Original article

Madang: Journal of Contextual Theology (Madang J Contextual Theol) 2026 June Vol.45, 123–139
https://doi.org/10.58302/Madang.2026.45.9

Received: May 18, 2026
Revised: June 17, 2026
Accepted: June 21, 2026
Published: June 30, 2026

From the *Priest of Han* to the *Priest of Friendship*: A Study on the Possibility of the Priest of Friendship Through Hannah Arendt's Concept of the "Conscious Pariah"

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Abstract

This thesis examines the possibility of a transformation from the *Priest of Han*[1] to the *Priest of Friendship. Furthermore* arguing for a fundamental shift from the affect of Han to the affect of friendship. The Priest of Han is one who understands the lineage of "the sound," which emerges from the suffering of the *Minjung*[2]—the sound of Han. The priest who hears this sound severs the Han. Suh Nam-dong referred to this as the "dialectics of Han and *Dan* (Severance)". Through the repeated process of accumulating Han and then severing it, one is elevated to a new stage. The problem is that this dialectic utilizes violent means. The use of such means must have a clear purpose. If the sound is misheard, that violence may be directed at the Minjung themselves. Violence, in fact, erases the voice of the Minjung. This was the case with the voice of the Indian *Subaltern* introduced by Spivak. The voices of Indian women sacrificed in Sati were erased by the British intervention intended to help them; rather, that intervention was a form of violence. Similarly, the intervention of the Priest of Han can become violence toward the Minjung. Now, a Priest of Friendship is needed more than a Priest of Han. There must be a priest who helps the Minjung find their own voice. Arendt's *Conscious Pariah* illustrates this well. Diaspora Jews were pariahs—people who had lost their voices. Among them were conscious pariahs who sought their lost voices in various ways to resist the oppressor. The conscious pariah shares an affective space with fellow pariahs, affirming that their pain is not theirs alone. The conscious pariah enables them to speak, listens to them, and empathizes with them. This is possible only when there is an affect of friendship rather than an indignant Han. Through friendship, the pariah speaks and stands in solidarity. The Priest of Han must now move toward becoming a Priest of Friendship who restores the voice of the Minjung through friendship.

Keywords

Priest of Han, Subaltern, Conscious Pariah, Politics of Friendship, Suh Nam-dong, Hannah Arendt.

1. Introduction

We live in a society where the Minjung is not clearly distinguished. The past method of fighting against dictatorial regimes by targeting entrepreneurs, U.S. imperialism, or military governments can no longer be maintained. Society has become fragmented, and the stage of life has expanded beyond South Korea to the global arena. For example, can a Filipino worker in Korea be seen as the Minjung? He might be a migrant worker discriminated against in Korea, but back home, he is treated as a "hero" who earns foreign currency. Remittances from overseas

1 The reason for transcribing *Han* as '*Han*' is that the unique affect shared by the Korean *Minjung* cannot be adequately expressed as *ressentiment*, which is defined as a mere will to power.

2 The reason for designating the *Minjung* as '*Minjung*' is that no other term can fully encapsulate the unique history of the oppressed, marginalized, and suffering masses.

ISSN : 1738-3196

workers account for 11% of the Philippines' GNP.[3] The temporal and spatial background defining the Minjung is multidimensional. And for the Minjung, there is a Priest of *Han* who listens to the voice of Han.

The Priest of Han is one who hears the sound. He is an agent who weighs the lineage of the sound and cuts away the Han accumulating within it. This agent may use violence. To cut away the Han, the priest holds a large "sword" in his hand. However, due to the multidimensional lineage of the sound, the sword hesitates and loses its direction. Severing does not always mean a clean break, and a wrong cut can cause innocent people to bleed. Furthermore, those who groan find it difficult to speak for themselves. It is fortunate if the priest understands that groan well, but misunderstanding is easy. In such cases, the violence of the Priest of *Han* loses its original duty.

This paper critiques the violence of the Priest of Han. It examines how he can represent the sounds of those whose voices have been stolen. The absence of a Minjung's voice means speechlessness, which in turn means a lack of political freedom. Without freedom, the Minjung can never become subjects of politics. Thus, restoring speech is the key. The Priest of Han must help find the Minjung's voice. However, violence cannot be used. As Arendt noted, "Only sheer violence is mute".[4] Before drawing the sword, one must become a Priest of "Affect" who resonates with sorrow, and further, a Priest of Friendship who achieves solidarity based on empathy. It is important here to examine the concepts of the Minjung, the *subaltern*, and the *pariah*. Though not identical, these three share the common trait of "voicelessness". Chapter II explores the violent risks inherent to the Priest of Han through Spivak's subaltern. Chapter III looks at the political voice restored by the pariah, showing a politics of friendship that responds to the pariah's affect. The Priest of Friendship will appropriate that method.

2. The Priest of Han and Violence

2.1. Han and the Priest of Han

Han is an emotion—an individual emotion of grievance felt when experiencing an event. On a religious level, individual Han relates to sin, which is the object of repentance. Thus, Han is resolved through atonement. Alongside this is communal Han—the Han of the Minjung. Here, the Minjung refers to all those who are wronged but cannot speak because they must use the language of the ruler. It is a double grievance: to be victimized and to be unable to speak. It is precisely these subjects who constitute the Minjung. Their Han is not solved by atonement; it cannot be understood as collective sense of guilt. It is the world that made them so; the structure of the world is wrong. This is strictly a matter of social justice. Suh Nam-dong defines it as follows:

Han is an affective state that arises when the oppressed and the weak are wronged and their

3 Dong Hyun Jeong, "Mark's Ochlos as Minjung: An Overseas Foreign Worker's (OFW) Reading," in *Stirring Up Liberation Theology: A Call For Release*, ed. Jione Havea (London: SCM Press, 2024), 98.

4 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 26.

rights trampled, and they feel truly aggrieved, yet there is no one to hear their plea or resolve it. Thus, Han is the very sound of grievance appealed to heaven, the voice of the nameless and voiceless Minjung.[5]

Han is resolved only when the scream of the person harboring it is heard. The one who does this is the Priest of Han. He responds to the sound—a cry of grievance reaching heaven. It is an unrefined groan uttered to heaven because there is no one to listen. At this moment, the sound is not refined. It is unpolished, merely a leaking groan. No one pays attention to this groan, as if they have lost their voice. The priest hears the voice of the nameless, innocent Minjung. The church must hear that sound, for that is the mission field where God works.

The church must become the Priest of Han. In the 1970s, many peasant households moved to the cities. Within the barren settings of their lives, they could not even find work. They lived as vagrants. As the urban poor, the Minjung drifted helplessly, deprived of the breath to care for one another amidst the chaos. They were inevitably driven into a life of crime. The world branded them as evildoers and sinners. Far from offering them sanctuary, the church further condemned them and demanded their repentance. They turned a blind eye to the contradictions of society even after seeing them, and were solely intent on expansion like a corporation. They blessed the rich. The Minjung condemned themselves. It was the church that conditioned them to do so. Their suffering was framed as an individual sin of their own making, effectively preventing them from turning their gaze toward social injustice and directing their anger outward. The church is called to be the Priest of Han, binding up the brokenhearted and giving strength to the lowly so that they may stand firm once again. The church must become the Priest of Han, comforting the oppressed and unraveling the knots of their Han.[6] To do so, it must listen well. The sound of Han is like the sound of the Emille Bell.

"The Legend of the *Emille* Bell" is a representative folktale of Han. In his analysis of the nature of Han, Suh Nam-dong utilized folktales and "social biographies." These folktales vividly illustrate how the Korean people confronted and sought to resolve their Han. The sacrifice of the poor is manifested in the legend of the Emille Bell. *The Divine Bell of King Seongdeok* was commissioned by his son and grandson across generations to commemorate the King's achievements. It was a large-scale state project, demanding the mobilization of 72 tons of copper. Crafting a bell of such immense scale required not only advanced technology but also an "extraordinary" devotion—specifically, a human sacrifice. Consequently, the king and his officials seized a three-year-old girl from a destitute family and cast her into the molten metal. Thus, the Emille Bell was completed. Whenever the bell was tolled, it emitted a cry calling for its mother: "Emille."[7] While the power-holders strived to produce a beautiful resonance, they were utterly indifferent to the sacrifice of a three-year-old girl from a poor household. The grand

5 Suh Nam-dong, "The Priest of Han," in *Inquiry into Minjung Theology*, rev. and exp. ed., ed. Jukjae Suh Nam-dong Memorial Foundation (Seoul: Dongyeon, 2018), 55.

6 Ibid., 54.

7 Suh Nam-dong, "A Post-Theological Reflection on Folktales," in *Inquiry into Minjung Theology* (Seoul: Dong-yeon, 2018), 355–7.

sound produced by the collective effort of the entire nation was, in essence, the cry of "Emille," saturated with the Han of the Minjung.[8] Such is the nature of the sound of Han. On the surface, it is a sublime and beautiful chime that seems to carry no particular meaning. Yet, within that "Emille" sound lies the deep-seated Han of the people—a desperate plea for its resolution. The Priest of Han must listen intently to this very sound.

One must become the 'Priest of Han' who reveals the 'history of these sound'—representing the voice of Abel's blood crying out to heaven from the ground (Genesis 4:10), listening to the groans of the neighbor who was robbed and beaten on the road to Jericho and binding up their painful wounds (Luke 10:25), and crying out so that the wages unpaid to the laborers reach the ears of the Lord of Hosts (James 5:4). It is to 'open one's mouth for the voiceless sounds of the mute and the lonely, and resolve the *Han* of the oppressed and the poor' (Proverbs 31:8). [9]

The suffering spit out groans that carry no particular sense. That is the sound of Han, the cry of the Minjung. As outcasts, disregarded and loathed by society, their only available language consists of gasps like 'Ah!', 'Heuk!', or 'Ugh!'. No one bothers to ask what these sounds signify. Even when they do, the sounds are incomprehensible. The voice of the Minjung is lost to the world, as no one truly intends to hear it. People only have ears for the words of the powerful—the logical and polished discourse of the elite. The Minjung, unable to speak the language of power, find themselves silenced. Robbed of their tongue, their bodies begin to testify. They suffer from 'aphasia, amnesia, and all manner of ailments.'[10]

The Priest of Han lives the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus was the one who listened to the voices of the Minjung, whose language had been stripped away. He was a friend to tax collectors and sinners, standing in solidarity with those whom religious leaders had "crucified" as sinners. He understood words that, to the powerful, seemed incoherent and filled with self-excuse, or visceral groans and screams blurted out incomprehensibly. Inspired by the life of Jesus, Kim Ji-ha composed a narrative poem titled "The Story of Jang Il-dam." Suh Nam-dong regards Jang Il-dam as the exemplar of the Priest of Han. Jang Il-dam's theology is the *Theology of Han*; he professes to be a medium for unintelligible sounds and a bearer of that Han. [11]

The Story of Jang Il-dam begins in prison. Those who dwell in prison are seen as having lost their humanity (*Inryun-sangsil*), and they are scorned by the world. Yet, behind this loss of humanity lies Han. Here, those cast into the abyss—the ones at the very base of existence—are those whose lives are knotted with Han. When the accumulation of Han overturns one's inner self, a loss of humanity occurs. Jang Il-dam escaped from prison and became a hunted fugitive. While fleeing from his pursuers, he witnessed a scene that led to his enlightenment. A prostitute was giving birth. She was so severely afflicted with venereal disease that she could barely move

8 · David Kwang-sun Suh, "The Priest of Han," in *Vocation for the Witness of the Gospel Today*(Seoul: World Alliance of Reformed Churches Theological Consultation, 1984), 179.

9 · Ibid., 54.

10 · Kim Jin-ho, "Theology of Han," *The 3rd Era* 20 (2011): 7.

11 · Suh Nam-dong, "The Confluence of the Two Stories," in *Inquiry into Minjung Theology* (Seoul: Dong-yeon, 2018), 104.

her own body. Yet, from that very body, a new life was being born. In this, Jang Il-dam saw the birth of God. God is born paradoxically: "O, new life is born from a rotting corpse. God is being born."[12] The Son of God, Jesus, was born from a human womb. That scene was perhaps a "loss of divine order." Jang Il-dam realized that God resides within the human body. Life exists in the lower strata, at the very bottom, in the abyss of human existence. Jang Il-dam, the son of a butcher, thus attained enlightenment: "Man is Heaven." (Innaecheon)[13]

Having realized that Humanity is Heaven, he continues his *Cheon-ju* (天主, bearing/serving God) struggle. This journey involves realizing the divine presence within (*Sicheonju*, 侍天主), cultivating a body worthy of God's dwelling (*Yangcheonju*, 養天主), practicing God toward one's neighbors (*Haengcheonju*, 行天主), and finally advancing to the stage of living as God (*Saengcheonju*, 生天主). Jang Il-dam deepened the profundity of his thoughts through encounters with various individuals. He engaged in rigorous debates with industrial mission pastors, priests, intellectuals, professors, labor union leaders, monks, and soldiers. These were individuals whose role was to embrace those leading difficult and arduous lives. Jang Il-dam rebuked them for their complacency. Through a praxis of struggle and a reflection rooted in solidarity, he mastered his own Han. Eventually, he severed it. This act of severance is referred to as *Dan*(斷). This Dan exists in a dialectical relationship with Han. Han accumulates; indeed, "to live is to accumulate Han."[14] Dan is what severs this Han. Subsequently, one accumulates Han once more, and Dan continues to sever it repeatedly. If life is Han, then Dan is also life. In the course of living, Dan advances to the point of self-negation. Jang Il-dam, who had amassed Han in the prison—the deepest abyss where freedom is utterly denied—internalized Dan during his travels. He is a butcher. A butcher is one who slaughters beasts. The greatest beast, however, is the self. Thus, Dan is the act of killing one's own self.

Gradually, the number of followers grew, and they formed a community. Those who followed Jang Il-dam were also people deeply saturated in the Han of the abyss. He sought to sever their Han through Dan (斷). His actions—ranging from violence and fierce debate to miracles—were all attempts to cut through this deep-seated Han. Yet, Dan does not end with the individual; the world must be transformed. Since it is the world itself that accumulates Han, one must overturn the world to bring Han to an end. He proclaimed *Haedong-geungnak* (海東極樂, the Eastern Paradise) and marched toward Seoul, the stronghold of Han. In Seoul, the poor attempted to encircle the center of power holding tin cans. These cans signify utter powerlessness. With nothing but this powerlessness, they advanced toward the heart of power. This illustrates that Dan is not merely a matter of physical violence. Such a reckless march was made possible only through the result of constant self-emptying. Jang Il-dam's Dan was finally sublimated into a

12 · Suh Nam-dong, "Theological Reflection on the Imagery of Han," in *Inquiry into Minjung Theology* (Seoul: Dong-yeon, 2018), 135.

13 · Ibid., 135-6.

14 · Ibid., 120. This quote does not originate from the narrative poem of Jang Il-dam; rather, it is spoken by a man in the novel *Seopyeonje* during the resolution of his Han. This passage from a different narrative within the same essay is cited here to further illustrate the dialectical relationship between Han and *Dan*(□).

spiritual dimension. This is the very objective of the dialectic between Han and Dan: the *Unity of God and Revolution*. It is the state where the inner spirit becomes one with external practice.

Jang Il-dam was apprehended following a betrayal by a disciple. Just like Jesus, he was subjected to interrogation. During his trial, he declared the following:

My paradise does not reside solely in this land; rather, it is this single, white path (*Huin-gil*, 흰. 길), like the wind, which begins from this land, passes through Seoul, and stretches toward the world, the cosmos, the heavens, and beyond all time. The path itself is *Geungnak*(極樂, Paradise), and I am a wayfarer (*Nageune*, 나그네) walking this path.[15]

Having reached the final stage of Dan, he was a Nageune. Like a Nageune, he was one who transcended life and death without any lingering attachments. In this way, he became free from the shackles of death. Resurrecting after three days, he severed the head of the disciple who had betrayed him. He then attached his own head to the disciple's body. His head, which possessed divine wisdom, became the *List* (cunning) that connected itself to the body that had betrayed him. Thus, the disciple did not perish but continued to live through his physical body. Jang Il-dam had both punished and saved his disciple.[16]

As mentioned previously, he is a butcher. He came from a lineage of butchers spanning three generations. He was the son born of the joining of flesh between a prostitute and a descendant of a family exterminated during the Donghak Revolution; he was the son born of the mingling of bodies between a prostitute and an independence fighter who perished during the Japanese colonial period; and he was the son born of the fusing of flesh between a prostitute and a man branded as a 'Red' and killed during the colonial era. The Han of Jang Il-dam resides in solidarity with the Han of the Minjung. Jang Il-dam was thirty-three years old at the time of his death, just as Jesus was. The birth and life trajectory of Jang Il-dam are a perfect replica of Jesus. The Jang Il-dam of 1970 is the re-enactment of Jesus. Kim Ji-ha, who composed the narrative poem of Jang Il-dam, sought to resolve the Han of the Korean Minjung through his poetry.[17]

Jang Il-dam employed the method of Dan. Initially, it took a linear and unidirectional form, manifesting as quite violent. The act of severing to resolve the Han of the Minjung requires force, for if Han merely leads to retaliation, the cycle of vengeance will continue to circulate endlessly. It must be severed all at once, and violence is the tool utilized at this stage. However, Dan does not signify violence alone. The philosophy of Dan eventually arrives at the path of the Nageune. It brushes away all lingering regrets and resentment. It is more than mere contemplation; without restricting its modes, Dan unifies earth and heaven, God and revolution, and earthly and heavenly ways of life.[18] Dan leads from violent means to the sublimation of Han into a higher spiritual dimension.[19] As Han accumulates, Dan severs and sublimates it. Han accumulates once more, and Dan severs it again. Han and Dan interact, providing opportunities for each other to

15 · Ibid., 137.
16 · Ibid., 137.
17 · Ibid., 137-8.
18 · Ibid., 136.
19 · Suh, "The Confluence of Two Stories," 105.

act and elevating the struggle to a higher dimension. The crux of the matter, however, is that violence inevitably emerges within this process.

The precise threshold where violence ends and at what point its cessation allows Han to be sublimated into a spiritual dimension remains inherently elusive. The dialectic of Han and Dan is an intersecting dynamic of frequent wounding and binding up. Violence is transitory, directed toward elevation. Its purpose is noble, yet its means are fierce. Violence is merely one of the myriad points that manifest upon the higher plane of Dan. This is the paradox entrusted to the Priest of Han.

2. 2. The Violence of the Priest of Han

Violence is permitted for the Priest of Han. It serves as a mechanism to control Han's indiscriminate desire for retaliation. This form of violence is sanctioned only insofar as it facilitates the severing of Han. Thus, violence is strictly a means; it can never be an end in itself. Yet, the fact that violence rests in the hands of the Priest of Han is a source of anxiety, for the means and the end may swap places at any moment. The church condones the violence wielded by the Priest of Han.

The church as a comforter that unbinds the Han of the Minjung; the church that must sever the cycle of violence born of Han; the church that must transform circularity into movement; the church that, to achieve this, must accept and condone limited violence; and the church that must serve as a sanctuary for all progressive ideas, activists in the shadows, and radicals.[20]

However, violence is indiscriminate. This is because violence silences the Minjung who groan before it. According to Hannah Arendt, speaking as a political agent is possible only outside the sphere of influence of violence. As she noted, "Only sheer violence is mute, and for this reason violence alone can never be great."[21] Violence obstructs speech. The moment the Han of the Minjung is severed by violence, the Minjung lose their voice. Consequently, their groaning ceases, and once silenced, that groan can no longer be heard. A more profound problem lies in the very exercise of violence: it stems from a misunderstanding of Han. The Minjung manifest their Han through groans and through the body; however, the concrete content of that Han remains concealed. Rather than being expressed in refined language, it manifests as screams and incoherent vulgarities. Thus, one fails to hear the content of a Han that has already lost its voice. The violence employed by a priest who attempts to sever this unheard Han inevitably becomes indiscriminate. Such indiscriminate violence silences both the Minjung and their oppressors alike. It repeatedly erases the already marginalized voices of the Minjung, making it impossible for others to hear them. This misplaced use of violence breeds new resentment and revenge, further intensifying the cycle of violence. In this process, the voice of the Minjung recedes even further. This issue is clearly illustrated in the concept of the *subaltern* as theorized by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

In her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak analyzes why the voice of the *Sati* was erased.

20 · Ibid., 105.

21 · Arendt, *Human Condition*, 26.

Sati was a custom practiced in the Bengal region of India, where a widow was immolated to follow her deceased husband. This practice was prohibited by the British, who were colonizing India at the time. Spivak formulated the sentence: "White men are saving brown women from brown men."[22] An ideology lies hidden behind this sentence. 'Western,' 'White,' and 'Male' perspectives attempted to interpret the 'brown woman' through their own grammar of race and gender. However, the reality of Sati was somewhat more complex.

The rumor that 'the women wanted to die' began to circulate. This suggests that the deaths of Indian women were voluntary. Such a claim raises profound patriarchal issues : a regressive and wretched existence. Choosing to follow one's husband without clinging to life is thus glorified as embracing a "great death". However, women sacrificed to Sati are simply driven toward death. After they perish in silence, the phrase "the women wanted to die" replaces their actual voices.[23] Western feminist discourse fails to capture this predicament of being driven toward an "ethical death" within patriarchal systems.

Furthermore, Western ideology also fails to contain the voice of Sati. As an ideology, the mode of production narrative presupposes a conflict between the working class and the capitalist class. In this framework, workers are alienated from the products of their labor because they do not fully possess the results of their output and are exploited by the capitalist class. Thus, the worker must reclaim the value of their labor taken by capitalists. However, the woman of Sati remains powerless within this mode of production narrative. Her existence is not labor that is exploited by capital. Consequently, "women outside of the mode of production narrative... mime 'writing as such'" through their gestures."[24]

The practice of Sati was essentially framed through the lens of violence within the dominant Western discourse of the era. Spivak pointed this out by invoking Marx's theory. According to Spivak, Sati was both staged (Darstellung) from a Western-centric perspective and represented (Vertretung) as a proxy, regardless of their own will. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx analyzed why the small peasant proprietors of the Napoleonic era failed to develop into a political class. In doing so, he distinguished between representation as *Vertretung* (speaking for or proxy) and *Darstellung* (staging or portrait). The small peasants lacked a voice to articulate their own position. Consequently, they sought representatives to speak for them; however, these figures—often their masters—did not truly represent the interests of the peasantry. Furthermore, they were unable to "stage" or re-present (darstellen) themselves; they could not render their own reality before others. Thus, the small peasants failed to become subjects of political agency and were instead forcibly staged and represented to serve the interests of their masters. There is a clear distinction between staging and representation. Spivak criticized Foucault and Deleuze for conflating these two senses of representation. They assumed that if the oppressed could stage themselves, they would automatically become

22 · Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 284.

23 · Ibid., 287.

24 · Ibid., 244.

political representatives and emerge as sovereign subjects.[25]

Just as the small peasants were inaccurately represented (vertreten) by their masters, causing their own voices to be erased, the masters staged (darstellen) the peasantry according to their own ideological perspectives, leading them to lose their own image. The women sacrificed to Sati faced a similar predicament, being forcibly represented by British imperialism. The abolition of Sati was driven by the imperialist intent to "represent" and protect the rights of colonial women. Yet, this abolition triggered a nationalist resistance movement. Sati was also inaccurately staged, depicted merely as "savage" or "heathen" victims. This was a distorted staging of Third World women who exist outside the mode of production narrative; they were driven toward deaths disguised as "nobility" within a patriarchal atmosphere. British measures to prohibit Sati in India utilized violence as a means, resulting in the erasure of the subaltern voice. Such "violent re-presentation" can similarly occur within the context of Minjung.

The Minjung are not easily defined. In the 1970s, the Minjung were relatively visible as the urban poor, laborers, and those resisting the military regime. As South Korean society has undergone significant economic growth and democratization, the Minjung have become fragmented. Diverse interests are intricately intertwined, and the roles of perpetrator and victim frequently shift and overlap. As such, it is nearly impossible to subsume disparate groups—such as students hoping for tuition cuts, non-regular workers seeking permanent status, or those addicted to plastic surgery as victims of lookism—into a single, common network.[26]

Soon-Yang Choi organizes Jin-Kwan Kwon's classification of the Minjung into two categories: "Real Minjung" and "Discursive Minjung."[27] The former refers to the Minjung in their raw, lived reality, while the latter refers to those who act within an ideal and theoretical framework, representing a state of "potentiality" moving toward a rationalized "actuality." In this context, the subjects who construct the discourse are the intellectuals ("the intelligent"). Acceptance of a discourse might look like a choice, but we cannot ignore how individuals are co-opted into the narratives of intellectuals, merely echoing the voices of power as if they were their own.[28] Under these circumstances, it is difficult for them to become subjective agents of the Minjung; instead of raising their own voices, they merely reiterate the discourse of the intellectuals. Consequently, those who are not subsumed into these discourses not only lose their agency but are also frequently misrepresented. Much like the case of Sati, the intellectuals may repeat the mistake of erasing the Minjung's voice rather than truly representing or staging them. Here, the "Priest of Han" runs the risk of becoming merely another intellectual who constructs a restrictive discourse.

To summarize, the Priest of Han uplifts the Minjung by severing Han and cutting through its re-accumulation. In the process of resolving Han, they possess and exercise violent means. When

25 · Ibid., 258-9.

26 · Soon-Yang Choi, "A Critical Suggestion for Asian Feminist Theology and Minjung Theology from the Perspective of Spivak's Subaltern," *Theological Forum* 72 (2013): 255.

27 · Ibid., 251.

28 · Ibid., 252.

they untie the knots of Han through such violence, the voice of the Minjung remains unheard; words fall silent at the moment of violence. Even where violence reaches its peak, the Priest of Han fails to deliver words; only violence appears and then vanishes. This was precisely the case with British imperialism toward the subaltern. The practice of Sati was offensive to them; they sought to "correct" what they perceived as an evil habit of a "savage" colony and thus prohibited Sati. However, this ban was regarded by Indians as a violent intervention that infringed upon their spiritual heritage. In the context of resistance, Sati re-emerged, and the "noble" woman who followed her husband into death was now transfigured into a "nationalist martyr" fighting against British imperialism. The woman of Sati, whom imperialism attempted to represent and stage, was labeled a "nationalist martyr" or a "noble woman"—and she died. Death was inevitable. The violence of Britain's "prohibition of Sati" manifested in India and ultimately reached the woman who had lost her husband, stripping away her voice. Western intellectuals could neither represent (vertreten) nor stage (darstellen) them. They should have listened attentively to the subaltern's voice; however, they merely consumed the subaltern violently while trying to project their pre-constructed discourses. If the Priest of Han also attempts to represent the Minjung through their own discourse, they have already committed an act of violence against the Minjung. They become a frustrating Priest of Han who complicates matters by forcibly providing unnecessary help. Before attempting to represent or stage the Minjung, it is far more important to help them "find and encounter their own voices and thoughts."[29] Simple "speaking and listening"—this is what governs the violent Priest of Han. To listen, one must allow the Minjung to make a sound. The role of the Priest of Han is to respond to that sound. *Pariah* demonstrates this. By resisting, Pariah re-presented his voice in diverse ways.

3. The Politics of Friendship and the Pariah

3.1. The Silenced Voice of the Pariah

The Diaspora Jews were pariahs. Originally, "pariah" was a term used to refer to the "untouchables" in India.[30] It was Max Weber who first applied this term to describe the 20th-century European Jews and their position within society.[31] Historically, Jews were objects of intense hatred; during the 12th to 14th centuries, they were consistently maligned as usurers who cared for nothing but money. In the subsequent centuries, they were labeled within Christian society as those to be shunned for their singular pursuit of profit. According to Kyung-sik Seo, however, the charging of interest on loans was actually prohibited within Christian society. This was rooted in a biblical taboo that forbade treating one's brothers as objects for

29 · Ibid., 252.

30 · It is noteworthy that both the pariah and Sati share a historical connection to India. The subaltern and. the pariah share the fundamental commonality of having their voices erased by external forces. However, the mechanisms through which they are stripped of their voices differ significantly according to their distinct historical contexts: Sati is situated within the framework of British colonial rule, whereas the pariah is grounded in the historical trajectory of the diaspora Jewish people.

31 · Chang-Ah Yang, "The Politics of the Pariah: Action of Resistance Starting with the Hidden Past," *Journal of the New Korean Philosophical Association* 96 (2019): 474.

financial gain. Yet, to conduct business in Christian society, capital was essential. Money had to be borrowed, but it could not be secured without paying interest. Thus, while the financial industry was a practical necessity, social regulations blocked its path. In this contradictory milieu, the Jew engaged in usury became a functional necessity. Christian society pushed usury into the shadows, branding it "dirty work," and subsequently tabooed the Jews who performed that work. The pretext for discriminating against the Jews—who were laboring in the shadows for the benefit of the Christians—was the accusation: "You crucified Christ." Thus, the Jews lived under a state of systemic and structural disdain.[32]

In the twentieth century, the Jewish people became victims of the Nazi Holocaust. At Auschwitz, the Nazis viewed the Jews and remarked, "The Jews are filthy; they are animalistic people driven only by instinct," while shoving them by the dozens into trains. They would then claim, "These people were dirty and foul from the very beginning."[33] In this manner, the Jews lived their lives as pariahs.

Hannah Arendt was one such pariah. Following the outbreak of World War II, Arendt went into exile in the United States and became a refugee. At the time, German refugees were treated as mere "schnorrers" (beggars) seeking aid. Regardless of the profession they had held or the reputation they had enjoyed back in Germany, they were reduced to nothing more than refugees pleading for assistance from the authorities.

Thus, I remember a director of a great charity concern in Paris who, whenever he received the card of. a German-Jewish intellectual with the inevitable "Dr." on it, used to exclaim at the top of his voice, "Herr Doktor, Herr Doktor, Herr Schnorrer, Herr Schnorrer!"[34]

Jewish refugees had no recourse but to rely on human rights. These rights were grounded in the universal "Man" as their source of authority. The problem, however, lies in the inherent powerlessness of this "Man." Human rights predicated on the "Man" can neither constitute specific legal frameworks nor derive individual rights. As secularization and the transition to a classless society dominated 18th-century Europe, the foundation of law shifted away from divine or natural law. As law began to be based on the "Man," nominal human rights emerged, forming the modern conception of human rights. If a government defending these rights vanishes, or if a state loses its sovereignty—leaving only the abstraction of human rights behind—the people are left entirely defenseless.[35] The "Man" is impotent; it is the government that sustains rights, and thus, citizenship effectively becomes the only true guarantor of human rights.

Arendt defines the essence of human rights as *the right to have rights*. Refugees who lack this right to have rights are forced to appeal to human rights; yet, without securing the right to be

32 · Kyungsik Seo, *Gotong-gwa gieok-ui yeondae-neun ganeung-han-ga?*[Is a Solidarity of Pain and Memory Possible?] (Seoul: Chulsu & Younghee, 2009), 90–1.

33 · Ibid., 92.

34 · Hannah Arendt, "We Refugees," in *The Jewish Writings*, eds. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 269.

35 · Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, new ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1973), 290–2.

guaranteed these rights, they are reduced to mere "schnorrers" (beggars). As a Jewish refugee and a pariah herself, Arendt belonged to a group that leaned on human rights to appeal for compassion, only to find that no one would heed their voices.

Nevertheless, Arendt held the Jewish people, who became targets of the World War II massacre, partially responsible for their fate. She pointed out that while they had established their own unique history and maintained a cohesive sense of community and religious life for two millennia, they had never engaged in political action for the sake of the Jewish nation

Jewish history offers the extraordinary spectacle of a people, unique in this respect, which began its history with a well-defined concept of history and an almost conscious resolution to achieve a well-circumscribed plan on earth and then, without giving up this concept, avoided all political action for two thousand years. The result was that the political history of the Jewish people became even more dependent upon unforeseen, accidental factors than the history of other nations, so that the Jews stumbled from one role to the other and accepted responsibility for none.[36]

Rather than engaging in political efforts to consolidate a Jewish community, some chose social assimilation. These individuals sacrificed their identity for the sake of success—a group Arendt identified as the *parvenu*. Derived from the French verb *parvenir*, meaning "to succeed," the term is commonly translated as "upstart." While Diaspora Jews generally existed as pariahs—marginalized and excluded—there emerged parvenus who adapted to society at the cost of their identity. Yet, regardless of their material prosperity, the parvenu's voice remained unheeded; they were perpetually relegated to the status of outsiders. Whether striving for success as a parvenu or subsisting as a powerless pariah, neither could function as a subject of political action They possessed no public voice, existing only as beggars whose speech was never heard as anything more than a plea for charity.

There were those, however, who refused to beg and turned toward resistance. They made deliberate attempts to articulate a voice they were forbidden to possess. Arendt called these individuals *conscious pariahs*, a concept she adopted from Bernard Lazare (1865–1903), a fellow Jew who deeply influenced her thinking. A conscious pariah is one who is "aware of their political status and recognizes the political role they must fulfill."[37] As a journalist who witnessed the Dreyfus Affair, Lazare believed he must resist the discriminatory society as a Jewish pariah. Rejecting the path of the parvenu, he actively engaged in politics to establish himself as a legitimate pariah. Nevertheless, his political efforts often fell on deaf ears.

True to type, he preferred to "play the revolutionary in the society of others, but not in his own," or else to assume the role of *schnorrer* feeding on the crumbs from the rich man's table, like an ancient Roman commoner ready to be fobbed off with the merest trifle that the patrician might toss at him. In either case, he mortgaged himself to the parvenu, protecting the latter's position

36 · Ibid., 8.

37 · Sun-Wook Kim, *From Amor Mundi to Res Publica: Hannah Arendt's Republicanism*(Seoul: Aporia, 2015), 90.

in society and in turn protected by him.[38]

Lazare sought to engage in political action in the Arendtian sense. For Arendt, politics is the act of appearing before others. In this appearance, one discloses oneself in one's unique specificity. This self-disclosure occurs within the *public realm*, drawing the collective attention of all. *Speech* serves as the most potent medium for revealing oneself. It is speech that compels the observer to ask not *what* a person is, but *who* they are. Thus, one appears before others as a human being—as an existence of intrinsic value. In this manner, politics constitutes the initiation of communal affairs through the disclosure of oneself and the performance of action before others.

The disclosure of the "who" through speech, and the setting of a new beginning through action, always fall into an already existing web where their immediate consequences can be felt. Together they start a new process which eventually emerges as the unique life story of the newcomer, affecting uniquely the life stories of all those with whom he comes into contact.[39]

For Arendt, speech is the preeminent medium for self-disclosure. Appearing before others through such speech is an *action* in its own right, serving as the catalyst for the initiation of politics. In doing so, one emerges as the *zoon politikon*—the political being who, as Aristotle posited, attains the highest form of human life through action. Through politics, the pariah achieves an existential elevation, transitioning from a state of discrimination and exclusion to becoming an equal member of the community. Chang-ah Yang appropriated Arendtian political action as "disclosure" and "beginning," recontextualizing it within the framework of "pariah politics." Yang interpreted these concepts as the "manifestation of the invisible" and the "genesis of history for the history-less," respectively. Consequently, "appearance," "*speech*," and "beginning" are established as the constitutive requirements of pariah politics.[40]

According to Yang, pariah politics must first commence with appearance. One must manifest the experiences of exclusion and discrimination in the space where all are present; this constitutes the reclamation of one's own personhood. When these experiences are disclosed, the gravity of the structural problem is laid bare. Next, the speech of the pariah must be restored. When structural discrimination persists over a long period, it is difficult to retrieve the words of the pariah, who has remained a hidden entity. However, as long as the history of discrimination may be, their stories endure. Appropriating this vanished language involves discovering and disclosing narratives of exclusion. By connecting to and transmitting the words laboriously left behind by earlier pariahs, their speech is recovered. The restoration of their speech is synonymous with the reclamation of their personhood. Finally, the pariah must initiate politics. This entails returning those who were reduced to non-real existences to a state of "normality." It is the act of standing before others. Their appearance represents the visualization of the pariah, whose very existence had been erased from the outset. Through this process, the long-standing

38 · Hannah Arendt, "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition," in *The Jewish Writings*, eds. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 285.

39 · Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 184.

40 · Yang, "The Politics of the Pariah," 484–5.

discrimination is ultimately exposed.[41]

Yet, the pariah stands in need of assistance. They are unable to appear, to speak, or to initiate on their own. Naturally, one must not use their own incapacity as a justification for irresponsibility. Among the pariahs, some adapted to society and became successful parvenus. These individuals believed that as long as they prospered personally, everything was "normal," regardless of the plight of their fellow pariahs. Conversely, there existed the conscious pariah, who maintained self-awareness and resisted even within a society permeated by discrimination. One must not solidify the existing reality by remaining a helpless pariah or becoming an assimilated, upstart parvenu out of mere incapacity. Nor should one retreat into a quiet, private sphere to preserve their identity in isolation. Both paths represent a form of political irresponsibility. Instead, one must strive to live as a conscious pariah. Yet, even for this endeavor, assistance is required.

3.2. The Conscious Pariah's Politics of Friendship

The pariah's self-awareness must be awakened. It is necessary to remind them of the historical reality of the discrimination they have endured and to convey that such exclusion is fundamentally unjust. Furthermore, solidarity is forged by standing with others who have been similarly marginalized by shared discrimination. What is required in this process is friendship. Arendt authored a biography of Rahel Varnhagen (1771–1833), in which she depicted the trajectory of a life evolving into a conscious pariah.

Rahel was born as a Jew into a prosperous family. She hosted a renowned Berlin salon. where the luminaries of the era frequently gathered. Her guests included influential intellectuals such as the Humboldt brothers, Schleiermacher, and Goethe. Despite her affluent lifestyle and interactions with the elite intelligentsia, Rahel suffered from a profound identity crisis. She considered herself German, yet the fact of her Jewish identity remained a source of persistent agitation—a name she desperately wished to conceal.

as it is I do not forget this shame for a single second. I drink it in water, I drink it in wine, I drink it with the air; in every breath, that is. . . . The Jew must be extirpated from us, that is the sacred truth, and it must be done even if life were uprooted in the process.[42]

Rahel strove for assimilation. She converted to Christianity and attempted to live as a German, yet she found the necessity of concealing her true self unbearable. Following Napoleon's march into Berlin, the city remained under French occupation until 1808. During this chaotic period, her salon collapsed, and public sentiment toward the Jews began to deteriorate. Rahel "carried" her Jewish identity as a burden, wandering from place to place. In the spring of 1821, she met the twenty-three-year-old Heinrich Heine (1797~1856). Despite their twenty-seven-year age difference, he became her most vital friend.

Heine was a *conscious pariah*. As a poet, he possessed a warm heart, yet he did not hesitate to

41 · Ibid., 485-7.

42 · Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewish Woman*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston, rev. ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 120.

ridicule the parvenus who prioritized personal advancement over all else. For Heine, the original Jewish pariahs were deeply invested in pleasing and delighting those around them. They stood in solidarity with the social exclusion faced by ordinary people, empathizing with their scorn, neglect, pain, and joy. Heine's poetry mirrored the innocence of the pariah while casting a gaze of contempt upon the parvenu.[43] To Rahel, Heine embodied the ideal of the conscious pariah. He felt a profound sense of sorrow for the social ostracism she faced and, above all, for her own self-loathing. Through their correspondence, they forged a deep and lasting intimacy.

Arendt explains that Rahel's marginalized political self-awareness established a resistant identity through her exchange with Heine.[44] Heine listened to Rahel's plight. To her, Heine was not just another person; he was a fellow Jew who shared her struggles with identity. By engaging with Heine, Rahel realized that her anguish was not hers alone but was shared with another. Through their companionship, she recognized that her wandering had not been in vain. She was finally able to remove the mask she had worn for a lifetime to hide her identity. In solidarity with Heine, Rahel was finally able to become a conscious pariah.[45]

Zebadúa-Yáñez views this as the realization of a *politics of affection*. This affection resonates within the realm of friendship. It is a space of kindness, support, and a comfort akin to being in one's own home, which allows one to reveal the true self hidden beneath the mask and to speak in one's own voice. Friendship is neither a purely individual emotion nor a collective consciousness shared by the entire community. According to Zebadúa-Yáñez, friendship creates an affective space between the private and the public, and between the personal and the political. This form of friendship paves the way for solidarity.[46]

The politics of friendship demonstrates that friendship can be inherently political. It is neither a mere fusion of private affects—such as Han, empathy, and compassion—nor a simple extension of public solidarity. Rather, friendship constitutes the creation of an affective space that simultaneously reflects both spheres.[47] For Arendt, friendship is a "mode of intersubjectivity"[48] that makes political demands and preserves our connection to the world, serving as a "mediating intersection and a point of coincidence that opens a horizon for freedom."[49] Allied to politics, friendship does not substitute for political action but stands as a condition for its survival and, moreover, its "awakening".[50] Rahel's awakening to her own situation through her friendship with Heine exemplifies this political realization, a transformation where inward introspection gives way to practical "engagement" and political "agency".[51]

The pariah must open a path toward freedom through this affective dimension. In the

43 Hannah Arendt, "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition," 279-80.

44 Verónica Zebadúa-Yáñez, "'But I am a rebel after all!' The Politics of Marginality in Hannah Arendt's Life of Rahel," *Arendt Studies* 4 (2020): 40.

45 Ibid., 43.

46 Ibid., 43.

47 Ibid., 43.

48 Ibid., 43.

49 Ibid., 43.

50 Ibid., 43.

51 Ibid., 43.

Arendtian sense, freedom is the prerequisite for appearing before others through speech and action and for initiating something anew with others. Thus, freedom establishes the horizons of politics—ensuring that anyone may speak and act.[52] However, the pariah is inherently powerless. Consequently, they are unable to speak, unable to appear, and find it difficult to initiate anything; they have, in essence, lost their freedom. Yet, there exists a way to reclaim this freedom: by initiating solidarity. If an affective space is opened—one where the emotion of friendship is shared, where one can weep alongside the groans and cries of others, where one can listen even without full understanding or when the words are crude and laden with curses, and where one can say, "It is not your problem alone; it is not your fault"—then the pariah, too, will begin to engage in politics. The same holds true for the priest of Han. Acting as the Priest of Friendship, the Priest of Han and the church coexist with the Minjung within an affective space. In that space, the priest helps the Minjung overcome their misunderstood self-conceptions and works to reclaim their voices. Ultimately, the duty of the Priest of Friendship is to accompany the awakened Minjung on their journey as active political subjects.

4. Concluding Remarks

The Priest of Han is a person who responds to sound. They listen to the unintelligible groans, cries, and curses of the Minjung and trace the lineage of those sounds. They are the ones who sever the Han as it accumulates; this is the essence of the Priest of Han. For Suh Nam-dong, the church must embody this Priest of Han. Whether it be the church, an individual, or the Minjung themselves, the cycle of Han must be broken. In this process, violence is sometimes employed. However, the moment violence appears, speech is halted. When speech is silenced, the voices of both the Minjung and the oppressor vanish. (An oppressor beside the Priest of Han): "Please, listen to me... That wasn't actually my intention." (A victim beside the Priest of Han): "Thank you. Finally, my anger is somewhat relieved." (Another victim): "No, that's not it. It wasn't that person, it was someone else." (Yet another victim): "Oh, I didn't mean for it to go that far." Such words are drowned out by the roar of violence, losing their voice. Just as the British intervention for Indian subaltern women or those who vainly self-immolate at protest sites to represent others, these actions often end up erasing the voices of the very people who are moaning in pain. Priests of Han must now become "conscious"—much like the "conscious pariah." This conscious attitude arises from the affective space pried open by affect. In that space, one strives to listen, to respond, and to stand in solidarity. What this era requires is not a Priest of Han driven by fiery passion, but one who possesses the capacity for friendship.

52 · Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 134–5.

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