

CONTENT AND CONTEXT IN THEOLOGICAL ETHICS



FEMINIST CYBERETHICS IN ASIA

Religious Discourses on
Human Connectivity

Edited by Agnes M. Brazal
& Kochurani Abraham



Palgrave Macmillan's
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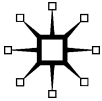
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FEMINIST CYBERETHICS IN ASIA

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This anthology celebrates the tenth year anniversary of the Ecclesia of Women in Asia (EWA), which was conceived at the conference on the post-synodal document *Ecclesia in Asia* in Pune, India, in 2001. Born in the first EWA conference in Thailand in November 2002, it aims to gather Catholic women theologians in Asia and increase their visibility in the Church. The name Ecclesia of Women in Asia was an idea of Evelyn Monteiro, SC, as inspired by Karl Rahner's "Church of women themselves" (*Theological Investigations*, vol. VIII, 88).

EWA owes its existence to many mothers (and fathers): to those who "conceived" her (Edmund Chia, Annette Meuthrath, Evelyn Monteiro, John Prior, SVD, and Hyon Dok Cheo); to those who nurtured her in her "struggling infancy" (2003 coordinator Pushpa Joseph, FMM; 2004 coordinator Agnes Brazal who ushered the group toward the 2nd EWA conference); to those who guided her in the "adolescent years" (2005–2006 coordinator Evelyn Monteiro); and accompanied the transition to "adulthood" in the ratification of the Constitution and by-laws (2007–2009 coordinator Sharon Bong).

The members of the first continuity committee that grappled to clarify and articulate the direction of this forum—its vision but especially its mission¹ and the structure that will support this—was headed by Brazal and includes Christine Burke IBVM, Pushpa Joseph, Antoinette Gutzler MM, Andrea Lizares-Si (2003–2009 webmaster), Sanae Masuda RSCJ, Evelyn Monteiro, Nunuk Murniati, and Theresa Yih-Lan Tsou, SSS. Annette Meuthrath from the Institute of Missiology, Germany, has given invaluable support as a consultant to the leadership of EWA from mid-2004 until the Constitution and by-laws were ratified in 2009.

Since its inception, EWA had published a total of 5 anthologies that were fruits of its biennial gatherings: *Ecclesia of Women in Asia: Gathering the Voices of the Silenced*, ed. Evelyn Monteiro and Antoinette Gutzler (ISPCK, 2004); *Body and Sexuality: Theological-Pastoral Perspectives of Women in Asia*, ed. Agnes M. Brazal and Andrea Lizares-Si (Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2007; finalist

in the 2007 [Philippine] National Book Award for Theology and Religion); *Re-imagining Marriage and Family in Asia: Asian Christian Women's Perspectives*, ed. Sharon A. Bong and Pushpa Joseph (SIRD, 2008); and *Practicing Peace: Feminist Theology of Liberation Asian Perspectives*, ed. Judette A. Gallares and Astrid Lobo-Gajiwala (Claretian Publications, 2011). In addition, 16 articles from the first anthology were translated into German and published as *Das Schweigen Brechen: Asiatische Theologinnen Ringen um die Befreinde Dimension des Glaubens*, ed. Hyondok Choe, Annette Meuthrath, Lieve Troch and Ulrike Kaps (Herder, 2005).

Feminist Cyberethics in Asia: Religious Discourses on Human Connectivity is the 6th publication of EWA. It consists mostly of revised versions of original papers presented at the fifth biennial EWA conference held in Kuala Lumpur on November 6–9, 2011. The presentations in the conference were set in motion by the two invited resource persons: Jac SM Kee, a Malaysian activist who spoke on taking back the (cyber) tech for the protection of women's rights against violence to women, and Pauline Hope Cheong from the University of Southern California, who spoke on how notions of religious authority and leadership are shaped in a Religion 2.0 era.

With Judette Gallares, RC as EWA 5 coordinator, and in collaboration with Regina Wolfe, Andrea Vicini, SJ, and James Keenan SJ of the Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church (CTEWC), a one-hour session featuring three papers of active (full) members of EWA was virtually bridged via Skype to five universities/college in the United States (Boston College, Fordham University, and Barry University in the East Coast; Loyola University in the Midwest; and Santa Clara University in the West Coast). The three papers were: "Digital Revolution—Creating a Flat World for Indian Women?" by Virginia Saldanha (India); "Women in Cyberspace: A New Key to Emancipatory Politics of Location" by Kochurani Abraham (India); and "A Cyborg Spirituality and its Theo-Anthropological Foundation" by Agnes M. Brazal (Philippines). This activity is part of EWA and CTEWC's effort to make the voices of theologians in the margins heard both within and outside their continental region.

EWA herself is a testimony to the space and power that computer-mediated communication gives women to organize themselves. All of EWA's conferences have been organized solely online, through its Yahoo! groups and website. EWA is a virtual community of women doing theology on the professional, pastoral, and grassroots level in Asia that has been sustained through online communications and support.

But EWA would not have lasted for more than a decade without the help as well of all the funding agencies that have given their support from EWA 1 to EWA 5: the Comité Catholique Contre La Faim et Pour le Développement, Paris; DKA, Austria; Ecumenical Commission of “World Day of Prayer Collection,” Switzerland; Institute of Missiology, Aachen; Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund; and an anonymous donor. The Institute of Missiology and the anonymous donor, in particular, have funded the conference that produced this volume.

Notwithstanding passionate arguments and tears, EWA—the only continental association of Catholic women theologians in the world—has survived! In a Church and society free of patriarchy, an organization exclusively for women theologians may not be necessary. But until then, we hope that God’s love and care will make sure that we are here!

NOTE

1. *Vision*: The Ecclesia of Women in Asia is committed to the formation of inclusive and just ecclesial communities and societies by doing theology from Asian women’s perspectives and the recognition of Asian Catholic women as equal partners in the life of the Church.

Mission: EWA encourages and assists Catholic women in Asia to engage in research, reflection and writing from a feminist perspective toward doing theology that: (1) is inculturated and contextualized in Asian realities; (2) builds on the spiritual experience and praxis of the socially excluded; (3) promotes mutuality and the integrity of creation; (4) dialogues with other disciplines, Christian denominations and religions/faiths.

INTRODUCTION

*Agnes M. Brazal and
Kochurani Abraham*

To aspire for connectivity is intrinsic to being human. With evolutionary and technological changes, humans have progressed from employing simple to more complex means of communication, as witnessed in the development from oral to written modes with the invention of printing technology. In this age of revolutionary transition from written communications to the sharpness and rapidity of digital expressions, the complexities in the evolution of human connectivity stands as an open ground for critical analysis and creative exploration. Along this line, Asia is an interesting locus of investigation.

The Asian continent, which is composed of tiger and emerging economies, is both a big producer and consumer of computer-mediated communication. Asia is home to global production leaders in personal and domestic electronics like Samsung (Korea), LG (Korea), Sony (Japan), and Sanyo (Japan). Around 18 Asian countries have more than 100 percent mobile diffusion, with more than 200 percent penetration for Macau and Hong Kong.¹ Nick Von Tunzelmann even argues that East and South Asia have supplanted the United States as the “head location” of the Third Industrial Revolution, based on information and communication technologies as well as biotechnologies, and powered by renewable or nuclear resources.²

CYBERSPACE AND ASIAN CULTURES

Research on cyberspace³ in the Asian context began only after the 1990s when the digital revolution spread outside the West. As these initial studies were largely dependent on Western theoretical categories, they do not analyze the socio-cultural contexts in which the technologies emerged and have developed. Despite the leading role a number of Asian countries have increasingly played in the