

SINI MIKKOLA

Body and Gender in  
Martin Luther's Anthropology  
(1520–1530)

*Spätmittelalter, Humanismus,  
Reformation*  
138

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**Mohr Siebeck**

# Spätmittelalter, Humanismus, Reformation

Studies in the Late Middle Ages,  
Humanism, and the Reformation

herausgegeben von Volker Leppin (New Haven, CT)

in Verbindung mit

Amy Nelson Burnett (Lincoln, NE), Johannes Helmrath (Berlin),  
Matthias Pohlig (Berlin), Eva Schlotheuber (Düsseldorf),  
Klaus Unterburger (München)

138





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*Sini Mikkola*, born 1982; University lecturer at the University of Eastern Finland; Associate Professor in church history at the University of Helsinki.

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To my late colleague

Professor Antti Raunio  
(1958–2022)



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Reformation Day 2023

Sini Mikkola





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## Abbreviations

ADB	<i>Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie</i>
DDStA	Martin Luther. <i>Deutsch-Deutsche Studienausgabe</i> . Edited by Dietrich Korsch et al. 3 vols. Leipzig 2012–2016.
LDStA	Martin Luther. <i>Lateinisch-Deutsche Studienausgabe</i> . Edited by Wilfried Härle et al. 3 vols. Leipzig 2006–2009.
<i>LW</i>	<i>Luther's Works</i> . Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann. 77 vols. St. Louis 1958–2014.
NDB	<i>Neue deutsche Biographie</i>
NRSVUE	New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition
StA	Martin Luther. <i>Studienausgabe</i> . Edited by Hans-Ulrich Delius. 5 vols. Berlin 1979–1986.
WA	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> . 61 vols. Weimar 1883–.
WA.Br	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Briefwechsel</i> . 18 vols. Weimar 1930–.
WA.DB	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Deutsche Bibel</i> . Weimar 1906–.
WA.Tr	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Tischreden</i> . Weimar 1912–.



## Chapter I

### Introduction

In the summer of 1521, a long-bearded aristocrat named Junker Jörg was dwelling in Wartburg Castle. From the centuries-old fortress built on a hill over 400 meters high, he had a magnificent view down to Eisenach, the town nearby, and beyond. Eagerly he wrote letters to Wittenberg, about two hundred kilometers distant as the crow flies, and waited for the carriers to bring back news from his comrades. On July 13, he lamented: “[...] my untamed flesh burns in great fire, that is: I should be inflamed by the spirit, but I am inflamed by the flesh, lusts, laziness, free time, [and] sleepiness [...]”<sup>1</sup>

In reality, Junker Jörg was a fictional character. He was Martin Luther (1483–1546), an Augustinian friar in disguise – without his tonsure and robe, dressed as a knight.<sup>2</sup> Wartburg Castle was not his estate, but a hideout ever since he had been condemned as an outlaw in the Diet of Worms a couple of months earlier.<sup>3</sup> What seems to have been real, however, was Luther’s anxiety. He was deemed a heretic, as he had been excommunicated by papal bull at the turn of the year 1520–1521,<sup>4</sup> and an outlaw whose life was worth nothing should someone want to put an end to his days. He was safe – for the time being – through the favor of Elector Frederick III<sup>5</sup> (1463–1525) of Saxony, who had arranged for him to stay at Wartburg Castle.<sup>6</sup> When Luther could return to Wittenberg, and what was going to happen to him or the evangelical movement, remained yet unknown.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> WA.Br 2, no. 418, 356.9–10. To Philipp Melanchthon (July 13, 1521). This passage is analyzed, among others, in Chapter IV (see below, p. 143).

<sup>2</sup> See WA.Br 2, no. 410, 228. To Georg Spalatin (May 14, 1521); WA.Br 2, no. 413, 348. To Philipp Melanchthon (May 26, 1521); BRECHT 1986, 11.

<sup>3</sup> BRECHT 1981, 451; METHUEN 2014, 14–17; MULLETT 2015, 167–168.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Brecht has pointed out that the whole question of dating Luther’s excommunication is disputable. BRECHT 1981, 406–407.

<sup>5</sup> Also known as Frederick the Wise, the Elector of Saxony from 1486 until his death in 1525.

<sup>6</sup> RUBLACK 2005, 23; MULLETT 2015, 167–169. The Elector justified his favor toward Luther at least partly for political reasons. BRECHT 1981, 448.

<sup>7</sup> For Luther’s biography, see, e.g., Martin Brecht’s tripartite series of monographs in German: BRECHT 1981; 1986; 1987. The books are also available as English translations. For more recent biographies, see, e.g., BEUTEL 2003; METHUEN 2014; HENDRIX 2015; MULLETT 2015; LEPPIN 2016a; ROPER 2016; SHEPHERD 2016.



No wonder that Luther's flesh was burning, and he was seething with different emotions. Indeed, Luther's residence at Wartburg Castle, from May 1521 to March 1522,<sup>8</sup> presented several spiritual, mental, and bodily challenges.<sup>9</sup> But what exactly was this burning and boiling of the flesh? Was it merely a depiction of his spiritual struggles, as has been suggested?<sup>10</sup> Or could it be that what Luther meant by fleshly burning was something more than an abstraction, something more down-to-earth? Does it in fact tell us something about Luther's bodily reality as well? And if not, how should one interpret, for instance, Luther's greetings from Wartburg to his colleague's "flesh and rib,"<sup>11</sup> meaning his wife?

## 1. The aim and context of the study

"[T]he Reformation was not primarily *about* sex and gender", noted Sarah Hinlicky Wilson in her article in 2018 when explaining Luther's manifold stances on women.<sup>12</sup> Even though I agree with Wilson, it is just as evident, however, that many theological and anthropological issues which were discussed in the beginning of the sixteenth century had to do with gender and the gendered body. Thereby, my starting point in this study is similar to that explicated by Jacob Randolph: "the theological questions that faced the leading actors in the Reformation were bound up in a complex system of gendered assumptions and prescriptions."<sup>13</sup> This book is based on the premise that gendered bodiliness – or fleshliness – is an essential part in understanding how Martin Luther viewed the human being. The aim of the study is threefold: first, to decipher how bodiliness was treated in Luther's discussions, especially on femininity and masculinity. Under scrutiny are the meanings that the concepts "body" and "flesh" acquired in Luther's thinking,

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<sup>8</sup> Luther thus stayed at Wartburg Castle for about ten months, although he visited Wittenberg briefly in the beginning of December in 1521. MIKKOLA 2014b, 95–96; MULLETT 2015, 175.

<sup>9</sup> Regarding bodily troubles, his constipation was probably the worst. On Luther's constipation at Wartburg Castle, see, e.g., WA.Br 2, no. 407, 333. To Philipp Melancthon (May 12, 1521); WA.Br 2, no. 417, 354. To Georg Spalatin (June 10, 1521); WA.Br 2, no. 420, 364. To Georg Spalatin (July 15, 1521). The condition that troubled him time and again, especially during his stay at Wartburg Castle, has not been a target of much scholarly interest. Rare exceptions are ROPER 2010, 291; CORTRIGHT 2011, 200–201.

<sup>10</sup> In the *American Edition of Luther's Works*, this passage is compared by the editor to other passages that more clearly describe spiritual battles. See KRODEL 1963, 28, fn. 10, 232, 412, *et passim*.

<sup>11</sup> WA.Br 2, no. 409, 335. To Johann Agricola (May 12, 1521).

<sup>12</sup> WILSON 2018, 15.

<sup>13</sup> See RANDOLPH 2020, 341, cf. also 326.

as well as gender-specific ways of constructing the significance of the human body and, hence, gender in his writings. Second, the study analyzes the ideals, norms, and expectations vis-à-vis womanhood, manhood, and the gender system that Luther formulated on the basis of human bodiliness. Thirdly, under investigation is the interrelation of theory and practice in his writings.

Susan Karant-Nunn and Merry Wiesner-Hanks have maintained that Luther must always be seen “from the dual perspective of theory and practice.”<sup>14</sup> Karant-Nunn continues in another context: “[...] even the Reformer’s most theoretical writings were interpenetrated by expressions of his personal stances and frequently by accounts of his experiences.”<sup>15</sup> Luther was a contextual theologian, who aimed at giving “the best theological answer or understanding for that particular moment in time or concern,” as David M. Whitford has summarized.<sup>16</sup> These notions have served as inspiration for the third perspective of the study. Hence, Luther’s viewpoints during the 1520s are investigated by comparing texts from different genres with each other and with different practical situations, as revealed especially by his correspondence.<sup>17</sup> The chapters are built thematically, but they are arranged chronologically, which serves to contextualize his views as thoroughly as possible and to avoid possible teleological deductions.<sup>18</sup>

All in all, the study is concerned with intersectionality,<sup>19</sup> asking how different factors – such as the historical situation and the genre of a particular text, or the societal position, age, and gender, among others, of Luther and his contemporaries related to certain texts or events – influenced Luther’s views concerning the gendered body, womanhood, and manhood. Especially important aspects in the study are power relations and the contemporary norms regarding the gender system and the social order. The power relations between Luther and his audience are considered as well; namely, his way of building his authority vis-à-vis his audience is fundamental in understanding the way in which he formulated his points in different contexts.

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<sup>14</sup> KARANT-NUNN and WIESNER-HANKS 2003, 9.

<sup>15</sup> KARANT-NUNN 2018, 97.

<sup>16</sup> WHITFORD 2018b, 3; cf. WIERSMA 2018, 318. See also WHITFORD 2018a. Luther’s contextuality is also noted in, for example, LULL 2003, 39; CORTRIGHT 2011, 2, 180; GERLE 2015, 24. For contextuality not only in Luther but also more broadly in the early Reformation, see, e.g., KAUFMANN 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Table talks are left aside due to the time period under examination, as the first table talks were recorded in 1531. See DRESCHER 1912, xxvi.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. SALMESVUORI 2014, 22.

<sup>19</sup> For the theory of intersectionality, see NASH 2008; LYKKE 2010; LUTZ et al. 2011. For notions of intersectionality at the beginning of the Early Modern Era, see WUNDER 1998, 205. Intersectionality is closely linked to modern discussions in postcolonial studies. See, e.g., KERNER 2016.

In addition to explicit discussions on body and gender, at times, Luther's views on femininity, masculinity, and gendered bodiliness are found only as implicit, between the lines. As Elisabeth Gerle has maintained: "It is not rare that it [Luther's views on the human body and sexuality] is something that comes in sight in between [i.e. between the lines], there where it is not said but is in present as a matter-of-course, or as something that comes up in the practical life [...]"<sup>20</sup> This study maintains a focus on the themes of bodiliness, gender, and the gender system that were explicitly discussed by Luther and deemed, for instance, as natural, normative, or praiseworthy, on the one hand, or as abnormal, shameful, or punishable, on the other. Attention is also paid to dimensions of bodiliness and gender that were not explicated in the text but implicitly present in Luther's way of discussing the themes and creating boundaries between normal / abnormal, rule / exception, and acceptable / forbidden.<sup>21</sup> While keeping an eye on norms and transgressions, for example, Luther's context is taken into account at all times.

Luther's anthropology has been under scholarly interest for decades. His theological anthropology has received much scholarly attention, and his views particularly on the soul and spirit have been thoroughly discussed.<sup>22</sup> However, most of these studies hardly touch the issue of bodiliness and thereby, the offering of these analyses on the issue of human corporality as such is surprisingly modest. Illuminative of the dismissal of the bodily aspect is Anna Vind's short notion of the body: "The purpose of the third part of man [sic!], the body, is to be used and trained by the knowledge of the soul and the wisdom of the spirit."<sup>23</sup> Vind's comment crystallizes the interest of mainstream theological research in spirituality and theological ideas at the expense of corporal reality.

The bodily aspects, experiences, and emotions, for example, in Luther's theology and anthropology have been increasingly discussed, especially during the last decade.<sup>24</sup> The past decades have also seen an increasing amount of gender-sensitive scholarship, which has begun to provide more diverse readings of the Reformation and its various agents, including Luther. A host

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<sup>20</sup> GERLE 2015, 26, cf. also 45.

<sup>21</sup> This way of looking into the sources has its inspiration in the queer method. For queering, see, e.g., LOCHRIE 1991; 2005; BURGER and KRUGER 2001; HOLLYWOOD 2001; WILSBACHER 2003; BRADY 2006; RYDSTRÖM 2008.

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., OZMENT 1969; HUOVINEN 1981; JANZ 1983; ASENDORF 1988, 359–417; BLAUMEISER 1995; ZUR MÜHLEN 1995; RAUNIO 2010; SLENCZKA 2014; VIND 2015; KARIMIES 2016. See also MATHIASSEN STOPA 2023a on Luther's relational anthropology.

<sup>23</sup> VIND 2015, 74.

<sup>24</sup> See, e.g., CORTRIGHT 2011; DESCHAMP 2015; GERLE 2015; LEPPIN 2015; KARANT-NUNN 2018, 96–119, 155–173; WIBERG PEDERSEN 2018; LOWE 2019; MIKKOLA 2019; MATHIASSEN STOPA 2022. For Luther and the body, see also ROPER 2012. However, Roper discusses especially the reception of Luther's bodily images.

of scholarship discusses Luther's views on gender, often women particularly,<sup>25</sup> as well as gender (most often women) in the Reformation era in general.<sup>26</sup>

Merry Wiesner-Hanks has aptly described the manner of conducting gender sensitive research within historical studies as the “add women and stir” method. This phrase encapsulates the tendency to consider gender merely as a distinct category at most having to do with women. According to Wiesner-Hanks, “It is certainly simpler to add new material to traditional courses, texts, and interpretations by just tacking it on [...]”<sup>27</sup> Gender is, however, a valid category of analysis when discussing not only women and the family, but all human beings as well as all historical events and changes.<sup>28</sup> Male experience has, perhaps surprisingly, been long overlooked in the scholarship of the Reformation period. This lack can be attributed to the perception that male experience represents the universal experience of humankind – and as a result it has not been deemed essential for scholars to explore men's gendered experience or thinking. Already some twenty years ago, Wiesner-Hanks called for the examination of masculinities in the Early Modern era, and hence, the investigation of men's thinking, actions, and experiences “as those of men”.<sup>29</sup> This is vital, as Kenneth Gouwens et al. have noted: “Reading for gender is not merely putting men into the mix: it promises to refine our understanding of the early-modern, across disciplines.”<sup>30</sup> An increasing amount of scholars have begun to take the challenge during the last years,<sup>31</sup> even though scholarship that focuses particularly on

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<sup>25</sup> Some of those, utilized in this study are MARON 1983; ROPER 1983; HINLICKY 1988; CLASSEN and SETTLE 1991; KVAM 1992; MATTOX 2003a; 2003b; KVAM 2004; STJERNA 2004; BELL 2005; MATHESON 2008; GHISELLI 2010; WIBERG PEDERSEN 2010; PAK 2012; METHUEN 2013; STROHL 2014; WILSON 2018; ROPER 2020; WHITFORD 2020; WIBERG PEDERSEN 2022; MATHIASSEN STOPA 2023b. I have written about Luther and gender in, e.g., MIKKOLA 2014a; 2015; 2019; 2023a.

<sup>26</sup> Some of those, utilized in this study are BAINTON 1971; ROPER 1989; MATHESON 1996; RUBLACK 1996; 1998; ROPER 1997; WUNDER 1998; CONRAD 1999; WUNDER 2001; P. ALLEN 2002; ZITZLSPERGER 2003; STJERNA 2009; THOMPSON 2009; CROWTHER 2010; METHUEN 2010; WIESNER-HANKS 2009; DOMRÖSE 2011; RÄISÄNEN-SCHRÖDER 2013; PAK 2015; ARNOLD 2018; STJERNA 2022a.

<sup>27</sup> WIESNER 1987, 317; WIESNER-HANKS 2002, 601. Wiesner-Hanks's and Karant-Nunn's pioneering work on gender in the Early Modern period is invaluable for this study. See, e.g., KARANT-NUNN 1982; 1997; 2002; 2008; 2010; 2012; 2018; WIESNER 1986; 1987; 1991; WIESNER-HANKS 2002; 2008; 2010a; 2011; 2012; 2016; 2018; 2022. See also their sourcebook *Luther on Women*: KARANT-NUNN and WIESNER-HANKS 2003.

<sup>28</sup> See MATHESON 1996, 98; RUBLACK 2002, esp. 2–7; WIESNER-HANKS 2002, 602.

<sup>29</sup> WIESNER-HANKS 2002, 601. See also WIESNER-HANKS 2011, 276–277; GOUWENS, KANE, and NUSSDORFER 2015, 527–528.

<sup>30</sup> GOUWENS, KANE, and NUSSDORFER 2015, 531.

<sup>31</sup> Some very explicitly, see WHITFORD 2020, 37.

men and masculinity in Luther's thought or in the Reformation era is still somewhat scarce.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, previous scholarship regarding Luther's views of the human being and gender has often emphasized the significance of Luther's texts from the 1530s and the 1540s. His *Disputatio de homine* (1536) and the *Lectures on Genesis* (1535–1545) have been deemed some of the most valuable materials and thus extensively used. The 1520s have remained a less-studied decade – especially from the viewpoint of Luther's gendered anthropology. Indeed, one reason for focusing on this period is the need to survey a decade which has been the object of far less interest than the succeeding ones. Also, the time period in question offers two important contextual factors that make it a decade well worth exploring: the first is the religious and sociopolitical turmoil that began in Germany in the beginning of the 1520s, and the second is Luther's personal turmoil, including his marriage to the former nun Katharina von Bora in 1525 and the change in his social position and self-understanding from an Augustinian brother to a husband and father.

## 2. Gender, gender system, and power

Many of the key concepts of this study – such as the gender system, power, authority, and otherness – have been adopted from gender studies. The terms sex and gender have featured prominently in feminist scholarly discussions since the 1970s. Gayle Rubin was amongst the first feminist academics in 1975 to use the idea of sex / gender system in her widely known essay “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex”.<sup>33</sup> Judith Butler has also been one of the most influential feminist thinkers to work with the concepts, for instance, in her *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex.”* She strongly criticized “sex” as a reference to biological sex and “gender” as the concept for socially constructed sex. She maintained that

[...] if gender is the social significance that sex assumes within a given culture [...] then what, if anything, is left of “sex” once it has assumed its social character as “gender”? [...] When the sex / gender distinction is joined with a notion of radical linguistic construction, the problem becomes even worse, for the “sex” which is referred to as prior to gender will itself be a postulation, a construction, offered within language, as that which is prior to language, to construction.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> For Luther's views of men and masculinity, see, e.g., KARANT-NUNN 2018, 120–154; SAARINEN 2019; RANDOLPH 2020; ROPER 2021, 64–80. For men and masculinity in the Reformation era, see, e.g., DINGES 1998; WUNDER 2002; KARRAS 2003; 2008a; SCHMALE 2003; HENDRIX and KARANT-NUNN 2008; SIMONS 2011; PUFF 2020.

<sup>33</sup> RUBIN 1997 [1975].

<sup>34</sup> BUTLER 1993, 5. Criticizing scholars that emphasize the idea of cultural construction of body and gender, Lyndal Roper has noted that bodies are not merely cultural con-

Summing up the feminist discussion in her classical study *Gender and the Politics of History*, Joan Wallach Scott has sketched six basic questions posed by the term “gender”:

[...] how and under what conditions different roles and functions had been defined for each sex; how the very meanings of the categories “man” and “woman” varied according to time and place; how regulatory norms of sexual deportment were created and enforced; how issues of power and rights played into questions of masculinity and femininity; how symbolic structures affected the lives and practices of ordinary people; how sexual identities were forged within and against social prescriptions.<sup>35</sup>

She has suggested a twofold characterization of gender: “gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.”<sup>36</sup> Also Judith Butler’s work contains the emphases of relations, social interaction, and power. According to her, gender is an outcome of a series of acts, or, in other words, of a repeated performance. Through these acts, a person attaches oneself in – and separates oneself from – the socially established meanings, given on gender.<sup>37</sup> According to Butler,

That gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of a strategy that conceals gender’s performative character [...].<sup>38</sup>

Scott’s and Butler’s notions bring the terms “sex,” “gender,” and “power” together well, pointing out that they must be seen as different sides of the same thing: each term contributes to studying the human being as a bodily being who is always part of different power structures, social relations, and linguistic negotiations. From an historical viewpoint, one could say that the meaning-making processes of gender are, in this way, profoundly bound to the historical context.<sup>39</sup>

Similar views than those of Butler’s have been offered by the Finnish philosopher Sara Heinämaa, who discusses gender from the viewpoint of body-phenomenology, and whose theoretizations are exploited the most in this study.<sup>40</sup> Heinämaa has successfully formulated a theoretical framework that brings the former discussions within the field of gender studies fruitfully together by giving due consideration to both the biological or anatomical aspects and the socially constructed dimensions of gender.

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structions but are factually and physically extant entities as well. ROPER 2012, 7. See also Gerle’s suggestion of “the materialist turn”; GERLE 2015, 85.

<sup>35</sup> SCOTT 1999 [1988], xi.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>37</sup> BUTLER 1990, 140.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. RUBLACK 2002, 1.

<sup>40</sup> HEINÄMAA 1996. See also, e.g., HEINÄMAA 2000.

According to Heinämaa, the philosophical questions concerning bodiliness, meaning, doing, and being are integrally intertwined in the concept of gender. Thereby, gender is not essential or a permanent norm. It rather is a philosophical problem, and, hence, gender difference “does not end to the discussion on ‘social relations’, ‘anatomical facts’, and ‘biological processes’ but only begins from here.”<sup>41</sup> From these remarks, she outlines a way to understand gender by examining the body-phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the discussion of Simone de Beauvoir in her treatise *The Second Sex*.<sup>42</sup>

Heinämaa’s central conclusion is that it is not possible to define what is a woman or a man. Instead, it is possible to define a gendered style or a way of being, that is, to decipher *how to be* a woman or a man. This resembles Butler’s central idea of repeated performance. If considered as a style or a way of being, gender can thus be understood as open and dynamic by nature. This way of rethinking gender includes the rethinking of difference. First, the gender difference between women and men can more easily be seen as something greater than a biological difference in terms of organs or bodily functions; indeed, gender difference becomes realized also in language, thoughts, spaces, and objects, for instance. Second, the idea of style or way of being allows us to see differences among women or among men. Accordingly, as Heinämaa maintains, it is possible to allow for differences in anatomy, experience, and actions, for instance, between different representatives of the same gender.<sup>43</sup> Third, styles or ways of being that cannot be easily defined as feminine or masculine but are something in-between can be examined without the need to bring forward an idea of, for example, a third gender. Rather, these styles can be taken as points of blending or dispersion. Indeed, as Heinämaa aptly describes, “[gender] is a development of a norm, and singular actions are its adaptations or developments. They drive forward the style of a binary gender [system] but are also able to disrupt it.”<sup>44</sup>

Her theoretization suits, hence, well to considering the body-based, gendered language of Luther but at the same time bringing forth the intertwined nature of biological, social, cultural, and contextual dimensions of femininity and masculinity in his language. The idea of a way of being offers a prolific framework to study Luther’s views on how to be a woman or a man, which qualities Luther excluded from proper feminine and masculine ways of being, what kinds of variations and possible changes different contextual factors produced, and what the connection was between the body, actions,

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<sup>41</sup> HEINÄMAA 1996, 174.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 9. The two volumes of de Beauvoir’s treatise were originally published in French in 1949 under the title *Le deuxième sexe*.

<sup>43</sup> HEINÄMAA 1996, 160–161.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 161–162.

emotions, and thoughts, for instance. The idea of a gendered way of being also allows one to take Luther's historical context seriously: it does not submit a theoretical or conceptual basis which would frame questions that are ahistorical or otherwise problematic to the context of the sixteenth century.

Sixteenth-century people lived in a hierarchical society. In regard to gender hierarchy, the concept of the gender system<sup>45</sup> is used. It is understood as a structure that recreates and maintains gendered dichotomies and hierarchies, wherein male is deemed as normative, and through which it is possible to examine, for instance, what kinds of distribution of work or hierarchical relations between the genders are prevailing in a certain time and place. Dichotomies concern, for example, representations of femininity and masculinity as opposing yet complementary. The concept thus refers to a structure that creates power relations by creating gendered meanings for different phenomena.<sup>46</sup> The gender system is not static by nature but always bound to a certain historical situation, time, and place – like gender –, which makes it dynamic and porous. This means that the reconstruction or making of the gender system, is continuously in progress by individuals and groups of people alike. Hence, we come again to the question of the use of power.

Michel Foucault has stated that “The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners, individual or collective; it is a way in which certain actions modify others. [...] Power exists only when it is put into action [...]”<sup>47</sup> Thus, power as a “mode of action” is a way of responding to acts by others.<sup>48</sup> In Foucauldian understanding, power is an omnipresent part of all human interplay, which always requires liberty on the part of the parties involved in power relations. Power itself refers to an “unstable and reversible” structure of actions between free parties.<sup>49</sup> Power can, thus, be used only over persons who have the possibility to make choices, and the aim of power is thereby to affect those very choices.<sup>50</sup> Hence, according to Foucault, power relationships are “strategic games between liberties – strategic games that result in the fact that some people try to determine the conduct of others [...]”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> The equivalent for the gender system is gender order, applied in, e.g., WOODHEAD 2007. The concept of gendered social order is used in SHEPARDSON 2004.

<sup>46</sup> LILJESTRÖM 2004, 122. Liljeström is especially referring to Yvonne Hirdman's view of the gender system.

<sup>47</sup> FOUCAULT 1982, 788.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 789.

<sup>49</sup> FOUCAULT 1988, 12; HINDESS 1996, 97, 100.

<sup>50</sup> HINDESS 1996, 100.

<sup>51</sup> FOUCAULT 1988, 19. See also A. ALLEN 1996, 267. However, Allen does use the terms “power” and “domination” as equivalents in her essay by defining power as “an oppressive power-over relation.”



Domination is a subspecies of power relationships, and it is asymmetrical by nature. Foucault defines it as a stable and hierarchical relation, a subordination, in which the subordinated do not have factual possibilities other than those dictated to them. However, Foucault insists that even in the relation of domination, in which the possessor of power can claim to have “all power over the other,” a certain amount of resistance remains possible. Relations of power, even when they are dominating by nature, do not exist if there is no freedom to act contrary to the one trying to exert influence or coercion.<sup>52</sup>

In this study, power and authority refer to a person’s capability to affect others’ conduct with their actions or words,<sup>53</sup> and to the capacity to exercise one’s own will, even when it conflicts with the will or interests of others.<sup>54</sup> Thereby, my premise is that the use of power is always linked to discourses as well. Indeed, as Reisigl and Wodak have noted, power can be both legitimized and de-legitimized in oral and textual discourses.<sup>55</sup>

### 3. Sources

The year 1520 can be regarded as the starting point of Luther’s rapidly increasing public visibility,<sup>56</sup> and the year 1530 has been described as the end point of the middle phase – controversial but not yet confessional – of Luther’s life.<sup>57</sup> Altogether, the first years of the 1520s were crucial in his life. He not only wrote and published a swiftly growing amount of material but was at the very center of public turmoil concerning spiritual as well as societal and political changes. Phenomena such as the debates of whether cloistered life or matrimony was the supreme way of life, the abandoning of the celibate life of secular and regular clerics, and the assertion of clerical marriage were at the center of many discussions.<sup>58</sup>

The year 1525 marked a significant turning point for both Luther and the evangelical movement in numerous respects.<sup>59</sup> Luther’s supporter Frederick

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<sup>52</sup> FOUCAULT 1988, 12; HINDESS 1996, 97, 102. See also A. ALLEN 1998.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. SALMESVUORI 2014, 9.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. REISIGL and WODAK 2009, 88.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. WIERSMA 2018, 319.

<sup>57</sup> See, e.g., HENDRIX 2009, 8; METHUEN 2014, 18.

<sup>58</sup> As WIESNER-HANKS (2022, 281) has noted: “Marriage was at the heart of the Protestant Reformation.” For debates concerning clerical marriage especially from the 1520s onward, see, e.g., PLUMMER 2012. For a wider historical continuum regarding clerical marriage, see, e.g., PARISH 2010. For the dawn of the Reformation as an era of crisis, see, e.g., LINDBERG 1983, 22–25.

<sup>59</sup> Albrecht Beutel, for instance, has even maintained that 1525 was “a deep caesura” for Luther personally. BEUTEL 2003, 14.

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