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# Eco-theological Reconstruction of Minjung Theology in the Anthropocene Era: Transcendence of Han and Responsive Subjectivity

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## Abstract

Modern society confronts an ecological crisis rooted in anthropocentrism and industrial civilization, defining the Anthropocene. Philosophical responses such as “flat ontology” challenge human privilege by placing all beings on equal footing. While this exposes exploitative structures, it risks erasing human ethical responsibility by reducing humans to mere nodes. This tension directly challenges Minjung theology, which centers God’s historical intervention on the Minjung as subject. Critics dismiss this as humanist residue, and attempts to expand Minjung to nonhumans risk diluting its theological weight.

This paper seeks to reclaim Minjung subjectivity ecologically without falling into anthropocentric hierarchy or flat reductionism. First, it grounds Minjung subjectivity in han (恨), the existential site where suffering and material reality converge. Han provides a framework beyond the binary of human agency versus determinism, articulating subjectivity through lived pain and historical reality. Second, the paper develops solidarity with nonhuman beings through the “event of han.” This event reconfigures human–nonhuman relations not as hierarchy but as transcendence, constituted by ethical responsiveness to wounds of the other.

The argument unfolds in three parts: a critique of new materialism’s limitations in anchoring ethical accountability; a tracing of Minjung subjectivity from the socio-cultural and bodily reality of han; and a demonstration of solidarity and responsibility toward nonhumans through han’s transcendent event.

In conclusion, Minjung theology remains vital. Far from outdated humanism, it offers an ecological-theological horizon for the Anthropocene. By grounding subjectivity in han and its ethical event, Minjung theology provides a robust framework for responsibility, solidarity, and interconnectedness.

## Keywords

Anthropocene, Flat Ontology, Minjung Theology, Han (恨), Subjectivity, Nonhuman Others, Event of Transcendence.

## 1. Introduction

Modern society is facing an unprecedented ecological crisis produced by an anthropocentric worldview and industrial civilization—namely, the challenge of the Anthropocene. In this context, recent philosophical debates have sought an alternative by way of flat ontology, which dismantles human privilege and places all beings on an equal plane. Attempts to connect all entities within a flattened network are significant insofar as they expose the structures of natural exploitation generated by anthropocentric thought by removing hierarchical distinctions between humans and nonhumans. At the same time, however, by treating humans as simply one being among others, flat ontology risks dispersing or even erasing specifically human

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ethical responsibility.

For this reason, flat-ontological approach poses a serious challenge to Minjung theology. From the standpoint of flat ontology, Minjung theology—because it explains God’s historical intervention and the mode of salvation through the concept of the Minjung as a “subject”—is often misunderstood as a residue of modern, human-centered (humanist) thought. It is within this setting that proposals have emerged to expand the concept of Minjung to nonhuman beings and to understand their suffering in parallel with human agency, as a response to the charge that Minjung subjectivity remains anthropocentric.

Against the backdrop of flat-ontological philosophy addressing the Anthropocene, this paper investigates how Minjung theology can ecologically reclaim Minjung subjectivity. This task can be divided into two aims. First, it seeks to clarify the theological validity of the core Minjung-theological notion of “Minjung subject” by grounding it in Minjung’s han (恨). Subjectivity, the paper argues, should not be determined through a binary choice between idea and matter; rather, it must be articulated through han, the point at which both are integrally received and held together. Second, once Minjung subjectivity is clarified through han, solidarity with and responsibility toward nonhuman others must be explicated through the concept of event generated by han. The “event of han” rethinks human–nonhuman relations not as a hierarchy of superiority and subordination, but as an event of transcendence constituted by responding to the wounds of the other.

Accordingly, the main body of the paper (1) critically analyzes the philosophical implications and limitations of new materialism in the Anthropocene; (2) clarifies the process by which the key concept of “Minjung subjectivity” is derived from the meaning of han; and (3) argues that the Minjung subject’s solidarity with and responsibility toward nonhuman others are manifested in han’s transcendent event. In conclusion, this paper contends that Minjung theology should not be regarded as a remnant of modern humanism. Rather, precisely under the constrained conditions in which ecological crisis is addressed through flatness’ anti-anthropocentrism, Minjung theology contains an immanent ecological-theological horizon—one that responds to suffering in the Anthropocene.

## II. Han, Dan, and Self-transcendence

### 1. Against Flatness

The global ecological crisis of the Anthropocene announces the end of modern humanism, which made the human the measure of all things. As a philosophical response, flat ontology has emerged as an umbrella term encompassing various forms of anti-anthropocentric thought, including new materialism, object-oriented ontology (OOO), speculative realism, actor-network theory (ANT), and critical posthumanism. Of course, these diverse philosophical currents cannot be simply reduced to a single label, since they pursue distinct questions and methodologies and cannot be collapsed into one unified system. Nevertheless, these approaches share a

widespread suspicion toward the concept of consciousness, recognizing that “consciousness” has lost credibility in the history of philosophy due to accumulated errors and distortions. Major theorists associated with this paradigm include Levi Bryant, Graham Harman, Jane Bennett, Timothy Morton, Bruno Latour, Karen Barad, and Rosi Braidotti.

The flat-ontological paradigm typically dismantles the vertical hierarchy presupposed by traditional ontology—namely, the “subject (human)–object (nature)” structure—and affirms an egalitarian field in which all entities possess reality and meaning on the same ontological level. Levi Bryant offers a succinct formulation in *The Democracy of Objects*, reducing flat ontology to four theses: the rejection of (1) transcendent substances, (2) “super-objects” (totality, the One), (3) hierarchical relations, and (4) ontological inequality. In short, flat ontology locates all beings within a single plane of an ontogenetic field.<sup>1</sup>

Yet an overly celebratory embrace of flat ontology should be resisted, since the paradigm may be little more than a symptom of a contemporary blind alley within continental philosophy. The reasons are as follows.

First, flat ontology generates a profound epistemological difficulty by insisting that things are absolutely independent of thought while neglecting how such independence can be conceptualized. For example, Graham Harman argues that every object has two dimensions: the real object and the sensual object.<sup>2</sup> Extending Husserl’s concept of intentionality, he claims that not only humans but all objects “intend” other objects. Yet Harman refuses epistemic mediations such as consciousness or a transcendental ego that would connect sensation and object. As a result, intentionality becomes a set of sensual qualities that can disclose only the sensual object, while the real object always withdraws behind the sensual.<sup>3</sup> This generates a contradiction: if what we can experience are only phenomenal differences—sensual qualities that distinguish appearances—how can we be confident that there exists a single, identical real object behind them? On Harman’s terms, access is restricted to phenomenal differentiation, and predication about a single object becomes impossible. As Brassier argues, such a position fails to secure individuation and identity and collapses the possibility of knowledge into an extreme incapacity.

Harman recognizes this tension and shifts the withdrawn object from the domain of epistemological proof to that of speculative ontology.<sup>4</sup> His position amounts to a declaration that independent reality exists even if it cannot be known. In this respect, his speculative ontology does not surpass Kant’s transcendental philosophy, which maintains that the categories synthesize appearances into objects while setting the thing-in-itself as the limit of cognition.

1 · Levi R. Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects* (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2011), 245–46.

2 · Graham Harman, “On Vicarious Causation,” *Collapse 2* (2007): 192–95, accessed February 2, 2026, [https://pervegalit.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/06/harman\\_vicarious\\_causation.pdf](https://pervegalit.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/06/harman_vicarious_causation.pdf).

3 · Graham Harman (in conversation with Jon Roffe), “Propositions, Objects, Questions,” *Parrhesia 21* (2014): 28–29, accessed February 2, 2026, [https://parrhesiajournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/parrhesia21\\_harman.pdf](https://parrhesiajournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/parrhesia21_harman.pdf).

4 · Graham Harman, *The Third Table/Der dritte Tisch*, 100 Notes–100 Thoughts, no. 085 (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012), 11–12.

Second, flat ontology's denial of access to real objects produces similar contradictions even when framed as a rejection of representation. Manuel DeLanda, for instance, develops Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage theory to interpret reality as the conjunction of multilayered, historically specific processes.<sup>5</sup> He understands things not as representations of substances but as actualizations of virtual forces (intensities) and tendencies. Representation, he argues, can only produce conceptual judgments about already individuated entities and cannot explain the emergence of pre-individuated virtual forces; thus, it reduces becoming to fixed concepts. DeLanda therefore turns to scientific and mathematical "models" to explain emergence as a non-representational, generative process.

Yet Raymond Brassier identifies here the problem of selection: when one chooses a model in order to reject representation, one cannot explain why that model is appropriate for capturing pre-individuated virtual forces and tendencies. The moment one attempts to justify the selection, one reintroduces precisely the representational problem one sought to escape. If one cannot justify the choice, one risks reverting to idealism or dogmatism. Thus, flat ontology becomes internally unstable.<sup>6</sup>

Third, flat ontology's refusal of consciousness and representation expresses a broader distrust toward universal truth or grand narratives. In rejecting grand narratives, flat ontology tends to produce an expansion of texts devoted to fabulation and speculation about "possible worlds." While this emphasis on possibility creates a vacancy of infinite potentiality, it lacks normativity—the question of what ought to be done. This absence is problematic because addressing the suffering produced by socio-technical systems and assigning responsibility requires the loss of neither the structures of transcendental consciousness, nor mind, nor spirituality. By rejecting transcendental consciousness, flat ontology may slide into a reduction of the world to purely materialistic, mechanistic processes.

Arran Gare argues that the resurgence and refinement of mechanistic, materialist reductionism regarding human mind and consciousness in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries must be understood through simultaneous shifts in philosophical and scientific paradigms.<sup>7</sup> Scientifically, after Darwinian evolution became paradigmatic, human self-centrality was gradually eroded, undermining the remaining bastions of anthropocentrism and humanism—for example, by attributing advanced cognitive and social capacities to animals or relativizing human privilege through theories of autopoiesis. Philosophically, since the Enlightenment, the critique of traditions that defined being through oppositional categories—reason/action, mind/body, form/matter, nature/culture, human/machine or animal—has

5 · Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London: Continuum, 2006), 3. And Manuel DeLanda, "Deleuze, Diagrams, and the Genesis of Form," *ANY: Architecture New York* 23 (1998): 30–32.

6 · Ray Brassier, "Deleveling: Against 'Flat Ontologies,'" in *Under Influence – Philosophical Festival Drift (2014)*, ed. Channa van Dijk et al. (Omnia, 2015), 74–76, PDF, accessed February 2, 2026, <https://uberty.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/RayBrassierDelevelingAgainstFlatOntologies.pdf>

7 · Arran Gare, "Against Posthumanism: Posthumanism as the World Vision of House-Slaves," *Borderless Philosophy* 4 (2021): 4–5.

become increasingly radicalized across generations. In particular, post-structuralism and Marxist critical theory, rooted in Nietzschean critiques of metaphysics, exposed the immanent relation between the structures of reason and the dominant discourses of modernity (capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism). Supported by scientific and positivist achievements grounded in materialist perspectives, philosophy opened new possibilities for thinking matter itself—nonhuman agency independent of the human subject. At minimum, humans came to be regarded not as privileged subjects of thought but as one agent among others; at maximum, the very validity of the category “human” was dismantled across biological and social dimensions.

Gare traces this mechanistic reductionism back to Hobbes. In *Against Posthumanism: Posthumanism as the World Vision of House-Slaves*, Gare argues that posthumanism is not new, but rather a revival of Hobbes’s mechanistic reductionism repainted in contemporary vocabulary (information science, cybernetics, etc.).<sup>8</sup> Gare even calls Hobbes effectively the “first humanist”: Hobbes defined humans as machines driven by appetites and aversions and nature as meaningless matter in motion. Gare stresses Hobbes’s definition of reasoning as mere “addition and subtraction,” i.e., calculation. Contemporary posthumanists, he argues, inherit this and treat mind as a machine, reducing consciousness to a secondary “side show.” Gare further claims that Hobbes aimed to make autonomy and freedom impossible so that people would conform to the edicts of a tyrannical sovereign, and he extends this analysis to contemporary posthumanism: by erasing the boundary between human and machine and denying human distinctiveness and responsible subjectivity, citizens become more likely to acquiesce to global corporate domination and neoliberal regimes of management. In this view, posthumanism is a speculative repackaging of a longstanding mechanistic tradition that reduces humans to controllable components.

If one were to say that the “newness” offered by flat ontology is merely a deception born of an impasse in contemporary continental philosophy, would that be too harsh? At the very least, it is clear that by denying human subjectivity through the flattened relation between humans and nonhumans, flat ontology risks eliminating the very ethical subject capable of responding to the global ecological catastrophe of the Anthropocene. This is flat ontology’s most painful point.

To fill the void of ethical responsibility left by flat ontology, a new form of subjectivity is needed—one that embraces the non-hierarchical relationality between humans and nonhumans while affirming the human as an ethically responsible agent. The following section examines how such a subject form can be generated from Minjung theology’s concept of han.

## 2. Han (恨) and the Minjung Subject

### 2.1. The Asymmetry between Han and Affect

Since modernity, debates on the formation of subjectivity have been marked by a persistent tension between the modern framework and its critical alternatives. The modern subject, beginning from Descartes’s cogito, grounds the conditions of thought and action in

8 · Ibid., 3–4 and 40–41.

the subject as a stable substance. In this framework, the subject functions as a center that privileges knowledge and power, organizing the world in a way that reinforces self-identity and anthropocentrism—while risking the instrumentalization of others and nature as objects to be known, managed, and mobilized. By contrast, new materialism and assemblage theory, inheriting Deleuzian relational thought, refuse to reduce agency to human will or consciousness, dispersing agency across human–nonhuman entanglements and effectively disrupting anthropocentrism. Yet precisely this schema of “distributed subjectivity/distributed agency” tends to weaken the normative question of “who is responsible?” and can generate a vacuum of agency and accountability. Thus, whereas modern subject theory risks monopolizing power and reproducing anthropocentrism, new materialist subject theory exposes the difficulty of sustaining ethical responsibility. The discourse of subject formation therefore points to the need for a new subject form that can both dismantle human privilege and affirm ethical responsibility.

This theoretical tension becomes sharper under Anthropocene conditions. While dismantling anthropocentrism is necessary, the destructive power relations that produced the Anthropocene and the attribution of responsibility must not be obscured. At this point, attempts to extend Minjung theology’s concept of han into ecological and nonhuman domains may appear to offer a promising route: they enable thinking the human–nonhuman entanglement while still securing responsible subjectivity. But is it legitimate to extend—or reduce—Minjung han to nonhuman beings?

Discourses that extend han into ecological and nonhuman domains tend to reveal two different reductionist tendencies. One reduces han to affect as generated in relations among objects; the other anthropomorphizes affect by reducing matter to han. Although these directions are asymmetrical, both share the aim of “expanding” han.

The first tendency reduces han to affect by redefining han as a general ontology of material and relational energetic movement (flows of affect, relational intensities, assemblage effects). Yet in Minjung theology, han has been understood not as a universal psychological emotion but as the accumulated residue (and transmission) of socio-historical wounds: oppression and violence “repressed, condensed, and stored” within the lives of the oppressed. If han is reduced to a general category of nonhuman material processes, the asymmetry of power relations (perpetrator/victim), the mediations of structural oppression, and the logic of responsibility attribution are diluted; han’s socio-historical determinacy is stripped away. Moreover, the manner in which new materialist ontology often legitimates itself through ethical demands of “attunement” or “responsiveness” can weaken critical analysis of social forces and mediations and bypass political-economic conditions. Thus, the first tendency risks not “nonhuman expansion” but the depoliticization and dehistoricization of han.

The second tendency anthropomorphizes affect as han by aligning the destruction and imbalance suffered by nonhuman beings with the “same code” as human han, interpreting and identifying nonhuman vulnerability through the emotional-linguistic system of han. Here the

issue is not simply conceptual overreach but becomes a problem of representational power: speaking “on behalf of” nonhumans inevitably raises the question of who is authorized to represent them. For example, Andrew Sung Park, in *The Wounded Heart of God*, extends human han to speak of “the han of nature (animals and the created world),” arguing that nonhuman beings suffer from human abuse and exploitation but cannot protest, and thus their condition can be named as han and linked to God’s han as a theological task of liberation/healing.<sup>9</sup> Grace Ji-Sun Kim, likewise, in “Nature and Han,” develops an attempt to think the pain of the earth/nature through the language of han.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, Mark B. Brown argues that democratic projects of representing nonhuman (natural) interests necessarily generate a justificatory task, since the act of speaking of nature’s “interests” partially constitutes and replaces the represented.<sup>11</sup> If we apply this framework, the “han of nature” risks functioning not to reveal the specific modalities of nonhuman damage, but as a mechanism by which human emotional narratives capture nonhuman suffering as an object of interpretation and substitute for it. Rosi Braidotti, in her work on critical posthumanism, warns against “replacing” nonhuman suffering with human emotional-narrative codes, emphasizing that such well-intended moral extensions can reactivate the grammar of existing power rather than produce liberation. In particular, she cautions that “compensatory solidarity” with animals can operate as a transfer of humanist moral privilege under the guise of species egalitarianism, thereby enabling an uncritical return of humanism. In this sense, narratives that “read” nature’s pain as han can tilt toward a structure in which nonhuman suffering is not merely interpreted but effectively replaced by human moral language (compassion, justice, healing).<sup>12</sup>

The core of this double reduction is therefore not the choice between “expansion” or “non-expansion,” but a shift of the problem: han must be generalized as a material movement without losing the texture of socio-historical oppression; and even when translating nonhuman damage into han, anthropomorphism and proxy speech must not replace nonhuman others. The question must be reframed as a hermeneutical reconstruction: how can humans, as responsible subjects, mediate solidarity with nonhuman others?

## 2.2. Minjung’s Han and the Formation of Subjectivity

In Minjung theology, han functions as the key concept of subject formation precisely because it traverses and integrates this tension. Han is generally understood not as a private psychological emotion but as the residue and energy of socio-historical suffering: the experience of injustice, violence, and oppression “condensed and accumulated” in the life of the victim (the Minjung). Yet emphases differ among thinkers. For Kim Chi-ha, han is the trauma of violence

9 · Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God* (Nashville: Abingdon press, 1993), 42-44.

10 · Grace Ji-Sun Kim, *Colonialism, Han, and the Transformative Spirit* (Palgrave Pivot, 2013), Chapter 5: “Nature and Han”.

11 · Mark B. Brown, “Speaking for Nature: Hobbes, Latour, and the Democratic Representation of Nonhumans,” Vol. 31 No. 1(2018): Science & Technology Studies: 31-33.

12 · Fredrik Karlsson, “Critical Anthropomorphism and Animal Ethics,” *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 25 (5):707-720.

condensed into sorrow within the victim—an “aggregate of infinite sorrowful experiences,” and the very accumulation of that sorrow.<sup>13</sup> Suh Nam-dong defines han as “the accumulation of repressed and condensed experiences of oppression,” and argues that this accumulated han can be inherited and transmitted, erupting at a collective level. Han is ambivalent: it can explode destructively as revenge, hatred, and rupture, but it can also be transformed into creative power through dan (斷), a self-negating/self-transcending break that interrupts vicious cycles.<sup>14</sup> Ahn Byung-mu, rather than formalizing han academically, grasps it as the core reality of Minjung experience. Reflecting on repeated arrests, torture, and imprisonment under the Yushin regime, he suggests that the suffering that “pierces the heart” is precisely “Minjung han,” and from this he sought the hermeneutical key to biblical interpretation (ochlos).<sup>15</sup> In his understanding, the Minjung are “those oppressed, imprisoned, and carrying congealed han,” and han is presupposed not as a private affect but as a collective knot of pain produced by asymmetric oppression.

From this understanding, an important point emerges: han is neither an inner sentiment nor a mere psychological state. It is a relational mode through which accumulated suffering, formed in histories of oppression, loss, violence, and silence, emerges and is expressed. This suffering neither fixes the subject as a stable substance nor reduces it to a mere byproduct of process. Subjectivity through han is formed as patience (the capacity to endure and receive suffering) and agency (the capacity to interrupt and transform that suffering) operate simultaneously. The subject is not a completed entity but a holistic movement that receives suffering (patience), transforms it (agency), and thereby produces a direction of responsibility.

Thus, han-based subjectivity stands against the modern rational subject grounded in the autonomy of individual reason. At the same time, han cannot be reduced to affect emerging from the relation between body and environment. Han provides a form of agency and responsibility that goes beyond new materialist desubjectivation precisely because it is thought as a transformative momentum that produces “becoming a subject” within history. How, then, do patience and agency appear concretely, and how are they related?

Minjung theology articulates han’s subjectivity through a double mediation of groan/moan (소리/*sori*) and story(이야기/*iyagi*). A *sori* is a material-bodily event prior to meaningful speech; it discloses the presence of a vulnerable being—“here it is”—and calls erased suffering into a relational field, disrupting a regime of silence. Sound does not immediately establish a rights-bearing subject; rather, it forms the relational position that demands response (abandonment/

13 · Kim Chi-ha (김지하), “Pungja nya Jasal i-na (풍자냐 자살이냐),” in *Igeot geurigo jeogeot* (이것 그리고 저것) (Seoul: Donggwang Chulpansa, 1991), 198.

14 · Nam-dong Suh (서남동), “Towards a Theology of Han,” in *Minjung Theology: People as Subjects of History*, rev. ed., ed. Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 58, 63-67.

15 · Byung-mu Ahn (안병무), *Minjungshinhak Iyagi* (민중신학 이야기) (Seoul: Hanguk Sinhak Yeonguso, 1990), 17–18, 25 and Byung-mu Ahn, “Jesus and the Minjung in the Gospel of Mark,” in *Minjung Theology: People as Subjects of History*, ed. Commission on Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia (Singapore: The Christian Conference of Asia, 1981), 136–154.

care, exploitation/protection, perpetration/victimhood), thereby potentiating subjectivity.

In this sense, *sori* functions as intensity and transformation prior to representation, akin to affect, and occurs as a relational event common to both humans and nonhumans. Yet unlike affect, which can be reduced to impersonal flow, sound is a “cry that must be heard,” calling forth the place of response and responsibility. When Suh Nam-dong, in speaking of “priests of han,” invokes “the voice of Abel’s blood crying from the ground” (Gen 4:10), the moans of the wounded neighbor (Luke 10), or “the wages...crying out” (James 5:4), the “*sori*” breaks the silence maintained by oppressive arrangements and calls into being those who must hear and answer—thus reconfiguring networks of justice, testimony, and accountability. *Sori* is therefore a nonverbal, bodily, material language that expresses oppression even when the Minjung have been deprived of a place to speak, functioning as a potential trigger of subjectivation.

If *sori* is a potential mode of being that expresses the material, bodily, and relational flow of force encompassing both humans and nonhumans, *iyagi*(story) is the actualization of that potential within social and symbolic fields (public language, memory, art, political practice) through which the Minjung “subjectivize” themselves. In his “*Theology of folk tales*,” Suh Nam-dong foregrounds story as the mode through which the *sori*-subject becomes visible and constructs itself. By contrasting writing as “spiritual language” with storytelling as “material language,” he suggests that writing can easily impose heteronomous meaning, whereas story—direct, concrete, bodily—recomposes suffering holistically and generates shared memory and meaning. Here “story” includes folk narratives and popular arts/practices such as mask dance, pansori, and *madanggeuk*(courtyard play). Through these practices, the Minjung become not passive objects subordinated to dominant power but agents who expose oppression and constitute themselves.

What, then, is the relation between *sori*(moan) and *iyagi*(story)? The subjectivity of *sori* (patience) and the subjectivity of story (agency) are distinguishable but inseparable. *Sori* discloses subjectivity provisionally from the position of “suffering,” while story transforms the passivity of sensitivity into agency by actualizing self-subjectivity. Yet these are not two severable layers: they are a continuous process in which the same movement of han unfolds through different mediations.

This is where Minjung theology decisively differs from flat ontology. Flat ontology emphasizes human–nonhuman relations and disperses subjectivity as an effect of assemblages, but it easily blurs responsibility and can fall into a naive assumption that the expression of pain (affect) immediately leaps into agency. By contrast, Suh Nam-dong’s moan–story structure affirms *sori* as a material cry common to humans and nonhumans, while positioning story—translation, testimony, narrative, artistic-political organization—not as human privilege but as human obligation. Nonhuman vulnerability may be grasped at the level of *sori*, but it is not appropriated through anthropomorphic emotional codes; instead, humans are charged with the responsibility to hear, translate, witness, and transform. In this way, the moan–

story form simultaneously avoids desubjectivation (the evaporation of responsibility) and anthropomorphism (the humanization and replacement of the nonhuman), offering a more persuasive alternative account of subjectivity that integrates relational patency and normative agency in one process.

### 3. Event and the Emergence of the Transcendent Minjung Subject

#### 3.1. Event and the Emergence of Minjung Subjectivity

Although the moan–story structure develops patency and agency as a process of subjectivation, this development does not automatically entail the emergence of *dan* (rupture/斷), the self-transcending Minjung subject. *Sori* reveals the traces oppression leaves on the body as a “cry,” and story actualizes that cry through testimony, narration, art, and organization. Yet these stages often remain reconfigurations within what Alain Badiou calls the ‘situation’—the field in which dominant knowledge and order determine what is counted and what is excluded.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the energy of suffering can be absorbed into manageable resistance or cycles of equivalent exchange (revenge), rather than being transformed into justice. This resonates with Ahn Byung-mu’s refusal to romanticize the Minjung: Minjung may be selfish and greedy; han can contain the dimension of sin. Thus, the continuity from the patency of moan to the agency of story does not guarantee the emergence of radical novelty capable of interrupting vicious cycles.

Badiou clarifies this limit by defining the situation as a field where beings are “counted-as-one,” and the “state of the situation” as the mechanism that represents and manages what is presented through categories and orders.<sup>17</sup> Change internal to the situation tends to remain visible only within these representational categories. Hence, change becomes the rearrangement of what is already “counted,” while the new universal (truth) that the situation excludes lacks grounding within the situation’s logic.

This suggests that *dan*—the transcendence of the Minjung subject—does not arise within the moan–story “situation” itself. It also implies that flat ontology, by rejecting universal narratives and emphasizing only micro-relational networks, may remain trapped within situational logic and thereby foreclose the possibility of new truth. If the subject of newness is not located within the structure of the situation, where and how does it appear?

For Badiou, it begins not as a continuous outcome of the situation’s laws, but as an exception that the situation’s knowledge cannot calculate, predict, or legitimate: an event. The event is an “incalculable emergence,” the beginning of truth.<sup>18</sup> It occurs in this world, yet cannot be derived from the rules of the situation, and is therefore “external” to the situation with respect to its knowledge.<sup>19</sup> For this reason, the event remains indeterminate within the language of the situation.

Therefore, the event does not complete truth by itself. It only opens a rupture. For that

16 · Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2005), 24–25; 104–7.

17 · *Ibid.*, 24–25; 95; 98–99.

18 · Alain Badiou, “Eight Theses on the Universal,” in *Theoretical Writings*, ed. and trans. Ray Brassier and Alberto Toscano (London: Continuum, 2004), 147.

19 · Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2007), 192.

rupture to unfold into truth, someone must decide the indeterminacy by declaring the event to be something that occurred. This requires naming the event, which entails fidelity(faith): a commitment that is not merely psychological, but a counter-situational practice that refuses to follow the existing representational order and reorganizes a new order within the situation. Subject here is not an inner capacity; it is a post-evental result produced by the procedure of fidelity itself.

When Minjung theology's *dan* is read through Badiou's notion of event, its meaning becomes clearer. Moan-story develops patience and agency, but remains exposed to absorption into the logic of the situation (representation/management). *Dan* can therefore be understood as the evental rupture that breaks this danger. *Dan* is not a stage reached by the "development" of Minjung morality or immanent strength; it is the sustained form of self-negation/self-transcendence that becomes possible only when the universal (truth) not counted by the situation emerges as an event, is named as such, and is carried through by fidelity. *Dan*, as the interruption of violent cycles through self-negation, thus coincides with this evental moment of subjectivation. The transcendent Minjung subject does not automatically arise from han; it is formed in the process of responding faithfully to a novelty that could never be produced by the world's existing rules.

Understood as an evental Minjung rupture, *dan* is better interpreted not as a "negative dialectic" but as an "affirmative dialectic." In contrast to Adorno's negative dialectics—which resists the violence of conceptual totalization and preserves the non-identical residue of suffering<sup>20</sup>—Badiou's affirmative dialectic emphasizes affirming the event and remaining faithful to it so as to produce new truth and new subjectivity.<sup>21</sup> In this sense, *dan* is not exhausted in negation of critique and exposure; instead, it is an evental transformation that interrupts the circuit of revenge and internalized oppression and opens a new order through responsive fidelity.

### 3.2. The Transcendence of the Responding Minjung

The remaining question is whether, under Anthropocene conditions, Minjung self-transcendence can assume responsibility and solidarity for the wounds of nonhuman beings without repeating hierarchical human-nature relations, and without dissolving responsibility into radical flattening. If Minjung transcendence is read as humanism, nonhumans become merely objects of "protection," and the Minjung re-emerges as a moral sovereign. If it is read as posthuman desubjectivation, Minjung suffering is flattened onto the same plane as nonhuman wounds, and asymmetries of responsibility are erased. How, then, can Minjung transcendence be expanded toward nature?

As noted above, Minjung self-transcendence in Minjung theology refers to an evental

20 · Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. Dennis Redmond (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970; trans. 2001, corr. 2021), 25, 139, 243–45.

21 · Alain Badiou, "Affirmative Dialectics: from Logic to Anthropology," *The International Journal of Badiou Studies* 2, no. 1 (2013): 2–4, 11–12.

transformation in which the Minjung, positioned as objects under oppression, emerge as historical subjects. It is not self-improvement arising autonomously from the individual interior; it is a transcendence in which suffering accumulated as *han* becomes visible and named through an event, and the Minjung interrupt (*dan*) the positions of silence, conformity, and revenge assigned by the existing order, organizing a new direction of action and responsibility. In this way, self-transcendence is not the elimination of *han* but the truthful disclosure of *han* (preserving it) while breaking off its reproduction of violence (*dan*), through which the Minjung become subjects who open a new history. This can be described as the structure *han–event–dan*, not as a linear stage model but as a process that can appear intertwined within communal history.

Such transcendence has nothing to do with the subject's moral excellence or elevated inner capacities. When misconstrued as the result of heightened virtue or goodwill, self-transcendence risks romanticizing the Minjung or reducing the historical conditions of suffering to questions of moral character.

Instead, Minjung self-transcendence must be understood as transcendence in response to the wounds of the other. It is not the manifestation of noble inner capacity but an event in which the subject is called by the other's wound and constituted through responding to that call. This resonates with Emmanuel Levinas: for Levinas, subjectivity does not arise from the self-grounding autonomy of the cogito, but from the nonreciprocal responsibility demanded by the other's "face," whose exposed vulnerability interrupts my freedom.<sup>22</sup> Transcendence is thus not an expansion of self-identity but a subjectivation that begins when the self is interrupted and reconfigured by the other. In this sense, the transcendent Minjung subject begins neither by managing the other as an object (hierarchy) nor by flattening the other into equivalence (responsibility-dissolving flatness), but by being formed as a subject who "cannot but respond" to the other's cry.

From this standpoint, the issue shifts from an epistemological question ("How do humans understand nonhumans?") to an ethical question ("How does subjectivity arise before the nonhuman others' call?"). In Levinas, the other's face is a demand that halts my freedom: "you are responsible." The subject does not begin from autonomy and then include the other; rather, the subject is constituted only through response to the other's demand.<sup>23</sup> Hence self-transcendence is not the extension of the self but the ethical transformation in which self-identity is fractured and reorganized in the direction of response.<sup>24</sup>

A similar horizon appears in M. H. Suchocki. In *The Fall to Violence: Original Sin in Relational Theology*, she redefines self-transcendence as "world-related self-transcendence." For Suchocki,

22 · Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 97–99.

23 · Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being, or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 76, 112–14.

24 · Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 199.

transcendence should not be understood as a vertical ascent toward God or an expansion of inner capacity, but as what occurs when one becomes open to the other within worldly relations. Self-transcendence arises when the other is engaged not as an object but as a “related other” who is also a subject. In such a relation, self-transcendence produces both the “richness of self” and the “richness of the other” as a reciprocal relational event.<sup>25</sup>

Suchocki’s reason for reconstructing transcendence horizontally (world-relatedly) is her understanding of sin: she frames “original sin” not primarily as rebellion against God, but as violence that unnecessarily violates the well-being of creation—rebellion against creation. When self-transcendence is understood as world-related, the social character of the self, its vulnerability, creaturely interdependence, and the obligations arising from that interdependence become visible. Conversely, the unnecessary violation of this interdependence and obligation appears as sin against creation. Self-transcendence is therefore not moral heroism but an anthropological-ethical disclosure of human openness to others—an openness that can generate richness but also makes destruction possible.<sup>26</sup>

If Levinas’s ethics of subjectivity formed by the other and Suchocki’s relational account of sin as violence against creation are applied to Minjung self-transcendence, Minjung theology gains a third path beyond humanist sovereignty and posthuman flattening. The Minjung subject is constituted through responsive responsibility to the vulnerability of nonhuman others (Levinas), and this response takes the form of acknowledging one’s own implication in structures of violence against creation and interrupting them through reorganization of relations (*dan*) (Suchocki). In this sense, the “transcendence of the responding Minjung” becomes a form of subjectivity capable of normatively justifying solidarity and responsibility toward nonhuman others without establishing a human–nature hierarchy (not sovereign protection but responsive obligation) and without dissolving responsibility (preserving implication and attribution in violence against creation).

### III. Conclusion: An Ecological-Theological Reconstruction of Minjung Theology in the Anthropocene

This paper has formalized the Minjung-theological transformation demanded by the Anthropocene as the problem of “breaking flatness.” While flat ontology has achieved a certain success in dismantling hierarchical structures between humans and nature, it entails the countervailing risk of weakening the normative question of “who is responsible?” by dispersing or erasing the responsible subject. The Anthropocene cannot be addressed by ontological rearrangement (the de-privileging of humans) alone; it must also account for the historical power relations that produced destruction and for the attribution of responsibility. In this respect, the paper has argued beyond merely defending Minjung theology against the charge

25 · Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence: Original Sin in Relational Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 40, 43

26 · *Ibid.*, 34-35.

that it is a residue of modern humanism, and has instead proposed that Minjung theology can be reconstructed as an ecological-theological resource capable of re-grounding ethical responsibility under Anthropocene conditions. In particular, the Minjung forms of han—sound and story—the transcendent event of dan, and the transcendence of the responding Minjung together provide an alternative logic by which responsibility is not lost and non-hierarchical solidarity with nonhuman others can be expanded.

In summary, this paper redefines han neither as a private human emotion nor as a depoliticized affective flow, but as a transformative movement that preserves the traces of socio-historical oppression while enabling responsible subjectivation. In order to avoid the dangers of anthropomorphism and proxy speech that can arise when translating nonhuman damage into han, the central question is reframed as a hermeneutical reconstruction: how can humans, as responsible subjects, mediate solidarity with nonhuman others? Han-based subjectivity operates as a continuous process in which patience and agency are inseparable: *sori* (cry/appeal) discloses the bodily traces of oppression, while story organizes that cry into practices of subjectivation within the public sphere. Yet because this moan–story development remains exposed to absorption within the “situation,” dan is understood not as the outcome of internal moral development, but as an eventual rupture that occurs when the possibility of a universal truth not counted by the situation emerges, is named, and is carried forward through fidelity. The transcendence that appears through dan is rearticulated not as self-exaltation but as the transcendence of response: the subject is called by the wound of the other and constituted through responding. In this way, the responding Minjung can expand non-hierarchical solidarity with nonhuman others without diluting the attribution of responsibility.

The han–event–dan–self-transcendence of the Minjung offers distinct contributions and implications for Anthropocene discourse. First, it provides a normative framework that thinks beyond Anthropocene responses framed only as ontological de-privileging, by simultaneously addressing historical power relations and responsibility attribution. Second, it avoids the twin pitfalls of flat ontology—responsibility evaporation (desubjectivation) and the anthropomorphic replacement of the nonhuman—through the mediating structure of moan and story, which integrates relational sensitivity and normative agency within one process. Third, it refuses to reduce Anthropocene transformation to moral exhortation or gradual internal development, instead presenting the conditions of rupture and transformation through eventual novelty (dan) and faithful practice that exceeds the managerial logic of the situation. Fourth, by grounding “responding transcendence” not in sovereign protection but in obligation before the other’s wound, it establishes ethical-political principles by which solidarity with nonhuman others expands non-hierarchically while preserving implication and responsibility in violence against creation.

Ultimately, the role this paper assigns to Minjung theology in the Anthropocene is to transform non-hierarchical co-existence into a politics of responsibility by hearing the cry of wounded

others, organizing it into story, and remaining faithful to the eventual rupture that breaks the situation's logic. The Anthropocene is a world that demands the reconstruction of a form of subjectivity capable of listening and responding to the other's cry; the Minjung-theological account of han and dan, as Minjung self-transcendence, remains a powerful theological and ethical resource for that reconstruction.

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