

Theological Exploration of the Recognition of Another

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Short Abstract

Recognition of the ‘other’ is a struggle for many people in Western political, social, cultural, and ecclesial communities. In this study, I take the current challenges of the ‘political recognition’ of the other as a departure point to offer a theological model of recognition that is marked by interrelationality. I argue that a comprehensive recognition of the other requires a broader perspective than the political. Moreover, this study suggests that any acts of recognition which emerge from a religious perspective need to engage with the social and political world—through mutual accompaniment—for the development of persons within communities.

This study is interdisciplinary, utilizing narrative theory, cultural studies, and disability studies. It uses a constructive and hermeneutical method, rather than historical analysis. Thus, I explore contexts—narrative, vulnerability, and difference—that support dispositions and acts of theologically inspired religious recognition. Many critical theorists, such as Charles Taylor and Judith Butler, expound on the value of ‘political recognition’, and more religiously orientated academics, such as Risto Saarinen, communicate the need for religious recognition that begins with the conversion of the recognizer. Building on these points of view, I argue for a more theologically infused praxis of religious recognition in the formation of personhood within communities that is achieved through ecclesial conversion. I call this ‘recognitional accompaniment’.

My study responds to Charles Taylor’s suggestion that religion may be one context that supports the wider recognition of individuals and minority groups. There have been recent advances within critical theory, which have sought to create a more comprehensive account of recognition, and some theologians and scholars of religion

have tackled the absence of religion in recognition theory. While this growing interest in recognition acknowledges the relational aspect of personhood, it overly rests on a ‘turn to the subject’ or existentialist turn at the cost of delimiting the authority of the other. This study offers an alternative, theological exploration of recognized mutuality through interpersonal accompaniment.

Long Abstract

The publication of Charles Taylor's essay on recognition, 'The Politics of Recognition' (1992), has sparked a wide-ranging debate on the merits of the concept of recognition. He notes that recognition is more than encountering someone or something whom one might have forgotten. Recognition theory argues for the political acceptance of a person or groups of persons. In recent years, theologians have considered whether recognition theory might be a useful resource for theology and religious studies in advancing an understanding and praxis of relating to the 'other' within ecclesial communities. As an academic project and a potential resource for the formation of persons and ecclesial communities, this approach remains in its infancy. My thesis seeks to develop a practice of recognition through mutual accompaniment.

In the thesis, I argue that a theological exploration of religious recognition means more than merely acknowledging someone. Religion enriches recognition at various levels:

1. Recognition means that secular political actors accept religious bodies as legitimate political actors. Here 'religious' has an objective sense: they are acknowledged;
2. Recognition means that religious bodies accept and acknowledge the legitimacy of the secular sphere, which is an autonomous realm to which religion must attend. Here 'religious' has a subjective or active sense: the religions are the recognizers;
3. Recognition means that in the give-and-take of political bodies interacting with each other and thereby acknowledging the legitimacy of each other, religious values are at stake. Therefore, political acceptance and interchange

involves religious values and concerns, which religions should be attentive to or, perhaps more importantly, secular agencies of any stripe should be concerned with.¹

Despite the clarity of these three ways of engaging persons or groups, recognition is neither a seamless single moment nor a precondition of any action. Nevertheless, it could be said that religious recognition, within the Christian context, acknowledges the ecclesial vocation of the baptized in their cultural contexts. Hence, I argue that recognition acknowledges the mutuality between the political and the theological, and thus the need to go beyond political and social formalities to the formation of persons within communities. Yet such a reframing of recognition in the Christian context requires an understanding of not just the secular vocation of the baptized, but also the call of all baptized as companions of Christ. Such a specific and universal recognition implies an exposure, an encounter, and, significantly, an ongoing experience of grace. In light of such an approach, this study offers an alternative focus on recognition theory: a theological exploration of recognized mutuality through interrelational accompaniment.

Chapter 1 introduces the thesis. I consider one recent response to recognition theory within the field of religious studies. Central to this introductory chapter is my understanding of Risto Saarinen's *Religion and Recognition* (2016), in which he argues that recognition becomes religious by means of historical sources, which supply the religious content for recognition. For him, religious recognition is a specific means of experiencing reality and has its own specific model of knowledge. Saarinen's argument rests on the transformation that occurs in experiencing the

¹ I gratefully acknowledge the exchanges with Roger Haight, which facilitated the expression of these 4 dimensions of recognition.

divine. This takes place in what he calls the ‘conversion narrative’. Yet this scholarly contribution to recognition omits any treatment of vulnerability. It applies an uncritical approach to narrative in the category of the ‘conversion narrative’ in religious recognition. Moreover, his project risks viewing religious recognition as a separate sphere of knowing and the generation of meaning. In response to Saarinen, I argue for a theological recognition of the human person as made in the image of God. This is not a rejection of the conversion narrative as presented by Saarinen. I suggest that *Imago Dei* is an exposition of a vulnerable God that fosters a recognition of a vulnerable humanity. Recognition, therefore, is a way of life within the mutual accompaniment of the other.

In order to properly situate my argument, I offer a brief review of the work of some significant authors of recognition theory since 1992. In particular, I examine the accounts set out by Charles Taylor, Axel Honneth, and Nancy Judith Butler. Thanks to these authors, the description of recognition theory has become more nuanced. It has expanded from recognition as identification, acknowledgement, and understanding, to one of evaluation and action. The multiplicity of recognitional descriptions points to the slippery nature of the term ‘recognition’. It is not my intention to make the definition of ‘recognition’ even more elusive by adding the term ‘accompaniment’; rather, I will suggest that accompaniment expresses a necessary feature of every stage of recognition as formation in the growth or decline of one’s personal and communal ecclesial vocation. This is particularly pertinent when a person or group experiences alienation or disrespect.

In order to identify responses to such experiences, in Chapter 2 I choose to explore the question of religion and recognition through the lens of Charles Taylor’s argument for political recognition within the (political) context of difference.

Similarly, theology, as Karl Rahner wisely observes, must always locate its programme for Christian life within the challenging context of plurality. Significant for Taylor is the formative dimension of language in valuing difference, and he argues for the priority of difference in relating to minority groups. While Taylor's academic work has focused on social imaginaries, one can still identify within his writing an ongoing concern for the recognition of the other. Terms such as judgements, expressions, and evaluations are part of his vocabulary to explain his understanding of recognition. These features are clear enough in his *Philosophical Papers I* (1985), but they can also be found in his most recent publication, *The Language Animal* (2016). My interest here concerns a richer understanding of recognition in ways that illuminate a meaning of life beyond the political to include the vocational. As such, religious recognition implies a retrieval of vocation as an expression of mutuality.

In Chapter 3, I move recognition of the other in the direction of this mutuality between the recognizer and the recognized. Here, conscious of Johann Baptist Metz's contention that the language of faith is never exhausted by instructional language of pastors or the arguments of theologians, I opt for 'narrative' as a necessary dimension in a recognition of the other through mutual accompaniment. Both autobiography and biography give expression to the development of narrative in achieving a fuller appropriation of one's vocation. Yet, narrative is more than a first-person singular story. As Paul Ricoeur has shown, narrative leads toward an encounter with the vulnerable other. Central to Ricoeur's treatment of narrative is the identification of a person as capable of developing a character that leads to action. Hence, in this chapter, I will explore the relationship between narrative and recognition. At the root of this exploration is my interest in showing how theology can be a resource for recognition. I hold that the task of theology is the formation of one's ecclesial

vocation through mutual recognition within an interrelational accompaniment. I contend that the practice of interpersonal accompaniment in recognizing the other is also more aptly expressed through narrative and storytelling than by argument alone. My aim is to avoid a treatment of religious recognition that is predominantly conceptual.

Of course, others have sought to include narrative as part of recognition. Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another* (1995) utilizes narrative theory to develop a more nuanced understanding of recognition through a strong correlation between sameness and difference. Chapter 3 here will draw upon Ricoeur's significant contribution to the theory of narrative identity, which can be a resource for theologians when developing an understanding of recognition through mutuality. This chapter, however, will not develop a concept of 'religious narrative' as such. To do so risks positing a specialized form of narrative that stands apart from the experiences of persons in time, space, and language. Rather, this chapter contends that the mediation of narrative religious recognition contributes to the formation of one's vocation and the development of communities.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the relationship between recognition and vulnerability. I explore how recognition requires vulnerability, for the latter enables—rather than limits—recognition. Recognition theory entails certain cultural norms, such as interdependency, which emerge from vulnerability. Moreover, I examine the possibility of mutual recognition through vulnerability. Surrendering to the other is a necessary and transformative step toward mutual recognition. Of course, recognition can also be withheld. Yet, recognition remains an urgent and critical aspect of personal and communal development, and the mutuality of vulnerable recognition is necessary in reconciling histories and persons. Such vulnerable selves support an

ecclesial and eschatological self whose vocation is lived out within a community of mutual recognizers in a spirit of mutual accompaniment.

In Chapter 5, I examine the notion of participation especially insofar as it can inform and enact a praxis of recognition. I consider recent developments in the understanding of participation and return to the topic of memory to explore recognition through witnessing. To highlight the disparity with respect to participation in ecclesial and social communities, I illustrate the challenge of inclusion for persons with disabilities. I shall argue that accompaniment requires the participation not just of those cognitively abled, but for any community to flourish it must also include the participation of those less cognitively abled.

In developing participation as a significant part of accompaniment I outline philosophical and theological dimensions of participation. Thus, I point to the gift of human finitude and limitation that is characteristic of such a wider constituency of participators. I identify the importance of memory as a resource for participation. For memory contributes toward a quality of accompaniment that helps interpret, transform, and reconstruct relationships. The conclusion of this chapter argues that the recognition achieved through accompaniment is a participation in witnessing to the relational repair that recognition advances.

In chapter 6, I bring my study to a conclusion. Here, I summarize the three contexts of recognition by way of accompaniment that have dominated my study: narrative, vulnerability and participation. Accompaniment is a commitment to walk with another person or group. For accompaniment to be a mutual search for recognition contexts that facilitate and nurture such a project are necessary. In this I attempt to provide three such contexts to give substance to my claim that recognition is a project that requires accompaniment.

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Recognition through Mutual Accompaniment

1.1 Recognition as a Theological Category

Within the confines of this study, I understand political recognition by way of Charles Taylor's presentation of the term. For Taylor, the achievement of recognition is understood as a mechanism whereby those persons or minority groups denied equality of recognition within the body politic are not only acknowledged but valued and generative participants in society. His contribution emphasizes the importance of recognition in multicultural and pluralistic societies. In a very foundational sense, recognition is about the availability of oneself to another in ways that facilitate spaces of mutual participation.

Such availability seem less possible in societies constructed with hierarchies that act as silos in which distinct identities express hard and fast creeds in their echo chambers. Whilst in the Western world hierarchical vocations have disappeared, in certain quarters they retain a defiant and authoritative presence. For instance, the recent rise in identity discourse has ushered in an epoch of political and cultural slogans that are charged with negative power. In this era of renewed populism, Taylor's argument that recognition ought to be attributed to every culture on the basis that each culture has value seems a precarious if not naïve move. Yet, as I will set out in Chapter 2, Taylor provides us the means with which to deny or withhold recognition. I understand this as having two key implications for our understanding of recognition. First, one cannot deny any person, group or culture initial or tentative recognition from the outset, and, thus, any initial encounter requires a spirit of availability that I will expand upon in Chapter 4; second, recognition is an ever-

evolving project and, therefore, re-assessments or re-evaluations can result from the legitimate withholding of recognition. As such, recognition is not a relative pursuit.

What are the implications of Taylor's presentation of recognition for my theological reflection upon recognition? In light of Taylor's argument, a Christian ought to, first, encounter the other as if they had value. Second, as part of a wider discernment a Christian can withhold the giving of unconditional recognition to another. Yet, any praxis of Christian accompaniment must also engage in the labour of repairing the collapse of recognition, whether that be misrecognition of another or the withholding of recognition.² It is this restorative step that is particularly significant for a Christian in light of our common journey toward our respective salvations.

The theological argument I am alluding to here concerns practice. It is a theological reflection on the relationship of the Christian toward another that participates in God's salvation of the world. On the one hand, accompaniment is the dynamic of interpersonal relationality for a theological reflection on the recognition of another. In such a relationship, one walks with another in mutuality. Accompaniment cannot then be understood as conventional pastoral work. It is not, therefore, the exclusive work of a minister of any church. A Christian accompanying another Christian is the walking together of two theologians.³ Graham Ward offers an understanding of a 'theologian' beyond the traditional confines of the term, taking it to mean 'that every Christian as a bearer of the Word is called to be a theologian'.⁴ Part of the task of the ordinary theologian living an ordinary vocation—one that is not identified by titles or hierarchies—is the labour of translating experiences in a way

² Gavin Flood, *The Importance of Religion: Meaning and Action in Our Strange World* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 44.

³ Graham Ward, *How the Light Gets In: Ethical Life I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 215.

⁴ Ibid.

that gives expression to their meaning and bears witness to the transformative outcomes of accompaniment that works toward recognition.

My method is interdisciplinary, which I will elaborate upon during the course of this study. As such, this is not a strict theological reflection on recognition. As the study falls within the scope of pastoral theology, I do not apply a systematic theologizing to recognition. Rather, as an interdisciplinary work, I take my lead from Johann Baptist Metz, insofar as I understand my undertaking here as a theological reflection on starting points.⁵ In this way, my theological approach stands within a legitimate theological tradition.

My interest in recognition initially emerged through my experience of living in a L'Arche community for three years, in which accompaniment was a significant resource for one's spiritual growth. Whilst there has not been any significant theorizing of accompaniment as a spiritual practice in L'Arche, my hope is that what unfolds in this study will contribute to a more comprehensive exploration of accompaniment, not for its own sake, but rather as a pathway toward mutual recognition between persons.

Whilst I situate my study within the realm of Christian theology, as a work within the specific field of pastoral theology it has a universal dimension that extends beyond Christianity. Pastoral care is a universal ministry to all humanity, for each and every person requires the concern and care of another. But, as stated earlier, such care is not exclusively the work of professional theologians or professional pastoral experts. Every person is a potential carrier and witness to the transformative power of recognition.

⁵ Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, trans. J. Matthew Ashley (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2013), 39.

The background to my enquiry is Risto Saarinen's discussion of the relationship between recognition and religion. In what follows, I examine his contribution to the task of giving a more comprehensive account of recognition. In doing so, my aim is not so much to contrast my account with his, but more to allow his work to provide a useful launch pad for my own specific approach: namely a theological reflection upon recognition.

1.2 Recognition as a Religious Category

Saarinen argues that religion makes a significant contribution to one's recognition of another person. In setting up this argument, he first notes the difficulty in locating and verifying historical incidents of recognition. The task of reaching back into history so as to catalogue occurrences of recognition has two main aspects. On the one hand, one can verify that recognition has occurred and speculate that future moments of recognition are thus possible in light of historical precedents. On the other, as Saarinen argues, history facilitates the claim for religious recognition. Or to put it another way, recognition becomes religious recognition by means of sources, which supply the religious content for recognition. Before I explore Saarinen's development of his claim, I shall first refer to his more general observation: The challenge of signalling out historical incidents of recognition.

Saarinen presents three conceptual tools that are helpful in locating incidents of historical recognition: first, the cognitive component or identification; second, the evaluative or socially binding component, that is, the attachment aspect of recognition; and third, the relationship between the recognizer and the recognizee, or availability to the other. He makes clear that these three identifiers do not in themselves constitute recognition in the present tense; he simply notes 'that these

features, appearing together, allow us to find historical instances of religious recognition'.⁶ Whilst one might hope that Saarinen's cognitive tools for verifying historical incidents of recognition can provide some stability to the notoriously slippery definition of recognition, such hopes are quickly dashed: 'we cannot speak of a homogeneous or unified concept of recognition but a cluster of family resemblances that highlight different aspects of the phenomenon'.⁷ In effect, though it may be the case that recognition as a term remains somewhat slippery, the experience of recognition has the potential to stabilize relationships. In my view, this possible relational transformation serves to legitimize the exploration of recognition, despite its definitional incompleteness.

Setting the definition of recognition aside, Saarinen pursues what he refers to as its 'preliminary parts', meaning 'acts' of recognition.⁸ They include the 'act of recognition, the horizon of expectation, and the return of recognition'.⁹ A performance of recognition must thus be comprised of these acts, in order to make it substantial.

Moving toward a more explicit account of the dynamic of recognition involving these acts of recognition, Saarinen presents an explanation of recognition that expresses the act of what he calls 'immaterial gift transfers'.¹⁰ Deliberating on his specific understanding of the phenomena of recognition, he contends:

The concept of the gift assumes that A and B are persons, the transfer need not be mutual. However, the actual recognition can be preceded by the expectation and followed by response, thus we obtain several combinations of mutuality that are constituted by different parts.¹¹

⁶ Ibid., 184.

⁷ Ibid., 185.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

While his specificity here suggests a precise model of recognition, Saarinen is clear that the concept of recognition requires careful treatment in both identifying its presence and naming the potential outcomes of any act of recognition. He adds:

The most dramatic variants of this content assume that the whole personal identity of A or B changes as a result of the recognitive act. However, this is by no means necessary; even a restricted change in knowledge or attachment may count as recognition.¹²

In one respect, Saarinen is tempering expectations as to the achievements of interpersonal recognition. Yet, at the same time, I understand that he is signalling that recognition need not be a radical conversion toward the other in that recognition may happen over time rather than in a single moment. Whilst the instance of recognition may entail a modest adjustment in one's attitude toward and opinion of another, moderate change need not determine the future dynamic of any interpersonal relationship. Thus, Saarinen qualifies that 'the performative act may be called "recognition", but the corresponding expectation is called something else, for instance, "a favour"'.¹³

How exactly does Saarinen move from this philosophically grounded theory of recognition to a more religiously infused one? He suggests that the 'historical sources supply the religious content. When this content is added to the formal elements, a richer theological meaning emerges'.¹⁴ Offering historical examples of such religious recognition, Saarinen presents both upward and downward modes of recognition. The upward mode characterizes recognition up to the eighteenth century, while the downward mode achieves prominence in Schleiermacher and others.¹⁵ As

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 185–86.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Saarinen outlines his understanding of religious recognition, his deliberations become more complex. Suzanne E. Smith, in her review of his book, notes that

things become more difficult, as Saarinen presents a complicated rubric of the different modes of recognition—so complicated that readers may find themselves repeatedly having to turn back to the pages detailing the rubric (I did this so many times that I finally had to write them down on a piece of paper).¹⁶

While I will not deliberate on the variety of technical components of recognition presented in his book, it is worth noting the general landscape before dealing explicitly with Saarinen's notion of religious recognition.

1.3 From the Enlightenment to the Present Day

Saarinen's account begins with Johann Joachim Spalding. The latter inherits an 'upward' understanding of recognition, but also reconstructs this understanding of recognition in significant ways. Saarinen notes that for Spalding,

the act of recognition is a cognitive gate through which one must pass to see the relevance of religion. Recognition is, therefore, an epistemic condition of possibility: in order to make sense of the call of duty and the striving for happiness that drive human beings, a fundamental and a priori recognition of the perfect world ruler is needed.¹⁷

The recognition achieved is one infused with an existential disposition, moving recognition from being 'a social condition' to 'a transcendental or existential condition'.¹⁸ Spelling out the features of this existential understanding of recognition, Saarinen adds:

This move is no longer 'upward' in the sense of a power relationship, but establishes an existential option through which the subject can connect himself with the divine. Such an existential recognition is preceded by God's

¹⁶ Suzanne E. Smith, 'Before Hegel and Beyond Kant: Risto Saarinen's *Recognition and Religion*', *Harvard Theological Review* 110, no. 2 (2017): 305.

¹⁷ Risto Saarinen, *Recognition and Religion: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 188.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 189.

equipping the person with necessary feelings and it is followed by the good gifts of well-being and virtue.¹⁹

This existential move in recognition of the other, Saarinen argues, facilitates the inclusion of a religiously orientated world view within the practice of recognition.²⁰

Having noted the implied developments of Spalding's recognition, Saarinen acknowledges two theologians in particular for their advancement of recognition within their theology, namely Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Barth. In Saarinen's view, Bultmann offers 'a biblical grounding to the view that recognition precedes proper religious cognition', whereas Barth criticizes 'the earlier orthodoxy for placing cognitive content before the act of recognition'.²¹ In general, all the post-Enlightenment versions of recognition stress 'epistemic or cognitive capability'.²² While Saarinen is contrasting the distinct approaches of a pre-Enlightenment version of recognition, which emphasized 'interpersonal submission and humility', with that of the post-Enlightenment version, he points out that theologians either side of the Enlightenment 'underline the primary relevance of recognizing God'.²³ Nevertheless, Saarinen ends his commentary on these emerging theological strands of recognition in these two distinct periods with the following evaluation:

Before the Enlightenment, the identity of the recognizer is reconstituted in the acts of conversion and submission. After Spalding, however, a cognitive capability through existential recognition is underlined, in which the change is more immediately connected with the status of the recognizee.²⁴

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid. In outlining Bultmann's deployment of recognition within the study of Scripture, Saarinen identifies Bultmann's theological assessment of the words 'ginosko' and 'pistis' as significant. The former 'to know' and the latter 'faith' can be broadly understood as an act of recognition (ibid., 160). His judgement in this respect rests on his contention that '[i]n both cases [ginosko and pistis], the faithful human response can be labeled an act of recognition' (ibid., 159). For a comprehensive account of Saarinen's argument, see ibid., 158–64.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 190.

²⁴ Ibid.

Saarinen proceeds to examine recognition as attachment, recognition of persons versus issues, recognition of oneself, and mutuality and gift exchange. But, for the purposes of this introductory chapter, I will proceed to his treatment of theology and recognition.

At the outset, Saarinen reiterates the value of the initial work in bringing together philosophical and social concepts that captured the performance of recognition, such as ‘upward’, ‘downward’, and ‘equal’ qualifications’.²⁵ However, in signalling the distinctive role that theological content can play in recognition, Saarinen adds that theological contents ‘are qualitatively richer views that employ the specific resources available in religious discourse’.²⁶ In contrast, my study will emphasize theology as a co-formative discipline of engagement.

In dealing with theological content in recognition, Saarinen shifts his use of categories. While more social and philosophical features of recognition were referred to as conceptions, he opts for the term ‘paradigm’ in considering ‘a bigger theological current of religious recognition’.²⁷ Defending his use of ‘paradigm’, Saarinen notes that ‘a paradigm captures the most common content-specific feature of a cluster of religious recognitions’.²⁸

1.4 The Possibility of Religious Recognition

Saarinen presents three types of religious recognition: (1) the conversion narrative; (2) the promise of self-preservation; and (3) existential attachment. Before weighing in on their usefulness, it is worth examining how he understands each type. With respect

²⁵ Ibid., 195.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 196.

²⁸ Ibid.

to the conversion narrative, Saarinen locates its historical period between the New Testament and Augustine. The Pauline conversion is offered as one such example of a conversion narrative:

The Pauline situation of ‘knowledge of the truth’ (*agnitio veritatis*) means a transformation of the identity of the recognizer who attaches his or her life to the known object, the recognizee, so that a social interaction between the recognizer and the recognizee takes place.²⁹

Yet, the attachment that occurs within the frame of a conversion narrative is qualitatively different from an attachment within a non-religious narrative.

Pushing this argument further, Saarinen argues that ‘religious recognition has its own particular mode of knowledge. Philosophy and rational thinking cannot attain the religious object as it can only be grasped adequately within the particular conversion narrative’.³⁰ With this particular mode, Saarinen makes a major claim about the utility of religious recognition: ‘In this manner, recognition is the proper way of approaching religious truths’.³¹ It would seem that the confidence of Saarinen’s claim rests upon the conversion narrative, as ‘[c]onversion transforms the recognizer and changes her understanding of religion’.³² As such, this narrative is ‘a powerful and many-sided paradigm of religious recognition’.³³ While Saarinen takes for granted the reliability of narrative as a vehicle of authenticity, he also acknowledges the particular challenges associated with narrative form, since narrative ‘is not conceptually elaborated and is most adequately expressed in terms of story’.³⁴

The second paradigm of religious recognition is ‘promise of self-preservation’, which Saarinen locates this particular expression of religious

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 196–97.

³² Ibid., 197.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

recognition within the historical period stretching from Bernard of Clairvaux to Zinzendorf. Promise here is understood as ‘all acts of initial religious expectation, such as commendation, favour, and justification’,³⁵ while self-preservation ‘depicts the stoic philosophical tradition of attachment, *oikeiosis*, and commendation’.³⁶ The dynamic of this paradigm is a ‘dialectic of downward promise and upward acknowledgement that provide for the self-preservation of the recognizer’.³⁷ Within this paradigm one will observe a limited relational dynamic, for in the self-preserving paradigm, the emphasis is on the recognizer: ‘The promise of self-preservation assumes a particularly strong heteronomy of the recognizer, his survival and identity being dependent on the favour of the Lord who is the religious source of all goods of this and the future life’.³⁸

The third paradigm of religious recognition, existential attachment, is situated within the time period spanning from Spalding to Bultmann and Barth. Again, there remains a considerable focus on the recognizer of recognition, but within it emerges a relational dynamic. As Saarinen suggests, in this paradigm, ‘the act of religious recognition opens up the possibility of understanding the religious object adequately’.³⁹ Recognition here is less a descriptive acknowledgement of a person; rather, this paradigm has the capacity to seize the object of recognition in sympathy or commitment: ‘The crucial feature of such recognition is not, however, the cognitive content but the attachment of the recognizer. Only after such attachment does the cognitive horizon become available in an adequate manner’.⁴⁰ While this paradigm as an upward recognition presupposes an affirmation of God, one observes within this

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 198.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

paradigm less need for such an upward recognition in order to have an interrelational recognition with another person: ‘the higher reality does not dominate the scene as with the first and second paradigms. Rather, the recognizee only becomes a capable participant after the first act of existential attachment’.⁴¹ I address the question of participation in Chapter 5, by emphasizing participation as accompaniment.

Saarinen draws some conclusions from this initial exploration of the three paradigms. He contends that the promise of the self-preservation paradigm is the most developed of the three and notes that, significantly, it ‘manifests very clearly that such heteronomy is not a post-Hegelian invention but an integral part of classical Christian doctrine’.⁴² Saarinen goes a step further in suggesting that within the second paradigm, there is a relational dynamic in operation. Indeed, he points to the promise of self-preservation—despite the title of the paradigm—as ‘a social interaction, the acts of recognition influence both the subject and object in various ways so that a comprehensive account is necessary’.⁴³ While the element of ‘social interaction’ comes rather late in his explanation, and is not spelt out satisfactorily, it remains a significant qualification to the paradigm and, thus, deserves further fleshing out.

Saarinen pulls the first and third paradigm together under the umbrella of conversion. Moreover, the existential attachment ‘shifts the accent toward the recognizee’.⁴⁴ Despite the title of the third paradigm, Saarinen locates it and the first within a deliberately religious dynamic, as they both ‘teach that a religious way of life cannot be reached through philosophical analysis’. Thus, ‘an existential conversion is

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 199.

⁴³ Ibid., 200.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

needed, and this conversion can adequately be called an act of recognition, an existential knowledge of the truth, *agnitio veritatis*'.⁴⁵

1.5 The Nature of Religious Recognition

There are, as previously noted, three paradigms of religious recognition: the conversion narrative; the promise of self-preservation; and existential attachment.⁴⁶ Saarinen begs a question: What constitutes the specific theological or religious content of these three paradigms and how such content might effect recognition. His treatment of the nature of religious recognition is ambitious in its programme. He first considers religion's relationship to recent theories of recognition and gift exchange. From there Saarinen offers some specifics on the nature of religious recognition. Finally, he establishes the significance of his results in the light of Hegel, issues of toleration, and theology.⁴⁷

Saarinen's treatment of the development of recognition within social history wrestles with friendship and patronage. Gift exchange here contrasts with economic exchange—the former being more aligned with benefits and the latter comprising an expression of the obligation of patronage.⁴⁸ Benefits, as Saarinen highlights, have been understood as an expression of friendship by philosophers such as Aristotle.⁴⁹ Yet, Saarinen makes clear that recognition ought not to be understood in terms of such friendship and patronage.⁵⁰ Drawing upon the observations of Miriam T. Griffin, Saarinen claims that 'recognition is a voluntary act that creates rather than assumes a

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 201.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 202.

social structure’.⁵¹ In addition, he also goes a step further and connects Griffin’s understanding of the generative dynamic of recognition with his three paradigms of religious recognition: ‘This “performative” nature of recognition is typical of conversion narrative, the promise of self-preservation, and existential attachment’.⁵²

This observation leads him to draw certain conclusions about the social quality of religious recognition. Specifically, ‘religious recognition creates social status and reality rather than adapting itself to it’.⁵³ Turning toward the question of recognition and God, Saarinen contends: ‘A divine being grants a benefit to humans who have a duty to “recognize” this benefit’. He is also clear that the relationship between the divine and the recipient of the gift is not simply ‘the act of a client in the already existing system of patronage, but an initial and constitutive duty that ratifies the bond offered in the downward beneficial act of God’.⁵⁴ While Griffin suggests that the one receiving the gift becomes a friend of the gift giver, Saarinen is hesitant to describe the relationship between God and the religious person in terms of friendship. Instead, he suggests that the religious person is more aptly described as a vassal, and that the outcome of religious recognition might be described in terms of childhood and adoption.⁵⁵

1.6 The Social Reality of Religious Recognition

Saarinen notes that ‘the phenomenon of religion resembles the duty of returning a favour or benefit’.⁵⁶ He reiterates that religious recognition may well have similar

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 203.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

characteristics to those found in patronage and friendship,⁵⁷ though he adds that religious recognition ‘remains distinct from both of them’.⁵⁸ Saarinen concludes that social reality created by religious recognition ‘resembles the anthropological event of gift exchange; however, the reciprocity involved in religious recognition does not need material or ceremonial gifts in order to emerge’.⁵⁹ Pointing toward the socially innovative and generative nature of religious recognition, Saarinen adds that ‘[t]he duty involved in this event is not a duty of payment but a constitutive duty to respond to the favourable opportunity to bond oneself with a more powerful reality’.⁶⁰ While religious recognition, for Saarinen, appears to be a distinctive type of recognition, it is not an other-worldly or hostile form of recognition: ‘[t]he act of religious recognition thus resembles the constitutive and performative event of giving and receiving “benefits” in Seneca’s discussion’.⁶¹ Within the act of religious recognition, relationships are ‘not presupposed before the event, but created and established through it’.⁶² Thus, religious recognition is disposed to encounter with the other.

For Saarinen, the term ‘mutual’ as a description and goal of recognition is not an outcome of modernity. Indeed, the innovation in his historical analysis of the term recognition is to be found in his suggestion that the notion of mutuality significantly predates Hegel. In Saarinen’s estimation, Hegel does not take the concept of recognition in a new direction as such, but rather develops its links with extant understandings of recognition: ‘While Hegel is very clearly original and innovative, he is also continuing the older paradigm of the “promise of self-preservation”, a

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

complex view that builds on a mutually recognitive relationship'.⁶³ The particular dynamic of religious recognition is described as an 'unfolding'.⁶⁴ This gradual development of recognition begins with conversion and proceeds to the other two paradigms of recognition.

To further understand the emerging question of religion and recognition in this introductory chapter, I have examined in some detail the development of Saarinen's account of the relationship between religion and recognition. Whilst recognition has featured in the discipline of theology to varying degrees, it is valid to point out that Saarinen has provided religious studies and theology with a comprehensive and specialized account of the relationship between religion and recognition. For this reason, I have chosen to launch my own study by considering his more extended investigation into the topic.

In the first instance, Saarinen's study illustrates the necessity of the ongoing exploration of the relationship between religion and recognition. His contribution demonstrates the compatibility of both disciplines as complementary dialogical partners on the question of what it means to be human. My intention in entering into this field of inquiry is not to proffer a counter argument to Saarinen's; rather, I want to further elucidate the merits of this interdisciplinary field and to supplement it by theologically reflecting on the topic of recognition and doing so within the field of pastoral theology.

That said, my approach will have a different emphasis, the most obvious one just mentioned above. In addition, my angle on the interdisciplinary discussion between religion and theology prioritizes interrelationality and interdependency over

⁶³ Ibid. Yet Saarinen also acknowledges that with Hegel 'mutuality...reaches a qualitative level' (ibid., 205).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

existential identity. In contrast to Saarinen's view that religious recognition creates a social status, I offer an alternative perspective whereby both religion and recognition engage in mutual accompaniment. The outcome of this process is a widening of the boundaries of each discipline in becoming more available to one another, and an increase in the degree to which the respective disciplines can grow and co-participate.

Whilst the thesis is not an enquiry into the co-development of religion and theology, both disciplines serve to form and inform the emerging vocation of a Christian who inhabits a variety of social, political, and ecclesial communities. Where Saarinen prioritized the conversion of the recognizer, I attempt to shed light on the interpersonal dynamic of recognition within the context of pastoral accompaniment. How might this differ from Saarinen's legitimate observation of the conversion of the recognizer? Within the dialectic of the recognizer and the recognizee, there is the possibility of a subject-object configuration. Perhaps this ordering is less problematic in a political or social study. In the context of pastoral practice, the situation of subject and object relations is problematic. Here I agree with Paul Tillich, who observed that when a pastoral minister makes a person the object of their care, this would close off the very possibility of carrying out such pastoral care.⁶⁵ In this thesis, I take up Tillich's presentation of pastoral care to be understood in our present time as mutual recognition through accompaniment. In line with Tillich's observation, accompaniment is not a subject-object interaction. It is a dynamic and interrelational encounter.

Accompaniment, in many respects, is the most human of activities. Julia Kristeva captures the essence of accompaniment in her discussion of the act of

⁶⁵ Paul Tillich, 'The Theology of Pastoral Care', *Pastoral Psychology* 10, no. 7 (1959): 21 (21–26).

walking with those who have disabilities: ‘The acceptance and the accompaniment of the person in the situation of disability expresses the desire of men and women, together, to overcome the most insurmountable of fears—the one that confronts us at our limits as living beings’.⁶⁶ One might infer from Kristeva’s words here an endorsement of accompaniment as basic or universally human. Such a verdict would give credence to accompaniment as a key part of any project of recognition characterized by mutuality or togetherness. Yet, she problematizes such a conclusion on the basis of what she calls singularity. Or to put it another way, a singularity that suggests that we are all, ultimately, different persons with disability—whether hidden or visible. In particular, Kristeva is taking aim at the founder of L’Arche communities, Jean Vanier, who delimited difference and disability to such a degree that these categories were no longer distinctive terms, but radically inclusive of all:

On this point, Jean Vanier and I had diverging opinions at the outset of our exchanges. I maintain in effect that disability cannot be reduced to the category of ‘difference.’ I reject portmanteau words, holdalls such as ‘we are all different,’ ‘all others,’ ‘all vulnerable,’ or ‘all fragile.’ No, we are not ‘all disabled.’⁶⁷

I understand Kristeva’s clarification as a defence of the uniqueness of personhood and an endorsement of the singularity of one’s biography. If indeed she interprets Vanier correctly, she has signalled in his understanding of accompaniment neither a recognition of the other in terms of availability nor mutual participation that takes seriously the specific finitudes and limitations of a person. When one understands recognition of another as the identification of sameness between two persons, there is

⁶⁶ Julia Kristeva, ‘A Tragedy and a Dream: Disability Revisited’, in *Carnal Hermeneutics*, ed. Richard Kearney and Brian Treanor (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015). In the period of getting my thesis together I became aware of Vanier’s misconduct with respect to women. I do not endorse his conduct. I hold, however, that his writings on disability are important for reflection on disability. Thus, I have included his material on disability in my thesis.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 121–22.

a risk of mutuality itself breaking down. For example, if in the context of accompaniment, I encounter another person who is ethnically, religiously, and physically different from me, I ignore their finitudes and limitations in a strong self-identification with them that narrates the idea that we are all the same after all.

To close this section, in detailing Saarinen's project, I have outlined the existentialist turn to the subject and what this expresses with respect to recognition of another. Signposting how my project will follow an alternative path, I have situated my study within the wider sphere of pastoral theology and noted how, in considering recognition, I will reflect upon it theologically and with specific regard to the notion of accompaniment.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

This study consists of five chapters, with the present one serving as an introduction. Chapter 2 introduces my argument that theological reflection is a resource for recognition of another. While I do not adhere to a particular school of thought in order to define theological reflection, I make a case for theological reflection as a doing of theology. Thus, I begin with what Johann Baptist Metz describes as the two aspects of a fundamental theology: praxis and the human person.⁶⁸ In the first instance, I consider who is to be recognized, wherein I argue for a widening of the constituency of those who are and those whom we expect to be recognized. The symbolism of the suffering other is an indisputable theological statement—often evoking constructive guilt—about the lack of equality and justice in societies and communities. Recognition of another by way of accompaniment is my proposal for transforming relationships. In other words, in seeing the suffering other as a political agent, I

⁶⁸ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 60.

consider the other as one with a vocation. Here, I am not in opposition to culture, nor am I suggesting that religious recognition creates its self-identification.

As I shall outline, the concept of ‘vocation’ can be used in both religious and secular contexts. Within theology, the ecumenical movement is an ongoing process of recognition in an ever-developing context of mutual accompaniment. Discernment is an aspect of pastoral theology; indeed, its usefulness in accompaniment goes without saying. Whilst I do not elaborate on discernment—it might well be beyond the scope of this thesis—I point toward a secular-style discernment that remains open to theology. Is this a process of co-existence? Of concern in this chapter is care for the salvation of self and of the other. For recognition of another through accompaniment pushes beyond the limitation of the immediate in exercising the pastoral dynamic of mutual ultimate concern. I conclude the chapter by considering what contexts might support a pastoral accompaniment of another as part of the project of recognition. I argue that narrative, vulnerability, and participation are three such contexts.

Chapter 3 analyzes narrative as a context for theological reflection on recognition. Building on the previous chapter’s identification of vocation in the ordinary life, this chapter utilizes narrative as a resource for developing a sense of biography and autobiography. What might this add to the understanding of vocation identified in Chapter 2? Biography captures the doing of theology that takes seriously the singularity of one’s vocation, and yet, at the same time, it leaves a future open to one’s emerging vocation. To make this claim, I emphasize how narrative as a theological approach facilitates an encounter with the vulnerable other. The experience of encounter within the relational context of accompaniment is an ongoing project—rather than a singular event. In giving form to this ongoing future-oriented trajectory, I make use of Paul Ricoeur’s development of narrative. As a result, I

proceed to argue that narrative gives expression to one's emerging personhood and interpersonal formation in ways that give rise to a mutual formation.

In Chapter 4, I elaborate on vulnerability as the second context that supports and nurtures mutual recognition. I begin by returning to the topic of narrative to suggest why it is that narrative requires vulnerability in any relationship of mutual accompaniment. Vulnerability aids the identification and evaluation of norms that might annex vulnerability as a context that creates a more comprehensive practice of accompaniment in achieving mutual recognition. What is achieved is an expansion of how one understands the frame of recognition. Within the experience of accompaniment, one participates in dependency and interdependency with the other, thus surrendering to the other within the context of an expanding understanding of community. I conclude this section by gesturing toward the positive power of vulnerability, whereby one's availability and facility to participate in relationships grows.

Chapter 5 brings together the praxis of theological reflection on recognition by locating the third context within the general discussion of disability and recognition. As in the previous chapter, I begin by revisiting vulnerability in light of the overarching question of this chapter about the relationship between disability and recognition. I explore accompaniment in three ways. First, I consider accompaniment as participation. In doing so, human finitude and limitation positively address what participation means within the context of recognition by way of accompaniment. In order to ensure that participation is not just a policy but actually takes seriously the vocation and biography of a person, I argue that accompaniment is a development of memory as interpretation, in ways that (re)constructively transform the remembering of vocation and biography. As a result of this process, persons within communities

become witnesses to the positive power of accompaniment in aiding and abetting the ongoing project of mutual recognition.

The theoretical framework and the general qualifications of a theological reflection on recognition by way of mutual accompaniment have now been established. It is therefore time to move from these initial remarks to the proper interdisciplinary analysis. Thus, I will now turn to the question of theological reflection as a resource for recognition of another.

Chapter 2: Theological Reflection as a Resource for Recognition of Another

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I shall address the absence of a theological reflection on recognition theory.⁶⁹ Since the 1990s, scholars of political science, philosophy, and cultural studies have developed theories of recognition as a means to explain and challenge the prevalence of disrespect in society. I contend that, for a Christian, the inclusion of a theological reflection in considering recognition theory creates a more comprehensive theory of recognition.⁷⁰ Such an inclusion, however, is not without its challenges. Pinning down what it might mean to provide a theological exploration of recognition is a tricky task. Within the limitations of this chapter, I understand a theological exploration of recognition to be a form of acknowledgement that values a person's vocation, and that reclaims and promotes a concern for the salvation of oneself and of the other. Salvation is traditionally understood as the saving of a soul, the deliverance from sins and its consequences, and the entry into eternal life. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ achieves salvation for the human race. In this thesis, however, I do not mean salvation in its more conventional understanding. I concur with Werner G. Jeanrond, who argues for an understanding of salvation that prioritizes humanity's participation in God's work of love. As he explains: 'This participation is not a denial of grace, but the consequence of grace'.⁷¹ Hence, salvation is an ongoing process for the encounter with God in our present time. At the

⁶⁹ I adopt Metz's understanding of theological reflection, which he argues is a dynamic that 'works itself out as the mystical biography of a life lived from faith, as the history of the ways that life proves itself in everyday, without great transformations or turns, without special illuminations and conversions'. Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 200.

⁷⁰ I gratefully acknowledge that working on my published article 'Charles Taylor and the Political Recognition of Difference as a Resource for Theological Reflection' *Open Theology* 2, no. 1 (2016): 907-23.

⁷¹ Werner G. Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love* (London: T & T Clark), 249.

same time, salvation is not exclusive to Christians. As Karl Rahner (1904-1984) explains: ‘As God’s real self-communication in grace, therefore, the history of salvation and revelation is coexistent and coextensive with the history of the world and of the human spirit, and hence also with the history of religion’.⁷² Whilst in this thesis I am exploring recognition with respect to the emerging vocation of a Christian, Rahner rightly points out that salvation as growth toward God and one another is specific also to members of other religious traditions and those persons who do not belong to a religious tradition.

I agree with Johann Baptist Metz (1928–2019), who described salvation as a reconciling dynamic through God’s actions in Jesus Christ.⁷³ As I explained in the introduction, my theological exploration of recognition falls within the area of pastoral theology. In so doing, I argue for accompaniment as part of the project of the recognition of another.

In locating a theological reflection on recognition within a wider understanding of recognizing a person’s vocation, I follow the precedent of my main interlocutor in this chapter, namely Charles Taylor (1931–). For Taylor’s treatment of the ‘politics of universality’ and the ‘politics of difference’ illuminates the multidimensional view of interpersonal recognition that, for the Christian, finds expression in living out one’s vocation. For instance, a Christian shares in the common baptism of believers, yet as a baptized Christian one lives out one’s vocation in a particular and unique way. Later in this chapter, I will focus on recognition by exploring Taylor’s argument for ‘political recognition’, which he proposes in light of the tensions between a politics of universality and a politics of difference.

⁷² Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Crossroad, 2012), 153.

⁷³ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 192.

As previously mentioned, for Christians, any interpersonal recognition of the other also includes the recognition of their respective vocation. As Rowan Williams puts it: ‘Christians are encouraged to think of themselves as growing into not simply “the divine life” in general terms, but into the particular form of divine life represented by the “Word”, the “Son”, the offspring of the eternal source’.⁷⁴

Therefore, such a theologically explored reflection on recognition is necessary within a wider presentation of the multidimensional recognition of a Christian who participates in the action of God through Jesus Christ. Yet, participation in the life of Christ is not just a vertical relationship; it is also a horizontal one too, encountering in the other a vocation which they too were gifted by God. For Christians, encountering the other means exposing oneself to the religious vocation of the other. Such an exposure brings to light for oneself the vocation of the other.

Vocation is the action on the part of God of calling a person to exercise some special function or ministry, especially of a spiritual nature. The opening paragraph of *Gaudium et Spes* presents an interrelational expression of vocation. This interrelational understanding of vocation does not merely concern itself with our current time, since its horizon carries with it an eschatological dimension in which vocation is both a natural and a supernatural phenomenon:

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of [persons]. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every [person].⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Rowan Williams, *Being Human: Bodies, Minds, Persons* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2018), 72.

⁷⁵ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1. Accessed 5 September 2016, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html

Thus, given that a Christian participates in the life of God with others, a more complete account of recognition requires the inclusion of a theological consideration of recognition. Persons, such as Christians, understand their personhood as a temporal matter of living one's vocation in the natural world and, equally, they understand their vocation as aspiring to a supernatural destiny in the world to come. To summarize, the challenges and conflicts involved in living one's vocation personally and within communities in this world cannot be fully appreciated if recognition of personhood is detached from an acknowledgement of vocation within any would-be theory of recognition.

In what follows, I begin with an introduction to political recognition theory as a resource for advancing a theological reflection on the religious dimension of recognition. First, I argue that a theologically considered theory of recognition emphasizes a salvific concern for the other. Second, I argue that in utilizing memory as a resource for remembering, one envisions an expanded constituency of those who ought to be recognized. The outcome of these two steps, as set out in the subsequent subsection, is an expanded constituency of those to be recognized and the identification of salvific concern for oneself and another, which gives a uniquely theological dimension to an expanded account of recognition.

Human relations can suffer from the absence of full or partial recognition. Indeed, some interpersonal relationships are characterized by misrecognition. The experience of interrelationships between first European settlers and First Nations persons in Canada is one such example of misrecognition. Equally, misrecognition can become the impetus for concern for another. As Marek Hrubec contends, 'we have to realize that experiences of disrespect play a role as catalyst of criticism that can be generalized and transformed into social conflicts and normative claims on

various kinds of recognition and equal participation'.⁷⁶ The question, therefore, as to what contexts support the recognition of another is an urgent and pressing one. Taylor suggests religion as one context that can support the recognition of the other in a multicultural society. Yet, he does not explore religion as a resource for recognition. Hence, my specific interest in the relationship between religion and recognition. The caveat, however, is that I limit my religious enquiry to that of a theological exploration of interrelational recognition. My theological treatment of recognition does not seek to establish a systematic account of religion and recognition. Rather, by means of pastoral theology, I investigate which persons recognition ought to be conferred upon.

In particular, I make use of Johann Baptist Metz's understanding of memory in support of my task of theologically reflecting upon recognition. I argue that Metz's understanding of memory and Taylor's presentation of political recognition can contribute to the development of a well-rounded theory of recognition. I shall return to the role of memory in the recognition of another in a more substantial manner in Chapter 5, where I explore memory and participation. For the purposes of the present chapter, memory is introduced as a critical resource to make it clear that for the Christian, the pastoral power of the recognition of another is manifest in the preferential prioritization of recognizing those who suffer and are marginalized. In what follows, I consider what groups of persons ought to be recognized.

⁷⁶ Marek Hrubec, 'Extra-Territorial Recognition and Global Poverty', in *Global Justice and the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Tony Burns and Simon Thompson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 168.

2.1.1 Who is to be Recognized?

For Metz, memory is more than an expression of shared recollection. Memory is an instrument for any process of pastoral concern and compassion for another. In particular, Metz's presentation of memory attempts to retrieve the memory of those who have suffered and died. Such a retrieval does not just amount to a psychological or anthropological recognition of a person. Rather, Metz presents the shared recollection as an advancement of the salvation of the whole community:

Christian solidarity of memory with the dead is not defined by some abstract interest and not in the first instance by the concern about what death will mean 'for me'. Rather, the concern that defines this solidarity has to do with what death means 'for you,' which is to say, for the other, especially for those who suffer (and only in connection with this does it have to do with one's own identity in death). In its mystical-political dual structure solidarity emerges as a category of the salvation of the subject at those points where it is being threatened: by being forgotten, by oppression, by death.⁷⁷

While Metz's presentation of memory is qualified as an expression of 'solidarity', I propose that a more apt expression for our purposes is to understand memory as 'retroactive recognition', as put forth by Axel Honneth.⁷⁸ Both Metz and Honneth's presentation of memory includes the recognition of those persons deceased and those who will be future members of our community. Such a presentation of memory that includes not only deceased members but also members yet to be born is not without its difficulties. Reflecting upon this, Honneth notes:

What is much more difficult to understand is why the recognition of dead members of the community as the coauthors of collective identity considered valid today should also include future members of the community through the recognition from the now existing community.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 211.

⁷⁸ Axel Honneth, 'Reflection: The Recognitional Structure of Collective Memory', in *Memory: A History*, ed. Dmitri Nikulin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 322.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 323.

Any comprehensive recognition places a great task upon any community. For now, not only must one recognize those presently living, but also those who have died and those yet to be born.

Honneth's verdict on the widening of the constituents who ought to be recognized emerges via a 'decision' to include those who will be born in the future.

He explains:

In this mode of shared recollection, the social community expands beyond its current members, establishing relationships of recognition with members who have died as well as those not yet living, who should be considered belonging to a group on the basis of their past or future merits.⁸⁰

In a similar vein, Metz's use of memory facilitates not just an inclusion of those who have suffered historically. Memory is equally concerned with those who are yet to be born. Significantly, Metz's understanding of memory as *memoria passionis* of the crucified Lord concerns an eschatological future freedom, in which the inhabitants will be those of the past, present, and future generations of persons. The social community created by means of memory is not just an expansion of any current community. Theologically speaking, it is also the Kingdom of God that is more than our current material world.

Whilst I have signposted Honneth's preference for a retroactive recognition that utilizes memory, as well as Metz's more comprehensive remembering by means of *memoria passionis*, I agree with Jeanrond that remembering—whether in its Honnethian or Metzian form—calls for more than an analytical argument.⁸¹ Thus, in Chapter 3, I will explore the concept of narrative, not so much with respect to its relationship to memory, but more so in its potential to convey the transformative interpersonal dynamics at the core of mutual recognition within relational and social

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Jeanrond, *Reasons to Hope* (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 104.

settings. Having identified that the constituency of persons to be recognized as those who have died, those presently living, and future generations, I now turn to what might motivate a Christian to recognize another.

Before taking this next step, allow me to summarize the main points so far. I have shown that recognition is applicable to persons past, present, and future, and that concern for another and retroactive recognition are not confined to this life alone, but rather extend to the life to come. As such, recognition, from a theological point of view, pertains to salvation. In what follows, then, I shall return again to memory as an important resource in facilitating recognition of another. In particular, the memory of a specific constituency—those who have suffered and subsequently denied recognition—ought to generate guilt for a Christian. As James Matthew Ashley explains that Metz’s understanding of guilt presents an alternative dialectic to that of ‘subject and object or reason and nature’.⁸² He points out that Metz argued for a dialectic between emancipation and redemption. The latter pertains to the role of the subject in the suffering of others. Guilt is the acceptance of one’s role in the suffering of others and its acknowledgment is necessary for the Christian to grow in their vocation. Significantly, rather than such guilt preventing or limiting one’s response to the lack of recognition ascribed, I follow Metz in claiming that this sense of guilt has the potential to motivate a Christian to a greater concern for another.

2.1.2 The Suffering Other

As I demonstrated at the beginning of this chapter, recognition theories are prominent in a variety of academic disciplines. Yet, these theories have rarely explored the

⁸² James Matthew Ashley, *Interruptions: Mysticism, Politics and Theology in the Work of Johann Baptist Metz* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 160.

possibility and potential contributions of a theologically considered account of recognition.⁸³ The lack of such an exploration represents a significant opportunity to offer a broader account of recognition theory. For in the existing presentations, recognition is usually limited to its social, moral, and political functions for the formation of persons and society.

A theologically inspired understanding of recognition expands the interaction and horizon of recognition theories beyond the material world and human finitude. As noted in the previous section, a theological consideration of recognition widens the constituency of those to be recognized, and, as this section will demonstrate, prioritizes those who have suffered. While the existing literature gives a great deal of attention to the dialogical relationship to the other, the relationship between God and the human person, and that between persons in light of their relationship to God, are in need of more development. Though giving an account of the relationship between the human person and God in light of recognition theory is beyond the scope of this chapter, some idea of how we might theologically reflect upon the other in light of recognition will be helpful. With this in mind, I now return to Metz.

Although Metz is not an explicit theorist of recognition, he is responding to the reality of disrespect and violence in our world. He reflects: ‘There is a history of suffering in society, the suffering of the poor, the oppressed, and the wretched. And there is also the cultural history of suffering in that world, the suffering of otherness and of endangered dignity’.⁸⁴ Given the existence of such suffering, Metz demands ‘the formulation of the biblical word of God as dangerous memory, in categories of

⁸³ I am aware of three scholars who work in the area of religion and/or theology and who have referenced recognition as a resource for theological and/or religious research: Flood, *The Importance of Religion*; Saarinen, *Religion and Recognition*; Ward, *How the Light Gets In*.

⁸⁴ Johann Baptist Metz, ‘Facing the World: A Theological and Biographical Inquiry’, *Theological Studies* 75, no. 1 (2014): 29.

resistance and liberating transformation'.⁸⁵ Here is the crux of Metz's approach to theology. He describes the human situation and imagines a theological response in light of that situation. Thus, he strives to 'avoid an artificial separation between characterizing the situation and reflecting upon it theologically'.⁸⁶ Metz's 'theory of action' innovatively occasions a 'transformation', which 'entails recognizing the capacity for guilt in all acting subjects'.⁸⁷ This inclusion of guilt in how one understands memory typifies Metz's particular presentation of memory.

Indeed, the capacity for guilt is not so much a record of sin or offence committed; rather, it ought to move the Christian toward a greater action of concern and compassion for the other. I maintain, therefore, that recognition is always person-particular and historically specific. It includes a dialogical responsibility to the other, whether that other is involved in an interpersonal relationship, a relationship with or between institutions, or a relationship with God.

Such a widened model is an effective means for Christians to pastorally explore the parallels between their own world view, informed by faith, and another person's world view, whether secular, cultural, or religious. For Taylor, recognition of the other is based upon an equality that understands all persons sharing dignity. One can observe the appeal to equality within the discipline of theology, whereby it is held that each person is made in the image and likeness of God. It follows, then, that Christian theology is concerned not just with the origins of human life, but also with how humans relate to God, to each other, to non-linguistic animals, to the planet, and with the destiny of human life.

⁸⁵ Ibid. Metz contends that dangerous memory is 'the expression of eschatological hope, elaborated in its social and historical mediation' (Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 184).

⁸⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁸⁷ Metz, 'Facing the World', 29.

Capturing the plurality of relationality involved in a theologically considered recognition, Jakob Wirén establishes a theological argument for recognition: ‘The theological argument that I am sketching is that the image of God is a value and a dignity in every human being and that a proper response to this dignity is recognition’.⁸⁸ As mentioned above, a theologically considered recognition demands of a Christian a sense of responsibility toward the plurality of relationships with which one is engaged. As noted, the faculty of memory plays a supportive role in the exercise of a theological reflection on recognition. This role is also a critical one. Thus, Metz’s insistence that memory is dangerous memory. For it moves the Christian to a concern not just for his/her own salvation, but also for that of the other, the one who is forgotten or has yet to be born. Moving forward, I ascertain that salvation is not achieved alone, but through interrelating with others in secular and religious communities. Because there is an interrelational and communal context in which persons grow and mature, when value and dignity are denied, a person’s capacity to mature and develop is impeded.

My argument presented thus far draws out a wider constituency to be recognized and a concern that emerges from guilt that might motivate a Christian to recognize humanity’s collective journey toward salvation. Yet, the experience of Christians suggests that Christian recognition is not always an immediate occurrence, as demonstrated in the challenge of ecumenism. For interpersonal relationships within community are subject to misunderstanding and misrecognition. Yet, practices or ways of relating to one another can facilitate recognition of another.

⁸⁸ Jakob Wirén, *Hope and Otherness: Christian Eschatology and Interreligious Hospitality* (Boston: Brill, 2018), 61.

2.2 Theological Humanism and the Recognition of Vocation

One term that captures the practices or, in the words of David E. Klemm and William Schweiker, the ‘moods and attitudes’ that support recognition is ‘humanization’.⁸⁹

Both authors distinguish between humanism and a humanism that is theologically considered: ‘Theological humanism intensifies and widens the account of human transcendence in relation to the reality of the integrity of life. The space of the integrity of life as the fullness of being includes but also exceeds lateral transcendence’.⁹⁰ I return to the theme of humanism here, only now I refer to Karl Rahner’s (1904–1984) use of humanism as meaning love for one’s neighbour. Thus, humanization is one of the practices that explores and develops love as a dimension of religious recognition.

Rahner describes the interrelational practice of love as the ‘humanization of the world’.⁹¹ He concedes that humanization is susceptible to being understood in a restrictive way, as a social activity within society, lacking openness to the love of God or the recognition of God’s activity in the world. Nevertheless, for Rahner, humanization has more than a social significance; it has theological significance. For instance, a more developed expression of humanization recognizes the praxis of a Christian love of one’s neighbour in their concern and charity for another.

The religious love of one’s neighbour, however, is not a separate sphere of love. Rahner contends that there is ‘no sphere marked off as sacral’.⁹² Rather, the human person reaches out ‘beyond in faith, hope and love to that mystery which we

⁸⁹ David E. Klemm and William Schweiker, *Religion and the Human Future: An Essay on Theological Humanism* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 174.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁹¹ Karl Rahner, ‘The Church’s Commission to Bring Salvation and the Humanization of the World’, in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 14, trans. David Bourke (New York: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974), 297.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 312.

call God'.⁹³ Given Rahner's emphasis on religious love as not a separate sphere of love, his notion of love is not unlike that of Axel Honneth. The latter presents love as one of the three spheres of recognition.⁹⁴ For Honneth, love as recognition is a precursor to any subsequent relationships of recognition.⁹⁵ Love, as a sphere of recognition, participates in the development of the human person within this present world. For the Christian, however, the formation of the human person has, as its trajectory, the person's very salvation and the salvation of others, which finds its ultimate fulfillment in the world to come.

In sum, having established that humanization is love expressed socially and that such loving also participates in God's very loving in the world, there might be, as I have just indicated, an understanding that Christian love is marked as separate from other loves. Yet, I contend that Christian love is not separate from human love. Although I have thus far mentioned the far-reaching concern that a theological exploration of recognition supports, and how that concern for personal and collective salvation is expressed in love of God and neighbour in a novel understanding of humanization due to salvation, I also acknowledge that any development of the theory of recognition through a theological reflection is helped by theology drawing from other disciplines.

In what follows, then, the question is, given the manner in which love of neighbour and love of God support one another, can any exploration or development of a theology of recognition benefit from the clarifications achieved and the issues raised by Taylor's treatment of recognition theory? For instance, recognition theory

⁹³ Ibid., 313.

⁹⁴ Cf. Axel Honneth argues for three: love, respect, and esteem.

⁹⁵ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, trans. Joel Anderson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 190.

reminds theology of the dangers of exclusively using a universalist language. Such language can fail to recognize or protect the autonomy of the individual, particularly if aspects of their individuality make them ‘different’. Taylor’s political recognition demands openness to the other not only because the other is understood as equal to any other person, but also because the other can be understood as different. Any dialogical model operating within religious recognition, therefore, cannot simply relate to the other because of a principle of equality; the religious recognition of the other also includes recognition of difference, and such difference is expressed in the personal expression of how a Christian lives his or her vocation.

Having proposed a method of exchange between the disciplines of theology and recognition theory for exploring dimensions of religious recognition, the subsequent section on Taylor’s treatment of political recognition will more fully unpack the questions and issues around any emerging exploration of the recognition of the other. What the previous and subsequent sections share is the conception of vocation. For Taylor also understands that persons have particular callings in life. In the previous chapter, I highlighted salvific concern as an aspect of accompanying another. Whilst not opposed to a confessional account of vocation, Taylor’s emphasis is specific to one’s response in this life for its own sake. To discern between various vocational decisions, Taylor introduces a discerning mechanism, which he terms evaluation. This process generates an attitudinal dignity afforded to all vocations. In this respect, one type of vocation is not deemed to be of higher importance than another. To concretize both the challenges and opportunities involved in recognition of another, I present the theological project of ecumenism as an example. This example exposes both bookends of the project of recognition. On the one hand, there is no agreed understanding of recognition, whilst, on the other, the ongoing project of

recognition reduces the freedom to disrespect one another. I proceed to explore the formation of vocation and, in particular, I examine the formation of persons within groups as an expression of relational interaction between what is universal and what is different.

2.2.1 Recognition of Vocation in the Everyday

Taylor considers the role that political recognition can play in the formation of persons.⁹⁶ His inaugural essay on the topic, ‘The Politics of Recognition’, first published in 1992, is considered a classic in political recognition theory. For Taylor, a distinctive feature of our current moment is the demand for recognition by persons and minority groups. The emergence of the self occurs through a relational interaction with the other, whereby the fashioning of the self is not a project exclusive to that person. Rather, the forming of the self is relational and social. For Taylor, the fashioning of personhood, therefore, is an interrelational and moral enterprise of dialogue with others:

identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by misrecognition of others, and so a person or a group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or the society around them mirror back a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves.⁹⁷

At the same time, Taylor cautions against any understanding of morality that is ‘thought to encompass just our obligations to other people’.⁹⁸ If our understanding of morality is delimited simply to obligations, Taylor suggests, ‘we have to allow that

⁹⁶ I understand persons or identity to signify that which is changing and developing, not something fixed and static. My understanding of identity derives from Paul Ricoeur’s preferred explanation of identity as *ipse*. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 2.

⁹⁷ Charles Taylor, ‘The Politics of Recognition’, in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 225.

⁹⁸ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 14.

there are other questions beyond the moral which are of central concern to us, and which bring strong evaluation into play'.⁹⁹ Here he is alluding to the discovery of one's 'vocation or true form' and such a way of living goes beyond the realm of morality.¹⁰⁰

In advancing his argument that vocation is not just an expression of a moral category, Taylor writes:

There are questions about how I am going to live my life which touch on the issue of what kind of life is worth living, or what kind of life would fulfill the promise implicit in my particular talents, or the demands incumbent on someone with my endowment, or of what constitutes a rich meaningful life—as against one concerned with secondary matters or trivia.¹⁰¹

He determines that such questions require strong evaluation and that in 'understand[ing] our moral world we have to see not only what ideas and pictures underlie our sense of respect for others but also those which underpin our notions of a full life'.¹⁰² As such, the living of one's vocation is not a lone or a moral exercise, but rather a deeply interrelational and communal activity. Such formation of any vocation, however, is often characterized by a degree of tension between what is deemed a higher life—such as religious or priestly life—and the ordinary or everyday life.¹⁰³ As Taylor notes:

The higher life is that ruled by reason, and reason itself is defined in terms of a vision of order, in the cosmos and in the soul. The higher life is one in which reason—purity, order, limit, the unchanging—governs the desires, with their bent to excess, instability, fickleness, conflict.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Charles Taylor, *The Language Animal: The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 318.

¹⁰¹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 14.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 23.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 20.

The ordinary life, by contrast, is presented as the ‘production and reproduction, of work and family’.¹⁰⁵ Prior to the modern period, the higher life was considered the greater vocational calling. But as Taylor correctly observes, there is a great degree of ‘attitudinal’ dignity afforded by the ordinary life.

Attitudinal dignity entails a ‘respect for rights’, but it is more ‘thinking well of someone’.¹⁰⁶ Yet, the modern tendency to elevate the dignity of ordinary life above other forms of life is not without its pitfalls. In highlighting the contribution of Reformation theologies in tipping the scale in favour of ordinary life, Taylor argues that they ‘introduced a polemical stance towards these traditional views and their implied elitism’.¹⁰⁷ Taylor’s critique of this modern position is particularly vocal in terms of its concern with how such a polemical stance eliminates distinctions between forms of life, whether such forms are characterized as ordinary life or the higher sphere:

It is the polemical stance, carried over and transposed in secular guise, which powers the reductive views like utilitarianism which want to denounce all qualitative distinctions. They are all accused, just as the honour ethic or the monastic ethic of supererogation was earlier, of wrongly and perversely downgrading ordinary life, of failing to see that our destiny lies here in production and reproduction and not in some alleged higher sphere, of being blind to the dignity and worth of ordinary human desire and fulfillment.¹⁰⁸

Taylor continues his critique of the polemical stance, adding that ‘the affirmation of ordinary life, while necessarily denouncing certain distinctions, itself amounts to one; else it has no meaning at all’.¹⁰⁹ For him, distinctions and oppositions between the ordinary life and any higher life (‘activity like contemplation, war, active citizenship, or heroic asceticism’) is not the challenge of our time in determining how we lead a

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 23.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 15.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 23.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

fulfilled life. Rather, the contrast today ought to be expressed in the ‘different ways of living the life of production and reproduction’ within ordinary living.¹¹⁰

Aware of the potential to disrespect the other in the ordinary life and the higher life, Taylor presents a thesis of recognition that considers the ill effects of misrecognition or non-recognition for those who are thus violated. The moral seriousness of misrecognition is further highlighted by his claim that recognition constitutes an essential part of what it means to be human: ‘Due recognition is not just courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need’.¹¹¹ That recognition is vital makes it indispensable to the maintenance and development of the person or an institution.

2.2.2 Recognition of the Other’s Vocation in Ecumenical Dialogue

The recognition of the need for ecumenical dialogue between the Christian churches is one example within Christianity of the necessity of recognizing the need of the other—either a personal or institutional other. The ecumenical need for recognition, both interpersonally and institutionally, emerged as a result of practices and theologies that disrespected the other. The ‘Troubles’ in the North of Ireland in the twentieth century are an example of where the achieved peace was in part due to the ecumenical recognition of the other as a fellow Christian.

While recognition theory is presented as a helpful device within ecumenical encounters, it would be premature to assume that there exists any advanced analytical account of how recognition is applied within ecumenical exchanges beyond a general invocation of the term recognition. Gerard Kelly’s *Recognition: Advancing Ecumenical Thinking* is a helpful resource in this regard. It catalogues the

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, 226.

development of ecumenical exchanges and agreements within some Christian churches. Yet, it does not present any agreed method of recognition within ecumenical exchanges.

Nevertheless, Kelly successfully employs the term recognition in signalling moments of ecumenical developments and agreements. Using the term recognition, Kelly traces moments of theological advancement with ecumenical dialogue. For instance, he notes a key change that took place at the Lund Conference in 1951, which introduced changes to the manner of Faith and Order studies. Up to this point, recognition was understood in a more canonical or legal sense. Faith and Order would now begin to understand recognition as a resource not to ‘compare the different positions of the respective churches, but rather to study together the sources of faith’.¹¹² This new understanding would move the ecumenical discourse beyond the mere recognition of differences between the churches. This trajectory of understanding recognition underwent an additional shift at the Montreal Conference in 1963, ‘where it was affirmed that the apostolic faith contained in the Scriptures is continually being transmitted in and by the church’.¹¹³

Recognition as a tool within ecumenical discourse has placed less emphasis on a juridical understanding of ecumenism, opting instead for the churches to return to a form of recognition that considers ‘the degree of communion which already exists between them’.¹¹⁴ But the question remains: Is recognition a helpful and relevant term for current ecumenical dialogue? In Kelly’s view:

The Churches do not yet agree on what is necessary (the *id quod requiritur et sufficit*) for the unity of the church. Until they share a common understanding

¹¹² Gerard Kelly, *Recognition: Advancing Ecumenical Thinking* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996), 219.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 227.

of the nature of the church of God, there will be no common understanding of recognition.¹¹⁵

At the same time, recognition as a term continues to find expression in current ecumenical discourse. For instance, the 2013 international Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue released its innovative study *From Conflict to Communion*, in which ‘recognition’ is employed as a formal acknowledgement, conveying approval or the sanctioning of something.

Yet, the differences concerning the nature of the churches persist. In the section entitled ‘Differences in understanding the ministry’, it is formally acknowledged that ‘[i]f, according to the judgment of the Second Vatican Council, the Holy Spirit uses ecclesial communities as means of salvation, it could seem that this work of the Spirit would have implications for some mutual recognition of ministry’.¹¹⁶ Such a mutual recognition, however, seems aspirational at present. Indeed, toward the conclusion of *From Conflict to Communion*, as it anticipates preparations for the commemorations of the Reformation, the document notes that while we belong to one body, we reside in divided communities. Consequently, ‘this struggle has two sides: the recognition of what is common and joins them together, and the recognition of what divides’.¹¹⁷ Yet, the fostering and strengthening of ecumenical dialogue has lessened the freedom of a person or an institution to disrespect a person of another denomination or institution. Furthermore, the recognition of the need for ecumenical dialogue highlights that the development of

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 226.

¹¹⁶ Lutheran World Federation and The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, ‘Lutheran-Roman Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017: From Conflict to Communion’ (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013), accessed 18 September 2017, <https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/From%20Conflict%20to%20Communion.pdf>.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 83.

churches and their members is relational, part of our individual and collective vocations, and requires a relationship with other churches and their members.

2.2.3 Recognition of the Other's Vocation in Civil Dialogue

Recognition can also have a developmental or maturing effect within civil communities. Taylor notes that civil communities have undergone an unprecedented breakdown of social hierarchies.¹¹⁸ This breakdown has seen the crumbling of social standing based upon one's inherited social status in society. Such a basis for any social status required discrimination between persons. For one person to have honour, others had to be without honour.¹¹⁹ Today, however, we have a 'modern notion of dignity', which replaces honour with dignity.¹²⁰

For Taylor, all people hold dignity. In noting such a universal change from honour to dignity, Taylor equally argues that the concept of dignity is 'the only one compatible with a democratic society'.¹²¹ Moreover, he coins the phrase 'individualized identity' to express an emphasis on the individual and personal traits and qualities of a given person.¹²² This subjective turn, as Taylor calls it, refers to the task of being true to oneself.¹²³ It is considered the best possible manner of being human, or a 'new ideal of authenticity'.¹²⁴ This new understanding of identity as a

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 226.

¹¹⁹ Taylor understands honour in both ancient and current expressions. Historically, honour was used to describe monarchy. Current uses of the term are evident in the issuing of awards. He notes as an example the Order of Canada, as its prestige is dependent on the privilege and selectivity of its membership. If it were to be universally given out in a non-selective manner, it would lose its perceived honour (ibid.).

¹²⁰ Cf. Sergio Dellavalle, 'From Imago Dei to Mutual Recognition: The Evolution of the Concept of Human Dignity in Light of the Defense of Religious Freedom', in *Understanding Human Dignity*, ed. Christopher McCrudden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 435–49.

¹²¹ Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, 227.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 229.

consequence of the rejection of hierarchical societies is closely connected to Taylor's presentation of recognition theory.¹²⁵ The formation of identity, as a relational interaction, occurs through 'dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others. That is why the development of an ideal of inwardly generated identity gives a new importance to recognition'.¹²⁶

While presenting such a turn to the self, with its implications for understanding identity and recognition, and their mutual relation to each other, the term recognition is not original or unique to Taylor.¹²⁷ Axel Honneth, in *The Struggle for Recognition*, develops a comprehensive theory of recognition. He draws upon the Hegelian tradition to set out a novel and contemporary account of the development of the human person, whereby recognition is a precondition for the formation and progress of the human person. For Honneth, the achievement of mutual recognition assumes a 'struggle' for recognition in the ordinary life of the individual. There are three spheres of recognition that contribute toward the formation and mutual recognition of the individual: love, respect, and esteem.

While the main purpose of this chapter is to elaborate Taylor's account of recognition, it is nevertheless helpful to briefly review Honneth's contrasting take on the topic. As noted, Taylor's presentation of recognition concerns the formation and development of groups, and thus the recognition of difference is crucial to his project.

¹²⁵ For Taylor, both identity and recognition assume a dialogical character. As he notes, 'we become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence defining our identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression' (ibid.). As Taylor makes clear, he is using language here in a general sense that includes 'languages of art, of gesture, of love, and the like' (ibid., 230). Languages of expression, therefore, are learnt through relating to the other. In a similar way, our task to define our identity is achieved through our dialogue with others within modes of expression. What is being highlighted here is the relational praxis through which identity is fashioned, and the important role that others play in us achieving this end.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 231.

¹²⁷ Alex Honneth, *The I in We: Studies in the Theory of Recognition* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 1–33.

By contrast, Honneth is more explicitly concerned with the formation of the individual human subject and, unlike Taylor, Honneth champions recognition as respect for universal human rights in conjunction with esteem for the particular individual. As Cillian McBride argues,

Taylor is sharply critical of the pre-eminence of recognition as respect for universal human dignity in rights-based theories, seeing it as a hindrance to the recognition of the value of cultural diversity, although he does not argue that we must abandon our concern with this form of recognition. Honneth, by contrast, offers a more harmonious picture of the relationship between universal ‘respect’ and particular ‘esteem’, seeing each of these modes together with ‘love’, as necessary to the formation of a successful identity.¹²⁸

There is, however, an important dimension to ‘general recognition’ that contrasts with the more ‘specialized recognition’ presented by Taylor. For example, he writes, ‘in the earlier age recognition never arose as a problem. General recognition was built into the socially derived identity by virtue of the very fact that it was based on social categories that everyone took for granted’.¹²⁹ Taylor’s presentation of the development of the person is dependent on a dialogical relation with others, whereby both recognition and misrecognition may occur.¹³⁰ Having flagged the potential for misrecognition, Taylor boldly suggests that what is needed is not so much recognition, but ‘the conditions in which the attempt to be recognized can fail’.¹³¹ He holds that our contemporary understanding of recognition—beyond general recognition—is dependent upon conditions that support the recognition of the other. Taylor presents the historical changes that brought about both a theory and a practice of political recognition, which is necessary for the formation of persons in our society. The dialogical character of this is central to Taylor’s account. From this dialogical

¹²⁸ Cillian McBride, *Recognition* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 2.

¹²⁹ Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, 231.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

dimension within political recognition, I will proceed to offer an overview of Taylor's fuller expression of recognition as 'equal recognition'.

For Taylor, the discourse of equal recognition occurs within two spheres: the 'intimate plane' and the 'social plane'.¹³² Within the intimate plane, the formation of the self occurs relationally with others, while the social plane is the locus of the politics of equal recognition. Within the intimate plane, conversation is a relational and a dialogical one with 'significant others', such as parents or siblings. The importance of this plane, Taylor adds, is in 'how much an original identity needs and is vulnerable to the recognition given or withheld by significant others'.¹³³ Taylor goes on to declare that 'love relationships are not just important because of the general emphasis in modern culture on the fulfillment of ordinary needs. They are also crucial because they are the crucibles of inwardly generated identity'.¹³⁴ Noting Taylor's relational position, Simon Thompson notes that 'we can see how he explicitly forges a link between identity and recognition by emphasizing the essential role that others play in the formation of the self'.¹³⁵ Having clarified the distinctiveness of both planes, for the remainder of his essay Taylor commits himself to an explication of equal recognition.

2.3 The Dialogue of Equal Recognition

There are two characteristics of equal recognition: the 'politics of universalism' and the 'politics of difference'.¹³⁶ The politics of universalism (or equal dignity) is a result of the move from honour to dignity, in which the equal dignity of all persons is

¹³² Ibid., 232.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Simon Thompson, *The Political Theory of Recognition: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 22.

¹³⁶ Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, 233.

upheld. This universalism stresses an equalization of rights and entitlements. A concrete expression of this concept is equal citizenship. The politics of difference, on the other hand, is a result of the recent emphasis on questions of identity. The legal protection of the French language in Quebec provides an example of civil law protecting the linguistic and cultural identities of a minority group in Canada. Taylor distinguishes between the politics of universalism and the politics of difference in the following way:

With the politics of equal dignity, what is established is meant to be universally the same, an identical basket of rights and immunities; with the politics of difference, what we are asked to recognize is the unique identity of this individual or group, its distinctness from everyone else.¹³⁷

The politics of difference, therefore, acts to rediscover the lost particularity and uniqueness of a person or a group, resisting any dominant identity of said person or group.

However, Taylor's account of recognition can often sow confusion as a result of a certain looseness in his choice of terms. For instance, he uses the words 'recognition' and 'respect' interchangeably in developing his concept of political recognition.¹³⁸ Responding to this potential problem, Thompson contends that Taylor presents us with a singular form of recognition, not a variety of forms of recognition.¹³⁹ In addition, 'the two modes of politics, both based on the notion of respect, come into conflict'.¹⁴⁰ Taylor's identification of two modes of politics at variance with one another suggests that they are 'competing traditions of interpretation', rather than complementary aspects of recognition.¹⁴¹ Thompson observes the contesting poles from which recognition is demanded:

¹³⁷ Ibid., 233–24.

¹³⁸ Thompson, *The Political Theory of Recognition*, 82.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, 236.

¹⁴¹ Thompson, *The Political Theory of Recognition*, 82.

While the politics of universalism contends that recognition requires subjective rights in order to protect rational autonomy, the politics of difference contends that cultural protection is necessary in order to safeguard the capacity to form identity. As a result of this analysis, Taylor tends to understand struggles for recognition as conflicts between these two forms of politics.¹⁴²

This struggle from a politics of universalism and a politics of difference to the demand for equal recognition is evident in multicultural societies. Taylor explains this via the example of ongoing linguistic and cultural tensions in Canada between Quebec and the rest of Canada. Quebec illustrates the difficulty that results from the demand for recognition within a politics of universalism and a politics of difference: Can recognition inhabit a space whereby both complement each other in facilitating recognition of equal dignity? The dialogical and interpersonal dynamic of recognition is the practice that can transform the demand for recognition from these two seemingly incompatible poles. Taylor emphasizes the positive role of community as a space that can support such equal recognition.¹⁴³ Persons are equally recognized within a community that ‘shares some common purposes and recognizes its members as sharing in these purposes’.¹⁴⁴ As such, recognition is dialogical at its core; I am recognized and I recognize, not in any self-isolated or absolute autonomous space, but rather in and through my relationships with others.

2.3.1 Equal Recognition Embraces Difference and Universalism

As Taylor concludes his essay on political recognition, he holds that recognition—particularly concerning a politics of difference—is not about recognizing only one

¹⁴² Ibid. Thompson illustrates this point by offering an example from Taylor’s native homeland, Canada: ‘Thus defenders of Quebec’s claim for recognition as a distinct society are regarded as exponents of the politics of difference, while those Canadians who oppose Quebec’s claim are understood to subscribe to the politics of universalism’ (ibid.).

¹⁴³ However, Taylor does not specify the type of community.

¹⁴⁴ Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, 276.

specific type of culture. He writes: ‘There must be something midway between the inauthentic and homogenizing demand for recognition of equal worth, on the one hand, and the self-immurement within ethnocentric standards, on the other’.¹⁴⁵ Taylor suggests ‘the presumption of equal worth’ as just such a midway point.¹⁴⁶ In doing so, he is appreciating anew the term ‘honour’. His development of recognition, however, is not a transposition of an inherited term as it was used historically in hierarchical societies. Taylor describes the need for recognition by way of a suggestion, which highlights the relational move toward the other: ‘Perhaps we don’t need to ask whether it’s something that others can demand of us as a right. We might simply ask whether this is the way we ought to approach others’.¹⁴⁷ In approaching another, we attempt to forge an interpersonal relationship with the other by way of drawing nearer to them so as to recognize them.

In light of the social function of religion, Taylor signals the prospective value of religious recognition: ‘How can this presumption [of equal worth] be grounded? One ground that has been proposed is religious’.¹⁴⁸ Taylor’s appeal to the potential of religious recognition is underscored by the transcendental quality he attributes to the recognition of the other: ‘Put another way: it would take a supreme arrogance to discount this possibility *a priori*’.¹⁴⁹ But the recognition of an *a priori* element in experience ought not to be understood as a Kantian understanding of the transcendental. As Taylor explains:

This is not just a recommended policy of the kind that suggests if you check your beliefs against others’ you’ll avoid some falsehoods. In speaking of a ‘transcendental’ condition here, I am pointing to the way in which the very

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 256.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

confidence that we know what we mean, and hence our having our own original language, depends on this relating.¹⁵⁰

Taylor is attempting here to ‘lift the transcendental conditions’ away from independence and individualism. Elevating the transcendental conditions corrects a position that seeks an ‘independent stance as a stepping altogether outside the transcendental condition of interlocution—or else as showing that we were never within it and only needed the courage to make clear our basic, ontological independence’.¹⁵¹

The position of individualism, for Taylor, is similar to some Romantic views of the self and, in particular, to American Transcendentalists, who in a sense contain the universe, but only through ‘by-passing any necessary relation to other humans’.¹⁵² To hammer home this point, Taylor offers the example of religious and political attitudes amongst young people, whom, he says, are ‘abandoning the political or religious convictions of their parents’.¹⁵³ Taylor characterizes their position in terms of how they would express it, as an ‘independent stance’.¹⁵⁴ Yet, ‘what an independent stance involves is defined by culture, in a continuing conversation into which that young person is inducted (and in which the meaning of independence can also alter with time)’.¹⁵⁵ For Taylor, then, the formation of identity is located within a conversation between ‘our sense of the good and our sense of the self’.¹⁵⁶ Within such conversations, ‘[e]ach young person may take up a stance which is authentically his

¹⁵⁰ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 38.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

or her own; but the very possibility of this is enframed in a social understanding of great temporal depth, in fact, in a “tradition”¹⁵⁷

Taylor goes on to extend the conversation between the sense of the good and the sense of the self and situate it within a wider ‘picture’, which he categorizes as ‘orientation’.¹⁵⁸ Orientation, for Taylor, involves ‘a second axis of strong evaluation...[about] what kind of life is worth living’.¹⁵⁹ Significant for religious recognition is Taylor’s extension of orientation into the realm of the spiritual or vocational:

The goods which define our spiritual orientation are the ones by which we will measure the worth of our lives; the two issues are indissolubly linked because they relate to the same core, and that is why I want to speak of the second issue, about the worth, or weight, or substance of my life, as a question of how I am ‘placed’ or ‘situated’ in relation to the good, or whether I am in ‘contact’ with it.¹⁶⁰

Taylor continues to explicate how ‘within certain religious traditions, “contact” is understood as a relation to God and may be understood in sacramental terms or in those of prayer or devotion’.¹⁶¹ A development of recognition, in light of Taylor’s writings, gives priority to the practice of recognition that acknowledges not just its social value, but also the wider contexts and contacts that foster recognition, including the spiritual and religious.

2.4 The Application of Recognition

In *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*, Seyla Benhabib (2002) offers a constructive reading of Taylor’s treatment of political recognition that culminates in her adding a final condition to Taylor’s original thesis. As noted

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 39.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 41.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 42.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 44.

previously, for Taylor, practices of recognition are significant for the formation of the human person. Benhabib generally supports the project of recognition as presented by Taylor and others. For instance, she writes: ‘I certainly subscribe to the thesis of the inter-subjective constitution of the self through dialogic moral practices’.¹⁶² However, Benhabib raises a concern as to the potential achievements of recognition theory within the confines of the body politic: ‘What is less clear to me is its implications for politics, and in particular the implications that assumptions at the level of ontology or moral psychology may or may not have for contemporary politics of identity/difference’.¹⁶³ Benhabib’s reservations concerning any political realizations of Taylor’s political recognition lay first in Taylor’s conflating the search for authenticity with a search for a corporate identity.

Benhabib’s concern is for persons and their subsequent development of self-confidence, self-worth, and self-respect. She suggests that the ‘clamoring for the recognition of their group identities’ could swallow up persons.¹⁶⁴ In a cautionary note against Taylor, Benhabib offers the following diagnosis: ‘The theoretical mistake comes from the homology drawn between individual and collective claims, a homology facilitated by the ambiguities of the term recognition’.¹⁶⁵ She then states: ‘Surely Taylor believes that autonomy and authenticity are not competing but complementary normative principles; he holds that “everyone should be recognized for his or her unique identity”’.¹⁶⁶

Yet, there are certainly key points of agreement between Taylor and Benhabib. For instance, the formation of identities can only be accomplished ‘through webs of

¹⁶² Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 51.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 53.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

interlocution, that we become who we are not solely but in a crucial sense through our immersion in various communities of language and socialization'.¹⁶⁷ The dialogical character of recognition has two significant outcomes for both authors. First, for Taylor, and indeed for Benhabib too, language has wide-ranging meanings and applications. As Taylor notes, '[w]e become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining our identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression'.¹⁶⁸ Language learning is relational and dialogical, in that we 'learn these modes of expression through exchanges with others'.¹⁶⁹ Yet, given Taylor's modest treatment of the intimate plane in 'The Politics of Recognition', this plane requires a greater level of explanation than is provided in that text.

The lack of description and development of the intimate plane coincides with a weak presentation of the ontological foundation underpinning the social morality of equal recognition presented by Taylor. Arguably, he has attended to the lack of detail on the interpersonal recognition of the other—although not directly on the topic of recognition—in *Sources of The Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* and, more recently, in *Language Animal: The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity*. The latter text presents the 'Bildungsroman' as a wider orientation of linguistic recognition, whereby a 'new way is offered of defining what a human life can take as its central direction'.¹⁷⁰

Such a direction in life is afforded a meaningful orientation in its

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 56.

¹⁶⁸ Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, 230. Taylor's understanding of language is generous and somewhat non-restrictive. Effectively, he wants to use language 'in a broad sense, covering not only the words we speak, but also other modes of expression whereby we define ourselves, including the "languages" of art, of gesture, of love, and the like' (ibid., 230).

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Taylor, *The Language Animal*, 298.

characterization as vocation: ‘in the examples of accounts of a life we discussed above, which recount the discovery of our vocation or true form, the stuff of bildungsromans, it is essential that I understand myself, at least retrospectively, as seeking’.¹⁷¹ Language is critical in how we recount the discovery of our vocation. As Taylor adds,

Linguistic capacity is essentially more than an intellectual one; it is embodied: in enacted meanings, in artistic portrayals, in metaphors which draw on embodied experience, and also in iconic gestural portrayal which accompanies everyday speech, not to mention the ubiquity of ‘body language’—tone of voice, emphasis, expressive gesture, stances of intimacy, of aloofness—which surround ordinary discourse.¹⁷²

Languages are used not just ‘for our own purposes’,¹⁷³ because the deployment of language has an egalitarian quality. For both Taylor and Benhabib, there is a linguistic character to the human person. Yet, the grounding upon which Taylor locates the practice of recognition remains problematic for Benhabib. First, she takes Taylor to task for his *a priori*-like position of affording all persons equal respect. Benhabib notes:

The claim to the recognition of individuality must be undergirded by the moral premise that such individuality is equally worthy of respect in the pursuit of its own self-realization; otherwise, the aspiration on the part of the self toward self-realization and the pursuit of authenticity cannot generate reciprocal moral claims upon others to respect such aspirations.¹⁷⁴

Judgements are made in determining whether a person is worthy. But Benhabib’s concern that Taylor’s argument for recognition lacks any discernment as to whether an individual is worthy of recognition is premature. For Taylor’s essay ‘What is Human Agency?’ examines the role of responsibility in the act of decision making. In particular, the essay argues for a constant ‘re-evaluation’ of ideas and claims given

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 318.

¹⁷² Ibid., 33.

¹⁷³ Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, 230.

¹⁷⁴ Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture*, 56–57.

that ‘fresh insights might alter my evaluations’ of the worth of others.¹⁷⁵ For Taylor, the link between individual recognition, responsibility, and worth for others is best laid out in what he calls ‘autobiographical reasoning’, which involves an openness to re-evaluation.¹⁷⁶ While a re-evaluation is not presented as such, Taylor does note that:

understanding oneself or others through biography is a potentially endless process. Any interpretation we reach can be upset, challenged, or amended by a new insight, which will ramify through the whole diachronic gestalt, modifying previous takes, including the one that I hold to at the present moment.¹⁷⁷

In what remains of this subsection, I shall examine in detail Taylor’s understanding of Bildungsroman as a way to explicate his understanding of re-evaluation.

2.4.1 Recognition and Re-evaluation

Taylor first signals the importance of story in his presentation of the mythic aspect of language. In this regard, as he explains, narration plays a prominent role. It signals the shift from mimesis to myth, culminating in what he terms ‘linguistic narration’.¹⁷⁸

These two facets are not presented as a series or as the dominance of one over the other. Rather, Taylor argues that these two terms are engaging in a ‘complementarity’ wherein both come together in a ‘clarifying or disambiguating’ activity.¹⁷⁹

In considering narrative as a meaning-generating form of language, Taylor examines the role played by story, by which he means ‘the telling of people and events and their complex relations, bound as they are inside a narrative’.¹⁸⁰ There are two ways in which stories or histories can be understood. On the one hand, there are

¹⁷⁵ Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 39.

¹⁷⁶ Taylor, *The Language Animal*, 307.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 315.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 72.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 292.

single causal attributes; on the other, there are inductive generalizations. Taylor describes induction as ‘where knowledge acquired over time by experience can be formulated into a timeless proposition’.¹⁸¹ As an example of how such generalizations are achieved through induction, Taylor refers to the generalization that all swans are white. As such, there is a sameness in these generalizations, whereby ‘the conclusion just sums up the instances’.¹⁸² Single casual attributes, by contrast, illustrate difference more so than sameness. As Taylor explains, single causal attributes ‘are often just too different and varied to ground any simple summation; they may give rise to a rule of thumb, or correlation frequently encountered, but not a real inductive generalization’.¹⁸³ Yet, for Taylor, these two responses are not the only ones available when responding to stories or histories.

To explain this further, Taylor highlights the modern development of the novel occasioned, in part, by the Bildungsroman.¹⁸⁴ Within this literary device, the ‘hero comes through this story to an understanding of his vocation, what his life should be about; what this consists in can’t just be detached from the story, and fully expressed in its endings’.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, the ‘insight emerges through the story itself. A new way is offered of defining what a human life can take as its central direction’.¹⁸⁶ This manner of defining and fashioning a human life contrasts with literature prior to the emergence of the modern novel. In particular, Taylor notes that such literatures prior to the modern novel must consist of persons of higher social, political, and economic class.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 297.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 297–98.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 298.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

The modern novel, on the other hand, focuses on depicting ordinary persons. As Taylor explains: ‘There emerges what I called a nonassertive portrayal of human life, of its choices, issues, travails, fulfilments; and this can open up new horizons for the reader’.¹⁸⁸ Such horizons, however, are considered within a mode of life that is a sphere of action. As such, Taylor uses the term ‘vocation’ to signal the significance of the ‘new light’ that is received from within the story, in a way that cannot be achieved through an inductive reading of the story.

For Taylor, an inductive reading only fails to take seriously the details that made the story, focusing instead on the ending of the story and any subsequent moral truth that can be expressed: ‘Our insight is too embedded in the diachronic process which yielded the insight’.¹⁸⁹ The diachronic process has two interrelated facets: An experience will facilitate a specific expression of what has been encountered and the meaning attributed to it will also emerge from the experience itself. I might encounter a priest who explains their vocational story. I can give a factual account of this. Equally, this encounter results in a specific insight, in respect of the value of ministry, for instance. This encounter in and of itself, and the historical manner by which it was narrated, does not take into consideration the comprehensive story of my life.

There is a dependency between giving expression to insights achieved from the experience and the story itself. As Taylor observes:

To convey the insight, we can’t rely simply on the formulation, but must somehow convey the experience, the felt intuition. This throws us back into narrative: narrating, first, of the episode; but then also of the key features of our preceding life against whose background the episode had the meaning and the impact that it did. These two facets are linked.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 299.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 300.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

Taylor presents two pieces of literature, highlighting in each the specific type of insight made available through the Bildungsroman. In one way, the insight achieved is particular to one of the characters in the story. But, as Taylor points out, that is ‘the step in the *Bildung*...it is quite plausible that this [insight] expresses a step in learning by the author’.¹⁹¹ The insight achieved by a character in the story is directly related to an equally received and shared insight by the author of the story. The author, as part of the background of the story, impacts the expressed insight of the story. As Taylor puts it, ‘We can see...an essential feature of such gains in insight, and we might say, in autobiographical self-understanding in general, that it comes, inter alia, in such comprehensive diachronic takes, linking new intuitions to the background they emerge from’.¹⁹²

Taylor pushes the insight achieved through *Bildung* from the literary toward the ethical or moral. In highlighting the interdependency of both the story and the background, Taylor speaks of ‘extended or diachronic gestalts’.¹⁹³ As he points out, any insight by a character in the story or by the author of that story ‘makes sense in light of the other’.¹⁹⁴ Yet, any concluding insight expressed in the background story or within the story itself is never final.

Stressing the importance of re-evaluating insights, Taylor claims that an ‘intuitive sense [i.e. a felt intuition of what is right or good] of this kind of diachronic gestalt can be challenged by rival interpretations of its elements’.¹⁹⁵ Such re-evaluation is presented as the “‘indirect” argument’ as opposed to the direct argument, which constitutes that initial felt conclusion as to what is good or right.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 304.

¹⁹² Ibid., 307.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 306.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 307.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 308.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

In unpacking the dynamic of the indirect argument or route, Taylor offers the following description:

For instance, I may think that such and such an earlier concern was an obstacle or a distraction, which stopped me seeing what I know now to be really important, whereas another cherished activity was a good preparation for what I now seek; for instance, that my desire to be liked, or famous, was pulling me off what I now see as my course.¹⁹⁷

Re-evaluation, therefore, emphasizes the fact that the ‘autobiographical reasoning’, which results in gestalts, also contains ‘intuitive convictions’.¹⁹⁸ It is these very intuitions that contribute toward any reconsideration of the insights achieved by the author of the story, and by extension the insights of any character within the story. While some will note that different people have irreconcilable ethical viewpoints, Taylor maintains that his own understandings of reason and instinct are reconcilable.¹⁹⁹

What has been achieved here? The abandonment of the ‘one-liner’ as the moral summation in a story, yes. What is advanced is the positioning of new insights against respective backgrounds, culminating in new understanding.²⁰⁰ This achievement, as Taylor notes, is not presented in a one-liner, but in paragraphs.²⁰¹

The presentation of the growth and development described in the Bildungsroman stands in opposition to any ahistorical account of the growth and development of individuals or societies in the post-Enlightenment era. As Taylor writes, ‘among the shallower strand of the Enlightenment’, there is the opinion that ‘new conclusions can be “detached” from the history which preceded them’.²⁰² For Taylor, any account of growth and development requires both a story and a critical

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 309.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 311.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 312.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 313.

²⁰² Ibid., 316.

account of that story. Taylor decries any decoupling of the story and the account thereof as ‘detached distillations’.²⁰³ He contends that such analytical separation is undertaken ‘because these would at least be in principle verifiable’.²⁰⁴ In summary, Taylor is arguing for ‘the telling of stories in fact and fiction as a creative or constitutive feature of language’;²⁰⁵ ‘You can only see this if you go beyond the single sentence and look at texts, complex, drawn-out accounts’.²⁰⁶ For Taylor, we ‘cannot have an understanding of self and life which doesn’t include some such diachronic reading of the whole through an extended gestalt’.²⁰⁷ Such a reading, however, is not an abstract one. It is a very embedded reading, for at ‘any given moment, we occupy a particular place in this extended whole; we are either adolescents, youths, or aged; we are alone or in a family, active or retired; and we have to take account of this in making our assessment’.²⁰⁸

To summarize this section, then, Benhabib has some reservations regarding Taylor’s presentation of political recognition. Specifically, she contends that Taylor’s argument for political recognition makes theoretical mistakes by imposing a form of homology within an understanding of equal recognition. In light of these concerns over the lack of development of the intimate plane within his essay ‘The Politics of Recognition’, Taylor’s earlier essay ‘Human Agency’ and his other texts to which I refer offer a potential solution to Benhabib’s warning about the problem of homology: the responsibility to re-evaluate our stories as new insights are possible at any moment. Taylor’s treatment of story not only gives concrete expression to the process

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 317.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

of re-evaluation, but also illustrates how to hold universality and difference in tension amid the ongoing development of one's emerging self.

2.4.2 Recognition as a Remembering Bridge to Formation and Healing

I have argued for an exploration of theology and recognition theory, which can draw out and develop certain dimensions of religion and recognition. Thus far, I have established that the term vocation can be used in faith and non-faith contexts. Both acknowledge persons as socially, morally, and politically emerging selves. Yet, theology would add that persons are also religiously emerging selves. Within both accounts of vocation, there are complementary notions that appear to assert the quality of interrelational engagement with the other. Taylor employs the term 'attitudinal dignity'; Honneth argues for a retroactive memory that expands the constituency of those to be recognized; Metz puts forward the case for memory as dangerous memory so that the priority of recognition can first be afforded to those who have suffered and are not remembered; and finally, Benhabib raises a concern about Taylor's version of the recognitional project insofar as a person's specific story and identity might be eclipsed by prioritizing persons belonging to groups or communities. Yet, Taylor's account of the Bildungsroman captures the complementary, formative tension between what is universal and what is particular in a person's emerging story.

Efforts to develop a theory and practice of religious recognition point to the wider challenges and opportunities confronting theology today. Whether within the church, society or academia, one of theology's key tasks is to foster a fuller engagement with other disciplines for the mutual benefit of all. For theology, such an engagement presents an opportunity to recognize the vocation of every person, not

only in this life but also in the life to come. Toward such a grand recognition, the project of recognition is a prerequisite pastoral concern for any mutual accompaniment of another in their emerging vocational selves.

Of course, there are identifiable disciplinary borders between political philosophy and theology. At the same time, this chapter has pointed to some of the overlaps between theology and recognition in exploring religious recognition as we care for the vocation of each person. In what follows, I will make explicit some of the differences and the overlaps that we encounter when engaging with theology and recognition theory.

Drawing from ‘The Politics of Recognition’, I would like to emphasize one of Taylor’s significant achievements, which supports my argument that recognition theory is an important resource for theology. This achievement identifies the lucid boundaries and overlaps between both disciplines. In arguing that personal identity is dialogically shaped, Taylor shares a common claim with that of Christianity on the interrelational formation of the human person, for the mission of the Church and, by extension, its members is ‘a single but complex reality which develops in a variety of ways’.²⁰⁹ Such a varied formation of personhood takes seriously the notion of belonging as personal, social, and institutional. Taylor’s argument for the dialogical quality of human formation contrasts with the ‘atomist’ self, which understands the formation of personhood as an autonomous enterprise not requiring any kind of formative relationship with others.

Responding to Taylor’s presentation of the dialogical and relational self, Kwame Anthony Appiah makes an important distinction between individual identity and collective identity, noting that, within Taylor’s essay, identity is a collective

²⁰⁹ John Paul II, *Encyclical letter Redemptoris Missio*, n. 41.

category.²¹⁰ Reminiscent of Benhabib's concern with homology, Appiah highlights how collective identities can also serve as a precarious identity for an individual's effort to understand the self more fully. As Appiah contends, an African American might need to reject the collective conventions held by society with respect to how an African American should act or think. These collective conventions, at the same time, are the very conventions that constitute collective identities in forming a politics of recognition.

The criticism levied here is not against Taylor's presentation of recognition. Rather, slippery-slope discourses of identity within the discourse on multiculturalism, which 'presupposes conceptions of collective identity that are remarkably unsubtle in their understanding of the processes by which identities, both individual and collective develop', are presented for recognition.²¹¹ In response to the unsubtle processes used in those identities presented for recognition, Appiah champions a process that is careful in its discrimination and discernment. This process is 'disciplined by historical knowledge and philosophical reflection'.²¹² The process is akin to Taylor's responsibility of re-evaluation, as I detailed in his understanding of the Bildungsroman, or Rahner's and Metz's humanization as a response to homology.

Appiah suggests that autonomous and collective identities require a 'form of healing the self'.²¹³ He argues for an engaged 'learning to see these collective identities not as sources of limitation and insult but as a valuable part of what they centrally are'.²¹⁴ But any satisfactory effort toward healing requires a responsibility to

²¹⁰ Kwame Anthony Appiah, 'Identity, Authenticity, Survival: Multicultural Societies and Social Reproduction', in *Multiculturalism*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 149.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 156.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 161.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

memory. For it is within such responsible deliberations in forming memory that any society decides upon who are the legitimate victims in need of healing. Honneth notes that this ‘particular kind of “struggle for recognition” over the role of past and future members for collective identity of a community becomes most apparent in the debates over who must be regarded as “victims” in the past’.²¹⁵ While accounts of memory, whether personal or institutional, can be selective and prejudicial in their presentation of history, the question remains as to who or what can best contribute toward the struggle for recognition of those victims who remain outside the arena of collective memory. Honneth suggests: ‘That collective memory is grounded in the relationships of recognition that reach both backward into the past and forward into the future becomes clearer once we put aside the small group of the family and turn to even larger collectives’.²¹⁶

The Roman Catholic Church, like many Christian Churches, in both its universal and particular structure, is one such larger collective that can make a contribution to a more just and inclusive collective memory. Keenly aware of this in the context of post-war Germany, Metz emphasizes the particularity of history in his presentation of human experience. This theological initiative presents a more complete account of those who have been silenced in the records of historical presentations. Metz’s emphasis on particularity toward generating a more comprehensive account of the history of humanity illustrates the necessary re-evaluation that must be applied to any theories used to interpret the meaning of human experience. Hence, the additional need to re-evaluate current theories of recognition by means of a theological reflection.

²¹⁵ Honneth, ‘Reflection’, 322.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 321.

2.5 Conclusion

My inclusion of Metz's theological understanding of memory in developing religious recognition promotes a wider recognition, striving to understand and preserve the memory of those who have suffered.²¹⁷ This hermeneutical approach, which seeks to include those who have suffered, is a response to what Metz understands as the 'privatization' of Christianity within society that often excludes the history of those who suffer. Human action that is protective of those who suffer is acknowledged and asserted in Metz's understanding of participation. Progressive and historically selective views of history, which are heavily reliant on technological and scientific authority, produce an account of history that marginalizes those who suffer.

Given such marginalization, Metz understands theology as talking about God while facing a suffering humanity. His theological project affirms new alliances between theology and politics. This project 'refuses to remain content with the kind of trivial affluent-society morality which we retain in the liberal distinction between politics and morals'.²¹⁸ A re-evaluated politics is determined by the collaboration of the political with the moral, in which 'a nourishing from below of freedom and effective responsibility' occurs.²¹⁹ It becomes an alternative to a politics fashioned by technology and economics.

The pairing of politics and morality does not entail merely receiving pre-held moral absolutes from sources beyond oneself. As Metz puts it, '[t]he connection between politics and morals cannot be ordained from above, and can and should not

²¹⁷ Johann Baptist Metz, 'The Future in the Memory of Suffering', in *Faith and the Future: Essays on Theology, Solidarity, and Modernity*, ed. Johann Baptist Metz and Jürgen Moltmann (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 5.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

be allowed to relapse into the political canonization of a particular moral system'.²²⁰ Instead, the combination of politics and morals fosters a 'radical democratization of the social infrastructure'.²²¹ The political imagination can keep its activities creative and discerning by preserving its moral imagination and the resistance that has, as its source, the memory of all those who have suffered in our world.²²² Such a political consciousness, for Metz, has a deep historical dimension: 'It offers inspiration for a new form of solidarity, of responsibility toward those most distant from us, in as much as the history of suffering unites all [people] like a "second nature"'.²²³ In considering Metz's two-pronged approach wherein both the moral and the political inhabit at once a single space, I intend to propose not so much a new form of solidarity, but rather a form of religious recognition.

Memory is a means through which the religious dimension of recognition can participate within a more comprehensive account of recognition. Religious recognition—faith, hope, and love—articulates itself through emotions, affectivity, and spirituality. Within these expressions of religious recognition, memory carries the religious dimension within a historically conscious account of recognition. For Metz, the exclusion of religion delimits any historical consciousness to 'technico-pragmatic reason'.²²⁴ In delineating the importance of historical consciousness, three varieties of memory are noted: the memory of 'the good old days'; the memory that 'transfigures'; and 'dangerous memory'.²²⁵ The first type of memory treats history with unrealistic optimism, failing to recognize the past suffering of individuals or groups. The second type of memory transfigures the past; infusing history with a

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid., 6.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid., 8.

²²⁵ Ibid., 7.

purifying quality such that history is seen as a glorious past. The third, ‘dangerous memories’, like political recognition, make demands, such as the need for constant re-evaluation. Metz describes dangerous memory as a ‘subversive tradition’, which resists efforts to silence or neutralize memory.²²⁶ His clarification of human history, which emphasizes the subversive, contends that the ‘natural history of [humanity] is in a certain sense the history of [its] passions’.²²⁷ In challenging and undermining a history exclusively reliant on scientific and technological authority, Metz destabilizes a certain genre of political history. What he presents instead is the reality of past suffering. This presentation, however, is not akin to a self-preoccupation with suffering for its own sake. Rather, it proposes a history of humanity that argues for an alternative branch of history, which is distinguished by ‘the memory of suffering as a negative consciousness of future freedom and a stimulus (with this freedom in our sights) to act to conquer suffering’.²²⁸ Memory as a theological re-evaluative force offers an account of history that includes suffering, both past and present. Suffering is not just an addition to more comprehensive accounts of history; it creates a new theological vision of others.

In this chapter I have argued for an interpretation of recognition that acknowledges and values a person’s vocation, and that reclaims and promotes the vocation of the other. In elucidating this position, I began with the observation that theology is not a strong interpretative frame within theories of recognition. Rather than bemoan this fact, I reframed this situation as a significant opportunity for theology and its interdisciplinary exchange with other academic discourses. The project of recognition begs the question as to whom recognition ought to be bestowed

²²⁶ Ibid., 8.

²²⁷ Ibid., 10.

²²⁸ Ibid.

upon. It is a question that emerges from this historical inventory of those who have not been recognized. Are some more worthy of recognition? Drawing upon the contributions of Metz and Taylor, the evidence presented has shown that the constituency of those to be recognized is not limited by time or any other designation. The constituency of those to be recognized is the entire human family due to the offer of salvation made to every person. From this universal constituency, I considered the particular vocation one is called to live out as part of the more universal human family. This step can easily put what is universal into conflict with what is particular. Given this possibility, I presented the ecumenical dialogue in the mainstream Christian churches as an example of how difference does not entail opposition. With Taylor's distinctive insight, one can conclude that universalism and difference together support equal recognition. As is commonplace in theories of recognition, the achievement of equal recognition culminates in a rallying cry for rights. Taylor, however, resists following this trajectory, opting instead for new orientations. But rather than assume that Taylor's approach is *de facto* the correct one, I introduce Benhabib's account in order to critically appropriate and supplement Taylor's contribution. Benhabib raises a legitimate reservation about Taylor's non-discriminating approach in affording others at first equal recognition. Yet, as illustrated in Taylor's elucidation on the *Bildungsroman*, within the project of recognition there is always space for re-evaluation.

Furthermore, I argued that memory reconciles the conventional division between the political and the moral in rejecting an account of history that overemphasizes the technological and the scientific. For certain accounts of history, memory contains a subversive quality. Affirming such a quality, Metz coined the concept 'dangerous memory', which has an eschatological aspect. Dangerous memory

is a critical eschatology in that it does not just center on the death of the person. Memory, therefore, is a form of praxis that seeks the liberation of past and future generations through a re-evaluated and realized eschatology. In developing my argument, I utilized Metz's understanding of memory as a means through which religious recognition can occur. Religious memory comprises a key part of religious recognition, which can acknowledge and value the vocation of an individual and the collective vocation of the Christian church. In avoiding the theoretical mistakes of homology, religious recognition strives instead to 'humanize' the world, creating not just an imminent future, but signalling an eternal future for all through a religious recognition characterized by concern and compassion.

As set out in Chapter 1, in this thesis I shall examine three significant contexts that facilitate the recognition of another through the pastoral care of mutual accompaniment: narrative; vulnerability; and participation. In Chapter 3, I shall explore the relationship between narrative and recognition. In identifying narrative, vulnerability, and participation as key contexts, I build on and pursue the line of argument taken by Taylor and Graham Ward.²²⁹

Chapter 3: Narrative as a Context for Theological Reflection on Recognition

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I shall explore the relationship between narrative and recognition. At the root of this exploration is my argument that recognition is a resource for pastoral theology.²³⁰ In my view, one of the main tasks of theology is to facilitate and encourage mutual recognition between persons.²³¹ This forward-oriented goal is the concern of any study of pastoral theology, for the ‘theologian’s task...is to project the *future* possibilities of meaning and truth’.²³² I shall argue for a practice of recognition that is more aptly expressed through narrative and storytelling than mere argument.²³³ My aim is to avoid a treatment of a theological reflection on recognition that is chiefly conceptual. As this chapter illustrates, reflecting upon recognition through the exploration of narrative studies is best achieved through a strong correlation between ‘sameness and difference’ in the vocation of every person.²³⁴

²³⁰ In Chapter 5 of this thesis, I will explore the relationship between practical theology and recognition.

²³¹ I understand ‘mutual recognition’ in the way suggested by Paul Ricoeur. He argues that ‘social patterns [can] experience actual recognition’ through the ‘exchange of gifts’, *The Course of Recognition*, trans. David Pellauer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 245. Ricoeur places particular weight on the disposition of the one who is recognized or receives the gift of recognition. Introducing an ‘ethics of gratitude’, he locates the primary context of recognition as a ‘festive’ experience of gift-giving. This contrasts with Honneth’s primary context of recognition as one of social moral struggle.

²³² David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 240.

²³³ In his article ‘Paul Ricoeur’s Surprising Take on Recognition’, *Ricoeur Studies*, 2, no. 1 (2011): 35–50, Arto Laitinen takes aim at Ricoeur’s claim that the struggle for recognition is an never-ending task, which fails to ever reach a satisfying outcome or conclusion. Arguing against this criticism, Laitinen argues through ‘conceptual points’. Yet, in only responding through conceptual points Laitinen does not answer the hesitation and concern that Ricoeur raises for any theory of recognition that is a moral theory.

²³⁴ Theologically, we can speak here of David Tracy’s ‘criteria of the relative adequacy’ in *Blessed Rage for Order*, 80.

To consider narrative as a crucial part of recognition is nothing new. Ricoeur uses narrative theory to develop a more demanding account of personhood through a strong correlation between sameness and difference. He argues:

We have to acquire simultaneously the idea of reflexivity and the idea of otherness, in order to pass from a weak correlation between someone and anyone else, which is too easily assumable, to a strong correlation between belonging to the self, in the sense of mine, and belonging to another, in the sense of yours.²³⁵

In this chapter I draw upon Ricoeur's significant contribution to the development of the theory of narrative identity, which can be a major resource for theologians with a view to exploring recognition as a resource for pastoral accompaniment. For one's narrative relation with oneself, others, and the world achieves a buoyancy and dynamic of continuous change within the relationship of interdependency.

In this chapter, however, I will not develop a concept of 'religious narrative' as such. To do so would risk creating a specialized form of narrative that stands apart from the experiences of persons in time and space. Rather, I will contend that a theological reflection on recognition—not a specific religious narrative, but through the mediation of narrative—contributes to the formation of a person's vocation and the development of communities of recognition through participation in mutual recognition. Mediation through correlation seeks to give meaningful expression to religious experience or one's mystical or spiritual biography.²³⁶ In what follows, I introduce narrative as a way of testimony, especially for those who suffer and are forgotten. Recognizing such persons through narrative testimonies that protest against injustice and the absence of pastoral care is an expression of accompaniment.

²³⁵ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 39.

²³⁶ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 199.

3.2 Narrative as Mediation

In what follows, I state the type of enquiry undertaken in the exploration of narrative.

I also present narrative mediation as having a restorative practice in its remembering of those who have suffered and been forgotten. A crucial part of narrative mediation is storytelling, whereby the other becomes more recognizable as a person. Johann Baptist Metz prioritizes narrative as a medium through which one can understand and experience salvation and history.²³⁷ In this light, this chapter will offer a theologically interdisciplinary exploration of religion and recognition in its narrative expression.²³⁸

As noted, I take my lead here from Metz, who observed:

Religious experience, that articulation of one's life story in God's presence, one's mystical biography, got more and more lost to the doxography of faith, so that it increasingly dismantled its experiential context in a subjective and impressionistic way and, as a consequence, became increasingly unable to bring it to bear in the public spheres of the church and society.²³⁹

That is not to say that a practice of recognition ought to exclude argument or conceptual explanation, but that recognition is more aptly experienced within the intelligibility of its narrative elements over and against a system of concepts and processes. This significant clarification is particularly helpful as I further explore the contribution of religion and theology toward a project of mutual recognition within the accompaniment of another.

Mutual recognition, I argue, has a particular pertinence in relation to the Christian commitment to a common life that is made manifest in acts of concern that transform persons and communities. As Metz shows, through the category of

²³⁷ Ibid., 192.

²³⁸ The term 'religion' is a slippery one as it can be defined in a number of different ways and there is no absolute agreement on a single definition. I understand the term religion as a limiting term. As such, religion is not an exhaustive term and is always subject to interpretation. In particular, the cultural-linguistic context influences how a person or a community understands the term. Cf. Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 93.

²³⁹ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 199.

narrative, religions have a valuable restorative contribution to make in their recalling of those who have suffered in the past. While Metz is not examining the relationship between recognition and narrative explicitly, his championing of ‘narrative mediation’ in the reconciliation of the ‘history of salvation and the history of suffering’ highlights the pastoral neglect of persons or minority groups within church communities, whose narratives are disrespected on personal, juridical or institutional grounds.

I suggest that within Christian communities, the necessary recognition of such persons and minority groups requires an appreciation and inclusion of narrative mediation that is not simply an appendix to theological argumentation or a church process or system that may be employed. Metz stresses that narrative within theological reflection upon religious experience and language ‘is thus anything but an ad hoc construction’,²⁴⁰ for it ‘articulates that mediation of the history of salvation and the human history of suffering that is found in the witness and testimonies of Christian faith’.²⁴¹ Central to this mediation is the ‘religious dimension to our common existence’.²⁴² For narrative demonstrates how lives are bound within a collective coherence via our mutual dependency.

While it is not the aim of this chapter to provide a definition of personhood, it will nevertheless be worthwhile to note that the emphasis I place is not so much on a definition of a person who recognizes, but the transformative social potential of the Christian belonging to a community who recognizes and the one who is recognized and, thus, experiencing the restoration of belonging. Promoting a person as having potential to engage in interrelational accompaniment, rather than defining a person in

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 194.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 107.

terms of their cognitive abilities and level of independency, is a crucial aspect in developing an account of mutual recognition.²⁴³ It is not that one cannot achieve an abstract categorical definition of person, but that the application of narrative in expressing one's understanding and experience of personhood prioritizes storytelling and biography as the first steps toward a narrative of mutual recognition.²⁴⁴

3.2.1 Narrative as a Resource for a Theology of Biography

Within Christian communities, the relationship between faith and language can generate a muddled understanding of what it means to recognize the self and to recognize the other. For instance, some Christians may find the 'grand narrative' of Christianity one in which they experience disrespect in the spheres of interpersonal relations, canonical or legal recognition, and institutional recognition.

In response, some Christians have offered a more nuanced account of themselves in an effort to step outside the grand narrative, which in their opinion fails to reverence their particular life story. Terms such as a 'practicing Christian' give way to terms like 'spiritual' or 'non-religious', or 'culturally Christian'. These terms of adoption for those baptized into a specific faith tradition are personal efforts to reclaim autonomy over and respect for one's religious or spiritual biography.²⁴⁵ It is

²⁴³ Cf. Mario J. Valdes, *Cultural Hermeneutics: Essays after Unamuno and Ricoeur* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 47. Valdes suggests that toward the end of Ricoeur's life, he began to consider the questions of human mortality and the desire for God. Valdes notes, '[h]e introduces the concept of "*I'homme capable*" (loosely, "the human who is capable of living unto death"). This question not only developed Ricoeur's concept of the human person, it also transformed his concept of God'. Valdes continues, '[t]he concept of God is seen as a human response to the absence of certainty. It is a form of reaching out in hope towards goodness' (ibid.).

²⁴⁴ Cf. Dan R. Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sign, Symbol and Story* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 139.

²⁴⁵ Autonomy here is not understood as a self-directed formation of one's personhood. Taking my lead from Paul Tillich, autonomy is a 'self-transcending autonomy' and, therefore, it always has a religious aspect. Cf. John P. Clayton, *The Conception of Correlation: Paul Tillich and the Possibility of a Mediating Theology* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1980), 34–39.

not surprising that ‘narrative’ has emerged as a constructive and, at times, confusing mechanism in recognizing the self and the other. Needless to say, there is no universal agreement on narrative as a resource for mutual recognition between individuals. As I will set out in Chapter 4, authors such as Judith Butler and Lois McNay have either argued against the contribution of narrative in achieving mutual recognition, or observed serious flaws in arguments put forward in support of narrative as a resource for mutual recognition.²⁴⁶

Within theological discourse, Metz makes use of terms such as ‘religious’, ‘spiritual’, ‘biography’, and ‘autobiography’ in the development of a practical, narrative-style account of Christianity. His development of these terms is modest. At times they read more like helpful signposts steering the reader in a particular direction, although a fuller explanation of the use and meaning of the terms is merited. Metz’s terms would benefit from additional clarity of definition in order to achieve the intended purpose of creating and communicating a narrative and practical account of Christianity. To fully understand Metz’s reasons for proposing an alternative narrative-style theology, it is important to begin by locating the specific method of theologizing against which he is arguing.

Metz’s article on the extensive contribution of Karl Rahner to theology affords a vantage point in locating Metz’s preference for a narrative-style theology.²⁴⁷ At the outset of his article, Metz presents an argument against a theology based on ‘universal-historical and idealistic Christianity’ through an examination of Rahner’s

²⁴⁶ Cf. Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 30–82; Lois McNay, *Against Recognition* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 96–126.

²⁴⁷ Johann Baptist Metz, ‘An Identity Crises in Christianity? Transcendental and Political Responses’ in *Love’s Strategy: The Political Theology of Johann Baptist Metz*, ed. by John K. Downey (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 113–112.

writings on the 'Anonymous Christian'. Metz is reacting to an exclusively theoretical theology, while favouring a more practical theology. As Gaspar Martinez notes:

In considering his theology a practical hermeneutics of Christianity, Metz distinguishes his position from that of Wolfhart Pannenberg (universal-historical hermeneutics in which negativity and praxis do not play an important role), Jürgen Moltmann (eschatological hermeneutics that risks reducing the suffering of Christ to an innertrinitarian reality), and Karl Rahner (transcendental hermeneutics that risks running into an ahistorical and idealistic Christianity).²⁴⁸

While it is not possible within this chapter to scope out these positions, it is helpful to identify them so as to show not only what Metz is responding to, but also what he is arguing. It is worth noting that Metz's assessment of Rahner's contribution to theology is in part misrepresented by Martinez. While Metz's priority of praxis over a transcendental theology is not in dispute, his overall sentiment concerning Rahner's contribution to theology is one of admiration and esteem. Metz explains:

In my opinion, Rahner's life work has succeeded in bringing together what has long been separated, indeed set at variance: his work has brought to an end the schism between theology and life history; it has related doctrine and life, the mystical and the everyday, in the context of the irreducible complexity and anonymity of our postmodern situation.²⁴⁹

What Metz observes in Rahner's theology is helpful for reflecting upon narrative and recognition: the relationship between theology and ordinary life. In acknowledging the development inaugurated by Rahner, it is made clear that the achievement cannot be taken for granted. The ongoing development of this relationship between theology and life will require what Metz describes as 'bridging categories'.²⁵⁰ Narrative, I

²⁴⁸ Gaspar Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God: Political, Liberation, and Public Theologies* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 62.

²⁴⁹ Johann Baptist Metz, *A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimensions of Christianity*, ed. James Matthew Ashley (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 103.

²⁵⁰ Johann Baptist Metz, 'Unity and Diversity', in *Faith and the Future: Essays on Theology, Solidarity, and Modernity*, ed. Johann Baptist Metz and Jürgen Moltmann (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 63.

contend, is one such context that connects a cognitive and argumentative theology with the ordinary experience of Christians.

3.3 Narrative as Constitutive of Theological Meaning

For Metz, then, theological reflection, including that of the transcendental approach to theology, requires a correction as to its starting point. James Matthew Ashley observes that Metz ‘set himself to modifying the transcendental approach in order to arrive at an analysis of human being that both begins from concrete involvement in history (rather than the *Seinsfrage*), and ends with concrete involvement within society and history’.²⁵¹ Metz, therefore, argues for ‘another point of departure for Christian theology apart from the one that insists that the universal meaning of history and the historical identity of Christianity is already established’.²⁵² Metz’s new point of departure, moving away from a grand narrative to that of a theology of story, emphasizes accompaniment through pastoral care and action, since a theology that is ‘transcendentally or universal-historical’ runs the risk of being ‘idealistic’.²⁵³ Metz contends that idealistic theology fails to take history and the experiences of people seriously. The appeal to narrative as a legitimate resource for theology is a way of identifying the emancipatory force of narrative in its ability to describe history and generate meaning.

An idealistic theology is a ‘conditioned salvation’ or a ‘confusion of salvation and Utopia’, suggesting a sinful world.²⁵⁴ Metz fears that a universal history of salvation fails to recognize the particular historical reality of those who have suffered:

²⁵¹ Ashley, *Interruptions*, 93.

²⁵² Metz, ‘An Identity Crisis’, 175.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid. Cf. Jeanrond, *Reasons to Hope*, 54.

‘Does this one, universal history of salvation that is founded in Christ not take place in the concrete mystical-political histories of salvation?’²⁵⁵ The challenge faced by theology is twofold: On the one hand, how can theology speak of a story of salvation history when its idealistic and universalistic theological character fails to pastorally accompany those disrespected and forgotten persons who inhabit such history? On the other, if theology is devoid of any recognition of the suffering of people within history, theology is only a partial and incomplete account of the history of salvation.

With these concerns in mind, Metz argues for a ‘narrative and practical Christianity’ as a corrective.²⁵⁶ Through the use of narrative, Christian praxis has a constitutive function in theology. Rather than recounting a story alone, narrative helps to establish and form meaning. Metz suggests: ‘It is because of the existence of these questions that I make a plea for a narrative and practical structure of Christianity, its historical identity and its idea of eschatological salvation’.²⁵⁷ As I have previously explained, Metz does not outline a complete theory of narrative, nor does he detail in any comprehensive way its merits. In response to this, however, it is helpful to note that Taylor presents a constructive account of narrative and its constitutive function in generating meaning, which allows for a more developed understanding of narrative that complements Metz’s treatment of narrative within theology. Taylor’s account of the importance of stories is worth citing here as it stresses the vital role of narrative as a vehicle for describing and interpreting difference. He describes the story as:

The telling of people and events and their complex relations, bound as they are inside a narrative. I want to defend the idea that stories give us an understanding of life, people, and what happens to them which is peculiar (i.e., distinct from what other forms, like works of science and philosophy, can give

²⁵⁵ Metz, ‘An Identity Crisis’, 175.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 176.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

us), and also unsubstitutable (i.e., what they show us can't be translated without remainder into other media).²⁵⁸

Narrative makes a necessary and significant contribution to the ongoing task of understanding and expressing meaning.

If theologians were to consider salvation history, the 'mystical-political histories of individuals would be of secondary importance in comparison with the saving meaning of history as a whole and could only be incorporated subsequently into the framework of a definitive history dissociated from the subjects'.²⁵⁹ The merit of narrative is in the merging together and dynamic interaction of particular and grand stories in such a way that one does not eclipse the other.²⁶⁰

Stories that are part of a narrative 'tell us about the human condition, including the list of things...[such as] causes, characters, values, alternative ways of being'.²⁶¹ It is worth recalling what I described in Chapter 2, namely that Taylor points to the *Bildungsroman* as a significant genre within the narrative tradition, particularly as a genre of story through which to communicate the spiritual development of a person. Within this genre, a person experiences insight that, in turn, culminates in spiritual growth. The person's insight is not extrinsic to himself; it is the result of assessment and discernment.²⁶² Nor is the insight a mere moment of clarity with respect to the past. It orientates the person in the story toward a commitment and a future. As Taylor notes, '[a] new way is offered of defining what a human life can take as its central direction'.²⁶³ The main themes within this form of story are a

²⁵⁸ Taylor, *Language Animal*, 291.

²⁵⁹ Metz, 'An Identity Crisis', 176.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Taylor, *Language Animal*, 295.

²⁶² For further reading on the role and implications of 'assessment', see Werner G. Jeanrond, 'Subjectivity and Objectivity in Theological Hermeneutics: The Potential of Love for Interfaith Encounter', *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 11, no. 2 (2013): 80–82.

²⁶³ Taylor, *Language Animal*, 299.

person's formative years and spiritual education. These stories allow a person to gain access to themselves as a relationally orientated self, while also allowing the person to fashion their self-understanding: 'It is only in this, at first dialogical, but later potentially monological, discourse of storytelling that I become self'.²⁶⁴ Thus, recognition of another requires a person who has the potential for self-expression and self-understanding particular to their abilities in ways that acknowledge the interrelational accompaniment of others that narrative captures.

3.3.1 Narrative as Theologically Reflected Biography and Autobiography

Taylor uses narrative to convey a value judgement or assessment that culminates in autobiographical self-understanding. Metz, by contrast, uses the word 'biography' to capture a theology that is both narrative and practical in its expression—prioritizing the suffering other. Both autobiography and biography can be employed in either religious or spiritual ways. For example, Augustine of Hippo and Ignatius of Loyola are two examples of persons who were concerned with religious questions and who wrote autobiographies that traced their respective religious conversions. Such religious autobiographical texts are valuable resources for persons to gain an understanding of Christian identity and religious vocation in current times. John D. Barbour echoes this point: 'What makes an autobiography theological is the author's attempt to describe and evaluate his or her life in terms of convictions about God—or to extend our topic beyond monotheistic traditions—which is believed to be ultimate and sacred'.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 319.

²⁶⁵ John D. Barbour, 'Autobiography, Biography, and Theological Questioning', in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 15th edn., ed. Lindsay Jones (London: Macmillan Reference, 2005), 2, accessed 14 January 2017, prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2368/ps/i.do?p=GVRL&sw=w&u=oxford&v=2.1&it=aboutBook&id=GALE|9780028659978.

What is achieved is a ‘universality of the offer of salvation in Christianity that is not characterized by transcendental or universally historical concept of universality’.²⁶⁶ Metz argues that the character that emerges from a presentation of Christianity through narrative is that of invitation: ‘[T]he inviting logos of Christianity does not in any sense compel. It has a narrative structure with a practical and liberating intention’.²⁶⁷ Taylor, Barbour, and Metz—each in their own way—provide a convincing argument for the constitutive function of biography and autobiography in developing a narrative that relationally fashions an account of Christianity within the pastoral accompaniment of those whose narratives are unwritten or forgotten.

While religious and spiritual biographies and autobiographies illustrate effectively the constitutive role of language in both recalling stories and infusing them with meaning, biographies and autobiographies can also be misused. Metz’s employment of biography is not about recreating a story to have a satisfying ending. Rather, biography contributes toward social and theological communication.²⁶⁸ Metz regards narrative as a useful theological tool for the individual Christian’s efforts to develop a practical Christianity of pastoral concern. Equally, the social function of narrative can also extend beyond the self to the communities we inhabit, such as the Church: a place where ‘Christians do not primarily form an argumentative and reasoning community, but a storytelling community’, in which ‘the exchange of

²⁶⁶ Metz, ‘An Identity Crisis’, 176.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Recognition theory is criticized by some scholars of English literature as the mechanism by which an author will bring a plot to a successful conclusion, especially when such a conclusion proves difficult to orchestrate. See Wendy Doniger, ‘Narrative Conventions and Rings of Recognition’, in *Recognition: The Poetics of Narrative: Interdisciplinary Studies on Anagnorisis*, ed. Philip Kennedy and Marilyn Lawrence (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 13–25.

experiences of faith, like that of any “new” experience, takes narrative form’.²⁶⁹

Within Christian communities, members struggle to find supportive mediums in which to recognize individual experience as the glue that holds the Christian community together.

Risto Saarinen employs recognition theory to meaningfully communicate the experience of Christians as they live in a world that is increasingly characterized by multiculturalism and religious diversity. Saarinen does not offer any in-depth treatment of narrative theory when developing a presentation of religion and recognition. He does, however, offer a wider account of recognition that includes the contribution of religion, noting that ‘we may define the heuristic idea of identity constitution’ in offering a thicker account of recognition.²⁷⁰ The outcome is a transformation of self through encounter with another within an interpersonal relationship. Yet, as I noted in Chapter 1, the lack of development within Saarinen’s theory of how one includes an exchange within the experience of change in the act of recognition remains a limitation for pastoral theology. To further underscore the importance of narrative for mutual recognition in accompanying another, I shall explore Paul Ricoeur’s contribution to narrative theory. In choosing Ricoeur as an interlocutor, I follow through on my intention to approach the relationship between narrative and recognition through an interdisciplinary exploration and, as I will illustrate, his approach to narrative emphasizes an interdependency that is significant in avoiding a monological practice of accompaniment.

²⁶⁹ Johann Baptist Metz, ‘A Short Apology of Narrative’, in *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 225.

²⁷⁰ Saarinen, *Religion and Recognition*, 33.

3.4 Narrative and Recognition: A Mutual Resource for Pastoral Care

Recognition is ultimately an action, one that emerges from within a social context.

What follows is an argument for the contextual importance of narrative for the action of recognition of both sameness and difference. By focusing on narrative and its relationship with recognition, my argument complements Taylor's recognition of difference, which centres around the acknowledgement of the history and the identity of minority groups—their historical past, their current situation, and the unchangeable facts of their life. His theory of recognition, then, is not exclusively concerned with the recognition of individuals and their capacity for transformation.

The utility of narrative theory can be seen in its ability to order the details of stories—be they fictional or historical—into a unity. Every narrative fashions a temporal world—one with a past, a present, and a future. Narrative, therefore, is not just a recording of historical facts. As I will outline, narrative engages in a dynamic construction of identity whereby one can recognize another in ways that are ethical and transformative.

One significant authority on the topic of narrative is Paul Ricoeur.²⁷¹ His three-volume work, *Time and Narrative*, represents an attempt to reconcile the divisions between a phenomenological understanding of time and a cosmological understanding of time.²⁷² In seeking a possible resolution between these two aspects of time, Ricoeur engages with a wide range of interlocutors who have made substantial contributions to the 'problem' of time. David Wood identifies the

²⁷¹ Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol.1, trans. by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984).

Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 2, trans. by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985).

Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 3, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988).

²⁷² David Wood, 'Introduction: Interpreting Narrative', in *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation*, ed. David Wood (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1.

distinctive contribution of Ricoeur in the presentation of narrative as a mechanism for mediating the ‘multiplication of aporias’ within time.²⁷³ Arguing for the mediation role of narrative, Ricoeur suggests that it achieves a reconciliation in the history of philosophy between the phenomenology of time and the cosmology of time. As Wood notes in the conclusion of *Time and Narrative*, Volume III, narrative does not resolve all the issues that time presents.

Although I address some of Ricoeur’s observations on the limitations of narrative in this chapter, I also acknowledge one of the key achievements of his treatment of narrative. As Wood rightly notes, ‘[o]ne of the central products of narrative is to allow us to construct a narrative identity—both at the level of history (and e.g., the identity of a nation), and at the level of the individual life’.²⁷⁴ Wood maintains that Ricoeur’s contribution marks ‘a considerable advance over accounts based on substance, or bodily continuity, or memory’.²⁷⁵ Its success, however, does not eliminate all of the challenges that accompany a presentation of identity through narrative. For instance, Wood remarks that Ricoeur’s theory of narrative identity ‘makes identity somewhat unstable, insofar as many stories can be woven from the same material’.²⁷⁶ Here Wood links plurality with instability. Yet, there is a desirability to diversity.

Today, countries and cities are diverse social and cultural sites. The value of diversity is esteemed in Taylor’s argument for political recognition. Diversity facilitates an encounter with difference. As Francis Fukuyama puts it: ‘Exposure to different ways of thinking and acting can stimulate innovation, creativity, and

²⁷³ Ibid., 2.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

entrepreneurship'.²⁷⁷ Given the value of difference, there is a need for narrative in both self-recognition and the recognition of others, for the 'ipse-identity' and the narrative identity are intimately bound up in our capacity to recognize others.

To explore further the complex relationship between sameness and difference, I shall focus on Ricoeur's development of narrative and its relationship to human actions. Given that Ricoeur's contribution to a wider narrative theory is vast, I will limit my consideration primarily to his book, *Oneself as Another*. This text takes up and clarifies issues arising from his earlier work, *Time and Narrative*. Thus, I am confident that my weighing in on *Oneself as Another* will suffice in mapping an outline of his theory of how recognition of the self and the other is understood through narrative.

I acknowledge upfront Wood's caution that the use of narrative in considering a wider concept of recognition is not without its challenges, owing to narrative's multiplicity of meanings. After all, the meaning taken from a story will differ from one reader to the next. Yet, *Oneself as Another* suggests a resolution to the challenges presented by a surplus of meanings in narrative and in life. To get around this problem, Ricoeur reprises Taylor's argument that the human subject is 'an interpreting animal'.²⁷⁸ Interpretation can result in a unity via an act of judgement between one's life 'as a whole and the preferential choices that govern our practices'.²⁷⁹ This feature of interpretation culminates with 'adequation of interpretation', where one's very living is the outcome of 'judging well and acting well'.²⁸⁰ The exploration of narrative and action is not confined to a theory of

²⁷⁷ Francis Fukuyama, *Identity: Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition* (London: Profile Books Ltd., 2018), 126.

²⁷⁸ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 179.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

interpreting written texts, for narrative—and any development of its understanding—carries an imperative force for ethical action.

In the following section, I will introduce Ricoeur's advancement of narrative and seek to show how and why his treatment of narrative is pertinent to the relationship between theology and narrative. In exploring Ricoeur's contribution to narrative theory, I am contributing to what Ward calls a 'Christian social imaginary'.²⁸¹ For the primary task of narrative theory, according to Ricoeur, is recognition and ethical interaction with one's neighbour. Whilst I am focusing on recognition rather than the social imaginary, the two terms are not unrelated in their common quest of transforming persons and communities.

I shall outline Ricoeur's argument for narrative action, which brings together fictional and historical discourses to develop a new understanding of narrative discourse, from which he presents the function of narrative as the 'art of narrating'. The achievement here entails a description of human history and individual identity on the one hand, and a re-description of human history and experience that points to a person capable of mutual recognition on the other.²⁸²

3.4.1 Narrative as Encounter with the Vulnerable Other

Ricoeur argues for a new understanding of narrative discourse. He first presents two traditional types of narrative discourse: 'fictional' and 'historical'.²⁸³ Fictional

²⁸¹ Graham Ward, *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 134.

²⁸² In *The Course of Recognition*, Ricoeur outlines three aspects of recognition: recognition as identification; recognizing oneself; and mutual recognition. This differs from Honneth's account of recognition as emerging from a struggle, whereby someone or group has been disrespected. Ricoeur challenges Honneth's presentation of recognition as rooted in struggle, opting instead to present 'peace' as the foreground for recognition.

²⁸³ Paul Ricoeur, 'The Narrative Function', in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 236.

narratives—novels and plays, for example—are constructed from the imagination of an author, while historical narratives are representations of actual events from history. At first glance, these two types of narratives might seem to be separate from each other. However, a central element of Ricoeur's work is to show that both fictional and historical narratives together advance an understanding of human identity.²⁸⁴ From the two types of narrative stem two dimensions of narrative: episodic and configurative. Episodic narrative means a story arranged in the order of time, while configurative is a story arranged by means of form or an image.²⁸⁵ Ricoeur argues that the action of narrative functions in its stringing together of the historical and the fictional, which is achieved through the construction of a meaningful totality of the scattered events of narrative. What results is an account of transformation that is not only historical, but also social and cultural, and which, as Taylor points out, the question as to what can strengthen our commitment toward transforming the self and each other. Before agreeing with his claim, it is prudent to first ask the critical question: Is narrative a sure pathway toward mutual transformation expressed through mutual recognition?

Taylor explains the challenge in creating bonds of neighbourly closeness in the contemporary world. Of course, there are some differences that create and sustain interpersonal and communal divisions. Taylor notes the divide between Christians and universal liberals as an example. Yet, his more urgent point remains the possibility of ethical change. But such change is more likely to occur between persons or groups who have significantly more in common.²⁸⁶ Taylor explains that differences also exist within more homogenized communities: differences that go unnoticed because of the collective identity of the group. Strong collective group identities often carry a grand

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 240.

²⁸⁶ Taylor, *Language Animal*, 172.

narrative that makes the recognition of self, let alone of others, something of a challenge. The equal recognition of persons in church communities and societies is one such example.

Ricoeur establishes that, although differences remain, narrative assists in forging closeness between distant groups and individuals. In what follows, I will explore how he illustrates this process of coming together. Narrative's constructive function is known as 'the art of narrating', wherein the reader draws out from the ordinary facts of a story the form, shape, and figure of the narrative.²⁸⁷

In elevating this labour of greater meaning within narrative, Ricoeur expands upon the terms episodic and configurative as vehicles of events and bearers of meaning. Sequence and figure are foils against which a more exacting record and interpretation are applied to narrative.²⁸⁸ Simply put, the episodic, chronological, and sequential refer to the consecutive events of any story, while configurative, non-chronological, and figurative describe the element of meaning that is achieved when one reflects upon a story. Yet, are these two distinct commentaries on narrative to remain solely parallel accounts of narrative? Combining the episodic dimension and the configurative dimension—in the art of narrating—culminates in a reflection that is at once descriptive and re-descriptive of our human situation. This two-tiered, complementary function secures a meaning that is attributed to the story.

The configurative or re-descriptive dimension of narrative is not a value-neutral procedure. Drawing on the work of Louis O. Mink, Ricoeur argues that within the configurative dimension, 'the narrative operation has the character of judgment or more precisely of a reflective judgment...'.²⁸⁹ Reflective judgement, for Ricoeur,

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 241.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

achieves a totality at the end of a narrative through the historical events of the narrative and the story or plot dimension (emplotment) of narrative. Plot, therefore, achieves a completeness in narrative via reflective judgement. Constitutive of plots are the variety of the imaginative practices and customs of narrative which are necessary for reflective judgement. For Ricoeur, this aspect of imagination introduces into any reflective judgement features of the social and the historical in a story.

The great achievement of Ricoeur's narrative action is the applicability of narrative from the pages of a text into a moment of personal judgement in real life. Thus, any recognition of another is not delimited to the plot of a story. In this sense, recognition is an effect of the reading process of a story.²⁹⁰ For the dynamics of narrative relate not only to fictional characters, but also to real persons, capturing the development and significance of human relationships.

Part of the narrative dynamic involves the capacity of narrative activity to facilitate the narrator's movement toward an encounter with the 'other'. By definition, the 'other' is a particular real entity—whether an individual, a people, or a group. The other enters into our horizon of consciousness as another in one's viewing of them as a distinct entity and in the conceptualization of them as excluded and intrinsically different from myself. The most common habitations of the other are race, nationality, and religion.²⁹¹ Ricoeur proposes a qualification to the term 'other' in an attempt to repair the distance between the recognizer and the one demanding recognition. The other is to be known as the 'suffering other'. For the purposes of exploring religion and recognition, I acknowledge Ricoeur's term 'the suffering other' as helpful to the

²⁹⁰ Winfried Fluck, 'Reading for Recognition', *New Literary History* 44 (2013): 45. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 45–67.

²⁹¹ Cf. Ryszard Kapuściński, *The Other*, trans. Antonia-Jones, introduction by Noel Ascherson (London: Verso, 2018), 53–61.

development of an ethical responsibility of mutual recognition.²⁹² That aside, I will leverage the term ‘the vulnerable other’ as my preferred terminology in promoting recognition, which I shall develop further in a Chapter 4.

In order to encounter the vulnerable other, one must overcome resistances that contribute to a lack of recognition of the recognizee. As Ricoeur notes, the ‘way of resurrecting the forgotten requires as its counterpart the capacity to suspend our own prejudices, our own convictions, our own point of view, ultimately to put into parentheses our own desires’.²⁹³ But there are different opinions as to whether recognition theory ought to first prioritize the recognizer or the recognizee. Saarinen points out that Ricoeur’s definition has, as its starting point, the recognition of the recognizee. As explained in Chapter 1, Saarinen advocates for a starting point focused on the conversion that the recognizer undergoes.²⁹⁴ But, in *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur focuses on the recognizer, not as the one undergoing a conversion toward the other, but instead as one who is capable of mutual recognition: a capability to perceive and comprehend the vulnerable other, and to act. As Ricoeur notes, ‘We have then to rely on the acting subject’s avowal, in which he or she takes upon him- or herself and assumes the initiative in which is actualized the power to act of which he or she feels capable’.²⁹⁵ For him, the human person is a capable human being²⁹⁶ for

²⁹² Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 191. Cf. Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 232–46. Here, Ricoeur cautions against the use of ‘mutuality’ in describing the dynamic of recognition. He opts instead for the term ‘reciprocity’, of which mutuality subsists. Mutuality, for Ricoeur, imposes an obligation upon the recognized to respond in kind to the recognizer. Thus, the interaction is more characterized by a prescriptive obligation to return to the recognized something of equivalence. It would seem that the obligatory tone of the interaction assumes a settlement-like transference, rather than a more dynamic and transformative encounter. Thus, Ricoeur opts for reciprocal recognition, which does not include any expectation of something in return for having recognized the other.

²⁹³ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*.

²⁹⁴ Saarinen, *Recognition and Religion*, 243.

²⁹⁵ Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 99.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

whom recognition is a transformative experience: ‘The road to recognition is long, for the “acting and suffering” human being, that leads to the recognition that he or she is in truth a person “capable” of different accomplishments’.²⁹⁷ The path to recognition, then, is both a destination, where a person is recognized, as well as a knowledge of one’s potential to perceive and comprehend.

3.5 Narrative as a Precarious Resource

The consideration of narrative in this chapter thus far has examined developments of narrative discourses within fictional and historical texts. The art of narrating in its descriptive form can be observed in biographical and autobiographical accounts of individuals. Accounts of description and re-description shape the meaning of historical and social accounts. As noted above, both forms work toward a unifying wholeness in a story.

The importance of narrative extends beyond the confines of history and literary studies. Within theology, ‘reflection on religious claims embedded in stories’ is ‘one of the most significant currents of late twentieth century thought’.²⁹⁸ Michael Goldberg’s *Theology and Narrative: A Critical Introduction* acknowledges the recent resurgence of interest in narrative theory within theology. Goldberg’s work explores the ways in which narrative can be used as a means to consider the role of religion for individuals and communities. He also emphasizes a persistent challenge to narrative theology:

Thus a basic challenge for a narrative theology, a challenge raised perhaps most intensely at the affective level, will be the test of such a theology’s ability to resolve these apparently so-daunting (post-enlightenment) problems

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 69.

²⁹⁸ Gary L. Comstock, ‘Two Types of Narrative Theology’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55, no. 4 (1987): 687.

of the discontinuity between, e.g., truth and commitment, or between particular and universal.²⁹⁹

As I shall explain in what follows, narrative identity transforms oppositional discourse into a dialectical discourse of recognition. One of the more obvious binary discourses that narrative identity seeks to reconcile is that of sameness and difference through mutual recognition.

Ricoeur presents ‘narrative identity’ as a bridge between sameness and difference:

A kind of otherness that is not (or not merely) the result of comparison is suggested by our title [*Oneself as Another*], otherness of a kind that can be constitutive of selfhood as such. *Oneself as Another* suggests from the outset that the selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other, that instead one passes into the other, as we might say in Hegelian terms. To ‘as’ I should like to attach a strong meaning, not only that of a comparison (oneself similar to another), but indeed that of an implication (oneself inasmuch as being another).³⁰⁰

A person is always in a process of dynamic interchange with what is other, where dynamic interchange is achieved through an understanding of the self within a narrative. The significant achievement of narrative theory in contributing to the formation of selfhood occurs through narrative identity. As Ricoeur is primarily concerned with the written text as a suitable location through which to develop the narrative identity of a person, he proposes narrative identity ‘as a poetic resolution to the problems of the dialectic of narrative and temporal experience’.³⁰¹ Here the term ‘poetic resolution’ signals the action-oriented person formed by narrative, whereby the fashioning of personhood is both an individual and cultural activity. Given that formation occurs within time, how might time become a friend to the emerging self?

²⁹⁹ Michael Goldberg, *Theology and Narrative: A Critical Introduction* (Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1981), 231.

³⁰⁰ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 3.

³⁰¹ Henry Isaac Venema, *Identifying Selfhood: Imagination, Narrative, and Hermeneutics in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000), 97.

Narrative identity does not provide an absolute solution to the *a priori* or disjunction caused by time. Ricoeur contends that ‘the constitution of narrative identity does illustrate in a useful way the interplay of history and narrative in the refiguration of a time that is itself indivisibly phenomenological time and cosmological time’.³⁰² There are also limitations to what narrative identity can achieve in resolving the *a priori* of time, for narrative is neither a fixed nor integral whole account of identity.³⁰³ From a single life, for instance, a variety of narratives can be written to describe a person. Siblings within the same family will describe their parents in a variety of different ways. Ricoeur makes this point with reference to the question that Jesus presented to the disciples: ‘Who do you say that I am?’³⁰⁴ Given the plurality of responses that one can expect from a question of identity, Ricoeur acknowledges that narrative identity ‘thus becomes the name of a problem at least as much as it is that of a solution’.³⁰⁵ In a nod to how narrative sustains plurality, he adds that ‘narrative does not exhaust the question of the self-constancy of a subject, whether this be a particular individual or a community of individuals’.³⁰⁶ For him, narrative identity offers a unity to the human subject, which he describes as follows:

Without the recourse to narration, the problem of personal identity would in fact be condemned to an antinomy with no solution. Either we must posit a subject identical with itself through the diversity of its different states, or, following Hume and Nietzsche, we must hold that this identical subject is nothing more than a substantial illusion, whose elimination merely brings to light a pure manifold of cognitions, emotions, and violations. This dilemma disappears if we substitute for identity understood in the sense of being the same (*idem*), identity understood in the sense of oneself as self-same (*ipse*).

³⁰² Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 284. In *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur presents his hermeneutical structure as a threefold process—prefiguration, configuration, refiguration—of *memesis*. The purpose of this threefold process is to ‘constitute the mediation between narrative and time’. It includes the inclusion of *emplotment*. Cf. *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, 52–70. See also Dan R. Stiver, *Theology After Ricoeur: New Directions in Hermeneutical Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 66–70.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 249.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

The difference between idem and ipse is nothing more than the difference between a substantial or formal identity and a narrative identity. Self-sameness, 'self-constancy', can escape the dilemma of the Same and the Other to the extent that its identity rests on a temporal structure that conforms to the model of dynamic identity arising from the poetic composition of a narrative text.³⁰⁷

Thus, the meaning of personhood, whilst expressed within time, is not discovered solely through one's history. Personhood, as evolving over time, is an ever-emerging meaning that is constitutive of a greater unity of human community.

3.5.1 Narrative and Emerging Personhood

Despite the difficulties caused by time, Ricoeur maintains that personal identity can be explained in terms of narrative identity. Conceiving of narrative as a resource to explore aspects of selfhood is Ricoeur's unique contribution to the development of a social and anthropological understanding of selfhood. He proposes a 'transcendental deduction' understanding of personhood, from a general and static conception of a person to a particular and dynamic conception.³⁰⁸ Underlining this specific presentation of the human person is Ricoeur's central claim that the person who recognizes is a 'capable human person'. There are four stages of development involved in a person becoming a capable human person. First, the person identifies him- or herself as self, not as object. Second, the self as a speaking subject identifies his/her capacity to act. Third, the self identifies that he/she has a narrative identity. Fourth, the self seeks ways to act ethically.

Before Ricoeur offers an examination of narrative as a propaedeutic to the fourth stage of the capable human person (i.e. ethics), he teases out difficulties that relate to the concept of personal identity. As previously noted, difficulties concerning

³⁰⁷ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, 246.

³⁰⁸ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 31.

how one understands selfhood are rooted in two distinct and contrasting views of identity: ‘Let me recall the terms of the confrontation: on one side, identity as sameness (Latin *idem*, German *Gleichheit*, French *mêmeté*); on the other, identity as selfhood (Latin *ipse*, German *Selbstheit*, French *ipséité*)’.³⁰⁹ There are two aspects to sameness of identity. The first is sameness that is numerical, wherein identity is understood as ‘oneness’ with its opposite as ‘plurality’.³¹⁰ In the second, sameness is a ‘qualitative identity’,³¹¹ for example, when ‘x and y are wearing the same suit’.³¹² Ricoeur also refers to qualitative identity as ‘extreme resemblance’.³¹³

Within the broader umbrella of identity, there are two presentations of the enduring existence of time, which involve description and interpretation: character and keeping one’s word.³¹⁴ These two terms challenge one’s understanding of identity, which attempts to move beyond the oppositional poles of sameness and difference. Both time and promise communicate ‘a permanence which we say belongs to us’.³¹⁵ There is, however, a division between character and keeping one’s word. In setting out this opposition, character is equated with a static or permanent aspect of one’s selfhood. Keeping one’s promise concerns one’s ongoing ethical response to situations. These two modes require a resolution in their mutual opposition. Both represent a ‘limit’ in how selfhood is understood. For Ricoeur, narrative identity resolves the division between an understanding of character that is fixed and a ‘constancy of the self in promising’.³¹⁶

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 116.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 118.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 124.

In outlining his understanding of narrative identity, Ricoeur argues that character ‘designates the set of lasting dispositions by which a person is recognized’.³¹⁷ It is through habit that a person’s character is known, and the two aspects of habit are not unlike the two aspects of identity. While habit reveals who a person is, it also identifies who a person is becoming. More often than not, habit is a tendency to act in a certain way and a mode of growth.³¹⁸ Ricoeur explains that ‘habit gives a history to character, but this is a history in which sedimentation tends to cover over the innovation which preceded it, even to the point of abolishing the latter’.³¹⁹ The outcome of this sedimentation is the ‘overlapping of ipse by idem’.³²⁰ What occurs is not equality between the two aspects of identity, but an overshadowing of ipse to such a degree as to eclipse idem.³²¹ As such, habit maintains difference.³²²

In addition to habit, ‘acquired identifications’ are also a dimension of dispositions. For instance, the identity of a person or a community is expressed through existing ‘values, norms, ideals, models, and heroes, in which the person or community recognizes itself’.³²³ Ricoeur engages in a performative and fashioning action, noting that ‘recognizing oneself *in* contributes to recognizing oneself *by*’.³²⁴ The dispositions of habit and acquired identifications reinforce a definition of character that cannot be understood as a separation of the person from the action. As Ricoeur claims, any behaviour by a person that is not consistent with how that person

³¹⁷ Ibid., 121.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ibid.

is understood in their past actions and values, is not reflective of that person's dispositions.³²⁵ Any action that a person performs is not external to their character.

Ricoeur suggests that the relationship between

innovation and sedimentation, underlying the acquisition of habit, and the equally rich dialectic of otherness and internalization, underlying the process of identification, are there to remind us that character has a history which it has contracted, in the twofold sense of the word 'contraction': abbreviation and affection.³²⁶

Internalization and identification communicate how a performed action relates to something within oneself, and this action can be either in character or out of character. For example, a person may act charitably, motivated by the values and norms expressive of their identity. Yet, this action creates and supports 'sameness' in how identity is understood; a recovery from displacement within the experience of change to such a degree as to achieve a stability of equilibrium within the permanence of time.³²⁷

Ricoeur thus concludes that narrative has a stabilizing and necessary role in understanding character. Furthermore, narrative is used in understanding the character of self through narrative identity. He argues that the narrative dimension is discovered in the character via the voice of the protagonist within a story.³²⁸

In addition to character, the second aspect of time that troubles identity is keeping one's word. Ricoeur contends that '[k]eeping one's word expresses a self-constancy which cannot be inscribed, as character was, within the dimension of something general but solely within the dimension of the "who?"'³²⁹ Keeping one's word contrasts with character in that the former is more properly identified with

³²⁵ Ibid., 122.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid., 123.

difference and selfhood, while the latter is linked with character and sameness.

Between these two modes of identity—sameness and difference—narrative is presented as the mediator.

Ricoeur engages with the thought of John Locke and David Hume to further explore the ‘paradoxes’ of personal identity.³³⁰ While Locke relies on reflection and memory to illustrate his theory, they are used in order to reinforce an understanding of identity as sameness. Ricoeur contends that Locke’s use of memory is unsuccessful: ‘And yet the turn to reflection and memory did, in fact, mark a conceptual reversal in which selfhood was silently substituted for sameness’.³³¹ In other words, even though Locke set out to arrive at a non-presupposed notion of identity, his conflation of reflection with memory results in a persistent and presupposed understanding of identity that emphasizes sameness.

Identity as sameness is also evident in Hume’s treatment of the subject. His development of identity relates to humans, while for Locke identity refers to linguistic and non-linguistic animals. Locke’s distinction, however, does not feature in Hume’s more empiricist apprehension of identity. Ricoeur observes that, ‘unlike Locke, Hume does not overturn his criteria of assigning identity when he moves from things and animate beings to the self’.³³² Hume introduces two new concepts that aid an understanding of identity: imagination and belief.³³³ Ricoeur surmises Hume’s account of both concepts as follows: ‘To imagination is attributed the faculty of moving easily from one experience to another if their difference is slight and gradual, and thus transforming diversity into identity. Belief serves here as a relay, filling in

³³⁰ Ibid., 125.

³³¹ Ibid., 126.

³³² Ibid., 127.

³³³ Ibid.

the deficiencies of the impression'.³³⁴ Ricoeur objects to Hume's understanding of identity on the grounds that he arrives at his conclusions as an inevitability. Hume literally '[presumes] the self' he intends to find.³³⁵ Second, Hume's treatment of identity through psychological and bodily criteria culminates in an understanding of identity that is achieved by 'comparison'.³³⁶

The charge made against Locke and Hume is that their understanding of identity 'can signify only sameness, to the express exclusion of any distinction between sameness and selfhood'.³³⁷ For Ricoeur, any understanding of 'selfhood intact' must be resisted over and against a 'defense of selfhood in its confrontation with sameness'.³³⁸

In the Sixth Study, 'The Self and Narrative Identity', Ricoeur not only points to the significant mediating contribution of narrative theory to the formation of selfhood, but he also outlines its dialectical function as both descriptive and prescriptive of action. He notes that 'this dialectic represents the major contribution of narrative theory to the constitution of the self'.³³⁹ He outlines a twofold task: elevate to a 'higher level the dialectic of selfhood and sameness' in order to show how narrative is a 'laboratory of moral judgment'.³⁴⁰ The use of narrative theory to the formation of selfhood is achieved through emplotment.³⁴¹ Ricoeur argues that the creation of a narrative whole or unity facilitates the inclusion in the permanence in

³³⁴ Ibid. Ricoeur notes that during Hume's time, belief was considered a part of philosophy. As such, to utilize belief as a resource toward understanding and explaining an idea would not warrant suspicion. This would change, as Ricoeur signals, with the arrival of Nietzsche.

³³⁵ Ibid., 128.

³³⁶ Ibid., 129.

³³⁷ Ibid., 130.

³³⁸ Ibid., 138.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid. Emplotment is the gathering together of a series of historical events into a narrative or plot. It configures these events into a wider meaning through the unity achieved in narrative.

time of any story of that which appears antagonistic to the sameness-identity within a story. This ‘allows us to integrate with enduring existence in time that which seems to be its contrary in the domain of sameness-identity, unpredictability and failure of continuity.’³⁴² Emplotment, therefore, achieves a discourse between sameness and difference within narrative through character development.³⁴³

Ricoeur draws upon Wilhelm Dilthey’s term ‘connectedness to life’ to emphasize a ‘preunderstanding’ operative in narrative, which attempts to understand narrative within a ‘higher level of conceptuality’.³⁴⁴ For Ricoeur, this conceptual and organizational development treats identity as ‘the identity of the *character*’,³⁴⁵ drawing upon tradition as an imaginative force in the shaping of character.³⁴⁶ Ricoeur explains that ‘the identity of the character is constructed in connection with that of the plot’.³⁴⁷ He understands the role of character as confronting sameness with difference through the mediation of narrative identity. He notes that this confrontational or dialectical progression of identity development was treated in an earlier work, namely *Time and Narrative*. The development of identity is achieved through a dynamic confrontation between a ‘demand for concordance and the admission of discordance’.³⁴⁸ Concordance concerns the ‘principle of order’ and understands

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Character, along with keeping one’s promise, is part of Ricoeur’s larger question as to ‘Who Am I?’ Cf. W. David Hall, *Paul Ricoeur and the Poetic Imperative: The Creative Tension between Love and Justice* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2007), 56. Hall notes a transition in Ricoeur’s work concerning his understanding of ‘character’. Initially, Ricoeur used the word *caractère*, which expressed the nature of a person. Thus, the person was recognizable in an ongoing way. In his exploration of narrative, however, Ricoeur opted for an alternative French word, *personnage*, to denote character. This new term includes not only the nature of a character’s personality traits, but also literary characters. Hall sees this as an important development, as literary characters are now considered to have identities and we can recognize them as fellow actors, from whom we can learn.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

narrative as possessing a certain harmony or predictability. Discordance, on the other hand, denotes a troubling of the presumed wholeness of a text. Within these two oppositional poles, Ricoeur introduces ‘configuration’, which ‘mediates’ both.³⁴⁹

3.5.2 Narrative and Interpersonal Formation

Ricoeur also pushes configuration further, beyond its role as a mediator. In creating the term ‘discordant concordance’, he highlights that plot (emplotment) within narrative is not simply a dynamic between opposites. Through plot, narrative achieves a constructive and formative thrust beyond any tentative unity achieved through the mere chronology of form within the text. Rather than the character relating to a chronological order of time and events, discordant concordance relates character to plot and future possibilities. The outcome is not one of predictability, but of ‘the unexpected, the surprising’;³⁵⁰ it becomes an ‘integral part’ of our understanding of the story,³⁵¹ so much so that Ricoeur captures the importance of the relationship of character to plot as a ‘narrative necessity’.³⁵² This emplotment, therefore, contributes to an understanding of identity beyond the categories of sameness and difference. For Ricoeur, the significant moment in one’s formation of selfhood moves to the stage of character development.³⁵³ His argument is that ‘the identity of the character is comprehensible through the transfer to the character of the operation of emplotment, first applied to the action recounted; characters, we will say, are themselves plots’.³⁵⁴ This movement beyond emplotment is toward the ethical realm of potential actions.

The dialectic between character and plot generates a corollary on par with that

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 142.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid., 143.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

achieved by the emplotment of action. This dialectical process of concordance and discordance skews an understanding of character identity as autonomous and separate from the events and actions of the plot. As Ricoeur argues, '[t]he person, understood as character in a story, is not an entity distinct from his or her "experiences". Quite the opposite: the person shares the condition of a dynamic identity peculiar to the story recounted'.³⁵⁵ But the development of character within plot is not just a matter of 'sharing'. There is a formative dimension to identity achieved, whereby '[t]he narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character'.³⁵⁶

The constructive performance of narrative occurs when the 'dialectic of discordant concordance belonging to the character must now be inscribed within the dialectic of sameness and of selfhood'.³⁵⁷ Character encounters and engages the permanence of time (selfhood and self-constancy in identity), whereby the 'dialectic of character comes to be inscribed in the interval between these two poles of performance in time'.³⁵⁸ Within narrative, selfhood emerges by way of confrontation between sameness and difference. In order for this confrontation to become creative and formative of selfhood, any reliance on sameness needs to be eliminated. Ricoeur's thesis is that, 'set back in the framework of the dialectic of *idem* and *ipse*, these unsettling cases of narrative can be reinterpreted as exposing selfhood by taking away the support of sameness'.³⁵⁹ The achievement of reinterpretation is the hallmark

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 147.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 147–48.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 148.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 149.

of the narrating person. Is this narrating self possible amid the variety of literary forms?

Although the genre of literary fiction is an ideal medium for developing a narrative identity of selfhood, the same is not true of all types of fiction. Whereas ‘technological fictions’ provide only an ‘impersonal treatment of identity’,³⁶⁰ characters ‘in plays and novels are humans like us who think, speak, act, suffer as we do’.³⁶¹ Characters in plays also express an embodied nature of selfhood shared by humans, in which the body is an extension of a selfhood that is historically located and relationally orientated. Moreover, Ricoeur extends significance to the material world that humans inhabit: ‘Insofar as the body as one’s own is a dimension of oneself, the imaginative variations around the corporeal condition are variations on the self and its selfhood’.³⁶² The Earth as the corporeal context where selfhood is developed acquires a particular status; it ‘is something different, and something more, than a planet: it is the mystical name of our corporeal anchoring in the world’.³⁶³ My point here is not to introduce the Earth as a context to support recognition. Rather, I am noting the importance of context for Ricoeur.

As I argued in Chapter 1 on the significance of context for recognition, Ricoeur highlights the importance of corporeal context as a constitutive aspect of the development of selfhood. He also reminds his readers of the special significance of the literary genre by contrasting it with technological genres. In doing so, Ricoeur signals the importance of the ethical level over the imaginary level in the development of narrative identity. While it is not necessary to draw out the distinction of these two

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 150.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Ibid.

levels, it is enough to say that the ethical identity ‘requires a person accountable for his or her acts’.³⁶⁴ Literary fiction, while an imaginary form, is most aptly suited to communicate the ethical level in the development of narrative identity. In Ricoeur’s estimation, technological genres are less suitable given their impersonal treatment of identity, which often stresses sameness within identity.

To summarize this section, the emerging selfhood is the result of the dialectic between sameness and difference, and it is interrelationally orientated and socially embedded. I have explored narrative from agency to configuration to action. Context, therefore, supports the development of selfhood. Ricoeur offers a way of interpreting selfhood by considering the roles of the other and incorporating one’s context into that reflection. Given that this chapter concerns religious recognition and narrative theory, there is a temptation to misuse Ricoeur’s treatment of narrative by fusing his philosophical hermeneutics on selfhood into a theological hermeneutics of selfhood. This could be accomplished by uniting both the philosophical and the theological with the goal of highlighting the sameness between both interpretative theories. The alternative would be to highlight the irreconcilable differences between the two, rather than draw out their sameness or fuse them together. Yet, if we are to appreciate Ricoeur’s dialectic of selfhood that resides creatively between the two poles of sameness and difference, a simultaneously critical and self-critical hermeneutic is required—one that is concerned not only with the text, but also with the testimony of the suffering body.

Richard Kearney’s ‘diacritical hermeneutics’ captures the testimony of the

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

body.³⁶⁵ He speaks to the necessity of a critical and self-critical approach, noting that such a 'hermeneutic turn suggests that it is wise to supplement the critique of self with an equally indispensable critique of the other'.³⁶⁶ Kearney is concerned with the relationships between self and other, whether that other is another human subject or even the divine. He wants to avoid an understanding that expresses itself in an 'ontology, onto-theology or logocentrism'.³⁶⁷ Such expressions, he argues, result in an understanding of the divine as a being that is either indistinguishable from our human nature or radically different from our nature. These two outcomes are the poles of sameness and difference through which Ricoeur expresses his dialectical understanding over and against an oppositional understanding of selfhood.

For Kearney, diacritical hermeneutics 'calls for a practice of narrative interpretation capable of tracing interconnections between the poles of sameness and strangeness'.³⁶⁸ What he refers to as Ricoeur's hermeneutic model of narrative 'recommends that some hermeneutic stitching and weaving between Same and Other be carried out if we are to keep alive the practice of responsible judgment and justice'.³⁶⁹ A hermeneutic model of narrative allows one to recognize the other in a discerning way. Such careful distinctions protect against 'putative indeterminations':³⁷⁰

[For] how could we tell the difference between one kind of other and another—between (a) those aliens and strangers that need our care and hospitality, no matter how monstrous they might first appear, and (b) those others that really do seek to destroy and exterminate (as evidenced in genocidal slaughters from Belsen to Bosnia where certain 'enemies' are indeed murderous adversaries). Or to take one of the most ancient examples of

³⁶⁵ Richard Kearney, 'Between Oneself and Another: Paul Ricoeur's Diacritical Hermeneutics', in *Between Suspicion and Sympathy: Paul Ricoeur's Unstable Equilibrium*, ed. Andrzej Wiercinski (Toronto: The Hermeneutic Press, 2003), 154.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 149.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 150.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

ethical discernment, how are we to differentiate between the voice from above that had Abraham kill Isaac and the voice that forbid him to do so?³⁷¹

The challenge of mutual recognition is made easier when the recognizee is neither too foreign nor too familiar.³⁷²

3.6 Narrative and Mutual Formation

Kearney presents diacritical hermeneutics as a ‘self-other relation’,³⁷³ which strives ‘to make us more hospitable to strangers, gods and monsters without succumbing to mystique or madness’.³⁷⁴ Diacritical hermeneutics is an alternative enterprise to two more established hermeneutical schools of thought that posit sameness and otherness as oppositional. Kearney’s diacritical hermeneutics is ‘inspired by Ricoeur’ and seeks to achieve a ‘variety of crossings between same and other’.³⁷⁵ The hermeneutical positions that emphasize ‘sameness’ and ‘otherness’ can also be referred to as ‘romantic’ and ‘radical hermeneutics’.³⁷⁶ Kearney identifies figures including Schleiermacher, Dilthey, and Gadamer as belonging to the Romantic school of hermeneutics. The main aim of this school of thought is to ‘unite the consciousness of one subject with that of the other’.³⁷⁷ On the opposite side, there is ‘radical

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid., 150–51.

³⁷³ Ibid., 160.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 156.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 154.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 154–55. Kearney notes that the technical name for this process is ‘appropriation’ or ‘*Aneignung* (becoming one)’. He adds: ‘Schleiermacher explored this retrieval of estranged consciousness in terms of a theological reappropriation of the original message of the Kerygma. Dilthey, for his part, analyzed it in terms of the historical resolve to each some kind of “objective” knowledge about the past; even though he distinguished sharply between the objectivity of the natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*) and that of the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) where hermeneutic understanding properly applies. And Gadamer, finally, pursued the idea of a reconciliation between our understanding and that of strangers in terms of a “fusion of horizons”. For all three, the purpose of hermeneutic understanding is to “recover some lost original consciousness by way of rendering what is past contemporaneous with our present modes of comprehension”’ (ibid., 155).

hermeneutics'. This school of thought is developed by John D. Caputo and is 'inspired by the deconstructive turn of Derrida, Blanchot and Lyotard'; this approach 'rejects the model of appropriation, insisting on the unmediatable and ultimately "sublime" nature of alterity'.³⁷⁸ Kearney describes Romantic hermeneutics as a 'community of minds', whereas the school of radical hermeneutics is an 'uncompromising stance [that] holds out for irreducible difference and separation'.³⁷⁹ Seeking a way between these polar opposites, Kearney offers an alternative hermeneutics. Yet, his alternative is no mere compromise between Romantic and radical hermeneutics. Kearney argues that diacritical hermeneutics or the 'middle way' is 'more radical and challenging than either' of the established versions.³⁸⁰ The task of diacritical hermeneutics is to explore possibilities of 'inter-communion between distinct but not incomparable selves'.³⁸¹

As a result of diacritical hermeneutics, the self engages with the other by recognizing oneself as another. Kearney's suggestion here is a salute to Ricoeur's hermeneutical work *Oneself as Another* for '[b]etween the *logos* of the One and the anti-*logos* of the Other, falls the dia-logos of oneself-as-another'.³⁸² The aims of diacritical hermeneutics range from the interpersonal to the interdisciplinary conversations within academic disciplines. As such, its hermeneutical reach stretches into society and the academy. Within society, diacritical hermeneutics promotes not just tolerance of the other, but a hospitable encounter with the other. This is particularly challenging in Western society, where '[w]e have too often exiled the "other" out of terror'.³⁸³ For example, our ignorance of others can manifest itself in

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Ibid., 156.

³⁸³ Ibid.

our fear of the other. Our lack of hospitality to refugees is often rooted in fear; their arrival will change our way of life. Within academia, diacritical hermeneutics engages other disciplines and participates in wider conversations. Kearney presents Rüdiger Bubner's definition of hermeneutics as significant, and it is worth repeating it here:

Hermeneutics has become more and more a key word in philosophical discussions of the most varied kind. It seems as if hermeneutics creates cross-connections between problems of different origin. In linguistics and sociology, in history and literary studies, in theology, jurisprudence and aesthetics, and finally in the general theory of science, hermeneutic perspectives have been successfully brought to bear. In this way, the traditional philosophical claim to universality is renewed under another name.³⁸⁴

Kearney presents a cautionary reading of Bubner's use of the term 'universality'. He offers what he calls a 'qualifier' in modifying universality with the term 'quasi'.³⁸⁵ The purpose of this move is to understand the claim to universality as a 'wager rather than a presumption'.³⁸⁶ It remains unclear what Kearney means by wager and universality, apart from simply noting that we are to understand universality as a wager. It would seem that wager, in this instance, communicates the possibility of inclusion and that universality cannot be taken for granted, as it remains uncertain and must be sought after. Kearney is also keen to note that the role of diacritical hermeneutics within disciplines 'extends horizontally' and 'extends historically across temporal horizons'.³⁸⁷ The movement over space and time has an ethical imperative through which meaning is expounded upon again within a disposition that is other-focused. As Kearney notes, dialectical hermeneutics that is both horizontal across the disciplines and historical 'reinterprets the myths and

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

memories of our past in light of future hopes for a more mindful and compassionate understanding of our Others'.³⁸⁸

In hermeneutics, there are a number of preferred approaches to increasing our ethical awareness of the other, including, as Kearney highlights, deconstruction and psychoanalysis. Deconstruction, he argues, 'discloses the interchangeable character of others and aliens, alerting us to the irreducible alterity of all incomers',³⁸⁹ while 'psychoanalysis reveals the role of the other as a psychic projection of the self'.³⁹⁰ It is not my intention to offer a critique of Kearney's conclusions with respect to the role of deconstruction or psychoanalysis toward increasing our ethical understanding of the other. It is helpful to note Kearney's general conclusions with respect to both so as to appreciate his alternative proposal.

Drawing upon Ricoeur, Kearney suggests that the preferred approach to ethical understanding of the other is achieved through a 'hermeneutic of action',³⁹¹ which is distinct from deconstruction and psychoanalysis in that it involves making 'critically informed judgments'.³⁹² Here Kearney is not just suggesting a certain mental constitution or temperament toward the other. Of course, such a disposition toward the other is a favourable one that manifests itself in moral and social qualities. One presumption of a disposition toward the other contends that the other 'is neither absolutely transcendent nor absolutely immanent, but somewhere between the two'.³⁹³ As the other is interrelationally configured, its very self is never complete in any single moment, but rather bound up in the selves of others. In illustrating this point, Kearney refers to a discursive example offered by Ricoeur: 'Human discourse, as

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid.

Ricoeur keeps repeating, *involves someone saying something to someone about something*'.³⁹⁴ This interrelationally caught-up self is not an incapable self; it is a self that contains 'self-identity and 'self-constancy'.³⁹⁵ Having some sense of self-identity and constancy is necessary to having a narrative identity that both recalls the past and imagines a future. The ability to transcend both space and time allows an individual self to fulfill promises made, which, as explored in a previous section, is an important aspect of identity. The significance of narrative identity as a structure in which to locate the necessary movements between past and futures is laid bare by Kearney: 'narrative identity, which sustains some notion of selfhood over the passage of time, can serve as a guarantor for one's fidelity to the other'.³⁹⁶

The self is characterized by its capacity to remember and to promise to the other in a future that awaits fulfillment. One alternative understanding of selfhood argues for an individualistic approach, where the 'ego's horizon of consciousness' is the defining characteristic of selfhood.³⁹⁷ Such presentation of the self externalizes the other. If selfhood is the 'ego's horizon of consciousness', then the 'Other is always an alter ego analogically "represented" or "apperceived" as other than mine'.³⁹⁸ A selfhood that alienates the other engages in hostility toward the other. Rather than recognizing oneself as another, what is recognized is the estrangement between oneself and the other.

Kearney draws upon Ricoeur in outlining steps toward 'de-alienating' the other: 'to recognize (a) oneself as another and (b) the other as (in part) another

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 157.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

self’.³⁹⁹ Recognition is not monological; it is interrelational or mutual. Kearney observes:

For if ethics rightly requires me to respect the singularity of the other person, it equally requires me to recognize the other as another self bearing universal rights and responsibilities, that is, as someone capable of recognizing me in turn as a self capable of recognition and esteem.⁴⁰⁰

Recognition involves practices of ‘promise-keeping’ and ‘testimony’.⁴⁰¹ For Kearney, these two practices create ‘narrative acts of...anticipation’ that allow us to engage in an interrelational recognition.⁴⁰²

Kearney’s presentation of narrative identity is reminiscent of Metz’s account of narrative theology. Indeed, Kearney’s account achieves his stated tasks of diacritical hermeneutics: to build bridges that facilitate exchange between disciplines; and to transgress the horizons of space, moving into the past and future alike. As Kearney observes, ‘[n]arrative memory seeks to preserve some trace of those others—especially victims of history—who would, if unremembered, be lost to the injustice of non-existence’.⁴⁰³ In a deliberate nod to the interdisciplinary dimension of diacritical hermeneutics, he notes, ‘this ethical task of narrative remembrance is perfectly in keeping with the biblical exhortation to “remember”—*zakhor!*—while refusing any notion that the lost other could be restored in the form of some fantasy of “presence”’.⁴⁰⁴

The achievement of Ricoeur’s hermeneutics is a ‘self-other dyad’ that espouses ‘a hermeneutic pluralism of otherness, a sort of polysemy of alterity—ranging from our experiences of conscience and the body to those of other persons,

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 158.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

living or dead (ancestors), or to a divine Other, living or absent'.⁴⁰⁵ Within the dyad, there is no master or slave.⁴⁰⁶ Recognition of the other through narrative identity is not an acknowledgement of class or identity classifications. Kearney creates a hermeneutics that deliberately avoids 'the extremes of Levinasian expropriation and Hegelian-Husserlian appropriation'.⁴⁰⁷ Kearney's diacritical hermeneutics is a 'third way', a 'mélange of ethics and ontology'.⁴⁰⁸ Central to Kearney's hermeneutics is the wherewithal to discern the character of the other. Through his hermeneutical perspective, the other is never understood as radically different. Kearney's hermeneutical position champions neither a hermeneutics of sameness nor one of difference. The primary subject's own ego is transformed 'into a self-as-another'.⁴⁰⁹ Consequently, '[t]he other is neither too close nor too far, neither too familiar nor too foreign, to escape my attention'.⁴¹⁰ Hermeneutics acts, conflating the other into an extension of one's ego, or castigating the other into the realm of radical difference.

3.7 Conclusion

Diacritical hermeneutics 'keeps in *contact* with the other...always striving to make the other that little less alien, that we tender (however provisionally) different interpretations of this and that other'.⁴¹¹ For Kearney, contact with the other requires 'discernment'⁴¹² that allows for 'some tentative judgments about the *kinds* of others we have before us'.⁴¹³ At the same time, Kearney cautions against a discernment or

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 159.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 160.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

subsequent judgement that does not commit to the ‘hermeneutic imperative of a plurality of interpretations’.⁴¹⁴ For Kearney, the commitment to plurality does not entail any embracing of relativism. Rather, the ethics of otherness ‘is an invitation to judge more judiciously so that we may, wherever possible, judge more justly’.⁴¹⁵

In this chapter, I have explored narrative as a context that supports recognition. Recognition is primarily an action. It can be understood through a narrative discourse, one that organizes, arranges, and prioritizes the details within fiction and history in such a way as to achieve a unity. It is from this unity that narrative identity is developed. The recognition of the other is never just a description of the other.

I have shown that, for Metz, the crisis of Christian identity is not one of the contents of faith. It is a crisis of the imitation of Christ. Metz notes that this crisis is expressed as a ‘Yes to Jesus, no to the Church’.⁴¹⁶ Amongst some members of the Church, there exists a ‘deep suspicion, rooted in the pre-rational Christian consciousness, that the living identity of the Christian body with Jesus has become lost in later Christianity’, that Christianity has ‘cast off its conformity to Christ a long time ago and that many of Jesus’ intentions were long ago successfully taken over by other historical movements’.⁴¹⁷ Metz suggests that such a suspicion ‘can only be diminished by providing evidence of the spirit and the power of Christianity in consistent imitation of Christ, in other words, by practical conformity to Christ’.⁴¹⁸

In a rather daring note, Metz strongly argues: ‘Our memories of the failure of Christianity and the deeply rooted disappointments felt by individuals and whole

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Metz, ‘An Identity Crisis’, 177.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

groups and classes of people cannot be theoretically explained away'.⁴¹⁹ Metz continues to argue for a 'narrative and practical Christianity'.⁴²⁰ He proposes a 'narrative and practical Christianity of the following of Christ'.⁴²¹ For him, this style of theology is a political theology as the following of Christ always has a dual mystical and political structure. This combined structure

implies a criticism of that dominant form of Christianity which is making a last attempt to achieve universality by transforming the messianic religion of the following of Christ into a middle-class religion which functions as a legitimating ideology for the priorities, aspirations and security of middle-class society.⁴²²

Such a narrative and practical Christianity provides 'necessary new *loci* and new subjects of theology'.⁴²³ Metz describes this new theology as a 'mystical-political biography, i.e., a theology which is fully aware of the historical and social situation of its subjects'.⁴²⁴

In the essay 'A Short Apology of Narrative', Metz notes the challenges associated with narrative. One such challenge is the distance of the narrator from the reader. In highlighting this difficulty, Metz draws on the critical theorist Walter Benjamin:

However familiar we may be with the name, the narrator is not present for us, alive and active. Not only is he remote from us—he is always becoming more remote. It is as though an apparently inalienable and assured ability has been taken away from us. This is the ability to exchange experiences.⁴²⁵

Narrative within theology can be a precarious resource when expounding upon religious experience of an individual, community or institution:

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ Ibid., 178.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Walter Benjamin, cited in Johann Baptist Metz, 'A Short Apology of Narrative', in *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 252.

If the category of narrative is lost or outlawed by theology as precritical, then real or original experiences of faith may come to lack objectivity and become silenced, and all linguistic expressions of faith may therefore be seen as categorical objectivizations or as changing symbols of what cannot be said. In this way, the experience of faith will become vague and its content will be preserved only in ritual and dogmatic language, without the narrative form showing any power to exchange experience.⁴²⁶

One important aspect of Metz's presentation of narrative is the 'pastoral and social aspect of narrative'.⁴²⁷ This dimension of narrative concerns the stories of '[m]arginal groups and religious sects [that] are always active in our society'.⁴²⁸ For Metz, such groups not only require an acknowledgement and recognition from the Church and society, but in the telling of their stories they remind societies and the churches of 'narrative potential'.⁴²⁹ The narratives of marginalized groups are not just a concern for the fate of individuals alone within such groups. The narratives of such groups express to the Christian community that we belong in community and also the type of communities that best communicate a Christian community. As Metz asks, '[a]re they not remembering that Christians do not primarily form an argumentative and reasoning community, but a story-telling community, and that the exchange of experiences of faith, like that of any "new" experience, takes a narrative form?'⁴³⁰ Narrative form, for Metz, is particularly significant for pastoral care and the proclamation of the faith. He sees the latter two as 'in a critical situation because we are no longer able to narrate with practical and social critical effect and with a dangerous and liberating intention'.⁴³¹ Such narrative form contributes to pastoral care, preaching, and teaching. But Metz is also conscious that narrative ought not to replace argument and reason. For him, both are required, and both have their time and

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 254.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 255.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

place.

In summary, I have argued here that the project of recognizing another person requires the context of narrative. My contention is that recognition is expressed through storytelling and narrative. Recognition, therefore, emerges within a relational dynamic of exchange. Part of this exchange will involve the registering of history and the necessary assessment of history within the context of storytelling and narrative. For this reason, I established, with recourse to Metz's work, that narrative acts as a mediator, playing a restorative role in remembering those who have suffered. Narrative is a fitting context for recognition with its context-sensitive approach that allows for the recognition of a specific person or group. What is achieved here is a reliance upon local or particular narratives over and against any grand narratives. Therefore, I can claim with Metz that narrative combines both biography and autobiography, which express an invitation to the other that assumes a would-be belonging to each other.

As Metz's presentation of narrative lacks a comprehensive hermeneutical exploration of narrative, I opted to supplement his elaboration on narrative with Ricoeur's account. To recall, I first discussed Ricoeur's separation of narrative into two branches of stories: episodic and configurative. The former is an inventory of facts and historical details that populate a story; the latter is a reflection on the story and ordinarily culminates in a value judgement. In this sense, the reader achieves what Ricoeur names as re-description. Thus, no story is confined by the plot, but every reading is open to new interpretations of the texts. The greater contention here is that openness to wider understandings achieved through reading a text is equally attained in one's interpersonal relationships. Thus, narrative is a resource for recognition.

As a context, narrative empowers recognition. This is despite the challenge presented by time and the ambiguity that can envelop narrative itself. What emerges from the declaration that a person has potential is a configuration whereby a person does not just identify with the plot of a given narrative, but can actually observe a multitude of potential actions and possibilities. Recognition in the context of narrative is not a prescriptive action; it is a unique moment and specific to each relational encounter and exchange. Whilst Ricoeur nuances and advances the context from which we recognize another, his theory of narrative as a resource for recognition requires a deliberate acknowledgement of the human body. In light of this, I turned to Kearney's treatment of hermeneutics.

In doing so, I showed that Kearney is not opposed to Ricoeur's narrative theory; rather, he reinforces the significance of the other person as also a recognizer. Recognition, therefore, is not dependent upon a recognizer and a recognizee. Rather, with the context of narrative, both persons have the potential to recognize the other.

I concluded the chapter by returning to where I began, namely Metz and theology as biography. The priority of personal biography elevates the importance of pastoral care in any re-description of theology. Narrative facilitates the inclusion of the pastoral within a theological reflection on recognition. For in their respective treatments of narrative, Metz, Ricoeur, and Kearney have expressed the centrality of belonging. For without the other, there is no self.

In the next chapter, I will explore the theme of vulnerability as my second context for recognition of another through mutual accompaniment.

Chapter 4: Vulnerability as a Context for Theological Reflection on Recognition

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I considered the relationship between recognition and narrative in the historical and constitutive formation of persons in communities. In this chapter, I will explore the question of vulnerability as a general question about the human condition.⁴³² In particular, I shall argue that vulnerability—as dependency upon another—is a category that supports interrelational recognition.

The challenge involved in recognition of another cannot be underestimated. Even within Christian communities, which found theological anthropology on the acknowledgement that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God, there is no guarantee of recognizing another. For instance, developmentally challenged individuals illustrate the precarious pathway toward recognition. Jean Vanier (1928–2019), a philosopher and founder of L’Arche, speaks to the paradox of persons with disabilities in the following:

I once visited a psychiatric hospital that was a kind of warehouse of human misery. Hundreds of children with severe disabilities were lying, neglected, on their cots. There was a deadly silence. Not one of them was crying. When they realize that nobody cares, that nobody will answer them, children no longer cry. It takes too much energy. We cry out only when there is hope that someone may hear us.⁴³³

Despite the profound vulnerability of the children in the hospital, they were not afforded recognition. Vanier’s experience shows that the witnessing of vulnerability and suffering will not guarantee a response of recognition. Indeed, Christian

⁴³² Cf. Sturla J. Stålsett, ‘Toward a Political Theology of Vulnerability: Anthropological and Theological Propositions’ *Political Theology* 15, no. 5 (2015): 464–78.

Stålsett argues for a positive and creative understanding of power that emerges from the experience of human and divine vulnerability.

⁴³³ Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999), 9.

acknowledgement of the *imago dei* will not in itself secure recognition of another. In this chapter, I demonstrate that recognition of another needs to be worked out through encounter and mutual accompaniment, paying particular attention to the role of vulnerability in the recognition of another.

Amongst some cultural theorists, including Jessica Benjamin, Adriana Cavarero, and Judith Butler, the category of vulnerability is deployed to develop theories of recognition. As Butler sets out in the following passage:

In my view, as much as vulnerability can be affirmed as an existential condition, since we are all subject to accidents, illness, and attacks that can expunge our lives quite quickly, it is also a socially induced condition, which accounts for the disproportionate exposure to suffering, especially among those broadly called the precariat for whom access to shelter, food, and medical care is often quite drastically limited.⁴³⁴

Such exploration of vulnerability by critical theorists has culminated in the novel contention that vulnerability is not confined to persons who are suffering. Rather, vulnerability is constitutive of human meaning for all persons.⁴³⁵ As a result of my interdisciplinary exploration of vulnerability, I shall suggest, in the conclusion of this chapter, a more comprehensive and theologically considered understanding of recognition, which emerges from my exploration of vulnerability in the constitution of personhood. Recognition, I will argue, occurs within a relationship of mutual accompaniment. Significant in this relationship is an interrelational dynamic, which is characterized by mutual availability. My presentation of recognition will emerge throughout the chapter and, more specifically, at the close of this chapter where I

⁴³⁴ Judith Butler, 'Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance', in *Vulnerability in Resistance*, ed. Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti, and Leticia Sabsay (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 25. Kindle edition.

⁴³⁵ Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 145.

consider recognition in light of theology that prioritizes availability and participation in the life of God and the other.

The present chapter is divided into four sections. First, I shall return briefly to the category of narrative, which I explored in the previous chapter. My aim here is to highlight Butler's prioritization of universal vulnerability over narrative as her preferred category for recognition. Second, I shall restate my working definition of mutual accompaniment and suggest that it is within such a relational dynamic that a praxis or practice of recognition occurs. Third, I shall examine the possibility of mutual recognition and consider its attainability through the creative power of self-donation to the other within a dynamic of mutual accompaniment.⁴³⁶ Fourth, I will suggest that recognition, by way of mutual accompaniment, results in both the emergence of a vulnerable self and an able-bodied self that is available to the other and one that participates in the full life of the community.

In revisiting the category of recognition, my aim is not to recapitulate the arguments presented in Chapter 3, but rather to discuss Butler's specific concern with narrative, especially her suspicion of narrative as a reliable category for recognition. Despite my reservations about Butler's stance, I agree with her observation that narrative lacks coherence. Whether this observation justifies a dismissal of the category of narrative for recognition is not considered in this chapter. I include Butler's observations and critical comments about narrative as a way of preparing the ground for her preferred category of vulnerability for recognition of another.

⁴³⁶ In L'Arche, an international federation dedicated to the creation and growth of homes, programmes, and support networks with people who have intellectual disabilities, this giving of oneself often occurs in the emerging relationship between an assistant and a person with intellectual disabilities, whereby the assistant insists less on their demand for autonomy through entering into an encounter with persons of disabilities.

4.2 The Vulnerable Whole: Recognition and Narrative Revisited

In the previous chapter, I explained, with reference to biography and narrative, how an audience or actor becomes attentive to the specificity of a particular history and the recovery of memory.⁴³⁷ Though both elements contribute to recognition of the other, no definitive consensus has been reached in the scholarly community on the role that narrative plays in securing that recognition, given any story's potential limitations.⁴³⁸ Butler is one such theorist who questions the reliability of narrative as a coherent conveyor of experience. She notes: 'Narrative authority does not require being at the scene. It requires only that one is able to reconstruct the scene from a position of non-presence in a believable way or that one's unbelievable narration is compelling for its own reasons'.⁴³⁹ Of concern to Butler is the type of account rendered by the narrator and, specifically, how his or her storytelling perspective is weighted toward a particular agenda. Underlining this concern is the question of transparency, which is significant for Butler. She argues that one can never be fully transparent, and as such, knowledge is never fully available to a person.⁴⁴⁰

Political theorists, such as Lois McNay, hold that narrative is an interpreting strategy that may result in the exclusion of a historical and biographical description.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁷ Cf. Metz, 'Facing the World'.

⁴³⁸ Cf. Taylor, *Language Animal*. For Taylor, storytelling is a constitutive feature of language and meaning. He suggests that storytelling is more than the communication of facts. Rather, it is an account of insights received and locating these insights within a wider background.

⁴³⁹ Judith Butler, *Senses of the Subject* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 4.

⁴⁴⁰ Cf. Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 28–29. Rahner contends that the lack of knowledge available to the self calls for self-interpretation.

⁴⁴¹ McNay, *Against Recognition*, 124. McNay argues against what she refers to as an 'over-generalized idea of narrative identity' (ibid., 97). Both Butler and McNay are cautious of

The resulting suspicions of narrative often concern the role of power in discourse, for ‘the story [one] reaches for says something about [one’s] authorial ambitions and desires’.⁴⁴² Thus, speech acts within narrative have the potential to accuse and regulate a person. This power ‘collapse[s]...speech into conduct’.⁴⁴³ Homosexuality, for instance, is presented as an example of how language is no longer self-descriptive, but now takes the form of an accusation.⁴⁴⁴ Sexuality, therefore, becomes a label placed on the other to socially weaken him or her. Thus, one of the initial hesitations over the utility of narrative pertains to the power of the storyteller to craft a coherent story from his or her point of view.⁴⁴⁵

The resistance to narrative also concerns its potentially negative impact upon the formation and development of a person. While Butler employs the term ‘formation’ with a degree of consistency, her understanding of narrative is not entirely clear. In my estimation, Butler is referring to a person’s negotiation within the social world as the context for one’s emerging self. Butler’s concept of formation concedes that there is a limit to self-knowledge, or that one remains opaque to oneself.⁴⁴⁶ Therefore, any narrative that one constructs is marked more by its limitations than by its completeness of knowledge. For Butler, then, one who gives an account of oneself

normative theories of narrative and recognition. For them, normative theories of narrative reduce the other to a form of domination.

⁴⁴² Butler, *Senses of the Subject*, 4.

⁴⁴³ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 23.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁶ Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 78.

engages in a disclosure based on the limitation of knowledge.⁴⁴⁷ Rather than this restricting a person's ethical response, for Butler, one's opacity necessitates a critical and self-critical engagement with one's social sphere. Though I observe a rejection of narrative in Butler's concerns, I do not believe that it amounts to a complete rejection. Rather, she suggests that something more is required for recognition of another.

Therefore, the question of this chapter remains: Does recognition require a category other than narrative to ensure an interrelational recognition? Owing to the lack of transparency or self-knowledge, recognition based upon autonomy or one's ability to be the exclusive author of one's narrative appears futile, since a person is also socially constituted. Therefore, Butler's contention that one requires a critical engagement with one's social world is a valuable observation. There is, however, a critical praxis of narrative by means of revision and re-editing.⁴⁴⁸ The ever-emerging and developing narrative story suggests not so much a coherent recognition, but a project within one's life. I shall expand on this observation later in this chapter.⁴⁴⁹

In summary, I have briefly returned to the category of narrative here in order to highlight Butler's suspicion of narrative as a category that supports recognition of another. In particular, I identified three concerns that Butler has with respect to narrative and recognition: narrative's lack of coherence; narrative taking on the form of an accusation; and narrative's compromised capacity as a formative category. In conclusion, I suggested that the revision and re-editing that is part of any story points

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. Kurt Borg, 'Narrating Trauma: Judith Butler on Narrative Coherence and the Politics of Self-Narration', *Life Writing* 15, no. 2 (2018): 447–65.

⁴⁴⁸ Rowan Williams, *Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 144.

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. Jan-Olav Henriksen, *Desire, Gift, and Recognition: Christology and Postmodern Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 216–20.

less to a lack of coherence, and more to the ongoing praxis of recognition in mutual accompaniment, for the learning and sharing in any relationship is an ongoing process. As such, in what follows, I will approach recognition as a praxis that takes place in relationships of mutual accompaniment.

4.3 Prioritizing a Praxis of Recognition

Where to begin in achieving recognition of the other? Some political recognition theorists, such as Kelly Oliver, Patchen Markell, and Alan Patten, have emphasized the importance of a turn toward the subject as the first step in achieving interpersonal recognition. This is evident in the emergence of acknowledgement theory, which mandates recognition of the subject first. Proponents of this theory even suggest acknowledgement as an alternative to recognition:

What draws us to or bars us from a just relation to others is, in many instances at least, not the state of our knowledge of them, but the state of our understanding of ourselves...[A]lthough the presence or absence of acknowledgment may have important implications for others, the direct object of acknowledgment is not the other, as in the case of recognition; it is, instead, something about self.⁴⁵⁰

Acknowledgement theory confidently presupposes one's ability to acquire knowledge of self. Of course, my previous treatment of narrative suggests that any coherent knowledge is not possible. Acknowledgement theory suspends the turn to the social world and others so as to engage the self as a first step in a future recognition of the other. Such intrapersonal recognition fits uneasily within a model of recognition through mutual accompaniment.

Intrapersonal recognition is not limited to acknowledgement theory. In

⁴⁵⁰ Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 35.

prioritizing the experience of the recognizer, Risto Saarinen argues for a theory of religious recognition that, first of all, values the self-recognition of the recognizer. As he notes, ‘our historical material outlines a way that starts with the dramatic transformation of the recognizer in conversion’.⁴⁵¹ However, I suggest that theological reflection on recognition through mutual accompaniment can respect the subjectivity of both the recognizer and the recognized in an interrelational way, thereby avoiding a trajectory of recognition that either deliberately turns to the self or to the other. Recognition in this instance is not so much an occurrence in a specific moment as it is a way of life or ongoing praxis, characterized by availability and participation in the life of the other within a relationship of mutual accompaniment.⁴⁵²

4.3.1 Praxis in Philosophical and Theological Tradition

Praxis sits firmly within philosophical and theological traditions. The Greek term *praxis* can be distinguished in two ways: *poiesis*, communicating a way of life; and *techne*, a technical skill.⁴⁵³ Within theology, the term praxis has been adopted by liberation theologians to express the importance of action in the liberation of the suffering and poor of the world. Justo L. González adds an important qualification to any theological understanding of praxis: namely that praxis should not be understood

⁴⁵¹ Saarinen, *Religion and Recognition*, 243.

⁴⁵² For an explanation of recognition as a project or praxis, see Stefan Bird-Pollan, *Hegel, Freud and Fanon: The Dialectic of Emancipation* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015), 87–93.

⁴⁵³ Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, ‘Systematic Theology: Task and Methods’, in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Gavin (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 49.

as activism.⁴⁵⁴

Johann Baptist Metz prioritizes praxis as the desired approach for any critical reflection in theology.⁴⁵⁵ In doing so, he highlights practical dimensions of theology. In particular, his development of Christian praxis as social takes seriously the reality of those who are vulnerable in the world. As such, he softens any understanding of praxis that is overly anthropological, wherein the human person is considered to be dominant over nature.⁴⁵⁶ Praxis, therefore, concerns a dynamic of encounter and mutual accompaniment.

Werner G. Jeanrond's presentation of praxis with respect to love expresses the significance of praxis as a way of life. In *A Theology of Love*, he argues against a Christian ownership of love, favouring instead a praxis or practice of Christian loving.⁴⁵⁷ While it is not within the scope of this chapter to explore his contention, I suggest that Jeanrond's argument can also be applied to a Christian praxis of recognition, particularly his caution against a 'narrowing of love and its spiritualization'.⁴⁵⁸ Jeanrond advocates for an understanding of love as a way of life or praxis. Recognition, as this chapter will suggest, is also about a way of life, for it concerns an exposure to the other that respects difference within a unique encounter in mutual accompaniment.

Furthermore, recognition as praxis is evident in philosophical discourse.

⁴⁵⁴ Justo L. González, *Essential Theological Terms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 137. He contends that not all action is liberating, and he identifies resistance as a type of praxis. Of course, Butler identifies vulnerability with the praxis of resistance.

⁴⁵⁵ Johann Baptist Metz, *Theology of the Word*, trans. William Glen-Doepel (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969), 112.

⁴⁵⁶ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 68.

⁴⁵⁷ Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love*, 44.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

Stefan Bird-Pollan, reflecting upon Frantz Fanon's development of recognition, argues that recognition needs to take on an emancipatory agenda in becoming a critical voice in the field of race relations.⁴⁵⁹ Kelly Oliver, on the other hand, argues for a witnessing beyond that which is recognized. Having observed how Fanon fails to deal with love in his treatment of recognition, she suggests that the power of love reconstructs notions of recognition.⁴⁶⁰ Both Bird-Pollan and Oliver prioritize a praxis of recognition against a more normative theory of recognition.

Responding to Honneth's normative theory of recognition, Butler argues that 'a genuine human praxis of recognition' cannot be achieved by a normative theory of recognition.⁴⁶¹ Her concern with Honneth's theory of recognition is its prescribed response of sympathy to the suffering of the other. For Butler, the regulation of a response in such a way fails to appreciate alternative responses to the suffering of the other, such as the desire to compound their suffering further.

What Butler highlights is a tension between praxis and moral conduct. Butler considers child-rearing practices and, in particular—what she observes in Honneth's theory—the obligation to adopt the point of view of the other. Such adoption, for Honneth, is required in order to understand the social world in which the other resides. Of concern for Butler, and it is one shared by Fanon, is the normative demand upon the child or the other to endorse what the recognizer deems morally right or wrong. For Butler, any such normative and prescriptive understanding of recognition is not a genuine praxis of recognition. From this emerges Butler's concern with norms

⁴⁵⁹ Bird-Pollan, *Hegel, Freud and Fanon*, 89.

⁴⁶⁰ Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

⁴⁶¹ Judith Butler, 'Taking Another's View', in *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*, ed. Martin Jay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 116.

and, specifically, the frame of recognition employed in relating to the other.

4.4 The Frame of Recognition: Norms and Seeing

Jean Vanier's experience in the children's hospital illustrate that not every person experiences recognition. Similarly, Butler draws attention to the actual experience of misrecognition:

Perhaps such a responsibility [to recognize another] can only begin to be realized through a critical reflection on those exclusionary norms by which fields of recognizability are constituted, fields that are implicitly invoked when, by cultural reflex, we mourn for some lives but respond with coldness to the loss of others.⁴⁶²

What then can join persons and communities together in a greater closeness—not mere connectivity—in recognizing those whom one would not ordinarily choose to recognize?

It would seem, for Butler, that norms alone will not ensure the recognition of another. Indeed, norms may very well impinge upon the recognition of another or groups. While Butler does not offer an account of misrecognition, she addresses the question of grief as a public and political matter. In doing so, she witnesses to those who are not recognized.

The first step, therefore, in a genuine praxis of recognition is to ascertain the norms or patterns of social behaviour employed by a person or a group. Pre-existing norms of recognition already determine that some persons are recognized while others are denied recognition. In illustrating this point, Butler brings to the reader's attention 'vicious forms of logic' that deny recognition of another, whereby the denial of recognition manifests itself in such attitudes as racism.⁴⁶³ At work here are 'modes of

⁴⁶² Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), 36.

⁴⁶³ Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 37.

power that seek to normalize certain versions of the human over others, either distinguishing among humans, or expanding the field of the nonhuman at will'.⁴⁶⁴ Not only is this a withholding of recognition, but, as Butler contends, such a treatment is a dehumanization of the other.⁴⁶⁵

Furthermore, dehumanization is observable in identity discourse and questions of human welfare. For example, persons or groups are labelled negatively on the grounds of sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or colour:

The terms by which we are recognized as human are socially articulated and changeable. And sometimes the very terms that confer 'humanness' on some individuals are those that deprive certain other individuals of the possibility of achieving that status, producing a differential between the human and the less-than-human.⁴⁶⁶

Terms that define a person find their expression in language and norms that the emerging 'I' must negotiate and, at times, wrestle free from their prescriptive trajectories. As Butler notes: 'There is the operation of a norm, invariably social, that conditions what will and will not be a recognizable account, exemplified in the fact that I am used by the norm precisely to the degree that I use it'.⁴⁶⁷ Even though one can acknowledge and deliberate on norms and their effect upon recognition of the other, there remains a danger generated by the 'presumption of agency'. For instance, there can be a gap between what a norm sets out to achieve and what is actually achieved.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Mari Mikkola, 'Dehumanization', in *The Wrong of Injustice: Dehumanization and its Role of Feminist Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 145. She argues that 'an act or a treatment is dehumanizing if and only if it is an indefensible setback to some of our legitimate human interests, where this setback constitutes and moral injury' (ibid.).

⁴⁶⁶ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 2.

⁴⁶⁷ Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 36.

Most persons and communities agree that human beings have an inherent dignity, which, in turn, is protected by agreed rights.⁴⁶⁸ Because of such agreements, it is imagined that persons and communities will act and exert power in order to protect the dignity of a person or groups through the application of agreed rights. Yet, as Butler argues, the application of such norms into practices may not produce their intended outcome. Her presentation of the effect of norms upon the emerging self anticipates a negative impact upon one's formation.

Butler, however, circumvents a held convention, whereby 'if we cherish something as a value, we are probably also inclined to prescribe its preservation'.⁴⁶⁹ Resisting norms as the contexts that support recognition for another, she asserts the body as the appropriate context that supports the recognition of another. Thus, Butler offers an argument for a dependency upon the other.

For her, the agency of personhood is best illustrated by the dependency of the body upon other bodies. Moreover, dependency is not just interpersonal; it is a radically inclusive feature of human personhood that extends toward interrelationality with persons or groups, creatures, and the world of objects.

To summarize, I have suggested a preferred understanding of praxis that argues for an interrelational recognition, where one is available and participates in the life of the other through mutual accompaniment. In this section, I have shown how

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. Jeremy Waldron, 'Lecture 1: Dignity and Rank', in *Dignity, Rank, and Rights*, ed. Meir Dan-Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 28. Waldron offers an interesting critique of Catholic social teaching, suggesting that the Catholic Church has politicized the term dignity. While I do not share his opinion, his treatment of rights presents a current and novel interpretation of the discourse.

⁴⁶⁹ Jeremy Waldron, *One Another's Equals: The Basis of Human Equality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 43.

praxis sits within a philosophical and theological tradition, thus providing an interdisciplinary platform upon which to explore vulnerability and recognition. Furthermore, I have stated that a theological consideration of praxis is not a specialized theological praxis. Rather, my reflection suggests characteristic features of praxis, such as exposure and encounter with the other. Butler chastens against a prescriptive understanding of praxis, highlighting the negative impact of norms for the emerging self. As an alternative to norms, she suggests the body as the site of vulnerability through which we recognize the other. The next section will explore this contention further.

4.4.1 Widening Recognition: Emerging from Dependency toward Interdependency

Dependency, for Butler, is manifestly expressed as interdependency upon another and the conditions that sustain life.⁴⁷⁰ As such, dependency counteracts an understanding of the body as autonomous and independent.⁴⁷¹ In developing the priority of interdependency for recognition of another, Butler pushes interdependency beyond interpersonal human relationships.⁴⁷² For her, one ‘cannot talk about a body without knowing what supports that body, and what its relation to that support—or lack of support—might be’.⁴⁷³ This interdependency suggests an understanding of the body

⁴⁷⁰ Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 132.

⁴⁷¹ Butler, *Senses of the Subject*, 8. In suggesting that the body is dependent, Butler is writing within a philosophical tradition that asserts the turn to the subject is not the identification of an autonomous subject, but dependent. Here she draws upon the insights of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Nicolas Malebranche.

⁴⁷² Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 43.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 65.

beyond just a corporal and singularly distinct being. Creatively, Butler suggests that the body is ‘a living set of relations’.⁴⁷⁴ The implication, therefore, is that ‘the body cannot be fully dissociated from the infrastructural and environmental conditions of its living and acting’.⁴⁷⁵ Her presentation of a more complex and expansive interdependency of human relations suggests an inclusive and broad set of relations for the formation of personhood.⁴⁷⁶

Behind Butler’s case for interdependency is her readjustment of ontology. For Butler, the body is the site for relationality. This interdependency, in turn, is an outcome of a deliberate shift from a ‘biological ontology’ to a ‘social ontology’.⁴⁷⁷ Butler’s adjustment of ontology is not simply a rejection of ‘biological individualism’.⁴⁷⁸ Significantly, the necessity of a social ontology lies within the realization of a relationality beyond just human relations:

There is no life without the conditions of life that invariably sustain life, and those conditions are pervasively social, establishing not the discrete ontology of the person, but rather the interdependency of persons, involving reproductive and sustaining social relations to the environment and to non-human forms of life, broadly considered.⁴⁷⁹

The body, therefore, cannot be annexed from the social conditions and meanings it assumes. To achieve this widened interrelationality, arguably, Butler eliminates the biological aspect of human ontology. Despite this potential quagmire, the question remains: How might one respond in advancing recognition of the other?

Butler is realistic about what can be achieved at any one moment. For her, the

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ Butler, *Senses of the Subject*, 8.

⁴⁷⁷ Butler, *Frames of War*, 19.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

body is exposed to others and to the world. It can be the site of vulnerability and of suffering.⁴⁸⁰ The body as a political site experiences the struggles for various goods, such as food, shelter, and protection.⁴⁸¹ As the body is interrelational, it cannot simply be political. Therefore, the body is also a social site. Vulnerability, therefore, is constitutive of relationships. The body is interrelational through its extension of its relationality to infrastructure that supports its life.

Dependency, not only upon other persons but also infrastructure, exposes the body to even greater vulnerability. Butler contends that vulnerability, in the political sense, is not an ‘essential feature’ of persons, but rather the outcome of ‘processes of gender formation’ and the ‘effects of modes of power’.⁴⁸² Yet, she counteracts the challenge that her theory of recognition is a negative one, in suggesting that the body can become the position and posture of ‘responsiveness’ through social vulnerability.⁴⁸³ Thus, vulnerability and its critical engagement with the social world facilitate a ‘strategic use of vulnerability’ as a ‘function of openness’.⁴⁸⁴ The body or a person, therefore, ‘remains a resource’ in the social world, for it is a courageous and spirited being.⁴⁸⁵

The body, despite its perceived limitation, is the context for a vulnerability that can fashion human meaning. Any achievement of vulnerability can never eclipse the precarity experienced by the body, as the body is never fully known or transparent, even to oneself. As Butler writes: ‘To be a body is, in some sense, to be

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., 61.

⁴⁸¹ Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 128.

⁴⁸² Ibid., 145.

⁴⁸³ Butler, *Frames of War*, 61.

⁴⁸⁴ Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 149.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., 153.

deprived of having a full recollection of one's life'.⁴⁸⁶ How, then, can one ever achieve recognition of the other in view of the deficiency of self-knowledge? The frame of recognition one applies to or projects onto any potential other is of utmost importance. It is not just about getting to the root of recognition, for recognition of another through mutual accompaniment is as much about fostering one's capacities as it is about an acknowledgement of one's current situation.

For Butler, the emerging self is not a determined political reality in which one's vulnerability is the result of felt diminishment, such as a lack of food and shelter or recognition by norms. These absences are significant in their own right. Indeed, they are occasions of grief.⁴⁸⁷ Yet, the experience of such grief is not one's undoing; rather, it 'makes way for something living'.⁴⁸⁸ Her observations here resonate with the experience of Christians in the experience of grief. Thus, Butler locates a shared human experience of grief and a shared desire for hope for something new emerging from grief.

There is, however, a difference in the understanding of time. What emerges out of grief for Butler, although not closed to the possibility of infinity, is bound within a finite time. For a Christian, every grief and subsequent emerging hope occurs within a horizon of infinite time or eternity. As Rahner notes, a person's 'acts have a meaning for eternity, not only morally but also ontologically'.⁴⁸⁹ It is within this future-oriented trajectory that one discovers a common call to a unity or salvation.

⁴⁸⁶ Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 38.

⁴⁸⁷ Butler, *Senses of the Subject*, 110.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Karl Rahner, 'On the Question of a Formal Existential Ethics', in *Theological Investigations*, vol. II: Man in the Church, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1963), 225.

Butler's expanding interrelationality beyond the political by means of the social strives for a greater solidarity.⁴⁹⁰ In doing so, she runs the risk of minimizing the significance of formation that takes place in particular relationships and communities.

Vanier, by contrast, emphasizes the transformative capacity of what he calls 'intermediate communities' as the particular site where a person can choose a way of life.⁴⁹¹ The relationships within such localized communities are neither political nor social, but pathways toward a covenant. In other words, I am in agreement with Oliver in the view that a new vision is required for recognition.⁴⁹² For Oliver, 'connection' with another is a new and preferred frame of recognition. Her vision is based on an interrelational one. I suggest, however, that a new vision is required for a frame of recognition that includes not only the political and the social, but also the spiritual dimension of the human body. By incorporating the spiritual dimension, such vision looks beyond finite time. This expanded understanding of vision desires not just a connectedness to the other, but a closeness to the other through mutual accompaniment. There are many aspects of theology that serve as a resource for a renewed vision of recognition.

4.4.2 Recognition: Surrendering to the Other

Jessica Benjamin's account of recognition seeks to break away from the binary relationship between the recognizer and the recognized. To do so, she relates to the other as a subject, not an object, thus recreating a mutual recognition through a

⁴⁹⁰ Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 104.

⁴⁹¹ Jean Vanier, *Community and Growth* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd), 62.

⁴⁹² Oliver, *Witnessing*, 222.

‘connection’ between two persons.⁴⁹³ In itself, her contribution is not overly original, but what is of significance is the interdependency achieved through her working model of recognition. Taking up an alternative account of recognition from Butler, Benjamin nuances and differentiates dependency as a ‘complementary structure’ and a ‘third space’ in which recognition occurs.⁴⁹⁴ Rejecting a psychological dualism, she argues for a theoretical model of recognition that emphasizes ‘the reciprocal, mutual influence of interaction between subjects, the confusing traffic of two-way streets’.⁴⁹⁵ All too often, the interaction between two persons is best described as happening on a one-way street. While Charles Taylor observes the one-way traffic of such recognition as ‘monological’ recognition,⁴⁹⁶ for Benjamin, this singular movement is the result of psychic power and a lack of recognition ‘in which we feel as if one person is the doer, the other the done to. One person is the subject, the other the object—as our theory of object relations all too readily portrays’.⁴⁹⁷ Her argument for this extra space rests on her contention that ‘[a]nalytic work based on the intersubjective view of two participating subjectivities requires discipline rooted in an orientation to the structural conditions of thirdness’.⁴⁹⁸ For her, this additional space is essential ‘to grasp two-directionality, [as] we do so only from the place of the *third*, a vantage point outside the two’.⁴⁹⁹ Benjamin’s proposal provides an alternative to the

⁴⁹³ Jessica Benjamin, *Beyond Doer and Done to: Recognition Theory, Intersubjectivity and the Third* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 69.

⁴⁹⁴ Jessica Benjamin, ‘Beyond Doer and Done To: An Intersubjective View of Thirdness’, *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (2006). In this essay, Benjamin offers a concise genealogy of the third. She notes that it became operative in psychoanalysis through Jacques Lacan. He drew upon Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s development of intersubjectivity. Lacan located thirdness in the movement of the child’s dependency from the mother to the father. He presented a movement from the dialectic between mother and son as that from paternalism to maternalism.

⁴⁹⁵ Benjamin, ‘Beyond Doer and Done To’, 6.

⁴⁹⁶ Taylor, *Language Animal*, 65.

⁴⁹⁷ Benjamin, ‘Beyond Doer and Done To’, 6.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

weight of obligations. In widening the community boundaries in which recognition occurs, she is resisting a quantitative experience of community in favour of a more qualitative development in relating to more rather than to less.

I will briefly recall some previous contributors in the philosophical development of 'space' so as to make clear Benjamin's specific contribution. Hannah Arendt develops a theory of space, in particular 'associated public space', as an alternative understanding of space. Here power is transformed into a formative force within communities. Significantly, this transformation only occurs 'wherever men are together'.⁵⁰⁰ Michael de Certeau also considers space in the light of plurality through the lenses of psychoanalysis and historicity. Ian Buchanan describes de Certeau's treatment of space as follows: 'His solution is to engage with "ways of being," or stories as he chose to call them, rather than "states of being" and so rewrite spatiality in terms of perspective to give it a more thoroughly active voice'.⁵⁰¹ Benjamin notes a wider variety of presentations among theorists as to what constitutes the *third*; for example, do professions or communities count as third? For Benjamin, the *third* is more than a task or a social constituency.

Significant for her is 'the process of creating *thirdness*', that is, the question of 'how we build relational systems and how we develop the intersubjective capacities for such co-creation'.⁵⁰² Butler refers to this constructive interdependency as a 'social network of hands'.⁵⁰³ Benjamin moves on from there to suggest that *thirdness* refers to a quality of relating, whereby it can be understood as a 'principle, function or

⁵⁰⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Human Action*, 2nd edn. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 199. See also Seyla Benhabib, 'Feminist Theory and Hannah Arendt's Concept of Public Space', *History of the Human Sciences* 6, no. 2 (1993): 97–114.

⁵⁰¹ Ian Buchanan, *Michael de Certeau: Cultural Theorist* (London: Sage, 2000), 112. See also Ward, *How the Light Gets In*, 274–78. Ward suggests that de Certeau's development and expansion of narratives is an exercise in recognizing others.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Butler, *Frames of War*, 14.

relationship'.⁵⁰⁴ Within this *third* space, one is exposed and one encounters the mind of the other, and in so doing, initiates or facilitates what Benjamin terms a 'surrendering'.

It is worth noting the distinction between Benjamin's understanding of surrender and Butler's understanding of 'being impinged upon'.⁵⁰⁵ Both terms attempt to characterize the experience of living socially and the felt force that such experiences occasion. For Butler, being impinged upon by another demands a responsibility toward the other, irrespective of whether or not one has any affective feelings toward them. The other does not have to be someone I know or love. Yet, one has 'obligations towards others'.⁵⁰⁶ For Benjamin, on the other hand, surrender relates specifically to the experience of *thirdness*. This space is the mutual recognition created through the dynamic between two persons: 'We now become two subjects—both an I—who recognize how we each are affecting the other Me in creating a pattern of interaction. We step into the thirdness of this mutual recognition, surrender together to our vulnerable self'.⁵⁰⁷

Moreover, within this space, there is not just a surrendering to self, but there is also a dwelling with the other, whereby a person 'surrender[s] to the space of aloneness in the presence of the other'.⁵⁰⁸ Further elaborating on the dynamic of thirdness, Benjamin adds that in her estimation:

Surrender relies on the space of thirdness, going beyond complementarity to encompass and perhaps reflect on the fear of excess together... This complementarity in turn is enacted in the analytic relationship [or, as Charles Taylor would put it, 'real judgments of worth suppose a fused horizon of standards'⁵⁰⁹]. As the couple becomes able to work through the enactment of

⁵⁰⁴ Benjamin, 'Beyond Doer and Done To', 7.

⁵⁰⁵ Butler, *Frames of War*, 14.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ Benjamin, *Beyond Doer and Done to*, 102.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., 139.

⁵⁰⁹ Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition', 70.

this complementarity, the space of thirdness gradually develops.⁵¹⁰

Both Butler and Benjamin note that encountering the other results in significant outcomes. For Butler, I observe that subjection in more dominant or lesser forms remains the outstanding feature of social interaction. Yet, for Benjamin, as I have just shown, social interactions have the potential to create a thirdness or mutual recognition, wherein relationships are transformed within communities.

Encountering the other changes any enclosed framework that is brought to community membership. For Benjamin, the encounter with the other and the subsequent experience of thirdness is an ‘intersubjective holding space [where] the excess was transformed, translated into a desire for an experience of the self at peace, at one, with the outside and the inside’.⁵¹¹ The effect of this is ‘recognition—being able to sustain connectedness to the other’s mind while accepting his separateness and difference’.⁵¹² Conscious of the distinction between surrender and submission, Benjamin champions an understanding of surrender and relational interaction that culminates in a mutual recognition between two persons. However, in developing my presentation of recognition through mutual accompaniment, while acknowledging Benjamin’s reference to the translation of excess into desire, I also stress the importance of interpretation. As Rahner observed, ‘the question of being is also a question of interpretation’.⁵¹³ Translation and interpretation, together, resist a reductionism with respect to difference. The very act of mutual accompaniment as part of recognition ensures that whatever distance was anticipated or felt within the respective differences emerges as not that distant after all.

⁵¹⁰ Benjamin, *Beyond Doer and Done to*, 140.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Ibid., 8.

⁵¹³ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 39.

4.4.3 Recognition: Beyond Linguistic Recognition toward an Embodied

Recognition

Surrender, for Benjamin, requires overcoming the aggression of competing relationships, and these relationships aim ‘to describe those push-me/pull-you, doer/done-to dynamics that we find in most impasses, which generally appear to be one-way—that is, each person feels *done to* and not like an agent helping to shape a co-created reality’.⁵¹⁴ The third space, for Benjamin, is first a ‘differentiating Third’, which moves beyond the dynamic of a dialectical relationship toward an encounter with a third party.⁵¹⁵ An explanation of the *third* is developed through observing the dynamics between a mother and child. However, Benjamin’s account of the *third* insists upon the *third* as never radically other. Thirdness, rather, already exists in relationship to both the mother and child, for ‘unless there is already space in the dyad, unless the third person is also dyadically connected to the child, he cannot function as a true third’.⁵¹⁶ Difference, therefore, can never be so great as to be alien to both parties.

Benjamin also draws upon scholars, such as Jacques Lacan, who have explored the significance of the intersubjective relationship between mother and child through a third space.⁵¹⁷ Lacan argued that the third space ‘keeps the relationship between two persons from collapsing’.⁵¹⁸ Moreover, this space ‘was constituted by recognition through speech, which allows for different viewpoints and interests’

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., 24.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 51.

⁵¹⁶ Benjamin, ‘Beyond Doer and Done To’, 12.

⁵¹⁷ Honneth develops his first sphere of recognition through a similar exploration of the relationship between a child and its mother.

⁵¹⁸ Benjamin, *Beyond Doer and Done to*, 26.

beyond the mother-child dialectic.⁵¹⁹ Benjamin, however, goes further than Lacan. She argues for a selfhood that is more than an outcome of language or symbolism. In her ‘view of thirdness, recognition is not at first constituted by verbal speech; rather, it begins with the early nonverbal experience of sharing a pattern, a dance, with another person’.⁵²⁰ What is suggested is a ‘nascent, energetic form of the Third—as distinct from the one in the mother’s mind. It is present in the earliest exchange of gestures between mother and child, in the relationship that has been called *oneness*’.⁵²¹ I hold that resisting an overly linguistic understanding of thirdness, or mutual recognition, avoids having a theory of recognition that is burdened by subject-object relations. What is operative in Benjamin’s embodied recognition is the dynamic of mutuality within relationships, not as an outcome or desire, but as an extant quality of relational interaction.

From her analysis of the relationship between a mother and child, Benjamin argues for an expanded definition of the third—the moral third that is both ethical and interrelational. Significantly, the impetus for a third space is a result of the lack of recognition between persons: ‘The notion of the moral Third is thus linked to the acceptance of the inevitable breakdown and repair, which allows us to situate our responsibility to our patients and the process in the context of a witnessing compassion’.⁵²² Equally significant is the experience of mutual recognition. This development of recognition is explained within the context of a therapeutic relationship. The outcome of this ‘asymmetrical responsibility’ is ‘mutual recognition—this shared thirdness with its rhythmic, reparative and difference-

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid., 30.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Ibid., 47.

accepting aspects—that is transformational’.⁵²³

This means that a moral third requires the movement to a differentiated third by means of reconciliation due to the lack of recognition afforded initially to a person.⁵²⁴ The differentiated third refers to:

our ability to express our own intentions and to recognize the other as a like subject deserving respect, on whom ideally we depend without resorting to coercion—with whom we bear the vulnerability of such mutual dependency requisite for realizing our intentions.⁵²⁵

Transforming the experience of thirdness from the differentiated to the moral involves relational restoration through reconciliation, which culminates in the quality of a moral thirdness. As such, this thirdness ‘depends upon acknowledgement of disruptions, disappointments, violations of expectancy, and broadly upon acknowledgement of injuries and trauma that challenge principles of fairness, and respect for human dignity’.⁵²⁶ Recognition is a vulnerable indwelling with others in mutual accompaniment. Yet, it is not a possessive or restrictive relationship. Such a recognition between persons always seeks to include others.

By contrast, Butler argues that recognition is ‘neither an act that one performs nor is it liberalised as the event in which we each “see” one another and are “seen”’.⁵²⁷ Recognition ‘takes place through communication, primarily but not exclusively verbal, in which subjects are transformed by virtue of the communicative practice in which they are engaged’.⁵²⁸ At the same time, Butler utilizes the work of Benjamin in developing her theory of recognition. As Butler points out, Benjamin has effectively united social theory and therapeutic practice in developing a theory of

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ The forgiveness or reconciliation stressed is the forgiveness given to the perpetrator, where their humanity is restored (Benjamin, *Beyond Doer and Done to*, 241–42).

⁵²⁵ Ibid., 51.

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

⁵²⁷ Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 132.

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

recognition characterized by communicative practice. Butler notes that one of the hallmarks of Benjamin's theory of recognition 'is to insist that intersubjectivity is not the same as object relations, and that intersubjectivity adds to object relations the notion of the external Other, one who exceeds the psychic construction of the object in complementary terms'.⁵²⁹ Benjamin introduces the concept of intersubjective recognition. The background to such recognition is the observation that symbolic knowing often ends up being privileged over the knowing of another's mind. In light of this, intersubjective recognition theory envisions the recoupling—however loose—between interactional and symbolic knowing. Benjamin gives 'play' as an example of how one can avoid dissociation in relationships.⁵³⁰

4.4.4 Recognition: Intrapsychic and Intersubjective Knowing

When recognition is denied, persons inhabit an intrapsychic life rather than an interrelational life. Nevertheless, intersubjective recognition always has to contend with intrapsychic life. Benjamin understands intrapsychic life as part of our human psychological makeup. It pertains to how one relates to the other, specifically in the absence of recognition. This form of relating establishes binary and opposing forms of relating—for example, as victim and victimizer. Intersubjectivity is a way of redressing the 'trauma' of intrapsychic interactions. The outcome of such a process is the restoration of recognition and this process becomes the 'platform of thirdness'.⁵³¹

The introduction of the 'external other' in the intersubjective recognition between two persons advances a wider dynamic of recognition. For Benjamin, the other is not just an individual in her own right, but a necessary partner in the creation

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Benjamin, *Beyond Doer and Done to*, 155.

⁵³¹ Ibid., 6.

of a new dynamic between two persons:

This is to say that the emphasis on mutual responsiveness and transformation as being psychologically vital tries to conceptualize the presence of two different minds mutually affecting each other regardless of their inequality or asymmetry—thereby leaving a potential space for equality and symmetry.⁵³²

The process of such recognition ‘involves an affective meaningful experience of the other as not simply an object of needs to be controlled or resisted, consumed or pushed away, but another mind we can connect with’.⁵³³ This specific formulation of recognition utilizes intersubjective and intrapsychic theories of formation in ways that are missed by Butler.

Yet, Benjamin is clear that these two theories exist within a wider articulation of recognition and ‘are best conceived not as exclusive but as interrelated phenomenologies of psychic life’.⁵³⁴ They contribute toward a two-pronged definition of recognition: The psychic theory relates to recognition of ‘sameness and difference, [that is] congruence and incongruence’,⁵³⁵ while the intersubjective theory contributes to an ‘expressive behaviour, to a dynamic process, to responsiveness in action’.⁵³⁶ Recognition, for Benjamin, strengthens and invigorates what can be ‘[a]cts of recognition confirm that I am seen, known, my intentions have been understood’.⁵³⁷ Recognition is not monological. Reaching toward an ever-expanding theory of recognition, Benjamin suggests the possibility of ‘mutual recognition’, defining it as a relational transformation in which ‘we share feelings, reflect each other’s knowing, so we also have shared awareness’.⁵³⁸

⁵³² Ibid., 3.

⁵³³ Ibid.

⁵³⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

⁵³⁸ Benjamin, *Beyond Doer and Done to*, 75. Ricoeur’s understanding of mutual recognition stresses not so much the obligation of the person to respond generously to the recognition received, but rather ‘to speak of a response to a call coming from the generosity of the first

How might one identify when recognition has taken place? Acts that culminate in mutual recognition are identified ‘by doing an act *with* someone, as opposed to doing an act *to* someone’.⁵³⁹ The latter denotes monological acts of recognition, while the former expresses acts of mutual recognition. For Benjamin, mutual recognition generates a ‘third space’, which ‘originally appears as a dynamic coordination, in which matching, mismatching, and return to matching of shared direction can be charted as a non-linear relation far from an exact mirroring or synchrony’.⁵⁴⁰ While her initial explanation of recognition as ‘expressive behaviour’ suggests recognition as confirming an understanding or feeling shared by both the recognizer and the recognized, the generation of the third alludes to a more constitutive and creative dynamic operating as mutual recognition. Benjamin argues that ‘the idea of thirdness tries to capture the original idea of free association as an opening to the not yet known, what arises without coercion and constraint’.⁵⁴¹ Recognition in interaction is not ‘a steady-state or stable condition but an ongoing process involving shifts in and out of thirdness’.⁵⁴² This recognition is as much a future-oriented drive as it is a work of repairing the past in the present.

Of significant importance for Benjamin is the restoration of recognition. As

gift’ (Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 243). In so doing, he moves mutual recognition as a giving that is understood phenomenologically to a giving born out of agape, whereby receiving the gift of recognition in a spirit of gratitude will determine how I respond to the giver of that recognition.

⁵³⁹ Benjamin, *Beyond Doer and Done to*, 5.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

⁵⁴² Ibid. In the ‘theorizing of recognition we must conceptualize not a static condition but a continual oscillation between relating to the outside and the inner object’ (ibid.). Benjamin draws upon the contributions of D.W. Winnicott in how one relates to an object, specifically ‘The Use of an Object and Relating Through Identifications’, in *Playing and Reality* (New York: Penguin, 1971). For a summary and assessment of this chapter, please see Jan Abraham’s ‘Further Reflections on Winnicott’s Last Major Theoretical Achievement: From “Relating through Identifications” to “The Use of an Object”’, in *Playing and Reality Revisited: A New Look at Winnicott’s Classical Work*, ed. Gennaro Saragnano and Christian Seulin (London: Karnac Books, 2015), 11–125.

she writes:

The process of restoring recognition that we observed in earliest interactions, the successful reorganisation and recreation of attuned coordination after moments of mismatch or frustration could thus be translated into a larger principle: recognition depends on mutual correction, and the ongoing adjustment or repair of disruption becomes the platform of thirdness.⁵⁴³

The operation of restorative recognition is explained through the dynamic between a caregiver and a client: Repairing recognition is a ‘relational repair (as opposed to the self’s internal repair of the object’s goodness) [that] involves the caregiver acknowledging—in deeds and communicative gestures—the violations of expected patterns of soothing or responsiveness’.⁵⁴⁴ Benjamin proceeds to make a distinction between political recognition and psychoanalytical recognition. Favouring the latter, she states that political recognition risks ‘the problem of regarding the other as if her subjectivity did not already exist apart from the subject’s dubious power to confer recognition upon it’.⁵⁴⁵ The action of restorative recognition or ‘intersubjective repair demands performing an action directed toward the other in which acknowledging the violence of projecting weakness must also acknowledge that he is the cause of the other’s suffering’.⁵⁴⁶ For Benjamin, ‘the other is the one who is meant to be liberated’.⁵⁴⁷ Rather than a person experiencing the burden of obligations toward another, through mutual accompaniment both are liberated from any occupying powers in their relationships in redirecting one’s attention toward one’s capacities as a person in relationship to another.

Because of the restorative dimension of recognition and the role that the recognizer plays in contributing to the plight of the other, a constituent part of

⁵⁴³ Benjamin, *Beyond Doer and Done to*, 6.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

restorative recognition is the very acknowledgement of the suffering caused by the recognizer.⁵⁴⁸ For instance, accepting responsibility and apologizing for a hurtful action is mutually transformative for an offender and the offended. Given this, Benjamin asks: ‘doesn’t it follow that acknowledgment cannot be sundered from recognition? Doesn’t such acknowledgment also simultaneously constitute a recognition of the other’s worthiness at the same time as an admission of the subject’s unworthy action?’⁵⁴⁹ Within acts of restorative recognition, acknowledgement plays a critical role in assessing the dynamic between the recognizer and the recognized. The mechanism by which acknowledgement and recognition form an integral link in transforming the relationship between two persons is outlined by Benjamin as follows: ‘When the movement of this transforming action of knowledge to acknowledgment becomes *mutual* knowledge of harm and vulnerability, then recognition and acknowledgment together form the two moments constituting the Third that holds this knowledge’.⁵⁵⁰ Her understanding and use of the term ‘acknowledgement’ is in noticeable contrast to how theorists of acknowledgement theory use the term as a counter argument to recognition theory.

As such, acknowledgement is both an effective and moral feature of recognition. Therefore, Benjamin introduces the formative dimension of remorse, adding: ‘True remorse takes us to the third position beyond “Only one can live”’.⁵⁵¹ The successful movement to the ‘third’ she coins as ‘splitting’, an overcoming of ‘the two moments in the dialectic: the double move in which the master acknowledges his vulnerability and the slave asserts the demand to be treated with the recognition of

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 18–19.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

dignity’.⁵⁵² The trajectory from the unconscious transfer of vulnerability to an acknowledgement of the other and the suffering they incur is a movement from ‘dissociation into connection’ with the other.⁵⁵³

While this interdependent model of repair or restorative recognition is the preferred one for Benjamin, she also identifies a more limited example of the repair model. She notes: ‘When there is no possibility of intersubjective repair—when the figure of authority refuses to acknowledge or fears loss of power—the self turns to intrapsychic repair of the internal object instead’.⁵⁵⁴ Benjamin draws out the negative consequences for the would-be recognizer or subject in not acknowledging and recognizing the other:

When mutual dependency cannot be negotiated, the other must be reduced to intrapsychic object fantasy, onto whom the subject splits off unwanted weakness. Theoretically, the need is to distinguish such objects of projection from the real other. This move, as we have already seen, is central to the survival of destruction and overcoming of doer-done relations. That is, the detail of humanity to the other is tantamount to the erasure of intersubjectivity, understood here as the ineluctable fact of mutual dependency on equally human others. The inability to embrace recognition within an interactive system of thirdness leaves the subject alone in a monadic world without intersubjective orientation.⁵⁵⁵

In what remains, I will suggest that a new vision of recognition can benefit from a theological engagement that promotes availability and participation. Finally, I shall suggest that, through an eschatological vision, what emerges is not just a social or political person, but an ecclesial person who is both open and available to the other.

To summarize, in this section I have explored Butler’s expanded presentation of relationality. In particular, I noted that a critical engagement with the social world moves vulnerability from precarious circumstances of the political, achieving a

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

vulnerability that is constitutive of human meaning. In order to make this move toward a widening interrelationality, Butler prioritizes an understanding of ontology as a social ontology. Thus, she argues that alternative and calculated uses of vulnerability are now possible, such as vulnerability as openness. From this openness emerge new frames of recognition. For the Christian, the vision afforded by Butler's new frame remains restrictive, for its horizon is restricted by the finiteness of time. Thus, the Christian requires a theological reflection on vulnerability that pushes beyond time in order to abide in a relationship that recognizes the other, the material world, and God.

4.5 Recognition as a Theological Category: Availability and Participation

Before I expand on an eschatological vision for recognition, I first want to elucidate the importance of a theological consideration of recognition. My theological impetus for exploring the relationship between recognition and vulnerability is rooted in the importance of pastoral accompaniment of the other.⁵⁵⁶ Such accompaniment is a spiritual and social practice. Practices such as alleviating human suffering are longstanding characteristics of Christian care. Indeed, the parable of the Good Samaritan expresses how pastoral care facilitates recognition of the other. While mutual accompaniment may include pastoral care, it is significantly more than this. Thus, in this section I will argue that mutual accompaniment is characterized by able persons, who participate in the life of the other through giving oneself in mutual accompaniment.

In the introduction to this chapter, I have signalled availability and

⁵⁵⁶ Wirén, *Hope and Otherness*. Wirén draws upon Ola Sigurdson's suggestion that recognition is a theological category when it is understood in light of *imago Dei*.

participation as a feature of the relational dynamic in mutual accompaniment:

‘Encountering another’s presence I am enticed outward, made available to the other in a gesture attuned to its difference’.⁵⁵⁷ It is reasonable, then, to suggest that a theological apprehension of recognition as availability refers to a much wider participation, not only in the lives of the recognizer and the one recognized, but also in the life of God.⁵⁵⁸

Availability, therefore, is an inclination toward the other in mutual accompaniment. Yet, inclination is not a gesture of power. Rather, it is a moving of the recognizer and the recognized toward each other. As Vanier observes: ‘It is not simply a question of becoming responsible for others and being committed to them; it is also allowing them to carry and love us, and entering into a relationship of interdependence and into a covenant’.⁵⁵⁹ The term ‘responsibility’ requires careful treatment as it can underestimate the closeness and transformation that occurs in the relationship of mutual accompaniment. I agree with Thomas E. Reynolds who contends that ‘the term “responsibility” can be construed in ways that connote disinterested duty, charity, and self-sacrifice, and these do not characterize the genuine mutuality, interdependence, and love we are talking about’.⁵⁶⁰ Vanier’s important insight shows that accompanying the vulnerable other becomes reversed, whereby the person identified as the recipient of care becomes a caregiver in his or her own right. Yet, would not participation and availability be the hallmarks of a more general human accompaniment?

⁵⁵⁷ Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 123.

⁵⁵⁸ Metz, *Theology of the World*, 27.

⁵⁵⁹ Vanier, *Community and Growth*, 78.

⁵⁶⁰ Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 123.

In all probability, a genuine praxis of recognition in mutual accompaniment could only benefit from availability and participation. As I set out in the section on praxis and recognition, my theological reflection on recognition and vulnerability would not attempt a specialized form of theological recognition. The dynamic operative in mutual accompaniment that contributes to a life-long project of recognition creates an understanding of recognition that is helpful for a Christian in his or her efforts to draw ever closer to God and to neighbour.

Yet, the theological acknowledgement of the unity of human destiny—salvation—generates a distinctive frame through which one recognizes the other.⁵⁶¹ This unity requires nurturing for it to be characterized by closeness in our interrelationality, otherwise one risks a unity that, at best, has as its aim mere connectedness with each other. In Butler's treatment of the body as political and social, a neglected political body or a socially grieving body emerges. Vanier offers an alternative view of the body as an able body,⁵⁶² writing: 'A human being is more than the power or capacity to think and perform'.⁵⁶³ The vulnerable body as an able

⁵⁶¹ Wolfhart Pannenberg argues for a 'mutuality of human destiny'. While the recognizer's understanding of this is always evolving, it is also the context in which one encounters the other. This relational exposure is transformed through love into 'human associations'. Of significance for such associations are communities, where 'interconnections' with other groups can be facilitated and nurtured. See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *What is Man? Contemporary Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 83.

⁵⁶² The term 'able-bodied' suggests strength and the ability to perform a minimum level of psychical and cognitive abilities. In L'Arche, everybody is able-bodied, in that every person is a unique gift. The value or ability of a person is not based on their abilities, but rather on the recognition that they are a person who participates in a covenantal relationship within the community.

⁵⁶³ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 46.

body is available for the other; it is defined by neither its capacities nor its achievements. The understanding of the able-bodied in L'Arche resists any tyranny of what Reynolds calls the 'cult of normalcy', for all participate in their respective ways in community.⁵⁶⁴ Participation, therefore, has a transformative capacity within community. However, the frame of recognition required to value such participation requires more than a social or political frame.

What is required is a certain kind of eschatological thinking or imagining.⁵⁶⁵ For instance, the participatory dynamic of a theologically infused recognition can be understood as creating an eschatological space in the relationship of mutual accompaniment: 'The Christian acts in Christ, and the Christian operation, though working within the world (immanently), also works beyond it, externally to it (transcendently); in other words, such an act announces the eschatological remainder'.⁵⁶⁶ Participation is an important distinction between a theological understanding of recognition and a social or political account of recognition. Encountering the other requires generosity in acknowledging an observed or anticipated participation and interdependency upon the other. For the religiously orientated person, recognition is not just a cognitive or social operation.⁵⁶⁷

Expressed theologically, one might refer to participation as requiring a self-donation in recognizing the other: an expression of discipleship through a process of discernment. Within L'Arche communities, self-donation of an accompanier is particularly necessary in such situations, where she can walk with the one who is

⁵⁶⁴ Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 69.

⁵⁶⁵ Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love*, 229.

⁵⁶⁶ Graham Ward, *The Politics of Discipleship: Becoming Postmaterial Citizens* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 185.

⁵⁶⁷ Ward, *How the Light Gets In*, 218.

suffering and engage in translating and interpreting the experience of the other through accompaniment.

Above all else, an interdependency upon another by giving of oneself in service to another is a matter of mutual accompaniment, which culminates in a mutual recognition.⁵⁶⁸ Both the recognizer and the recognized become parallel actors through acknowledging their interdependency. The quality of self-donation captured in such dependency is a '[b]ecoming [that] must be understood as becoming *more*'.⁵⁶⁹ One such example of this interdependency upon each other in L'Arche is the dance troupe, the 'Spirit Movers'. The dancers are composed of people of all abilities. Through participation in dance, they seek to express diversity, interrelationality, and the sacred.

These relationships of growth and transformation within L'Arche are referred to as covenants.⁵⁷⁰ I have yet to consider what happens when recognition collapses in such relationships. For Butler, one obvious sign of misrecognition is grief. As I explained earlier, Butler observes that in working through grief, a new openness emerges. Yet, she is not specific in enunciating how one moves through grief toward a renewal of relationship or covenant.

In this section, I have emphasized availability and participation as important dynamics of any covenant with another. In addition, I have observed how self-donation is an expression of a wider participation with God, self, neighbour, and the world. I want to conclude this section with a consideration of the cross as a source of renewal for broken covenants, where recognition has been denied to the other. I

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., 189. Ward favours 'interrelationality' over 'intersubjectivity' as the former underscores 'relations [that] are far larger than the subjects engaged in evaluating them can measure; relations by nature exceed subjects'.

⁵⁶⁹ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 184.

⁵⁷⁰ Vanier, *Community and Growth*, 61.

suggest this, in part, as a response to Butler's lack of clarity on how grief can restore recognition.

4.6 Repairing Recognition: Returning to Recognition by Way of the Cross

Miroslav Volf, in *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*, explores the historical reality of failed covenants. He observes a 'pervasive social dynamic between the people who already belong to the covenant but fail to keep it'.⁵⁷¹ In considering a theological response to restoring relationships, he explores the significance of the cross and covenant. The cross is one sign of the availability of Jesus for mission. In addition, it expresses the radical donation of God's only son to humanity and the world. In that very missioning, God participates in a unique way in our humanity. Thus, my previous exploration of mutual accompaniment as both availability and participation is complemented by Volf's specific focus on the cross as a way to probe the renewal of covenants.

Volf identifies three insights that a Christian can gain from the cross. First, 'on the cross God renews the covenant by *making space* for humanity in God's self'.⁵⁷² Second, 'renewing the covenant entails *self-giving*'.⁵⁷³ Third, 'the new covenant is *eternal*'.⁵⁷⁴ Concerning the second insight, the life-long process of recognition requires an ever-renewed commitment to being available and participating in restored relationships or covenants. Whether grief alone is enough to reignite availability and participation is uncertain. Yet, as Volf's first insight suggests, the persistent

⁵⁷¹ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 153.

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, 154.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

knowledge that on the cross Christ embraced all humanity is a call for each Christian to create space for the other. Covenants lived out in mutual accompaniment is one way of creating a space for the other as not only honouring God's self-donation on the cross, but also participating in the radical embrace it inaugurated. In the final section of this chapter, through eschatology and its relationship with love, I will consider Volf's third insight, namely that new covenants are eternal.

In sum, this section began by elaborating on the theological importance of accompanying the other. In particular, I identified availability and participation as operative dynamics within mutual accompaniment. I briefly expanded on these dynamics through Volf's exploration of how the cross renews covenants. In doing so my aim has not been to create a specifically religious model of mutual accompaniment. Rather, abiding by my earlier contention, I have argued that there ought to be a praxis of Christian recognition, where the dynamics in any genuine praxis of mutual accompaniment as a way toward recognition would, in turn, assist a Christian in their efforts to recognize God and their neighbour. However, I did identify within Christian theology the unity of human destiny, or salvation, as nuancing the vision by which a Christian engages in the life-long project of recognition. In my view, this elicits an eschatological thinking in one's understanding of recognition through mutual accompaniment.

4.7 Recognition and Eschatology: Loving Accompaniment

Butler has shown that interrelationality emerging from vulnerability demands an expansive recognition of another and the created world. For theology, this interrelationality seeks to recognize self, other, non-linguistic animals, the created world, and God. Theology extends further the outreach of interrelationality

championed by Butler. With that acknowledged, I suggest that eschatology is one aspect of Christian theology in which a Christian can further explore this expansive theological understanding of interrelationality.

One might argue that recognition theory and eschatology are two disparate fields of study. However, both recognition theory and eschatology share a similar concern: the formation of the human person. In this chapter, I have considered the formation of the human person through theories of recognition and vulnerability. As I have shown, recent developments in recognition theory focus on the psychic, political, and moral formation of persons. While these advances in understanding human progress are welcome, scholars such as Butler shy away from the significance of religion in the formation of the human person.

In attempting to remedy this lacuna, I wish to demonstrate the relationship between recognition theory and eschatology. Traditionally, eschatology was concerned with matters of the next life. For example, Karl Rahner describes eschatology as the doctrine about the last things, namely death, judgement, Heaven and Hell. Yet, he also challenges any absolute understanding of eschatology as only the last things. Rahner expands the field of eschatology to include the past and the present, ‘as it gives expression once again to [the human person] as Christianity understands him [or her]: a being who exists from out of his [or her] present “now” toward his [or her] future’.⁵⁷⁵ However, the necessary relationship between a priority of faith and judgement within an eschatological humanism is fraught with risk.

While the conclusion of this chapter does not permit me to carry out a genealogy of this development, I do wish to consider one specific contribution made by Werner G. Jeanrond in this developing field of theological enquiry, namely the

⁵⁷⁵ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 431.

eschatological potential for love.⁵⁷⁶ He argues for a renewed eschatology that takes seriously love as a participatory force in human relationships. For Jeanrond, love is the overarching dynamic that operates within human relationships. The achievement of unity or ‘wholeness’ with God and with each other ‘in and through love is an essential aspect of this eschatological dynamic’.⁵⁷⁷ More significantly, the fusion of love into our human relationships achieves an interrelationality beyond human relationality: ‘The Christian Praxis of love begins with love itself in order then to review the personal, structural, social, political economic, cultural, etc. context in which love is taking place’.⁵⁷⁸ Perhaps Jeanrond’s observation about the permeating dynamic of love gives us reason to pause before fully appropriating Butler’s treatment of vulnerability and recognition, from which love is absent.

4.8 Conclusion

As I have indicated earlier, any theological account of personhood has to be rooted in *imago dei* and an eschatology that includes our loving in this world and the next. This gives the ‘I’ an ontological value and future that Butler’s political and social account of personhood may not have. For her, the emerging self is hinged down: an outcome of the interaction between norms and power. Nevertheless, as this chapter has established, Butler affords us a language, understanding, and sensitivity that will help contribute toward an account of recognition that is located within a universal vulnerability.

Not wishing to diminish the significance of any social encounter that identifies

⁵⁷⁶ Jeanrond, ‘Love and Eschatology’, *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 50, no. 1 (2011): 56.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

a common vulnerability as the category in which to recognize another, L'Arche suggests an alternative theological exposure that enables a more complex and integrated encounter. Perhaps it is one's prior knowledge of one's personal vulnerability that facilitates an observation of another's vulnerability. Or it may be that being exposed to another's vulnerability allows one to identify one's own vulnerability. Whatever the route, both ways give legitimacy to the rightness of vulnerability as a valued aspect of interrelationality within mutual accompaniment. L'Arche communities, however, understand that vulnerability is not simply the outcome of interpersonal exchange or something to be circumvented. It is primarily a gift given by the Spirit.⁵⁷⁹ Hence, vulnerability is not about power, but rather the exposition of the human body in its availability, participation, and loving in the world.

⁵⁷⁹ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 161.

Chapter 5: Disability as a Context for Theological Reflection on Recognition

5.1 Introduction

One may not recognize another person at ‘first sight’. Sometimes one must participate in repeated encounters of the same person before one achieves recognition of another. As I have suggested in previous chapters, accompaniment is a significant way of proceeding toward the recognition of another. In this final chapter, I shall explore the relationship between recognition and participation that is grounded in memory and practiced in witnessing to recognition, such that participation is a necessary dimension of recognition in social and ecclesial communities.

The demand for recognition by persons or groups not only brings to light historical incidents of disrespect, but also provides a forum for their experience of the absence of full or partial participation in public and ecclesial life.⁵⁸⁰ Whilst a variety of persons and groups can testify to recognition withheld and participation denied, I identify two such groups for attention here: those who suffer from intellectual disabilities; and those afflicted with serious mental illness. Both groups represent the unique lives of persons who bear witness to what it means to be human.

In bringing to the fore those who have been disrespected and excluded, I make explicit the reality of exclusion in our social and ecclesial world.⁵⁸¹ In doing so, one is reminded of how far communities can drift from the norm suggested by the

⁵⁸⁰ Cf. Nancy Fraser, ‘Identity, Exclusion, and Critique: A Response to Four Critics’, *European Journal of Political Theory* 6, no. 3 (2007): 316. Fraser identifies four types of social exclusion: economic, cultural, political, and a combination of some or all three. She argues that transformative recognition is required to correct incidents of cultural exclusion. This recognition, according to Fraser, amends the given ‘status order’, facilitating greater and more equal participation in institutional and social life (ibid.).

⁵⁸¹ Cf. Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia: The Joy of Love* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2015), 115. In this apostolic exhortation, Pope Francis suggest a pastoral care of accompaniment for separated and divorced Catholics.

theologian Jürgen Moltmann: ‘There is no differentiation between the healthy and those with disabilities. For every human life has its limitations, vulnerabilities, and weaknesses. We are born needy, and we die helpless. It is only the ideals of health of a society of the strong which condemn a part of humanity to being “disabled”’.⁵⁸² Yet, the historical absence of recognition afforded to persons with disabilities and their subsequent exclusion from participation in public and ecclesial life suggests that Moltmann’s correct observation of the unity that exists between persons is undercut by the realness of exclusion within political and religious societies. The task of this chapter, then, is to discuss, by advocating for a form of participation that is grounded in memory and practiced as witnessing, the contribution of a theologically considered expression of accompaniment in advancing the recognition of those who have been disrespected and denied full or greater participation in their respective communities.

5.2 Recognition as Accompaniment: Participation Disabilities

In what follows, I shall outline the trajectory of this chapter, in which I argue that recognizing those with disabilities or mental illness as persons allows one to accompany others.⁵⁸³ Furthermore, it is my contention that persons denied recognition are witnesses not just to the limitation of the normative frame of recognition within our political, cultural, economic, and ecclesial communities, but also to how such limitations are counteracted by a commitment to interrelationality through a mutual accompaniment. Such accompaniment supports the participation of a person in

⁵⁸² Jürgen Moltmann, ‘Liberate Yourselves by Accepting One Another’, in *Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing Religious Practice*, ed. Nancy L. Eiesland and Don E. Saliers (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 110.

⁵⁸³ Cf. John Swinton, ‘Stanley Hauerwas on Disability’, in *Disability in the Christian Tradition: A Reader*, ed. Brian Brock and John Swinton (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 512–24. Cf. Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 90.

community life within their respective finitudes.⁵⁸⁴ Thus, for the purposes of this thesis, those excluded from partial or full participation in social and religious life reiterate the significant pastoral contribution that accompaniment can play in the re-ordering of the status quo. At the same time, their witnessing as Christians testifies not to victimhood, but to the unique participation of every vocation in the collective narrative and vulnerable memory of life in Christ.⁵⁸⁵

As relayed in the title of this final chapter, I address the role of accompaniment in aiding the recognition of another from the perspective of disability. The chapter has three major sections. The first explores recognition as accompaniment through participation in the life of a person with disabilities. The second section establishes that notion of accompaniment as memory, which facilitates the development from non-recognition of another to recognition of a person. The third

⁵⁸⁴ Cf. Molly C. Haslam, 'Imago Dei as Relationality or Relationality: History and Construction', in *A Constructive Theology of Intellectual Disability: Human Beings as Mutuality and Response* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 106. Haslam suggests that given that persons with profound intellectual disabilities communicate through 'no symbolic modes of responsiveness', an alternative understanding of theological anthropology that overly prioritizes one's cognitive and intellectual ability is required. As she argues that 'the imago Dei in human being is understood in terms of participation in relationships of mutual responsiveness, whether symbolic or not symbolic, and not in terms of the possession of a particular, "essential" capacity, such as intellectual ability to imply signs and symbols for intentional communication or intentional agency of any kind' (ibid., 106).

⁵⁸⁵ In identifying that participation occurs in ecclesial communities and political communities, I am not suggesting that these two communities are independent and separate from one another. Institutionally, they may contrast legally and morally, yet they overlap through the multiple affiliations of their respective members. As Graham Ward observes, 'Those characterised as the community of the Church participate in the operations of other desires... These members of the community of the Church are also members of other forms of fellowship, other bodies—industrial, commercial, agricultural, political, sporting, domestic', Ward, *Cultural Transformation*, 57. Furthermore, one's belonging to a specific community is not always apparent, as Ward further notes that 'our lives inhabit, simultaneously, several different social imaginaries, and our living crosses back and forth through them all. In fact, some of them are probably not even articulated, because the social terrain they propose is so internalised it has become invisible: like my being white, like my moving mainly among people of a professional class' (ibid., 134–35). It should be noted that Ward does not consider a person locked into particular social, cultural or political groups. He acknowledges that, for persons, some communities of habitation will be more primary than others. Equally, he contends that migration between groups can occur, and drawing upon the work of Ricoeur, he suggests that such migration occurs through the assistance of the imagination (ibid., 136).

section makes a deliberate move toward a praxis of recognition by way of witnessing. In this section, I present what I term ‘recognitional accompaniment’ through participation in witnessing. As the chapter proceeds, I shall offer an explanation and an argument for these three interpretations of recognition of another by way of accompaniment.

Before concluding this introductory section, I want to elaborate on why I have chosen to approach this chapter in the manner just outlined. In elaborating on the exclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities, I consider the experience of Jean Vanier, the founder of L’Arche. He suggests that their inclusion in community life will not only change their lives; the lives of those they encounter will also be transformed.⁵⁸⁶ With respect to the three sections of this chapter—participation, memory, and witnessing—Vanier sums up the ethical outcome of a relationship between persons with disabilities and those without such disabilities: ‘To witness is to tell a story’.⁵⁸⁷ Of course, one cannot understand stories without understanding memory. Whilst Vanier elaborates on stories shared within L’Arche communities, he does not offer a substantive treatment of memory as a part of stories. Thus, in this chapter, I consider the role of memory and its relationship to witnessing in recognizing another person or group as my contribution to developing an interpretation of accompaniment.

In particular, I shall comment on how Vanier understands disability. One cannot do so without considering how he understands community and Christianity. By that I mean that Vanier does not present a definition of disability. I suggest that this action of not defining or stating exactly what constitutes disability is a deliberate

⁵⁸⁶ Vanier, *Becoming Human*, 84.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 90.

move on his part, as this allows him to prioritize not a person with disability, but rather, as he says, our ‘common humanity’.⁵⁸⁸ Placing all persons under the umbrella of a common humanity is not a denial of disability, but an affirmation of a unity amongst humanity, which I shall expand upon further in the section pertaining to accompaniment and participation.

Vanier acknowledges the acutely precarious position of those with disabilities, particularly around their ability to determine their lives. In observing how a human life and societies are understood in terms of capacities and advancements, Vanier notes that ‘people with disabilities have no such future’.⁵⁸⁹ Whilst persons with disabilities experience functional and cognitive development, the threshold for such growth is lower than the anticipated average for an abled-bodied person. Thus, those without disabilities are considered to have a constant potential for advancement on a personal and a professional level, whereas those with disabilities reach a limit at which no further progress can occur. For Vanier, the subsequent exclusion from communities of belonging is not the outcome of the limitation of the one with disability; rather, it expresses the limitation of the operative ‘social norm’.⁵⁹⁰

Persons and societies are not indifferent to those with disabilities. Indeed, any exclusion they experience interpersonally, legally or institutionally is not to be interpreted as an annexation from the consciousness of those who encounter or know persons with disabilities. That their potential for biological and cognitive development is interrupted and limited is a lamentable situation and a source of suffering for families and societies. Yet, Vanier cautions against such a reaction, which often

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., 86.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid., 45.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., 46.

perceives the lives of those with disabilities as a tragedy.⁵⁹¹ Their exclusion is neither their fault, nor a legitimate consequence of their circumstances.

Rather, as Vanier observes, ‘we tend to reduce being human to acquiring knowledge, power, and social status’.⁵⁹² Reducing humanity to the exclusion of the weak and vulnerable is a fatal move in Vanier’s estimation, not just for those with disabilities, but particularly for already recognized and included members of society. As Vanier states with conviction, ‘I also believe that those we most often exclude from the normal life of society, people with disabilities, have profound lessons to teach us’.⁵⁹³ The recognition that occurs between a person with disabilities and another is, as Vanier suggests, the outcome of a learning that occurs relationally. The dynamic of such a relationship, I argue, is best captured by the term mutual accompaniment.

In what follows, I propose a method of enquiry that argues for recognition of another by means of mutual accompaniment, which requires the participation of the recognizer and the one to be recognized. Such participation is not so much about a parity of participation, but a participation with respect to a person’s ability and finitude. To make clear the necessity of accompaniment in this process and to avoid an overly theoretical exploration of the question of recognition and participation, I consider the question in light of those with disabilities and severe mental illnesses by means of an interdisciplinary enquiry.

This allows me to make two points. First, participation requires mutual accompaniment. For to participate in a process of recognition is more than a cognitive engagement. And second, participation allows for a greater interdependency and

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁹² Ibid., 78.

⁵⁹³ Ibid., 45.

immersion in the life of a community. To illustrate these two positions, I draw out the contrast between Seyla Benhabib's presentation of political participation and a more theologically narrated one. The former prioritizes participation as a means by which one may represent one's point of view through public reasoning. The latter emphasizes participation as a process emerging from the experience of limitation and subsequent interdependency. Participation in this respect is a mutual trajectory of growth for a person in their own emerging sense of personhood and their immersion within community or the experience of communion.

To ground this process within the reality of historical theological experience, I suggest that memory is a significant resource in accompanying another and, thus, a necessary part of participation. There are, however, various perspectives on how memory might be employed in both historical and future recognition. Exploring two divergent schools of thought, I prioritize the urgency for recognition of the present moment as one way to navigate accompaniment within participation. Whilst the outcome of this cannot be prescriptive in nature, I go on to argue that mutual accompaniment is a form of witnessing in our ecclesial and political communities.

Before I explore participation and its role in the recognition of another through mutual accompaniment, I shall consider the difficult project of recognition of another, before proceeding to the topic of vulnerability. For the purposes of this chapter, my aim here is not to repeat what was explored and argued for in the previous chapter, but to relate the question of vulnerability specifically to persons with disabilities, in contending that recognition is an ongoing project of learning from and with any other person.

5.2.1 Participation and the Labour of Recognition

Recognition is not always the immediate outcome of encounter with another, particularly if the person is perceived as different. It is not surprising, then, that the vulnerability of persons with disabilities comes into sharp focus when one considers their struggle for recognition. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson captures this struggle, noting that ‘all too often we see each other not as we are, but as we are expected to be’.⁵⁹⁴ What follows from this social norm or expectation is misrecognition. Thus, a standard of normalcy is imposed upon who is to be recognized, and those with disabilities, as Garland-Thomson suggests, will mask their disabilities in order to fulfill the operative norm. What makes a person distinctive and unique is hidden from sight.

For Garland-Thomson, covering or ‘masking’ one’s distinctiveness ‘forfeits recognition’.⁵⁹⁵ In highlighting further the ongoing work of recognition, the human face is presented as an example of the precariousness of the task at hand. Garland-Thomson notes that upon encountering another, their face becomes either the site of ‘revelation’ or ‘refusal’.⁵⁹⁶ Faces are the ‘visual architecture of recognition’, whereby one endeavours to ‘distinguish’ one face from others and the ‘meaning’ of a face.⁵⁹⁷ Of course, there is a standard configuration of features to a face, insofar as there is a degree of predictability as to its general form and construction in terms of eyes, mouth, and nose, for example.⁵⁹⁸

With respect to the project of recognition, upon encountering a face, one is called on ‘to differentiate among similar configurations, to recognize a face as a face

⁵⁹⁴ Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 158.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

but also as a specific face'.⁵⁹⁹ Whilst the encounter with the face of another is not a unusual circumstance since we encounter faces every day, the process involved in transforming the encounter into an experience of recognizing another is a negotiation between what is anticipated and known, and that which is surprising and different. As Garland-Thomson observes, '[r]eading and recognizing faces demands negotiating between the universal and the particular, between the parts and the whole'.⁶⁰⁰ As with any negotiation, recognizing agreement is no guarantee.

Indeed, there exists no absolute given that the dialogue between the concrete and personal encounter with another and what one imagined that other ought to be will necessarily result in an experience of recognition. As argued in the previous chapter, the encounter with another might very well result in the further marginalization and rejection of that person. To prevent this, Garland-Thomson is not providing a mechanism to ensure recognition upon first encounter; instead, she is proposing an understanding of recognition that includes a participatory process:

The problem with the facial gestalt is how to find the nuances of individual features. The intense visual work of staring at faces is both a cognitive and epistemological undertaking. When we look at another person, we seek to know much. Is this a face? Do I know this face? Whose face is this? Does this face know me? What is this face's response to me? What does this face mean? Does this face matter to me? What relation do I have to this face now and what will it be in the future?⁶⁰¹

The ongoing repeated exposure to faces, then, will surely increase one's ability to recognize them. Yet, the historical misrecognition of people with disabilities confirms that the process of recognition is not a certainty, for 'facial legibility rests upon a narrow set of expectations and tolerates a limited range of variations'.⁶⁰² Regularly

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid.

⁶⁰² Ibid., 104.

encountering the face of a disabled person will not necessarily result in the recognition of that person.

As Garland-Thomson points out, there exists, in every culture, ‘norm-based coding’ that enables ‘facial legibility’,⁶⁰³ meaning that we are more inclined to recognize, at first sight, the general features of what we understand a face to be. The challenge for recognition of another is the ‘how-to’ of recognizing a face that is different from one’s expectations.⁶⁰⁴ In the next section, I will suggest that one way toward achieving recognition of another is via exposure to them through participation.

Garland-Thomson problematizes any expectation that recognition upon request is a forgone conclusion. Obtaining recognition is an ongoing project, as typified by its precarious achievement by persons with disabilities. Before I proceed further, it is worth recalling that, in utilizing aspects of Garland-Thomson’s work around facial recognition, I have illustrated the challenge in recognition of another. In particular, her work emphasizes that recognition is often an ongoing project. This is due, in part, to cultural norms through which we encounter another, for one is more disposed to recognizing similarity than difference.

The task of recognition is often undercut or delayed by what one deems to be ‘normal’. To explore this further, I return to the theme of the previous chapter: vulnerability. My suggestion is that vulnerability, as evidenced by persons with disabilities, reveals not only the limits of being human, but also the interdependency that is universally human.

In returning to the topic of vulnerability, my aim is not to repeat what was explored and concluded in the previous chapter, but to specifically locate

⁶⁰³ Ibid., 103.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

vulnerability with respect to persons with disabilities through an interdisciplinary exploration. A more socially nuanced understanding of vulnerability is achieved through an interdisciplinary account of the relationship between disability and vulnerability. Part of the resulting composite of the relationship between disability and vulnerability is the positive power of witnessing to the value of a human life and seeing how, in learning from the other, one becomes a student of their experience. Whilst I note this at the conclusion of the following subsection, the point, with respect to witnessing and recognition, will be explored in more detail later in the chapter, in which I consider the contribution of memory to witnessing.

5.2.2 Disability and Accompaniment: Vulnerability Revisited

Treating recognition as an ongoing project aids in the recognition of those persons with disabilities. Toward this end, I will draw upon the observations of Jackie Scully. My point here is to caution against employing vulnerability in a general way as the site for recognition of another. By considering seriously how disability narrates vulnerability, those more abled-bodied persons are exposed to how the norms they create and uphold can prevent recognition, as Garland-Thomson argued.

Scully contends that persons with disabilities are *especially* vulnerable⁶⁰⁵ because they are more exposed to harm or particular types of harm.⁶⁰⁶ For instance, homeless persons are more exposed to ill health given their economic poverty and lack of housing. Persons with disabilities are also particularly exposed to vulnerability given their cognitive or linguistic inability to express an experience of harm or pain.

⁶⁰⁵ Jackie Scully, 'Disability and Vulnerability: On Bodies, Dependence and Power', in *Vulnerability: New Essays in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy*, ed. Catriona MacKenzie, Wendy Rogers, and Susan Dodds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 205.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

Scully points to the challenge of what she calls ‘theorizing vulnerability’.⁶⁰⁷ As she notes, a tension arises as a result of the two diverging approaches to vulnerability. The first seeks to understand vulnerability in a foundational way through ontology. The second considers not so much the permanent feature of vulnerability, but rather the fact that some persons are more disposed to experiencing vulnerability and certain situations are more conducive to an experience of vulnerability.⁶⁰⁸

As discussed in the previous chapter, Thomas Reynolds observes this tension by which one structures vulnerability, in highlighting the prevalence of a frame of normalcy. Similarly, Scully notes:

Populations then become dichotomised into two distinct groups: people who are ‘normal’ and sufficiently invulnerable to be left to get on with their lives; and vulnerable others who are in some way abnormal and need extraordinary treatment, either to restore them to normality or to offer them ongoing protections that normal people do not need.⁶⁰⁹

In observing this commonly held dichotomy, Scully reiterates that disabled persons are considered particularly vulnerable. Having observed the prevalence of this dichotomy in research ethics involving persons with disabilities, Scully nonetheless seeks to examine it critically for its merits, specifically in how disability can narrate and/or create vulnerability. She first examines inherent vulnerabilities, such as disabilities that expose a person to physical illness. For example, a person with muscular dystrophia is more vulnerable to falling than others. As Scully rightly points out, societies and governments can improve the quality of life of ‘impairment-related inherent vulnerabilities’⁶¹⁰ by providing and maintaining accessible infrastructure.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid., 206.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

Health conditions related to persons with Down syndrome are less easily managed or improved. Scully asserts the prevalence of vulnerability as a consequence of a physical or developmental impairment. The challenge, therefore, is not to cast aside this fact in order to employ vulnerability as a term through which one can develop angles of enquiry into mainstream questions of social or moral recognition. Vulnerability is directly embodied in those who experience a disability. Nevertheless, one's encounter with persons of disability not only confirms that fact, but also evokes a wider consideration of a more prevalent or mainstream vulnerability that is common to all.

Scully, however, asserts that vulnerabilities experienced by persons with disabilities are inherent, and, significantly, contingent. By contingent, she is referring to how vulnerabilities are generated or exacerbated by social relations and conditions. For instance, care of those who suffer from disabilities may not be a priority for governments or other institutions. As a result, such persons will experience greater vulnerability, with fewer resources made available for their healthcare, housing, and education. As Scully writes, '[v]ulnerabilities to these are neither natural nor inevitable consequences of the impairment; they occur because of the unequal ways that existing material, cultural, and social resources are distributed and so are either produced or exacerbated by social institutions'.⁶¹¹ Lurking in the background is a persistent value attributed to autonomy over and against dependency upon the other.

Despite the tendency to understand autonomy and dependency as binaries, Scully views their relationship as reciprocal. To summarize, Scully has not sidestepped the challenge of identifying the limitation of the disabled person; her observations highlight the inherent vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities.

⁶¹¹ Ibid., 218.

Moreover, Scully adds an additional feature to the vulnerability experienced by persons with disabilities: namely that vulnerability is also socially contingent. I suggest that she turns the spotlight onto abled persons, demonstrating how their non-recognition of those with disabilities is socially limiting and marks the disabled person. Thus, any consideration of the disabled person must take account of how limitation and exclusion are socially constructed and imposed upon another.

Thus far, I have suggested that recognition of another is not a forgone conclusion. In highlighting the non-recognition of persons with disabilities, the precariousness of recognizing another was brought to the fore. Furthermore, I returned to vulnerability and considered it anew in light of disability, revealing that disability is both inherent and contingent. More significantly, the interdisciplinary consideration of disability in light of vulnerability reveals the finitude and limitation of every human life. Whilst this might typically be understood in a negative way, I suggest that such limitation reveals how persons are dependent upon one another, a dependency that is best realized through mutual accompaniment.

5.3 Accompaniment through Participation: Human Finitude and Limitation

In what follows, I will consider the notion of participation from a philosophical and a theological perspective. Whilst I cannot provide here a comprehensive account of how the term is understood or developed in both traditions, I offer a contrast between a political philosophy of participation and a theological presentation of participation. I suggest that participation from a theological point of view is more than a political or social procedure.

Within ecclesial communities, participation, as a way of regarding one's interaction with another, concerns the universal trajectory of all, namely salvation.

Thus, participation is more than one's political and social involvement in institutions and their processes; it is a dynamic within a wider community of humanity and the life of God. For a Christian community, participation concerns a praxis, which acknowledges human limitation while at the same time identifying the necessity of participation for a renewed appreciation of one's dependency upon another and God in the pursuit of one's vocation.

To emphasize the contrast between participation as a political or social activity and participation as a theologically informed activity, I shall first illustrate the procedural aspect of participation as a political endeavour in noting Benhabib's argument for participation. In particular, I shall highlight her over-reliance on participation as a cognitive enterprise, whilst acknowledging the importance of a form of participation that facilitates the involvement of an individual in political processes.

5.3.1 The Philosophical Dimensions of Participation

Political theory and theology share a common concern about the fracturing of community life. Thus, participation is considered to be a resource within both disciplines in curbing the splintering of community life. In her development of communitarian political theory, Benhabib argues for two operative aspects of such thought: an integrationist one and a participatory one.⁶¹² She observes a 'vacillation' between these two aspects of communitarianism. The integrationist approach attempts to resolve the collapse of community through a resurgence of faith-orientated or secular religion.⁶¹³ This approach to the challenge of individualism and privatization in our societies prioritizes 'value revival, value reform, or value regeneration and

⁶¹² Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 77.

⁶¹³ Ibid.

neglects institutional solutions'.⁶¹⁴ Yet, Benhabib does not share the integrationist view that societies are thwarted by individualism.

In situating her opposition to the integrationist diagnoses of communities that are in demise, Benhabib suggests that their demise is due to a lack of 'agency and efficacy',⁶¹⁵ suggesting a 'participationist' remedy.⁶¹⁶ Within this approach, Benhabib suggests that social belonging can be comprised of multiple belongings. For example, one could be Roman Catholic and a member of a political party, or one could be a resident in one country and a citizen of another. Thus, multi-belonging does not necessitate 'separation' from one social or political attachment to another. As such, the issue seems less an estrangement or a lack of integration as a result of a plurality of commitments in various social and political situations.

For Benhabib, the emergence of individualism within multi-belonging is a consequence of the 'contradiction between the various spheres which diminishes one's possibility for agency in one sphere on the basis of one's position in another sphere', or 'that membership in the various spheres becomes mutually exclusive because of the nature of the activities involved'.⁶¹⁷ What seems to be of concern for Benhabib is how one's social belonging, such as membership in a faith-based community, could nuance and restrict one's sense of belonging in other communities of habitation.

In exploring the philosophical foundations of democracy, Benhabib identifies what she defines as three public goods:⁶¹⁸ namely legitimacy, economic welfare, and

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid.

⁶¹⁸ Seyla Benhabib, 'Deliberative Rationality and Models of Democratic Legitimacy', *Constellations* 1, no. 1 (1994): 26.

collective identity.⁶¹⁹ I will restrict my consideration to the public good of legitimacy. This good makes particular reference to participation and, in due course, it will enable a contrast between participation in the political sense and participation from a theological perspective.

Benhabib defines democratic legitimacy as ‘the belief that the major institutions of a society and the decisions reached by them on behalf of the public are worthy of being obeyed and granted normative recognition’.⁶²⁰ Adherence to the opinions and actions of institutions is based on the ‘impartial standpoint’ by which such institutions reach would-be conclusions, and that what has been determined by said institutions is best for everybody.⁶²¹ For Benhabib, democratic legitimacy is an inclusive form of participation whereby recognized norms are obeyed because they are outcomes of deliberative participation.⁶²² Participation in such a process is modelled according to three parts:

- a. participation in such deliberation is governed by the norms of equality and symmetry; all have the same chances to initiate speech acts, to question, to interrogate, and to open debate; b. all have the right to question the assigned topics of conversation; c. all have the right to initiate reflexive arguments about the very rules of the discourse procedure and the way in which they are applied or carried out.⁶²³

Whilst it is not within the remit of this chapter to expand on Benhabib’s presentation of participation, it is worth relaying her understanding of participation. She offers a persuasive defence of the proceduralist model of participation, arguing that it facilitates the availability of greater knowledge with respect to matters of common concern by means of conversation and debate.⁶²⁴

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

⁶²⁰ Ibid., 31.

⁶²¹ Ibid.

⁶²² Ibid.

⁶²³ Ibid.

⁶²⁴ Ibid., 44.

Whatever norms emerge from such a deliberative model are inconclusive and, therefore, are open to revision and amendment.⁶²⁵ Her model of participation places particular value on its use of ‘practical rationality’.⁶²⁶ Yet, Benhabib’s model for participation presumes cooperation between persons purely on the basis of the proceduralism—assumed levels of literacy, articulation, and being informed—through which such participation occurs. How might her model of participation respond to the question of the participation of persons with disabilities? I hold that her model would not in any obvious way answer the question.

As I shall relay subsequently in this subsection, participation also requires accompaniment, for not every person will have the practical resources needed to give an account of themselves. The acceptance here—that persons are limited and interdependent—challenges the opinion of a participation model that overstates abled cognitive or rational actors to the abandonment of less abled actors.

Benhabib’s argument derives from her appreciation and employment of Jürgen Habermas’s conception of the public sphere.⁶²⁷ With respect to this chapter and the usefulness of participation in the recognition of another—particularly persons who are developmentally challenged—one observes the pastoral limitation of Benhabib’s particular presentation of participation as a solely cognitive endeavour:

These trends [‘irrationalities of modern societies’] can only be counteracted by expanding individuals’ cognitive participation in various branches of knowledge which today have become the monopoly of experts, and by increasing the possibilities for meaningful life-choices on the parts of individual.⁶²⁸

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

⁶²⁶ Ibid.

⁶²⁷ Benhabib, *Situating the Self*, 80.

⁶²⁸ Ibid., 81.

It is the emphasis on participation as a cognitive enterprise that presents a pastoral challenge to a Christian employment of participation in aiding the recognition of another.

Thus, the non-critical appraisal of a communicative-driven approach to participationism releases it from a pastoral or person-focused approach:

‘Participationism is not an answer to the dilemmas of modern identity, estrangement, anomie and homelessness’.⁶²⁹ Benhabib suggests, however, that ‘the participationist concerns the public opinion that having the facility and opportunity to express one’s attitudes on the political, civic and economic rules and policies is of utmost importance’.⁶³⁰ Actions for restoring estranged people or groups, within her understanding of participation, are considered to be of less value.

5.3.2 The Theological Dimensions of Participation

For the Christian community, involvement is part of the social dimension of participation. Yet, participation entails more than just social involvement. In what follows, the theological view of participation points toward a recognition of the marginalized other. This recognition is sourced in the acknowledgement of universal salvation and the prioritizing of participation through the extension of human activity within a wider interrelational accompaniment.

I now consider participation from a theological perspective. Within the discipline of a philosophy of religion, Paul Tillich employs the term ‘participation’ in order to highlight how some individuals are not recognized as persons. In a more general sense, he interprets that those marginalized in society are victims of non-

⁶²⁹ Ibid.

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

recognition. At first, Tillich observes their denied participation within law, noting that ‘the law has not recognized everyone as a person’.⁶³¹ Indicating non-recognized persons—such as children, women, or slaves—Tillich adds that their exclusion from participation in various cultural, social, and political contexts is a consequence of their lack of recognition as persons. This is not a mere social or moral observation for Tillich. Indeed, he estimates that in order for a person to move beyond individualism or estrangement, they need to participate relationally with what he terms the transcendent ground. As Julia T. Meszaros observes in Tillich’s presentation of participation, ‘this relationality recognizes the other as representative of nothing less than the ground of one’s own being, from which one is distinct, yet to which one belongs’.⁶³²

Thus, there is a direct link between participation and recognition: where one is denied, so is the other. Tillich has brought to the fore the necessity of participation in recognition of another. He points to a development in a Christian understanding of personhood and participation: ‘The uniqueness of every person was not established until the Christian church acknowledged the universality of salvation and the potentiality of every human being to participate in it’.⁶³³ As I indicated in the opening section of this chapter, participation is a qualified involvement due to the limitations or vulnerability of persons, for ‘man’s participation always is limited’.⁶³⁴ Yet, as accompaniment in pastoral practice indicates human limitation, one’s participation is neither a weakness nor a shortcoming.

⁶³¹ Paul Tillich, ‘The Ontological Structure and its Elements’, in *Paul Tillich: Theologian of the Boundaries*, ed. Mark Kline Taylor (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 144. Cf. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 168–70, 179–201.

⁶³² Julia T. Meszaros, *Selfless Love and Human Flourishing in Paul Tillich and Iris Murdoch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 92.

⁶³³ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁶³⁴ *Ibid.*

In Christian communities, limitation fosters a dependency upon one another, as one moves relationally toward salvation. Like Tillich, Werner G. Jeanrond observes that participation provides greater nuance to the way in which the Christian community understands salvation and who participates in it. Perceiving salvation as participation in the life of God, rather than mere deliverance from this world, Jeanrond notes that it thus replaces absolute and autonomous human power with future-oriented participation.⁶³⁵

The person, Tillich suggests, participates in various planes of life. Moreover, participation generates a deepening relationality with other linguistic beings, which culminates in the experience of communion.⁶³⁶ Yet, if participation is denied to another, a direct consequence will also be the denial of the experience of communion, in which participation culminates thoroughly within personal relationships. Or to put it another way, participation is necessary for human development and growth. Underscoring this point, Tillich adds that participation is ‘essential for the individual, not accidental’.⁶³⁷ This essential dimension of participation is expressed in three ways, for Tillich: namely through perception, imagination, and action.⁶³⁸

Participation is a way out of estrangement or the isolation that non-recognition occasions. Moreover, Tillich observes that accounts of human nature focus on personal alienation, and in so doing, such accounts ‘reduce man to a cognitive subject (*ens cogitans*), who perceives, analyses, and controls reality’.⁶³⁹ Such an overly determined cognitive person ‘deprives [knowledge and knowing] of any participation’

⁶³⁵ Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love*, 248–49.

⁶³⁶ Mark Kline Taylor, ed., *Paul Tillich: Theologian of the Boundaries* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 145.

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.*, 209. The opposite of participation is estrangement, where a person is denied participation and isolated from relationships (*ibid.*).

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*, 210.

in a wider or universal communion that is life with God.⁶⁴⁰ What Tillich advances is participation as a response to the experience of marginalization. His claim that the human person is more than a cognitive subject facilitates interdependency between persons. Thus, his specific treatment of the dimension of action in how one understands participation is not only a response to universal salvation, but it also speaks to how participation in daily Christian living makes such salvation attainable. In particular, Tillich's understanding of participation identifies the interdependency between persons in advancing a dynamic of participation that culminates in the experience of communion. Two observations are worth noting in Tillich's presentation of participation. First, the recognition of another is between humans. Thus, he does not advocate for interrelationality between linguistic and non-linguistic animals. Second, Tillich's treatment of the limitation of persons is not intended to restrict one's participation, but rather ought to be the impetus for a greater reliance on the other in a mutual participation toward communion, by way of mutual accompaniment.

Communion is an outcome of Karl Rahner's and Herbert Vorgrimler's presentation of participation. They distinguish two interpretations of participation: self-communication and mutual communication—where communication is understood to mean 'that active exchange, based on personal ability to hear and free openness, that creates a community between the transmitter and the recipient (hearer) which is best called communion'.⁶⁴¹ With respect to self-communication, participation concerns the effect that one person may have on another person. It is monological in its trajectory, in that one person gives to the other and thus extends

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁴¹ Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, *Concise Theological Dictionary*, ed. Cornelius Ernst and trans. Richard Strachan (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1965), 89.

participation into his or her life. In other words, the participation of A in the life of B grants B a participation in the life of A.

Mutual communication, on the other hand, involves both human and divine relationships.⁶⁴² Its mutuality is concerned with participation that occurs between persons and culminates in self-communication to the human person. Participation within reciprocal communication involves a commitment to another, in which ‘two spiritual personal beings may give the other a participation in itself’.⁶⁴³ Furthermore, Rahner adds that ‘[t]his kind of participation reaches its summit in God’s communication of himself’.⁶⁴⁴ For Rahner, participation illustrates that ‘everything has a single origin and thus participates in God’, and that ‘two beings remain two and yet are one by participation in each other’.⁶⁴⁵ Thus, while difference exists between groups and persons, there is also a fundamental unity between persons that ought to characterize our social and spiritual participation interpersonally and communally.

Yet, terms such as ‘difference’ and ‘unity’ can be overly abstract, particularly when understood as part of a theological account of participation. For Lorencino Bruno Puntel, the classical notion of participation is understood within theology as an *event*.⁶⁴⁶ Puntel’s event is ‘the self-disclosure of the whole through and in the self-realization of the “parts”, that is, of the different particulars’.⁶⁴⁷ He succinctly outlines the development of participation from Greek philosophy through to its adoption as a

⁶⁴² Cf. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 141. Here Rahner explains God’s ‘self-communication’ as both God’s intervention into human history and God’s hiddenness in our personal and collective lives. Despite God’s disclosure and non-disclosure, Rahner adds that there exists a unity in God, ‘a history which really is the one true history of God himself’ (ibid., 142).

⁶⁴³ Rahner and Vorgrimler, *Concise Theological Dictionary*, 337.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁶ Lorencino Bruno Puntel, ‘Participation’, in *Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. Karl Rahner (London: Burns and Oates, 1977), 1162.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid.

Christian term by Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas. Advantageous for this chapter is Puntel's contention that the term 'participation' has potential for assisting in theology's task of wrestling with present-day ecclesial and political life.⁶⁴⁸

With Puntel's contention in mind, I suggest that participation is understood as advancing the experience and growth of personal freedom within one's vocation. In light of Christian theology's adoption of the Greek notion of participation, Puntel adds that the 'event [or participation] is regarded as a radically personal exercise of freedom', whereby the human person becomes 'the freely-acting partner of God'.⁶⁴⁹ How does this answer the question of the relationship of the particular to the universal in one's Christian understanding of participation? Is it the case that the particular ought to be subsumed into the universal and, thus, participate as the freely-acting partner of God in the created world?

I agree with Puntel that '[w]herever and in whatever degree a totality appears, it must be considered as a participative unity, that is, as a unity whose nature or purpose only comes to its own proper fulfilment in the establishment and liberation of its "parts" (particulars, differentiations)'.⁶⁵⁰ The significant point of understanding totalities as non-absolutes is that they participate in a wider unity in which difference

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid., 1163.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid. Whilst I do not explore the term *Koinonia*, taken from the Greek *κοινωνία*, its use is implicit in my exploration of the term *participation* as an aspect of mutual accompaniment. Within a Christian context, *koinonia* is generally understood to mean fellowship or communion with God and fellow Christians. In addition, *koinonia* also denotes participation. Paul L. Lehmann (1906–94) argued that the Church's ethical ministry is often carried out in discrete ways. Its ethical ministry, however, is not an ethical ministry in the political or philosophical sense. The term *koinonia* understood as participation gives expression to the Christian dimension of ethical care in the Church, in which Christians and the Christian community participates in God's activity in the world. For Lehmann's main concern was 'with the concrete ethical reality of a transformed human being and a transformed humanity owing to the specific action of God in Jesus Christ, an action and transformation of which the reality of the Christian *koinonia* is a foretaste', Paul Lehmann, *Ethics in a Christian Context*, intro. Wallace M. Alston Jr. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 17.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

and particularity experience their place and meaning within a unity. Such understanding also serves as a protective mechanism within the Christian community. For Puntel, this event or participation, in which totalities are understood as participative and not domineering absolutes, assists in ridding totalities of their generalities and inadequacies.⁶⁵¹ Here Puntel seems to affirm an identity of difference. Rather than relating someone or something to a more general idea, such as understanding a person from a particular culture within that culture, the greater task for Puntel is to experience the uniqueness and particularity of that person.

For ecclesial communities, understanding participation as an event, and seeing totalities as participating in a wider unity, can help to prevent ‘a sealed-off and clericalized Church’.⁶⁵² Thus, all persons are called to participate in the event of co-labouring with God, in which ‘the “totalities” that “particularize” our reality in so many different modes and degrees: the person and work of Jesus Christ, the history of salvation, humanity, Church, society, State and so on’, come together as constitutive parts of a participation that is caught up in a unity.⁶⁵³ For participation to be genuine, it requires an event that is hospitable to those not recognized, such as persons and groups who experience disability.

In this way, then, participation is an extension of Christian praxis. Whilst I explored the term ‘praxis’ in the last chapter, it will be helpful to recall that ‘praxis’ entered the theological realm with renewed vigour in the 1980s.⁶⁵⁴ In this subsection in which I have briefly explored participation, I have made explicit—through revisiting some of claims made by Rahner, Vorgrimler, and Puntel—that the

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² Ibid.

⁶⁵³ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁴ Cf. Werner G. Jeanrond, ‘Toward a Critical Theology of Christian Praxis’ *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (1985): 136–45.

relationship between the universal and the particular is participation within a wider unity of a learning relationship with both God and humanity. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the expansion of participation to include difference aims to accompany and recognize excluded persons.

5.3.3 Current Developments in a Theology of Participation

Andrew Davison examines participation within a theological tradition, primarily sourced in the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas. He argues that participation is a partnership, firstly between God and the created person, and secondly between persons themselves.⁶⁵⁵ In identifying participation as partnership, Davison makes a calculated distinction between participation as ‘part of’ and as ‘part in’. The former interpretation, for Davison, implies an ‘annexing’ from a relationship of which one was previously a part. In contrast, ‘part in’ is a partnership that has, as its ongoing dynamic, cooperation between God and persons, and, subsequently, between persons themselves.

Participation in the life of God and another is an ever-emerging encounter. Similar to Butler’s argument that one’s knowledge of another is never fully transparent, Davison observes that participation in the life of another ‘is a limited reception from another’.⁶⁵⁶ In arguing this, he makes a distinction between ontological and predicamental participation.⁶⁵⁷ The former understands participation as ‘the reality of what is participated in confers being on what participates in it’.⁶⁵⁸ Whilst the latter, Davison contends, ‘is notional, since what is participated in does not exist other

⁶⁵⁵ Andrew Davison, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 137.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁶⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

than in what participates in it'.⁶⁵⁹ I take this to mean that a person is not an autonomous being set free from God or persons, but rather that one's existence is dependent upon God and another.

Expanding upon predicamental participation with respect to one's relationship with God, Davison suggests that 'likeness' advances how one might further understand participatory relationships. As an analogy for participation, likeness is presented as an image for the relationship between God and humanity. Specifically, likeness captures both a 'bond and a distinction' in the relationship between God and humanity. In this way, Davison is emphasizing the gift of life that has been donated by God, while identifying the difference between the creator and the created. As he puts it, 'That is why analogy features so prominently in participatory theology: analogy is likeness in the face of yet-greater unlikeness, or against the backdrop of yet-greater unlikeness'.⁶⁶⁰ Whilst this first priority of understanding the participatory relationship between God and a person is a necessary one, for the purposes of this chapter, Davison's last chapter—in which he considers participation and human interrelatedness—is pertinent to understanding the dynamic of interpersonal participation.

Participation between persons is considered dynamic, for it 'involves the idea that creatures can be said to participate in one another'.⁶⁶¹ With this comes a frame of recognition through which one encounters another. As Davison argues, a 'participatory vision is also likely to recognize a depth to things, grounded in their origin in God'.⁶⁶² Such recognition, therefore, concerns how one recognizes the depth

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., 370.

⁶⁶² Ibid., 2.

in another person. Here Davison describes the participation involved as ‘intra-finite participation’.⁶⁶³ Dependency upon another is the operative dynamic within the participatory relationship between persons. Such dependency, however, is sourced with a more fundamental dependency with God:

The dynamics of receiving from, of coming through, and of depending upon can readily be seen, from a participatory perspective, as a refraction within the world of the great constitutive reception and dependence (on God and from God) by which creation exists at all. To have being by participation from God is to be constituted with a form of openness and potential to receive from other creatures.⁶⁶⁴

In summary, the theological understandings of participation prioritize relationships as the context in which one experiences meaning and spiritual growth. As Tillich argued, participation is a way out of loneliness. Not only was he prescribing a solution to the experience of alienation, he was equally testifying to the reality of human alienation. Rahner’s argument for self-communication and mutual communication corresponds in part to Davison’s ontological and predicamental participation. There is, however, a distinction between both theologians with respect to the sequence of participation. For Davison, participation begins first in the relationship between God and the human subject. From that primary relationship, interpersonal relationships between persons occur and flourish through a participatory dynamic. Rahner, on the other hand, first prioritizes communication between persons, which culminates in communication between the human subject and God. Rather than cast a verdict on which sequence is more appropriate for recognition by way of mutual accompaniment, Ward employs participation as a way of life.

⁶⁶³ Ibid., 370.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid.

Ward draws upon the ‘activity’ of the Church at Thessalonica during the time of Paul.⁶⁶⁵ He qualifies the Greek word *plērophoría* with two English words, ‘euphoria’ and ‘dysphoria’, in order to present a new understanding of the term recognition in light of participation. Ward explains:

With *plērophoría*, I suggest, we have a word concerning participation in Christ, the fullness of God. There is an unmistakable recognition, a knowledge, carried within, borne by, brought forth in Paul’s word because of the way that word participates in the *plērophoría* of Christ. This recognition, that is both affective and cognitive, is the sign of that word’s authenticity and truth.⁶⁶⁶

Thus, Ward’s presentation of participation extends beyond Benhabib’s argument that participation is a cognitive or rational exercise.

By pointing toward the affective dimension of participation, Ward is underscoring how one might practice participation. This ethical move is less developed in Davison’s account of participation. In particular, Ward contends that the affective dimension in participation requires discernment to be part of any project of recognition that prioritizes the role of participation.⁶⁶⁷ In this chapter, I do not explore the idea of discernment, but instead identify, from what Ward suggests with respect to participation, the need for mutual accompaniment in recognition of another. As Ward observes, ‘[t]his recognition comes from others and supports the act of believing’.⁶⁶⁸ Due to the social and dialogical aspect of how recognition is expressed, there will also inevitably be experiences of misrecognition.

Proponents of recognition theory champion the overcoming of misrecognition. For misrecognition, they contend, is an experience of disrespect for the one denied recognition. Ward, however, is less hostile to misrecognition, though his

⁶⁶⁵ Ward, *How the Light Gets In*, 217.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 276.

understanding takes into account the difficulty of transparency and the reality that we are ever-emerging selves. In light of this, Ward argues that ‘recognition has to understand that it is also a misrecognition because its understanding is incomplete’.⁶⁶⁹ His position here is in agreement with one of the observations of this thesis, namely that recognition is not so much a moment in history, but an ongoing project.

5.3.4 Participation and the Challenge of Norms

Having established that participation is more than political inclusion, I return to the participation event by considering participation’s challenge for developmentally challenged persons. A theological account of participation does not necessarily result in an actual praxis of recognition by means of participation within Christian communities. Examining participation through the specific frame of disability not only confirms this, but also facilitates an interdependency between theology and other disciplines by achieving a recognition of those forgotten within societies.

In what follows, I will consider how participation is constrained by operative norms to such an extent that recognition is withheld. As noted previously, the exclusion of persons with disabilities from participation in community life illustrates the reality of withheld recognition and denied participation. I disagree with Puntel’s understanding of participation as event, for an event may be just a one-off encounter. I suggest, rather, that recognition, and the activity of participation that goes with it, does not occur during a singular event in time. Rather, participation is an ongoing, interrelational activity marked by an ever-emerging relationship with another. As such, in recognizing another, one challenges the prevailing norms that socially and spiritually subjectify a person or a group of people. With respect to disability and

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid., 310.

mental illness, Thomas Reynolds observes that they provide ‘a prophetic counter to the cult of normalcy far too often assumed in theological formulations’.⁶⁷⁰ The challenge of operating norms requires a theological enquiry that is enhanced by other disciplines.

In defining disability, I am seeking to avoid confining my interpretation to such definition. While there are numerous definitions of disability, Thomas Reynolds, a theologian and a father to a son with a disability, provides one that identifies the importance of participation for a meaningful life:

Disability, then, is a physiologically rooted social performance. With this in mind, a more holistic definition of disability might read as follows: disability is a term naming that interstice where (1) restrictions due to an involuntary bodily impairment, (2) social role expectations, and (3) external physical/social constructions come together in a way that (4) preempts an intended participation in communal life.⁶⁷¹

Unlike other definitions, Reynolds’ choice to highlight praxis of participation in political and social communities presumes that persons with disabilities have a contribution to make toward the building up of community life.

Reynolds discusses how interpretations of what is deemed normal within communities and institutions prevent those less abled persons from participating in community life.⁶⁷² Commenting on what he calls ‘the cult of normalcy’, he adds that the effects of this ‘are pernicious, setting up social mechanisms that either assimilate by enforcing conformity or exclude by preventing participation in a community’s

⁶⁷⁰ Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 21.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁶⁷² Commentators on Honneth’s theory of recognition observe that his presentation of social progress is a concept of social normalcy. Cf. Miriam Bankovsky and Alice Le Goff, ‘Deepening Critical Theory: French Contributions to Theories of Recognition’, in *Recognition Theory and Contemporary French Moral and Political Philosophy: Reopening the Dialogue*, ed. Miriam Bankovsky and Alice Le Goff (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 5.

economy of exchange'.⁶⁷³ Yet, this experience of exclusion has also sparked resistance to such normalcy in our social, political, and church communities. Thus, Reynolds acknowledges that 'liberal conceptions of rational freedom, equality and interdependence' have instigated a corresponding rallying call by those with disabilities and persons who advocate for them.

Nevertheless, the demand for greater recognition is constrained within the operating social, economic, and political culture of the day, in which individualism and consumption are normative aspects in the attainment of greater human freedom.⁶⁷⁴ The effects of such constraining norms are far-reaching and even implicate the spirituality of ecclesial communities. To illustrate this, Reynolds draws from this constriction a link between an emerging understanding within Western societies of consumerism and spirituality as a private matter.⁶⁷⁵ But, as I have already argued, participation is not an individual or a socially removed activity for persons. In identifying the constraining role that norms can perform, Reynolds is arguing for a critical and self-critical approach when utilizing any discipline as a resource for

⁶⁷³ Ibid., 73. An economy of exchange is not comprised of economic interests, but stretches from a strict understanding of Marxist theory to include a variety of conditions that are constitutive of human meaning.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid., 97.

⁶⁷⁵ Ashley, *Interruptions*, 13. Ashley presents a definition of spirituality that prioritizes the practice of participation within community life. He argues that certain practices 'form a mystagogy into a life of Christian discipleship' (ibid., 13). Mystagogy is traditionally the final initiation of persons into the life of Christian discipleship, whereby they are learning about Christian sacraments, prayer, and the life of discipleship. Ashley observes a twofold dynamic operative during this time. On the one hand, it is a time for the emerging seeker to participate more fully in personal prayer and in the liturgical life of the church. On the other hand, it is also a time for the Church to take on the consistent commitment of taking on Christ in the world. Thus, this liturgical time of mystagogy has implications for theology, according to Ashley. He notes that this formative experience exposes a seeker to an encounter with Christ. Yet, this participation is not a private event. Rather, it is ecclesial whereby the example of the seeker's encounter with Christ encourages the people of God to also grow in a deeper and more generous participation in the life of Christ. In addition, Ashley also notes that such a time advances new ways of giving an account of the Christian life. As such, how one gives an account of God and the meaning of human life is expressed in novel and expanding ways, through 'symbols, narratives, rhetorical strategies, metaphysical speculation, and so forth' (ibid., 14).

exploring questions of inclusion and exclusion. This brings one to recognition of another through disability as a prophetic event is a consideration of disability and theology.

5.3.5 Participation and the Gift of Human Limitation

Deborah Beth Creamer argues for a realism with respect to how we understand a human person with disabilities. Her insight—that persons with disabilities are limited—facilitates her acknowledgement that all human life is limited, thus challenging prevailing attitudes of normalcy. Whilst Reynolds observes the legitimacy of participation of all persons in community life, Creamer provides nuance, viewing a person's limitation not as a restriction on their ability to participate in the community, but instead as an acknowledgement of the interdependency that is central to interrelationality. Creamer further highlights two operative models of disability: the medical or functional-limitation model and the social or minority group model.⁶⁷⁶ The former identifies disability as a medical or biological condition, whilst the latter treats disability as an outcome of a disrespectful experience. Creamer notes that the medical model understands the functionality of a disabled person's body as less than an abled body. For the social or minority group model, Creamer notes that disability is understood as socially constructed. In her view, both models prove unsatisfactory in that they pin down disability as a form of limitation resulting from physical, cognitive or psychological restriction or a socially framed imposition of disability as a consequence of attitudes and biases within communities.

⁶⁷⁶ Deborah Beth Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology: Embodied Limits and Constructive Possibilities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 23–34.

Thus, Creamer attempts to furnish an alternative, less rigid definition of disability, coining what she terms a ‘model of limitation’:

Attention to fluidity, as well as to the commitment that disability is as much an identity statement as it is a biological or a sociopolitical condition, leads me to a consideration of disability as an instantiation and a reminder of human limits.⁶⁷⁷

How might her model assist the contribution of disability studies in the achievement of recognition of another? Creamer argues that her model is not intended to replace the other two models; rather, the limitation model is meant to become the site for a wider conversation about disability that incorporates the knowledge of the other two models. She argues: ‘Key to the limits model is the recognition that “disability” is more normal than any other state of embodiedness’.⁶⁷⁸

Given that recognition of the other is primarily a social and relational endeavour, communities provide generative contexts for the exploration of recognition through the lens of disability.⁶⁷⁹ The limitation model, recalling how vulnerability was explained in the last chapter as universal to all life, understands that the ‘notions of limits are common’ to all life.⁶⁸⁰ Like vulnerability, the experience of what Creamer refers to as limitation allows one to ‘acknowledge a web of related experiences’ that confirm the value of mutual interdependency.⁶⁸¹ Here I agree with Creamer, who affords significance to ‘local perspectives’, not only in terms of their histories and narratives, but also as ‘legitimate sources for theological reflection and

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid., 32.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁹ I accept that there are foundationalist concepts of the body, but this chapter illustrates the sociological understanding of human interaction, which troubles any outright acceptance of the body in its foundationalist presentation as a given.

⁶⁸⁰ Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology*, 32.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid.

construction'.⁶⁸² Thus, Creamer is arguing against a procedure of theological reflection that begins with universal norms.

In highlighting the transformation of the local perspective, Creamer illustrates past advances, such as the uniqueness of the 'experience of women, which feminist studies has revealed; the distinctiveness of race that liberation theology flagged; and the effects of context that disciplines concerned with justice have illuminated'.⁶⁸³ From these advances, the question of disability studies emerges as a current albeit neglected area of study, particularly in its relationship to theology. As this chapter seeks to make clear, disability studies contribute to a greater interrelationality in a theological reflection on recognition of the other.⁶⁸⁴ My statement is neither a prescriptive nor abstract statement, for communities that facilitate and welcome persons who are disabled engage in an accompaniment with the other.⁶⁸⁵ On the achievements of liberation theologians, Creamer observes that they 'challenged the viability of universal theologies and argued that experiences of difference must be recognised for reasons of justice as well as theological adequacy'.⁶⁸⁶ In a similar vein, her theological impetus is the 'pursuit of recognition', which culminates in the inclusion of the other.

Recognition of the kind I am advocating for here would require a community characterized by relations of interdependency and learning through mutual accompaniment. Yet, how can one ensure such interdependency is its hallmark? As Reynolds notes, '[e]verything subsists with and is affected by others. No thing is

⁶⁸² Ibid., 54.

⁶⁸³ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid., 55.

⁶⁸⁵ L'Arche communities are exemplary of such communities that are defined by accompaniment in their mission to expand and strengthen the participation of disabled people in the life of local communities.

⁶⁸⁶ Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology*, 55.

autonomous, having its own being: it is from God, out of nothing, and with others'.⁶⁸⁷

Community, therefore, is a body of people viewed collectively. They practice communal living, usually live in the same place, and share a common cultural identity. Whilst acknowledging these general descriptions of community, the uniqueness and limitation of each body is the particular site within communities from which to consider the recognition of another in an immediate way. I concur with Creamer, who prioritizes the body as the location for engagement in how one might explore disability and theology.⁶⁸⁸ At the same time, how do we avoid a theological view of the body as discrete or autonomous? Will community alone prevent such an understanding of what it means to be human?

The value that participation brings to the life of intellectually challenged persons in their communities is identified by a variety of sectors and professionals. Researchers exploring the question of disability and spirituality have found that persons with disabilities make a positive contribution to the life of community⁶⁸⁹—a finding I highlighted in the introductory chapter through the example of L'Arche. In addition to persons with intellectual disabilities, health practitioners attending to persons affected by severe mental health illnesses have observed the positive effect of religion and spirituality in the recovery and ongoing stability of their clients.⁶⁹⁰ As a consequence of the interdisciplinary research into the question of religion and mental recovery, more recent findings have shifted from a presumed association between 'psychotic material and religious content' to contemporary opinions, which suggest

⁶⁸⁷ Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 161.

⁶⁸⁸ Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology*, 57.

⁶⁸⁹ Richard Hobbs, C. Elizabeth Bonham, and Jennifer Fogo, 'Individuals with Disabilities: Critical Factors that Facilitate Integration in Christian Religious Communities', *Journal of Rehabilitation* 82, no. 1 (2016): 44.

⁶⁹⁰ Marcia Webb, Anna M. Charbonneau, Russell A. McCann, and Kristin R. Gayle, 'Struggling and Enduring with God, Religious Support, and Recovery From Severe Mental Illness', *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 67, no. 12 (2011): 1162.

that persons with severe mental illness—like the rest of the populace—benefit from the resources of religion.⁶⁹¹

As detailed in the previous chapters on narrative and vulnerability, the question of who participates within communities is an ongoing social, political, and religious one. The demand for recognition by those persons and groups excluded from participation in political and social life is, in itself, a record of the lives of those disrespected and forgotten. Moreover, as I shall argue, demand for recognition affirms the value of testimony or witnessing of disrespected persons and groups, as well as their potential contribution to the collective process of creating a more substantial memory of the past—one that aids the formation of the present and imagines a more hopeful future.

As I have argued thus far, it is excluded persons and groups who seek recognition of their equal dignity and their inclusion within social, political, and ecclesial communities. Whilst many marginalized and disrespected groups make up an expansive catalogue of those seeking recognition, intellectually disabled persons illustrate the particular challenges of those who intellectually and physically struggle to express their demand for recognition and to participate more fully in community life. Thus, I have argued here that recognition is not simply an event but an ongoing participatory relational project. For recognition of another is not a given upon first meeting another person. As a vital part of any pastoral care, participation demands the involvement of all in ways that respect a person's limitations and finitude. Yet, limitation is not interpreted as a diminished participation; it opens up the possibility of learning through mutual accompaniment. Such learning takes seriously the past,

⁶⁹¹ Ibid.

present, and future. As such, participation will require a struggle with the histories of those who have been excluded.

Yet, as I have argued, this very struggle challenges the frame through which one recognizes or misrecognizes one's neighbour. This is particularly pertinent when a person is linguistically unable to give an account of their experience or their demand for recognition. Thus, the significance of the past is expressed only partially, such that the very process of dialogue that generates a collective memory negates the experience of the most vulnerable.

Persons with intellectual disabilities depend upon and express the importance of relationships of accompaniment in the struggle for recognition. My exploration of participation, through recognition and accompaniment, will then focus on the specific dimension of collective memory in recognition. This is because the historical structure of recognition is a necessary aspect of an interrelational recognition that binds past, present, and future generations together within the intergenerational project of recognition.

My suggestion is that, with the help of memory, one can retrospectively identify those who have been historically disrespected. This may seem a peculiar step at this stage, as those who have intellectual disabilities are more challenged at the level of cognition and memory than persons deemed more able-bodied. Nevertheless, persons with intellectual disabilities carry the memory of past sufferings and past relationships. Indeed, their experience establishes 'a history by contrast'.⁶⁹² Furthermore, it is memory as a vehicle of retelling and recalling that is significant for a theological reflection on recognition as mutual accompaniment.

⁶⁹² Sue Campbell, 'Challenges to Memory in Political Contexts', in *Our Faithfulness to the Past: The Ethics and Politics of Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 198.

In what follows, I will first examine memory as a resource for recognition of the other through interrelational accompaniment. I begin by cautioning against an uncritical acceptance of memory in the recognition of the other, as illustrated through the experience of persons with intellectual disabilities. Second, I will explore two treatments of memory within the tradition of Christian theology today: namely that of Miroslav Volf and that of Johann Baptist Metz. Volf argues for a right remembering that intentionally involves a forgetting of memories. Metz, on the other hand, argues for a remembering of the past in order to fashion the present and future.

5.4 From Non-recognition to Recognition: Accompaniment as Memory

In a certain sense, shaping memory retrieves and carries the stories of those who have suffered. Such memory is expressed as remembering and this expression is performed personally and communally. The modern nation state, for instance, will publicly remember those who have died in armed conflict whilst defending their country. Some Christian communities will remember the passion of Christ within the liturgy of the Eucharist. Memory then could be described as a storehouse.⁶⁹³

Yet, amongst current Western theories of memory, Sue Campbell notes a shift from an understanding of memory as a storehouse to that of memory as a reconstructive model. It is suggested that the former model delimits the value of a plurality of memory, opting for an agreed and universalist narrative of the past. Dissenters of said model have prioritized a reconstructivist model on account of its ability to accommodate a variety of narrative expressions of the past. According to Campbell, the reconstructivist model emerges from a concern to relate memory to

⁶⁹³ Ibid., 166.

present-day circumstances and needs.⁶⁹⁴ Furthermore, relating the present to the past in a reconstruction of memory is equally about a concern for the future. Campbell's intention is not so much about determining the future, but rather ensuring that the present moment is a time of preparation and formation. Whilst I prefer her model over memory as a storehouse, in order to preserve the memory of disrespected and marginalized persons or groups, I recognize the importance of prudence when attributing an unflappable facility to the reconstructive model.

Thomas Reynolds, for example, cautions against deploying memory as an advocate for disabled bodies that have been excluded from communities. Despite historical knowledge of the exclusion of intellectually challenged persons and those with severe mental illness, it remains the case that such persons encounter a myriad of obstacles in their pursuit of employment, housing, transportation, education, healthcare, and community life. While not an exhaustive list, I mention these ordinary aspirations and everyday political and social services to illustrate the significant challenge that intellectually disabled persons confront in their pursuit of a meaningful communal life. The challenges they face, however, are not restricted to the social and political realm. Indeed, their very struggles for greater recognition and participation within the social and political realm correspond to a parallel struggle for recognition within Christian communities.

Nevertheless, the emerging interdisciplinary field of disability studies and theology is offering a critical position from which theology can advocate for the recognition and inclusion of those who are intellectually disabled. In addition, this interdisciplinary enquiry contributes toward a self-critical account of how theologies

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid.

in the Western tradition have aided and abetted the exclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities.⁶⁹⁵

Reynolds identifies the challenge facing church communities in describing the ‘we’ of their communities.⁶⁹⁶ As I have shown, the question of participation illustrates the struggle of persons with disabilities in achieving greater belonging in social and political life. The question of participation, however, is not limited to civic life. As previously highlighted, the inclusion of persons with disabilities in ecclesial communities is a history tainted with exclusion. As Reynolds notes, history reminds

⁶⁹⁵ Cf. Jayne Clapton, ‘Disability, Inclusion and the Christian Church: Practice, Paradox or Promise’, *Disability and Rehabilitation* 19, no. 10 (2009): 420–26. Clapton, like Reynolds, takes aim at what she perceives as the cult of normalcy within Western thought. In particular, she observes that difference was conceived in a binary-like fashion, such as male/female, straight/gay, or abled/disabled. In her estimation, these binaries generated a power dynamic, whereby one dominated the other and created the other as a result of the perceived difference. She is drawing upon the insights of Susan Wendell, *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 40, 92. Apart from cataloguing Wendell’s observations on disability and Western thought, Clapton’s particular angle on the question of disability and theology is presented as a matter of biography. She notes as a young child being informed of a sibling who was stillborn. This experience formed within her family a frame or ‘gaze’ of perceiving persons with disabilities in a welcoming and affirming manner. Thus, she makes the following argument: ‘Therefore, it is our perception of relationships which embrace embodied difference that not only textures, but rather constitutes, the socio-moral fabrics of inclusion or exclusion’ (Clapton, ‘Disability, Inclusion, and the Christian Church’, 425). See also Hans Reinders, ‘Doing Theology and Disability in Europe’, *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health* 16, no. 4 (2012): 439–42. Reinders notes two somewhat recent conferences, where the positive contribution of disability studies emerged in a number of those presenting papers. First, the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics gathered for their annual conference in Cambridge, UK, in 2012. Reinders relayed that the meeting had as its central concern the question of theological anthropology. As the article notes, the substantialist approach to this overarching topic was troubled by a number of scholars who sought to tackle the conference’s topic through the frame of disability studies. The outcome of this, and for my purposes it is worth noting here, was that the question of theological anthropology moved from a discussion concerning one’s capacities with respect to reason and will to that of the human person in light of mutuality and vulnerability. More significantly, and echoing Butler’s suggestion on transparency and the human person, the theological conversation moved in the direction of limited self-knowledge and self-determination (ibid., 441–42). Reinders, like Reynolds, observes the effect of a culture of choice in the establishment of religion as a private matter within European societies. The net effect of this, according to the author, is that theology ‘has been relegated to the study of the phenomena of spiritual life in the domain of human subjectivity’ (ibid., 440). Reinders is of the opinion that in North America, the question of disability and theology is a political question and, as he suggests, the question falls within the realm of practical questions (ibid.).

⁶⁹⁶ Thomas E. Reynolds, ‘Past and Present with Disability in the Christian Tradition’, *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health* 17, no. 3 (2013): 288.

theologians and members of faith communities that persons with disabilities were not always considered members in the same way as more abled persons.⁶⁹⁷ Exclusion from participation, however, is complex to relay, as noted by Fraser who asks ‘what exactly are the excluded excluded from?’⁶⁹⁸ In answering her question, she concludes that ‘exclusion can take a plurality of different forms’.⁶⁹⁹ Perhaps the more common experience of exclusion is exclusion from certain, but not all, social spheres of interaction. Fraser offers the example of women, who were historically excluded from the franchise, but who enjoy an inclusion and elevated status and dominion over the domestic household space.⁷⁰⁰ Exclusion, therefore, is at times ‘contained within a given sphere or subset of spheres and does not spill over into others. In other cases, however, exclusion is highly convertible, spreading freely from sphere to sphere’.⁷⁰¹

Exclusion can be partial or comprehensive in its reach. Its intrusive and restricting effects can infiltrate any social interaction or institution. The situation of disability reveals not so much a monological trajectory of victimization, but the interchange of exclusion that occurs between the excluder and the excluded:

Disability is the site of not only overt but also covert and hidden gestures of exclusion, and intentional and unintentional acts of oppression. Furthermore, by fostering such exclusion and oppression non-disabled people ironically suppress or deny their own vulnerability, and in so doing avert what is perhaps most human about all of you—the need for welcome, to be recognized as valuable.⁷⁰²

The alienation of one’s own vulnerability in the subjugation and exclusion of another abandons an open encounter with the other at an interpersonal and institutional level.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁸ Fraser, ‘Identity, Exclusion, and Critique’, 315.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid.

⁷⁰² Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 210.

Church communities as institutions were not always known for their inclusion of difference within their respective congregations. In part, this lack of inclusion has its origins in the operative denominational theological frames, which located the question of one's relationship to God in nature and grace through one's cognitive capacity. Yet, some recent theological conferences, such as the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics conference of 2012 in Cambridge, are moving toward a more interdisciplinary approach in grappling with the question of what it means to be human and to be a disciple. Thus, narrative and vulnerability have emerged as important interlocutors for theology.

5.4.1 Accompaniment as Interpretative Memory

The lack of recognition afforded to persons with intellectual disabilities in social, political, and faith communities indicates a deficit of the historical memory of the human family. I contend that the question of collective memory and its emergence is part of a fruitful, critical, and self-critical approach to the wider question of the recognition of difference. As such, I am in agreement with Reynolds, who suggests that disability is a 'dangerous memory' in that it challenges faith and secular communities to become accountable,⁷⁰³ where dangerous memory is an aspect of Christian praxis.⁷⁰⁴ Indeed, as a method of enquiry, Metz seeks to act in a subversive and rebellious manner so as to make transparent the lives and memory of those forgotten and excluded from humanity's collective memory.⁷⁰⁵

One cannot assume that recourse to memory alone has the ability to salvage

⁷⁰³ Ibid., 17. Reynolds borrows the phrase 'dangerous memory' from Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 66.

⁷⁰⁴ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 66.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid., 67.

the memory of those excluded. Memory, as a source for critical and self-critical reflection, requires the cooperation of persons. It is not surprising, then, that Reynolds hesitates to outrightly validate memory as a place of critical interpretation. For example, in responding to the publication of *Disability in the Christian Tradition: A Reader*, Reynolds identifies that the collection as a whole operates via ‘retrieval strategies’, which he deems potentially problematic in that one may apply a surety to the churches to be inclusive communities. For Reynolds, the history of church communities as champions of inclusion is a checkered one. In particular, he takes issue with the application of divine providence, holding that such providence suggests both that one is loved by God, and that one’s disability is ‘God’s test, a cross to bear’.⁷⁰⁶ This specific approach of *Disability in the Christian Tradition*, therefore, points to the challenge of memory,⁷⁰⁷ specifically that ‘historical memory [is both] complex and precarious’.⁷⁰⁸ On the other hand, if the work of remembering includes the forgotten and the disrespected, memory can become the place of a critique and facilitate greater participation of persons within the wider Christian communities.

Within current Christian theological development, there are counterarguments to remembering as a pathway to establishing greater inclusion and participation of disrespected persons in Christian communities. Memory is a complex faculty. For instance, Volf argues that not all remembering is good.⁷⁰⁹ Memory is a discriminating depository, and not every historical incident is banked in one’s memory. We often choose to store certain experiences in the memory vault over and against others. Significantly, for theologians such as Reynolds and Volf, memory is not just an

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid., 289.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁹ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 132.

historical record of human experiences; it also shapes one's present situation. As Volf contends, '[s]ince memories shape present identities neither I nor the other can be redeemed without the redemption of our remembered past'.⁷¹⁰

Volf is identifying here two aspects of memory: individual memory and collective memory. Individual memory carries personal historical experiences. The question, therefore, is how these personal experiences, which are accessible to one's consciousness, become part of a collective memory.⁷¹¹ Honneth, for instance, suggests that this transposition of what is part of individual memory to that of collective memory is a 'natural tendency' for persons.⁷¹² Furthermore, Honneth contends that the natural tendency to form individual memory is 'pre-reflective', whilst collective memory is 'dynamic' and the outcome of 'discussion'.⁷¹³ While Honneth's specific meaning of 'pre-reflective' is somewhat vague, I take it to mean that one's individual formation can never be fully transparent, owing to the fact that it does not occur solely internally, where one would presumably have autonomous control over it. Rather, the pre-reflective takes into account external aspects, such as one's social world and the experience of personal growth, which interface with the internal.⁷¹⁴ Honneth suggests that 'we find a relationship of recognition that stretches both into the past and into the future' in collective memory.⁷¹⁵

Discussion plays a role of distinction between memories on the level of pre-reflective and conscious:

The differences arise from the fact that in the case of smaller groups or entire collectives, the ineradicable plurality of perspectives compels the members of

⁷¹⁰ Volf, 'Difference, Violence, and Memory', *Irish Theological Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (2009): 6. Volf proposes what he calls right remembering. His specific presentation of remembering is an aspect of redemption within Christian theology.

⁷¹¹ Honneth, 'Reflection', 317.

⁷¹² Ibid.

⁷¹³ Ibid.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid.

a group, by the required negotiations for the collective self-understanding, to hold on to the past experiences and events that are worthy of being collectively remembered.⁷¹⁶

It would seem that implicit in collective memory is its political and social capacity to bear witness to a preconceived ideal of the who and what of a group and its constituents. For instance, Honneth argues that these

processes of negotiation, in which all collective remembering is anchored, make publicly apparent that which should be probably also true for the individual memory that serves our ethical self-understanding: such self-understanding comes in the form of bridging the temporal gap from the present to the past and future persons who should be treated as addressees of the mutual recognition.⁷¹⁷

Honneth does not identify faith communities as institutions that facilitate mutual recognition.

5.4.2 Accompaniment as Transformed Memory

From the perspective of those who have been excluded from participation within Christian communities, the sharing of memories is a vital part of being welcomed into community life. As outlined in the section on participation, learning from another is a necessary part of accompaniment on the road to recognition. Needless to say, this is not without its pitfalls or challenges. As such, the possibility of a redeemed past is a precarious goal. For instance, how could the past sufferings of persons with intellectual disabilities in institutions become a redeemed history? For Volf, memory is both a recalling and an action. Furthermore, its ability to transform suffering in the present moment is possible. Yet, recalling cannot deny past suffering. Indeed, such suffering remains. But action is not paralyzed by the past. Following the suggestion of Ricoeur, and as we observed in Butler's treatment of vulnerability in the previous

⁷¹⁶ Ibid., 318.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid.

chapter, Volf suggests mourning as an action that redeems the past. For Volf, however, mourning is not a holding onto the memory of past suffering, but rather a project in letting go of the very memory itself: ‘Passing through the stages of mourning, we must ultimately reach the stage of non-remembering—in the arms of God’.⁷¹⁸ As a political action, non-remembering may well be counterintuitive when we consider remembering as a necessary step for holding persons or institutions to account for wrongdoings. Volf, however, turns this political aspect of remembering upside-down, which offers not a counter-political form of remembering, but a Christian account of non-remembering.

Volf’s proposal is presented positively as remembering rightly. This non-remembering legislates not for a denial of the past, but a contextualization of the history within a redemptive theology inaugurated by Jesus Christ. He bases this remembering rightly upon a Christian theology, which argues that: (a) Christ died for all, including those who have harmed others; (b) in dying for even those who have caused harm, Christ atones for their sins too; and (c) in dying for the sins of all, Christ creates one community that includes those who have perpetrated suffering upon others.⁷¹⁹ Volf’s appropriation of remembering is situated within an expanding social context. He notes that remembering is a personal action, and yet it has social currency. As he notes, ‘human individuals don’t exist (except as part of our social imaginations); only persons in multiple and multilayered relations exist’.⁷²⁰ For Volf, remembering rightly initiates a participation not only in the life of the other, but also in the divine life of God:

When we remember rightly and when we ultimately forget, we free from wrongdoing the other who, through a complex set of circumstances and

⁷¹⁸ Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 135.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷²⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

personal decisions, had become a wrong doer—or rather we participate in our own human way in the divine freeing of the wrongdoer from wrong doing. In this way we prevent the past violation from doing the insidious work of othering the other and reinforcing the spiral of violations.⁷²¹

The location of right remembering, for Volf, is community. Within community, a person's history is transformed through interrelationships. Because one is no longer held in bondage by one's memories, one discovers a greater unity or solidarity with others. Volf argues:

The consequences for my project of remembering rightly are significant. The normative contraction of a person's memories is then tied to the normative construction of the communities remembering. The implication is that we will be able to remember rightly as individuals only if we situate ourselves within communities of right remembering. These for me are the Christian churches, normatively understood as the sites of the Eucharistic celebration.⁷²²

I suggest that, for the Christian, these communities recall and participate in a more coherent narrative: 'Such communal memories of Christ's death and resurrection, which take into themselves memories of the Exodus of the people of Israel, are meta-memories regulating how each individual should go about remembering mundane wrongs suffered'.⁷²³ For Volf, right remembering is a strategic move that has in its sight a new vision of being Christian in the world. Within this new vision, the Christian belongs not to his or her memories, but to a community:

As I see it, in the Christian faith the ultimate goal of remembering wrongs suffered is the creation of a community of love—possibly, the recreation of a community of love—where the social bonds that have been ruptured by violence, injustice, and deception are healed.⁷²⁴

It may appear that Volf creates an alternative or counter-cultural community, whereby the Christian's participation in right remembering is a foil against the normative practice of remembering one's history, especially when one has been disrespected.

⁷²¹ Ibid.

⁷²² Ibid.

⁷²³ Ibid., 11. It is worth noting that Volf excludes the ministry of Christ.

⁷²⁴ Ibid.

The priority of Christian community, however, is not a counter-cultural stance. For Volf, community does not exist in and for itself. Rather, community is a means to an end, and that end is the unity of peoples. He notes that the creation of a community of love ‘is the direction in which all history is headed; more precisely, it is the place toward which God is leading history’.⁷²⁵

5.4.3 Accompaniment as the Reconstruction of Memory

For Metz, remembering can be an expression of solidarity with victims of suffering. Thus, memory is a recalling—not a forgetting—of those whom history has forgotten. Moreover, Metz goes beyond an understanding of memory as a registrar of a more comprehensive history; memory is also a faculty of interpretation and resistance.⁷²⁶ In its recalling of those victims of past suffering, memory is charged with more than a political or ethical motivation. Recalling here is an act of memorative solidarity with others.⁷²⁷ The expressed solidarity is not just with the victims of past suffering, for it is also a facility with which to interpret one’s faith.⁷²⁸

Memory, for Metz, emerges through the encounter of two historical schools of knowledge: Greek philosophy and the Judeo-Christian tradition.⁷²⁹ What is achieved is a bridging of the Platonic understanding of anamnesis and the Judeo-Christian understanding of history and freedom. Whilst Volf prioritizes forgetting as an act of right remembering, for Metz the category of memory as solidaristic recollection of the forgotten victims serves as a corrective to current situations and relationships.

Metz withholds any explication as to the distinctions between memory and

⁷²⁵ Ibid.

⁷²⁶ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 169.

⁷²⁷ Ibid.

⁷²⁸ Ibid.

⁷²⁹ Ibid., 171.

remembering. Indeed, he contends that little is gained in doing so. While not offering conceptual clarity on the faculty of memory, Metz points to a variety of schools of thought that elaborate on the understanding of memory, such as practical philosophy and hermeneutics.⁷³⁰ In attending to the significance of memory for his theological project, Metz offers a brief genealogy of how memory was conceptualized and explained within the development of philosophy from the Greek period to the current context. He observes that within the development of philosophers' understanding of knowledge, commentators were consistent in their position that there exists a priori knowledge in our very efforts to develop human knowledge.⁷³¹ This thread of consistency is ruptured by Kant's thesis that reason alone constructs knowledge.⁷³²

Yet, this heavily theorized understanding of remembering is disrupted decisively by the development of knowledge within Christianity, for remembering within the Christian tradition is the interplay within community of memory and narrative.⁷³³ This specific Christian understanding of remembering is a consequence of the 'historically unique event' that is Christianity.⁷³⁴ Furthermore, in its remembering it is orientated toward the future, to the anticipated unity that is eschatological redemption.

Metz presents a Christian attitude toward memory and its role in the practice of faith. Memory for him, in its theological aspect,

is not the memory which sees all of the past in a rosy light, not a memory that sets the seal on the past as something over and done with in such a way that it has made its peace with everything in the past that is dangerous and challenging.⁷³⁵

⁷³⁰ Ibid.

⁷³¹ Ibid.

⁷³² Ibid.

⁷³³ Ibid., 172.

⁷³⁴ Ibid.

⁷³⁵ Ibid., 182.

For Metz, memory requires an interpretative frame. In doing so, it is more than just a registrar of historical facts.

As Metz suggests, ‘dangerous memory’ is that which ‘harries the past and problematizes it, since it remembers the past in terms of a future that is still outstanding’.⁷³⁶ For him, this kind of remembering is faith as *memoria* and it achieves a bridge between the Kingdom of God that is already and that which is not yet.⁷³⁷ Suggesting that *memoria* is a decisive step away from a cognitive approach to a more discerning and praxis-oriented Christianity, Metz adds:

Everything depends on not dehistoricizing the understanding of salvation and bringing it to a standstill historically in an ‘idea’. It all comes down to understanding and appropriating the ‘already’ within the ‘not yet’, taking up the givenness of salvation in hope.⁷³⁸

For Metz, faith is not simply a matter of performing certain actions.⁷³⁹ While acknowledging that certain faith acts are fitting for a particular time, Metz designates as warranting greater attention the content of faith. Christianity, therefore, requires its content for any faith action to have social and political agency. This *memoria* of Christ’s passion is brought together through remembering both the contents of Christian faith and the emerging acts of faith. The contents of Christian faith are

Formulas in terms of which the claims made by past promises and past hopes for some future life, as well as by the terrors experienced in the past, are called back to memory, so as to break the spell of the dominant consciousness in its instrumentality and one-one-dimensionality, to break free again and again from the compulsion exercised by that which is immediately given and perceptible, to break through the banality of that which is now in existence and the future that can be called forth from that alone.⁷⁴⁰

Metz sees his insistence on content and act as inherently necessary for the life of the Christian. In particular, the necessity of content and acts is more presently urgent,

⁷³⁶ Ibid.

⁷³⁷ Ibid.

⁷³⁸ Ibid.

⁷³⁹ Ibid., 183.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid.

given the erosion of the intergenerational handing down of the faith.⁷⁴¹ Metz is signalling the importance of ecclesial communities as formation contexts for recognition: ‘A Christian, for instance, who is living completely divorced from any institution might—perhaps—still be nourished by the substance of Christian faith as long as his or her generation lasts’.⁷⁴² As such, ecclesial communities are carriers of memory.

With the seemingly inexorable decline of institutional membership, the challenge of forming Christians in right memory is an urgent one. This specific time of remembering or ‘actualizing a *memoria*’ is primarily a communitarian enterprise for Metz.⁷⁴³ The work of remembering demands both interpretation and translation. The translation of this teaching is critical for Christian living today. Metz offers the example of the Trinity, suggesting that translating the ‘*memoria Jesu Christi* as a *memoria* of the advent of the Kingdom of God in the love of Jesus for the oppressed could very well be implemented as a dangerous-liberating application of the classical *Christological formulas* of this sort’.⁷⁴⁴

In the previous chapter, the frame of recognition was shown to be an important mechanism for determining how certain bodies are recognized while others are not. Similarly, in considering the role of memory by way of the Christian tradition, theological reflection ought to bear witness to participatory relational accompaniment in welcoming and recognizing persons today. Reynolds draws attention to the frame of memory and its importance for theological reflection on the role of persons with disabilities in society and ecclesial communities:

⁷⁴¹ Ibid.

⁷⁴² Ibid.

⁷⁴³ Ibid., 184.

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid.

Not only does the past inhibit the present, but complex sets of circumstances in the present also shape the way the past is taken up and recollected. This double edge can be glossed too easily in theological frames that remember selectively in a modality of resistance, favouring either an idealized present that anachronistically censures past church witness as dramatically antiquated or favouring the pre-modern past nostalgically as offering a redemptive counter-vision to the disparaged present-day secular society.⁷⁴⁵

Memory, therefore, is never an accurate description of a historical period or persons.

Rather, it is a presentation of the past by means of selectivity and evaluation. As

Reynolds puts it, '[s]pecific decisions to remember are made as present experiences come to be understood within the arc of a tradition, within designated canonical

memories'.⁷⁴⁶ With more specific reference to memory and communities, Reynolds

adds that '[c]ommunities of memory do not simply collect episodic events and place them in sequential order; rather, they reconstitute by re-gathering or re-collecting the past in a way that highlights certain events as formative, accordingly interpreting

other events in their light'.⁷⁴⁷ It is worth noting here the significance of community as a space and frame through which the collective 'we' interpret our personal and

communal histories and translate these interpretations within our ordinary shared

living. Relating the communal aspect of remembering in this way to Christian living,

Reynolds notes that 'Christians are, in theological terms and not only socio-historical terms, a "communion of saints," a Church joined together by grace as parts of one

body, so that harm to one member harms all'.⁷⁴⁸ Through a collective memory, we

witness to each other's traumas and exclusions. More importantly, memory facilitates

a learning for those in power by those who were powerless. This is achieved by

attention to memory as argued by Volf and Metz. Right remembering, or one that re-

⁷⁴⁵ Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 298.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid., 290.

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid.

orders the status quo, does not just initiate a more integrated participation; it also achieves a more inclusive community of belonging. At the same time, the already operative normative frame of recognition is duly subject to interpretation because of the reality of exclusion experienced by persons or groups.

This brings me to my final contention that participation grounded in memory witnesses, as Vanier communicated, to a learning community. In what follows, I will consider witnessing with regard to Kelly Oliver's account of witnessing and recognition.

5.5 Recognitional Accompaniment through Participation in Witnessing

My inclusion of Oliver in this last section allows me to signal the next necessary step in arguing for a recognition of another that prioritizes the necessity of participation grounded in memory. That next step is a turn toward the pastoral accompaniment of another. Oliver defines this turn as an ethical one. My decision to retain the term pastoral here makes specific the Christian outreach that is accompaniment. Oliver's treatment of recognition reinforces claims I have already made in this chapter: first, that recognition is an ongoing project; second, the requirement of accompaniment in the project of recognition (although Oliver clarifies her use of the term accompaniment as 'accompaniment by affect'); and third, the urgency of ensuring that recognition frees itself from an overly theoretical interpretation.

Returning to the theme of vulnerability and recognition, Oliver suggests that feminist theorists, such as Butler, argue that the struggle for mutual recognition is a struggle for mutual vulnerability.⁷⁴⁹ Oliver explores the merits of Butler's contention that the recognition of mutual vulnerability is a necessary step against the

⁷⁴⁹ Oliver, *Witnessing*, 478.

dehumanization of a person or a group. Suggesting an alternative contribution of vulnerability, Kelly proposes that ‘while recognition of vulnerability does not necessarily lead to violence, in an importance sense, it is a prerequisite for it’.⁷⁵⁰ This is based upon her contention that ‘a body or spirit is vulnerable to being oppressed or tortured; otherwise we would not bother subjecting those bodies to our violence’.⁷⁵¹ As I explored in the previous chapter, Kelly’s observation here is not unlike Butler’s suggestion that the demand for recognition is overly presumed by Honneth and others. As Butler noted too, the demand for recognition can also be met with the refusal of recognition and the further advancement of violence upon the body that is already subjected to disrespect.

At the same time, Oliver acknowledges a universal vulnerability in death. All life is vulnerable to suffering and affliction, and some attacks on human life are so grave as to end life itself. However, the more significant question, for Kelly, is how one moves from recognition to action. Or, to put it another way, how might our recognizing have an impact on our ethical living? Like Butler, Kelly is all too aware that vulnerability operates within the political and social spheres, with the subsequent power dynamics entailed therein. In a similar vein to Butler’s *Precarious Life*, Kelly notes that ‘[s]ome bodies are more vulnerable than others’.⁷⁵² Referring to the market economy, she points out that some bodies are purposely devalued in order to optimize the profit of others.⁷⁵³ In addition, non-human bodies are particularly vulnerable to the demands of human consumption.⁷⁵⁴ Because violence upon the body—human and

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid., 479.

⁷⁵¹ Ibid.

⁷⁵² Ibid., 481.

⁷⁵³ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid.

otherwise—is not equally felt, Oliver is hesitant in agreeing to vulnerability as constitutive of subjectivity.⁷⁵⁵

5.5.1 Accompaniment as Realism to the Idealism of Recognition

For Oliver, the idea of recognition as a particular moment in time and place is dubious. I take her argument for recognition to be similar to Farron's, whereby recognition is an ongoing project. For recognition as an ethical force requires, in Oliver's opinion, something more than the political. Specifically, recognition that has ethical currency 'must be accompanied by affect'.⁷⁵⁶ As I highlighted in the previous chapter, Butler considers affect and its relationship to recognition. Oliver, therefore, is not suggesting anything novel in noting the requirement of affect for developing a more integrated and ethical account of recognition. She does, however, call attention to what she understands as the significant contrast between her employment of affect and that of Butler: 'She [Butler] imagines a world in which we grieve even for our enemies. But she makes grievability and mournability part of a politics of recognition so that once again it is an epistemological problem of seeing as that leads to the political problem of exclusion'.⁷⁵⁷ Oliver's dissatisfaction with recognition based on epistemology is rooted in her contention that persons can hurt and exclude even those whom they recognize as fellow persons. Therefore, such recognition will not in and of itself guarantee care for the other. For Oliver, recognition requires pathos.

Oliver's pursuit of ethical recognition requires something more to ensure that recognition culminates in compassion.⁷⁵⁸ Underneath her concern is a contention that

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid., 482.

recognition theory is overly intellectual. Thus, its treatment of suffering and exclusion of persons or groups remains an intellectual activity. Oliver, on the other hand, suggests that the projection of recognition requires also the dimension of affect, which she locates as a recognition from the heart.⁷⁵⁹ In theorizing her argument for a recognition beyond intellectualism, Oliver presents an alternative presentation of subjectivity. Put simply, she argues for *witnessing* as a new and alternative structure of subjectivity.

Witnessing, as she understands it, has two dimensions: the particular historical and local context of a person; and witnessing as a dimension of subjectivity. For Oliver, the aspect of witnessing ‘brings together the historical context and finite situation of particular subjects, on the one hand, with the witnessing structure that makes subjectivity an infinite open system of response, on the other’.⁷⁶⁰ Noting her proposal as a recognition beyond the political, Oliver clarifies that ‘witnessing has both the juridical connotations of seeing with one’s own eyes and the religious connotations of testifying to that which cannot be seen’.⁷⁶¹ Yet, the introduction of ‘witnessing’ moves beyond an affect to help correct a recognition that is overly intellectual. In an unanticipated move, Oliver elevates witnessing as a preferred conception of subjectivity: ‘It is this double meaning that makes witnessing such a powerful alternative to recognition in reconceiving subjectivity and thereby ethical relations’.⁷⁶² Elaborating on her meaning of witnessing, Oliver suggests:

What the process of witnessing testifies to is not the existence of facts but a commitment to the truth of subjectivity as addressability and responsibility. Witnessing is addressed to another and to a community; and witnessing—in both senses as addressing and responding, testifying and listening—is a

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid., 483.

⁷⁶² Ibid.

commitment to embracing the responsibility of constituting communities, the responsibility inherent in subjectivity itself.⁷⁶³

Oliver points to the significance of address for subjectivity: ‘It is the possibility of address that sustains psychic life and the subject’s sense of its subjective agency’.⁷⁶⁴

Yet, address ought not be understood as an intellectual or abled address, for address and response can be ‘verbal or non-verbal, grunts or whispers’.⁷⁶⁵ Oliver’s move toward ethics in relating to the other emerges out of her reading of Levinas. Oliver adds: ‘For Levinas, ethics must always be a movement beyond recognition, because recognition risks turning ethics into moral rule following’.⁷⁶⁶ Furthermore:

Mutual recognition necessarily undermines itself insofar as it assumes an exchange between two subjects, whether or not they are beholden to each other. In addition, the political recognition required by our daily lives as political beings necessarily effaces the singularity of each living being.⁷⁶⁷

Oliver instead opts for a politics of hospitality, which ‘demands that we develop a universal principle of hospitality that applies to all, effacing the singularity required by ethics’.⁷⁶⁸

5.5.2 Recognitional Witnessing: The Reparation of Relationships through Mutual Accompaniment

For this thesis, Oliver’s most significant comment on recognition is her prioritizing of witnessing over a political recognition. Here she wishes to move beyond a recognition between persons alone. With specific concern for widening human ethical relations to include animals, Oliver states that the ‘basis for ethical relations has moved beyond reason or recognition and toward witnessing to response-ability itself, that is to say,

⁷⁶³ Ibid., 485.

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid., 486.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid., 488.

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid., 489.

witnessing to the ability to respond, which is not just the domain of humankind but all of animal-kind'.⁷⁶⁹ Witnessing, therefore, becomes address and response ethics.⁷⁷⁰ For Oliver, political recognition is overladen with the burden of negotiation. She contends that such negotiations necessarily result in a domination of one over the other. With a shared planet, witnessing and response ethics elicits an alternative response, whereby one continually 'reassesses and reinterprets our responsibility toward others, even if, perhaps especially if—those others are threatening'.⁷⁷¹ In a manoeuvre not unlike Butler, Oliver moves toward an interrelationality with animals and the entire world. In doing so, she proffers 'a vision of democracy based upon our proximity not a political contract'.⁷⁷² Nevertheless, proximity should develop toward unity, whereby recognition participates in a much wider communion.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued for recognition as a project that develops toward a unity of communion. In arguing for participation as a necessary dynamic of recognition, I have suggested a greater inclusion of those not recognized. The inclusion of persons with disabilities, for example, does not just manifest a pastoral concern for those who are marginalized; rather, the very accompaniment of such persons reveals a universal limitation shared by every human person. In order to ensure that participation is more than a political project of mere representation, one must be aware of how frames of normalcy determine who is recognized and who is not recognized. Therefore, the utilization of memory is a significant resource for any legitimate form of

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid., 489.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁷¹ Ibid., 491.

⁷⁷² Ibid.

participation. For memory is necessary for that development toward unity within our Christian communities. As Christians, our recognition of another through participation is an alternative witnessing in the world. Unlike Oliver, who attributes to recognition the weight of negotiation and witnessing as an alternative way of relationality, I have suggested that participation demands of us a historical memory that prioritizes the urgency and pastoral need of the present. For the Christian community, this witnessing prioritizes a learning church through the pastoral practice of accompaniment.

Jean Vanier understood the praxis of witnessing as storytelling. Such stories express interpersonal transformation and the immediacy of God's presence at the personal and communal level. These stories, however, are memories of those who, in their vulnerability, experienced suffering and exclusion in social and ecclesial settings. Yet, as argued in this chapter, such memory constitutes the context for constructing new social and ecclesial relationships in which mutual recognition occurs. Recognition, as I have argued, is an ever-emerging interrelational project, which requires accompaniment.

This chapter opened with the statement that one may not recognize another person at first sight. To illuminate this point, I presented the challenge of persons with disabilities in receiving recognition. Within theology, an avenue around their experience of disrespect can be found within the tradition itself, such as the theology of the Incarnation. This would facilitate the declaration of clear theological statements, such as every human person is made in the image and likeness of God—a general theological truism that also applies to those with disabilities. Yet, this declaration is not always applied to pastoral practice of the care and inclusion of those with disabilities in social and ecclesial settings. Thus, I opted to explore dimensions

of accompaniment that would facilitate the recognition of another. In doing so, I have argued that accompaniment of another first requires the participation of the other that respects their finitude and limitations. As Ward points out, participation facilitates the recognition of another insofar as participation demands discernment. Whilst I have not looked extensively at the question of discernment in this thesis, its exploration with respect to recognition and accompaniment is something I shall return to in the future. From the inclusion of another through participation, I then proceeded to examine the role of memory in accompanying another. The role of memory is to ensure that accompaniment as pastoral care is a mutually learning experience. Lastly, the distinctive accompaniment of another that emerges interrelationally through participation and memory witnesses to the transformation that occurs through a pastoral practice of mutual accompaniment.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

At the close of this study, I wish to reflect upon where I began, how far I have proceeded, and what future directions may lie ahead that are beyond the scope of this thesis. To recall what I have argued at the outset of my study: Mutual recognition is an ongoing social and theological project, whose praxis is best understood by the word accompaniment. I located my study within the sphere of social pastoral theology, since pastoral theology expresses the social relations of persons or communities. Placing a theological reflection on recognition within the field of pastoral theology was a deliberate move on my part. In doing so, I prioritized the ministry of pastoral care for the Christian and for faith communities. Yet, this is not pastoral care in the conventional sense of a monological giving to another. My study of a theological reflection on recognition has prioritized mutual recognition, and I have identified the term accompaniment as the pastoral way toward such a recognition. The emerging field of theology of recognition promises to make an ongoing contribution to the wider exploration of interrelationality, yet studies that explore recognition by way of mutual pastoral accompaniment are rare.

In Chapter 2, I exposed the present lack of attention afforded to theology as a legitimate and fruitful interdisciplinary partner for exploring and advancing recognition theory. Thus, I committed to an examination of theological reflection as a resource for interpersonal recognition. This pursuit at its beginning has one fundamental question: Who is to be recognized? Given that my study is located within the sphere of pastoral theology, the other who is suffering or forgotten is a priority for any Christian reflection on recognition. As a Christian participates in the life of God with others, the demand for a more comprehensive theory and praxis of recognition is

a necessary development within the emerging interdisciplinary dialogue between theology and recognition.

As set out in Chapter 2, the urge to widen the frame of reference within recognition theory is not an isolated call by theologians and practitioners of pastoral care. Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth have both, in their respective ways, expanded the constituencies of those to be recognized. What emerges from the employment of memory is that recognition is applicable to those who have died, those who presently live, and those future generations yet to be born. For political philosophers, like Honneth, those to be recognized within this more developed and inclusive account of recognition are to be recognized by persons, laws, and institutions within this present time. Recognition of a person in another life, such as the Kingdom of God, or recognition of another because we are a created life, is not a feature of his presentation of recognition. Acknowledging, however, that every Christian has a vocation places the question of salvation at the heart of recognition. Thus, pastoral concern for another is not a functional skill with which one engages and recognizes another; instead, the encounter with another person is in some way a care or love for them.

For the discipline of pastoral theology, Taylor brings an important amendment to the recognition of another: recognition of vocation in ordinary life. Whilst Christians may have a distinctive understanding of vocation in the religious or spiritual sense, Taylor's emphasis on a humanist vocation in ordinary life signals a recognition that is neither merely political nor solely religious, but communal. It should not be assumed that recognition is a right that ought to be dispensed uncritically. This point is picked up by Seyla Benhabib in calling for a judgement determining who is to be recognized. Taylor is aware that recognition can be

legitimately withheld. Creating what he terms ‘re-evaluation’, Taylor presents a critical and self-critical method of interpretation. To illustrate this secular process of discernment, I outlined Taylor’s development of the *Bildungsroman*. His account of this literary device exhibits the formative and creative tension between what is universal and what is particular in a person’s story. In the conclusion of Chapter 2, I identified memory as a resource for the labour of re-evaluation. Having identified the pastoral dimension of recognition, I went on to explore what contexts support an interdisciplinary theological reflection on recognition as mutual accompaniment. In Chapter 3, I explored the first of the three contexts, namely narrative.

In Chapter 3, I showed how narrative is a key context that gives expression and meaning to the testimony or witness of one’s vocation. By means of presenting a more comprehensive account of a theological reflection on recognition, I suggested that narrative is not only constitutive of human meaning, but also provides an encounter with the vulnerable other. Narrative, as a context for a theological reflection on recognition, is not transposed into a specific theological or religious narrative. In other words, it is not a specialized form of narrative as context for theological reflection. Rather, I maintained that the mediation of narrative contributes to the formation of a person’s vocation through participation in recognition by means of accompaniment. The significance attributed to narrative as a constitutive part of theological reflection is not a unique position, but nor is it a majority stance within theology as a place of first beginning.

Narrative as a context for recognition of another is a foil against an overly cognitive or argumentative theology. In illustrating this point, I highlighted the development of theology as biography and autobiography. Metz was an obvious interlocutor in this regard, given the status he attributes to narrative in his

development of a fundamental theology. Yet, I noted that his development of narrative as a resource for theology ought to be updated and supplemented by the work of other theologians and philosophers. My contribution toward advancing narrative as a resource for theology acknowledged narrative as a vehicle through which one transposes to this present moment those who suffered and were forgotten. Moreover, I argued that narrative is also a storied landscape whereby one encounters the vulnerable other. Narrative as a context for recognition is not simply a site of observation; it is a context for recognitional action. To develop encounter as an action between the recognizer and the vulnerable other, I explored Paul Ricoeur's treatment of narrative in order to not only highlight the tension between sameness and difference, but more significantly to signify how, as in the case of stories, one is not constrained by plot. Transcending the confines of a prescriptive plot by way of emplotment opens up the labour of ongoing interpersonal formation.

Such a theological formation as the work of ongoing recognition is more than a growth in tolerance toward the other. Narrative as a context for recognition illustrates through accompaniment the hospitable encounter with the other. Yet, the moment of encounter with another does not guarantee recognition of another. Narrative can, however, empower recognition. But for recognition to occur, narrative cannot be the only context. As such, I suggested vulnerability as an additional context that facilitates recognition of another.

In exploring vulnerability as a context for recognition, I highlighted the significance of recognition as praxis. After exploring the philosophical and theological assertions as to the necessity of praxis, I considered the frame of recognition through which one first observes the other. I argued that pre-existing norms of recognition determine that some are recognized while others are denied

recognition. The challenge, therefore, for any Christian is to make oneself more available to the other by widening the frame of recognition. Through extending the frame of recognition, there emerges a verdict that persons are interdependent. Whilst at the beginning of Chapter 4, I focused on the widening of the frame of recognition, I moved to a widening of the community boundaries in which recognition occurs by exploring Jessica Benjamin's stress on the third. Growing availability occurs in this third space, not just with regard to surrendering to the other, but dwelling with or accompanying the other. In exploring Benjamin's account of recognition, I was able to highlight the significance of repair or restorative recognition. Yet, as with narrative, Benjamin's presentation of recognition is complicated by finitude and time. For theology, she adds the necessity of always expanding community, ensuring that its constitution is not solely an outcome of law. Recognition acting as a force for repair is an understanding of recognition that theology ought to employ. Yet, recognition in its non-theological aspect might be complemented by an understanding of recognition as a theological category, a repairing category, and an eschatological category.

In Chapter 5, I explored the final context of recognition, namely participation. Here I contextualized a theological reflection on recognition by examining participation in light of disability studies. In the previous chapter, I began by revisiting narrative and its relationship to vulnerability studies, and in this final chapter, I began by considering vulnerability and its relationship to participation. What can recognition of another person mean when the one being recognized is excluded from participation in the social, cultural, political or ecclesial life that shapes interrelationality and belonging? Recognition, therefore, ought not to be identified with passivity. For each context that supports recognition—narrative, vulnerability, and participation—shows that recognition requires embodied social relationships and

action. Yet, there is a danger that in reflecting upon recognition, a person is understood as a cognitively and physically abled adult. Exploring participation as a context for recognition helps to develop a theological reflection on recognition that prioritizes accompaniment as the relationship model. Thus, in Chapter 5, I argued for an accompaniment through participation in valuing human finitude and limitation. I also returned to memory as a resource for a theological reflection on recognition. I held that memory facilitates the recognition of another by way of accompaniment. It should be recalled that participating in the accompaniment of another is not a passive walking with someone, but an active engagement with the other whereby there is an interpretation of experience, the transformation of lives, and the reconstruction of relationships. Christians who engage in the ongoing project of recognition are witnesses not to an identity conflict, but to the responsibility to accompany one another in our journey toward our respective salvations.

Is a theological reflection on recognition saying something new? There is certainly much more to be said on the relationship between theology and recognition. My own effort here has sought to begin such a task, identifying three contexts that facilitate and support recognition. Perhaps more contexts can be added to the list, but I hope to have demonstrated here that narrative, vulnerability, and participation are crucial for a project of recognition that is characterized by accompaniment.

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