁸ Wright, *Athena*, 7.

⁵⁹ Wright, *Athena*, 7.

⁶⁰ Mary C. Gray, "Reclaiming Mary: A Task for Feminist Theology," *Theological Trends*, The Way 29 (1989): 335.

⁶¹ Clara Fischer, "Gender and the Politics of Shame: A Twenty-First-Century Feminist Shame Theory," *Hypatia* 33, no. 3 (2018): 371-383, DOI: 10.1111/hypa.12431.

theology that is “unacceptable in its sexism, scapegoating female sexuality for sin and death.”⁶² The outcome of this argument is ultimately the same, Mary is equated with female repression. Neither expression of feminist criticism is kind to the ongoing influence Mary holds. Beattie, for example, situates the locus of this difficulty in the prevalent masculinity of theology, identifying the Marian archetype as primarily a male construct. Beattie argues, ‘The problem for women seeking to interpret their lives in symbolic engagement with the Marian tradition is that it has been constructed almost exclusively according to masculine projections and desires.’⁶³ Indeed, interpreting Mary as a manifestation of masculine desires is indicative of the image of Mary as a Marionette in Daly’s subsequent work, which I will now examine.

3.2 Mary: The Marionette

Around the time of the publication of her second book *Beyond God the Father*,⁶⁴ in 1973, Daly disavowed Catholicism.⁶⁵ In line with her personal faith journey, this work contains an extremely critical view of Roman Catholicism. Within this work, she further develops the concept of Mary as a model woman.⁶⁶ However, Daly does so by considering how the Marian image has been controlled. Daly dubs Mary as ‘the Marionette.’⁶⁷ This Dalian image represents a harsh critique of the manner in which Daly sees Mariology used by the Roman Catholic Church. Daly’s discourse on the subject can effectively be summarised as follows, ‘Especially in its periods of greatest desperation it has tried to capture female presence and power in a symbol, *using* this to captivate the psyches of women and men, mesmerizing them, binding them in unquestioning loyalty to itself. For is not the owner of the Marionette that is so attractive to the masses, casting its spell upon them, luring them into the churchly fathers’ suffocating embrace?’⁶⁸

The Marionette that is created from this symbol is owned and performs at its master’s bidding. This puppet does not stand through her own actions, instead, her body and choice are manipulated by strings. She is not free to move or choose as she wills. Without these strings, she will fall. Although a puppet’s actions may seem from afar to be her own, they are derived through the choices of the hidden but true acting agent, the puppet master. For Daly,

⁶² Wright, *Athena*, footnote 10, 60.

⁶³ Beattie, “Woman,” 60.

⁶⁴ Daly, *Beyond*.

⁶⁵ Elizabeth Hedrick, “The Early Career of Mary Daly: A Retrospective,” *Feminist Studies* 39, no. 2 (2013): 461.

⁶⁶ Daly, *Beyond*, 81-90.

⁶⁷ Daly, *Beyond*, 90.

⁶⁸ Daly, *Beyond*, 90.

the Roman Catholic Church is the puppet master.⁶⁹ Mary's choices are not her own, nor is her body and she is used to idealise subservient womanhood. The point to note, here, is that Daly's likening of Mary to a Marionette draws significant focus to how Mariology is being directed through external forces and contrivances.

3.2.1 Mariology: Feminist Perspective

A key distinction to be acknowledged is that a vast divide exists between the textual Mary and Mariology. As Pelikan aptly states, 'By one of the most dramatic reversals in the history of ideas, this humble peasant girl from Nazareth has been made the subject of some of the most sublime and even extravagant theological speculation ever thought up.'⁷⁰ When we turn to scripture Mary is shockingly inconspicuous within the biblical text compared to the grandeur of Mariology.⁷¹ De Chirico notes that Paul 'does not even mention her by name. The only anonymous reference is an allusion to the 'woman' in Galatians 4:4.'⁷²

On the contrary, in terms of Mariology, I am reminded of Simone de Beauvoir's famous adage, "Women are made, not born."⁷³ I would argue there is no woman in the course of religious history to whom this applies more in terms of power and personhood than Mary. Part of the challenge in Mariology from a feminist perspective is that it does not originate from a singular source. Instead, it is the summation of twenty centuries of theological exposition and ideation.⁷⁴ As Gallagher Elkins comments, Mary 'is both an idealised figure and an incredibly flexible one.'⁷⁵ McKenzie is more severe, contending that 'Faith in the Mary of the traditional Christian devotion is faith in something that is not true.'⁷⁶ Representing the feminist perspective on Mariological origins Maeckelberghe likens the Marian image to a 'patchwork quilt,' each century adding another patch of cloth.⁷⁷ Importantly, it is against this carefully formatted 'patchwork quilt,' that the bulk of negative feminist criticism occurs, not the textual Mary. Much like a quilt, Hamington argues you find blended together in Mariology

⁶⁹ Daly, *Beyond*, 88-90.

⁷⁰ Pelikan, *Mary*, 221.

⁷¹ Beverly Gaventa, *Mary: Glimpses of the Mother of Jesus* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 100.

⁷² Leonardo De Chirico, *A Christian's Pocket Guide to Mary: Mother of God?* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 2017), 15.

⁷³Quote is 'On ne naît pas femme, on le devient,' Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 267. The translation is my own.

⁷⁴ Pelikan, *Mary*, 215.

⁷⁵ Kathleen Gallagher Elkins, *Mary, Mother of Martyrs: How Motherhood Became Self-Sacrifice in Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Feminist Studies in Religion Books, 2018), 2.

⁷⁶ John McKenzie, "The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament," in *Concilium: Mary in the Churches*, eds. Hans Kung and Jurgen Moltmann, no. 168 (1983): 9.

⁷⁷ Els Maeckelberghe, *Desperately Seeking Mary: A Feminist Appropriation of a Traditional Religious Symbol* (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing, 1991), 89-91.

a mixture of theological justifications, infallible papal pronouncements, and the devotional faith of the laity.⁷⁸ As such, for Hamington, the Mary of Mariology is a ‘constructed reality.’⁷⁹ Interestingly, in the realm of the arts, Verdon sees Mary as a blend of Scripture and imagination.⁸⁰ I would argue manufactured Mariology raises such strong concerns within the field of feminist theological studies because constructed, flexible, or even imaginative formation allows for an image to be shaped as per the image user’s needs. Whilst such mercurialism does not necessarily require the image user to have a negative intent, manipulation in itself holds inherent risk.

3.2.2 Mariology: Roman Catholic Perspective

From a Roman Catholic perspective, the shaping of Mary’s image is justified through a framework of principles which guide formation. De Chirico, for instance, provides a concise summation of the four guiding Mariological principles within Roman Catholicism as defined by Roschini.⁸¹ These are the principles of singularity, fittingness, eminence, and analogy to Christ.⁸² Roschini’s four Mariological principles can be applied towards a defence of the major Catholic dogmas of Mary - Divine Maternity, the Immaculate Conception, Perpetual Virginity, and Mary’s Assumption. These four principles provide a Catholic rationale as to why Mariology has developed beyond the biblical character of Mary.

Although four principles are given, of particular importance to the development of Mariology is her analogy to Christ. Thus, the Catholic Mariologist, Bur, summarises, ‘As the great doctors of the Middle Ages said: “Do you want to know who this mother is? Ask first of all, who is this Son” [...] Mary’s divine predestination to become the mother of Christ is correlative to the eternal predestination of the Son of God incarnate in Mary for our salvation.’⁸³ Similarly, De Chirico aptly recognises, ‘a kind of automatism was introduced and eventually established, whereby all that can be said of Christ should find an analogy with Mary.’⁸⁴ This analogy was particularly criticised by the Women’s Liberation Movement as it was heavily emphasised within Vatican II. In discussing Vatican II Gray states, ‘Mary is the

⁷⁸ Hamington, *Mary*, 25.

⁷⁹ Hamington, *Mary*, 25.

⁸⁰ Timothy Verdon, Melissa R. Katz, Amy Goodrich Remensnyder, and Miri Rubin, *Picturing Mary: Woman, Mother, Idea* (New York: Scala Arts Publishers, 2014), 17.

⁸¹ Roschini was one of the preeminent Roman Catholic authorities in the field of Mariology throughout the twentieth century. His four volume Mariology written in Latin, *Il Capolavoro di Dio*, is thought by many to be unrivalled in its comprehensiveness. De Chirico provides a concise summation of Roschini’s main principles.

⁸² De Chirico, *Christian’s*, 30-35.

⁸³ Jacques Bur, *How to Understand the Virgin Mary*, translated by John Bowen and Margaret Lydamore (London: SCM Press, 1994), 6.

⁸⁴ De Chirico, *Christian’s*, 25.

woman in the service of others-of God, Christ, the Church, redemption- and the ultimate meaning of history. She has no theological meaning of her own [...] As women we know how harmful this interpretation has been for us. As the inferior 'other', so well described by Simone de Beauvoir, autonomous personhood has been beyond our grasp and Mary has been used to justify this view.⁸⁵ Hence from a feminist perspective, Mary as a human agent is not served by this doctrine and effectively becomes doubly subservient to both father and son. If this interpretation is to be abided by all women, then through Mary all women share this subservience.

Therefore, the question remains as to whether Catholic formative principles have evolved through a natural genesis or if they have been manipulated to create a Marian image that serves and directs a specific agenda much like the strings of Daly's Marionette. The accusation that then stands is that the Marian image that has been constructed denies, in and through Mary, autonomous agency.

3.2.3 Implications of Constructed Mariology

Furthermore, from a feminist perspective it can be argued that if Mariology is taken as a male construct of an archetypal woman, what is suggested through Daly's work is that there exists a desire to reinforce a repressed female community within the broader Church. As with Mary, this female community can then be both directed and controlled in accordance with male desire. Practically speaking, this could well be reflected in debates surrounding women's roles in ministry and Church leadership.⁸⁶ Control is of course in direct opposition to feminist philosophies. Ackermann provides a clear rejection of such control, she argues that 'Theologically speaking, whatever diminishes or denies the full humanity of women must be presumed not to reflect the divine or authentic relation to the divine, or to reflect the authentic nature of things, or to be the message or work of an authentic redeemer or a community of redemption.'⁸⁷ Perhaps the feminist accusation does indeed stand that, 'The Church decided what kind of Mary it wanted and chose in the end a woman-denying Mary.'⁸⁸ As such, traditional Mariology should be denied, as Ackermann suggests, where it is used to portray inauthentic representations of womanhood. In conclusion, Mary as a female

⁸⁵ Gray, "Reclaiming", 334.

⁸⁶ Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Should Women Want Women Priests or Women-Church?" *Feminist Theology* 20, no. 1 (2011): 63–72, DOI: 10.1177/0966735011411814; G. Grandy and S. Mavin, "Informal and Socially Situated Learning: Gendered Practices and Becoming Women Church Leaders," *Gender in Management* 35, no. 1 (2020): 61-75, DOI: 10.1108/GM-03-2019-0041.

⁸⁷ D. Ackermann, "Rosemary Radford Ruether: Themes from a Feminist Liberation Story," *Scriptura* 97 (2008): 40, DOI: 10.7833/97-0-712; Note this is derived from a summation of Ruether, *Sexism*, 18-19.

⁸⁸ Storkey, "Significance," 191.

archetype and how this imaging has been used as a controlling force are both powerful concepts which will guide this research further.

Chapter 4: Autonomy as a Component of Consent

4.1 Identifying Components of Consent: Autonomy

As Daly's Marian images have shown, Mariology is traditionally a male construct, which raises concerns that perceptions of her consent have been moulded in a similar manner. As such, in forming a feminist consideration of consent I will look beyond theological definitions, and instead adopt an ethical definition of consent. Beauchamp, a primary scholar in the development of autonomous agency in consent ethics, argues that consent cannot be reduced to merely permission giving.⁸⁹ Instead, he defines consent as being composed of both *autonomous choice* and *voluntariness*.⁹⁰ I will adopt this understanding of consent throughout my research as it has been instrumental in the development of contemporary consent ethics.

First, being led by Beauchamp's definition of consent I will consider Mary's autonomous choice. Choice denotes agency, and as such evaluating autonomous agency is a fundamental aspect of determining the potential for consent. Hence, when I speak in terms of Mary's autonomous agency this can be understood as corresponding to her individual consent. At its most basic definition, autonomous agency is Mary's capacity to exercise control over her life in terms of her direct personal agency.⁹¹ Capacity is understood here as the extent to which an agent has both the ability and freedom to act. Wright posits that for Mary the parameters for autonomous agency are not met. Wright argues, 'Mary is not a free and undefeated subject with her own inviolate agency and authority.'⁹² Therefore, a key consideration in terms of the Annunciation is the degree of freedom within Mary's choice.

4.2 Defining Autonomy

As defined by Nahmias, 'Autonomous agents, like autonomous nations, are able to govern themselves. They are not controlled by external forces or manipulated by outside agents. They set goals for themselves, establishing principles for their choices and actions, and they

⁸⁹ Beauchamp, "Autonomy," 57.

⁹⁰ Beauchamp, "Autonomy," 55.

⁹¹ Albert Bandura, "Social Cognitive Theory: An Agentic Perspective," *Annual Review of Psychology* 52, no. 1 (2001): 1, DOI: 10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.1.

⁹² Wright, *Athena*, footnote 10, 60.

are able to act in accord with those principles.⁹³ In accordance with Nahmias, the moral philosopher Wolf paints a similar picture of the autonomous agent. Wolf states that ‘Her choices emanate from her bare, free self, uncoerced by internal or external forces that would threaten to dictate her decisions.’⁹⁴ Hence there are clear parameters outlining autonomous agency, primarily a freedom of choice, influences which restrict choice limit the agent. If Mary is not free to act this violates Nahmias’ principles of autonomous agency and in so doing negates consent as defined by Beauchamp. It seems apt then to turn to a further philosophical consideration of autonomy.

While this study precludes a full investigation of the many branches of autonomy,⁹⁵ a common modern working definition of autonomy is indeed self-governance.⁹⁶ This definition of autonomy is typically taken to be Kantian in origin.⁹⁷ Within *Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals*⁹⁸ Kant posits that ‘Autonomy of the will is the property the will has of being a law unto itself (independently of every property belonging to the objects of volition).’⁹⁹ In simplified terms, Christman seeks to modernise the Kantian definition by explaining that ‘to be autonomous is to govern oneself, to be directed by considerations, desires, conditions, and characteristics that are not simply imposed externally upon one, but are part of what can somehow be considered one’s authentic self.’¹⁰⁰ Christman’s ‘authentic self’ parallels Kant’s ‘will,’ taken as such, self-governance can be understood to have occurred when action and internal desire align free from external influence.¹⁰¹ Of course, whether an agent can operate free from external forces is widely debated in philosophical discussions of autonomy.¹⁰² As such self-governance and considerations of the will of an agent particularly encourages a consideration of external influences which may act as restricting forces. The external influences Mary may have been subject to would by this definition have reduced her autonomous agency.

⁹³ E. Nahmias, "Autonomous Agency and Social Psychology," in *Cartographies of the Mind*, eds. M. Marraffa, M. D. Caro, and F. Ferretti (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 169, DOI: 10.1007/1-4020-5444-0_13.

⁹⁴ Susan Wolf, *Freedom within Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 63.

⁹⁵ For a comprehensive overview, especially of Kantian autonomy see J. B. Schneewind. *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁹⁶ Disciplines which apply an understanding of self-governance include bioethics, political, legal, medical and most social disciplines.

⁹⁷ This definition is often seen to have gained widespread appeal through John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). Rawls' work is often termed classical liberalism.

⁹⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by H.J. Paton (New York: Harper & Row, 1948).

⁹⁹ Kant, *Groundwork*, 108.

¹⁰⁰ John Christman, "Autonomy in Moral and Political Philosophy," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2020), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/autonomy-moral/>.

¹⁰¹ It is important in self-governance to differentiate autonomy from autarchy see: S.I. Benns. *A Theory of Freedom*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), chp. 8.

¹⁰² Schneewind, *Invention*, 212.

4.2.1 Criticisms of Autonomy: Individualism and Competitive Agency

Understanding self-governance as individualism has led to criticisms of autonomy within the church. For example, when Storkey presents an Evangelical feminist analysis of Mary's choice in the Annunciation she rejects individualism by stating that Mary 'does not respond to God by refusing to co-operate and choosing her own autonomy, but by faithfully committing herself to God's promise.'¹⁰³ Storkey thus establishes autonomy and a willingness to follow God as opposing forces. De Stigter similarly labels a construction of oppositional divine-human interaction as competitive agency.¹⁰⁴ What this competition suggests is that a form of agential interaction exists, which positions acting agents as binary opposing forces. Autonomy can only be possessed by one individual. Such a restriction heavily impinges on the autonomy of the other. Whether this is a false dichotomy can be further determined by considering if autonomy is solely limited to an understanding of individualism which requires the dominance of a singular acting agent.

The existence of strong criticism against self-governance should be acknowledged. For example, Gunton sees Kant's work, and subsequently the influence on society, as a byproduct of an overemphasised doctrine of the unknowability of God that has been perpetuated by the primacy of the Augustinian tradition in the West.¹⁰⁵ This criticism is supported by Green's analysis of Gunton's views on the *homoousion* in which he summarises 'The One is so emphasised that the Many are virtually made superfluous.'¹⁰⁶ However, in terms of societal implications, the doctrine of the unknowability of God could be held in tension with the aforementioned archetypal identity formation. If God as the primary archetype is seen to be separate within himself and separate from humanity, then humanity is denied an ontology formed out of the relationality intrinsic within the Godhead.¹⁰⁷ Such a severe denial of relationality could indeed perpetuate an identity of human individualism, which in turn could be projected into a broader individualistic social anthropology.

¹⁰³ Storkey, "Significance," 197.

¹⁰⁴ Christopher Paul De Stigter, "Conceiving Mary's Agency: Towards a Barthian Mariology," *Modern Theology* 39, no. 3 (2023): 390-408, DOI: 10.1111/moth.12834; Note this understanding of agency is reminiscent of Derrida's Deconstruction Theory which argues that in Western society people have a tendency to think and express themselves in binary opposites. In so doing one object becomes central, requiring the other to become marginalised. Arguably, a philosophy of binary opposites can later be seen to contribute towards a feminist interpretation of gender dynamics.

¹⁰⁵ Colin Gunton, "Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43, no. 1 (1990): 33-58, DOI: 10.1017/S0036930600039685.

¹⁰⁶ Bradley G. Green, *Colin Gunton and the Failure of Augustine: The Theology of Colin Gunton in the Light of Augustine* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Company, 2012), 3.

¹⁰⁷ To consider the importance of intimacy in identity formation see Elaine Storkey. *The Search for Intimacy* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996).

As follows, individualism would explain in part, a competitive understanding of agential interactions in the Annunciation. In a competitive divine-human encounter, each agent acts as an individual unknowable to the other, whose governance competes with the other. By definition, then, Storkey would be correct in her previous assumption that autonomy and following the will of God are not symbiotic. Mary would, in this understanding, be forced to relinquish all freedom and authority as an agent in order to accept God's governance. Either God is an agent, or Mary is an agent.

It is worth noting however that Hill argues that many perspectives on individualism display a lack of understanding of the Kantian moral ethic. Instead, Hill argues that 'Kantian autonomy is meant to be a crucial part of the moral point of view from which specific principles can be assessed, not an ideal of living independently from others.'¹⁰⁸ Hill, therefore, suggests that when individualism is understood as an intrinsic part of a moral ethic it is not distinct from community, as individualism is so often interpreted as being. Hill's view finds support from the biomedical ethicist O'Neill who also offers a complete rejection of an individualistic interpretation of Kantian autonomy.¹⁰⁹ However, Beauchamp systematically argues against O'Neill's interpretations of autonomy, where O'Neill seemingly seeks to divide autonomy and consent.¹¹⁰ Therefore, despite Hill's defence enough points have been raised to suggest that self-governance is problematic when taken as an individualistic attribute that divides the agent from all others. Considerable limitations are likely to exist if autonomy is viewed as an absolute state of individualism in competition with relationality.

4.2.2 *Alternative: Relational Autonomy*

Surprisingly perhaps is the vehemence of criticism that has been levied against an individualistic understanding of autonomy by feminist scholarship.¹¹¹ McLean argues that individualistic autonomy 'is most closely linked to what might be called "male" interests or behaviour; isolated, aggressive, confrontational and competitive. Women, on the other hand, are seen as more likely to be contextually aware and socially engaged.'¹¹² However, I would caution against this argumentation given the extreme binary gender stereotyping it entails. It is not helpful for feminist argumentation to deny one philosophy by endorsing destructive

¹⁰⁸ T. Hill, "Kantian autonomy and contemporary ideas of autonomy," in *Kant on Moral Autonomy*, ed. O. Sensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 15, DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511792489.003.

¹⁰⁹ Onora O'Neill, *Autonomy and Trust in Bioethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 83, DOI: 10.1017/cbo9780511606250.

¹¹⁰ Beauchamp, "Autonomy," 59-61.

¹¹¹ Marilyn Friedman, *Autonomy, Gender, Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 82.

¹¹² Sheila McLean, *Autonomy, Consent and the Law* (Abingdon: Routledge Cavendish, 2010), 25.

gender identities. Hence, the validity of individual autonomy should not be denied merely on the grounds that it is masculine.

Instead, what is more accurate is to acknowledge that humanity displays these behaviours within a social context and not in isolation as individualism could be argued to suggest. Social contextualisation is indicative of the scholarship of Nedelsky. In her estimation, autonomy needs to be reframed relationally because human beings possess an 'inherently social nature.'¹¹³ Relationality is further reflected by Knox in the field of psychotherapy, she claims that 'in relationships, agency is not just physical but social [...] we experience it through the impact and influence we have on other human beings.'¹¹⁴ Hence the relationality of human experience is a key differentiator of Nedelsky's scholarship and is sympathetic to Ruether's aforementioned universal human experience. Nedelsky further argues that 'there are no human beings in the absence of relations with others. We take our being in part from those relations.'¹¹⁵ Therefore, in Nedelsky's estimation social nature requires the individualistic language surrounding liberal autonomy to change to reflect the relationality of the self.¹¹⁶

Together Mackenzie and Stoljar built on the work of Nedelsky to reconfigure individual autonomy into a feminist model of autonomy they define as relational autonomy.¹¹⁷ Relational autonomy is inclusive of social reality and acknowledges its impact on an agent's choice. I would argue that this is helpful where relationality is seen to allow individualism and community to coexist while maintaining the integrity of each as separate agents. As Gray states 'relationships must respect two poles-the integrity and self-affirmation of the person, as well as that of interdependence and intersubjectivity.'¹¹⁸ As such the individual as self and the individual in a relational community coexist within the autonomous agent. Rather than presenting the individual and the community as opposing forces of agency, in other words, competitive agents, I would instead propose that what is being presented by relational autonomy is a model of cooperative agency. Indeed, a cooperative agency is highly

¹¹³ Jennifer Nedelsky, "Reconceiving Autonomy: Sources, Thoughts and Possibilities," *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 1, no. 7 (1989): 8.

¹¹⁴ Jean Knox, *Self-Agency in Psychotherapy: Attachment, Autonomy and Intimacy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011), 8.

¹¹⁵ Nedelsky, "Reconceiving," 9.

¹¹⁶ Nedelsky, "Reconceiving," 9; Mackenzie and Stoljar proposed Relational Autonomy is derived from this view of the relational self. For a foundational collection of feminist essays on Relational Autonomy see Catriona Mackenzie, and Natalie Stoljar. "Introduction: Autonomy Refigured," in *Relational Autonomy: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*, eds. Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar (Oxford University Press on Demand, 2000): 3-31.

¹¹⁷ Mackenzie, "Introduction," 3.

¹¹⁸ Gray, "Reclaiming," 336; See also A. Mason, "Personal Autonomy and Identification with a Community," in *Liberalism, Citizenship and Autonomy*, ed. D. Milligan and W. W. Miller (Aldershot: Avebury, 1992), 171-186.

significant to this project in that it does not negate Mary's agency from relationality with God and we are able to view the Annunciation as a 'non-competitive encounter between God and human.'¹¹⁹ If this encounter is cooperative, Mary's agency need not be diminished as God acts.

4.2.3 Alternative: Scaled Autonomy

A further danger of self-governance is if self-governance is viewed as an absolute state, as either governed or governing. This binary opposition is indicative of competitive states of being. Rather than speaking in terms of absolute states which entails the agent as being either autonomous or non-autonomous, I would suggest a more actionable model is seen in terms of a scaled approach to autonomy. Autonomy in this state is limited but not necessarily negated. This can be demonstrated through a modern stream of liberalism dubbed perfectionist liberalism which offers a palatable alternative to autonomy as an absolute competitive state. The main proponent of this stream, Raz, offers the following definition of autonomy, 'An autonomous agent or person is one who has the capacity to be or to become significantly autonomous at least to a minimal degree. Significant autonomy is a matter of degree. A person may be more or less autonomous. (Significantly) autonomous persons are those who can shape their life and determine its course. They are not merely rational agents who can choose between options after evaluating relevant information, but agents who can in addition adopt personal projects, develop relationships, and accept commitment to causes, through which their personal integrity and sense of dignity and self-respect are made concrete.'¹²⁰

Raz, therefore, allows for a capacity which is variable and subject to change. The agent can both lose and gain degrees of autonomy, as the person demonstrates a capability of determination. As such it can be concluded that agents exercise a variable capacity to act. In terms of Mary's choice, we can speak then in terms of degrees of consent as variable capacity allows for some areas of autonomy to be limited without capacity being entirely negated. Raz clarifies that 'the capacity for autonomy is a secondary sense of "autonomy,"' as he places 'ultimate value'¹²¹ on having an autonomous life. Perhaps then the exercising of capacity falls within that which Raz determines is of intrinsic value, that is, 'a sufficient range of acceptable options.'¹²²

¹¹⁹ De Stigter, "Conceiving," 398.

¹²⁰ Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 154.

¹²¹ Raz, *Morality*, 205.

¹²² Raz, *Morality*, 205.

Options also exist in terms of degrees. In this case, there are a range of intrinsic actions that can lead to a life of ultimate value, removing the requirement of a singular autonomous path, an agent may allow for a range of differing paths to be acceptable in order to reach that which is of 'ultimate value,' an autonomous life. As such, multiple paths that can be taken to circumvent external barriers. Whether Mary had a range of acceptable options or only one is a question of debate. Within this research a 'yes' and 'no' path would allow her to judge acceptability and lend significantly more autonomy to her agency in this model. Raz's understanding of capacity, therefore, allows for autonomy which does not exist as a fixed point of being but rather exists as a variable scale.

I would suggest then that scaled autonomy, if you will, more readily incorporates the nuances of human experience in that it recognises limitations placed on the agent by both self and circumstance. These limitations could otherwise be considered to be the external influences which entirely negate self-governance in a Kantian model. Thus, by removing autonomy as a fixed point of being, as either existing or not, and instead applying a gradient technique we may be more fully able to evaluate the nuances of Mary's choice beyond the opposing forces of competitive agency.¹²³

Moving forward autonomous agency will be seen as a state in which both self-governance and relationality are understood as acting forces within the agent. Agency will therefore be assessed in terms of competitive and non-competitive agency. Rather than negating all consent, external influences will be seen as limiting factors to autonomy. This will allow degrees of autonomous agency to be assessed on a scale.

¹²³ I would further posit that Raz seems to demonstrate that autonomous choice is not a fixed point temporally. Rather his work suggests the agent must display an ongoing commitment to the choice as well as the impact this choice has on the agent's self both individually and relationally. Therefore, to judge the scale of autonomy achieved the moment of choice cannot stand alone but acceptance must be seen as an ongoing process of determination. Practically speaking in the life of Christian faith this is exemplified by the difference between the moment of conversion and a lifelong commitment to discipleship. While the primary focus of this research is on the moment of choice and as such the temporal aspects of agency fall outside the scope of study, Mary's ongoing commitment could be judged in further research through a textual consideration of the Magnificat.

Chapter 5: Limiting Factors to Autonomous Agency

5.1 Gender Inequality

A potential significant limitation to Mary's autonomous agency, and the perception of said agency is that she is a woman.¹²⁴ Feminist theologians such as Ruether,¹²⁵ Schüssler Fiorenza,¹²⁶ and Barr¹²⁷ condemn wider theological scholarship and broad Christian practice for traditionally rooting God, and therefore humanness, in the male body alone. In her assessment of the impact of a male God, Romero in her analysis of a masculine God also presents a previously unseen source that demonstrates with poetic zeal the danger of a male God for women. 'As a symbol of God *His* maleness profoundly affects both our theological thinking and ecclesiastical practice; and thus our general social attitudes. In theological thinking the unconscious "syllogism" appears to run:

God is male

God has the right to dictate and demand (bully) obedience

Males share in this right with God.¹²⁸

As the above demonstrates a male God equates to a male humanness. As a male God is taken as having a right to demand obedience, male humans adopt this right. Hence, in feminist theological scholarship, it is argued that the female body and the female experience have been labelled as 'other.'¹²⁹ Therefore, women such as Mary are other, and it can be questioned if her obedience is demanded of her. To be other is by definition to stand apart from normative humanity and is in direct opposition to an inclusive 'universal human experience'¹³⁰ previously introduced by Ruether. In line with feminist philosophy, the roots of such othering should be rejected due to the dangers this presents to women.¹³¹

¹²⁴ I would note that not all men seek to be oppressors but rather they exist within an established system of gender oppression. For five reasons why men may seek to reject patriarchy see Raewyn W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), xiii.

¹²⁵ To further consider the historical effects of gender on theology see Rosemary Radford Ruether. *Women and Redemption: A Theological History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012).

¹²⁶ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 22.

¹²⁷ Barr, *Making*, 11-38.

¹²⁸ Joan Arnold Romero, "The Protestant Principle," in *Religion and Sexism: Images of Women In the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974), 319; Note this quote originates from an unpublished source written by an anonymous South African theologian titled "Towards a Theology of Sexual Politics." Romero uses this poetic source to frame her further scholarly debate.

¹²⁹ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship*, 260-261; I would add this should include the 'othering' of all bodies and experiences including sexuality, which do not conform to those of a cisgender heterosexual male.

¹³⁰ Ruether, *Sexism*, 13.

¹³¹ In my research both female and male bodies are held as equally normative representations of humanity. This is not to say the male body ceases to be normative, but rather that both the female and male bodies are equally normative representations of humanity. Neither is greater, both apply equally. However, this study will place a high level of emphasis on the female body. Although this may as a result appear

Personally, as a practising Christian woman, the arena in which I have experienced the most targeted gender-based persecution has been within the Church. I am not alone in expressing this lived experience.¹³² Goldberg, for one, argues that 'Scorn for the female in general and the female body, in particular, is a basic element in Christian practice and symbolism.'¹³³ In this regard, Mary's gendering as a woman is in itself a source of scorn. In this way, Mary's female gender can be seen to symbolically epitomise inequality in ecclesial gender ethics. In terms of female agency, then, if women are lesser this suggests that the male gender is higher. In being put this way, the male and female gender are often positioned as binary competitive forces within the Christian community.

The limitation of female autonomy as an expression of gender inequality within the Church is arguably an extension of a global anthropological trend. Barr argues that an androcentric culture is a historical norm in that 'A gender hierarchy in which women rank under men can be found in almost every era and among every people group.'¹³⁴ Barr's cultural analysis does not suggest that all anthropologies are patriarchal, rather, she suggests that androcentric anthropology is predominantly the human norm. The globalisation of cultural androcentricity can be confirmed when current anthropological trends are further considered.

The prevailing global inequality of gender is demonstrated through the United Nations *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. This global initiative which was unanimously adopted by member nations in 2015 consists of 17 Sustainable Development Goals which were adopted globally.¹³⁵ Each goal is seen to be a vital component of global development. Notably, Goal 5 relates entirely to achieving gender equality for women. This Goal insists that the empowerment of all women and girls is a basic human right, and it defines female autonomy as a key component of gender equality which it aims to see realised by 2030.¹³⁶

A diminished capacity to act as a result of gender inequality is demonstrated in areas such as sexuality and healthcare. For example, regarding access to healthcare, UNFPA statistics

preferential to the female body, this overemphasis is being utilised as a counterbalance to the much more prevalent expression of male humanity.

¹³² For example, see Fry, Alex DJ. *Gender Inequality in the Ordained Ministry of the Church of England: Examining Conservative Male Clergy Responses to Women Priests and Bishops* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2023).

¹³³ Naomi R. Goldberg, *Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 15.

¹³⁴ Barr, *Making*, 19.

¹³⁵ United Nations, "The Sustainable Development Agenda," Accessed October 20, 2022, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>.

¹³⁶ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," Accessed October 20, 2022, <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>.

indicate that 1 in 4 adult women are unable to make independent decisions regarding their own healthcare needs, requiring permission from a male counterpart.¹³⁷ In terms of consent in intercourse ‘looking at partnered women of reproductive age in 64 countries, show that 23 per cent are unable to say no to sex.’¹³⁸ However, according to the 2022 joint report between the UN Women, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and Women Count, the World is falling woefully short of gender equality being realised. Instead, they report that at the current rate of change, it will take 286 years to eliminate gender discriminatory legal practices. This failure includes such legal areas as reproductive rights and sexual violence, as such, there is a direct failure to legally protect and promote female consent.¹³⁹

In summary, gender inequality can severely limit an individual’s capacity to exercise autonomous agency and as such, consent. Hence, gender inequality can be seen to limit various aspects of women’s lives including their health, sexual safety, and even relational dynamics. Addressing gender inequality is crucial, then, for promoting consent and ensuring that all women have the autonomy and agency to make choices that reflect their own desires and security.

5.1.1 *Silencing the Female Gender*

Arguably, one of the significant impacts of gender inequality, especially for theological scholarship, is what Ruether describes as the silencing of the female narrative.¹⁴⁰ During the course of writing this research project I experienced my own silencing. I am reminded of a recent coffee-shop conversation between myself and two friends, we will call them Jack and Alice. Now bear in mind, both are mature, university-educated individuals; and as is wont to occur when one is pursuing further education, and amongst long-suffering friends, our conversation circled around to the thesis of my research. Alice, a migration specialist, was enthusiastic in her support.¹⁴¹ However, things soon took a surprising turn when Jack made somewhat of an inflammatory statement, “Don’t get me wrong” he said with a placating gesture to us both, “but I don’t see how your thesis is relevant.” I of course replied somewhat

¹³⁷ United Nations Population Fund, “State of world population 2022. ‘Seeing the Unseen.’ The case for action in the neglected crisis of unintended pregnancy,” eds. Ian McFarlane et al., 20, Accessed October 20, 2022, <https://www.unfpa.org/swp2022>.

¹³⁸ UNFPA, ‘Seeing,’ 20.

¹³⁹ United Nations Women, Women Count, and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. “Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2022,” 2, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2022>.

¹⁴⁰ Rosemary Radford Ruether, “The Feminist Critique in Religious Studies,” *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 64, no. 4 (1981): 388-402.

¹⁴¹ To consider consent as it pertains to migration see Elizabeth G. Ferris. “Abuse of power: Sexual Exploitation of Refugee Women and Girls.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 32, no. 3 (2007): 584-591.

indignantly, "Why not?!" "Because" he continued confidently, "Women are already equal with men, nobody questions that anymore." At this point Alice and I looked at each other and laughed (with some despair). Despite Alice and I going on to provide testimony of times when we had personally experienced gender-based oppression, he would not be dissuaded from his view. I believe that my friend's confidence in female equality whilst well intended was highly misplaced. His denial in itself serves to highlight a key feminist argument, the reality of women's experiences is often silenced. Although I do not believe my friend was deliberately malicious in his intention, Alice and I experienced the silencing of our voices. Despite demonstrating a narrative of inequality this was dismissed and the larger narrative did not change.

The silencing of women's voices in our conversation reflects the formation of male-dominant theological practices as demonstrated in numerous works by preeminent feminist scholars. Ruether argues within "Feminist Interpretation: A Method of Correlation,"¹⁴² that the female biblical narrative has been systematically repressed. She argues that through this repression the human experience has become synonymous with the male experience. As 'human' has become synonymous with 'male,' women's experiences are subsequently considered dangerous. This 'danger' has caused the exclusion of women from communal and religious memory, further denying women a place in their own identity formation. In this way, women have been ostracised from human understanding. Ruether argues this exclusion is ongoing and has harmed contemporary women and society. By her estimation not only are women's experiences trivialised but women's physical bodies as a whole are diminished.¹⁴³ Ruether's thought progression, much like my own experience, demonstrates that there has been a systematic silencing of women, and this correlation method suggests that the diminishing of women is a result. Gender inequalities cannot be overcome unless this silencing is addressed.

The symbolism of Mary, therefore, holds significance when considered in conjunction with the active voice of the female gender. It can be reasonably surmised that if women's experiences are silenced, Mary's experience as a woman may likewise have been silenced, or altered to mitigate the danger it could represent. Therefore the traditionally submissive and consenting image of Mary presented in Mariology may in fact be a false narrative. Causing a silencing of Mary's experience does not enable voluntary consent. Arguably, the truth of her consent cannot be known if Mary's experience is altered to enforce consent. As

¹⁴² Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Feminist Interpretation: A Method of Correlation," in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty M. Russell (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 111-124.

¹⁴³ Ruether, "Feminist," 111-124.

with Daly's image of the Marionette, a risk is that Mary's free expression of agency is diminished by this external control. Furthermore, it can reasonably be posited that a non-threatening submissive Mariology has been used in an ongoing role to silence a strong female narrative both in theology and in the wider Christian community.

5.1.2 Adaptive Preference Formation

I would posit that a constant emphasis on the validity of the male narrative alone is dangerous in terms of the potential effect this has on the capacity of a female agent to form and hold to their own unique narrative expression. The limitation to autonomous agency in this regard can be assessed in part by examining what Kluge terms as valuational competency.¹⁴⁴ Valuational competency requires an individual's values and ethics to be taken into account in the process of decision-making.¹⁴⁵ Hence the root of a problematic, if the value systems in place are set by a male-dominant narrative it is questionable how far a female agent deviates from cultural norms.

The sociologist Connell indicates that gender stereotypes which are held by men are unconsciously internalised by women as they are 'promoted through families, schools, mass media and other "agencies of socialisation."' ¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, an example of an 'agent of socialisation' is given to be a gender role model.¹⁴⁷ As Mary has previously been determined to be a female archetype in this study Connell's portrayal of unconscious internalisation provides argumentation for seeing Mariology in the role of an aggressor. Additionally, valuational competency comes into question when female agents lack awareness of the inequality they face. Therefore a further implication of unconscious internalisation is that gender ideologies are imposed on an individual without their active consent. Hence, as Rawls notes, female agents in an unaware state may have distorted perceptions of social situations, their own natural abilities, or even prejudices concerning what is considered good.¹⁴⁸

It is this lack of awareness that is most heavily criticised by feminist scholars, who caution that those who are oppressed may not recognise their oppression.¹⁴⁹ The social and political

¹⁴⁴ E.H. Kluge, "Competence, Capacity, and Informed Consent: Beyond the Cognitive-Competence Model," *Canadian Journal on Aging* 24, no. 3 (2005): 297, DOI: 10.1353/cja.2005.0077.

¹⁴⁵ Kluge, "Competence," 299.

¹⁴⁶ Connell, *Gender*, 34.

¹⁴⁷ Connell, *Gender*, 34-35.

¹⁴⁸ Rawls, *Theory*, 12.

¹⁴⁹ In discussing this topic with a colleague he shared with me that in his home town in Ethiopia, where he was raised, it is the expectation of women that they will be beaten by their husbands. He explained that physical violence against women is so much a part of his national culture that it is expected to occur within

philosopher Elster defines this non-recognition of oppression as an unconscious and nonautonomous process he labelled adaptive preference formation.¹⁵⁰ Stoljar summarises this term as indicating that 'choices and preferences are unconsciously accommodated to oppressive social conditions, and decisions of agents to adopt what may appear to be practices of gender oppression.'¹⁵¹ Maduro argues this point to the extreme and adaptive preference formation becomes a definite not possible consequence. Maduro asserts that 'Every subaltern, subordinated, oppressed group- even in its rebelliousness and resistance to oppression- tends to partly repeat and intimate the vision of the oppressor,'¹⁵² oppressive vision is reinstated by enacting a hyper-morality as the subordinate seeks to gain a moral high ground over their oppressors, this in effect perpetuates the judgements they themselves were subject to. Maduro roots the origins of his observations in the work of Freire, and indeed they can be seen to complement each other.

Freire comments extensively on the self-limitations adopted by those who have been oppressed in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.¹⁵³ Freire argues that those who undergo oppression, internalise the image of the oppressor. Once internalised the image of the oppressor is then adopted and propagated by the oppressed.¹⁵⁴ What we can see then through Freire is the potentially cyclical nature of oppression. When dominating values whether cultural or moral are internalised by the subordinate there is arguably a subconscious limitation placed on the subject's conscious agency, as such competency is compromised and in turn, the potential for autonomy is limited. In relation to Mary, she can be considered, then, in terms of both the oppressed and the oppressor. As the oppressed Mary undergoes one can ask if she has internalised a system of judgement which negates her ability to exercise autonomous choice. Mary as a female archetype, further perpetuates,

marital relationships. He stated that many wives view beatings as an expression of their husband's love and as such there is little call for this practice to change. An equivalent example is given by Nussbaum when describing the domestic violence experienced by disadvantaged women in India. See M.C. Nussbaum. "Adaptive Preferences and Women's Options," *Economics and Philosophy* 17 (2001): 67-88. For further consideration of physical abuses perpetrated by women on other women see Diana Tietjens Meyers, "Feminism and Women's Autonomy: The Challenge of Female Genital Cutting," *Metaphilosophy* 31, no. 5 (2000): 469-491.

¹⁵⁰ Jon Elster, *Sour Grapes: Studies in the Subversion of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 141-166.

¹⁵¹ Natalie Stoljar, "Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2022 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman, Accessed March 3, 2023, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2022/entries/feminism-autonomy/>; See also Natalie Stoljar, "Autonomy and Adaptive Preference Formation," in *Autonomy, Oppression, and Gender*, eds. Andrea Veltman and Mark Piper (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 227-252, DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199969104.003.0011.

¹⁵² Otto Maduro, "Once Again Liberating Theology? Towards a Latin American Liberation Theological Self-Criticism," in *Liberation Theology and Sexuality*, ed. Marcella Althaus-Reid (Norwich: SCM Press, 2009), 27.

¹⁵³ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2005).

¹⁵⁴ Freire, *Pedagogy*, 47.

and therefore causes to be internalised, male-engineered female stereotypes. In this way, Mary becomes the oppressor.

5.3 Submissive Gender: Case Study: Augustine

In terms of assessing Mary's womanhood as a limiting factor to the broader autonomous agency of the female gender, I am led to a brief consideration of the development of misogynistic anthropological ideologies. A summary of a feminist perspective on this topic is supplied by Ackermann who states that 'Patriarchal anthropology has come perilously close to seeing women as the cause of sin in the world. From ancient to modern times [...] run the threads of patriarchal thinking. Augustine, the classical source of such views on women, believed that the male alone possessed the image of God normatively.'¹⁵⁵ Ackermann's assessment follows the majority line of feminist thought, feminist theological scholarship has long argued that women have been denied full participation in *imago Dei*.¹⁵⁶ The summation of Ackermann indicates that this should be considered in conjunction with Augustine. This consideration will serve to later assess the modern effects of Patriarchal anthropology.

In much of his work, the systematic theologian Gunton holds to the influence of neoplatonism in the development of Western society.¹⁵⁷ Gunton in particular roots this influence in the writing of Augustine who he argues has been instrumental in the development of the Western church. For Gunton, misunderstandings in human identity are derived from a misunderstanding of God.¹⁵⁸ Providing a concise summation of this theme Green notes that,

'For Gunton, 'Augustine's attempt to fuse neoplatonic and Christian categories resulted in a dualism between the sensible and the intelligible, and between the material and the ideal, and in effect "neutralised" the concept of "relational being" which Gunton holds was "made possible by the *homoousion*" [...] Augustine's failure to appropriate the Nicene conceptual advance led to three key developments: (1) the concept of person was undermined. (2) The unity of God was stressed at the expense of plurality. Or, we might say, the One was gaining its victory over the Many [...] (3) Consistent with Augustine's Platonism, the material world was disparaged. Hence, the doctrine of creation was marginalised...'¹⁵⁹

Considering this summation, for Gunton, it is a failure to incorporate *homoousion* that has led to an image of the divine which lacks full cohesion of essence. This fracturing is then

¹⁵⁵ Ackermann, "Rosemary," 39.

¹⁵⁶ Isherwood, *Introducing*, 8-16.

¹⁵⁷ See for example Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 41-60, DOI: 10.1017/CBO9781139166546; and Colin Gunton, "The Trinity in Modern Theology," in *Companion Encyclopaedia of Theology* (London: Routledge, 2002), 953-973.

¹⁵⁸ Gunton, "Trinity," 953-973.

¹⁵⁹ Green, Colin, 4.

mimicked in a divided humanity and as such a confused understanding of what it means to be fully human as expressed through *imago Dei* within the doctrine of creation. Following this logical progression, as we consider the Marian image, we are led to consider what it is to be female, what it is to be human, and as such what we understand of the being of God. Feasibly, it is at this breaking point within our understanding of the divine that a competitive agency forms between female, male, and divine agents.

For the feminist theologian Gebara, the platonic anthropology visible in Augustine's work 'entails a deep separation men and women, that is, how in this division men are regarded as the thinking beings par excellence, the ones closest to the ideals of perfection, while women are seen as second-class beings, with little affinity for things of the spirit or thinking.'¹⁶⁰ Although not stated explicitly the separation Gebara seems to be referencing could be derived from *Timaeus* in which it is stated 'since human nature is two-fold, the superior sex is that which hereafter should be designated "man."¹⁶¹ Arguably, man does not refer to the broader understanding of humankind as it is further clarified that women are the reincarnation of men who have failed to live justly or well and were cowardly in their previous incarnate life.¹⁶² Split in this way Plato does indeed establish the male life as the most ideal form of existence and women are at the core of their nature flawed and failed human beings.

However, it should be acknowledged that Plato is mixed in his philosophies regarding women in Book V of *Republic* seemingly affording women equal nature to men in terms of allowing women guardianship of the state, music, gymnastics, and education following their natural aptitudes.¹⁶³ As *Timaeus* is a later work than *Republic* it is possible that Plato's views on women devolved into negative argumentation over time. Unfortunately, it is Plato's later thinking which seems to be most prevalent in the formation of Western ideologies. Gebara further argues that a platonic understanding of texts as seen through Augustine has created and propagated male-dominant culture and academic patterns which are still active in the value systems of both the Eastern and Western cultures.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ Ivone Gebara and Maria Clara Bingemer, *Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Poor* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1989), 1-2.

¹⁶¹ Plato, *Timaeus*, in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 9, trans. W.R.M. Lamb (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1925), 42a, urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0059.tlg031.perseus-eng1.

¹⁶² Plato, *Timaeus*, 42a-42d; 90-91a.

¹⁶³ Plato, *Republic*, in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vols. 5 & 6, trans. Paul Shorey (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1969), 5. 455d-456a; For a positive interpretation of Plato as a sexual egalitarian see Smith, Nicholas D. "Plato and Aristotle on the Nature of Women," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 21, no. 4 (1983): 467-478.

¹⁶⁴ Gebara, *Mary*, 4.

Børresen offers a somewhat kinder interpretation of Augustine. Initially, her interpretation agrees with Gunton and Gebara. She also holds that Augustine is a key thinker in the West and that his work holds a distinct dualistic neoplatonic influence. However, Børresen argues Augustine acknowledges a distinctly female body at creation which she views as a positive advancement in comparison to the genderless presexual states of being preferred by Clement of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa.¹⁶⁵ While Børresen recognises that Augustine places women in a subordinate context, she sees the mere recognition as a positive step towards a feminist reading of Gen 1:27. I would argue this is too generous on the basis of Elm's analysis of *De Genesi ad litteram*.¹⁶⁶ Even if a moderate interpretation of Augustine's *imago Dei* is taken, it should be tempered with the knowledge that in *De Genesi ad litteram* Augustine states clearly that Eve and therefore all women's reason for being is their subordinate and passive procreative function.¹⁶⁷ I would therefore suggest Augustine was not intentionally advancing the position of the female body, rather he was binding the role of women to procreation.

It appears that for Augustine, women are created to be mothers and that is all.¹⁶⁸ Augustine in centring the role of women on their procreative function may also be mirroring the biological functions outlined by Plato in *Timaeus*. In *Timaeus*, a woman 'is an indwelling creature desirous of childbearing.'¹⁶⁹ Similarly, as assessed by Ruether Augustine's delineation of the female body is 'not the image of God, but rather images the body as carnal and prone to sin. As female, even in the original creation in paradise, woman was created to be subject to the male in her sexual roles as wife and childbearer.'¹⁷⁰ Hence while Augustine may concede a female body, I would argue that he consistently enforces throughout his collected works the subordinate role of women limiting them to a reproductive function.¹⁷¹ Augustine, therefore, remains decidedly androcentric with a view of a male-dominant hierarchy as both normative and righteous.¹⁷² Alternatively, it can be recognised that

¹⁶⁵ Kari Elisabeth Børresen, "In Defence of Augustine: How 'Femina' Is 'Homo'," *Augustiniana* 40, no. 1 (1990): 413-415.

¹⁶⁶ Susanna Elm, "De Genesi Ad Litteram 9: The Creation of Eve," in *Augustinus De Genesi ad litteram* (Brill eBooks, 2021), 241-242, DOI: 10.30965/9783657791286_013.

¹⁶⁷ Augustine of Hippo, *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, in *Patristic Bible Commentary*, IX, 5, Accessed May 05, 2023, <https://sites.google.com/site/aquinasstudybible/home/genesis/augustine-s-unfinished-commentary-on-genesis>.

¹⁶⁸ See for example: Augustine, *Literal*, III; and Augustine, *Literal*, IX, 5.

¹⁶⁹ Plato, *Timaeus*, 91C.

¹⁷⁰ Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Sexism and Misogyny in the Christian Tradition: Liberating Alternatives," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 34 (2014): 85, DOI: 10.2307/24801355.

¹⁷¹ Augustine, *Anti-Pelagian*, in Elizabeth A. Clark, *St. Augustine on Marriage and Sexuality: Selections from the Fathers of the Church* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 42-70.

¹⁷² I would argue this commitment to the secondary status of women indicates an inclusion of Aristotelian philosophy, (especially in Augustine's marital role), as per *Politics* in which Aristotle states 'Again, as between the sexes, the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject.' Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. H. Rackham (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1944), 1.1254b.

Augustine acknowledges the role of women faith, however this always occurs within a domestic role.¹⁷³ Nonetheless, this faith is accorded to her in terms of complete submission to the will of God.¹⁷⁴

Moreover, how submission is interpreted depends largely on how this act is interpreted in terms of competitive agency. The competitive gender dynamics created in much of Augustine's writing are imposed by the subservient role he attributes to women. Such subservience indicates that there could be androcentric overtones in the relational dynamic that is created between Mary and God. Mary as female is mitigated to a lower expression of autonomous agency and therefore expected to submit to a dominant male God.

Furthermore, 'Mary's submission and obedience, her secondary (passive) work, operationalizes her individual performance of motherhood and serves to justify the disciplining of women's wills and bodies collectively: women must obey, submit, and keep silent.'¹⁷⁵ Mary's "choice" is then negated as her submission is not a function of autonomous agency but an expectation of a submissive gender role. Therefore, in light of the impact Augustine's work has on the Western Church, I would argue that for women like myself who exist in this sphere, the inheritance gained from Augustine is that of a submissive female gender identity as well as passive procreative function. From this genesis, the female gender as a whole is significantly limited in the scale of autonomy it can demonstrate.

I have now determined that, from a feminist perspective, Mary has helped ingrain the ideation that women hold a subservient gender role. What has been seen is that the formation of an imbalanced gender dynamic has limited Mary's capacity as a woman to exercise autonomous agency. Mary's establishment as a female archetype acts as a restrictive measure upon the female gender suppressing the free agency of women as a whole which has led to a number of gender based limitations being placed on her autonomy. As a woman Mary has been restricted. What has also begun to be considered is the danger that such an inequality poses to women, namely, the creation of power-based gender interaction.¹⁷⁶ As such, I will now consider these hazards to a further extent. Being praxis-led in intent, this research will also consider if Mary, as a figurehead of weakness and submission, has contributed to modern violence against the female gender.

¹⁷³ Augustine, in Clark, *Anti-Pelagian*, 42-70.

¹⁷⁴ Augustine, in Clark, *The Aesthetic Debates*, 62-63.

¹⁷⁵ Wright, *Athena*, 16.

¹⁷⁶ J. Hanmer, "Men, Power, and the Exploitation of Women," *Women's Studies International Forum* 13, no. 5 (1990): 443-456, DOI: 10.1016/0277-5395(90)90096-G.

Chapter 6: Results: Power and Violence

6.1 Gender, Power, and Violence

An extreme limitation to autonomy is seen through the external influence of coercion. 'Coercion is a form of power. To exercise coercion is to exercise power.'¹⁷⁷ In relation to the Marian narrative, there are distinct power structures at play during the Annunciation that could lend support to the view that Mary experiences a coercive influence. Mary is arguably subordinate in her humanity to the power inherently held by the angelic agent Gabriel and more importantly to the primary acting agent, God. This power structure could be used to legitimise a claim that coercion occurs. However, not all expressions of power are coercive, coercion exists where power and violence meet. 'Coercion entails the use of force or threats to compel or dispel a particular response. In addition to causing immediate pain, injury, fear, or death, coercion can have long-term physical, behavioral, or psychological consequences.'¹⁷⁸ Therefore, if force or threats were administered against Mary this equates to modern definitions of coercion. Arguably, the text does not explicitly depict any overt threat of violence or force.¹⁷⁹ However, it can be argued that when a submissive Mariology is read into the text, the likelihood of interpreting coercive interactions increases. Similarly, it is arguable that imposing a submissive gender identity onto women suggests a correlation between that gender role and male domination, force, and violence. Therefore, I will now explore the relationship between female gender, power-based gender interactions, and violence. Ultimately, considering such a link will aid in determining if the interaction between Mary and God could be classified as coercive.

Numerous feminist theories draw a direct correlation between oppression and the power relations between men and women.¹⁸⁰ Althaus-Reid and Isherwood suggest that power structures play a significant part in gender role formation.¹⁸¹ They argue that historically women and men are ascribed gender roles through a framework of power and significance. More specifically they propose men hold places of power and significance while women carry the burden of submissive gender roles.¹⁸² Furthermore, female submission is reflective

¹⁷⁷ H. J. McCloskey, "Coercion: Its Nature and Significance," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 18 (1980): 335, DOI: 10.1111/j.2041-6962.1980.tb01390.

¹⁷⁸ Evan Stark, *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 228.

¹⁷⁹ See Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 159; and Edgar W. Conrad, "The Annunciation of Birth and the Birth of the Messiah," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (1985): 662.

¹⁸⁰ For the historical development of feminist theories related to power see Connell, *Gender*, 23-40.

¹⁸¹ Althaus-Reid, *Controversies*, 22.

¹⁸² Althaus-Reid, *Controversies*, 22; and Hanmer, "Men," 443-456.

of the power-based sociological development undertaken by Connell. Connell notes that 'To sustain patriarchal power on a large scale requires the construction of a hypermasculine ideal of toughness and dominance.'¹⁸³ Connell finds that in power-based social interactions, women and men are separated into opposing and competitive categories. Competition is achieved 'by converting an average difference into a categorical difference- "men are stronger than women."¹⁸⁴ As such, the stereotype of physical strength is then used to justify power-based control.

Such strength based gender formation is echoed by the systematic theologian Macquarrie. He proposes power structures have formed through 'the law of the jungle,'¹⁸⁵ which 'gives the strong the right to dominate the weak.'¹⁸⁶ This anthropological development seemingly mirrors a Darwinian 'survival of the fittest.'¹⁸⁷ Macquarrie proposes an ontology that establishes a direct correlation between humanness and bodily strength. Women being physically weaker are deemed to be defective in their humanity and as such non-normative.¹⁸⁸ Therefore, a correlation is created wherein being powerful is equated to being human, and being human is equated to being male, while maintaining power legitimises domination. Power is seen then as a natural and rightful justification for the domination of the weak, the poor, and in this case women.

Empirical research conducted by Hearn further suggests the correlation between a gender-based power structure and a pattern of violent male-female relations. His study demonstrates that violence against women is consciously used by some males as a means of increasing and consolidating their own sense of power.¹⁸⁹ In light of 'the law of the jungle,' this lends support to the claim that violence against women is utilised by some men to promote their sense of humanness. Finding gender value through such blatant negative competition leads worrying credence to a gender differentiation given by Dworkin who suggests that 'men are distinguished from women by their commitment to do violence rather than be victimised by it.'¹⁹⁰ As violence is a coercive element, when it occurs against a woman her autonomous agency is significantly limited.

¹⁸³ Connell, *Gender*, 80.

¹⁸⁴ Connell, *Gender*, 80.

¹⁸⁵ John Macquarrie, *Mary for All Christians* (A&C Black, 2001), 11.

¹⁸⁶ Macquarrie, *Mary*, 11.

¹⁸⁷ This quote was first made by Spencer in *Principles of Biology*, 1864. However, it gained lasting notoriety when it was included by Darwin in the 5th edition of *On the Origin of Species*, 1869, and is largely attributed to Darwin.

¹⁸⁸ Macquarrie, *Mary*, 11.

¹⁸⁹ J. Hearn, *The Violences of Men: How Men Talk about and How Agencies Respond to Men's Violence to Women* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1998), chap. 7, DOI: 10.4135/9781446279069.

¹⁹⁰ Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography* (New York: Perigee, 1981), 53, cited by Andy Smith, "The Crucified One: Pornography of the Cross," in *Violence Against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook*, ed. Carol J. Adams and Marie M. Fortune (New York: Continuum, 1996).

The limitation to autonomy experienced by women in a powerless relational dynamic is demonstrated vividly through statistics related to domestic violence. According to Ciurria 'The operative notion of autonomy is first and foremost the ability to preserve one's own survival and safety, and secondly, the ability to pursue the primal goals of self-actualization and wellbeing.'¹⁹¹ This is in direct correlation to the work of Friedman who argues that domestic violence severely undermines autonomy in that the basic goals of safety and survival are eliminated.¹⁹² In Friedman's model aspects of autonomy can be both lost and gained, hence as violence increases autonomy decreases as increasing aspects of agency are lost.¹⁹³ Much like Raz, posited this suggests autonomous agency exists as a scale rather than a fixed point of being.¹⁹⁴ This indicates that the greater the violence enacted, the more an agent's safety and survival drive is compromised.

The constraining function of violence relates specifically to the Marian image due to the powerless gender function she seemingly embodies and promotes. Althaus-Reid condemns Mariology in this regard stating 'Mariology does play a role, for example, in episodes of domestic violence, when the women experience difficulty in asserting themselves over against a submissive role.'¹⁹⁵ I do not suggest that Mary herself promotes domestic violence, what I am proposing is that the submissive gender role that Mariology has promoted places women in a subservient role. When power-based gender dynamics are exercised there is a heightened risk of violence occurring against women. As has been demonstrated, this ideation is especially prevalent within Western ideologies. The coercive use of force against women is a global crisis that is only exacerbated by idealising female powerlessness.

6.1.1 Case Study: Domestic Violence

The reality of life faced by modern women is summarised eloquently by Maduro who states, 'the majority of the poor are women; the majority of women are poor; and the poorest among the poor are women. It has been said, albeit not as often as it should have been, that women and children are the majority of victims of violence, both domestic violence and war.'¹⁹⁶ The actuality of Maduro's statement as it relates to women is demonstrated by The World Health Organisation's *2022 World Health Statistics Report*. This report indicates that 26 per cent of

¹⁹¹ Michelle Ciurria, "The Loss of Autonomy in Abused Persons: Psychological, Moral, and Legal Dimensions," *Humanities* 7, no. 2 (2018): 48, Accessed July 26, 2023, DOI: 10.3390/h7020048.

¹⁹² Friedman, *Autonomy*, 141.

¹⁹³ Friedman, *Autonomy*, 150.

¹⁹⁴ Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 154.

¹⁹⁵ Althaus-Reid, *Controversies*, 65.

¹⁹⁶ Maduro, "Other," 25.

women aged 15 years and older have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate male partner at least once.¹⁹⁷ The WHO also indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in intimate partner violence far beyond 26 per cent.¹⁹⁸

Taking the United Kingdom as a case study, the Office of National Statistics (ONS) reports that 1 in 5 adults aged 16 years and over (10.4 million) have experienced domestic abuse, with over 70 per cent of these victims being female.¹⁹⁹ The Crimes Survey for England and Wales *2022 Annual Report* indicates a higher percentage with the victim being female in 74.1 per cent²⁰⁰ of domestic violence crimes. 1.7 million women in England and Wales experienced domestic abuse in 2022 alone.²⁰¹ Considering demographics of abuse survivors even more closely, the *2023 Annual Audit* conducted by leading UK charity Women's Aid, reports that of the women who have accessed their services 75.6 per cent of abuse survivors were between the ages of 21 and 45, and 63.2 per cent were White British.²⁰² This age demographic is typically seen as occupying the highest level of competency thereby demonstrating the highest capacity for self-governance.²⁰³ Hence, where domestic violence occurs adult women are diminished in practice far below their legally held status of individual sovereignty. These demographics also indicate that cultural framings which seek to relegate violence to "outsiders" are inherently false.²⁰⁴ These demographics suggest the problem of violence is innately ingrained within power-based gender structures which supersede national boundaries. As Stark summarises, 'Domestic violence will persist so long as sexual inequalities persist.'²⁰⁵

In summary, domestic violence restricts consent because it undermines the principles of autonomy, freedom, and capacity. Women who suffer domestic violence experience an

¹⁹⁷ World Health Organization, "World Health Statistics 2022: Monitoring Health for the SDGs Sustainable Development Goals," released May 19, 2022, viii, URL: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240051157>.

¹⁹⁸ World Health Organization, "World Health Statistics 2023: Monitoring Health for the SDGs Sustainable Development Goals," released May 19, 2023, 17-23, URL: <https://www.who.int/data/gho/publications/world-health-statistics>.

¹⁹⁹ Office for National Statistics (ONS), "Domestic Abuse Victim Characteristics, England and Wales: Year Ending March 2022," released November 25, 2022, URL: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2022>.

²⁰⁰ ONS, "Domestic."

²⁰¹ ONS, "Domestic."

²⁰² Women's Aid, *The Domestic Abuse Report 2023: The Annual Audit* (Bristol: Women's Aid, 2023), URL: <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/The-Domestic-Abuse-Report-2023-The-Annual-Audit-FINAL.pdf>.

²⁰³ In England and Wales through the *Mental Capacity Act*, c. 9, accessed February 11, 2023, URL: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/9/contents/enacted>.

²⁰⁴ Montoya, Celeste, and Lise Rolandsen Agustín, "The Othering of Domestic Violence: The EU and Cultural Framings of Violence against Women," *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 20, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 534-557, DOI: 10.1093/sp/jxt020.

²⁰⁵ Stark, *Coercive*, 8.

ultimate loss in their agency. To move towards a future of empowered consent, violence against women must end.

6.1.2 Case Study: Religious Violence

In terms of praxis, rather than standing apart from a global context, Barr suggests that within the broad Christian community regardless of denomination women are taught to be subordinate due to a dominating hierarchy centred on male power and control.²⁰⁶ Heggen also argues that religious beliefs specifically prevalent within the Evangelical Church directly contribute to the subjugation of women. Namely, that God intends that men dominate, and women submit.²⁰⁷ Where the Western church matches society in male-based power structure it makes sense then that violence against the female body will once again be a result. The negative practical outworking of this ideology in the Christian community is demonstrated by Wright who argues for a direct link between the idealisation of female obedience within the church and 'high incidences of sexual, emotional, and physical abuse by family members and clergy.'²⁰⁸

One example amongst many globally is the sexual abuse scandals that have occurred in the Southern Baptist Church (SBC) in the United States.²⁰⁹ In 1989 the Alsdurfs published *Battered into Submission*.²¹⁰ This empirical study offered a harrowing insight into domestic and sexual violence occurring against women within the Evangelical Church across the southern United States. The Alsdurfs site 'imbalanced teachings on male-female roles'²¹¹ as a contributing factor to this violence. Two decades later in 2019, the Houston Chronicle published a comprehensive investigative article which proved that violence against women has continually been perpetrated in the SBC by men in positions of power. This article indicated that since 1998, roughly 380 SBC leaders have faced allegations of violent and

²⁰⁶ Barr, *Making*, 151-172.

²⁰⁷ Heggen, C. H. "Religious Beliefs and Abuse," in *Women, Abuse, and the Bible: How Scripture Can Be Used to Hurt or Heal*, edited by C. C. Kroeger and J. R. Beck. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019, 16-19.

²⁰⁸ Wright, *Athena*, 17.

²⁰⁹ A similar example could be found in *The Anglican Church Investigation Report* published between 2020-2022. This investigation outlines the extent to which the Anglican Church in England and Wales has historically protected children from sexual abuse. It outlines numerous instances of failure. For example, from 2003- 2018, the main insurer of the Church of England managed 217 claims relating to child sexual abuse in the Church. See *Independent Inquiry Child Sexual Abuse: "The Anglican Church Investigation Report, 2020,"* eds. Alexis Jay, Malcolm Evans, Ivor Frank, and Drusilla Sharpling, Accessed September 18, 2023, URL:

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20221215023918/https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-document/s/22519/view/anglican-church-investigation-report-6-october-2020.pdf>.

²¹⁰ J. Alsdurf and P. Alsdurf, *Battered into Submission: The Tragedy of Wife Abuse in the Christian Home* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998), 1.

²¹¹ Alsdurf, *Battered*, 10.

sexual misconduct leaving behind over 700 victims of assault.²¹² This investigation demonstrates that SBC power and dominance structures have directly been used to enact violence against women.

6.2 Implications for Mary and Women

As a response to such vivid examples of violence being enacted against women, one may be led to cry out in righteous anger much like Rollins 'Why does the Church most often fail to speak out against these crimes against women forming its own genocide, fail to hold men accountable for choosing to do violence against women and still fail to speak up for the empowerment and provision for battered women?'²¹³ To overcome such expressions of violence, Schüssler Fiorenza argues that it is 'necessary to critically "name" the theological definitions and institutional issues at the heart of this conflict between patriarchal church and women-church. Only if we break through the theological mystifications and religious legitimations of patriarchal authority and power will women be able to reclaim our dignity, authority, and power as ecclesial subjects.'²¹⁴ Can we then 'name' Mary as such a source of conflict? Indeed, I would argue that there is a correlation between the theological construction of Mary as submissive and systems of power that breed violence. Where Mariology is used to propagate an idealised gender role which requires female submission it justifies the accusation that Mariology as a contributing factor to ongoing female oppression and violence. Arguably, if violence against women originates in the belief that the female is subordinate to her male counterpart this violence cannot be overcome until competitive power-based gender structures are overcome.

Moreover, when competitive agency is actualised between the genders, the idealisation of female submission promotes a limitation of autonomous agency in the female gender, as exemplified through a submissive representation of the Marian image. Furthermore, this submissive idealisation of women has been seen to have had far-reaching impacts on society, especially when combined with male-dominant power structures. This combination may result in the idealisation of limited female autonomy, leading to expressions of violence against the female agent, as demonstrated through domestic violence, ultimately

²¹² Robert Downen, Lise Olsen, and John Tedesco, "Abuse of Faith: 20 Years, 700 Victims: Southern Baptist Sexual Abuse Spreads as Leaders Resist Reforms," *Houston Chronicle*, February 10, 2019, <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/investigations/article/Southern-Baptist-sexual-abuse-spreads-as-leaders-13588038.php>

²¹³ Victoria Rollins, "Uses and Abuses of Power in the Shoah and the Silent Genocide of Abused Women," in Marcella Althaus-Reid and Lisa Isherwood, eds., *Controversies in Body Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2008), 129.

²¹⁴ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship*, 244.

representing a severe loss of autonomous agency. Indeed, violence against the female agent represents an ultimate loss of autonomous agency.

Therefore, when Mary is established as an agent who acts out of gender-based weakness, the potential negative implication of violence against her may occur. Furthermore, through her this negative implication extends to the wider female community. In this way, may Mary act as misogynistic propaganda cementing the place for women within the Church as one of subjugation. Hence, misogyny and female repression are able to walk hand in hand towards violence. To expand the correlation suggested previously by Macquarrie, because Mary is a woman she is weak, which justifies the claim that she submits to the dominant power or violence may occur against her.

In this thought system, Mary could not have conceivably said 'no' as her submission is intrinsically implied by her gender which is typified as being both silent and submissive. A self-reinforcing system is established whereby Mary as a woman must submit, and Mary because she submits is a model for all women who should seek to replicate her submission. Women in the church are caught in this spiral as a male-dominant hierarchy uses Mary to solidify its own self-justification. Therefore, the issue highlighted by domestic abuse statistics in the United Kingdom and cases of sexual abuse within the SBC in the United States is the high potential for violence against women within a power-based, gender-competitive structure.

In summary, what has been observed is that the Marian image can be argued to propagate both a submissive female gender role and relational dynamic. From the standpoint of competitive agency, this power structure suggests that normatively the male agent has become the dominant agent. For male domination to occur, a lower positionality of the female agent is a requirement. These factors act as considerable constraints to Mary's autonomous agency, suggesting that as a woman Mary's capacity to act as a free agent is severely limited. Furthermore, the feminist argumentation that has been previously explored in this research, for example in the works of Dworkin²¹⁵ and Althaus-Reid,²¹⁶ suggests that a correlation exists between female subjugation and violence against the weaker female agent. Arguably, during the Annunciation Mary is subjected to a dominant male agent in the form of a masculine God.²¹⁷ If this interaction were seen to be forceful, an accusation could be raised that God exercised coercive control over Mary, violating her potential for consent.

²¹⁵ Dworkin, "Pornography," 53.

²¹⁶ Althaus-Reid, *Controversies*, 65.

²¹⁷ Romero, "Protestant," 319.

Thus, I will now explore whether an accusation of violence can be extended beyond the male human agent and directed towards God. If violence is applicable to God, it could be seen as a significant constraint on Mary's consent during the Annunciation, potentially jeopardising her very personhood.

Chapter 7: Voluntariness as a Component of Consent

7.1 Mary: The Rape Victim

In order to consider a violent interpretation of the Annunciation I will once again consider an image of Mary proposed by the feminist theologian Daly. By the publication of Daly's third book in 1978 *Gyn/Ecology*, she had moved firmly into the realms of post-Christian philosophy denying both the church and its male God. Unsurprisingly, this work presents the most radical of Daly's Marian interpretations. The image of Mary that Daly puts forth in the work is Mary as a 'Total Rape Victim.'²¹⁸ For Daly, the Annunciation and subsequent impregnation of the Virgin Mary through the Spirit is a spiritual rape.²¹⁹ Daly does not attest that Mary was physically raped by God,²²⁰ instead she argues that, 'Physical rape is not necessary when the mind/will/spirit has already been invaded.'²²¹ Due to this invasion, Daly sarcastically mocks the notion of Mary's consent.²²²

In Daly's estimation Mary was not free to consent due to the special grace afforded to her by Catholic theology which she sees as placing Mary 'in a state of perpetual indebtedness.'²²³ Mary does not consent in this imaging, instead, she is under an obligation to repay an involuntary debt. Choice, in Daly's reckoning, was removed from Mary before the moment of her birth. Furthermore, in Daly's estimation if Mary continues to be a 'model to all women' as she previously suggested, then all women are 'Reduced to the state of an empty vessel/vassal, the victim.'²²⁴ The final image of Mary is of a 'brainwashed receptacle/rape

²¹⁸ Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 84; I would like to recognise that the term "victim" is criticised in contemporary feminist studies. Trauma theology, in particular, has recognised that women are "survivors" of rape and designates them as such. "Survivors" is an empowering term that I believe Daly would have embraced had the terminology been available to her.

²¹⁹ Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 83-86; I would like to recognise that for rape survivors, rape is understood in the context of a highly traumatic and violent physical experience. Although I will discuss rape in a metaphysical context in no way do I seek to diminish the horror of rape as a physical experience, and the untold pain it has caused. Neither do I believe would Daly, who was a champion for women's sexual rights.

²²⁰ As opposed, for example, to the numerous rape narratives originating within Greco-Roman mythology.

²²¹ Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 85; This research will not consider if Mary's pregnancy was a result of human sexual activity. To consider this argument see Schaberg, Jane. *The Illegitimacy of Jesus: A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

²²² Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 85.

²²³ Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 85.

²²⁴ Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 233.

victim²²⁵ reduced to following the desire of others. The images Dale evokes in this text are violent and visceral. In Daly's imaging, Mary is a victim and through her example as an archetype, all women carry a legacy of this wounding.

Seemingly, there is a tendency in feminist theology to promote a human agency that delineates a freedom of the human will that is distinct from the will of God. This is understandable considering the background of gender oppression in which the Women's Liberation Movement was birthed. The second wave of feminism to which the Women's Liberation Movement belonged, was specifically focused on advocating for greater personal and social freedoms for women.²²⁶ During the second wave, feminist theologians such as Daly sought to overcome male domination in the academy. This is reflected in how relational interactions between Mary and God are portrayed in *Gyn/Ecology*. Daly does not allow for cooperation between divine and human agents. Instead, they are established as opposing competitive forces. Accordingly, for Daly, the Annunciation represents a violent breaking of Mary's autonomous agency.

Daly's representation of Mary stands in direct opposition to traditional Catholic doctrine which she vehemently opposed to at this point in her academic life. Bur, who acted as a theological expert on Mariology at Vatican II denies any claim of violence against the person of Mary. In *How to Understand the Virgin Mary*, Bur argues that 'Mary abandoned herself freely to the will of God, which did no violence to her inmost being.'²²⁷ This work also received the *Nihil obstat* and *Imprimatur* which are a declaration that it is deemed to be free from doctrinal and moral error. Daly and Bur's views are directly opposed. I would also note that despite following the broad trends of feminism at the time of writing, the language used in *Gyn/Ecology* received a mixed reception within both feminist and wider scholarship, being seen by some as unnecessarily inflammatory.²²⁸ Therefore, moving forward 'rape' will be understood as exemplifying a total loss of consent, with an extreme emphasis placed on the potential violation of Mary as a choice-maker.

Consequently, in determining if coercive metaphysical violence was perpetrated against Mary a further exploration into consent is required. I would argue the practical examples that

²²⁵ Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 229.

²²⁶ Burkett, Elinor. "Women's Rights Movement." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Accessed August 26, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/event/womens-movement>.

²²⁷ Bur, *How*, 8-9.

²²⁸ To view a summary of the reviews and criticisms of Daly's collected works see Clare Monagle. "Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology*: Mysticism, Difference, and Feminist History," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* (2019), Accessed August 17, 2023, DOI: 10.1086/699341; For a further critical review see Storkey, "Significance," 192-193.

can be drawn for the contemporary Christian community balance on this same line. Therefore, it is in the consideration of consent that we can judge if Mary stands as a powerful female figurehead within the Church, or if this narrative is a heartbreaking illustration of female subjugation, the abuse of power, and ultimately spiritual rape.

7.2 Defining Consent and Voluntariness

Considering Daly has made the specific accusation of rape, I posit there is value in considering the interplay between rape legislation and philosophical understandings of consent. As has been previously indicated by Beauchamp and Childress,²²⁹ consent must extend beyond verbal confirmation.²³⁰ Beauchamp consistently argues throughout his work that for consent to have occurred, 'A person must do more than express agreement or comply with a proposal.'²³¹ Beauchamp's argument is consistent with the definition of consent outlined by The Code for Crown Prosecutors which is a public document issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions, it is used when prosecuting criminal cases in England and Wales. In determining criminal cases which involve rape, The Code for Crown Prosecutors states that 'There is no requirement to communicate lack of consent. In *R v Malone* [1998] 2 Cr App R 447, the Court of Appeal confirmed that the *actus reus* of rape imported no requirement that the complainant demonstrate or communicate to the defendant a lack of consent. What was required was some evidence to be put before the jury of lack of consent, and the nature of that evidence depended on the circumstances of the case.'²³² Adhering to the legal structuring of consent, Mary's verbal agreement alone does not prove that her consent has been given freely, nor would she be required to explicitly state a denial. Instead, evidence is required to prove the validity of consent given or lack thereof. In practice the burden of proof disproving consent must be provided by the rape survivor. Hence, to determine if Mary was a victim of metaphysical rape, as advocated by Daly, it then becomes necessary to further consider the components of consent on Mary's behalf.

²²⁹ Beauchamp and Childress are widely credited as the founders of contemporary moral philosophy and biomedical ethics surrounding the concepts of consent and autonomy.

²³⁰ Tom L. Beauchamp and J. F. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 77-79.

²³¹ Beauchamp, "Autonomy," 57.

²³² The Code for Crown Prosecutors, "Rape and Sexual Offences," Chapter 6: Consent, Sexual Offences Act 2003, Section 74," Accessed June 1, 2023, URL: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/rape-and-sexual-offences-chapter-6-consent#:~:text=with%20care%20workers-,Statutory%20definition%20of%20consent,consider%20this%20in%20two%20stages>; For an alternative feminist critical engagement with the Sexual Offences Act see Victor Tadros, "Rape Without Consent," *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 26, no. 3 (Autumn 2006): 515–543, DOI: 10.1093/ojls/gql016.

As defined by the Sexual Offences Act 2003, Section 74, consent is given 'if he agrees by choice, and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice.'²³³ Some feminists such as Cowan-Turner criticise this legal definition by arguing that it fails to encompass feminist values. She argues that 'Consent is a concept which we can either fill with either narrow liberal values, based on the idea of the subject as an individual atomistic rational choice maker, or with feminist values encompassing attention to mutuality, embodiment, relational choice and communication.'²³⁴ However, I do not fully subscribe to this view. Instead, I predicate that the relational values of feminism are of value in terms of consent only insofar as they reveal additional areas where an agent's individual consent has been denied. I would argue that if the freedom and capacity of an individual choice maker are violated there is no possibility for positive mutuality or relationship. I maintain then that freedom and capacity are a firm basis for determining consent when they are understood in greater fullness.

The freedom and capacity highlighted in legal definitions of consent, as they pertain to sexual violence, are comparable to the ethical definition of consent previously outlined by Beauchamp and adopted in this study. Beauchamp defines consent as being a twofold construct of *autonomous choice and the voluntariness of the agent*.²³⁵ I have until this point considered the nuances of autonomous choice as a primary component of consent, as well as constraints which limit said autonomy. However, Daly's accusation of rape seemingly focuses on the corruption of Mary's will, and a violation of agency in this manner shifts the focus of this research onto voluntariness, which is an additional component of consent. Therefore, it now becomes necessary to also consider voluntariness as it pertains to freedom and capacity.

7.2.1 Historical Understanding of Voluntariness

Voluntariness has been debated from ancient through to contemporary times.²³⁶ John Locke's proposed volition of the will and his exploration of liberty were foundational to the Enlightenment and can be taken as a key precursor to contemporary Western philosophies

²³³ Code for Crown Prosecutors, "Rape," 6.74.

²³⁴ Kate Conway-Turner, Suzanne Cherrin, Kathleen Doherty Turkel, and Jessica Schiffman, eds., *Women's Studies in Transition: The Pursuit of Interdisciplinarity* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), 53.

²³⁵ Beauchamp, 'Autonomy,' 55.

²³⁶ I will not pursue causality or intentionality as it pertains to voluntary ethics or action theories. When I speak of voluntariness it will be taken as an intentional voluntary act. To consider intentionality further see Mayr, Erasmus. "Intentional Agency and Acting for Reasons," in *Understanding Human Agency* (Oxford, 2011; online edn, Oxford Academic, 19 Jan. 2012), Accessed May 12, 2023, 249-267, DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199606214.003.0011; One could also compare deontological ethics and the Kantian Maxim to derive the moral status of the action from the categorical imperative, see Patricia Kitcher. "What Is a Maxim?" *Philosophical Topics* 31, no. 1/2 (2003): 215-43.

of voluntariness. Locke's volition of the will is exemplified through his notable quote, 'my right hand writes, whilst my left hand is still: What causes rest in one, and motion in the other? Nothing but my will, a thought of my mind; my thought only changing, the right hand rests, and the left hand moves.'²³⁷ As this quote demonstrates, Locke firmly situated the will within the mind; he also assumes both the independence of his will as well as the intentionality of subsequent actions resulting from the exercising of that will. For Locke, an action is voluntary if it aligns with an agent's internal intentionality. This seems to reflect the understanding of will expressed by Daly in that she lists the 'mind/will/spirit'²³⁸ as interchangeable entities.

The freedom of the will itself is fiercely debated by European Enlightenment theologians and philosophers, such as those reflected in the Hobbes-Bramhall debates surrounding freedom of will and action. Much like Locke, Bramhall argues 'that man is not only free in the sense of being able to act according to his will, but that he is free too in the determination of his will.'²³⁹ Hobbes on the other hand views the will as led by external appetites and desires. Such argumentation is summarised by Chappell who states, 'Hobbes is a determinist: he thinks that everything that happens, including every human action, is the necessary effect of antecedent causes. Bramhall, by contrast, thinks that some human actions are not necessitated by antecedent factors; these are the free actions we perform [...] Hobbes's view of freedom and necessity was quite similar to that of the Protestant Reformers, Luther and Calvin among others. And Bramhall's view was close to that of the most influential Catholic thinkers of the day, namely the Jesuits, who followed Molina and Suarez.'²⁴⁰

As can be seen Hobbes and Bramhall represent two very influential theological circles, and no agreement was reached between them as to whether the will can be said to be free.²⁴¹ However, in an almost contradictory fashion Hobbes seemingly advocates for a freedom of agency in actions derived through the will. Van den Enden notes that according to Hobbes, 'freedom or liberty indicates the human characteristic of being able to perform actions which proceed from the will, unless this performance is impeded by external and material circumstances.'²⁴² For Hobbes then it becomes imperative that an agent is free to act in

²³⁷ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding Book IV: Of Knowledge and Probability*, IV.X.XIX, URL: <https://enlightenment.supersaturated.com/johnlocke/BOOKIVChapterX.html>.

²³⁸ Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 85.

²³⁹ H. Van den Enden, "Thomas Hobbes and the Debate on Free Will: His Present-Day Significance for Ethical Theory," *Philosophica* 24 (1979): 190, DOI: 10.21825/philosophica.82629.

²⁴⁰ Vere Chappell, "Introduction," in *Hobbes and Bramhall on Liberty and Necessity*, ed. Vere Chappell, *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), xi, DOI: 10.1017/CBO9781139164207.001.

²⁴¹ For a critical overview of recent philosophical debates surrounding free will in comparison to broader historical debates see Robert Kane. *The Significance of Free Will* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

²⁴² Van den Enden, "Thomas," 187.

accordance with their will once the direction of said will has been established.²⁴³ Once again, external influences present a significant restraint to an agent.

In addition, Locke also recognised that for an agent a voluntary act is not necessarily free in that there can exist external constraining forces restricting the act. Although the will may exist freely, the agent may not be free to act. Locke summarises, 'So that liberty is not an idea belonging to volition, or preferring; but to the person having the power of doing, or forbearing to do, according as the mind shall choose or direct. Our idea of liberty reaches as far as that power, and no farther. For wherever restraint comes to check that power, or compulsion takes away that indifference of ability to bear acting, their liberty, and our notion of it, presently ceases.'²⁴⁴ Hence for Locke, a will can only be said to be free to the measure in which it has capacity to exercise that freedom. Therefore, much like autonomy, the will can be seen as scaled in its freedom. It is clear then, that although Hobbes, Bramhall, and Locke are in disagreement as to the extent to which the will can be said to be a prime initiator and therefore free, a unifying factor exists in terms of actions derived through the will. All agree that actions derived through the will should be free from internal and external influences. What is of significance, then, is the amount to which the will is subject to constraint, as a limitation in this capacity restricts voluntariness, and as such consent. I will explore now if contemporary models of voluntariness are also subject to such restraints.

7.2.2 Contemporary Understandings of Voluntariness

Contemporary definitions of voluntariness have synthesised Enlightenment debates down predominantly to the issue of the will versus external constraining influences. Beauchamp and Childress define a voluntary agent as 'a person acts voluntarily to the degree that he or she wills the action without being under the control of another's influence.'²⁴⁵ This definition ties voluntariness to the exercising of an agent's will, and much like autonomous agency, recognises that controlling influences will limit voluntariness. Pink provides a further caveat to this reasoning by determining that voluntariness indicates the agent's power of the will to act as willed.²⁴⁶ Power being used synonymously with the capacity for action in Pink's work indicates that voluntariness expresses self-determination of will in addition to the ability to

²⁴³ Thomas Hobbes, "Of Liberty and Necessity," in *Hobbes and Bramhall on Liberty and Necessity*, ed. Vere Chappell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 15-42.

²⁴⁴ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding Book II: Of Ideas*, Jonathan Bennett, Accessed August 23, 2023, II.XXI.X, URL: <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/locke1690book2.pdf>.

²⁴⁵ Beauchamp, *Principles*, 93.

²⁴⁶ Thomas Pink, "Voluntariness and Freedom of the Will," in *Self-Determination: The Ethics of Action*, Volume 1 (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2016), online edn, January 19, 2017, 234-245, DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199272754.003.0014.

exercise that determination.²⁴⁷ Therefore, an agent must maintain the capacity for a self-determination of the will.

Voluntariness then ‘requires that a person be able to give her consent freely and not be subject to the constraints that impair her self-determination.’²⁴⁸ Examples of constraints are provided by Kiener as being ‘coercion or manipulation, being placed in a situation with no acceptable alternative other than to consent to a procedure or being in an abusive relationship.’²⁴⁹ I would propose then that although voluntariness is distinct from autonomy, it is synonymous with the definition of autonomous agency that I have pursued in this research as both terms necessitate a capacity for action and recognise constraints. Considering voluntariness then offers an amelioration of autonomous agency through a focused emphasis on the agent's will as a component of choice.

7.3 Constraining Influence: The Mind

Being situated in the mind, the first potential constraint of the will is the capacity of the mind itself. To evaluate mental capacity the mental competency of the agent must first be determined. Cognitive competency encompasses ‘the rational capacities of the individual.’²⁵⁰ This competency is the purview of legal and medical legislation, which seeks to safeguard individuals by balancing agency and responsibility with mental capacity.²⁵¹ If Mary is seen to lack mental competency her capacity for consent is immediately limited. McLean observes that in legislation mental competence is a presupposed status in adults. Mental competence in adults is taken as the norm.²⁵² As such the burden of proof lies on disproving an individual's cognitive capabilities to claim a lack of cognitive competency.

Within the biblical text, Mary's mental capacity does not seem to have been impaired. Instead, as suggested by McLean in accordance with the Mental Capacity Act 2005 the stability of Mary's cognisance can be taken as per the legal norm. No definitive evidence is provided on the contrary. Rather, Mary's cognitive competency is affirmed in the Lucan Annunciation as she engages in lucid conversion, exercises rational questioning, and later engages in retrospective consideration. Furthermore, Mary's position within Mark 3:21 can be taken as proof of her mental competency, it states, ‘When His family heard about this, they went out to take custody of Him, saying, “He is out of His mind.”’ A clear suggestion by

²⁴⁷ Pink, “Voluntariness,” 234-245.

²⁴⁸ Maximilian Kiener, *Voluntary Consent: Theory and Practice* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2023), 1.

²⁴⁹ Kiener, *Voluntary*, 1-2.

²⁵⁰ Kluge, “Competence,” 297.

²⁵¹ For example in England and Wales through the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

²⁵² McLean, *Autonomy*, 18.

means of comparison is that the family of Christ possessed standard mental competency. Christ's mental stability is questioned in that his actions are thought to deviate from the perceived norm. Mary's inclusion in this narrative is suggested by Mark 3: 31-33, indicating Mary was perceived to be operating within the norm. Hence from a purely cognitive standpoint, Mary appears competent and as such capable of rational choice.²⁵³

7.3.1 Brainwashing

Of greater significance in terms of this research is that Daly labels Mary as 'brainwashed'²⁵⁴ denying her mental capacity for self-determination. An accusation of brainwashing is highly provocative as it 'evokes fears of losing self-control, of being used and dominated by another, and of losing one's very identity.'²⁵⁵ Brainwashing is a term coined by Hunter as a reaction to the violent indoctrination experienced by prisoners of war during the Korean War. Hunter states, 'The intent is to change a mind radically so that its owner becomes a living puppet a human robot without the atrocity being visible from the outside. The aim is to create a mechanism in flesh and blood, with new beliefs and new thought processes inserted into a captive body.'²⁵⁶ Brainwashing as described by Hunter is highly coercive, there is a forceful domination of a victim and clear power inequality. The mind of the victim is forcibly taken over until the identity of the aggressor becomes the identity of the victim. Identifying coercion in conjunction with Daly's accusation of a rape of the mind suggests the violent overthrow of Mary's very self, her identity and even her thought processes. Violently coerced in such a way Mary would be incapable of offering voluntary consent. Any consent given would be a reflection of violent indoctrination.

Whilst it could be argued that the torture experienced by prisoners of war is perhaps too extreme a position to be placed on the person of Mary, this does not entirely negate brainwashing in its more moderate forms. Taylor also discusses the more subtle variations of indoctrination which occur through advertising.²⁵⁷ I would posit this is indicative of the forced gender ideals that are promoted through Mariology within theological tradition. These ideals being of female submission and subservience. The risk being that the constant promotion and idealisation of Mary for these repressive attributes has led to damaging adaptive

²⁵³ In broader terms of cognitive competency, Mary as the model of 'feminine mystique' could be accused of having a damaging impact on female intellectual intelligence. See Daly, *Second*, 171-173.

²⁵⁴ Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 229.

²⁵⁵ Kathleen Taylor, *Brainwashing: The Science of Thought Control* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 98.

²⁵⁶ Edward Hunter, *Brainwashing: The Story of Men Who Defied It*, Pyramid Books: Student Edition (Delhi: Highly Publishing LLP, 2023), 224.

²⁵⁷ Taylor, *Brainwashing*, 25-48.

preference formation.²⁵⁸ As has previously been discussed adaptive preference formation which is a mechanism of internalised oppression that sees an agent in a subordinate role adopt, often unconsciously, the preferences of their dominant oppressors to which they are consistently subjected. The adoption of this internalised constraint equates to a restraint on autonomous agency as it acts as a limitation to valuational competency.

7.4 Constraining Influences: Grace

The problem posed by Daly is whether divine influence upon Mary acts as a constraint to her free will. 'Free will is a hotly debated topic, lurking at the heart of theories of human behaviour like a singularity in an equation. Just as dividing by zero gives an infinity of possible values, so plunging into the cauldron of free will can leave one adrift in a sea of confusing philosophical possibilities. Yet free will is central to our conceptions of ourselves, particularly in the modern Western world.'²⁵⁹ As Taylor suggests, free will is a vast topic both philosophically and theologically that cannot be considered in its entirety in this research. However, the contemporary significance free will holds in terms of identity, voluntariness and thus consent means that it cannot be entirely overlooked.

Together the Roman Catholic and Anglican denominations officially hold that Mary provides freely given consent during the Annunciation. This stance is reflected in The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) in *Mary Grace and Hope in Christ*. The ARCIC states that 'The Incarnation and all that it entailed, including the passion, death and resurrection of Christ and the birth of the Church, came about by way of Mary's freely uttered *fiat* – "let it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).'²⁶⁰ Freely given *fiat*, suggests Mary's free will. However, as has been indicated, Daly's interpretation within *Gyn/Ecology* contests whether Mary's utterance was free. Instead for Daly, Mary being afforded a special grace equates to an undue influence upon her capacity for self-determination.²⁶¹ Daly therefore introduces grace as a constraining influence. This constraint equates to the loss of a self-determination of will which negates a determining factor of voluntariness.

²⁵⁸ Elster, *Sour*, 141-166.

²⁵⁹ Taylor, *Brainwashing*, 101.

²⁶⁰ Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *Mary Grace and Hope in Christ*, The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, An Agreed Statement, Accessed August 5, 2023, Point 5, URL:

https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/105263/mary-grace-and-hope-in-christ_english.pdf.

²⁶¹ Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 83-86.

7.4.1 Grace and the Will

Daly is not alone in recognising the impact of grace upon Mary. The influence of special grace is clearly established in John Paul II's *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), Article 3, Section II.²⁶² A summary of the arguments made can be seen in CCC 490 and CCC 494 which state,

To become the mother of the Saviour, Mary "was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role." The angel Gabriel at the moment of the Annunciation salutes her as "full of grace." In fact, in order for Mary to be able to give the free assent of her faith to the announcement of her vocation, it was necessary that she be wholly borne by God's grace.²⁶³

Thus, giving her consent to God's word, Mary becomes the mother of Jesus. Espousing the divine will for salvation wholeheartedly, without a single sin to restrain her, she gave herself entirely to the person and to the work of her Son; she did so in order to serve the mystery of redemption with him and dependent on him, by God's grace.²⁶⁴

For a Catholic perspective, the problem in terms of voluntariness of the will is that CCC 490 states that it was necessary to enact an external influence over Mary in order to ensure her ability to offer 'free assent.' The necessity of influence could be interpreted as a controlling force and raises the question as to whether free assent would have been given were the influence withdrawn. In accordance, Bur seems to indicate that Mary's consent is not possible without influence, he also suggests it stems not from her will but through a predestined choice made on her behalf. Bur states, 'Mary's maternal co-operation is possible only in response to an allotted vocation, not absolutely necessary, but given through a divine predestination which is quite free. And Mary's 'yes' at the time of the annunciation was already the fruit of redeeming grace, granted to Mary in expectation of the merits of Jesus.'²⁶⁵

In accordance with Bur's position, Vatican II also affirms that, 'The Father of mercies willed that the Incarnation should be preceded by assent on the part of the predestined mother.'²⁶⁶ Hence assent is confirmed to have originated through divine will rather than through Mary as the acting human agent. In terms of a feminist reading, if a controlling influence is required to ensure Mary gives free assent, it becomes difficult to argue that Mary possessed self-determination of will outside of the influence. Arguably, Mary's will is supplanted by

²⁶² Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Popular Revised Edition* (London: Burns & Oats, 2006).

²⁶³ CCC, 490.

²⁶⁴ CCC, 494.

²⁶⁵ Bur, *How*, 12-13.

²⁶⁶ Vatican Council II, "Lumen Gentium," in *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Degrees, Declarations*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport: Costello, 1996), 56.

divine will. If Mary lacks the capacity for self-determination, she no longer exercises voluntariness. As a key component of consent, the absence of voluntariness lends some credence to the accusation of a rape of the will.²⁶⁷

I would recognise however that applying a modern philosophical understanding of voluntariness to the CCC could be seen as problematic in terms of historical theological doctrines of free will. It is crucial to approach arguments surrounding grace with caution as many theological perspectives emphasise that divine grace empowers individuals to free themselves from the restrictive influence of sin. Knell, a historical theologian who specialises in the study of sin, grace and free will criticises the contemporary tendency to separate notions of freedom from sin.²⁶⁸ Knell states,

Of vital importance is the principle that a person's nature, or will, is revealed in the choices that they make, complicated by the precise threads of sin and grace that are at play. Connected with this is a division between unregenerated and under-regenerated humanity. Those without the indwelling Holy Spirit, who are 'dead in their transgressions,' are historically seen to retain something of the image of God, although this is often heavily obscured, and have no agency in relation to their salvific state without first movements of grace. There is no true freedom in such people because freedom implies a release from the enslaving nature of sin.²⁶⁹

What is clear in Knell's work is the interconnectedness of the themes of sin and grace in historical discussions of human agency. Knell's summation of free will stands critically opposed to Daly's liberal interpretation of Mary's free will in that Daly seemingly denies the need for a movement of grace in order to overcome a sinful nature. As such Mary would remain enslaved by her sinful nature unless grace was afforded to her. It is clear that CCC 494 also speaks to the restraining influence of sin which according to Knell necessitates the freeing movement of grace. However, Knell speaks to the work of the Holy Spirit in all of humanity.

In contrast, CCC 490-494 seemingly asserts the Mariological principle of singularity. Through the attestation of Pope Pius IX referenced in 491 the grace afforded to Mary is a 'singular grace and privilege.'²⁷⁰ If this position is accepted, then it can be argued that whatever influence of grace seen to be exerted over Mary as expressed within CCC 490-494 is entirely unique. Especially as this work of grace is experienced within Mary 'more than any other created person.'²⁷¹ In *Redemptoris Mater*, John Paul II again describes this grace as

²⁶⁷ Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 85.

²⁶⁸ See also Hilary Brand. "Whatever happened to sin? An examination of the word and concept in contemporary popular culture," *Holiness* 2, no.3 (2016), 283-312, DOI: 10.2478/holiness-2016-0006.

²⁶⁹ Matthew Knell, "Divine Sovereignty and Human Agency: The Contributions of Luis de Molina, the Founding Thinker of Molinism," Research Seminar, London School of Theology, March 8, 2023.

²⁷⁰ CCC, 491.

²⁷¹ CCC, 492.

being special, he states, 'When we read that the messenger addresses Mary as "full of grace," the Gospel context, which mingles revelation and ancient promises, enables us to understand that among all the "spiritual blessings in Christ" this is a special "blessing."²⁷² I would argue then that the singularity of grace afforded to Mary cannot be viewed as being in the same measure as the grace afforded to other human agents, it is in some way either different or more than. If the grace experienced by Mary is unique, the idea of grace as a controlling influence over Mary cannot immediately be discounted on the grounds of doctrines of sin and grace as it applies to the rest of humanity. It is the uniqueness of this grace that makes it vulnerable to the accusation of control even if all other applications of grace are not seen as controlling influences.

Furthermore, in terms of a philosophical model of autonomous agency, grace being placed on Mary through divine will could be seen to establish an external dominant agent. This provides an image of a dominant agent who not only controls but permanently alters the submissive agent to ensure compliance. An alteration of Mary beyond the bounds of human womanhood parallels the feminist critique of the development of Mariology that we have seen previously.²⁷³ Namely, Mary has once again 'been constructed almost exclusively according to masculine projections and desires.'²⁷⁴ Hence the Marian will presented by the Catechisms is once again a product of male desires, albeit a divine male, not one of self-determination. Mary is established as a superhuman being who cannot say no, as she is both conceived and born uniquely to ensure that she says yes. In this way, she is shaped to be the vessel of an external agent's desires.²⁷⁵ This is also reminiscent of Daly's image of Mary as a Marionette.

Furthermore, as has previously been noted, Raz argues that to achieve significant autonomy an agent must have a choice between multiple paths. Considering this point further Kenny suggests that 'If we are to assign wants to an agent, the agent must have available to it a number of different ways of getting its needs.'²⁷⁶ The argumentation of CCC 490 and 494 seemingly indicates that Mary's path was fixed for her with an assured outcome due to the influence of grace. Arguably then Mary's "free assent" occurs not through voluntary autonomous agency but only under the control of divine intervention. Mary's will has become the male will.

²⁷² John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater: Encyclical Letter on the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Life of the Pilgrim Church* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1987), 7-8.

²⁷³ Hamington, *Mary*, 25

²⁷⁴ Beattie, "Woman," 60.

²⁷⁵ Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 233.

²⁷⁶ Kenny, Anthony. *Will, Freedom, and Power* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1975), 49.

7.4.2 Grace and the Body

Schüssler Fiorenza argues that Mary is traditionally argued to be full of grace and therefore separate from all other women, 'Because if Mary was just another woman, then she would have shared the same "fallen" sexuality of other women. So, Mary cannot be allowed to be an ordinary woman.'²⁷⁷ In terms of feminist usage, as expressed by Ruether, I am reminded of the teaching I myself received within Protestant Evangelical youth groups. As female teenagers, we were exhorted from the pulpit to dress modestly because our bodies would cause our male counterparts to sin. Lapses in modesty were met with subtle discipline such as being told to put on a cardigan or being sent home to change. In this way, my teenage female body was designated as both a source of sin and potential shame. Paradoxically, this teaching was never applied in reverse. Seemingly, the bodies of my male counterparts were not subject to such innate sinfulness. I have in the years since heard this teaching repeated throughout the globe, particularly in Evangelical denominations.

It is not then a radical supposition to maintain that Mary's female and therefore "fallen" sexuality was and is seen as requiring alteration. The grace applied to Mary is then seeking to free her from her own gender. She is not empowered in her womanhood but isolated from the female community. This raises the question as to whether all other ordinary unchanged women are deemed as lacking in terms of their capacity for self-determination. Thus, rendered through Mary as an exemplar voluntariness is diminished through dogmatic morphology into an action only possible as a superhuman being devoid of the sin of her sexuality.

The need to alter Mary's body through an excessive gift of grace may also produce overtones of the view that for all other women maternity is both unclean and unholy.²⁷⁸ This view originates in Jewish purification rituals after birth as prescribed in Leviticus 12: 1-8 and by the Middle Ages this developed into the ecumenical practice commonly referred to as the Churching of Women.²⁷⁹ It is worth noting that although within theological tradition Mary is removed from this status of female specific sin, within the Biblical text she too presents herself at the Temple for cleansing Luke 2: 22-39. Mary does not appear to consider herself superhuman, uniquely pure, or in any way differentiated from other mothers in this passage, only tradition deems that she is so.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Memory*, 190.

²⁷⁸ Daly, *Church*, 63.

²⁷⁹ William Coster, "Purity, Profanity, and Puritanism: The Churching of Women, 1500-1700," *Studies in Church History* 27 (1990): 377-87, DOI: 10.1017/S0424208400012183.

²⁸⁰ See for example how Aquinas justifies Mary's cleansing in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1911-1925), III:37:4.

Furthermore, CCC 494 speaks towards the fallenness of all humanity referencing back to the Doctrine of Original Sin outlined in the CCC from 404- 409. This is indicated in CCC 494 through the justification provided through the teaching of Irenaeus,²⁸¹ which references the whole human race. The fallenness indicated is not limited doctrinally to the female gender. However, in terms of feminist thought a problem is instead created through Irenaeus' analogy between Mary and Eve,²⁸² derived from 1 Timothy 2: 12-15. Mary and Eve are established as opposing forces.²⁸³ Eve has historically been taken to indicate an 'innate tendency to depravity in the female sex,'²⁸⁴ with reference back to the numerous teachings of the Early Church Fathers utilised to justify this misogynistic belief.²⁸⁵ Through Eve, all women are seen to carry this sin. Ruether further highlights the negative ideation of early Christian understanding towards women and the fall. Ruether states, 'Women through the Fall and in punishment for the Fall lost her original equality and became inferior in mind and body. She is now, within fallen history, subjected to the male as her superior. This subjugation is not a sin against her, but her punishment for her sin. It is an expression of divine justice.'²⁸⁶ Once again two competitive agents are formed, the fallen woman through Eve, and the superior male. Thus rendered, Ruether suggests that in an androcentric reading affording a unique grace equates to the removal of Mary from her "female depravity." As such, Mary becomes the antithesis to Eve, but to achieve this she is separated from all other women.²⁸⁷ Mary is unique, but she is alone. Mary is stripped of her female personhood and isolated from the human female community. In this way, the removal of Mary from her female self establishes her under a will "superior" to her own, a male will.

In summary, due to the fact that the concept of consent this research has adopted relies heavily on the notion of free autonomy and the willingness of choice, a divine external influence such as grace can be seen as a restriction to consent. The idea that Mary's unique grace can be seen as a constraining influence of her voluntariness raises complex debate regarding her agency and self-determination. It can be argued that the overwhelming presence of divine grace in Mary's life may limit her ability to make decisions free from external influence. If Mary's will is superseded by an external divine force, then indeed, it

²⁸¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Accessed June 3, 2023, 3.22.4: PG 7/1, 959A, URL: <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103.htm>.

²⁸² Irenaeus, *Against*. 3.22.4: PG 7/1, 959A.

²⁸³ Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Quartet Books, 1978), 50-67.

²⁸⁴ Antonia Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel: Woman's Lot in Seventeenth-century England* (London: Phoenix Press, 2002), 2.

²⁸⁵ Warner, *Alone*, 60.

²⁸⁶ Ruether, *Sexism*, 97.

²⁸⁷ For example, through the establishment of Mary's perpetual virginity. See Warner, *Alone*, 34-49.

could be argued her capacity for self-determination is undermined. Such limitation calls into question the extent to which Mary can be considered an autonomous agent, capable of independent choice.

Moreover, if grace is perceived as stripping Mary of her female self and distancing her from original sin, an altering of personhood could be considered to be a coercive element. Arguably, what is implied is that both her individuality and womanhood is being reshaped in accordance with an external agenda, potentially diminishing her capacity to exercise genuine self-expression. The message this alteration presents to Christian women today is that the expression of their natural female independent will is inferior, they need to change or be changed if they seek to be empowered to choose. As such, female choice is positioned as inferior to the desires of a dominant external, and most likely male, agent. Such positionality leaves women in the Christian community vulnerable in terms of the integrity of their selfhood and the power of their choice. As has previously been determined, female disempowerment often leads to subjugation and violence.

7.5 Voluntariness: Case Study: Barth

Offering an alternative perspective to traditional Mariology could in theory reclaim the aforementioned effects of grace acting on a human agent. A distinct variation is argued by De Chirico who proposes that much of the debate surrounding Mary's unique positionality has sprung from misconceptions of grace. He attributes the special influence of grace afforded to Mary to a mistranslation. De Chirico argues that:

Gabriel tells her twice that she is 'favoured' (*kecharitoméne*) by God (l:28-30). The Vulgate translates this Greek expression as 'gratia plena' (full of grace), thus opening up all sorts of misconceptions as if Mary possessed the fullness of grace in herself. This translation has been taken as implying that she was so full of grace that she must have been conceived without original sin and that the grace that she is so full of can overflow to those who pray to her. There is no hint in the text about this fullness. No moral or spiritual reason grounds the choice in Mary's character: the decision is entirely God's.²⁸⁸

In this reckoning Mary is favoured but she is not unique, and as such she is not removed from female humanity. De Chirico is by no means a feminist scholar, but his argument could serve to reunite Mary in her humanity with the female community. However, De Chirico's view is exceedingly problematic in terms of consent as it strips Mary of her choice. De Chirico's analysis of *kecharitoméne* entirely negates Mary's consent, as in his view the decision is God's alone.

²⁸⁸ De Chirico, *Christian's*, 8-9.

Arguably, De Chirico's view is an expression of Theological Voluntarism,²⁸⁹ otherwise termed Divine Command Theory.²⁹⁰ A simplified but widely used definition of Divine Command Theory is 'that what God commands is coextensive with what is right.'²⁹¹ This theory implies that moral principles are not rooted in human ethics or reasoning but are dependent on divine will alone. Adopting Divine Command Theory is dangerous when applied to Mary in that it can act as a moral justification for her consent being entirely denied. A major proponent of Divine Command Theory is Barth.²⁹² Part of the danger of Barth as it pertains to this research is the vast impact his work has had in shaping thought within the Western Protestant Church.²⁹³ Indeed, as a particular danger to feminist theology Ackermann firmly accuses Barth of perpetuating patriarchal thinking in the West.²⁹⁴ Due to his lasting influence and the likelihood of Barth's views being held within the contemporary Church, Barth's presentation of Mary will be evaluated to determine if it indeed holds patriarchal overtones. If such tones are found, Barth's ideologies may, in part, be responsible for the limitation of female voluntariness and autonomy in the West.

7.5.1 Barth's Human Agency

The problem of Barth in relation to voluntariness is shown starkly when he applies his model of human agency on to the person of Mary. In *Church Dogmatics* Barth states, 'The form of the virgo Maria [is] only in the form of non-willing, non-achieving, non-creative, non-sovereign man, only in the form of man who can merely receive, merely be ready, merely let something be done to and with himself.'²⁹⁵ In this way 'Barth reduces Mary to a receptacle of divine action and a bystander to divine purpose.'²⁹⁶ Barth's account of Mary's agency in particular opens up the allegation of a rape of the will. She is in Barth's own words 'non-willing,' she is forced to 'let something be done to herself.' Mary does not consent. Mary is denied all personal agency. If these same sentiments are applied to any other woman, she would instantly be seen as a victim.

²⁸⁹ Philip L. Quinn, "Theological Voluntarism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*, ed. David Copp (Oxford University Press, 2006), 63-90.

²⁹⁰ John E. Hare, *God's Command* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 11-15.

²⁹¹ Edward Wierenga, "A Defensible Divine Command Theory," *Noûs* 17, no. 3 (1983): 387, DOI: 10.2307/2215256.

²⁹² William Werpehowski, "Command and History in the Ethics of Karl Barth," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 9, no. 2 (1981): 298.

²⁹³ Daniel W. Hardy, "Karl Barth," in *The Modern Theologians*, eds. David F. Ford and Rachel Muers (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 21.

²⁹⁴ Ackermann, "Rosemary," 39.

²⁹⁵ Barth, *CD 1/2*, 191.

²⁹⁶ De Stigter, "Conceiving," 393.

The above is not the only instance where Barth seemingly advocates against Mary's consent. Barth is vehemently opposed to Mariology throughout much of his work, particularly in the context of his doctrine of revelation in *Church Dogmatics* I/2,²⁹⁷ this is particularly manifest in his rejection of Mary's agency during the Annunciation.²⁹⁸ As summarised by De Stigter, 'he betrays a tendency towards a competitive account of divine and human agency. More specifically, Barth's description of the annunciation is such that Mary is disregarded for the sake of exalting God. Barth repeatedly stresses that Mary does nothing and brings nothing to the event of revelation. Mary does not act within God's action, rather God acts in spite of Mary.'²⁹⁹

Barth's understanding of human agency has been widely criticised as emphasising divine action to the extent that human action is negated in its passivity.³⁰⁰ This framework of divine-human relationship is particularly rejected by feminist scholarship.³⁰¹ Ruether criticises Barth for promoting an active/passive relational dynamic and the subsequent hierarchical anthropological structure it promotes.³⁰² Bodley-Dangelo recognises that for many feminist scholars Barth's work represents a significant source of female repression. She provides one such summary of Romero's interpretation of Barth stating that Romero 'finds in Barth a theology of domination and oppression that preserves at its heart a master-servant relation in which God commands and humans obey. Thus, the subservience of a passive, incapacitated human to the divine actor finds human analogy in the domination of women by men.'³⁰³ Mary as such can be viewed as utterly passive and subject to the dominating agency of God.

However, offering a more positive perspective on Barth's Mariology, Bodley-Dangelo argues that Barth presents Mary as a model human agent regardless of her sex.³⁰⁴ In her estimation Barth presents Mary 'as a model of the hearing, response, and orientation to the divine

²⁹⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: Vol. 1 and 2*, ed. Thomas F. Torrance, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley et al., (London: T&T Clark, 2004).

²⁹⁸ Barth, *CD* I/2, 139; 143; 145.

²⁹⁹ De Stigter, "Conceiving," 391.

³⁰⁰ See for example A.E McGrath. *The Making of Modern German Christology: From the Enlightenment to Pannenberg* (Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 1986): 104-116. In McGrath's reading of Barth, humanity is presented as an utterly passive recipient and God alone is the active agent; and J.B. Webster. *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 5-8. A range of negative interpretations of Barth are presented here although Webster does not agree and goes on to more sympathetically synthesise Barth's agency within an ethic of reconciliation.

³⁰¹ For a well-considered summation of the feminist argument against Barth's human agency see Faye Bodley-Dangelo, *Sexual Difference, Gender, and Agency in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 6-7, footnote 4.

³⁰² Ruether, *Sexism*, 94-99.

³⁰³ Bodley-Dangelo, *Sexual*, 6-7, footnote 4, commenting on Joan Arnold Romero. "Karl Barth's Theology of the Word of God: Or, How to Keep Women Silent and in Their Place," in *Women in Religion*, ed. J. Plaskow Goldenberg (Missoula: University of Montana, 1973), 35-48.

³⁰⁴ Bodley-Dangelo, *Sexual*, 35.

address proper to proclamation and the doing of theology.³⁰⁵ There are however limitations to Bodley-Dangelo's portrayal, primarily a single Barthian source alone is used as justification for positive Marian imaging. The source being a lecture series given to students during the 1934 Advent season with a focus on pastoral exegesis, later published as *The Great Promise: Luke 1*.³⁰⁶ Arguably, the singularity of the source weakens Bodley-Dangelo's argument in terms of authority in comparison to the weight of Barth's academic publications in *Church Dogmatics* which displays a staunchly anti-Marian viewpoint. Furthermore, within *The Great Promise: Luke 1* itself, Barth presents Mary as an exemplar of God's mercy and the need for saving grace, the promise of which he attributes to faith.³⁰⁷ Therefore, the praise Barth attributes to Mary is in her total dependence on God to act, he is not reconciling her womanhood.

Offering an alternative view of Barth's Mariology De Stigter argues that 'Barth's wholesale rejection of Mariology exhibits a marginalization of the human agent and, in turn, a competitive construal of the divine and human encounter.'³⁰⁸ Hence despite Mary being a female agent, she does not represent a positive portrayal of female agency or autonomous agency in Barth's work. Mary is not praised for being a faithful woman, but an incapable one. I would argue instead that the submissive role Mary fills reflects the summation Bodley-Dangelo provides for all human agency in Barth's work. She states, 'They are constituted as recipients of an un-repayable gift that imposes on them an obligation to imitate this gratuitous activity in a turn toward other human beings, on whom they depend for the same sort of aid. That is, human beings are always already set in motion by their divine benefactor and directed toward their neighbors in a relationship of dependency and obligation.'³⁰⁹ Barth's human agency directly reflects the 'state of perpetual indebtedness'³¹⁰ that Daly rejects as a constraining force negating Mary's consent. I would argue then that establishing human agents as solely operating through obligation regardless of gender negates voluntariness and reduces the human agent to an automaton.

In terms of praxis, a dangerous precedent is set if human relationship is reduced to a state of obligation. Mary's example could, as Daly suggests, be taken as a model that reduces all women to the state of a vessel for another's desires, especially if they are seen to be obligated to fulfil this role. I would draw attention to an extreme outworking of the ideation of female obligation, that being the current rise of incel culture on social media. Incel is a

³⁰⁵ Bodley-Dangelo, *Sexual*, 32.

³⁰⁶ Karl Barth, *The Great Promise: Luke 1* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2004).

³⁰⁷ Barth, *Great*, 19-20.

³⁰⁸ De Stigter, "Conceiving," 390.

³⁰⁹ Bodley-Dangelo, *Sexual*, 176.

³¹⁰ Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, 85.

portmanteau of the phrase ‘involuntary celibate.’ This name has been adopted by men mainly on social media networks who blame women for their own lack of sexual intimacy. It is an online culture that normalises misogyny and the objectification of women, women are represented as both evil and objects to be acquired. Radical Incels believe that women owe a sexual debt to men and as such they have a right to claim it, often violently. Therefore, Incels often believe women should be verbally shamed and even physically punished with sexual assault, rape, or disfigurement if they withhold this perceived sexual obligation.³¹¹

In summary, as I have sought to demonstrate in this example, relationality when viewed as a moral obligation can create a sense of entitlement when perceived obligations are not met. When entitlement is enacted against women there is a risk that it will be applied violently. As has previously been argued, violence against women is a violation of consent. So too, would I argue that a view of entitlement towards relationality is inconsistent with consent.

7.5.2 Barth’s Christology

Offering an alternative perspective to Barth, I contend that divine-human relationality is not confined to the restrictive structure Barth imposes but can be more readily exemplified by Christ. I would echo then Irenaeus who states that ‘the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself.’³¹² I would argue then that loving relationality rather than moral obligation should be the driving force behind an understanding of agential interaction. De Stigter aptly notes ‘Barth does not explore the possibility that God desires to give Mary a place of special attention, nor does he consider that through her dependence on Christ, she becomes an “independent” agent.’³¹³ Barth does not allow that Mary had the capacity for free and empowering choice derived through relationship and opposed to obligation. Furthermore, De Stigter argues that ‘God’s dealings with Israel, chiefly in sending Jesus Christ, reveal a God who exercises sovereignty with the other. God relates to the creature as an empowering, jealous, and long-suffering covenant partner.’³¹⁴

Comparatively, Barth’s own work on the autonomous agency possessed by Christ provides a free and workable model of human agency. Barth states, ‘The perfection of God’s giving of Himself to man in the person of Jesus Christ consists in the fact that far from merely playing

³¹¹ B. Hoffman, J. Ware, and E. Shapiro, “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 43, no. 7 (2020): 565-587.

³¹² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5, Preface.

³¹³ De Stigter, “Conceiving,” 393.

³¹⁴ De Stigter, “Conceiving,” 398.

with man, far from merely moving or using him, far from merely dealing with him as an object, this self-giving sets man up as a subject, awakens him to genuine individuality and autonomy, frees him, makes him a king, so that in his rule the kingly rule of God Himself attains form and revelation.³¹⁵ If Barth's Christology was applied to human agents such as Mary, then Mary's agency need not be viewed as oppositional to God's. Mary would be free to give of herself through choice in such a way as to be established as an individual, with autonomy, with freedom. Dare I say her consent would make her a queen. Hence, as Loades determines, 'we have no need, if we are ever to begin to understand her son, to turn her into some kind of doormat.'³¹⁶ Therefore, Christ's autonomous agency acts as a model of non-competitive agency by which women can be freed to consent.

In conclusion, Daly's accusation of Mary as a victim of metaphysical rape stands when Mary's consent is placed in opposition to God's will. Where a competitive understanding of agency occurs, spiritual rape can be said to occur if it is understood as a complete violation of voluntariness. Hence, if Mary's choice is made through the domination of her will or personhood Mary cannot be seen to have consented or is severely limited in her capacity to exercise consent. Whereas a non-competitive understanding of agential interactions offers the possibility of a Marian image that enables consent. I will now consider further Marian images which establish Mary as an autonomous agent with the capacity for voluntariness.

Chapter 8: Images of Mary that Enable Consent

8.1 Mary: The Great Goddess

Daly does not allow Mary to remain a submissive un-consenting victim. Throughout Daly's work she establishes Mary 'The Great Goddess.'³¹⁷ She is dominant and capable and leads women to reclaim their power.³¹⁸ The Goddess image offers a rejection of the controls placed on Mary by traditional theology. In Mary ancient goddess worship is reborn,³¹⁹ and the Goddess is presented as an alternative model for women. Daly's imaging of Mary as the Goddess is developed in far greater depth in her later post-Christian work to the extent that in her later work the rise of the Goddess replaces worship of the triune God.³²⁰ Daly is by no

³¹⁵ Barth, *C/D II*, 179.

³¹⁶ Loades, *Grace*, 67.

³¹⁷ Daly, *Beyond*, 90-92.

³¹⁸ I do not deny the importance of understanding a female image divinity, rather I object to the application of this image on to the human person of Mary.

³¹⁹ Daly, *Beyond*, 92.

³²⁰ For example: Daly, *Gyn/Ecology*, * linked to footnote 28 seen on 85-86.; and Mary Daly. "A Manifestation of Goddess: A Conversation with Mary Daly." *On The Issues* 7, no. 2 (1998): 14.; See also Christ, "Why," 273-287.

means alone in linking Mary to ancient female goddess figures. The Goddess image is replete across feminist literature.³²¹ However, as has previously been demonstrated by numerous feminists such as Dowell and Hurcombe³²² experience is a primary defining influence of feminist critique. Storkey further emphasises the preeminent role of experience in post-Christian feminist theology,³²³ in which Daly is firmly situated.

Although Daly regifts Mary with autonomy and power in the image of the Goddess, I would argue this imagery is inherently flawed. The Goddess is not true to Mary's human experience, and thus limits its usefulness. In establishing Mary as a 'Goddess,' humanity and womanhood are denied resulting in the silencing of her true narrative. How can this Goddess reintroduce value to human women when no other woman can attainably stand in such a role? This deification is not a restoration of female power true to the figure of Mary. Instead, Mary is once again stripped of true feminine autonomy, in this case through the removal of her very humanity.

Yes, the Great Goddess acts as a counter-interpretation of Mariology, but it is the projected attributes within Mariology which formed the primary source of Daly's criticism. Once again, by elevating Mary to a Goddess she is removed from her experience as a human woman becoming an engineered symbol, only the puppet master has changed. Feminist theologians now hold the strings to the Goddess Marionette figure being created. Therefore, although Mary as a Model for All Women, Marionette, or Rape Victim are in direct opposition positionally to the Great Goddess, all of these images superimpose pseudo-characteristics and roles onto the person of Mary. As such, Mary is not reclaimed in any of these images, rather differing elements of her nature are lost. In some views she loses her voluntary autonomous self, in the next her human self. None serves to represent Mary as a consenting female whole.

Furthermore, Schüssler Fiorenza argues that the Goddess image is not effective in overcoming gender oppression. She argues that 'In such a cultural patriarchal context the divinisation of woman and declaration of women's essential superiority does not overcome patriarchal gender stereotypes. Rather it reinscribes them as androcentric projections and

³²¹ See Geoffrey Ashe. *The Virgin Mary's Cult and the Re-Emergence of the Goddess* (London: Arkana, 1985); Stephen, Benko. *The Virgin Goddess: Studies in Pagan and Christian Roots of Mariology* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 171-172; and Rosemary Radford Ruether. *Goddesses and the Divine Feminine: A Western Religious History*. 1st ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); For a broader consideration of the importance of the Goddess image within feminist study see Christ, "Why," 273-87.

³²² Susan Dowell and Linda Hurcombe, *Dispossessed Daughters of Eve* (London: SPCK Publishing, 1987), 60.

³²³ Storkey, "Significance," 186.

idealizations stood on their head.³²⁴ In short, the patriarchy is not overcome when its destructive power-based ideologies are subsumed by a female figure such as Mary. Patriarchal values are merely transferred on to the female subject as perpetrator. Hence, Mary is not empowered in her agency but placed to an even greater extent in competitive opposition with God. The model this deification provides for Christian women today is divisive rather than restorative for the Christian community. Therefore, the Goddess image is not representative of female experience nor does it overcome the dangers of patriarchal ideology. I do not find in the Goddess image a picture of Mary that can be representative of female choice, and I will not pursue it as a means of considering consent. Alternatively, I would posit that examining Mary's human experience may offer a more useful platform for determining consent.

8.2 Mary: The Human Woman

While considering Marian images, I have rejected the feminist reclamation of Mary, as expressed in Daly's work through the Goddess figure. I hold that the deification of Mary does not adequately promote an empowering model of autonomous agency for women in that it removes Mary from her human experience. Storkey similarly denies the Goddess figure and instead promotes a re-evaluation of the human Mary expressed in Scripture.³²⁵ As such, this human evaluation is one I will now adopt. Storkey contends that Mary within the Biblical text, 'is a very ordinary human being [...] She is not singled out because she was immaculately conceived, or perpetually virginal. In a very full sense, she was simply a woman, and as a woman was as significant as all women are in God's eyes and in God's dealings with the world.'³²⁶ There is a twofold significance in Storkey's argumentation in terms of this research. Firstly, Mary is a human woman and can therefore be understood to a greater extent in terms of her human context. Secondly, understood as a normal human woman Mary reclaims significance for contemporary, non superhero human women, empowering them in terms of their own interactions with God. Women do not need to be divine themselves to approach God relationally. Therefore, I will briefly consider Mary within her historical context in order to consider Mary's human agency as it pertains to her interaction with the divine agent during the Annunciation.

Exploring Mary in her human context reflects the exegetical practices championed by feminist Liberation theologians such as Gebara who argues that 'God speaks to us and

³²⁴ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship*, 21.

³²⁵ Storkey, "Significance," 196-199.

³²⁶ Storkey, "Significance," 196.

saves us through the male and female realities that make up the human.³²⁷ While Gebara posits that ‘Reducing biblical figures to natural size permits a more human approach to them, an approach within the relativity of our existence, our various conflicts and conquests. Such a procedure opens a space in which the history of women, who today in their striving for liberation are closely allied with all the poor and oppressed of the earth, can emerge and grow.’³²⁸ Therefore, in Gebara’s reasoning, as with Storkey’s, understanding Mary within her lived context allows for a greater level of practical application. As this research seeks to be practical as well as philosophical in its aims, considering a human Mary as opposed to the feminist Goddess or even deified Mariology,³²⁹ may allow for a more actionable model of consent to be seen.

8.2.1 Women in Ancient Times

To understand Mary’s human context, it should be remembered that Mary was a woman who existed in a particular time and place, within specific cultural, social, and religious structures. As outlined by Luke 1: 26-28 Mary is depicted as a young Jewish woman, from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, alive during the first century. However, understanding the experience of women in ancient times is an area of much recent scholarly debate.³³⁰ Pertinent to this research are considerations of the level of autonomous agency possessed by women in this period. Rawson argues that the most beneficial study on women should involve ‘an intersection of Roman, Greek and Near Eastern cultural traditions.’³³¹ Winter for example rejects the notion that all women were relegated to the domestic roles of wife and mother which he sees as an ‘unexplored assumption.’³³² Rather, Winter argues for a reimagining of women seemingly based on elite women in Rome: ‘There is evidence that women could occupy civic posts and have the title of magistrates, and those with wealth (and what was deemed to be rank and status) influenced commercial, civic and provincial affairs.’³³³ This would suggest that women during Mary’s lifetime had the capacity to obtain personal power outside of the home through financial means.

³²⁷ Gebara, *Mary*, 36.

³²⁸ Gebara, *Mary*, 41.

³²⁹ Sarah Jane Boss, "Deification: The Mariology of the Ordinary Faithful," *New Blackfriars* 98, no. 1074 (2017): 188.

³³⁰ Beryl Rawson, "From 'Daily Life' to 'Demography'," in *Women in Antiquity: New Assessments*, eds. R. Hawley and B. Levick (London: Routledge, 1995), 1.

³³¹ Rawson, "Daily," 18.

³³² Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 6-7.

³³³ Winter, *Roman*, 4.; and Elaine Fantham et al., "The 'New Woman': Representations and Reality," in *Women in the Classical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), Chap. 10.

Alternatively, Jeffers argues that even in Rome the majority of women lacked financial independence and remained under the absolute control of their husbands.³³⁴ Jeffer's portrayal poses a distinct problem in viewing Mary in relation to Winter's proposed female advancement in that the female autonomy described is directly proportional to the woman possessing independent wealth. There is no indication in canonical Scripture that Mary possessed wealth or high social status.³³⁵ Instead, Mary is traditionally portrayed as economically limited. Pelikan goes so far as to call her a 'humble peasant girl.'³³⁶ It follows, then, that if Mary did not possess wealth, she cannot then be seen to have access to the personal power Winter portrays. As such, Mary is denied agency because of her socioeconomic position. I would argue then that despite Rawson's call for intersectionality and Winter's portrayal of women beyond the home, Mary should not then be considered within the social understanding as her wealthy urban female counterparts. Instead, and in order to more accurately consider Mary's capacity for agency she should be understood within the context of Judaism in the Second Temple and Talmudic periods.³³⁷

8.2.2 Mary: A Jewish Woman

Problematically, rather than empowering Mary's position, being considered within the context of Second Temple and Talmudic Judaism may be a considerable constraining influence.³³⁸ Many scholars demonstrate how Judaism places women in a position of inferiority across social, legal, economic, and religious spheres,³³⁹ with Baskin summarising that 'Rabbinic Judaism places women at a severe disadvantage.'³⁴⁰ A further disadvantage that Mary faced is found in a consideration of the social status of women. Tiffin notes that 'The Mishnah

³³⁴ James S. Jeffers, "Jewish and Christian Families in First-Century Rome," in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome*, eds. Karl P. Donfried and Peter Richardson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 139.

³³⁵ As a textual example, consider when Jesus is presented to the Temple in Luke 2:22-24, Mary is seen to offer two doves as a purification offering. Two doves are prescribed in Lev 12: 6-8 as appropriate in lieu of a lamb and a dove if the mother is unable to afford a lamb. Mary's offering of two doves indicates a lower economic status.

³³⁶ Pelikan, *Mary*, 221.

³³⁷ Gebara, *Mary*, 47.

³³⁸ Some recent scholarship towards Wisdom literature has been undertaken in the hope of establishing a tolerant vision of Judaism, however as Lewis recognises, in this text the wife's activities are always depicted in relation to her husband and family. The woman's position then remains within the domestic sphere under the authority of her husband. Therefore, a greater consideration of women's roles in Wisdom literature will not be pursued. See Jack P. Lewis. "The Capable Wife (Prov 31: 10-31)," 155-180, in *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, Vol. 2, ed. Carroll D. Osburn (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007): 401-441.

³³⁹ For example, see Jacob Neusner, *Method and Meaning in Ancient Judaism*, Brown Judaic Studies, no. 10 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979), 80; and Leonard Swidler, *Women in Judaism: The Status of Women in Formative Judaism*, (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, 1976), 82-84.

³⁴⁰ Judith R. Baskin, "The Separation of Women in Rabbinic Judaism," in *Women, Religion and Social Change*, eds. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddah and Ellison Banks Findly (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 4.

generally presents the male as norm, and the female as derivation from that norm, always with a concern to protect male property, including wives and daughters.³⁴¹ As such, considering Mary in terms of her Jewish culture then risks relegating her to the position of property.

Gebara firmly argues that during Mary's lifetime, women were viewed as property, she states that,

According to the information we have in the Old Testament, an Israelite woman, from a juridical standpoint, was more thing than person. Before marriage she was under her father's authority. At marriage she became the property of the man her father had chosen to be her husband [...] In all respects the man was more her owner and master than husband or father (Gen.3:16) In relation to the Old Testament, later Judaism moved backward rather than forward, evidencing a virulent contempt for women [...] Woman's body had no value in itself, as her way of being present and communicating in the world, but it was always related to reproduction and conception.³⁴²

Clearly, Mary's primary function here is as a domestic object defined by her reproductive capacity. She is relegated to a life of obedience to her husband in the home. Producing her husband's heirs becomes her clearly defined gender role.³⁴³ Of interest, then, is how Romney Wegner expands Gebara's positioning even further by noting that the level of a woman's personhood was greatly influenced by whatever male owned her reproductive potential.³⁴⁴ Hence, Mary's role and her very identity are bound to her male owner and since Mary and Joseph are pledged to be married, Joseph functions as Mary's owner. It is expected that he should act as a controller to Mary's domestic reproductive future. Mary would be situated firmly under Joseph's authority, and her complete obedience to this male figure was the expected norm. It could be expected then that as with adaptive preference formation,³⁴⁵ mirroring the will of her future husband would boundary Mary's will, especially her reproductive choices.

As the Annunciation concerns an interaction between Mary and a divine agent it could be asked what Mary's religious context may have been. It is most probable that Mary's religious understanding only extended as far as her domestic capacity.³⁴⁶ Otherwise, women were

³⁴¹ Gerald C. Tiffin, "The Problem of Credulity of Women," in *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, vol. 2, ed. Carroll D. Osburn (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007), 407.

³⁴² Gebara, *Mary*, 47-48.

³⁴³ Rawson, "Daily," 10.

³⁴⁴ Judith Romney Wegner, *Chattel or Person: The Status of Women in the Mishnah* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 168.

³⁴⁵ Freire, *Pedagogy*, 47.

³⁴⁶ Tiffin, "Problem," 407.

prohibited from studying the Torah³⁴⁷ and barred from intellectual pursuits.³⁴⁸ Even Hauptman, who promotes a more positive interpretation of women's practical engagement with rabbinic texts, advocates for a religious participation that is always located within a domestic environment,³⁴⁹ and as such fails to establish a vision of womanhood that is outside of male authority. Hauptman is correct, then, in acknowledging that the patriarchal state of Judaism is a given and that many Talmudic laws are disabling for women,³⁵⁰ a point well made by Baskin when she concludes that 'Women did not play a part in the development of rabbinic Judaism, nor were they granted a significant role in that tradition's religious life [...] In rabbinic Judaism, no woman is deemed capable of any direct experience of the divine.'³⁵¹

8.2.3 *Mary: A Radical Woman*

Against this backdrop of Mary's human context, I would argue that the scene of the Annunciation can be better understood as radically counter cultural. Joseph is not present during the Lukan Annunciation, nor is his will sought. Culturally speaking, Mary should not have had independent control over her pregnancy. In fact, it could be argued that independent action in this regard could only be undertaken at great personal risk to herself. By accepting a pregnancy on her own Mary was in danger of being accused of adultery and either killed or divorced for her actions.³⁵² That Mary does not seek Joseph's council and assents to pregnancy alone, could be seen as a courageous reclamation of her reproductive function and an assertion of her own personhood beyond cultural bounds. Indeed, Wright demonstrates the positive implications of a radical imaging of Mary when she states that,

If, on the other hand, Mary subverts male power by sharing volition with God—if she chooses to enter into relationship with the divine—the tradition of piety surrounding devotion to merciful (and maternal) Mary takes a radical turn. By choosing maternity, Mary's assent becomes a personal act that authorizes a unique and agential mothering of child and church. By freeing pregnancy from a power relation that subordinates the feminine to the masculine, Mary liberates pregnancy from its circumscribed passivity. Like Jesus who reverses the Edenic curse and frees humans from social oppression, Mary reverses the material and maternal dimensions of this curse and frees women from embodied objectivity.³⁵³

³⁴⁷ Tiffin, "Problem," 406.

³⁴⁸ Romney Wegner, *Chattel*, 3-6.

³⁴⁹ Judith Hauptman, "The Talmud's Women in Law and Narrative," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues* 28 (2015): 31, DOI: 10.2979/nashim.28.30.

³⁵⁰ Hauptman, "Talmud's," 31.

³⁵¹ Baskin, "Separation," 3.

³⁵² See Exodus 20:14, Leviticus 20:10, Jeremiah 3:6-8, Ezekiel 16:38.

³⁵³ Wright, *Athena*, 17-18.

If, as Wright suggests, Mary is understood as having personally assented to the divine agent, then it can be argued then that she overthrows constraining patriarchal influences towards her autonomous agency. Arguing for the reestablishment of autonomous agency is not to say that Mary actively places herself in competition with her male counterpart. Rather, and much more positively, the oppressive function of patriarchal authority is negated through divine relationality enabling Mary to express freedom in her personhood. In this freedom Mary then chooses to claim authority over her own gender role and function. In such a manner Mary can be seen to demonstrate a subversive level of voluntariness through self-determination and can then be seen to enact both autonomous agency and self-determination. Where both voluntariness and autonomous agency are present an interaction can be deemed to be consensual.

Furthermore, Mary is not isolated from the divine in this interaction, rather she demonstrates that women have the capacity to enter into their own experience of divine encounter. Mary is not excluded from a divine encounter due to her womanhood, instead she enters into a religious engagement which far surpasses her cultural bounds. I would argue further that the model presented here is not one of competition with the divine but rather an experience of non-competitive relationality. Mary does not need to compete with God to maintain her own autonomy, but by choosing to agree alongside the will of the divine agent Mary is empowered in her autonomy. Hence as Storkey argues, 'A theology of Mary based on the biblical text gives a much greater freedom for women than that based on the Church's ideologising.'³⁵⁴ Indeed, the model Mary presents to the contemporary Christian woman is not one of submission but of brave and radical consent which functions to release Mary from oppressive bounds through relationship with God.

8.3 Cooperative Agency

In light of the above, I would argue then that Mary's consent can be seen in the Annunciation only if her interaction with God is understood in terms of relationality. It should not come as a surprise that Gray proposes Mary can be liberated from the role she has been made to play in keeping women passive, inferior, and other. Gray proposes this can be achieved through advancing our understanding of relationality.³⁵⁵ In particular, she holds that new hope can be found for Mary by reinterpreting the relational language. Gray argues that 'We have to reclaim relational language itself. Seen from the perspective of right relation, of justice in relationship, we know that relationships must respect two poles-the integrity and

³⁵⁴ Storkey, "Significance," 197.

³⁵⁵ Gray, "Reclaiming," 336.

self-affirmation of the person, as well as that of interdependence and intersubjectivity.³⁵⁶ I would propose then that an understanding of Mary's consent can be found by considering the agential interaction between Mary as a human agent, and God as divine agent, in the Lukan Annunciation. That is, rather than a violent and competitive interaction Murphy argues that 'Mary's pregnancy is a cooperative exercise with God.'³⁵⁷

The concept of cooperation agency is a relatively new, but influential model of agency that has been proposed by the moral philosopher Bratman. He explores agency with the aim of explaining planned activities within small-scale shared interactions,³⁵⁸ such as the interaction we see between Mary and the divine agent in the Annunciation. Bratman argues that there are certain interpersonal interactions such as singing a duet and painting a house that may require shared cooperative agency.³⁵⁹ His later developments of this theory expand to help explain social interactions such as engaging in conversations, friendship, and love.³⁶⁰ To be considered as shared cooperative activity Bratman argues that the agents involved in the planned activity must have the shared intention of achieving a goal. A strength to this model of agency rests in the fact that it avoids collectivism and maintains the autonomous agency of each individual involved.

Bratman illustrates cooperation well in his description of two agents seeking to perform a duet together, he states, 'I will be trying to be responsive to your intention and actions, knowing that you will be trying to be responsive to my intentions and actions. This mutual responsiveness will be in pursuit of a goal we each have, namely, our singing the duet. You may have this goal for a different reason than I do; but at least we will each have this as a goal.'³⁶¹ In this model of agency, distinct autonomous agents are working towards a goal that they each hold separately but intentionally coordinate to reach. There is an innate interdependency, but personal integrity is maintained. Moreover, Bratman's model suggests that the two acting agents must each choose to interact as they work towards the collective aim. I would suggest then this forms a model of non-competitive autonomous agency which mirrors the feminist model of relational autonomy. With a non-competitive cooperative model, a form of relational agency can be formed that is sympathetic to the feminist aim. Owing to

³⁵⁶ Gray, "Reclaiming," 336.

³⁵⁷ Francesca Aran Murphy, "Mary as 'Omnipotent by Grace,'" in James Schaefer, *Advancing Mariology: The Theotokos Lectures 2008-2017* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2017), 198.

³⁵⁸ Michael Bratman, *Shared Agency: A Planning Theory of Acting Together* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2014), ix.

³⁵⁹ Michael E. Bratman, "Shared Cooperative Activity," *The Philosophical Review* 101, no. 2 (1992): 327
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2185537>.

³⁶⁰ Bratman, *Shared*, 3.

³⁶¹ Bratman, "Cooperative," 327.

the fact that the agents are seen to cooperate, the negative power structure seen in competitive agency is not necessary.

Hence, in this model of shared cooperative agency there are neither dominant or submissive agents and the dangers of competitive social interactions such as coercion and violence are mitigated. Mary is liberated from her subordinate role. This freedom Mary presents to all women is a model of both consent and powerful relationality. As an advancement to this model of cooperative agency I would like to introduce an argument given by Tanner who states, 'A non-competitive relation between creatures and God means that the creature does not decrease so that God may in-crease. The glorification of God does not come at the expense of creatures.'³⁶² Seen thus, a non-competitive understanding of agency allows for a polarity of personal power to be maintained that may be entirely disparate but that does not need to result in domination. The acting agents interact as cooperating partners regardless of whatever external wealth, social status, or even sovereignty they hold in other external situations. In this way, the aim of each individual is met through cooperation and mutual trust not dominance and submission.

8.4 Collaborative Agency

I wish to propose a further advancement beyond cooperative agency towards a model of collaborative agency. Collaboration is a concept that is gaining popularity particularly as it pertains to teamwork in the workplace and within the technological sector.³⁶³ Numerous popular articles have been published on the subject, yet few scholarly sources have followed suit.³⁶⁴ Although the terms cooperation and collaboration are often used interchangeably in the past these popular sources propose they are distinct entities. A key differentiating factor between cooperation and collaboration is the locus of goals. For instance, in Bratman's model of shared cooperative agency each acting agent retains goals individually while working together to attain them. Thus, in a collaborative team, individuals work together

³⁶² Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 2-3.

³⁶³ Tara Matthews, Steve Whittaker, Thomas Moran, and Sandra Yuen, "Collaboration Personas: A New Approach to Designing Workplace Collaboration Tools," in *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (New York: Association for Computing Machinery, 2011), 2247-2256, DOI: 10.1145/1978942.1979272.

³⁶⁴ For examples of discussions on Collaboration in popular sources see Indeed Editorial Team, "Collaborate vs. Cooperate: Definitions and Differences," October 1, 2022, Accessed September 10, 2023, URL: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/collaborate-vs-cooperate>; Lynda Gratton, and Tamara J. Erickson. "Eight ways to build collaborative teams." *Harvard Business Review* 85, no. 11 (2007): 100; Robert A. Hargrove. *Mastering the Art of Creative Collaboration*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998); Radina Skortcheva, "The Difference Between Collaboration and Cooperation," March 27 2023, Accessed September 10 2023, URL: <https://www.brosix.com/blog/difference-between-collaboration-and-cooperation>.

towards a common goal which is achieved through the collective sharing of ideas, resources, and effort leading to a more efficient and productive working environment. In this way, collaboration allows for goals to be reached that cannot be attained alone. Hence, the free adoption of a common goal by autonomous agents forms the starting place for a model of collaborative agency.

Consider for example two people rock climbing together with the common goal of reaching a summit. Each climber climbs individually, the hand and footholds they choose on the rock face are not likely to be the same, and even the reasons they have for participating in the climb may not be the same. However, their goal is united: they want to go to the top. As they climb, the roles that they fulfil to reach this goal will differ, likely one will lead, one will belay, but these roles are interconnected. The climbers are both literally and figuratively roped together. To reach the summit they must work together, they cannot reach their goal alone.

Hence in collaborative agency, each agent acts to advance with their partner towards the common goal. If Mary and God are seen to interact in this way Mary retains her personal power, autonomy, and self-determination without the need to either be dominated by, or reduce, God's supremacy. Although God possesses an unquantifiable level of personal power in comparison to a human agent, such as Mary, what is demonstrated through a non-competition is a mutuality of engagement. Therefore, a non-competitive collaborative interaction between Mary and God demonstrates a power structure that does not seek to dominate or oppress. I argue, then, that only in an agential interaction that allows for mutual relationship could Mary be free to fully consent while God fully acts. It therefore follows that in a collaborative environment both a united and autonomous agency of will is enacted by each acting agent. In this case, it can be agreed alongside Jenson that, 'By what will and power did Mary conceive? If we are to follow the suggestions of Luke's narrative, the answer must be double.'³⁶⁵ Collaboration overcomes competition and allows for consensual relational agency to be enacted. Mary chooses God, just as God chooses Mary. Together they choose the embodiment of Christ. I conclude then that a collaborative understanding of the agential interaction between Mary and the divine is fundamental in enabling consent to occur.

³⁶⁵ Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology: Vol. 2: The Works of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 200.

Chapter: 9 Conclusion

9.1 Summary

In conclusion, this research has explored the multifaceted factors that constrain an individual's autonomy and voluntariness, ultimately limiting their capacity to consent. Throughout this investigation, the significance of viewing interactions between acting agents as either competitive or non-competitive has emerged as a pivotal determinant of the constraints on consent. Acting as a female archetype for all women, I have particularly scrutinised Daly's portrayals of Mary derived from the Annunciation. As a result of analysing Daly's Marian images this research has identified multiple external influences that constrain Mary's ability to exercise autonomous agency and voluntariness. Primary among these limiting factors are gender inequalities, the subordination of women, the interconnectedness of power-based gender dynamics and violence, and coercion.

In summation, the perpetuation of competitive agency between genders, epitomised by the idealisation of female submission particularly in Mariology results in a restriction of female autonomous agency. Limitations to female autonomy and voluntariness have far-reaching implications. Indeed, the portrayal of Mary as submissive reinforces the perception of women as inferior within the Church. As such, the ideation that women should emulate a submissive portrayal of Mary entrenches a self-perpetuating oppressive system wherein women are expected to conform to and adopt submissive gender roles.

Such a cycle of female submission is particularly concerning when combined with male-dominated power structures. Female subordination can be seen to heighten the potential for violence against women, as evidenced by alarming statistics on domestic violence and sexual abuses within Evangelical Christian communities. Arguably, then, a competitive understanding of gender power structures fuels such violence, representing a severe erosion of women's autonomy. Additionally, when Mary is denied the capacity to exercise self-determination she can be seen to be restricted in terms of her voluntariness, opening the divine-human interaction to accusations of violence and coercion. In essence, when Mary is portrayed as a female agent compelled by gender-based weakness, it inadvertently spreads a misogynistic narrative that undermines the standing of women in the Church and society at large. This highlights the critical need for a paradigm shift towards gender equality and non-competitive interactions to protect and empower women within Christian communities.

Moreover, I have assessed Marian images that have historically impacted the ideation of womanhood and found that they have often functioned to limit consent. I would propose that a reimagining of the Marian image is necessary to guide discussions of consent into the future. The importance of reassessing the Marian image is demonstrated by Johnson who recognises the impact it will have on women in the Christian community, she states that,

It seems a sure judgement to say that the future of the Marian tradition is closely tied with the future history of women in the church, and that it will be regenerated or remain collapsed of its own weight depending in large measure on what happens in that history. A renewed Marian tradition will be credible only in a church which recognises and embodies in theory and practice the full dimensions of the dignity of women... Ultimately, what is at stake in this question is not only the redirection of the tradition about Mary, but the search for our common humanity: the essence of woman, of man, and of redeemed humanity, the church itself.³⁶⁶

The historical human Mary like the Mary of Mariology faced dominant and oppressive patriarchal forces, just as women today both inside and outside of the Christian community face gender power structures that have led to inequality and violence. In a search for common humanity this cannot continue to occur. Therefore, it is in a non-competitive representation of the interactions between Mary and God that the basis of consent can be observed. It follows, then, that to overcome systems of gender oppression and ensure the consensual future of women in the Christian community we can move towards a vision of a redemptive community which promotes non-competitive agency. When women can be seen to engage in relational interactions that do not place them in competition with their male counterparts, the divine, or even other women, a redemptive vision of autonomous agency and voluntariness can be found. In this non-competitive Marian image, future women within the church are empowered not suppressed.

9.1.1 Looking to the Future

Furthermore, looking to the future, a non-competitive imagining of agential interactions can be applied beyond male-female interactions. If we look beyond gender and take Mary as a human archetype, she becomes representative of universal human experience.³⁶⁷ If the Annunciation forms a model for either cooperative or collaborative agency, then non-competitive interactions form a broad model of relational consent. Therefore, a non-competitive understanding of agent interactions has wide reaching implications for how we interpret relationality into the future between human-human and human-divine interactions. Perhaps even human-ecological, and human-technological interactions can be

³⁶⁶ Elizabeth Johnson, "The Marian Tradition and the Reality of Women," *Horizons* (December 1, 1985): 135.

³⁶⁷ Ruether, *Sexism*, 13.

reevaluated. As such, Mary demonstrates that within agential interactions a mutuality of engagement free from oppression and subjugation is possible, offering a vision of a more inclusive future.

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