

Making Disciples, Constructing Selves: A Narrativ-Developmental Approach to Identity and its Implications for the Theology, Pedagogy, and Praxis of the Present-Day Church in the United States

Author: Joshua Harrison Lunde-Whitler

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Making Disciples, Constructing Selves: A Narrative-Developmental Approach to Identity and its Implications for the Theology, Pedagogy, and Praxis of the Present-Day Church in the United States

Joshua H. Lunde-Whitler

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**MAKING DISCIPLES, CONSTRUCTING SELVES: A NARRATIVAL-
DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH TO IDENTITY AND ITS IMPLICAITONS
FOR THE THEOLOGY, PEDAGOGY, AND PRAXIS OF THE PRESENT-DAY
CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES**

Joshua H. Lunde-Whitler

Advisor: Jane E. Regan, PhD

ABSTRACT

This project explores the concept of identity through the lens of *narrativity*, a multifaceted concept that describes the way the consciousness makes meaning about life, throughout life. Narrativity depicts meaning-making as both an intensely personal *and* communal endeavor, epitomized in the way people tell and listen to life stories together. Narrativity is endemic to who we are as humans; yet it dramatically evolves over time. Indeed, it must continuously evolve, so that we might continue to learn, love, and maintain hope amidst the myriad circumstances and exigencies we face. And so when theologians and researchers in the social sciences alike speak of an “identity crisis” at work in the United States today, they are speaking directly to a deficiency in the way people make meaning together—a deficiency that, in the present view, is indelibly linked to the country’s history of hegemonic, colonizing practices of exclusion and domination by those in power. This history, which is also our present, has profoundly shaped the capacities of people from every walk of life to co-create meaning.

Understood in this way, identity formation must be seen as a pivotal task for Christian religious educators in the United States. Of course, such educators are typically interested in the formation of a “Christian identity,” and rightly so. But this work makes the case that nurturing narrativity—that is, personhood and personal identity-

development—is part and parcel to Christian identity formation, which in turn is inseparable from social and political engagement. In this view, narrativity is actually ingrained into the very pedagogy and praxis of the discipling community that Jesus cultivated through his ministry. Present-day Christian communities should likewise consider themselves as *discipling communities*, who embody this collective (or communal) identity precisely to the extent that they cultivate narrativity through their missional-pedagogical practices. This will require most US churches to radically re-imagine their structure and aims.

The primary tasks of this work are threefold: (1) It defines identity in terms of the psychosocial and spiritual notion of narrativity—and Christian identity in terms of discipleship, which awakens and restores narrativity. These definitions inform a holistic philosophy of narrational meaning-making, and a practical and liberationist approach to theological anthropology, ethics, and ecclesial mission. (2) It attempts to depict narrativity as it evolves through the lifespan, with the help of current research in neuroscience and narrative developmental psychology. This is articulated in terms of a “*narrational-developmental*” perspective. (3) Guided by these definitions, it suggests ways that churches in the present-day United States might begin to re-orient their missional and teaching practices around these notions of narrativity and narrational-development. Chief among these suggestions are four hypothesized principles for teaching for narrativity, which emerge at project’s end.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the church in the United States today, with its many flavors, colors, and shapes, with its bedraggled history marred with the stains of slavery, genocide, segregation, and expansionism:

We have artlessly prayed for your unity

We have optimistically prayed for your unity-in-diversity

Now in this time, may we now pray—and *work*—together

for a *living, transforming interconnectivity*.

It is also dedicated to the memory of Dr. James Cone, who passed away just days prior to the defense of this dissertation. To the extent that the present work listens to and uplifts the voices of the oppressed, Cone receives credit for challenging me to do so. To the extent where it falters in this regard, I resolve in the future to hold his and others' clarion words even closer, so that I might continue to listen and learn. More broadly, it is my hope that his legacy will continue to shape the life of the entire US church, as it seeks to redeem its past and claim a new future—and will continue to inspire more awakenings, more voices, and more action.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Family members are often listed as the final, punctuating offering in a list of acknowledgments. I am compelled to begin, however, by thanking my partner in life and love, the Reverend Amy Lunde-Whitler—because from start to finish, her care, sacrifice, and relentless confidence in me has made this entire endeavor possible. There were several large roadblocks along the way to completing this dissertation, that simply could not have been overcome without Amy. I can only hope to support her work as much as she has mine, especially over these past seven years of doctoral work.

My son, Josiah, must also be mentioned at the outset. Born a month before I began writing, I have watched his narrativity in action, and his meaning-making consciousness take shape, throughout the course of this dissertation's unfolding. Being a new parent increased my satisfaction in writing—and in turn, my research and writing helped inform and (hopefully!) enliven my parenting. He has had as much a role to play in facilitating this work as anyone.

There are many others whose efforts made the writing of this dissertation possible. I am so appreciative of my mother-in-law, Annesta, who took many trips to the Boston area to help watch Josiah so that I could write. Gratitude is also due to all the staff, student leaders and interns at the Walker Center for Ecumenical Exchange over the past three years, for their diligence and perseverance which allowed me to preserve my writing time.

Of course I owe a great deal to my committee, to Dr. Michael James and Dr. Nancy Pineda-Madrid, and to my committee chair Dr. Jane Regan, for all their feedback

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There are several people who deserve special mention for playing a formative role in the shaping of the concepts of narrativity and narrativ development: Michael Novelli, who showed me how stories engage and enliven participants, Dr. Nancey Murphy, at Fuller Theological Seminary who first led me to consider storied forms of knowing, my clinical pastoral education supervisor Wendy Terpstra, who taught me what it meant to truly listen and to treat human beings as sacred, Dr. Richard Kearney, who was my river guide through the treacherous waters of Paul Ricoeur, Dr. Thomas Groome, for his shared praxis methodology and for introducing me to Paulo Freire, Sr. Meg Guider, for deepening my understanding of Freire and his dialectical way of viewing the world, Dr. Jane Regan, for introducing me to the work of Robert Kegan, and Dr. Mary Elizabeth Moore, at Boston University, whose caring guidance and problem-posing directly resulted in the moment of insight when the concept of narrativ development first took shape. There are many others who also should be mentioned in this regard, too many to name in full. I do want to offer special thanks to Dr. Groome and the entire School of Theology and Ministry at Boston College. I want to especially thank my colleagues in the Theology and Education program, who were willing to trudge through those early, more-cumbersome versions of my dissertation proposal, and who offered their suggestions and insights.

Finally, I wish to thank Sunshine, Jackrabbit, Phillip, Blair, Michael, Fernando, Rocky, David, Tina, Jerry (RIP), Melinda, Jerry, Catriona, Ginny, and many others, all for sharing their stories—indeed their very selves—with me at the Central Park Hub in Pasadena, California, which is discussed in the forthcoming opening pages. I am honored to have known each of them, even if it was only for a time and under difficult circumstances. I am permanently altered as a result of the time I spent with them all.

To all of you, and to the countless others who have made their mark upon my life and work: I cannot thank you enough.

1.0 INTRODUCTION: THE “PERMANENT SEARCH” FOR MEANING

Critical acceptance of my inconclusion necessarily immerses me in permanent search. What makes me hopeful is not so much the certainty of the find, but my movement in search.

—Paulo Freire¹

1.1 FINDING OURSELVES IN EACH OTHER: A PRELUDE

One of the implications that can be derived from the following pages is that every movement, every philosophy, every value system, every cause—and yes, every dissertation—is rooted in storied human experiences, and remains connected to its conception insofar as it continuously recounts these stories. Of course such roots often run even deeper, all the way down to the level of a person or group’s very origins, and so it is not always easy to recount the exact moment of genesis for an idea. But as the present work aims to present a novel approach to understanding human identity and its evolution through the lifespan, an apposite place to begin would be the four years where I served as the founder and chaplain of a ministry with transient persons² in Pasadena,

¹ Freire, Paulo, *Pedagogy of the Heart*, trans. Donald Macedo and Alexandre Oliveira (New York: Continuum, 1997/2007), 106.

² Neither the term “transient” nor “homeless” are ideal descriptors for persons in the life position I am describing, although the former is my preferred term here. The typical full description here is “transient person(s),” following the conviction of this entire work that human beings are inherently narrational, and thus not reducible to any labels, whether accepted or imposed.

California. I say that it was a ministry “with,” and not “for,” because the very essence of the ministry-community was its contagious spirit of mutual hospitality and dialogue. Such an ethos emerged in spite of the fact that it was a community consisting of both those who were transient, who were searching for meaning and camaraderie in a world that had turned away from them, and those with homes, including myself, who themselves were often searching for meaning and connectedness in a world from which they somehow felt disconnected or lost. Despite the inherent challenges, that beautiful spirit nevertheless prevailed—at least for one night a week, for a couple of hours—as we searched for meaning together.

This is how the Central Park Hub community began: In 2006 I was a seminary student in search for a ministry goal for fulfilling the internship requirements for a Masters of Divinity, and thanks to many provocative voices that had influenced me, I had become aware of a gap in the ways that both social services and communities of faith were addressing the meteoric rise of the transient population in southern California in the early-to-mid 2000’s. Many of these institutions primarily focused upon meeting more urgent immediate needs such as temporary shelter and food, while more evangelical churches would often provide these things while simultaneously preaching or handing out Bibles. Meanwhile advocacy for the transient was considered primarily in terms of letter-writing or awareness-building campaigns by progressive faith communities or non-governmental organizations; the actual helping of people navigate their way through homelessness was mostly left to social workers, who across the board were overwhelmed with the demand. All of these activities served important roles, and I certainly believed that both meeting immediate needs and confronting systemic injustice were necessary.

Yet informed by an understanding of incarnational ministry inspired by the gospel narratives as well as by contemporary exemplars, I wagered that an open-ended relationality that aspired for mutuality would help fill the inherent gap between these two concerns. That is, meals are often as much about relationships as they are about nutrition, and eating in community is a near-universal component of every human culture wherein key relational bonds are forged. Relationships, in turn, even at varying degrees of intimacy, can challenge people beyond easy or cheap notions of empathy towards concrete expressions of concern and solidarity. The hope was that through mutual relationships (that resisted temptation towards condescension), where food was shared among equals, group participants would inherently discover the motivation to be greater social and political advocates, on behalf of those who are now called friends. And so my church at the time, which was seeking to develop mid-sized “Hub” communities in the neighborhoods surrounding Pasadena, sanctioned me to help launch a new Hub in the middle of downtown Central Park as a primary component of my required internship, to be a place where both the many transient persons who already frequented the area, as well as our and other church community members, could come together. The idea was to have a picnic, and to do away with food lines like they had at the shelters, where the participants were often shuttled along like cattle. We would pray together (in a circle holding hands, giving everyone opportunities to pray aloud if they wanted) and then we would all eat together in smaller circles sitting on the grass, and just talk and get to know each other—and from there, we would see what would happen.

It was a simple notion, to be sure—some might say, simplistic. It was a community that maintained a relatively-limited growth outlook, even as it certainly did

grow. In addition to dealing with troublesome police patrols, and the occasional troublesome crowd, we received a fair amount of criticism from other local street ministries, who often thought our meetings lacked requisite theological substance, or that we were not overtly-evangelistic enough in intent. And yet within the first couple of months we all, as both housed and transient participants of the same community, came to notice that we were participating in something quite beautiful in its simplicity. Even without expressing an explicit agenda, other than promoting radical welcome and mutual hospitality rooted in God's love, over time life transformation did manage to occur, as many of our transient participants found housing, found jobs, entered rehabilitation programs, etc. Many would come back to credit our community, and the advocate-friends they had gained through it, as the source of strength they needed to begin navigating their way out of the cycle of homelessness.

Over the years since I have left southern California, I have come to believe that the basis of what made the Central Park Hub transformative and life-giving was its collectively-created environment of mutual respect across differences where life was shared with others, as expressions of a common, inborn human compulsion to tell stories. Whether in Central Park or anywhere else, stories are integral to the bonding that organically happens around meal-sharing. Just as sharing food is a symbolic act of sharing life, i.e., sustenance, so the stories told around a meal are how life *itself*, as interpreted, is shared in meaningful ways. Through story-sharing, I came to learn that the condition of homelessness in the United States should not only be understood as an affliction of economic poverty, but also a condition of extreme socioeconomic and sociopolitical isolation. A transient person is reminded of their "less-than" status in

society, every time passersby would divert eye contact or cross the street to avoid passing them. Anyone who is regularly ignored or neglected, treated like a statistic and passed from program to program, can easily lose sight of who they are, and even what it is like to be a human being. Central Park Hub presented an opportunity for each person to tell his or her own story to others who would look at them and listen, and in doing so, a sense of humanity could be reclaimed.

Meanwhile, those of us with more privileged positions in the US socioeconomic hierarchy—living amidst what Robert Kegan calls the “mental demands of modern life,”³ where there is no time, only an eternal present⁴—would find our own lost humanity restored in the park, whenever we stopped at least long enough to listen to the tragicomedies of the suffering in our midst, which in turn would expose our own vulnerabilities and would lead to a more authentic sharing of our own life-histories. Story-sharing in this way became a ritual of mutual revelation. It was the means by which we all re-stitched and shared the salvaged bits and pieces of that humanity with each other, and by accepting each other’s patchwork gifts, we found our own humanity beginning to further mend as well. Over the course of my four years with the community, I gained a greater depth of understanding of the concept of *ubuntu* that Desmond Tutu has made well-known, the South African-based theology-philosophy of becoming persons with and through other persons.⁵ By opening ourselves to each other’s storied

³ Robert Kegan, *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

⁴ “These are times of timelessness. No one has time; no one takes time.” Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Towards a Practical Fundamental Theology*, trans. ed. J. Matthew Ashley (New York: Crossroad Publishing/Herder & Herder, 2007), 156. See also the discussion regarding the threefold present by Ricoeur; chap. 4 sec. 2.

⁵ See Desmond M. Tutu and Mpho A. Tutu, *Made For Goodness: And Why This Makes All the Difference*, ed. Douglas C. Abrams (New York: Harper One, 2010). 15; Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1997), 39-40. See also chap. 2 sec. 6.

lives, we were in some way coming into a fuller awareness of our own selves, as selves-in-community.

To say the least, it can be challenging to foster a sense of mutuality in most voluntary communities, and even more so where socioeconomic unevenness exists so conspicuously. The process of disentangling the self from well-worn stereotypes and prejudices is an inherently messy one, cluttered with tensions and impasses. Although I understood most group participants to be my friends, this did not change the fact that at the end of every gathering, half of us would leave to go sleep in a warm bed, while the rest would simply be hoping to find a bed at all, or at least a dry, enclosed space where they would not be attacked, robbed, arrested, or simply shooed away. Story-sharing in itself is certainly not a panacea for society's ills, for overcoming addictions or socioeconomic disparities. But in the Park, the opportunity to share life with each other nevertheless seemed to possess a miraculous quality. It was a sacred circle, where the cigarette smoke in the air was our incense, and bowls of chili were our Eucharist, where through each other we regained a sense of what it meant to be human, to be ourselves. And since then, as a Christian practical theologian, I have come to see story-sharing as restorative on a broader scale as well, as glimpses of the Reign of God made manifest in the world, which indeed offer hope for the world and all who live upon it.

1.2 PROBLEM AND CONTEXT: THE IDENTITY CRISIS IN THE UNITED STATES

Central Park Hub, for me, represents a place where human beings in need of deeper communion with each other were given a chance to come together. It also highlights both the inner loneliness, and socioeconomic and political divisiveness, that defines life for many in the present-day United States. As the above recollection notes, the plight of isolation, and of deeply longing to discover oneself, is hardly limited to those struggling with homelessness. Psychologist Kenneth Gergen, quoting Peter Berger et al., would go so far as to argue that being caught up in a ““permanent identity crisis”” constitutes the norm for persons in contemporary society, which he sees as ““a condition conducive to considerable nervousness.””⁶ Whether or not this is an overstatement is a matter of debate, but it cannot be denied that a voluminous number of pages in psychology and other fields have already been devoted to the topics of selfhood and/or identity over the past several centuries, particularly in the United States. Promises to provide “self-help” or self-actualization have long sustained “a cottage industry”⁷ in this country, continuing even in the present day. Topics pertaining to selfhood headline an untold number of popular books, recordings—and of course, sermons. Hollow as such baubles might be, their persistent presence in the marketplace nevertheless illustrates the ongoing salience of the issue. Indeed it seems that no one in the present-day US, whether rich or poor, is

⁶ Kenneth Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1991/2000), 73.

⁷ James Holstein and Jaber Gubrium, *The Self We Live By: Narrative Identity in a Postmodern World* (New York: Oxford, 2000), 81.

immune to experiencing some form of *inner dissociation, ostracism or marginalization*, a sense of *loneliness or isolation*, or some version of all of these.⁸

For my part, when I started the Central Park Hub, I had only begun to grasp the deep interconnectivity between the rich and the poor at the psychosocial level, and how the isolation and dehumanization of the “have-nots” likewise isolates and dehumanizes the “haves.”⁹ During my time there I became increasingly aware of how many were experiencing this “identity crisis” in some way (having long recognized it in myself), and I sensed how sharing stories together in the Park help us all restore a sense of meaning and connectedness—but my perceptions of this phenomenon remained fuzzy. I knew that I wanted to learn more, to understand better what was happening and why. I wanted to understand how a person’s sense of identity came to be, and how it took shape throughout life. As a pastor, I came to believe that in story-sharing there was something essential to the craft of pastoral ministry and teaching that was at stake, and I wanted to know what it was and how to explain it. And I wanted to know the role of Christian faith, and Christian identity, in all of this—and what specifically about Christian faith needed to be reclaimed, so that churches would begin healing instead of contributing to the divisiveness in US society.

All of these concerns seemed interrelated, and led me to explore resources not only in my initial field of expertise, i.e., theology, but also in philosophy, psychology,

⁸ Dan McAdams states that the past two hundred years in the West have seen “an increasing number of people, beginning with the elites and spreading to the expanding professional and working classes, have come to find both challenging and problematic the experience of individual, modern selfhood.” Dan P. McAdams, “Personality, Modernity, and the Storied Self: A Contemporary Framework for Studying Persons,” *Psychological Inquiry* 7, no. 4 (1996), 297.

⁹ Liberation psychologists in particular have helped bring to light this interconnectivity, as well as the psychological ramifications (for all) when this interconnectivity is systematically abused or denied; see n. 42 below.

and education (religious and otherwise). Quite naturally but unintentionally, I found myself developing a uniquely holistic, multifaceted perspective on the well-worn topic of identity and selfhood.¹⁰ This present study marks a culmination of my explorations to date, a journey which itself is hardly complete, and will require future research to further verify and clarify the analysis found here. But before offering *narrativity*, and *narrational development*, as the central concepts which tie together these various perspectives, a brief historical review is in order. This review attempts to explain the “identity crisis” as a symptom of modern and postmodern life in the United States, directly attributable to a widespread sociocultural and structural divisiveness that hinders our collective ability to tell stories and make meaning together.

An “identity crisis,” of course, cannot be understood without first defining identity itself.¹¹ While identity will soon be more carefully defined in accordance with this work’s overarching narrational perspective,¹² it is helpful to begin with exploring practical definitions, i.e., how the term is used. A cursory survey of both popular and academic sources shows that the term “identity” appears to have two common referents:

¹⁰ Thomas Groome in *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 109-110, distinguishes between the terms “self” and “identity,” but then explains that “the two concepts are so closely related that here I prefer to speak of them together as *self-identity*, meaning the continuous and stable awareness we have our self-image, world view, and value system.” Others do make valid distinctions here (such as McAdams); yet going forward, unless otherwise stated, the reader should understand “selfhood” and “identity” in this work to be essentially synonymous; see the definitions in chap. 2 sec. 5.

¹¹ It is not within the present study’s scope to delineate a comprehensive survey of the historical evolution of the concept of identity in Western philosophy, which has been done many times before. For further reading see John Barresi and Raymond Martin, “History as Prologue: Western Theories of the Self,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Self*, ed. Shaun Gallagher (Oxford: University Press, 2011); Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Harvard Univ. Press), 1989; Taylor, “Multiculturalism: The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Univ. Press, 1994), 25-73. A source that recounts the history of selfhood in a way that foregrounds the “social self” in the US is Holstein and Gubrium’s *Self We Live By*.

¹² See sec. 3 of this chap. Moreover, defining identity in terms of narrativity is the primary theme of chap. 2; see esp. sec. 5.

identity as *personal*, and identity as *communal*. In the former sense, identity refers to the collective enduring meanings which together indicate an overall sense of a person's own persistence of being through time, whether conceived as a self, an ego, a soul, a mind—it is having a sense of being an “I.” This notion has taken on a decidedly individualistic flavor in the European-American modern era, having been initially influenced by Descartes' mind-body dualism, then expanded by the likes of Locke and Kant,¹³ and over time indelibly linked to notions such as personal freedom, plurality of individuality, subjectivity and moral agency, democratic politics, etc., through J.S. Mill and many others.¹⁴ “Identity” in the communal sense in contrast concerns how people refer to particular communities and people's belonging to them, which is typically expressed via labels by which people are easily categorized.¹⁵ According to Kwame Anthony Appiah, this way of using the word “identity” became more prominent following the work of Erik Erikson and Alvin Gouldner in the 1950s. Appiah offers a threefold definition of a group (or communal) identity: (1) the existence of a term or terms that have become a conventional way to describe a group, (2) the internalizations of these labels by persons, and (3) the discernible patterns of behavior of others toward those who either claim or are presumed to claim said label(s).¹⁶ But it is not just a label that is internalized; there is also everything that label represents: its behaviors, engagements, its stories and values, etc.¹⁷

¹³ See Barresi and Martin, “History as Prologue,” 38-47.

¹⁴ Kwame A. Appiah's *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton, NJ: University Press, 2005) can be described as a neo-Millian approach to identity; see esp. 3-34.

¹⁵ Not every adjective used to describe someone constitutes a communal identity, although it might provide a means of comparison between two or more persons. But Appiah distinguishes between labels for “kinds of person,” (Ian Hacking) i.e., communal identities, and shared properties such as “witty” or “charming.” The former is socially constructed; “by contrast, there could certainly be clever people even if we did not have the concept of cleverness.” See Appiah, *Ethics of Identity*, 23.

¹⁶ Appiah, *Ethics of Identity*, 65-69; see also n. 7 on p.296, regarding Erikson.

¹⁷ See Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice, Learning, Meaning, and Identity* (Cambridge, UK: University Press, 1999), 73.

All of these inform a semi-durable continuity of meanings, which can still evolve over time. And so “communal identity” refers to the overall way of life of a community or group. In the case of how it manifests in individual persons, it regards how each person consciously and subconsciously appropriates that way of life, and thereby gaining a sense of an identity as part of a “we,” a sense of belonging.

From this view, the aforementioned identity crisis today can be reformulated into the following question: *What is the relationship between personal and communal identities?* That is, between the two, which one should receive priority (and if communal identity should, then which community)? What happens when a person experiences conflict between personal and communal identities, or between two or more assumed communal identities? While this line of questioning somewhat belies the complexity of the issues, it does provide a means of analyzing history that gets to the heart of why identity is such a difficult and yet salient issue in the unique context of the present-day United States. Back in medieval Europe, as Diana Butler Bass notes, there was no confusion regarding either one’s sense of “I” or “We,” for everyone was who they were “by accepting [their] place in a great chain of being, God’s ordering of the universe...and obeying those...in authority over you...Identity was fixed, divinely assigned, and communal.”¹⁸ I-ness was completely contained within We-ness. Over the course of the late Middle Ages, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment, the old identity-structures and metanarratives slowly crumbled, and I-ness began to gain greater articulation, with Descartes and then Kant leading the way in the philosophical realm.¹⁹ This was the case

¹⁸ Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity After Religion: The End of the Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 173.

¹⁹ See Bass, *Christianity After Religion*, 173-174. See Barresi and Martin, “History as Prologue,” 46-47.

as the land now known as North America began to be permanently populated by immigrating, colonizing Europeans, with varying degrees of allegiances to their respective homelands and their governments, and with many taking upon themselves an identity-as-expansionists, inherently entitled to a seemingly-boundless land populated by those they deemed to be “savages.”²⁰

By the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, this expansionist culture had by then infiltrated every aspect of life in the US—as immigrants continued to pour into the land, its indigenous population having been decimated, the land thoroughly colonized in the name of Christendom, the original national identities of immigrants often diminished or shed altogether, even as ethnocentrism remained. If there was an “American” communal identity to speak of, that united the original colonists as well as later immigrants, it would have been rooted in a spirit of expansionism, in both its best and worse senses. Expansionism speaks to many desires: to dream, to choose a destiny, to claim territory, to invent, to earn, to own, to succeed, to improve one’s lot in life, etc. This was a version of individualism that was uniquely featured in the US, as a nation of immigrants. Expansion in this broad sense offers both potential gains as well as troubling potential dangers—dangers which Alexis de Tocqueville noted in his assessment of the US’s civic life. For expansion requires separation, and this proclivity to separate, ingrained into the population, was of grave concern for Tocqueville. It was through the many local voluntary associations in the US, Tocqueville believed, together with the country’s established social mores (“habits of the heart”), that would preserve the US in

²⁰ See Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (New York: Back Bay, 1993), 35.

spite of this danger, that would help knit communities in the US together and ensure its democratic progress.²¹

Except, these mores included those regarding *race*: a post-national, post-religious, communal identification-system that quickly became ingrained into the fabric of the country. Race is a “legal fiction” (S. Copeland)²² developed specifically to divide, exclude, and legitimize mass dehumanization, all for the sake of a new social order based upon economic expansionism.²³ Racial norms justified colonization, and systematically ingrained separateness into all facets of US society. Moreover, the Industrial Revolution led to new forms of expansion and division. When Tocqueville wrote in the mid-nineteenth century, communities were still mostly agrarian. Through industrialization, the resultant increase in the commodification of persons would eventually come to attenuate many previously-established forms of community life.

It was in this context that the US school of philosophy known as pragmatism—headlined by James, Cooley, Mead, et al.—emerged on the scene. Whatever their motivations for doing so, many of their works addressed the gap between personal and communal identity. They all in some way²⁴ attempted to synthesize a modern notion of

²¹ “Habits of the heart” is a Tocqueville quote that inspired Robert N. Bellah et al.’s *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, updated ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) 37; see 36-39.

²² Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 9-10. See also chap. 3 sec. 2 regarding John M. Perkins’ conversion.

²³ Takaki explains how racialization evolved in the earliest days of European colonization in the Americas, where initially the division and dehumanization of indigenous and African persons were justified by the notion of the “savage” and the “heathen,” as opposed to themselves, who were “civilized” and “Christian.” “But this line,” he says, “was shortly ruptured by the conversion of Africans to Christianity. Hence, laws were passed that separated race from religion... The distinction was no longer between Christianity and heathenism... but between white and black.” Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 59. This systemic separation and division, which justified oppression and dehumanization, reinforced itself again and again over the course of generations, as it was required to perpetuate ongoing US expansionism.

²⁴ See the comparison of all three in Holstein and Gubrium, *Self We Live By*, 21-31; for an important analysis of Mead in particular (as well as a brief foray into James) see Hubert J. M. Hermans and Harry J.G. Kempen, *The Dialogical Self: Meaning as Movement* (San Diego: Academic, 1993), 102-121.

having an “I,” a personal identity, with the undeniably-formative role of society and community, by speaking of the self in terms of a “social self” (Mead): the result of expressed attitudes and expectations by others and groups that are then internalized by a person.²⁵ In part via the work of the pragmatists, over time a notion of an idealized selfhood in the late-modern US developed into something akin to the following definition of the modern self offered by narrative psychologist Dan McAdams: A person’s sense of self is (1) a reflexive project, that a person-in-society works on (2) over the course of everyday social life, creating (3) multiple conscious and unconscious layers, that (4) develops over time, yet still (5) constantly seeks a coherence of life over time.²⁶ In short, the “I” had become the new frontier, a dynamic social self in relation to community, that was more flexible and responsive to the ever-changing world, even while still maintaining a free will and capable of dreaming and seeking out its destiny.²⁷

The emergent synthesis of the social self influenced the development of late-modern education, public policy, psychology, and countless other areas of US life. But by the late twentieth century, the social self had begun to show cracks.²⁸ Even to the present day, personal identity and communal identity have ultimately remained in a difficult tension, which cannot be so easily reconciled by either philosophy or psychology. Two contrasting examples of how this tension manifests, even amongst contemporary philosophers of the highest repute, can be found in Charles Taylor’s *Sources of the Self*

²⁵ Holstein and Gubrium, *Self We Live By*, 4-5. See Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 110-113. According to Holstein and Gubrium, the works of the pragmatists “offered up a new vision of the self as a social object that was part and parcel of ordinary living, which...would readily ‘go with the flow’ of American progress and ingenuity.” Holstein and Gubrium, *Self We Live By*, 4.

²⁶ McAdams also includes a sixth component: the modern self is formed largely by (6) a deep relationship with a romantic partner/spouse. Dan McAdams, “Personality,” 297-298.

²⁷ Holstein and Gubrium, *Self We Live By*, 5.

²⁸ Holstein and Gubrium explore the “dark side” of the social self as it emerged in the middle-late twentieth century, in *Self We Live By*, 38-55.

and Appiah's *The Ethics of Identity*. Briefly stated, for Taylor "identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose."²⁹ Appiah similarly depicts personal identity in terms of a "mode of life to be pursued,"³⁰ but for him this is far more transferable and consistent between contexts than for Taylor, and is rooted in the human capacity to reflect and make judgments—"a capacity we need to cultivate"³¹—independent of any one communal "frame."

Both of these rigorous and nuanced treatises diligently strive to take the complexity of modern social identity into full account, as both personal and communal. Yet both can also be viewed, at their fundamental levels, as prioritizing either personal identity or communal identity in relation to the other. Taylor eases the modern demand upon the individuated self to be dynamic and responsive to the world, by defining selfhood primarily in terms of a person's relation to groups, preferably to one primary group. A person's sense of self is ethically shaped through the process of becoming invested in a particular group's practices and values, so that it becomes a *habitus* in the sense of Bourdieu,³² more so than by a person's independent capacities to perceive the good apart from such resources. This can perhaps be conceived as a reclamation of the I by a well-defined We, at best a less-coercive, non-feudal version of what identity was in medieval Europe. But this understanding by itself does not make clear how someone

²⁹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 27.

³⁰ Appiah, *Ethics of Identity*, 5.

³¹ Appiah, *Ethics of Identity*, 37.

³² Pierre Bourdieu defines *habitus* as "embodied history, internalized as second nature"; see David I. Smith and James K.A. Smith, "Introduction: Practices, Faith, and Pedagogy," in *Teaching and Christian Practices: Reshaping Faith and Learning*, eds. David I. Smith and James K.A. Smith (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 10.

today should view her or himself as belonging to more than one group, or how people can fairly determine or critique the morality of a group's habitus or discern whether or not its practices are hegemonic in any way, while themselves being immersed within it.

Meanwhile Appiah, even while taking myriad sociopolitical influences into full account, nevertheless doubles down on the modern demand for an autonomous self to emerge, that is ultimately “emancipated from the limitations of his [sic] local circumstances”

(Oakeshott).³³ His goal is not mere autonomy for its own sake; he wants to encourage an “I” that can critically think, as well as maintain a more global outlook on the world. Yet to what extent is such autonomy possible, if we are taking social pressures and perceptions into full consideration—not to mention the pressures of racist cultural mores, as well as sexist, classist, and other mores, all of which continue to be perpetuated by authoritarian voices? It is not always possible to adequately discern just how deeply influenced all are by social environments, or how much cultural forces such as expansionism continue to unwittingly affect the ostensibly-independent thoughts and actions of US residents of every stripe.

These questions regarding the tension between personal and communal identity now intensify and elicit further questions within the present-day cultural pressure cooker frequently described as *postmodernism*. Today people increasingly experience the world as a globalized reality, with even greater geographic mobility,³⁴ an even more pervasive

³³ As quoted by Appiah (who views this “emancipation” in terms of one gaining a “cosmopolitan” perspective), *Ethics of Identity*, 200; see 267-272. In each chapter of this work, the first instance of gender exclusivity present within a quotation is marked with [sic]; any subsequent examples within a chapter are not denoted in order to limit the distraction of the reader, but the reader is nevertheless asked to understand the [sic] to be implied.

³⁴ See Bass, *Christianity After Religion*, 177-180. Willie James Jennings' *The Christian Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) argues that there is a historical correlation between greater human mobility and the rise of racialized identities worldwide, which provided a matrix of identity-stability where

commodification of both persons and goods than before. People are bombarded by messages and interpretations from various groups across various mediums, each with varying degrees of capacity to arrest our attentions. If a person chooses to apply Taylor's insights, by immersing oneself wholly into a discernible tradition and its central narratives, then she or he would develop a stronger sense of "We," and with it, a set of lenses with which to interpret a complex world. Yet the questions concerning how we remain critical of our own traditions, or even how traditions themselves become self-critical³⁵—and the related questions regarding how one can escape hegemonic communal identities, or contend with inevitable intersectional issues regarding communal identities—remain. Then there is the further warning of Amartya Sen, who warns against attempting to make *normative* any particular conception of a communal identity, all of which can promote bifurcated forms of thinking between "us" and "them," i.e., right and wrong, good and evil, etc., and as a result they often lead to further division and exclusion between peoples, even the diminishment of humanity and the justification of one form of another of violence.³⁶

Conversely, if someone followed Appiah's guidance, there is at least a risk that he or she might become frustrated at the inherent difficulty of asserting such a strong "I." A creeping postmodern fear, that the task of selfhood today has proven too difficult, and should just be declared a lost cause and scrapped, might well rear its head. Kenneth Gergen's work suggests this, in fact. He defines postmodern existence by what he calls

geography and land no longer did (a temporally-prior reason for racialization than what Takaki claims, see n. 23 above; yet both still clearly connect racialization to the failure of past guarantors of identity.)

³⁵ See Appiah, *Ethics of Identity*, 107-108.

³⁶ See Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006). See also Appiah, *Ethics of Identity*, 107-108.

the “saturation” of a no-longer-self, where the mind becomes so overloaded with so many competing or contradictory voices that one cannot help but experience life-meaning as fragmented. For Gergen, a person at best can only aspire for selfhood, or rather, for temporary applications of highly-limited, vestiges of various “selves” to discrete situations, via playfully probing reality, employing irony, etc.³⁷ The notion of saturation further increases suspicion by many, that the extent to which we are socially determined goes further than even the pragmatists imagined, and that ultimately we are actually *not* in control of our formation, and that both consciousness and the freedom of the will are illusory.³⁸ But an even more jarring concern is raised by emergent postcolonial voices from the margins, who have demonstrated how the language and mythology of expansionism (e.g. rights, freedom, opportunity) continues to be wielded by neocolonizers, often masking the ongoing exploitation, subjugation, and extermination of persons of color that did not cease with the idealized conception of a connected-yet-free social self. In fact, this late modern depiction of social selfhood might be in actual practice serve as an ideological Trojan horse, which justifies the uncritical expansion of the privileged at the expense of the oppressed.³⁹

³⁷ Gergen, *The Saturated Self*, 6-7; 16; see Holstein and Gubrium, *Self we Live By*, 58-60. Gergen offers a compelling argument for how to view the “identity crisis” in the world today, but obviously by this description, he does not offer much in the way of considering what agentic role people might have in their own self-construction. For a critique of Gergen along these lines see Holstein and Gubrium, *Self We Live By*, 222-223.

³⁸ Consider e.g. the neuroscientists Merlin Donald dubs “Hardliners” and “Minimalists,” with Daniel Dennett serving as the preeminent example; see Donald, *A Mind So Rare: The Evolution of Human Consciousness* (New York: Norton, 2002), 28-45. Many philosophers and psychologists believe, following Barthes and Foucault et al., that the self is at least a largely unhelpful or problematic construct [see Ulric Neisser, “Self Narratives, True and False,” in *The Remembering Self: Construction and Accuracy in the Self-Narrative*, Ulric Neisser and Robyn Fivush, eds. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 10], e.g. Derek Parfit; see Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992), 128-139.

³⁹ So states the famous Langston Hughes’ poem “Let America Be America Again,” which recounts the African-American experience in the lament, “America was never America to me.” See Takaki, *A Different Mirror*, 73-74. Takaki depicts many examples of this sort of subterfuge: The Civil War was largely cast in

Both sets of potential pitfalls—neither of which are made inevitable by virtue of either Taylor or Appiah’s helpful and necessary perspectives, but which do represent observable consequences of the US postmodern reality—can lead to a failure of people’s ability to *make meaningful lives*.⁴⁰ Fundamentally, they result in *disconnection with others*, which is related to *dissociation within oneself*. The person who is immersed in communal identity, whether having been internally “converted,” or having conformed to external social pressures, must suppress or silence any dissenting voices. The so-called independent individual, in contrast, appears to hold no obligations or commitments, but in actuality, either dissociates from reality, or simply falls in line with the perceived commitments of whatever discernible group is loudest or most present to his or herself at any given time, with few or no qualms about doing so. In both cases, people perpetuate existing divisions and dehumanizing expansions, which contribute to both socioeconomic poverty as well as the “poverty of affluence.”⁴¹ As I first began to dimly see in Central Park, liberation psychologists have demonstrated how divisions between peoples, which create subsets of oppressed, oppressors, and bystanders, diminish the humanity of *all three*, and not only the oppressed.⁴² It is foundational to the present work that meaning-

terms of a war for states’ rights in the South, which conspicuously included the “right” to hold slaves. Justification for the continued subjugation and extermination of the First Nations by the US and Canada was provided by referring to it as a process of “civilization,” and claiming to be “protecting” the colonies (See Takaki, *Mirror*, 47-48). Today racist laws and policies, and the prison industrial complex, both of which directly stem from this sordid history, still claim to “protect people”—that is to say, they seek to permanently isolate and divide white and middle-to-upper-class persons from the rest of the US population.

⁴⁰ See Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 18.

⁴¹ Bellah, *Habits of the Heart*, 294.

⁴² Liberation psychology formed as a parallel movement the mid-twentieth century liberation theology and critical pedagogical movements beginning in Central and South America, influenced primarily by the work and thought of the late Ignacio Martín-Baró; see esp. *Towards a Liberation Psychology*, eds. Adrienne Aron and Shawn Corne (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). Key to Martín-Baró’s thought is that deficiencies at the psychological level are symptomatic of a deficient social-political reality. Mary Watkins and Helene Shulman, in *Toward Psychologies of Liberation* (Houndsmill, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), delineate the interrelated psychopathologies of bystanders of oppression (64-80),

making, as a function of being in dialogical relationships epitomized by story-exchanges, is not only the means by which personal and communal identities are both formed and shown to be interconnected. Such meaning-making is also at once the very enactment of *personhood*, a coming into a deeper sense of humanness—and thus it offers clues about community and ethics, learning, development, and the depths of the human spirit.

There needs to be a way to conceive of identity that does not simply try to reclaim past meaning-making structures, which tend to subvert either personal or communal identity in relation to the other. In the present-day US and beyond, a perspective is needed which sees personal and communal identities as truly interactive and interdependent. There also needs to be a way to consider the interdisciplinary ramifications of these interactions, which have real-life effects on minds and spirits, as well as communities and societies. Thus the interdisciplinary approach taken in what follows can appropriately be summarized as an anthropological, ethical, and psycho-spiritual account. That is to say, that the “identity crisis” discussed over the last several pages is primarily considered going forward in terms of a quest for the renewal of personhood. The concept of ubuntu, by which we find ourselves in relationship with each other, suggests that the question of “*Who am I and who are we*, in relation to others and to the universe?” is part and parcel to that of “*What does it mean for me to be a human being* in time, caught up in myriad relations with others, the universe, and God?” From a holistic, spiritual perspective, the question of identity is therefore one about meaning itself. It is about how to both forge and discover a meaningful existence in time, by which we concurrently gain data on what it means to be human-in-communities through time.

perpetrators of oppression (81-104), and the oppressed/victims (105-130) alike; although these categories are not always cleanly separate, they remain helpful.

The context of the so-called postmodern United States, with its social, economic and political realities that frame life for the oppressed, oppressor, and/or bystander alike, shapes the contours of this “crisis” of personhood that faith educators and leaders within this context must address.

1.3 KEY TERMS, THEMES, AND AUDIENCE

So far, the initial problem of the current study (a prevailing sense of disconnectedness and division, and difficulty in charting a meaningful existence, both of which can attributed to an underlying tension between personal identity and communal identities) along with the primary context of said problem (postmodernity and the prevailing authoritative structures and metanarratives that frame life for everyone within the present-day US) have both been identified. Now, in order to set the stage for the following chapters which seek to respond to these realities, we return to the topic of narrative. The next chapter provides more background, but for now it is enough to say that the “narrative turn” within Western social sciences, from the middle-late twentieth century through the present-day, has already begun to offer more productive ways to explain the interrelationship between a personal self and communal selves. The central insight of these narrative psychologists and others is that both types of identity are expressed and understood most naturally through narrative, stemming from the fact that life itself has a narrative structure.⁴³ Narration (more specifically, what the next chapter

⁴³ Joshua Lunde-Whitler, “Paul Ricoeur and Robert Kegan in Unlikely Dialogue: Towards a ‘Narrative-Developmental’ Approach to Human Identity and Its Value for Christian Religious Education,” *International Journal of Practical Theology* 19.2, 2015, 294-295.

calls “narrative social constructionism”)⁴⁴ opens up a forum in which personal identities and communal identities can both be examined as interrelated, within the context of a life-as-told. Here conventions and assumptions can be either reinforced or subverted, providing overt and/or inferred clues about the meaning, values, convictions, and trajectories of said characters. This normal, everyday process helps people interpret who they are within the context of myriad relationships and communities. In other words, the modern tension between personal identity and communal identities can be reconceived as being in a fruitful, dialectical relationship.⁴⁵ Both types of identity are easily reduced to labels and stereotypes which define and divide, but when these reductions are redeployed back into experiences within time and space, i.e. into plots, their interrelationship can be more easily seen. In stories the “I” and the “We” both co-manifest and commingle, and can be expressed as integrated, differentiated, or conflictual, all within the context of how they manifest in the stories’ characters. As such, stories permit selves-in-communities and communities-of-selves to be viewed in ways that are both dependent upon and irreducible to context, both capable of change over time and yet in some way stable through time. Thus one need not be “emancipated” from their historical limits, as Appiah and Oakenshott suggested, but can instead tell their life-history in terms of an ongoing journey that nevertheless starts from one’s history and initial context. These and similar

⁴⁴ See chap. 2 sec. 3.

⁴⁵ I use the term “dialectic” throughout this work liberally, and it should be noted that this is rooted for me in the essentially social and dialogical dimension of human existence (see chap. 2 secs. 2-3). Such interactions involve the evolution of both sides of a dialectical relationship, but do *not* resolve into a common synthesis (à la Hegel). My understanding is inspired by Marx and Engels’ dialectical materialism, although it is perhaps best represented by Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogism (see chap. 2 sec.3) and Paul Ricoeur’s hermeneutics (see chap. 4 sec. 2).

insights can be attributed to the later twentieth-century works of Stephen Crites⁴⁶ and Alasdair MacIntyre,⁴⁷ among others. One of the most influential Western thinkers on narrative hermeneutics and identity is Paul Ricoeur, whose influence features prominently in the perspective offered in this work.⁴⁸

This relatively recent “narrative turn” in Western social sciences and humanities has reinvigorated scholarly theory and research about the self. One key contribution of the present study in this regard, by way of a meta-analysis of selected psychological research, is the way that it ties this research together in such a way so as to highlight the *spirituality of the narrativial, meaning-making self*. A famous quote by Ricoeur points this direction: “Time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence.”⁴⁹ This suggests the same thing inferred by the Central Park Hub gatherings, that the narrative self is about more than simply the actual stories we tell about ourselves. It must be the case, if story-sharing is indeed a human universal, that story-telling reveals some defining characteristic of the human species as a whole. There is something essential to our humanity that spurs the ongoing articulation of stories, by which we enact and cultivate a self-in-community, and in the process, our very sense of personhood. Jerome Bruner touches upon this when he identifies an inherent “push to narrative,”⁵⁰ the drive in human beings to make *narrativial* meaning, that precedes narrative itself

⁴⁶ See Stephen Crites, “The Narrative Quality of Experience,” in *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*, eds. Stanley Hauerwas and Gregory L. Jones (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 65-88. Orig. article 1971.

⁴⁷ See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University, 1981), 190-209.

⁴⁸ Ricoeur is featured in chap. 4.

⁴⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Vol. 1*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 52.

⁵⁰ Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 77.

chronologically (i.e., it is present in newborns)⁵¹ but which is revealed most fully through narratives. Identity, then, is not only a product of stories-proper, exchanged within a social dialectic. There is a spiritual engine powering the process as well that must be considered, which is referred to hereafter as *narrativity*:⁵² *the overarching narrational quality of human meaning-making*, rooted in the inherent capacity of people to narrate meaningful lives, which is a lifelong prevailing feature of the human consciousness. The distinction foregrounds the temporal aspect of identity, as something that is shaped over time, both through the stories we are compelled to tell and the stories that we strain to hear.

A second, related contribution of this work to the understanding of narrative identity builds upon this temporal aspect of identity, which is foregrounded by the many developmental psychologists who have taken the narrative turn: While narrativity is inborn, it continuously evolves through various accruing layers of consciousness, by which identity continues to be co-constructed and evolve over time. The term “*narrative-developmental*”⁵³ (with the noun form of *narrative development*) is therefore used here to describe this approach. Narrative development asserts that identity is not static; narrativity can evolve and even be revitalized, no matter a person’s past upbringing, or current impinging demands. In the context of Christian religious education, it suggests that people of all ages should experience learning environments which encourage dynamic, authentic story-sharing, where *being* is understood as a

⁵¹ See chap. 2 sec. 2.

⁵² Ricoeur’s *Time and Narrative, Vol. 1*, pt. 1 (3-87) serves as the conceptual foundation for this seminal term, referenced throughout the work but defined in explicitly Ricoeurian terms in chap. 4. See also Valerie Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self* (Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2008), 21-33.

⁵³ This term evolved out of amalgamation of the term “constructive-developmental,” that Kegan uses to describe his and similar views, with “narrativity” à la Ricoeur. See Lunde-Whitler, “Ricoeur and Kegan,” 304; 308; see also chap. 4 sec. 4.

lifelong *becoming-with-others*. To the extent that identity is nurtured in its evolution, people can strive to remain relatively whole, to both politically and psychologically resist dehumanizing influences, and to live ethically without escaping or ignoring the wider culture, or being inherently threatened by or fearful of social-cultural change.

The above Ricoeur quote can thus be re-stated: A person's lived existence becomes human to the extent that they have the freedom and capacity to tell compelling stories and to deeply listen to stories, in transformative ways throughout their lives. From this perspective, the aforementioned identity crisis could consequently be viewed in terms of a *deficiency in storytelling*—whether stories are silenced, muted, or ignored—or whether stories are reified and amplified to such an extent that others' stories can no longer be heard. There is also the act of ignoring stories, i.e., bystanding, and this is also itself dehumanizing, and leads to psychosocial detachment and increasingly dissociative ways of thinking and acting.⁵⁴ Blind sectarian allegiances to communal identities further denote a storytelling deficiency; these discourage any stories which do not promote a group agenda, and which invariably flatten other narrative identities into mere labels (A. Sen). Fatalism is the presumed predetermination of a story's telos; numbness via saturation is the absence of a telos altogether; blind acquiescence to the currently-most proximate and salient voice can result from both—all of these are further signs of deficient story-sharing.

Such deficiencies subvert personhood and the natural, social-dialectical dynamism of the human spirit.⁵⁵ They lead to an atrophying of a person's inborn capacity

⁵⁴ See Watkins and Shulman, *Toward Psychologies of Liberation*, 64-80.

⁵⁵ Per James Loder, the human spirit can be viewed in terms of its "inner logic, its creative drive to construct coherence and remain open to ultimacy, its irrepressible self-transcendence and transformational potential..."all of which "disclose the structures, patterns, and power hidden in the universe and in human

to receive others in the form of stories-heard. Often this inability to narrate reflectively or openly is perpetuated by hegemonic acts that are described here as instances of *meta-narrational authoritarianism*:⁵⁶ the proliferation of reified stories, story-themes, or the deeply-ingrained, presumed interpretations and values derived from lived-stories, all of which attempt to speak authoritatively about either a group or personal identity, even while remaining deaf to other narrative influences. The great educator Paulo Freire, whose work is also featured in later chapters, understood meta-narrative forces⁵⁷ and their manipulative agendas as well as anyone, seeing their goal as “to minimize or annul...creative power and to stimulate...credulity” which “serves the interest of the oppressors” of society,” “to turn women and men into automatons—the very negation of their *ontological vocation to be more fully human*.”⁵⁸ These mythical, expansionist stories and paradigms (e.g., declaring the US to be a land of freedom and opportunity, without acknowledgement of its blatant denial of such freedoms for many, or the slaughter of indigenous peoples that was required for Europeans to actualize this “freedom”), justify and legitimize separation and isolation. They invoke divisive agendas which demand to be heard over and against other stories, which are subsequently marginalized and silenced. They inspire stereotypes and flat character-assessments, such as “Homeless

nature [that] point toward God the Creator.” James Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 9-10. See chap. 5 sec. 4.

⁵⁶ The term intentionally connotes Lyotard; yet the reader should make note of the caveat regarding my use of the term “metanarrative” in sec. 4 below.

⁵⁷ Emilie Townes considers these forces as the work of the “fantastic hegemonic imagination,” which “helps to hold systematic, structural evil in place because we pass on its caricatures as knowledge” and is countered via “counter-memory.” Emilie Townes, “Teaching and the Imagination,” *Religious Education* 111, no. 4 (2016), 368.

⁵⁸ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 73; 74 (emphasis mine). It should be noted that Freire chooses to refer to these meta-narrative forces as “narrative” (see 71-75 of same vol.) but this is not to be confused with what is meant by “narrative” or “narrativity” in the present essay.

people are dangerous drug addicts,” or “X group’s presence here is a threat to my tribe’s security and/or way of life,” etc. These exemplify the evaluations of *closed narratives*,⁵⁹ which are fixed and immobile in their meanings. Cultivating narrativity throughout life, exemplified by the exchanging of *open narratives*, is thus paramount for not only the co-construction of a resilient sense of self-identity, i.e., of living more fully as a person, but also for resisting forces of meta-narrative authoritarianism, which threatens everyone’s personhood.

Given my present historical situation as a US practical theologian and Christian religious educator, my primary intended audience members for the central ideas in this work are the leaders and educators of Christian faith-communities within the US.⁶⁰ Generally speaking, churches have traditionally been most interested in the development of communal (i.e., a Christian) identity in its participants. This is not surprising; after all, Christian communities are historically grounded in a pedagogical imperative, as expressed by the words of the Great Commission attributed to Jesus: “Go therefore and *make disciples of all nations...*” (Matthew 28:19).⁶¹ This imperative suggests that Christian faith calls people from many communal-cultural identities to something new—not unlike a new nation of immigrants who dream and seek to claim a destiny. The term “Reign of God”⁶² supports this social and political interpretation. This call to

⁵⁹ AnaLouise Keating refers to these as “status-quo stories,” which contain beliefs about reality but present them as facts. Keating, “Transforming Status-Quo Stories: Shifting from ‘Me’ to ‘We’ Consciousness,” in *Education for Hope in Troubled Times: Visions of Change for Our Children’s World*, ed. H. Svi. Shapiro (New York: Routledge, 2009), 211-213.

⁶⁰ The comprehensive and technical nature of this work makes it most conducive to scholarly study and analysis; however the eventual goal is that these ideas will be developed in the future in ways that will prove even more useful to Christian religious educators; although see chap. 6 secs. 2-3.

⁶¹ All scriptural references in this work refer to the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

⁶² Thomas Groome emphasizes that the notion of the Reign of God shapes the ontological purposes of Christian religious education: to truly form selves who can be “historical agents” of that Reign. See

discipleship, however, is not to an expansion at the expense of others, but rather towards a new form of community together, that engages in life-giving fellowship with others, and which ultimately views itself in the service of the wider family of all humankind.⁶³ As a religious identity (in the sense of *religio*),⁶⁴ belonging to this community must also provide spiritual nourishment, and as such it must fall onto the side of promoting rather than hindering the narrativity universal to all human beings. This means that personal identity, as defined here in terms of *selfhood*, must also be a matter of preeminent concern for Christian religious communities. And so Christian identity in the present-day US is also explored in what follows, as understood in relation to personal identity. This requires a more robust definition of communal identity than what has been provided so far, namely one that seeks to view identity in terms of lived experience, as does a narrational approach to personal identity. Social learning theorists Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave provide such an approach, which foregrounds the practices and experiences of communities. By applying their approach, the argument is made in a forthcoming chapter that Christian identity, as a product of the transformative practices of *discipleship*, is a *potent communal identity that rightly derives its potency from its ability and charge to cultivate personal identity, i.e., narrativity and narrational personhood, over time*. Such cultivation is not only neglected, but hindered, when religious educators simply disseminate sanctified versions of meta-narrational authoritarianism.⁶⁵

Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry: The Way of Shared Praxis* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1999), 17.

⁶³ See Mark 10:29-30.

⁶⁴ I.e., a matter of the heart, a “‘particular way of seeing and feeling the world’”; Wilfred Cantwell Smith, as quoted by Bass, *Christianity After Religion*, 97.

⁶⁵ This is not an apologetic argument in favor of Christian identity over and against other forms of religious identities. Indeed many of the chapters could prove insightful for those from a variety of religious perspectives, including non-religious or irreligious ones. The focus on Christian identity here, again, is simply the result of my natural starting point as a Christian religious educator and practical theologian.

1.4 OBJECTIVES AND CLARIFICATIONS

The primary objectives of this entire work can now be summarized as threefold:

Objective One: To present, and to argue for the validity of, personal identity as understood in terms of narrativity—that is, to view identity-as-selfhood from a holistic perspective, as the enlivening meaning-making processes of the human consciousness which have a decidedly narrational quality to them at multiple levels—and *Christian identity as discipleship, a specific religious renewal movement with the explicit goal of restoring and enlivening narrativity*. In the postmodern globalized world, and especially in the US, there remains a relatively high demand placed upon personal identity in this view, such as what Appiah suggests. This approach attempts to explore the deep “yearning” of human beings⁶⁶ to narrate life and to receive each other’s stories of lived and imagined experiences, as the very thing that nurtures our ability to face this demand through life. Narrativity so understood is a skill that we continuously cultivate, in relation to cultural demands, but which we also seem to *naturally possess*. Patterns of meaning-making, even in higher and lower-order forms, all seem to carry the DNA of some inborn capacity that is referred to here as narrational. Embracing Christian identity in terms of a narrative of Jesus-following, of discipleship, involves both the activation and evolution of this capacity over time.

Objective Two: To introduce the concept of narrational-development, a description of how the narrational identity-process evolves through time, as a key feature of narrational identity. This feature emerges upon closer examination of the narrational meaning-making

⁶⁶ See chap. 2 sec. 2.

process itself, a process that is discussed going forward using the term *mimesis-poesis*, which is derived from Ricoeur.⁶⁷ His mimetic-poetic narrative hermeneutics is synthesized with Kegan's comprehensive developmental psychology, which when viewed along with narrative-based, social-constructionist perspectives,⁶⁸ creates a perspective truly capable of taking the narrativity of identity seriously. For human beings are never entirely what they present to the world in a given moment, but carry complex histories and pieces of narratives, which together form the interpretive matrix by which they generate their present emotions, thoughts, and actions, in interactive relation to their environments. Looking at either hermeneutics or identity without taking time and change into account risks reducing the human spirit in such a way that can make the fate of Gergen's "saturated self" seem like an inevitability. It also sidesteps most of the ethical, anthropological, and spiritual implications of meaning-making via narrativity. Furthermore it misses the pedagogical and transformative implications, as the specific demands of identity in the present-day US naturally vary from person to person, and will invoke different teaching approaches, if educators wish to help participants discover and continually rediscover their own and others' narrational identity. By taking the evolution of identity into account, the resulting holistic depiction offers a unique perspective and set of insights for Christian religious educators.

Objective Three: To present narrativity, characterized by narrational development, as a worthy pedagogical focus for any Christian religious educational endeavors that aspire to cultivate disciples—and to that effect, to suggest basic pedagogical, ecclesial,

⁶⁷ See chap. 4 secs. 2-3.

⁶⁸ This synthesis is the subject of Lunde-Whitler, "Ricoeur and Kegan"; see esp. 299-307; see chap. 4 sec. 1.

and missional orientations which encourage narrativity and narrativial development.

Discipling faith-communities, centered on the restorative, narrative practices of Jesus, seek to promote humanity, in a world where personhood is often fraught with various contradictory impinging narrative and metanarrative messages which commodify, reify, demand, claim, and manipulate. The Central Park Hub picnics symbolizes such narrativial, restorative community for me personally, although there are many other, more established examples, such as the *comunidades eclesiales de base* primarily in South America, the Catholic Worker Houses of Hospitality, or the various community centers founded by the Christian Community Development movement.⁶⁹ The third chapter in particular explores Christian identity formed by the peripatetic⁷⁰ discipling community of Jesus' original followers, as a potential guide for communities today that seek to promote human flourishing. The gospel narratives depict this community of disciples as constantly "on the move" with Jesus of Nazareth, breaking bread and sharing faith-stories with others, restoring bodies and spirits, all the while receiving on-the-job training and teaching that empowered them to continue these communal practices and to similarly pass them to others. This mission-centered community, narratively invoked whenever the word "discipleship" is used today to describe present-day Christian identity, should be viewed in light of all of its provocative implications. It should challenge immobile, doctrine-centered, and "centripetal" descriptions of faith, church, or discipleship. Forthcoming chapters consider what such a missional ecclesiology and pedagogy that promotes narrativity might look like.

⁶⁹ See chap. 3 sec. 5.

⁷⁰ The word "peripatetic" was, by the author's personal recollection, evocatively used by theologian and Methodist bishop William Willimon to describe discipleship, at a series of talks at Baylor University's Truett Seminary, ca. 2010-2011.

By stating this objective as “to suggest some basic...orientations,” this is to admit that a full, original model or program for religious education per se is not the designed goal of this project. Rather I hope to offer a set of interpretive lenses and strategies for Christian religious educators and researchers, that I believe can clarify and focus their pedagogical and missional strategies on the task of humanization. In so doing, the table is set for future explorations and analyses that will potentially yield more specific pedagogical insights—even if, I suspect, that teaching for narrativity might resemble something closer to the work of a master artisan honing a craft that they share with others, than that of a builder following pre-designed blueprints. Even so, the final chapter does summarize some key principles for “mimetic-poetic teaching,”⁷¹ and suggest some practices,⁷² which make use of these new lenses. It also makes some rather radical prescriptions for the reorganization and reconceptualization of present-day churches, echoing the third chapter, as well as others who have drawn similar conclusions.⁷³ The best hope for these considerations is that they, together with the theological-philosophical offerings from prior chapters, inspire and inform Christian religious leaders and educators to begin exploring how to promote narrativity in and through their respective churches, and consequently in their wider communities.

Before proceeding to delineate the forthcoming chapters, it is important to offer an initial clarification of terms, since I limit the semantic range of several terms in order to avoid confusion, and as already noted, there are a handful of neologisms regularly

⁷¹ chap. 6 sec. 2.

⁷² chap. 6 sec. 3.

⁷³ For examples and more detail see chap. 3 sec. 5.

referenced in what follows. Further clarifications and definitions are to come, but here at the outset, there are three potential sources of confusion that should be clarified.

First, there is the need to make plain the difference between *narratives* (adjectival form: narrative) and *narrativity* (adjectival form: narrativ), which together help constitute identity and give it its *narrativational-developmental* quality. The potentially confusing issue here is that both the term “identity” itself, as well as the adjective “narrative,” suggest a certain level of definability to selfhood. In reality, however, no story or articulation can fully encapsulate what people mean when they ask the question “Who am I?” Not even the sum total of a person’s accumulated narrativational meanings, were it even somehow possible to articulate, could capture what is at stake in that question. And so “identity,” and especially “narrative identity,” can be misleading terms. This is why preference is given here to the terms *narrativational* and *narrativational identity*. And yet, this identity is still *narrative* in the adjectival sense: The human mind, in continuous dialogue with culture,⁷⁴ together consists of the interpretive field for a person’s life, an intricate cognitive-cultural network of evolving and overlapping stories, themes, scripts, etc. The most common way to share oneself with others is to convey an actual *story*, by drawing upon this interpretive field in response to a particular context. (It is the same with communal identity—both in a collective, shared sense, and in the sense of belonging manifested in the respective lives of its participants—in that a telling of a community’s remembered history is the best way to communicate that identity, even if no telling can encapsulate all that is entailed within a tradition.) Story-sharing thus plays a pivotal role in the narrativational development of both communal and personal identities. Chapter Two

⁷⁴ This notion (of cognition and culture being viewed as interrelated) is foundational to Merlin Donald’s *Origins of the Modern Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1991); see esp. 9-14; 355-360.

defines personal identity, in terms of narrativity, en route to clarifying the role of actual narratives within the overall identity-puzzle. But for now, it is critical from the outset that the reader remains cautious of this distinction, and the reason why the more common parlance of “narrative identity” is used exclusively in reference to a specific narrative by which identity is partially revealed, or in the context of a quotation.

Second, clarification is necessary regarding the many distinctions made between narrative, pre-narrative, proto-narrative, metanarrative, etc., modes of consciousness. More remains to be said in later chapters concerning these differences,⁷⁵ but they are mentioned here in light of the fact that I have already made reference to *meta-narrative*⁷⁶ *authoritarianism*. I am stretching the definition of “meta-narrativity” a bit, but it should be noted that in this work, the reader should not immediately think of Lyotard’s critique of metanarratives when encountering the term. Here, metanarratives more generally refer to any semantic structures, whether explicitly narrative in form or otherwise, which emerge from one or more narratives in some way so as to help guide their interpretation and offer broader applications—i.e., they “narrate” narratives, so to speak. *They are not inherently authoritarian*. They include things like themes, values, virtues, and convictions, as well as *generative* (Erikson/McAdams) forms of myth and paradigm. Of course they also include stereotypes and “closed” narrative evaluations, as well as reductive and divisive grand myths and paradigms, which are in fact metanarratives in the Lyotardian sense.⁷⁷ It is when metanarrative structures seek to limit narrative meanings in

⁷⁵ See chap. 5 sec. 3.

⁷⁶ Throughout the work I use *metanarrative* when referring to an actual meaning-set, and *meta-narrative* or *meta-narrativity*, with a hyphen, when referring to a broader sense—paralleling the distinction above regarding *narrative* and *narrativity*.

⁷⁷ See chap. 5 sec. 3.

forced and/or reductive ways that they become authoritarian, and should be rightly resisted.

Finally, some notes should be offered about certain preferred terms, many of which have already been used above. *Modernity* (adjective: *modern or modernist*) refers to the psychological, socioeconomic, cultural, and political legacy of the European Enlightenment and the reactions to it, which ideologically includes the US vision of expansion and its violent, hegemonic, divisive, and isolating ramifications, as well as its idealized depictions of identity, democracy, civic progress, etc. While indeed expansion involves separation, the disciplining community demonstrates how separation *for* something else, such as a better community, and/or a greater sense of interrelatedness with others, can actually be positive in many ways. Other so-called postmodern or narrative-based approaches to identity and/or teaching often denounce modernity wholesale. The present approach views at least the Cartesian philosophical roots of the modern legacy more neutrally, in terms of its desire to disentangle personal from communal identities. From this perspective, modernity's philosophical problems came about as it attempted to distinguish personal and communal identities from each other, without a clear path for restoring them to a proper relationship with each other. In the US, this resulted in new authorities replacing the old (medieval) ones, but which were now legitimized and masked by new myths and paradigms—freedom, opportunity, progress, capitalism, manifest destiny, etc. These notions fanned the flame an expansionist, individualist spirit, provoking a shockingly-rapid conquest of a continent and justifying unhinged economic expansion at the expense of enslaved and oppressed human beings. If feudal religion and land were the old markers of societal identity-division, the new

markers of race and class proved to be just as, if not more effective (i.e., divisive, dehumanizing) in the hands of lawmakers and capital holders. The underlying problem to all of this, however, is one that has persisted throughout time and across cultures: the division between, and diminishment of, human beings from each other. This is the concern that disciplining communities throughout the ages, as well as others, have sought to confront and dismantle.

Postmodernity refers to, in one sense, the exponential acceleration and multiplication of the various cultural movements that shaped late modernity: more geographic mobility, more re-locating and commodifying of persons within industries and goods in an ever-widening global marketplace, more resultant messages and stories vying for allegiance, more and varied mediums of such messages invading our living spaces, etc. Additionally, postmodernity can refer specifically to the debunking of modernist mythologies and paradigms, along with the taking of modernity's Eurocentric assumptions to task and the rising-up of once-marginalized voices. Yet the present-day cultural milieu in the US is still very much saturated by the assumptions of US modernity, and supported by its political and economic, as well as its meta-narrative, structures. Modernity and postmodernity co-exist and interweave, and so by way of acknowledging this messiness, I prefer to refer to the present-day cultural situation in terms of a *(post)modern* culture, where both postmodern and modern perspectives influence thought and behavior in various ways.

I also avoid using the term "America" to refer to the *United States* as much as possible—for "America" should generally include the entire Western Hemisphere (the Americas). Reference to the US as *the* "America" exemplifies US exceptionalism. I thus

try to use “United States” or “US” as much as possible to denote the specific political-national entity. I occasionally reference the “*West*,” which is both a more inclusive, and yet an admittedly-problematic term. It typically include all the Americas and Europe, and places where a Eurocentric hegemony has historically been established, despite the fact that peoples from various ethnic backgrounds, including indigenous peoples and those of non-European and mixed ancestries, remain inseparable from the social fabrics of these regions.⁷⁸ References to the “West” should be read as inclusive of these marginalized groups.

1.5 APPROACH AND CHAPTERS

In addition to the specific objectives mentioned above, two other features distinguish the approach of this presentation: First, I consider this project to be primarily a practical theology of narrational hermeneutics and ethics, which brings together a wide array of interdisciplinary theory and research, mostly from developmental psychology, for meta-analysis and theological reflection. Narratives and narrativity—as well as a proclivity to favor a liberation-oriented perspective—served as mediating concepts across the multiplicity of disciplines and perspectives, including education, philosophy, and neuroscience. The resulting perspective offers a certain holism and depth afforded to interdisciplinary work. Unfortunately, there are other fruitful connections to be made,

⁷⁸ Echoing both Takaki and Jennings from earlier notes, James Cone’s words should also be noted: “Not all people in the West experienced the Enlightenment [and its effects] in the same way. For black and red peoples in North America, the spirit of the Enlightenment was socially and politically demonic, becoming a pseudo-intellectual basis for their enslavement or extermination.” James H. Cone, *Theology of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005), 42.

with economics, politics, anthropological studies, etc., that are not considered to the same degree. Moreover, a diversity of representative theorists and researchers are utilized, but these can hardly be considered to speak unilaterally for any single field of discipline. This work neither presumes nor desires to be the final word on the subject of meaning-making or narrativity, and so further connections and critiques from across the disciplinary spectrum are left to be examined in the future. Even so, the cultural, political, and economic implications of the arguments made here remain in view throughout, even if peripherally.⁷⁹ Occasionally these implications present themselves more conspicuously in the text, albeit typically from an educational, ethical and/or theological perspective—all of which carry political, cultural, and economic weight, after all.

Second, the approach aims for ecumenical application within the Christian tradition, even as it shies from directly considering many distinctions between denominational identities, or common larger Christian subgroup identifications such as Roman Catholic, Evangelical Protestant, Mainline Protestant, Black Protestant, etc. Besides the fact that these distinctions do not represent all forms of Christianity in the US, it would also be an exercise in futility to attempt to address each of these sub-groupings, let alone denominations, specifically. This is especially the case since, particularly among many Protestants, Christian traditions are often vague and

⁷⁹ As a white, male, cis-gendered US-born citizen, writing in and about the “US context” about identity development, I have done what I can to (1) remain conscious while writing of my positionality and the perspectives/positions of others, including marginalized positions, (2) write from a liberation-oriented perspective, and (3) include a diversity of perspectives as resources and guides whenever possible. However, I also acknowledge that my biases and cultural privileges do show up in the text; this can be beneficial when this is done critically (e.g., in chap. 1 sec. 2 and elsewhere, I focus my critical historical analysis on power structures and metanarratives in the US, which have been predominantly controlled by European immigrants and their descendants). But it is also a shortcoming in that it assumes white normativity—and moreover there are certainly other instances of similar assumptions in the text, to which I remain blind at present.

overlapping, and do not neatly follow denominational lines. Rather, my focus upon the local community of disciples affords the possibility of viewing it as the primal ecclesial unit, which existed before any other Christian sub-identifications had developed. The expectation here is that this overarching dynamic of discipleship can be considered relevant for Christian religious educators and faith leaders in myriad settings, who are all united by a common set of formative narratives (i.e. the Christian scriptures).

Discipleship here is thus presented here as an ecumenical way of explaining the identity of the contemporary church, i.e., as based upon its ongoing missional participation in Jesus' life and ministry, which makes manifest the Reign of God upon the earth.⁸⁰

To quickly summarize the basic strategy for obtaining the aforementioned objectives: The large-scale goal, stated succinctly, is to present narrativity and narrational development together as a means of understanding the complex interrelationship of personal and (specifically Christian) communal identities through time. To accomplish this task, personal identity is first defined in general, followed by a depiction of Christian community identity that fits well with the convictions underlying personal identity.

Narrativity is then fleshed out in greater detail, followed by narrational development, and then the work concludes with some final pulling of things together, to support how an eye for narrativity and narrational-development can inform identity, especially within the context of Christian ecclesial faith education in the present-day US. Throughout, selected interdisciplinary sources are meta-analyzed so as to offer a unique vantage point, even as

⁸⁰ “With the emergence of a strong ecumenical movement, the Christian church should be sufficiently at one to at least permit our educational efforts to be named by the generic term *Christian religious education*....a political activity with pilgrims in time that deliberately and intentionally attends with them to the activity of God in our present, to the Story of the Christian faith community, and to the Vision of God's Kingdom, the seeds of which are already among us.” Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 24-25; emphasis in text. See also 43; 46-51. Groome begins referring to the “Reign of God” instead of “Kingdom” in more recent works (see e.g. *Sharing Faith*, 14).

it heavily corroborated by research in various academic fields. The next three chapters each begin with a narrative reflection upon a particular person's biography or autobiography. These story-summaries illuminate various elements of identity, narrativity, and Christian faith. They also help illustrate that viewing identity in terms of narrativity is a rich, complex, and seemingly limitless topic of scholarly inquiry—that at the same time is readily observable, nearly universally-resonant, and eminently practical.

The chapters break down in the following manner: After the introduction to the context of the US “identity crisis” and to many of the project's key terms and concepts in Chapter One (the present chapter), Chapter Two attempts to overview personal identity specifically, in light of communal identities, and according to a narrational framework. It presents personal identity according to three suggested dimensions: (1) the deep *yearnings* of the human consciousness to be in dynamic relationship with the world, which leads to (2) the *co-construction of social meanings*, which can then (3) be re-constructed and so continue to *evolve through time*. By defining each of these dimensions in terms of narrativity, personal identity is shown to be a constitutive element of a person's sense of personhood, from birth and throughout the course of a lifetime. Communal identities can subsequently be considered more closely, in a way that is in accordance with this social-dialectical and practical conception of personal identity—namely, as a “community of practice” (Wenger).⁸¹ This approach allows both personal and communal identities to be considered in terms of their inherent interconnectivity and mutual interdependence. This is the case even as the focus of the chapter, and this entire work, is primarily upon personal identity—the side of the meaning-making picture that is

⁸¹ See chap. 2 sec. 5.

far less understood, as this introductory chapter has sought to demonstrate.

Simultaneously, the chapter serves to review how similar conceptions of identity and meaning-making in terms of narrativity have emerged in Western psychological research, especially with respect to the social construction and evolution of meaning-making; several key figures and concepts from this review feature heavily in what follows. The chapter begins with, and is in fact illustrated throughout by, Dorothy Day's journals and autobiographical writings. Additionally, the chapter's focus on identity in terms of personhood lends itself to a concluding reflection upon the narrativity of human nature, in light of Tutu's theology of ubuntu.

As Chapter Two makes clear that personal identity cannot sensibly be considered apart from communal identity, Chapter Three in response seeks to examine a specific communal identity, one that is most relevant to the context of Christian religious educators: *Christian* identity. But while many approaches might begin by mapping out the various constitutive aspects of Christian identity, such as its traditions, doctrines, organizational structures, and its manifold histories and narratives, here the focus is limited to on a small set of narrative-segments, and upon one vitally-important narrative-theological concept—namely, Christian identity as discipleship. Guided by the conversion-autobiography and ministry philosophy of John M. Perkins as well as by the work of several theologians, the movements of the discipleship-narrative are lifted from key passages in the communal narratives of the synoptic gospels, revealing a cycle of *being called, following, and being sent*; each turn of the cycle generates *mutual transformation*, of both the disciples and those with whom disciples come into contact. The reason for focusing on this pattern within the narratives is to come as close as

possible to a conceptualization of Christian identity in terms of a community of practice, which began at a moment in history and which has continued to re-create and re-imagine itself in various ways across the globe and over the past two millennia. This perspective locates Christian identity within the identity-framework established in the prior chapter—but beyond that, this chapter asserts that Christian identity-as-discipleship has a special relationship with personal identity. That is, the mutual transformation that occurs is precisely the humanization and the restoration of personhood of others, which involves activities of *reconciliation* and *shalom-seeking*. This is the work of the “beloved community” of which Martin Luther King spoke, and Perkins pursued. If this is so, then viewing personal identity in terms of narrativity is not a trivial matter to Christian religious educators and community leaders, but is at the very heart of their pedagogical concern, which is inextricable from their missional concern. Concluding reflections examine this “beloved community,” and its radical implications for US churches, further.

With the framework established in the second chapter, and the stakes for Christian religious education clarified in the third, Chapter Four then turns to narrativity *itself*, as a defining feature of a human consciousness by which we dialectically interpret the world. The narrative hermeneutics and ethics of Paul Ricoeur ground this entire chapter, which focuses especially upon his notion of *mimesis*, referred to here as *mimesis-poesis*. Using this concept, some of the key underlying movements overviewed in the second chapter can be synthesized in a way that shows the meaning-making consciousness to *itself* evolve throughout life in patterned, yet contextually-tied and messy ways. This is the foundational idea for *narrative development* as an overarching philosophy (i.e., a metanarrative) of human nature and learning—and by chapter’s end a summarizing

proposal of this concept is offered. The great emancipatory educator Paulo Freire intertextually inserted in bits of autobiography within some of his later works; one of these segments is considered here, in light of Freire's own philosophy and pedagogy which itself profoundly inspires narrational development. Despite this chapter's dependence upon philosophical abstractions, the chapter's concluding reflection offers some practical reflections, which elaborate upon Ricoeur's narrative ethics that is characterized by his usage of the word *solicitude*.⁸²

With narrational development now defined in a preliminary manner, Chapter Five provides further research *support* for it, and then proposes a basic *outline* of the narrational-developmental process, which details the potential evolutionary trajectory of the mimetic-poetic consciousness over the course of life. By viewing the consciousness in terms of evolving narrational modes (pre-narrative, narrative, metanarrative), the previously-established identity-framework is now depicted "in motion," as the consciousness socially co-creates itself over the course of time, with personal and communal identities co-informing and co-inhabiting each other's narratives in evolving ways. This overview of the process does not delve deeply into the details of any single consciousness-mode, but continues to keep the larger picture in view, concerning how to understand identity as the ever-evolving product of lifelong narrativity. Even so, enough is presented so as to discuss the significance of each consciousness-mode, both in the course of meaning-development and as it manifests throughout life. Biographical material is omitted from this chapter; yet it still concludes with theological reflection, this time initiated by the works of James Fowler and James Loder, which are then considered in

⁸² See chap. 4 secs. 2 and 5.

light of narrativity. In the process, narrational development is once again deployed as offering a window into the evolution of personhood, which impels disciples to join the Spirit of God in an ongoing co-creation of the world.

The final chapter (Chapter Six), again, leaves much to be considered to future study and research. But by way of concluding this entire project, it makes the following offerings: (1) a theologically-oriented overview of the entire project, that depicts the community of disciples as a community that promotes narrativity, (2) some hypothesized pedagogical principles based upon mimesis-poesis, and (3) a selection of suggested practices and basic strategies for teaching in Christian faith for narrational development, which follow from said principles. In particular, the four hypotheses offered here, even if only impartially and at an introductory level, offer a substantive glimpse at what so-called “mimetic-poetic teaching” might look like in a Christian faith community. Corresponding suggested teaching practices aim to facilitate the continual opening-up of the consciousness to receive otherness, along with the promotion of empathy, compassion, authenticity, the willingness to evolve, courage for the pursuit of justice, etc.—all while encouraging community participants in their lifelong search for meaning together. These are character traits which exemplify narrativity.

2.0 YEARNING, CREATION, EVOLUTION: THE DIMENSIONS OF NARRATIVAL IDENTITY

We should always be thinking of ourselves as pilgrims anyway. When things get tough, I like to recall St. Teresa's 'Life is a night spent in an uncomfortable inn.'

—Dorothy Day⁸³

2.1 EXPECTING TO BLOOM: THE NARRATIVAL IDENTITY OF DOROTHY DAY

The biography of the late Dorothy Day (1897-1980) is well-known: her early childhood predilection for faith, her awakening via the clarion call of Marxism that convinced her of religion's opiating role in society, her early protests and arrests, her life on Staten Island with common law husband Forster and the birth of daughter Tamar, her decision to baptize Tamar at the expense of her relationship with Forster, her inability to reconcile her burgeoning faith with her commitment to the poor until meeting Peter Maurin, the beginning of *The Catholic Worker* (CW) paper and the Houses of Hospitality, establishing farming communes, her travels to labor strikes and protests around the country, her battles with the FBI, etc.⁸⁴ The undeniable reach and impact of her ministry notwithstanding, perhaps it was her propensity to write her and other self-stories—by

⁸³ Part of the opening lines to Day's *Catholic Worker* column, the first installment with the new title, "On Pilgrimage," February 1946. See Dorothy Day, *The Duty of Delight*, ed. Robert Ellsberg (Milwaukee: Marquette University, 2008) 105, n. 81.

⁸⁴ See Robert Ellsberg, "Introduction," in Dorothy Day, *Selected Writings* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997), xv-xli; see also Day's own words in the same volume, 3-48.

composing regular articles for her paper that were often story-laden, as well as by writing several books that were all semi-autobiographical—that explains her continued renown, decades after her passing. For the countless who have been drawn to the rawness of her musings, her meandering prose, her at-times scattershot chronicling of daily events (particularly in her CW articles), Day managed to invite readers around the world to walk a while with her and imaginatively experience the “functional anarchy”⁸⁵ that characterized the CW’s Houses of Hospitality. “Writing is an act of community,” she said. “It is an expression of our love and concern for each other.”⁸⁶ This is precisely how she wrote, as if to a close friend. She would lay bare her life experiences to her readers, sharing her deepest struggles even alongside her most strident convictions. With such sincerity, Day offered up her very self through her words, words which revealed a deep *yearning* that marked her life at every stage. First taking the form of a “restless searching”⁸⁷ in her youth, it would continue to manifest throughout her life as an ongoing “expectation of fulfillment...of flowering, a hunger and thirst for the ineffable.”⁸⁸ Her journey of Christian faith offered her a discernible path, by which she could set her feet upon the permanent search for selfhood. This was the case even if she would continue to feel, as all saints tend to do, like a “pilgrim” who was always on the way but had not fully arrived, who perennially lived as if “in an uncomfortable inn.” As she ventured along this faith-journey, her self-revealing writings invited readers to join her, and to explore their own yearning to be and become.

⁸⁵ Ellsberg, *Selected Writings*, xxix.

⁸⁶ Day, as quoted by Robert Ellsberg, “Introduction,” in Day, *Duty of Delight*, xvi.

⁸⁷ Ellsberg, in Day, *Duty of Delight*, xiii.

⁸⁸ Day, *Duty of Delight*, 96.

Day did not write only to invite others into her personal searching, to spur Catholics to social involvement, or to convince non-Christians of the symbiotic relationship between faith and justice. She also wrote for personal reasons, to work out her own life meanings and her yearning to become. While the authenticity of her public writings revealed this need to write in part, the compulsion is most evident in her voluminous journals, posthumously published, which begin in 1934 and continue until nine days before her death.⁸⁹ Yet as Robert Ellsberg her biographer noted, Day wrote her entire life, about her life. As a child she kept notebooks with her sister, finding that “recording happiness made it last longer... [and] recording sorrow dramatized it and took away its bitterness...”⁹⁰ As an adult she seemingly always kept a notepad with her, as a means of continuing to express an “intense interest in life” even as she aged.⁹¹ According to Ellsberg, writing was a form of prayer for Day, an activity of the soul.⁹² It was necessary work for her, especially given the exigencies of her life—the daily chaos, the accusations, the constant travel, etc. She recorded her life on paper as she was simultaneously etching her life upon the world, not for the sake of an agenda, but because she had to. It was a way of participating in the necessary human activity of sharing herself, even when isolated, even when God was her only audience. To be sure, Day was more apt to speak of her life and writings in terms of a journey towards spiritual sanctification, than that of a search for the fulfillment of personhood. Yet as Ellsberg reveals by recalling the words of Thomas Merton, traveling the road to sanctity is indeed

⁸⁹ Ellsberg, in Day, *Duty of Delight*; see 1-2; see Day, *Duty of Delight*, 643-654. 1934 was the year following the beginning of the CW newsletter.

⁹⁰ Day as quoted by Ellsberg, in Day, *Duty of Delight*, xiii.

⁹¹ Ellsberg, in Day, *Duty of Delight*, xix.

⁹² Ellsberg, in Day, *Duty of Delight*, xx.

ultimately about becoming more fully human,⁹³ as one “expecting to flower”—even if that road is meandering, treacherous, and seemingly unending.

The following chapter seeks to delineate a comprehensive, holistic view of identity as a function of human narrativity, supported by an examination of select recent literature in the field of psychology. As the previous chapter stated, however, this *narrativ*al (and not only *narrative*)⁹⁴ approach grounds identity in the meaning-making human spirit, i.e., the very nature of personhood. For all people, as with Day, engage in the lifelong activity of meaning-making in various ways, which is epitomized via the social and cultural exchange of narratives. The following analysis explores this intrinsically human process, yielding important clues into the very nature of personhood and consciousness. In so doing, this chapter also sets out to establish a framework that defines and guides a dialectical-dialogical understanding of identity. This framework outlines how the relationship between personal and communal identity works, and how they interrelate without one subsuming the other. Its (non-synthesizing) dialectical quality,⁹⁵ in particular, is critical for understanding identity in a way that resists tendencies towards either individualism or tribalism, i.e., towards divisiveness that hinders the *narrativ*al human spirit. The framework and corresponding definitions enable the role of Christian communal identity (as that which promotes the human spirit) to be properly asserted in Chapter Three, and set the parameters for exploring the very nature of narrativity itself and its evolution in Chapter Four and beyond.

⁹³ Ellsberg, in Day, *Duty of Delight*, xxii.

⁹⁴ See chap. 1 sec. 3 for more concerning the distinction between “narrative” and “*narrativ*al.”

⁹⁵ See chap. 1 sec. 3, n. 45, regarding my use of “dialectic.”

The majority of this chapter outlines personal identity-as-selfhood, according to three inexorable dimensions of human meaning-making: inborn narrational yearning, social-narrational createdness and creativity, and narrational evolution through time. These three dimensions each demonstrate identity to be dialectical and narrational, impelled by narrativity and made conspicuous through narratives shared. Communal identity is then briefly defined in a way that is similarly dialectical and rooted in lived experience. Finally a taxonomy of terms are defined which help to clarify the interrelationship between personal and communal identity, and how they mutually shape each other.

2.2 THE YEARNING TO NARRATE OURSELVES: AGENCY, COMMUNION, LOCATION, PURPOSE

Day's constant searching throughout life suggests the starting point for viewing identity in terms of narrativity: the innate *yearning* to make meaning out of lived existence. Albeit inseparable from the dynamic of meaning-making, this yearning itself rarely receives the attention it is due as an object of study. It can rightly be considered a *spiritual* point of departure, that is at the same time indicative of biological, emotional, and social factors in the ways meaning is made. The word yearning is being used to describe this starting point, precisely because it aims to refer to something endemic to the universal human condition. It is a deeper sort of longing, that throughout human history has consistently expressed itself most completely through story and myth. To put it another way, this yearning is the genesis of hope, and what follows outlines four aspects of this yearning which collectively illustrate humanity's ultimate hopes.

By way of discussing the first two aspects in particular, consider again the tension embedded within the concept of selfhood during the modern era, especially in the US, that the self is both personal *and* communal. The differences between Taylor and Appiah summarized earlier illustrated the resulting modern proclivity to give greater weight to either personal or communal identity, as the starting point of the “true” self, so to speak.⁹⁶ But what if Taylor and Appiah are each emphasizing different aspects of *personhood*, and attributing the word “identity” to their central observations? Perhaps these attributions and various constructs actually point to deeper, underlying human needs and concerns. The contention is made here that there are twin fundamental, universal human yearnings in play: *the yearning to belong, and the yearning to act*. As Robert Kegan elaborates, they are “the yearning to be included, to be a part of, close to, joined with, to be held, admitted, accompanied...” which can indeed often be in tension with “the yearning...to experience one’s distinctness, the self-chosenness of one’s directions, one’s individual integrity.”⁹⁷ David Bakan describes these as the twin yearnings for *communion* and *agency*, which together define “the duality of human experience.”⁹⁸ It is these two energies which fuel every search for meaning.

The inner yearnings of agency and communion provide another avenue for explaining the modern identity crisis in the US: The collective drive to expand and divide that led to the colonization of the Americas, and which continues to motivate neocolonialism across the globe, indicates a corruption in the spiritual yearning for agency. No longer constrained to the same degree by their former communal identity-

⁹⁶ See chap. 1 sec. 2.

⁹⁷ Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1982), 107.

⁹⁸ See David Bakan, *The Duality of Human Experience* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966).

structures, the earliest colonists' desire to enact their agency ran amok in the so-called New World, which was depicted as a sort of *tabula rasa* where Europeans could forge new lives in new territories—but again, at the expense of the continent's then-diverse array of original Nations. The colonial impulse was agency-against-communion, an I-over-other-Wes. Of course such “freedom” could not go entirely unrestrained—and so racialization and capitalism both assisted in setting parameters, so to speak, on exploitative practices. The towns and cities could then work properly, maintaining its social contract and seeking communion with (desired) others, through faith-community, family, neighbors, civic life, etc. Of course the negative effects of free-market capitalism always, eventually, impinge upon (especially) the lower classes, as was the case when industrialization radically reoriented community life. Racial-ethnic subjugation cannot be hidden from view forever, nor can the marginalized's own yearning for agency be suppressed forever. So when Michael Kammen claims that agency and communion together are the “push-pull of both wanting to belong and seeking to be free” defining “the ambivalent condition of life in America, the nurture of a contrapuntal civilization,”⁹⁹ this can be understood as another way to depict the modern identity crisis. Disconnecting personal from communal identity resulted in a particular set of distortions regarding agency (misconstrued as a false perception of human freedom and autonomy) which consequently led to increasingly-distorted views about communion (misunderstood as *purely* volitionally-based,¹⁰⁰ i.e. a supreme ability to choose one's relationships, which undermines a sense of interdependence and ethical obligation to others).

⁹⁹ As quoted in Dan P. McAdams, *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By* (Oxford: University Press, 2006), 244-245.

¹⁰⁰ Each subsequent generation in the US in the past 150 years has experienced an exponential increase of this distortion. Prior to the cumulative rise of industrialization, the ease of travel, mass media and

These yearnings are not derived from culture, even if they are soaked in culture. Rather, these drives in themselves are innate from birth.¹⁰¹ As such, in fact, they are not inherently contradictory but are actually *intrinsically and dynamically related*: By acting in and upon the world, people communicate, relate and develop bonds of belonging—and it is in the very context of belonging that activity is considered meaningful. I-ness requires We-ness, and vice versa. Appiah, in regards to the modern emphasis on agency, notes this when he says that “the standpoint of agency is connected, in the most direct possible way, to our concern to *live intelligible lives in community with other people* who are, first of all, lovers, families, and friends, and then colleagues, officers...strangers, and so on.”¹⁰² The relationship between the two drives, then, is not a contradictory but a *dialectical* one. This relationship was skewed in medieval feudalism, and then again in modernity—and at countless other times and places in human history, for that matter.

These interrelated yearnings which drive our personal and communal identities are, in fact, fundamentally *narrative*. This can be seen when they are framed as questions: *To whom do I belong, and who belongs to me? What do I do, or how do I act?* To answer these questions with any depth of substance, beyond simplistic self-labeling (“I belong to my church,” “to my family,” etc., or “I am a social worker,” “I sell shoes,” etc.) will invariably require the answerer to reflect upon their own past and present

communication, the internet, etc., it would have been nearly impossible to imagine the extent to which adults “choose” or “discover” their relationships today. This is not to disparage all voluntary associations, but simply to suggest that we must recognize the potential dangers of (1) subconsciously (if not consciously) avoiding interaction with either our origins or with otherness, (2) justifying our willful ignorance of undesired others on the basis of utility, and/or (3) refusing to acknowledge, or forgetting about, the societal-political structures and historical precedents which have aimed to sequester persons of privileged race- and class-status from marginalized groups.

¹⁰¹ See f. paragraph regarding Bruner and the inborn “push to narrative”; see also chap. 5 secs. 2 and 3.

¹⁰² Appiah, *Ethics of Identity*, 58, emphasis added. Belonging can thus be conceived as “belonging-as,” and agency as “agency-with.”

experiences, and give reasons that accordingly resemble a story-form or story-fragment (e.g. “I joined my church eight years ago during a difficult time in my life...”) These stories constitute a self-revelation on some level, regarding one’s habits, values, weaknesses, tragic and/or comic experiences and their results, etc. In short, a person can only say something substantive about her or his agentic and/or communal sense of identity through the ascription of identity-narratives, lived plot(s), and expressions of character. Narrative psychologists have emphasized the centrality of agency and communion as primal themes that structure the meaning of all human existence. Jerome Bruner hypothesized decades ago that the aforementioned inborn “push to narrative” was observable in the expressions of “agentivity” (i.e., agency) found in the earliest speech-acts of a child.¹⁰³ Yet as Valerie Hardcastle emphasizes, these early verbal as well as non-verbal acts occur fundamentally within social exchanges with caregivers, with which a child builds emotional bonds, expresses likes and dislikes, requests attention, solicits particular reactions, etc.¹⁰⁴ Dan McAdams in *The Stories We Live By* shows how, in adulthood, many of the major themes and character-types within life-stories build around the themes of agency and communion, whether emphasizing one over the other, or bringing them into balance.¹⁰⁵ Amazingly, mature life-stories can be seen as sharing the same basic yearnings for agency and communion that are detectable in the earliest pre-narrative expressions and interactions, in infancy and early toddlerhood.

¹⁰³ Jerome Bruner. *Acts of Meaning*, 77; see also 52.

¹⁰⁴ Valerie Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 51-55; 58.

¹⁰⁵ Dan P. McAdams, *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self* (New York: William Morrow, 1993/1997), 133-161 and throughout the entire book. See also Dan McAdams and Kate McLean, “Narrative Identity,” *Current Directional in Psychological Science* 22, no. 3 (2013), 234.

Although agency and communion are the most primal and innate dimensions of human beings' yearning to make meaning, there they are not the only ones. Agency and communion refer to the desire and capacity of human beings to act and react in ways that accumulates meanings, i.e., to act socially and to learn dialectically. Yet on another level, people also desire to think reflectively regarding their position in relation to others, a yearning that itself *derives* from their primal sociality. Even if these desires do not manifest themselves from birth like agency and communion do, eventually all people come to exhibit a need to spatiotemporally map oneself within the universe, whatever the boundaries of one's "universe" may be, in coherent and satisfying ways. The questions "Where am I (in space and time)?" and "Where am I going (through time, and to what ends)?"—questions which echo Heidegger's themes of "presence," "historicality," and "temporality"¹⁰⁶—reflect the most common ways that this need manifests itself. These questions reflect another twofold yearning: to ascribe meaning in terms of *location*, as well as of *purpose*. These interrelated yearnings concern a person's being able to situate her or himself within relations in space-time,¹⁰⁷ and consequently to then be able to meaningfully trace his or her movement through the dimensions of space-time (including the past, present, and future) in meaningful ways towards discernible ends, respectively. Like most people, Day emphasized location and purpose when offering her testimonial stories. It was her yearning to go somewhere in her life, and to make a purpose-filled difference in the world, that she cites as the reasons for her conversion to her

¹⁰⁶ Donald Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (Albany, State University of New York, 1988), 129-131.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Groome explains the importance of temporality to selfhood to pedagogy in *Christian Religious Education*, 12-15.

synthesized¹⁰⁸ Communist-Catholic group affinities. Moreover she often spoke of her entire life and her faith in terms of an ongoing journey that clearly had a destination in mind.¹⁰⁹ Life would be unbearable, she once wrote, without having any direction, sense of purpose, or expectation for something greater in one's life, or afterlife.¹¹⁰ Her sentiments recall the famous words of Augustine, "Our hearts are restless until they find rest in You,"¹¹¹ even as her faith launched her again and again into new, previously unforeseen quests.

Perhaps even more clearly than agency and communion, location and purpose are readily observed as narrational dimensions of human meaning. "To be human..." says Ulric Neisser, "means also to know that we have a past and a future...the sense of being in time, of living through time, has a special and central status in human lives."¹¹² And the need to assert and refine this sense of living within meaningful space-time provokes storytelling and story-sharing, as the earliest and foremost voices within the "narrative turn" often emphasized.¹¹³ Much of literature is, in fact, structured around location and purpose—biography and autobiography being among the chief examples of this. Sometimes these and other forms of story will be thematically structured according to location and purpose, in terms of a literal and/or figurative quest of some kind. Journey ranks among the most ubiquitous motifs in fiction and poetry worldwide, with examples ranging from Basho to Frost, from Homer to Tolkien. Yet location and purpose are also

¹⁰⁸ This was a "synthesis," but via narrative; see sec. 3.

¹⁰⁹ Note that the illustration of the journey is inherently both about location and purpose, and the natural interweaving of their respective meanings. Journey-narratives frequently explore the interplay between the momentary location of the protagonist(s) and the anticipated destination, as a metaphor for the moral, spiritual, emotional, etc., movement and development of the protagonist(s).

¹¹⁰ Day, *Essential Writings*, 21.

¹¹¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk. I. sec. 1.

¹¹² Neisser, "Self-Narratives," 16.

¹¹³ See Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing*, 129-131.

ubiquitous themes in everyday narrational discourse, as human beings share both simple and elaborate stories about themselves and life-events. Simply recounting life-events allows people to locate and re-locate oneself in place and time, within the context of a story's definable limits, and in relationship with certain elements and characters. Through this organization and evaluation of life-events (i.e., a plot), the narrator posits a trajectory, a purpose, and direction to lived experiences.

There are now four questions: What do I do; to whom do I belong; where am I (then and now), and where am I going? All four are subsumed within an even broader question: *Who am I?* Any attempt to answer this broader question, i.e., to articulate a sense of personal identity, requires attention to be paid to agency, communion, location and purpose. This requires speaking of things such as roles, jobs, family and organizational belongings, life experiences, birthplaces, world events, dreams of the future, etc. Stories are the most, indeed the only, satisfying way to do this, even if no single story can offer the definitive answer to the "Who am I?" question. Thus the hypothesis is made that *agency, communion, location, and purpose, when viewed together, encompass a core set of meaning-dimensions of the narrativity of the consciousness*—i.e., the fundamental, universal yearning for human beings to narrate their lives—*by which narrational identity, the sense of an "I-in-community," takes its shape.*

Again, narrative psychologists support this claim. In a time where theories of the brain involving Chomskian-like pre-structures had become out of vogue, Bruner argued that the presence of a narrational cognitive structure could be observed in preverbal children's protolinguistic social forms—cries, attention-making, tracking, etc.—all of

which demonstrate key (proto-)narrative qualities, such as agentivity, maintenance of temporal sequences, sensitivity to canon, and voice.¹¹⁴ More recent neuropsychological research supports Bruner's hypothesis. Hardcastle for example, in examining the emotional-cognitive roots of the self, concludes that every human being appears to be "wired" to narrate, with an inherent drive for meaning to be ascribed to her or his own life, which underlies all social, cognitive and linguistic development.¹¹⁵ There appears to be a powerful meaning-making impulse that lies at the heart of our being, that is even prior to language, yet can nevertheless be referred to as narrative.¹¹⁶ That is, from our earliest moments in life, the desire to interact as agents-in-communion, originally with caregivers and then with others, sets a life-long, dialectical meaning-making mechanism into perpetual motion. By this same mechanism, we learn to locate ourselves in space and time, and eventually to attribute generative meanings to our existence. It is a single, continuous process, driven by the yearning to make meaning out of our lives (that takes these four forms). That is, we seek to narrate our lives, throughout our lives, with whatever conceptual and linguistic tools we might possess.

The evolution of narrative meaning-making is discussed later;¹¹⁷ for now the key point is to establish that meaning-making is in fact narrative, and what makes it narrative is innate to human nature. This innate yearning can be referred to as an inherently *spiritual* longing to share stories, i.e., to express, feel, and understand a combined sense of communion, agency, location, and purpose within the world, by which

¹¹⁴ Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 77-80.

¹¹⁵ Valerie Hardcastle, "The Development of the Self," in *Narrative and Consciousness: Literature, Psychology, and the Brain*, eds. Gary D. Fireman, Ted E. McVay, and Owen J. Flanagan (New York: Oxford University, 2003), 38. See more on Hardcastle's research in chap. 5 sec. 2.

¹¹⁶ See Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing*, 152. Again, there is research to support this claim; see e.g. Merlin Donald et al., chap. 5 sec. 2.

¹¹⁷ See sec. 4 in this chapter; see also chap. 5 sec. 3.

people gain a sense of their identity and personhood.¹¹⁸ The concept of a deep spiritual yearning is vaguely reminiscent of Schleiermacher's *Gefühl*, as well as of Tillich's understanding of ultimate concern. The primary difference in the present description is that spirituality here infuses everyday activity. People are made to search for meaning, and to be dialectical co-creators of meaning in communities, from their earliest days. And people are compelled to continuously narrate throughout their lives, to continually seek greater depth and coherence to their life's meaning. Even if not every person voraciously chronicles her life with pen and paper as Dorothy Day did, all nevertheless share in a spirit that seeks to make meaning, and constantly searches for ways to make sense of the surrounding world.

The means by which this search for meaning occurs is through reconstructing lived experiences in time via narrational expressions, shared in either actual or implied social relationships. Thus the social self and its co-construction must be explored once again, and this is the subject of the following section.

2.3 THE ONGOING WORK OF IDENTITY CREATION: NARRATIVITY AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

Those who are familiar with Day know about her journey from being a fervent Communist who converted to Catholicism even while maintaining her radical stance. “All my life I have been haunted by God,” she quotes Dostoevsky, then adding, “and

¹¹⁸ Recall the first chapter of Parker Palmer's *To Know as We Are Known: A Spirituality of Education* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983); there Parker links spirituality with learning, in terms of openness to transcendence.

that is the way it was with me.”¹¹⁹ Yet during her Staten Island years her yearning for meaning, that was beginning to move her towards faith, was continually met inside her with resistance, armed as she was with the critical tools of Marxism. Was she trying to self-induce an emotional response?—she asked herself. She was compelled by Catholic spirituality, but she knew she could not blindly support the Catholic Church as an institution of power, “so often a scandal to [her],” in its blindness to poverty and injustice. “How I longed for a synthesis reconciling [my] body and soul,” she cried.¹²⁰ That reconciliation involved two concurrent events: First, upon witnessing a ragtag Communist group march in Washington, the dangerous memory (Metz) of Jesus arose within her consciousness in a sudden realization. The resulting confluence of narrative images led her to declare that in fact ““these are Christ’s poor. He was one of them.””¹²¹ Then, the very next day she went to pray at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in D.C. and asked God for a way to be opened up to her to work for the poor; she then famously found her soon-to-be co-conspirator and theological mentor Peter Maurin on her doorstep, upon returning to New York.

But while Maurin’s theological vision for a new society that was both faithful and just indeed impressed itself upon Day, his version did not ring entirely true to her immediately. With Maurin’s guidance she began to study theology, yet continued to struggle in helping others to fully see the vision the *Catholic Worker* was attempting to embody.¹²² The truth is that the so-called integration of her Catholic and Communist

¹¹⁹ Day, *Selected Writings*, 9.

¹²⁰ See Day, *Selected Writings*, 38-39.

¹²¹ Day, *Selected Writings*, 41.

¹²² See Day, *Selected Writings*, 41, 44; see Ellsberg in Day, *Selected Writings*, xxvii. Even struggling with Maurin’s vision, she recalls how in those days she became didactic at times with others, because she was convinced that Maurin was correct as her teacher and mentor; see Day, *Selected Writings*, 47.

identities could not be reduced to a single moment of synthesis. It was more of a perpetual work-in-progress, continuously shaped by a myriad of characters, plots, and interpretive contexts, such as: her socialist friends, Forster her husband, her time in prison, early Christian influences for her such as Mrs. Barrett (as a child) and Sister Aloysia, the life and words of Vanzetti (and the church's then-silence about him), the reflections of Mauriac, watching live performances of "The Hound of Heaven," countless Dostoevsky characters, Tolstoy and Dickens, etc.¹²³ Over time she was better able to articulate and understand the truth she had glimpsed upon seeing that Communist march—that Jesus was a servant of the poor, who lived in solidarity with the poor. And therefore, her Catholic and her Communist communal identities were quite compatible.¹²⁴

More remains to be said about communal identities later in this chapter,¹²⁵ but the point for now is that Day's identity-synthesis aptly demonstrates how the conscious mind, as it strives to make meaning out of life, does so precisely via a *creative, co-constructing interplay with the world*. No one, not even Maurin, gave Day the blueprint on how she would eventually integrate these two particular communal identities, which during that time, and for many today as well, appeared to be diametrically opposed to each other. In light of all the various events, stories, and people that had influenced her, she had to make some spontaneous mental connections and associations between these various narrational scenes—with the association of the march on Washington with the disciples playing a key role. She also needed to exert a greater degree of mental agency,

¹²³ See *Selected Writings*, 3-40.

¹²⁴ In Day's time, a practical-theological Catholic vision of God's Reign, that included overt concern for economic equality and social justice, was quite rare in the US, even if it is more commonplace today. It is further evidence that her vision was one that she had personally configured, and not simply received from another and repeated verbatim.

¹²⁵ See sec. 5 below.

to integrate the insights she had experienced and reflected upon into her own developing theological metanarrative. Eventually she came to an articulation of a theological vision of the world that was similar *but not identical* to Maurin's; hers was more radical, and at once more personal. It was a product of her own synthesized experiences, and it was what ultimately stimulated her mind and heart towards hope and a sense of purpose. Her resultant cosmic social-political-spiritual vision was what provided her sense of selfhood the thematic backbone that it had previously lacked. This "large and generous picture" was what enabled her to face the daily problems, complaints, and the other manifold exigencies involving life at the Charles Street house.¹²⁶ This vision was her conceptualization of the Reign of God, i.e., the concrete manifestation of *shalom*¹²⁷ upon the earth, to which that and the other CW communities would aspire, and which she communicated through her personal stories and reflections to countless Catholics in the US and beyond.¹²⁸

It would be easy, of course, to romanticize her early life in terms of a battle of competing wills (between Day the "Catholic" and Day the "Communist"), whereupon reconciling the two, she suddenly became self-assured, now confidently anchored in a coherent vision of God's Reign. Indeed many might presume such self-assurance were they to glimpse only the fiery and zealous side of Day, which did come out frequently in

¹²⁶ Day, *Selected Writings*, 86-87.

¹²⁷ In Heb. שָׁלוֹם, *slm*, "to be complete, sound," peace in the sense of wholeness; see Francis Brown with S.R. Driver and Charles Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 8th printing (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 1022. For more on the shalom-Reign of God see George R. Hunsberger, "Mission Vocation: Called and Sent to Represent the Reign of God," in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, ed. Darrell Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 90-91; Walter Brueggemann and Patrick Miller, *The Word That Redescribes the World: The Bible and Discipleship* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 97.

¹²⁸ Day's personal writings were widely disseminated among US Catholics, in the form of her stories and personal appeals. These articles and writings played a key role in the rise of the social justice movement in the US Catholic church.

her public voice for much of her life. Yet an honest assessment of her personhood requires a far more complex perspective than this. As her writings, journals, and biographers all attest, she often felt like a failure. As previously mentioned, she frequently suffered from loneliness. In her writings she often grieved what she saw as her own hypocrisy, and her perpetual incapacity to fully share in the suffering and poverty of those around her. A pensive person, Day's sense of selfhood cannot be so easily described as stable or assured. In the beginning her first autobiography, she wrote, "Much as we want to, we do not really know ourselves."¹²⁹ Upon turning fifty she reflected, "I have always to struggle against self. I am not disillusioned with myself either. I know my talents and abilities as well as failures. But I have woefully little."¹³⁰ Even if she was no longer seemingly tossed about by the waves of life, as she often felt prior to her conversion, it did not mean that her history and her experiences would cease to require ongoing examination, the stretching of self-meanings, and/or incorporations of new meanings. For at no point can a person eject herself or himself from the permanent search for meaning.¹³¹

Both Day's Catholic-Communist identity synthesis, as well as her ongoing negotiations of her life-meanings and stories, demonstrate the *socially constructed* nature of the self-in-world. By this ongoing social co-construction, the narrational yearnings of agency, communion, location and purpose are continuously culled, shaped, and negotiated between each other. This occurs most often through the medium of narratives, which are exchanged in mutual dialogue with the world. In the social sciences the term

¹²⁹ Day, *Selected Writings*, 4.

¹³⁰ Day, *Duty of Delight*, 112.

¹³¹ See chap. 1 sec. 1.

“social constructionist” is a broad one, encompassing many explanations and nuances depending on one’s starting point and area of expertise. Yet in the postmodern West, approaches to self and meaning that can in some way be labeled as social constructionist have become increasingly accepted as having more intuitive and less reductionistic starting points (as opposed to more individualistic, essentialist, or “constructivist” starting points).¹³² While there are many versions of social constructionism, when it comes to how they approach identity, most contemporary articulations have three overlapping basic concepts in common: Human Identity (1) is rooted in lived experience (i.e., it is not a purely internal process), (2) is embedded within social relationships, and within the very means of its expression via language/symbols, and (3) is at once both a product and producer of culture. This way of explaining selfhood, albeit simplified, is less volitional, is less integrated, and possesses varying degrees of stability and coherence, in contrast to the classical modern perspective. In social constructionism the individualist notion of self as epitomized by Descartes’ *cogito*, “bounded” (Taylor), and unique, has been replaced by a new aphorism, “*Communicamus ergo sum*.”¹³³ That is to say, a person’s selfhood is contingent upon the whole of her or his various social-dialectical interactions with the world.

¹³² For an explanation as to the differences between “constructionism” and “constructivism” see Brendan Hyde, “Confusion in the Field? Providing Clarity on Constructivism and Constructionism in Religious Education,” *Religious Education* 110, no. 3 (May-June 2015), 289-302). “Constructivist” is a term used more often to describe Piaget et al., who as Hyde notes, begin from more modernist, individualist epistemological assumptions concerning an individual’s capacity to “construct” reality (“Confusion,” 294). “(Social) constructionists” in contrast emphasize more postmodern (i.e., non-dualist, situated, and relational) understandings of learning and being [Hyde, “Confusion,” 294-298; see Kenneth Gergen, “Mind, Text, and Society: Self-memory in Social Context,” in *The Remembering Self*, eds. Neisser and Fivush, 78-104]. It has had a major influence in narrative therapy; see Jill Freedman and Gene Combs, *Narrative Therapy: The Social Construction of Preferred Realities* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996), 25-26 (referring to Lynn Hoffman). Regarding narrative social constructionist approaches to development, which also often invoke or imply constructivist notions, see sec. 4.

¹³³ Gergen, *The Saturated Self*, 242.

It is not unnecessary to fully delineate here the intellectual history of social constructionism.¹³⁴ Yet by way of showing the relationship between social constructionism and narrative psychology in more recent years, a quick historical overview is helpful: The concept once again find roots in the US pragmatist tradition and the social self of Mead (1934) who built upon the earlier ideas of James, Cooley, et al.¹³⁵ As mentioned before, while a remarkable and fruitful conceptual achievement, the social self fell short of successfully depicting a social identity that is both robustly personal and communal. Meanwhile, in cultural anthropology and sociology over the course of the twentieth century, ethnomethodologies began to emerge which focused on narrational discursive practices and sociohistorical histories as the means of identity construction.¹³⁶ Yet as Jerome Bruner points out, most of Anglo-American psychology was slower to consider the so-called “linguistic” and “cultural” turns in the social sciences and humanities, captivated as it was by behaviorism and cognitive processing during the middle-twentieth century.¹³⁷ A notable exception in psychology’s global scene was the Russian Lev Vygotsky’s dialectical, sociocultural approach. As with the cultural anthropologists, Vygotsky illuminated the social-dialectical character of identity, and emphasized bilateral meaning “mediation” via shared “cultural tools” (i.e. language and symbols); as a seminal voice in social and educational psychology, Vygotsky in

¹³⁴ The role of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Doubleday, 1966) played a particularly key role in pulling together the concepts of prior theorists (Weber, Durkheim, Hegel, Marx, et al.) into a theory of socialization and dialectical co-construction in Western sociology (see Hyde, “Confusion,” 294-295).

¹³⁵ See chap. 1 sec. 2. See also Katherine Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds: Experience, Meaning and Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2007), 31-33.

¹³⁶ Holstein and Gubrium, *Self We Live By*, 85-100 (esp. 88-90).

¹³⁷ Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 2-12.

particular emphasized how such mediating activity led to personal as well as social development.¹³⁸

Bruner's work marked a turning point in Anglo-American psychology towards the meaning-making implications of narrative. By the late 1980s, the narrative turn had already begun in other fields within the social sciences and humanities, as part of a natural evolution of their common interest in contextual and discursive analyses. An inchoate conception of a narrative psychology was just beginning to take shape through the work of Spence, Shafer, and others, primarily influenced by psychoanalytic theory and therapeutic practices. Having himself been influenced by pragmatist, contextualist, and Vygotskian traditions alike, Bruner fused their collective insights together by bringing them into conversation with psychology's budding interest in narratives and human narrativity (i.e., the ongoing human compulsion to narrate), and presenting these as endemic to the very process of social construction.¹³⁹ It is through stories, he asserted, by which people constantly navigate, as well as help create, their respective social webs of relations. In this view, selfhood is not merely an accumulation of narrative memories; rather the self is a story made up of many stories, each full of social and cultural content, which are perpetually being written and rewritten, as a person continues to consciously or subconsciously ascribe socially-derived meanings to life actions, events, and conversations.¹⁴⁰ Bruner thus made his own synthesis, which could be summarized the

¹³⁸ Vera John-Steiner and Holbrook Mahn, "Sociocultural Approaches to Learning and Development: A Vygotskian Framework," *Educational Psychologist* 31, nos. 3/4 (1996) 192; See James V. Wertsch, Pablo del Rio, and Amelia Alvarez, "Sociocultural Studies: History, Action, and Mediation." In *Sociocultural Studies of Mind*, eds. Wertsch, del Rio, and Alvarez (New York: Cambridge University, 1995), 6-28.

¹³⁹ Mancuso and Sarbin (1983) and Sarbin (1986) made a similar early connection, between William James' distinction between the I and Me, and the relationship between author and actor. See Hermans and Kempen, *The Dialogical Self*, 45-46.

¹⁴⁰ See Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 40-43, 77-86; 99-116; see also Bruner, "The 'Remembered Self'" in *The Remembering Self*, eds. Neisser and Fivush, 53.

following way: Identity as life-meaning is produced through people's lived experiences-with-others, which are intermediated through narratives exchanged in social-cultural relationships, which consequently give rise to new, and/or evolutions of, social-cultural productions. This is a narrative-centered way of stating the three key attributes of social-constructionism that were listed previously.

Following Bruner,¹⁴¹ *narrative social constructionism* (hereafter “NSC”) has, over the past three decades, blossomed into an exciting and fruitful approach to identity research in Western psychology. Indeed it has become nearly a consensus viewpoint that the social construction of meaning necessitates an interest in narrativity; as Holstein and Gubrium state, “*Narrative practice* lies at the heart of [social] self-construction. It is a form of *interpretive practice*, a term we use to simultaneously characterize the activities of storytelling, the resources used to tell stories, and the auspices under which stories are told.”¹⁴² Whether it articulates it precisely as such or not, NSC theory and research nevertheless offers definitive support for *narrativity*, as a definitive feature of human nature which represents a litany of “actively constructed and locally constrained” meaning-making activities.¹⁴³ In light of the previous section, it is asserted that the inborn impulse to narrate one's own life can fulfilled only through lifelong dialectical sociocultural engagements. Personal identities are thus always fashioned in relation to what is co-created (i.e., narrated, done, shared) in community. New stories and visions emerge out of these narrative experiences, as they did with Dorothy Day, and the

¹⁴¹ Freedman and Combs credit Gergen, “The Social Constructionist Movement in Modern Psychology,” *American Psychologist* 40 (1985), 266-275, and Lynn Hoffman, “Constructing Realities: An Art of Lenses,” *Family Process* 29 (1990), 1-12, as being particularly influential articles which helped popularize social constructionist notions within the world of psychotherapy. Freedman and Combs, *Narrative Therapy*, 16, n. 9.

¹⁴² Holstein and Gubrium, *Self We Live*, 104, emphasis theirs.

¹⁴³ Holstein and Gubrium, *Self We Live*, 104.

resulting productions and interpretations carry a wide impact, capable of becoming part of the fabric of culture, even as the person is being reshaped, re-created, in both conscious and unconscious ways.

Gary Gregg states that studies of identity in Western psychology today typically follow one of three basic orientations; two of these aptly represent somewhat-divergent, yet overlapping, streams of thought that have emerged within NSC studies, both of which warrant consideration here.¹⁴⁴

The first can be referred to as a “*polyphonic*” approach, following the terminology of Mikhail Bakhtin, noted philosopher and literary scholar and compatriot of Vygotsky. According to Peter Raggatt, despite his relative anonymity in the West, Bakhtin is often credited with being the first scholar to take the notion of social construction, which has always sought to resist the depiction of the self as individually whole and distinct, to its logical conclusion: a radical decentralization.¹⁴⁵ Selfhood, indeed the mind itself, is in this view understood in terms of dialogical interrelations, corresponding with what Bruner called a “distributed” understanding of the self. Per Bakhtin, as people are formed fundamentally via dialectical-dialogical exchanges with the outside world, it is within these social exchanges themselves that the self exists at all. Hermans and Kempen’s influential study on the “dialogical self” expands upon Bakhtin’s approach, explaining selfhood in terms of the various “I-positions” a person takes in the course of varying exchanges.¹⁴⁶ Kenneth Gergen’s aforementioned notion of the

¹⁴⁴ The third, non-narrative approach Gregg mentions is information-processing models, which are not considered in this work. See Gary Gregg, “The Raw and the Bland: A Structural Model of Narrative Identity,” in *Identity and Story: Creating Self in Narrative*, eds. Dan P. McAdams, Ruthellen Josselson, and Amia Lieblich (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2006), 63.

¹⁴⁵ Peter T. Raggatt, “Multiplicity and Conflict in the Dialogical Self: A Life-Narrative Approach,” in McAdams et al., *Identity and Story*, 17-18.

¹⁴⁶ Hermans and Kempen, *The Dialogical Self*, 115; for a summary of Bakhtin see 39-44.

postmodern self as saturated,¹⁴⁷ rooted in the essentially-social and distributed nature of personhood, represents a polyphonic perspective. For him, the postmodern condition almost invariably results in a disorienting, chronic “multiphrenia” that cannot readily be reconciled.¹⁴⁸ Yet while this interpretation presents challenges to meaning-making, other theorists have made certain to emphasize that polyphony in itself need not necessarily be viewed as a portent of an inescapable relativism, or the source of person’s identity-based malaise. Many polyphonic approaches, including Hermans and Kempen themselves, emphasize that the psychological goal is not to simply subsume multiple polyphonic “possible selves” (Markus and Nurius)¹⁴⁹ into a singular Voice or Story. Rather, drawing upon Bahktin, the psychological goal is to facilitate a healthy dialogue between various internalized voices of the self, so that a client is increasingly able to imaginatively and critically explore his or her own multiple modes of presence, and to aim for authenticity in narrative expression.¹⁵⁰

A polyphonic approach to NSC can thusly be summarized as one that emphasizes the dialectical and embodied-experiential components of social construction, but specifically by *viewing the self as a multiplicity of stories and characters which do not necessarily require an all-encompassing unitive center*. In regards to narrative yearnings, this approach favors viewing meaning-making as primarily a *communal and locative* (i.e.,

¹⁴⁷ See chap. 1 sec. 2.

¹⁴⁸ See Gergen, *The Saturated Self*, 16.

¹⁴⁹ Hazel Markus and Paula Nurius, "Possible Selves," In *American Psychologist* 41, no. 9 (1986), 954-969.

¹⁵⁰ McAdams, *The Stories We Live By*, 131. See Hermans and Kempen, *The Dialogical Self*, 62-76. Other helpful images supporting polyphonic perspectives involve viewing the self as a conductor of selves (per Schwartz) or a composer (per Hermans and Kempen; see *The Dialogical Self*, 95-98), or the self as inherently nomadic in the midst of multiple interconnections (per Watkins and Shulman, *Towards Psychologies of Liberation*, 166). In these images the self is notably not entirely decentered—and yet they still portray identity as inherently fluid and the goal being to become a “non-subject” (Dion-Buffalo and Mohawk) in dialogical engagement with oneself and others (Watkins and Shulman, *Towards Psychologies of Liberation*, 158; see 176).

a situated and embodied) activity. It shares the suspicion of Continental postmodern philosophies of controlling, imposed, or self-contained “master narratives.”¹⁵¹ A person taking a polyphonic view, in analyzing the autobiographical data of Dorothy Day, would be more likely to focus on the instances of ambiguity and ambivalence found in her self-narrations, to look for the presence of distinct I-positions taken within various communities, and to consider their interrelationship as being most authentically reflective of her “narrative selfhood.”

The second stream of NSC thought that Gregg mentions is the *life-story* approach, which derives from pragmatist Josiah Royce’s view of “life-stories,” as well as Erik Erikson’s notion of identity-formation as a process of self-integration.¹⁵² Life-story approaches, in contrast to polyphonic perspectives, tend to view identity in terms of a narrative “unity of a life” (MacIntyre).¹⁵³ That is, personal identity is defined precisely in terms of a concrete life-story, which is concocted from the narrative-materials received in social-cultural interactions, and somehow knit together into a coherent whole. The psychological importance of such an identity is reflected by Appiah: “One thing that matters to people across many societies is a certain narrative unity, the ability to tell a story of one’s life that hangs together. The story—my story—should cohere in the way appropriate to a person in my society,” even as the story adapts over time.¹⁵⁴ Examples abound which resemble this approach in psychology,¹⁵⁵ including Ira Progoff’s “intensive

¹⁵¹ “Master narratives” is another way to discuss Lyotardian metanarratives; see Avril Thorne and Kate C. McLean, “Telling Traumatic Events in Adolescence: A Study of Master Narrative Positioning,” in *Autobiographical Memory and the Construction of a Narrative Self: Development and Cultural Perspectives*, eds. Robyn Fivush and Catherine A. Haden (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003), 171.

¹⁵² See Raggert, “Multiplicity,” 16.

¹⁵³ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 190; see 190-209.

¹⁵⁴ Appiah, *Ethics of Identity*, 23.

¹⁵⁵ For a comprehensive survey of (pre-2012) life-story approaches that span multiple disciplines, see the introductory paragraphs of Jonathan Adler, “Living into the Story: Agency and Coherence in a

journal” method to “life-study”;¹⁵⁶ Dan McAdams in particular has become among the foremost proponents of the life-story approach to NSC, “the narrative study of lives.”¹⁵⁷ McAdams views the various so-called “voices” accrued in social-cultural interaction not necessarily as discrete selves or I-positions, but as developing characters that in early to middle adulthood begin to be culled into more refined *imagoes*, the “personified and idealized concept(s) of the self.”¹⁵⁸ The psychological goal is to continue developing a greater capacity to articulate narrative character, values, core beliefs, etc. Life-story approaches can thus be said to view social construction primarily in terms of the development of a coherent and consistent narrative consciousness. It portrays a narrational sense of self that is fluid and dynamic, constantly being worked upon, yet in the mature adult attaining a level of organized unity,¹⁵⁹ and giving it the potential to guide life and to center lived values and convictions. In this approach, in contrast with polyphonic approaches, meaning-making is more often expressed in terms of *agency and purpose*, emphasizing the importance of each person’s capacity to integrate a meaningful life-story. Influenced by both pragmatist and Anglo-American post-analytical philosophers such as Taylor and MacIntyre, it views uncritical polyphony as a cause of postmodern

Longitudinal Study of Narrative Identity Development and Mental Health Over the Course of Psychotherapy,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 102, no. 2 (2012), 367-368.

¹⁵⁶ See Ira Progoff, *Life-Study: Experiencing Creative Lives by the Intensive Journal Method* (New York: Dialogue House, 1983).

¹⁵⁷ McAdams, *The Redemptive Self*, 14.

¹⁵⁸ McAdams, *Stories we Live By*, 122.

¹⁵⁹ Thus per McAdams, “Young children have selves; they know who they are, and they can tell you. But they do not have identities, in Erikson’s sense, in that they are not confronted with the problem of arranging the me [sic] into a unified and purposeful whole that specifies a meaningful niche in the emerging adult world.” McAdams, “Identity and the Life-Story,” in *Autobiographical Memory*, 189; see 187-194; see also McAdams, *Stories We Live By*, 122-123. It should be noted that life-story approaches have been framed in more Vygotskian, processual ways also, by the likes of Kate C. McLean, Monisha Pasupathi, and Jennifer L. Pals, “Selves Creating Stories Creating Selves: A Process Model of Self-Development,” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 11, no. 3 (2007), 262-278. This trend has begun to influence McAdams as well; see McAdams and McLean, “Narrative Identity,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 22, no. 3 (2013), 235.

emptiness¹⁶⁰ and multiphrenia, and sees narrative self-integration as the means by which psychological health is achieved in a saturated, postmodern world. From this view, a person taking this position would almost certainly read Dorothy Day's writings and journals as telling a story of self-integrative achievement, so to speak, in its reconciliation of competing Catholic and Communist identities. It is not surprising that many of today's narrative theologians and Christian religious educators would tend to favor a life-story approach à la McAdams over a polyphonic one, since they are more inclined to view stories of faith and conversion as more central to identity than other self-constitutive stories, which exert a kind of integrative control upon every dimension of our existence.¹⁶¹ Day herself would likely have echoed this sentiment, at least in regards to the hope and expectation she had for her life to become fully integrated in faith, or in theological terms, sanctified.

Looking at these two streams of thought together, it is important to note that despite the apparent polarity in their respective views and strategies, they nevertheless share a litany of common assumptions. Those representing both perspectives recognize the dialectical nature of meaning-making, and that this "social process of human becoming" (Groome)¹⁶² is rooted in story-sharing. They all basically affirm that identity is not purely located, so to speak, within the mind—in other words, they recognize that *both* memory and consciousness are always externally-referential in some way, and thus

¹⁶⁰ See McAdams, *Stories We Live By*, 125-126 (regarding his echoing of Jay Lifton's criticism of Erving Goffman).

¹⁶¹ An example: "The power of strong religion to transform people flows from its narrative character, and this narrative character demands an approach that acknowledges faith's link to all aspects of the human person (emotional, psychological, intellectual, social, cultural, and practical). Thick religion consists in these aspects, inseparable and irreducible to any of them." Erin Default-Hunter, *The Transformative Power of Faith: A Narrative Approach to Conversion* (Landham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 89.

¹⁶² Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 114.

cannot be considered in isolation of context. Yet conversely, most in some way also affirm the psychosocial importance of narrative coherence and consistency to personal identity. Most carve out some sort of possibility for the consciousness to articulate and shape each person's own identity-in-community, even if all of them recognize that identities are never fully products of personal choice, and that much identity content is imposed, or at least limited by personal experiences and narrative histories. In the end, both polyphonic and life-story approaches consider identity as something created via the ongoing process of exchanging stories, and view all persons as having some sort of capacity to narrate their lives. Their differences remain largely matters of emphasis.¹⁶³ The most glaring distinction may be that of their expressed psychological goals (whether dialogue or integration), and the corresponding strategies and techniques applied in therapeutic or educational settings.

Considering the similarities in the underlying presumptions behind both life-story and polyphonic approaches to narrative social construction, perhaps there is a way to affirm both in the present model. After all, Day's writings reveal her using narrative *both* to strive to integrate her life-story in some places, *and* also to dialogically negotiate her sense of self. Perhaps then, at least from a pragmatic perspective, both can be viewed as valid and interrelated narrative strategies of self-reflection, depending upon the momentary need.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Just as most polyphonic approaches are not entirely "decentered," neither do most life-story approaches presume that the multi-vocal nature of selfhood can be eliminated entirely. There is substantial overlap between the two strategies, and increasingly so; see n. 159 above.

¹⁶⁴ Chap. 5 sec. 3, in the course of delineating narrational development, demonstrates how life-story views align with *integrative* narrational strategies that are utilized via a metanarrational mode of consciousness. Polyphonic views, in turn, correspond with *negotiating* strategies, which facilitate an aiming towards a "trans-paradigmatic" consciousness-mode.

2.4 IDENTITY'S EVOLUTION THROUGH TIME: THE ONGOING DEVELOPMENT OF SELFHOOD

Dorothy Day, as previously mentioned, began to journal even more frequently as she aged, thereby continuing to work out each step of her oft-difficult pilgrimage, her never-ending pursuit of her fullest (i.e. sanctified) self. Again, her writings make clear that she was not merely recording her memories for posterity, or to help herself remember things and events. Rather by writing she was activating and enlivening her memories, the pieces of her “self,” in the present through the act of writing, by regularly returning to key events and themes of her life in order to navigate her present situation.¹⁶⁵ As she put it, “one always turns back to the past to be able to deal with, to cope with, the events of the day.”¹⁶⁶ This “turning back,” in one sense, reinforces old memories and their previously-ascribed meanings. Yet with every story-connection, every new context in which a memory is found to be resonant, the opportunity for new, even if subtle, expansions of the memory’s meaning exists as well. Therefore every constructed moment in social-dialectical experience inherently involves a change of some kind, whether that change is a re-entrenchment of long-held beliefs and convictions derived from narrated experiences, or an amplification or reorganization of them. Changes, consequently, build upon each other, as a dynamic person continuously encounters new experiences in need

¹⁶⁵ Thus in two separate but proximate 1976 journal entries, she follows a similar chain of thought: she records two distinct instances of having received praise, provoking her to record the same Tolstoy quote, ““I have sinned exceedingly in my youth,”” which then reminds her of past indiscretions to call her to humility (the second time including memories of felt shame), which *then* leads her to think of her memoir *The Long Loneliness*. She says, “People speak of [it] as an autobiography. It is rather a story of conversion.” She wishes to emphasize the spiritual and integrative nature of the book, perhaps to view it as more inspirational than self-indulgent. See *Duty of Delight*, 565-567. There are other examples of this kind of repetition in her journals.

¹⁶⁶ Day, *Duty of Delight*, 567.

of narration, and the resulting accumulations of narrations lead to even more insights and re-tellings.¹⁶⁷

So in addition to (1) the yearning for meaning, that (2) drives social construction, identity must finally be considered in terms of a third dimension (3): its ongoing development over time.¹⁶⁸ Day demonstrates that remembering and sharing stories is the most natural means by which human beings evolve in their life-meanings through time. Yet she also shows that such development cannot simply be viewed in terms of singular, dramatic and identifiable self-achievements, even as these make for natural self-narratives (such as, for example, the moment when she recognized Christ in the faces of the poor). Progression in the accrual of meanings is also endemic to ongoing existence, but it typically occurs in fits and starts, and is more difficult to pin down than any single life-story, no matter how sweeping or formative, can suggest. Human beings are always “‘in the middle of our stories,’”¹⁶⁹ and as Day illustrated in her later journals, they are always in the midst of a co-constructed process when it comes to their selfhood. And so process is not a mere accumulation, nor a constant improvement, but rather an endless stream of varied and complex processes, such as processing, editing, selecting, remembering, reformulating, imagining, etc.—all of which can occur either consciously or subconsciously.

¹⁶⁷ This expresses a non-reductionist, social-dialectical understanding of sociocultural development; see Vygotsky, *Educational Psychology*, 213-217. See also chap. 1 sec. 3, n. 45. Transformative learning approaches such as that of Jack Mezirow view these sorts of changes in terms of the elaboration or transformation of meaning perspectives; Jack Mezirow, “Learning to Think Like an Adult: Core Concepts of Transformation Theory,” in *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*, ed. Jack Mezirow (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 16; 19.

¹⁶⁸ The relationship between point, line, and plane offers a fitting analogy for these three dimensions.

¹⁶⁹ Polkinghorne, as quoted by Bruner in *Acts of Meaning*, 115-116.

An entire, forthcoming chapter is devoted to the development of identity in terms of narrational meaning-making.¹⁷⁰ The goal for now is to provide a brief overview of the legacy of Western developmental psychology, highlighting three particular shifts in the field which have helped illuminate how development is narrational. Since Jean Piaget, developmental psychology has remained a highly influential sub-discipline in the West, that has sought to explain precisely how meanings accrue and build upon each other. Piaget and others such as Kohlberg, and Fowler have offered various structural, constructive theories of cognitive development.¹⁷¹ Other developmental models have been derived from depth and ego psychology, rooted in the work of Freud, perhaps the most influential example of which being the “epigenetic” view of lifelong development advanced by Erik Erikson.¹⁷² These two trajectories have by far proven to be the most influential approaches to conceiving of human development in the twentieth century West. Both constructivist and Eriksonian approaches have offered numerous contributions to an understanding of human nature-in-its-becoming, but have also been criticized for their shortcomings. By and large, both schools of thought tend to depict development in terms of universal “stages,” and promote views of the self and psychosocial health which reflect modern individualist (i.e., expansionist and divisive) biases. Especially in comparison to a social constructionist standpoint, such approaches fall short in adequately contending with the complexity and diversity of human cognition,

¹⁷⁰ See chap. 5.

¹⁷¹ Felicity B. Kelcourse, “Theories of Human Development,” in *Human Development and Faith*, ed. Felicity B. Kelcourse (St. Louis: Chalice, 2004), 24-25. See n. 132 above concerning the difference between constructivism and constructionism.

¹⁷² Kelcourse, “Theories,” 24; 35-36. Note that Kelcourse also says that, while Erikson is related to the psychoanalytic tradition, “his work forms a bridge between psychoanalytic and structural understandings of development given his attention to developmental stages” (Kelcourse, “Theories,” 25). See also James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: HarperCollins, 1981), 46-47.

emotion, and meaning.¹⁷³ Discussing Erikson in particular, Donald Polkinghorne observes the difficulty endemic to much of the field in trying to speak of a person's life in terms of a continuous, predictable, and sequential thread, which promotes over-systemized analyses of life-events and pre-determined, generic interpretations.¹⁷⁴

The *first* shift in the field, that has served to bring narrativity to light, is actually not a narrational approach at all, per se. Yet Robert Kegan has contributed a developmental theory that plays a vital role in the present work's narrational-developmental perspective, in that it forms a conceptual bridge between classic Western developmental theories and narrative social constructionist (NSC) assumptions. Kegan refers to his approach as "*constructive-developmental*," following the course of other fellow constructivists, such as Gilligan and Fowler, who have come to be greatly influenced by Erikson as well as Piaget.¹⁷⁵ Sensing a connection between the two developmental schools,¹⁷⁶ these theorists have in different ways combined the "rigorous yet reductionistic" self of most neo-Piagetian constructivist theories, with the "vague but richer" view of the psychoanalytic tradition which inspires Erikson's view of lifelong ego-development.¹⁷⁷ Constructive-developmental approaches apply a constructivist (i.e.,

¹⁷³ Nelson, in *Narrative and Consciousness*, 19; Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 52-53.

¹⁷⁴ Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing*, 115.

¹⁷⁵ Robert Kegan, *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1994), 198-199; see also Kelcourse, "Theories," 25. Kelcourse distinguishes Fowler, Gilligan and Kegan (all of whom are influenced by Erikson) as constructivists who "compared to Piaget and Kohlberg ... are relatively more willing to take into account the contexts in which meaning is made and place more emphasis on meaning-making as a process involving both affect and cognition that evolves over time"; Kelcourse, "Theories," 25.

¹⁷⁶ "As the idea of construction directs us to the activity that underlies and generates the form of thingness of a phenomenon, so the idea of development directs us to the origins and processes by which the form came to be and by which it will pass into a new form." Kegan, *Evolving Self*, 13.

¹⁷⁷ Kegan, *Evolving Self*, 12; see Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 198-199.

active learning-oriented, pattern-aware) view of consciousness¹⁷⁸ to more epigenetic (i.e., evolutionary) perspectives. This has resulted in the crafting of theories of lifelong development that examine the learning processes of the consciousness—not only in childhood, but throughout the entire lifespan.¹⁷⁹

Kegan’s particularly-robust constructive-developmental theory is detailed in later chapters;¹⁸⁰ for now it is worth mentioning a couple of important distinguishing factors that ultimately make it compatible with NSC thought. To begin, even though Kegan as a constructivist locates himself firmly in the legacy of Piaget,¹⁸¹ he strains to present a perspective that “liberates us from a static view of” persons, and shifts our thinking “from entity to process, from static to dynamic.”¹⁸² In other words, Kegan’s view offers a glimpse of persons-in-process, who in the present view, are understood to be always in the middle of their stories.¹⁸³ While Kegan might not be as dialectically-minded as Vygotsky, and does not go so far as to consider personal development in its wider interrelationship with communities and with culture, his view of teaching itself still closely resembles Vygotsky.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, Kegan attempts to not only combine, but to look *beyond* the Piagetian and Eriksonian legacies, in a sense, by contending with “not

¹⁷⁸ This is framed more positively here than the description in the previous note (n. 132), which places more emphasis on the difficulties of constructivism that have typically made it incompatible with social constructionism.

¹⁷⁹ Kelcourse, “Theories,” 25. Fowler’s approach is briefly mentioned in chap. 5 sec. 4 (although see Table 1 in chap. 5 sec. 3).

¹⁸⁰ Chap. 4 sec. 3 considers Kegan’s explanation of the consciousness that learns in terms of subject-object relations; chap. 5 sec. 1 overviews the orders of consciousness Kegan considers, as a starting point for narrativel-developmental approach’s viewing consciousness in terms of narrativel modes (chap. 5 sec. 3).

¹⁸¹ See Kegan, *Evolving Self*, 4, as well as the chapter, “The Unrecognized Genius of Jean Piaget” (25-45).

¹⁸² Kegan, *Evolving Self*, 13.

¹⁸³ See Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing*, 150.

¹⁸⁴ Kegan’s view of learning environments, that they function best when participants “continuously experience an ingenious blend of support and challenge” (*In Over Our Heads*, 42), closely resembles Vygotsky’s zones of proximal development, as well as Lave and Wenger’s “legitimate peripheral participation” (see chap. 3 sec. 4). This suggests dialectical co-construction, and the importance of sociocultural environments and learning communities in identity-development.

only...the shape and sequence of our various consolidations of meaning, but [also] to the universal processes themselves of constructing... meaning...”¹⁸⁵ That is, he wants to ascertain the common reason for why both traditions detect universal patterns of development in the first place, despite the fact that they operate under different assumptions about human nature. Consequently, his *The Evolving Self* focuses on the development of the meaning-making self—as that which, he argues, underlies other various proposed developmental models.¹⁸⁶ In his subsequent work, *In Over Our Heads*, he further clarifies his conception, by viewing selfhood more in terms of consciousness, and reconceiving Piagetian “stages” of the self as “orders of consciousness”¹⁸⁷ that evolve through ongoing social-cultural engagement.

Kegan’s intentional turning of his focus both to *consciousness*, as well as to the *socially-situated, ongoing dynamic by which the consciousness develops throughout the lifespan*, together yields an approach that allows the possibility for more complex and culturally-situated expressions of development than most other approaches stemming from either the Piagetian and/or Freudian-Eriksonian legacies. Even so, it still remains capable of accounting for apparent patterns in the leaps of human capacities at certain ages that have been observed by Western developmentalists. Thus Kegan’s theory, especially in *In Over Our Heads*, presents a more holistic¹⁸⁸ model of constructive development that is not wholly antithetical to social constructionism.¹⁸⁹ This is in spite of

¹⁸⁵ Kegan, *Evolving Self*, 12.

¹⁸⁶ See e.g. Kegan, *Evolving Self*, 83-84.

¹⁸⁷ Kegan’s orders are discussed in chap. 5 sec. 1.

¹⁸⁸ Kegan’s model considers not only what is classically considered “cognitive” development, but also social and emotional, all of which are products of the meaning-making consciousness (again see Figure 9.1 in *In Over Our Heads*, 314-315; he distinguishes between “cognitive,” “interpersonal” and “intrapersonal” manifestations of subject-object relations; see chap. 4 sec. 3.

¹⁸⁹ “Subject-object theory...can be a saving tool for avoiding absolutism. And it can help us preserve the distinction between the rejection of absolutes on the one hand, and the rejection of the possibility of any

the fact that most developmental models are rejected by social constructionists, due to those models' tendency to proffer universalized solutions and to overgeneralize.

The *second* shift mentioned here, which occurred around the same time period Kegan published his two aforementioned works, concerns the pivotal role *developmentalist researchers* have played in the emergence of NSC theories. During the 1990s and 2000s many narrative-centered theorists and researchers, such as Bruner himself, along with Katherine Nelson, Robyn Fivush, Peggy Miller, Catherine Haden, et al., began to emphasize the role of narrational activity for and by children as the linchpin for identity's development in the early years. They gave substantial consideration to how autobiographical memory is socially constructed and re-constructed through time, and to how such cumulative work functions as a person's operational sense of self even from early childhood. Like Kegan, they too began to shift the developmental conversation from product and content to *process*, specifically focusing on *how children become narrators of their lives*. They saw this as the means by which children enter into the complex sociocultural fabric of relation of our world, what Nelson would later call "the community of minds,"¹⁹⁰ in ways that promoted healthy early identity-formation (or in other words, a sense of agency-in-communion). In these and in other aspects, narrative social constructionism (NSC) and developmental psychology began to naturally cross-pollinate, further encouraging the explosion of new NSC theory and research in subsequent years, up through the present-day.¹⁹¹

nonabsolutist ground on the other" (Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 333). Kegan's approach thus sees the mind in terms of its social and contextual interaction with the world, by which people learn as well as gain new perspectives and capacities. (Subject-object relations are featured in many constructivist, i.e. Piagetian, approaches and are discussed in chap. 4 sec. 3.)

¹⁹⁰ Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 210.

¹⁹¹ A few among countless examples: Catherine Haden explores parent-child dyadic social remembering and how it leads to the development of memory and language; Catherine A. Haden, "Joint Encoding and

It is natural, of course, that even as the field has evolved in this way, most developmental psychologists would continue to carry aspects of their Piagetian and/or Eriksonian DNA with them. For instance, many cognitive-developmental researchers such as Nelson have, like Piaget, continued to focus upon the rapid and manifold evolutions of the narrating self in *children*, giving less consideration to adolescence or adulthood. Others such as McAdams have followed the course charted by Erikson, by considering the lifelong development of a narrating self, but localizing the concern for identity primarily within *early-to-middle adulthood*.¹⁹² In neither case is identity being fully considered in terms of the consciousness' lifelong searching and social co-creation of meaning, which has been introduced in the present chapter in terms of the narrativity of selfhood.

Constructive-developmentalism à la Kegan, and the general presumptions behind most developmental-NSC perspectives, are worth briefly considering in tandem, as many of their strengths and weaknesses complement each other. For instance, while NSC theories have yet to offer a truly integrated, comprehensive theory of meaning-making

Joint Reminiscing: Implications for Young Children's Understanding and Remembering of Personal Experiences," in *Autobiographical Memory*, 50; 64-66. Fivush and Haden states that they along with their contributors to *Autobiographical Memory* utilize a "social and developmental constructivist" approach (Robyn Fivush and Catherine A. Haden, "Introduction: Autobiographical Memory, Narrative and Self" to *Autobiographical Memory*, vii). Miller examines the ways that children's inclusion in family storytelling practices contributes to their social construction (citing Bruner's relational self along the way); Peggy J. Miller, "Narrative Practices: Their Role in Socialization and Self-Construction," in *The Remembering Self*, eds. Neisser and Fivush, 158-179.

¹⁹² For McAdams, while "selfhood" develops throughout life, "identity" is considered almost purely a product of a discernible, tellable life-story. So while he does not restrict development of identity-per-se to *one* life-stage like Erikson, including all adults in the process (see *The Stories We Live By*, 95-96), for him children are not pursuing identity, because they cannot really considered self-narrators until they come to develop the capacities for "thematic" and "casual" coherence (Habermas and Bluck). These integrative narrative capacities then expand and become even more critical in later adulthood, as the need for a "generative" life-story, integrated around a worthy purpose or legacy, increases. Identity-talk is thus reserved for these life-periods (See McAdams, "Identity and the Life-Story," 190-194). See chap. 5 sec. 2 for an overview of McAdams' understanding of development.

throughout the lifespan,¹⁹³ Kegan has done so. By focusing on consciousness, he manages to offer a comprehensive theory, without absolutizing identity in terms of universal psychodynamic forces or cultural master self-narratives. Yet Kegan still considers orders of consciousness similarly to Piagetian stages, in which superior higher orders of consciousness subsume the inferior, lower ones. Even as it is more processual, his view continues to perpetuate the illusion that identity-formation typically follows a consistent, stable, and steadily-cumulative course—an illusion that most NSC approaches reject.¹⁹⁴

A *third* set of contributors to narrativial identity-development have emerged over the past twenty years who deserve brief mention here: NSC researchers who have begun to feature the manifold advances in recent neuroscientific research. For instance, the work of Katherine Nelson, a prolific NSC researcher throughout the eighties and nineties, first began to evolve in 2003 as she became influenced by the neuropsychologist Merlin Donald. Nelson uses Donald's research and evolutionary theory as the basis for explaining the "emerging levels of narrative" in young children, which manifest in ways

¹⁹³ McAdams admittedly comes close, even if he limits identity-concerns to one part of the lifespan, and even if he does not deliberately consider qualitative changes in the way children and adults think, or how such changes relate to narrative or narrativity. Jefferson Singer does show how various NSC-based studies, each focusing upon various discrete phases of the lifespan, can indeed be considered collectively, strongly demonstrating that narrative identity-development is a lifelong endeavor; Jefferson Singer, "Narrative Identity and Meaning-Making Across the Adult Lifespan: An Introduction," *Journal of Personality* 72, no. 3 (June 2004), 443. Chap. 5 sec. 1 makes a similar argument, focusing on a select number of works, including that of McAdams, in order to show that all the major premises of a narrativial-developmental view have been individually demonstrated in research, but simply have not been integrated together.

¹⁹⁴ This is to say, that viewing the cumulative work of the consciousness in terms of its apprehension of subjects and objects approximates social-dialectical thinking (see n. 189) but stops short of the mark (see n. 132). See chap. 4 sec. 3 regarding subject-object relations, in contrast to the more social-constructionist and (therefore) social-dialectical notions of *conscientização* (Freire) and mimesis-poesis (based in Ricoeur and the basis for narrativial development).

not unlike the ways Donald describes cognitive evolution.¹⁹⁵ Another example is the work of Valerie Hardcastle, which is not as developmentally systematized as Nelson's, but which still shares a similar objective: "to uncover...and outlin[e]...the neurobiological and psychological building blocks for our narrative selves."¹⁹⁶ Together, both researchers notably attempt to account for the complexity of evolving selfhood, precisely by considering the inherent complexity of the human brain. They both use neuroscientific findings to describe meaning-development, in terms of the evolution of the brain-as-socially-situated. Nelson and Hardcastle represent the next generation of NSC researchers, whose findings offer further supporting evidence for understanding the brain's development and learning as narrativel. As such, more detailed overviews of both Nelson and Hardcastle are reserved for Chapter Five, where the narrativel-developmental approach proposed by the present work is delineated and defended.¹⁹⁷

2.5 NARRATIVAL IDENTITY AND COMMUNAL IDENTITIES: DEFINING THE INTERRELATIONSHIP

The purpose of the past three sections can be thus summarized, as together presenting a comprehensive picture of identity to be understood in terms of selfhood along the three dimensions of *yearning*, *creation*, and *evolution*—that is, the inborn lifelong drive of the consciousness to make meaning, which occurs in dialectical and mutually-informing

¹⁹⁵ Gary Fireman, Ted McVay, and Owen Flanagan, "Introduction," in *Narrative and Consciousness*, 7. Nelson's approach based on Donald reaches conceptual maturity in *Young Minds in Social Worlds*. For a summary of Nelson's approach see chap. 5 sec. 2.

¹⁹⁶ Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 19. For an overview of Hardcastle's key insights see chap. 5 sec. 2.

¹⁹⁷ See chap. 5 sec. 2.

relations with the world, that over the course of a lifespan produce various accumulations and changes in both one's internalized field of meanings and in the consciousness itself. The adjective that can appropriately be used to describe all three of these dimensions of identity is *narrativ*al.

So understood, personal identity is not merely a cognitive construct, a feeling, a set of commitments, a voice, a position, ethic, etc. It is not even a narrative, as if any single story could fully encapsulate what we sense or intend when we consider the question "Who am I?" Rather, personal identity is a continuous and lifelong pursuit for meaning, identifiable by these three dimensions, and given partial and incomplete definition through dialogical meaning-making, most conspicuously through stories but not exclusively. Every act of meaning-attribution to life, from the loftiest to the most banal, is ultimately in some way related to our lifelong underlying compulsion to narrate who we are—whether in terms of our actionable capacities (agency), our various relational belongings (communion), our spatiotemporal contexts (location), and/or our goals and dreams (purpose). The yearnings for agency and communion are inborn, whereas the yearnings for location and purpose evolve *out of* agency and communion; yet all four evolve and interweave dramatically, and gain breadth and nuance over time, as a person engages in various social-dialectical interactions. And so it can be said that all life-meanings are *narrativ*al in nature, even if they are not explicitly narrative in structure.

Personal identity has been demonstrated thus far to be inherently social and formed within communal settings; yet so far *communal identities* per se have not been

formally discussed.¹⁹⁸ But it has been noted that Day's Catholic and Communist identities, which are both communal identities, played a critical role in her overall sense of personal identity, and that being able to integrate these ostensibly-competing allegiances within herself marked a pivotal moment in her life story. As life meanings are socially constructed, meaning-making is always situated within one or more social-communal commitments, each of which exerting varying degrees of influence upon the interaction. What is required at present, then, is a way to conceive of communal identity that directly corresponds with the *practical* and *social-dialectical* approach to personal identity that has been presented, that can also help explain how communal identities form and evolve. The social learning theory of Wenger and Lave offers just such a perspective.

Wenger and Lave claim that learning and identity-formation can be understood as a function of being situated within communities that collectively engage in specific practices; these are aptly called “communities of practice” (hereafter COPs).¹⁹⁹ Such communal engagements result in various co-productions of meaning,²⁰⁰ and it is through these co-productions that communal narrative identities, and personal identity by extension, are shaped. Three essential components, according to Wenger, identify the presence of a COP: the (1) mutual engagement of participants, in a (2) joint enterprise, who together utilize a (3) shared repertoire of routines, tools, stories, concepts, processes,

¹⁹⁸ Admittedly, communion *has* been discussed. It is a subtle but helpful distinction: the *yearning* for communion itself, is in the present perspective an aspect of *personal* identity. The *ways in which communion is shared*, however, involve expressions of *communal* identity—which either takes the form of a self-attribution of a communal role, or of a person speaking as the We or on behalf of a We. This distinction enables the claim to be made, that communal identity-expressions help inform and shape personal identity.

¹⁹⁹ Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge, UK: University Press, 1998), 51-52.

²⁰⁰ Wenger, *Communities of Practice*, 5.

etc.²⁰¹ These three dynamic elements work together within the ongoing life and activities of the community, thickening over time as a shared history is developed and a way of being-together is habituated. They serve to constitute its collective sense of “who we are.”

As with personal identity, communal identity is the product of ongoing social-dialogical meaning-making. In COPs, meaning-making is summarized according to the dual terms of *participation* (all the various corporate enterprises in which a community engages together, where participants take various roles towards a common end) and *reification* (all of the productions and repertoires that support said enterprises).²⁰² Reifications are initially developed out of participations, often in order to guide and safeguard future community enterprises; reifications then in turn guide, modify, or generate new forms of, participation in these enterprises.²⁰³ This dynamic is what fosters communal identity, what Wenger and Lave call a “shared energy”²⁰⁴ with a formative power in the lives of community participants.²⁰⁵ Over time, COPs develop “shared histories of learning,”²⁰⁶ much of which is remembered by the community through its reified, canonized, *communal narratives*. The various participations and reifications that drive this collective energy will either evolve, or stagnate and/or devolve, as the community encounters problems and contingencies and either responds, overreacts,

²⁰¹ Wenger, *Communities of Practice*, 73. Note that these elements cannot be entirely separated; each of them imply aspects of the others, and changes in one inevitably lead to changes in all three.

²⁰² Wenger, *Communities of Practice*, 55-6; 59.

²⁰³ Wenger, *Communities of Practice*, 65.

²⁰⁴ Wenger, *Communities of Practice*, 84.

²⁰⁵ “It is the interplay of participation and reification [in social engagement] that makes people and things what they are.” Wenger, *Communities of Practice*, 70; see also 151.

²⁰⁶ Wenger, *Communities of Practice*, 91.

ignores, etc. Communal narratives help process and shape these changes, even as the community develops new shared histories.

A community's "shared energy" fuels its communal co-creations and shared activities, which in turn bolster, reroute, or dampen that energy; the community evolves or devolves via this ongoing relationship. This dynamic is comparable to the yearning that drives social-dialogical meaning-making, by which personal identity evolves (or devolves) over time. And so again, there is a "motivational-dialectical-evolutionary" structure, to communal identity as with personal identity. Both, from this view, are subsumed under the category of *meaning-making*, i.e., human narrativity, by which both personally-attributed and communally-attributed meanings are crafted. But here the question first raised in the original chapter re-emerges: *How do personal and communal identities interrelate?* They are clearly implied within each other; our sense of being an "I" invariably involves belonging to various "Wes"; conversely our sense of "We" informs and guides an emerging sense of being an "I." They cannot be cleanly separated and they cannot avoid each other; yet neither should one be reduced to the other. An efficient way to help clarify the distinctions between personal and communal narrational identity, while also preserving the subtlety of their interrelationship, is to identify the different *narrative* elements in play with both. Personal and communal identities are both essentially meaning-making *dynamics*, and thus inherently abstract; nevertheless they are more easily observable through the different kinds of concrete story-elements they produce, and especially the kinds and aspects of *characters* that result from those stories. Viewed in this way, the overlap between personal and communal identity is re-conceived as a product of the natural *overlap between self-stories and communal narratives*. A short

taxonomy of terms here serves to organize and define personal and communal identity in relation to each other, in relation to their respective constitutive narrative productions:

- *Personal identity, identity, self, selfhood*, or the Ricoeurian use of the Latin *ipse*, are all considered here to be essentially synonymous terms which represent the holistic conception of *narrational identity*, a socially-constructed identity²⁰⁷ viewed in terms of a person's inherent *narrativity*, that is outlined in detail in this chapter. The heart of the concept lies at the end of the question "Who am I?" Human beings answer this question in many ways, but ultimately it is the four aforementioned longings that lie at the bottom of this question and any attempts to answer them.
 - *Personhood* can be considered primarily as the spiritual and psychosocial dimension of personal identity.²⁰⁸ It is the sense of wholeness and meaning-*full*-ness associated with a person's life and his or her communal belongings, a sense that stems from a deep spiritual yearning to make meaning.²⁰⁹ ("Personhood" can also refer to each person's inherent dignity and worth as a human being.)
- *Self-stories* are the actual social expressions by which people dialectically make sense of, shape, and/or communicate to others their sense of selfhood using hermeneutical symbols, especially language. They constitute a

²⁰⁷ It is worth the reminder that in the present view all identity, whether personal or communal, is *social*, following sec. 3 above. Therefore personal identity should *not* be read as *individualized* identity that can be disconnected from all social fabrics.

²⁰⁸ This is not to say that personhood is a subset of selfhood; to the contrary, personhood is endemic to the depths of the mystery of human existence itself.

²⁰⁹ See the following section, sec. 6. This "yearning" (see sec. 2) is therefore a "desire," but not in the same sense as a craving. Yet people who are denied opportunities to make meaningful lives undoubtedly feel a lack, and/or begin to lose their creative and productive dynamism, making meaning-making increasingly difficult.

substantial part of everyday discourse. Typically self-stories exhibit some semblance of a self in the form of a *character* who takes an *I-position* (Hermans and Kempen).²¹⁰ That is, the protagonist assumes a particular set of relational conditions in play and positions oneself within those conditions, thereby assuming a role within a community. When a person actually formulates an answer to the question “Who are you?” the common result is the expression of a story-character, or a more broadly-defined *imago* (McAdams),²¹¹ via a self-story. These stories reveal and dialectically interpret identity, but do *not* provide a sufficient definition of identity in and of themselves.

- Self-stories most evidently take the form of testimonies or autobiographies, and unless otherwise stated, “self-stories” refers to these, which are typically told in the first-person, with the narrator assuming the role of the story’s protagonist. But there are other authorial positions that can be taken, such as the third person, the plural, etc.
 - A *life-story*, following McAdams, is a particular kind of autobiographical self-story with broad reach, which strives to capture a wide swath of personal history, and to draw together an entire, or a significant segment of, life into a meaningful whole.

²¹⁰ Recall polyphonic NSC approaches in sec. 3 of this chap.

²¹¹ Recall life-story NSC views in sec. 3 of this chap.; see also chap. 5 sec. 2.

- There are also less complete *story-fragments* of expressed or recalled memories, which demonstrate an inchoate narrational structure, even if such self-story memories are incomplete. Also, all lived experiences can be conceived of as stories-lived, or as latent *potential stories* (Ricoeur),²¹² even if they have not yet been narrated or intentionally re-constituted in the memory. Both sub-conscious, unformed self-stories, as well as partially-formed story-fragments, can still affect meaning and interpretations, and thus selfhood, in profound ways.
- *Traditions* are the historically passed down, yet ever-evolving, products and processes of a group—or in Wenger’s terms, its various forms of participations and reifications, and the interaction between both. The term “tradition” emphasizes the fact that a community’s shared activities and symbols (e.g. its rituals, rules, symbolic systems, practices, and communal narratives) can be considered in terms of their durability over time. These are what enable communities to continue to survive, even for multiple generations, and to be recognized as being in continuity with the community’s prior iterations.
 - *Communal narratives* are the components of a community tradition with which the present work is most concerned. In short, they are the “we-stories,” so to speak, which parallel the self-stories of individual persons.

²¹² Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. 1*, 74.

- These include community-specific pre-narrative patterns, or what Appiah calls *scripts*,²¹³ which play a particularly critical role in people's narrativial development. Scripts help define an I-within-a-We, i.e., a person's particular I-position and role within a communal setting. As such they are communal narratives, but which also provide the raw conceptual or thematic materials for autobiographical self-stories, and ultimately for the formation of characters. Thus it is a means by which communal and personal identities overlap and inform each other.²¹⁴
- Communal narratives also include the *shared histories* of the community, both as it occurs and is recounted amongst a current set of participants, as well as the passed-down, enduring stories over the course of multiple generations. Such stories are the natural output of life-together, and denote shared meanings amongst groups of persons. These help foster and reinforce a sense of communal identity, and/or to communal bonds of friendship and camaraderie.
- *Myths* are well-known societal and cultural communal narratives, utilizing established *mythic plot-forms* and *character archetypes*, with high explanatory and purpose-giving power within a community. Whether creatively evolving

²¹³ Appiah, *Ethics of Identity*, 23.

²¹⁴ See chap. 5 sec. 3 regarding "sequencing" and proto-narratives.

from shared histories, or whether they more overtly take the form of a fable, they all communicate in some way the central themes and values of a community. Myths often detail the origins of a community, including on a larger scale, that of society, or of humanity as a whole. These grand narratives can belong to local communities, interconnected “constellations” of COPs (Wenger),²¹⁵ or to wider political or economic structures; they all have the capacity to exert tremendous influence upon communal narratives and traditions, as well as self-narratives.²¹⁶

- *Communal identity* refers to that aforementioned “shared energy” (Wenger and Lave) of communities, a sense of common belonging and interdependence. Like personal identity, communal identity can really only be observed through its explicit practices and shared meanings, especially narratives. The continuous, mutual informing between participation and reification is what drives this shared energy.
 - The term “communal identity” is also used to apply to not only this sense of commonality in itself, but also to the ways that sense actually manifests in the lives and stories of individual persons. A willingness to attribute *identification-markers* to oneself, as defined by Appiah earlier (“Christian,” “Democrat,” a surname, “queer,” “American,” a

²¹⁵ See Wenger, *Communities of Practice*, 127.

²¹⁶ Per McAdams, developed characters draw upon the most salient of cultural-mythical resources to form imagoes. McAdams, *Stories we Live By*, 122-123. See chap 5 sec. 3.

racial or ethnic distinction, etc.) usually indicates some measure of a sense of belonging to or with others. These communal identities inform a person's underlying personal identity.

The terms and concepts in this taxonomy complete the framework for a personhood-affirming approach to personal and communal narrational identity that this chapter seeks to provide. This framework and these terms help set the parameters for what follows in later chapters. In the process, they define the interrelationship between personal and communal identity, demonstrating are both abstract “senses” that become discernible via their effects and productions. Chief among such productions are the various kinds of narrative elements exchanged in communities which can illuminate Is and/or Wes, neither of which are neatly separated, even if certain kinds of narratives tend to emphasize certain forms of identity over others. Within these narrative exchanges, communal identities and personal identities mutually inform each other; *how* they do so is a matter of how meanings are interpreted and symbolized in the course of these contextually-specific exchanges. By this definition, our personal identities are *not* our narrative characters, but are nevertheless *expressed* via the characters featured in our self-stories and our shared histories (See Figure 1).

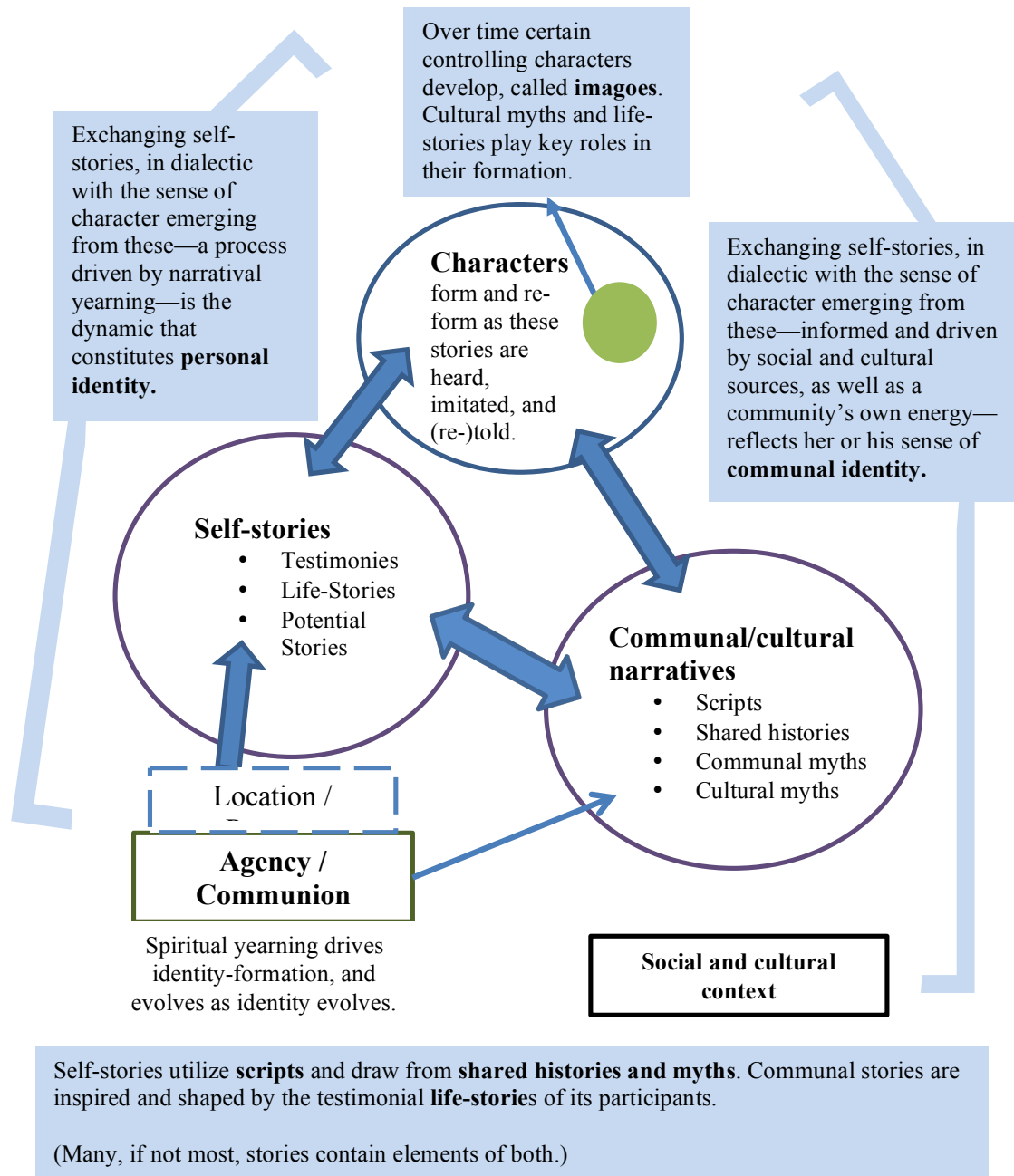


Figure 1. Relationships between Narrative Elements of Narrativ Personal and Communal Identity.

2.6 REFLECTION: TOWARDS A THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF NARRATIVE PERSONHOOD

To summarize the content of this chapter: That which has been referred to as personal identity can be most holistically understood in terms of narrativity, in dynamic relationship with communal identities. Viewing identity in terms of narrativity acknowledges the inherent narrational yearning in every human being, which propels the social co-creation and ongoing evolution of life-meanings. It is within and through this dynamic that humans claim to have selfhood, an “I” that can be articulated through self-stories—whether that narrated-I is constituted by many characters and positions, or reflects one among many characters, or asserts some degree of integration and consistency amidst various Wes, or communities of belonging. Narrative approaches to identity and development have paved the way for a “solution” to the identity crisis—as stories help shape our personal and communal identities, and narrational dialogues are how personal and communal identities interrelate and mutual inform each other. The above analysis has attempted to delineate this interrelationship.

Today, if you are a researcher in the humanities and social sciences, who has not taken a view similar to Gergen et al., or a physicalist-reductionist view in light of the hard sciences—and therefore you still believe that selfhood is a legitimate psychological category—then you are almost certainly making this claim precisely by keying in on narratives. For it is through self-stories, whether told by a polyphonic or a more integrated narrator, that human beings most naturally conceive of having a “self.” The most basic identity question, “Who are you?” (along with its corollaries), are instinctively and most satisfyingly answered by telling and/or implying stories. But as the present

chapter seeks to demonstrate, such awareness of selfhood-as-depicted-by-narratives only scratches the surface of the deeply *narrational* quality of human identity. Narrativity is demonstrated in every person's intrinsic desire to be a narrator and a co-creator of meaning. It refers to how all persons somehow exemplify a need to share themselves with others, as well as to receive others, through exchanging stories. And it suggests how each moment of sharing directs the course of a person's self-narratorship--whether by affirming established meanings and directions, challenging those meanings and directions, or opening up new, previously-unforeseen, possibilities.

Narrational identity reveals our narrativity as human beings. Chapter Three takes up narrativity's inner workings and processes as the engine of human meaning-making; the present chapter aims to show how narrativity is *central to human nature itself*. This is visible when we share stories with each other: To share stories is in fact to share life with others. And to receive someone's story is not only to be given a window into someone's identity; it is a sacred invitation to be drawn into the world of another, to enter another way of being and seeing. Humans share stories with each other, because stories tap into an intrinsic desire to know (in the Hebraic sense of *yada*)²¹⁷ and learn, to feel interconnected, to somehow grasp the surrounding world as one who is fully present in the world, and to better relate oneself to their surroundings, past and present. Moreover these exchanges foster the lifelong evolution of identity, allowing people to remain both in continuity with the past and with openness to the present and future, so that they are consequently better able to see and speak of themselves as a "whole" with a purpose and a hope, as well as to learn to accept and contend with the less-than-whole aspects of

²¹⁷ Heb. יָדָע, referring to the relational understanding of "knowing"; see Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 141-145.

themselves and others. All of this and more is implied by the above examination of narrational identity.

From this perspective, personal narrational identity is intertwined with a sense of personhood. Narrativity is not simply an epistemological, social, hermeneutical, ethical, or developmental category, although it is all of these; it is also an *ontological* quality of the human condition, and a profound clue as to what it means to be a human-being-in-community. This belief grounds the theological-anthropological thread that weaves through this entire present project, and indeed much more remains to be said. For now, this belief can be further reinforced, by way of considering how the view of personal identities, in dialectical relation to communal identities, presented in this chapter can be considered from a theological-anthropological perspective.

Desmond Tutu's aforementioned *ubuntu* theology²¹⁸ offers such a perspective. Using his interpretation of ubuntu as an interpretive lens, we come to view ourselves as inhabiting and constituting each other, as fellow human beings who all belong to God's one family, who are responsible for each other who receive each other accordingly.²¹⁹ All human beings are connected to each other; they know themselves only to the extent that they know and relate to others. Narrative social constructionism adds that this ongoing dynamic of receptivity and reciprocal (i.e., dialectical) constitution is the direct product of sharing stories in communities. There are two equally-important sides to this picture. The first is that *personal identities and self-stories require genuine communities, which share with each other their communal scripts and narratives, their practices and*

²¹⁸ See chap. 1 sec. 1.

²¹⁹ See Desmond Tutu, *God is Not a Christian: And Other Provocations*. Ed. John Allen (New York: Harper One, 2011), 24. See also Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999/2000), 143-144.

traditions, and their personal self-stories of its participants. It is precisely in storying communities that people develop and define their primal yearnings for agency and communion, which with time and nurture eventually enable greater “mapping” of oneself within the world and in time, as well as the instilling of some sense of purpose which carries one’s hope for the future. But the other side is that *such genuine communities do narratively cultivate a We-ness, yet never at the expense of, or with the intention to override, anyone’s narrational I-ness.* In order for “my humanity...[to be] bound up with your humanity,”²²⁰ there must be other “I’s” with which to be connected, as well as an “I” who can receive others as well as share itself with others. Communities that cultivate personhood must include the freedom to openly narrate life and experiences in community, to allow narrational yearnings to take narrative forms, and thus co-create new meanings. This is *not* individualism, in the sense that the “I” could ever exist apart from a We. Rather it is in the course of the narrative exchange, i.e. unimpeded dialogue and relationship, by which a sense of I-ness is truly free to emerge.²²¹ Personal identity can never be reduced to communal identity/identities, any more than a person can ever come to express and identify his or herself apart from community. For the ultimate community is the family of God, which in Tutu’s theology includes every human being, who all have a story, an intrinsic value and worth. This assertion is the basis of a theological defense of personal identity.²²²

²²⁰ Tutu and Tutu, *Made for Goodness*, 47.

²²¹ “The distinctiveness of each person depends upon her or his connection with other persons and a recognition of a more encompassing context. All humans are born with potential, according to ubuntu theology, but this potential can be [sic] understood only in the context of others and God” (Battle, *Reconciliation*, 44).

²²² In other words, ubuntu is humanity’s universal communal identity (as interconnected), which grounds personal identity.

Narrative identity and personhood are multifaceted concepts that are resistant to reducibility. But clearly one essential element to both is *creativity*: the desire and capacity to make and re-make meaning. In order to remain connected to his or herself, and also be interconnected with others, the freedom to narrate a truth (whether historical or otherwise) must be maintained, and continually re-affirmed. It is in the context of communities that honor personhood-as-ubuntu that, following the words of Vygotsky, “Life then discloses itself as a system of creation, of constant straining and transcendence, of constant invention and the creation of new forms of behavior. Thus, every one of our thoughts, every one of our movements, and all of our experience constitutes a striving toward the creation of a new reality, a breakthrough to something new.”²²³ Therefore our personhood is diminished whenever we diminish, or disregard, another person’s *desire and capacity to narrate and co-create*—perhaps the primary goal of meta-narrative authoritarianism.²²⁴ The South African apartheid regime from which Tutu’s theology arose, much like US expansionism and its racialization-segregation systems, divided human beings from each other, relegating them to their respective silos. Identity was weaponized, aiming to reduce every person to a racial identity-marker, and claim the final word upon that identity. It sought to preclude genuine ubuntu from being manifested, which stirs the creative and re-creating energies of the human spirit in its ongoing search for meaning.²²⁵ Consequently the personhood of all persons, no matter the racial distinction, was adversely affected. Racial, as well as individualist, triumphalist,

²²³ Vygotsky, *Educational Psychology*, 350. Side note: This little-known yet intriguing passage is part of a collection of early Vygotsky lectures that went decades without being reprinted or translated, as V.V. Davydov says, “for purely ideological reasons” (from Introduction of *Educational Psychology*, xxi).

²²⁴ See chap. 1 sec. 3.

²²⁵ See chap. 5, sec. 4 regarding the *analogia spiritus* (Loder).

and consumerist metanarratives²²⁶ all to varying degrees categorize and create divisions, and silence marginalized voices. Boundary-crossing, personhood-affirming, story-telling communities, where each person's God-imbued creative freedom to dialogically co-create life meaning is claimed and/or protected, are rare yet necessary forces of disruption against such meta-narrative hegemony.

This is where Christian faith-communities, and their educational agendas, enter the discussion. If they in any way resemble God's shalom-Reign, these communities must somehow encourage the creative, narrative human spirit, and counteract the narratives and practices of transactionalism, isolationism, and racial segregation that persist throughout US politics and culture. Yet in considering faith-communities we must also contend with the context of a (post)modern US, with its proliferation of new forms of communication and community, new forms of connectivity and means of participating in cultural and global conversations, new forms of voluntary association and dissociation with such communal identities (corresponding with an increased sense of "mobility," or choice of group allegiance), etc.²²⁷ Within this rapidly changing cultural landscape, US churches must also face the harsh reality that Christian faith-communities and leaders have done more to foster US expansionism and to hinder narrativity than otherwise. This fact that contributed to the precipitous decline of overall faith-community participation, the rise of the so-called "Nones," suspicion and/or antipathy towards religion becoming an increasingly-mainstream position, etc.

The challenges to the present-day church in the US are manifold and complex—and so a natural response might well be to simplify matters. Indeed many believe that the

²²⁶ Tutu was also critical of these metanarratives; see e.g. Tutu, *God is Not a Christian*, 23.

²²⁷ Recall chap. 1 sec. 2.

most faithful response of the church today is to “be the church” (a cliché, but is often credited to Stanley Hauerwas). In this view, churches should focus their efforts solely upon the cultivation of a robustly *Christian* community, with Christian practices nurtured by Christian biblical narratives, prayer and worship, and guided by a proper understanding of doctrines, all by which the God-of-ubuntu becomes known and followable, and disciples are cultivated. For how else can the Gospel break through the cacophony of cultural narratives and metanarratives, without such a focused and comprehensive approach, via committed communities who are deeply catechized into a life of discipleship? Has this not been the pedagogical goal of Christian communities for millennia? Does a concern for personal identity-as-such put the cart before the identity horse, so to speak? In other words, to again echo the language of Hauerwas: Is not the primary charge of Christian education to teach *Christian* communal identity, after which one’s sense of identity will naturally follow?²²⁸

The next chapter, among other tasks, offers an alternative response to this strategy for Christian faith-educators to consider. It is a sympathetic and similarly-demanding, yet alternative, focus and strategy that foregrounds *personhood, rooted in the narrative of discipleship itself*.

²²⁸ See Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame: University Press, 1981), 35 (note the line “everything else just follows, doesn’t it?”). For an important postcolonial critique of Hauerwas’ basic orientations and philosophy see Miguel A. De La Torre, “Stanley Hauerwas on Church,” in *Beyond the Pale: Reading Ethics from the Margins*, eds. Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas and Miguel De La Torre (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 217-224.

3.0 THE “BELOVED COMMUNITY”: THE COMMUNAL IDENTITY OF DISCIPLESHIP THAT ENLIVENS NARRATIVITY

To be a public disciple means finding a place in the world where the kingdom of God is taking shape and getting yourself there.

—Charles Marsh, describing the ministry philosophy of John Perkins²²⁹

3.1 SHALOM-MAKING IN MENDENHALL: THE NARRATIVAL IDENTITY OF JOHN PERKINS²³⁰

He was never coming back, he thought, as the westbound train chugged out of Mississippi. That previous year, 1946, young John M. Perkins (1930-) had watched his older brother Clyde die, after being shot by a police officer while standing outside a movie theater. Drafted into World War II, as Perkins tells the story, “[h]e had come home safe from the white man’s war only to be shot down six months later by a white man in his own hometown.”²³¹ With his mother also gone and his father absent, and fearful that he might seek retribution for Clyde (since the Perkins clan was known for not “tak[ing] nothing off nobody”),²³² John’s extended relatives shipped him off to California. Upon arriving on the West Coast, as a young African-American from the Deep South, he happily discovered that for the first time in his life, he was able to work where he pleased

²²⁹ Charles Marsh and John M. Perkins, *Welcoming Justice: God’s Movement Toward Beloved Community* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2009), 32.

²³⁰ Details of the following story unless otherwise stated are derived from John Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down: John Perkins Tells His Own Story* (Ventura: Regal, 1976). Specific quotes below are referenced.

²³¹ Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 22.

²³² Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 24.

and to advance in career opportunities. Growing up, in part due to the rebellious spirit of his family, he thankfully “had never accepted that falsehood”²³³ of the intrinsic worthlessness of black flesh, that psychological artifice perpetuated by white-controlled power structures via meta-narrative authoritarianism.²³⁴ So once he escaped the South, he never considered moving back home.

Having rejected such lies, he never had much time for Christian faith either—for early in his life he was able to notice how local churches were complicit in these same power structures. “Never in the South,” he reflects, “had I heard one white Christian speak out against the way whites treated blacks as second-class citizens.”²³⁵ And he had always seen black Christians as “gullible and submissive...Religion had made them cowards and Uncle Toms.”²³⁶ Yet upon arriving in California, along with his new-found financial independence and dignity in work, he slowly, amazingly, began to discover and pursue his own accompanying spiritual liberation. After starting a family of his own, he began to participate in local congregations in California and to explore the Bible.²³⁷ He was naturally drawn to the writings of Paul and the intensity of his conviction, and eventually through the words of those epistles, he came to face his own brokenness as illuminated by the light of divine love. He became an evangelical Christian, and like Paul he soon also felt his own profound sense of conviction to become an evangelist himself.

²³³ Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 58.

²³⁴ See chap. 1 sec. 3.

²³⁵ Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 58.

²³⁶ Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 57.

²³⁷ John Perkins credits his son Spencer for being the one to first invite him to Sunday School in 1957, “out of which I came to know Jesus Christ,” as quoted in an obituary following Spencer’s untimely death in 1988 by Joe Maxwell, “Obituary: Racial Reconciler Spencer Perkins,” *Christianity Today* 42, no. 3 (March 2, 1988). Accessed on Christianity Today website, February 15, 2018, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1998/march2/8t3073.html>.

Except...the call he discerned was to return home, back into the fires of systemic racism that he had tried to escape. Those fires were burning even brighter in the South by this point due to the rabid resistance to desegregation following the 1954 decision for *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. Yet incredulously, Perkins felt compelled to return to the land stained with the blood of his brother. In California he had seemingly become a new person, through his work, and especially through faith—but as it turned out, he could not so easily shed his past. For that past was still a horrifying present for so many others, and his newfound faith would not allow him to stand idly by.

And so during the years of 1960-61, not far from where he grew up, he and his family moved to the town of Mendenhall, Mississippi to begin his evangelistic ministry. But unlike the white and black churches there, his social and political consciousness could not so easily be separated from his faith. “Does the gospel,” he asked himself, “...have within itself the power to deal with racial attitudes?....If evangelism is truly on the side of God and His love, then it should never allow itself to look like it’s on the side of a bigot-producing system.”²³⁸ Much like Dorothy Day, his conversion did not stifle but rather emboldened his desire for justice. So he began educating people through his ministry about injustice, in order to combat the instituting of poll taxes, literacy tests, and other means being used to deprive black persons of voting rights at the time. He started training young people to become local leaders, at a time when persons of color were fleeing the South in droves. He helped institute housing and other forms of co-operatives, to economically empower the community and restore dignity. And in stark contrast to his rough-and-tumble upbringing, he would offer all these means of resistance to hate not

²³⁸ Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 112-113.

with more hate, driven by anger and fear, but with the radically non-violent love of God that was demonstrated through the life and death of Jesus.

Without many voices around to validate him, Perkins nevertheless intuited that the gospel he felt so obligated to share was one that had to have concrete visibility in the world, in the form of presently restored lives and communities. Just as he had found both social-economic and spiritual wholeness in his own life, so he now began to nurture this sense of wholeness, now informed by the biblical concept of the shalom-Reign of God, right where it was needed the most. He began to offer others an alternative vision of an interconnected and interdependent human existence, à la ubuntu,²³⁹ that stood in stark relief to the extant power structures that dehumanized and divided. In doing so, he stirred up the unrest of the white power structures, and this resulted in Perkins' arrest. This inspired a mass boycott of white retail businesses by blacks in the community, which in turn exacerbated the growing tension between black and white persons in the town and surrounding area. All of these events eventually reached their climax in one night of horror—an eruption of hate against Perkins and his co-workers, with the explicit intention of squashing the growing local momentum for racial equality once and for all.

Arrested and jailed in the nearby town of Brandon, Perkins and others were mercilessly beaten, tortured and mocked for hours inside the jailhouse by the police. Having come dangerously close to death, from a hospital bed in Jackson Perkins also found himself beginning to inch dangerously close to becoming hardened by anger and despair. That was, until he returned to his story-memories. He began re-narrating to himself the memories of all that he had seen—the suffering and loss, yes, but also the

²³⁹ See chap. 1 sec. 1; chap. 2 sec. 6.

flickers of hope, in the form of black persons who now “embraced the [whole] gospel. Who now knew dignity. Who now walked taller than before...” and of white persons “who [now] believed in justice. Who lived love. Who shared themselves. Who joined our community.”²⁴⁰ And as he recalled these lived-stories of people who had demonstrated a capacity for change, who had begun seeking justice and reconciliation, the combined memory of such compassion suddenly culminated in a stunning vision of the cross of Christ. Perkins was overwhelmed by the truth of love’s power. He would later refer to this moment of story-reflection his “second conversion... of love and forgiveness.”²⁴¹ After his release from the hospital, rather than slow down, he redoubled his commitment to the gospel of love that refused to allow him to hate those who had almost destroyed him. He became even more convinced than before that God’s love had to be incarnated “on the ground” of lived existence, and lead to the lifting-up and restoring of persons of every color of their humanity and dignity. Eventually Perkins formally became a principal founder of the Christian Community Development [CCD] movement, which birthed many local communities around the country and launched a non-profit association, whose vision to this day is to help foster “wholistically restored communities with Christians fully engaged in the process of transformation.”²⁴²

In this chapter, the focus shifts towards Christian communal identity, and aims to explain it in light of the framework for narrativ identity that is proposed in the previous

²⁴⁰ Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 204.

²⁴¹ Perkins, as quoted by Marsh, in Marsh and Perkins, *Welcoming Justice*, 28.

²⁴² “Our Vision,” Vision and Mission, Christian Community Development Association, accessed February 15, 2018, <https://ccda.org/about/vision-a-mission/>. For a brief but helpful collection of stories about Community Development in action, see Marsh, *Beloved Community*, 189-206.

chapter. Wenger and Lave's social learning approach provides a practice-centered means for examining more generally how communal identities function and take shape. But in order to fully appreciate why narrational identity should be of concern for Christian religious educators per se, the particular nature and qualities of Christian communal identity *as such* must be considered.

Studying the faith autobiographies of such inspirational figures such as Day and Perkins has value for ascertaining what constitutes Christian identity in the present-day and how it relates to a person's overall sense of self. It is notable, for instance, that both of them were "formed" as adults by the church, albeit with mixed, and often negative, results. The restorative and justice-seeking community-networks that they each went on to start (the CW and the CCDA)²⁴³ were not initially inspired or motivated via systematic theology or doctrine. Yet in a (post)modern world of fragmented and dissociated identities, it is understandable that many Christian faith-communities, as suggested at last chapter's end, would prefer to focus upon what ostensibly makes Christian faith identifiable and unique—i.e., its scriptures, doctrines, beliefs, etc.²⁴⁴ In contrast, the principle contention of the present chapter is that Christian faith educators do and should teach for Christian identity, but this identity itself should be grounded in the concrete *practices of discipleship*, which are chronologically and ontologically prior to doctrines, etc. And these practices, paradoxically, are fundamentally concerned with the *enlivening*

²⁴³ I.e., the Christian Community Development Association.

²⁴⁴ This description (echoing the questions and the Hauerwas quotation at the end of the previous chap.) reflects the view of the twentieth-century Christian Education movement, as described by Mary C. Boys, *Educating in Faith: Maps and Visions* (Lima, OH: Academic Renewal, 1989); see 76. Its sentiment is still reflected in some faith-education circles, and is still widely presumed, embedded as it is in many forms of church curricula (see e.g. n. 249 below). See sec. 3 below regarding *following*; see also the end of sec. 4 below regarding the church's own "identity crisis."

and enrichment of narrational identity and personhood itself. This suggests the need for a radical re-orientation of the majority of Christian faith communities in the US today.

In order to define Christian identity as a communal identity, within the framework of the previous chapter, the following two sections together offer a *narrative analysis*, followed by a subsequent section which deploys *communities of practice (COP) theory*²⁴⁵ as an analytical tool. The narrative analysis utilizes a kind of “narrative-dialectical” methodology:²⁴⁶ The self-stories of a compelling Christian autobiography (i.e., that of Perkins) are examined for their broad pedagogical themes, which are then compared to the communal narratives of relevant biblical shared histories and myths (i.e., key synoptic Gospel passages that foreground the formation and practices of Jesus’ discipling community). This yields narrational movements (i.e., *call-follow-send*) which define discipleship in a recognizable way, but which emphasizes, among other points, *how pedagogy and mission interrelate*. After this, COP theory is once again considered for the purpose of determining and organizing the discipling community’s participations and reifications, based on the findings of the narrative analysis. A key implication emerges over the course of both sets of arguments: Discipling communities that seek to reflect the shalom-Reign of God start with *Jesus’ reconciliatory, transformative mission, which awakens and sustains narrational personhood*, and all other elements of ecclesial life revolve around this. Concluding theological reflections center upon the ecclesiological

²⁴⁵ See chap. 2 sec. 5.

²⁴⁶ See also Figure 1 in chap. 2 sec. 5, which illustrates this interaction between self-stories and communal narratives. The “back and forth” aspect of this dialectic is, naturally, not reflected in the text of this chapter, but rather its results are summarized in terms of Perkins’ story-themes and the discipling community’s story-movements, which mutually illuminate each other. (The story-movements, in particular, constitute the broad metanarrative (mythic) themes which implicate the archetypal character of “disciple” in Figure 1—this is not emphasized in the text of the chapter, out of concern that it would incite confusion; although see chap. 6 sec.1 regarding discipleship.) Regarding use of “dialectic” in general, see chap. 1 sec. 3, n. 45.

ramifications of this understanding, specifically in regards to Christian faith-communities in the US.

3.2 THE NARRATIVE OF DISCIPLESHIP: PERKINS' CONTINUAL CONVERSION

Following Bonhoeffer's classic work on the subject,²⁴⁷ there has been a revival of the notion of discipleship in both Protestant and Catholic ecclesiologies in the West. The term has not always been defined consistently, but it has often accompanied a critique (even if implied) of viewing Christian faith purely in terms of beliefs or piety, and a corresponding greater emphasis upon ethics and actions by which faith (belief) is worked out through love (Galatians 5:6). Supported by the imperative of the Great Commission (Mathew 28:19), the term frequently intends *pedagogical* as well as *missional* meanings, usually in a ubiquitous sense. In other words, the living-out and passing-down of Christian faith are not merely the responsibility of the few, but are fundamental to Christian life.²⁴⁸ Many churches view discipleship as essential to Christian identity and community; yet there are few explanations of what a pedagogy for discipleship might look like, or how that pedagogy relates to mission.²⁴⁹ The approach taken here, by way of

²⁴⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995). Orig. Ger. ed. 1937.

²⁴⁸ For an overview see Terrence Tilley's short description of the "practical turn" in twentieth-century theology, in *The Disciples' Jesus: Christology as Reconciling Practice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 28-31.

²⁴⁹ One resource to this effect with which I am familiar is Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP Connect, 2007). In the first lesson he writes, "Discipling is an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow towards maturity in Christ. This includes equipping the disciple to teach others as well." (Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*, 17). This definition does not even mention a mission. The "innovation" of the resource is essentially that teaches peer-based catechesis, by which the

presenting the core themes of Christian identity-as-discipleship and exploring their implications, is to begin with the real-world example of John Perkins. His autobiography narratively depicts his own exemplary conversion into Christian identity, involving a real pedagogical transformation, accompanied by real missional conviction and action. The intention here is to try to observe Perkins' autobiography in terms of the cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and ethical-practical changes he self-identifies, due to his coming to Christian faith. While no two conversion narratives, let alone faith narratives, are the same, the aim here is to at least begin with a contextualized, particular example of contemporary discipleship—and in light of the biblical narratives regarding discipleship, to try to draw out some universal themes.

An initial observation of Perkins' story is that, despite Christian identity being imported, i.e., something added on to his self-understanding, after having already accumulated twenty-plus years of history and practical wisdom, *the gravitational pull of this new identity from the start was profound*. The strength of this pull²⁵⁰ was to such a degree that all other communal identities he had long carried, even those that had seemed to invoke irrevocable aspects of himself, such as his racial identity-marker of “black,” consequently began to be re-conceived and reorganized around a Christian identity. This is why he was able to later declare that “the gospel...says [that] in Christ there is no black or white.”²⁵¹ It was as if his initial explorations into Christian faith awakened some deep truth inside of him, which spoke to the love at the center of his being. He was somehow

“students” then become the “teachers” for others—but the entire curriculum revolves around classical theological doctrines and spiritual practices, which are expected to produce “maturity in Christ.” The topic of justice is at least discussed, but as one week’s topic, out of twenty-five. There are “action steps,” but relatively few in comparison to the number of doctrines and practices discussed.

²⁵⁰ Since gravity is the intended metaphor here, “pull” (here and elsewhere) should not invoke the notion of a physical act of force.

²⁵¹ Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 203. Perkins statement intentionally invokes Galatians 3:28.

able to recognize this voice as true, *because it gave meaning and form to his inborn human yearning to make meaning*.²⁵² And this deeper truth about the self now illuminated his existing communal identities, including his identity as “black,” in new ways. Whether or not he was fully conscious of it, he nevertheless began to glimpse a profound truth: that these identities and labels are not our God-given selves, but evil constructions, and that his “blackness” is actually a sociocultural fabrication by the powerful that perpetuates a “legal fiction” (Copeland).²⁵³ Racial communal categories exist for the purposes of the powerful, to divide and to legitimize dehumanization in the name of expansion. Yet for Perkins, its fictiveness was revealed, in the light of a loving God. By coming into Christian faith, he began to intuit that imposed labels of exclusion and closed narratives did not express anything intrinsic to his own humanity and identity. Conversely, being a beloved child of God, among all the children of God, was in fact central to his and all others’ personhood.

Perkins’ first hints of noticing that deep resonance notably began after experiencing personal dignity in work for perhaps the first time in his life, after having moved to California. Even after having experienced such negative, non-empowering examples of Christian faith back in Mississippi, he began to search out and respond to his

²⁵² See chap. 2 sec. 2. Per Russell Connors and Patrick McCormick, “In that most secret core of our being we are haunted by a moral siren summoning us to become more and more fully human, to transform ourselves into increasingly loving and principled adults, indeed, to become saints.” As quoted by John Neafsey, *A Sacred Voice is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006).

²⁵³ “Blackness” as a concept is explained by Frantz Fanon (as “negrification” and “negritude”); see *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove, 1967), orig. Fr. 1952. For an excellent theological treatment regarding “racialization” and identity that is symbiotic with the present discussion, see William J. Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). Acknowledging that race is socially constructed does not, of course, negate the legitimacy of using terms such as “black” or “white” altogether. These terms often serve important roles, not the least of which being the reclamation of “blackness” or “womanhood” or other marginalized identities as equally-valid expressions of personhood, as various black and feminist scholars seek to accomplish.

awakened inner yearning, and used the Bible and the local Christian community to do so. And so secondly, following that “pull,” there was a *response*, or rather a series of responses, to it. Gradually his seeking led him into a willing, full acquiescence to this new communal identity. This is a typical feature in conversion narratives such as Perkins,²⁵⁴ where the newly-claimed, life-giving stories and themes of faith are shown to have an *orientating force in the life and identity of the protagonist*. Thus the panoply of less authoritative (and often falsely imposed) socially-constructed communal identities, which accumulate throughout a lifetime, are in principle subjected to the authority of the newly-converted self. This might include one or more somewhat dramatic moments of re-orientation; even so, as with Perkins, the Christian continues over time to seek and discover the capacity of the community through history to powerfully speak to all of the aforementioned deep yearnings for life-meaning—i.e., for belonging, agency, location, and purpose.²⁵⁴ And so as divine love continued to tell Perkins a truth about himself, one that resonated more deeply than did the prevailing cultural metanarratives of division and exclusion, he consistently found Christian narrational tradition capable of helping to deepen his affection for and understanding of this truth.

A third development soon followed: Perkins quickly came to grasp a key implication of this new Christian identity that he now claimed, namely, that this deep resonant love he discovered was not only particular, but universal. He grasped that love was not simply at the heart of his own being, but at the heart of everyone’s being, as well as something beyond being, that knits all beings together, both in their individuality and together as part of the same biosphere. And therefore, he understood that *love must be*

²⁵⁴ For the four dimensions of yearning for meaning, see chap. 2 sec. 2.

enacted, via loving actions among others. It was a holistic revelation, impelling not only the heart and mind, but the hands and feet. First demonstrated through Perkins' empathy for "the lost" during his initial evangelical stage, greater commitment towards this love provided him a willingness to again acknowledge his tragic past, and sparked a resurgent empathy for the plight of black Mississippians, all of which spurred his return. "I didn't set out to start a movement," he would say later; "I wanted to love people."²⁵⁵ The love that he had come to discover had to then take on a corporeal form, within his own life. Even as he did not fully understand what he was getting into at first when he began his ministry in Mississippi to work as an evangelist, he himself was nevertheless continuing to be shaped by a new way of being—i.e., of *being-with*. Being a Christian, for Perkins, required him to embody *the gospel*, and not just proclaim it. Perkins discovered that love must be lived and shared; by its own nature it can remain neither sedentary nor solitary—and that universal love must be shared especially with those whose life circumstances or sociopolitical standing deny them the ability to fully thrive as persons, who carry the *imago Dei*.

The three narrative themes in sequence, then, are "pull," "respond-orient," and "enact-share." In considering these three themes, it is helpful to quickly compare Perkins' narratives with Day's: Although they displayed these themes in very different ways, they both came to view the practices of *sharing* in divine love with society's "least of these" as part and parcel to their Christian identity. This was the case even though the faith-communities who originally guided each of them towards faith in the first place did not themselves foreground such a radical commitment to the oppressed. For both of them,

²⁵⁵ Perkins, in Marsh and Perkins, *Welcoming Justice*, 77.

their respective approaches to lived faith, as well as their commitment to the resistance of oppression, had organically emerged out of identity-related insights. Day over time learned to synthesize her Communist and Catholic identities, while Perkins managed to incorporate his self-understanding as a black activist and resister of white domination²⁵⁶ into his evangelical Christianity. Neither simply adopted Christian-identity-as-presented-to-them, which would have required them to ignore or corrupt the clarion truth of human dignity that they had already witnessed on several occasions, prior to assenting to faith. After this assent, Perkins continued to see the socioeconomic realities that oppressed African-Americans, which he had already experienced firsthand, but now he could view them through a new lens: the love of God that affirmed and sought to restore human dignity and worth. He could now see anew that this dignity had been physically, socially, culturally, and politically assaulted and diminished, through centuries of whites actively dehumanizing persons of color, thus “depriv[ing] them of...any real sense of self-identity.”²⁵⁷ From this love-motivated realization came his renewed sense of mission and subsequent response—a sense that was revitalized and reinforced at the moment of his so-called “second conversion.”

It is also noteworthy that Day and Perkins, who came to faith in different times and circumstances, and who shared little in common in terms of culture, politics, or theology, nevertheless both set out to form decidedly counter-cultural Christian

²⁵⁶ Recall the “rebellious spirit” of Perkins’ family; Perkins also tells the story from when he was twelve feeling empowered by making fifteen cents from a white plantation owner for a day’s work: “I told myself, ‘Tupy, this system is a system of capital. Get capital, control it and know how to use it...Once you get the means of production, you can do good or evil with it. And this man done evil with it. He exploited you.’” Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 48-49. Later in California as a foundry worker he helped organize a strike; “Even years later, with some of the other things I managed to do, I still look back to that event as my claim to fame; pulling that strike together. I never forgot the potency of united action.” Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 54.

²⁵⁷ Perkins, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 105.

communities with remarkably similar values and aims. In both instances, they formed communities in response to their fervent desire to make the love of God incarnate, in and among those whose personhood had been suppressed or injured in some way. Perkins would eventually come to define his fundamental principles of community-creation, which he called the “three R’s”: Relocation requires a commitment to a “‘living involvement’” with the poor, that turns the poor “‘from statistics into our friends.’”²⁵⁸ Redistribution involves working for economic equality, primarily through developing co-operatives and working politically for social justice). Reconciliation concerns having trust in the belief that love in Christ tears down all dividing walls,²⁵⁹ and working to sustain the “brotherhood [sic] of intertwined lives”²⁶⁰ by seeking forgiveness and mending relationships whenever possible. These principles, which evolved out of his own experiences of transformative love, embody Perkins’ own approximation of the “beloved community”²⁶¹ that Martin Luther King spoke and dreamt about, the great biblical-political vision of shalom²⁶² found in the presence of God.

Where all are free to exist without fear of violence, and to be at home in the world (i.e., to have a sense of *location*).

²⁵⁸ Perkins, as quoted by Marsh, in Marsh and Perkins, *Welcoming Justice*, 28; see 106.

²⁵⁹ See Ephesians 2:14.

²⁶⁰ Marsh, in Marsh and Perkins, *Welcoming Justice*, 30. In each chapter of this work, the first instance of gender exclusivity present within a quotation is marked with [sic]; any subsequent examples within a chapter are not denoted, in order to limit the distraction of the reader, but the reader is nevertheless asked to understand the [sic] to be implied.

²⁶¹ The term “beloved community” having been coined by pragmatist Josiah Royce, King made his first recorded reference to it in 1956, in the last days of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Urging the participating Christians to see the goal as wider than any individual success or failure, he exhorted, “The end is reconciliation, the end is redemption, the end is the creation of the beloved community”; as quoted in Charles Marsh, *The Beloved Community: How Faith Shapes Social Justice, from the Civil Rights Movement to Today* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 1.

²⁶² Tutu articulates this as *God’s dream* for the world, in *God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time*, with Douglas Abrams (London: Rider, 2004), “to extend His kingdom of shalom—peace and wholeness...God is transfiguring the world right this very moment *through us ...*” (p. 128, emphasis his).

Where all can work and feel a sense of accomplishment (i.e. of *agency*), and play a meaningful role in society and in the lives of others (sense of *purpose*).

Where all people believe that they ultimately belong to each other and should remain open to each other, *eschewing all social stratifications, divisions, or abuses of power* (a sense of *communion*, i.e., *koinonia*).²⁶³

In other words, he (and Day) formed communities that actively pursued shalom, in which personhood-as-ubuntu would be affirmed and restored.

Even if neither of them could have foreseen what their work would eventually become, both Day and Perkins were compelled to create communities by the same inner logic: to restore personhood and shalom in all corners, not only amongst community's own participants, but all the people and systems in the world with which they come into contact, everywhere and at every level of existence. Thus they were to be *mutually transformative* communities. Therefore these communities' explicit and implicit curricula cannot be viewed in isolation from their relational and embodied mission—and vice versa.

In summary, Perkins' personal stories, as well as Day's, illustrate an appropriation of Christian communal identity that (1) is rooted in an experience, or series of experiences, of a "pull" by which the deep truth of human existence's rootedness in love is illuminated and affirmed; this (2) elicits (or rather, solicits) some form of response in the form of an acceptance and/or commitment, guided by a nascent sense of belonging to a faith-community and introduction to its central traditions, which consequently leads to

²⁶³ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza describes *koinonia* in terms of a shared, consensual partnership and commitment between equals to God and to each other. See *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesiā-logy of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 272; see also Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 302.

(3) the sharing and ongoing re-discovery of that humanizing love in concrete ways with and for others. These three steps are broadly sketched here, even as they have particular, real-world manifestations as expressed in their self-stories. Together they delineate the movements of a narrative plot which points to a *telos*: the *mutual transformation of persons-in-society towards greater ubuntu-personhood*, and (simultaneously) that of *societies-of-persons towards greater shalom*. As this telos is not realized in their stories, the three movements might best be described in terms of an ongoing story or journey of lifelong discipleship, one that cannot be reduced to a single conversion narrative, but as Perkins demonstrated, might repeat once or even multiple times over a lifetime—what Gutiérrez calls the “permanent process” of conversion.²⁶⁴

3.3 THE NARRATIVE OF DISCIPLESHIP: CALLING, FOLLOWING, BEING SENT, TRANSFORMING

Discipleship, even as it requires ongoing, concrete manifestation in real lives, cannot be understood apart from the original community of women and men who followed Jesus of Nazareth, the itinerant rabbi with a radically inclusive agenda, into the towns and countryside of first-century C.E. Judea and Galilee. The community’s literal journeying serves as the essential symbol and metaphor for the ongoing continuation of this “journey” in the present-day, led by contemporary disciples such as Day, Perkins, et al. This section compares the ancient journey with the contemporary, by way of determining

²⁶⁴ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “A Spirituality of Liberation,” in *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings*, ed. James Nickoloff (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 288.

the narrational themes that depict Christian identity as discipleship. The most essential resource for understanding the original discipling community—or rather, the tradition’s recorded, canonical memory of that community—is naturally the biblical collection of synoptic²⁶⁵ gospel accounts. Interpreted as they are through the lenses of their authors and redactors through the years, and composed decades after their precipitating events, these stories nevertheless have remained the church’s primary sources for understanding itself as a discipling community that continues to follow Jesus the Christ in the present, who is believed to also be the Jesus of Nazareth from history.²⁶⁶ Applying a *narrative* hermeneutic to these writings suggests that we presume their relative wholeness, and give priority to the *intent* of the received form for its intended audience.²⁶⁷ (Presuming an authorial intent to in some way be instructive to its recipients, this could also be viewed as a *pedagogical* interpretive approach.) Such a view suggests that these narratives were composed specifically so that subsequent generations of followers of the Way (Acts 9:2) might be able to imagine for themselves what it was like to be a disciple of the itinerant Jesus of Nazareth.²⁶⁸ The biblical analysis that follows applies this narrative-pedagogical perspective, by considering the following questions: What are the *characters* in the story

²⁶⁵ The Gospel of John is not in direct view here, because the emphasis by its author(s) is far more upon the identity and personhood of Jesus himself than upon his relationships with his disciples. It does not ask its audience members to imagine themselves inside the community’s history (see the remainder of this paragraph), as much as ask them to encounter the risen Christ themselves in their own day. Thus its pedagogical strategy is considered drastically different, and becomes too confusing to consider alongside the synoptic texts in such a short analysis as is found here.

²⁶⁶ For Tilley, the gospel-narratives help serve to structure performances of discipleship, and to aid the present-day development of a repertoire of practices pertaining to discipleship; Tilley, *The Disciples’ Jesus*, 73.

²⁶⁷ See Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 6.

²⁶⁸ Matthew and Luke-Acts (Matt.28:19, Acts 1:8; see also Jn 15:16) in particular indicate an authorial belief that this passing-down of this community’s life (which has both a multiplying and decentralizing effect; see below) was Jesus’ intention, and itself a critical component of identity-as-discipleship from the start. For notes on the potential recipients of Luke-Acts see below, n. 312.

experiencing, and how do they respond to Jesus and his actions? How does Jesus *teach* the disciples, and what does he ask of them? As a COP, what are discipling community's *practices*, and what *ends* do these practices serve? How does Jesus facilitate the disciples' own participation in these practices?

This section focuses its attention on the following set of narratives from Matthew 4:18-24 and Luke 9:1-10:24,²⁶⁹ which shine light on a central pedagogical story-arc at work repeatedly throughout the synoptic gospels: The disciples are those in the story who are essentially (1) *called* by Jesus, compelled to (2) *follow* and continually participate in their new community by which they learn the way of Jesus rooted in a vision of the shalom-Reign of God, and then are (3) *sent* to share that community and vision with others in concrete, transformative ways. These movements correspond with the three broad movements of Perkins' conversion narrative. An analysis of these select passages from the narrative provides a more complete picture of how this Christian communal identity took shape, and how it intersected with personal identity. It attempts to show that these three narrative themes (called-follow-sent), which together lead to *mutual* transformations that anticipate the community's future telos (the Reign), aptly summarize the discipleship journey; together they communicate the essentially missional, pedagogical, and radically-inclusive character of Christian identity-as-discipleship.

Call (First Movement): "As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fish for people'" (Matthew 4:18-19). As Perkins discerned a sacred voice beckoning him, so discipleship

²⁶⁹ The conversation will be primarily restricted to these select passages, for simplicity's sake, even as they point to the dynamics of discipleship that can be traced throughout the synoptic gospels.

begins with a call, which invites a radical self-reorientation (“repentance”). What compels Simon and Andrew, as well as the many others who walked with Jesus, to make such a drastic change? None of them would have been motivated to dramatically alter the current course of their lives (like Perkins, not to mention countless other converts through the ages) unless a call spoke a deep truth to their core, which in some way coaxed out the inner yearnings which initiate human narrativity. It was a call that communicated that they were wanted, that they could have a community to which they could belong, if they were going to risk leaving behind their established *locations* in order to enter a new form of *communion*. The promise that Simon and Andrew will one day “fish for people” foreshadows such communion. But it also portends their impending new *purpose* in this community, which is also God’s purpose: the restoration of personhood. And perhaps it was already being sensed by Simon and Andrew that this new purpose would result in greater satisfaction to their sense of *agency*.²⁷⁰ The intrinsic motivation to heed this call resulted from the tantalization of all four narrational yearnings—which together amounted to a promise of a renewal of identity and sense of personhood.

It is not insignificant that their home-country (“by the Sea of Galilee”) and occupation (“for they were fishermen”) are emphasized in the biblical text. As Galilean Jewish fishers in a Roman-dominated society, their impoverished socioeconomic and political position²⁷¹ might have resulted in a feeling of lost identity and personhood.²⁷²

²⁷⁰ See Tannehill, *Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 205.

²⁷¹ Virgil Elizondo writes about the significance of Jesus and the first disciples’ Galilean ancestry, as historically oppressed peoples who were ostracized and even conscripted for slave labor by the elite and powerful, in “Jesus the Galilean Jew in Mestizo Theology,” *Theological Studies*, 70 (2009); see esp. 269-273. See also John P. Meier’s *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), esp. the summary on 6-9.

²⁷² Liberation psychologists such as Ignacio Martín-Baró and Lawrence Alschuler have discussed at length the “colonial wound” (Fanon) that results from systemic marginalization [see Jennings, *The Christian*

Simon's self-declaration in the Lukan version of the story, "I am a sinful man" (Luke 5:8) suggests this possibility; while the full meaning of what Peter meant to convey is not apparent to the reader, to reference oneself as sinful (i.e., as some kind of inherent and enduring characteristic) in the context of ancient Jewish society not only suggests one's religious or moral standing, but also one's feelings of social and political exclusion and of cultural shame. By Jesus' coming to these ragtag Galilean fishers himself,²⁷³ and his choosing to call them to his community and his mission, foreshadows his later redefining of the community²⁷⁴ as fundamentally "for sinners" (Matthew 9:13). The called might not fully grasp it, but they are being offered a life-restoring community that lifts up the lowly and humbled, i.e., excluded and oppressed (Luke 1:52).²⁷⁵ The words "fishing for people" suggest the very nature of this communal identity, as an essentially "for-others" orientation. Compared to their trade being invoked in the wordplay, they will now embark in a new trade, a practice of healing and restoration, in which people are drawn into community not by nets but by compassion—just as they themselves were.

Calling, therefore, involves an incarnational going-to, a meeting face-to-face and the affirmation of the full personhood of the called, followed by a personal invitation to a new communal identity that speaks to a person's deepest yearnings for meaning and

Imagination, 114-115; Lawrence R. Alschuler, *The Psychopolitics of Liberation: Political Consciousness from a Jungian Perspective* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 70-74].

²⁷³ In proto-rabbinic Judaism, seekers would approach renowned teachers, and they would have to first prove their knowledge of Torah before they could then "follow" them. Jesus, in stark contrast, did the seeking-out of his students, who were demonstrably poor and were unlikely to be aspiring Torah-scholars, and made the comparatively simple request to only "follow me." See Groome (quoting Grassi), *Sharing Faith*, 303. See also Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community: The Social Dimension of Christian Faith*, Eng. trans. John P. Galvin (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 31-35.

²⁷⁴ See Tannehill, *Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 108-109.

²⁷⁵ Schüssler Fiorenza demonstrates, in addition to the radical inclusivity made plain in the words and actions of Jesus, how the discipling community challenged traditional patriarchal household structures and Jewish ethnic purity, and created a new family/kinship of equals based in conversion as opposed to lineage (*Discipleship of Equals*, 219-222).

identity. Upon responding to this invitation, as Perkins' life-story demonstrated, it immediately begins to take on an orientating effect within the self, precisely because it affirms human dignity. Already from the start of the lifelong journey of discipleship, then, the formative and restorative capacities of divine love are glimpsed, with profound implications for a person's sense of self and narrativity. This power of love is revealed in more dramatic ways to the first disciples as they go forward.

Follow (Second Movement): "Immediately they left the boat...and followed him."²⁷⁶ Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them" (Matthew 4:22-24). Simon and the others begin to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, both literally and figuratively. "Following" is, in fact, the central meaning of "discipleship"; per Sobrino, following "is the axis around which the Christian life...must turn."²⁷⁷ And yet, since the disciples in the gospels exist primarily within the background of Jesus' teachings and dramatic ministry encounters, the significance of their "following" can be more readily missed. Beyond a literal walking-with Jesus, what does "following" truly entail? Here in the Matthean narration, as well as in the other synoptic gospels, the initial description of Jesus' missional activity of proclaiming and healing immediately succeeds the call of the first disciples (vs.23-24). It is also a

²⁷⁶ The "they" in v.22 refers to James and John the sons of Zebedee, who in the Matthean narrative were called immediately after Simon and Andrew. The first set of brothers left "their nets and followed him" in v.20; the second set left "the boat and their father, and followed him" (v.22). V.23 then marks the beginning of Jesus' itinerant ministry that the disciples were in fact "following," i.e., witnessing and in some sense participating.

²⁷⁷ Jon Sobrino, "Jesus of Galilee from the Salvadorean Context: Compassion, Hope, and Following the Light of the Cross," *Theological Studies*, 70 (2009), 438.

commonly-used formula in the synoptic gospels to describe Jesus' ministry practices.²⁷⁸

Healing and proclaiming go hand in hand, as Tannehill explains: "The healings are concrete realizations for needy persons of the salvation... [announced through] preaching the good news of God's reign."²⁷⁹ The narrative juxtaposition of "following" with "healing/curing" and "proclaiming" in vs.22-24 suggests that the disciples are following to join Jesus on a *missional journey* to share the gospel with others, through healings and proclamations of the shalom-Reign of God. The proclamation of this gospel and Jesus' teachings (v.23) explain what the healings signify; the healings and exorcisms²⁸⁰ embody the prophetic vision of shalom that is the primary content of the proclamation and teachings of Jesus. Together as the physical and verbal gospel, these joint activities make love manifest among the crowds—the same deep love that compelled the disciples to drop their nets in the first place, and Perkins to return to the land where his brother was killed, and countless others to take similar bold steps of faith.

Brueggemann et al. have stressed that the call of Jesus disrupts the life one knows, and therefore that following Jesus entails a distinct turning ("repentance") towards a new (missional) discipline, self-denial and a carrying of a cross (Mark 8:34-38).²⁸¹ This is true—to the extent that cross-carrying is interpreted in terms of the faith-community's collective willingness to face, in solidarity with others, the social and political ramifications for living in an alternative way to what the powers of the world have

²⁷⁸ Luke in particular commonly juxtaposes proclamation with healing and/or exorcising (e.g. Lk. 6:11; 9:2; 10:9-11).

²⁷⁹ Tannehill, *Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 88.

²⁸⁰ Healing also includes exorcisms; Tilley offers justification for this understanding in *The Disciples' Jesus*, 138.

²⁸¹ Brueggemann and Miller, *Word that Redescribes*, 94. Brueggemann here echoes the sentiments of Hauerwas, the Christian Education movement, et al.; see chap. 2 sec. 6, and sec. 1 of this chapter.

established as normative.²⁸² But the synoptic gospel accounts of Jesus' discipling community imply a crucial additional point regarding Christian distinctiveness: Precisely what makes Christian community distinct, even if not unique, is that it is founded upon participation in a *love-imbued mission that constantly reaches beyond itself*. From the beginning of the new disciples' journey, Jesus' actions make clear that the primary discipline of their new community is love-in-practice, most obviously manifested in the sharing of the gospel (i.e., telling and testifying to the truth about every person's personhood, which brings restoration to hearts and minds) and healing (i.e., making that truth manifest in concrete ways that restore bodies to communities). This way of being is ultimately what distinguishes the beloved community.²⁸³

The faithful community of disciples might well attract the attention and the ire of "the powers that be" (Wink).²⁸⁴ For actions of gospel-love undermine the stratification of persons by the established social, economic and political power structures; they expose the lies of authoritarian metanarratives which support those divisive structures.²⁸⁵ But a disciple's goal is *not* to stand out, to be provocative, or even countercultural, in and of itself.²⁸⁶ The distinctiveness of Christian identity-as-discipleship is not the product of

²⁸² That is to say, Jesus' words to his disciples should not be stripped of their political content; nor should "cross-carrying" be glamorized, or made into an end in itself. See quote by Sobrino below, n. 286.

²⁸³ Therefore just as Jesus "evangelized by loving broken people like they had never been loved before," says John Perkins, so "love is supposed to be the abiding sign of the church." Perkins, in Marsh and Perkins, *Welcoming Justice*, 77. Love is the church's primary distinguishing mark.

²⁸⁴ Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York: Doubleday, 1999). (This is a short one-volume synopsis offering the essentials of Wink's so-called "powers trilogy.")

²⁸⁵ For a fascination discussion regarding the Jesus-community's perceived threat to Jewish ethnic identity, see Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 258-265.

²⁸⁶ "And Jesus adds with clairvoyance that in history doing good implies meddling in conflict and picking up what is burdensome: 'if any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me (Mk 8:34; Mt 16:24; Lk 9:23).' We...saw this in the [El Salvadorian] martyrs. However, responding to the call to follow is the Jesus-like way of fulfilling what God asks in Micah 6:8: 'to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.' In both cases the text speaks of walking." Sobrino, "Jesus from Galilee," 458.

sharing teachings or traditions in benign isolation from the rest of the world. The discipling community is a *peripatetic*²⁸⁷ missional community, that follows a Jesus who takes to the streets and visits others' homes to share the gospel, and takes his community with him all along the way. This is what Terrence Tilley, quoting William Burrows, calls the *missio inter gentes*,²⁸⁸ the healing and proclaiming work of the rabbi Jesus *among the people*.²⁸⁹ The repetition of "every" and "all" in Matthew 4:23-24 emphasizes this for-others, face-to-face, non-exclusive nature of Jesus' missional activity. And so the cliché might still be appropriate to use in some instances to say that Christians are called to be "in but not of the world." But the disciple who follows this Jesus must in fact must consider his or herself to be fundamentally oriented *for* the world, if she or he belongs to the community serving as "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). From this perspective, the faith-community's alternative status in relation to wider culture is precisely due to its *worldliness*, so to speak—i.e., its willingness to lovingly engage others for their own sake, and its refusal to isolate itself.²⁹⁰

Yet "following" is as much of a *pedagogical* notion, as it is a missional one. While loving gospel-practices are featured from the onset of their journey, according to the text the first disciples began as observers primarily. Per the Synoptic gospel writers, compelled as they were to follow this nomadic teacher of Torah, they nevertheless

²⁸⁷ See chap. 1 sec. 4.

²⁸⁸ Latin for the "mission among the people," this term intentionally builds upon the term *missio ad gentes*, which refers to a seminal decree from the Second Vatican Council, *Ad Gentes*. See Tilley, *The Disciples' Jesus*, 187; 256. Per Tilley (256 n. 35), Burrows coins the term in "A Response to Michael Amaladoss," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 56 (2001), 15-20.

²⁸⁹ See Tannehill, *Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 215.

²⁹⁰ Kathryn Tanner states, "Christian identity may have to do with the drawing of a boundary, but that means--contrary to postliberalism, correlationist theology, and the theological heritage of Friedrich Schleiermacher--that Christian identity itself is essentially relational. Thus, one can argue that, because of several complicating factors, Christian identity simply cannot be secured by a sharp cultural boundary." Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1997), 108.

followed before they truly knew who Jesus was, or understood his community's ethos or mission in any significant way.²⁹¹ But they nevertheless left their life behind to follow Jesus. Here, even as observer-learners, they came face-to-face with the wounds and needs of real people, prior to any discernible development of theological sophistication or leadership. This suggests that the discipline of following is not a bifurcated pedagogy of first learning how to be a disciple in private, and *then* going out to do the work. Rather discipleship is learned *on the job*, albeit beginning with primarily watching and listening. These are appropriate preparatory, intermediate activities²⁹² for the mission of compassion, for before one can give themselves to others without imposition, they must learn to receive others as they are, as Thous (Buber)²⁹³ with unique constitutive stories. But the key here is that the disciples could not learn this mission had they been sequestered from the world. Beloved community does not take shape by listening to sermons, or attending a series of courses on the topic of discipleship. The disciples needed to learn by going out with Jesus into the cities and countryside, to observe, but also to interact with real human beings, and to experience their joys and sorrows. Formation comes about by participating in a gospeling praxis, along with opportunities to reflect upon action.²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ Richard Peace argues that in the gospel of Mark, the prologue declaring Jesus as the messiah and son of God (Mark 1:1-15) “is for the readers of the Gospel. The unfolding understanding of Jesus on the part of the disciples” becomes foregrounded after that, and “only at the end of the whole account, in the epilogue, will the disciples understand what the readers already know...” Richard V. Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament: Paul and the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 199), 158.

²⁹² See sec. 4 below, regarding legitimate peripheral participation.

²⁹³ See Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970).

²⁹⁴ See chap. 6 sec. 3, where four core identity-forming participations of the discipling community are identified, two of which are *praxis* and *reflection*. (Of course in Western thought, “action-reflection” is a well-established learning construct, popularized by John Dewey et al.)

Being Sent (Third Movement): “Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal” (Lk. 9:1-2; see Matt. 10:1; Mk. 3:13-19; Mk. 6:6b-13). After a time of watching and listening as they journey together, now the promise made to Peter and Andrew that the disciples would fish for people²⁹⁵ begins to come to fruition; having been deemed apostles (lit. “the sent ones,”²⁹⁶ per Luke 6:13), they are now “sent”²⁹⁷ to live out the *missio inter gentes* themselves—and once again, proclamation and healing/exorcising are listed as the central missional activities. The “kingdom,” the shalom-Reign of God that is being revealed through Jesus, is rightly understood as embodied in and centered upon Jesus, but is not equated with his historical person, or found only within his physical vicinity. Rather the Reign is actualized in the *mission*, Jesus’ taught and shared practices which make manifest the restorative truth of divine love in all dimensions of life, wherever they are practiced and *whoever* practices them.²⁹⁸ This social, political, interpersonal and intrapersonal way of being-with within this shalom-Reign, i.e., its law, fulfills the essence of Torah (Matthew 5:17; 22:37-40). Thus as other biblical scholars (Brueggemann, N.T. Wright, et al.) have asserted, the discipling community is called and sent, to be the light to the world that the nation of Israel was called to be (see Gen. 12:3; Ex. 19:4-6; Is. 42:6-7, 49:6),²⁹⁹ by following the

²⁹⁵ The Gk. (ἀνθρώπους ἔση ζωγράων) can be translated “catch people alive” in Luke.5:10; see Tannehill, *Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 203-204. Tannehill’s first note (n. 1) on p. 203 explains how the rare word ζωγράφω is actually an amalgam of ζωός, “alive,” and ἀγρέω, “to seize” or “catch”; note the contrasting use of ἀγρέω without ζωός in the immediately previous references to “catching” fish (vs.4; 9), indicating the striking character of the construction in the context.

²⁹⁶ Gk. ἀποστόλους (accusative plural n.), *apostolous*.

²⁹⁷ Gk. ἀπέστειλεν (3rd person v., aorist active indicative, *apesteilen*, “he sent.”)

²⁹⁸ “It is not Jesus alone who is the ‘kingdom of God in person’ [Ratzinger] but the one who incarnates the agency of God makes the reign of God real.” Tilley, *The Disciples’ Jesus*, 159.

²⁹⁹ See Brueggemann and Miller, *Word that Redescribes*, 185-6. Ancient Israel’s *raison d’être* was *tikkun olam*, “the repair of the world,” in pursuit of the prophetic vision for God’s worldwide shalom; the

Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 43:3), i.e., her Messiah, and embodying his community's practices which embody the spirit of Torah.³⁰⁰

Being sent marks a subsequent stage in the narrative after following, via a missional and pedagogical advancement: "Sentness" involves *empowerment*. After a period of following Jesus gives the disciples "power" and "authority" to heal. The teacher now recedes from view temporarily, having provided students with the most necessary tools to take the community's missional activity into new spaces and in new directions. It is tempting to read this purely as a supernatural bestowing, either for the sake of spiritualizing the text, or to enable an excuse for contemporary readers, who do not perceive themselves as having been so empowered, to recuse themselves from the disciple's mandate to "go" (Luke 10:3). Yet the context of the disciples' personal narrational journeys thus far must be recalled: Those who were once impoverished in body and mind, socially and spiritually as well as economically, have been invited by a great Teacher into a new community in which love was the watchword, i.e., where love was revealed as the inner logic of all that Jesus did and said. Therefore the "power" and "authority" bestowed to the disciples, however one chooses to interpret these terms, cannot be separated from divine love. Indeed, the assertion here is that love itself is the very power behind any and all activities of gospel-healing and gospel-proclaiming, past and present.³⁰¹ Having experienced it, the disciples must share this love; there can be no rote performance when it comes to healing or proclaiming. This is precisely why the

discipling community takes this mission upon themselves to fulfill this vision; see Brueggemann and Miller, *Word that Redescribes*, 97; 102; see also Lohfink, *Jesus and Community*, 28-29.

³⁰⁰ See Tilley, *The Disciples' Jesus*, 132-135.

³⁰¹ The power and authority of the disciples is therefore not dominating or submission-oriented, but enabling, energizing, creative, liberating, and wholeness-seeking (per Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, 247).

disciples must follow before they are sent,³⁰² so that they might more deeply discover the power of loving presence and compassion, the face-to-face experience of shalom in all its facets, as the heartbeat of Jesus' ministry. Tilley states that "compassion—care for and with an other—is a key to recognize those who live in the *basilea tou theou* [i.e., the shalom-Reign],"³⁰³ more so than any other mark of distinction attributable to Christian identity.

Jesus' mission of compassion is therefore to be carried out by disciples who are empowered to and made responsible for lovingly enacting it. Yet from the perspective of narrational identity, empowerment itself is simultaneously an act of love *on behalf of* the disciples, for it provides them purpose and agency by which they make narrative meaning of their lives. By sending them and empowering them to participate in his ministry, Jesus is taking the next step in the edification (lit., the "building up")³⁰⁴ of poor fishers, tax collectors, prostitutes, etc., who used to lack agency or purpose. Discipleship is thus a journey of coming into a deeper sense of personhood, but that journey is traveled precisely by radically and relentlessly affirming the personhood of other persons.³⁰⁵

³⁰² Ray Anderson, writing in the context of evangelicalism and the influence of Pentecostalism, says, "Spiritual maturity is not evidenced by possessing spiritual gifts, but rather by being possessed by the Spirit in such a way that we are moved toward ministry to others....Ministry, in this sense, is not what follows a [spiritual] gift but what precedes the gift. The *charisma* that makes us "charismatic" is the free gift of the Spirit of Jesus Christ experienced as a community of persons bound to his body." Ray Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 134.

³⁰³ Tilley, *The Disciples' Jesus*, 160. The necessity of love for Christian mission is reinforced to the disciples by Jesus in the subsequent scene in Luke 9:10-17. Jesus welcomes the ailing and hungry crowds among them, offers them the gospel actions of healing and truth (v.11), and when the disciples point out the imposition the people have placed upon them (v.12), Jesus responds by putting the responsibility back upon the disciples: "You give them something to eat" (v.13). It is the disciples' food that then feeds the multitude, even if the loving power enabling this provision finds its ultimate source in God (vs.13-17). Consider also 1 John 4:7-16.

³⁰⁴ Lat. *ædificatio*; Gk. οἰκοδομή; see 1 Cor. 14:12, 2 Cor 12:19, Rom 15:2, etc.

³⁰⁵ "In this...praxis (of discipleship) Christians prove themselves in historical struggle on behalf of men and women: they commit themselves to a reality in which all persons become subjects in solidarity with one another, and in this praxis oppose the danger of a creeping evolutionary dissolution of the history of men and women as subjects, as well as the danger of a negation of the individual in view of a new, as it were, post-bourgeois image of the person." Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 81.

Being sent with power exerts a decentralizing, democratizing (E. Schüssler Fiorenza)³⁰⁶ force upon hierarchical notions of power in the discipling community, as Jesus deliberately shares his power to perform activities that he at first did without assistance. Moreover there is an inherent dynamism to the boundary-definitions of the community, and therefore the community mission cannot simply be protected and preserved, whether by its originator, its most original members, or any subsequent generation of the community. A rarely-discussed aspect of the post-resurrection command to “make disciples” (Matthew 28:19) is the pedagogical implications of such a command being directed to those who remain disciples themselves. In this community, then, the students are to become the teachers, who will then teach new students, who will become future teachers, and so on. In the course of the life of a community, the lines between student and teacher-leader are blurred,³⁰⁷ so that both the power and responsibility that comes with being a leader in this community are periodically redistributed throughout the discipling community, to be passed on to another group, culture, or generation. Hence power must eventually be received by and shared among the whole community, through the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; see Acts 2:43-46; 4:32).³⁰⁸ The Lukan passage in view here already begins to hint at this dynamic. This observation of course does not inherently undermine all contemporary ecclesial leadership structures or educational processes; nor does it suggest that there is no place for specifically-trained and ordained faith-leaders. But it should at least remind the present-day church that Jesus

³⁰⁶ See her definition of *ekklesia* as “the democratic decision-making assembly of equals,” in *Discipleship of Equals*, 105. Regarding the feminist ecclesiology of Schüssler Fiorenza see sec. 5 of this chap.

³⁰⁷ Thus Paul utilizes familial language (e.g. “brothers and sisters”) to speak of the community, refers to himself and other leaders as “household stewards (1 Cor. 4:1-2; 9:17), household servants, or slaves,” etc. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, 221.

³⁰⁸ See Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, 105-106; 199.

offers the original model for what Christian teaching and leadership look like.³⁰⁹ The way he led his peripatetic community was precisely as a “first among equals,”³¹⁰ who prioritized loving responsiveness and restoration of wholeness over tradition or creed, and who actively sought to share responsibility for his mission with those who would carry it into the future.

Transformation (Telos): “‘The seventy [-two other sent disciples] returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!’ He said to them, ‘I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning.’” (Luke 10:17-18). Luke’s text depicts a second sending of disciples, this time of “seventy-two”³¹¹ others, in an even wider extension of Jesus’ mission beyond the “twelve.”³¹² The striking language here, as well as in the urgent tone of the initial sending of the seventy-two (Luke 10:2-4) indicates what is at stake in the mission of Jesus, and especially in the empowerment of the disciples to carry out this mission: the very defeat of evil itself upon the earth. The power and authority given to the disciples to embody the mission of love-imbued healing and proclaiming, destroys destructiveness itself. Thus the call-follow-sending narrativel

³⁰⁹ By this I am referring to the *way* Jesus teaches, guides, and empowers others, modeling (a non-self-effacing) humility and eschewing divisive forms of power.

³¹⁰ See Tilley, *The Disciples’ Jesus*, 153.

³¹¹ “Seventy-two”: ⱥ⁷⁵ B L Ξ al.; “seventy”: ⋈ A C f^l f^{d3} Byz al. “Seventy-two” is the preferred reading; redacted to “seventy” for symbolic purposes (Ex 21:1; 9-10; Gen 10 MT; Dt 10:22; etc.); See John T. Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 233.

³¹² The numeric symbolism here in Luke cleverly exemplifies the author’s rhetorical agenda: While “twelve” disciples are a clear reference to the tribes of Israel and suggest the fulfillment of the covenant through the discipling community, “seventy-two” likely refers to the sum of the Gentile nations (which are numbered “seventy-two” in Gen 10 LXX, 3rd Enoch, et al.; see Carroll, *Luke*, 233; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, 107-115). Thus through the second sending passage, which is nearly identical to the first, the author demonstrates to the Lukan community [a mixture of Jews and Gentiles; see Phillip Francis Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1989), 27-31], among other things, that despite working within two separate historical time-frames, they all together continue and fulfill the story of Israel *as well as* form a new community—and identity—as disciples that transcends all ethnic or other divisions.

dynamic of discipleship enables *transformation* in the present-day. Loving actions by disciples (and others) can actually manipulate the existing patterns of the entire *kosmos* (Wink),³¹³ towards greater physical, psychological, social and political shalom.³¹⁴ Such transformations serve to moves reality increasingly towards the gospel story's great telos, of a world and society thoroughly transfigured by shalom-wholeness.

From the perspective of the learning disciple, having a sense of participation in the wider mission of God imbues all facets of his or her narrativial identity (agency, communion, location, purpose). Dialectically engaged in a transformational mission, the *disciple is likewise changed* through these loving actions, which are informed and nurtured by the faith community. In this way the *transformation is mutual*, because loving actions also transform the disciples who love. Loving others necessitates vulnerability and the opening up of oneself to being shaped by the other, thereby creating new possibilities to receive the other and to revitalize one's narrativity. Jesus as the teacher plays an important role here in the reflective learning of the seventy-two disciples following their being-sent. They return to Jesus expressing their surprise and wonder at their capacity to share in the transformative power of divine love, in effect asking him the question, "What does this mean?" Jesus' response situates their actions into their wider narrativial, cosmological and soteriological context: "By participating in my transformative mission, you are helping bring about the end of violence, loneliness, despair, and oppression—the results of a *kosmos* that expands and divides and is

³¹³ Gk. κόσμος, "world"; in Walker Wink's sense of the world's collective domination systems; see Wink, *The Powers That Be*, 93-95.

³¹⁴ See Perkins, in Marsh and Perkins, *Welcoming Justice*, 77.

preserved by its own deadening metanarratives—and anticipating the full realization of God’s Reign.”

3.4 THE PEDAGOGY AND MISSIONAL PRAXIS OF THE DISCIPLING COMMUNITY: RECONCILIATION SEEKING WHOLENESS

So far, Christian communal identity has been explored by examining two sets of stories: a contemporary example of a discipleship journey as revealed by his own telling of a life-story that revealed his Christian identity in its development, and a selection of seminal ancient narratives found in the synoptic biblical narratives which partially reveal the formation and mission of the first disciples. Without intending to sidestep the irreducibility of these instructive narratives, there is a pattern of discipleship that can be discerned when they are read together, summarized as a divine call (and initial response), an ongoing following (and learning), and a being sent (as an empowering missional pedagogy). This pattern constitutes a journey that results in moments of mutual, dialectical transformation (of both disciple and world) which are considered foretastes of a world transformed into the fullness of God’s Reign, defined by beloved community.

This call-follow-send pattern resembles Brueggemann’s own articulation of the perpetual narrative pattern of discipleship, of the God (Jesus) who both “calls” followers and “sends” them to continue and fulfill his mission.³¹⁵ Calling-sending is the basic, and repeatable, dynamic for contemporary disciples as well; it applies whether they have

³¹⁵ See Brueggemann and Miller, *Word That Redescribes*, 92-113.

never known life without faith (Bushnell), or whether they experienced a dramatic conversion at some point. But as the above narrative analysis reveals, the middle step of *following* is important as well, and should not be overlooked. For following, which leads to sending, together demonstrate that *the journey of discipleship is as pedagogical as it is missional*. By cultivating transformative shalom in the world, disciples of Jesus likewise cultivate their *own* identities-as-disciples, in beloved community together. Through restoring a sense of interconnected ubuntu, disciples grow in awareness and understanding about their *own* personhood. Both personal and Christian senses of identity evolve, in the process of shalom-making.

To understand these dynamics better, the COP-approach is once again utilized, this time with support from Terrence Tilley's biblical and theological examination of the discipling community's key practices. Recalling the discussion of COPs in the previous chapter,³¹⁶ the *shared repertoires* of the community have been summarized as two complementary sets of activities, of proclaiming/teaching, and of healing/exorcising. Tilley concurs with earlier assumptions, that the apparent pedagogical intent of the gospel narratives suggests that these sets of tasks should continue to be viewed as central practices to faith communities, generations later.³¹⁷ (He also includes Jesus' offering of forgiveness and engagement in radical table fellowship to the list of essential missional

³¹⁶ Chap. 2 sec. 5.

³¹⁷ "The early communities remembered the disciples as doing three crucial things: they exorcised, they healed, and they preached—just as Jesus famously was remembered as doing and empowered them to do." Tilley goes on to say, "These [three] are not, of course, the only practices [of the community], but they are a place to begin seeing what it means to have, in practice, the imaginative, faithful *phronēsis* that characterizes discipleship." Tilley, *The Disciples' Jesus*, 136.

endeavors.)³¹⁸ Jesus’ teachings, especially at the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7),³¹⁹ as well as his response to the seventy-two, indicate that these practices point directly to the coming Reign of God, i.e., the community’s *joint enterprise*, rooted in the Love that calls, impels participation, and sends out. Tilley uses the term *reconciliation* to encompass all of these activities—as acts of compassionate, love-based restoration (whether physical, spiritual, social-relational, economic, and/or psychological) leading to wholeness, i.e., shalom. “The heart of God’s reign is reconciliation, [i.e.,] the repair of conditions that split communities, the healing of sickness, and the overcoming of the alienation from God.”³²⁰ While the term can at times be carelessly applied or misconstrued,³²¹ “reconciliation” for Tilley specifically highlights the *relational and personal* quality to

³¹⁸ See Tilley, *The Disciples’ Jesus*, 165-185. Tilley explains why he omits other practices, specifically naming prayer and worship, but gives priority to the reconciling practices of “healing, teaching, forgiving, and enjoying table fellowship” which are “touchstones for understanding the validity of new practices,” in *The Disciples’ Jesus*, 188-189. He admits that the Jesus-movement could not exist without prayer, sacrament, etc., but these have been widely reviewed elsewhere; meanwhile the discipling-practices of the community do not receive nearly the same level of attention, yet they are just as critical to Christian identity; see *The Disciples’ Jesus*, 188.

³¹⁹ Following Bonhoeffer, theologians have perpetually lauded the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) as a reasonably comprehensive, representative sample of Jesus’ teaching, and thus can be viewed as the key interpretive lens through which to understand the nature of Jesus’ mission. Glen Stassen and David Gushee, in *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), note that the Sermon on the Mount has been poorly interpreted over the course of history in some traditions (e.g. Lutheran, Reformed, etc.) as suggestive or idealistic at best, contrary to the Greek (à la Chrysostom) and Roman (Augustine) traditions which saw the Sermon as “God’s will for everyone” (p. 131, referencing Jaroslav Pelikan on this point). Stassen and Gushee persuasively demonstrate how the Sermon should be read as a series of “transforming initiatives,” which aim to free forms of “traditional righteousness” from “vicious cycles” of counter-productivity—and that these initiatives focus on *practices* which form disciples and transform communities (see esp. 132-145). This conclusion strongly supports Tilley’s argument.

³²⁰ Tilley, *The Disciples’ Jesus*, 121-122. According to the author(s) of the gospel of Matthew, reconciliation with God is intrinsically wrapped up in being reconciled to fellow human beings, both relationally and socioeconomically. See e.g. Jesus’ instruction in Matthew 5:24 to first be reconciled before offering your gift to God; see also his warning in Matthew 25:45, which makes plain that a lack of concern for the poor is part and parcel to a lack of concern for God.

³²¹ Real reconciliation takes time, wisdom, patience, etc.—and even then might prove nearly impossible when divisions are deeply entrenched, when traumas are involved, when power differentials remain, etc. Setting aside these difficulties for the moment, Miroslav Volf’s *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996) is commended, as well as the more recent work by Grace Ji-Sun Kim, *Embracing the Other: The Transformative Spirit of Love* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015). The latter work includes a helpful albeit brief critique of the former, rooted in Kim’s feminist, Korean-American perspective; see *Embracing the Other*, 149-153.

Jesus' missional work and teachings (and teaching-methods), which also instantiate God's shalom-Reign.³²² Understood in its narrational context, it also points to the *power of enacted compassion, often in the face of oppression or violence*, to make this Reign manifest in concrete ways in the real world.

Wenger and Lave have already explained how the *participations and reifications* of a COP work together in order to create a sense of communal identity. They are thus not opposing forces, but operate dialectically: Reifications offer permanence, portability, guidance and definition to the group's shared meanings, and it is through ongoing participations that reified meanings can be reanimated and gain meaning, and/or enable the generation of new meanings.³²³ Overly abstract or restrictive reifications, in contrast, can attenuate the generative aspects of participation, and hinder the community from gaining new members or from being able to adjust its mission amid changing contexts.³²⁴ And so the community's narrational history and identity can be analyzed in terms of its participations and reifications and their interplay—what Wenger and Lave also call the “negotiation of meaning.”³²⁵

The most essential forms of *Christian participation* in the discipling community have already been discussed: Healing, teaching, proclaiming, fellowshiping, forgiving—

³²² Thus per Tilley, “What Jesus did and taught was not merely *about* the *basileia tou theou*; it was the Reign of God!” (*The Disciples' Jesus*, 65; emphasis in text). Per Sobrino: “The most historical aspect of the historical Jesus is his practice and the spirit with which he carried it out. By ‘practice’ I mean the whole range of activities Jesus used to *act on social reality and transform it in the specific direction of the Kingdom of God*.” Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993), 51; emphasis added.

³²³ See Wenger and Lave, *Communities of Practice*, 61; 65.

³²⁴ Berger and Luckmann explain reification and the roles of “legitimation,” institutionalization, and “typification” (which can be considered a reification of labels/identification markers) that contribute to it. While necessary, reifications also “impl[y] that man is capable of forgetting his own authorship of the human world.” Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 89; cited in Freedman and Combs, *Narrative Therapy*, 24-25.

³²⁵ Wenger and Lave, *Communities of Practice*, 55.

all summarized as reconciliation—form its central participatory activities. And these activities are engaged, and identity is formed, through the call-follow-send dynamic of discipleship. But beyond this, it is worth examining Jesus’ patient and empowering approach to teaching for participation in the discipling community: The way Jesus models and instructs in the practices of the Reign of God mirrors Kegan’s description of the effective pedagogue, who “comes from [the perspective of] his students and their own vitality rather than from himself...He engages them ‘where they are’ but invites them to step beyond that limit.”³²⁶ Wenger and Lave similarly speak about the necessity for opportunities for *legitimate peripheral participation*, i.e., predetermined ways that newer members of a COP can gradually develop their own mastery of a community’s engagements as well as a fluency in its shared repertoire.³²⁷ This kind of process is implied in the biblical narratives above: The disciples were *called* into this community as they were,³²⁸ first to *follow* Jesus as he went among the towns and people where they observed his work first-hand, and then they were empowered and *sent* by Jesus to do it themselves (Luke 9:1-2, to be repeated in Matthew 28:19 and Acts 1:8). The implication is that this legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) of the disciples involves an intermediate period of observational learning—field research, so to speak. This still requires *going* with Jesus into the crowds, and remains a form of learning-by-doing, “on the job. The disciples are not afforded the opportunity to wall themselves off; shalom-

³²⁶ Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 55.

³²⁷ See Lave and Wenger, *Situated Learning*, 36-37.

³²⁸ The Jesus-practice is, in the case of Simon Peter, initially presented by Jesus as an approximate task to that which Simon already had proficiency: “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people” (Lk. 5:10). The call itself emerges out of life of the one called (as a fisher), even as it suggests new, previously-unforeseen, possibilities.

making practices are only learned by going, experiencing, seeing, hearing, touching,³²⁹ tasting, and experiencing the suffering of Judea's poor, even as they themselves were poor. By going and listening to, i.e. experiencing, the storied lives of others, they could learn to receive the storied lives of the other as gift, respond appropriately, and remain willing to continue to learn and to remain vulnerable.³³⁰

If the call-follow-send rhythm is the community's essential participatory dynamic, the key *reifications* that support its pedagogical and missional practices must therefore serve to keep disciples constantly listening to each other and to others, and to ground them in being people-oriented, ministers of presence. They should discourage rather than encourage remaining sequestered from the world. However, the problem is that, as Wenger warns, "The power of reification – its portability, its potential physical persistence, its focusing effect – is also its danger."³³¹ A lasting community with a discernible tradition and long-term agenda, if it is to reconstitute itself again and again in various places and times, indeed needs ways to communicate, language to communicate with, processes of transmission, etc. But the ease of controlling and transmitting meanings through a community's reifications can seduce both teachers and learners. A

³²⁹ Shawn Copeland emphasizes the "embodied" relationality of Jesus' missional praxis, in that went to and amongst the bodies of common people, peasants, economic and political refugees, abused women and disabled persons. Among all of them "he put his body where they were. He handled, touched, and embraced their marked bodies." Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 60.

³³⁰ Paulo Freire: "Dialogue cannot exist...in the absence of a profound love for the world and for men." As quoted in Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 190. And per Kim, "as we work out our differences and difficulties as people of color and whites, and men and as women, we understand that it is Spirit God who can reconcile us and bring us together....Spirit God liberates the erotic energy of both women and men to have conflict-resolution conversations where we go to the places that divide us, talk about the issues with nonviolent empathetic listening, mutual understanding, and heartfelt prayer. Spirit God connects us to each other, opens us up for an exchange of hearts, heals the curse between men and women that goes back to Adam and Eve, and is a source of perpetual soul repair and bodily renewal as we love into a deep and disciplined spirituality that can sustain the movement to incarnate God's justice and shalom, on earth as it is in heaven" (Kim, *Embracing the Other*, 140-141).

³³¹ Wenger, *Communities of Practice*, 61.

community of practice can become fixated upon its reifications. When these become ends to themselves, instead of being deployed in service to the joint enterprise, the community can lose its sense of vitality and begin to atrophy. Reifications are supposed to protect central community practices from corruption, but they might actually preclude the community from being able to dynamically respond to reality, or to re-interpret its central narratives in light of context. Such rigidity ironically creates its own kind of corruption, one of a more insidious sort, which actually masquerades as fidelity. This sort of inflexibility is an even more pressing concern in a COP like the discipling community, whose enterprise is based in Jesus' own lived praxis—a mission dependent upon relational and responsive participation. J.B. Metz, whose political theology is deeply attuned to the gospel implications of narrational personhood, speaks to this conundrum:

As the church of the Son the church cannot cut itself off from the 'other' of the historical world that is beyond our conceptual grasp. It cannot seek to preserve itself shut off in this way. This 'being defined by the other' is not something that is added on to the church after the fact; it is an element of its constitution, it belongs to its *specificum christianum*. The church cannot come to know either what it is to be 'human,' or what it is to be 'Christian' prior to and without going through the experiment of historical experience and critical engagement. Whenever the church forgets this it runs the danger of becoming a sect in the theological sense of the term.³³²

Disciples therefore cannot fully live into their communal identity, unless they are in some way seeking to engage with and respond to others *beyond* that community. This is why Perkins' initial ministry strategy begins with relocation, a concrete act of presence and solidarity with the marginalized. Without some manifestation of this kind of presence, disciples cannot fully participate in the shalom-making way of Jesus.³³³

³³² Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 96.

³³³ See Perkins, in Marsh and Perkins, *Welcoming Justice*, 79-81. The above biblical examination referred to Luke 9:1-2, but vs. 3-5 (see also 10:3-9), where Jesus gives further instructions as to the way in which the disciples should enact their mission, importantly depict the disciples to be in solidarity with those they serve, specifically the poor. This is reinforced in the feeding of the multitude that follows their return (Luke 9:11-17); the hospitality they receive on the road (Luke 9:4) foreshadows the hospitality they are instructed to offer (9:13: "You give them something to eat") despite the apparent limitations of the situation.

Christian discipling communities are COP's of a peculiar sort. It is a community that is called to not just contend with or adapt to encounters with otherness, but to *actively seek out otherness* as a constitutive part of its identity. It does not force conformity, but conversely is always re-forming itself, through its ongoing encounters with the stories of other faiths, contexts, persons, traditions, ethnicities, etc. In so doing, the community's mission and identity is not muddled, but (if it maintains a commitment to orthopraxis) can actually be sharpened. Christian identity, as one among many communal identities a person might claim, indeed often asserts a primary, integrative role amongst a person's other communal identities, as it did with Perkins and Day. Yet this integration does not involve cutting oneself off from other groups or from society; nor does it require legalistic adherence to doctrine or performances of piety. Rather it requires a willingness to see and hear, and to lovingly, non-coercively respond to reconciliation-seekers in every sphere of life, especially those at the margins of culture and society.³³⁴

Summarizing this section: Examining the discipleship-dynamic from a social-learning perspective highlights how communal identity-formation is both pedagogical and missional at the same time, and provides a way of understanding how the disciples' mission effects change, in both the disciples themselves, and in those with whom they come into contact. The mission of reconciliatory praxis is the central enterprise of the discipling community; it is a mission lived out relationally and dialogically, through proclaiming the truth of Love, and the restoring of bodies, communities, and societies to

³³⁴ Thus the radically hospitable community of disciples is, as Letty Russell suggests, inherently open to pluralism and to welcoming those on the margins of society into its center (see Letty M. Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 172-181. But the dialectical dynamic of discipleship being articulated here, complements this "centripetal" movement, with an equally-"centrifugal" movement as well, by which the community itself journeys to the margins to encounter, and be mutually transformed by, pluriform humanity.

wholeness. So long as the community's primary orientation remains outward, both the community itself and its constituents will never cease having opportunities to evolve and grow, and to remain vital. Overall, discipling communities are *loving, mutually evolving, democratic, dialogical, relationship-centered, reconciliation-seeking communities, aimed towards a compelling and transformative telos*. These qualities exemplify the kind of environment where the *yearning, co-creating, and evolutionary* dimensions of narrational personal identity³³⁵ can and should be encouraged to flourish. This is in fact the chapter's primary thesis, which is made more explicit in the forthcoming, final section.

Yet before proceeding, the role of what is typically referred to as the "Christian tradition" in Christian communal identity-formation must now at least be mentioned. After all, these "passed down" reifications—the rituals, rules, symbols, belief systems, and stories of the community through history—are often presumed to be elements which *produce* Christian identity-formation. This is, at least, what our faith-education practices imply that we presume. Clearly these elements are important, for they include the very gospel narratives themselves which memorialize the original community! But the key is that *these reifications*, even including Christian scriptures, *exist precisely in order to support Christian discipling praxis*: Together they are used to catechize people into a new vocabulary by which shalom can be continually *proclaimed*. They offer creative avenues for disciples to re-enter and continually re-imagine themselves as participating in the community of *reconciliatory healing*, an imagination that aims to be actualized in practice. Focusing on discipleship, then, roots Christian identity in its historical commitment to the reconciliation of the world, not at the expense of its traditions, but

³³⁵ See chap. 1 secs. 2-4 re: the three dimensions of personal narrational identity.

actually in order to revitalize their meaning—especially in contexts where religious meanings are seen as obsolete or unnecessary,³³⁶ even dangerous.³³⁷ The church in the US itself, much like many of its participants, now faces its own “identity crisis” of sorts; this has become increasingly true in recent decades. This collective confusion regarding the church’s self-understanding and role in society, however, cannot be addressed simply by resuscitating or revitalizing Christian stories and rituals themselves. It must begin by more deeply *living into the narrative of missional discipleship*, which is nurtured by these stories and rituals.³³⁸ Following Daniel Schipani, this perspective gives priority to orthopraxis, by which worship, community, and mission are properly understood, as interrelated and integrated goals of the church’s defining “discipling task.”³³⁹

3.5 REFLECTION: TOWARDS AN ECCLESIOLOGY OF DISCIPLESHIP THAT FOSTERS NARRATIVITY

To summarize the present chapter: Discipleship can be understood as a narrational way of understanding Christian identity, based upon the stories of the original disciples, which

³³⁶ Charles Foster discusses how faith, faith symbols, and scriptures make little sense to people today; see Charles Foster, *Educating Congregations* (Abingdon, 1994), esp. 80-88.

³³⁷ Diana Butler Bass’ *Christianity After Religion* makes the compelling case that one of the primary reasons for the sharp decline of institutional religion in the US, particularly between 2000-2010, were various large-scale conflicts (the September 11th terrorist attacks, the Roman Catholic sex abuse scandal, the conflict in Protestant denominations over homosexuality, etc.) which “revealed the ugly side of organized religion”; Bass, *Christianity After Religion*, 77; see 77-94.

³³⁸ Tilley concludes: “Christology must be reconciling practice, bringing shalom to the peoples and allowing the people to enrich us with their understandings of reconciliation. Otherwise it is sound and fury, signifying nothing worth living in or living out.” Tilley, *The Disciples’ Jesus*, 258.

³³⁹ Daniel S. Schipani, *Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology* (Birmingham: Religious Education, 1983), 182-183. See chap. 6 sec. 3 regarding the proposed core communal practices of ecclesial communities.

are accessible-as-interpreted via the gospels. The narrative rhythm of calling, following, and sending (and returning), which are together aimed at transformation, was established by the discipling community's original pedagogue, the rabbi Jesus, and situates Christian identity within an overarching mission of making God's shalom manifest upon the earth. This rhythm naturally involves going out to real people and seeing and affirming their humanity, forming relationships with others which mutually affirms and restores humanity, advocating for justice within social-political systems, seeking reconciliation across human-made divisions falsified by the gospel and thereby affirming the logic of ubuntu, etc.³⁴⁰ As such, then *the mission of shalom must also be said to be a mission of promoting personhood, which is to say, narrativ identity*. To be more specific:

- *Calling* promotes both personal narrativ identity and personhood, as it is revealed via shared acts of compassion and reconciliation which communicate truth. That is, a love is evoked within the one called that undeniably stirs from the depths of one's being, that transcends all other appropriated communal identities, many of which are imposed narratives and metanarratives which dampen or impede that truth, by dividing human beings from each other. God's invitation to a person typically comes through the loving act(s) of disciples, who non-coercively invite participation into life-giving, mutually restorative practices, which activate narrativ yearning from within. This activation permits new possibilities for communion, agency, location, and purpose to emerge, via new narrative articulations of an ever-evolving

³⁴⁰ “[The] ethos of the Jesus movements also finds expression in the early Christian missionary movements. In them social status privileges based on race, religion, class, and sex are not valid. All Christians are equal members of the community.” Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, 177.

personal identity. This call does not eliminate the particularities of personal identity or communal identities. Rather it re-orientes all particularities towards the universal—the love that speaks to the divine reality and to the interconnectivity of the divinely-created order.

- *Following* promotes identity and personhood by offering disciples a means to participate in the community of reconciliatory praxis. Such participation might well be said to have a “christoform” shape; yet this shape comes precisely from each Christ-follower’s own contextualized participation in Jesus’ redemptive practices, which seek the healing of bodies and minds, hearts and spirits, families and societies. Discipleship is not an attempt at the mere “imitation” of Jesus the Nazarene (an *imitatio Christi*); it is the call of God stirring the depths of one’s being that inspires the imagination to carry forth an ancient charge into the future, in the form of a *sequela Christi*, in the sense that Gustavo Gutiérrez uses the phrase.³⁴¹ The community of disciples walks together in this *sequela*, often involving activities of legitimate peripheral participation. They come face-to-face with others and their stories, and participate in the shared communal narratives and rituals by which the community imaginatively *and* actively remembers and embodies Jesus’ ministry of reconciliation—its own form of LPP, in a sense.

³⁴¹ I.e., a “following of Christ,” as opposed to an “imitation of Christ.” Gutiérrez sees this *sequela* as the embarking on an ongoing journey towards ever-increasing solidarity with God and others (especially the poor, whose personhood has been degraded or at least diminished), within a context that is unique to each disciple-in-history. See Gustavo Gutiérrez, “The Option For the Poor Arises From Faith in Christ,” *Theological Studies* 70, no. 2 (2009), 319.

- *Sending* promotes identity and personhood by its insistence for disciples to go among others and to promote reconciliation in all forms. This occurs not only by loving others in ways that break through barriers of communal identities that divide and dehumanize, but also through each disciple's own self-discovery of their own personhood as they openly engage others. Sending also empowers disciples to take ownership of Jesus' practices and to truly make them their own in the context of their respective self-stories. Following and sending together reflect the co-creative and social-dialectical process of narrational identity-formation. They show how the discipling community is at once pedagogical and missional; the best pedagogy includes cumulative missional engagement, and missional engagements open disciples up to learn and be shaped. Learning and loving go hand in hand. Such engagements lead to an ever-deepening understanding of the Spirit of Love at the center of all things, who initiates the call to discipleship, and continues to vitalize it.

These three narrative steps together initiate the *mutual transformation* of both the disciples themselves and the world-at-large. These transformations further promote identity and personhood, by revealing the narrative telos of the beloved community in concrete ways, both within and beyond the community's permeable and flexible boundaries. These revelations of the transformative power of love come in the form of small, day-to-day interpersonal interactions; they also take shape within groups and larger social movements who create lasting impacts. These revelatory scenes clamor to be re-told as stories, creating new, living, communal and personal memories to be remembered, and "re-membered" (i.e., repeated, re-embodied), by the community. Transformation also

occurs via the extension of the community's boundaries, by its venturing into new times and places, thus hearing and receiving new persons and new stories. This allows for the continuous narrational evolution of the community as well as that of its members. This ability to organically move and re-emerge in new places is the sign of the universal church's self-perpetuating quality in the Spirit. Therefore communities of disciples must resist the temptation towards over-reifications which risk choking out this dynamism. Communities of practice have a natural tendency to preserve themselves, but this can potentially lead the discipling community to lose the very features that set it apart: its *agape*-love which carries great power, the power of making liberation and reconciliation more fully realized within the created order. Openness to change, and to adapt the community's mission to a present-day context, is an essential characteristic of the discipling community.

What kind of church is this? Has it ever existed, beyond the original discipling community (or even then)? Or is this a wholly idealistic vision, merely wrapped up in praxis-oriented modes of discourse, but which is not actually all that practical, or realistic? Saving this final question for the very end of the chapter, it should first be acknowledged that many, similarly-idealistic, versions of this vision are offered not only by the likes of Tilley and Perkins, but also by many other theologians.: Jesuit theologian Roger Haight has advocated for the mission of the church to be understood as humanization, and the "whole being of the church" is actually a "being-for-the-world."³⁴² The missional church theologians (e.g. Darrell Guder, Craig Van Gelder, et al.) have warned US and Canadian Protestantism about the death of US Christendom, while also

³⁴² Roger D. Haight, "The 'Established' Church as Mission: The Relation of the Church to the Modern World," *The Jurist*, 39 (1979), 11. Quoted in Boys, *Educating in Faith*, 177.

calling attention to the opportunity this death permits to now revitalize ecclesial identity, precisely by foregrounding the mission of discipleship.³⁴³ Liberation theologians such as Gutiérrez have spoken as to how this mission is primarily to the margins of society, and that the goal of missional activity for the Reign of God is specifically to restore the lost personhood of persons.³⁴⁴ And feminist theologians such as Schüssler Fiorenza have challenged the notions of power and authority in the church even as it conducts its mission, stating that the *koinonia* of the church (as *ekklesia*) contradicts patriarchal notions and structures, and that discipleship is fundamentally a shared set of practices among equal (fe/male) persons.³⁴⁵ So if this is an idealistic vision (as is the very nature of Christian hope in the Reign of God, even if it requires concrete manifestation), it is one that is widely shared. Undoubtedly, however, other theological perspectives could also be named here that would nuance and clarify the positions presented in this chapter further.

The more critical question might actually be, assuming that the original discipling community embodied the intentions of their rabbi, even if imperfectly, *how did its central reconciliatory practices, its dynamic, centrifugal movements from the center to the margins, become replaced by an overemphasis on reifications, and encouraging centripetal containment and order?*³⁴⁶ Here it is best to refer to Jon Sobrino's two-volume Christology, which contains a watershed analysis on this very topic. In the first volume he traces the nature of Jesus' relational community and missional practices to

³⁴³ See Craig Van Gelder, "Missional Challenge: Understanding the Church in North America," in *Missional Church*, 46-55; Darrell L. Guder, "Missional Church: From Sending to Being Sent," in *Missional Church*, 1-7.

³⁴⁴ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. Revised Ed., trans. ed. by Sr. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988/2006), xiii. See chap. 6 sec. 1.

³⁴⁵ See Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, 247; 272.

³⁴⁶ "The history of Christianity can be told as a story of the tension between order and prophecy." Bass, *Christianity After Religion*, 89.

which he invited his disciples' participation;³⁴⁷ in the second he traces how the practices of Jesus evolved from lived encounters into titular declarations, e.g. Jesus as Lord, Son of God, etc., and eventually into universalizing creeds and doctrines.³⁴⁸ By applying COP-theory to Sobrino's analysis,³⁴⁹ one can readily see how the lifeblood of the early church ran through its ongoing participation in the reconciliatory work of Jesus. This participation lost its meaning over time, especially after Constantine's conversion and the beginning of Christendom, after which doctrinal and institutional reifications gradually began to be prioritized as the central markers and sources for nurturing so-called Christian identity.³⁵⁰

Sobrino's work was viewed as controversial enough so as to attract the ire of the Roman Catholic Church's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, who in 2007 issued a notification that largely condemned its contents, for not properly valuing creeds and doctrines as constitutive of Christian identity.³⁵¹ When reifications are viewed as the *substance of identity*, and not as the *support structures for the participations which inform identity*, such a response from authority is unsurprising. Those that insist upon the

³⁴⁷ I.e., Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*.

³⁴⁸ I.e., Jon Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator: A View from the Victims*, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001). See esp. 260-266. To reiterate, creeds and doctrines themselves are not necessarily the problem themselves, but they are intrinsically reifying by nature; i.e., they seek a certain uniformity and conformity. If reifications serve to reify without themselves being regularly reactivated at the level of participation, then they can serve to diminish the growth and identity-nurturing potential of a community, which is the entire point of Christian identity. As Tilley states (while analyzing Lindbeck's identity principles for Christianity), "Doctrines that fit the identity principles *and* are useful and proper guides to Christian practice are proper doctrines" (Tilley, *The Disciples' Jesus*, 207).

³⁴⁹ Lunde-Whitler, "The Community of Storied Reconciliatory Engagement: A Social-Learning-Based Explanation of Sobrino's Christology and His Understanding of Discipleship," 2012 (unpublished).

³⁵⁰ Juan Segundo: "The more a community, just as that which follows Jesus, tries to avoid Death by quantitative increases that seem to transcend conflicts, the more the very mechanism of the real world threatens its life and Sin enters it. For that approach attacks the very roots of its meaning, turning it into an ideology in the unwitting service of the very values opposed to those of Jesus." Juan Luis Segundo, *An Evolutionary Approach to Jesus of Nazareth*, ed. trans. John Drury (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998), 91.

³⁵¹ For an overview of Sobrino and the CDF's response see Tilley, *The Disciples' Jesus*, 196-202.

former view, unfortunately, are in danger of losing sight of Christian identity's participatory character. They are left with a vacuous view of Christian identity that may well do more to suppress narrational personhood than to contribute to its flourishing. Since they see identity as static, they frequently resort to meta-narrational authoritarianism—whether in the form of written notifications or censures, “statements of faith” such as those which are commonplace in many evangelical traditions, any form of elaborate gateways which limit or preclude a person's participation in church life and/or worship, disproportionate barriers to church leadership for many women and GLBTQ persons, incorporated cultural-political metanarratives which laud power structures and invoke fear against the other, etc. All of these create divisions and exclusions which not only distort Christian identity-as-discipleship, but discourage the very personal identity that disciples are supposed to encourage and enliven.

Viewing Christian mission and teaching in terms of how it engages and promotes narrativity, in light of Perkins as well as above biblical and COP-based considerations, suggests some profound ecclesiological implications concerning what the church today must do, and change. As Perkins himself reflects,

“Jesus invested his whole ministry in [the disciples]. He didn't do anything else with his time here on earth. He didn't start an organization or build up an institution. Jesus invested God's love in authentic relationship with broken people who were created in God's image.... Love is supposed to be the abiding sign of the church. I don't think we can have beloved communities until we learn to love like Jesus loves and make that our main plan for sharing the gospel.”³⁵²

Elsewhere he states even more plainly, “If the gospel of reconciliation is going to interrupt the brokenness in our society, our churches are going to have to rethink their vocation.”³⁵³ How might we rethink the vocation—and thus the structure and

³⁵² Perkins, in Marsh and Perkins, *Welcoming Justice*, 76-77.

³⁵³ Perkins, in Marsh and Perkins, *Welcoming Justice*, 108.

organization—of our churches in the US, so that they might embody a beloved community that resists dehumanization, and restores persons from social, cultural, and/or political isolation? From the perspective of viewing personhood as narrativity, this rethinking must occur at least on three levels: First, on the level of *missional organization*, as the missional church theologians have said, the church must no longer be conceived of as a building, or as a singular gathering once per week. It must be creatively re-imagined in its infrastructure and its organization, to in some way embody a lived dialectic of action-reflection, a community concretely located both “in the world” as it lives into the *missio inter gentes*, as well as a community of equals that gathers together for *koinonia* with God and each other. In *both* ends of the dyad, stories (i.e., people, lived experiences) are told and received. These stories can break through closed narratives which suppress, and activate the deepest yearnings of the human spirit to, over time, learn to tell stories, to discover an agency-in-communion and to claim a location and purpose for the sake of the common good.³⁵⁴ The *comunidades eclesiales de base* (CEBs) in South America provide real-world examples of this inherently-humanizing ecclesial structure.³⁵⁵

Second, at the *pedagogical* level, the stories shared in the ecclesial dyad are both the stories and rituals of the Christian tradition, as well as the “dangerous stories”

³⁵⁴ Discipleship is defined, per Metz, as “a praxis in history and society that understands itself as a solidaristic hope in the God of Jesus as the God of the living and the dead, who calls all to be subjects in God’s presence”; Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 81.

³⁵⁵ There are many explanations of CEBs of course, but one example is Schipani, *Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology*, 235-250. Note here also what Schipani identifies as their “key ecclesial context principles” (245) at work: CEBs promote mutual support/*koinonia* (245), they foster “a sense of self-worth and affirmation” (246), they affirm personal differences and ministerial vocations (247), they are “increasingly open” to the world (248) due to the universal implications of the Reign of God, and they “embrace complexity and engage existential conflict” (249).

(Metz)³⁵⁶ of past and present community participants, especially the stories of the oppressed.³⁵⁷ These are what Groome calls “Story and stories shared in dialogue,”³⁵⁸ a pedagogical-formational processes that accompany, and remain in dialectic with, a community’s missional praxis.³⁵⁹ This story-exchanging approach is further explained in light of Jesus’ own biblical pedagogical patterns: He calls disciples to welcome them, and invites them to participate in a more humanizing story. He further invites disciples to engage in the practices of shalom from the start, first via legitimate peripheral participation and then as empowered agents of his mission; he models listening and receiving the stories of those he serves; he asks critical questions and speaks in parables that invite critical thinking and invoke theological and sociopolitical imagination, etc. Jesus shows respect for his disciples precisely as-learners, and pedagogically empowers them in ways that promote adaptability and ongoing responsiveness to God, as well as cultivate empathic listening and compassion for others. Story-exchanges in such learning environments nurture the narrativity of its participants, allowing them to remain within the permanent process of conversion.

³⁵⁶ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 67.

³⁵⁷ “According to the Gospel of Mark, there was originally a particularly close relationship between Jesus and the people (ὄχλος)... Wherever Jesus goes in Galilee, the poor who have been reduced to misery gather round him. He teaches them. They bring him their sick. He heals them. They move about with him. The distress of the people awakens in him the divine compassion (Mark 8:31)... The ‘multitude’ are the poor, the homeless, the ‘non-persons’. They have no identity, no voice, no power and no representative.... Whereas λαός is used for the people of God and ἔθνη is used for the nation, these downtrodden masses are ὄχλος. In Galilee ‘the multitude’ in this sense were *de facto* the poor Jewish country people. They were not so designated because they were Jewish, but because they were poor. So Jesus’ solidarity with these people has a certain universalism which takes in all the poor who have been reduced to misery. Jesus takes as his family ‘the damned of this earth’, to use F. Fanon’s expression, and discovers among them the dawning future of the kingdom and God’s new creation.” Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, trans. Margaret Kohl (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 148-149.

³⁵⁸ Thomas Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 244; see 135; 145.

³⁵⁹ Metz says that a Christian faith that desires subjecthood for all inherently should take into consideration both “history and histories,” i.e. both the metanarrative of God’s shalom and the personal self-stories of disciples, which both inform and “merge together” yet without diminishing each other in any way; Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 153-154.

Finally, at the *intrinsic structural* level, there are the metanarrative interpretive guidelines, i.e. doctrines, as well as the structures of local and regional governance. But in whatever form they take, these exist specifically to *facilitate, and certainly not to hinder, the community's missional and narrational-pedagogical activity*. Doctrines should thus help facilitate readings of scriptures, as well as the signs of the times, that point to the shalom-Reign of God that nourishes ubuntu-personhood. As for leadership, such a community must be led and governed in ways that creatively follow³⁶⁰ the narrative character and position of Jesus-as-teacher, who led as a “first among equals.” This discipling community, per Schüssler Fiorenza’s biblical analysis, can be thought of as a new kind of people-group, a new family, which stands in contrast to ancient systems of domination, patriarchy, and exclusion.³⁶¹ Authority and power in this community is thus not dominating, but rather is “enabling, energizing, [and] creative” in the service of Jesus’ liberating, humanizing praxis.³⁶² Again by viewing the community from a historical-developmental, pedagogical lens, Jesus’ commission to “make disciples” is hardly a license for the community to compel conversion or obedience, but rather for disciples to proclaim God’s shalom-Reign, by word and by reconciling-liberating deeds. Others are invited to participate and to join in this family. But the often-overlooked structural implication here is that, unlike most COPs, the Jesus-movement was originally engineered in a way that could persist through multiple generations, so that would not

³⁶⁰ This is mimesis-poesis; see chap. 4 secs. 2-3.

³⁶¹ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, 105-6; 219-222. Specifically, the discipling community in Jesus’ time denoted a familial belonging no longer dependent upon ethnic descent, class, or gender, in a time where household arrangements subjected servants and women to lower-class members of society. “Discipleship in the Jesus-movements required the breaking of natural kinship ties and household relationships. Those who followed Jesus received instead a new familial community” (*Discipleship of Equals*, 220; cf. Mark 3:31-35; 10:28-30). In this community, all were “co-heirs,” and “brothers and sisters”; the leaders themselves were the “servants” (*Discipleship of Equals*, 221).

³⁶² Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, 247.

lose momentum or cease to exist upon the departure of its leader or its original adherents. The movement of disciples, that would then create more disciples of ultimately-equal standing and worth in the community, was designed to resist ever being dependent upon any single leader, group, or culture to define the movement. It was to emerge and re-emerge, again and again, in every time and place, ever renewing its commitment to participation and resisting over-reification.

Catholic Worker communities, Christian Community Development communities, and the *comunidades eclesiales de base*, are all non-hypothetical, real-life ecclesiologies³⁶³ which embody many if not most of these principles, even if imperfectly. Discipleship is therefore not merely a biblical ideal, or a vision of a distant future—but it does, to echo Perkins, suggest the need for the institutionalized churches of the US and beyond to radically “rethink their vocation,” and thus their pedagogies. But we will return to this in the final chapter. The focus now shifts towards narrativity itself—what it is, what forms it can take, and how it changes over a lifespan—from a hermeneutical, psychosocial, and evolutionary perspective.

³⁶³ Jesus says, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” Matthew 18:20.

4.0 NARRATIVITY, CONSCIOUSNESS, AND THE NATURE OF PERSONHOOD

Only by living time as best as possible can one live it young. Deeply living the plots presented to us by social experience and accepting the dramatic nature of reinventing the world and the pathways to youth...We grow old if we believe this importance lies in ourselves rather than in the relations between ourselves, others, and the world.

-Paulo Freire³⁶⁴

4.1 THE FREEDOM TO BECOME UNDER THE MANGO TREE: THE NARRATIVAL IDENTITY OF PAULO FREIRE

For the third and final autobiographical subject, given that narrativity is the topic at hand, the life and work of the great educator Paulo Freire (1921-1997) is worthy of reflection. Similar to the journals of Dorothy Day, his writings were increasingly peppered with his personal self-stories as he aged, as can be seen in his later works such as *Pedagogy of the Heart*,³⁶⁵ *Pedagogy of Hope*, and *Letters to Cristina*³⁶⁶ (all of which were published from 1992 to 1997). His life-story is not presented in these works in the form of a singular, unified autobiography, in contrast to Perkins' *Let Justice Roll Down* or Day's *The Long Loneliness*. Freire's self-stories instead are told as snippets, interspersed within broad and multilayered expositions which reveal his renowned perspectives on learning, culture,

³⁶⁴ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Robert R. Barr (New York: Continuum, 2004), 73.

³⁶⁵ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Heart*, trans. Donald Macedo and Alexandre Oliveira (New York: Continuum, 2007).

³⁶⁶ Freire, *Letters to Cristina: Reflections on My Life and Work*, trans. Donald Macedo with Quilda Macedo and Alexandre Oliveira (New York: Routledge, 1996).

human nature, transformation, etc. His writings frequently oscillate from self-story, to analysis, to argument, and back again. Yet the stories and story-fragments are not merely illustrations to help him make his points. Rather, he offers them to his readership because they are frequently the starting points for his higher-level reflections. For example, his posthumously-published *Pedagogy of the Heart* is primarily concerned with Brazilian life and politics. And yet at its core, *Heart* is a self-reflection that begins from the very particular location of his early childhood home, represented metonymically by the mango trees that grew in that home's backyard.³⁶⁷ This represented his "first world,"³⁶⁸ his "immediate objectivity" that through the course of his life "has been unveiling itself to many other spaces...Spaces where this man of today sees the child of yesterday in himself and learns to see better what he had seen before...seeing angles that were not perceived before."³⁶⁹ Like a tree itself, his childhood memories of home serve as the narrative root structure for his entire constructed sense of personhood. From here the rest of the book branches out into other various self-reflections, which bear fruits of trenchant cultural and political analysis along the way.³⁷⁰

Freire was deeply aware of his own narrativity—that is, of how much all meaning-making, even the most universal or abstract conceptualization, is rooted in

³⁶⁷ The Portuguese title of *Heart* is "Under this Mango Tree"; see Ladislau Dowbor's preface to *Pedagogy of the Heart*, 26. In his Recife backyard he imagined the trees' "branches kneel...down to the shaded ground" and "with their varied colors, smells, and fruits would attract various birds where they would take advantage of the space provided for them to sing" (*Pedagogy of the Heart*, 37-38). Under those trees was where his parents taught him to read, by writing practice phrases in the ground (see *Letters to Cristina*, 27-28). There his parents "knelt down" like the branches, to teach him from his level, and under their tutelage he was free to sing like the birds. Thus Freire learned about humanizing education from a very young age, and he would later apply this same wisdom to his liberating pedagogical method and philosophy; *Heart* especially demonstrates this link.

³⁶⁸ Freire, *Pedagogy of Heart*, 37.

³⁶⁹ Freire, *Pedagogy of Heart*, 38.

³⁷⁰ Freire states plainly that his childhood gave him the original narrative materials that would later be refigured (Ricoeur) into virtually every idea he would encounter in his own academic studies; see Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*, 11.

flesh-and-blood, social-dialectical³⁷¹ experiences, which are interpreted and committed to memory in narrativational (even if not narrative)³⁷² ways. Freire writes in such a way so as to make this awareness apparent, and this provides an initial clue as to the significance of narrativity itself, and why educators in faith should pay attention to it. As he notes in *Pedagogy of Hope*, he writes to “stir [his own] memory and challenge it, like an excavation in time, so that [he] can show [the reader] the actual process of [his] reflection, [his] pedagogical thought and its development.”³⁷³ Clearly in *Heart*, he is also embarking on a journey through the memory as he writes, and inviting readers to join him, to accompany him under his mango tree. For Freire knows that stories stir the narrativity—the humanity—of others, and can persuade more readily than even the most cogent analysis or precise argument. And so he employs scenes from self-stories to create fissures in the flow of the reader’s consciousness, interrupting to invite readers into vicarious encounters with him. Just as these “bits and pieces of time [that] actually lived in [him]” were forever being woven together “in the composition of the larger fabric” of his life and work,³⁷⁴ and always informing his academic productions, he hopes that they would also invoke the narrativity of his readers in ways that could open pathways for their own critical self-reflection, and thus their own self-composition.

We return to Freire’s writings in the next section, to assist with illustrating the work of Ricoeur. For now the above overview attempts to show, on both the level of his own writing and at the level of the reader, that not only stories themselves, but also the very *process of story-crafting and story-sharing*, give us clues as to how human beings

³⁷¹ See chap. 1 sec. 3, n. 45.

³⁷² See chap. 1 sec. 3.

³⁷³ Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*, 53.

³⁷⁴ Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*, 10.

make meaning out of their lives. Narrativity is the term that has been used throughout the present work to describe this process; it is a function of the perpetually-active, ever-elusive, electric signals of the brain known as the human *consciousness*. While narrativ identity is something more than the consciousness alone—a complex interaction of ongoing spiritual, social, and cognitive processes—the consciousness is what vitalizes every experience, every social interaction, and every construction, modification, or transformation of meaning. And yet, we know painfully little about this powerful energy.³⁷⁵

At the present crossroads, it is an appropriate occasion to look at a roadmap, beginning with a glance back from where we are coming, so as to see more clearly where we are going.³⁷⁶

- Chapter Two presents a way of viewing personal identity in terms of human beings' *perpetual meaning-making activity*, i.e., *narrativity*. It does this by arguing that all three dimensions of this activity (the deep yearning to make meaning, its social-dialectical quality, and its evolution through time)³⁷⁷ are appropriately regarded as *narrativ*, making identity irreducible to any single *narrative*. The wide-angle purpose of the chapter is to *establish the parameters and definitions of a wholly narrativ* (i.e., processual, creative-spiritual, social-dialectical, practical) *perspective on meaning-making*. This allows for the interrelationship between personal and communal identity-

³⁷⁵ See n. 383 below.

³⁷⁶ See chap. 1 sec. 5 for the initial overview of the content for each chapter.

³⁷⁷ See chap. 2 secs. 2-4 which discusses these three dimensions of narrativ personal identity.

processes and narratives to be sorted out.³⁷⁸ (It also explains this narrational meaning-making activity to be endemic to human nature, and reflective of one's sense of *personhood* and interconnectedness with others.)

- Chapter Three, then, seeks to *define Christian communal identity*, specifically, in accordance with said parameters and definitions. Discipleship is selected and defended as the appropriate narrative archetype for this task,³⁷⁹ and then the specifically pedagogical and missional implications of this archetype are drawn out. The overarching goal here is to *establish the stakes for Christian religious educators* as to why narrativity and narrational identity, as defined, are relevant to them. *Discipleship is a communal identity that specifically aims to enliven narrativity and personal identity*. If community practices fail to promote narrativity (i.e., to the extent that they consider participants to be static rather than in-process, discourage creativity, teach in monological and authoritarian ways, or favor universal and/or absolute claims about reality over practical considerations), they fall short of embodying Jesus' beloved community that promotes shalom.
- The parameters and definitions provided in the second chapter, along with the stakes for Christian religious educators stated in the third, together set the

³⁷⁸ Recall chap. 1 sec. 2 regarding the "identity crisis," viewed in terms of the divisiveness and isolation that results when personal and communal identities are not properly interrelated—which is to say, when they are not treated dialectically. The framework and parameters of chap. 2 serve to preserve that dialectic, while also allowing for personal and communal identities to interrelate and co-narrate together, while also not losing sight of the spiritual yearning that drives personal identity, or the cultural forces which drive communal identity.

³⁷⁹ The "discipleship pattern" in chap. 3 is in fact reflective of a communal identity *character archetype* (see taxonomy in chap. 2 sec. 5; see also Fig. 1 in the same sec.). This is also discussed in chap. 3 sec. 1, n. 246.

stage for the second act of the work, which explores *narrativity-in-itself*³⁸⁰ (Chapter Four) and its *evolution throughout the course of the lifespan* (Chapter Five). There are certainly scholarly motives for taking these additional steps.³⁸¹ But the most applicable reason is that narrativity and narrational development utilize some key concepts—namely, mimesis-poesis, solicitude, and the various narrational modes of consciousness—which can help inform Christian religious educators who wish to foster greater narrativity (openness, compassion, willingness to evolve, courage, etc.) in others. To this end, some initial hypotheses and practices for mimetic-poetic teaching are suggested in Chapter Six.³⁸²

Narrativity-itself remains the subject of the present chapter, i.e., the meaning-making process activated by the human consciousness. Not even a neuropsychologist, however, would be of much use in observing this creative energy of the mind; one must necessarily take a philosophical line of inquiry.³⁸³ Paul Ricoeur, a key figure in the

³⁸⁰ So far we have only really examined the activities and effects of narrativity, in terms of personal and communal identity; narrativity as-such (i.e., the quality of the meaning-making consciousness) still remains to be explained. Doing so will make explicit why “narrativity” is the most appropriate metaphor to use for characterizing meaning-making (i.e., because it is mimetic-poetic; see sec. 3 of this chap.)

³⁸¹ Some notable examples: (1) See above note (n. 380). (2) Exploring narrational hermeneutics and narrational development completes a holistic picture of narrational identity, meaning-making, and meaning-evolution, and provides an overarching philosophical framework, along with corresponding ethical considerations. (3) This same holistic picture offers manifold theological implications, in particular a compelling evolutionary approach to theological anthropology; see Lunde-Whitler, “Paul Ricoeur and Robert Kegan,” 312-313; see also chap. 5 sec. 4. (4) There are a number of conceptual difficulties that have been discussed which the narrational-developmental synthesis appears to resolve; e.g., the limitations of Kegan’s (e.g.) developmental psychology (see sec. 3 of this chap.); the difference in approaches between life-story and polyphonic NSC researchers (see chap. 5 sec. 3); etc.

³⁸² Solicitude is initially discussed in sec. 5 of the present chap., and all three “fruits” are discussed in terms of how they can be practically applied in chap. 6, esp. secs. 2-3. Indeed there are likely many other applications, especially regarding consciousness modes, that await to be explored in future research endeavors.

³⁸³ This is because consciousness itself cannot be directly observed, except by its effects (including our words, actions, interpretations, etc.) Himself coming from a neuropsychological perspective, Donald (in *A Mind so Rare*, 177-178) says as much about the consciousness. He explains that the neural electric impulses that correspond with consciousness can be observed via metabolic imaging, and that these

aforementioned narrative turn in philosophy, and whose various works in narrative hermeneutics and ethics have had an immeasurable influence across Western humanities and social sciences, serves as an apt guide. The bulk of this chapter investigates his existential philosophy, hermeneutics, and ethics (concentrating on the first volume of his *Time and Narrative* series, as well as the subsequent *Oneself as Another*), which together provide a series of windows into the narrativity of the consciousness. This is primarily accomplished in the next section.³⁸⁴ Then, one of the most critical concepts in Ricoeur's theory, which is referred to here as *mimesis-poesis*, is considered in some detail. Mimesis-poesis provides a way to describe the narrational quality of human meaning-making and consciousness. In order to see how it works pedagogically over the course of time, the next step is to locate narrativity-as-mimesis-poesis within the practical, social-constructing and dialectical framework established in the prior chapters; Robert Kegan and Freire himself make for apposite initial dialogue partners for this task.

At this point, an initial proposal can be made with regards to narrativity and its development throughout the lifespan, made possible by the *application of the Ricoeurian notion of mimesis-poesis to Kegan's understanding of consciousness-development*. In so doing, many of the difficulties with regards to Kegan's theory are addressed, while still maintaining the holism and universality of his approach that both life-story and polyphonic narrative social constructionists (NSC)³⁸⁵ have themselves been largely

impulses can even be shown to rearrange the brain's grey matter—almost (as he puts it) like a computer that adjusts itself by rewriting its own hardware while being used. But as he goes on to say, “brain activity is the end of the line”; i.e., consciousness *itself* still defies direct observation by science, and it will likely always remain so. This fact, as he eloquently argues, should not by itself compel scientists, who seek to test everything via direct observation, to now turn around and deny the existence of consciousness, even if the “Hardliners” say otherwise; Donald, *A Mind so Rare*, 178 (for “Hardliners” see chap. 1 sec. 2, n. 38).

³⁸⁴ This forthcoming section (sec. 2), mirrors the threefold structure of yearning-creation-evolution, established in chap. 2 secs. 2-4.

³⁸⁵ See chap. 2 sec. 3.

reticent to consider, to date. The resultant *narrativational-developmental* theory, as a way of understanding narrativity and its evolution throughout the human lifespan, constitutes the central insight of this entire essay. Another, subsequent chapter is required to support, explain, and delineate this seminal notion.³⁸⁶ To conclude the present chapter, however, the implications of the narrativity of consciousness are theologically reflected upon, by way of focusing on Ricoeur's own ethical framework that is rooted in narrativity.

4.2 PAUL RICOEUR'S CONCEPTION OF NARRATIVITY

Narrativity: the Inborn Yearning to Make Meaning. Ricoeur begins *Time and Narrative* with a series of reflections aimed to demonstrate the *centrality* of narrativity to human existence. His starting point is the universal existential problem of time, as it is brought to light by Augustine (in Book XI of his *Confessions*): ““What, then, is time?””³⁸⁷ Ricoeur extrapolates: “How can time exist if the past is no longer, if the future is not yet, and if the present is not always?”³⁸⁸ The tension of time, felt due to its incessant movement combined with the human incapacity to perceive anything beyond the immediate present, results in a universal human dilemma. Without some means of coping, it would inherently result in psychological distress, a sense of being locked into an eternal present that is inherently devoid of meaning. Ricoeur refers to Augustine of Hippo's astute explanation as to how this dilemma is seemingly solved in day to day existence, for most people: We hold past memories and future expectations together with the consciousness

³⁸⁶ See chap. 5.

³⁸⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk. XI, sec. 14:17; as quoted in Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. I*, 7.

³⁸⁸ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. I*, 7.

(i.e., our attention) in the mind, experiencing all three as a “threefold present.”³⁸⁹ The remaining problem, however, as Ricoeur sees it, is that any conscious intention upon these three modalities of experience reveals the impossibility of unifying them.³⁹⁰ Having a sense of personal wholeness through time, or of any quasi-permanence of self-meanings—i.e., of identity—requires people to find a way to overcome this “incessant dissociation”³⁹¹ between past, present, and future time. Yet human beings throughout history have managed to not lose touch with reality—precisely because, Ricoeur’s work implies, by and large all people tell stories. By cleverly employing several concepts from Aristotle’s *Poetics* to address Augustine’s dilemma, Ricoeur asserts that human use narratives in real-life to construct tentative resolutions to the dissociated experience of time, by way of synthesizing elements together within an imagined space-time; what he calls a “*discordant concordance*.”³⁹² Stories have this capability precisely because they themselves imitate life. Life-narratives, whether offered as a temporal whole or as fragments, at their essence are interpreted representations of life within an imaginable, spatial-temporal structure.³⁹³ Stories provide a means for interpreting past, present, and future events as meaningfully interrelated, thus contributing towards a prevailing sense of a temporal and thematic unity to life.³⁹⁴

³⁸⁹ He describes this as “a present of [de] past things, a present of [de] present things, and a present of [de] future things”; Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk. XI, sec. 20:26; as quoted in Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. I*, 11.

³⁹⁰ He refers to this as a sense of “distention”; see e.g. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. I*, 20.

³⁹¹ Ricoeur, “Life in Quest of Narrative,” in *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation*, ed. David Wood (London: Routledge, 1991), 31.

³⁹² Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. I*, 43 (not italicized in text); see “Life in Quest,” 31-32.

³⁹³ “Narrativity is what marks, organizes, and clarifies temporal existence.” Richard Kearney, *On Stories* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 130; see Ricoeur, “Life in Quest,” 32.

³⁹⁴ Per Richard Kearney: “Each human life is *always already* an implicit story. Our very finitude constitutes us as beings who, to put it baldly, are born at the beginning and die at the end. And this gives a temporal structure to our lives which seek some kind of *significance* in terms of referrals back to our past (memory) and forward to our future (projection).” Kearney, *On Stories*, 129, emphasis in text. See also Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 142.

This existential line of inquiry elicits the same conclusion as does the exploration of the modernist tension between personal and communal identity that underlies the identity crisis in the (post)modern US: Identity is centered upon telling stories, an act that creatively bridges these tensions inherent to making meaning out of existence. Identity-formation, then, is dependent upon human beings' capacities to craft meaningful story-forms. The inborn yearning to make meaning of our lives requires stories in order to even begin to conceive of life or reality as any kind of a temporal whole. For Ricoeur, creating these tentative "discordant concordances" is how narratives *humanize* time. Without it, we could only experience the timelessness of the eternal present, and events would lose all meaning. Meta-narrative authoritarianism³⁹⁵ stifles authentic storytelling, whether by silencing certain voices, forcing narrative conformity to its reified standards, or when all else fails, engendering story-confusion (e.g., by gaslighting). These distortions are inherently dehumanizing, deepening the divisions at the heart of the identity crisis.

Narrativity is thus central to existence *as* a human being: as a person with *agency-in-communion*, who accrues an evolving sense of *location* in a past up through the present, and comes to claim a sense of *purpose* in the present that anticipates a significant future.³⁹⁶ Human beings are born with the inherent yearning to create discordant concordances to this effect, to synthesize otherwise-heterogeneous experiences and observations,³⁹⁷ and to create "imaginative reconstructions of the past in light of an envisioned future" (McAdams).³⁹⁸ The "discordant" aspect of telling narratives is never fully resolved, per Ricoeur, for human beings can never perfectly explain every action or

³⁹⁵ See chap. 1 sec. 3.

³⁹⁶ Regarding the four yearnings of narrative identity, see chap. 2 sec. 2.

³⁹⁷ Ricoeur, "Life in Quest," 21.

³⁹⁸ McAdams, *The Stories We Live By*, 53.

event, or ever fully access every aspect of how and why they have come to be the way that they are. Even so, stories—and especially self-stories—still promote a kind of clarity to personhood, and to a person’s overall sense of being-in-the-world.

Narrativity: The Threefold “Mimesis” By Which Meaning is Created. But again, where this inherent yearning of consciousness is activated, and where meaning is constructed, is in the course of everyday, social-dialectical interactions, a dynamic to which Ricoeur is especially attuned. The synthesis of the heterogeneous by which a plot symbolically constructs an imagined sense of time, or “emplotment,” is at the heart of his philosophy of hermeneutics, i.e., the social-dialectical exchanging of meanings. To describe the work of the consciousness in these exchanges Ricoeur again follows Aristotle by invoking the term *mimesis*³⁹⁹—more specifically, a *mimesis praxeos*, the “imitation of action,” which is to say, the “imitation of life.” Mimesis suggests that emplotment attempts to imitate, i.e., to symbolically re-present, reality in some way. It also describes how the narrator’s use of (typically) language prompts audience members to formulate their own mental re-presentations. Mimesis implies that a narrator must always, in some manner, depict events and characters in time in ways that are faithful to lived experiences, to *praxis*. But since this “imitation” is also inherently a synthesis, a discordant concordance, a narrator also must make creative choices regarding what events to include, what elements to emphasize or exaggerate, precisely how to express those elements, etc. So there is *poiēsis*, to use the Aristotelian term, element to all emplotment. Ricoeur emphasizes this fact, that all social-dialectical interpretation is

³⁹⁹ Erich Auerbach (1953) is often credited for reintroducing the concept of *mimesis*, the “interpretation of reality through literary representation,” into Western philosophy and the other humanities, thereby contributing to the “narrative turn”; Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Thought* (Princeton: University Press, 1953/2003), 554.

somehow a product of its double anchoring to both the historical and the possible,⁴⁰⁰ to the memory of life-“as” as well as the imagination seeking to postulate a life-“as-if.”⁴⁰¹ Mimesis, then, is inherently creative, or as Kearney puts it, an “imaginative redescription,” a product of “the power...to re-create actual worlds as possible worlds.”⁴⁰² In proceeding, this double-anchoring is hereafter designated as *mimesis-poesis*,⁴⁰³ so as to emphasize the co-incidence of both life-imitation *and* imagination within every narrative telling.

This concept is so pivotal to the present work that it is worth offering a narrative illustration: Returning to Freire’s embedded narratives in his later works, there is a unique story he tells in *Pedagogy of Hope*, where Freire recalls a period of time in his twenties, while working in Pernambuco for the *Serviço Social da Indústria* (SESI). At some point he suddenly began experiencing a profound depression. “I felt wounded, and bored with the world,” he said, “as if I were submerged in myself, in the pain whose reason I did not know and everything around me seemed strange and foreign.”⁴⁰⁴ As these feelings became increasingly constant, instead of suppressing or ignoring them, he attempted to “take my depression as an object of curiosity...I ‘stepped back’ from it, to

⁴⁰⁰ Ricoeur argues for history and fiction to be understood as along a continuum, *pace* both MacIntyre (who per Ricoeur underestimates fiction’s role in history; see Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 158-159) and Hayden White (who conversely views all history in terms of fiction). See Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. 1*, 77-82; *Time and Narrative Vol. 3*, 180-192.

⁴⁰¹ See Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. 1*, 47; 64; See Kearney, *On Stories*, 133.

⁴⁰² Kearney, *On Stories*, 131; 132.

⁴⁰³ Ricoeur does not use this hyphenated term, nor does Aristotle. As Ricoeur understand mimesis itself to be an inherently creative act (see Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol.1*, 45; Kearney, *On Stories*, 132-133) such phrasing would be redundant. Yet the term is sometimes used by others in ways that de-emphasize the creative dimension of mimesis—notably in the case of both Nelson and Donald, whose work is featured in subsequent pages. Using the term “mimesis-poesis” going forward ensures that both aspects of mimetic configuration are kept in view. (Note that “mimesis” by itself, or numbered via subscript, e.g. “Mimesis₁,” following *Time and Narrative*’s usage, is very occasionally used in the present chap., when speaking directly about Ricoeur’s theory.)

⁴⁰⁴ Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*, 20.

learn its ‘why.’”⁴⁰⁵ He began to posit reasons for them via internal dialogue: Are these feelings connected to my trips to the Zona de Mata? No. But maybe they are connected to the rainy season, which is when I tend to make these trips? No, not rain alone, because I was not depressed on my visit to São Paulo, when it was pouring rain... “What was missing was green, and mud – the black earth soaking up the water...” Freire eventually came to conclude, “My depressions were doubtless connected to rain, and mud – *massapê* clay – and the green of the cane brakes and the dark sky. Not connected to any one of these elements in isolation, but to the *relationship among them*.”⁴⁰⁶ An image was beginning to coalesce, one from his past, that offered him a clue as to the truth of his depression: Jaboatão, with its famously ample rainfall and its massive sugarcane plantations,⁴⁰⁷ was where Paulo and his family moved to when he was ten years old, where he spent the rest of his late childhood and adolescence before returning to the city of Recife.⁴⁰⁸ While it also became a place of love and freedom for him, as did his first home,⁴⁰⁹ clearly there was also unfinished emotional business waiting for him there to complete. “And so it was that, one rainy afternoon in Recife, under a leaden sky, I went to Jaboatão in quest of my childhood.”⁴¹⁰

Pausing the story for now, one can already see in these writings, composed by the elder Freire, a depiction of a young adult Freire who even then displayed an uncanny degree of self-consciousness, seeking to emplot a self-narrative that was faithful to the reality of his past and that would unveil the “why” of his present pain. It was an act of

⁴⁰⁵ Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*, 21.

⁴⁰⁶ Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*, 21 (emphasis added).

⁴⁰⁷ See Freire’s descriptions of Jaboatão in *Letters to Cristina*, 49; 69.

⁴⁰⁸ See Freire, *Letters to Cristina*, 25, 77.

⁴⁰⁹ See Freire, *Letters to Cristina*, 29; 63-64.

⁴¹⁰ Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*, 22.

mimesis, in that his goal was to accurately refer to his own lived experience, to discover a truth. Yet *poiēsis* was still clearly involved, most noticeably in the trial-and-error probing of his somewhat-fragmented memories, which led to the eventual emergence of an inchoate narrative synthesis. This is but one of countless potential examples, showing how *mimesis* and *poiēsis* are really two sides of the same coin.

Ricoeur sees mimesis-poesis occurring at three overlapping points within the hermeneutical circle. In other words, there are three ways that narrativ meaning-making, i.e. creative imitation, can be said to occur in *every instance* of dialectical interpretation. These three ways work together sequentially to make learning new meanings, forming new meanings, and reorganizing remembered meanings, possible.⁴¹¹

- *Prefiguration*: Stories—told and untold, fragmented and whole, new and established, popular and dissonant, verbal/visual and symbolic/ritualistic, communal and personal—all permeate our sociocultural landscape, and correspondingly our thoughts and actions as they are interpreted by the senses. From these come the litany of presuppositions that constitute our capacity to understand stories: There are the basic rules governing human behavior, the semantics of action, and other “symbols” (in the anthropological sense of Geertz);⁴¹² in formal narratives there are structural clues prompting the audience to read it as a narrative, and as a certain type or genre; moreover, stories presuppose the presence of time and provide time-markers to help audiences conceive of the meaning of events.⁴¹³ All of these presumed

⁴¹¹ For an overview of the process described here, see Ricoeur, “Life in Quest,” 24-25. For a detailed treatment, see *Time and Narrative Vol. I*, 52-87.

⁴¹² See Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. I*, 57.

⁴¹³ See Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. I*, 54-64 (esp. summary on p. 64).

“preunderstandings”⁴¹⁴ are narrativel, in that both stories and life teach them, and they provide the means by which both future stories, and future experiences of life, can be interpreted. They constitute a primary level of mimesis praxeos, or as Ricoeur calls it, the level of *prefiguration*, or “*Mimesis*₁.”

- *Configuration*: Prefigurations are what enable the possibility of the moment of emplotment, which Ricoeur also calls the stage of *configuration* (or *Mimesis*₂). Here is where the consciousness is most clearly engaged, drawing upon prefigured narrative materials which (especially in the case of self-stories) may also include remembered or anticipated events, sequences, emotions, and/or images. Through the employment of plot, the configuring mind is consciously, poetically attempting to re-present lived (or imagined) life in a creative, meaningful temporal sequence, within the context of the present—thus constituting the second, most conspicuously *poetic* stage of mimesis praxeos.⁴¹⁵ This is the aforementioned “synthesis of the heterogeneous” in its most conscious and observable form.
- *Refiguration*: The third form of mimesis (*Mimesis*₃) is the work of the audience, where the emplotted stories are heard, read, experienced, or witnessed, “mark[ing] the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader...[i.e.,] of the world configured...and the world wherein real action occurs and unfolds its specific temporality.”⁴¹⁶ This the

⁴¹⁴ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. I*, 54.

⁴¹⁵ See Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. I*, 64-70.

⁴¹⁶ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. I*, 71; see “Life in Quest,” 26.

moment of *refiguration*, where a configured story re-enters the audience's field of prefigured narratives, to be drawn upon in future narrations. Akin to Gadamer's "fusion of horizons," it is when the narrational consciousness of an audience attempts to enter a world at this intersection. In so doing the resulting meaning is shaped by both the narrator's configuration as well as recipients' previously-prefigured meanings, together creating an avenue for novel thoughts and actions to be contemplated by the imagination.⁴¹⁷ The resultant story-as-received, i.e., its characters, plot movements, structure, ethical makeup, etc., becomes per Ricoeur "sedimented"⁴¹⁸ within the memory, thus joining the pantheon of the recipient's prefigured, interwoven meanings.⁴¹⁹ Yet this sedimentation includes the potential for "innovations"⁴²⁰ to be introduced into this corpus through either, or both, instances of mimesis-poesis—and such innovations can precipitate a gradual and/or dramatic transformation of prefigured meanings.

Ricoeur summarizes the entire process by saying that human beings live within "the destiny of a prefigured time, that becomes a reconfigured time through the mediation of a configured time."⁴²¹ The circle is completed, but always containing within itself the possibility for innovations, i.e., evolutions of meaning, to occur at both the narration of

⁴¹⁷ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. 1*, 77. Note that the narrator is *also* part of the audience (and if told or written in private, possibly the only audience). Therefore both configuration and refiguration often happen concurrently for the narrator.

⁴¹⁸ Ricoeur, "Life in Quest," 24.

⁴¹⁹ The movement from Mimesis₁ to Mimesis₂ can be called a "mimetic-poetic" move via speaking and/or writing, whereas the movement from Mimesis₂ to Mimesis₃ is considered a second mimetic-poetic move via listening and/or reading. The latter can be thought of as an inversion of the narrator's own configuration process.

⁴²⁰ Ricoeur, "Life in Quest," 24.

⁴²¹ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. 1*, 54.

meaning (where prefigurations are configured) and upon the reception of the narration (where a configuration is interpreted and refigured). Thus it can be a productive cycle⁴²² instead of a redundant or self-reinforcing circle—i.e., if stories are free to be told, and space is made to listen, by all participants within the social dialectic.

Now to return to Freire: His homecoming to Jaboatão in his twenties marked a moment when he was quite deliberately seeking to hone his already-remarkable self-reflective capacities, thereby continuing along the lifelong journey towards a more whole sense of self. He did this precisely by examining his prefigured “bits and pieces” of memory that somehow needed to be narrated. In the midst of a pouring rain, upon perusing his old neighborhood, seeing the old soccer pitch, muddy hills, and of course, its mango trees,⁴²³ he began to imaginatively re-enter those prefigured childhood experiences, experiencing what Ricoeur calls “potential” or “inchoate” stories,⁴²⁴ i.e., a rudimentary configuration in the mind, with primitive scenes and episodic fragments that were prefigured in the memory manifesting to varying degrees of consciousness and arranging themselves in meaningful ways. This continued as he returned to his old house on that gloomy day, where upon arrival he at once began to recall a particularly vivid memory, from October 21, 1934. Suddenly “I had before me, as on a canvas, my father dying, my mother in stupefaction, my family lost in sorrow.”⁴²⁵ His father’s passing, one month after Freire’s thirteenth birthday, was the loss of one who in many ways was a

⁴²² Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. 1*, 71-72.

⁴²³ Freire notes the presence of mango trees again, to allude back to his earliest childhood memories in Recife (and perhaps more specifically, to his father’s role in helping to establish his sense of home), even though he was physically in Jaboatão, his second childhood home. This is a secondary mimetic-poetic move. Again the scenic details here reflect the way that the scenery and weather had before stirred up the untold story of his father’s death, a tension manifesting in his depression.

⁴²⁴ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. 1*, 74.

⁴²⁵ Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*, 22.

guarantor of Freire's precious sense of home, who "played an important role in [his] constant search for understanding [by] being affectionate, intelligent, and open."⁴²⁶ His death was sudden, and the words he uses to describe his family ("lost," "stupefaction") along with the fact that little Paulo himself was disallowed from entering his father's room, but was instead forced to listen to his father die from "a corner in the house,"⁴²⁷ both suggest that he and perhaps his entire family were somehow denied the chance to fully mourn. For the adult Freire, his depression was a manifestation of this heretofore-untold self-story, that demanded to be told.⁴²⁸ As Ricoeur puts it, "A life-story proceeds from untold and repressed stories in the direction of actual stories the subject can take up and hold as constitutive of his [sic] personal identity."⁴²⁹ By re-experiencing the physical place associated with the untold trauma, Freire opened a narrational pathway for a cathartic refiguration of meaning that permitted mourning: "The unmasking of the 'why' of my experience of suffering was all that was needed to overcome it."⁴³⁰ By allowing his own past to re-present itself, these pre-existing memories could then be configured and then refigured⁴³¹ towards a more, even if never fully, complete and conscious narrative sense of self going forward.

⁴²⁶ Freire, *Letters to Cristina*, 28. This does not preclude Freire's mother's essential role in preserving his sense of home, but many of Freire's later writings do emphasize the role of his father (see e.g., *Letters to Cristina*, 39).

⁴²⁷ Freire, *Letters to Cristina*, 73-75.

⁴²⁸ "Only when we assume their absence, no matter how painful this acceptance may be, does the pain...diminish and we begin to return to being fully who we are. Only in this way can we wholesomely have, in the felt absence, a presence that does not inhibit our ability to love." Freire (in reference to his father), *Letters to Christina*, 74.

⁴²⁹ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. 1*, 74 ("Life-story" for Ricoeur here refers to an overarching sense of self, and not in the more literal sense like McAdams). In each chapter of this work, the first instance of gender exclusivity present within a quotation is marked with [sic]; any subsequent examples within a chapter are not denoted, in order to limit the distraction of the reader, but the reader is nevertheless asked to understand the [sic] to be implied.

⁴³⁰ Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*, 23.

⁴³¹ Narrators are also audience members; see n. 417 above.

It can be extrapolated, based on the definitions above, that while not all meaning-making is equally salient with regards to identity, all social-dialectical interpretation can nevertheless be considered mimetic-poetic. All exchanges somehow involve prefigured elements being configured in a way that produces meanings, which are then refigured together with the audience's prefigurations to produce other meanings. Yet narratives are uniquely salient forms of interpretation, because stories epitomize mimesis-poesis. In stories, life itself is creatively construed out of previously-learned places, characters, events, tropes, genres, etc., and given a life-like (i.e., spatiotemporal) structure. By this structure the various elements of a story are arranged together, connected to each other via proximity, cause and effect, expectation (and dramatic reversal), etc., so as to make sense out of them.⁴³² Thus Ricoeur's narrativ-dialectical hermeneutics seek to explain the narrativity of the consciousness, with narratives themselves playing a pivotal role in the ongoing, complex social process of co-constructing a sense of identity and personhood.

Narrativity: The Means By Which Consciousness Evolves Throughout Life. The fact that narrativ hermeneutics, as the ongoing creation and reception of plots, explains how *novelty* is introduced into meaning-making, suggests the evolutionary quality to meaning-making. This leads Ricoeur to shift his focus from hermeneutics to narrative identity and ethics, which he takes up most explicitly in *Oneself as Another*.⁴³³ For while the capacity to consciously emplot life itself implies a "self," it is the accumulation of

⁴³² Not only literary theory, but also gestalt theory, can be helpful for understanding how the mind organizes and relates elements of a story. See e.g. the laws of perceptual organization listed in Mary Elizabeth Moore, *Teaching from the Heart* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 68-69.

⁴³³ Ricoeur only begins to tackle the issue of identity in *Time and Narrative* (and only then as an unresolved aporia; see *Time and Narrative Vol. III*, 241-248). In *Oneself as Another* identity is then taken up as his primary object of concern.

manifold self-stories over the course of life that implies a consistency to the self, regarding a person's attitudes, remembered experiences, likes and dislikes, behavioral tendencies, etc. In other words, through repeated emplotments of life, people develop a sense of character—i.e., as in a story, who takes an I-position—about oneself and others.⁴³⁴ Characters, as well as the self-as-narrator's capacities to narrate them, are representations of narrative identity, and are what evolve throughout life via ongoing evolution of meanings.

But before he can explain the significance of a self-as-character, Ricoeur first notes a tension between consistency and coherence, which he explores by comparing the two Latin words for identity: *idem* ("sameness") and *ipse* ("selfhood").⁴³⁵ These are overlapping terms, but they raise an important question: What if self-identity is described and understood *mostly* in terms of consistency—i.e., of sameness, familiarity, habit? That is, what if *ipse* and *idem* are considered nearly synonymous? While human beings naturally look for patterns reflecting instances of "sameness," and are more inclined to view familiar things as significant to oneself, Ricoeur's analysis suggests the potential dangers of meaning—"internalization which annuls the initial effect of otherness,"⁴³⁶ or of meaning-sedimentations which no longer permit any possible narrational innovation.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁴ Ricoeur initially defines character as "the set of lasting dispositions by which a person is recognized...the limit point where the problematic of *ipse* becomes indiscernible from that of *idem*...", or in other words, character is a set of claimed traits; Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 121. Ricoeur's rhetorical strategy involves initially defining character apart from narrative, which explains the relative flatness of this definition (the essence of which is discussed below in the next par., regarding instances when *ipse* and *idem* become indiscernible); Ricoeur then restores this understanding of character to narrative in *Oneself as Another*, 122. Note that Ricoeur's approach (and narrational approaches in general, perhaps) also manages to blur the line between character in the meaning-attribution sense, and that in the moral, "Aristotelian" sense (see Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 122).

⁴³⁵ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 2; 116.

⁴³⁶ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 122.

⁴³⁷ "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." Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 121.

This danger was observed in the previous chapter in terms of communities of practice,⁴³⁸ in which over-reifications can encourage an inordinate emphasis on communal sameness; this can include the insistence of unquestioned communal allegiance, forced conformity to a limited set of ideals, maintenance of existing social-political structures despite having lost their utility, etc. Having a sense of fidelity to oneself, and/or to a community-ethos, are valuable components of personhood. But when this is not accompanied with a community's corresponding sense of responsibility to other persons-as-individuals, who require a certain freedom to fully be and become, identity "formation" can actually be detrimental to a person's own ubuntu-personhood, not to mention that of others.⁴³⁹

Conversely, Ricoeur notes that *ipse* and *idem* can be seen as having little or no discernible overlap, in moments where personal consistency is considered at the expense of life-coherence, the "way things are." Ricoeur here cites the uniquely-human capacity to "keep one's word,"⁴⁴⁰ to perform tasks in order to keep a promise, or out of a sheer sense of necessity or obligation, despite a potential sense of incongruity with regard to oneself.⁴⁴¹ It also correlates with moments of rupture via encounters of the other, where ethics precedes all hermeneutics. Such moments have been famously explored by the likes of Martin Buber⁴⁴² and Emmanuel Levinas, the latter going so far as to say that the encounter with the other is a "dazzling" beyond interpretation or intention, but that

⁴³⁸ See chap. 2 sec. 5.

⁴³⁹ Amartya Sen's concern for the normalization of communal identities applies here; see chap. 1 sec. 2. For ubuntu see chap. 1 sec. 1; chap. 2 sec. 6.

⁴⁴⁰ "Keeping one's word expresses a *self-constancy* which cannot be inscribed, as character was, within the dimension of something in general but solely within the dimension of 'who?'" Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 123.

⁴⁴¹ See Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 123.

⁴⁴² Buber, *I and Thou*, 56; 66.

nevertheless demands a humble responsibility and obligation to act.⁴⁴³ Ricoeur affirms the value of such reasoning, even if he expresses a modicum of caution against taking such arguments for ethical and relational priority too far, to the extent that there is hardly a self to consider within a self-other dialectic. Pure encounter and responsibility can give way to empathy and mutual relation, and over an even greater length of time, it can lead to a sense of camaraderie, and even friendship. Even if encounter *begins* with the otherness of the other, the next step requires *receptivity* within oneself, an opening-up of the heart and arms⁴⁴⁴ to receive what the other has to offer, including her or his shared stories. Even though this otherness must be interpreted, and so can never be received as wholly other, a receptive spirit affords at least the possibility for life-giving exchanges which result in mutual formation via refiguration—and potentially the genesis of a shared history. If the “self” could only be silent in the face of otherness, then there would be no dialectic with the other, and thus no hermeneutics, no possibilities for innovation and meaning-evolution, or even for cultivating sustainable and reciprocal relationships.⁴⁴⁵

Yet these possibilities do exist, thanks to human beings’ capacity to transcend the reduction of all relationship to sheer encounter—but without then, conversely, necessarily

⁴⁴³ Emmanuel Levinas, “God and Philosophy,” in *The Postmodern God: A Theological Reader*, ed. Graham Ward (Malden: Blackwell, 1997), 62.

⁴⁴⁴ See Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 141; see also sec. 5 below.

⁴⁴⁵ Ricoeur appear to critique Levinas in *Oneself as Another* to this effect. Many scholars (Richard Cohen, John Arthos, etc.) have critiqued Ricoeur for fundamentally misunderstanding Levinas’ argument as rhetorically exaggerative, composed as such in the context of the wake of the Holocaust; see John Arthos, “Paul Ricoeur and the Re(con)figuration of the Humanities in the Twenty-First Century,” *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 75, no. 2 (2014), 121. Without dismissing the validity of this critique, it bears knowing that Ricoeur himself states that Levinas uses “limiting cases” by which “the self [is] stripped bare,” so as “make it clear to us that the issue here is the ethical primary of the other than the self over the self.” Ricoeur (at least in this selection of text, from the present author’s limited view) is affirming Levinas in this, but then simply adds, “it is still necessary that the irruption of the other, breaking through the enclosure of the same, meet with the complicity of this movement of effacement by which the self makes itself available to other. For the effect of the ‘crisis’ of selfhood must not be the substitution of self-hatred for self-esteem”; Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 168.

imposing an insistence upon sameness or agreement on all relationships. Most adults develop a more robust sense of *ipse*-self, that is in dialectic but not confused with a sense of *idem*, and for Ricoeur this advancement is the direct product of a narrativity that compels the seeking to understand oneself and others in terms of emplotted characters. In stories, a character is not only dictated but revealed, in the course of their narratively-significant experiences—as one who is “thrown” into life, in the Heideggerian sense, but at the same time as one who must assume an I-position and remain responsive to life’s ebbs and flows.⁴⁴⁶ By telling self-stories, then, one asserts an *ipse* who is “same,” i.e. consistent in some way from the beginning to the end and connected by time, causality, agency, goal, etc.—and yet who can also endure change, learn lessons, gain (or lose) relationships and friendships, etc., all in ways that are coherent and meaningful, whether the outcomes are positive or negative.⁴⁴⁷ In this way, says Ricoeur, such configurations mediate between *idem* and *ipse* via “imaginative variations” of a plot and its characters;⁴⁴⁸ when these stories are then received (by the narrator as well as an audience) the two are again mediated via the co-experience of the *detour* of narrative: the sensation of being “transported” to another time and place, and/or of experiencing what Kearney calls the “vicarious imagination,” which has the ability to “‘alter’ us.”⁴⁴⁹ Self-stories need not seek meaning, then, simply by an utter distancing of oneself from the other—nor

⁴⁴⁶ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 146-148. This discussion recalls James W. McClendon in *Theology as Biography: How Life Stories Can Remake Today’s Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974), 31-32, on character as both the cause and consequence of the actions that people take and receive, and that these aspects can only be expressed through stories.

⁴⁴⁷ “According to my thesis, narrative constructs the durable properties of a character...his narrative identity, by constructing the kind of dynamic identity found in the plot which creates the character’s identity. So it is first of all in the plot that one looks for the mediation between permanence and change, before it can be carried over to the character.” Ricoeur, “Narrative Identity,” trans. David Wood, in *On Paul Ricoeur*, 195.

⁴⁴⁸ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 148.

⁴⁴⁹ Kearney, *On Stories*, 137.

from a totalizing (and potentially colonizing) “identification-with” that seeks to consume or control the other. Stories are how human beings naturally share themselves, vicariously, with others. A crisis of self-identity, in contrast, often corresponds to some hindrance in ability to engage with others in ways that produce the authenticity, vulnerability, and reciprocity native to good story exchanges.

An *ipse* is thus an evolving sense of self, a life that is responsive to others and to context, without jeopardizing one’s sense of being an “I,” and ultimately of being a character in a story with other characters, a story that is not yet complete. This view of narrative identity is the foundation of Ricoeur’s narrative ethics,⁴⁵⁰ which he summarizes as life in accordance with three dimensions: “aiming at the ‘good life,’ with and for others, in just institutions.”⁴⁵¹ These dimensions are interrelated: *Aiming* is somehow a cumulative product of prefigurations that form a person’s sense of communal identity-belongings, and necessarily involves remaining capable throughout life of interacting with and learning from others. *Living together* in community in turn precipitates the formation of all *institutions*.⁴⁵² This process of reification, at its best, helps maintain and give order to a community of practice’s participations—and at its worst, hinders or restricts a community’s collective capacity to learn and grow.

Taken together, Ricoeur is suggesting that narrative identity (*ipse*) informs a narrative-shaped ethics, one which happens to be highly correlative with the ethic of the community of disciples—rooted in a commitment to engagement in cumulative mutual

⁴⁵⁰ See also Hille Haker, “Narrative and Moral Identity in the Work of Paul Ricoeur,” in *Memory, Narrativity, Self and the Challenge to Think God: The Reception within Theology of the Recent Work of Paul Ricoeur*, ed. Maureen Junker-Kenny and Peter Kenny (Münster: LIT, 2004), 143-152.

⁴⁵¹ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 172.

⁴⁵² See Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 194; the assertion originates in Aristotle; see *Ethics*, 211 (1171b-1172a).

transformations, aimed towards the “good life” of the shalom-Reign. At the center of this ethical orientation towards transformation is the activation of narrativity, and specifically of a narrative mode of consciousness. In this mode, a vision of the good life can be cast, and experiences and imaginings depicting life-as, and life-as-it-could-be, can be shared via mutual narrative exchanges. And as such shared engagements help direct an ethical society, institutions are charged with maintaining citizens’ equal capacity to pursue this good life with and for others. When institutions fail in this regard, narrative exchanges can also create potential moments of rupture, by which these failings can become exposed and critically examined. Ricoeur refers to this narrative mode as an ethical category by using the term *solicitude*. By his usage, this is more than, yet not at the expense of, an emotional state. It can arguably be considered to be something close to the *solidarity* discussed in liberation and political theologies that are rooted in the telos (“good life”) of universal shalom and the cessation of unjust human suffering. Solicitude as a term emphasizes the non-optional requirement of relational engagement for ethical living that anticipates this good life. It might even be considered as a *narrative solidarity*, which seeks to illuminate the narrative and cumulative character of human relationality, the “supreme test” of which is found in moments of “authentic reciprocity of exchange which, in the hour of agony, finds refuge in the shared whisper of voices or the feeble embrace of clasped hands.”⁴⁵³ Christian tradition invokes the importance of solicitude whenever it gives preeminence to the virtue of *agape* as the supreme virtue (cf.

⁴⁵³ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 191. Here Ricoeur points out that just as pathos and joy can co-exist and intermix within tragedy, so it is the case within genuine friendship, depicting what Martha Nussbaum calls the “fragility of goodness” (as cited by Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 191). The ethos Ricoeur has in mind here is one of humility and lack of presumption: “Here magnanimity ... must lower its flag” (Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 191).

1 Cor. 13:13), which involves a fundamental openness to an other; this epitomizes the dialectical nature of narrational selfhood.⁴⁵⁴ Solicitude understood in this manner characterizes any setting where the good life is pursued amidst mutual relationships, in ways that engender mutual transformation.

This section has sought to encapsulate Ricoeur's prolific work in the interconnected areas of identity, hermeneutics and ethics—all of which are interconnected precisely due to narrativity. In doing so it has emphasized the following concepts, which build upon each other, and together illuminate human narrativity as an essential characteristic of consciousness:

- *Discordant concordance*—i.e., how human beings humanize time, even if tentatively, through narrative. This notion highlights how narrativity, viewed as the impulse to make finite meaning from an otherwise-infinite stream of time, is basic to human thought and function. It establishes what is at stake in narrational hermeneutics—namely, our sense of personhood itself.
- *Narrational dialectical hermeneutics (via prefigurations, configurations, and refigurations)*—i.e., the hermeneutical cycle, understood in narrational terms. It supports a narrative social-constructionist view of meaning-making that is *both* personal and communal, without reducing one to the other (*pace* Taylor or Appiah).⁴⁵⁵ It also highlights the power of the mimetic-poetic

⁴⁵⁴ Haker, "Narrative and Moral Identity," 65; Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 180.

⁴⁵⁵ See chap. 1 sec. 2 (on Taylor vs. Appiah); chap. 2 sec. 5 (on the interrelationship between personal and communal identity at the hermeneutical level).

consciousness: Innovations create the possibility for a productive hermeneutical cycle, as opposed to an endlessly-self-referential circle.

- *Mimesis-poesis*—i.e., how the narrativial hermeneutical cycle works, which is discussed in depth, in the next section.⁴⁵⁶
- *Idem and ipse*—i.e., two ways of understanding identity, either as related to a perception of “sameness,” familiarity, and consistency, or to an emplotted coherence that posits a “self,” as a character.⁴⁵⁷ The two are dialectically related, and the latter appears to be an advance of the former, in that the mimetic-poetic work of the consciousness through time evolves from a *pre-narrative* form of engagement to a more fully *narrative* one. Thusly coming into a narrative sense of self (*ipse*) indicates how people can remain *dynamically responsive* to life and to others without (necessarily) experiencing such change as a threat to selfhood. Importantly for present purposes, it also suggests that *narrativial self-evolution can include a corresponding evolution of the consciousness itself*, in step with Kegan.⁴⁵⁸
- *Solicitude*—i.e., narrativial interrelationality and solidarity, to describe a personal and communal ethic in which the hermeneutical cycle, and the resulting ongoing evolution of *ipse*, are most encouraged to thrive. It most directly characterizes environments of mutual story-exchanges, but exists in some form whenever a person is given space to share self-stories (which are expressions of life), and others are capable and willing to receive that “life”—

⁴⁵⁶ See sec. 4 below.

⁴⁵⁷ See chap. 5 sec. 3, regarding coming into the “narrative” mode of consciousness, fundamental to which is the emerging capacity to speak of the self and others as characters.

⁴⁵⁸ See sec. 4 below.

thus creating a kind of shared experience between each person's consciousness. The final, reflective section of this chapter approaches a theological ethics rooted in this definition of solicitude.⁴⁵⁹

With these concepts Ricoeur effectively presents narrativity as an essential quality of the consciousness, elucidates its mechanics, and points to its significance. (Narrative hermeneutics, in particular, shines light on the meaning-making process that is always occurring at the intersection between personal identity and communal identity. And solicitude extends narrative hermeneutics into the realm of ethics, which for Ricoeur also implicates politics, economics, and civic life.) These concepts all inform, to varying degrees, the forthcoming presentation of a narrative-developmental approach to personhood. However, *it is mimesis-poesis that epitomizes the "how" of the narrative consciousness, and best explains its evolution.* The subsequent section explains this key process. In doing so, several concerns raised previously are addressed: Mimesis-poesis helps explain narrative social constructionist (NSC) understandings of identity and how they form, helping to reconcile the differences between so-called "life-story" and "polyphonic" strategies. It also provides a conceptual means for reconciling NSC assumptions with Kegan's approach to development-evolution—resulting in a view of meaning-making that is at once social-dialectical, non-generalizing, *and yet* expansive and transformative. And especially as it manifests in an ethic of solicitude, mimesis-poesis suggests the *modus operandi* of the community of disciples, who are charged to engage in a humanizing mission-pedagogy of reconciliation and mutual transformation.

⁴⁵⁹ See sec. 5 below.

4.3 MIMESIS-POESIS AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS: RICOEUR, KEGAN, AND FREIRE

And so the present task involves a closer examination of mimesis-poesis as the central mechanism for human meaning-making, as well as a consideration of the significance of the narrative consciousness in relation to the rest of meaning-making. This is accomplished by first elaborating upon Ricoeur's conception, and then considering how mimesis-poesis resembles (and differs from) Kegan's understanding of evolving meaning-making through time via cumulative subject-object relations.⁴⁶⁰ The result is a uniquely-comprehensive NSC perspective, which resembles the process of educating the consciousness that Freire himself describes. Articulating this *narrative-developmental* approach to identity, over the remainder of this chapter and through the next, constitutes one of the central objectives of the present project.

To begin by returning to Ricoeur: Again, mimesis-poesis describes Ricoeur's insistence upon the double anchoring of narrative, both to lived experience, and to the creative impulse that anticipates meaning. It is that mixture of the familiar with the novel⁴⁶¹ which drives the power of narrative. A bit more needs to be said about these two aspects. To begin, narrative *familiarity* is what makes lived events intelligible, through their correspondence to previously learned (i.e., prefigured, sedimented) meanings. The *mimetic* side of mimesis-poesis, then, manifests as an association made by which the prefigured past (i.e., a memory) is in some fashion re-presented, imitated, or recalled in

⁴⁶⁰ This comparison forms the basis of the previously-referenced article by the author, Lunde-Whitler, "Paul Ricoeur and Robert Kegan."

⁴⁶¹ Bruner discusses these as two "generalities" of every narrative: reflexivity, and the ability to envision alternative realities. Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 109-110.

the present. By these associations, remembered forms and features of past experiences, histories, characters, patterns of cause and effect, etc., enable the anticipation of present meanings. There are manifold ways in which the *familiar* manifests itself in meaning-making—but the point is, as Ricoeur insists, that every story must imitate life and history in some way, and that even includes fiction. For instance, even a monster from a movie or play must have recognizable, even if distorted, features, whether they appear animalistic, humanoid, or some combination, so that the audience can make sense of its monstrous characteristics.⁴⁶² Similarly, even a fantasy must balance the extraordinary aspects of the alternative world it depicts with distinguishable reference points (foods, technologies, behavioral patterns, etc.) to the real world.⁴⁶³

Conversely, to describe the *poetic* aspect of narratives is to discuss the means by which *novelty and innovation* enter sedimentation, which is the very thing that makes the evolution of meaning and identity possible. Without it, no learning could occur; there would only be the confirmation of what is already known, and all would be viewed from an absolute reference point, the self-as-same (*idem*). But innovation enters precisely through these same associations, which are essentially narrational analogies between immediate experiences and/or previously-disparate memories.⁴⁶⁴ The distance between

⁴⁶² For example, Ridley Scott's movie *Alien* (1979) and its subsequent sequels depict a monster that is perhaps the "strangest" in modern US cinema (as the movie title itself suggests, as does the alternate title for the beast itself in the film, "xenomorph," i.e., "strange shape" in Gk.) Yet even it had discernible humanoid, insect-like, and dragon-like features and behaviors, imitating both life and fiction; Kearney suggests that this "familiarity" the audience achieves with the monster is what provokes horror, as a fictional representation of the very real, "monstrous" aspects of human/animal behavior which reside within each person. See Kearney, *Strangers*, 49-53.

⁴⁶³ Some additional examples: The entire premise of "acting," whether on stage or screen, is predicated upon the concept of mimetic representation, where "believability" is the measure of success—again, even more so in fictions and fantasies. And as Ricoeur emphasizes, the imposed temporality of narrative is itself an imitation of the temporality of life.

⁴⁶⁴ In a paper presented at the 2015 Religious Education Association's Annual Meeting (Joshua Lunde-Whitler, "The Mimetic-Poetic Imagination: How Recent Neuroscientific and Cognitive Psychological Research Suggests a Narrational-Developmental Approach to Identity," unpublished manuscript, 2015, pp.

the analogized elements, initially surveyed by the imagination of a narrator, becomes bridged via the selective work of configuration and refiguration, by which all meaningful forms of novelty are introduced, rather than the elements themselves. And so just as all fiction relies upon history, so-called historical works, which claim a greater burden of fidelity to lived experience, are still *construed* in some way. They select certain details and omit others, highlight certain events and dismiss others. Non-fiction writers—not to mention self-storytellers—narrate from a particular point of view in an attempt to persuade, give assurance, inspire, etc., and rarely to only delineate “facts.” In the process, they imply if not outright state *how* particular sequences of events should be considered meaningful—even if this means that what is considered canonical history is typically determined by those in power, and tends to uncritically depict privileged classes as just and righteous, the heroes of their own story. In these and many other ways, the imagined blends with the historical, in every genre to varying degrees.

Narrative’s power lies in the fact that, again, these two aspects of *mimēsis* and *poiēsis* are not simply two discrete elements within narrative meanings; they are in fact two sides of one and the same activity of narration. In Ricoeur’s hermeneutics, following Aristotle’s study on tragedy, the familiar is what provokes *pity* (i.e., empathy, identification-with) whereas the strange (the somehow-unfamiliar) is what provokes *fear* (distance, identification-from). Woven inextricably together within a plot, both of these provocations are experienced simultaneously. Pity, so to speak, can even be said to mediate fear, so that that which is alien can be in some way experienced through the

8-9) I very briefly discuss the neurology of analogical reasoning, and make an argument for analogy-making to be understood as narrativity, and symbol as metonymy—an argument that falls outside the present work’s scope.

imagination, allowing for a catharsis of that emotion and the consequent refiguration of meaning—which is the mark of most successful, salient stories.⁴⁶⁵ Fear in turn is what holds interest, as well as tempers the desire of pity to going too far in attempting to grasp, and thereby over-interpreting, an other. The proper mimetic-poetic ratio for achieving catharsis varies greatly according to circumstances, and is dependent upon the genre (history or fiction), the author’s purposes, and the prefigured meanings of readers/listeners. But however the ratio is employed, such emplotment inherently, and always, utilizes both identification and disidentification together, i.e. discordant concordance, for its specific purposes.

In the context of seeking to understand identity and its evolution, there are profound implications to this capacity of human beings to re-present life and reality by creating “as-if” worlds,⁴⁶⁶ by which the strange becomes familiar, in some mediated sense. The key point for now is this: The fact that new configurations can be refigured into the consciousness is what enables learning—and not only of new meanings, but of new *perspectives*, and eventually new *capacities* to perceive new meanings.⁴⁶⁷ In other words, it at least implies the lifelong, qualitative, developmental changes in the consciousness itself that Kegan seeks to articulate. And as such, it thus provides

⁴⁶⁵ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* Vol.1, 50; see 42-51. Aristotle refers mainly to tragedy in regards to catharsis, but in viewing Aristotelian pity and fear as a dynamic of empathy versus distance, respectively, it can be extended to have explanatory power for all narratives. See Kearney, *On Stories*, 135-140.

⁴⁶⁶ Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* Vol.1, 64.

⁴⁶⁷ Mimesis-poesis, then, offers another way to conceive of transformative learning à la Mezirow et al., who does not consider the consciousness *itself* in the same way as Kegan, but rather begins from examining the ways that meanings appear to be organized, and from there describing how these perspectives can be adjusted or overhauled; for an overview of this process see Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 167-169. Mimesis-poesis, in fact, more closely resembles the threefold transformative approach of Jane Taylor: generation of consciousness, transformation of consciousness, and integration of consciousness (cited in Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions*, 172-174). Going forward, the relationship between Mezirow’s theory and the narrational-developmental approach is not a matter of emphasis in the present work, largely due to this difference in their respective starting points.

psychology a way of considering these very changes from an NSC-based point of view, which (following the lead of Nelson, Fivush, et al.) resists the unnaturally smoothing-out of the many complexities of socially-constructed meaning-making.

How does Kegan's constructive-developmental approach describe how learning, and the evolution of the consciousness, occurs, if not via mimesis-poesis? For him, the consciousness takes new discrete shapes through the process of cumulative *subject-object relations*, which is a conception of developmental learning with roots in the constructivism of Piaget but is expanded upon by Kegan. *Objects* in this view are aspects of reality that can be intended, in the phenomenological sense. They are the objects, values, emotions, concepts, and relationships that the mind can perceive and purposefully interpret in meaningful ways. *Subjects*, in contrast, are what cannot be perceived and interpreted intentionally, but nevertheless remain constitutive sources of a person's meanings and self-understandings. Like a fish's experience of the ocean, subjects are the immediate "givens" of life that permeate a person's context and shape his or her perspective, yet typically go unnoticed unless she or he learns how to step back and reflect upon that experience.⁴⁶⁸ For Kegan, the consciousness develops through the "transformative, qualitative, and incorporative"⁴⁶⁹ process of making subjects into objects, which then lead to the possibility for recognizing new kinds of subjects; he describes this as a "lifelong process of development" marked by "successive triumphs of 'relationship to' rather than 'embeddedness in.'"⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁸ Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 32. See Lunde-Whitler, "Paul Ricoeur and Robert Kegan," 302.

⁴⁶⁹ Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 33.

⁴⁷⁰ Kegan, *Evolving Self*, 77.

In this way, Kegan's approach to subject-object relations enables him to uniquely discern a universal pattern of consciousness development, through which subjects become objects that enable new subjects. It is a helpful perspective for educators, who can mindfully "invite" students "to step beyond"⁴⁷¹ the limitations of their present consciousness-order, by "problem-posing," to use Freire's language.⁴⁷² They can encourage the student's engagement of the next, most proximate order of consciousness, as opposed to utilizing a "banking" (Freire) style of education that does not require the consciousness to stretch its capacities. The fivefold pattern of consciousness orders that Kegan discerns is particularly insightful, and is considered in the next chapter more closely.⁴⁷³ But in addition to the already-noted limitations to Kegan's approach, subject-object relations can only describe what worlds the self-consciousness can discern at each order, and suggest how educators can create learning environments which guide students towards new "qualitative differentiations of the self from the world."⁴⁷⁴ It cannot by itself explain *how* the consciousness itself transcends its own limitations of perception or self-reflection, which at some point necessitates the exertion of agentic insight that is self-generated by the learner, whether or not one is guided by a teacher in the process. Mimesis-poesis, in contrast, suggests that it is the highly variant, and dialectically-interdependent, mixture of the familiar and the strange, by which novelty is perceived as somehow embedded within what is already known. This invokes the vicarious imagination that enables potentially new points of view.⁴⁷⁵ Receiving stories, and

⁴⁷¹ Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 55.

⁴⁷² Freire, *Pedagogy of Oppressed*, 79.

⁴⁷³ Chap. 5 sec. 1.

⁴⁷⁴ Kegan, *Evolving Self*, 77.

⁴⁷⁵ See Lunde-Whitler, "Paul Ricoeur and Robert Kegan," 304.

inchoate attempts to remember or tell stories, thus might be considered as more *mimetic* mimetic-poetic activities by which what is subject can begin approaching objectivity. Evidence of a greater mastery of a story's telling might then indicate a more *poetic* mimetic-poetic engagement by which a story becomes object, with the resulting configurations paving the way for new forms of telling, new perspectives and new insights. To state it more simply: Whether or not, and how, aspects of a person's lived experience can become object, is a function of her or his capacity to narrate (i.e., creatively imitate) existence, and to imagine new potential narrations.

Mimesis-poesis suggests a view on learning and development that is truly dialectical as well as social, that not only considers the external conditions by which the consciousness itself is encouraged to evolve, but also the internal mechanics through which the consciousness-in-relationship reaches beyond prior limitations. It is fair to say that, so understood, this encouragement of the "inner narrator" (in dynamic interrelationship with the world) is the prevailing goal of Freire's liberating pedagogy. In environments inundated by the sociopolitical and cultural myths of meta-narrative authoritarianism, which depict reified notions of reality that suppress the agentic, the poetic, the creative, the evolutionary—i.e., the narrative—quality of human nature, Freire's approach seeks to re-activate these suppressed qualities and to encourage the telling of new stories. It particularly encourages openness and availability to the world and to each other, a "curiosity that makes us beings in permanent availability for questioning,"⁴⁷⁶ as the mark of someone who is capable of continually entering and re-entering into dialectical relationships with the world. By learning how to engage reality in

⁴⁷⁶ Freire, *Pedagogy of Heart*, 94.

this way, people learn to perceive (i.e. make object) the myths and metanarratives themselves, and their meaning within history and in life as it was unfolding.⁴⁷⁷ This is how, per Freire, people could poetically “overcom[e] authoritarianism and...alienating intellectualism”; they could “overcome their false perception of reality” and as narrators learn to see the world as “the *object* of...transforming action of men and women which results in their humanization.”⁴⁷⁸

Freire is, from the present view, clearly describing advancement in the capacities of the narrational consciousness, a process he dubbed *conscientização* (“conscientization”).⁴⁷⁹ And like Kegan, he identifies a generalized, universal pattern to the process—even if it is threefold, as opposed to Kegan’s fivefold pattern: Consciousness evolves by people becoming (1) conscious beings, which then enables their becoming (2) conscious of the world, which finally activates the (3) consciousness of their own consciousness.⁴⁸⁰ It is by reaching this final mode that one learns how to sustain curiosity and openness towards the world.⁴⁸¹ Yet he maintains throughout an emphasis on the dialectical and relational nature of this development, which necessitates the taking-on of new perspectives through shared exchanges.⁴⁸² This is in keeping with

⁴⁷⁷ These capacities, which involve being able to *view history as a whole* (i.e., as a narrative) are also what make it possible for the people to contend with environments ripe for change, to not be reactionary but to be “integrated” with the reality of “transition.” Freire, “Education as the Practice of Freedom,” trans. and ed. by Myra Bergman Ramos, in *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Continuum, 1973), 7-8; see 1-8; 32. Keep in mind that Freire’s discussion of “subject” and “object” (as trans.) should not be confused with Kegan’s usage of the same terms.

⁴⁷⁸ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 86 (emphasis added).

⁴⁷⁹ The Portuguese is ultimately untranslatable into English, but has been neologized as “conscientization”; the common translation “consciousness-raising” is misleading. See *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 35-36. Again note the different usage of “subject” as opposed to Kegan.

⁴⁸⁰ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 79.

⁴⁸¹ Freire, *Pedagogy of Heart*, 94.

⁴⁸² See Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 129-131. Elsewhere, notably, Freire describes *conscientização* as the “reading of the word... [and] of the world... together, in dialectical solidarity”; Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*, 90.

Ricoeur, and suggests a more variable and complex process than Kegan alone. A synthesis thus begins to crystallize, of a social constructionist approach that features the cumulative emergence of widely-applicable developmental patterns in the evolution of consciousness à la Kegan. Yet it is also highly correlative with a liberating social-dialectic, which nurtures the ongoing emergence of consciousness-capacities as narrators of their own reality (Freire). This overlap is in spite of the significant contextual and methodological differences between Kegan and Freire. Nevertheless, both are ultimately concerned with the consciousness and the process of becoming more human—i.e., learning to maintain and foster one's own and others' sense of humanity-in-community, despite facing dehumanizing oppression, commodification, or alienation, etc., all of which threaten personal identity (*ipse*). But it is by way of Ricoeur that these ultimate aims of both Kegan and Freire are shown to be directly related to the nurturing of narrativity, the mimetic-poetic character of the consciousness by which consciousness itself evolves. For when life can be creatively imitated in community, so that the imagined intersects with the historical, the consciousness becomes free to flourish according to its narrational nature by which it strives to both tell *and* receive stories—and in the process, new and more complex forms of the narrational consciousness can be encouraged to emerge.

4.4 A NARRATIVAL-DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH TO IDENTITY AND CONSCIOUSNESS

Thus a portrait of the narratival consciousness, that both works and evolves via mimesis-poesis, materializes at this intersection between the works of Ricoeur, Freire, and Kegan. It suggests an approach that offers Kegan's long-range, comprehensive view of the consciousness throughout the lifespan, but does so from an NSC-based frame of reference. Although an earlier chapter⁴⁸³ implied the need for such an approach, it should be at least briefly noted here that it has been long anticipated. Some of the earliest NSC theorists in psychology implied the possibility of an unfolding, multimodal consciousness in relation to narrative. Polkinghorne, for instance, suggested that narrative knowing develops by the continuous "emergence" of more complex mind structures out of prior-formed structures.⁴⁸⁴ Moreover a seminal article by Bruner on the subject emphasized the reflexivity of narrative consciousness as both the producer *and* product of stories, suggesting some sort of consciousness-emergence via dialectical engagements.⁴⁸⁵ Much of the entire history of NSC theory and research, in fact, owes its existence to researchers' increasingly-shared conviction that people can become narrators of the world and of their lives-in-community, and that this becoming is a lifelong process. The addition of the present, interdisciplinary proposal is that, in light of mimesis-poesis and

⁴⁸³ Chap. 2 sec. 3.

⁴⁸⁴ Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing*, 2; 32.

⁴⁸⁵ Bruner goes on to say, "I cannot imagine a more important psychological research project than one that addresses itself to the 'development of autobiography'—how our way of telling about ourselves changes, and how these accounts come to take control of our lives. Yet I know of not a single comprehensive study on the subject"; Bruner, "Life as Narrative," *Social Research* 71, no. 3 (Fall 2004), 694-695; orig. published in *Social Research* 54, no.1 (Spring 1987). McAdams and Nelson both serve as potential examples of researchers who have answered Bruner's challenge since 1987, among others; see the following chap.

of Ricoeur's hermeneutics as a whole, there appears to be a nearly-universal narrational quality to the human consciousness-in-relation, that itself reflects something critical about what faith-educators might call the human spirit, or at least about human meaning-making in general. Narrativity is thus not limited to the crafting or reception of literal narratives per se, even if narratives epitomize narrativity, and play a central role in the shaping of identity-as-consciousness. Narrativity constitutes a quality of all meaning-making, especially our most salient meanings and memories, and it undergirds and drives the various forms the consciousness takes.

A key concern at this critical juncture is whether or not this synthesis adequately incorporates the lifelong and holistic view of Kegan, while also retaining the aforementioned advantages of other NSC-oriented theories, namely: their capacity to see meaning-making as contextually grounded and not over-extending universalized themes in an Eriksonian manner, their ability to account for the complexity of dialectical influences and of the corresponding various (polyphonic) "social selves" that one can have, the way they limit the degree to which changes in consciousness-capacities possibly be considered as individual and triumphalist "conquering" of personal limitations, their allowance for the possibility of conflicts within the consciousness that cannot be so easily reconciled, etc.⁴⁸⁶ Here a two-part hypothesis must be offered: (1) The meaning-making consciousness itself evolves through its own meaning-making activity, along the way developing cumulative consciousness "modes" which can be discerned *throughout human history and across cultures*. (2) At the same time, these modes are acquired amidst various social-dialectical contexts, *to which the consciousness remain*

⁴⁸⁶ See chap. 2 secs. 3-4.

inextricably tied, and which introduce various conflicts, tensions, and dissonances into a person's prefigured field of meanings. The assertion here is that both sets of claims be true (that consciousness modes are both contextual and universal, both spontaneous and intentional), when social construction is considered in terms of narrativity-as-mimesis-poesis.

This is why the deeply self-reflective Freire must physically return to the context of Jabotão, in order to access an untold story from his past that was deeply affecting him; conversely it is also why adults who have moved away can feel, or even act, like children again upon visiting their parents or childhood friends. Where, and with whom, we are situated in a given moment, affects what stories we can access and tell, and what characters we can perceive or inhabit. Our various internalized roles and characters co-exist, and are sometimes in tension with each other. Similarly we frequently switch between different consciousness-modes, in accordance with the higher or lower demands of a given moment.⁴⁸⁷ Even so, the energy of the consciousness manages to work amidst this morass of entanglements, inconsistencies, and contradictions within our prefigured minds—configuring new meanings, refiguring old ones, and gaining in consciousness capacities in various contexts.

The next chapter presents the work of several NSC theorists and others that provides further support of this suggested synthesis. It also attempts to delineate a

⁴⁸⁷ Nelson's developmental perspective, based upon Donald, emphasizes that "there is no implication that one moves *on* from one level [of consciousness] to another. Rather, all levels already achieved are available for derivations of meaning and awareness in any further encounter. Thus this is a dynamic cognitive system, always in motion." Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 26. See chap. 5 sec. 2. (This is *pace* Kegan, as well as Eleanor Drago-Severson; see *Becoming Adult Learners: Principles and Practices for Effective Development* (New York: Teachers College Press Columbia University, 2004), 22-23).

multimodal consciousness in the course of its development, guided by insights Kegan provides into these modalities. For now, it is time for some proposals which adequately summarize the key claims made over the course of the present work thus far. The heart of the matter is that identity can be explained in terms of narrativity and the narrational consciousness, the function and evolution of which can be considered from a so-called *narrational-developmental* point of view. This evolving narrativity, moreover, illuminates something critical regarding what it means to be fully human in the world, and thus is worth the consideration of Christian religious educators in the US (and beyond) who are seeking to foster discipleship and ultimately shalom. The central claims of a narrational-developmental approach are summarized as follows:

First, the narrational consciousness interacts with the world in a way that can be described as mimetic-poetic. The way people understand the world around them is through a continuous cycle of making these mimetic-poetic, or “creatively-imitated,” connections between prefigured meanings and present stimuli, which can result in more or less conscious configurations of meaning which can be then shared and/or refigured into the memory. Understanding mimesis-poesis requires examining interpretation itself in terms of mediation-in-relation, i.e. as an intermediate step, an intersection between two (or more) worlds⁴⁸⁸ by which innovations are introduced. Through this process, what can be “grasped” as object can then be re-constructed and re-emplotted towards future directions that can only be hypothesized or imagined—and what was only partially grasped before can become more fully grasped, an unknown world or perspective can become in some way known (i.e., experienced, felt); etc. This view corresponds to the

⁴⁸⁸ I.e., between person and experience, person and text/speech, person and person; etc.

well-established developmental theory of subject-object relations, but offers a more robust explanation as to how the consciousness comes to make something object. It also demonstrates the interrelationship between *personal identity* (the “I”) and *communal identities* (the “We”) that happens in the course of interpretation, and how these interactions in relation to lived experience serve as opportunities for shifts in meaning and perspective, as well as for *societal transformations*, to occur.

Second, it is by virtue of mimesis-poesis that the consciousness engages in the ongoing process of meaning-making that contributes to the ongoing evolution of ipse, a person’s sense of identity and personhood. The basic frame of this process can be considered in terms of evolution of consciousness suggested by Freire:

- Becoming conscious, i.e., becoming capable of perceiving reality, corresponds to people’s earliest forms of mimesis-poesis, and therefore what we might call a *pre-narrative* consciousness.
- These meanings in turn enable what Freire refers to as becoming conscious of the world, and the subsequent capacity to speak of oneself or others within the world in some meaningful way. This is the *narrative* consciousness, properly speaking, i.e., a “detour” of the consciousness via the vicarious imagination.
- Freire’s final step, the consciousness of consciousness, requires perspective-taking and critical thinking that aspires to transcend the limitations of a person’s embeddedness within a perspective. And so it can be said to require some form of *metanarrative* consciousness—even if this “transcendence” is neither a detachment from context, nor an final claim about *the* meaning of

something, nor even an inherently better or more “accurate” perspective than a more conspicuously-embedded one.

In other words, the narrativial consciousness can be said to take on an explicitly *narrative* mode, which itself evolves out of *pre-narrative* modes which characterize the person’s earliest forms of self-and world-recognition and understanding, and which itself enables the possibility of developing *metanarrative* modes—some of which may relate the “logico-scientific” mode of thinking that Bruner famously hypothesized to be in contrast with such narrative thinking,⁴⁸⁹ but are perhaps more broadly conceived according to Freire’s conception of *conscientização*, the consciousness of consciousness. All these modes build upon each other; yet they all continue to co-exist without necessarily subsuming the prior modes, and so the consciousness can assume any mode at any time, although context and circumstances might restrict access to some. Further, while metanarrative forms of thinking might attempt to transcend multiple narratives, it remains that there is never an all-encompassing self-story, life-theme, belief system, etc. that can fully articulate, explain, or predict a person’s behavior or circumstances. Rather, a person’s sedimented meanings gain complex and irreducible yet dynamic structures, as a result of this multifaceted work of the evolving consciousness. These structures (which feature various self-stories and characters), along with the consciousness itself (especially the narrative consciousness), are together what create *ipse*, a person’s sense of narrativial identity.

⁴⁸⁹ See Jerome Bruner, “Narrative and Paradigmatic Modes of Thought,” in *Learning and Teaching the Ways of Knowing*, ed. Elliot W. Eisner (Chicago: University Press, 1985), 97-115. For a review of the narrative modality of consciousness, see David C. Rubin and Daniel L. Greenberg, “The Role of Narrative in Recollection: A View from Cognitive Psychology and Neuropsychology,” in *Narrative and Consciousness*, 60-62. A more complete (fivefold) explication of the narrativial modes of consciousness is discussed in chap. 5 sec. 3.

Third, all of this suggests a narrativational-developmental perspective on the process of constructing identity and meaning. Through the ongoing dialectic that is a person's relationship to life, there is the possibility of gradual permutations that can bring about evolutionary changes in her or his capacities to interpret the world in pre-narrative, narrative, and metanarrative ways. The nature of these changes, and whether or not certain modes ever actually develop, are highly dependent upon social learning environments, and the kinds of cultural myths and other narrative resources that are made available to each person. But it remains that in everyone, and in every act of the consciousness, both mimetic and poetic aspects can be detected to varying degrees. This is, as Ricoeur phrases it, "life in quest of narrative,"⁴⁹⁰ as it manifests itself from life until death.

4.5 REFLECTION: TOWARDS A THEOLOGICAL ETHICS OF NARRATIVITY AS SOLICITUDE

The latter half of this chapter has focused especially on mimesis-poesis as the inner working of human narrativity-as-consciousness, which is important for understanding the *development* of identity and consciousness—the focus of the forthcoming, penultimate chapter. Yet it should be noted that the entirety of Ricoeur's narrational philosophy as presented here hangs together. Ricoeur's narrational-hermeneutical reflection informs his view of identity, which in turn shapes his narrational approach to ethics, based in "aiming

⁴⁹⁰ Ricoeur, "Life in Quest."

towards the good life, with and for others, in just institutions,” epitomized in communities of narrative-exchange imbued with solicitude. The mutual reciprocity and creativity of such communities is reflected within the hermeneutical moment itself—or to put it another way, communities of solicitude exemplify qualities corresponding to the mutual, dialectical sharing of stories. *Narrative ethics and narrative hermeneutics imply each other*. It is unsurprising, then, that Freire not only makes substantial use of stories and snippets in his writing, but also that his pedagogy presents what Arnett refers to as a “narrative-centered communication ethic.”⁴⁹¹ Freire’s agenda, at least in this sense, is similar to Ricoeur’s. Certainly the actual stories and metanarratives utilized in teaching play a critical role, by providing the means for articulating a transcendent vision of the good life, e.g., the shalom-Reign of God. But by understanding narrativity, as both Ricoeur and Freire seek to illuminate in their own respective manners, the beloved community of reconciliatory praxis becomes challenged to not only consider and teach humanizing stories, but to teach them in humanizing ways, and to promote an environment by which personal stories can also be shared and received.

Such ethical considerations have already been considered in part previously, but further reflection is warranted regarding solicitude, defined here broadly as narrativity, relational solidarity with an other or others, as an essential condition of community that promotes narrativity. Humanizing communities—whether in Pasadena, or Recife, or Jackson, Mississippi, or in a House of Hospitality—are inherently governed in some way by this way of being-together. Christian theological ethics have historically addressed it according to the biblical terms of *agape* and/or *koinonia*. To conceive of this being-

⁴⁹¹ Ronald C. Arnett, “Paulo Freire’s Revolutionary Pedagogy: From a Story-Centered to a Narrative-Centered Communication Ethic,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (2002), 489-510.

together in terms of solicitude, however, is to consider how narrativity and the value of narrational meaning-making, identity, and learning to Christian life and community. Such a perspective yields the following insights:

- *Solicitude includes encouraging communities to view fellow participants and non-participants alike as characters in the midst of their own story—i.e., everyone’s past history is ultimately hidden from view (apart from being narrated in the present, as configured and refigured), and everyone’s future remains ultimately incomplete and in-process. Everyone is the main character of their own lives, and every life has a beginning, middle, and end—and in most cases, the final page of a person’s life has yet to be written. As Hardcastle puts it, “[t]he person itself is a four-dimensional object existing through time. All we ever have access to, though, are glimpses of people [at any given moment].”⁴⁹² There is even another layer to this indeterminateness: As we are not only the main characters of our stories, but also its narrators who are always co-narrating our lives with a multiplicity of communities and relationships, everyone is therefore living out a multiplicity of stories as well. This includes stories with main characters that largely overlap and those that do not, stories we have claimed and stories thrust upon us, potential stories that shape us despite being untold and over-wrought stories to which we cling even after they have been rendered powerless, etc. In solicitude, this storied quality of identity is promoted, so that people might learn to better respect the intricate and mysterious aspects of others, and of oneself, as well as to put*

⁴⁹² Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 15-16. See Lunde-Whitler, “Paul Ricoeur and Robert Kegan,” 314.

ostensible inconsistencies that are perceived in oneself or others in a wider perspective.

- *Solicitude welcomes and encourages the mutual sharing of narratives, ; it recognizes that to honestly share a self-story—no matter how seemingly-trivial the event, and no matter the narrator’s agenda—is an offering of one’s life to and for others.* The fundamental orientation of the story-sharing community, then, is for every shared self-story to be treated and received as a gift, and therefore with gratitude. Rather than demand vulnerability and authenticity to be the preconditions for expressions of gratitude, communities of solicitude, to paraphrase Parker Palmer, create spaces of gratitude by which safety is communicated and self-authenticity is encouraged. Gratitude also encourages deep listening, i.e., the consciousness entering into the “detour” of narrative that creates the possibility for greater willingness to refigure the poetic or unfamiliar, or even to challenge presumptive, over-reified assumptions within one’s own perspective. Gratitude is thus related to silence, which is consequently a prerequisite for the most sacred of story exchanges.
- *Solicitude recognizes, quoting Ricoeur, that “we never cease to reinterpret the narrative identity that constitutes us, in the light of the narratives proposed to us by our culture.”*⁴⁹³ Solicitude actively resists over-reification, i.e., interpretations which exalt more-mimetic behavior and perspectives at the expense of more-poetic forms. Freire states it more succinctly:

⁴⁹³ Ricoeur, “Life in Quest,” 32.

“Knowledge is always becoming.”⁴⁹⁴ Human flourishing cannot be attained by the achievement of certain measures, but by the extent to which people continue to search truthfully and reflectively for meaning in community with others, as those meanings themselves are embodied in practices and evolve over time. In this sense, solicitude factors heavily into how narrational “development” should be understood: People develop various modes of consciousness within various narrational self storylines, but these modes themselves are not “achievements” in the Western, individualistic sense. They are not indications of mastery of ourselves or our interpretive capacities; we can direct but can never entirely tame the consciousness, as our agency is always an “embedded agency.”⁴⁹⁵ And so no mode of consciousness represent a permanent status; rather we oscillate constantly between various pre-narrative, narrative, and metanarrative modes, at different times and across various contexts. In solicitude we therefore recognize the multimodality of each person, as well as strive to let go of the Western cultural illusion that promoting identity and selfhood involves learning to control the consciousness (which is how one might understand what Ricoeur means when he states that we are narrators, but never the authors, of our own lives.⁴⁹⁶) Instead, to emplot is to search for and to discover truth, as much as it creates truth. Environments of solicitude are

⁴⁹⁴ As quoted in Arnett, “Paulo Freire’s Revolutionary Pedagogy,” 496.

⁴⁹⁵ Arnett, “Paulo Freire’s Revolutionary Pedagogy,” 495.

⁴⁹⁶ Ricoeur, “Life in Quest,” 32.

rooted in practices which activate and foster mimetic-poetic searching, aimed at the good life.

- Related to the previous point, because narrativity is a never-ending process, *an environment of solicitude requires a community that remains committed to the “historical moment”* (Arnett),⁴⁹⁷ by which we “deeply live...the plots presented to us by social experience and accept...the dramatic nature of reinventing the world” (Freire).⁴⁹⁸ This is an ethical stance involving humility—not self-effacement but self-awareness, as a self-in-community-in-world. It means we must continue to come to the table of community, to learn from the other and to humbly offer one’s own *phronesis* to others. This is critical for the community of discipleship that seeks to both embody *koinonia* amongst itself, as well as engage in an ongoing *missio inter gentes*. The community and its leaders (which per Schüssler Fiorenza resist systems of domination both within and beyond itself) always remain co-learners, and willing recipients of the practical wisdom of others, from and beyond its own participants, in continual discernment of how to best pursue greater shalom in the world. When committed to solicitude, the relational “sentness” of the disciples’ mission cannot be ignored or muted.
- A distinctive of Ricoeurian ethics is that *solicitude inculcates radical openness and engagement with others*, which (as mentioned previously) is not limited to sheer encounter and obligatory responsibility to act, *but also continues to guide ongoing interactions which build relational bonds*.

⁴⁹⁷ Arnett, “Paulo Freire’s Revolutionary Pedagogy,” 501.

⁴⁹⁸ Introductory quote at beginning of this chap.

Connections can be made across manifold differences. Persons, and communities, form *shared histories* in the course of life together, and become increasingly fluent in both the histories of each other as well as the community's collective shared history. In communities of solicitude, the key difference is that the dialectical and relational nature of community interaction is protected, in order to maintain productive mimesis-poesis. Thus Ricoeur makes the observation that "lack dwells at the heart of the most solid friendship";⁴⁹⁹ in other words, where true friendship is allowed to flourish, the *otherness of another should also grow over time in parallel with the growing familiarity with another*, via the accumulation of shared meanings and histories together. Our most intimate relationships testify to the fact that the more we know someone, the more we realize how little we know them—in solicitude, we grow in awareness as well as appreciation of this fact. For this "lack" at the heart of every relationship means that we are forever precluded from ever truly possessing, or being possessed, by another. Solicitude celebrates this lack as a gift in itself, the recognition of the sacredness of each person and their constitutive self-stories. It is empathy but not presumption, vulnerability but not self-abnegation. It is *ubuntu*, a growing in a sense of belonging to each other, and our stories being caught up with one another which nevertheless refuse to subsume or define each other.

⁴⁹⁹ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, 187 (text in italics).

This portrayal of an ethic of solicitude (at its best), rooted in narrativity and aimed at the nurturing of narrativity, is implied in the narrative of discipleship, by which disciples follow and are sent, to be generous and compassionate to the poor and oppressed, and to take stands against instances of injustice—but also, to be in ongoing relationship with the oppressed. Cultivating solicitude involves many challenges for those in every class and position of sociocultural power, including growing in awareness of intersectionality (i.e., our multiple and often-not-so-easily-reconciled communal identities) and listening for dangerous stories of hope while remaining grounded in present-day realities. But a particular challenge arises for those with one or more communal identities-belongings with privileged and/or normative cultural status: Claiming to be in solidarity with the oppressed, without living in solicitude with the oppressed, cannot by itself adequately reflect the *missio inter gentes* of the discipling community. Therefore a key principle emerging from this study of narrativity, with clear implications for Christian religious educators,⁵⁰⁰ is that *solicitude with the oppressed* (what could be called *narrative agapeic solidarity*) *can be considered the highest of Christian virtues*. It is the mark of a community that confronts the (post)modern identity crisis precisely by encouraging the ongoing narrativity of the consciousness. It challenges contemporary discipling communities in the US (and particularly those benefitting from sociocultural privilege) to go beyond benign, sanitized understandings of solidarity or justice, which ultimately do little to heal divisions or challenge divisive metanarrations.

⁵⁰⁰ See chap. 6 sec. 3, regarding the “way of being” of the community of disciples.

5.0 NARRATIVAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE EVOLUTION OF PERSONHOOD

Man's [sic] ontological vocation...is to be a Subject who acts upon and transforms his world, and in so doing moves toward ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively. This *world* to which he relates is not a static and closed order, a *given* reality which man must accept and to which he must adjust; rather, it is a problem to be worked on and solved. It is the material used by man to create history, a task which he performs as he overcomes that which is dehumanizing at any particular time and place and dares to create the qualitatively new.

Richard Schall⁵⁰¹

5.1 INTRODUCTION: A NARRATIVAL-DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE ON KEGAN

Glancing back at the roadmap once again, the overarching objectives of the entire work are outlined in the initial chapter⁵⁰² as follows:

- (1) Define and support a conception of *personal identity-as-narrative*, and to identify the responsibility of *Christian identity-as-discipleship* to promote narrativity.
- (2) Introduce and support *narrative development*, as a function of narrativity.
- (3) Suggest ways to *orient Christian religious education* in the present-day US towards narrativity and narrative-development.

⁵⁰¹ Quote in reference to Paulo Freire's prevailing philosophy of life and teaching; Richard Schall, "Foreword," in Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 32, emphasis in text. In each chapter of this work, the first instance of gender exclusivity present within a quotation is marked with [sic]; any subsequent examples within a chapter are not denoted, in order to limit the distraction of the reader, but the reader is nevertheless asked to understand the [sic] to be implied.

⁵⁰² See chap. 1 sec. 4.

Chapters Two and Three together form the work's first act, in which the first objective serves as the chief aim. In introducing the second act, Chapter Four provides a conceptual bridge between the first and second objectives, concluding with an introduction to the concept of narrativ development. The current (fifth) chapter is charged with completing this second objective, leaving the third objective primarily to the final (sixth) chapter.⁵⁰³

Narrativ development is, at its core, a *Ricoeurian interpretation of Kegan's constructive-developmental approach*. As Kegan's approach itself has yet to be discussed in detail, the natural first step in explaining narrativ development is to provide an *overview of Kegan*. Yet narrativ development is not only an abstract synthesis of Kegan and Ricoeur's existing theories; it is also influenced by a litany of narrative social constructionist (NSC) research.⁵⁰⁴ The theory is presented here in full acknowledgement of the fact that it requires further research and formal application to test its worth. Even so, the preponderance of evidence for narrativ-development within NSC research provides ample support for the approach, and has served to inform and clarify it. The second step, then, is to *outline the works of key NSC researchers* who have proved the most influential to the narrativ-developmental perspective presented here.⁵⁰⁵ Their support further enables the third step, which marks the culmination of this entire work: *an overview of a narrativ-developmental approach*, which delineates the interactions between the various narrativ modes of consciousness. This overview hearkens back to

⁵⁰³ See chap. 4 sec. 1 for another overview, which explains how these pieces conceptually fit together into an overarching argument, and aims to explain the significance of the whole. See also chap. 6 sec. 1.

⁵⁰⁴ See chap. 2 sec. 3.

⁵⁰⁵ Additional research from neuropsychology and other NSC perspectives is referenced in footnotes throughout sec. 2, as well as in the overview of narrativ development in sec. 3.

the first act, by demonstrating narrational identity-as-framed in the course of its narrational development; it also paves the way for the final chapter to offer some hypotheses and suggested practices, for a Christian religious education that productively engages various modes of consciousness in order to strengthen its narrational engagement with the world.

Beginning in haste with the first task: Kegan's constructive-developmental approach outlines five cumulative orders of consciousness—what he also calls “principles for organizing experience,” or “epistemologies”⁵⁰⁶—which are distinct yet build upon each other in succession, developing over the course of an entire lifespan. The orders correspond to certain capacities of the consciousness, which enable a person the ability to respond to the cultural and community demands being exacted upon her or him at that time:.

- For Kegan, early in life, a young child typically gains the principle of “independent elements” (or first-order knowing) and becomes capable of attaching meaning to “the momentary, the immediate, and the atomistic.”⁵⁰⁷
- This, in turn, enables the eventual formation of “durable categories” (second-order knowing), by which older children can now make properties, perspectives, dispositions/personalities, and even an inchoate sense of self and of others, all object.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁶ Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 29; 32. The following outline refers more directly to Kegan's later, more nuanced explanation of consciousness-development in *In Over Our Heads*, as opposed to his earlier *The Evolving Self*.

⁵⁰⁷ Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 29.

⁵⁰⁸ Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 29.

- The period of late childhood and adolescence ushers in growing cultural demands for “cross-categorical” (third-order) knowing, of which its mastery becomes the critical task during this period. Making durable categories objects involves being able to see durable categories in interaction. This is what enables abstractions, the formulation of ideals and values, inner states, the mutuality of relationships, etc., to begin to be gained. The third-order person begins to see oneself as a self-in-community, and as such, communal identities and roles within them start becoming more significant means of self-identification; that is to say, they become socialized. Kegan observes, however, that the onset of social-communal and cultural demands in the West for a child/adolescent to fully see and grasp oneself-as-in-community often chronologically precedes the actual gaining of this principle. This tension, and resolving it, is for Kegan the essential meaning-making task of adolescence and early adulthood.⁵⁰⁹
- The demands adulthood *itself*, however, are even more complex, and require a fourth order of consciousness. This order involves the awareness of “complex systems”: systems of abstractions, ideologies, consciousness of multiple roles and the capacity to set the boundaries between them, greater awareness of self-in-multiple-communities, etc. Adults seek to make these complex systems object. If successful they can begin to demonstrate personal autonomy, the capacity to self-regulate, the ability to individuate oneself from groups and intimate partners, to think critically and to make decisions that do not reduce

⁵⁰⁹ Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 29, 32; see 96, 287-289.

problems to good/bad or other binaries, etc. All of these, per Kegan, are necessary capacities of the consciousness to have, particularly within Western, ostensibly democratic societies.⁵¹⁰ Helping adults develop this fourth order of consciousness is Kegan's primary concern throughout the course of *In Over Our Heads*.

- Yet another, fifth level of demands exists beyond these, which Kegan identifies in terms of postmodern demands, which require a “trans-ideological” or “post-ideological” frame of reference. Viewing the relationship between complex systems *as object*, i.e., to see the *interrelatedness of persons and societies as systems*, represents such a moment where a fifth-order of functioning is being engaged, according to Kegan. Yet he cautiously asserts that social constructionists⁵¹¹ and other postmodern theorists in various fields make many fifth-order prescriptions upon others,⁵¹² when most adults today in the West have not yet even mastered the fourth-order. In his view, attention should first be paid to helping people with fourth-order consciousness, before postmodern concerns can be addressed with any integrity.⁵¹³

A narrativational-developmental approach, in essence, makes two significant, Ricoeur-inspired modifications to Kegan's model: *It reconceives subject-object relations as*

⁵¹⁰ Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 96, 302-303, 315.

⁵¹¹ Kegan actually refers to “social constructivists” in *In Over Our Heads*, a term that demonstrates the common confusion between constructionism and constructivism (see chap. 2 sec. 3, n. 132).

⁵¹² More accurately he claims that they “aim too low” and “aim too high,” simultaneously (Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 290). In Kegan's view, teachers from a postmodern critical perspective who “aim high” are those who ask students to observe and critique systems of logic that they have not mastered (*In Over Our Heads*, 290). See sec. 3 regarding “aiming” for a trans-paradigmatic consciousness.

⁵¹³ Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 292-293; see 312-317.

mimesis-poesis, and orders of consciousness as modes of consciousness. The previous chapter has already provided some of the main conceptual advantages of mimesis-poesis over subject-object relations. It has also claimed (with assistance from Freire) that such a mimetic-poetic view in turn implies the multimodal quality of the consciousness, although this claim requires additional support, which NSC researchers help provide in the next section. By synthesizing Kegan with Ricoeur in this way, the result is a more fluid, social-dialectical⁵¹⁴ perspective upon the fivefold pattern of consciousness-evolution. In addition, it is also an approach that is far more in-line with the present work's overarching motivations. Take, for instance, Kegan's prioritization of helping adults develop a fourth-order consciousness, his aim being to equip adults to contend with and meet the demands of culture. Insofar as the late-modern liberal social self (with an emphasis on personal selfhood à la Appiah) is perceived to be the epitome of psychosocial health, Kegan's desire to help others rise to the cultural demands of modern life is understandable. Yet earlier analysis⁵¹⁵ impels the critique that not all cultural demands (e.g., those that promote divisive forms of expansionism, isolationism, and/or tribalism) are worthy of being "met." *Many demands must, in fact, be resisted instead.* This difficulty is only amplified by the way Kegan essentially relegates postmodern and social constructionist concerns, ultimately deemed as secondary in comparison to late-modern cultural ideals.

⁵¹⁴ That is, by applying Ricoeur's social-dialectical hermeneutical approach, the dangers of an approach where dialectic seeks synthesis can be avoided. Indeed, constructive-developmentalists in the legacy of Erikson tend towards such "Hegelian" syntheses; Kegan mutes but does not entirely eliminate this tendency, at least when it comes to how he views orders of consciousness themselves (which are subsumed by higher orders). Regarding use of dialectic in this work see chap. 1 sec. 3, n. 45.

⁵¹⁵ See chap. 1 sec. 2.

A narrational-developmental framework, in contrast, frames identity and development around mimesis-poesis—i.e., an irreducible dialectical-dialogical process that implies mutual openness, creativity, an interconnectivity with others and an interdependence with culture and the world.⁵¹⁶ It reveals that we each have an evolutionary consciousness and live within an evolving universe, and that we live in the most human way possible when we participate in the world’s continuous unfolding. This is human beings’ “ontological vocation,” from which all meaning and culture arises.⁵¹⁷ When we come and make meaning together, telling and listening to stories old and new, then we create shared histories and discover shared destinies, and we move together towards the overcoming of our dehumanizing divisions. This is how identities are restored—indeed, re-storied. In other words, narrational development’s root motivation is the pursuit of universal human flourishing, by resisting dehumanizing metanarratives, and empowering all people to narrate and re-narrate their lives together.

5.2 SUPPORT FOR NARRATIVAL-DEVELOPMENT: FOUR VIEWS

As stated before, narrational development is not merely a synthesis of Kegan and Ricoeur (with a dash of Freire). Many other voices in and around the field of narrative psychology have contributed key insights, in addition to evidence providing further credence for the theory. Chief among these are Katherine Nelson, Valerie Hardcastle, Dan McAdams, and Merlin Donald—all of whom have already been at least named, if not discussed, in earlier

⁵¹⁶ See chap. 4 sec. 5, regarding how a narrational hermeneutic is also an ethic.

⁵¹⁷ See the introductory quote from the present chap.

chapters.⁵¹⁸ This section provides a brief overview of each of these especially helpful sources,⁵¹⁹ which reinforce the notion that narrativity is intrinsic to being human and spurs the lifelong dialectical search for meaning, i.e., identity-development. In particular they affirm both a general *multimodality* of the mind and consciousness, as well as some specific (*pre-narrative, proto-narrative, narrative, and meta-narrative*) modes which greatly resemble the first four consciousness-orders of Kegan. Taking these four distinct yet remarkably conversant approaches to development together, the narrativational-developmental perspective gains further support and depth.

*Merlin Donald and evolutionary cognitive science.*⁵²⁰ The work of Merlin Donald offers a fresh perspective on consciousness based in evolutionary cognitive psychology. He offers a compelling scientific explanation for Kegan's claim about the consciousness: "The distinguishing feature of contemporary culture is that for the first time in human history, *three* mentalities exist side by side in the adult population, even in the postindustrial, so-called 'developed' or 'First World' societies—the traditional, the modern, and the postmodern."⁵²¹ Kegan's words, even more so in the original context, strongly imply that the developmental process Kegan suggests is not only sociocultural but at once *neurological*, and that both the brain and the culture are *productions*, in a sense, that mutually inform each other and guide each other's evolution. Donald's work seeks to demonstrate this from the neurological side, namely that the brain has indeed co-

⁵¹⁸ See esp. chap. 2 secs. 3-4.

⁵¹⁹ Other "minor" dialogue partners are referenced in footnotes throughout secs. 2-3.

⁵²⁰ The present work is highly impacted by, but cannot in its limited space give justice to, the complexities and insights Donald provides in *Origins* and *A Mind So Rare*. There are manifold ramifications to his findings in regards to understanding identity, development, and educating in faith, which are left to future research.

⁵²¹ I.e., third-, fourth-, and fifth-order consciousness; Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 303-304, emphasis in text.

evolved alongside culture.⁵²² If it is the case that culture is the product of human consciousness, *and* that culture itself shapes the brain,⁵²³ then culture cannot be conceived apart from minds, and vice versa. Wielding both archaeological and neurological evidence, Donald supports this conclusion by claiming that human brains are the “hybrid products of a brain-culture symbiosis,”⁵²⁴ and that this dialectic is not only responsible for pedagogical “evolution” (i.e. learning, perspective-shifting) but for the *biological* evolution from lower primates and hominids. Kegan of course does not take this line of inquiry; for him the “three mentalities” do all co-exist today—just not in the same mind at the same time. For Donald, in contrast, the diversity of perspectives discernible in culture is itself a mirror into the brain’s evolution, where pre-modern (and even earlier!), modern, and postmodern structures can all co-exist and continue to exert their own influences and co-evolve with culture *within a single brain*.⁵²⁵

Donald’s resulting notion of the *hybrid mind* is based upon evidence of three major transitional phases in the evolutionary history of the consciousness,⁵²⁶ with each one resulting in both emergent novel cognitive-structural features corresponding with social-cultural developments. The first transition was from *Episodic to Mimetic Culture*,

⁵²² Per Nelson (referencing Donald), “[o]ur brain[s] coevolved with culture and are specifically adapted for living in culture...” *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 237. See Donald, *Origins*, 234-247.

⁵²³ See Donald, *Origins*, 11.

⁵²⁴ As quoted in Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 267.

⁵²⁵ This is a key point in *Origins*; see also 259-300; esp. Table 7.1, p. 260.

⁵²⁶ Encephalization—the evolution of the prefrontal cortex—marks the onset of consciousness (Donald, *Origins*, 7). Donald explains in detail in *A Mind So Rare* the levels of basic awareness in animals (for a summary see Table 5.1 on *A Mind So Rare*, 195), and how its cortical expansion is what makes episodic awareness—i.e., the inchoate consciousness—“complete only in primates and fully developed only in humans” (*A Mind So Rare*, 200). Cognitive archaeological research suggests that the continued evolutionary growth of human prefrontal cortex was correlated with increased analogical capacity and creativity, and that this in turn led to the critical increases in the capacities of the human *memory*; see Sophie A. de Beaune, “Technical Invention in the Palaeolithic,” in *Cognitive Archaeology and Human Evolution*, eds. Sophie A. de Beaune, Fredrick L. Coolidge, and Thomas Grant Wynn (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 6-7; 12-14.

which commenced around two-million years ago. It precipitated the start of an evolution from primate self-awareness and momentary event perception, to the early hominid's emergent capacities for pre-linguistic, pre-symbolic social structures: mime, play, simple games, gesture, toolmaking, etc.⁵²⁷ During the second transition, from *Mimetic to Mythic Culture* (beginning about a half-million years ago), hominid mimetic event representation evolved into the uniquely human capacity for oral and cognitive symbolic representation. This enabled the onset of linguistic ability and the consequent arising of *narrative thought*, as well as new oral/bodily forms of creative cultural expression: languages, oral tradition, ritual, social myth sharing, etc.⁵²⁸ This capacity and impulse to share stories and myths, which *preceded* formal language formation in cultural development, marked the arrival of *homo sapiens*.⁵²⁹ The third transition from *Mythic to Theoretic Culture* (marked

⁵²⁷ Donald, *A Mind so Rare*, 260; *Origins*, 193; see 198. The self-awareness necessary to mimic others, and to consciously rehearse and model skills via audial and bodily expressions, is what makes these new forms of interaction and cultural expression possible (Donald, *Origins*, 174), it marks the beginning of non-sensation-dependent forms of memory, as well as the possibility for genuine creativity. Neurologically speaking, Donald argued that there is evidence for a pre-linguistic "central mimetic controller" that emerges in hominid cognition during this time period, which integrates various thoughts, movements, feelings, etc. in memory. (Donald, *Origins*, 186), which cannot be so easily localized cognitively to a specific brain region; see Donald, *Origins*, 186-196. More current research than *Origins* (beginning with Rizzolatti et al., 1996; 2001) suggests that mimesis occurs at the neural-cellular level, with "mirror neurons" that activate identically upon sensing a socially-performed action by another as they do when one performs the same action her/himself. Donald, in a footnote in his subsequent work *A Mind So Rare*, suggests that these neurons, which exist in primates, "could have served as the predecessor of the human mimetic controller, but not as the sole foundation of human mimesis"; *A Mind So Rare*, 340 (in endnotes).

⁵²⁸ Donald, *A Mind so Rare*, 260.

⁵²⁹ Donald, *Origins*, 213-216. Research shows that coordinated advancements in human speech, auditory, and memory, over early ancestors, point to a "linguistic controller" system, of which "narrative thought is the normal, automatic activity" (Donald, *Origins*, 259). "Narrative skill is the basic driving force behind language use.... the ability to describe and define events and objects lies at the heart of language acquisition.... [Narrative skill] might be seen more simply as *the natural product of language itself*.... Narrative is so fundamental that it appears to have been fully developed, at least in its pattern of daily use, in the Upper Paleolithic"; Donald, *Origins*, 257, emphasis in text. McNeil cites research that supports Donald's arguments for viewing narrativity as having evolutionary roots in primates and early hominids, and that human thinking corresponds with narrative thinking; Lynda McNeil, "Homo Inventans: The Evolution of Narrativity," *Language and Communication* 16, no. 4 (1996), 336-338. Other researchers have suggested a link between the onset of ritualistic group behaviors and shared experiences, along with a sense of the spiritual, with an increased capacity for keeping attention and the advancement of working memory; see e.g. Matt J. Rossano, "The Archaeology of Consciousness," in *Cognitive Archaeology and Human Evolution*, 30-34. Ritual is a cognitive and social advancement that goes beyond simple rehearsal

by the emergence of *external* symbolization, beginning roughly forty-thousand years ago)⁵³⁰ transpired through initial gains in the human capacity to preserve and re-tell oral stories, which came in the form of pictures, pictographs, and eventually written language, among other forms. For Donald such externalized configurations are extensions of the human mnemonic system itself, and thus he calls them “external symbolic memory storage.”⁵³¹ These cultural forms enable increasingly-vast networks of personal and social memory to supplement biological memory, as well as the composition of written narratives with even greater permanence and transferability between contexts than oral stories. Externalized symbols further led to the arrival of analytic processes, such as arguments, taxonomies, verification systems, logic, measurement, etc., the culmination of all these being the employment of integrative theories, i.e., systems of thought with explanatory power.⁵³²

It should be quickly noted that Donald’s terminology is conspicuously similar to language already used in this work: Coming from drastically disparate perspectives, Donald’s depiction of the actions of a “mimetic mind” is not exactly the same thing as the “mimesis” that Ricoeur sees as critical to human interpretation—although they are

activities, that naturally involves mythologizing and other forms of story-telling. The key implication here is that language was *not* the precursor to culture, story, or ritual, as might be expected, but instead that there were pre-linguistic forms of communal connection, as well as the creation of a proto-culture, which created the conditions for language to emerge (See Donald, *A Mind So Rare*, 254); these elements are considered in this project to be related to developmental pre-narrativity (see sec. 3 below).

⁵³⁰ Donald, *Origins*, 276.

⁵³¹ Donald, *Origins*, 273.

⁵³² Donald, *Origins*, 273-274. Social-dialectically, then, it is expected that these externalizations have had effects upon the modern human mind, namely in terms of how learning has become increasingly visual and literacy-based (since the written word became more ubiquitous in Western culture) and how memories are developed and stored as it works with “external symbolic storage” networks (see *Origins*, 312-314; 331). Yet while modern thought cannot be understood apart from this mind-culture interaction, it must be stressed that the high mark of the physical-cognitive evolution of humanity is the mind’s capacity to explain the world and to narratively share meanings with one another, and not its capacity to theorize and systematize, or to read and write (all of which require external symbolic networks).

related. Yet notably both Donald and Ricoeur suggest that story-sharing epitomizes human meaning-making. And if this story-sharing itself evolves out of the mimetic, i.e., representational, cognitive capacities of pre-humans, then Donald provides formidable support for the validity of a narrativational-developmental perspective. Nelson's research, in fact, picks up on this significance.

Katherine Nelson's "weak" recapitulation. The notion of human development being somehow a "recapitulation" of evolution is one with an embattled history (even if the idea has begun to be reclaimed).⁵³³ Yet Donald's hybrid mind correlates with social constructionist notions of cognitive development. Moreover his hypothesis on mind-culture evolution is almost Vygotskian, and once again correlates with NSC approaches to the developmental patterns of early childhood. These correlations have proved too compelling for Nelson, in particular, to ignore. Describing her approach as a "weak" recapitulation of Donald's view of cognitive evolution, Nelson designates six levels of the emergence of consciousness in children, which roughly correspond to Donald's first three forms of mind-culture (i.e., episodic, mimetic, and mythic).⁵³⁴

⁵³³ According to Wertsch (*Voices of the Mind*, 23-24), biologist Ernst Haeckel in 1874 was the first to propose the recapitulation of evolution within human development; the idea was popularized by G. Stanley Hall (1906). His and related theories were resounding debunked by the mid-to-late twentieth century. Nelson thus self-designates her approach as a "weak" recapitulation; i.e., it is not suggesting false equivalencies between primate and early childhood cognition, but only a resemblance that per Donald is the direct result of the hybrid mind's evolutionary architecture (Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 48-50). Not surprisingly, both Piaget and Vygotsky's notions of development were influenced by the post-Darwin interest in evolution (Wertsch, *Voices of the Mind*, 24-25), although the rise in interest of the latter figure in the US over the past thirty years has led per Nelson to a surge of interest in "biocultural developmental psychology," among the likes of Cole (1996), Rogoff (1990, 2003), Valsiner (1987, 1998), Wertsch himself (1985, 2001), et al.; see Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 53. McNeil also offers a list of many researchers suggesting that some kind of recapitulation of evolution occurs in child development (see "*Homo Inventans*," 351).

⁵³⁴ To be precise, Nelson [in an earlier work, *Language in Cognitive Development: The Emergence of the Mediated Mind* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996)], connected Donald's levels of consciousness to child development, but concluded that the levels nevertheless formed and then functioned "more or less simultaneously" (Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 50). The outcome of this comparison, however, led Nelson to develop a more complex developmental approach, which is outlined in six levels in *Young Minds in Social Worlds* (see 50). And so the six levels do not precisely match with

- The first two levels of consciousness in development, *basic awareness* and *social consciousness*, correspond to the pre-mimetic, episodic culture in Donald that reaches its evolutionary peak in primates. Here the roots of social interactions are formed, eventually reaching a peak moment around the middle to late first year of life, when three-way interactions (between self, other, and object) and shared forms of attention become possible.⁵³⁵
- This shared attention enables the movement towards a third level, *cognitive consciousness*, marked by the onset of more intentional mimetic learning (like Donald), rehearsal activities that become the primary way the late infant/early toddler discovers the world.⁵³⁶ Such repetition and rehearsal in turn enables the advancement in functional cognitive memory,⁵³⁷ which allows early toddlers to form simple mimetic games, learn songs, and anticipate sequences of behavior routines. As the child thusly develops an inchoate sense of time, she or he learns to locate oneself within these scripts, leading to a fourth level of *reflective consciousness*. Self-reference and representation here becomes more established, enacted scripts and scenes of action become more sophisticated and elaborate, and social awareness increases. Scripts and early

Donald's (although in Table 1 in sec. 3 their correlation is approximated). Nevertheless an evolutionary pattern is evident in development without attempting to draw a strict parallel with phylogenetic evolution.

⁵³⁵ Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 85. This has been often studied in terms of "joint attention" between caregivers and late infants/early toddlers. Tomasello (1992, 1999; Carpenter, Nagell, and Tomasello, 1998) has researched the importance of shared intention of consciousness between caregiver and infant is critical to later development, esp. to language and cognition (see Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 76). The social consciousness Nelson describes, when compared to Donald, would fall somewhere between a purely episodic and a more intentionally mimetic mode of consciousness.

⁵³⁶ Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 85-86.

⁵³⁷ Here marks the beginning of explicit forms of memory, although such memories remain relatively short and require proximity to experience (see Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 89).

play, says Nelson, evince the ways that information is being stored—⁵³⁸ i.e., according to experiences and repeated representations, linked together in temporal sequences. This expansion of “temporal capacity” (from momentary, proximate events to longer, more durable sequences) marks successive advancements in memory, and in turn, the rudimentary imagination,⁵³⁹ since now events, persons and objects can be intentionally represented in new circumstances.

- Even as oral language skills begin to emerge in the prior levels, in Nelson’s view the full representational powers of language begin to materialize for the late toddler/young child, in the form of a budding narrative consciousness (akin to Donald’s mythic mind): A child begins ““thinking in language,”” making intramental references to the world and engaging in self-talk.⁵⁴⁰ A sense of the self-in-time, via autobiographical memory, begins to take greater shape, as ongoing narrative talk with caregivers leads to greater mnemonic capacities.⁵⁴¹ She or he makes advances in her or his ability to follow and tell simple stories and myths, to report activities, to plan for events, and to enter into dramatic, creative forms of social play.⁵⁴² All of this contributes to increasingly-complex story-sharing, eventually culminating in a capacity to

⁵³⁸ Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 89.

⁵³⁹ Central to Nelson’s view of memory is that “the basic function of memory is preparation and support for future action” (Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 89), a dialectic negotiated by the consciousness—yet she notes that children at this age cannot yet transfer meanings and objects into new scripts, and have a limited sense of past which in turn limits their view of the future (*Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 114-115). Representations are still limited to proximate contexts, the imaginative consciousness’ primary task being the ongoing expansion and integration of scripts and roles within social settings. This prepares the mind for the imaginative capacities that will come with the onset of narrative memory and consciousness.

⁵⁴⁰ Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 183.

⁵⁴¹ Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 184; 197.

⁵⁴² Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 169-172; See also McNeil, “*Homo Inventans*,” 352-353.

attribute “motivations, goals, emotions and beliefs of other people”⁵⁴³ as well as the self to story *characters*. This *narrative consciousness* is what eventually paves the way for the child to enter into a *cultural consciousness* and into the wider public discourse Nelson calls (echoing Donald) the “community of minds.” Herein lies the aim of Nelson in *Young Minds*: to locate the roots of cultural awareness in the narrative identity development of early childhood, by which hybrid minds come to meaningfully and creatively participate in social-cultural life.

Valerie Hardcastle’s “multiplex” narrative self. While Hardcastle does not propose a specific process of narrative identity development like Nelson, she, more directly than either Donald or Nelson, articulates human’s inborn desire to “share the world” in community that underlies social-dialectical learning as well as the evolution of an explicitly narrative sense of self.⁵⁴⁴ Even the seemingly-reflexive, mimetic utterances and gestures of infants, she insists, are best understood as a “sharing back” of what was shared with them by caregivers, an engagement by which there is a constant social and reflective workshopping of accruing meanings.⁵⁴⁵ As previously discussed,⁵⁴⁶ her particular emphasis is on the emotionally-laden nature of this dialectical engagement that suggests the human brain’s hard-wiring for narrative.⁵⁴⁷ Hardcastle explains that the frontal lobes are actually intricately interconnected with the thalamus, hypothalamus, and

⁵⁴³ Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 205.

⁵⁴⁴ Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 19; 54-55; 63.

⁵⁴⁵ Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 55.

⁵⁴⁶ See chap. 2 sec. 2.

⁵⁴⁷ Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 57-58. Allen Schore (following Bowlby) states that facial recognition and cues from the caregiver constitute early imprinting and attachment, which actually change the chemistry and cellular structure of the brain. See Allan N. Schore, *Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self: The Neurobiology of Emotional Development* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 91; 145; 167.

other parts of the limbic system. This interconnectivity suggests a two-way interrelationship between the more-primal hindbrain with which we are born, and the forebrain that continues to evolve in a sociocultural dialectic throughout life.⁵⁴⁸ Thus there is an inherent linkage between cognition and emotion,⁵⁴⁹ i.e., between a remembered event, person, image, sound, etc., and what was experienced neurochemically and emotionally at the moment of the experience. From infancy onwards our most salient life-experiences, whether positive or negative, along with the social-relational information received from them, are the ones that are most likely to become lodged in the memory. Over time these memories, whether shaped via dialogue with others or not, form a pre-narrative, emotional “‘core’ around which we structure our views of ourselves and the world.”⁵⁵⁰

Hardcastle and others have demonstrated that the very means of cognitive development is, in fact, guided by and structured in accordance with the brain’s emotional system. Early story-sharing, moreover, utilizes and refines those emotional roots of the cognitive information embedded in memory. NSC research has demonstrated how even from early childhood, children use story-fragments and create their own *proto-narratives*, which are per Fivush “emotionally meaningful, causally connected sequences

⁵⁴⁸ See Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 78-82. “Indeed, evolutionarily speaking, it appears that the cortex is really just overgrown hypothalamic tissue”; Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 57. Hardcastle thus hypothesizes, based on research and anecdotal evidence, that the “battle” in neuroscience between “cognitive appraisal-like theories” that emphasize cognitive-affective unity, and “basic emotion reductive theorists” who prioritize brain localization and physiological responses is a false one. That is, humans have hard-wired emotional responses, *and* emotions can mature and evolve (and take on culturally-specific and personal flavors) over time; these are not mutually exclusive realities; Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 83-84. See also de Beaune, “Technical Invention in the Palaeolithic, 12-13.

⁵⁴⁹ Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 59.

⁵⁵⁰ Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 58 (citing Eder 1994 et al.) Per Schore, all people undergo some sort of social-affective attachment process in their earliest years that forms the basis for the cognition, relationships, emotional regulation, actions, etc., upon which meaning-constitutive narratives are based, and so can be rightly called the “core” of one’s identity. Schore, *Affect Regulation*, 497-498.

of actions [in order to] provide both temporal and evaluative cohesion to life events.”⁵⁵¹ Hardcastle emphasizes how important these early proto-narrative activities are in helping children develop a remembered “framework in which to appreciate the present and by which to anticipate the future,” i.e., an inchoate sense of identity.⁵⁵² But story-sharing is also their natural “way of caring about ourselves and others. It is a way of integrating and consolidating our affective reactions to the events around us, a way of making our life events meaningful, to us and to others.”⁵⁵³ This is still being learned and practiced in early childhood, but in short order it becomes an ongoing, lifelong process.

This emotional-cognitive interrelationship, related to the interconnectivity between forebrain and hindbrain, is another indication of the hybridity of the mind. Hardcastle refers specifically to a related notion of a “multiplex” mind,⁵⁵⁴ which allows for multiple I-positions to co-exist. Hardcastle’s polyphonic constructionist view of the self suggests that the various self-stories one tells are configurations between a person’s emotional core and a particular social context, through which she or he forms various roles and characters. What prevents this natural multiplexity of the mind from devolving into a dissociative, disorienting *multiplicity*, in her view, is to increase narrative self-coherency—by developing personal storytelling skills, finding or creating metaphors to

⁵⁵¹ Robyn Fivush, “Constructing Narrative, Emotion and Self in Parent-Child Conversations About the Past,” in *The Remembering Self*, eds. Neisser and Fivush, 136. Fivush is cited by Hardcastle, along with others who have helped demonstrate the early protonarrativity of children, namely Eisenberg (1985), Hudson (1990); Miller & Sperry (1988), and Nelson (1988); in Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 60.

⁵⁵² Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 60.

⁵⁵³ Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 62-63. This view is supported by Schore, who demonstrates how emotional regulation (i.e., an infant/toddler’s ability to manage the continuous onslaught of sensory-emotional data) is a product of “the [social] experience-dependent development of the corticolimbic system” (Schore, *Affect Regulation*, 66), i.e., the neural network interconnecting the forebrain and hindbrain. Of course, not all stories are told; often unpleasant ones are suppressed, or the stories people consciously tell do not always align with their subconscious, latent “potential stories” (Ricoeur); this can cause psychological distress; Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 109.

⁵⁵⁴ Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 121.

explain difficulties, and learning how to better integrate their past, present and future⁵⁵⁵

At least with this prescription, Hardcastle concurs with her life-story NSC counterpart, Dan McAdams—even if he places a stronger emphasis upon life story-coherence.

Dan McAdams: Beyond the Early Years of Narrativial Development. A pioneer of life-story research, McAdams' foremost concern is the integrative narrative (and metanarrative) work done by young and middle-aged adults.⁵⁵⁶ Yet this concern is embedded within a comprehensive view of identity-development, which he designates as having “prenarrative,” “narrative,” and “postnarrative” phases.⁵⁵⁷ Early in childhood the “prenarrative” self gains an inchoate sense of intentionality, and in so doing, children “gather material for the self-stories they will one day construct.”⁵⁵⁸ This marks the emergence of autobiographical memory that corresponds with a growing self-awareness. McAdams uses the words “episodic” and “social” to describe memory in this early stage—words also used by Donald and Nelson, respectively—and eventually through repeated social-sharing it begins to gain greater narrative *coherence*.⁵⁵⁹ McAdams follows Habermas and Bluck's (2000) four types of narrative coherence as a guide

⁵⁵⁵ Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 118-119, 122.

⁵⁵⁶ It is not difficult at all to find references in psychology to the role of narrative in adult identity development; indeed it has been a prevailing theme in the literature. Narrative therapy, to give but one example, emerged in the 1990s initially through the works of Michael White and David Epston, and has since blossomed into a robust set of theories and psychotherapeutic methodologies that all advocate for adults' need to re-work and re-narrate their told and untold life-stories. See an overview in Kevin Bradt, SJ, *Story as a Way of Knowing* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1997), 108-117; see also Catrina Brown and Tod Augusta-Scott, “Introduction: Postmodernism, Reflexivity, and Narrative Therapy,” in *Narrative Therapy: Making Meaning, Making Lives*, eds. C. Brown and T. Augusta-Scot (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2007), ix-iviii.

⁵⁵⁷ McAdams, “Personality, Modernity, and the Storied Self,” 310-311. Elsewhere he refers to “three phases” of life as “premythic, mythic, and postmythic” (*Stories We Live By*, 277). These categories demonstrate the Eriksonian roots of McAdams' thinking.

⁵⁵⁸ McAdams, “Personality,” 310.

⁵⁵⁹ McAdams, “Identity and Life Story,” in *Autobiographical Memory*, 191.

here:⁵⁶⁰ Around five to six years of age—when Nelson’s “narrative consciousness” emerges—early story-sharing begins to increase in (1) “temporal” and (2) “biographical” coherence. Young children begin connecting momentary events in sequences and applying social-cultural norms upon these sequences; that is, they are learning how good stories are structured and told, and what kind of information stories contain.⁵⁶¹ For McAdams, however, it is usually not until adolescence that people begin to regularly speak of life-events as self-constitutive in some way, i.e., with (3) “casual” coherence. They also begin to reference the integrative themes, values, and principles that connect various life-episodes; this is (4) “thematic” coherence.⁵⁶² So we see here a narrative consciousness, which is in a more inchoate state in early childhood; then as a person approaches early adulthood, it gradually reaches a level of maturity.

Adulthood for McAdams is dominated by the identity-task of developing autobiographical resources, by continuing to make causal and thematic connections between salient present events and past emotionally significant experiences.⁵⁶³ Early-to-middle adulthood is often when people begin cultivating and refining their storied self-characters into *imagoes*, which are co-products between a person’s narrations and cultural-communal influences.⁵⁶⁴ He examines especially how adults cull and consolidate

⁵⁶⁰ See McAdams, “Identity and the Life Story,” esp. 192-193; for orig. article see Tillman Habermas and Susan Bluck, “Getting a Life: The Emergence of the Life-Story in Adolescence,” *Psychological Bulletin*, 126 (2000), 748-769.

⁵⁶¹ McAdams, “Identity and the Life Story,” 192.

⁵⁶² McAdams, “Identity and the Life Story,” 192-193.

⁵⁶³ Jennifer Pals, “Constructing the ‘Springboard Effect’: Causal Connections, Self-Making, and Growth Within the Life Story,” in *Identity and Story*, 176. These “causal connections” are conspicuous examples of mimesis-poesis from the present view.

⁵⁶⁴ McAdams, *Stories we Live By*, 124-126; for a definition of imago see chap. 2 sec. 3. Imagoes for McAdams correspond to people’s deepest narrational motivations for agency and communion, and he organizes them accordingly in *Stories We Live By*, 124. Recall from chap. 2 sec. 2 that agency and communion are the most primal modes longing for meaning, out of which location and purpose evolve (see Table 1 in sec. 3 below); McAdams’ typologies inform these secondary longings as well.

these imagoes over time, and especially how they inform life-stories featuring themes of *generativity* (Erikson).⁵⁶⁵ The most satisfying and integrated life-stories rank high in generativity, which is related to *purpose* in the present terminology; McAdams' life-story methodology looks for generative themes as indicators of personal mythology and core life themes.⁵⁶⁶ The integration of imagoes and the pursuit of generativity are tasks which span adulthood, until late in life, when McAdams suggests a post-narrative self, a person in "life review" (Robert Butler) who is less concerned with making mythical meanings and more with "looking back on the making."⁵⁶⁷

Narrative-Development as a Unified Perspective. All four of these perspectives, in their own way, support the notion of narrativity as a feature of human development. Taken individually, they do not offer as comprehensive of a vision as Kegan; yet when considered together, they provide enough overlap so as to suggest a general concurrence regarding the following summary points: (1) Human beings have an *intrinsic capacity to narrate*, to "share back" life with others (mimetic-poetically), that is ingrained within their mental makeup.⁵⁶⁸ (2) This narrativity is the foundation of human identity, spurring

⁵⁶⁵ Erikson located most work in generativity to be done in mid-life; McAdams certainly focuses on this life phase as a time where generativity concerns are the most pressing, yet he more accurately understands generativity to be something that begins evolving in adolescence, and then gradually moves from the periphery to the focal point of one's identity-formation to serve as a consolidating and integrating force; see *Stories We Live By*, 232-233.

⁵⁶⁶ McAdams' research methodology includes asking participants for articulation of a "future script" (McAdams, *Stories We Live By*, 260), "personal ideology" (262-263), and "life theme" (263-264).

⁵⁶⁷ McAdams, *Stories We Live By*, 278. This should not be compared or confused with a "trans-paradigmatic" consciousness (see below, sec. 3), or with Kegan's fifth order of consciousness; this is rather a shift in the kinds of narratives and metanarratives people tell as a result of their place in life. It is closer to Erikson's way of approaching end-of-life questions.

⁵⁶⁸ This "push to narrate," per Bruner, has been a constant drumbeat throughout this entire work—but Donald's research, which suggested that the sociocultural emergence of narratives corresponded in evolution with the emergence of *homo sapiens* as well as of bona fide culture, connects this claim to the genesis of humanity itself. Hardcastle's emphasis upon the emotional roots of narrative provides a more practical explanation that concurs with previous citations. McAdams ties personal narratives and their manifestations even through adulthood, to the two primal yearnings of meaning-making: for agency and for communion.

lifelong identity-development, which is contingent upon the *ongoing social co-construction of narrativel meanings* between a person and other persons, communities, and cultures.⁵⁶⁹ (3) The resulting *human mind is essentially hybrid*, and especially as people age and continue to co-construct meanings, *the consciousness driving identity becomes increasingly complex and layered in its operations*. It begins to operate *modally* (rather than via established “orders” or “stages”), utilizing both less and more developed forms of awareness in different settings. These available consciousness-capacities, however, remain interrelated with various social contexts.⁵⁷⁰ These three claims together point to the key hypothesis, that (4) *identity-development is a product of the ongoing and lifelong narrativity of the consciousness, which includes pre-narrative, narrative, and metanarrative meaning-making capacities*, all of which work within a hybrid mind-in-culture.⁵⁷¹ Having taken, in this section, an entirely different path of inquiry than the

⁵⁶⁹ Even if it does not explicitly consider self construction beyond the age of six, Nelson’s entire process, which builds upon Donald, certainly implies a centrality to narrative in the meaning-making process throughout life. The first four, “pre-narrative,” orders of consciousness in early childhood that Nelson names build towards a narrative consciousness. This capacity, in turn, enables the child to access the wider culture, the community of minds, which informs meaning-making activity for the rest of life. In other words, narrativel skill is the gateway to community and culture, and consequently to lifelong psychosocial health and to healthy circles of relationships. This concurs with both Hardcastle and McAdams as well.

⁵⁷⁰ Donald’s evolutionary model offers a coherent explanation for concurrent layers of consciousness, and the neurological findings cited by Hardcastle supports this explanation. These provide some critical clues as to how the overall complexity of the brain and of consciousness, and therefore human behavior and choice, can be perceived even if it cannot be fully comprehended.

⁵⁷¹ Nelson’s suggestion that the evolutionary stages of mind-culture according to Donald correspond to psychosocial development is a critical insight, even if her perspective is limited to early childhood. McNeil makes noteworthy similar claims to Nelson, and *independently of Donald or Nelson*, specifically identifies “prenarrative” primate, “protonarrative” hominid, and narrative human activities as together having a rough yet uncanny correspondence to child development. See McNeil, “*Homo Inventans*,” 331-360. Similarly Salvatore, DiMaggio and Semerari propose a developmental approach that moves from pre-narrative, to proto-narrative, and then to various narrative capacities, focusing on the importance of verbal interactive narrativity for psychological health. See Giampaolo Salvatore, Giancarlo Dimaggio, and Antonio Semerari, “A Model of Narrative Development: Implications for Understanding Psychopathology and Guiding Therapy,” *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice* 77 no. 2 (2004), 231-254.

previous chapter—with Ricoeur, Kegan, and Freire—the resulting conclusions are remarkably similar.⁵⁷²

The correspondence goes even further: Donald and Nelson together quite compellingly suggest that McAdams' pre-narrative consciousness can be further divided into two sub-categories—a pre-narrative consciousness that centers upon objects, persons, surroundings, etc., as well as a “*proto-narrative*” *consciousness* that seeks to view the world in terms of relationships and to connect objects and persons in space-time. These two modes correspond with Kegan's first and second orders of consciousness, respectively—and in turn they lay the foundation for narrative capacities which resembles Kegan's third-order.⁵⁷³ At this point of development, following Nelson and Hardcastle, access to culture dramatically widens beyond a person's most immediate spheres of influence, enabling the possibility for ongoing dialectical evolution throughout the teenage and young adult years, and indeed throughout the lifespan. This advanced meaning-making includes the work of life-storying (per McAdams), and of the development of generative themes within in through the course of adulthood, both of which involve broader kinds of narratives (e.g. myths) and paradigms, but can be considered related to a “*meta-narrative*” kind of awareness. It is readily associated with Kegan's fourth-order, which involves the ability to sort through a litany of disparate social-cultural demands (i.e. narrational themes, values, goals, etc.), and in the process becoming a more individuated self-in-communities-of-selves.

⁵⁷² See chap. 4 sec. 4.

⁵⁷³ Kegan offers a narrative-based analogy about the movie *Star Wars*, in fact, to demonstrate these three orders (from his view): Young children focus on individual (quite flat) characters they can name and describe; somewhat older children can string events together into sequences; it is not until later that the movie can be considered in relation to a movie's plot's overall meaning(s), i.e. its themes. Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 33.

Given all of this confluence between the Kegan-Ricoeur-Freire synthesis, and the unified picture of NSC-development via Donald, Nelson, Hardcastle, and McAdams, et al., it is natural to wonder Is there perhaps another sub-category of metanarrative consciousness, one that corresponds with Kegan's fifth-order, where human relationality and intersubjectivity begins to be taken up as object? Such a mode would indeed seem to correspond well with the polyphonic NSC-theorists who speak of selfhood in terms of a multiplicity-in-dialogue. Awareness of the interrelationality within oneself implies a corresponding capacity to view the self as one who interrelates in communities, and between multiple communities.⁵⁷⁴ Perhaps researchers with such a polyphonic NSC view can shine a light on how a fifth-order consciousness might be viewed narratively, how it relates to the other modes, and whether or not (or why) it is as difficult for most adults in the West to pursue as Kegan surmises.

5.3 AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS OF NARRATIVAL DEVELOPMENT

The hypothesis of narratival development from the previous chapter has now been supported with research-based evidence. Taken together, along with additional research, the basic developmental modes of narratival-development can now be proposed. Even as it is inspired by Kegan, narratival-development, taking the insights of NSC-

⁵⁷⁴ This correspondence is implied in social constructionism, and in Donald's view of mind-culture; it also reflects the tenant of liberation psychology that our inner life is symptomatic of our outer, political life. Watkins and Shulman, e.g., suggest the importance of having a *nomadic* sense of consciousness, a polyphonic notion (as defined here). "The nomad does not take up residence within one fixed and central experience of identity, but can blur fixity, using ambiguity as a bridge to connect with multiple others and aspects of self." Watkins and Shulman, *Towards Psychologies of Liberation*, 166.

developmental research seriously, distinguishes itself from Kegan in important ways, most conspicuously by employing the dual notions of *mimesis-poesis* and the *hybrid mind*. Mimesis-poesis emphasizes not only the social, but also the practical, “trial-and-error”-like,⁵⁷⁵ and contextual nature of learning. It sees identity-development as an ongoing process that can go many directions, and can develop even amidst inconsistencies between personal narratives, each with different contexts. The mind’s hybridity, further, allows for a way to view the mind as operating under various co-existing modes of consciousness, even as the modes interweave and inform each other. Learning a new mode of consciousness necessitates *aiming*, so to speak, for a mode that has not yet been fully gained; it requires activities that are more imitative (i.e., mimetic) than creative (poetic) at first, before there can be greater creative control exerted in configuration and refiguration (i.e., before a perception becomes “object,” and then consciously applied to the field of memory). Therefore these modes are presented as in-process, and as much as is possible in the scope of the present overview, some explanation of how mimesis-poesis occurs and changes in each mode is provided. An overview is provided in Table 1.

⁵⁷⁵ Donald evocatively calls this “linguistic idea laundering”; Donald, *A Mind So Rare*, 287; see 287-290.

Approx. Mode of Consciousness ⁵⁷⁶	Meaning-Making Activity ⁵⁷⁶	Narrative Yearnings Expressed	Narrative Elements	Donald (sec. 2)	Nelson (sec. 2)	Kegan (sec. 1)	Fowler (<i>Stages of Faith</i> , 52; see sec. 4) ⁵⁷⁷
--	Sensing	Agency, Communion	sounds, basic gestures	--	Basic	--	Undifferentiated
Pre-narrative	Naming	Agency, Communion	words, basic concepts, more complex gestures	Episodic	Social	independent elements	Intuitive-Projective
Proto-narrative	Sequencing	Agency, Communion, <i>Location</i> ⁵⁷⁸	basic sentences, timelines, routines, roles, scripts, early play, scenes	Mimetic	Cognitive, Reflective	durable categories	Mythic-Literal
Narrative	Narrating	Agency, Communion, Location, <i>Purpose</i>	setting, orientation, evaluations, plot resolution, point of views, personality, character, ethics/goals	Mythic	Reflective, Narrative, Cultural	cross-categorical	Synthetic-Conventional
Metanarrative	Integrating	Agency, Communion, Location, Purpose	abstract themes, values, principles, nuclear episodes, myths, paradigms, imagoes, generativity, conscientization	Theoretic	--	complex systems	Individuative-Reflective
Trans-paradigmatic	Negotiating	Agency, Communion, Location, Purpose	"Deep I," interconnectedness, intersubjectivity	--	--	trans-ideological	Conjunctive (Universalizing)

Table 1. Summary of Narrative-Developmental Modes of Consciousness in Comparison with Other Developmental Models.

⁵⁷⁶ As they evolve via mimesis-poesis, the lines between the various modes and activities of the consciousness are *permeable*, and their development is *multi-layered, contextual, and always in motion*. Viewing them from a table belies these critical differences in assumptions, in contrast to other developmental approaches. Even so, the table enables the modes to each be compared individually with other influential perspectives.

⁵⁷⁷ James Fowler's specific "stages of faith" are included here as an interesting point of comparison, given the claim made in sec. 4 that Fowler spoke of faith he was, in fact, speaking about narrativity.

⁵⁷⁸ *Italics* in this column are used to show that a particular yearning-expression is emerging as both cognitive and linguistic tools develop. (Note that agency and communion do not require language or symbol to be expressed, whereas location and purpose do.)

Towards a Pre-narrative Consciousness: From Sensing to Naming. Human beings are born into a sea of experiences, which bombard an infant's sensory faculties with essentially raw information. Additionally we are born with a limbic system which serves to guide and focus our most basic forms of awareness—although only a modicum of resources for interpreting this information is hard-wired into the system. Thankfully the desire to socialize and form attachments is also part of that hard-wiring, for this enables the lifelong entry into social-cultural dialectics, the mechanism for our ongoing social, emotional, *and* cognitive postnatal development.⁵⁷⁹ Earliest interactions with especially primary caregivers concern learning how to communicate basic needs and feelings (e.g. hunger, fear, joy), a process guided over time by caregiver's responses to requests and indications of relation and understanding. Interactions also involve visual, tactile, and audial bonding, involving an infant's cueing into caregiver signals and developing what Schore calls the "dyadic amplification of positive affect." By this social dialectic, the facial cues of each other elicit both a mutual mirroring of those facial cues, as well as shared dopaminergic arousal.⁵⁸⁰ Vocalizations, tactile sensations, and limb movements are the infant's first means of expression, and through this shared attention with caregivers, these gradually begin to take greater shape and intentionality as the infant develops physically.

All of these social-dialectical processes are also essentially mimetic-poetic, and together they suggest the earliest bases of those aforementioned neural networks that link

⁵⁷⁹ Schore cites research (Milner, 1968, Bucher et al. 1970, Hasselmo et al., 1989a, etc.) that together suggest that infant cortical development follows the same patterns of caregiver cognition, via the guidance provided in social interaction and specifically gaze (*Affect Regulation*, 77). Based on more recent research, mirror neurons (see n. 527 above in this chap.) might help explain why this is the case.

⁵⁸⁰ Schore, *Affect Regulation*, 82.

forebrain with hindbrain, cognition with emotion and sensory data. Social-developmental engagement is driven from the beginning by both attachment, and by the stimulating and enriching process of mimetically-poetically practicing various forms of expression—in other words, by the dialectic between communion and agency, respectively.⁵⁸¹ Gradually, as the intentionality of expression increases and as myriad meanings become linked within the memory, the capacity for early forms of representation emerges. A more raw imitation of caregiver vocalizations and movements⁵⁸² can now yield to more intentional (poetic) meaning-expression. By this ongoing externalization, which can be further informed by caregiver signaling, meanings become more fully internalized. In this way, conceptual frameworks begin to form even before the onset of full language-acquisition. Caregiver feedback from early vocalizations, guided by these inchoate connections, motivates the sharpening of vocal utterances into first words—in other words, the desire for communion informs the desire for increased agentic capacities, which in turn enable more complex forms of communion. And once children fully realize their newfound capacity to assign meanings in the form of labels to elements of their experience, most cannot stop exercising that capacity!⁵⁸³

⁵⁸¹ See Table 1 for what yearnings of narrational identity (chap. 2 sec. 2) are capable of being interpreted while utilizing each mode of consciousness.

⁵⁸² This is facilitated by the typical inclination of caregivers to condescend (in the best sense of the term) to infant vocalization (especially), creating a “zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky) for the infant to mimetically-poetically cross. E.g., even if a caregiver asks an infant “Would you like some milk?” and the infant mimetically responds “Ma?” most caregivers will not simply repeat the question again, but they might repeat the specific word “Milk”; they might go get a bottle to show the child; they might make a social gesture (e.g. baby sign language), etc. Caregivers (presuming they are properly motivated by love and by their heightened sense of narrational generativity—or if they are simply disproportionately preoccupied with their child’s linguistic development) seem to almost inherently know how to do this.

⁵⁸³ See Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 102.

These early processes, culminating in the gained capacity to *name* reality,⁵⁸⁴ correspond to Nelson's description of the evolution from basic awareness to (early) social consciousness. Obviously a young child's learning to name objects, actions, desires, etc. can be considered pre-narrative, in the sense that words/symbols are used to make sentences and stories. Pre-narrative naming remains a valuable and necessary part of existence throughout life. Because of it, most adults very rarely, except when disoriented, experience the world as raw sensation. But in order to truly understand naming as pre-narrative and therefore significant to later narrative-formation, it must be stressed that these pre-narrative determinations are contextually developed. The environment in which a child learns the proto-word "nana" (i.e., the repeated experience of eating, feeling, smelling, and tasting mashed bananas, along with the corresponding feelings of hunger-relief and comfort, all associated with the closeness and smiling face of a caregiver, as well as with the audible word "banana" itself)⁵⁸⁵ is critical to the learning of the word and the meaning it carries for that child. Once competency is gained, the concept and/or symbolic "name" can then be mimetically-poetically reapplied into new contexts.⁵⁸⁶ Of course, the earlier and/or less salient the contextualized memories which

⁵⁸⁴ This is "typification," per Berger and Luckmann; see Freedman and Combs, *Narrative Therapy*, 24.

⁵⁸⁵ Nelson gives a similar example: a toddler might say "car," but in the particular context of watching the street through the window—thus the word actually signals an entire remembered situation with multiple components [She references her own earlier (1973) work, as well as Bloom (1973), Piaget (1962) and Vygotsky (1962) regarding this insight]. Nelson's research describes names and their constitutive learning environments as "functional core concepts," emphasizing the practical and contextual nature of learning a concept. See Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 103.

⁵⁸⁶ An implication here is that the Piagetian notion of early cognitive organization can be viewed as a product of contextual, social, and practically-centered pre-narrative and proto-narrative memories. Object qualities are acknowledged and categorized *insofar* as they illuminate the particular practical and social functions of the object itself in the toddler's world. (E.g., a child learns that "milk" and "water" are both kinds of the category of "drinks," but what motivates this learning is the repeated context of eating dinner with the family and learning to choose between two options and express preferences within this context.) Nelson supports this claim when she notes that first words are both expressive and referential, and their formation centers around (1) understanding the environment, (2) using objects within it, and (3) being able to share in conventional meanings with adults (see Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 120-125).

surround the formation of named core concepts are, the more likely they will fade over time—most adults, after all, do not recall when and how they learned about bananas. Sometimes the name-concept⁵⁸⁷ will become re-embedded within a newer, more salient memory; oftentimes it will begin to connect with a plurality of memories. Whatever the case, these names so-conceived are the building blocks of narratives, and their meaning from the start is contextually loaded. Thus they are pre-narrative, ready to be deployed into increasingly-narrative forms.

Towards a Proto-Narrative Consciousness: From Naming to Sequencing. As the memory continues to accumulate awareness of things within its surroundings, and as various conceptual wholes demonstrate trustworthiness (i.e., object permanence) over time, the memory begins to make further gains in its spatial and temporal capacities, and memories and meanings themselves become more “durable” (Kegan), especially those which are the most emotionally-salient.⁵⁸⁸ The social-dialectic between toddlers with caregivers remains crucial in this rapid expansion of memory-capacity. Research shows that caregivers naturally begin to talk about the past with toddler-aged children, even while their language-acquisition is still in its early-to-middle stages. By asking recall questions (“Remember when...?” or “And then what happened?”) and then asking them to fill in the gaps, they provide a spatiotemporal scaffolding that then asks children to do what they have already begun to do with a degree of agency: to mimetic-poetically name recalled entities, events, states, etc., to be situated within that scaffolding.⁵⁸⁹ This is an

⁵⁸⁷ By “naming,” word and concept become merged, per Vygotsky; see Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 147.

⁵⁸⁸ “Affective ties are the most fundamental relationships [in meaning construction] and we build from there. Development [of meaning structures] entails learning to perceive the world apart from our emotions.” Hardcastle, “The Development of the Self,” in *Narrative and Consciousness*, 44.

⁵⁸⁹ This is illustrated well in a study by NSC-researcher Robyn Fivush, “Constructing Narrative, Emotion, and Self” (in *The Remembering Self*), 136-157. Per Hardcastle, through these shared events the parent “is

example of young children dialectically learning, alongside caregivers, how to stitch together objects and properties into a spatiotemporal sequence that then connects and qualitatively transforms those meanings. Through this and similar social and mimetic-poetic activity, the primal narrational yearnings of agency and communion enable a third narrational yearning to spring forth: one for (spatio-)temporal coherence (Habermas & Bluck),⁵⁹⁰ i.e., to see oneself in relation to the surrounding world. This has been referred to elsewhere in this work as the longing for *location*.

The burgeoning of a consciousness that links and combines, i.e. a *sequencing consciousness*, can be viewed in other ways as well: Since learning is contextual and memory is spatiotemporal, pre-narrative memories are often remembered in terms of audial-visual *scenes*, with all elements recalled in relation to each other.⁵⁹¹ Mimetic-poetic externalization of such memories frequently takes the form of early *play*, where objects are manipulated, gestures are performed, multi-step procedures and behavior patterns begin to be enacted, and proto-scripts of adults and characters are imitated.⁵⁹² Children also learn from, and become highly dependent upon, repeated caregiver-

giving a personal example of the strategy for how her culture and community would understand the child's life," by telling in elaborate and affective-laden ways to which even the youngest of children are naturally responsive (*Constructing the Self*, 61-62, quote on p. 62).

⁵⁹⁰ Nelson explains games, songs, and scripts in toddlers to be the early patterning and organizing of experience; see Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 89.

⁵⁹¹ This is how Salvatore et al. primarily views "proto-narratives": as "emotionally marked," "micro-sequences of mental images"; Salvatore et al., "A Model of Narrative Development," 236. "According to Guidano (1987), images are the most basic level of representation/construction of the self. The stringing together of images in episodes is, to use a biochemical metaphor, the 'primary structure' of complex narratives; the enzyme that puts together the various units is emotion. Emotion helps to make an image stay quite a long time in mental space and to generate narratives that are consistent with itself." Salvatore et al., "A Model of Narrative Development," 238. Salvatore thus affirms the dependence of proto-narrative on pre-narrative meaning-making and on the emotions—he also prioritizes visual memory over audial and linguistic, which is at once a potential oversight, and also a helpful corrective to most developmental psychologists in English-speaking academia who are more likely to prioritize language and conceptual development.

⁵⁹² Donald's "mimetic mind" in early hominids was marked by the onset of these sorts of proto-narrative and sequencing skills: mime, games, play, rehearsal, toolmaking, reproductive memory, etc. (Donald, *Origins*, 193).

established patterns of their own behavior, or *routines*, that are internalized.⁵⁹³ Routines also include, as toddlers continue to gain greater awareness of their emotional states and desires, the sequences of caregiver behaviors that they observe which correspond to these states and desires.⁵⁹⁴ Autobiographical dialogue, play and routine all contribute to a developing awareness of *roles*, whereby communal narrational *scripts* begin to be mimetic-poetically applied to oneself and/or to others (such as basic sequences of behaviors and attitudes pertaining to a “mommy,” or to a “firefighter,” which are practiced in early play). Finally, it is no coincidence that toddler and very early childhood is both when proto-narrative consciousness developed and when *language* is mastered, for each drives the other’s development. The child learns to grammatically connect objects, states, and actions (through imitating prepositions, cue phrases such as “and then,” etc.) and this increase in linguistic skill aids the replicability and capacity to externalize scripts. Language becomes a key way for children to maintain the social dialectical feedback system with caregivers that they use to gauge the meaning-value of their scripts and other sequenced conceptions.

⁵⁹³ Nelson refers to the research of Bauer and Wewerka (1997) and Lucariello et al. (1986) that states what every parent knows all too well: Children depend upon routine to anticipate and structure their experience, and will become adamant about retaining the proper order of events. Nelson affirms that these routines and other scripts form the basis of self- and other-knowledge and knowledge about how the world works in general, and are key to the development of the child’s early memory systems (Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 89-90).

Note the dialectical dependence of the child here upon the caregiver to establish the sequence to be imitated is similar to what occurs in autobiographical memory exchanges.

⁵⁹⁴ The classic example of this is the so-called *fort-da* game as discussed in Sigmund Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. C.J.M. Hubback (London: International Psycho-Analytical Press, 1922), 11-16. The game of throwing and retrieving ordinary objects as a cathartic means of dealing with an absent caregiver is comforting precisely because it replays (even if symbolically) the sequence of events by which a caregiver’s leaving is followed by a returning. Combine this notion with Schore, who argues for ongoing parent-child interactivity to be the basis for the child’s development of an internalized affect regulation system: “The core of the self lies in patterns of affect regulation that integrate a sense of self across state transitions, thereby allowing for a continuity of inner experience”; Schore, *Affect Regulation*, 498. The implication here is that games, role play, simple scripts, etc., activate and develop children’s inchoate affect regulation, by utilizing their agency to better grasp events and persons in time, and by helping them mimetic-poetically gain perspective of their situated selves.

If these developments, which are initially more mimetic than poetic and more external than internal, correspond to Nelson's cognitive consciousness, then as it leads to more poetic forms of interaction, this development loosely corresponds to the onset of per Nelson an emergent reflective consciousness.⁵⁹⁵ The meaning-making of early childhood is defined by this transition, where social scripts, roles, routines, etc., become internalized and more intentionally re-worked within social-dialectical moments,⁵⁹⁶ and each instance of configuration offers the possibility for a mimetic-poetic evolution of meaning. Perhaps the most apparent way children exhibit a more developed sequencing consciousness is the rapid expansion of play capacities, especially once certain roles and scripts (at varying speeds and ages of onset) become more object.⁵⁹⁷ Children can now begin to assign myriad roles to real or imagined others, and strive to perform various kinds of increasingly-interactive scripts with either real or imagined others. They can assign more creative symbolic tasks to objects (e.g. using a pool noodle as a fire hose). They can begin to creatively (poetically) combine elements from other scenes and scripts into new scripts, or introducing roles endemic in one context into another. Early play typically

⁵⁹⁵ See Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 114-115.

⁵⁹⁶ Internalization is a term that goes back to the US pragmatists, but can tend to convey the notion that once a concept is "internalized," it becomes fixed in some way. It is true that concepts (as well as reactions, emotions, behavioral patterns, etc.) can become quite rigid in adult minds, and societal meta-narrative authoritarianism actively seeks to promote this rigidity. Yet the fact that all learning exists within a social dialectic, and the possibility of the transcendence of the reflexive consciousness, means that there is always the possibility for breakthrough and/or change. This is a key point for Wenger: "Practice, even under circumstances of utter control and mandates, is the production of a community through participation. This local production implies a notion of agency in the negotiation of meaning, which even the most effective power cannot fully subsume. It is a small opening, a crack that represents a limitation to the application of power." Wenger, "Communities of Practice and Social Learning Systems," PDF, Wenger-Trayner Consulting website, Accessed February 13, 2018, <https://wenger-trayner.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/09-10-27-CoPs-and-systems-v2.01.pdf>; 9. See also Wenger and Lave, *Communities of Practice*, 258. Of course, toddlers and children naturally remain quite malleable, even as they develop more durable conceptions.

⁵⁹⁷ "Various action modes—imitation, gesture, object and event play, category sorting—allow toddlers to represent their meanings, their knowledge of things and how they function in events in the child's world. The representations are external, 'in the world' and available for viewing... [by] others..." Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 101-102.

marks the earliest instances of children's attempts to take another's perspective and to resolve conflicts, even if in limited ways at first.⁵⁹⁸ It allows them to learn how to situate and observe themselves in *relationships* with real or imagined others in a sequence of places, objects, states, and events.

This explosion of the child's imagination, and the child's ability to engage and share imaginatively,⁵⁹⁹ is appropriate deemed the onset of a *proto-narrative* consciousness, by which the early preschool-aged memory makes rapid gains in spatial and temporal capacities, and can imitate (mimetically) biographical coherence, where the cultural rules of storytelling can begin to be socially practiced, even if they are inconsistently applied. The scripts, routines, roles, and other linguistic/symbolic resources corresponding to these gains are proto-narrative. These resources help signify the beginnings of an episodic, proto-autobiographical memory,⁶⁰⁰ insofar as they are linked to emotionally-salient memories,⁶⁰¹ and provide ways to structure and interpret pre-narrative emotions and events by establishing simple causality and context.⁶⁰² When these conditions are met, children can develop an imprecise sense of a meaningfully-lived self-history,⁶⁰³ in enduring and meaningful relationships with others. This is an inchoate sense of self, in the sense of *idem* (Ricoeur), an ability to experience "sameness" through time. In other words, there is now some trustworthiness and permanence to the memories

⁵⁹⁸ Deficiencies in early play, which often correspond to instances of abuse or neglect, can conversely hinder narrational capacities from developing into and through adulthood. This was visible in Belenky et al. (1986) in their interviews women demonstrating "silenced" forms of knowing; see Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (Basic Books, 1986), 33; see 32-34.

⁵⁹⁹ See Loder, *Logic*, 154-155.

⁶⁰⁰ Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 184; 187.

⁶⁰¹ Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 89-90.

⁶⁰² Fivush, "Constructing Narrative," 136; see Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 59-60.

⁶⁰³ Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 60.

of core relationships and communities, life-events, and enduring characteristics (e.g. preferences). These memories form the content-basis for a future sense of selfhood.⁶⁰⁴

Towards a Narrative Consciousness: From Sequencing to Narrating.

Routines, scripts, and even early play, do not rise to the level of full-fledged story-telling, the “detour” of the consciousness that Ricoeur describes—at least not at first. Yet even the youngest children are seemingly predisposed to *receive* stories, and to want to be drawn into them. Young children ask for stories to be repeated again and again, and demonstrate the memorization of words, and even of scenes and characters. Stories offer children the opportunity to see *life itself* re-presented to them, with objects, people, landscapes, time, change and continuity, etc. They sense story’s importance, its sacredness. By mimesis-poesis children begin first associating words, and then statements and sequences, in the stories they hear. This helps them begin to configure the objects, people, events, activities, and roles from one’s own life.⁶⁰⁵ The refiguration of these stories in the consciousness enables additional new names/concepts and sequences/relationships to be creatively imitated in play, dialogue, and self-talk.⁶⁰⁶ Life-

⁶⁰⁴ A controversial study by linguist Daniel Everett (2005) of the Pirahã of Brazil, cited by Hardcastle, yields profound insights into an instance of a community where their language, among other anomalies, contains very little reference to time, and has extremely limited ways to express durable relationships, ongoing activities, or indeed abstractions or generalizations at all. They have no myth or fiction; if asked about their history they reply, “‘everything is [always] the same’,” says Everett. At times they starve even when there is abundant food, because they do not prepare or store food, unlike other indigenous peoples in that region. Per Hardcastle, who somewhat acknowledges the danger of colonialism-like over-interpretation here, the Pirahã provide a “non-pathological case of a Strawsonian self: no past, no way to think about oneself reflexively, and no way to generalize or abstract” (Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 32; see 30-32). It must be noted that the Pirahã serve as an extreme example, even amongst the least “modernized” of societies. They are, in the present author’s view, the exception that proves the rule, that narrativity is foundational to human culture. But the Pirahã illustrate the importance of temporality and how it is necessary to view things in relationship to each other, as well as how a sense of temporality is necessary for narrative and a narrative self.

⁶⁰⁵ See Nelson (citing Miller, Hoogstra, Mintz et al., 1993), *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 174.

⁶⁰⁶ Nelson’s earlier research (1991; 1996) discusses her daughter Emily’s early mimetic-poetic narrational work from her crib: She would look at a familiar book during naptime, recalling phrases as she followed the pictures, and interpolating events and characters from her own life as she did so; see Nelson, *Young*

memories and fictional memories continue to be drawn upon, again and again, and reshaped through socially-constructed, mimetic-poetic work—what Barclay referred to as “improvisational activities...of autobiographical remembering...[which] create *protoselves*...”⁶⁰⁷ This will become the foundation for the story-consciousness which will eventually provide the preschooler with a new level of resources with which to help construct her or his own self-in-world.

What are the differences between proto-narrative consciousness and narrative consciousness? How does narrative emerge out of “mere” sequences and scripts? William Labov has extensively researched oral self-stories, and has identified these essential elements: *abstract*, *orientation* to time and place (i.e. taking the detour), *complicating action*, *evaluation* (the point of the narrative), *resolution* and *coda* (the return from the detour into the present time).⁶⁰⁸ Gaining full command of these elements as narrators takes many years, and indeed a lifetime. But even preschool-aged children can begin to pick up this basic structural pattern of oration, again via the mimesis-poesis of caretakers⁶⁰⁹ and of the wider cultural environment, including storybooks. In particular, Labov’s story-element of evaluation seems critical,⁶¹⁰ since evaluating itself implies the

Minds in Social Worlds, 176-177. Emily was literally utilizing fiction to process her own history, to echo Ricoeur.

⁶⁰⁷ Craig R. Barclay, “Composing Protoselves Through Improvisation,” in *The Remembered Self*, 70.

⁶⁰⁸ These were originally the findings by Labov and Walentzky (1967), see William Labov, *The Language of Life and Death: The Transformation of Experience in Oral Narrative* (Cambridge: University Press, 2013), 5.

⁶⁰⁹ The co-narration of the past that happens between caretakers and children, described above, helps teach this basic structure. For example, the parent ends the recollection of an event with “wasn’t that fun?”—an evaluative comment, to which the toddler parrots the obligatory “yea.” Eventually, with greater linguistic and cognitive skill, the child begins to mimetically-poetically experiment with evaluations on stories, and looking for social cues as to whether or not the declaration “this is fun!” was utilized correctly, and/or if it generates positive affect in caretakers. Eventually they begin to creatively imitate more complex deliberations, and relating events to one’s own emotional state, likes and dislikes, i.e., early sense of self.

⁶¹⁰ The importance of evaluation became one of the most frequently-cited points of the original Labov and Walentzky (1967) paper; see Labov, *Language of Life and Death*, 5.

presence of a self who evaluates, who can consequently become a self-aware narrator. Moreover, an evaluative statement in reference to a story involves a speaker who is postulating a basic faith in personal meaningfulness. That is, to evaluate assumes that the events of the past and present are significant to a person, and that that meaning is persistent, and is worthy of being shared in story-form with others. Early narrative evaluation, then, plays a key part in the onset of the reflective consciousness that Nelson claims to begin around the fourth year of life. This capacity denotes a proto-narrative consciousness that is more clearly beginning to aim mimetic-poetically towards a narrative consciousness, even if the posited linkages between action and evaluation are not quite clear.

This aiming-towards narration continues for most of early childhood, up until around five and six years of age—the point where Nelson claims that the primary learning goal of early childhood should become realized: the earliest demonstrations of a full-fledged autobiographical memory, which is “in an important sense the culmination of the development of [a sense of] self in time.”⁶¹¹ This involves a more consistent sense of self-continuity, corresponding with children’s social sharing of storied memories, reflecting past events with present-day significance, which can then be projected towards the future.⁶¹² Such self-stories now involve evaluations that directly follow from action, along with resolutions which more satisfyingly imply the ongoing significance of events and potentially future action. Establishing greater temporal and biographical story-

⁶¹¹ Nelson, *Young Minds in Social Worlds*, 205 (with bracketed insert added in order to avoid confusion, since what Nelson means by “self” is not the same as Ricoeur or McAdams).

⁶¹² In other words, one’s sense of temporal *location* in the world starts becoming quasi-permanent (subject).

coherence, motivated by an emergent yearning for location, are thus the foremost goals of early self-storying.

Of course, at this age, storytelling is still not well developed. Self-stories do not typically begin to demonstrate signs of a continuous plot line through time, until around ages eight and nine,⁶¹³ whereupon the causal connections between evaluations and events seem to become clearer. As a child approaches adolescence, he or she is moving from merely having a sense of being- and acting-in-time, to expressing a greater awareness of time-as-purposeful, in the form of stories. This older child can now begin to emplot their self-stories similarly to what adults often do: by centering upon a seminal, “meaning-full” event, and mentally-socially re-constructing surrounding events and character-actions in ways that enhance the present and future significance of that event, making this significance plain in the story’s evaluation. This is a more poetic-form of narrative consciousness that displays a degree of casual coherence through the configuration of *plot*, by which life is not only imitated, but is also creatively appropriated so as to enhance its meaningfulness. The narrator, in other words, begins to possess greater rhetorical control over the meanings she or he intends to communicate with others through the telling of a self-story. And as such narratives are the creative re-presentation of life itself, they are the work of mimesis-poesis *par excellence*.⁶¹⁴

⁶¹³ A study by Miranda and Miranda (1971), as reported by Loder, claims that by age seven, children can begin to grasp a sense of their own history, and can label (i.e., evaluate) characters, but cannot grasp plots as wholes. By eight, a basic plot form emerges; by nine a child can develop a timeline with a complete plot/causal structure; by ten a child can do this with quite a bit of proficiency. Loder, *Logic of the Spirit*, 190-191.

⁶¹⁴ Donald says that “once we have leaped into a narrative mind-set, our worlds become virtual ones...If mimesis is our cultural glue, stories are the main by-product, as well as the principal organizing force...[i.e.] the oral tradition...They are the imaginative fodder of self-identity, morality, class, and authority.” Donald, *A Mind So Rare*, 295.

Throughout the development from proto-narrative to narrative sharing, emplotment skills are developing concurrently with proto-narrative roles and scripts. These relatively-flat communal identities become more three-dimensional, and within a full-fledged plot emerge as *characters* of the self. Characters emerge when all the elements of a story per Labov—settings, past and present events, key actions/reversals, evaluations, and consequences—now clearly affect, and are affected by, *perspective/point of view*, *personality traits*, *ethics/values*, and *goals*, in addition to roles. These are mimetic-poetic creations that are formed amidst of a child's ever-expanding access to communal identities and to the wider culture. As this access increases, the idealized characters of cultural and communal narratives are discerned, and then imitated. The interrelationship between the I and the We, discussed in the second chapter, becomes even more conspicuous here.⁶¹⁵ And so self-stories are now where the self-as-character—rooted in the narrational memory, situated within particular communities, and informed by cultural and communal stories—is continually worked-upon, in ways that reflect the deepest yearnings of the human spirit. Older children and adolescents in this way continue to refine and reimagine their agency-in-communion in various communities, strive to define more clearly their sense of location in the world (e.g. their network of relationships and communities, etc.)—and now also begin to attribute a sense of *purpose* to their assumed characters. By resubmitting one's character to a community, the evaluative feedback it provides can confirm, deny, or seek to modify a narrator's self-presentation and/or its meaning. And as characters develop and become more refined, self-stories become more purpose-filled, and thus meaningful.

⁶¹⁵ See chap. 2 sec. 5.

Towards a Metanarrative Consciousness: From Narrating to Integrating.

Naming, sequencing, and narrating all continue to co-exist as consciousness-modes throughout life. At times we still interpret things and persons in terms of their “is-ness,” as determinable, time-less realities (i.e. naming); other times in terms of simple relationships and sequences of actions, effects, and/or behaviors (i.e. sequencing). But for most adolescents and adults, the narrative consciousness serves as the primary means by which people confirm, adjust, or reorient their life-meanings, in profound as well as more ordinary ways. Yet as cultural access continues to widen, since the narrative consciousness is where communal identities begin to develop alongside personal identity in the form of characters, it is also where adolescents and young adults can first begin to experience this intermingling between personal and communal identities in stories as a tension. Typically people deal with the tension subconsciously and mimetic-poetically, by attempting to apply plot evaluations and character traits from one context into new ones. They often begin telling new kinds of self-stories, ones that span wider lengths of time, that demonstrate more permanent character developments and which are more selective with regards to details. These stories tend to be organized around especially-salient events (what McAdams calls “nuclear episodes”), the significance of which can be applied far more broadly to a person’s life, so as to indicate a more consistent and powerful narrative identity over time.⁶¹⁶

As with the previous developments, this remains a highly social-dialectical activity. Cultures and communities offer various *mythic* forms,⁶¹⁷ which offer well-rehearsed plot patterns, and standardized and culturally-approved evaluations, both of

⁶¹⁶ McAdams, *Stories We Live By*, 259.

⁶¹⁷ McAdams, *Stories We Live By*, 50.

which together communicate a *theme* that implies a *communal value*. And so as adolescence and early adults live in the throes of the search for thematic coherence (according to McAdams), myths offer direct assistance in this pursuit. It is where mythic archetypes⁶¹⁸ mimetic-poetically become configured and refigured within self-stories that imagoes, the “main characters” of our lives,⁶¹⁹ begin to take more discernible forms. The lifelong project of living into, expressing, culling, and refining these imagoes then commences.

Mythic themes and values are absorbed intentionally and also subconsciously through various forms of cultural intake—but they can also be extracted from their narrational origins, and re-presented as abstracted truths, within the context of *paradigms*. Thomas Kuhn defined these as the “models, patterns, traditions of thought, or descriptions of reality that had achieved such overwhelming consensus within a given community or culture as to become acceptable as a functional substitute for reality itself.”⁶²⁰ Paradigms are the cultural perspectives which purport to state “the way things are,” thus discouraging people to narrate or to examine reality itself—or at least to make it seem unnecessary to do so. They are thus a step further removed from narratives, by taking the lessons, themes, values, goals, etc., from the evaluations of lived stories or myths, and abstracting them so as to widen, or even universalize, their applicability. It is similar to how reifications emerge from participations in communities of practice,⁶²¹ in order to guide ongoing participations. In fact, not coincidentally, many forms of

⁶¹⁸ See chap. 2. sec. 5, regarding myths.

⁶¹⁹ McAdams, *Stories We Live By*, 122; see McAdams, *Stories We Live By*, 124, Fig. 1.

⁶²⁰ As quoted by Bradt, *Story as a Way of Knowing*, 64. In other words, paradigms are meta-narrational constructs, which encourage pre-narrational (un-reflective) engagements with the world by others, taking the “truth” those constructs depict for granted.

⁶²¹ See chap. 2 sec. 5.

reification (rules, boundaries, axioms, verdicts, power structures, etc.) are precisely the means by which paradigms are implicitly and explicitly communicated and taught.

Paradigms, along with corresponding cultural myths, together constitute much of the meaning-content people absorb from culture. When they are combined and systematized, this is considered an *ideology*, a powerful set of ideas with pervasive influence over a community or society.⁶²² When wielded by those in power,⁶²³ ideologies often serve as the oppressive “metanarratives” in the Lyotardian sense—where cultural myths, paradigms and other reifications (songs, symbols, monuments, etc.) all reinforce and reference each other, so as to establish cultural normativity and sociocultural hierarchies, bolster social cohesion, discourage disruptive behavior, etc.⁶²⁴ Ideological systems are how meta-narrative authoritarianism most demonstrably manifests itself, thereby encouraging the social divisions and expansions necessary to maintain dehumanizing social stratification, as well as discouraging narrativity.

As for individual persons, as they begin to develop imagoes, this indicates a mimetic-poetic reaching towards what can be called their own meta-narrative consciousness. Like cultural metanarratives, this mode of consciousness seeks narrative *integration*. That is to say, that from the myriad of character and plot-forms ascribed to oneself, people in communal and cultural dialogues begin to synthesize and prioritize some into one or more imagoes, while diminishing or dismissing others.⁶²⁵ As they age

⁶²² Narrative therapist Michael White follows Foucault in discussing how we “internalize the ‘dominant narratives’ of our culture, easily believing that they speak the truth of our identities”; as quoted by Freedman and Combs, *Narrative Therapy*, 39.

⁶²³ The shalom-Reign of God is an example of an ideology that need not (and indeed should not) be considered oppressive or manipulative. See chap. 6 sec. 2.

⁶²⁴ Bradt, *Story as a Way of Knowing*, 65.

⁶²⁵ “As adults we develop meta-accounts to explain discrepancies (Turner 1980). We are distressed when we find incoherence; it is psychologically important to us to maintain continuity, so we have to devise ways

and takes on parental and other responsibilities, McAdams, following Erikson, suggests that self-stories naturally become increasingly focused on generativity, i.e., a concern for an even deeper sense of lasting *purpose*.⁶²⁶ This contributes to the desire to integrate, to orient more and more life activities and experiences towards the generative goals that bolster legacy, enhance the lives of others, etc.⁶²⁷

This integrative work is influenced by a number of factors, not the least of which being each person's own history of pre-narrative, proto-narrative, and narrative meaning-making. Emotionally-salient events, when repressed or dissociated⁶²⁸—as was the case with Freire prior to returning to Jabotão—can go unnamed and unnarrated. The more such events correspond to narrational yearnings (agency, communion, location, purpose), the more emotionally-salient they will be, and the more important it is for them to become a story-told, lest they lead to psychological disturbance (see Table 2). Adults struggle in successfully integrating their narratives selves, so long as significant aspects of the self continue to go unnarrated, or if certain stories or characters are poorly constructed, contradicting or suppressing other stories/characters. Narrative therapists⁶²⁹

to explain away discontinuities, by narrating from different points of view.” Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 119.

⁶²⁶ Yet note that McAdams (*pace* Erikson) includes generativity as an motivating factor from the start of the identity-journey in adolescence and young adulthood, and that “identity becomes more and more concerned with generativity as we mature” (McAdams, *Stories We Live By*, 232) largely due to the assumption of more generative roles in mid-life and beyond (McAdams, *Stories We Live By*, 233).

⁶²⁷ McAdams suggests that certain imagoes primarily emphasize either agency or communion, but some (e.g. healer, teacher, counselor, humanist, arbiter, etc.) inherently combine agency and communion; these then are more conducive to mythic integration (McAdams, *Stories We Live By*, 124).

⁶²⁸ Hardcastle cites Sarbin (1992) who suggests that dissociation is directly correlated to a failure in narrational skills (i.e., “authorship”); see Hardcastle, *Constructing the Self*, 121.

⁶²⁹ In addition to Freedman and Combs’ *Narrative Therapy*, a helpful primer is Alan Parry and Robert E. Doan, *Story Re-Visions: Narrative Therapy in the Postmodern World* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1994).

work to help persons re-access and narrate repressed meanings, as well as to guide them in re-narrating bad self-stories and characters that have precluded personal integration.⁶³⁰

Senses of Self	Corresponding Psychological Disturbance if Lacking	Corresponding Narrativational Yearning/Activity
Agency	Paralysis, Sense non-ownership of self-action, Feeling of loss of control to external objects	Agency
Physical cohesion	Fragmentation of bodily experience, Depersonalization, Out-of-body experiences, Derealization	Spatial Location
Continuity	Temporal Dissociation, Fugue states, Amnesia	Temporal Location
Affectivity	Anhedonia, Dissociated States	Intrapersonal Communion
Achieving intersubjectivity with others	Cosmic loneliness, Psychic transparency	Interpersonal Communion
Creating organization	Psychic chaos	<i>Proto-narration and narration</i>
Transmitting meaning	Exclusion from culture, No socialization, No personal validation	Purpose/Generativity
Source for First Two Columns: Hardcastle, <i>Constructing the Self</i> , 112 (data from Stern 1985, 7-8).		

Table 2. Correspondence between Expressions of Narrativational Yearning and Potential Psychological Dysfunction when Yearnings are Repressed or Unnarrated.

⁶³⁰ McAdams distinguishes between these two strategies of “myth change”: the “developmental” (the re-working of existing myths) and the “personological” (uncovering the untold or repressed pre-narrative stories of the past); see *Stories We Live By*, 270-275. Two other aforementioned examples of “developmental,” overtly-integrative approaches includes Proffo’s life-study work, and McAdams’ own life-story research methodology (which might be as much, if not more so, therapeutic and constructive as it is descriptive of something already-present; see *Stories We Live By*, 251-264.

Meta-narrational authoritarianism, again, is another factor. In general it encourages integration—but only via its own limiting myths and paradigms. When these conflict with people’s developing self-stories and imagoes, it can lead to psychological dissonance. This occurs when people are guided by cultural-political ideologies that promote either their inferiority or superiority in relation to other identity-groups, as well as mask the less-palatable implications of this ideology so as to maintain a moral legitimacy. It also occurs when a specific community of belonging seeks to shape self-stories so as to reflect its own values, which might contradict what persons in the community value. Both situations encourage more-mimetic-than-poetic forms of story-integration to persist, and promote mythic forms that freeze and attenuate selfhood through repeated, vicious circles of confirmation bias.⁶³¹ In contrast, Freire’s pedagogy for conscientization centers upon encouraging the continued fluidity of identity and identity-exchange⁶³² through critical dialogue, which reveals myths and paradigmatic structures to be *creations*, in dynamic relation with “the role of man as Subject in the world and with the world,”⁶³³ and not simply preordained, unquestionable truths. This development towards more poetic forms of meta-narrativity involves, per Freire, taking the “causal links” that one perceives in narrative thinking, and “submit[ting] that causality to analysis” that does not relegate narratives to “established fact.”⁶³⁴ In so doing, one does not merely construct new, or reinforce old, myths and paradigms, but

⁶³¹ See Watkins and Shulman, *Towards Psychologies of Liberation*, 128, with reference to Santner.

⁶³² Concerning “fluid identities” see Watkins and Shulman, *Towards Psychologies of Liberation*, 162; see 158-174.

⁶³³ Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, 46. Recall the introductory quote to the present chap. by Schall. Schall also clarifies a “subject” to be one who knows and acts in the world (not to be confused with Kegan’s usage) as opposed to “objects” merely acted upon (in Foreword to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 36 n. 2).

⁶³⁴ Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, 43-44.

rather begins to become conscious of those myths and paradigms as such themselves. Integration, then, becomes the work of a narrator who is increasingly aware of his or her own capacity to narrate, at least in some way and in certain contexts. That is to say, the maturing adult, who tries to self-differentiate amidst various communities-belongings and societal demands,⁶³⁵ is becoming increasingly aware of meta-narrative influences, and learns to engage with and respond to them, as opposed to merely being manipulated by them.

Beyond Metanarrative Consciousness: Integrating and Negotiating. McAdams' work presumes a high degree of self-awareness in the consolidating of imagoes, to the extent that a subject's integrative work achieves some sort of unity in the form of an overarching, "master" personal myth centered on nuclear episodes; his life-story methodology intends to make this myth explicit.⁶³⁶ Of course all people have nuclear episodes (key life moments) which mark personal timelines, as well as provide the critical tensions for their most salient and repeated self-stories. There is also psychological as well as ethical merit to a person being able to articulate consistent themes and values across multiple communal-cultural spaces, which indicates a more integrated sense of self. But if integration, in this narrative-developmental approach, is

⁶³⁵ Jungian psychology emphasizes how such individuation works paradoxically: as one becomes disentangled from social narratives and myths, and thus more responsive and malleable, the possibility for deeper relationships with both oneself *and* others increases; see Watkins and Shulman, *Towards Psychologies of Liberation*, 149.

⁶³⁶ See Peter Raggatt's critique of McAdams et al. concerning this very tendency, in "The Landscape of the Dialogical Self: Exploring Identity with the Personality Web Protocol," *Narrative Inquiry* 12, no. 2 (2002), esp. 292-294; see also Raggatt, "Multiplicity and Conflict," 15-35. The latter article quotes Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Silber (1998), who have "observed that 'a life-story that is provided in an interview (or any other particular setting) is...but one instance of *the* life-story....The particular life story [presented] is one...instance of the polyphonic versions or possible constructions... of people's selves and lives'" ("Multiplicity and Conflict," 21). Another helpful exploration of polyphonic selfhood is Tova Hartman Halbertal with Irit Koren, "Between 'Being' and 'Doing': Conflict and Coherence in the Identity Formation of Gay and Lesbian Orthodox Jews," in *Identity and Story*, 37-61.

viewed in terms of conscientization, then it must be noted that achieving narrational unity is not really the point of integration. It is less a matter of coming to a wholly-coherent and articulated (metanarrative) self-understanding—for again, no self-stories or imagoes are ever entirely freed from specific cultural influences—and more about people becoming more practiced and resourced as *narrators of their selves-in-world*. As such, people develop unifying narrative themes, styles, perspectives, and ideally a commitment to generativity and a set of life goals; yet they remain in dynamic relation to the world and are in the end never finished in the lifelong search for meaning. This is just as well, according to the polyphonic NSC-theorists. As previously discussed,⁶³⁷ they see the adult identity-goal as more about fostering dialogue between her or his most salient, dialectically-worked imagoes, than about achieving a sense of self-unity—which is often an illusory sense, anyway. In fact, many researchers suggest the danger of overemphasizing personal homogeneity: it can discourage ambivalence (and thus encourage inflexible meaning-making and/or unwitting capitulation to dominant voices),⁶³⁸ force people to deny aspects of their own narrative experience,⁶³⁹ or even lead them back into accepting meta-narrative authoritarianism and into viewing communal identities in absolute and polarized ways, and othering of the other.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁷ Chap. 2 sec. 3.

⁶³⁸ António P. Ribeiro and Miguel M. Gonçalves, “Innovation and Stability within the Dialogical Self: The Centrality of Ambivalence,” *Culture and Psychology* 16, no. 1 (2010), 116-126 (see esp. p. 123); see also Ribeiro and Gonçalves, “Maintenance and Transformation of Problematic Self-Narratives: A Semiotic-Dialogical Approach,” *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 45 (2011), 281-303.

⁶³⁹ Halbertal and Koren’s narratives of Orthodox Jewish persons who have also come to fully accept themselves as gay/lesbian demonstrate the difficulty, in fact the impossibility, for them of a pure unity of self; by holding both communal identities in tension they refuse to deny aspects of themselves, when doing so would likely result in psychosocial disturbance. See Halbertal et al., “Between ‘Being’ and ‘Doing,’” esp. 52-56.

⁶⁴⁰ See Watkins and Shulman, *Towards Psychologies of Liberation*, 165.

The aforementioned idea of a polyphonic self-in-dialogue (via Hermans and Kempen; Bahktin; etc.), might well explain these limits of self-integration. It might further lend credence to a *trans-paradigmatic* form of consciousness that can be in some manner aware of its own plurality, which itself is due to self-formation occurring within manifold cultural/communal contexts. And so people at some times can seek out, and continuously rework their own imagoes so as to better integrate them—but at other times they might come up against the limits of these storied characters, especially upon better understanding how paradigms affect them. In these cases, the goal is not simply integration but also a productive, corresponding *negotiation*, i.e., a process of dialogical co-adjustments and of establishing relationships between two or more imagoes.⁶⁴¹ From this perspective, then, there is credence to the suggestion from an earlier chapter:⁶⁴²

Integrating self-stories and imagoes, and negotiating between them, are not two mutually-exclusive strategies for psychosocial well-being, but are actually two sides of an ongoing dialectic of meaning-making for many adolescents and most adults. From a Freirean perspective, in fact, these are naturally-related processes: Becoming aware of oneself-as-Subject who is in transformative narrational dialogue with culture, goes hand in hand with learning to embrace one's own "nature as a project" who is "immersed in a

⁶⁴¹ This negotiation process is well-described by Halbertal and Koren in the real-world context of gay and lesbian Orthodox Jews; see "Between 'Being' and 'Doing,'" 57-58. The notion of integration and negotiation as a unified process is articulated well in Hammack's study of highly polarized, "hyphenated identities," e.g. "Palestinian-Israelis," which are passed down via "master" narratives (i.e., myths and paradigms), and processed/interpreted via "personal narratives" [self-stories and life-stories; see Phillip L. Hammack, "Narrating Hyphenated Selves: Intergroup Contact and Configurations of Identity Among Young Palestinians of Israel," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 34 (2010), 371-372]. Hammack concludes, "As the trajectory of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians endures, so too does the struggle for *identity negotiation and integration* among young Palestinian-Israelis... This work suggests that, as a collective, Israel's Palestinian citizens are increasingly tipping the weight of their hyphenated identities toward the Palestinian, rejecting the state's attempts at subordination and delegitimization (e.g., Nasser & Nasser, 2008; Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker, 2005)." Hammack, "Narrating Hyphenated Selves," 380 (emphasis added).

⁶⁴² See last par. of chap. 2 sec. 3.

permanent search.”⁶⁴³ Both are a product of learning to view the world as “not a static and closed order... [but] a problem to be worked upon and solved” (Schall).⁶⁴⁴

Given the correlation between the multiplex nature of self and the plurality of culture, then this kind of awareness and meaning-making naturally corresponds Kegan’s fifth-order of consciousness, in which the intersubjectivity of humankind is in some sense “made object.” But it is perhaps still more of an aiming for intersubjective awareness, i.e., a more mimetic mimesis-poesis, than it is a mastery of the interconnectedness of all things. The difficulty Kegan describes in people’s capacity to reach fifth-order consciousness leads him to focus adult moral formation on a more-attainable fourth-order demand, of gaining mutual respect for other persons and perspectives.⁶⁴⁵ Yet what if this acceptance of diversity itself is reconceived, as actually *aiming* at intersubjectivity?⁶⁴⁶ A mimetic-poetic view of learning suggests that the “trying on” of new and/or wider perspectives, e.g. glimpsing the inherent value and dignity of all human persons, is part of the process of how we come to make new meanings ourselves. Any difficulty adults might have in this reaching for such a global-universal point of view, moreover, might in many cases be more directly attributable to our perspective being skewed in the first place, by divisive modernist authoritarian metanarratives that suppress narrational personhood. In other words, when the modern demands of individuation are overwhelmingly portrayed in terms of a glorified, corrupted notion of “independence” or

⁶⁴³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Heart*, 93; this is a different quote than a similar one from the same work, which introduces the first chapter of this project.

⁶⁴⁴ From the introductory quote of the present chap.

⁶⁴⁵ See Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 344.

⁶⁴⁶ This would require more of an emphasis on an ethical environment in which people are encouraged to be vulnerable, creative, willing to change, etc. Kegan’s description of fourth-order consciousness (e.g. Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 343-346) can seem rather guarded, controlled, and rational.

“freedom,” as is commonly the case in the US context, it is no surprise when it becomes difficult for people to see the world as interconnected and interdependent.

But when individuation-as-self-emergence is pedagogically considered in a way that respects the Jungian paradox, whereby learning to narrate one’s own *personal* life-with-others actually permits deeper *relationships* with oneself and others,⁶⁴⁷ then approaching a trans-paradigmatic consciousness might not be seen as such a herculean task. In fact, at times many persons might be able to glimpse that sense of interrelatedness, i.e. what Harry Kunnemann calls a “deep I,” an understanding of oneself as unique yet at once interconnected with the world,⁶⁴⁸ in certain moments and under the right conditions. An initial requirement for this would be the presence of a social environment in which the agency, communion, location, and purpose of all persons was welcomed and celebrated, even loved, in the course of *story-exchanges*. A community so engaged might exhibit a general air of interconnectedness, i.e., a positive social energy and a shared ethic of mutuality and open dialogue, to which all participants would be compelled to respond.⁶⁴⁹ Occasionally moments of deep reverence and spiritual awareness might emerge which celebrate, or marvel at, our human and/or global

⁶⁴⁷ “The capacity for inner dialogue is a touchstone for outer objectivity.” See Watkins and Shulman, *Towards Psychologies of Liberation*, 177.

⁶⁴⁸ Burt Roebben, “Generating Hope: The Future of the Teaching Profession in a Globalized World,” *Religious Education* 112, no. 3 (2017), 202.

⁶⁴⁹ E.g., David Hansen has studied public elementary schools that, he says, exhibit a “cosmopolitan canopy,” where a diverse body of young students manage to demonstrate a collective orientation “toward the affairs of life in which a person comes to grips with and holds his or her identity (or identities) in a kind of generative or productive tension with those of other people”; David T. Hansen, “Cosmopolitanism as Education: A Philosophy for Educators in Our Time,” *Religious Education* 112, no.3 (2017), 212-213. While what Hansen describes in elementary-aged children does not quite rise to the level of a so-called “deep I,” it is still a far more ambitious description than, e.g., saying that these children are merely being inculcated in Western liberal and/or democratic values. Following Hansen, I believe it is quite plausible that in environments where “intermingling,” as well as “like-mindedness” cast upon a “broader horizon,” are encouraged (Hansen quoting John Dewey, in “Cosmopolitanism as Education,” 214), then even children might be capable of “aiming towards” a cosmopolitan worldview.

interconnectedness. Such moments of awareness of our ubuntu-personhood,⁶⁵⁰ even if fleetingly-grasped and contextually-dependent, can still manage to deeply inform the self's core imagoes and ultimate meanings in ways that encourage a sense of "permanent search," an enduring curiosity. But either way, by simply participating in heterogenic story-exchanges, human beings are "co-creating the world together."⁶⁵¹ All people can begin to cultivate a deeper sense of personhood—i.e., a more flexible and open, hospitable sense of personal-social identity—by learning to generously and consistently turn towards otherness, which itself continuously (re-)reveals our interrelatedness.⁶⁵²

5.4 REFLECTION: TOWARDS A THEOLOGICAL VIEW OF DEVELOPMENT AS NARRATIVAL *CREATIO CONTINUA*

The present work does not permit the space to explore each of the various modes of consciousness in much more detail than what has been presented. Yet the above overview of narratival development offers enough insight so as to make it possible to propose a short set of hypotheses concerning teaching for narrativity in the community of disciples. These, along with a series of corresponding practices and suggestions, are offered in the forthcoming final chapter.⁶⁵³ They pave the way for future research, the development of teaching strategies, and other practical resources.

⁶⁵⁰ See chap. 1 sec. 1; chap. 2 sec. 6.

⁶⁵¹ Watkins and Shulman, *Towards Psychologies of Liberation*, 153.

⁶⁵² See Watkins and Shulman, *Towards Psychologies of Liberation*, 150-154.

⁶⁵³ See chap. 6, secs. 2-3.

But before proceeding to this final task, it is appropriate to take a brief step back to historically situate what has just been presented. This work's attempt to approach human development, which ultimately stems from a theological perspective, would not have been possible without the seminal work of others who have forged similar paths, with perhaps the most renowned being the constructive-developmental theory of faith development offered by James Fowler. Therefore this chapter concludes with a reflection on the work of Fowler, as well as that of James Loder, by way of relating their understanding of human development to the present, narrational-developmental, perspective:

Over thirty years ago Fowler's *Stages of Faith* became, in short order, one of the most influential works⁶⁵⁴ that sought to consider faith through the lens of human development. Very similarly to Kegan, Fowler sought a universal approach to development rooted in the Western developmental tradition, considering the work of Piaget, Kohlberg, Erikson, et al., and attempting to articulate their common thread. For Fowler, however, it is faith that is what ultimately underlies all human development; the ongoing evolutionary process of humanity is rooted in our universal longing for transcendence.⁶⁵⁵ Fowler thus depicted faith development as an endemic feature of human nature at its core, expanding the notion of faith as something beyond belief or worldview, beyond religious adherence, and even beyond self-actualization.⁶⁵⁶ *Stages* is, naturally, littered with myriad statements that Fowler uses to describe this universal

⁶⁵⁴ For a summary of the various ways Fowler's work has been received by theologians, see Craig Dykstra and Sharon Parks, "Introduction," in *Faith Development and Fowler*, ed. Dykstra and Parks (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1986), 1-8.

⁶⁵⁵ Fowler, *Stages*, 14.

⁶⁵⁶ Fowler, *Stages*, 91-92.

quality of faith: It is “an alignment of the will, a resting of the heart” in accordance with “one’s ultimate concern” (echoing Tillich)⁶⁵⁷; elsewhere he says that faith is the commitment that is at the root of every relationship⁶⁵⁸; in another place it is the ground of identity⁶⁵⁹ and is integral to one’s personality and character/sense of values, and permeates a person’s habits, emotions, and actions⁶⁶⁰; etc. Faith for Fowler is all of these, and more.

Without question, attempting to describe human development in any kind of comprehensive manner is a difficult task that often tests the limits of language. Yet it is fair to note that despite his various, often eloquent descriptions, it still is not always clear how Fowler defined or understood faith. While his attempt to universalize the meaning of the term is a direct part of his theory’s appeal, it also is considered among its most challenging aspects, and has often left peers,⁶⁶¹ students,⁶⁶² and non-academics⁶⁶³ alike struggling for a more precise definition. The tension is amplified by Fowler’s own insistence upon the singular legitimacy of the word “faith” to describe what he is after: “There simply is no other concept that holds together [these] various interrelated dimensions of human knowing, valuing, committing and acting that *must* be considered together...”⁶⁶⁴ Yet if the cumbersome nature of his attempt in *Stages* to encapsulate these

⁶⁵⁷ Fowler, *Stages*, 14.

⁶⁵⁸ Fowler, *Stages*, 17.

⁶⁵⁹ By “identity” Fowler can be said to mean, self-meanings that are derived out of a person’s ultimate commitments. See Fowler, *Stages*, 19-23. (In contrast, narrativial-development sees commitments as something that evolves alongside meanings.)

⁶⁶⁰ Fowler, *Stages*, 92.

⁶⁶¹ See Fowler, “Dialogue Toward a Future in Faith Development Studies,” in *Faith Development*, 280-285.

⁶⁶² See Fowler, *Stages*, 28-29.

⁶⁶³ See Fowler, *Stages*, 91.

⁶⁶⁴ Fowler, *Stages*, 92 (emphasis added).

attributes within a singular “comprehensive” definition of faith⁶⁶⁵ is any indication, one might indeed wonder if it is all simply too much content for one term to hold. Fowler appears to force himself into such difficulties, even inconsistencies, by expecting so much from one word.⁶⁶⁶ Meanwhile, it is clear that one of his central goals in exploring human development is to understand the “generic [i.e., universal] feature of the human struggle to find and maintain meaning...”⁶⁶⁷ throughout the lifespan, which is referred to here as narrativity. Consider the following: (1) At several points where Fowler reaches the limits of his ability to define faith, he resorts to telling stories, and/or making reference to how stories function.⁶⁶⁸ (2) One key explanation of faith describes human nature as *Homo poeta*, constantly in pursuit of making meaning and imaginatively knitting meanings together into an “order, unity, and coherence.”⁶⁶⁹ In other words, Fowler is asserting that we are mimetic-poetic. (3) In regards to his stage theory itself,

⁶⁶⁵ Faith for Fowler is defined as follows: “People’s evolved and evolving ways of experiencing self, others, and world (as they construct them) as related to and affected by the ultimate conditions of existence (as they construct them) and of shaping their lives’ purposes and meanings, trusts, and loyalties, in light of the character of being, value, and power determining the ultimate conditions of existence (as grasped in their operative images—conscious and unconscious—of them).” Fowler, *Stages*, 92-3.

⁶⁶⁶ For example, Fowler appears to struggle with explaining how faith is both dependent upon, and also more generic than, the belief and tradition structures of religious traditions; this discrepancy is highlighted in Craig Dykstra, “What is Faith?: An Experiment in the Hypothetical Mode,” in *Faith Development and Fowler*, 45-64. While Dykstra’s criticism is not without its own problems (see Fowler’s response in “Dialogue,” in *Faith Development and Fowler*, 284-285), he still illustrates how Fowler’s quest for a view of faith that is always described as a “both-and” can make its usefulness as a concept difficult to ascertain. Dykstra’s sentiments are echoed by James Loder; see *Logic*, 255-259.

⁶⁶⁷ Fowler, *Stages*, 91.

⁶⁶⁸ E.g. in attempting to explain “ultimate environments,” Fowler tells a story. It is a personal story of Fowler (again) trying to explain ultimate environments to a class. The clearest explanation was offered by a student, who used narrative-related language (“theaters of action,” “scenery,” “plot,” etc.) to explain ultimate environments (Fowler, *Stages*, 28-29). Another example: Soon after offering the definition above, he attempts to cut through the murkiness of the language he has resorted to, precisely by switching to a narrative voice, re-telling a story by Flannery O’Connor. And in the story itself, it is clear that the child protagonist is using story to make sense of his own experiences, via (mimetic-poetic) play in which situations are “re-imagined,” words are “experimented” with, that eventually leads to change, catharsis, etc. (*Stages*, 93-97). Generally speaking, *Stages* is filled with stories (and narrations within narrations) and is primarily informed via research in the form of stories, i.e., life-interviews. Using a narrative methodology to study faith is, in fact, one of the enduring legacies of Fowler, according to Loder (See *Logic*, 255), and has helped inspire the prolific use of qualitative research in practical theology today.

⁶⁶⁹ Fowler, *Stages*, 24.

Fowler describes intuitive faith (Stage-1) in highly mimetic, pre-narrative terms; mythic-literal faith (Stage-2) is described as an initial proto-narrative acquisition of sociocultural mythic stories that are then personally appropriated—i.e., narrated—in Stage-3; Stages 4 and 5 describe a meta-narrative capacity for critical reflection and a post-critical, trans-paradigmatic “second naiveté” (Ricoeur), respectively.⁶⁷⁰ It is plausible to suggest, then, that what Fowler is truly seeking to articulate in terms of faith, is in fact better understood as narrativity.

Fellow practical theologian and developmental theorist James Loder’s subsequent research includes a helpful critical examination of Fowler in terms of his own approach, which takes a step closer to the present view regarding identity as narrativity. Loder explicitly recognizes that, regardless of his predilection for the term “faith,” Fowler’s stages more accurately reflect the development of a person’s meaning-making capacities,⁶⁷¹ which are “the creative achievement of the *human spirit* as it strives for universality...”⁶⁷² Loder thus analyzes Fowler’s model in terms of how each faith-stage involves a change in the modes by which people make meaning.⁶⁷³ In the end he concludes that the evolution of meaning-making could at best be considered “an aspect of faith,” but certainly not the whole of it.⁶⁷⁴ His work instead utilizes a dualized

⁶⁷⁰ See Fowler, *Stages*, 182; 197.

⁶⁷¹ Loder, *Logic*, 255. Similarly Kelcourse says in reference to Fowler, “Faith, in the understanding of structural development, has to do with our *ability to find and make meaning* as the sequential phases of our lives unfold.” Kelcourse, “Theories,” 25, emphasis added.

⁶⁷² Loder, *Logic*, 258 (emphasis added).

⁶⁷³ Loder summarizes these modes as: forms of logic, perspective-taking, forms of moral judgment, bounds of social awareness, loci of authority, forms of world coherence, and symbolic functions (Loder, *Logic*, 256; Fig. 11.1).

⁶⁷⁴ Loder, *Logic*, 256. Per Loder: “It seems to me that Fowler’s work is a sensitive, insightful study of the ego’s competence in structuring meaning, and it is only potentially but not necessarily related to faith in a biblical or theological sense.” (Loder, *Logic*, 256). For Loder and others like Dykstra (see “What is Faith?”), the term “faith” is inextricable from its specifically biblical (as *pistis*) and theological interpretations, which are, by their reading, not specifically in view in Fowler’s more universal definition.

conception: For Loder we best understand lifelong self-development in terms of what he calls the evolution of the human *spirit*, which ultimately seeks to bring the self-as-ego into harmony with itself.⁶⁷⁵ He describes this human spirit as the source of the intense drive and determination in humankind to seek and create meaning in the face of dissonance and crisis, which transforms a person from within even as she or he shapes surrounding realities.⁶⁷⁶ These two components, the meaning-making work of the self-ego, and the meaning-seeking analogous human spirit, are the two interactive dimensions of human nature which work together to drive development.⁶⁷⁷ In Loder's view, considering "self" and "spirit" together captures Fowler's primary developmental concern, without the difficulties that come from associating the loaded term "faith" to this process.

The finer points of Loder's theological-developmental model—and its limitations—will not be discussed in detail here, but it is worth noting how it, like Fowler's model, can also be viewed through the lens of narrational development. Loder's description of the human spirit corresponds directly to the present study's description of the spiritual yearning of consciousness that drives narrational meaning-making throughout life. It is no surprise, then, that when Loder attempts to summarize the "fundamental form of the human spirit," he does so by describing its movements as "the turning points of a plot," driven by a "sense of an ending" (Kermode).⁶⁷⁸ Like Fowler, Loder must resort to

⁶⁷⁵ Loder, *Logic*, 72.

⁶⁷⁶ Loder, *Logic*, 33-34.

⁶⁷⁷ See Loder, *Logic*, 72.

⁶⁷⁸ Loder, *Logic*, 89. These "movements" themselves are "conflict, interlude, insight, release of energy/appropriation, [and] proving out" (Loder, *Logic*, 89). Recall chap. 2 sec. 6.

narrative language, and this again suggests the appropriateness of the term “narrativity” to describe his concern.

But Loder’s theological angle also offers an important contribution to the present view, which expands upon the discussion of human creativity in the second chapter: Humans share in the *imago dei*; the ground of human spirit is divine spirit. There is a direct “*analogia spiritus*,” between the creative and transformational Spirit of God, and the human spirit’s own movement to create and transform oneself and one’s proximate external realities.⁶⁷⁹ Thus the innately human “creative drive to construct coherence and remain open to ultimacy, its irrepressible self-transcendence and transformational potential, its revulsion at confusion and its discovery of order [with]in chaos...” itself testifies to “the structures, patterns, and power hidden in the universe” that “point towards God the Creator.”⁶⁸⁰ The use of the word *evolution* to describe development throughout this work, then, appears even more appropriate in light of Loder. It recalls Teilhard de Chardin’s explanation of consciousness as the force and product behind cosmic evolution, epitomized in human consciousness.⁶⁸¹ The ways that human beings make meaning offer opportunities to become (per Teilhard) a “living extension” of God’s creative-evolutionary power;⁶⁸² following Segundo, such participation in divine creativity leads not only to personal but social and political evolution.⁶⁸³ The current chapter’s attempt to outline development in terms of narrativity ultimately seeks to explain how to maintain that divinely-gifted creativity, openness, and irrepressibility of the human spirit

⁶⁷⁹ Loder, *Logic*, 35-36.

⁶⁸⁰ Loder, *Logic*, 9-10.

⁶⁸¹ See Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (London: Collins, 1970), 284.

⁶⁸² Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1968), 62-63.

⁶⁸³ Thus “an incomplete creation is what gives human freedom its fullest meaning.” Segundo, *An Evolutionary Approach to Jesus of Nazareth*, 115; see 111-115.

throughout the lifespan. Our senses, working together with our emergent language and other symbol-making capacities, are what enable the reflexivity necessary to creatively imitate the world around us, thereby participating in our own *and* the world's ongoing creation. Narrativity is an overarching metaphor that describes and explains this process, and narrativial development describes the (pre-narrative, narrative, and metanarrative) pattern the process follows, when the human spirit is encouraged to flourish.

A theological reflection on narrativial development-as-evolution should rightly marvel at this *analogia spiritus*, especially when considered in light of the evidence that Donald presents (that brain structures evolved through the consciousness being in dialectic with culture), and that Nelson presents (that this cognitive evolution is “weakly” recapitulated in early development).⁶⁸⁴ Again following Teilhard, the analogy of the spirit can thus be viewed as an analogy of consciousness.⁶⁸⁵ It is the divine consciousness that creates, and then human consciousness in relationship with the divine that continues to create. We participate in the *creatio continua*, an under-acknowledged theological theme that goes back to Irenaeus, but has re-emerged in the work of liberation theologians such as Gutierrez, Garcia-Rivera, Elizabeth Johnson, et al. From a narrativial-developmental perspective as well, storying communities are participating in profoundly creative-creating work: They create new *meanings*, new *relationships* and *belongings*-*commitments*, new *agendas*, new *outlooks*, new *dreams and visions* in the lives of real

⁶⁸⁴ A fuller exploration into this powerful connection must be left for the time being to future research.

⁶⁸⁵ Attention to the legacy of Teilhard has been renewed in recent years, as new scientific evidence is discovered which supports many of his once-controversial ideas. See e.g. Alejandro Garcia-Rivera, *The Garden of God: A Theological Cosmology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 23-52; see also the various works in Arthur Fabel and Donald St. John, eds., *Teilhard in the 21st Century: The Emerging Spirit of Earth* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2003). Juan Segundo's less-recent *An Evolutionary Approach to Jesus of Nazareth* is also a must-read for anyone interested in how Teilhard intersects with science, as well as dialogues with liberation theology.

human beings—all which can challenge authoritarianism. In the storying community of disciples, these meanings all become actualized by the liberating, restorative, *shalom*-making actions of the missional community.

This is not an idealized, modernist and triumphalist notion of creation as “development.” Tension, pain, loss, and the facing of evil, are all taken up and incorporated into this ongoing co-creative process—for what good story omits these things?⁶⁸⁶ But it is critical for the sake of this project to see that ongoing participation in this creative-evolutionary process is not just a matter of preserving or restoring narrational personhood in oneself or others; rather it is the very means by which people-in-communities live in their fullest sense of personhood. For we, as Fowler puts it, are indeed *homo poeta*. Meta-narrational authoritarianism is recognized within the voice perpetuating a myth or paradigm which aims to suppress the continuous creation-evolution of selves-within-the-world. It is our participation in this perpetual creative activity that makes us more whole human beings, who share in the image of the God-who-creates—indeed, the God-who-narrates. The discipling community of practice resists such suppression, and cultivates continuous evolution.

The wager of this entire work is that Christian religious education for the discipling community can discover resources to accomplish such resistances and cultivations, in the midst of a (post)modern world struggling for a sense of identity, by learning to approach its pedagogy and mission in terms of narrativity and narrational

⁶⁸⁶ See Loder, *Logic*, 258-259.

development. The final chapter, by way of reflecting upon all that has been presented thus far, offers some pedagogical and practical suggestions towards this end.

6.0 CONCLUSION

La fe y la acción política no entran en relación correcta y fecunda sino a través del proyecto de creación de un nuevo tipo de hombre en una sociedad distinta, a través de la utopía....La liberación política se presenta como un camino hacia la utopía de un hombre más humano, protagonista de su propia historia.

Faith and political action cannot enter into a right and fruitful relationship, except through the aspiring to create a new kind of person in a different society, [i.e.,] through utopia....Political liberation manifests like a journey towards the utopia of *people who are more human, protagonists of their own life-stories*.

—Gustavo Gutiérrez⁶⁸⁷

6.1 TYING IT ALL TOGETHER: NARRATIVITY AND DISCIPLESHIP IN THE PRESENT-DAY US

Two of the three principle objectives for the present work⁶⁸⁸ have now been fulfilled. The first objective presented a perspective and framework for understanding personal identity in terms of the entire meaning-making process through time, which is essentially characterized in terms of *narrativity* and corresponds to our sense of *personhood*.⁶⁸⁹ From this perspective, Christian religious educators (particularly those who accept that the central motif of Christian narrative identity is discipleship, in all its missional-pedagogical implications) must consider this process closely—for encouraging personal narrational identity⁶⁹⁰ and awakening people's fullest sense of personhood-in-community

⁶⁸⁷ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología de la liberación—Perspectivas* (Lima CEP, 1971), 303-304; emphasis added.

⁶⁸⁸ The three main objectives for the present work are outlined chap. 1 sec. 4.

⁶⁸⁹ See chap. 2.

⁶⁹⁰ Recall the difference between narrative and narrational identity, see chap. 1 sec. 3.

are essential aspects of the disciple's humanizing, reconciling mission.⁶⁹¹ Examining this meaning-making process in greater depth (i.e., by considering mimesis-poesis)⁶⁹² initiated the second objective: to define, support, and outline *narrative development*, a comprehensive hypothesis about lifelong identity-development and meaning-making.⁶⁹³ The third and final principle objective is to offer practices and principles—informed by narrativity and narrative development—that have value for Christian religious educators in the US. While some important implications and convictions have emerged, often in the concluding theological sections of the other chapters, the third objective is most directly addressed here, in this final chapter.

Even as the conclusion of this journey rapidly approaches, it is acknowledged that it has not been a straightforward path to this point. Just reaching the first objective alone proved itself to be quite an undertaking. The second objective could have been drastically reduced in scope, if not omitted entirely, without detracting that much from the first objective's agenda (although this in turn would have made it impossible to offer the pedagogical insights and strategies that follow, which are directly informed by narrative development). This presentation indeed has its limitations, and choosing to take such a panoramic perspective, and to utilize several interdisciplinary lenses in order to properly view it, inherently involves certain questions going unaddressed, generalizations being made, jargon at times being over-utilized, etc. But the advantage of this approach is its ability to substantiate and inform an overarching theology-philosophy of an ever-

⁶⁹¹ See chap. 3.

⁶⁹² Chap. 4 bridges between the first two objectives (see chap. 1 sec. 4) by delving deeper into narrativity itself. (For mimesis-poesis see chap. 4 secs. 2-3.)

⁶⁹³ Chap. 4 concludes with an initial definition, and chap. 5 focuses on the evidence for, and a broad overview of, the theory.

evolving personhood, which can serve as a guide for additional research into specific contextual concerns and specific life-narratives. This concluding chapter affords an opportunity to more succinctly tie these three objectives together, along with many of the key supporting concepts and claims that have appeared along the way. Doing so should prove useful in demonstrating how the entire work fits together, as a work of practical theology. This in turn will facilitate the transition to offering pedagogical principles and practices for Christian discipling communities—the primary agenda for this conclusion.

The final course is now set: This first section provides a *theological overview* that summarizes and further clarifies the community of disciples' commitment to restoring narrativity. The second section then offers *four hypothesized pedagogical principles* that work together in order to activate mimesis-poesis. The final section follows by envisioning what a *discipling community of missional-pedagogical practices, which promote narrativity and narrativial development*, might look like from the present view.

The Vision: The Restoration of Narrativial Personhood. Narrativity is demonstrated here to be a multifaceted and complex means of describing identity-as-personhood, even as it focuses the questions concerning identity upon the *meaning-making* qualities of the consciousness. Yet some distinctive descriptions have been featured thus far: Narrativity is a *spirit of creativity*, which takes the form of a co-creative *yearning* that is enacted in community with others, who are simultaneously co-creating as well. Narrativity is a *spirit of meaning-sharing that testifies to human interdependence*, i.e., to the fact that not only am I a narrator of my life, but all others are narrators as well—and I need their stories, and they need mine, and we all need the stories that communities make and share together, if we want to make meaningful stories and have

meaningful lives. This spirit sees all people in light of their individual *and* collective *imago dei*, thereby placing everyone on the same level of inherent value. Narrativity is a *spirit of openness that creates space for oneself and others to continue to tell self-stories*, acknowledging our unfinished personhood, as well as our consciousness as that which is always in process. Narrativity is indeed the very *humanness of the human spirit*, that reflects the divine spirit.

Communal and social-cultural myths, paradigms, and ideologies, with both broad and narrow cultural reach,⁶⁹⁴ offer explanatory power, structure, and direction to the stories that people exchange. They encourage, as a result, *some* sort of community practices, and a corresponding communal identity. To the extent that these metanarratives disrupt human narrativity, they have been referred to previously by using the term *meta-narrative authoritarianism*.⁶⁹⁵ They do this by reinforcing established meanings in order to discourage co-creativity, creating divisions and hierarchies between people, “completing” the stories of people or groups instead of leaving them unfinished, silencing narration by dissenting voices, etc. They utilize communal narrative and myth, but in the form of stifling propaganda which portrays flat archetypal characters, and idealizes notions of an impossible future with little bearing upon present-day reality, i.e. an opiate for the masses (K. Marx). The communal identities people construct in relation to such narratives and paradigms are based primarily upon demonstrations of fealty, to the

⁶⁹⁴ That is, either a local community or organization, or an entire country/society/economy/etc., either a sustained and organized movement, or a “flash” virtual community that forms organically (and often very temporarily) via social media—all of these types of communities can invoke new, borrowed, and/or modified myths and paradigms (and other reifications) which encourage social cohesion and communal identity.

⁶⁹⁵ See chap. 1, sec. 3.

community's leaders and/or its stifling reification structures.⁶⁹⁶ But there are other kinds of metanarratives, including those that amplify narrativity, those that encourage the ongoing narration of agency, communion, location and purpose,⁶⁹⁷ and those that promote interconnectedness with others and responsiveness to the hopes of an ever-changing world. These myths depict a vision of the good life, what Gutiérrez calls a "utopia," which is at once now-but-not-yet, a "denunciation of the existing order" and "also an annunciation...of what is not yet, but will be."⁶⁹⁸ Faithful political action in his view is utopic activity within the present culture, with its authoritarian metanarratives actualized via socioeconomic and political hegemony, which transforms that culture and anticipates a wholly new future. It is the mimetic-poetic blending of the "as" with the "as-if" (Ricoeur).⁶⁹⁹

The arc of the Hebrew and Greek biblical narratives depicts such a utopic-practical mythical vision of *universal shalom*, where all persons are united in the presence of the Divine in Beloved Community, are free to live in agentic communion, and have a place (location) and function (purpose) in the world. The discipling community both foreshadows and facilitates this vision's fulfillment, through its central practice of the *missio inter gentes*.⁷⁰⁰ Some key theological and ecclesiological orientations which guide this inherently "political" mission have been highlighted

⁶⁹⁶ Note that while this describes some instances of meta-narrative authoritarianism (MA), it also depicts the extreme. In the complexity of narrative formation it is possible for more and less overt forms of MA to exist, or for a communal identity to be considered "liberating" by one person, and "restrictive" by another.

⁶⁹⁷ See chap. 2 sec. 2 regarding these four yearnings that drive narrative identity.

⁶⁹⁸ Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 136.

⁶⁹⁹ Recall chap. 4 sec. 2. In *Theology of Liberation*, Gutiérrez quotes Ricoeur twice when he says that "Only utopia...can give economic, social, and political action a human focus" (Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 138), yet utopia is only effective "in the measure in which it gradually transforms historical experience" (Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 136).

⁷⁰⁰ See chap. 3 sec. 3.

elsewhere in this text: *Koinonia*⁷⁰¹ signifies a relational commitment to each other and God that refutes and renders obsolete all hierarchical divisions. *Solicitude*⁷⁰² is agapeic narrativial solidarity, an openness to others that extends beyond the gathering of the community and seeks other forms of mutually transformative community, unsilencing voices and witnessing to a utopia that stands against all opiating dreams. *Ubuntu*⁷⁰³ is the theological reality communicated through our narrativial interrelatedness that, when affirmed and cultivated, orients disparate people and groups towards *reconciliation*⁷⁰⁴ and the restoration of personhood. And *evolution*⁷⁰⁵ points to the unfinished quality of a creation that is nevertheless consciously longing to move towards shalom, and calls the narrativial human spirit to participate in and facilitate this movement.

The discipling community, which carries this ideological vision for beloved community, and orients its practices and teachings accordingly, actually restores narrativity and dismantles meta-narrativial authoritarian power, thereby encouraging “a new kind of person in a different society,” who can now be “the protagonist of his or her own life-story” (Gutiérrez).⁷⁰⁶ As such, it is a communal identity that utilizes metanarrative, and seeks to guide and shape personal identities—but does so in such a way that encourages personal identity’s creativity and freedom, indeed its narrativial spirituality, to flourish.

The Problem: The “Identity Crisis” in the (Post)modern US. What Berger and Gergen have referred to as the “identity crisis” in the contemporary (post)modern West

⁷⁰¹ See chap. 3 sec. 2.

⁷⁰² See chap. 4 sec. 5.

⁷⁰³ See chap. 1 sec. 1; chap. 2 sec. 6.

⁷⁰⁴ See chap. 3 sec. 4.

⁷⁰⁵ See chap. 5 sec. 4.

⁷⁰⁶ In orig. Spanish, *Protagonista* is sing., see introductory quote for this chap.

was explained in the initial chapter in terms of psychosocial symptoms—loneliness and dissociation—that result from the reality of increased personal and/or communal isolation and division.⁷⁰⁷ Liberation psychology has illuminated these connections between psychology and political and economic realities;⁷⁰⁸ the present study has taken a similar approach by considering the interrelationship between personal and communal identities. After modernity attempted to disentangle personal from communal identity, which instead managed to position both within a seemingly-irreconcilable tension, late-modern philosophies of selfhood in the US set out to resolve that tension—by pursuing either a robust “I” that is capable of integrating her or his own chosen communal commitments, or a self-in-communities who orients his or her entire self using the resources of one or more communal identities. In everyday practice, even today, while some might consistently pursue one of these solutions, most people subconsciously slip back and forth between the two strategies, depending on which one is more useful in a given moment. Postmodern commentators and the present-day cultural milieu alike, however, have revealed both of these paths to be ultimately limiting: To sequester oneself within one community or a single communal identity can hinder critical thought and promote tribalism in response to diversity; to strive towards self-actualization might actually end up masking even more insidious forms of conformity which render a person content to ignore or dismiss, rather than actually overcome, cognitive dissonance. And to simply cut oneself loose within a sea of self-saturation disorients and disconnects a person from all communal commitments, and can lead to extreme forms of psychosocial dissociation.

⁷⁰⁷ Per Diana Butler Bass, “Google ‘longing for community,’ and you will get more than 10 million hits.” (Bass, *Christianity After Religion*, 194).

⁷⁰⁸ See chap. 1 sec. 2.

All of these scenarios share one thing in common: They hinder narrativity and narrational development. They do so, because they all fail to keep personal and communal identities in an ongoing, creative and mutually-informing, irreducible social-dialectic.⁷⁰⁹ Without such a dialectic, narrative *evaluations* are told-to instead of worked-out; *themes* and *values* are viewed as unquestionable standards of conformity; *characters* and *imagoes*⁷¹⁰ ossify through perpetual reinforcement of one or more potentially-conflictual communal norms; and the various *untold narratives* and *proto-narratives* of oneself and others remain untold or unprocessed.⁷¹¹ Without such a dialectic, human beings become disconnected and divided—between each other, and as a result, within themselves (between their internalized, socially-formed self-characters) as well. Abusive power-authority structures thrive within such non-dialectical environments. Not only the initiators and chief perpetrators, but also *all beneficiaries of these structures*, are prone to either passively or actively propagate divisive sociocultural metanarratives, which maintain the system-as-is by continuously amplifying and reifying the dissociations, disconnections, and distortions between persons. (This is a particularly critical point to note here, given the earlier historical analyses, which touched upon the role of racial and economic-capitalist mythology and paradigm in justifying and perpetuating the expansionist *Zeitgeist* of the United States through the centuries, including the present-day. When people—whether a marginalized group, a culturally-normalized and/or privileged group, or as intersected between multiple groups—experience some deficiency

⁷⁰⁹ See chap. 1 sec. 3, n. 45.

⁷¹⁰ See chap. 2 sec. 3.

⁷¹¹ These terms regarding story-forms and identity are defined in chap. 2 sec. 5.

in identity, this in itself is a symptom of the continued persistence of these and other dehumanizing meta-narratives and power structures.)⁷¹²

*The Community of Disciples That Actualizes the Vision.*⁷¹³ Much has been said elsewhere regarding late modernity and early postmodernity's admission of the inadequacies of the Cartesian and Kantian formulations of selfhood, which sparked the late modern surge of interest in the "social self," as well as the postmodern awareness of selfhood as "saturated" (Gergen) or "distributed" (Bruner), and the rise of the postcolonial world's depictions of identity such as ubuntu.⁷¹⁴ But while a narrational-developmental approach to identity takes this disavowal of modern dualist epistemology-ontology (i.e. Descartes' *cogito*) for granted, it also surprisingly offers a means of reclaiming Descartes, in a sense. If selfhood began in the mind for Descartes ("I think therefore I am"), and in community for many postmodern and non-Western constructions (e.g., "I am because we are," per theologian John Mbiti, a phrase which also aptly describes ubuntu), then in narrational development the self is rooted in the yearning, co-creative, and evolutionary narrational consciousness in transformative dialogues with multiple communities: "*I am part of many Wes, and they are part of me; in the midst of the search for meaning together, I am, and we are, becoming.*" This sense of identity-as-*ipse* is inherently imprecise and cannot be pinned down; it is a moving target, a product of an ongoing interrelatedness littered with infinite hermeneutical moments. But amidst this chaos, we manage to find ways to tell self-stories, to make meanings and build relationships with others; this is the ongoing, ever-emerging work of the consciousness.

⁷¹² This recalls the insight from liberation psychology, that psychological dysfunction is a symptom of social and/or political dysfunction (see chap. 1 sec. 2; chap. 5 sec. 3).

⁷¹³ This paragraph refers in general back to chap. 1 sec. 2.

⁷¹⁴ See Bass, *Christianity After Religion*, 194-195.

A community of disciples who today seeks to restore personhood, therefore, does not seek to restore a pre-Cartesian, medieval-like unity between personal and communal identity (i.e., an “I submissive to We”). Rather they restore and cultivate the dialectic between personal identity and Christian identity-as-disciple, in such a way that promotes the lifelong evolution of consciousness-in-communities. In the process, it seeks to be a community that does not amplify divisions between peoples but breaks down walls. It aims to be people and a community who hear, tell and amplify the stories that have been otherwise suppressed or silenced. Such a community’s leaders and pedagogues can strive to do the following:

- *To encourage environments of solicitude, whenever and however the community gathers.* The community non-coercively invites others to share their stories, and receives them as gifts, as contributions to each person and to the community, without then limiting the definition of others *to* any one story. This narrational agapeic solidarity, which remains open to the possibility of sustained relationality and openness, is the fundamental ethical orientation for the community’s missional activities, as well as its worship and teaching.
- *To offer the Christian “Story and Vision”* (Groome), i.e., the theological story-thread of shalom-seeking and utopia that must (re)focus the community of disciples upon Jesus’ mission of reconciliatory love in every age. The reality of ubuntu, our interrelated personhood, is communicated both in this story of love and in loving actions that validate and confirm that story. Whatever the context, the biblical vision is always *offered*, as a resource or a guide; it is never forced.

- *To make space for authentic self-stories.* No matter the agenda, educators in faith can carve out intentional times and means for people to make mimetic-poetic connections about their lives, especially through self-stories; this inherently communicates solicitude and encourages narrativity, especially over time and repeated gatherings.
- *To make space for other belongings, for multiplex selfhood, and for persons to be in process.* There is always risk involved with an approach promoting narrativity; yet the temptation to limit self-stories, by setting undue parameters, prematurely “closing-off” narratives, promoting facile interpretations, etc., should be consistently monitored. The evolution of the consciousness occurs within multiple narrational trajectories at different times, and is often messy and inconsistent. People are always managing multiple communities of belonging of various sorts. While there are appropriate ways to focus conversations, to avoid conversations being hijacked, etc., in general faith-educators would do well to become more comfortable with (productive) chaos and in communicating the acceptance of each other’s “messy” senses of selfhood.
- *To confront meta-narrative authoritarianism.* The community can “read” the culture together, and “listen” to the silences. When possible, educators and leaders can encourage people to make their own mimetic-poetic connections with the dangerous memories (Metz) of US and global histories. They can help communities and others identify loci of power and authority, and the authoritarian myths and paradigms (of race, capitalism, patriarchy, gender

normativity, etc.) which either oppress or benefit them. They can then encourage the creative telling and/or broadcasting of each other's stories and self-stories which challenge the hegemonic imagination (E. Townes) of those myths and paradigms.

*Discipleship as a Lifelong Journey.*⁷¹⁵ The previous bullet points offer some snapshots depicting what a mimetic-poetic mission-pedagogy for narrativity might look like, from the perspective of the discipling community as a whole. The conclusion to the third chapter overviews the essentially *dyadic quality* of this community, as a community that engages in practices of reconciliation, and then gathers together for worship and reflection, before again returning to missional activity, etc. The majority of that chapter,⁷¹⁶ however, focuses upon the communal narrative of discipleship, as it pertains to the lived experience of disciples in the midst of their own identity-formation, while being engaged in a mutually-transformative mission: When disciples are *called*, on some level connecting with the creative principle of Love at the center of all things, they begin to *follow* by participating in this community that serves to incarnate this Love in the world, both in its actions and in its gathered reflections, and both of which affirm narrational personhood. "Follow" recalls the principle of *legitimate peripheral participation* (Lave and Wenger)⁷¹⁷ in COP-theory; it suggests the necessity of educators and/or mentors and others to help shepherd fellow-disciples, not only via a catechesis of rituals and doctrines, but also in missional practices, and all of which are characterized by narrational agapeic solidarity. In time they are *sent*, i.e., they gain greater ownership of

⁷¹⁵ In lieu of individually referencing each term in this subsection, see chap. 3, esp. secs.3-5, in which the majority of the italicized terms here are defined, unless otherwise noted.

⁷¹⁶ See esp. chap. 3 sec. 3-4.

⁷¹⁷ See chap. 3 sec. 4.

these missional practices of the community for themselves. Again guided by the spirit of Love, they come to see the mission as somehow informing their own sense of narrational spatiotemporal location and purpose. This might spark new forms of mission, especially as a participant gains deeper reflective understanding of the God of reconciliatory love in light of their participation—the God who continues to “call” people throughout life. The pattern can thus repeat perennially over the course of a disciple’s lifetime.

Applying the narrational-developmental perspective, this narrative pattern of discipleship is understood as a synoptically-derived *mythic form*, an overarching “story of stories” (i.e., of the synoptic narratives). The “disciple” in the generic sense, therefore, is an *archetypal character* that, as disciples adopt discipling practices and a discipling rhythm of life, informs the formation of a *character-as-disciple* that can be appropriated into self-stories. Quickly or gradually, this can evolve into an *imago*,⁷¹⁸ an integrative character that embodies convictions and qualities which inform the narrational yearnings of selfhood. The narrative movement from “following” to being “sent” corresponds to such an integrative move between personal and communal identities; it is a pedagogical move corresponding with both an evolution of consciousness, as well as with deeper, less peripheral forms of participation in the community. A lifelong approach to faith-education, from childhood throughout adulthood, has to consider how, and under what conditions, does the community best prepare for and facilitate these kinds of moves.

A key point to notice is that this overview of discipleship-as-pedagogy clearly takes “Christian” formation seriously, yet it does so precisely by *not* authoritatively dictating how a Christian identity becomes appropriated in a disciple’s life. For the

⁷¹⁸ See chap. 2 sec. 5 for an overview of all of these narrative identity-related terms; see chap. 2 sec. 3 for more on *imagoes* specifically.

motivational force which nudges the consciousness towards greater, more *sustained* meta-narrative integration, from following to being sent, is narrativity itself, i.e. the yearning to make meaning in community with others. And this requires space to create and to discover *personal identity*, and to re-imagine oneself as a disciple throughout life in ways that enliven a sense of agency-communion-location-purpose—i.e., generativity—yet which still permit continued re-interpretation, and the possibility of adjustment to new situations and contexts. Curricula and communal reifications inform and support this dynamic; they cannot dictate it. This is why the term *sequela Christi* is used to describe discipleship as a journey, as opposed to the more common formula *imitatio Christi*.⁷¹⁹ It is not a purely imitative, but rather a *mimetic-poetic*, co-creative journey, of following after the missional-pedagogical way of life patterned after Jesus and his original community of practice.⁷²⁰ The lifelong journey of faith requires a narrative *openness* to the God who calls, and is always calling—to a consciousness that strives to evolve and reach towards new insights, new degrees of awareness, greater wholeness-in-the-world, and a deeper sense of generativity. The next section, therefore, turns once again to mimesis-poesis.

6.2 SOME HYPOTHESES REGARDING MIMETIC-POETIC TEACHING

It is impossible in the scope of the present paper to do justice to Ricoeur's expansive work in narrative hermeneutics and ethics, beyond what is delineated in the fourth

⁷¹⁹ Chap. 3 sec. 5.

⁷²⁰ See chap. 2 sec. 5 regarding communities of practice.

chapter, with regards to its significance for meaning-making and development. But it is appropriate here at project's end to at least offer an overview, and some hypotheses, concerning how teaching in general might be considered from a "mimetic-poetic" point of reference, i.e., narrativational-developmentally. The goal here is to provide some further clarification as to how people learn and why narrativational development is significant for disciplining communities, and to imagine some guidelines based on this that assist in the outlining of some basic teaching practices in the final section. Most of these guidelines already been stated in various ways in prior chapters, whether explicitly or implicitly. Since the narrativational-developmental perspective has already been articulated as a synthesis (based upon a reading of Kegan through a Ricoeurian and Freirean lens, compared with research findings from NSC developmental psychology⁷²¹ and others), these points of application are best framed as hypotheses for now.

Each of the names for the modes of consciousness in narrativational development discussed in Chapter Five (sensing to naming to sequencing to narrating to integrating to negotiating)⁷²² describes a kind of mimetic-poetic activity. Mimesis-poesis provides a way to describe the basic act of interpretation in every mode, as an inherently dialectical, analogical, creative, and often improvisational or even playful act. As summarized previously,⁷²³ the notion of mimesis-poesis emphasizes that interpretation is often about *aiming* for meaning, which is to say that learning involves constant dialogical interactivity and ever-evolving degrees of mastery. When aiming towards some new meaning, learning is more mimetic than poetic, i.e., it involves imitation of others, a

⁷²¹ See chap. 2 sec. 3 regarding narrative social constructionism (NSC).

⁷²² See chap. 5 sec. 3.

⁷²³ See beginning of chap. 5. sec. 3.

continuous conversion of stories-heard (a refiguration, in Ricoeur's terminology) into stories-told (a configuration). In the course of this repeating or retelling, some poetic, creative novelty might be introduced. Sometimes this occurs randomly via trial-and-error; sometimes it already anticipates analogical connections based on prior learning. In a social dialectic, communities offer responses to these innovations that attempt to reinforce, modify, and/or discourage the learner's mimetic-poetic choices—which she or he must in turn receive back and interpret, adjusting the initial response in some way. As this becomes a cycle by which a new meaning is reworked over time, the learner eventually gains a sense of comfort with the meaning as mimetic-poetically constructed. This comfort could be referred to as a sense of “truth.” This “truth” becomes its own object, in that it can be recognized, i.e., imitable, both in similar and in novel contexts. When noticed, it can launch new mimetic-poetic connections of a qualitatively different sort, again beginning with more-mimetic social offerings and proceeding from there.

When a meaning becomes comfortable and more-easily manipulated by the learner, it can become taken for granted, which on the one hand makes it less taxing for the mind to process, and then to mimetically-poetically reach towards other meanings and concepts. We thankfully do not have to filter through various sensory perceptions in order to accurately name an object as “tree”; nor do we have to actively reproduce all the steps and interactions involved in order to refer to the act of driving, or to perform it as a sequence.⁷²⁴ On the other hand, such presumptions in certain contexts can contribute to over-reified, closed-off meanings, if they are continually reinforced without ever being challenged or adapted. Narratives, however, are unique forms of meaning-making in that

⁷²⁴ “Names” and “sequences” are narrational-developmental categories of meaning-making activity; see chap. 5 sec. 3.

they epitomize mimesis-poesis—for they are creative imitations of life itself. It is true that stories themselves can become reified in a sense, as *closed narratives* with pre-determined *evaluations* regarding *character*, group, or setting; these types of narrative are typically influenced by or derived from meta-narrative forms. But an activated *narrative consciousness* always maintains at least the potential to break through reifications and awaken the imagination. The power of this activation is proportionate to the extent to which a story-recipient makes both mimetic and poetic connections to it, a discordant concordance (Ricoeur) which constructs a mediated event, i.e. a *detour*. This is then refigured by a vicarious imagination, thus producing emotional catharsis, an experience of truth. The narrator can greatly affect this process—but so can a recipient.⁷²⁵

Based upon this understanding of meaning-making, learning, and the self-evolving consciousness, four hypotheses are hereby presented which suggest the relevance of mimesis-poesis, and narrative development to teaching for narrativity:

- *Hypothesis One (H1): Teaching for narrativity involves paying attention to salient meanings, and to the mode of consciousness corresponding to them.* In a context of mutual solicitude, where life is shared and stories are exchanged, people of all ages will tend to reveal what *matters* to them. An axiom in narrative therapy is that “there are no neutral stories”;⁷²⁶ neither are there neutral evaluations, value-statements, or any other kind of spontaneous, non-solicited expressions about life. Something might matter because it taps into

⁷²⁵ See chap. 3 sec. 3 regarding Ricoeur’s various insights in this regard. According to Michael White, even among the very most marginalized persons, one’s personal experiences remain that which, per Freedman and Combs, “lie...outside the domain of the dominant stories that have marginalized and disempowered those lives.” Freedman and Combs, *Narrative Therapy*, 39-40.

⁷²⁶ Brown and Augusta-Scott, “Introduction,” ix.

their deepest yearnings of agency, location, communion, and/or purpose in some way. Or, it might matter because it is something hindering those yearnings from being fulfilled in some way—or maybe both. In any case human beings, *when* they feel safe in communion, will invariably offer clues indicating some point of significance in their lives. These likely offer fruitful starting points for narrational learning and identity-formation.

- *Hypothesis Two (H2): Teaching for narrativity involves both invoking and provoking the narrative consciousness.* Salient meanings about people's lives all are somehow tied to real-world experiences, and to the social and emotional contexts relevant to those experiences. They invoke a certain set of relationships that contribute to some aspect of personal identity, or one of a person's communal identities. Freire's originally-unnarrated depression was mnemonically located in the acute, yet inaccessible, moment of his father's death, even as it contributed to a persistent sense of loss and lack of mourning. Tutu's theology of ubuntu, as he interprets it, is a theological ideology, but with real-life roots in his personal experiences of growing up in apartheid South Africa (and regardless of how "systematic" a theology might be, all theological reflection similarly emerges from practical, lived experiences). The narrative consciousness is the mode by which such experiences and contexts can be vicariously and imaginatively re-created in the present. Either a *story-heard* can provoke a person to make spontaneous analogies to experience, or she or he can offer a *story-told* by foraging prefigured meanings and memories, and constructing a plot that anticipates and creates

significance. The narrative consciousness—the center of personhood—can indeed be considered the mission control of a person’s narrational identity and its evolution. By activating the narrative consciousness, meanings can be resubmitted to the more-malleable level of vicarious *participation*—whether via oral story-exchanges, dramas, or rituals, or also in a derivative way by listening or watching the unfolding of a story. Both of these can invoke a detour of the consciousness.

- *Hypothesis Three (H3): Teaching for narrativity involves helping participants to navigate between different modes of consciousness.* Activating the narrative consciousness can break through inertia that hinders mimetic-poetic connections, or the movement between different modes of consciousness. Educators can facilitate these connections and movements, based on the particular identity-needs of the participant and what modes of consciousness are accessible to him or her in the moment—although by mimesis-poesis an educator can oftentimes, when appropriate, challenge participants to aim towards a new perspective. Some hypothetical example-patterns of how this can work:⁷²⁷
 - A self-story-told (the narrating consciousness) can be reflected upon in terms of the evaluations and characters it depicts, and in terms of its plot which reflects themes and values (moving towards integrating). The source of themes/values can then be considered, whether as native to the

⁷²⁷ These are not intended to prescribe universally-applicable teaching practices, or to outline specific pedagogical steps. The point here is to simply illustrate how the consciousness moves between various modes in ways that help clarify identity and sense of narrativity.

- story itself, or as imported from cultural mythology—in which case it can then be discussed in terms of whether or not the theme benefits or harms the self-story or the character it depicts (integrating and/or negotiating).
- A story-told (narrating) can reveal a self-character flattened into a mere role (proto-narrating), that was imposed as a past communal identity (narrating again) that reflects themes and values that the narrator now rejects. A narrative reinterpretation of that role in light of the present (narrating again) can reveal a more three-dimensional character, who redeems the past versions of that role and reflects desirable themes and values (integrating), even while recognizing that vestiges of the “old self” remain (negotiating).
 - A story-heard (narrating) can incite a particularly complex, previously-hidden emotion (sensing) that is identified (naming); the memory is scanned for recurrences of this emotion (sequencing) and experiences are recounted (narrating). An overarching pattern between disparate experiences is sought (integrating), and considered in light of the themes and values one claims to uphold (integrating and negotiating).
 - *Hypothesis Four (H4): Teaching for narrativity involves creatively collaborating with participants in their identity formation.* The acknowledgement here is that much of the teaching process remains outside of the control of a teacher; at the end of the day the participants must take ownership of their own process. There is no magic formula, no pedagogical format or system, which guarantees a student-participant’s formation.

Ultimately guided by the faith that, deep down, every person longs for the same yearnings for a meaningful life, a teacher's job is to listen closely and to be willing to adjust their teaching plans accordingly (in truthful ways). The format and/or medium of every presentation must be considered, in whether or not they encourage a spirit of collaboration. Attention should also be paid to the individual learning of each person, understanding that beyond teaching a set of facts, or a biblical theme, teaching for narrativity involves each person's life-journey becoming enlivened, and/or her or his capacities to interpret the surrounding world amplified—and such gains are highly personal and learner-specific.

These hypotheses are indeed preliminary and in need of further research and testing, and do not prescribe in themselves a formal pedagogical process. Nevertheless they attempt to reflect what I have personally observed and experienced in teaching environments that have borne demonstrable fruit in a person's narrational identity. They also manage to echo a shared praxis methodology, as articulated by Groome.⁷²⁸ H1 suggests actively listening and dialoguing with participants about lived experience (related to Groome's Movements One and Two). H2 is about crafting captivating stories that elicit meanings, and/or creating environments that encourage others to do so (which, setting aside the role of faith-stories at the moment, is ultimately about presenting narratives that respond to salient themes, which describes what stories of faith do in Groome's Movement Three). H3 connects the oscillations between various modalities of consciousness with learning that amplifies and/or challenges presumptions, a more

⁷²⁸ For one articulation of the movements of Groome's shared praxis see Groome, *Christian Religious Education*, 207-208.

specific way of considering the mind's activity in the course of critical reflection (Groome's Movement Four). And while H4 doesn't specifically exhort a verbalized "decision" per se (Movement Five), it does assert the importance of teachers' awareness of each student's learning process and its short-term and long-term goals. Even with such connections, these hypotheses are likely to require adjustment in the future. Yet assuming that the present hypotheses are valid, they provide some pedagogical guidelines that can help inform what follows—a basic rhythm and suggested practices for the discipling community that promotes narrativity.

6.3 SUGGESTED PRACTICES FOR EDUCATING FOR NARRATIVAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE COMMUNITY OF DISCIPLES

The overarching goal of this work, as already stated, is not to provide a specific method of faith-education based on narrativity; more research and testing are required. Additionally, there is no shortage of faith-based pedagogical approaches which utilize narrative and/or narratival methods and practices, even if they are not explicitly considered as such: Groome's shared praxis, Anne Wimberley and Maria Harris' respective pedagogies, Michael Novelli's depiction of biblical storying, Mary Elizabeth Moore's insights into narrative teaching, etc. These and others (especially Groome) have well demonstrated the pedagogical power of narrative in Christian religious education and have certainly influenced what follows. It is with these past works in view that this concluding section reflects upon the hypotheses just offered, in light of the theological, philosophical, and psychosocial vision of identity and discipleship that was reviewed in

the first section. In other words, it seeks to offer how teaching with an eye for narrativity (i.e. *paying attention, presenting narrative detours, facilitating new movements between consciousness modes, and creatively collaborating with participants*) might occur in the community of disciples, in order that it might (1) promote participants' narrational sense of agency, communion, location, and purpose, in light of (2) the shalom-Reign of God in which human beings are hospitably-invited to partake via an ongoing communal journey of discipleship, through (3) works of transformative reconciliation in the world that restore personhood, all resulting in (4) lives more infused with vitality, openness, and courage, resistant to meta-narrational authoritarianism and to its numbing of the human spirit. The *organizing structure/shape* and *ethic* of the community is first considered, which in turn suggest key *participations* as well as the essential *rhythm* of pedagogical-missional activity. Finally, a preliminary listing of teacher and environment *qualities* and teaching *strategies* is offered.

Despite the tentative nature of these proposals, they are based in some rather strong convictions about the *organizing structure* of a community of discipleship that educates for narrativity, as well as the overall *ethic and way of being* in such a community, both of which have been introduced in prior chapters' reflection sections and reviewed above.⁷²⁹ And while these convictions are not novel by any stretch, they indeed remain radical in the context of most established (Western) ecclesiological traditions in the US, whether Mainline Protestant, Black Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Evangelical. Structurally-speaking, the notion that the church-as-community must begin to be conceived as more than a building, or even as more than a body of worshippers, and

⁷²⁹ The shape of the community is articulated in chap. 3 sec. 6; its ethic in chap. 4 sec. 5; see also sec. 1 of the present chap (6).

begin to see its central practices as being a *living, embodied mission to the world* that is as constitutive of the community's identity as its worship, is wholly counterintuitive to the individualistic, transaction-based, or spectator-based notions of church which still dominate Christian faith communities. These notions, when unchecked, can do more to *support* the prevailing hegemonic imagination⁷³⁰ in the US than to *challenge* it. In light of the dialectical philosophies at work throughout this project, I have contended that Christian communities of practices need to view themselves as fundamentally *dyadic*. That is, churches need to begin both narrating, and re-constituting, themselves and their activities, so that it should be conspicuous to neutral observers that *what they do missionally is of equal, if not greater, importance to the community than what they do on Sunday mornings* or the like. Who we are as a community is tied to what we do, and to what we devote our time.

While it is not necessarily required to fulfill this charge, the notion of a dyad can be applied literally. My former church community, while I was in seminary in Pasadena—the same community that empowered me to form the Central Park Hub—also initiated a missional-church approach that was paradigm-altering for me: They chose to collectively focus on *one local*, and *one global*, missional partnership each. They decided to devote as many resources and as much energy into these areas as possible, instead of splitting their collective energies across multiple, even if well-intentioned efforts. After months of discernment, the church voted to adopt a nearby, under-advantaged elementary school as their local partnership. The idea was that, despite this focus, there was a variety of more or less “legitimately peripheral” ways for differently-skilled people to get

⁷³⁰ “Hegemonic imagination” invokes Emilie Townes; recall chap. 1 sec. 3, n. 57.

involved at a school—whether it was cleaning up the schoolyard, volunteering construction, tutoring and mentoring children, politically advocating for school funding and curriculum enrichment, etc. From a COP perspective, it is easy to see how such a partnership can quickly become a constitutive part of the church’s identity, and can provide a way for participants to know and speak of themselves missionally, as “the church that partners with X School.” Such partnerships also promote solicitude, in the sense that they encourage a sustained relationship between the participants of both institutions, and require empathic listening and continuous reflection to sustain the partnership. However it is structured, a faithful embodiment of Jesus’ community of reconciliatory practice requires the community always seeing itself in equal measure through the bifocal lens of action and reflection—and this should correspond to real-life, concrete manifestation of this dual perspective in its communal structures and regular practices. Sunday (or any other) gatherings should *directly* feed into mission, and mission back into worship and teaching practices, and so on.

If the *shape* of the community is dyadic, then the *way of being* or *ethic* that characterizes both ends of the dyad is solicitude, in the expanded sense already described. Educators and leaders do their best to encourage without forcing the nurturing of environments where everyone, and every story, is treated as sacred. Such an environment promotes mutual trust and authenticity, encourages listening (and the curiosity that is necessary for listening well), and a willingness to learn from others and to change. This ethical stance is as important in the context of explicitly-missional practices, as it is in its explicitly-pedagogical practices. Encouraging and exhibiting solicitude does not necessarily require literal “story-telling”; it is better viewed as an essential virtue that we

must practice in every form of discourse. If disciples in mission cannot demonstrate a deep respect for those with whom they partner, or show willingness to listen to their stories and perspectives, then the mutual transformation-humanization of both is hindered. Following the *sequela Christi*, the way of Jesus, involves going-to, and being interactive and involved with others in some form. As Jesus invited others to be a part of his community, so disciples even today remain open to entering into sustained, mutually-healing relationships with others, not only within but beyond the discipling community itself. This way of being is best modeled in the moment by community leaders and more invested participants; it can then be mimetic-poetically rehearsed by them as well as by newer, more peripheral participants who, as they move from “following” to “being sent,” can take greater ownership of this ethic and consider it as constitutive to their own selfhood.

Viewing the narrativizing community of discipleship’s structure as dyadic, and its ethic as solicitude, already anticipates the community of practice’s core identity-forming *participations*. Here I propose a breakdown between *missional praxis*, *reflection on praxis*, *worship-sacrament*, and *catechesis*.⁷³¹ Fundamentally speaking, all four of these are pedagogical activities, and all four are either missional or witness to the missional nature of the church. They all promote Christian identity-as-discipleship, while also welcoming multiplex and multi-narrative persons to offer their own stories, even if they challenge presumptions or norms. Perhaps the primary distinctive here from other

⁷³¹ I refer to catechesis generally, not with a particular curriculum or age group in mind. I am primarily referring to the means by which a people becomes more fully integrated into a life of Christian faith, but it can also refer to “continuing education” for disciples of all ages.

prominent lists of core ecclesial practices (e.g. Groome)⁷³² is the way it distinguishes missional reflection as its own entity, although it perhaps could just as well be considered as part and parcel to mission. The truth is that all four of these practices are interrelated and overlap, but nevertheless they are delineated here, because I believe that these represent *four unique spaces around which the discipling community can re-imagine its core identity-constitutive activities*. (The discipling community of Jesus lived within these four spaces as well—in the homes of strangers and on the streets where they conducted Jesus’ mission of reconciliation, in table fellowship with each other where they undoubtedly reflected upon the day’s events, in attendance of Jewish cultic practices and festivals, and in the presence of their rabbi on hillsides and on the side of boats where Jesus taught them a new way of life.)

The advantage of creating designated spaces and times for reflection on missional praxis is that it creates a natural means of legitimate peripheral participation, in which persons can begin participating in the work and ethic of the faith-community, and still reflection upon that praxis in relation to their personhood, whether or not they are fully committed to being a disciple, are not certain they wish to be one, are dead-set about never becoming one, or are a participant, or a whole group of participants, of another faith community. Strategically speaking, it can play various roles depending on context: It can be a space for forming interfaith partnerships with other communities towards a common mission, while also having the opportunity to engage difference and grow in

⁷³² Groome submits the traditional terms of *kerygma*, *koinonia*, *leitourgia*, and *diakonia*; Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 445. Note that I consider concrete acts of *koinonia* (e.g. shared meal, socializing time) to be an inextricable aspect of all four of the practices in the text, and endemic to Christian gathering of any sort, so that an ethic of solicitude permeates everything the church does together. Moreover, I view proclamation as a sacramental activity along with the other sacramental tasks, and therefore combinable with *leitourgia*—although in another sense I understand all forms of sacrament to be inherently acts of proclamation, i.e., as narrative-participatory performances; see below.

mutual personhood.⁷³³ Or, it can provide a less-intimidating opportunity for people curious in the identity-forming resources of Christian tradition to explore and ask questions. Or, it can be a way for those who have no or little interest in the stories and traditions of faith, but who care about the mission it conducts, to be involved and to have opportunities to grow in their own sense of personhood as well. Whatever the course they take, the goal here is not to gain new converts, members, or catechumens, but to provide avenues for narrational yearnings to be nurtured in love.

And yet, this fourfold structure also creates a way, if desired by the community, to shepherd those who desire along the narrative of discipleship. Mission and reflection can be considered the “entry-level” discipleship dyad. Those who feel called to do so might decide to extend their participation, entering into the worshipping community’s acts of contemplation of the Spirit, celebration in the Spirit, recalling the stories and practices of the faith, and performing rituals that narratively connect present-day disciples to each other, the original community of Jesus, and/or the worldwide communion. For those who are then called to increasingly integrate their sense of self via the emerging-*imago* of disciple, they can then participate in various types of catechetical instruction, which are also narrational and based on dialogical story-exchanges. Those from various denominational and theological traditions might prefer a different order to these practices, or combine them (e.g. reflection with catechesis). However organized, the key is that *the central practices of the faith-community should be carefully considered in terms of where and how they intend to meet other human beings in mutually-transformative encounters*—along the journey of life, as well as along the journey of life-in-discipleship.

⁷³³ This can work so long as both communities commit to solicitude, and meet in such a way and place that communicates and ensures mutual respect and value to member of both communities.

In the post-Christendom US, the church can no longer rely upon “Christian nurture” (Bushnell) to be its chief survival strategy; nor can it rightly utilize manipulative forms of false “evangelism” which rely upon closed narratives, monologues, fear-based indoctrination and groupthink. Again, these strategies support the very social-cultural divisions and internal dissociations that US communities of faith in particular must resist. But when the *community shifts its primary concerns to be the mission of Jesus, and to the promotion of narrational personhood as the goal of that mission*, “making disciples” then becomes better understood—as the continuing evolution of Jesus’ life-restorative mission and ethic that is reincarnated in every day and age, which seeks to reveal “the more within the real” (Sobrinho) and affirm personhood in every sphere.⁷³⁴ Anyone who wants to continue to explore this “more” further, with help from the narrational resources of the Christian tradition, is free to do so, but is never pressured or coerced.

Even as all of these categories of practices educate for narrativity, reflection and catechesis are the more overt, pedagogically-oriented practices.⁷³⁵ Both concern themselves with personal identity and formation, and offer resources of Christian identity (i.e. the discipling tradition) towards this end. Catechesis is more directly concerned with offering the resources of the Christian tradition in a formative way, so as to help participants gain greater integration of their selfhood by developing their integrative

⁷³⁴ Stated plainly, discipling communities should be concerned with *people*, and with *communities, societies, and our planet*, more so than either participation numbers or converts. While this might seem self-evident to some, how churches meet, arrange their spaces, spend their money and time, etc., are all instructive as to whether or not there is a difference between a community’s explicit and implicit curricula and ultimate agendas.

⁷³⁵ Worship-sacrament and mission, in contrast, are concrete manifestations of the great vision of God’s shalom for the world—one as performed, experienced, and imagined as consummated, the other as its concrete manifestation in lived experience. Again, all four spheres educate, and so one or more of these hypothesized steps in the pedagogical rhythm can still be applied to either mission or worship/sacrament, if given the right circumstances.

disciple-imago. Groups focused on critical reflection on praxis (“CROP groups”), as discussed, can have varied, contextually-appropriate agendas depending on need and resources, but in some way offer opportunities to critically reflect on missional activities in a collegial, story-centered, safe setting. Both kinds of pedagogical gatherings should seek to make the promotion of personhood, i.e. love, their primary pedagogical goal. Without proposing a formal pedagogy, a basic *pedagogical rhythm* can be suggested for both such meetings, based on the four hypotheses above:

- H1 (*paying attention*) occurs in environments of *koinonia*, where participants can interact with others freely and establish an atmosphere of solicitude. These can include shared activities, meals, artistic endeavors, etc., anything that legitimately affords participants the space and freedom to speak about real-life openly with others. The faith-educator takes these opportunities to *listen deeply*, to everything from run-of-the-mill chatter to shared personal stories—and models this listening to other participants. Stories about life often indicate particularly salient meanings as well as inherently invite others to participate and offer (solicitude-guided) feedback. An unexpected (pre-narrative) emotional display might also indicate something, if the faith-educator has been given permission.
- H2 (*presenting narrative detours*) can occur many different ways: it can stem directly from a narrational question posed in response to a pre-narrational statement (“When did that first start for you?”; “How long have you believed that?”; “What was it like to live like that?”; etc.) that then spontaneously provokes a story worthy of reflection. Or, it can be a well-rehearsed, dramatic

presentation of a self-story, faith-story, or even a work of fiction, as part of a planned curriculum. The form and genre of this *incipient story* will vary depending upon the type of practice, the particular circumstances, and any learning-goals at stake. In CROP groups, a salient occurrence during a recent mission event, or a story by someone from the missional or another community, are good examples of stories to use. In catechetical (and liturgical) settings, and in appropriate CROP settings as well, this is where presentations of faith-related stories—whether biblical, testimonial, or “hagiographical” (i.e., the biographies of exemplary disciples throughout the ages)—are appropriately offered. The keys are that the story produces a shared experience of some sort, that has discernible relevance to present-day existence, and which provokes the mimetic-poetic imagination by (1) introducing a relevant “generative theme” (Freire)⁷³⁶ and (2) inviting participants into a true narrational “detour” of the consciousness. That is, the story should take its audience somewhere where it would not have expected to go.

- H3 (*facilitating consciousness movement and evolution*) can, again, look very different depending on the circumstances; the primary requirement is that there be opportunities to *form narrational connections in story-sharing dialogues*. This step does happen naturally in many ways, but is best guided by a community-sanctioned and trained⁷³⁷ leader or educator.

⁷³⁶ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 96; generative themes are also the starting point for Groome’s shared praxis.

⁷³⁷ Narrative therapy and liberation psychology both offer helpful resources that unfortunately could not be presented in a comprehensive manner in this paper, other than the brief mentions along the way and in the

- After a story is shared, the educator should invite responses from the community in some way. Often participants will gravitate to one or more elements of a story (scenes, specific actions, real or implied evaluations, characters, plot-themes, etc.) for some reason. The emotional content of the reaction can be discussed, and if a personal memory is involved, they can be encouraged to respond with a spontaneous narrative of their own based on that memory. Critically comparing the similarities and differences between two (and more) narratives can then provoke new, or recall previously-established, forms of meta-narrative awareness.
- Sometimes a story offers a clue regarding a character or imago that seems askew or ill-fitting in some way. If permitted to explore this, a person's closed self-narratives and its origins might be exposed, which might inspire similar revelations by others as well. Participants can then be encouraged towards a more integrated self-*imago*, and/or a more multiplex self who improves at negotiating/dialoging between *imagos* and/or communal identities.
- Or perhaps, the initial story provoked a reaction without a clear memory—in which case there is likely an untold, or unsatisfactorily-told, self-story at work, as with Freire's depression. This requires steady care to help the participant unpack, usually beginning with pre-narratively naming the emotion, and then attempting to find patterns in a person's life-history to

practices below. There are resources applying narrative therapeutic insights to ministry use, see e.g. Burrell David Dinkins, *Narrative Pastoral Counseling* (Longwood, FL: Xulon, 2005). The guidelines here also share much in common with case study methods; see Jeffery H. Mahan, Barbara B. Troxell, and Carol J. Allen, *Shared Wisdom: A Guide to Case Study Reflection in Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993).

attempt to discern the significance of that emotion, which if discovered can then be narrated—again, if permitted and if appropriate to do so in a particular context.

- All along the way, solicitude should be demonstrated, “problem-posing questions” (Freire) should be asked carefully, and the generative theme should be used more as a resource for facilitating these movements and less as an imposed limitation on what can be discussed. Yet a good point of preparation, if one knows the generative theme in advance, is for the educator to consider the cultural archetypes, myths, and other meta-narrative meanings which affirm or hinder that theme, so that she or he can guide participants to see these, or others like them.
- Finally, as H4 involves being deeply aware of the learning needs of individual participants, the faith-educator can use this awareness to then note if and where salient narrative connections are being made. A *creative collaboration* here between the participant and others (the educator and/or other participants) then involves an opportunity to imaginatively project or reconstruct the story, character, life-theme, or other insight that was elicited, typically with the shalom-Reign of God and/or the generative theme in view. This can take the form of yet another story, or a prayer, an art project, a work of art/drama/music, a ritual, a conversation—or even an act of protest or the launching of a movement. The uniting factor here is *that it is an expression of oneself-as-narrator*, in some form, *that can be shared among the community and/or others*.

- When possible the result should also *point participants back into the participation in the mission* of shalom in some way, whether specifically to the concrete missional community of the church, or towards another specific plan of action.

These “steps” here are suggested in a more generic way, but the hope is that by activating these four movements, community-participants are refreshed in their selfhood-in-community, and can grow in their narrational resources—such as a *greater openness, greater generosity of spirit, and a greater inclination to engage with difference*. The disciples within such learning communities learn specifically about how to connect this greater sense of personhood, to a sense of purpose rooted in the shalom-Reign of God, as well as how to continually integrate and negotiate between this disciple-imagō and their other self-characters of various import.

What kind of *qualities* should an educator in faith aiming towards narrational personhood, as well as this educator’s teaching space, exhibit? In no particular order, such a faith-educator:

- Understands that, fundamentally, the *missional praxis* of the faith-community is inextricable from the rest of the activities by which the community educates in faith. She or he always keeps the missional implications and contexts in mind, makes reference to these, and encourages applications to be applied to them.
- Sets expectations from the start for participants regarding the kind of learning she or he hopes will take place. He or she also allows participants in turn to

communicate their own expectations, and then can allow these to inform the direction of the group in some way.

- Models narratival learning by being willing to grow and learn from others.
- *Treats every salient self-story, and every person, as sacred.*
- Creates a learning space where people are comfortable and free to connect; sharing is never forced. Opportunities for both individual and group, casual and formal, interactions contribute to a learning environment with an “open feel.”
- Does not only listen to others, but is genuinely *interested* in what others say. (Narrative therapists have shown that one of the best ways to display neutrality and earn trust is to be an especially-interested listener.)⁷³⁸
- Allows for flexibility within a lesson plan, to allow the real lived experiences of the participants to adjust or even overhaul it.
- Exhibits patience, and is comfortable with silences, instead of jumping in to provide “the answer.”
- Exhibits patience, and is comfortable with a modicum of chatter and free talk, when appropriate. This helps participants feel more comfortable in the learning setting and allows for opportunities to connect with peers.
- Encourages both truth-telling and curious listening. She or he is generally encouraging and sympathetic when it comes to story-sharing, but also knows the right time, *if* there is trust *and* prior permission given, to gently “push”

⁷³⁸ Parry and Doan, *Story Re-Visions*, 136.

upon (e.g.) the use of a “closed” narrative, or an uncritically-assumed stereotype or paradigm.

- Understands his or her own role to be similar to an editor, who reflectively collaborates in the self-storying processes of participants.

In addition to the broad overview above, some additional *strategies* for (mostly adult) mimetic-poetic faith-education include, but are not limited to:

- Finding ways to encourage *spontaneous, testimonial, oral-aural storytelling*. Donald’s research (as well as that of Walter Ong) suggests that oral-aural storytelling, in particular, is the foundation of our humanity⁷³⁹—and it makes sense, since the face-to-face context more fully communicates the intimacy, the dialogical spirit, and the mutual self-giving implied in story-sharing. They play a critical role in our feeling connected with others. With the rise of digital technologies and social media, and with global interactivity at an all-time high, oral storytelling appears to be a dying craft, especially in the US—yet it is essential to our collective psyches and to our meaning-making capacities.
 - “Spontaneous” means that the story arises in the moment from the participant. Promoting this spontaneity is to encourage narrational *yearnings* for communion, etc.
 - “Testimonial” means that testifying to what a person has seen and heard is the privileged form of theological dialogue in storying communities—it is not objectively “true,” but it communicates a “truth” that comes out of a lived existence. Witnessing, especially to suffering, can create fissures in

⁷³⁹ In Bradt, *Story as a Way of Knowing*, 6.

closed narratives and metanarratives, as well as assist in healing. Creating conditions for participants to spontaneously elicit their testimonies, face-to-face, promotes personhood and can elicit highly generative story-dialogues, thus encouraging narrativity.

- Nurturing the “shared energy”⁷⁴⁰ (Wenger and Lave) of story-dialogues. In situation where stories lead to stories that lead to more stories, etc., in a story-dialoguing group, where mutual solicitude is maintained and a proper amount of reverence (possibly also mixed with humor) is shown, there is a spirituality to such moments, where interdependence-*ubuntu* can be glimpsed more clearly than normal. The educator should encourage these moments, so long as she or he also follows the next guideline:
- Managing one’s own (as educator) and others’ power. In general the educator should allow stories to be told freely, until another’s story cannot be told, or is not given the same amount of due or respect as another. This is why, as mentioned above, mutual expectations for the group should be well-established. But the educator should similarly take care to manage his or her own power as well: to encourage full participation, protect voices, ask problematizing questions, and hold up the generative theme—but to not interject so much so as to break or stymie the momentum of the group.
- Realizing that, when it comes to generating greater openness and ability to resist meta-narrative influences, there is no form of narrative teaching that can replace *face-to-face story-dialogues within diverse communal settings*.

⁷⁴⁰ This was originally mentioned in chap. 2 sec. 5.

And so if the learning community itself is not particularly diverse, consider questions like: Are there others in the faith-community who should be included? Does our missional involvement include opportunities to story-share with those who claim a different racial construct, social class, ethnicity, faith, etc., than what is represented among us alone? Would it be appropriate to *invite* partners from missional settings to participate in our reflection group?

- Continuing to keep in mind that there are no neutral stories; every story reveals.
- As part of this paying attention to stories, learning how to listen for:
 - *Closed narratives or evaluations*: “All X are Y,” “Everyone knows...” “That’s the way things are,” “They always....” etc. Respond to such statements and narratives with deconstruction questions,⁷⁴¹ which resubmit the closed narrative to the narrative consciousness: “When did you first start thinking that way?” (e.g.)⁷⁴²
 - *Common story-plot trajectories*: These can also be called “strategies” for emplotment. Four basic types include:
 - Good beginnings lead to good ends
 - Good beginnings lead to bad ends

⁷⁴¹ For various kinds of deconstruction questions in therapy settings see Freedman and Combs, *Narrative Therapy*, 122-124.

⁷⁴² An extreme version of this involves adolescents or adults who think in only dichotomies (good/bad, win/lose, etc.), possibly due to early life neglect and/or silencing; Watkins and Shulman, *Towards Psychologies of Liberation*, 188. Dialogue and new narration is nearly impossible for them; however, an externalized narrative or a work of fiction might provide enough distance so as to experience it mimetic-poetically.

- Bad beginnings lead to good ends
- Bad beginnings lead to bad ends⁷⁴³
 - The educator, especially with adolescents and young adults, can listen for *patterned* story-telling; if a person's stories or characters, even in casual conversation, consistently utilizes one of these plot-strategies, it likely indicates that it has evolved into part of his or her sense of character, whether in one or in many communities.
- *Common imagoes*: Educators can listen for these integrative core self-character in the self-stories of adults, informed by cultural norms:
 - *Agentic or communal*: Agentic includes “the warrior,” “the traveler,” and “the maker”; Communal includes “the lover,” “the caregiver,” “the ritualist.”⁷⁴⁴ These tend to be highly gendered cultural constructs. Additionally, as the US identity crisis is based upon dividing and conquering, and splitting agency from communion, then these unilateral imagoes can mask opposing deficiencies—e.g., perceiving self-as-warrior masks loneliness, or self-as-caregiver masks powerlessness; etc. (Other imagoes, e.g. “the escapist,” depicts a deficiency in both agency and communion.)

⁷⁴³ Agnes Hankiss called these “ontologies of the self”: “dynastic,” “compensatory,” “antithetical,” and “self-absolutory,” respectively (see McAdams, *Stories We Live By*, 103). Elsewhere McAdams and McLean discuss the bad-good dynamic as “redemption” and the good-bad dynamic as “contamination”; McAdams and McLean, “Narrative Identity,” 234.

⁷⁴⁴ McAdams categorizes imagoes primarily around the most primary life yearnings of agency and communion. See McAdams, *Stories we Live By*, 124.

- *Agentic and communal*: These include “the teacher,” “the counselor,” “the humanist,” “the arbiter,” etc.⁷⁴⁵ These are in contrast, not surprisingly, all centered upon claiming a highly generative purpose on behalf of humanity and/or the world. These imagoes are more inherently likely to resist divisiveness and dehumanization of oneself and others.
 - *Disciple as Imago*. “Disciple” can function as a core imago itself—although how it is understood is contingent upon many factors, especially including the life of the individual person. In general it should exhibit both agentic and communal (as well as locative and purpose-related) life-themes, and like the above, be oriented towards the greater good (i.e. a “disciple-as-healer,” etc.) The themes of being called, being loved by God, patterning one’s life after Jesus, and being empowered to bring reconciliation, can also be encouraged as a part of basic catechetical instruction.
 - *Journey language*: An imago-as-disciple lends itself well to language of being “on the way,” and this is helpful, non-threatening language in helping both new and established Christians articulate their personal histories and their goals and dreams in relation to discipleship.
- Engaging in re-storying, or retelling. The high drama point of a storying dialogue, as conceived above, is the opportunity at the end to create (or

⁷⁴⁵ McAdams, *Stories We Live By*, 124.

creatively imitate!) something new, whether a story, piece of art, a song, a drama, a creative protest plan, acts of service, etc. The educator collaborates with participants in either making individual creations or a communal project, helping where most needed. She or he helps people talk through the meanings and significances of the work, as well as form *action plans* regarding how to use their creations. These need not be a part of every story-dialogue gathering, and not everyone will gravitate to this sort of activity, but they are the primary means, in this basic teaching approach, by which participants take new, previously-unforeseen steps in their sense of self-as-narrator/creator.

- Keeping notebooks. Because lives are complex, the educator can consider keeping notebooks on his or her regular participants to keep track of: nuclear episodes (McAdams), common themes/evaluations, key relationships/communities, imagoes, closed narratives, where they are in life-journey, where they are in discipling-journey, etc. This notebook, however, should stay in one's office or at home, and kept confidential.

One final note, regarding *children's faith education*:⁷⁴⁶ A narrational-developmental approach to children's faith education obviously does not place the same level of demands upon story-dialogues as it does with adult participants. But it does provide insight into crafting a story-centered approach geared towards age-appropriate mimesis-poesis. In effect, the educator just drops H3 for the youngest children, and then

⁷⁴⁶ This description, even as it is informed by my own research and recent practices, still highly resembles the "biblical storying" approach for adolescents that I learned many years ago from Michael Novelli; see Michael Novelli, *Shaped By the Story: Helping Students Encounter God in a New Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008).

slowly adds it back in, bit by bit, as children become older, adjusting the time spent on the four movements accordingly. But in general, the initial gathering/listening phase (H1) is very short and usually music- or activity-based; a presentation of a biblical story (H2) is done *dramatically*, or *creatively*, or using media, etc. However the story is told, it should arrest attention. It should foreground the drama surrounding lost or gained *agency* and/or *communion*. Usually a retelling (i.e., H2') is a good idea—often by having the children themselves now retell or reenact the story, but the educator(s) involved can be of assistance. The children's mimetic-poetic imaginations as a result can now remember the *sequence* of the story and at least retell it as a *proto-narrative*; what's more they can respond, and even re-imagine the stories, or project themselves into them, in productive ways. Simple questions or activities can reinforce sequences, and/or draw attention to characters, and they can mimetic-poetically consider evaluations and themes as well, when presently simply and in ways that tie to the story. And a re-storying time, where the children reapply the story to their lives (H4), can be incredibly fruitful—that is, *if the educator is truly willing* to give children the chance to freely engage the stories, in ways that might be uncomfortable for some. But such freedom to *play* is how a love and enjoyment of the biblical stories takes shape, and how they (especially when reinforced at home) can come to deeply shape a child's earliest sense of narrational selfhood, indeed their inchoate sense of personhood.

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