

Religious Recognition

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Charles Taylor and the Political Recognition of Difference as a Resource for Theological Reflection on Religious Recognition

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Abstract: This paper argues for a wider presentation of the term ‘recognition’ that includes ‘religion’ as a dimension of recognition. Toward this end, the author draws on the Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor, who considered whether religion might be a supportive context for the promotion of recognition. Recognition for Taylor includes recognition not only of sameness, but, significantly, recognition of difference. As the author of this paper highlights, Taylor’s argument for recognition of difference is an important resource in any theological reflection on the possibility of religious recognition.

Keywords: Charles Taylor, Political Recognition, Religious Recognition

Introduction

This paper identifies the absence of dimensions of religious recognition within recognition theory. Since the 1990’s scholars of political science, philosophy, and cultural theory have developed theories of recognition as a means to offset the prevalence of disrespect in society. I propose, however, that the inclusion of religious recognition within recognition theory creates a more comprehensive theory of recognition. In proposing this, I recognize that such an inclusion is not without its challenges, given that pinning down what religious recognition means is a precarious task. Within the limitations of this paper I understand ‘religious recognition’ as an interpretation of recognition that acknowledges and values a person’s vocation and reclaims and promotes the vocation of the other through the collective memory of the religiously-orientated faith community. Locating ‘religious recognition’ within a wider understanding of the recognition of a person’s vocation follows the precedent of my main interlocutor, Charles Taylor (1931-). For instance, Taylor’s treatment of ‘politics of universality’ and ‘politics of difference’ illuminates the multidimensional view of interpersonal recognition that, for the Christian, finds expression in living out one’s vocation. I develop my proposal by exploring Charles Taylor’s argument for ‘political recognition’, which he proposes in light of the tensions between a politics of universality and a politics of difference.

For the religiously orientated person, any interpersonal recognition of the other recognizes that the religious vocation of the other is an essential part of their personhood. Therefore, such religious recognition is necessary within a wider presentation of the multidimensional recognition of an individual. For religiously orientated persons, understanding 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 can be understood as the action on the part of God of calling a person to exercise some special function, especially of a spiritual nature. Beyond a two-state ecclesiology, the opening paragraph of *Gaudium et Spes* presents an inter-

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relational expression of vocation. This inter-relational understanding of vocation not only concerns itself with our current time, but its horizon carries with it an eschatological dimension in which vocation is both a natural and a supernatural phenomena. As the Council document states,

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 men. 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 man.¹

Thus a more complete theory of recognition requires the inclusion of religious recognition because a religiously orientated person understands 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. As such, the challenges and conflicts in living one's vocation personally and within communities in this world cannot be fully appreciated if our recognition of vocation is separate from the supernatural destiny of one's vocation.

The paper begins with an introduction to political recognition theory as a resource for exploring the development of dimensions of religious recognition. First, I acknowledge recognition is an elementary aspect of the mature development of the human person. Second, I argue that religious recognition as a dimension of recognition entails recognition of the religious vocation of the other. I suggest that such recognition is practiced as 'speaking of God while facing the world'²—emphasizing the inter-relational dimension of religious recognition, while avoiding a presentation of recognition that is susceptible to extrinsicism. I then explain and critique Taylor's treatment of political recognition as a resource for theologically reflecting upon religious recognition.

Taylor suggests religion as one context that can support the recognition of the other in a multicultural society. Yet, he does not explore religious recognition. Hence, I explore religious recognition that is informed by a theological reflection. In particular, I introduce Johann Baptist Metz's (1928-) understanding of memory as a process supportive of religious recognition. I argue that Metz's understanding of memory and Taylor's presentation of political recognition contribute to development of dimensions of a well-rounded theory of recognition. For Metz, memory is more than an expression of shared recollection. Memory is part of a process of concern and compassion for the other. The concern and compassion expressed has as its subject the other who has suffered. In particular, Metz's presentation of memory attempts to retrieve the memory of those who have suffered and died. Such retrieval is not just a psychological or anthropological recognition of the subject. Rather, Metz presents the creation of this 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.³

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 proposed by Axel Honneth.⁴ Both Metz and Honneth's presentation of memory includes the recognition of those persons deceased and those who will be future members of our communities. Such a presentation of memory that includes not only deceased members but also members yet to be born is not without its difficulties. Honneth, in reflecting upon the this notes, 'What is much more difficult to understand is why the recognition of dead

¹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1.

² Metz, "Facing the World," 29.

³ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 211.

⁴ Honneth, "Reflection," 322.

members of the community as the coauthors of the collective identity considered valid today should also include future members of the community through the recognition from the now existing community'.⁵

Honneth, however, answers his question in terms of a 'decision' to include those who will be born in the future within a shared recollection. He notes, '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'.⁶ In a similar manner, Metz's presentation of memory is 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 is a future freedom and a shared recollection made real by the passion of Christ's suffering and resurrection for those who have died, for those who currently live, and for those yet to be born. The social community created by such memory is not just an expansion of any current social community. It is also the kingdom of God that is more than our current material world.

Recognition as a Social and Religious Function

Recognition theories are prominent in a variety of academic disciplines. Yet these theories have not adequately explored the possibility and potential contributions of dimensions of religious recognition. The lack of such an exploration represents a significant omission within recognition theory. As a result, recognition is usually limited to its social function for the building up of individuals and society. Religious recognition, however, widens the interaction and horizon of recognition theories beyond the material world and its concerns. While the dialogical relationship to the other is studied at length within recognition literature, the relationship between God and the human person and the relationship between persons in light of the relationship to God awaits development within recognition theory. While an extensive treatment of the relationship between the human person and God in light of recognition theory is beyond the limited scope of this paper, some signposts illuminating how we might theologically reflect upon the other in light of religious recognition is helpful. With this in mind, I return to Metz.

Although Metz is not a theorist of recognition, like many recognition theorists he is responding to the reality of disrespect and violence in our world. He notes, 'There is a history of suffering in society, the suffering of the poor, the oppressed, and the wretched. And there is also a cultural history of suffering in that world, the suffering of otherness and of endangered dignity'.⁷ Given such suffering Metz 'demand[s] the formulation of the biblical word of God as dangerous memory, in categories of resistance and liberating transformation'.⁸ Here we arrive at the crux of Metz's approach to theology, he describes the human situation and imagines a theological response in light of the situation described. Thus, he 'avoid[s] an artificial separation between characterizing the situation and reflecting upon it theologically'.⁹ Metz's 'theory of action' innovatively occasions a 'transformation', which 'entails recognizing the capacity for guilt in all acting subjects'.¹⁰ It is this inclusion of guilt in how one understands memory that locates Metz's presentation of memory as distinctive. Indeed, the capacity for guilt is not so much a record of sin or offence committed, but the capacity for guilt ought to move the Christian toward a greater action of concern and compassion for the other. Recognition, therefore, 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 explore the parallels between their worldview, informed by faith, and another person's worldview, whether secular, cultural, or religious. For

⁵ Ibid., 323.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Metz, "Facing the World," 29.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ John K. Downey, ed., *Love's Strategy*, 83.

¹⁰ Metz, "Facing the World," 29.

Taylor, recognition of the other is based upon an equality that understands all persons sharing dignity. Theology, while recognizing the dignity of all persons, understands the need for recognition because the fulfillment of every human vocation is divine salvation. Indeed, dangerous memory moves the Christian to a concern not just for their salvation, but for the salvation of the other, the one who is forgotten or has yet to be born. Salvation is not achieved alone, but through inter-relating with others in secular and religious communities. Because there is an inter-relational and community context by which persons grow and mature, when value and dignity are denied, a person's capacity to mature and develop is impeded. I understand religious recognition as concerned with practices that make recognition possible. One term that captures the practices that support recognition is 'humanization'. Karl Rahner (1904-1984) understood this term 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 inter-relational practice of love as the 'humanization of the world'.¹¹ He held that humanization in a non-religious sense is limited as a social activity within society where it lacks openness to the love of God. For him, humanization has more than a social significance—it has religious significance. As such, a more developed expression of humanization recognizes the religious love of neighbour. However, the religious love of neighbour is not a separate sphere of love. Rahner contends that there is 'no sphere marked off as sacral'.¹² What is proposed by Rahner is the human person 'reaching out beyond in faith, hope and love to that mystery which we call God'.¹³ 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's (1949-). Honneth presents love as one of the three spheres of recognition. For him, love as recognition is a precursor to any subsequent relationships of recognition.¹⁴ 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.

For the Christian, humanizing practices of formation are not only a social love of neighbour, but through the love of neighbour the Christian locates love of neighbour within a much wider horizon. Yet, Christian love is not separate from human love. Given the manner in which love of neighbour and love of God aid each other, can any exploration or development of religious recognition benefit from the clarifications achieved and the issues raised by Taylor's treatment of recognition theory? For instance, recognition theory reminds theology of the potential dangers of using only 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 because the other can also be understood as different. Any dialogical model operating within religious recognition, therefore, cannot simply relate to the other because of a principle of equality, but 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 their 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 that concern a religious recognition of the other.

¹¹ Rahner, *The Church's Commission to Bring Salvation and the Humanization of the World*, 297.

¹² Ibid., 312.

¹³ Ibid., 313.

¹⁴ Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 190.

Charles Taylor: Reaching Out toward the Conditions for Religious Recognition

Taylor considers the role political recognition can play in the formation of persons.¹⁵ His inaugural essay on the topic, *The Politics of Recognition*, first published in 1992, is considered a classic text in political recognition theory. For Taylor, a distinctive feature of current times is the demand for recognition by individuals and minority groups. The emergence of the self occurs through a relational interaction with the other, whereby the fashioning of the self is not the sole project of that individual. Rather, the forming of the self is relational and social. For Taylor the fashioning of personhood, therefore, is an inter-relational and moral enterprise of dialogue with others. He holds, ‘identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by *misrecognition* of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves’.¹⁶ At the same time, Taylor cautions against any understanding of morality that is ‘thought to encompass just our obligations to other people’.¹⁷ If our understanding of morality is delimited just to obligations, Taylor suggests, ‘we have to allow that there are other questions beyond the moral which are of central concern to us, and which bring strong evaluation into play’.¹⁸ He is alluding to the discovery of one’s ‘vocation or true form’ and such a way of living is more than morality.¹⁹

In advancing his argument that vocation is not just an expression of a moral category, Taylor asks if ‘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’.²⁰ 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’.²¹ The living of one’s vocation is not a lone or a moral exercise, but a deeply inter-relational and communal activity. Such formation of any vocation, however, is often characterized by tension more than ease between the higher life and the ordinary life.²² 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’.²³ The ordinary life, on the other hand, is presented as ‘production and reproduction, of work and family’.²⁴ Prior to the modern period, the higher life was considered the greater vocational calling. But as Taylor correctly points out, there is a great degree of ‘attitudinal’ dignity afforded the ordinary life.

Attitudinal dignity is ‘respect for rights’, but it is more ‘thinking well of someone’.²⁵ Yet the modern sensibility to elevate the dignity of the ordinary life above other forms of life is not without its pitfalls. Taylor notes, in highlighting the contribution of Reformation theologies in tipping the scale in favour of ordinary life, it ‘introduced a polemical stance towards these traditional views and their implied elitism’.²⁶ Taylor’s critique of this polemical stance held by a modern sensibility is particularly vocal in its concern with how

¹⁵ I understand identity to signify that which is changing and developing, not something fixed and static. My understanding of identity is sourced in Paul Ricoeur’s preferred explanation of identity as *ipse*. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 2.

¹⁶ Taylor, ‘The Politics of Recognition,’ 225.

¹⁷ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 14.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Taylor, *The Language Animal*, 318.

²⁰ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 14.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 23.

²³ Ibid., 20.

²⁴ Ibid., 23.

²⁵ Ibid., 15.

²⁶ Ibid., 23.

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.²⁷

Taylor continues his critique of the polemical stance, adding ‘For the affirmation of ordinary life, while necessarily denouncing certain distinctions, itself amounts to one; else it has no meaning at all’.²⁸ 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 fulfilled life. Rather, as Taylor notes, the contrast today ought to be expressed in the ‘different ways of living the life of production and reproduction’ within ordinary living.²⁹

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 nonrecognition for those who are thus violated. The moral seriousness of misrecognition is further highlighted by his presentation that recognition constitutes an essential part of what it means to be human, noting that ‘Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need’.³⁰ That recognition is vital makes it indispensable to the maintenance and development of the person or of an institution. 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 inter-personally 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 is an example of where ecumenical and dialogical encounters at a local level and church level contributed toward a sustainable programme for peace on the island of Ireland.

While recognition theory is presented as a helpful device within ecumenical encounters, it would be premature to assume that there exists any advanced analytical feature as to how recognition is applied within ecumenical exchanges beyond a general employment of the term ‘recognition’. Gerard Kelly’s *Recognition: Advancing Ecumenical Thinking* is a helpful resource that catalogues the development of ecumenical exchanges and agreements within some Christian churches. While a presentation of a method of recognition within ecumenical exchanges has not been achieved, the term ‘recognition’ remains a useful term in theological reflection and discourse.

Nevertheless, Kelly successfully employs the term ‘recognition’ in signaling moments of ecumenical developments and agreements. Using the term recognition Kelly traces moments of theological advancement in ecumenical dialogue. For instance, he notes a key change at the Lund Conference in 1951 that 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’.³¹ This new understanding would move the ecumenical discourse beyond 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’.³²

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, 226.

³¹ Kelly, *Recognition: Advancing Ecumenical Thinking*, 219.

³² Ibid.

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 recognition that ‘consider[s] the degree of communion which already exists between them’.³³ But the question remains, is recognition a helpful and relevant term for current ecumenical dialogue? Kelly states that ‘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 of the nature of the church of God, there will be no common understanding of recognition’.³⁴ 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 the term ‘recognition’ is employed as a formal acknowledgment, conveying approval or the sanctioning of something.

Yet the differences that remain concerning the nature of the churches persist. In the section ‘Differences in understanding the ministry’ it is formally acknowledged that, ‘If, 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’³⁵ – a mutual recognition that 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 the 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’.³⁶ 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 illustrates that the development of churches and their members is relational, part of our individual and collective vocations and requires a relationship with other churches and their members.

Recognition can also have a developmental or maturing effect upon members within civil communities. Taylor notes that civil communities have undergone an unprecedented breakdown of social hierarchies.³⁷ This breakdown saw 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.³⁸ Today, however, we have a ‘modern notion of dignity’, which replaces honour with dignity.³⁹

For Taylor, all people hold dignity. In noting such a universal change from honour to dignity, he equally argues that the concept of dignity is ‘the only one compatible with a democratic society’.⁴⁰ Moreover, Taylor coins ‘individualized identity’ to express an emphasis on the individual and personal traits and qualities of a given person.⁴¹ This subjective turn, as he names it, is the task of being true to oneself.⁴² It is considered the best possible manner of being human, or a ‘new ideal of authenticity’.⁴³ This new understanding of identity—as a consequence of the rejection of hierarchical societies—is closely connected with Taylor’s

³³ Ibid., 227.

³⁴ Ibid., 226.

³⁵ Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity, *From Conflict to Communion*, 71.

³⁶ Ibid., 83.

³⁷ Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, 226.

³⁸ 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 was universally given out in a non-selective manner to all it would lose its perceived honour. Ibid., 226.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 227.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 229.

presentation of recognition theory.⁴⁴ 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’.⁴⁵

While presenting such a turn to the self, with its implications for understanding identity and recognition, and their mutual relation to each other, recognition is not a term original or exclusive to Taylor. Axel Honneth, in *The Struggle for Recognition*, develops a comprehensive presentation of the theory of recognition. He draws upon the Hegelian tradition to present a novel and current 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 contributes toward the formation and mutual recognition of the individual: love, respect and esteem.

While the purpose of my paper is an elaboration on Taylor’s account of recognition, it’s helpful to present in a very introductory and brief manner the contrasting angle taken by Honneth with respect to recognition. Taylor’s presentation of recognition concerns the formation and the development of groups and essential to his presentation of recognition is the recognition of difference. While Honneth is more explicitly concerned with the formation of the individual human subject and, unlike Taylor, Honneth is championing recognition as respect for universal human dignity 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.⁴⁶

There is, however, an important dimension to ‘general recognition’ that contrasts the more ‘specialized recognition’ presented by Taylor. For example, ‘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’.⁴⁷ Taylor’s presentation of the development of the person is dependent on a dialogical relation with others, whereby both recognition and misrecognition may occur.⁴⁸ Having flagged the potential for misrecognition, Taylor boldly suggests that what is needed is not so much recognition for itself, but what ought to be considered are ‘the conditions in which the attempt to be recognized can fail’.⁴⁹ 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 not only a theory but also a practice of political recognition that is necessary for the formation of persons in our society. Specific to his presentation of recognition is its dialogical character. From this dialogical dimension within political recognition, I will proceed to offer an account of Taylor’s fuller expression of recognition as ‘equal recognition’.

⁴⁴ 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., 230). 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 others play toward us achieving this end.

⁴⁵ Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, 231.

⁴⁶ McBride, *Recognition*, 2.

⁴⁷ Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, 231.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

The Discourse of Equal Recognition

For Taylor, the discourse of equal recognition occurs within two spheres: the ‘intimate plane’ and the ‘social plane’.⁵⁰ Within the intimate plane formation of the self occurs relationally with others, while in the social plane exists 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’.⁵¹ Taylor goes on to declare, ‘Love relationships are not just important because of the general emphasis in modern culture on the fulfillments of ordinary needs. They are also crucial because they are the crucibles of inwardly generated identity’.⁵² Highlighting Taylor’s relational position, Simon Thompson adds ‘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’.⁵³ Having clarified the distinctiveness of both planes, Taylor commits himself for the remainder of his essay to an explication of equal recognition.

Equal Recognition beyond a Politics of Difference and a Politics of Universalism

There are two characteristics to equal recognition: the ‘politics of universalism’ and the ‘politics of difference’.⁵⁴ 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 upheld. In doing so, it stresses an equalization of rights and entitlements. A concrete expression of this concept is equal citizenship. Politics of difference, on the other hand, is a result of recent emphasis on identity questions. The legal protection of the French language in Quebec is an example of civil law protecting the linguistic and cultural identities of a minority group in Canada. Taylor contrasts both the politics of universalism and the politics of difference: ‘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’.⁵⁵ The politics of difference, therefore, acts to rediscover the lost particularity and uniqueness of a person and a group, resisting any dominant identity of the said person or group.

Taylor’s account of recognition, however, often slides into confusion or a laxity in his use of terms. For instance, he uses the words ‘recognition’ and ‘respect’ interchangeably in developing his political recognition.⁵⁶ Responding to this, Thompson contends that Taylor is presenting us with a singular form of recognition, not a variety of forms of recognition.⁵⁷ In addition, the ‘two modes of politics, both based on the notion of respect, come into conflict’.⁵⁸ 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.⁵⁹ Thompson observes the contesting poles from which recognition is demanded:

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

⁵⁰ Ibid., 232.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Thompson, *The Political Theory of Recognition*, 22.

⁵⁴ Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, 233.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 233-4.

⁵⁶ Thompson, *The Political Theory of Recognition*, 82.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, 236.

⁵⁹ Thompson, *The Political Theory of Recognition*, 82.

identity. As a result of this analysis, Taylor tends to understand struggles for recognition as conflicts between these two forms of politics.⁶⁰

This struggle from a politics of universalism and a politics of difference to the demand for equal recognition is noticeably evident in multicultural societies. Taylor notes the ongoing language and cultural tensions in Canada between Quebec and the rest of Canada. Quebec illustrates the difficulty resulting 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.⁶¹ Persons are equally recognized within a community that ‘shares some common purposes and recognizes its members as sharing in these purposes’.⁶² Recognition, therefore, is dialogical at its core; I am recognized and I recognize, not in any self-isolated or absolute autonomous space, but in and through my relationships with others.

Recognition: Honour Is Equal Worth

As Taylor concludes his essay on political recognition, he holds that recognition—particularly concerning a politics of difference—is not about recognizing only one specific type of culture. As such, ‘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’.⁶³ Taylor suggests ‘the presumption of equal worth’ as a midway.⁶⁴ 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 questioning 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’.⁶⁵ Approaching another attempts 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’.⁶⁶ Taylor’s appeal to the potentiality 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’.⁶⁷ But the recognition of an *a priori* element in experience ought not to be understood as only 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 confidence that we know what we mean, and hence our having our own original language, depends on this relating’.⁶⁸ Taylor is attempting 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’.⁶⁹

⁶⁰ 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.).

⁶¹ Taylor does not specify the type of community, however.

⁶² Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, 276.

⁶³ Ibid., 256.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 38.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 39.

The position of individualism for Taylor is likened to some Romantic views of the self and, in particular, to American Transcendentalists, who ‘in a sense [contain] the universe, but by-passing any necessary relation to other humans’.⁷⁰ To hammer home the 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’.⁷¹ Taylor characterizes their position in terms of how they would express it, as an ‘independent stance’.⁷² Yet as he notes, ‘what an independent stance involves is defined by the culture, in a continuing conversation into which that young person is inducted (and in which the meaning of independence can also alter with time)’.⁷³ For Taylor, the formation of identity is located within a conversation between ‘our sense of the good and our sense of the self’.⁷⁴ Within such conversations ‘Each young person may take up a stance which is authentically his or her own; but the very possibility of this is enframed in a social understanding of great temporal depth, in fact, in a “tradition”’.⁷⁵

Taylor, however, extends the conversation between the sense of the good and the sense of the self within a wider ‘picture’, which he categorizes as ‘orientation’.⁷⁶ Orientation, for Taylor, involves ‘a second axis of strong evaluation...[about] what kind of life is worth living’.⁷⁷ Significant for religious recognition is Taylor’s extension of orientation into the realm of the spiritual or vocational, for it is,

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.⁷⁸

Taylor goes on to explain that ‘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’.⁷⁹ 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 supportive of recognition, such as the spiritual and religious.

Seyla Benhabib’s Critique of Charles Taylor’s Approach to Recognition Theory

In *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*, Seyla Benhabib (1950-) offers a constructive reading of Taylor’s political recognition that culminates in a final reservation—not dismissal—of Taylor’s thesis on recognition. As noted 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: ‘I certainly subscribe to the thesis of the inter-subjective constitution of the self through dialogic moral practices’.⁸⁰ However, she raises a reservation as to the potential achievements of recognition theory within 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’.⁸¹ Benhabib’s reservations concerning any political

⁷⁰ Ibid., 39.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 40.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 39.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 41.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 42.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁰ Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture*, 51.

⁸¹ Ibid.

realizations of Taylor's political recognition lay first in Taylor's conflating one's search for authenticity with a search for a corporate identity.

Benhabib's reservation is a concern for persons and their subsequent development of self-confidence, self-worth, and self-respect. She suggests the 'clamoring for the recognition of their group identities' could swallow up persons.⁸² In a cautionary note against Taylor's presentation of political recognition, 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'.⁸³ Benhabib asks the following rhetorical question: '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'''.⁸⁴

Yet there are points of agreement between Taylor and Benhabib. For instance, the formation of identities can only be accomplished 'through webs of interlocution, that we become who we are not solely but in a crucial sense through our immersion in various communities of language and socialization'.⁸⁵ The dialogical character of recognition has two significant outcomes for both authors. First for Taylor, and indeed for Benhabib, language has wide-ranging meanings and applications. As Taylor notes, 'We become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining our identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression'.⁸⁶ Language learning is relational and dialogical, in that we 'learn these modes of expression through exchanges with others'.⁸⁷ Yet given Taylor's modest treatment of the intimate plane in *The Politics of Recognition*, this plane requires more explanation than he afforded in that text. The lack of description and development of the intimate plane coincides with a modest presentation of an 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 his latest book, *Language Animal: The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity*. This 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'.⁸⁸

Such a direction in life is afforded a meaningful orientation in its 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'.⁸⁹ 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.⁹⁰

Languages are used not only 'for our own purposes',⁹¹ because the deployment of language have 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 to task Taylor's *a priori*-like position (of affording all persons equal respect) as a necessity.

⁸² Ibid., 53.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 56.

⁸⁶ 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., 32)

⁸⁷ Ibid, 230.

⁸⁸ Taylor, *The Language Animal*, 298.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 318.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 233.

⁹¹ Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments*, 230.

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.⁹²

Judgments are made in determining whether a person is worthy. 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' in *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* examines the role of responsibility in human agency. In particular, the essay argues for constant "re-evaluation" of ideas and claims given that 'fresh insight might alter my evaluations' of the worth of others.⁹³ For Taylor, the link between individual recognition, responsibility, and worth for others is best played-out in what he calls 'autobiographical reasoning', which he notes involves an openness to reevaluation.⁹⁴ While a schema of reevaluation 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'.⁹⁵

Benhabib has reservations concerning Taylor's presentation of recognition theory. 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. Concerns with the lack of development of the intimate plane within his essay *The Politics of Recognition* remain. Nevertheless, Taylor's earlier essay 'What is Human Agency' and his other texts which I refer to in this paper offer a solution to Benhabib's cautionary observation on the problem of homology: namely, the responsibility to re-evaluate our stories as new insight is possible in any moment.

Religious Recognition as a Responsibility to Re-evaluation

I have argued for an exploration between theology and recognition theory concerning the development of dimensions of religious recognition. Efforts to develop a theory and practice of religious recognition point to the wider challenge and opportunity for theology today. Whether within the church, society or academia, theology's challenge and opportunity is one of a wider engagement with other disciplines for the mutual benefit of theology and other disciplines. For theology, such an engagement presents an opportunity to recognize the vocation of every human person, not only in this life but also in the life to come. Toward such a grand recognition, religious recognition is a prerequisite for any dialogue with the other in understanding their vocation.

Of course the disciplinary borders between political philosophy and theology are rather identifiable. At the same time, this paper has alluded to overlaps between theology and recognition for the exploring of religious recognition as we care for the vocation of each person. In this concluding section I will make explicit some of the differences and some of the overlaps that we run into when engaging with theology and recognition theory toward presenting an account of religious recognition.

Resulting from *The Politics of Recognition*, I would like to emphasize one achievement by Taylor, which, in my opinion, supports my argument that recognition theory is a 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 inter-relational formation of the human person, for the mission of the Church and, by extension, its members are 'a single

⁹² Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture*, 56-57.

⁹³ Taylor, *Human Agency and Language*, 39.

⁹⁴ Taylor, *Language Animal*, 307.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 315.

but complex reality which develops in a variety of ways'.⁹⁶ Such a varied formation of personhood takes seriously belonging as personal, social or 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 a formative relationship with others.

Responding to Taylor's presentation of the dialogical and relational self, K. Anthony Appiah (1954-) makes an important distinction between individual identity and the collective identity, noting that, within Taylor's essay, identity is a collective category.⁹⁷ In a similar tone to Benhabib's concern with homology, Appiah highlights how collective identities can also serve as a precarious identity for an individual's efforts to understand more fully the self. 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, a slippery-slope discourse of identity within the discourses 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.⁹⁸ 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'.⁹⁹ The process is akin to Taylor's responsibility to 're-evaluation', 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'.¹⁰⁰ 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'.¹⁰¹ But any satisfactory effort toward healing requires a responsibility to memory. For it is within such responsible deliberations in forming memory that any society decides who are the legitimate victims that require healing. Honneth notes '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'.¹⁰² While accounts of memory, whether personal or institutional, can be selective and prejudicial in its 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'.¹⁰³ 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 post-war Germany, the German political theologian, Johann Baptist Metz, emphasized the particularity of history in his presentation of human experience. This theological initiative presented a more complete account of those who had 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.

⁹⁶ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 41.

⁹⁷ Appiah, "Identity, Authenticity, Survival," 149.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 156.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 161.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Honneth, "Reflection," 322.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 321.

Johann Baptist Metz: Political Consciousness as Participation in the Suffering of Others

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.¹⁰⁴ This hermeneutical approach that includes those who have suffered is in 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 we retain in the liberal distinction between politics and morals'.¹⁰⁵ 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.¹⁰⁶ It becomes an alternative to a politics fashioned by technology and economics.

The pairing of politics and morality is not a reception of pre-held moral absolutes from sources beyond oneself. As Metz puts it, 'The connection between politics and morals cannot be ordained from above, and can and should not be allowed to relapse into the political canonization of a particular moral system'.¹⁰⁷ Instead, the combination of politics and morals arrange a 'radical democratization of the social infrastructure'.¹⁰⁸ 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.¹⁰⁹ 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"'.¹¹⁰ In considering Metz's two-pronged approach of both the moral and the political inhabiting at once the same space, I intend to emphasize 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'.¹¹¹ 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'.¹¹² The first type of memory treats history with unrealistic optimism, failing to recognize past sufferings of individuals or groups. The second type of memory transfigures the past; infusing history with a purifying quality such that history is seen as a glorious past. The third are 'dangerous memories'. Like political recognition, dangerous memories 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.¹¹³ His clarification of human history, which emphasizes the subversive, contends that the 'natural history of [humanity] is in a certain sense

¹⁰⁴ Metz, "The Future in the Memory of Suffering," 5.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 8.

¹¹² Ibid., 7.

¹¹³ Ibid., 8.

the history of [its] passions'.¹¹⁴ In challenging and undermining a history exclusively reliant on scientific and technological authority, Metz destabilizes a certain genre of political history. Presented instead is the reality of past suffering. This presentation, however, is not any 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'.¹¹⁵ Memory as a theological re-evaluative and retroactive recognition force presents 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.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued for a presentation of recognition that acknowledges and values a person's vocation and reclaims and promotes the vocation of the other through the collective memory of the religiously-orientated faith community. Drawing on Metz's understanding of memory, 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 not just centering on the death of the person. Memory, therefore, is praxis that seeks the liberation of past and future generations through a re-evaluated and realized eschatology.

In exploring the dimensions of religious recognition, by means of memory, I suggested a more comprehensive account of recognition in widening the reach of those to be recognized. Drawing from political philosophy, I examined Taylor's essay *The Politics of Recognition* and some of his other works as an aid to exploring the dimensions of religious recognition.

Thus I have presented the case for a theological reflection upon the dimensions of religious recognition in light of its absence from current theories of recognition. In developing my argument, I employed Metz's understanding of memory as a means through which religious recognition can occur. This presentation of memory is complemented by Honneth's presentation of memory as a retroactive recognition force. For Metz, memory has a 'dangerous' quality, in that it subverts versions of history that seek to exclude the voiceless and the suffering. Memory is a part of the dimensions of religious recognition that 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 signaling an eternal future for all through a religious recognition that is characterized by concern and compassion.

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¹¹⁴ Ibid., 10.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

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