Being 'human' under regimes of Human Resource Management: Using black theology to illuminate humanisation and dehumanisation in the workplace

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Abstract

Critical studies have rightly faulted mainstream HRM for its failure to account for the meaning of being human under regimes of HRM. This article advances the field in this regard by drawing on African and broader black theological reflection on the meaning of being human, and by using visual research methods to interrogate the extent to which workplaces respect human dignity. Fifty-five (55) visual timeline interviews were conducted in a range of workplaces in the north-east of England. Data showed that allowing autonomy and freedom, mediating audit regimes, contractual affirmation, and creating communities of care were the key factors whose presence created humanising workplaces and whose absence signalled dehumanising ones. This research allows a richer understanding of structures and processes that produce either humanising or dehumanising workplaces.

1. Introduction

This article is a contribution to the growing body of literature about how to study the 'human' in Human Resource Management (HRM). This is important, because the neglect of the humanity of workers under HRM regimes often contributes towards harmful practices and structures in the workplace. For example, in a thoughtful intervention, Mariappanadar calls for a "sustainable HRM" that seeks to identify, via a "stakeholder harm index", the negative individual, family and community externalities of high-performance work practices – lack of sleep, coffee/alcohol abuse, heart disease, depression, divorce, and the like (Mariappanadar, 2014). Critical studies of HRM have long recognised the ethical need to challenge such work-

place conditions, echoing Legge's oft-cited call for "the submerged voices of those who experience HRM initiatives ... to be given more prominence not only for ethical reasons, but to counteract the managerialist agendas that are implicit in much HRM and performance research" (Legge, 2005:41).

This article seeks to advance this critical project in two ways. First, for all its critique of either the neglect or commodification of workers, critical HRM itself does not always sufficiently foreground real workers or provide a positive ontology of being human to be able to articulate practical alternatives. This is, I argue secondly, a methodological issue, because critical HRM commonly relies heavily on textual analysis rather than exploring in detail people's experiences. Instead, this research uses visual timeline methodology to interrogate the actual experiences of the workplace as either humanising or dehumanising. 55 such interviews were conducted with public sector and charity workers in the north-east of England.

Theoretically, this research draws on African/African American/black Christian theological literatures on the value of human life. Revisiting the Biblical idea that humans are created *imago Dei* (in the image of God) I argue that, whereas Euro-American theologians have been more interested in philosophical questions about the meaning of being human, black theology has insisted on the exploration of the ethical significance of the *imago Dei* in concrete contexts of unequal power relations where human dignity is denigrated. Suggesting that this work has relevance beyond the original discussion of race, I argue that viewing the modern workplace under regimes of HRM as one such context, allows us to ask how well human beings created *imago Dei* are being treated. In so doing, we can draw out the ways in which HRM can contribute to workplaces being either humanising or dehumanising.

There is a substantial literature on HRM in Africa (Kamoche, 2002; Ruggunan & Spiller, 2014; Budhwar, Tung, Varma & Do, 2017), and a recurring theme is how HRM in Africa blends both international and indigenous practices (Anakwe, 2002; Wood & Bischoff, 2020). However, this body of work can be critiqued for seeing the movement of ideas as monodirectional – how 'international' ideas are locally adapted in Africa (for example, Ruggunan & Spiller, 2018). Following Nigerian theologian Ezekiel Nihinlola (2018), I want to ask how ideas from Africa and the broader field of black theology amongst African diasporas can shape and critique international debates about HRM.

Many HRM scholars have called for a shift away from research that attempts to prove the links between HRM interventions and performance, which are often based on flawed research methods, producing weak data that demonstrate correlation rather than causation. Heeding this call and seeking to augment the important work of others in this regard, this article points to the possibilities afforded by studies with creative methodologies that foreground the lived experience of real human beings in the workplace and turn a critical lens on the organisational cultures and political economies that make work and the workplace humanising or dehumanising.

The article proceeds as follows: Section two examines how 'the human' has often been sidelined in academic HRM, focusing on ontological and methodological questions. These

questions are addressed respectively in Section three, which draws on black theological anthropology, and Section four, which outlines visual timeline interview methods. The substantive part of the article, Section five, uses interview results to foreground the experiences of real workers to construct an inductive account of workplaces as either humanising or dehumanising, which is discussed in Section six before the article concludes.

2. The meaning of the human under HRM

Human Resource Management is, self-evidently, about the human. But what does it mean by the 'human'? This question is not always explored in the depth that one might expect. For example, Wilkinson et al.'s HRM textbook has a chapter about "Developing resourceful humans" (Wilkinson et al., 2017:147), but is silent on exactly what these 'humans' are. HRM debates have more commonly been focused on other topics, for example, on the issue of how effective HRM interventions are at improving performance (Wall & Wood, 2005; Guest, 2011; Ridder et al., 2012). The recent growth of reflection on ethics in HRM might present an opportunity to ask this question recognising, with Ackers, that "HRM presents us with a paradox because it talks of developing people, while considering its subjects as human resources" (Ackers, 2017:483). However, much of this literature focuses on *corporate* ethics: the external social responsibility of an organisation (Truss et al., 2012) or, of relevance to HRM, the ethical frameworks for thinking through how employees should be treated (Bevan, 2007; Ackers, 2017). The focus is on employees as a collective, rather than on the humanity of individual employees.

This omission enables the implicit assumption that humans, as Taskin and Ndayambaje (2018) put it, are merely "resources that can be put to work and that are available to support corporate strategy that exhausts them and, more broadly, that reduces them to productivity rates and performance levels" (Taskin & Ndayambaje, 2018:295). For example, Fulmer and Ployhart (2013) lament the absence of a generally accepted method of calculating the financial value of "human capital resources" in a way that would enable comparison with "other economic resources" held by a firm (Fulmer & Ployhart, 2013:162). Achieving this through big data techniques, they conclude, would dispel HRM's perception as a "soft science" (ibid.:187).

It is here that critical approaches to HRM have articulated a powerful interrogation of mainstream HRM. Karen Legge, pioneer of critical approaches to HRM, observed that: "The exploited resource, by definition, becomes commodified and its potential humanity is degraded" (Legge, 1999:256). O'Connor's excavation of the influence of Harvard Business School professor Elton Mayo's work (Mayo, 1949) on HRM is an example of research inspired by Legge. O'Connor argues that Mayo's sympathy with Freud's interpretation of war as the failure to sublimate irrational impulses led him to view workers as essentially maladjusted, and industrial disputes as the manifestation of irrational impulses that needed managing through counselling to "facilitate adjustment to industrial life" (O'Connor, 1999:242). This work highlights how HRM's implicit definition of 'the human' influences workplace relations. Similarly, Taskin and Ndayambaje (2018:278-279)

use textual analysis to explore how the human being is conceptualised in HRM textbooks. They find an underlying anthropology that humans are *objectified* (reduced to the status of an object to be instrumentalised for economic aims) and *subjectified* or deprived of their unifying human condition by being reduced to beings "whose importance and qualities depend on the organisation's hierarchy" (Taskin & Ndayambaje, 2018:278-279). Steyaert and Janssens (1999:189) accuse HRM (as academic discipline) of a "constant process of excluding what can be considered human", and their challenge that "taking up the research of and the search for the 'meaning' of the 'H' in HRM" should be a "core" task for the discipline (ibid.:194) is one that I endorse.

Despite this growing body of reflection, there are two shortcomings of critical HRM that blunt its capacity to take up this task. The first is *ontological*, being the reluctance of many scholars to articulate a positive understanding of what it means to be human. For example, in her impressive Foucauldian interrogation of HRM as techniques "by which activities and individuals are made knowable and governable", Townley (1994:139) problematises HRM as the exercise of subjectivity-forming power, but offers no deeper understanding of what it means to be human that could provide a basis for normative evaluation or resistance. This critical reflection has rendered a valuable service in problematising HRM as a regime of power that seeks to remake human subjectivities. It has raised ethical questions about how people are treated if they are commodified as 'resources', with Bowie (1998) articulating a Kantian categorial imperative to treat people as ends in themselves rather than, as HRM has it, as means. Yet this Kantian critique is inadequate, argues Richard Roberts "because it fails to recognise that HRM has a potency that not merely treats human beings as means rather than ends, but seeks to break and remake human identity itself" (Roberts, 2013:7). Beyond the mere commodification of people, he contends, "there is a deeper problem that concerns the ontology of the self and the identity of the person" (ibid.:5). It points us towards enquiring about the meaning of the human, but not to explaining why the human matters.

The second area of critical HRM where there remains ample room for progress in this regard is *methodological*: real human beings are less-commonly sighted in this work than might be expected. For example, Taskin and Ndayambaje (2018:278-9) take mainstream HRM to task for its amoral assumptions about humans and how they should be treated in the workplace. But their focus is on discourse – typical of this genre, their argument is built on a study of textbooks – and no actual workers are present in their narratives. Legge's engaging study of how we represent people at work – as members of a market, a team, a family, or a community – is predicated on the assumption that "how we conceptualize and label people will reflect and influence how we treat them" (Legge, 1999:259). Likewise, Schneider follows Legge in asking what assumptions about the person are contained in HRM discourse by exploring the metaphors it uses (Schneider, 1999). But, once again, the study of actual workers is absent. The limits of such analysis in explaining how workplaces function are obvious. As Thompson observes of Foucauldian textual analysis of HR process documents, it is quite possible that the appraisals do nothing at all (Thompson, 2011:257). I agree with Guest when he argues that "[w]hile this critical analysis implicitly reflects a sympathy for the workers' viewpoint, it is rarely able

to draw on evidence about workers' reactions to HRM" (Guest, 1999:5), and what he calls "the workers' verdict" has still not been taken seriously. I suggest that this is because real people are even more absent from the pages of critical HRM than they are from the mainstream research that it critiques.

I contend that two steps are necessary to place the human more centrally into critical HRM. The first is theoretical, or *being human*, and the second is methodological, or *seeing humans*. These arguments are explained in the next two sections.

3. Theory: Putting the human into critical HRM

Critical HRM has been adept at critiquing the discursive construction of the human in HRM, but scholars have been less forthcoming at providing a more positive articulation of what it means to be human. This question is of course one that has long concerned philosophers, and Leyens describes the "empirical and theoretical research on dehumanization" as "blossoming" (Leyens, 2009:807). This article draws on one field of this interdisciplinary work – theological anthropology. This is the field of academic theology that explores the question about what it means to be human. I am not alone in seeking to bring theological anthropology into dialogue with management and organizational studies (see, for example, Dyck & Schroeder, 2005). But of particular relevance to this article is a paper by Sandrine Frémeaux and Grant Michelson which, they state, aims to "radically shift the focus and give privilege to the 'human' in human resource management" (Frémeaux & Michelson, 2017:39), to ensure that employees are not merely viewed instrumentally as means to an end (typically profits or performance), but instead that "people are treated as important for their own sake" (ibid.:28), with "employees, customers, superiors, [seen] not as a means to achieve good results, but as ends in themselves". This resonates with but exceeds a Kantian critique of instrumentality because they use an optic of 'meaningful work', that is, that work can be a means of being, of creating, and of helping and serving others.

Their argument is located within a specific theological anthropological tradition (theological anthropology is that part of theology which explores the technical question of the nature of being human). Their perspective, they claim, "provides a wider vision that the conception of work derives from the conception of the human person. In other words, the Judeo-Christian view asserts that God created men and women in his image" (ibid.:30-31). The key term here is 'in his image.' The idea that human beings are created *imago Dei*, in the image of God, occurs in the Hebrew Bible's creation story (Genesis 1:27) and has been hugely important for Christian theology and derivative post-Christian traditions of human value and human rights (Marshall, 2001). Scripture itself does not explain the content of the term in any detail, and it has thus been subject to multiple interpretations by theologians (Cortez, 2010:15). Some scholars suggest that to be created *imago Dei* is primarily a claim that humans are essentially relational (Zizioulas, 2006), others that it is to exist with certain capacities (Altmann, 1968), properties (Farris, 2015) or responsibilities (Middleton, 2005). These all have in common a belief that human

beings are intrinsically valuable. However, what is missing in this debate, I contend, is an explicit extrapolation of the ethical and political significance of the *imago Dei* for concrete power-laden contexts (Frémeaux and Michelson do that, but in this regard they are unusual). It is noteworthy, for example, that the extended discussion on the *imago Dei* in the authoritative *Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology* (Farris & Talifiaferro, 2015) says virtually nothing about the ethical implications of the concept that humans are created in the image of God.

I therefore look to an alternative tradition of interpreting the *imago Dei*, that of black theological anthropology. Black theology draws on experiences of racism and colonialism to challenge these systems of oppression (Hopkins, 2005). Theological anthropology (that part of theology which explores the technical question of the nature of being human, as we saw above) has particularly engaged African scholars in recent years (see, for example, Nihinlola, 2018). In both African and diasporic African reflection, political ethics are at the forefront. Amongst African Americans in particular, the *imago Dei* has historically been a key optic to view and critique the treatment of black American slave populations and their descendants. For example, in his 1843 'Call to Rebellion', Henry Garnet Highland wrote that: "Unless the image of God be obliterated from the soul, all men cherish the love of Liberty" (Garnet, 1843). In his study of literature's use in the progressive struggle before the American Civil War, McKanan (2002) concludes that "identifying the Image of God" was a key strategy in radical Christian activism. Frederick Douglass, the freed slave who became perhaps the most iconic anti-slavery leader, insisted in a much-cited 1850 essay that: "The slave is a man, 'the image of God'", and that slavery aims "to mar and deface those characteristics of its victims which distinguish *men* from *things*, and *persons* from *property* ... It reduces man to a mere machine" (Douglass, 1992:217).

James Cone wrote in his landmark 1969 book *Black Theology and Black Power* that: "The crucial question, then, for the black man is, 'How should I respond to a world which defines me as a nonperson?'" His answer was that: "To be for God by responding creatively to the *imago Dei* means that man cannot allow others to make him an It ... When black people affirm their freedom in God, they know that they cannot obey laws of oppression" (Cone, 1997[1969]:137-138). Feminist theologians have extended this analysis to insist that because "All African women are made in the image of God", their oppression "is oppression of God's own image and energy" (Thomas, 2007:2-3).

The-best known exponent of this view was Martin Luther King Jr., who located himself clearly and self-consciously within this tradition. Baker-Fletcher (1993) argues that King's concept of "somebodyness" placed human dignity at the centre of his work. In the most detailed extant study of King's theological anthropology, *Martin Luther King Jr and the Image of God*, Richard Wills agrees with Baker-Fletcher that "King's appeal for civil rights was premised upon the theological fact of 'Somebodyness'" (Wills, 2009:118). He argues that the *imago Dei* was the basis of King's life and work, because it led him to conclude that all individuals were equally valued by virtue of being born with an inherent dignity, and that all individuals had an intrinsic worth that became the requisite for the bestowal of just and fair treatment (Wills, 2009:113). Of relevance to the casting of the employee

as a deployable 'resource' under HRM, King insisted that "man is not a thing. He must be dealt with not as an 'animated tool', but as a person sacred in himself. To do otherwise is to depersonalise the potential person and desecrate what he is" (King, 1965). This view followed him to his untimely grave: "We are determined to be people", King stated in his final sermon, before he was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, where he had gone to support workers in an industrial dispute (King, 1986[1963]:280). This tradition of black theological anthropology is a powerful lens through which to view the modern workplace as it insists that we cannot think about 'Human Resource Management' without thinking ethically and politically about 'the human' who is being managed as a resource.

4. Methods: Seeing the human in critical HRM

The second way in which critical HRM could be developed to advance its ability to interrogate being human, I contend, is *methodological*. Real human beings are less commonly sighted in this work than might be anticipated. It follows from my argument that to properly explore the meaning of the human under HRM, we need a research method that inductively foregrounds actual people, to complement both the more commonly encountered textual analysis of critical HRM, or the deductive reflection of theologians. How do we go about "putting the human back into strategic human resource management", as Wright and McMahan (2011) have it? This is a methodological question. Many studies use results from the UK government-run Workplace Employment Relations Survey, a national workplace survey conducted 6 times between 1980 and 2011. Guest claims that studies using WRES are useful in "bringing the worker centre stage" (Guest, 2011:5), but the WRES relies on a single interview with a senior manager. As Wright and McMahan (2011) pointedly put it, not only does this lead to greater bias, but such studies easily forget the more important question of the meaning of being human (Wright & McMahan, 2011:94).

In contrast, this research adopts a case study approach of humanisation and dehumanisation under HRM regimes in UK secondary education, higher education, and the church. A case study is an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context (i.e., actual practice of HRM in our chosen institutions), especially when "the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (as in HRM in a complex organisation). It is especially useful for research, like this, relying on the triangulation of multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2014:16-17). The case study approach has been well-used by other studies of HRM (for example, Knights & McCabe, 2000; Piening et al., 2014). Three sources of data were used for the research project from which this article derives: content analysis of HR documents, interviews with HR managers, and visual timeline interviews with employees. It is largely the latter source upon which this article is based. Looking at secondary education, higher education and the church is a "multiple-case design" as recommended by Yin (ibid.:57). The logic behind this is not sampling, but replication. Churches, schools and universities were chosen as the units of analysis because of my hypothesis that they would provide particularly suitable grounds to explore the humanising or dehumanising

effects of HRM interventions. Characterised by an emphasis on relatively lower-paying "meaningful work" (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), workplaces in the public sector (Gould-Williams, 2004), charities and voluntary organisations (Cunningham et al., 2017; Guo et al., 2011) have historically often developed distinctive human- rather than profit-focused employment cultures that have come under particular pressure under neoliberal models of New Public Management with the associated import of private-sector-style models of HRM (Brown, 2004; Harris, 2005). Further, as Brown argues, "contemporary HRM texts often disregard or give only cursory acknowledgement of HRM within the public sector, relying instead on appropriating a business model of firms as the general context for HRM scholarship" (Brown, 2004:304).

This research uses visual timeline methodology interviews conducted with secondary teachers, academics, and church leaders in the Baptist and Anglican churches, across a range of institutions in the north-east of England (where the author is located). Visual timeline methodology (VTM) was developed by Angela Mazzetti and John Blenkinsopp to explore career trajectories retrospectively (Mazzetti & Blenkinsopp, 2012). It has an older heritage in business and organisational studies, located in the tradition of critical incident technique (CIT) which sought to trace and understand key moments in an organisation's trajectory (Chell, 2004). CIT has proved powerful in elucidating lived experiences of the career path. For example, Gustafsson and Swart (2020) used it by asking elite professionals to draw pictures that narrate their experience of promotion. As the authors argue, this is useful because "promotions need to be understood through the emotional experiences of individuals, whereas promotion decisions need to be viewed as situated in socio-emotional contexts" (ibid.:1220).

VTM develops CIT by emphasising the importance of creating visual timelines as an aid to narrating career histories. Visual timelines, like other visual research methods, are part of what Bengry-Howell et al. (2011) identify as "creative research methods". In an overview, Pain observes that: "Visual methods are accepted tools for qualitative research and are increasingly used in a wide range of disciplines" (Pain, 2012:304). She observes that using visual materials instrumentally in investigation is conceptually different from using visual information as the object of research itself, and, following Pain, this article excludes the latter. Pain found that many researchers reported that visual methods led to "enhanced data richness, by facilitating communication, enabling the expression of emotions and tacit knowledge, and encouraging reflection" (ibid.:313).

VTM asks respondents to draw and narrate visual timelines of their careers. In an important article on timelines as semiotic devices, Champagne observes that we commonly use timelines for the chronological portrayal of information, but they are less often used in research itself. This is a pity, he argues, because – in ways that are not entirely understood – "they enable the drawing of connections not previously made, enabling novel features to come into view" (Champagne, 2016:13). This should not be surprising, he continues, because "stepping back from the minutia of accumulated facts can allow one to discern patterns" (ibid.:37). He concludes that timelines are important semiotic devices that enable the discernment of new relations, and that by neglecting

them researchers may be "neglecting significant aspects of reality that are revealed only by those signs" (Champagne, 2016:11).

For this study, interviewees (recruited by random sample or by gatekeepers) were asked to tell the story of their working lives by drawing a timeline, using visual metaphors as far as possible. They were requested to draw particular attention to how they came to be teachers, academics or ministers, and to subsequent high and low points of their working lives. This was done using coloured pens on one or more sheets of A1 cartridge paper. After this, interviewees were asked to mark on the timelines moments or periods when they felt treated in humanity-affirming or dehumanising ways, and to reflect on these. Champagne (ibid.:38-40) argued that timelines can allow us to see patterns that we might not otherwise be aware of, and on many occasions, respondents remarked to me that they were understanding links and patterns in new ways by being able to analyse them using what he calls "diagrammatic reasoning" (Champagne, 2016:37). Finally, respondents were asked how schools, universities or churches could ensure that they are treated in humanity-affirming rather than dehumanising ways. Beginning with three pilot interviews, 55 such interviews were conducted, each lasting between 1½ and 4 hours. Interviews were not audio recorded, allowing for greater openness and trust.

The sectoral and gender distribution of interviewees is shown in Table 1. Interviewees ranged in length of service from people who had worked five decades to those in their first year. Reflecting the gender balance in these professions, most secondary schoolteachers interviewed were female, most church leaders were male, and academic staff were more evenly split. Only two of the interviewees were identifiable as members of BAME groups (Black and Minority Ethnic, a common designation in the UK). This indexes the historically lower levels of migration to north-east as an economically peripheral region of England, as well as issues of structural racism (Okoye, 2021). Although these two people spoke of their or their family's migration to the UK, in neither interview did race emerge as an issue in their working lives. The reader might ask why a research programme using black theology did not explicitly interrogate race and seek purposively to sample BAME participants. But that is to suggest that black theology is only of relevance to understanding racial issues. As the theoretical section above argues, the insights of black theology have far wider relevance. Although derived in the specific contexts of the African American freedom struggle and African reflection on Christian theology, I contend that they offer more general resources to help rethink the study of HRM wherever it occurs – as this article will demonstrate.

Table 1: Interviewees, by gender and employment sector

Employment sector	Male	Female	Total
Higher Education	7	11	18
Secondary Education	7	13	20
Church	14	3	17
Overall Total			**55**

The visual timeline interviews yielded a very rich data set. This was subsequently analysed by focusing on all moments marked by interviewees as humanising or dehumanising. I collated all experiences thus marked, and coded them to identify the key themes running through them. This allowed me to create an inductive account of what it means to be human under HRM regimes. This was based on the theoretical foundation that human beings are created with inherent dignity and that this must be understood not abstractly but within real, power-laden social contexts like the workplace. As part of a larger project, I identified eight factors which, when present, marked workplaces as humanity-affirming or humanising, and which when absent, marked them as dehumanising, which I call elsewhere "the eight habits of highly human workplaces" (Megoran, 2019). Those four factors which most related to HRM processes, form the basis of the substantive part of this article: issues of performance management, freedom, and trust; mediating audit regimes; contracts; and well-being and care. These are used to structure the substantive findings presented in the next section of the article.

5. Findings

The use of visual timeline interviews, inspired by African American theological anthropology, allowed me to create an inductive account of what it means to be human under HRM regimes. Given the argument that actual workers should be more present in HRM analysis, in this substantive section each point is elaborated through the extended presentation of the experiences of individual workers. These examples have been chosen because they illustrate the key recurring themes throughout the interviews. All respondents have been anonymised, and transcripts checked and approved by respondents.

5.1 Autonomy, freedom and trust

The single factor that was most frequently and most strongly flagged by church leaders, teachers and academics alike when asked to reflect on humanity-affirming or dehumanising experiences of work was: freedom, autonomy and being trusted.

This was marked most strongly amongst church leaders, who often have unparalleled leeway in choosing how they will spend their time in working with their congregation and other sections of local or wider community. "At the moment I can do anything I like so long as I turn up on Sunday and take communion," as church leader Andrew put it. He has chosen to devote certain energies into working with children and young people in his church and community and facilitating wider community life, as well as conducting part-time doctoral research on feminist readings of marginal figures in the Old Testament. He found this freedom extremely humanity-affirming and regarded potential threats to it through standardised training programmes and the Church of England's recent moves to formally adopt HRM procedures as alarming.

As with church leaders, freedom and trust was often for academics the lynchpin of their reflections on humanisation/dehumanisation. Indeed, 'academic freedom', or the

autonomy to choose which topics to research and what to say about them, is a principle enshrined in university charters. Academics spoke in general terms of their pleasure at being able to use their time in ways they chose to pursue topics they thought were interesting and important. Thus, Jasmine emphasised how humanising she found her "autonomy" in being able to choose to locate herself within a particular academic unit of the university, a certain research centre, a certain teaching sphere, and a hospitals trust: "I do have a line manager, but I'm pretty much allowed to do it my own way."

It was commonly the sense that being trusted to initiate changes to working practices and activities was identified as humanity-affirming. Andrea, an academic, described going to her head of department and asking for a reduction in administrative duties so she could take up the opportunity that had emerged of a placement in a public policymaking unit, a request that was granted – 'we'll make room for it'. "When the Head of a School says, 'yes, go and do it, if it makes you happy', this is very affirming," Andrea relayed.

Andrea spoke further about the freedom to "make room for my individual interests", such as setting up small reading groups to create networks of people with whom to talk about her research, as research interests change over time. This was humanity-affirming, in contrast to the example of another academic who had set up a reading group that he enjoyed and found interesting. He said, however, that when a new head came into the unit, she made it quite clear that this did not fit in with the direction she wanted to take, so this group was stopped – an erosion of autonomy that he found dehumanising. Likewise, the imposition of a technology of dashboard-driven micromanagement in universities was identified as dehumanising by Alicia. She described how task lists, deadlines, etc come up on the dashboard management panel, representing "more surveillance, and that makes me feel less human".

But the most egregious examples of dehumanisation through the denial of this freedom were reported by academics on casualised contracts. For example, Amelia recounted being asked to continue teaching a module which, she considered, "was a fraud". It was being delivered entirely by Teaching Fellows with no relevant scholarly background. This lacked integrity, she reasoned, in the face of students who were signing up to learn, so she told the department that she could not run it. But she recounted unhappily, "I wasn't allowed to refuse things" – she said no, but was forced to do it: "I felt completely powerless" and "the sense of value and worth I got from teaching was lost".

For secondary schoolteachers working under the national curriculum and tighter audit cultures, freedom of manoeuvre is more curtailed. But it was nonetheless immensely important to teachers, explained by one as "leeway" which he defined as this message: "Get off my case and let me do what works in helping kids move on." Music and drama teacher, Carrie, spoke of how her subject easily gets devalued in relation to those like Maths and English, but recounted how valued it – and therefore she – was made to feel in one school. In this school, request for additional time and resources for workshops, residential theatre trips, choirs, Saturday rehearsals and the like were warmly endorsed. This had seen many more kids "given the opportunity to try music", and a significant

increase in children learning instruments. In Carrie's experience, support by the senior management "made you feel a bit valued".

In the interviews, trusting people to do the work to which they felt called and were committed to, and giving them the freedom to make decisions about how to do that work, were closely correlated to a high sense of humanisation. In contrast, the denial of autonomy was linked to strong senses of dehumanisation.

5.2 Mediating audit regimes

Steven was head of an academic department subject to an external audit exercise. Over several days, auditors met staff and looked at their work to build up a picture, in their terms, of the 'quality' of the department. It seemed to be going well, but on the last day a new person came in. Steven described him as somewhat pompous, "twiddling his bow-tie", who "started to pull us apart". At the end of the assessment Steven sat in the university's vice-chancellor's office to hear the outcome. As negative verdicts were pronounced and scores on different categories were revealed one by one, Steven realised they had not done as well as they had hoped. He marked the experience as one of the few dehumanising ones in his entire working life, noting that he felt "diminished" as a person – not simply by the verdict, but by the way it was delivered.

Steven's experiences were echoed by many teachers and academics in the interviews, and the negative experiences were accentuated where people felt the poor verdicts were in part mis-informed or based on prejudice or delivered in dehumanising ways. In a different and later audit exercise, used to generate league tables that influenced government funding, Steven's department came nationally near the top, which he identified as a humanity-affirming moment as he had written the submission. Schools, universities, and other publicly funded bodies increasingly find themselves subject to multiple external audits that determine in part access to resources and the futures of staff and managers. They are unavoidable. The data from this research however shows that the ways in which individual schools and university departments respond to audit exercises have significant impacts on processes of humanisation/dehumanisation.

The corrosive effects of badly handled audits were frequently recounted to me. An academic recounted how in the 1990s preparation for a Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) audit produced dehumanising effects on the departmental collective by turning younger staff against older-established ones who were held responsible for poor performance: "We should avoid a blame culture", he reflected. Similarly, a teacher observed the divisive effect of a 'panic'-induced response to an unexpectedly poor outcome of an audit by the Office for Standards, Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), as the leadership team's relations with staff and governors and each other broke down. According to her, a small number of staff (including our interlocutor) were adjudged 'outstanding' by Ofsted and the other staff instructed to observe and emulate their good practice. These teachers were "moseying along, good solid teachers, maybe not the most creative or enthralling lessons, but kids made progress". However, by being forced to emulate

others their own teaching styles were not recognised and they "lost heart", their teaching subsequently adjudged to have deteriorated rather than improved in the subsequent interim 'health check'.

But this need not necessarily be the case. Gary, a teacher, observed how the ways in which different schools prepared for Ofsted audits had differential humanising/dehumanising effects. In the first school, what he termed a "stick" approach was employed by management who seemed entirely focused on a good Ofsted outcome: "[T]his is the requirement, you are accountable" as individual staff. The approach was characterised by pawing over the 'data' for individual staff and students, and staff were sacked in large numbers if they were not seen to be performing well enough, producing an ugly culture of bad-mouthing. Endless Ofsted dry runs ensured a perpetual focus on Ofsted, and he recounted that "we were then in fear of Ofsted until Wednesday lunchtime" when we knew they would not come, leading to a collective sigh of relief. This whole experience was dehumanising, in contrast to the more humanity-affirming approach of a second school. This one, he said, did not have this "culture of fear", but instead "senior leadership drip-fed a healthy diet for us to follow". This was characterised by "trusting us more" in drawing up a plan, working on aspects of it, ssupporting them through CPD (Continuing Professional Development), and expecting to see the evidence of this work in time – rather than going around constantly checking up minute aspects of work. He prefers it because it is more "student-centred", rather than the previous school where "you farm children to get results for your school" and where "they were treated like machines" as "we became more corporate, less student-centred". "Ultimately", he reflected, "Ofsted doesn't matter as much as helping vulnerable kids get a good education."

Apart from overall approaches to Ofsted and the REF (Research Excellence Framework, a UK government audit of university research that is used to allocate funding and generate league tables and the like) respondents reported more subtly dehumanising effects of audit regimes. In schools, audit regimes and associated league tables valorise subjects seen as core. Thus, teacher Aileen drew attention to the marginalisation of subjects such as music, performing arts and religious education (RE) in the English Baccalaureate (EBAC), a suite of GCSEs the government wants all schools to teach and on which take-up rates are assessed. She complained that "people who teach music are also told to teach RE or drama or something they don't know anything about, because these are seen as less important. If a music teacher was put in front of the maths class, there'd be lots of criticism – these are valued more." This is dehumanising because "it gets implied that our contribution is less valuable because we don't teach one of these valuable subjects".

Similarly, university funding regimes and international league tables like those drawn up by the Times Higher Education place a greater emphasis on research than teaching, and this has subtle implications: "[T]here is pressure from the REF, it is not hard and fast, but it is there", said Andrea (an academic) drawing a raincloud to represent the negative, overshadowing influence of the REF on her working life. One of these is contractual, some universities creating what are effectively teaching-only contracts, with research time allowed not for work in the scholar's field of expertise but for 'pedagogical' topics,

in which they may not have been well trained or conducted PhDs. Thus Andrea, who enjoys teaching more than research but wants to remain on a teaching and research contract, vouchsafed her fears that she will be pressured into a teaching-only contract because "the centre" does not "understand that we are all individual people". Likewise, Stuart's research is on important social and ethical issues, and he has contributed to the teaching- and student-experience side of his department that has been nationally recognised and is seen as being of strategic importance for the university. But because he is not publishing what are deemed in the language of the REF 'four-star articles', he cannot get promotion, which would be "a recognition by the university that you count as a person who is contributing to what really matters to the university". The consequence of this is that you come to feel you are "not being seen as a full, valuable contributor" to the mission of the university, he explained. The promotion criteria structured by external audit "legitimates a set of ways of thinking about a human being and what counts", which he finds dehumanising.

As a contrast, church leaders did not talk about formal targets, although informally they sometimes used the increase or decrease of congregation numbers as proxies of success. One minister, Thomas, used the *absence* of targets as an example of an aspect of his work he found humanity-affirming. As a young minister in a socio-economically disadvantaged urban parish, one night he witnessed a burglary and reported it to the police. The burglars learnt he had been the 'grass', and perpetrated a campaign of revenge against him including instances of assault, graffitiing his house and the church with the slogan 'The vicar is a grass', smashing his windows, repeatedly damaging his car, breaking in and trying to set fire to his house. He admitted that staying felt like 'masochism' at times, but said that "you stay because in your deepest self you feel this is what you are called to do". Instead of leaving, he obtained grants to initiate a whole series of programmes to engage with 'detached youth' – youth clubs, cultural events, etc. to provide activities and connect them more broadly across the community. After some time, he was able to see many lives touched and engaged, and the violence against him ceased, and this for him was marked as a particularly humanity-affirming activity. He commented, tellingly, that he likes working with churches who are "in it for the long term"; "Unlike the council we don't demand results in 18 months" and "we do not have targets". He elaborated later: "We do what we can to be generous and self-giving – trying to walk that way of the Cross – not knowing outcomes. It's God who brings the transformation. That cannot be predicted."

External audit in multiple metrics-gathering exercises is an unavoidable aspect of the way that UK educational institutions work; as the churches remind us, they are not inevitable and there are other ways of enabling social interventions. Nonetheless, schools and universities have leeway in how they respond to and prepare for these audits, and the choices they make can have important implications for how staff are treated in humanity-affirming or dehumanising ways.

5.3 Employment conditions: Contractual affirmation

The conditions of employment that interviewees experienced were one of the most important factors correlated to humanisation or dehumanisation that came up in the interviews. Poor employment conditions –precarious work and maternity-related issues in particular – were undoubtedly the most dehumanising aspects of the modern workplace for many people.

Following the offer of a job itself, promotion was marked by many people as humanising. Andrea described her promotion to Senior Lecturer as a "restoration of balance". She felt she had been looked down on by some colleagues, who thought she could teach but not do research, and so had "crap" administrative roles dumped on her. Suddenly, she said, those colleagues did not treat her with the same disrespect. Similarly, for teacher Stan, getting a promotion "felt as if somebody was saying 'you have a valuable role to play'". Within work, what schoolteacher Leia described as "I'm worth it moments" stuck out for many interviewees: an article being accepted for publication by a good journal, the bestowing of an award by a scholarly society, and the like.

Such experiences of what I call 'contractual affirmation' were related by most interviewees. They spoke more positively about the affirmation that came from postings and promotions than they did about the pecuniary benefits. Similarly, the denial of hoped-for promotion was interpreted as the institution not valuing what they could offer and who they were – the two being inseparable. This section will look at examples at two of the most encountered topics.

5.3.1 Return from maternity leave

Secondary-teacher Bryony, the only woman in her department, returned to work part-time after becoming a mother. She remarked on two dehumanising aspects of her treatment. First, she was only one given lower-ability classes to teach (unlike previously) and second, she was the only person not given her own key to the store cupboard. When asked why she was told: "You've had a baby, you may take time off." Likewise, Alicia, an academic, found the workplace experience of becoming a mother dehumanising in many ways, complaining of poor discretionary maternity pay and a lack of institutional support on campus upon her return. For example, initially there was no breast-feeding room and then, when one was made available, it was cumbersome to access. Further, she was not allowed to opt out of teaching slots for nursery pick-up time. She regarded it as ironic that her department had been given a 'bronze' charter mark by 'Athena Swan', a gender equality audit. She was scathing of the award: "The application said that we did x and y for women returning to work. You claim to be enabling flexible working, but you aren't." By not attending to her specific needs, "they didn't see me as an individual at all," she remarked. "It was pretty inhumane and quite brutal."

The poor treatment of women returning from maternity leave was a major source of dehumanisation reported by interviewees.

Philippa, an academic in a management position, requested flexible working under the 2002 Employment Act and found the employer's refusal to give this while not technically illegal, certainly dehumanising: "I had given them everything, but they wouldn't give me one thing." The pressure was increased from her more traditional religious family, who felt she should spend more time at home now that she was a mother. She appealed, and a meeting with management was called. The Human Resources director, a woman with children, remained unsympathetic: "I can do it, so why can't you?" she said.

More subtle than these egregious examples was that it became harder for female teachers going part-time after childcare to pursue or continue leadership roles in their schools. "I became a part-time nobody", one teacher reflected on giving up her previous leadership role in returning to work part-time post maternity leave. She noted how strange it was to be at a meeting and no longer looked to as a meeting leader with something to contribute, as she had previously. She was not able to apply for "lower middle or middle management" roles, as these were full time. Tina felt she had done a good job in her head of year role, and when she wrote informing the school that she would like maternity leave she said she would still like to be involved in this type of work when she returned. However, upon coming back part-time this was never mentioned, and she was given no classes in her preferred subject. She described the attitude as, "well, you're here for just 3 days, you'll have to do what's left." On top of this, no longer having the leadership role, she lost her former office: "I felt I'd lost everything." "Do you mind just being a teacher?", people asked, "as if I were a different person". All this was dehumanising.

Maternity issues interweave with those of budget restraints and the distorting effects of audit exercises in exacerbating experiences of dehumanisation for women returning from work for maternity issues. A third teacher had been head of two allied subjects before maternity leave, and when she returned part-time, she was told she had to drop one of those headships and the accompanying salary points. After her second maternity leave, according to her narrative, the head told her bluntly that she would never be given a full-time job there because her salary scale makes her too expensive and her subject is not a core one. She tried to apply for an Assistant Head role but was told by the head-teacher that he would not even physically accept her application letter. This dehumanising loss of identity was unfortunately not uncommon amongst schoolteachers.

Employment practices in schools and universities around maternity were often dehumanising for women. However, this was not inevitable, as shown by the example of Carly, an assistant head-teacher. She related how, before having children, she assumed she would stop her career when she became pregnant: "you know, mother earth and all that". But when she did have a child, she reconsidered this and applied for – and was given – the role of assistant head teacher. She described this as a "made it" moment for her, and she was never made to feel bad about needing maternity cover. Being "supported through major life events of getting married and having kids" was extremely humanity-affirming for her. Another teacher recounted that she was struggling after childbirth and went to see the head-teacher with her concerns over returning to work. He said: "As your employer, I'd like you back as I need you, but as a human I think you should stay off longer." This she found wonderfully affirming.

5.3.2 Casualisation of academic labour

UK academia has become increasingly reliant upon the proliferation of people on temporary, flexible, or 'casualised' contracts (Mason & Megoran, 2021). A number of our interviewees were either on such contracts now or had been on them prior to securing permanent positions, and spoke of these employment conditions as dehumanising. For example, Amelia had worked several temporary or part-time jobs over half a decade, sometimes in two or three different universities at once. In one of these, she was given slightly better conditions than the others and said, "I was a real person, an office all to myself, with my name on the door." Seeing her name written with the title "Dr" in front moved her, as it made her feel like "an academic". This is telling that her extended experience of casualised labour was dehumanising. She gave an example of one place where she was given a six-month contract to fill in teaching for someone who had got a grant. She was given this without interview, training or vetting, and was simply told to read out verbatim notes the lecturer had left. It was not a great module, she reported, and students were unhappy, but "no one wanted to give me anything in terms of training or emotional support". "People rarely see you, they don't think about you, and they don't care about you, because you're only ever temporary." This invisibility continued from start to finish. "No one ever says farewell" – those in the most vulnerable temporary roles, such as the hourly paid – "are never introduced to anybody so why should you be given a farewell?"

Keira described years of working on temporary contracts before getting a permanent job, doing research for someone else whilst all the while trying to build the experience and CV to win permanent employment. "The structure of hierarchy in research that empowers permanent staff with grants to employ casualised staff to help with their research is conducive to the university doing well," she reflected, "but not conducive to me being a person." She was "despondent at this time", as "you start to look unemployable if you have been an RA [research assistant] for 6 or 7 years". Her manager – who held the grants that employed her – was not a great manager, and PDRs (annual reviews) were very negative as she was being told she needed to publish more articles and get more grants. However, these were the very things she was not being given the freedom to do, with her time spent facilitating his career: temporary contracts rarely allow the same length of time to research and publish that established academics get, and are frequently fewer than 12 months long or less that 100% of time. Keira described this situation as "the systematic destruction of my self-esteem and dismissal of my personal ambitions", with her teaching not being appreciated and her individual research goals not being valued. "There wasn't a single PDR that I didn't leave in tears," she said. She used psychologist Martin Seligman's famous term "learned helplessness" to describe her state, a condition that can be observed in laboratory rats and dogs if they are punished indiscriminately and end up docile and dulled. It was a striking and disturbing evocation of dehumanisation. Temporary staff are amongst the most marginal and invisible, and HRM regimes can all too readily mistreat them by failing to recognise their equal personhood.

5.4 Creating communities of care

In his 2002 book *Identifying the Image of God,* about anti-slavery literature in the pre-Civil War USA, historian Dan McKanan argues that: "Identifying the image of God" in slaves was the key strategy of radical Christian social reformers. These writers placed victims (slaves, native Americans, children, women) in situations understood to be universally human, depicting them as loving family members and victims vulnerable to physical and emotional abuse. McKanan defines this strategy as 'sentimentality', asking people to acknowledge the full, equal humanity of another by appealing to common experiences of family relationships or bodily pain. Although we would make no comparison between enslaved African Americans and our interviewees, it is nonetheless the case that they frequently referred to moments when their pain, pleasure and familial relations were recognised – or not – by managers as moments of humanisation/dehumanisation in the workplace.

This was rooted in the ordinary things of life. One church leader, Hayley, spoke of a friend in the church who would go out with her for meals and concerts, and of a couple who invited her round for cups of tea: "[T]hey treated me as an individual, saw me as someone other than the vicar." Another spoke of how humanity-affirming it was when people invited him to watch amateur dramatics performances or football matches. For one teacher, Sarah, a highlight of the school year was the annual "wellbeing CPD" session when, rather than being taught something to do with work, staff are allowed to pick something fun to do such as playing tennis or cocktail making. This was marked as humanity-affirming because it was fun, relaxing, and made staff feel valued by "giving us time to enjoy being us". Leia, a supply teacher, recounted that in one school the head of department used to buy her flowers and other presents, and invited her to her home to meet her family, "even though I was only a supply teacher". When she left, the head of department bought her a Pokémon scarf, a humorous reference to the time she had been spotted playing Pokémon on her phone. Leia contrasted this with a leaving event for her at another school when she was only given generic wine and flowers. She appreciated this, of course, but the personal attention to detail underlined for her that she had been treated and appreciated as an individual human being in her time at this school. All these acts sent messages that employers were interested in these workers as human beings rather than just as employees.

However, it was in moments of crisis that differential attitudes to the humanity of the worker were most starkly drawn out. Academic Philippa has suffered with cancer over the course of her work in two different educational establishments. In the first, the employers were what she called "difficult" about her sick leave and its implications for the workplace; in the second, they were "fabulous" – supportive in terms of work implications, but also demonstrating a clear personal concern for her. Schoolteacher Susan recounted a very difficult time at work where two colleagues were constantly criticising her over minor issues, making her feel "valueless, worthless, stupid" – "but I know I'm not stupid," she added. This dehumanising experience led into a period of ill

health, and she described how the head-teacher, as she put it, "rescued" her. He insisted that she was not lazy or stupid, telling her to "just go home until you are better enough to come back". Susan reflected that she appreciated someone understanding what it meant, that she did not need to feel embarrassed or ashamed: "To be treated like a human being, knowing that someone was there."

Finally, how bereaved employees were treated was seen as a touchstone for how humanising or dehumanising the workplace was. Jasmine has one foot in the academic world of research and teaching, and one in the clinical world of the NHS. She described working for one NHS Trust as "brutal", for example, with rotas being changed at short notice which prevented people going on pre-planned family holidays. A particularly egregious event she drew our attention to was the death of a relative. The Trust would not provide cover for her to attend the funeral, so her already-overworked colleagues had to do it instead: "[T]hey genuinely didn't give a shit." She remarked on never seeing or meeting a manager – "you don't have a particular identity, you're just a number". In contrast, a minister spoke of going through a time of family turmoil compounded by a bereavement. The denominational overseer gave money for him and his family to take a weekend holiday in Scarborough, while he covered his Sunday services. "Okay, so Scarborough is not that glamorous", he joked, "but it helped and it was affirming that I was noticed". Similarly, an academic newly in her first, permanent job, was faced with the impending death of her father on another continent, during an intense marking season. With some trepidation she approached the head of department who encouraged her to return, told her not to worry about the marking as 'we'll find a way to sort it out': "Be a human", he said to her, which she found supportive.

When employers recognised their staff as human beings marked by pain, joy, and familial bonds and responsibilities, this was appreciated and remembered. In contrast, it was marked as dehumanising when they overlooked or disregarded these key signifiers of humanity.

6 Discussion: Accounting for the human in HRM

In an important intervention on ethics and HRM, Michelle Greenwood underlined the obvious point that because HRM is about using people it "raises a number of ethical concerns". As she elaborated:

> On the face of it, HRM violates any number of ethical proscriptions against using people. To call a person a resource is already to tread dangerously close to placing that human in the same category with office furniture and computers.
>
> (Greenwood, 2002:261)

Ethical interrogations of HRM based on Kantian perspectives have not been convincing, she continues, because the argument that workers should not be treated as a means to an end is untenable from an organisational perspective: they are employed precisely to further that organisation's end (ibid.:273). So, how can this apparent impasse be overcome?

The findings presented in this article point to a way beyond this dilemma, using the insights of black theological anthropology. Ontologically, rather than considering workers as means to an end or as ends in themselves, they are considered as beings made in the image of God and thus entitled to dignified treatment as such beings. Methodologically, rather than deduce logically what that looks like, the narrative visual timeline interviews conducted provide an inductive account of what workers felt it meant to be treated in humanising or dehumanising ways in the workplace. These showed that allowing autonomy and freedom, mediating audit regimes, contractual affirmation, and creating communities of care were the key factors whose presence created humanising workplaces and whose absence dehumanising ones.

Such research matters, because particular modes of HRM have real effects on daily lives. As part of the same research project, I also interviewed nine HR managers of the institutions in which my respondents in this article worked. A detailed analysis of this material is beyond the scope of this article, but comments from two of those interviews illustrate the point. At the beginning of these interviews, I asked: "What is your role as Director of Human Resources [or organisational-specific title] primarily about?" One manager explained it as twofold. First, "to help the organisation be a winning organisation" and achieve "success" defined as rising higher in the Russell Group rankings (a self-defined group of UK 'elite' universities). Second was playing "a key role in the transformational change required to achieve the university's vision and strategy", and for this to happen, she said, there is a need to overcome the problem of academics seeing "performance management" as negative, rather than as "a key part of their own development". In a second organisation, the response was trying to get staff to "adopt the culture". This was proving difficult, and she recognised that not everyone was happy with it as a goal. "You have to get the people to change, or change the people," she mused. "We've found ways to release people from our organisation who haven't been able to respond," she added – a euphemism for firing staff. Many of the people whose voices appeared in this article, and who reported egregious examples of dehumanising treatment, worked for these two organisations. The responses of these HR managers epitomise the central problem with strategic HRM: it risks seeing staff primarily not as people with inherent dignity, but as mere resources to be deployed for the strategic ends of managers – or to be dispensed with if they resist reprogramming.

The theological concept of humans being created *imago Dei* could be a powerful source of critical resistance to such thinking. However, Euro-American theological anthropology has focused on understanding the *imago Dei* through the lens of human capacities and attributes. In contrast, black theology's insistence that it must be considered ethically in contexts of unequal power-relations is a valuable corrective to the theoretical discussion and one that can inform research into the modern workplace and what it means to treat people properly as human beings under regimes of Human Resource Management.

7. Conclusion

The theoretical approach adopted here and the autobiographical visual timeline analysis employed led to findings that demonstrate what it means to treat people ethically under regimes of Human Resource Management. This research shows what factors, when present, make for humanising workplaces and, when absent, dehumanising ones.

HRM has emerged as a powerful and frequently uncontested technology of workplace control. Critical HRM has long identified the moral and ethical need to consider what happens to 'the human' in such contexts. However, commonly employed Kantian critiques have proven inadequate, and an over-reliance on discourse analysis has meant that the voices of real workers have been less audible than they should have been. It is here that visual timeline interviews, informed by black theological anthropology, can provide a powerful way to frame research questions. Although developed in contexts of the struggle against slavery and racism, black theology's insistence that any discussion of the nature of being human must involve a consideration of their ethical treatment provides a powerful lens with which to examine the treatment of people in other contexts of unequal power relations – such as the workplace. This research was conducted in the not-for-profit sector, but future studies may extend this analysis to other contexts more directly moulded by capitalist dynamics. Further, this research suggests that Euro-American theological anthropology could learn from the insights and perspectives of African and African diasporic Christian theological reflection.

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