


# Blackness and Whiteness separated: A political theology after the subject-object relation

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Political theology is a socio-critical theology with its face towards the world. The formations of the matrix of power in the world are produced by coloniality and its dynamics outworked in the world. Thus, based on this meaning of political theology, there is a possibility to use political theology to critique the ways of knowing and being, and face the world to see a hope in theology. Furthermore, political theology allows socio-political critique outside the colonial paradigm. This article seeks to detail the colonial subject-object paradigm as well as how Whiteness is intrinsically connected to 'the other', Blackness. Additionally, it discusses the different iterations of politicised theology in South Africa – a process of a disengaged and decolonial political theology. Finally, it proposes a decolonial process of politicised theology using South African knowledge systems and theologising in order to disable the paradigm for the liberating possibilities of both sides of the colonial paradigm.

**Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications:** The article is interdisciplinary as it looks at theological reflection as well as philosophy, sociology and anthropology in decolonial scholarship. This article aligns with the scope of the journal as it creates a conversation around political theology and the possibility for a liberatory political theology from South Africa.

**Keywords:** political theology; colonialism; coloniality; decolonialism; justice.

## Introduction

Colonialism has had an impact on episteme across the globe. In Africa, there are some changes which have been recorded from colonialism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015:485). One is that colonialism changed African conception of economy and pulled the continent into the world's economy based on capitalism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015:485). Additionally, Africa was forcefully partitioned during the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885 (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015:486). Moreover, these partitioned nations were incorporated into Eurocentric culture, languages, dissemination of information, law and moral order (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015:486). Overall, the world and Africa's epistemologies were suppressed and forced to take on the image of European ontology. Alongside this history is the formation of political theology in Europe.

Political theology initially was formed by both Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians (Lawrence 2005:7244). The impetus was to come to terms with secularisation in western culture in the 1960s (Lawrence 2005:7244). By 1970s, political theology was seen to have developed in two strains, in developed nations and developing nations (Lawrence 2005:7245). Lawrence states that leading scholars in Europe doing political theology (such as J.B. Metz and Jürgen Moltmann) characterise this theological endeavour as the interpretation of God in a practical and political way (2005:7245).

Additionally, political theology has multiple processes, according to the discipline's scholars. One way to read political theology is seeing it as the process of studying an extremely large range of issues on the complex relationships between politics, theology and religion (Bernstein 2013:33). Furthermore, political theology can also be viewed as a socio-critical theology with its face towards the world (Van Wyk 2015). As communicated by Ndlovu-Gatsheni, the formations of the matrix of power in the world are produced by coloniality and its dynamics outworked in the world (2015:487). Since the political and practical have been affected by this coloniality, there is a need to develop epistemological processes to disengage from this matrix of power towards an Africa-centred political theology. If political theology is to critique the ways of knowing and being, and face the world to see a hope in theology (Van Wyk 2015), then processes can be developed to develop

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humanity outside the colonial paradigm. This article details the colonial paradigm and the subject-object relation. Furthermore, the subject-object relation is expanded using the systemic terms of 'Blackness' and 'Whiteness', as well as how Whiteness is intrinsically connected to 'the other', which is Blackness. As a Black woman on the underbelly of the colonial paradigm, decolonial work is needed. The article proposes a decolonised political theological process (using South African knowledge systems and theologising) in order to disable the political theology based on a Eurocentric paradigm for the liberating possibilities of both sides of the colonial paradigm.

## Methodology

This research article employs a qualitative methodology. It uses literature in the areas of political theology, *ubuntu* studies, decolonial studies and Black theology of liberation. Furthermore, this article has an epistemology founded in interpretivism in order to analyse the colonial paradigm and construct a possible political theology outside of the colonial paradigm.

## The colonial paradigm, subject-object relation and de-linking

As mentioned in the introduction, there is a relation of direct, political, social and cultural domination which was established by European nations across the world (Quijano 2007:168). This domination is known as Eurocentric colonialism (Quijano 2007:168). Across the world, the active formal colonial domination has largely ended (Quijano 2007:168) and has been replaced by new republics and independent nations. However, the formal system has a successor. Quijano names the successor western imperialism, which is a dynamic of countries having unequal power rather than a formal system of imposition from a colonial force (2007:168).

Quijano states that, initially, colonialism was a product of systematic subjugation of indigenous beliefs, ideas, images and knowledge systems that were not useful for the furthering of colonial domination (2007:169). Concurrently, colonisers were expropriating knowledge from the colonised such as mining, agriculture, engineering, food and fruit (Quijano 2007:169). The suppression was over modes of knowing, producing knowledge and resources, and was followed by the imposition of the use of the colonisers' forms of expression, beliefs and images, particularly when referencing the supernatural (Quijano 2007:169). The imposed beliefs and images impeded cultural production of the colonised, but also provided social and cultural control when the repression stopped being legally applied (Quijano 2007:169).

Quijano coins the second oppression beyond colonialism as coloniality (2007:169). This second repression, or coloniality, exists beyond the formalities of colonial administrations which have ended in many countries (Quijano 2007:169–171).

Furthermore, Quijano remarks that there has been a 'Eurocentricification' of the world and knowledge production

(2007:171). This 'Eurocentricification' allowed formations of stratifications of identities existing in the colonial formations of knowledge and reality (2007:171).

The European forms of knowledge developed stratifications founded on what is called the subject-object relation (Quijano 2007:172). The relation assumes that there is a 'subject' (Eurocentric and based in the Cartesian 'cogito, ergo sum'), which is a classification referring to a solitary individual that exists in and for itself in the relation and in its power of reflection (Quijano 2007:172). Moreover, the object in this relation is a grouping referring to an entity (which is not necessarily always an individual) that differs from the subject and is peripheral to the subject by its very nature (Quijano 2007:172). Moreover, the object, according to the relation, is an entity made up by properties ascertained by the subject, which grants its identity and outlines it (Quijano 2007:172). The identity classifiers describe the object and, at the same time, situates it in relation to other objects (Quijano 2007:172). Therefore, this subject-object relation does not offer any space for the identity or knowledge production of the object outside the relation (Quijano 2007:172). The subject bears reason and knowledge, while the object is 'nature' being studied always within the said relation (Quijano 2007:172–173).

Because of the existing colonialism and coloniality, decolonial thinking developed from the 16th century in order to respond and resist western imperialism and its products (Mignolo 2011:3). Since the 1970s, there has been increasing discussions around knowledge being colonised (Mignolo 2007:450). Scholars like Quijano have made links between the power to the concept of coloniality of knowledge (Mignolo 2007:451). Mignolo discusses Quijano's work on decoloniality, further stating that, 'The de-colonial shift, in other words, is a project of de-linking while post-colonial criticism and theory is a project of scholarly transformation within the academy' (2007:452). In discussing de-linking in decolonial scholarship, there is the separation of 'emancipation' and 'liberation' (Mignolo 2007:454). Mignolo challenges the concept of emancipation, stating that it belongs to the discourse of the European enlightenment scholarship and is still used today within that tradition (Mignolo 2007:454). Liberation, on the other hand, serves the aim of decolonisation and relates to 'two different and interrelated struggles: the political and economic decolonisation and the epistemological decolonisation' (Mignolo 2007:454). Mignolo argues that the concepts of both 'liberation' and 'decolonisation' point towards conceptual (and therefore epistemic) projects of de-linking from the colonial set up of knowledge and power (2007:455). Moreover, Mignolo states that in order to de-link from the colonial matrix of power and the logic on coloniality, it is important to engage in peripheral epistemologies and alternatives to modernity (2007:456–457). Liberation is needed and the larger project of decoloniality involves the colonised and the coloniser (Mignolo 2007:456–457).

The decolonial process is needed to disengage the subject-object relation. This decolonial thinking will be discussed with regard to political theology further on in the article. The proceeding section discusses the colonial subject-object relation reflected in Blackness and Whiteness.

### Blackness and Whiteness: A bloody connection

The subject-object relation mentioned earlier can be seen in the relation between Blackness and Whiteness. Modernity and its formation of colonial matrix of power created ontological and epistemological disruptions happening over time. These disruptions led to the formation of rational knowledge. This knowledge, known as supreme, was shown in the body and mind of the White person.

Carter et al. (2007) labelled the systemic knowledge, or Whiteness, as:

... a hegemonic system that perpetuates certain dominant ideologies about who receives power and privilege. Whiteness maintains itself in cultures through power dynamics within language, religion, class, race relations, sexual orientation, etc. (p. 152)

In the wake of rising awareness across the world, scholars have engaged the concept of Whiteness. Sheppard discusses Whiteness in relation to 'state-level response to national political movements to decentre Whiteness in American social studies education' (2023:1). She discusses the form of Whiteness, saying it is the centre of a racial social order and works to maintain hegemonic structures (Sheppard 2023:3). Furthermore, Whiteness is always either propagating ideologies embedded in White supremacy or making itself invisible (Sheppard 2023:3). Moreover, it is a concept that is seemingly invisible to White people who, in most cases, are unable to note the racial social order that provides privilege in varying systems and dynamics in society (Sheppard 2023:3). It must be stated that Whiteness is not one and the same with White people (Sheppard 2023:3). Rather, it is the way in which human beings, commonly White people, act out racism in ways that consciously and unconsciously undergird systems of White supremacy (Sheppard 2023:3). The capacity of Whiteness to survive, founded in the subject-object relation, is the result of continued White investment, intentional or not, in the status quo (Sheppard 2023:3). Mathias and Newlove state that Whiteness 'encompasses ideologies ... emotions ... rhetoric ... symbolism ... and speech ... that, upon its expression, is used to dominate or control a populace without even actively acknowledging such domination' (2017:317). In post-apartheid South Africa, Van Wyngaard states that Whiteness is hard to pin down (2019:7), but is surely political in nature (2019:6). Also, it has its own inner logic (further linking with the concept of the colonial matrix of power) and has a certain commitment to oppression of others (Van Wyngaard 2019:8). Van Wyngaard, as a theologian, discusses the inherent enfolding of racialisation within theology and that theology is being discussed and done within the colonial paradigm (2019:57). Theology, then, may sometimes contain a colonial distortion of the Christian imagination (Van Wyngaard 2019:57).

Thus, Sheppard, Mathias and Newlove and Van Wyngaard share similarities of their views of Whiteness: it displays itself in different ways systemically in societies; it works for the oppression of the other and honouring White supremacy. Also, Whiteness is not outside of theology, but rather theology exists within this colonial paradigm.

This hegemonic system finds its roots in the subject-object relation, where all things labelled and viewed as inherently 'White' or Eurocentric, whether pop music, common conceptions of beauty or straight hair, are the subject, deity and height of all existence. Blackness, on the other hand, lies at the underbelly of this hegemony.

In his book, *The Souls of Black Folk* (originally published in 1903), W.E.B. Du Bois (2007) states:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, – a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. (p. 8)

There have been scholars that have proclaimed that this assertion by Du Bois shows how Whiteness prevents Black people from experiencing full humanity outside of the other (Phadi 2021:53). While other scholars state that this statement was based in the American Black middle class need for upward mobility; there are other cases of a double or multiple consciousness (Phadi 2021:53). Phadi makes a case in South Africa for multiple consciousness (2021:53). While Du Bois discusses a double consciousness, Phadi states that there is a multiple consciousness for the Black middle class in South Africa. This multiple consciousness is a fluid production and reproduction of what it means to be Black in order to subvert the 'otherness', Blackness in history (Phadi 2021:69). She states that some have liberties that have allowed access to things of Whiteness, which means there may be a multiple consciousness, however, not fully attaining the fullness of being the subject (Phadi 2021:70). Black people who have entered the middle class in South Africa have access to certain items involved in systems of Whiteness, but still do not have the ontological shape of the ultimate person reflected in Whiteness which is a reflection of supremacy and Eurocentrism, and is based on European ideals and thought processes. Furthermore, she says that 'being Black' among Black elites in South Africa needs the attainment of certain items to keep social currency but subverts the views of those behind the Whiteness veil (Phadi 2021:70). In explaining the Christian mission enterprise, Mothoagae explains that object relation of Blackness was infused in the salvation experience (2021:3). When looking at the object and everything it represents as 'Blackness', Black bodies were seen as not only needed for spiritual change and salvation but object of infusion of Eurocentric views and ideals (Mothoagae 2021:3). Therefore, Christianity was used in certain ways as a

disciplinary power to advance the colonial paradigm (Mothoagae 2021:3).

In the object of the subject-object relation, Blackness is seen as that which is not the dominant 'White' or Eurocentric in nature, performance (Mills 1998:152) and spirituality. Furthermore, Blackness is the reflection of 'the other' in those who cannot fit in the subject category in intersecting ways, from ways of thinking to cultural ways of being in community to religion.

In essence, Blackness is that which cannot be supreme in the subject-object relation. It is an identity created by the subject for those it deems beneath it. The identity bestowed on this 'other' is forcefully given and allows no expression of difference outside the relation unless there is deep resistance. Blackness as identity is meant to crush the identified through the giving of an inferior identity; however, many ideologies and theologies have been created (one can rather say reclaimed) in order to resist the inferiority applied by the subject.

One point, interestingly, is also pursued in some works mentioned previously: freedom from the relation is not only available for the object (Black people) but the subject as well (White people). Whiteness, or the subject of the relation, is deeply entrenched in deified identities, and these identities block the humanising of the subject. In being deified, the subject is not human and has to live at the totem pole of existence to survive in the relation. There is a need to humanise those at the totem pole of the relation and run the systems of Whiteness. Furthermore, the objects, seen as the other and being Blackness, must gain liberation. This liberation must entail the freedom to live outside Whiteness' systems. Therefore, the subject-object relation is a bloody connection, bleeding both subject and object of their humanity. This revelation in no way takes away the accountability those who enforce the relation should have. With Christianity being part of the White hegemony, and this bloody connection continuously working death-dealing measures, one must ask if there are possibilities in political theology for liberation for those in the dynamic. The next section discusses the varying views of political theology from a number of scholars and a new relation for the future.

## **Political theology: Origins, descriptions and a definition for a post subject-object relation future**

### **Political theology origins**

As mentioned before, political theology is interdisciplinary and engages theology and politics.

Carl Schmitt is known as a scholar who largely influenced the conceptualisation of 'political theology'. Schmitt discusses that political theory is undergirded by theologisation, saying that all important concepts of the theory of the state are theological concepts that are secularised (1985:36). Also, the concepts are transferred

from theology to the theory of the state such as how the omnipotent God becomes in state theory the omnipotent lawgiver (Schmitt 1985:36).

German theologians, such as Jürgen Moltmann (identifying as Reformed) and Johann Baptist Metz (a Catholic) have furthered work on the concept of political theology (Ullrich 2022:14). Ullrich's reading of Metz is one of an eschatological political theology which creates a hermeneutic for societies today (2022:13). Moltmann, a systematic theologian, has written on the politics of the world through the concept of a crucified God (1993). In the work on the crucified God, he describes that there should be a theology that has public strength to address the social issues of different contexts (Moltmann 1993:201). With these origins, there have been a multiplicity of views on the description of political theology.

### **Political theology descriptions**

Bernstein discusses the links between religion and politics by stating that there is no escape from political theology because of these links (2013:38). The discussion of politics and theologised is furthered by García-Alonso who discusses Calvin's epistemological foundation of the bibliocracy (2021:541). Bibliocracy is when the Bible is the head of the city (García-Alonso 2021:541). Furthermore, Garcia-Alonso argues that Calvin is a pioneer of democratic constitutionalism and theocrat (2021:542). Calvin has interest in political theory but this is minor in relation to him trying to create a new ecclesiastical model that can replace Catholicism (García-Alonso 2021:542). Overall, these scholars have pointed towards theology and politics being interlinked, using human ability to locate and engage a higher power as founding parts of each concept.

Van Wyk mentions a broad definition of the study of political theology. Van Wyk (2019) chooses a broad approach to defining political theology, stating the following:

A broad definition of political theology includes the way in which the theological and the political impinge upon one another and the 'daily, material concerns that threaten to disintegrate both individual bodies and communal bodies of people'. Political theology as a focus of Christian theology pertains to an inquiry carried out by Christian theologians in relation to the political in which 'political' is broadly defined to include the different ways human beings order their common life, the things that make for the flourishing of human beings and the ordering of life to promote flourishing ... (p. 136)

Van Wyk implores that political theology is the discussion and critique of the different ways humans order their lives, including in their spirituality and their identities.

Schüssler Fiorenza speaks of a more classical conception explored that conveys seeking out the right and just life (1977:143). Furthermore, the classic concept focussed on praxis and not the technical (Schüssler Fiorenza 1977:143). Thus, according to Schüssler Fiorenza, political theology, then, is focussed on the search for a good and just life, which is based on praxis and prudence (1977:144). There

are varying thoughts on the foundations of political theology; however, there are similar discussions on the links of politics and theology and that political theology involves the discussion of the human life and how to better it. The next section discusses the history of politicised theology in South Africa.

### South Africa and the issue of politicised theology

South Africa is a unique case study as the term 'political theology' is not widely used. However, the application engagement between political theory and theology has existed and continues to exist (Ullrich 2022). The engagement of politics and theology can be seen through the theologisation of the apartheid regime. The *Afrikaner* national identity formed in the 19th and 20th centuries created philosophical, religious and political boundaries between *Afrikaners* and other identities in South Africa (Ullrich 2022:20). A distinct nationalist and colonial lens of Calvinism was formed by Dutch Calvinist and politician Abraham Kuyper (Ullrich 2022:20). This Calvinism alongside the *Afrikaner* was used to develop the apartheid theology, which promoted nationalistic and exclusive hermeneutics and ways of being, and used state structures for implementation (Ullrich 2022:20).

Liberation theologies, formed through the need to resist colonial and apartheid regimes, began to develop in the 20th century (Ullrich 2022:19). In South Africa, the Black theology of liberation formed and theologians like Allan Boesak and Takatso Mofokeng (Ullrich 2022:18) used the Black condition (the condition of the 'other') as a critical hermeneutical lens. Interestingly, at the dawn of democracy, a new politicised theology arose called public theology (Martin 2020). Public theology formed in American scholarship in the early 1970s (Martin 2020:3). With the new South Africa forming questions around the need for resistance, public theology grew in traditionally Afrikaans universities like the University of Stellenbosch and the University of Pretoria (Martin 2020). Public theology is described as theology formed in and for the public square, and is a facilitator of global ethics manifesting in local sites (Martin 2020:5). Martin explains it as, '... a new paradigm for connecting the theological tradition formed in South Africa during the struggle years to the new, public realities' (2020:9). Furthermore, public theology is seen as having the ability to absorb different theological currents (Martin 2020:9). However, scholars as part of liberation theology had and have suspicions towards public theology. Maluleke states that public theology claims the vision of the 'rainbow nation' without engaging the continued reality of the Black condition (2011:88–89). Furthermore, he states that it claims the postmodern lens, rather than the Global South's postcolonial one and lacks the resistance needed for liberation (Maluleke 2011:86–88).

Overall, South African theology has been politicised. It contains nationalist and resistant tones while also attempting to partner with Global North ideations such as public theology. However, some in the Global South continue to

rule out public theology because of its lack of resistance to the continued status quo. Ullrich explains that there are three possibilities for the future of political theology, particularly in South Africa (2022:24). The first is a 'critical public theology' (this political theology would have a continuation of the liberal democratic arrangement but engaged in critique) (Ullrich 2022:24). The second would be a 'theopolitical' theology that is involved in the political-secular landscape while marking the church as the site for counter-politics (Ullrich 2022:24). The final would be a negative political theology, which would be committed to critique of both politics and theology (Ullrich 2022:24). The following section makes a case for a decolonial process of political (or now politicised) theology from a South African lens.

### Possibilities of political theology outside the subject-object relation's paradigm

Poljarevic (2023) states that the political events since coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) have created a need for new imaginaries with regard to political theology. He states that these events:

revealed the inadequacies of such traditional solutions, including democratic deliberations, wide-scale public reasoning, the balance of power and deterrence, large-scale transnational negotiations between/among sovereign nations and transnational organizations, and signing treaties and cooperation deals.... If we were to allow ourselves to perceive this gloomy picture as being pregnant with a novel set of imaginaries and political opportunities, we could also allow some liberties in presenting how they can be understood from a variety of perspectives. The wide lens of political theology can provide a range of imaginaries that could help us consider and perhaps even start to, at least theoretically, resolve some of these emergencies – on global, regional, and local levels. (p. 1)

Van Wyk discusses political theology as the discussion of the political on the theological and vice versa. Now, if one was to claim the conceptual framework of the search for a good and just life in praxis and discussion of the theological and political, then political theology must engage the issue of the subject-object relation. The dominant conceptual frameworks of capitalism, individualism, racism, and many other isms find their heartbeat in the subject-object relation. The discussion of political or politicised theology has not yet endeavoured to disengage the subject-object relation on both ends. A political theology after colonial dispensations must seek to critique and unravel these frameworks and the subject-object relation itself. Can this be done? What are the possibilities of a political theology beyond the relation?

It is here, then, that I must mention that this article comes from the mind of one on the underbelly of the relation, a Black woman in theology. If Fiorenza and Van Wyk's definitions of political theology are to be taken seriously, political theology must engage the subject-object relation and its products in order to see justice and righteousness in the world. With this in mind, political theology must have some key characteristics. Firstly, political theology must be based on the exploration of differing polities or cultural expressions of community. Many have named political theology as a

critical theology, or one that engages the public square (hence the growth of public theology in South Africa). Furthermore, many academic fracas have occurred on offering political theology as a stand in or replacement for liberating theologies such as Black theology of liberation. Van Wyk discusses that political theology has changed because of the rise of liberation theologies in the Global South, which are changing the shape of political theology (Van Wyk 2019:136–137).

Vellem discusses the unfitting nature of Black theology of liberation in global theology discussions. He states that Black theology of liberation has been rejected because of its socialist and deeply contextual nature (Vellem 2017:4). The starting point of Black theology of liberation is Black people and that the social analysis of Blackness is key in the theology (Vellem 2017:4). There is no way to build a contextual theology without connecting with the situation of a people and their country (Vellem 2017:4). Vellem (2017) discusses the de-linking from western theology that seeks to be 'global' or universal by saying:

[T]he argument that BTL is foreign and socialist, flies in the face of a White theologian who cannot succeed to detach any of the doyens of Western theology from their context, whether Karl Barth, Georg Wilhelm Hegel or Jürgen Habermas and their situations. Are they not Swiss or German, respectively? One cannot use theology as a tool of neutrality in the face of an evil such as racism and apartheid. (p. 4)

Moreover, Black theology of liberation is seen as a new paradigm with a new grammar of doing theology (Vellem 2017:6). Black theology of liberation is a commitment 'to a different politics with the view to liberating Black people from White supremacy and superiority' (Vellem 2017:6).

The colonial paradigm in the subject-object relation demands there be a fracas, that there must be a winning 'political' theology. Political theologies post the colony must disengage from this relation. Instead of the continuing subversion of others for the sake of the subject and discussions of 'universal' 'political theologies', there must be a process of theologies being their own subjects in their own contexts. The fracas between public and Black theology should rather be disengaged. Black theology of liberation is part of the de-linking project and the honouring of Blackness beyond being an object. Public theology can also play its own part if it disengages from the view of being 'universal' and therefore in many ways is linked to supremacy. Therefore, one possibility is various political theologies for differing politics and contexts.

Secondly, political theologies must exist in varying ontologies. 'I think therefore I am' has run theologising for centuries. Can bodies, souls and hearts carry theologising as well? Of course! One example is in the *ubuntu* ontology.

One of the ontologies outside the relation is *ubuntu*. *Ubuntu*, a Zulu word that cannot be fully translated to English, is also called care ethics (Chisale 2018). *Ubuntu* ontology suggests

some sense of homogeneous culture in Southern Africa based on caregiving (Chisale 2018) within community. Metz states that this conceptual formation of *ubuntu* declares that there is intrinsic value in humanity that needs honour (2007:n.p.). However, as a Black Zulu woman, I must state that *ubuntu* gives further than the recognition of humanity. *Ubuntu* is also the recognition of the 'other' as human as well. The ontological concept of *ubuntu* is based on common care with no individual existing outside the community and vice versa. Furthermore, it is dynamic and seeks life for all in communities that engage the ontology. Kobe discusses *ubuntu* in relation to Black theology shown by Steve Biko. Kobe (2022) states that:

Biko coined Black consciousness as a philosophy developed from African culture, history, and spirituality. Its basic tenet of sharing, communal living, human integrity and dignity, and respect for people's property, land, and culture is the philosophy of *ubuntu*. (p. 599)

Kobe engages *ubuntu* ontology and its theologisation and states that political discussions in South Africa included engaging the characteristics of *ubuntu*. This reveals an act of theologising alongside Eurocentric political systems and using an African-based ontology.

A number of African ontologies call for existing as a marker for life. There must be a radical refusal to engage western and Eurocentric ways of theologising as the only paths to developing theologies of politics, life and justice. Also, there must be a radical disengagement of 'universality' by those claiming Eurocentric ways of being and knowing. This includes the recognitions of ontologies outside the colonial paradigm that engage embodiment of the historically silenced. There must be involvement of feeling, emotion, bodies and creation in the theologisation process, particularly political or politicised theology. These theological lenses and knowledge systems can be used as processors for disengagement. The disengagement is not only for those on the underbelly, but those at the totem pole as well. There is the possibility for subjects in the subject-object relation to disengage their central role in political or politicised theologies. The subjects need to be human, not supreme in the writing and doing of theology. In doing so, subjects should claim humanity rather than being little gods and offer the possibility to create theologies based on God and not themselves.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, there are possibilities of processes of disengagement in political theology. Political theology has been conceptualised in many ways over the last few decades. However, the classic concept of political theology (that seeks to set things right) creates an opportunity to discuss the multitude of possibilities for political theology beyond the subject-object relation. The subject-object relation holds the subject and the object in a dynamic that dehumanises. Seeking a political theology undergirded by justice and the disentanglement of the subject-object relation offers possibilities of living for the now and future.

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