Addressing the Need for Recognition:
A Fundamental and Constitutive Point of Departure for Catholic Social Ethics

Hilary Ogonna Nwainya

A dissertation

submitted to the Faculty of

the department of theology

in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Boston College

Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences
Graduate School

August 2023

Addressing the Need for Recognition:

A Fundamental and Constitutive Point of Departure for Catholic Social Ethics

Hilary Ogonna Nwainya

Advisor: Professor James F. Keenan, SJ

Abstract

Why should any society acknowledge and address recognition as a vital human need? This dissertation primarily sets out to offer a theological ethical response to this opportune and critical question. Fundamentally, it does not attempt to develop a new theory of recognition or, even, correct the existing ones. Rather, in agreement with the Aristotelian eudemonistic principle that the end of ethics is virtuous action and drawing on major theories of recognition, it highlights the necessity of acting virtuously in a manner that properly addresses the human need for due recognition. Its ultimate goal is to highlight the ethical significance of recognition as a vital human need. This goal is premised on the central thesis that all human beings need to be duly recognized and consistently treated as subjects with inherent dignity and fundamental rights; and, that failure to address the need for recognition leads to a catch-22 situation in human society. Therefore, it argues that doing a proper social ethics, especially Catholic Social Ethics, practically demands that we duly address the human need for recognition and explore how to integrate the habit of mutual recognition into the moral schemas of our societies so as to create a thriving culture of recognition – one that normalizes, prioritizes, and sustains mutual recognition as a common ground for negotiating the common good in modern multicultural and pluralistic societies.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement

I acknowledge the boundless love of God Almighty in whom we live, and move and have our being. I am very thankful to Professor James F. Keenan, SJ for his mentorship and for directing this dissertation. I thank Professors Lisa S. Cahill and Kenneth R. Himes, OFM. for reading this dissertation and for their invaluable contributions. I also thank the entire Faculty, staff and students of the Theology Department, the Morrissey School of Arts and Sciences as well as the entire community of Boston College for all their support and friendship.

I acknowledge the various contributions of Charles Taylor, Enda McDonagh, Judith Butler, Hille Haker, David Hollenbach, Kwame Appiah and many other scholars, authors and thinkers whose works and ideas were consulted, appropriated or expressed in this dissertation. Similarly, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all the persons and institutions that have inspired, supported and guided me through my PhD program at Boston College especially the Catholic Diocese of Abakaliki-Nigeria, St. Benedict's Parish, Somerville, MA and Sacred Heart Parish, Malden MA as well as all individuals, families, and groups that have assisted me during this period.

Finally, I am eternally grateful to my family, friends, cohorts, colleagues, and students, for your love, loyalty, care, support, and friendship. May God reward you all abundantly and keep you in his Grace, love and peace. Kindly be assured of my continued prayers, goodwill, and friendship.

Introduction

Modern societies tend to be multicultural in their composition and pluralistic in their ethical perspectives. Thus, living ethically and relating properly with one's neighbors in the midst of these diverse cultures and many viewpoints entail negotiating a practical approach to the common good. Inspired by this reality, I have been exploring the ethical implications of various efforts being made by some modern multicultural and pluralistic societies to effectively negotiate a practical approach to the common good. My studies in this field has gone on for nearly two decades, during which I have consistently raised critical questions bordering on the idea of unity in diversity.[1] For instance, in my 2018 STL dissertation at Maynooth, Ireland, I addressed the question: *how do we negotiate a notion of the common good that respects, embraces, and promotes the primordial ties – family, tribe, religion, caste – that essentially constitute our diverse identities?* My research strategy was to engage two contemporary ethicists in a creative conversation – the American Jesuit theologian, David Hollenbach and the British American philosopher, Kwame Appiah. My main finding, which

---

[1] See Ogonna Hilary Nwainya, "African Palaver Ethics, the Common Good, and Nonrecognition of Women," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 43, no. 1 (June 1, 2023): 189–202, https://doi.org/10.5840/jsce202341882; Ogonna Hilary Nwainya, "Bias, Conversion and Recognition," in *Reinventing Theology in Post-Genocide Rwanda: Challenges and Hopes*, ed. Marcel Uwineza, Elisee Rutagambwa, and Michael Kamanzi (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2023), 264–75; Ogonna Hilary Nwainya, "The Common Good and The Ethics of Identity: A Conversation with David Hollenbach and Kwame Appiah" (Licentiate in Sacred Theology, Maynooth, Ireland, Pontifical University, St. Patrick's College, 2018); Ogonna Hilary Nwainya, "Integral Ecology and Sustainable Development: An Ecofeminist Conversation with Laudato Si," in *Theological and Ecological Issues*, ed. Luke E. Ijezie, Stephen Audu, and Agnes I. Acha (Lagos, Nigeria: Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHAN), 2017), 660–80; Ogonna Hilary Nwainya, "Advancing Religious Peace in Nigeria through Strategic Dialogue: A Case Study of Enohia-Itim in Afikpo Ebonyi State" (Master of Science, Abuja, Nigeria, National Open University of Nigeria, 2015); Ogonna Hilary Nwainya, "An Eschatological View of the Year of Faith: Witnessing to Hope in Age of Despair," in *Religious Faith and Public Service in Nigeria: Ambiguities and Paradoxes*, ed. Luke E. Ijezie, Stephen Audu, and Agnes I. Acha (Lagos, Nigeria: Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHAN), 2014), 197–207; Ogonna Hilary Nwainya, "Africa's Commitment to the Globalization of Solidarity: A Perspective from Africae Munus n. 86," in *The Church in Nigeria and the Ecumenical Question*, ed. Luke E. Ijezie, Stephen Audu, and Agnes I. Acha (Lagos, Nigeria: Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHAN), 2013), 291–304; Ogonna Hilary Nwainya, "The Significance of Christian Hope in 1 Peter 1,3: An Inquiry into the Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann" (Bachelor of Theology, Enugu, Nigeria, Bigard Memorial Seminary (Affiliate of the Pontifical Urban University, Rome, Italy), 2011); Ogonna Hilary Nwainya, "Globalization and Sustainable Development in Africa: A Dialectical Inquiry" (Bachelor of Philosophy, Enugu, Nigeria, Bigard Memorial Seminary (Affiliate of the Pontifical Urban University, Rome, Italy), 2006).

gives impetus to this current dissertation, was that negotiating a practical approach to the common good is possible only if there is a prior mutual recognition among the constituents of a society.

Of course, it is not surprising that constituents of a society must regard one another as true friends with whom they can negotiate and pursue a practicable notion of the common good. This is because we cohabit modern societies with largely unchosen, sometimes unwanted, neighbors with whom we must relate as true friends and who we must duly recognize as worthy collaborators in articulating and pursuing a practicable notion of the common good. What is surprising though, is that we fail to appreciate how the common good itself is a question of recognition: *who do we recognize as worthy collaborators for negotiating the common good?* Moreover, for a good to be truly common, everyone in the society ought to participate equitably in negotiating and pursuing it. In other words, everyone ought to be duly recognized and should also recognize others as worthy collaborators in pursuit of the common good – this is mutual recognition. Therefore, all modern societies ought to intentionally normalize and prioritize the habit of mutual recognition as a crucial step toward creating a necessary common ground for negotiating the common good.

But, to normalize and prioritize the habit of mutual recognition in any society, such society must first acknowledge recognition itself as a vital human need that ought to be addressed by it. Thus, while acknowledging the importance of discussing how society can normalize and prioritize the habit of mutual recognition, this dissertation will mostly focus on why it is necessary for society to address recognition itself as a vital human need. I concede the insufficiency of just asking *why*, but I am convinced that it is only natural that I join this emerging conversation from the essentials; and, in fact, address the *how* and other practical questions in my future works. Hence, although I will briefly allude to how we can develop a culture that effectively normalizes and prioritizes the habit of mutual recognition especially in the final chapter, I will devote this work to highlighting

the failure of recognition in modern societies, arguing that an ethics of recognition is a vital missing link in our current moral schema, and proposing a theological ethical paradigm for integrating it.

I will present my operative definition of recognition in chapter two, particularly from an ethical perspective. But, it suffices for now to note that recognition basically involves a profound awakening in a moral agent to the existential reality of another moral agent whom they ought to duly acknowledge, regard, respect, and treat as a distinct social subject. This awakening occurs in the context of a social encounter in which a social subject (the recognizer) is morally obligated to ethically respond to another social subject (the recognized). Hence, throughout this work, I will principally use the term "recognition" in an inclusive way that accounts for the agency of both the recognized and the recognizer by emphasizing the inherent dignity and fundamental rights of the recognized as well as the ethical responsibility or obligation of the recognizer to uphold that dignity and rights when they encounter each other, in their otherness, as distinct social subjects. By a social subject, I mean a moral agent who can freely engage in ethical relations with others and equitably participate in the common good of a society without being subjugated or relegated as an object.

Ethical relation is the basic appropriate relationship that ought to exist among distinct social subjects. It is typically characterized by their mutual trust and protection, which is necessitated by their mutual vulnerabilities.[2] In principle, ethical relations is a question of recognition: *who do we recognize as worthy of mutual trust and protection?* But, in reality, ethical relations is imperative due to our susceptibility to ethically respond to the call of the other. In other words, ethical relations presupposes our responsibility or obligation to protect one another in our mutual vulnerability. In fact, without ethical relations and the responsive ethical actions that are generated by recognition, there would be no genuine community as such; perhaps, we might have a mockery of it – a charade.

---

[2] See Nilgun Kahraman, "What Is Ethical Relationship? And Why Is It Important for Psychiatric Nursing Care?" *Journal of Nursing & Care* 5, no. 8 (2016), 143.

Therefore, ethical relations is necessary for a community to actually exist, and it cannot be truly achieved without the mutual recognition of all moral agents as social subjects in their own rights.

Where mutual recognition is lacking, as we would see in the first and final chapters, there cannot be genuine ethical relations. What we would have is a charade between a master and a slave or an upper caste and a lower caste or a superior race and an inferior race or an oppressor and the oppressed or an abuser and the abused. *Ipso facto*, these cannot be regarded as true friendships. Even where there seems to be a semblance of peaceful coexistence among them, it will ultimately depend on the victims' ability or otherwise to effectively demand or struggle for due recognition. Hence, to avoid this demand or struggle, mutual recognition engenders ethical relations in society by ensuring that every human being duly recognizes others and is duly recognized by others as a subject. This is essential for human flourishing as no human being can ever flourish as an object like a slave, lower caste, inferior race, oppressed or abused person, which are moral anomalies. This is why it is deeply painful and puzzling to hear narratives about how obnoxious institutions like slavery and colonialism were beneficial to the victims. For instance, the new history standards for schools in Florida will teach that slaves learnt new skills.[3] Some argue that colonialism brought "civilization" to the "uncivilized world" – of course, including empires like Egypt, Kush, Songhai, Mali, Bornu, Ashanti, India, Han, Maya, Inca, Olmec, Aztec and other sophisticated civilizations.[4]

Such false narratives are inimical to the ability of society to negotiate the common good as they foster an unhealthy culture of neglect and impunity, which are based on the nonrecognition of the other as a subject or their misrecognition as an object. Hence, normalizing and prioritizing

---

[3] See Antonio Planas, "New Florida Standards Teach That Black People Benefited from Slavery Because It Taught Useful Skills," *NBC News*, July 20, 2023, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/new-florida-standards-teach-black-people-benefited-slavery-taught-usef-rcna95418.

[4] See Brandon Kendhammer, "Analysis | A Controversial Article Praises Colonialism. But Colonialism's Real Legacy Was Ugly.," *Washington Post*, December 7, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/09/19/colonialism-left-behind-a-long-legacy-most-of-it-bad/.

the habit of mutual recognition in society is vital for the common good as there would literally be no common ground for negotiating and pursuing it without mutual recognition. But, as I already noted, no society can successfully cultivate this habit without first acknowledging recognition *itself* as a vital human need that ought to be addressed by human beings. This acknowledgment morally obligates society to intentionally explore and devise appropriate means for addressing recognition, primarily, as a need – and only secondarily as a demand or a struggle.

Hence, the key question is: *why should a society rightly acknowledge and properly address recognition as a vital human need?* This dissertation primarily sets out to offer a theological ethical response to this all-important question. Actually, it does not attempt in any way to develop a new theory of recognition or, even, correct the existing ones. Rather, in agreement with the Aristotelian *eudemonistic* principle that the end of ethics is virtuous action and drawing on existing theories, it aims to highlight the necessity of acting virtuously in a manner that properly addresses the human need for recognition in multicultural and pluralistic societies like Nigeria, USA and India.[5] The fundamental argument running through this project is that doing a proper social ethics, especially Catholic Social Ethics, practically demands that we duly address the human need for recognition and explore how to integrate the habit of mutual recognition into our moral schemas with the goal of creating a thriving culture of recognition– one that normalizes, prioritizes, and sustains mutual recognition as a necessary common ground for negotiating the common good in modern societies.

Ultimately, the goal of this dissertation is to highlight the ethical significance of recognition as a vital human need from a Christian theological perspective. This goal is premised on the thesis that: *recognition is a vital human need that ought to be duly addressed by all social subjects to*

---

[5] See Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.1 1094a1ff. Also, see Richard Kraut, "Aristotle's Ethics," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Fall 2022 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2022), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/aristotle-ethics/.

avoid its self-escalation from being a mere need to becoming a problematic demand or struggle.[6]
This thesis clearly suggests that there are two distinct phases in the movement of recognition: the anthropological phase where recognition is a mere human need and the political phase where it becomes a socio-political demand or, even, an intersubjective struggle. Hence, a fuller version of this thesis is that recognition is *a human need* that ought to be *primarily* addressed in social ethics as a vital need that every human being is both deserving of receiving and obligated to duly fulfill for others, without which the apposite recipient would naturally demand or struggle for it thereby leading to an avoidable conflict. Thus, to forestall this conflict or resolve an already existing one, recognition has to be primarily addressed as a need and only secondarily as a demand or struggle. Otherwise, various genuine efforts to prevent or resolve certain conflicts would likely continue to flop because the need for recognition that may lie beneath them is often unmet or neglected.

The need for recognition is all too often neglected, perhaps, because we tend to identify recognition more as demands or struggles and frequently ignore the needs that often underlie them. For instance, this neglect can create a critical gap in peace and conflict resolution operations when conflicts are allowed to begin, fester and, then, erupt while key actors and stakeholders spend time and resources addressing demands and struggles, which may be visible symptoms of a latent need. This dissertation aims to contribute toward filling this gap by laying a theological groundwork for developing a normative social ethics that is primarily concerned with the anthropological need for recognition, of course, without ignoring the more obvious demands and struggles for recognition in society. This ethics, which I call the ethics of recognition, is both timely and necessary as it would help various societies to proactively address recognition at the point of need, thereby,

---

[6] This thesis is influenced by Charles Taylor's crucial proposition that recognition is *a vital human need*. See Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann, Revised edition (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1994), 26.

preventing it from morphing into the political phase of recognition (characterized by demands and struggles) or to efficiently halt its further escalation if this need is already unmet. Hence, the focus of this dissertation is primarily on the human need for due recognition.

Focusing on *the human need for recognition* in a doctoral-level research is long overdue. Its necessity is justified by the very fact that the human need for recognition has all too often been neglected or abused. Every now and then, human beings are systematically denied recognition for the dignity of their personhood, the inviolability of their bodily integrity, the inalienability of their fundamental rights, the wealth of their cultural values, and the distinctiveness of their way of life.[7] In other words, their needs to be recognized as human subjects are denied through nonrecognition or abused through misrecognition, which adversely affects ethical relations as the victims of these denials or abuse are typically unable to collaborate with the perpetrators to articulate or pursue the common good. In other words, the victims usually do not recognize the perpetrators as true friends with whom they can collaborate to create the necessary common ground for articulating, pursuing and, probably, attaining the common good in society. This is bad news for social ethics.

The bad news is that genuine efforts by ethicists to resolve conflicts, inspire reconciliation, and build sustainable peace often bungle as they tend to overlook the unmet needs for recognition, which typically underlie social conflicts, while focusing on the ensuing demands and/or struggles. The result is that many conflicts escalate from merely avoidable skirmishes to intractable violence. As victims continue to suffer real harm due to their unmet need for due recognition, they naturally tend to demand and, then, struggle for the recognition that was hitherto denied them. This can start a vicious cycle of violence culminating in protracted or recurrent conflicts like the wars in Sudan, Syria, Yemen, and Ukraine. This cycle can begin when the victim's inevitable demand or struggle

---

[7] Joel Anderson, "Translator's Introduction" in Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press, 1995), x.

for recognition is misconstrued as a quest for unwarranted advantage or dominance. Or when they are accused of ignoring the "benefits" of their own woes. In this way, victims are revictimized either by shaming them for pursuing their due recognition like those seeking due reparation for slavery and colonialism or blaming the victims for their own ordeals like the case against Dalits or by the perpetrator outrightly claiming to be the "real victim" like Kyle Rittenhouse.

Mutual recognition remains untenable in any society until recognition is properly addressed as a vital human need. The consequence is that negotiating and pursuing the common good would be increasingly difficult since, as more needs for recognition get neglected, crucial collaborations may continue to elude modern societies. Moreover, as I will demonstrate in the first chapter, unmet needs for recognition eventually rupture into political irruptions featuring problematic *demands* and *struggles*. Unfortunately, we mostly hear or talk about recognition at this problematic stage as people frustrated by their experience of serial nonrecognition or misrecognition begin to demand recognition as their rights and, ultimately, struggle to enforce this right as part of social justice or the last option left them to preserve their dignity. However, recognition does not have to escalate to its problematic phase. When recognition is met at the point of need or duly addressed as a need, it remains a positive human trait that helps us embrace our mutual vulnerabilities and cultivate true friendships necessary for negotiating and pursuing the common good. Hence, addressing the need for recognition ought to be a primary concern for social ethicists and ought to be prioritized from the beginning of moral investigations through to the performance of responsive ethical actions.

This dissertation is, fundamentally, a Christian theological work. It presupposes the equal dignity of all human beings as distinct persons created in the image and likeness of God – *imago Dei.* I will explain the Christian doctrine of *imago Dei* in the third chapter. But, it suffices to note here that all human beings, as *imago Dei*, ought to be treated as equal subjects who have a parity

of participation in the common good of their society. Of course, I do not suggest that recognition confers or translates to this equality. I acknowledge the complex nature of social relationships due to inequalities in power, levels of knowledge, access to wealth, and other intervening variables in society. Moreover, I appreciate that many modern societies tend to address these diversities and inequalities through participatory governance as a realistic way of encouraging participation and collaboration among their diverse constituents. Still, I argue that these societies need the mutual recognition of their constituents to truly flourish.[8] Precisely, mutual recognition is needed for them to successfully engage in "a 'progressive' politics, in which particular identities and relationships are appreciated as the bases of meaningful social agency, and in which particular communities come together around problems of mutual concern to establish common ground and working relationships in a participatory democracy."[9] Certainly, we need a social ethics that can prioritize and normalize the recognition of identities to create crucial relationships and common grounds. Therefore, the overarching strategy for this dissertation is to highlight the normative value of recognition as a fundamental point of departure and a constitutive element in doing a proper social ethics that is ordered toward the common good, nay Catholic social ethics.

Following the above strategy, this dissertation will adopt multiple approaches comprising narratives, exploratory, analytical, and constructive reviews. The first chapter will begin with three narratives – the 2020 #EndSARS protests in Nigeria, the 2020 BLM protests in USA and the 2018 Dalit protests in India – that vividly illustrate the grave ethical consequences of an ubiquitous crisis of recognition. It will argue that these are the ugly norms that necessitate the ethics of recognition. With insights from Charles Taylor, the second chapter will attempt to establish the philosophical

---

[8] See Sami Pihlström, "A Pragmatist Approach to the Mutual Recognition between Ethico-Political and Theological Discourses on Evil and Suffering," *Political Theology* 20, no. 2 (February 17, 2019): 157–75, 167.
[9] Lisa Cahill, "Liberalism in Progress—From Equal Rights to Global Participation," *Political Theology* 7, no. 1 (February 10, 2006): 29–46, Abstract, 29.

foundations of my thesis that recognition is *a human need* that ought to be *primarily* addressed as a need. It will argue that every human being is both deserving of recognition by others and are obligated to recognize others. Building on these foundations and leveraging the Catholic social tradition as well as with insights from Enda McDonagh, the third chapter will try to develop a framework and paradigm for a theological ethics of recognition in modern multicultural and pluralistic societies like Nigeria, USA and India. It will argue that, by virtue of their unique identity as *imago Dei,* every human person ought to be duly recognized and treated as a subject. Finally, the fourth chapter will try to contextualize the proposed paradigm in a particular society, using Nigeria as a case study. It will argue that Nigeria needs an ethics of recognition that will enable it develop a systemic, intentional and sustainable culture of recognition. This culture is meant to be a proper corrective to the prevailing culture of impunity that encourages the systemic failure of recognition (like police brutality), which culminate in the ubiquitous irruption of recognition.

Chapter One

Political Irruptions of Recognition: A Global Narrative

On the night of October 20, 2020, the Nigerian army opened fire on a gathering of young protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos, Nigeria. This was the culmination of weeks of relatively peaceful protests, led by young people, across the country. They were protesting against an odious tradition of brutality, extortion, extrajudicial killing, and impunity by a special unit of the Nigerian police – the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). This protest became known as the EndSARS movement. The protesters raised the Nigerian flag and sang the national anthem as a sign of their patriotism. Yet, the Nigerian soldiers opened fire on them. More than one hundred unarmed young Nigerians were brutally murdered on that night. Their promising lives were cut short and dreams shattered by their own military, in their own country, under the watch of their own government.

Across the Atlantic, a much older movement was also protesting against a similar tradition of police brutality, aggression, extrajudicial killing, impunity, and institutional racism in America. This was the Black Lives Matter (BLM) in the United States of America. The movement began in 2013 by using the hashtag *#BlackLivesMatter* on social media to protest the acquittal of George Zimmerman, a white/Hispanic man, in the February 2012 shooting death of a black teen, Trayvon Martin, 17. But, the immediate trigger for the nationwide protest in 2020 was the killing of another black man, George Floyd, 46, in Minneapolis by a white police officer, Derek Chauvin, on May 25, 2020. At least 25 people died during these protests and the ensuing political unrest after police brutally cracked down on the protesters. Properties worth millions of dollars were also lost.

Earlier in 2018, an even older movement was protesting against an unjust court ruling. They were also brutalized by police. It was the Dalit Movement in faraway India. The movement was launched in 1956 by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Nearly half a million Dalits, formerly known as the

'untouchables', joined him and converted to Buddhism. They rejected Hinduism, challenged the Indian caste system and promoted the rights of their community. But, the immediate trigger for the 2018 protest was a supreme court ruling that banned the automatic arrest of the accused in cases under a special law to protect marginalized groups who suffer widespread discrimination. The 1989 Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act was intended to guard against the harassment of Dalits and other groups. Dalit leaders accuse the ruling of diluting the 1989 law and increased the likelihood of attacks on Dalits. The protests and ensuing violence led to the death of about 14 people; many others were injured and many properties were lost.

The three protests described above depict a typical pattern. Each begins with the outburst of latent grievances that ruptures the status quo. The rupture is escalated by an ensuing demand for redress, which snowballs into a violent struggle. The ensuing conflict culminates in a brutal crackdown and killing of protesters by authorities that attempt to maintain or restore the status quo. As the protesters reprise, a vicious cycle of violence ensues rendering the conflicts intractable and bloodier. While myriad factors like corruption, colonialism, slavery, racism, casteism, and religion are responsible for these conflicts, I argue that they are basically local instances of an ubiquitous crisis of recognition. Historical instances of this crisis are the Storming of the Bastille in France (1789), the Castle Hill Rebellion in Australia (1804), and the South American Revolt (1810–1830).

Therefore, this chapter reviews the EndSARS, BLM and Dalit protests (2018-2020) so as to vividly illustrate the grave ethical consequences of the global crisis of recognition and inspire theologians to explore viable ethical solutions.[10] This illustration will rest on two questions: *how did each protest unfold? what are the immediate and remote causes of each protest?* In subsequent chapters, I will be reflecting on these protests and their aftermaths as irruptions of recognition.

---

[10] The next chapter will discuss the attempt by philosophers to proffer a political solution and argue that these efforts remain ethically inadequate without a firm theological foundation especially regarding the *quid* or *what* of recognition.

1.1 The 2020 EndSARS Protests in Nigeria

In October 2020, a series of protests erupted in Nigeria with the hashtag #EndSARS.[11] Millions of young Nigerians were protesting against police brutality and impunity. Police brutality is rife in Nigeria. It dates back to the military regimes when soldiers unlawfully arrested citizens and violated their rights with impunity. Over the years, many human rights groups like Amnesty International have documented allegations of abuse of civilians by the Nigerian police like extortion, rape, and extrajudicial killings. Yet, the government repeatedly failed to address police brutality and the demand for police reform continued to escalate. Hence, the EndSARS protests mark a decisive phase in the escalation of neglected demands for police reform in Nigeria.

The protests initially targeted a particular unit of the Nigerian Police known as the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). SARS was set up in 1992 as a heavily armed elite police unit to tackle violent crimes like armed robbery, kidnapping, and carjacking. Over the years, this unit gained a special notoriety for its brutality and impunity. Of course, there have been protests movements against SARS and the Nigerian police. But, unlike previous ones with clearly identifiable leadership structure, which made the leaders more susceptible to being targeted by government, the #EndSARS movement intentionally had no central leadership.

The organizers used Twitter and other social media to rally the youth across ethno-religious fault lines. They also used traditional banks and cryptocurrencies to fund the protests. Hence, the protests were well-coordinated, largely peaceful and almost successful, until the massacre of many unarmed protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos on the night of October 20, 2020. To appreciate the significance of these protests and their aftermath, we shall address the question: *what led to*

---

[11] These series of protests coordinated simultaneously by the Nigerian youth, have been described in many accounts as the #EndSARS protests or the #EndSARS protest. I will use the terms interchangeably here to refer to the same case.

these protests and how did the protests unfold? In the following narrative, I will attempt to address

this question in two parts. I will begin with the second part on the historical accounts of the protests

and, then, proceed to the first part to highlight the immediate and remote causes of the protests.

1.1.1.   How the 2020 #EndSARS Protests Unfolded

There are various accounts of how the 2020 EndSARS protests unfolded in Nigeria. I will

draw on various reports to articulate a reasonable timeline of events.[12] In early October 2020, a

video emerged showing SARS officers fatally shooting a young man in Warri, Delta State before

driving off in his car.[13] This video sparked a series of online protests on twitter and other social

media. The posts began with condemning the unfortunate event while demanding the prompt arrest

and prosecution of the killer cops. But, after days of no responsive action from Nigerian

government, they escalated to a long-held call to disband SARS and reform the Nigerian police.

October 3, another video went viral showing some SARS personnel killing another man in

Lagos. The graphic footage shows the police officers dragging two limp men from a hotel and

shooting one of them in the street. This new video sparked mass fury across the country. The police

claimed the video was fake and arrested the man who posted it, provoking more anger.[14] This

arrest forced the Nigerian youth to organize and present their long-held demands to the

government.[15]

---

[12] I will model my narrative after Al Jazeera's timeline. See Al Jazeera, "Timeline: #EndSARS Protests in Nigeria," *Al Jazeera*, October 22, 2020, Online edition, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/22/timeline-on-nigeria-unrest.
[13] See Libby George, "Why Are Nigerians Protesting against Police Brutality?," *Reuters*, October 16, 2020, sec. World News, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-protests-police-sars-factbox-idUSKBN2711TK.
[14] See Amnesty International, "#EndSARS Movement: From Twitter to Nigerian Streets" (February 8, 2021), https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2021/02/nigeria-end-impunity-for-police-violence-by-sars-endsars/.
[15] Emmanuel Akinwotu, "Outcry in Nigeria over Footage of Shooting by Notorious Police Unit," *The Guardian*, October 6, 2020, sec. World news, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/06/video-of-nigerian-police-shooting-man-in-street-sparks-outcry.

In their demand, the protesters called for the disbandment of SARS and a transparent prosecution of all officers suspected of crime.[16] They also called for justice for all victims of police brutality and suggested the police hierarchy apply digital medium for tracking such cases with the police. Also, they demanded the unconditional release of all protesters and activists in police detention and for the total overhaul of the police force. These demands were ignored.

By October 4, the protest had escalated both online and, on the streets, even beyond the borders of Nigeria. The hashtag #EndSARS topped the global trends on Twitter, supported by popular Nigerian and foreign celebrities.[17] The involvement of these celebrities around the world gave the #EndSARS protest movement a global visibility that was unprecedented in the history of protests in Nigeria. The protest and its cause became global news. Yet, the government stalled.

By October 8, street demonstrations had erupted in major cities across Nigeria. The youth came out *en masse* to protest against the recent string of killings by SARS, fearing they could be next. In Abuja, the federal capital, protesters were violently stopped from marching to the National Assembly. The police used tear gas to violently disperse them. In Lagos, thousands of youths gathered, holding signs like "respect for human rights" and "a more equal society."[18] They called for the disbandment of SARS. The police responded with a heavy crackdown on young activists, musicians, and actors.[19]

Similarly, in state capitals like Ilorin, protesters were forcefully dispersed by the police. In Enugu, a combined team of security personnel, made up of the Nigeria Army and the police, dehumanized journalists who were on duty to cover the processions by a coalition of civil society

---

[16] Emmanuel Akinwotu, Outcry in Nigeria over Footage of Shooting by Notorious Police Unit, ibid

[17] Jamaica Observer, "What to Know about Nigeria's #EndSARS Protests," Jamaica Observer, October 16, 2020, https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/latest-news/what-to-know-about-nigerias-endsars-protests/.

[18] Al Jazeera, "Timeline: #EndSARS Protests in Nigeria." Ibid.

[19] Soni Daniel et al, "ENDSARS: Crackdown, as Protests Rock Lagos, Abuja, Enugu, Ilorin," *Vanguard News*, Oct. 21, 2021, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/10/endsars-crackdown-as-protests-rock-lagos-abuja-enugu-ilorin/.

organizations and dispersed the youths who converged for the protest. At least two protesters were killed. Young musicians from the Southeast, who spearheaded the protest in the East, accused the Enugu State governor of hiring political thugs to threaten the protesters.[20] The government denied this allegation, but there was a counter protest suspected to be organized by thugs hired by some politicians loyal to the governor.

On October 11, the Nigeria Inspector General of Police, Muhammed Adamu, announced the disbanding of SARS with immediate effect and that SARS personnel would be redeployed to other police units.[21] A new unit, Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) was hastily launched.[22] But, the government tarnished this announcement with adverse actions that created distrust and bad faith between authorities and the protesters. Soon after the announcement, the government quickly began to attack the finances of perceived influencers in the protest movement. Human Rights Watch noted that the Central Bank of Nigeria instructed private banks to freeze the accounts of several organizations and individuals to stop the flow of funds supporting the protests.[23]

The government also attacked the media. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), the state-run television and radio regulator, fined three independent television stations that reported on the violent crackdown on the EndSARS protesters. The stations were accused of broadcasting footage posted on social media, which the government claimed to be unverified, and contributing to the conflict. Given these attacks, the impact of the above announcement and proposed reforms were badly diminished. And, instead of calming the protests, the government further escalated it.

---

[20] James Eze, "#EndSARS: Flavour, Phyno Others Accuse Enugu Govt of Threatening Protesters with Thugs," *Premium Times*, October 18, 2020, Online edition, https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/ssouth-east/421570-endsars-flavour-phyno-others-accuse-enugu-govt-of-threatening-protesters-with-thugs.html.
[21] Al Jazeera Al Jazeera, "Timeline: #EndSARS Protests in Nigeria." Ibid.
[22] AllAfrica, "Nigeria Army Threatens Action as #EndSARS Protests Intensify," *AllAfrica*, October 16, 2020, Online edition, sec. inFocus, https://allafrica.com/view/group/main/main/id/00075305.html.
[23] See Human Rights Watch, "Nigeria: Punitive Financial Moves Against Protesters," *Human Rights Watch* (blog), November 13, 2020, https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/13/nigeria-punitive-financial-moves-against-protesters.

Protests continued with the youth widening their requests to a five-point demand as follows: 1. Immediate release of all arrested protesters. 2. Justice for all deceased victims of police brutality and appropriate compensation for their families. 3. Setting up an independent body to oversee the investigation and prosecution of all reports of Police misconduct (within ten days). 4. In line with police action, psychological evaluation and retaining (to be confirmed by an independent body) of all disbanded SARS officers before they can be redeployed. 5. Increase Police salary so that they are adequately compensated for protecting lives and property of citizens.[24]

By October 15, the demonstrations had developed into broader protests against corruption and bad governance, calling for wider political and economic reforms. Reiterating their demands, the protesters charged the presidency and police hierarchy to not just disband SARS, but to also end police brutality and then institute police reforms from lower cadre policemen to the highest cadre. They also called for transparent prosecution of officers involved in police brutality, both past and present, as well as ensure compensation of victims.

As protests intensify, the Nigerian army released a statement referring to the protesters as "subversive elements and troublemakers."[25] The army issued threats that it will "fully support the civil authority in whatever capacity to maintain law and order and deal with any situation decisively," and that it was "highly committed to defend the country and her democracy at all cost."[26] Meanwhile, in Lagos, protesters carried the Nigerian flag and banners as they blocked a road leading to the airport; some camped at the toll gate on a major highway in Lekki. They meant to affect government's revenue and force the authorities to address their demands.

---

[24]See Nasir Ayitogo and Yusuf Kabir, "#EndSARS Anniversary: One Year after, What Has Happened to Protesters' Five-Point Demand?," *Premium Times*, October 20, 2021, Online edition, https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/490594-endsars-anniversary-one-year-after-what-has-happened-to-protesters-five-point-demand.html. See also, Vanguard News, "Five Demands from #EndSARS Protesters," *Vanguard News*, October 12, 2020, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/10/five-demands-from-endsars-protesters/.
[25] See AllAfrica, "Nigeria Army Threatens Action as #EndSARS Protests Intensify." Ibid.
[26] Amnesty International, "#EndSARS Movement," ibid.

On the night of October 20, Nigeria's security forces killed dozens of peaceful protesters waving the Nigerian flag and wounded many. Amnesty International says it received "credible but disturbing evidence of excessive use of force occasioning deaths of protesters at Lekki toll gate in Lagos", adding that it was investigating the killings. At least 12 people were killed, but the death toll was probably higher. The Human Rights Watch also confirmed that security forces shot at protesters calling it a "shooting spree."[27] Protesters gathered the victims and put them in front of the soldiers, telling the soldiers that they were responsible for the deaths.

Earlier in the day, Lagos State government announced a statewide curfew beginning at 4 p.m. to restore order as "arsonists, hoodlums, and anarchists continue to hide under the #EndSARS protest to unleash mayhem in the state and wantonly disrupt citizens lives and property."[28] The curfew was later delayed to 9 p.m. after many people complained that it was impossible to get home before 4 p.m. given the traffic in Lagos. Although some protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate left following the announcement of the curfew, many stayed believing that, the curfew meant they stayed in place and not move around Lagos, and they were prepared to do just that.[29]

The soldiers took many of the bodies away with them. A 24-year-old construction worker said that he was among those taken away by military officers, who thought he was dead. "I was faint and lifeless, but I could make out what they were saying and doing," he said. "We were taken to the military hospital, and from there, six of us were taken to the general hospital in Marina. I am not sure what happened to the other five, but they didn't follow us from the military hospital."[30]

---

[27] See Human Rights Watch, "Nigeria: A Year On, No Justice for #EndSARS Crackdown," *Human Rights Watch* (blog), October 19, 2021, https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/19/nigeria-year-no-justice-endsars-crackdown.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

He regained consciousness fully at the general hospital after seven hours and left the hospital early the next morning because he was afraid the military would come back for him.

Five people said they saw military officers with flashlights picking up bullet shells and bullets before the officers left. "I saw the soldiers picking up bullets one by one so they could cover up what they did," said one protester who works as a security guard.[31] A 24-year-old organizer said that she also picked up bullets to keep them as evidence, including six casings and one live round. Human Rights Watch saw and analyzed these, they appeared to be standard ammunition.

On October 21, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari assured that justice would be done for all the victims of police brutality, and that the police reforms demanded by the demonstrators were gathering pace. The United Nations also condemns the use of "excessive and disproportionate" force by Nigerian security forces against peaceful protesters.

The international community also condemned the shooting of peaceful protesters. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, urged "Nigerian authorities to take urgent steps to deal decisively with the underlying problem of persistent violations committed by the security forces."[32] Also, the African Union Commission chairman, Moussa Faki Mahamat, strongly condemned deadly violence and called on all parties to privilege dialogue.[33]

The Nigerian army initially responded to news of the shooting by labeling posts on the incident as fake news. They later changed their position on October 27, when the Nigerian army said its soldiers were deployed on orders from the Lagos State government to enforce the statewide curfew. They denied that the troops shot at protesters.

---

[31] Human Rights Watch, Nigeria: A Year On, No Justice for #EndSARS Crackdown, ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

Unfortunately, after weeks of a series of well-coordinated protests, hoodlums overwhelmed the EndSARS movement. This marked a sad end to the 2020 EndSARS movement as the protests turned into "a wanton destruction of public and private properties as well as indiscriminate looting of warehouses in several states."[34] In Lagos State, for instance, the hoodlums started their activities by attacking peaceful #EndSARS protesters on two occasions at Ikeja and were alleged to have been sponsored by the state to discredit the #EndSARS protests.[35] The state denied all allegations.

1.1.2   Immediate and Remote Causes of the 2020 EndSARS Protests

Several factors had contributed to the 2020 EndSARS protest. These include: police brutality, politics of neglect, bad governance, endemic corruption, rising inflation, youth unemployment, and the COVID-19 pandemic. For want of space, this subsection will focus on police brutality as both an immediate and a remote cause. I will also highlight how a politics of neglect in Nigeria added impunity to police brutality. Afterwards, especially in subsequent chapters, I will argue that the nonrecognition of citizens as social subjects in their own rights who should engage and be engaged in ethical relations with their leaders is the overarching moral problem that underlies police brutality. Hence, the historical politics of neglect in Nigeria and the brutal suppression of any protest that genuinely challenges the status quo are all instances of a failure of recognition.

Obviously, the immediate cause of the 2020 EndSARS protest was the viral video of the extrajudicial killing of a young Nigerian citizen at Warri by SARS operatives who took away his car. However, these killings were not accidental, isolated, rare or even strange. From colonial through democratic eras, extra judicial killings by the Nigerian police are rife. In 2018 alone,

---

[34] na Jeremiah, "#EndSARS: No to Looting, Vandalism, Arson," *Leadership*, October 30, 2020, Online edition, sec. EDITORIAL, //leadership.ng/endsars-no-to-looting-vandalism-arson/.

[35] Ifeoluwa Adediran, Ifeoluwa Adediran, "How Hoodlums Took Advantage of #EndSARS, Wreaked Havoc in Lagos," *Premium Times*, October 25, 2020, https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/422983-how-hoodlums-took-advantage-of-endsars-wreaked-havoc-in-lagos.html.

Nigeria recorded about 841 taking the 8th position among top 10 countries with the highest numbers of police killings in the world, just behind the United States.[36]

Hence, the killings in early October 2020 that actually triggered off the EndSARS protest were a part of an endemic tradition of brutality, extortion, lawlessness, extra-judicial killings, and other acts of impunity by the Nigerian security operatives that have simply stretched the endurance limits of Nigerian citizens to a breaking point. Going by a series of prior police killings, the October 2020 killings could be rightly described as the proverbial "last straw" that broke the camel's back. For a clearer picture of this odious tradition, here are a few of the killings that happened in less than six months prior to the eruption of the EndSARS protests.

On May 4, 2020, Augustine Ugwu, a 27-year old student was shot dead by the police at Nsukka, Nigeria. He was in the final year of a law degree.[37] He was the son of a former policeman. On June 2, 2020, a policeman shot and killed a 20-year-old motorcyclist in Adamawa for not paying a bribe of N100 (about 25 cents).[38] A policeman killed a 27-year-old man in Imo for not wearing his face mask on July 9, 2020.[39] On October 3, 2020, Samson John was killed in Abuja by a policeman who shot directly at people in a beer parlor.[40] Five days later, on October 8, 2020, a lady was shot in the mouth by police in Lagos for protesting against SARS and police brutality.[41]

---

[36] See World Population Review, "Police Killings by Country 2022," *World population Review 2022 Report*, accessed May 14, 2022, https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/police-killings-by-country.

[37] See Ikechukwu Odu, "Enugu Police Allegedly Shoots Final-Year Law Student to Death, Refuses to Release Corpse," *Vanguard News*, May 4, 2020, Online edition, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/05/enugu-police-allegedly-shoots-final-year-law-student-to-death-refuses-to-release-corpse/.

[38] See Oyindamola Olubajo, "Adamawa:Police Kill Commercial Motorcyclist Over N100," *Allnews* (June 02, 2020), accessed May 14, 2022, https://allnews.ng/news/police-kill-20-year-old-commercial-motorcyclist-over-n100-bribe.

[39] See Chidiebube Okeoma, "Policeman Kills Okada Rider for Not Wearing Face Mask - Punch Newspapers," *Punch* (July 10, 2020), accessed May 14, 2022, https://punchng.com/policeman-kills-okada-rider-for-not-wearing-face-mask/.

[40] See Oluwafadekemi Areo and Favour Olarewaju, "An Inexhaustible List of Police Brutality Stories and Fundraisers across Nigeria," *Businessday NG*, October 23, 2020, Online edition, https://businessday.ng/bd-weekender/article/an-inexhaustible-list-of-police-brutality-stories-and-fundraisers-across-nigeria/.

[41] ibid.

Nigerians experience of Police brutality is documented. In March 2005, the *Human Rights Watch* interviewed about 50 victims and witnesses of police brutality in 3 Nigerian cities – Enugu, Kano, and Lagos. They found the use of torture and other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment by Nigerian Police to be widespread and routine.[42] The respondents described brutal acts of torture, dozens of which resulted in death. The violations were perpetrated by and with the knowledge of senior police officers. The practice has become so routine that some senior officers are known within the police stations by the nickname "Officer-in-Charge Torture."[43] The abuse that Human Rights Watch documented is carried out in local and state police stations, often in interrogation rooms which witnesses and victims said appeared to be especially equipped for the purpose.

Victims and witnesses note that the forms of torture and other ill-treatment committed by the Nigerian police included the tying of arms and legs tightly behind the body, suspension by hands and legs from the ceiling or a pole, repeated and severe beatings with metal or wooden objects (including planks of wood, iron bars, and cable wire), resting of concrete blocks on the arms and back while suspended, spraying of tear gas in the face and eyes, rape and other sexual violence against female detainees, use of pliers or electric shocks on the penis, shooting in the foot or leg, stoning, death threats, slapping and kicking with hands and boots and denial of food and water.

Any young men with dreadlocks or full beards were easily targeted by police as criminal. They were harassed, arrested and sometimes left to rot in jail. Take the case of Ndukwe Ekekwe, who SARS officers arrested on February 16, 2018. He was accused of selling stolen goods at his shop. The officers pushed him from a second-floor balcony, leaving him paralyzed from the waist down and struggling to make ends meet.

---

[42] See Human Rights Watch, Human Rights Watch, "'Rest in Pieces': Police Torture and Deaths in Custody in Nigeria" (Human Rights Watch, July 27, 2005), https://www.hrw.org/report/2005/07/27/rest-pieces/police-torture-and-deaths-custody-nigeria.
[43] Ibid.

On May 11, 2020, after a drawn legal process Ekekwe was awarded N7.5 million (about $4,000). However, for most victims of police brutality, monetary compensation is not enough for the horrors they faced and the damage they now live with. At just 35-years-old, Ekekwe is now in a wheelchair and on diapers for life.

With utmost impunity, the Nigerian police violated a range of human rights like the right to life, right to freedom from torture, right to a fair trial, right to privacy, and freedom of assembly, all of which are protected by local and international laws.[44]

Violations of the right to life include extrajudicial killings, shooting of protesters, and other random, unprovoked killings. The Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI) found in a 2010 investigation that extrajudicial executions are a routine feature of policing in Nigeria.[45] Human Rights Watch estimates that over 10,000 people were killed by the Nigerian police in the eight years spanning 2000 through 2007.[46] One senior police officer in charge of SARS in Enugu allegedly told a researcher that he personally ordered the extrajudicial executions of only persons whom he knew to be guilty.[47]

The impunity is even more shocking as these killings do not always happen secretly, hidden away in police cells and dungeons. In August 2019, videos surfaced showing men of the Nigerian

---

[44] See Allwell Uwazuruike, "#EndSARS: The Movement Against Police Brutality in Nigeria," *Harvard Human Rights Journal* Volume 34, no. Issue 1 (Spring 2021), https://harvardhrj.com/2020/11/endsars-the-movement-against-police-brutality-in-nigeria/.

[45] *See Criminal Force: Torture, Abuse, and Extrajudicial Killings by the Nigerian Police Force*, Open Society Justice Initiative (2010), https://www.justiceinitiative.org/uploads/8063279c-2fe8-48d4-8a17-54be8ee90c9d/criminal-force-20100519.pdf; *'You Have Signed Your Death Warrant': Torture and Other Ill Treatment by Nigeria's Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS),* Amnesty International (2016), https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4448682016ENGLISH.PDF. Cited in Uwazuruike, #EndSARS: The Movement Against Police Brutality in Nigeria, ibid.

[46] Human Rights Watch, *Nigeria: Investigate Widespread Killings by Police*, Human Rights Watch (Nov. 18, 2007), https://www.hrw.org/news/2007/11/18/nigeria-investigate-widespread-killings-police. Cited in Uwazuruike, #EndSARS: The Movement Against Police Brutality in Nigeria, ibid.

[47] Open Society Justice Initiative, ibid.

police force executing arrested suspects in the streets of Lagos.[48] The suspects were alleged to belong to a criminal gang that disguised themselves as phone buyers to lure and rob unsuspecting victims. The police arrested two of the suspects, only to have their summary execution recorded shortly after. Amateur clips of the police shooting the victims in the full glare of the public went viral. In reaction, the Nigerian police announced the arrest of the officers involved.[49] But, there is no public record of their eventual prosecution.

SARS personnel have also been known to routinely torture suspects for "confessions."[50] The OSJI report states that the practice is so common that many police stations have a person on staff who oversees the torture of detainees and a room set aside for the practice; police personnel even have their own slang for various methods of torture. Amnesty International has also documented cases of torture, most of which emanate from detainees in SARS custody.[51]

The police use various forms of brutality, including sexual violence, against detainees and suspects.[52] Some former detainees report having been bound and suspended mid-air in painful positions, kicked and beaten with machetes, gun butts, boots, fists, electrical wires, animal hides, and other instruments.[53] Others describe being shot in limbs, assaulted by police officers while in custody, suffering multiple fractures, or being forced to perform painful calisthenics. Sex workers

---

[48] Samson Folarin, *Policemen Shoot Dead Suspected Phone Thieves in Lagos,* PUNCH (Aug. 20, 2019), https://punchng.com/sars-operatives-shoot-dead-suspected-phone-thieves-in-lagos/. Cited in Uwazuruike, #EndSARS: The Movement Against Police Brutality in Nigeria, ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Open Society Justice Initiative, ibid.
[51] Amnesty International, *Nigeria: Authorities Repeatedly Failing to Tackle Impunity Enjoyed by Notorious SARS Police Unit* (Oct. 6, 2020), https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/10/nigeria-authorities-repeatedly-failing-to-tackle-impunity-enjoyed-by-notorious-sars-police-unit/. Cited in Uwazuruike, #EndSARS: The Movement Against Police Brutality in Nigeria, ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

in particular report being rounded up by the police to be raped.[54] Acknowledging the routine sexual violence by police, a police officer referred to it simply as a "fringe benefit" of certain patrols.[55]

In February 2020, BBC Africa published a damning documentary on the use of torture techniques by Nigerian security forces.[56] The video focused on the wide and uniform use of a technique known as *Tabay*. The technique involves binding detainees in a crude and painful fashion: the arms are forced back and tied at the elbows, cutting circulation to the hands and immobilizing the victim. The feet are then tied back, arching the spine and contorting the body into a triangle. Victims can be suspended, forcing the full weight of the body unto the arms. A heavy block, usually wood or concrete, is often placed on the victim's back to intensify the pain.

The documentary implicated several arms of the Nigerian security forces including the Nigerian Army, the Nigerian Mobile Police, the Nigerian Air Force, the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps and, of course, the notorious Special Anti-Robbery Squad. SARS, as well as other units of the Nigerian Police, routinely lock up suspects, sometimes for years, without trial.[57] The average length of pre-trial detention in Nigeria is three years and ten months. Such prolonged detentions are usually done through the use of a "holding charge," whereby the police bring a charge against an accused before a lower court lacking jurisdiction to try the offence, pending advice from the Director of Public Prosecutions.

---

[54] Abraham Achirga, *Nigerian Police Accused of Abusing Prostitution Suspects*, Reuters (May 6, 2019) https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-police-women-idUSKCN1SC1KD. Cited in Uwazuruike, #EndSARS: The Movement Against Police Brutality in Nigeria, ibid.
[55] Open Society Justice Initiative, ibid.
[56] BBC News Africa, *The Torture Virus: Tabay 'Rampant' Among Nigeria's Security Forces – BBC Africa Eye Documentary*, YouTube (Feb. 9, 2020), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AzqP7z62ilU&t=26s&bpctr=1603329234. Cited in Uwazuruike, #EndSARS: The Movement Against Police Brutality in Nigeria, ibid.
[57] Open Society Justice Initiative, ibid.

The Nigerian Court has held this practice to be unconstitutional, though the practice persists.[58] SARS personnel, ironically hired to tackle violent crimes, have recently assumed the mandate of fishing out so-called "Yahoo boys" (internet fraudsters). This they do by stopping mainly young men in the streets and demanding to go through their phones. Mere ownership of an iPhone is enough to make one a suspect. Victims have reported being arrested for owning iPhones and laptops or for refusing to grant the police access to their phones.[59]

Unfortunately, the police brutality and impunity has continued in Nigeria due to a politics of neglect by various governments. One aspect of this neglect is the repeated failure to reform the Nigerian police despite many promises. Between 2015 and 2020, the government had promised but failed to reform the police and disband SARS on at least five different occasions. In 2015, Nigerian authorities promised to reform SARS and the police after years of reports of human rights abuses and violations. But, the government repeatedly reneged on its promises and the proposed changes were never made. Instead, SARS developed more impunity, gained wider notoriety, and the situation worsened.

In 2016, Amnesty International documented multiple new cases of abuse titled: "You have signed your death warrant."[60] It recounted a visit by researchers from Amnesty International to a detention center in Abuja operated by SARS. The facility called the "Abattoir" held about 130 detainees kept in overcrowded cells. They were regularly tortured with different methods including hanging, starvations, beatings, shootings, and mock executions. The government reacted to this and similar reports with a pledge to disband SARS and reform the police, this did not happen.

---

[58] *See* Shagari v. Commissioner of Police [2007] 5 NWLR 275. Cited in Uwazuruike, #EndSARS: The Movement Against Police Brutality in Nigeria, ibid.
[59] Peace Hyde, *Nigeria Dissolves SARS But The Youth Demand Justice*, Forbes Africa (Oct. 13, 2020) https://www.forbesafrica.com/current-affairs/2020/10/13/nigeria-dissolves-sars-but-the-youth-demand-justice/. Cited in Uwazuruike, #EndSARS: The Movement Against Police Brutality in Nigeria, ibid.
[60] Amnesty International, "#EndSARS Movement," ibid.

In 2017, a social media campaign with the hashtag #EndSARS was launched. Hundreds of Nigerians used the hashtag to document abuses by SARS personnel and demanded an end to police brutality, human rights violations and other acts of impunity by Nigeria police. In response, the National Assembly adopted an anti-torture law, which established torture as a criminal act in Nigeria.[61] The law also provided penalties for cruel and inhumane treatment of persons by police and other security agencies. In addition, broad reforms of SARS were again proposed to tackle the issue of excessive use of force. As usual, these were not executed and SARS impunity continued.

In 2018, the Vice President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, then acting president, ordered the reform of SARS amidst a growing outcry over the abuses of the unit, but its members were never held accountable for their unlawful activities. A Presidential Commission of inquiry was formed to investigate the unit's activities and findings were submitted to the government.[62] The findings of the commission were not made public and they were not seen to be implemented. SARS continued.

Hence, after half a decade of repeatedly failing to keep the promise to reform the police and disband SARS, the October 11, 2020 announcement was greeted with a widespread skepticism. This skepticism was justified not only by the failed promises of Nigerian government, but also by immediate and subsequent adverse actions of government against prominent protesters. Recently, this skepticism has resurfaced as Nigerian youth vigorously campaign for a political revolution through the outright rejection of corrupt politicians in the buildup to the 2023 general elections.

1.2   The 2020 Black Lives Matter Protests in USA

The United States of America, more than Nigeria, typifies the diversity that characterizes contemporary societies. With over 300 million people categorized into 7 recognized racial groups

---

[61] Amnesty International, "#EndSARS Movement," ibid.
[62] Ibid.

and spread across approx. 3.8 million square miles, the United States is a socio-cultural colossus. It is also a flashpoint for racial tension, discrimination, and violence dating back to its foundational history of race-based genocide, slavery, and segregation.[63] This is evident in the various forms of institutional racism that pervade daily living in the United States, which is mostly perpetuated by the white majority through police brutality, gun violence, and official redlining against indigenous people, non-white immigrants and other minoritized racial groups.

One race that has unduly borne the brunt of police brutality and race-based violence in the United States is the black race. Despite constituting only 13% of the US population, blacks represent 23% of 1,144 people killed by law enforcement in 2021 alone and almost 99% of these killings have not resulted in criminal charges.[64] This is not an exception, it has been the norm since the founding of the United States. Hence, historically, black people in America have been forced to protest against police violence as they struggle to be recognized as human beings whose lives also matter like other American lives. These protests took a more global turn in the fall of 2020 following the killing of Mr. Floyd, an unarmed black man, by a white police officer, Mr. Chauvin.

On the evening of May 25, 2020, Chauvin killed Floyd by kneeling on his neck for almost 10 minutes. The death, recorded by bystanders, sparked the largest racial justice protests in the United States since the Civil Rights Movement and a nationwide reckoning on race and policing. By early June, protests were so widespread that over 200 American cities had imposed curfews and half of the United States had activated the National Guard. Marches continued and spread throughout June, despite militarized resistance from federal and local law enforcement. In all, more

---

[63] In August 2021, *The New York Times Magazine* introduced *The 1619 Project*, which "aims to reframe the country's history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative." Greg Grandin, "Slavery, and American Racism, Were Born in Genocide," January 20, 2020, https://www.thenation.com/article/society/slavery-american-genocide-racism/.
[64] Elona Neal, "A History of Police Violence in America," *Stacker*, April 29, 2022, https://stacker.com/stories/4365/history-police-violence-america.

than 2,000 cities and towns in all 50 states of the US saw some form of demonstration in the weeks after Floyd's death.[65] The protests also set off local and national dialogue about the role and budgets of American police departments, as well as intense discussions in schools and corporations about how to end racism and create inclusivity, equality and equity.

Protests also erupted in major cities across the globe from London to Pretoria to Sydney to Seoul as thousands joined the protests. They took to the streets demanding for police reform and racial equality even in their communities. Many held signs that read "Black Lives Matter," while others kneeled or stood in silence for 9 minutes 29 seconds, the amount of time Chauvin knelt on Floyd's neck as he struggled to breathe. These protests, well-organized by Black Lives Matter movements across the globe, spread across over 60 countries worldwide on all continents despite the COVID-19 pandemic, during which gathering in crowds was strongly restricted in most parts of the world, and illegal in some.

Hence, the 2020 BLM protests is a historic milestone in the global demand for racial justice and struggles for the due recognition that black lives matter just like other lives. To appreciate the significance of these protests and their aftermath, then, we shall address the question: *what led to these protests and how did the protests unfold?* Like I did above, I will address this question using the following narrative. I will begin with the second part of the question on the historical accounts of the protests and, then, proceed to the first part about its immediate and remote causes.

1.2.1   How the 2020 Black Lives Matter Protests Unfolded

Many accounts of the summer 2020 BLM protests in the United States and across the globe begin with the killing of George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man, by police in Minneapolis.

---

[65] Audra D. S. Burch et al., "How Black Lives Matter Reached Every Corner of America," *The New York Times*, June 13, 2020, sec. U.S., https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/13/us/george-floyd-protests-cities-photos.html.

Security footage, videos clips and official documents illustrate how a series of bad actions by four Minneapolis police officers turned fatal. They show these officers violating the Minneapolis Police Department policies and taking a series of actions that left Mr. Floyd unable to breathe, even as he and onlookers called out for help. By combining videos from bystanders and security cameras, reviewing official documents and consulting experts, *The New York Times* had reconstructed in detail the minutes leading to the death of Mr. Floyd.[66] I will draw on this report and other resources to articulate a reasonable timeline of how the killing and the ensuing protests unfolded.

Around 8 p.m. on Monday, May 25, 2020, four Minneapolis police officers responded to a call from a store clerk who said Mr. Floyd had paid for cigarettes with a counterfeit $20 bill. The officers were Derek Chauvin, Alexander Kueng, Tou Thao and Thomas Lane. They arrested Mr. Floyd. Seventeen minutes after their arrived at the scene, Mr. Floyd was unconscious and pinned beneath three of the officers, showing no signs of life.[67] In an initial statement, the police said that Mr. Floyd "appeared to be under the influence."[68] It said that officers ordered him to step away from his car, and that he resisted them after he got out. They noted Mr. Floyd appeared to be suffering medical distress, after which they called an ambulance.[69] Curiously, the police statement lacked critical details about what really happened. These details will gradually unfold.

Bystander video and officer body camera footage released months later helped to fill in the blanks left by the police statement. The body camera footage showed police officers approaching a car in which Mr. Floyd was sitting in the driver's seat. Mr. Lane, taps his flashlight on the window

---

[66] See Derrick Bryson Taylor, "George Floyd Protests: A Timeline," *The New York Times*, November 5, 2021, sec. U.S., https://www.nytimes.com/article/george-floyd-protests-timeline.html. See also Evan Hill et al., "How George Floyd Was Killed in Police Custody," *The New York Times*, June 1, 2020, sec. U.S., https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/31/us/george-floyd-investigation.html.

[67] Hill et al., "How George Floyd Was Killed in Police Custody," ibid.

[68] Tim Arango et al., "How George Floyd Died, and What Happened Next," *The New York Times*, May 19, 2022, sec. U.S., https://www.nytimes.com/article/george-floyd.html.

[69] Ibid.

and asks Floyd to show his hands. After being asked several times, Mr. Floyd eventually opens the car door, while apologizing. The door opens after six seconds, Mr. Lane drew his gun, points it at Floyd and ordered him to put his hands up instantly.[70] Without explaining the reason for the stop, he pulls Floyd out of the car.

After removing Mr. Floyd from the vehicle, Officers Lane and Kueng handcuffed him and walked him across the street to their squad car. Mr. Floyd protests and resists sitting in the back seat, saying he is claustrophobic. Still, they tried to force him in. He pushes himself out the other side of the vehicle, saying he preferred to lie on the ground.[71] Three of the officers pinned Mr. Floyd facedown — Chauvin kneeling on his neck, Kueng kneeling on his upper legs and holding his wrist, and Lane holding his legs, while officer Thao kept bystanders away. Floyd began saying repeatedly that he could not breathe. Chauvin kept his knee on his neck for nine and a half minutes.

Bystanders captured video of the three officers pinning Mr. Floyd behind a police car and the fourth officer preventing them from intervening. In the video, Floyd is heard repeatedly saying, "I can't breathe."[72] Six minutes after the officers put him facedown, and only after bystanders shouted at them to attend to him, Mr. Kueng checks for Floyd's pulse and says he cannot feel it. Still, all three officers continued to hold him in same position that restricted his breathing until emergency responders arrived. They loaded him into an ambulance; without a CPR or any obvious attempt to revive him. Mr. Floyd was later pronounced dead that night.[73] Thus, began the protest.

The next day, May 26, the bystander video of the incident was widely shared on social media. The video showed that the official police account of the arrest had borne little resemblance to what actually occurred. Hence, the Minneapolis police chief, Medaria Arradondo, fired all four

---

[70] Arango et al., "How George Floyd Died, and What Happened Next," ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Taylor, "George Floyd Protests: A Timeline," ibid.
[73] Arango et al., "How George Floyd Died, and What Happened Next," ibid.

men involved in the fatal arrest of Mr. Floyd and called for an F.B.I. investigation.[74] Still, hundreds of protesters flooded into the streets of Minneapolis that night. Officers tried to forcefully disperse them and some businesses, including restaurants and an auto-parts store, were torched.

May 27, demonstrators began organizing in other cities. In Memphis, a protest over the deaths of Mr. Floyd, Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Ky., and Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, Ga., led the police to temporarily shut down some streets. In Los Angeles, hundreds of protesters converged in the city's downtown area to march around the Civic Center. A group of demonstrators broke off from the march and blocked the Route 101 freeway. In St. Louis, a man was killed after protesters blocked Interstate 44, set fires and tried to loot a FedEx truck. In Chicago, six people were shot and one was killed that night.[75]

May 28, after three days of mounting pressure, Mr. Chauvin, who pinned Mr. Floyd's neck to the ground with his knee was arrested and charged with third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz activated the National Guard. In Washington, May 29, President Donald Trump gave an ultimatum to protesters, whom he called thugs.[76] He threatened that the military could use armed force to suppress them. Protesters gathered outside the White House, prompting the Secret Service to temporarily lock down the building and evacuate the president and his family to an underground bunker for a little under an hour.[77]

May 31, hundreds of thousands of people joined largely peaceful demonstrations across the country, but cities reported hundreds of arrests as protesters clashed with the police and some areas were looted. About 200 protesters were arrested in Minneapolis and a man ran a truck into

---

[74] Taylor, "George Floyd Protests: A Timeline," ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Taylor, "George Floyd Protests: A Timeline," ibid.
[77] Kaitlan Collins and Noah Gray, "Trump Briefly Taken to Underground Bunker during Friday's White House Protests," CNN, accessed July 11, 2022, https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/31/politics/trump-underground-bunker-white-house-protests/index.html.

protesters. The National Guard was deployed in more than two dozen states to assist overwhelmed police departments, and dozens of mayors extended curfews. In Philadelphia, a huge peaceful demonstration outside the city's art museum contrasted with the scene in West Philadelphia, where the police used pepper spray to repel looters. In Atlanta, two officers were fired for "excessive use of force" against two college students.

June 3, an upgraded charge of second-degree murder was also added against Mr. Chauvin, who had at least 17 other misconduct complaints lodged against him prior to the killing of Floyd.[78] The other officers — Mr. Lane, Mr. Kueng and Mr. Thao — were charged with aiding and abetting the killing of Mr. Floyd for failing to intervene. On April 20, 2021, a jury found Chauvin guilty of all charges. He was later sentenced to 22 and a half years in prison.

Protests also erupted in countries all over the world as activists saw Mr. Floyd's death as a local symbol of a global racial injustice.[79] The United Kingdom had the largest BLM protests outside of the United States. London's protests rose from about 20 people outside the U.S. embassy to more than 20,000 people flooding the streets. In New Zealand, the protests brought Black protesters together with Indigenous Māori and Pacific Islanders, creating a movement for racial progress unlike anything the country had seen for years. In France, protesters rallied against their nation's own history of racial injustice and police brutality.

1.2.2 Immediate and Remote Causes of the 2020 BLM Protests

Like the EndSARS protests, the 2020 BLM protests is a culmination of several factors including police violence, institutional racism, systemic bias, and the COVID-19 pandemic. But,

---

[78] Derek Hawkins, "Officer Charged in George Floyd's Death Used Fatal Force before and Had History of Complaints," *Washington Post*, May 29, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/05/29/officer-charged-george-floyds-death-used-fatal-force-before-had-history-complaints/.

[79] Some of these protesters had their own George Floyd — a black person whose killing created national outrage. See Jason Silverstein, "The Global Impact of George Floyd: How Black Lives Matter Protests Shaped Movements around the World," June 4, 2021, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/george-floyd-black-lives-matter-impact/.

I will highlight police violence against black Americans as both an immediate and a remote cause. I will also highlight how slavery and racism in the United States added impunity to police violence. In subsequent chapters, I will argue that the nonrecognition of black Americans as social subjects in their own rights who should engage and be engaged in ethical relations with white Americans is the overarching moral problem that underlie police violence in the United States. Hence, I address it as a failure of recognition and the ensuing BLM protests as irruptions of recognition.

The immediate trigger for the 2020 BLM protest was police violence in killing Mr. Floyd. But this violence is not accidental, isolated, rare or even strange. Police violence against black people is a typical feature of US history.[80] From slave patrols in the 18th-century up to the Floyd case, US history is fraught with instances of police violence against black people. Black people's experiences with the criminal justice system have always been vastly different from those of other groups. Despite making up only 13% of the American population, Black people represent 23% of those killed by the US law enforcement in 2021.[81] Black people are nearly 3 times more likely than white people to be killed by a police officer in the US.

Policing in America is closely tied to slavery. The need to enforce labor on enslaved black people was the main objective for birthing the American police system. While the first official police department in America was established in 1838, in Boston, policing actually began in America in 1704, when slave patrols were formed in South Carolina.[82] The patrollers hunted down

---

[80] Elona Neal compiled a list of chronological events showing the history of police violence in the United States. The report highlights policies, organizations, and events, and explores how they relate to police brutality, institutionalized discrimination, and the loss of lives. The research is based on news articles, government reports, and historical documentation including primary sources. Neal notes that multiple methods that encourage racial division within the system have been enforced and continue to show up in statistics over the years. See Neal, "A History of Police Violence in America," ibid.

[81] See Reed T. DeAngelis, "Systemic Racism in Police Killings: New Evidence From the Mapping Police Violence Database, 2013–2021," *Race and Justice*, October 19, 2021; Jeffrey Fagan and Alexis Campbell, "Race and Reasonableness in Police Killings," *B.U. L. Rev.* 100 (January 1, 2020): 951.

[82] See Ben Brucato, "Policing Race and Racing Police: The Origin of US Police in Slave Patrols," *Social Justice (San Francisco, Calif.)* 47, no. 3/4 (2020): 115–36.

black fugitives on horseback and forcefully returned them into slavery. Then, various anti-Black codes like segregation, incarceration, voter suppression, redlining, poor infrastructure, and lack of economic assistance government were later introduced to create the *status quo*. Hence, racism and violence were embedded into the American police system *ab initio*.

Slavery was officially abolished in America in 1865. But, prior to that, black Americans were already heavily policed through institutionalized racism by a new name: The Black Codes. These were a set of laws designated for black people and, later, those newly freed from slavery. It restricted property ownership, forced cheap labor, and perpetuated other racist activities. Southern states like Louisiana laid the groundwork for such codes as early as 1855.[83] Black Codes became precursors to Jim Crow laws, which legalized white violence like lynching, looting, arson, and other acts of terrorism against free black Americans late into the 20th century. In fact, during the Jim Crow era (between 1877 and 1950), the South alone documented about 5,000 cases of lynching of black people.[84]

Between 1916 and 1970, millions of black Americans migrated northwards from the South to escape harsh Jim Crow laws, extreme racial violence and excruciating poverty.[85] As the North was not accustomed to large presence of black people, police departments and white communities reacted with fear and hostility towards both the northern-born blacks and blacks from the South.

---

[83] The Louisiana criminal code of 1855 defined vagrants as "all idle persons" who live "wandering abroad" without "visible means to maintain themselves"--in short, itinerant and parasitic outsiders. Historians invoke such vagrancy arrests as hallmarks of a postbellum criminal justice system that lacked ideological complexity and pursued only the harassment and redeployment of black labor. But vagrancy, while profoundly racialized, was more nuanced and layered than such an explanation allows. See John K. Bardes, "Redefining Vagrancy: Policing Freedom and Disorder in Reconstruction New Orleans, 1862-1868," *Journal of Southern History* 84, no. 1 (February 1, 2018): 69–113.

[84] A bill that declares lynching a federal crime was only signed into law in March 2022. While many Black advocates brought gruesome evidence of the lynching to the attention of government officials, nothing was done to designate the brutality as a hate crime. And while lynching by definition decreased in numbers in the '60s, modern-day lynching continues. See Neal, "A History of Police Violence in America," ibid.

[85] This mass movement is called the Great Migration. See Duchess Harris, *The Great Migration*, Harris, Duchess. Freedom's Promise (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Core Library, an imprint of Abdo Publishing, 2020).

The shock modification in racial composition "reduced the gains from growing up in the northern United States for Black families and can explain 27 percent of the region's racial upward mobility gap today… Locational changes, not negative selection of families, explain lower upward mobility, with persistent segregation and increased crime and policing as plausible mechanisms."[86] The North became a new frontier for racial conflicts, boosting police violence against black Americans from a regional problem to the level of a national catastrophe.

The police became militarized across the US with an unprecedented nationwide violence against black people. Soon, police departments across the country began to create special weapons and tactics teams (SWAT), which blurred the lines between soldiers and policemen.[87] The ensuing police violence led black activists to organize into a more formidable civil rights movement in the 1960s. On August 28, 1963, over 250,000 civil rights activists marched on Washington alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to protest against racial discrimination and police violence.[88] The March on Washington was one of the largest political rallies that ever took place in support of civil and economic rights of African-Americans. Dr. King, standing in front of the Lincoln Memorial, gave one of the most stirring speeches in history when he delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech.[89] In his 39 years lifetime, and 13 years as the leader of the American civil rights movement, MLK

---

[86] Ellora Derenoncourt, "Can You Move to Opportunity? Evidence from the Great Migration," *American Economic Review* 112, no. 2 (February 2022): 369–408, 369.

[87] The first SWAT team emerged in Los Angeles during this time after a series of high-profile raids against groups like the Black Panther Party. LAPD established SWAT teams, in response to the Watts uprisings that year, militarizing police tactics. The program expanded across the country and was used heavily to quash riots and enforce military order over any uprisings. For more, see Jim Fisher, *SWAT Madness and the Militarization of the American Police: A National Dilemma* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2010).

[88] See Taylor Branch, *The King Years: Historic Moments in the Civil Rights Movement*, First Simon & Schuster hardcover edition, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013).

[89] See Bob Adelman, *"I Have a Dream": A 50th Year Testament to the March That Changed America* (Pearson FT Press, 2013).

himself would be arrested about 29 times, mostly on misdemeanors related to civil rights protest. That number may not include the arrests wherein he wasn't sent to jail.[90]

The militarization of police also led to race riots as black Americans demanded equal rights and justice with their white counterparts across the country. In less than one decade, between 1963 and 1972, there were over 750 race riots across more than 500 cities in the United States.[91] Newark and Detroit were hotspots. In 1967, riots broke out in Newark when white police officers severely beat John Smith, a black cab driver, during a traffic stop. The ensuing protest turned into a four-day race riots that left 26 people dead and many others injured.[92] Similar riots also broke out in Detroit after incidents of "white flight." As black people integrated the urban areas, white people fled to suburban areas. The urban became densely populated with African Americans and heavily policed. On July 23, 1967, police conducted a bar raid, and while they were making arrests, a riot broke out that lasted for five days. It was among the most destructive race riots in American history.

A key pretext for the militarization of police and its disproportionate surveillance of black communities is drug abuse. Compared with whites, blacks were more likely to be arrested for drug offending, despite contrary evidence from socio-demographic data.[93] Specific legal protections originally designed to curtail police powers were eroded leading to increased police violence

---

[90] A King biographer, Clayborne Carson, said that the activist didn't like getting arrested and told his wife that being in prison was lonely. "He just broke down and cried and then he felt so ashamed of himself," Carson said. One of the arrests happened in Georgia's Fulton County and in 2020, Solicitor General Keith Gammage said that he wanted to clear King's name in Fulton, and professor Peniel E. Joseph — a scholar of Black Power Studies — agreed. "The record should be expunged in the sense that the society, and not Martin Luther King Jr., were the ones guilty of crimes of violence and illegality against Black bodies in that generation," Joseph stated. Read more: Jean Mendoza, "How Many Times Was Martin Luther King Jr. Arrested?," Grunge.com, February 17, 2022, https://www.grunge.com/772575/how-many-times-was-martin-luther-king-jr-arrested/.
[91] See Peter B. Levy, *The Great Uprising: Race Riots in Urban America during the 1960s* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1.
[92] See Albert Bergesen, "Race Riots of 1967: An Analysis of Police Violence in Detroit and Newark," *Journal of Black Studies* 12, no. 3 (1982): 261–74; Laura Hapke, "Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America – By Kevin Mumford," *WorkingUSA* 11, no. 3 (2008): 403–4; Julie Cary Nerad, "Leaping into the Fire: Women in United States Race Riots," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 40, no. 2 (September 22, 2007): i–i.
[93] David W. Koch, Jaewon Lee, and Kyunghee Lee, "Coloring the War on Drugs: Arrest Disparities in Black, Brown, and White," *Race and Social Problems* 8, no. 4 (2016): 313–25.

targeting Black communities with impunity and less accountability.[94] Hence, the war on drugs was used as to justify increased policing and arrests of black youths, with harsher prison sentences. The war was prosecuted in a manner that unduly hurt and broke black families.[95]

With institutionalized racism in place across the country, incarceration numbers of blacks and urban crime rates began to rise in the 1970s and 1980s, further perpetuating racial stereotypes. Moreover, the "broken windows" theory was introduced during this time, which stated that small crimes would lead to bigger crimes if not punished.[96] The theory suggests that policing methods that target minor crimes such as vandalism, loitering, public drinking, jaywalking, and fare evasion help to create an atmosphere of order and lawfulness. Police took license to enforce punishments on small "offenses" like unauthorized barbecues.

Consequently, although the 1980s generally recorded rising unemployment, gang activity, drugs and violent crime in poorer neighborhoods, aggressive efforts by the police to exert control fostered a belief among black communities that its members were unduly harassed and that abusive officers were not held liable for their unlawful actions. Tensions rose between police departments and black communities across the United States. On March 3, 1991, this tension erupted into race riots in Los Angeles when Rodney King, a black motorist, was arrested and brutally beaten by four police officers after a high-speed chase. The officers were later indicted on charges of assault with a deadly weapon and excessive use of force after a by-stander video of the incident went viral. But, on April 29, 1992, a mostly white jury acquitted the officers of all charges, sparking a violent

---

[94] For more on this policy, see Hannah LF Cooper, "War on Drugs Policing and Police Brutality," *Substance Use & Misuse* 50, no. 8–9 (2015): 1188–94.

[95] Neal, "A History of Police Violence in America," ibid.

[96] The "broken windows" theory was introduced in a 1982 article by social scientists James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling. It was popularized in the 1990s by New York City police commissioner William Bratton and mayor Rudy Giuliani, whose policing policies were influenced by this theory. For more, see Brandon C. Welsh, Anthony A. Braga, and Gerben J. N. Bruinsma, "Reimagining Broken Windows: From Theory to Policy," *The Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 52, no. 4 (2015): 447–63.

uprising resulting in about 63 deaths, 2,000 injuries, and 12,000 arrests. More than 3,000 buildings were torched or vandalized and about 3,000 businesses were affected, amounting to about $1 billion in damages and leaving an estimated 20,000 to 40,000 people out of work.[97]

There were some crucial efforts by the government to reform the police. In 1994, Congress passed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act. This bill mandated the Department of Justice, "to review the practices of law enforcement agencies that may be violating people's federal rights."[98] However, the Clinton administration's 1994 crime bill was not entirely good news for the black community as it proved counter-productive. While the bill intended to signal an effort to reform police departments, it ultimately hurt low-income black families by enforcing "tough on crime" provisions.[99] An entire portion of the bill highlighted "tough punishment" like the bill's "three strike" rule, which mandated harsher sentences for a third felony offense.[100] This encouraged strict law enforcement and caused the system to unduly target Black and Latino Americans who would ultimately fall victim to mass incarceration.

Meanwhile, the militarization of police was boosted in 1997 with a military equipment loan scheme that incorporated military weapons like grenade launchers in police departments in almost every state in America.[101] Known as the 1033 program, the scheme further heightened the use of

---

[97] For more, see Jack Katz, "Culture within and Culture about Crime: The Case of the 'Rodney King Riots,'" *Crime, Media, Culture* 12, no. 2 (2016): 233–51; Ryan Watson, "In the Wakes of Rodney King: Militant Evidence and Media Activism in the Age of Viral Black Death," *The Velvet Light Trap* 84, no. 1 (2019): 34–49.

[98] Neal, "A History of Police Violence in America," ibid. citing The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, 42 U.S.C. § 14141 (re-codified at 34 U.S.C. § 12601). For more, see Department of Justice, "Conduct of Law Enforcement Agencies," The United States Department of Justice, August 6, 2015, https://www.justice.gov/crt/conduct-law-enforcement-agencies.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Former US President Bill Clinton has admitted his "three strikes" crime bill introduced in the 1990s contributed to the problem of overpopulated prisons. For more: see BBC, "Bill Clinton Regrets 'three Strikes' Bill," *BBC News*, July 16, 2015, sec. US & Canada, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-33545971. See also, Joe D. Whitley, "'Three Strikes and You're out': More Harm than Good," *Federal Sentencing Reporter* 7, no. 2 (1994): 63–65.

[101] See Casey Delehanty et al., "Militarization and Police Violence: The Case of the 1033 Program," *Research & Politics* 4, no. 2 (2017): 205316801771288-, https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168017712885; Wendy M. Koslicki, Dale W. Willits, and Rachael Brooks, "Fatal Outcomes of Militarization: Re-Examining the Relationship between the 1033

military assault rifles during public calls to action such as protests or riots. A famous victim of this program was Amadou Diallo, a 23-year-old black man, who was shot and killed by four New York City Police Department plainclothes officers on February 4, 1999. The officers shot at Diallo 41 times out of which 19 bullets hit him. They claimed he had a gun; it turned out to be his wallet. All policemen involved were arrested, charged, and acquitted.[102]

Prisons and juvenile detention centers were among major public institutions that vividly illustrate the negative effects of the disproportionate policing of blacks and nonwhite youths in the US. The rate of incarceration in prison at year end 2000 was 478 sentenced inmates per 100,000 U.S. residents up from 292 in 1990.[103] Thus, in a single decade US prison population almost doubled from 774,000 in 1990 to 1.3 million in 2000. Among the more than 1.3 million sentenced inmates at year end 2000, an estimated 428,300 were black males between the ages of 20 and 39. At yearend 2000, 9.7% of black males age 25 to 29 were in prison, compared to 2.9% of Hispanic males and 1.1% of white males in the same age group. More recently, by 2018, black men were over 5 times more likely to be imprisoned than white men, while black women were 1.8 more times than white women.[104] This trend was exacerbated by the school-to-prison pipeline, in which students are pushed out of schools directly into the hands of law enforcement.

The school-to-prison pipeline is one of the fastest incarceration routes for juveniles from mostly black and other minoritized groups in America. The increased use of juvenile detentions results from new disciplinary reaction to students, predominantly nonwhites, using harsh

---

Program and Police Deadly Force," *Journal of Criminal Justice* 72 (2021): 101781-, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2021.101781.

[102] See Ronald Weitzer, "Incidents of Police Misconduct and Public Opinion," *Journal of Criminal Justice* 30 (2002): 397–408, 402; "Diallo Truth, Diallo Falsehood," *City Journal,* December 23, 2015, https://www.city-journal.org/html/diallo-truth- diallo-falsehood-12011.html.

[103] Allen J. Beck and Paige M. Harrison, "Prisoners in 2000," *Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin,* August 2001, NCJ 188207.

[104] Neal, "A History of Police Violence in America," ibid.

punishment tactics. Research suggests, "there are racial and ethnic disparities associated with school discipline practices and juvenile justice contact."[105] It suggests that stricter school discipline practices and disproportionate minority contact for minority youth are relatively more prevalent in urban areas like inner cities where blacks populate, and that both stringent and lenient school discipline practices have effects on juvenile justice referrals as well as racial and ethnic disparities across specific school districts.

Police violence and extrajudicial killings in the United States did not spare little children. At least 111 children recently have died by police use of force in the U.S. over the last six years, according to data compiled by the Washington Post.[106] The victims are disproportionately black at 37%.[107] On May 16, 2010, Aiyana Stanley-Jones, a 7-year-old black girl from Detroit's East Side was shot in the head and killed by police officer, Mr. Joseph Weekley, during a SWAT operation in the middle of the night.[108] In 2015, charges against Mr. Weekley were dropped. Another black child, 12-year-old Tamir Rice, was shot while playing in a recreation park with a toy gun. Former Cleveland police officer, Mr. Timothy Loehmann, shot Rice after a witness called 911. The caller noted that the suspect was "probably a juvenile" and that the gun was "probably fake."[109] Charges against Mr. Loehmann and his cohort, Mr. Frank Garmback, were dropped after 5 years.

---

[105] Miner P. "Trey" Marchbanks et al., "School Strictness and Disproportionate Minority Contact: Investigating Racial and Ethnic Disparities With the 'School-to-Prison Pipeline,'" *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 16, no. 2 (2018): 241–59. Also see, Nathaniel Bryan, "White Teachers' Role in Sustaining the School-to-Prison Pipeline: Recommendations for Teacher Education," *The Urban Review* 49, no. 2 (2017): 326–45.

[106] See Washington Post, "Fatal Force: Police Shootings Database," *Washington Post*, July 15, 2022, Online edition, sec. Fatal Force, https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/investigations/police-shootings-database/.

[107] Kiara Alfonseca, "Police Have Killed More than 100 Children since 2015 in US, Data Shows," *ABC News*, April 28, 2021, https://abcnews.go.com/US/police-us-killed-100-children-2015-data-shows/story?id=77190654.

[108] See Jason Butt, "AJC FALCONS SOCIAL JUSTICE: Why Jones Honored Aiyana Stanley-Jones: Death of 7-Year-Old Girl Asleep during Raid Tugged at WR's Heart," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution (2001)*, 2020; Maya Winfrey and Elizabeth Stinson, "Pulses from the Multitude: Virtuosity and Black Feminist Discourse," *Women & Performance* 26, no. 2–3 (2016): 208–21.

[109] Jamiel Lynch, Christina Carrega, and Steve Almasy, "Justice Department Won't Pursue Charges against Officers in Tamir Rice Shooting," *CNN*, December 29, 2020, https://www.cnn.com/2020/12/29/us/tamir-rice-shooting-no-federal-charges/index.html.

Black women suffer a double tragedy. They have been fatally shot by police, like men and children. From February 2015 to March 2021, the police shot and killed at least 50 Black women in the United States. The accurate number might be higher.[110] These include Sandra Bland (2015), Lajuana Phillips (2018), April Webster (2018), Crystal Danielle Ragland (2019), and Latasha Nicole Walton (2019), to name a few. Of the nearly 250 women killed by US police since 2015, black women account for 20% and 28% of unarmed deaths. These killings gained relatively less media attention and none of the officers has been convicted. There are cases like those of Breonna Taylor and Ma'Khia Bryant, whose deaths did spark a lot of national news coverage. But, they are the exception, not the norm. Both deaths only got national attention after Floyd's death, when police violence and extrajudicial killing was dominating headlines.

Still, it was three black female organizers — Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi — who created the Black Lives Matter movement in 2013 to serve as a black-centered political will and movement building project. Since then, the BLM movement has pushed police violence into greater media attention and intensified global outrage over unfair treatment, racial biases, extrajudicial killings, and disregard for safety during arrests of unarmed black people. It has spearheaded demonstrations worldwide protesting police brutality and systematic racism that overwhelmingly affect black communities globally.[111] Thus, the BLM has established itself as a global movement and its 2020 protests has triggered calls by India's Dalits to end discrimination.

---

[110] Kadia Tubman, Emma LeGault, and Rebecca Harrington, "50 Black Women Have Been Killed by the Police since 2015.," accessed July 16, 2022, https://www.insider.com/black-women-killed-by-police-database-2021-6; Marisa Iati, Jennifer Jenkins, and Sommer Brugal, "Nearly 250 Women Have Been Fatally Shot by Police since 2015," Washington Post, accessed July 16, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/investigations/police-shootings-women/.

[111] For more on BLM, see Barbara Ransby, *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the Twenty-First Century*, American Studies Now: Critical Histories of the Present 6 (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018); Charlene A. Carruthers, *Unapologetic: A Black, Queer, and Feminist Mandate for Radical Movements* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2018); Christopher J. Lebron, *The Making of Black Lives Matter: A Brief History of an Idea* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017); DeRay Mckesson, *On the Other Side of Freedom: The Case for Hope* (New York, New York: Viking, 2018); Maria del Guadalupe Davidson, Susan Hadley, and George

1.3   The 2018 Dalit Protests in India

India is one of the most diverse – if not the most diverse – countries in the modern world. Perhaps, more than Nigeria and the United States of America, India epitomizes the socio-cultural and ethno-religious diversities that characterize most modern societies. Occupying approx. 1.3 million square miles with a population of over 1.3 billion people, India ranks as the seventh largest country in the world and the second most populous, after China.[112] Statistics indicate that, with its growth rate of 0.68% as opposed to China's 0.00%, India is set to topple China as the most populous country in the world by 2023.[113]

Modern India is home to about 700 tribes and 100 languages. It also hosts every major religion in the world including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and the Bahá'í Faith. Most of the world's Hindus, Jains and Sikhs live in India as well as millions of Muslims, Christians, and Buddhists. Hindus make up 79.8% of India's population and Muslims account for 14.2%; Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains account

Yancy, *Our Black Sons Matter: Mothers Talk about Fears, Sorrows, and Hopes* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016); David Wallace McIvor, *Mourning in America: Race and the Politics of Loss* (Ithaca, [New York] ; Cornell University Press, 2016), https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501706189; Laurie Collier Hillstrom, *Black Lives Matter: From a Moment to a Movement*, Guides to Subcultures and Countercultures Ser. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2018); Jessica Watters, "Pink Hats and Black Fists: The Role of Women in the Black Lives Matter Movement," *William & Mary Journal of Women and the Law* 24, no. 1 (2017): 199-; Viveca S. Greene and Amber Day, "Asking for It: Rape Myths, Satire, and Feminist Lacunae," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 45, no. 2 (2020): 449–72, https://doi.org/10.1086/705005.

[112] India's overall population more than tripled between 1951 and 2011, though growth rates have slowed since the 1990s. After adding the equivalent of nearly a quarter of its population every decade in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the country's growth rate dropped to 22% in the 1990s and to 18% in the most recent census decade. Growth among Hindus slowed from a high of around 24% to about 17% in the 2000s, while Muslim growth slowed to around 25% and the rate among Christians dropped to 16%. See Stephanie Kramer, "Key Findings about the Religious Composition of India," *Pew Research Center* (blog), accessed July 24, 2022, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/09/21/key-findings-about-the-religious-composition-of-india/.

[113] India is expected to surpass China to become the world's most-populous nation in 2023, four years ahead of an earlier estimate by the United Nations. The UN expects global population to grow to 9.7 billion in 2050 and 10.4 billion in 2100, lower than the UN's 2019 estimate of 11 billion. More than half the projected growth between now and 2050 is expected to be in just eight countries: Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and Tanzania, according to a report titled World Population Prospects 2022. An earlier report projected India surpassing China by 2027. China is expected to experience an absolute decline in its population as 2023. In India, the total fertility rate may decline to 1.29 births per woman by 2100 instead of the UN's earlier estimate of 1.69 births, according the report, which cites data from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation.

for most of the remaining 6%.[114] While Hinduism is the dominant religion for several thousand years, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism, and Sikhism have flourished in recent years.

India's massive population is not only diverse, but also intensely religious. Religion is taken far more seriously in India than it often is in the West and by virtually the entire population. Officially, India is a secular country with no official state religion.[115] Yet, religion plays a central role in Indian daily life through its temple ceremonies, festivals, pilgrimages, family religious traditions, and the like. It is often difficult for a foreigner to fully appreciate religion's importance in this officially secular country. Hence, religious diversity has been a defining characteristic of India's population for centuries.

A recent survey of religion across India, based on nearly 30,000 face-to-face interviews of adults, conducted in 17 different languages by the Pew Research Center between late 2019 and early 2020, "finds that despite sharing certain values and religious beliefs – as well as living in the same country, under the same constitution – members of India's major religious communities often don't feel they have much in common with one another."[116] This perception of difference, even within a particular religion like Hinduism, is reflected in traditions and habits that maintain the segregation of Indians into religion-based castes.

Modern India has one of the most ancient and strongest religion-based segregation known as the Hindu caste system. The caste system, as it actually works in India is called *jati* and is deeply

---

[114] Ibid. Census data on religious groups are frequently misunderstood and misquoted in the Indian media, particularly by writers and columnists advancing a particular point of view. See

[115] O.P. Sharma and Carl Haub, "Change Comes Slowly for Religious Diversity in India," *Population Reference Bureau (PRB)*, accessed July 28, 2022, https://www.prb.org/resources/change-comes-slowly-for-religious-diversity-in-india/.

[116] The majority of Hindus see themselves as very different from Muslims (66%), and most Muslims return the sentiment, saying they are very different from Hindus (64%). There are a few exceptions: Two-thirds of Jains and about half of Sikhs say they have a lot in common with Hindus. But generally, people in India's major religious communities tend to see themselves as very different from others. See Neha Sahgal et al., "Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), June 29, 2021, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/06/29/religion-in-india-tolerance-and-segregation/.

rooted in the belief in reincarnation and *karma*.[117] The term "Jati" (also spelled 'jat'), is derived

from the Sanskrit word jāta, which means "born" or "brought into existence." It indicates a form

of existence determined by birth. In Indian philosophy, jati (genus) describes any group of things

that have generic characteristics in common.[118] The Hindu theology indicates that all are born in a

particular jati or caste. Currently, there are around 3000 jatis or castes in India.

The word 'Caste' derives from the Spanish/Portuguese word 'casta' meaning race, lineage

or breed. It was used formally for the first time in India by the British to identify and enumerate

the various groups in India as part of their Census exercises.[119] But, caste is not the same as race.

Using the word caste to describe the many groups or 'jatis' in India does not connote a racial

differentiation between them, as the original meaning of the word 'caste' might imply.

Sociologically, *jati* has come to be used universally to indicate a caste group among Hindus.

Dating back more than 3,000 years, Hindus were divided into four main castes or *varna*

based on who they were in their past life, their *karma*, and their current family lineage. The varna

social hierarchy include Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and the Shudras.[120] Hence, the Indian

---

[117] karma, Sanskrit karman ("act"), Pali kamma, in Indian religion and philosophy, the universal causal law by which good or bad actions determine the future modes of an individual's existence. Karma represents the ethical dimension of the process of rebirth (samsara), belief in which is generally shared among the religious traditions of India. Indian soteriologies (theories of salvation) posit that future births and life situations will be conditioned by actions performed during one's present life—which itself has been conditioned by the accumulated effects of actions performed in previous lives. The doctrine of karma thus directs adherents of Indian religions toward their common goal: release (moksha) from the cycle of birth and death. Karma thus serves two main functions within Indian moral philosophy: it provides the major motivation to live a moral life, and it serves as the primary explanation of the existence of evil. See Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Karma | Indian Philosophy | Britannica," accessed July 28, 2022, https://www.britannica.com/topic/karma.

[118] Amit Thorat and Omkar Joshi, "The Continuing Practice of Untouchability in India: Patterns and Mitigating Influences," *Economic and Political Weekly* 55, no. 2 (January 11, 2020): 7–8.

[119] Ibid. authors like Isabel Wilkerson have used the Indian caste system to describe racism in America. But this does not imply that caste and race are synonyms. See

[120] The term *jati* appears in almost all Indian languages and is related to the idea of lineage or kinship group. Many believe that the system originated from Brahma, the Hindu God of creation, believing that the Brahmins represent the eyes and mind of Brahma and are therefore often teachers and priests, the Kshatriyas represent his arms and are often warriors, the Vaishyas represent his legs and are often farmers or merchants, and the Shudras represent his feet and are often laborers. Although there are 4 main castes, the system is divided into thousands of sub-castes. See "Jati: The Caste System in India," Asia Society, accessed July 23, 2022, https://asiasociety.org/education/jati-caste-system-india;

social system based on the Hindu jati is hierarchal, hereditary and endogamous in nature and has historically been linked to a particular or specific occupation.

However, there is a separate group, an outcaste, that Hinduism believes to be impure from birth. Hence, they are considered to be untouchable and too low to be in the *varna*. Hence, designated pejoratively as the "untouchables," members of this group were discriminated in every sense, excluded from the mainstream of society and lived in the Hindu villages.[121] Now officially designated as *Scheduled Castes* in the Constitution of modern India and making up about one-sixth of the country's population, the formerly "untouchables" prefer to be designated as Dalits.

The term "Dalit" is a Bengali word, that stands for "crushed" or "oppressed." Dalits are literally outcastes; that is, a group that is so oppressed it does not fall within the caste system. For centuries Dalits have been positioned at the bottom of the rigid Indian caste society. Barred from education, Dalits were forced to serve the upper castes for very little or no pay. The Dalits have experienced consistent denial to access to education since the 1850s.[122]

The ancient caste system of India, which has resulted in the social and economic oppression of the Dalits, continues to play a dominant role in modern India. Despite being unlawful, about 40 million Dalit children are bonded workers, working to pay off familial debts that could have been incurred generations ago with some working as actual slaves. Over the years, the situation of Dalits has remained largely unchanged, especially in rural India where *jati*, sustained and reinforced by

---

Set Free, "The Indian Caste System: Explained," *Set Free* (blog), August 26, 2021, https://www.setfreealliance.org/indian-caste-system-explained/.

[121] Dalit communities are heavily concentrated in India's vast rural areas, where roughly 80 percent of the country's population dwells. It is in these most remote areas where we find unreached villages and people groups and where the deep religious principles of Hinduism dominate.

[122] There have been many different reasons proposed as to why the Dalits suffer from low rates of literacy and primary education enrolment, but the principal reason is their historical lack of access to education. In fact, Ensuring access to education for the Dalits of India has been the greatest challenge for the Indian government in diminishing the social effects of the caste system, which still remain entrenched in Indian society. Erik Fraser, "The Dalits of India: Education and Development," *E-International Relations* (blog), June 23, 2010, https://www.e-ir.info/2010/06/23/the-dalits-of-india-education-and-development/.

the obnoxious practice of untouchability, remains a socio-cultural reality[123] Therefore, millions of Dalits are trapped in an inescapable cycle of extreme poverty, illiteracy, and oppression in India.

Over the years, Dalits have demanded, and even struggled, for due recognition as human beings and equal citizens with other Indians. They have protested against their inhuman treatment by developing a meaningful political identity for themselves and engaging in a collective action for social change.[124] One such collective action for social change by the Dalits is the 2018 protest against a Supreme Court ruling, that diluted the stringent provisions in *the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act in 1989*.[125] To appreciate the significance of this protest and its aftermath, we shall address the question: *what led to this protest and how did the protest unfold?* I will address this question beginning with the second part and, then, the first.[126]

---

[123] Suratha Kumar Malik, "Genesis, Historicity and Persistence of Dalit Protest Literature and Movements in Odisha," *Contemporary Voice of Dalit* 13, no. 1 (May 1, 2021): 81–94.

[124] Dalit mobilization has been experienced in several cycles in India's modern history, not only in terms of demonstrations in the street since Ambedkar's Mahad satyagraha in 1927, but also in electoral terms. In 1962 and 1967, the Republican Party of India was very successful in Uttar Pradesh. The current resurgence of Dalit assertiveness is remarkable because it develops simultaneously in several states–not only UP and Maharashtra, but also Gujarat. Long-term and short-term factors explain this state of things. After several decades of reservation policy, Dalits are getting some education and with it comes a new awareness of one's rights. Circumstances explain their mobilization too: First, Dalits are facing dominant castes' antagonistic attitude, like the questioning of the 1989 Anti-Atrocities Act by the Marathas; second, they are collateral victims of the rise of Hindutva forces and some of their "programs", including cow protection, as evident from what happened in Una in Gujarat. See Christophe Jaffrelot Nair Malini, "'Educated Dalits Are Mobilising Against Upper Caste Antagonism, Rise of Hindutva Forces,'" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, accessed July 23, 2022, https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/02/04/educated-dalits-are-mobilising-against-upper-caste-antagonism-rise-of-hindutva-forces-pub-75457.

[125] The practice of "untouchability," other caste-based discrimination, violence against Dalit men, women, and children are in violation of numerous domestic and international laws. One of such laws is The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. The promulgation of the act itself was an acknowledgment by the central government that abuses, in their most dehumanizing form, continue to take place against Dalits throughout the country. The greatest deficiency of the Protection of Civil Rights Act was the fact that abuses against Dalits were not limited to name-calling or denial of entry into public spaces: violence was a defining characteristic of the abuse. Thirty-four years after the introduction of the PCR Act, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, was enacted to bring these other forms of abuse to an end. Human Rights Watch, "Failure to Meet Domestic and International: Legal Obligations to Protect Dalits - Broken People: Caste Violence Against India's 'Untouchables' (Human Rights Watch Report, 1999)," accessed July 28, 2022, https://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/india/India994-13.htm.

[126] Since this is a phenomenological chapter, I will try to narrate the story without my views or interpretations and highlight the background of the protest to depict how things escalated and culminated in violence. The next chapter and the rest of this dissertation will review this and the two earlier narratives as political irruptions of recognition.

1.3.1 How the 2018 Dalit Protests Unfolded

The 2018 Dalit Protests officially began on April 2, 2018. It was a usual summer day until regular commutes across India got disrupted by a *bharat bandh* led by Dalit groups.[127] Dalits were protesting a Supreme Court ruling from two weeks prior. They accused the ruling of diluting the stringent provisions in the 1989 *Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act* also known as the Dalit Protection Law. The protesters clashed with police and upper-caste gangs. By noon, as TV screens and social media became awash with images of street violence, the horror of one of the biggest protests in modern India began to unfold. By the end of it all, many people were dead and properties worth millions of rupees were destroyed.

How did the 2018 Dalit *bharat bandh* unfold? There are various accounts of how the 2018 Dalit protests unfolded. I will draw on various reports to articulate a reasonable narrative.[128] On March 20, the Indian Supreme Court stated that the 1989 law was being weaponized as a tool for blackmailing innocent citizens. The Court argued that the law was not intended to be an instrument for blackmail, noting that, "any harassment of an innocent citizen, irrespective of caste or religion, is against the guarantee of the Constitution." [129] Hence, it ruled that arrests cannot be made without the written permission of relevant authorities or police, and that charges be vetted prior to arrests.

---

[127]A *bandh* is a form of civil disobedience. It is a form of protest that uses a general strike to cripple activities in a designated place. A *bandh* can be called for an individual state or municipality but *bharat bandh* is a call for a general strike, protest or civil disobedience across an entire country like India, Nepal or Pakistan. The community or political party declaring a bandh expects the general public to stay at home and not report for work. Shopkeepers are expected to keep their shops closed, and public transport operators are expected to stay off the road. See "Bharat Bandh: Nationwide Strike Impacts Road and Rail Traffic," *The Economic Times*, June 20, 2022, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/bharat-bandh-today-live-news-updates-20-june-2022/articleshow/92325214.cms.

[128] I will draw on the *Hindu Net Desk'* account and other resources to narrate the major events that culminated in the 2018 Dalit *Bharat Bandh* and its aftermath. See The Hindu Net Desk, "The Hindu Explains: What Triggered the 'Bharat Bandh'?" *The Hindu*, April 2, 2018, sec. India, https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/the-hindu-explains-what-triggered-the-bharat-bandh/article61870711.ece.

[129] Cited by *The Hindu Net Desk*, "The Hindu Explains: What Triggered the 'Bharat Bandh'?" *The Hindu*, April 2, 2018, sec. India, https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/the-hindu-explains-what-triggered-the-bharat-bandh/article61870711.ece.

The 1989 Atrocities Act is grounded in the understanding that scheduled castes are being subjected to violence, not just the practice of "untouchability."[130] The Human Rights Watch notes that, "it is the second phase of the Protection of Civil Rights Act which is very soft. There was a long period of dialogue before its enactment. After forty years in India, people began to acknowledge that violence continued to be perpetrated and it needed to be stopped. The act presumes that if a non-scheduled-caste member harms a scheduled-caste member then it is because of the culpable mind of "untouchability" [a belief in the inferiority of lower castes]. They don't have to utter the caste name in the 1989 act; any humiliation is an offense.

Essentially, the Atrocities Act is very stringent as it is meant to eradicate the practice of "untouchability," not just control it. In the Act, the complainant is prioritized. There are stringent provisions against the police for negligence.[131] Hence, diluting these stringent provisions renders the law redundant and exposes Dalits to abuses. Simply put, "the Supreme Court ordered that the police were not to arrest anyone accused under SC/ST Act immediately. They first had to complete a preliminary investigation into the complaint filed by a person under the SC/ST Act. If police investigation prima facie indicates that such a crime has been committed, only then can the accused be arrested."[132] This is why Dalits were protesting.

The reaction was instantaneous, furious, and ubiquitous. On March 21, the Indian Congress criticized the ruling of the Supreme court as capable of undermining the security of Dalits in India. Some political parties noted that the dilution of the ruling might lead to an increase in violence against Dalits. MPs representing Dalit communities across India urged the central government to

---

[130] Untouchability is the practice of ostracizing a group of people regarded as 'untouchables', as ascribed in the Vedic Hindu literature to persons of "high caste" or to persons excluded from the caste system resulting in the segregation and persecutions from the people regarded as "higher" caste.

[131] Human Rights Watch, "Failure to Meet Domestic and International: Legal Obligations to Protect Dalits - Broken People: Caste Violence Against India's 'Untouchables' (Human Rights Watch Report, 1999)."

[132] India Today Web Desk, "SC/ST Act: From Dilution to Restoration in 5 Months," *India Today*, August 2, 2018, https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/sc-st-act-from-dilution-to-restoration-in-5-months-1303463-2018-08-02.

review the ruling. Dalit movements and organizations lamented the dilution of the strongest legal instrument protecting Dalits in India and urged the government to take swift measures to overturn it. Still, the government hesitated, saying it was yet to examine the Supreme Court judgment.

By April 2, as the government continued to vacillate, violent protests erupted in major cities across India. The Delhi-Dehradun highway was completely blocked by agitators, leaving thousands stranded on the roads.[133] The effect was overwhelming as states were forced to close educational institutions. Communications and transport services were disrupted. There were reports of arson and vandalism in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Utar Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab, among other states.[134] Hundreds of protesters carrying swords, sticks, baseball bats and flags forced businesses and establishments to shut down in several cities of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Odisha and Jharkhand.

By April 3, there were reports of shooting and arson. At least nine people were dead; six were killed in Madhya Pradesh, two in Uttar Pradesh and one in Rajasthan. As protesters clashed with police, military and paramilitary forces were put on standby. Curfew was imposed in major cities and hundreds of protesters were detained. Since April 2, "curfew was imposed across the three districts. The Dalit population in Chambal is over 20%, of which a large majority belongs to the Jatav community recognized as the most conscious among Dalits. This gives them special status and also makes them special targets of those to whom Dalit assertion is anathema."[135] Hence, this community experienced the strictest implementation of the curfew.

---

[133] India Today Web Desk, "4 Killed in MP, 1 in Rajasthan as Dalits Clash with Cops in Several Cities," *India Today*, April 2, 2018, https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/bharat-bandh-live-1202578-2018-04-02.

[134] ET Online and Agencies, "Bharat Bandh: 9 Dead; Supreme Court to Hear Case Today," *The Economic Times*, April 3, 2018, English Edition, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/bharat-bandh-live-protesters-hits-life-in-several-states-centre-to-file-review-petition-in-sc/articleshow/63575827.cms?from=mdr.

[135] Subhashini Ali, "Attacks on Dalits in MP during the Bharat Bandh," *Peoples Democracy* XLII, no. 19 (May 13, 2018), https://peoplesdemocracy.in/2018/0513_pd/attacks-dalits-mp-during-bharat-bandh.

Several Dalits were killed by both Indian law enforcement agents and some police-backed upper caste gangs during the protest. Dalits were killed in Rajasthan and Western Uttar Pradesh and in the days following the bandh.[136] Out of the official death toll of 11, at least six of the victims were Dalits. In the Chambal area of Madhya Pradesh, eight people were killed. But, the police deny either committing this crime or aiding it. Also, there were reports of looting, arson and destruction of property by upper caste gangs in Dalit communities. Videos of young upper-caste men firing rifles and revolvers at the protesters went viral. The men were seen walking down the streets while firing at Dalits with utter impunity. Though they were recognized by name, none were arrested.[137] Paradoxically, thousands of Dalits were arrested and charged.[138]

Dalit activists and leaders were put under surveillance by intelligence agencies. Since, social media was instrumental in rousing unprecedented support for the bandh, the agencies started policing social media platforms including WhatsApp. They censored protest messages from Dalit activists. Eventually, the government shut down internet services.[139] As the bandh began to cripple socio-economic activities in major cities across India, the government reluctantly filed for a review of the Supreme Court ruling. It sought restoration of the provisions the 1989 Act arguing that the

---

[136] Ali, "Attacks on Dalits in MP during the Bharat Bandh," ibid.

[137] Anurag Dwary, "Not A Single Arrest After Deaths Of 6 Dalits In Bharat Bandh Violence," NDTV.com, accessed July 27, 2022, https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/not-a-single-arrest-after-deaths-6-dalits-in-bharat-bandh-violence-1834647.

[138] The use of 'unknown others' (*anya agyaat*) in police FIRs is known to create panic and terror and also unending opportunities to extort. Anyone and everyone can be arrested, or anyone and everyone who could be arrested can be left untouched, for a price. The matter does not end there, as the policemen can return citing "tremendous pressure from seniors" to arrest so-and-so which can only be eased by more gratification.

[139] India now ranks at the top among countries with the most Internet shutdowns, accounting for 134 of the 196 documented shutdowns in 2018. While public safety, national security and spread of misinformation are the most commonly stated reasons, there have been instances such as the one in Rajasthan in 2018 wherein Internet services were suspended to prevent cheating in examinations. See, The Hindu, "Are Internet Shutdowns Healthy for India?," *The Hindu, Politics and Polity*, December 19, 2019, sec. Politics and Policy, https://www.thehindu.com/thread/politics-and-policy/are-internet-shutdowns-healthy-for-india/article30348873.ece.

new ruling may have violated the legal protection of Dalits provided in the constitution. The court eventually reversed its ruling on October 1, 2019, more than a year and six months later.

1.3.2   Immediate and Remote Causes of the 2018 Dalit Protests

What India witnessed on April 2, 2018 was an outburst of pent-up resentment, an irruption, a sort of climax to a gradual build-up of mistrust between Dalits and upper castes in India. It was a violent manifestation of the fear held by Dalits that the entire "system" was conspiring to keep them down again in their despicable place. The Supreme Court ruling had stoked this fear and immediately set off the protests. But, the ruling was only a trigger as the protest soon became a challenge to the ruling party (BJP) and its polices that allegedly tend to promote Hindu as a national religion and its caste-based hierarchy as the norm.[140] Hence, the protesters not only demanded the reversal of the ruling, they also called for the "scrapping of the reservation system" in India.[141] For Dalits, therefore, their moment for liberation is now or never. But, how did we get here?

Of course, like the two cases narrated above, several factors had contributed to the 2018 Dalit protest. These include: caste-based violence, religious intolerance, politics of neglect, bad governance, endemic corruption, rising inflation, youth unemployment, and the COVID-19 pandemic. For want of space, this subsection will focus on caste-based violence as both an immediate and a remote cause. I will also highlight how a historical politics of neglect in India

---

[140] UCA News, "Dalit Anger Challenges Indian Government's Future," ucanews.com, accessed August 5, 2022, https://www.ucanews.com/news/dalit-anger-challenges-indian-governments-future/82095.
[141] Reservation in India is a government policy of affirmative action that reserves access to seats in the government jobs, educational institutions, and even legislatures to certain sections of the population. The basic principle behind the reservation policy is the Caste System and the malpractice of untouchability in India. Caste-based discrimination, led to the social backwardness of these sections and created the need for a reservation policy in India. The idea was originally developed in 1882. But the prevailing reservation system in today's India was introduced in 1933 by the British colonial government under the provisions of the Communal Award. See Alex Andrews George, "Reservation in India - Explained in Layman's Terms," *ClearIAS* (blog), March 3, 2019, https://www.clearias.com/reservation-in-india/. Kaushik Deka, "The Dalit Awakening," *India Today*, accessed July 29, 2022, https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/20180416-dalit-protest-bharat-bandh-sc-st-act-supreme-court-judgement-1206277-2018-04-05.

added impunity to caste violence against the Dalits. Afterwards, especially in subsequent chapters, I will argue that the nonrecognition of Dalits as social subjects in their own rights who can engage and be engaged in ethical relations with other Indians is the overarching moral problem that underlie caste violence in India and elsewhere. It is an instance of a failure of recognition. We will revisit this line of argument in the next chapter and develop it in the rest of this dissertation.

In this subsection, however, we will focus on caste violence and its oppressive corollaries. Caste violence is a massive historical problem in India. It is one of the most long-standing instances of the routinization of violence, predating European colonialism although not unshaped by it, and now firmly enmeshed within the new global order.[142] An Indian historian, Rup Kumar Barman, ranks caste violence as one of the most dangerous forms of violence in India.[143] Barman notes that, caste violence is a complex subject of study as "it often intermingles with the political, social, cultural, regional and class violence."[144] Hence, he suggests that caste discriminations and atrocities against Dalits based on age-old religious, traditional and unconventional norms deserves a careful historical investigation.

The rest of this subsection will attempt a careful historical review of caste related violence against the dalits in India focusing on some key areas like socio-cultural, civil, economic, political, and communal/religious, violence. I will also highlight gender-based violence against dalit women as well as psychological and physical torture. Barman has drawn these forms of caste-related violence into seven categories namely, socio-cultural violence, disadvantageous economic status

---

[142] British ruled the Indian subcontinent for nearly 200 years (1757-1947). Its colonial dominions stretched from Bombay to Delhi to Calcutta, from the Ganges Delta to the Hindu Kush on the Afghan border. See Ania Loomba, "The Everyday Violence of Caste," *College Literature* 43, no. 1 (2016): 220–25, 220.

[143] Dr. Rup Kumar Barman is a professor of history at Jadavpur University in Kolkata, North-East India. He writes on democratic experiments of the postcolonial nations of South Asia and their mutual problems. Dr. Barman Studied BA (Major in History) in Alipurduar College (1993-1996) and completed his MA (in History) from University of North Bengal (1999) and got Ph.D. Degree in 2006.

[144] Rup Kumar Barman, "Caste Violence in India: Reflections on Violence against the Dalits of Contemporary India," *Voice of Dalit* 3, no. 2 (2010): 193–I, 193.

and the enhancement of caste violence, communal/Religious violence, violence against women, psychological violence against Dalits, physical torture, and other violence against Dalits. I will briefly highlight key points in each category largely based on the work of Barman.

Dalits in India face myriad socio-cultural violence. Barman notes that violation of socio-cultural rights of the dalits since the ancient period has been a well-known characteristic of caste violence in India. He notes that, "the first and foremost is the denial of rights of the dalits to participate in social ceremonies along with the upper castes. Social prohibitions including entering temples, sitting in the main spaces of the village, having drinking water from the same well, etc. still exist in different parts of India."[145] Another aspect of this category of caste violence occurs during matrimonial unions, especially in cases of inter-caste marriages. Barman notes that, unlike men of the upper caste, dalit men do not have equal rights of union according to their choice.[146]

Dalit women are not only subjected to caste stigmatization in mixed marriages, also their children face a lifelong inter-generational discrimination due to their 'diluted' *Jat* identity and inherited low-caste status.[147] Caste is descent-based and hereditary in nature. It is a characteristic determined by one's birth into a particular caste, irrespective of the faith practiced by the individual.[148] By the mere circumstances of their birth, children of Dalit women are made to inherit a historical and inter-generational stigma that burdens them throughout their lifetime. The Indian society, being predominantly patrilineal and patriarchal, generally aligns children to their father's caste. But, this is not consistent across India. For instance, while a Court in Delhi rules that, "Indian

---

[145] In recent years dalit, students are experiencing an ugly type of social violence with the introduction of the midday meal in the primary level schools. The upper caste students often refuse to have meals prepared by dalit women. The dalit students on the other hand are often forced to sit separately from the rest of the students. They are often asked to even clean latrines in the schools. Barman, "Caste Violence in India," Ibid, 202.
[146] Ibid, 203.
[147] See Reena Kukreja, "Caste and Cross-Region Marriages in Haryana, India: Experience of Dalit Cross-Region Brides in Jat Households," *Modern Asian Studies* 52, no. 2 (March 2018): 492–531, Abstract: 492.
[148] Human Rights Watch, "Caste Discrimination: A Global Concern" (Human Rights Watch, August 29, 2001), https://www.hrw.org/report/2001/08/29/caste-discrimination/global-concern.

society is [a] patriarchal society where the child acquires the caste of his father," the government of Bihar has said in the past that the children of a dalit mother and a non-dalit father would be counted as a dalit.[149] Hence, a mixed marriage does not protect the children of Dalit women from caste-based violence, oppression, and discrimination. The system subjects them to identity crisis.

The socio-cultural violence against dalits often reinforce their economic backwardness. Barman lists a few features characterizing the economic woes of the dalits in India. These include: "(i) due to low levels in education, the majority of dalits are labour workers (sic); (ii) they have limited opportunities for upward mobility and remain economically backward; (iii) attempts to set up stores in villages by dalits are often unsuccessful since because of their social inferiority the rest of the villagers refuse to purchase things from their shops; (iv) government officials often do not enforce laws and policies to allocate land for the dalits."[150] These features show the inescapable disadvantageous position of dalits, which is often sustained through caste-based violence.[151]

Dalits also face communal and religious violence based on the Hindu caste hierarchy. They are routinely abused and subjected to violence and even murder for supposedly desecrating a religious shrine or a temple with their so-called polluting touch.[152] Even when lower caste Hindus convert to other religions, they do not escape the caste system or its discrimination and violence.[153]

---

[149] See Rohan Manoj, "What Does It Mean to Be a Child of an Intercaste Union in Modern India?" *The Hindu*, February 6, 2021, sec. Society, https://www.thehindu.com/society/what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-child-of-an-intercaste-union-in-modern-india/article33757476.ece.

[150] Barman, "Caste Violence in India," 203-4.

[151] See Smriti Sharma, "Caste-Based Crimes and Economic Status: Evidence from India," *Journal of Comparative Economics* 43, no. 1 (2015): 204–26.

[152] Yashica Dutt, "Feeling Like an Outcast," *Foreign Policy* (blog), accessed August 5, 2022, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/17/caste-book-india-dalit-outcast-wilkerson-review/.

[153] Religious conversion is rare in India and, to the extent that it is occurring, Hinduism tends to gain as many people as they lose or more. Conversion of people belonging to lower castes away from Hinduism to other religions, especially Christianity, has been contentious in India, and some states have laws against proselytism. See Jonathan Evans and Neha Sahgal, "Key Findings about Religion in India," *Pew Research Center* (blog), accessed August 5, 2022, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/06/29/key-findings-about-religion-in-india/.

In fact, such conversion typically becomes an additional detrimental factor to dalits.[154] Barman notes that the non-Hindu dalits are often unable to avail the opportunities of reservation because of their religious background. Although the Sikh, Buddhist and Christian SCs are enjoying reservation in government jobs, educational institutes and in the political sphere, the Muslim dalits are still lagging behind."[155] Hence, non-Hindu dalits seem to actually face more discrimination and violence based on their religion than their Hindu counterparts.

Perhaps, Dalit women are the most oppressed among the oppressed people in India as they face dual oppression – for being dalits and for being women. Barman notes that dalit women are frequently targeted as a revenge against their male relatives who are thought to have committed some acts against the upper castes.[156] He also notes that dalit women face sexual assaults, often perpetrated by landlords, upper caste gangs, and police officers.[157] In most cases the atrocities against the dalit women particularly rape are dismissed by the police officers as false complaints. Police routinely demand bribes, threaten witnesses, cover up evidence, and beat up the women's husbands. In some cases, rape victims have been murdered. Recently, in 2021, a nine-year-old Dalit girl was allegedly gang-raped by four upper-caste men in South West Delhi. The attackers murdered and, then, cremated her to cover up their crime.[158] Such crimes are not unusual.

Historically, dalits are physically and verbally assaulted. Their properties are vandalized, torched or confiscated. This necessitated the 1989 Act to protect dalit lives and property. Moreover, Dalits surfer grave psychological violence which, for Barman, "is perhaps more dangerous than

---

[154] See Rowena Robinson and Joseph Marianus Kujur, *Margins of Faith: Dalit and Tribal Christianity in India* (Los Angeles, Los Angeles ; London: Sage, SAGE, 2010).
[155] Barman, "Caste Violence in India," 205.
[156] Ibid, 207.
[157] See Ajay Kumar, "Sexual Violence against Dalit Women: An Analytical Study of Intersectionality of Gender, Caste, and Class in India.," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 22, no. 10 (October 1, 2021): 123–35.
[158] Rhea Mogul, "Anger Mounts in India over Alleged Rape and Murder of Dalit Girl," *NBC News*, accessed July 29, 2022, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/alleged-gang-rape-murder-9-year-old-dalit-girl-prompts-n1275888.

the physical assaults as nobody can legally be charged as criminal for this type of violence."[159] He notes that the upper caste do not usually recognize the proficiency of dalits. Thus, dalits are denied employment or promotion opportunities. Even in the educational institutes dalits are often treated as inferior, beginning from elementary to higher levels of education in India. He notes that, dalit students are often emotionally exploited by their upper caste classmates and their teachers.[160]

Caste violence is not a relic of the past, it persists in modern India. In the past 10 years, crimes against Dalits have been steadily increasing. Rape and other sexual crimes against Dalit women doubling.[161] The number of harassments, attacks and murders has also increased. In 2016 alone, there were more than 40,000 crimes against dalits and other lower castes in India.[162] Despite abolishing the practice of untouchability in 1950, its legacy of caste oppression persists. At present, over 160 million Dalits face caste-based violence: they are denied access to places of worship, clean water, housing, and land. They are forced into menial and degrading jobs like manual scavenging. Their children are underserved, maltreated and forced out of school, thus, setting them up for illiteracy, poverty, and reinforcing their downward social mobility.

Therefore, the 2018 protest was made inevitable for Dalits by the Indian society and its persistent oppressive caste system. The protest marked the growing assertiveness of Dalits in their efforts to escape the vicious cycle of poverty, oppression, violence, and downward social mobility that has been visted on them by the Indian society for generations. It marks the irruption of their need to be duly recognized as equal members of the Indian society as well as their willingness to

---

[159] Barman, "Caste Violence in India," 207.
[160] Ibid, 208.
[161] UCA News, "Dalit Anger Challenges Indian Government's Future."
[162] India's 200 million Dalits and 104 million indigenous people together form some 25 percent of India's population. Besides them, at least another 40 percent of Indians belong to backward castes, making the number of disadvantaged people close to 70 percent. See UCA News, "Dalit Anger Challenges Indian Government's Future," ibid. Also, see BBC, "India Top Court Recalls Controversial Caste Order," *BBC News*, October 1, 2019, sec. India, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-49889815.

strongly demand, even violently struggle for, this recognition by fighting against the caste system that has oppressed them for many generations and the powerful authorities that seek to brutally maintain this obnoxious system. It is one of many instances of the political irruption of recognition.

1.4 Conclusion

I have narrated three recent protests around the world that should awaken us to the need for recognition. I adopted a largely phenomenological approach to allow each event to present itself in its uniqueness, devoid of my personal views and interpretations. Of course, there is no single way to correctly, even sufficiently, illustrate these protests and their aftermaths. Each protest is unique in the context it began and manner it unfolded as well as its remote causes and projections. Thus, different researchers might view each protest from different perspectives, employing varied approaches, and arriving at different conclusions. In fact, this should be the norm, not an exception. But, despite the uniqueness of each protest and how any researcher might approach them, there is still a common feature that is pivotal in appreciating the ethical significance of these protests.

Each protest portrays itself as a culmination of intricately linked psychosocial, cultural, historical, anthropological, ethno-religious, economic, and socio-political factors that run deeper than its actual trigger. In most cases, the protests escalated from being a mere reaction to a proximate event to becoming a demand for redressing remote historical grievances. As the demand goes unmet, the situation escalates into a struggle that culminates in a huge loss of lives and property. Each protest went beyond the immediate cause, none ceased simply because the actual trigger was addressed, and there is no guarantee that each protest will not rebound in the future albeit from a different trigger. Hence, from an ethical perspective, I view each protest as an outburst of a deeper phenomenon and view them collectively as local instances of a global crisis.

Therefore, while I do not intend to delve into the interpretation of these protests yet, I wish to briefly highlight an oft-overlooked but pivotal phenomenon that underlies each of them, namely, *the failure of recognition*. Each protest culminated from a concatenation of escalating efforts by the oppressed to demand for due recognition from the oppressors. Each protest was necessitated by the repeated failure of the oppressors to duly recognize the oppressed as social subjects capable of participating equitably in their commonwealth. The EndSARS protesters in Nigeria, the Black Lives Matter protesters in America, and the Dalit protesters in India did not chose protest as a first call. They were all forced to resort to protests – as a last resort – by the systemic neglect (nonrecognition and misrecognition) of their humanity by their oppressors. Therefore, I would like to conclude this chapter by flagging a few ethical questions that might help us ponder the failure of recognition as an underlying phenomenon in these protests.

What is the basic relationship between those protesting oppressive systems in Nigeria, in America, and in India? They are all human beings.[163] *What is the basic relationship between those perpetrating the same oppressive systems in Nigeria, in America, and in India?* They are all human beings. *What is the basic relationship between these protesters, who are victims of the oppressive systems, and the perpetrators, who enforce and maintain these oppressive systems?* The oppressed and their oppressors are all human beings. If they are truly human beings, they deserve to be duly recognized as such and be treated according to this recognition. This recognition cannot be denied even a single one of them, without ethical consequences. Neither the oppressors nor the oppressed

---

[163] Of course, one could rightly ask: *what does it mean to be a human being?* This is a very crucial question that will be subsequently addressed in chapter 3, from the perspective of Christian theological anthropology based on *creatio imago Dei* and the embodiment of the divine in each human person. Also, the ethical implications of this theological anthropology will be addressed in that chapter. Thus, it suffices here to simply say that they are all human beings.

can be denied due recognition as human beings without tarnishing their dignity and impeding the ethical relations that should exist among them.[164] Anything short of this recognition is unethical.

Were the young Nigerians protesting police brutality in 2020 duly recognized as human beings? No! *Were the black Americans protesting racism in 2020 duly recognized as human beings?* No! *Were the Indian Dalits protesting casteism in 2018 duly recognized as human beings?* No! Certainly, no human being - including the perpetrators of police brutality, racism, and casteism – can rightly condone the subhuman and inhuman conditions meted out to young Nigerians, black Americans and Indian Dalits. It is inevitable that they had to protest as one of the few avenues left them to legitimately assert their humanity, retrieve their dignity, and flourish in their societies.[165] Therefore, the protesters in Nigeria, America, and India were simply expressing a common human aspiration to be duly recognized as human beings and to be treated according to this recognition.

Should the nonrecognition or misrecognition of the aspiration of the oppressed to be duly recognized and rightly treated as equal human beings with other members of society be protested? Yes! The inevitability of these protests is rooted in the anthropological need of every human being to be duly recognized as an equal member of the human family. Every human being has the deep-rooted need to be regarded, respected, and treated as a social subject endowed with the agency to engage in ethical relations (or friendly relations) with other members of the human family. Simply

---

[164]The UN alludes to this recognition, when it declares that, "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." United Nations, "Preamble," *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, United Nations (10 December 1948), accessed May 16, 2022, https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights. Although, recognition as used in this dissertation is neither synonymous with human rights nor with the rule of law, it guarantees the protection of human rights even beyond the rule of law. While rights makes a demand that needs the protection of law and law is usually an external factor, recognition is deeply etched in the interior recesses of the human person. It does not necessarily make a demand until there is a prior failure of recognition even prior to conscience, duty, and responsibility. We often accept the ethical imperatives imposed on us by conscience, duty, and responsibility if we recognize the other as one worthy of these imperatives.

[165] The UN declaration alludes to this aspiration. It states that "the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people." Ibid.

put, every human being needs recognition as a human being in relation with fellow human beings. It is inevitable that nonrecognized or misrecognized persons or groups will demand, even struggle, for recognition when their need for recognition is unmet.[166] And, as long as this need is unmet, the demand and struggle persist, and the flourishing of the human family is jeopardized. Therefore, the rest of this work will focus on one key question: *how do we address the need for recognition?*

---

[166] Hence, the UN declaration acknowledges that "it is essential, if [hu]man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law." The repeated failure to meet this need forms the basis for protests and rebellion against any *status quo* that does not guarantee the mutual recognition of the people. Ibid.

Chapter Two

Recognition as a Vital Human Need: The Philosophical Foundations

The last chapter ended with a crucial question: *how do we address the need for recognition?* In the build up to that question, I narrated three stories to illustrate how the need for recognition can erupt into political demands and violent struggles in societies when it is not properly addressed. I argued that the ubiquity of similar stories indicates that, "we face a large-scale crisis of solidarity, a crisis of recognizing, and acting on the recognition, that our own lives, hopes, and destinies are inextricably intertwined with those of others."[167] I concluded that these stories reveal a global systemic failure to address recognition as a vital human need. I will begin this chapter, by narrating three other stories that illustrate how the human need for recognition can be addressed.

In 2019, Mr. Friday Ajabor, was shot by thieves in Lagos, Nigeria. Though he was dying, no hospital would attend to him as there was no police report. Of course, it is a crime for hospitals in Nigeria to deny gunshot victims treatment. But a formal police report has to be provided within two hours of commencing treatment for such victims.[168] Unless this report is guaranteed, hospitals tend to refuse treatment. Fortunately, Mr. Ajabor's life was saved by the timely intervention of an off-duty police officer, CSP Celestina Nwankwo Kalu – a Chief Superintendent of Police. Ajabor held Kalu's hand feebly saying; *please don't let me die*.[169] Staking her job and risking a possible jail time, the officer prevailed on the hospital to treat the dying man. She not only took responsibility for providing the report, but also paid the medical bill for Ajabor.

---

[167] Charles Mathewes, "Vulnerability and Political Theology," in Heike Springhart editor and Günter Thomas (eds.), *Exploring Vulnerability*, V & R Academic (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017):165-83, 166.

[168] Gbenga Salau, "Deaths Mount as Lax Enforcement of Victims of Gunshots Act Persists," *The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News*, March 6, 2022, Online edition, https://guardian.ng/news/deaths-mount-as-lax-enforcement-of-victims-of-gunshots-act-persists/.

[169] Victor Duru, "She Spent over N400k: Nigerians Praise Policewoman Who Saved Man Shot by Thieves," *Nigerians Praise Policewoman*, December 9, 2021, sec. Legit Nigeria News, https://www.legit.ng/people/1446998-nigerian-policewoman-helps-young-man-shot-by-thieves-spends-n400k-hospital-bills-photos-go-viral/.

Earlier, in 2016, Mr. David McCoy – a Deputy at the DeSoto County Sheriff's Department – met Mr. Dan Williams sitting in front of Wendy's in Horn Lake, Mississippi, USA. Mr. Williams was homeless, penniless, and hungry. Mr. McCoy offered to buy him lunch, but the eatery covered the meal instead. As both men ate lunch together, the police discovered that Williams had been hitching rides down from Ohio, hoping to re-unite with his family in Monroe, Louisiana. McCoy and his cohort – Deputies Brea, Garrett, and Andrews – funded Williams' ticket to Monroe. They also gave him some extra money for his other travel needs. Overwhelmed, Williams said, "out of all the people that reached out to help me in my time of need, it was the cops (sic.). Thank you!"[170]

More recently, in 2020, an Indian police officer, Inspector Munish Pratap Singh, was about to end his long and rough shift when a stranded and worried father called. It was around 10:00pm. The stranger made a very touching request. It's his son's birthday and they can't find a cake. The poor boy is sad. The father asked if the cop can help. Singh was not used to such requests. But, with the lockdown and similar COVID-19 related restrictions in place, it was no ordinary time in India. Though, it was dark and treacherous outside, the cop got a baker-friend to make the boy a cake. The tired cop got with his team to pick up the cake and deliver it to the troubled family. The boy was beyond happy, the cops had made his day. Mr. Sing remarked that, "the happiness on the boy's face made everything worthwhile. My team and I forgot how tired we were."[171]

What did Kalu, McCoy, Singh and their cohorts do here that the other officers failed to do in the last chapter? The officers here addressed the need for recognition. They responded to the

[170] Fox 29, "Hitchhiker Trying to Meet Family Is Treated to Lunch, Bus Ticket by Generous Cops," *FOX 29 Philadelphia*, August 19, 2016, Online edition, https://www.fox29.com/news/hitchhiker-trying-to-meet-family-is-treated-to-lunch-bus-ticket-by-generous-cops.

[171] Vikas Pandey, "India Coronavirus: How Police Won Hearts with Cakes, Songs and Sacrifice," *BBC News*, May 12, 2020, sec. India, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-52586896.

need of Ajabor, Williams and others to be duly recognized as humans. The others failed to do likewise.

The term 'recognition' can have several distinct meanings for diverse contexts.[172] For this context, I will use Paddy McQueen's definition. McQueen identified three meanings of recognition: "(1) an act of intellectual apprehension, such as when we 'recognize' we have made a mistake or we 'recognize' the influence of religion on American politics; (2) a form of identification, such as when we 'recognize' a friend in the street; and (3) the act of acknowledging or respecting another being, such as when we 'recognize' someone's status, achievements or rights."[173] This third meaning of recognition – *the act of acknowledging or respecting another being, such as when we 'recognize' someone's status, achievements or rights* – clearly applies in this context. But, I will add here that recognition is not just an act. It is, basically, a process that culminates in an action.

The process of recognition occurs within the context of a mutual intersubjective encounter. As a process, recognition begins with a moral awakening and culminates in a responsive ethical action. This process has three key stages: *awareness*, *acknowledgment* and *response*. A subject [the recognizer] becomes aware of another subject [the recognizee] by encountering them in their

---

[172] Paul Ricoeur identifies about twenty-three different usages. Ricoeur drew on the French verb *reconnaître* "to recognize" to arrive at these usages by exploring the folds of one usage to discover the key to the derivation of the next usage. He followed the order of increasing separation of subsequent usages from the initial usage to emphasize their key variance. Ricoeur also highlights what is being said or what is left unsaid in the previous definition and how they influence subsequent definitions. He notes that these subsequent definitions vary from the preceding definitions by either expounding what was already said or supply for what was left unsaid in the previous usages. The first usage of *reconnaître* "to recognize", implies: "to bring again to mind the idea of someone or something one knows" like saying *I recognize a person.* What is said here is the *ubi* (where) or *root* of recognition. It answers the question: *where* does recognition happen or begin? It depicts the mind as the place or *ubi* where we do the act of recognizing or initiate its process. It also depicts the innate ability of the mind to repeat the act of recognizing and the temporal sense of this repetition. This usage is crucial as it shows that recognition involves constant striving. Hence, due recognition requires the virtue of diligence as it can be hampered by the vice of sloth. Ricoeur notes that what is left unsaid in this usage is the *quid* (what) or *content* of recognition. It does not answer the question: *what does the mind or the will apprehend during the act of recognizing?* This question is addressed by the second usage, which we will discuss later as a subsection under Charles Taylor. For more on the various usages of recognition see Paul Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, trans. David Pellauer, (London: Harvard University Press, 2007), 5-16.
[173] Paddy McQueen, "Social and Political Recognition," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed January 16, 2021, https://iep.utm.edu/recog_sp/.

otherness. This awakens the recognizer to their moral responsibility to acknowledge the inherent dignity of the recognizee, in this context, as a fellow human being. Based on this acknowledgement, the recognizer acts ethically towards the other in response to their awakening to the other's inherent dignity and their mutual need to be duly treated as a subject that has such dignity. Ignoring this need can impel the recognizee to demand or struggle for recognition from the apposite recognizer. Surely, the apposite recognizer has the responsibility to initiate the process of recognition. But, the recognizer and the recognizee have to mutually exercise their agency, as social subjects, for this process to be successful. Hence, this type of recognition is both intersubjective and mutual.

Jessica Benjamin, the psychoanalyst and feminist theorist, describes intersubjectivity as "that zone of experience or theory in which the other is not merely the object of the ego's need/drive or cognition/perception, but has a separate and equivalent center of self."[174] Benjamin suggests that the concept of intersubjectivity was deliberately formulated to challenge the risky logic of subject and object that predominates in Western thought. According to her, intersubjectivity is the decisive impetus for engaging in mutual recognition as it addresses "the problem of defining the other as object."[175] She notes that this problem emerges when we consider the term "object" as a problematic legacy of intrapsychic theories.[176] These theories are distinct from psychodynamic theories as they focus on the processes that occur within the mind.

Intrapsychic theories bequeath us with the risky possibility of misrecognizing a subject as an object. This risk of treating the other as an object raises a critical danger for mutual recognition.

---

[174] Jessica Benjamin, "An Outline of Intersubjectivity: The Development of Recognition," *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 7, no. Suppl (1990): 33–46, 35, https://doi.org/10.1037/h0085258.
[175] Benjamin, An Outline of Intersubjectivity, 34.
[176] Benjamin, An Outline of Intersubjectivity, 34.

But, Benjamin insists that mutual recognition is "the core element of intersubjectivity."[177] Her thesis is that identity is formed from both mutual recognition and intersubjectivity.[178] As a child psychologist, Benjamin illustrates mutual recognition with the central experience of infants when they first encounter other infants. Suddenly, they are no longer the object of other people's attention. They become aware that they are subjects who are mutually recognizing other subjects like them. Through this mutual intersubjective recognition, infants have their first encounter with their own humanity, which is pivotal as it has the potential to make or mar their lifelong identity.

This first encounter with humanity is the most vulnerable moment in a child's development as it helps the child create a balance between *self* and the *other*. This balance depends upon the mutual intersubjective recognition between the infant and the independent other. Benjamin notes that this first experience of "mutual recognition is the most vulnerable point in the process of differentiation." [179] At this point, the infant finally recognizes that they are like that other infant. Prior to this point, "this child does not believe he will ever gain recognition for his own independent self, and so he denies that self."[180] Thus, by mutually recognizing the other in their otherness, "the subject accepts the premise that others are separate but nonetheless share like feelings and intentions."[181] From this moment, the child either embraces their vulnerable self and take the risk of friendship through ethical relations with the vulnerable other, or continue to deny their vulnerable self by attempting to dominate the vulnerable other.

This first encounter is also the most crucial formative moment for one's identity as infants leading up to adulthood. Benjamin suggests that this experience plays itself over again and again,

[177] Benjamin, An Outline of Intersubjectivity, 33.
[178] C. Jeet, "Understanding Jessica Benjamin's Theory on Subjectivity," *Story Power* (blog), August 31, 2022, https://storypower.criticsandbuilders.com/2022/08/31/understanding-jessica-benjamins-theory-on-subjectivity/.
[179] Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon, 1988) 53.
[180] Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love,* 53.
[181] Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love,* 53.

where we are continually challenged to recognize our common humanity. Hence, her goal was to explore ways of restoring mutual recognition as a defining key for understanding right relationship. In pursuit of this goal, she is ever mindful of the existential risk of treating the other as an object. She acknowledges that, while mutual recognition has to be between two equal subjects, it typically occurs in contexts where variables like wealth, power, knowledge, appearance, gender and access to crucial resources can intervene to create some form of disparity between the subjects.

Benjamin concludes that, "recognition is a capacity of individual development that is only unevenly realized."[182] She suggests that this unevenness, though very precarious, can still be mitigated by intersubjectivity. According to her, "intersubjective theory postulates that the other must be recognized as another subject in order for the self to fully experience his or her subjectivity in the other's presence."[183] Therefore, She draws two crucial meanings from this theory: "first, that we have a need for recognition and second, that we have a capacity to recognize others in return—mutual recognition."[184] Here is the underlying thesis for the above narratives and question: *recognition is a vital human need that ought to be duly addressed by human beings*.

A full version of this thesis is that human beings have a need for recognition, which can be addressed by other human beings, and that this need is prior to demands or struggles for recognition. The implication is that recognition has to be primarily addressed as a need to avert its political irruption as demands and struggles. To further delineate this thesis and explore its implications to social ethics, therefore, this chapter will examine Charles Taylor's proposition that recognition is *a vital human need*.[185] Taylor is, perhaps, the most influential contemporary thinker on recognition.

---

[182] Benjamin, An Outline of Intersubjectivity, 35.
[183] Benjamin, An Outline of Intersubjectivity, 35.
[184] Benjamin, An Outline of Intersubjectivity, 35.
[185] Charles M. Taylor (born November 5, 1931) is a Canadian philosopher and political theorist. His distinguished academic career was interlaced with political participation. He was active in the Canadian New Democratic Party (NDP), which promotes a social democratic platform, and ran a number of times (unsuccessfully) as its candidate for federal Parliament. In 2007–08, he cochaired a public inquiry into the future of cultural and religious differences in

He is known for his examination of the modern self. His work is remarkable for its range, both for the number of areas and issues it addresses as well as for the breadth of scholarship it draws upon.

2.1 Philosophical Theory of Recognition: The Hegelian Background

Taylor's work falls within the broader philosophical tradition attributed to G.W.F. Hegel. I will start by exploring his Hegelian background in connection with other traditions that are also crucial for our work. Paul Ricoeur identifies three approaches to recognition that correspond to three distinct philosophical traditions. These include: the Kantian tradition based on Immanuel Kant's *a priori* introspective approach, the Bergsonian tradition based on Henri Bergson's historical memory approach, and the Hegelian tradition based on Hegel's social intersubjective approach.[186] Historically, Hegel (1770 –1831) falls in-between Kant (1724–1804) and Bergson (1859–1941). But, to make for a smoother transition from Hegel to Taylor, I will alter this sequence. I will first discuss Kant and Bergson followed by Hegel and Taylor, in that order.

2.1.1 Immanuel Kant: Moral Autonomy and Mutual Recognition

Immanuel Kant's theory of recognition is based on the concept of *recognitio* "to identify." For Kant, to recognize is to identify, grasp or apprehend a unified meaning through thought.[187] In Kantian ethics, recognition is presented as a free choice by two autonomous subjects to mutually identify each other as self-conscious agents in a contractual relationship. According to Kant, a subject is autonomous only if their choices and actions are unaffected by external factors.[188] Kant's "principal idea is to vindicate the categories for self-consciousness understood as the subjective

---

the Quebec province. He was appointed a member of the Companion of the Order of Canada, the country's highest civilian honor, in 1996. He was also a winner of the Templeton Prize for Progress Toward Research or Discoveries About Spiritual Realities (2007), the Kyoto Prize for significant contributions to the scientific, cultural, or spiritual betterment of humankind (2008), and the John W. Kluge Prize for Achievement in the Study of Humanity (2015).

[186] Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 17-18.

[187] Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, 37.

[188] James Stacey Taylor, "Autonomy: Ethics and Political Philosophy," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, June 20, 2017, https://www.britannica.com/topic/autonomy.

'I'."[189] These categories were popularized by René Descartes (1596-1650). Descartes' first principle of philosophy was *cogito, ergo sum,* often translated as *I think; therefore, I am*. McQueen describes Descartes' influence on the Kantian approach, noting that, the "atomistic conception of self, encapsulated in Descartes' *cogito*, filtered into the transcendental idealism of Kant (despite his objections to Descartes' philosophy) and the transcendental phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, as well as being present in the contract theories of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke.[190] Kant masterfully built on Descartes' *cogito* to develop a contractual approach to recognition that prioritizes the moral autonomy of the subject.

The Kantian approach to recognition is essential to our work as it lays a firm foundation for intersubjectivity on the grounds of moral autonomy. Fundamentally, autonomy means a subject's capacity for self-determination or self-governance. But, philosophers distinguish three kinds of autonomy: moral autonomy, personal autonomy, and political autonomy. Moral autonomy is usually traced back to Kant. It means the capacity of a moral subject "to deliberate and to give oneself the moral law, rather than merely heeding the injunctions of others." [191] This kind of autonomy is different from personal autonomy, which is the capacity to decide for oneself and pursue a course of action in one's life regardless of any particular moral content, and political autonomy, which is the capacity to protect and enforce one's decisions within a political context.

The Kantian idea of moral autonomy is crucial for mutual intersubjective recognition as it guarantees reciprocity between the self-conscious subjects. Without a particular moral law binding on the autonomous subjects that freely choose to mutually identify each other as self-conscious

---

[189] Alfredo Ferrarin, *Thinking and the I: Hegel and the Critique of Kant*, trans. Elisa Magrì (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2019), 142.
[190] McQueen, "Recognition, Social and Political," ibid.
[191] Jane Dryden, "Autonomy," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed February 11, 2023, https://iep.utm.edu/autonomy/.

agents in a contractual relationship, there is no guarantee for a successful mutual intersubjective recognition due to the aforesaid danger of treating the other as an object. Hence, Kant's notion of recognition is often described as a form of reciprocal recognition. This type of recognition plays a crucial role in international law, usually as the basis for bilateral treaties between sovereign states.[192]

Kant's moral autonomy is also crucial to our work here because of his idea that respect is essential to mutual recognition Kant describes respect as the mode of recognition whereby a subject identifies others as rational agents, capable of setting their ends and holding moral status.[193] As a form of recognition, respect accounts for the subjective experience of morality whereby an autonomous subject is driven to duly recognize others as moral agents and, at the same time, bound by the recognition of others as equals. Thus, respect works as a moral incentive to engage in a contractual relationship based on reciprocal recognition. It also works as a social constraint on one's choice as they concede the freedom of others to choose their own ends.

2.1.2   Henri Bergson: Unconscious Memory and False Recognition

While Kant laid a firm foundation for mutual intersubjective recognition, Henri Bergson developed this foundation in four crucial ways. First, Bergson brings in the idea that unconscious memories play a vital role in the process of recognition. Second, he establishes the idea that the process of recognition occurs in the context of an intersubjective encounter. Third, he affirms that the process of recognition begins with awareness and culminates in a corresponding responsive action. Fourth, and most crucial, he draws our attention to the possibility of a false recognition.[194]

---

[192] Some of these were laid out in the Draft Declaration on the Rights and Duties of States of the International Law Commission. Consider Articles 2, 3, and 5, respectively: See Francesco Paris and Nita Ghei, "The Role of Reciprocity in International Law," *Cornell International Law Journal* 36, no. 1 (April 1, 2003): 119.

[193] Carla Bagnoli, "Kant on Recognition," in *Handbuch Anerkennung*, ed. Ludwig Siep, Heikki Ikaheimo, and Michael Quante, Springer Reference Geisteswissenschaften (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2020), 1–5, 1, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-19561-8_18-1.

[194] See Iser, "Recognition," ibid.

Bergson's theory of recognition is largely based on his concept of the unconscious memory. He distinguishes two kinds of memories. One is habit memory. This kind of memory consists in developing a certain automatic behavior through repetition. It coincides with the acquisition of *sensori-motor* mechanisms by a subject. The other is true or pure memory. This kind of memory consists in the unconscious residue of our past experiences.[195] Bergson describes recognition as a function of this residual unconscious memory. He presents it as the process by which we grasp past experiences through memory-images and bodily movements that result in our present actions.

In other words, the recognition of a subject that is being presently encountered consists in mentally inserting the subject in similar preceding experiences that make the subject familiar. For him, recognition occurs when a subject utilizes past experiences to engage in present actions.[196] He explains it as follows: "I encounter a man for the first time: I simply perceive him. If I meet him again, I recognize him, in the sense that the concomitant circumstances of the original perception, returning to my mind, surround the actual image with a setting which is not a setting actually perceived."[197] Hence, past perceptions are evoked by present similarity in the context of an encounter. But, this type of recognition is not a mere blend of perception and memory. It actually involves bodily movements and corresponding actions.

Bergson argues that simply associating a perception with a memory does not fully account for the process of recognition. Otherwise, recognition would only occur when the memory images are retained and be obliterated when they are not.[198] Rather, as the present perception dives into the depths of unconscious memory to recollect the previous perception that resembles it, the work

---

[195] See Leonard Lawlor and Valentine Moulard-Leonard, "Henri Bergson," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2021 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2021), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/bergson/.
[196] See Henri Bergson. "Of the Recognition of Images. Memory and the Brain," Ch. 2 in *Matter and Memory*, trans. by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1911): 86-169, 87.
[197] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 103.
[198] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 106.

of memory acquires a higher practical significance. In the degree that these recollections draw nearer to external perception, and so to practical movements, there comes a moment when recollection is capable of blending so well with the present perception that we cannot say where perception ends or where memory begins. Precisely, recognition becomes a spontaneous act at this point.[199]

At this point in the process of recognition, the unconscious memory spontaneously initiates actual bodily movements. Bergson explains that, "on the plane of action, memory is narrowed down to become one with action," and that, "past images reproduced exactly as they were with all their details and even with their affective colouring, are the images of idle fancy or of dream;" hence, "to act is just to induce this memory to shrink, or rather to become thinned and sharpened, so that it presents nothing thicker than the edge of a blade to actual experience, into which it will thus be able to penetrate."[200] Thus, the process culminates in physical bodily movements with some corresponding conscious actions in response to one's recollections. But, this process can end badly.

Bergson hints at the possibility of a false recognition, which he considers to be an anomaly. This happens when the process of recognition goes wrong and culminates in a bad action. Ethically, Bergson regards recognition as a genuine "attention to life."[201] But, he notes that not all forms of recognition pay a genuine attention to life in a consistent manner. Some forms of recognition pay attention to life in some situations but not in all. For instance, the Ku Klux Klan in USA or the

---

[199] Contemporary psychologists are talking about spontaneous recognition (SR), which is the unintentional recognition of target stimuli measured by the effect of familiarity to distractors on a recognition task. Research has indicated that previously seen or not seen (old/new) distractors affect the recognition of targets. See F. Ebru Köse and Dinkar Sharma, "Spontaneous Recognition: Investigating the Role of Working Memory," *Memory & Cognition* 49, no. 8 (November 1, 2021): 1665–76, https://doi.org/10.3758/s13421-021-01194-x.
[200] Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 130.
[201] Henri Bergson, *Key Writings*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson and John Ó Maoilearca (New York: Continuum, 2002), 153.

Caste mafia in India or killer police squads in Nigeria and terrorists anywhere may pay attention to life within their groups. But, these groups essentially exist to destroy other lives. Hence, their in-group recognition can be described as false recognition.

The danger of false recognition become obvious when they culminate in pathological acts like the mass destruction of lives through genocide, racial and caste-based violence. In some cases, the act of destroying an out-group life or actively participating in such acts can be a way of gaining an in-group recognition as a faithful or worthy member. For instance, the genocide perpetrators in Turkey, Germany, and Rwanda had some form of in-group recognition that paid attention to their lives and those they chose to recognize. But, this recognition meant a corresponding death for their victims. In Rwanda, many Hutus and Twas were killed for either being neutral or refusing to kill the Tutsis. They were regarded as saboteurs or betrayers of their tribes common cause.

Bergson's idea of false recognition is crucial for understanding how misrecognition and nonrecognition can develop from a seemingly genuine recognition. Essentially, false recognition depicts a feeble attention to life (misrecognition) or an absolute inattention to life (nonrecognition). It begins as an abnormality in the process of recognition when one's "consciousness, no longer turning in its natural direction, allows itself to look at what it has no interest in perceiving."[202] This wrong turn eventually weakens one's attention to life, thus, culminating in a bad act of recognition.

2.1.3   Georg W. F. Hegel: Mutual Recognition and the Ethical Life

The political philosophy of Georg W. F. Hegel is centered around his theory of recognition. Hegel developed this theory using the German word *Anerkennung* (recognition), which he mostly describes as the process by which a moral being overcomes the state of nature and actualizes social freedom. In Hegelian ethics, overcoming the state of nature and actualizing social freedom are the

---

[202] Bergson, *Key Writings,* 153.

two essential conditions for forming a human community.[203] Hegel argues that recognition makes

attaining these conditions possible since it forms the basis for ethical relations in society. For Hegel,

recognition helps us to actualize our very existence as moral beings with socialized identities as it

is the process by which the state of nature is overcome and freedom is actualized in the world.

Hence, he presents recognition as the form of all social virtues and the core of ethical life in society.

Hegel's thesis is that mutual intersubjective recognition is the overarching structure of

ethical life in society. For him, a social being is constituted as an autonomous "self" only if they're

recognized by others.[204] He argues that recognition is the "form of consciousness of the substance

of every essential spirituality: family, fatherland, state, as well as all the virtues: love, friendship,

courage, honor and fame."[205] Thus, mutual recognition (*Anerkannt Sein* or Being-recognized) is

the moral structure supporting a virtuous society as it enables autonomous subjects to become

integrated as ethical and political subjects within a community.[206] In a sense, mutual recognition

constitutes the sphere of social ethics and underlies virtuous ethical relations in society as it is the

transcendental condition or deep structure for rights, law and ethics.[207]

For Hegel, mutual recognition makes the ethical life possible in a lawful society. He views

the ethical life as the embodiment of the social reason or the basis for the very concepts of society.

He argues that the ethical life subsumes and transforms the traditional theory of virtues and vices

as it is constituted when the other comes to count. Fundamentally, mutual recognition makes the

idea of a modern virtuous society possible since it mediates the affirmative consciousness of

---

[203] Robert R. Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 388.

[204] Evangelia Sembou, "Hegel's Idea of a 'Struggle for Recognition': The 'Phenomenology of Spirit,'" *History of Political Thought* 24, no. 2 (2003): 262. Hegel hints at this thesis in the two manuscripts of his Jena lectures (1803-06) titled *Realphilosophie*, which were published in 1932 by Johannes Hoffmeister. He eventually develops it in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (1807) and the *Philosophy of Right* (1821).

[205] -5.

[206] McQueen, "Recognition, Social and Political | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy," ibid. Charles Taylor will later develop this argument as the foundation for his proposition that recognition is a vital human need.

[207] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 2.

freedom in society. Hence, Hegel argues that the modern conception of the ethical life is best articulated in terms of various patterns of recognition since it is constituted by several distinct levels of intersubjective recognition.[208] The implication is that this type of recognition is not just an account of one occasion of relationship based on intersubjectivity or mutuality. Rather, it is a consistent pattern of affirmative relationships that makes a virtuous society possible.

Although, Hegel develops his theory of recognition around Kant's foundational ideas of intersubjectivity and moral autonomy, he got his most crucial idea from Johann Fichte (1762-1814). Fichte had proposed the idea that, "one's freedom is both rendered possible and yet limited by the demands made on us by others."[209] Using this idea, Hegel argued that social freedom is actualized only through mutual intersubjective recognition. For Hegel, freedom means, "to accept and respect the other as an end in herself such that controlling, dominating, and manipulating behaviors are inappropriate."[210] Seen this way, "freedom becomes actual through the process of recognition and emerges as liberation in the final moment of mutual-reciprocal releasement."[211] This clearly means that freedom is not an individual experience. It is essentially an intersubjective and social reality.[212]

Hegel synthesizes the strengths of many crucial concepts while avoiding their weaknesses. This partly accounts for the advantage of his theory of recognition over Kant's and Bergson's. It also accounts for Hegel's great appeal to modern theorists like Charles Taylor, Axel Honneth, and Nancy Fraser. For instance: "in his concept of *Anerkanntsein,* being-recognized, Hegel synthesizes [Jean Jacques] Rousseau's general will, Kant's concept of right, and Fichte's concept of recognition." [213] However, he avoids their common heritage of the Cartesian individualistic

[208] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 364.
[209] See McQueen, Recognition, Social and Political, ibid.
[210] See McQueen, Recognition, Social and Political, ibid.
[211] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 80.
[212] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 84.
[213] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 102.

interpretation of freedom. By decentering the concept of the autonomous subject.[214] Hegel's genius is summed up in the idea that mutual recognition is the universal shape and pattern of freedom, including all the virtues, and of social institutions from the family through civil society and state.[215]

Hegel transforms, expands, and elevates the idea of intersubjectivity by bringing social relations to the center of the ethical life rather than duty or other deontological commitments. He argues that, the threshold of the ethical life is attained when the other ceases to be regarded as a nullity or a mere 'thing,' and comes to count as a self-determining end in itself. This means that, recognition is not just an intersubjective process that necessitates mutuality or relationality with others, but also a decisive stage in the process of actualizing one's freedom in the society. This echoes Aristotle's idea that human beings are social (relational) animals.

Hegel basically views the ethical life from a relational perspective – as a product of intersubjective recognition when the other comes to count as a social subject. For him, the ethical life comprises a plurality of levels of recognition that culminate in an ethical "we" through the practice of mutuality. He argues that there is no absolute autonomy as this does not leave room for the other; rather, it contradicts and undermines the possibility of relation.[216] For Hegel, recognition helps us actualize social freedom through a process of self-assertion, self-negation and re-definition of oneself in relation to an other. This means that social freedom entails asserting oneself as an autonomous subject while, at the same time, negating the natural tendency to dominate others.

Social freedom culminates in redefining oneself as a social subject among other social subjects. Thus, the telos of Hegel's theory of recognition is the formation of an ethical "we", which

---

214 Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 2.
215 Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 3.
216 Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 85.

is achieved through mutual recognition. The process of attaining this telos comprises four moments or characteristics of freedom: autonomy, union, self-overcoming, and *Freigabe*. [217] *Freigabe* (opening up to the other) is crucial to our work here. It highlights the Hegelian idea of relationality and freedom. This can be understood negatively and positively. Negatively, it is the renunciation of the urge to dominate or control others [*libido dominandi*]. Positively, it means allowing the other to be, being open to the other, and affirming the other as an end in herself such that controlling, dominating, and manipulating behaviors are always considered inappropriate. [218]

Freigabe corresponds to the final moment of recognition, namely, letting the other be in the freedom of their otherness. [219] It is the recognition of the otherness of the other, the difference of their difference; not as a matter of indifference or alienation, but as a matter of union and love in freedom. [220] Hence, Hegel's idea that mutual recognition is the beginning of one's consciousness of freedom depicts the importance of *Freigabe* for social ethics. [221] The idea implies that freedom is not simply individual but fundamentally intersubjective and social.

Hegel's concept of *Freigabe* is intricately linked with his concept of union and love. For him, *Freigabe* is "the consummation of reciprocal recognition, through which *Geist* is constituted as the I that is a We." [222] It is a condition of union, and union is a result of mutual-reciprocal *Freigabe*. The Hegelian union does not conceal otherness. Rather, as the condition of union, *Freigabe* manifests otherness. Hence, by pursuing the ethical 'We' as the telos of his theory of recognition, Hegel envisions a community based on freedom. One that does not absorb or reduce

---

[217] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 364.
[218] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 84. *Freigabe* is akin to Enda McDonagh's concept of "letting be." We will discuss this in the next chapter. See Enda McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy: In Faith, Morality and Art* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Columba Press, 2004), 15-16.
[219] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 84.
[220] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 84. Taylor would later develop this great insight to form his idea of the politics of difference. We will explore this further in the next section.
[221] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 2.
[222] Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 84.

the differences of individuals. This vision would later influence Taylor's idea that respect for difference is essential to the politics of recognition [we will get to this point shortly].

Hegel's theory of recognition is sometimes misunderstood. Alexander Kojeve suggested that Hegel's idea of mutual recognition is a discredited ontological harmony. Kojeve erroneously identifies Hegel's idea of *Anerkanntsein* "mutual recognition" with a form of reciprocal coercion.[223] This is a fallacy. But, it actually highlights a wider misunderstanding of Hegel's notion of a struggle for recognition. Critics like Kojeve tend to confuse Hegel's fringe idea of a struggle for recognition with his central idea of a "life-and-death struggle." But, these are two separate concepts.

On the one hand, Hegel temporarily used the idea of a struggle for recognition to explain the political reality that social freedom, which is based on mutual recognition, must be guaranteed as a right through laws and ethics. Without this guarantee, there would be no society since no autonomous subject would willingly yield its individual freedom to others if they do not mutually recognize them as partners in pursuit of an "ethical we", which is the telos of mutual recognition.

Struggle for recognition is often viewed as a "struggle of individuals for the recognition of their person by others."[224] This is not wrong. What is wrong is the failure by critics like Kojeve to appreciate the ontological structure that makes this struggle normal and keeps it outside the master/slave anomaly. Besides, struggle for recognition is neither a core idea in Hegel's theory nor does it refer to a binary relationship. Rather, it is a fringe idea that Hegel used in his earlier works to illustrate how interpersonal or intersubjective relationships play out in society.[225] In fact, most contemporary theorists generally view the master/slave paradigm as an anomaly

---

[223] See Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, 380-381.
[224] Sembou, Hegel's Idea of a Struggle for Recognition, 262.
[225] Axel Honneth notes that the struggle for recognition plays an important role in Hegel's 1802 *System of Ethical Life*, but that by the time Hegel wrote the *Phenomenology* in 1807, the struggle for recognition had receded to a minor role,

On the other hand, the life and death struggle characterizes what Hegel defined as a master and slave relation. Hegel's master/slave narrative illustrates the awkward relation between two autonomous "self-consciousnesses" that necessarily engage each other in a vicious battle during their encounter. A deadly combat must ensue between the two self-consciousnesses until a victor emerges. He argues that, "the two self-consciousnesses must struggle because each one sees the other as a threat to itself. In this struggle to determine the objective truth of itself, each consciousness seeks to establish the certainty of its being not only for itself but also for the other. In other words, each consciousness is trying to prove its worth to the other as well as to itself."[226] Although this is as a deadly struggle, the victor would typically spare the life of the vanquished. But, the victor spares the vanquished only to serve as an external, objective witness to their power.

In other words, the winner coerces the loser into relinquishing their autonomy without a mutual form of recognition that guarantees their freedom. Therefore, "out of this life-and-death conflict emerges a master-slave relationship where the victor is master and the vanquished is slave."[227] The winner becomes the master of the loser who now becomes a slave in an awkward relationship where both need each other's coerced reciprocal recognition to remain relevant. The master needs the slave so as to remain powerful while the slave needs the master so as to remain alive. But, this relationship is not only abnormal, it is also capricious.

---

and had disappeared almost entirely in his later works. This is true. Until Kojève popularized the "master-slave dialectic" in his lectures published after World War Two, the "struggle for recognition" was a relatively forgotten theme. See Andy Blunden, "Honneth's 'Struggle for Recognition,'" accessed January 28, 2023, https://ethicalpolitics.org/ablunden/works/honneth1.htm.

[226] See Hegel, G.W.F., The Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. AV. cited in J.D. Feilmeier, "Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic: The Search for Self-Consciousness – Writing Anthology," accessed January 28, 2023, https://central.edu/writing-anthology/2019/07/08/hegels-master-slave-dialectic-the-search-for-self-consciousness/; Robert R. Williams, "Hegel and Nietzsche: Recognition and Master/Slave," *Philosophy Today (Celina)* 45, no. 9999 (2001): 164–79, https://doi.org/10.5840/philtoday200145Supplement18.

[227] Feilmeier, Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic, ibid.

Through defeat, the loser become painfully aware that they are limited; that they are not the objective standard of truth in the world. In this negative sense, they will achieve self-consciousness. But, the master would not achieve a similar self-consciousness as they have not discovered their limitedness. Therefore, they continue to see themselves as the measure of all things. Thus, they keep recreating the conditions for a vicious circle of life and death struggles.

Hegel's account of life and death struggle emphasizes the importance of mutual recognition for genuine ethical relations in society. Ethical relations is the basic proper relationship that should exist between cohabiting subjects. Ethical relations is based on the natural susceptibility and vulnerability of moral subjects to respond to the call of the other. [228] It is characterized by an ethical obligation on subjects to mutually recognize and protect one another in their mutual vulnerability. In practical terms, without due recognition there can be no genuine ethical relation between killer police squad and young Nigerian citizens, white supremacists in America and black Americans or privileged upper caste in India and the Dalit. *Ipso facto*, these cannot form a true community or pursue the common good. They can cohabit a space, albeit, without a parity of participation in it.

Ethical relations is necessary for society to exist. Without ethical relations, there might be a semblance of a community but that would be a charade like the slavery/Jim Crow America or the British colonial Nigeria and India. But, ethical relations cannot be truly achieved without the mutual recognition of the moral agents as social subjects in their own rights. Ethical relations occur because of a prior recognition by the subjects of their mutual vulnerabilities, precarities and responsibilities. There is no ethical relations between a master and a slave or an oppressor and the oppressed or an abuser and the abused or an upper and a lower caste.

---

[228] See Judith Butler, "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26, no. 2 (2012): 134–51, 140, 142, 150. Butler is citing Emmanuel Levinas here.

The moral of Hegel's life and death struggle is that human beings cannot flourish in a society devoid of mutual recognition. Such society is doomed by this vicious struggle. Human flourishing occurs in society due to the ethical relations and ethical actions by subjects who have mutually recognized one another as deserving of *Freigabe*. History shows there can be no true justice or peace in the world without due recognition. Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, stated:

> That until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned; that until there are no longer first class and second class citizens of any nation; that until the color of a man's skin is of no more significance than the color of his eyes; that until the basic human rights are equally guaranteed to all without regard to race; that until that day, the dream of lasting peace and world citizenship and the rule of international morality will remain but a fleeting illusion, to be pursued but never attained. And until the ignoble and unhappy regimes that hold our brothers in Angola, in Mozambique and in South Africa in subhuman bondage have been toppled and destroyed; until bigotry and prejudice and malicious and inhuman self-interest have been replaced by understanding and tolerance and good-will; until all Africans stand and speak as free beings, equal in the eyes of all men, as they are in the eyes of Heaven; until that day, the African continent will not know peace. We Africans will fight, if necessary, and we know that we shall win, as we are confident in the victory of good over evil… Equality of representation must be assured.[229]

The Emperor spoke on behalf of Africa; but, also for all nonrecognized or misrecognized people of the world.[230] He was asking the world community to address the vital human need for recognition.

2.1.4   Hegel's Influence on Contemporary Theorists: Taylor, Honneth and Fraser

Hegel has a near universal influence on contemporary theories of recognition. Following Hegel, contemporary scholars like Taylor, Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser are grappling with this question [or its variations]: *Why is recognition so important to human beings; and, why should*

---

[229] An address by the Emperor to the United Nations General Assembly on October 4, 1963. See Ras Iadonis Tafari, *Selected Speeches of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I*, First Edition (Addis Ababa: The Imperial Ethiopian Ministry of Information, 1967), 378. This portion of the speech was the inspiration for Bob Marley's hit song "War".
[230] Selassie was quoting the resolutions adopted at a prior meeting of Heads of African States and Governments held at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in May 1963. The three-day meeting, attended by representatives of thirty-two African nations, led to the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor of the African Union (AU).

lack of it motivate struggles or conflicts in society?[231] There can be many answers. But, Taylor's proposition that recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people, but "a vital human need" provides a solid philosophical basis for a proper response to this question.[232] This proposition is both foundational to and constitutive of this dissertation and will be discussed in more detail here.

To situate Taylor's groundbreaking proposition within the larger context of contemporary discourse on recognition, I will first present Honneth and Fraser as Taylor's important interlocutors. I will mostly paraphrase Paddy McQueen's excellent precis on Honneth and Fraser before focusing attention on Taylor's proposition. My work here is basically to encourage more theological works on recognition. Hence, it is quite sufficient to just focus on Taylor here. But, I acknowledge that any advanced work on recognition must delve deeper into the works of Honneth and Fraser as they are very crucial developments on the Hegelian tradition beyond Taylor's groundbreaking work.[233]

---

[231] I am combining and paraphrasing two critical questions posed by Heikki Ikäheimo: *Why is recognition of such an importance for humans? Why should lack of recognition motivate people to fight or work for recognition?* For Ikäheimo's response to this question, please see Heikki Ikäheimo, "A Vital Human Need: Recognition as Inclusion in Personhood," *European Journal of Political Theory* 8, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 31–45.

[232] This was the thesis of Taylor's ground-breaking essay titled, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*. This seminal work was published in 1992 and later in 1994 with contributions from Amy Gutman, K. Anthony Appiah, Jurgen Habermas, Steven C. Rockefeller, Michael Walzer and Susan Wolf. Although this essay does not provide a developed theory of recognition, it has inspired subsequent theories of recognition and has become the usual point of departure for most contemporary conversations on recognition. For more on this important work and its reception among Taylor's conversation partners, see Taylor, *Multiculturalism*.

[233] Here are few works to consult for a more advanced research on the works of Honneth and Fraser: Wendy Martineau, Nasar Meer, and Simon Thompson, "Theory and Practice in the Politics of Recognition and Misrecognition," *Res Publica* 18, no. 1 (February 1, 2012): 1–9, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11158-012-9181-7; Ikäheimo, "A Vital Human Need"; Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press, 1995); AXEL HONNETH and John Farrell, "Recognition and Moral Obligation," *Social Research* 64, no. 1 (1997): 16–35; Jeffrey C. Alexander and Maria Pia Lara, "Honneth's New Critical Theory of Recognition," *New Left Review*, no. 220 (1996): 126–36; Jean-Philippe Deranty and Emmanuel Renault, "Politicizing Honneth's Ethics of Recognition," *Thesis Eleven* 88, no. 1 (February 1, 2007): 92–111, https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513607072459; Nancy Fraser, *Redistribution or Recognition?: A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (London ; New York: Verso, 2003); Rauno Huttunen, "Hegelians Axel Honneth and Robert Williams on the Development of Human Morality," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 31, no. 4 (July 2012): 339–55, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-011-9278-z; John Paul J. Petrola, "Ethics of Recognition: Axel Honneth's Normative Critique of Modern Society," *Journal of Critical Reviews* 7, no. 11 (2020), https://doi.org/10.31838/jcr.07.11.30; Laura Lee Downs and Jacqueline Laufer, "Nancy Fraser, Rebel Philosopher," *Travail, genre et societes* 27, no. 1 (March 11, 2012): 5–27; Laura Lee Downs and Jacqueline Laufer, "Nancy Fraser, Rebel Philosopher," *Travail, genre et societes* 27, no. 1 (March 11, 2012): 5–27; Christopher F. Zurn, "Arguing over Participatory Parity on Nancy Fraser's Conception of Social Justice," *Philosophy Today (Celina)* 47, no. 5 (2003): 176–89, https://doi.org/10.5840/philtoday200347supplement23; "Bozalek, V. & Hölscher, D. & Zembylas, M. (Eds.) 2020. Nancy Fraser and Participatory Parity: Reframing Social Justice in South

Honneth is credited for producing the most extensive discussion on recognition so far.[234] He agrees with Hegel that, "practical identity-formation presupposes intersubjective recognition."[235] For him, recognition is important to human beings because it is key to our self-realization as social beings who must develop our sense of selfhood by interacting with significant others. His insights are pivotal especially in understanding how misrecognition can be both the source and justification for demands or struggles for recognition.[236] He argues that acts of misrecognition violate the natural human expectation to be duly recognized by the significant other. According to him, "the denial of recognition provides the motivational and justificatory basis for social struggles. Specifically, it is through the emotional experiences generated by certain attitudes and actions of others towards us that we can come to feel we are being illegitimately denied social recognition."[237] Honneth points out that our unmet expectations for due recognition would probably lead to cycles of violence and retaliation, rather than to peaceful resistance and dialogue.[238] Hence, addressing misrecognition is crucial to prevent or arrest the self-escalation of recognition from need to demand and struggle.

African Higher Education. London: Routledge," *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning* 8, no. 2 (2020): 136–38, https://doi.org/10.14426/cristal.v8i2.371; Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking Recognition," *New Left Review* 3, no. 3 (2000): 107–20; Nancy Fraser, "Recognition without Ethics?," *Theory, Culture & Society* 18, no. 2–3 (2001): 21–42, https://doi.org/10.1177/02632760122051760; Hanne Marlene Dahl, Pauline Stoltz, and Rasmus Willig, "Recognition, Redistribution and Representation in Capitalist Global Society: An Interview with Nancy Fraser," *Acta Sociologica* 47, no. 4 (2004): 374–82, https://doi.org/10.1177/0001699304048671; Jeffrey C. Isaac, "Beyond Trump? A Critique of Nancy Fraser's Call for a New Left Hegemony," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 45, no. 9–10 (2019): 1157–69.

[234] Axel Honneth is one of the most influential social and political philosophers in contemporary German political thought and one of the central figures of the third generation of the Frankfurt School. Honneth's philosophical project presents at once a solution to a problem that has beset Frankfurt School Critical Theory from the first generation onwards, and offers a re-conceptualization of social philosophy and its methodology in general. Honneth's work presents a viable alternative to mainstream (especially Rawlsian) political philosophy by taking on challenges mainstream theories tend to avoid. See McQueen, "Social and Political Recognition," ibid.

[235] Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 92.

[236] Honneth ascribes an inherent expectation of recognition to humans, referring to demands generated from such an expectation as the "quasi-transcendental interests" of the human race. It is only through the failure of such expectations that recognition can become a motivational source, arising via negative emotional experiences. McQueen, "Social and Political Recognition," ibid; Fraser and Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?*,174.

[237] McQueen, "Social and Political Recognition," ibid. For more, see Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 131-39.

[238] Of course, as McQueen notes, Honneth's position here requires the further steps of (a) locating these experiences within a socially-generated framework of emancipatory discourse; and (b) the establishment of common experiences

Honneth affirms that recognition occurs within the context of an intersubjective encounter. For him, *love, rights,* and *solidarity* are three "spheres of interaction" corresponding with three "patterns of intersubjective recognition."[239] Here, he seems to adopt and develop Hegel's idea that family, civil society, and the state are three main contexts for mutual recognition. But, Honneth went further than Hegel by describing *love*, *respect* and *esteem* as distinct modes of recognition. For him, "Love is the mode of recognition which, all being well, we receive from our small circle of significant others. Respect is that mode which we experience when our fellow citizens regard us as rights-bearing individuals. Esteem is the sort of recognition we enjoy when we are valued for our distinct contributions to society's collective goals."[240] He gives primacy to love.[241]

For Honneth, love provides the model for both respect and esteem as one must experience love before experiencing a genuine respect or esteem. But, he notes that a stable and ongoing experience of all three modes of recognition is vital for a social subject to attain self-realization. Thus, he agrees with Hegel [and Taylor] that recognition is crucial for flourishing in human society as its absence can impact human identity and self-realization. But, as we will see shortly, Fraser disagrees with Honneth here. She argues that recognition alone is insufficient for self-realization.

Fraser developed her work on recognition within her theory of social justice. This theory is based on a principle that she called: 'parity of participation' or participatory parity.[242] According

amongst individuals for these individual frustrations to develop into social struggles. McQueen, "Social and Political Recognition," ibid. For a potential problem with this position, see Rogers, Melvin L. 'Rereading Honneth: Exodus Politics and the Paradox of Recognition'. *European Journal of Political Theory*, 8:2 (2007): 183-206. Moreover, Ikäheimo criticizes Honneth's position as a psychologizing strategy [I think Honneth does more] that is neither sufficient nor necessary for motivating fight or work for recognition. See Ikäheimo, "A Vital Human Need," 31-34.

[239] Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 92ff. See also Axel Honneth, *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA .: Polity Press, 2007), 129-142.

[240] Martineau, Meer, and Thompson, "Theory and Practice in the Politics of Recognition and Misrecognition," 2.

[241] See Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, 107.

[242] Nancy Fraser is professor of philosophy and politics at the New School for Social Research in New York. An Einstein fellow at the John F Kennedy Institute of the Free University of Berlin, she also holds the chair in global justice at the *Collège d'Etudes Mondiales*, Paris. In 2011, she was a Visiting Professor of Women's Rights at Kings College, Cambridge University and Donald W. Gordon Fellow at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies in South Africa. For more, see her faculty profile on https://www.newschool.edu/nssr/faculty/Nancy-Fraser/

to this principle, "justice requires that social arrangements permit all (adult) members of society to interact with one another as peer."[243] Basically, Fraser's participatory parity does not call for a classless society like Marxism. Rather, it calls for the redistribution of material goods and the reshuffling of social representation as a guarantee that people are independent and 'have a voice'.

Fraser regards recognition as a guarantee for social justice. That is, recognition is required in order to guarantee that all members of society have a participatory parity in social life. She agrees with Taylor and Honneth that nonrecognition and misrecognition are harmful to human flourishing and can motivate sociopolitical crisis. Hence, she argues that any effort to address social injustices arising from misrecognition must first overhaul the unjust systems that assign a relatively inferior social status to certain persons or groups in the society.[244] But, she also warns that recognition is not the only requirement for actualizing social justice.

Fraser regards the social justice paradigm presented by Taylor and Honneth as deficient. This is because, she accuses both scholars of treating redistribution as a consequence of recognition. According to her, the works of both scholars mostly addressed recognition, while they largely remained silent on redistribution. She argues that redistribution is neither antithetical to recognition nor implied by it.[245] Rather, both concepts are distinct and none can either subsume or substitute for the other. She insists that both concepts as equally crucial aspects of social justice as they necessarily balance the scales of justice. This is not to say that Fraser is anti-recognition or dismissive of its overall significance to social justice. She is just highlighting a critical dilemma.

McQueen notes that many social movements face the dilemma of having to balance their demand for (economic) equality with the insistence that their (cultural) specificity be recognized.

---

[243] Fraser, *Redistribution or Recognition*, 36.
[244] Fraser, *Justice Interruptus*, 19.
[245] See McQueen, "Social and Political Recognition," ibid;

This dilemma presents the options as mutually exclusive; one must choose one against the other but not both. Fraser gives the example of the feminist movement by posing the question, 'How can feminists fight simultaneously to abolish gender differentiation [through economic redistribution] and to valorize gender specificity [through cultural recognition]?' Fraser believes that this dilemma derives from the fact that recognition seems to promote differentiation, while redistribution works to eliminate it. She argues that, while recognition targets cultural injustice that is based on the way one's identity is either positively or negatively formed, redistribution targets economic injustice that is based on the relations between human beings and the market or means of production.[246]

According to McQueen, Fraser departs from the "monistic" model of Honneth [and Taylor], in which recognition is the foundational category of social analysis and distribution is treated as a derivative of a sufficiently developed recognition. In this model, individuals exist as members of a community that is based upon a shared horizon of meanings, norms and values. However, Fraser argues that there is a "dualistic" model where individuals exist in a hierarchically-differentiated collective class system. She notes that, from the perspective of the majority who are characterized by a lack of resources, this system has to be abolished through the redistribution of resources before there can be a genuine recognition. Honneth thinks this change would be a product of recognition.

Alternatively, Fraser considers two possible remedies for addressing social injustice that can transcend the dualistic model of a redistribution-recognition divide and be applicable to both redistribution and recognition. The first is 'affirmation', which incorporates any remedy or action that corrects the 'inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying

---

[246] See McQueen, "Social and Political Recognition," ibid; Fraser and Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?*,14; Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 19, 23-24, 36-46. For further research, see Fraser, "Rethinking Recognition"; Fraser, "Recognition without Ethics?"; Zurn, "Arguing over Participatory Parity on Nancy Fraser's Conception of Social Justice"; Christopher F. Zurn, "Identity or Status? Struggles over 'Recognition' in Fraser, Honneth, and Taylor," *Constellations (Oxford, England)* 10, no. 4 (2003): 519–37.

framework that generates them'. The second is 'transformation', which refers to 'remedies aimed at correcting inequitable outcomes precisely by restricting the underlying generative framework'.

McQueen notes that Fraser's concept of transformation highlights her belief that certain forms of injustice are ingrained within 'institutionalized patterns of cultural value'. Precisely, some forms of inequality, including those of race and gender, derive from the signifying effect of socio-cultural structures. These discursive frameworks, situated within language and social arrangements, reproduce hierarchical binary oppositions such as 'heterosexual/homosexual', 'white/black' and 'man/woman'. Thus, the remedy is not simply a matter of revaluing heterosexual, female or black identities. Rather, it must involve attempts to deconstruct the binary logic which situates people as inherently inferior, creating a field of multiple, de-binarized, fluid, ever-shifting differences.[247]

For McQueen, a crucial aspect of Fraser's transformative approach is its global application. Unlike her affirmative approach, which aims to alter a particular group's sense of worth or material situation, the transformative approach can change everyone's sense of self. Therefore, McQueen sees Fraser's proposal as a call for the radical restructuring of society. This can be achieved through transformative redistribution (socialism) and cultural deconstruction (recognition). But, McQueen, also notes that Fraser's more recent work on recognition resists offering any particular remedies, arguing instead that the required response to injustice will be dictated by the specific context. Thus, she appears to distance herself from the more 'deconstructive' elements of her earlier work.[248]

More recently, Fraser concedes that present-day claimants for redistribution [as part of social justice] tend to couch their claims within demands for recognition [unlike their 20th century predecessors who mostly fought for redistribution *per se*]. She notes that, "today for example, class-accented appeals for economic redistribution are routinely pitted against minority-group who

---

[247] McQueen, "Social and Political Recognition," ibid.
[248] McQueen, "Social and Political Recognition," ibid.

demand for "recognition," while feminist claims for gender justice often collide with demands for supposedly traditional forms of religious or communal justice."[249] She insists that these modern approaches to social justice do not justify attempts by recognition theorists to make recognition the sole arbiter of social justice and subsume redistribution as a consequence of recognition.

Fraser's position on identity is very crucial to understanding Taylor's theory of recognition. She agrees with Taylor that recognition is crucial for identity formation and self-actualization, especially as recognition is connected to the idea of a universal right. But, she radically opposes Honneth's idea that recognition and its absence necessarily influence our self-realization in society. According to Fraser, Honneth seems to equate recognition with self-realization, which relegates redistribution to a mere derivative of recognition. Fraser argues that recognition and redistribution are distinct realities as economic inequality cannot be reduced to cultural misrecognition.

Fraser concludes that misrecognition and maldistribution are primary and co-original injustices. For her, injustice in the form of both misrecognition and maldistribution is detrimental to the extent that it inhibits participatory parity. Hence, misrecognition should not only be seen as an impediment to self-realization, but also as an institutionalized relation of subordination.[250] Thus, recognition alone is not sufficient for self-actualization. It requires social justice and, as she already noted in the recognition/redistribution debate, recognition is just one aspect of social justice.

2.2 Charles Taylor: Proposing Recognition as a Vital Human Need

Contemporary ethical discourse on recognition mostly starts with Charles Taylor's concept of a politics of recognition. This concept is used to discuss a wide range of ethical issues from the rationale for socio-political struggles [like various protests in multicultural societies like Nigeria]

---

[249] Nancy Fraser, *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World*, New Directions in Critical Theory (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 3.
[250] See McQueen, "Social and Political Recognition," ibid.

to quests for parity of participation in representative democracies [like the civil rights movement in USA] and insights about the nature of social justice [like the revolt of Dalits in modern India].[251] Taylor's central thesis is that *recognition is a vital human need*. This section investigates this thesis. It explores why Taylor thinks that recognition is a vital human need and how this need escalates to demands and struggles. Hence, the above question about why recognition is important to human beings; and, why lack of it should motivate struggles or conflicts in society*,* will be rephrased as: *Why is recognition a vital human need? How does the need for recognition escalate into political irruptions?*

Obviously, contemporary theorists of recognition like Taylor, Honneth and Fraser have differing responses to the above questions: *Why is recognition so important to human beings; and, why should lack of it motivate struggles or conflicts in society?* Honneth places the importance of recognition for human beings on the need for self-realization while Fraser places it on the need to guarantee equal participation in social life. As we will soon see, Taylor places it on the need for proper identity formation and development of self-hood. Also, on why a lack of recognition motivates struggles in society, Honneth points to the natural human expectation to be duly recognized while Fraser points to the need by people to have equal participation in social life as full partners in society. As we will see shortly, Taylor points to the unmet need for recognition by others. These responses might look different, but the Hegelian notion of an autonomous "self" that

---

[251] While most contemporary philosophical theories on recognition could trace their origins to a combination of Kantian, Bergsonian, and Hegelian traditions, the influence of the Hegelian tradition has been foremost and will become more visible in this dissertation going forward. Indeed, the Hegelian influence is very evident in the landmark works of Taylor and Axel Honneth on recognition – like Taylor's essay, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* and Honneth's book, *Kampf um Anerkennung*. Both works, which were separately published in 1992, engaged with Hegel's philosophical system by simultaneously appropriating and departing from its traditional stance on recognition in varying degrees and with differing emphasis. See Wendy Martineau, Nasar Meer, and Simon Thompson, "Theory and Practice in the Politics of Recognition and Misrecognition," *Res Publica* 18, no. 1 (February 1, 2012): 1–9, 1.

dialogically develops through mutual recognition seems to run across and, perhaps, bond them. This notion is much more evident in Taylor's proposition that recognition is a vital human need.

2.2.1   Reviewing Taylor's Proposition: Why is Recognition a Vital Human Need?

The point of departure for Taylor's politics of recognition is that "a number of strands in contemporary politics turn on the need, sometimes the demand, for *recognition*."[252] He explained how this politics plays out in modern democratic societies where recognition, rather than honor, is the basis for defining human dignity. Taylor argues that the collapse of social hierarchies, which had provided the basis for bestowing honor on certain individuals (that is, those high up on the social ladder), led to the modern-day notion of dignity which rests upon universalist and egalitarian principles regarding the equal worth of all human beings.[253]

Following these principles, Taylor makes his famous proposition that: "due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need."[254] The underlying idea behind this proposition is Hegel's dialogical notion of identity and selfhood. This idea implies that one becomes a self only in dialogue with others since one's identity is intricately linked to recognition by others. Hence, identity formation is a process of mutual dialogue and recognition.

---

[252] Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, 25.

[253] This is complicated by the fact that alongside this development of dignity there emerged also a new understanding of 'individualized identity', one in which the emphasis was on each person's uniqueness, which Taylor defines as 'being true to myself and my own particular way of being.' Taylor refers to this idea of uniqueness as the ideal of authenticity, writing "Being true to myself means being true to my own originality, which is something only I can articulate and discover. In articulating it, I am also defining myself." Taylor explicitly draws on Hegel to argue that the struggle for recognition can have only one satisfactory solution, and that is a regime of reciprocal recognition among equals. Asymmetrical relationships such as that of master and slave are unable to provide the recognition necessary for either party to lead a full flourishing human life. Thus, for Taylor the implications of this analysis of recognition point to modern democratic polities which extend public recognition to all their citizens. However, since the state is inevitably biased towards the majority culture, a difference-blind and purportedly impartial liberalism is both unequal and inherently assimilative. See Taylor et al., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, 25.

[254] Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, 26.

Taylor describes identity as a person's understanding of who they are or of the fundamental features that define them as human beings.[255] He argues that recognition is intricately linked to our understanding of who we are or of the fundamental features that define us as full human beings. The implication, on the one hand, is that our identity is positively shaped by the due recognition we receive from the people or society that matter to us. The identities of Ajabor, Williams, and the Indian family as human beings were positively shaped by their being duly recognized as such by Kalu, McCoy, Singh and others. Their positive encounter with these police officers contributed to their flourishing as full human agents who are capable of self-realization as autonomous subjects.

On the other hand, one's identity can be distorted or harmed by both their nonrecognition [not being recognized at all] and misrecognition [being wrongly recognized] by the people or society around them, if they reflect back to them a wrong image of themselves which limits their flourishing. Victims of nonrecognition or misrecognition like the #EndSARS youth in Nigeria, Blacks in America and Dalits in India can internalize the wrong self-image from their oppressors. This is destructive as it can become a subjective barrier for flourishing even long after the objective barriers had gone. Hence, there is need to heal or rebuild such identities by addressing their prior unmet need for recognition or by addressing recognition as need, *ab initio*. Therefore, to appreciate Taylor's proposition, it is important to understand his broader views on identity and selfhood.

2.2.1.1 Dialogical Notion of Identity and Selfhood in Taylor's Work

Taylor's ethics investigates how people form their identities amid diverse conceptions of selfhood. He discussed his idea of selfhood and identity in his 1989 book titled, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Owen Abbott notes that, "*Sources of the Self* provides Taylor's preeminent contribution to moral philosophy. It is in *Sources* that Taylor seeks to redraw the

---

[255] Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, 25.

significance of selfhood to philosophic questions of morality." [256] According to Abbott, the work

delivers a number of important contributions from which two principal aims can be identified:

> The first is to show 'how deeply flawed any account of human personhood must be which tries to address identity separately from moral subjectivity,' and the second is to develop an neo-hermeneutic account of the making of modern identity, which fuses an argument for seeing intellectual historicity as being integral to the formation of the modern self with Taylor's own conception of 'philosophical anthropology' (described as 'the study of the basic categories in which man and his behaviour is to be described and explained'.[257]

The goal of Taylor's ethics is to draw a radical portrait of selfhood that could prompt a renewed

concept of modernity.[258] He argues that the self is on a quest and, so, is changing. But, despite its

changes, the self still has the *a priori* unity of a human life. His point is that we cannot understand

ourselves [as modern selves] without coming to grips with this history and its ethical implications

for both the person and their community. This is a modern version of the Hegelian ethical *We*.[259]

Like Hegel, Taylor argues that human identity is fundamentally dialogical in character:

"one is self only among other selves. A self can never be described without reference to those who

surround it."[260] In other words, to be a self is to be capable of *self-understanding* and achieving

self-definition. Taylor uses the term "self-definition" as an answer to the question: *Who am I?* and

argues that this question finds its original meaning in the web of interlocution or in the interchange

of speakers.[261] His point is that mutual recognition makes this interchange or interlocution possible.

---

[256] Owen Abbott, "The Self as the Locus of Morality: A Comparison between Charles Taylor and George Herbert Mead's Theories of the Moral Constitution of the Self," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 50, no. 4 (2020): 516–33, 518.

[257] Abbott, The Self as the Locus of Morality, 518.

[258] Taylor, *Sources of the Self,* Preface, *ix.*

[259] See Italo Testa et al., eds., *"I That Is We, We That Is I." Perspectives on Contemporary Hegel: Social Ontology, Recognition, Naturalism, and the Critique of Kantian Constructivism* (Brill, 2016), https://brill.com/edcollbook/title/33542. In this book, an international group of philosophers explore the many facets of Hegel's formula which expresses the recognitive and social structures of human life. It sheds new light on Hegel's take on metaphysics and puts into question some presuppositions of the post-metaphysical interpretative paradigm.

[260] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 35.

[261] Taylor, *Sources of the Self,* ibid, 35.

Taylor's ethics is largely based on the idea that one's behavior reflects a deeper search for meaning and recognition.[262] His dialogical notion of identity basically implies that one can only become a self – that is, find meaning and recognition – in relation to other conversation partners, that is, within webs of interlocution.[263] It is only against the background of these webs of interlocution that the self can form an identity that gives it meaning and recognition. It is within this web that the self is capable of making coherent ethical choices: about what is right or wrong, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance, and what is vital or trivial.[264]

Taylor notes that we are selves only because certain issues matter for us: "what I am as a self, my identity, is essentially defined by the way things have significance for me."[265] But, he argues that this self-definition does not happen in abstraction: "one cannot be a self on one's own."[266] It happens within the context of social relations: "I define who I am by defining where I speak from, in the family tree, in social space, in the geography of social statuses and functions, in my intimate relations to the ones I love, and also crucially in the space of moral and spiritual orientation within which my most important defining relations are lived out."[267] In other words, self-definition and identity formation happens within the context of a community where there is mutual recognition.

Clearly, Taylor's identitarian ethics echoes the Hegelian notion of mutual recognition. Reiterating Hegel's intersubjectivity, Taylor argues that recognition is important because of its essential role in forming human identity. According to him, the "crucial feature of human life is its fundamentally dialogical character. We become full human agents, capable of understanding

---

[262] See Wendy Martineau, Nasar Meer, and Simon Thompson, "Theory and Practice in the Politics of Recognition and Misrecognition," *Res Publica* 18, no. 1 (February 1, 2012): 1–9, 1.
[263] Martineau *et al*, "Theory and Practice," 1.Citing Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, ibid, 32, 36.
[264] Taylor, *Sources of the Self,* 28.
[265] Taylor, *Sources of the Self,* 34.
[266] Taylor, *Sources of the Self,* 36.
[267] Taylor, *Sources of the Self,* 35.

ourselves, and hence of defining our identity…through interaction with others who matter to us – what George Herbert Mead called 'Significant others.'"[268] Taylor's point is that we understand ourselves in narrative forms within our community of interlocutors.[269] Hence, due recognition from these interlocutors or its absence is vital for the formation of personal and social identities.

Taylor then proceeds to argue that, "our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves."[270] Thus, he argues that nonrecognition or misrecognition can actually be a form of oppression as it not only harms the victims but also imprisons them in a false, distorted, and diminished mode of being.

For Taylor, then, recognition is a vital human need because identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence.[271] Since our identity is constituted at least in part by our membership of a particular community an individual's sense of self-worth is deeply tied both to the value that members attach to the individual within this community as well as the value that others attach to this community and its members. If a member is demeaned or held in contempt by others, the individual will suffer real harm as a consequence. Likewise, if the entire community is demeaned or held in contempt by others, the community and its membership will suffer real harm.[272]

For instance, police brutality against young Nigerians has its roots in colonialism and the demeaning self-image it left the colonized people to deal with. From colonial to democratic regimes, instances abound of the unjustifiable massacre of unarmed Nigerians by the Nigerian

---

[268] Taylor, *Sources of the Self,* 32.
[269] Taylor, *Sources of the Self,* 52.
[270] Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, 25.
[271] Iser, "Recognition," ibid.
[272] Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, 25.

military, within the Nigerian territory, under the watch of the Nigerian government. Fifty odd years prior to the Lekki Massacre, on November 18, 1949, about 21 striking coal miners were shot dead by the British colonial army at a government-run coal mine in Enugu, Nigeria. The poor miners were legitimately demanding back-pay owed to them by the government. They were not paid their dues; they were killed by their government. Earlier, the government also killed more than 50 women in Aba, Nigeria. The incident was the Women's War of 1929. The women were protesting against unfair taxation by the British colonial power and their local warrant chiefs.

Perhaps, Nigerian lives would have mattered in 2020, if Nigerian lives had always mattered. In other words, the Lekki Tollgate massacre of 2020 may never have happened, if there were no historical antecedents that went largely unaddressed. Unfortunately, Nigerian lives had not really mattered as the massacred protesters at Aba in 1929 and Iva Valley in 1949 depict the contempt in which Nigerian lives were held from colonial times, almost a century ago.[273] Also, the demeaning of black lives through slavery, lynching and racial segregation in America paved the way for the 2020 killing of George Floyd and its aftermath. The same is true for Dalits in India and all the oppressed.

Therefore, it is not just enough to recognize mutually, it is also essential to recognize rightly. This is the point of Bergson's crucial caveat about the possibility of false or dangerous recognition. A Bangladeshi philosopher, Kazi Huda, argues that recognizing rightly is one of the important responsibilities we owe to each other as social and interdependent beings. According to Huda,

---

[273] For more see: Ngozi Edeagu, "Critiquing Witness Testimonies in African Colonial History: A Study of the Women's War of 1929," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 26 (2017): 40–64; Marc Matera et al., *The Women's War of 1929: Gender and Violence in Colonial Nigeria* (Springer, 2011); Judith Van Allen, "Aba Riots or the Igbo Women's War? - Ideology, Stratification and the Invisibility of Women," *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 6, no. 1 (1975); Carolyn A. Brown, "Locals and Migrants in the Coalmining Town of Enugu (Nigeria): Worker Protest and Urban Identity, 1915–1929," *International Review of Social History* 60, no. S1 (2015): 63–94; JOLIBA, "The Iva Valley Massacre – November 1949," *Joliba* (blog), January 7, 2020, https://joliba-africa.com/2020/01/07/the-iva-valley-massacre-november-1949-2/.

> For being social and interdependent, we need each other for our well-being. Since the beginning of our existence, we depend on others, for example, for our food and survival. We also need people to be shaped as individuals livable in a society in which we find ourselves. Because of the varying nature of our dependencies, we form a network of relationships with various people. But to regulate these interdependent relationships, we have to follow various customs of society. One of these customs is to meet our responsibilities to each other through offering due recognition to others which is an important feature of a thriving community. But, the failure to meet the normative expectation of recognition as members of society leads to various practices of dehumanization and discrimination.[274]

Hence, due recognition is vital to build a thriving community and this is Taylor's main point.

2.2.1.2 Taylor's Critics on Reification, Essentialism, and Subjectivism

Critics suggest that Taylor's model of recognition is susceptible to reification, essentialism, and subjectivism.[275] It might be helpful to briefly highlight and respond to some of these criticisms.

Critics note that Taylor's attempt to base social justice on the recognition of specific features of group identity, might reify those features and ostracize nonconformers. Here, reification is an intragroup coercion that enforces conformity at the expense of individual specificity. It can also mean valorizing certain in-group features to create an *'us-vs-them'* mindset that stifle or eliminates critical dialogue or collaboration within or between groups.[276] They note that identity is multilayered and individuals are often positioned at the intersection of multiple axes of relations. Thus, they argue that reducing one's sense of relationship to a single feature of identity (such as race or gender) might fail to acknowledge interconnectivity of each feature of identity, so that, for example, race and gender cannot be treated as analytically distinct modes of dominance. Taylor mitigates reification by adopting the Hegelian idea that society is built through multiple layers of recognition from self to local and global circles of commitment.

---

[274] Kazi A. S. M. Nurul Huda, "Misrecognition, Social Stigma, and COVID-19," *Developing World Bioethics*, (August 10, 2021), 1-6, 1.

[275] McQueen outlined five criticisms but these three specifically apply to my use of Taylor's model of recognition. I will briefly summarize his brilliant work, but for more, see McQueen, "Social and Political Recognition," ibid.

[276] McQueen, "Social and Political Recognition," ibid.

Critics also suggest that Taylor's ideas like his reference to the massive subjective turn of modern culture as a new form of inwardness, "in which we come to think our ourselves as beings with hidden depths" can lead to a dangerous form of essentialism.[277] Essentialism is the idea that a certain grain of selfhood awaits recognition. It is the idea that certain features of a person's authenticity lie dormant until they are discovered and presented to the world by others.[278] Taylor precludes any form of essentialism by adopting Hegel's dialogical notion of identity which implies that we always work out our identity through mutual dialogue with others. Hence, like Hegel, the telos of Taylor's recognition is also the ethical "We." This telos does not impede the autonomy of the authentic "I." Rather, it means that recognition is essentially geared towards building a society where the otherness of the other is genuinely respected as a gift and not feared as a threat. Therefore, recognition always begins with an awakening to the inherent dignity of the other in their otherness.

Taylor states that dialogue with others requires that we struggle with and sometimes resist what others mirror back to us.[279] Critics note that he does not clearly state whom or what we should appeal to in this case [I will subsequently propose the *imago Dei* as what or the *quid* that Christians should appeal to in this case]. Critics interpret this lack of clarity in Taylor's work as a gap that can lead to subjectivism. Subjectivism is the idea that individuals can arbitrarily decide what their 'true' identity is. But, despite his silence on who or what determines the rightness or wrongness of our notion of authenticity, Taylor avoids any form of subjectivism by adopting Hegel's version of mutual intersubjective recognition, where the Kantian "I" always tends towards the ethical "We." Here, the autonomous subject is always a subject-in-dialogue with fellow autonomous subjects.

---

[277] Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, 29.
[278] See Lois McNay, *Against Recognition* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 64-69; Cressida Heyes, "Can There Be a Queer Politics of Recognition?" Recognition, Responsibility, and Rights: Feminist Ethics and Social Theory. Ed. Fiore, Robin N. and Hilde L. Nelson. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003: 53-66.
[279] Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, 32-33.

In the final analysis, recognition remains indispensable as a fundamental and constitutive element in social ethics. There is an increasing interest in the value of recognition as a normative socio-political principle and Taylor's work remains influential. The increasingly multicultural nature of contemporary societies, even those that previously seem homogenous, clearly calls for a social ethics that places respect for difference at its core while building communities and pursuing the common good. This is the task for an ethics of recognition. The implication of the continued absence of a normative ethics of recognition is that irruptions based on demands or struggles for recognition are likely to increase as the need for recognition goes unmet. *Why is this the case?*

2.2.2   Why does Recognition Self-Escalate from Need to Demand and Struggle?

Taylor addresses this question by noting that modern politics has been significantly shaped and fundamentally driven by the need and, sometimes, the demand for recognition.[280] He makes a clear distinction between recognition as a vital human need and the demand for it. As I noted in the introduction to this work, I understand Taylor's distinction of need and demand for recognition as two distinct phases in the self-escalation of the same reality. There is a third and final stage, namely, the struggle for recognition. When the need for recognition goes unmet, as is often the case, it tends to self-escalate to a demand for the fulfilment of it's right to be duly recognized or to enforce this right as a struggle for justice.

As I also noted in the introduction, this dissertation is focusing on the need for recognition as an ethical issue, without overlooking the political questions. In the last chapter, I argued that the need for recognition highlights the ethical dimension of recognition, while the demand and struggle for it highlight its political dimension. The need for recognition is natural to every human being. It is an anthropological need that places an ethical obligation on every social subject. The

---

[280] Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, 25.

demand and struggle for recognition are political irruptions that occur due to a prior failure to address recognition as a need.

Taylor explains that the demand for recognition is pursued by people whose need for recognition have been historically unmet. Ultimately, this demand self-escalates to a struggle for recognition. He further notes that the demand for recognition is present in the political activism and, occasionally, struggles by movements pursuing gender equity, racial justice, and multicultural coexistence.[281] He calls this the politics of recognition, which involves the politics of equal dignity and the politics of difference. Taylor argues that the politics of recognition, generally, entails that everyone should be recognized for their unique identity. But, this has distinct implications for human dignity and cultural difference.

According to Taylor, "with the politics of equal dignity, what is established is meant to be universally the same, an identical basket of rights and immunities; with the politics of difference, what we are asked to recognize is the unique identity of this individual or group, there distinctness from everyone else."[282] Taylor explains that the rationale for the politics of recognition, especially the politics of difference, is the attempt to address a pre-existing failure of a recognition. According to him, "the idea is that it is precisely this distinctness that has been ignored, glossed over, assimilated to a dominant or majority identity."[283] He, therefore, described this failure as "the cardinal sin against the ideal of authenticity."[284] In practical terms, this cardinal sin involves the nonrecognition or misrecognition of the authentic other.

---

[281] See McQueen, "Social and Political Recognition," ibid. For a critical discussion of this point, see Linda Nicholson, "To Be or Not to Be: Charles Taylor and the Politics of Recognition," in *The Play of Reason* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019), 129–44.
[282] Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition,* 38.
[283] Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition,* 38
[284] Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition,* 38

The need for recognition often goes unmet either through nonrecognition or misrecognition. The inability of the apposite recognizer to effectively meet this need, using Frazer's principle of social justice, tends to tilt the parity of participation that is necessary for genuine relations in a community by assigning some people or group a relatively inferior social status.[285] Hence, social subjects can suffer harm, oppression or marginalization when they are not duly recognized. Taylor notes that, "our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves."[286] Thus, the absence of recognition can have the debilitating effect of imprisoning its victim in a false, distorted and compromised sense of self, thereby, limiting their moral agency.

The unmet need for recognition typically escalates from being a natural human need to becoming an object of volatile political demands, and ultimately, culminating in violent struggle. Of course, no human being really wants to be imprisoned under any circumstance or have their moral agency limited by another without a protest. The most debilitating impact of imprisonment on a social subject is their isolation from social life. The problematic nature of this isolation was succinctly captured by Kenneth Himes, writing about the isolated individual, he notes that: "in a state of isolation the person is cut off from others in the area of personal relations, removed from any sense of participation in the political order, alone in his search for a plan or goal in individual and world history."[287] This is the situation that most victims of nonrecognition and misrecognition typically find themselves. Since no one really wants to be in this situation, their search for a plan or goal becomes an inevitable pursuit for freedom, which would only come through recognition.

---

[285] Fraser, *Justice Interruptus*, 19.
[286] Taylor et al., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, 25.
[287] Kenneth R. Himes, "The Local Church as a Mediating Structure," *Social Thought* 12, no. 1 (1986): 23–30, 23.

Recognition is an ethical imperative whose absence or deficiency has enduring impacts on society. As long as nonrecognition or misrecognition persist, demands or struggles for recognition are inevitable. Marginalized people, in search of suitable social relations that enhance their overall flourishing, would infinitely protest the debilitating conditions imposed on them by nonrecognition and misrecognition. Hence, protests like the #EndSARS that has just transformed into a formidable political movement ahead of the 2023 elections in Nigeria, the Black Lives Matter and Civil Rights Movements that are now significant forces in American politics especially in states like Georgia where an all-black senatorial race was locked in an acrimonious run-off, and the Dalit-led *bharat bandhs* that increasingly put significant pressure on Indian politics cannot be wished away or really ignored or even resolved in a better way than through due recognition – addressing it as a need.[288]

The repeated failure to address recognition as a vital human need triggers its self-escalation. Recognition, innately escalates from being a latent, harmless, and desirable anthropological need to becoming an object of disruptive, harmful, and aversive impetus for political irruptions. As illustrated in chapter one, the political irruptions of recognition are more visible and compelling that they cannot be ignored. As such, recognition is often misconstrued as an impediment to ethical relations or social peace. This is because the need for recognition is easily identified with the disruptive, harmful and aversive features of the political consequences of its lack. Thus, the latent, harmless and desirable features of the need for recognition are mostly drowned out by politics. The implication is that the need for recognition, which boarders on normative ethics, is frequently confused with the demand and struggle for recognition, which is the realm of political ethics.

For instance, the need for recognition inspires nationalist and professional guilds like the Society for Christian Ethics and Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria that aim to form,

---

[288] See Badri N. Tiwari, "Six Dalit Public and Political Power: Grassroots Pressures on Democracy," in *The Making of the Dalit Public in North India: Uttar Pradesh, 1950 - Present*, ed. Badri N. Tiwari (Oxford University Press, 2011).

promote and protect their identity and common good even without a compelling threat. Obviously, these guilds cannot be classified as politics of recognition until a failure of recognition compels them to demand or struggle for recognition – thus, birthing recognition as an ethical problem. This problem is complicated as nonrecognition and misrecognition, manifesting in various forms like racism, caste system, sexism and nepotism, eventually isolate their victims by excluding them from rightful ethical relations in society and due participation in the common good of their community. This isolation and exclusion often becomes a motivation or justification for them to persistently demand for recognition and, if not properly addressed, this escalates to a struggle for recognition.

Moreover, the cases treated in the last chapter can be better described as political irruptions of recognition based on Taylor's idea of the politics of equal dignity and the politics of difference. The #EndSARS, BLM, and Dalit protesters are all involved in a politics of equal dignity as they demand to be recognized as equal citizens who deserve to partake of the same basket of rights and immunities like everyone else. Likewise, blacks and people with different identity orientations, globally, want to be recognized in their otherness, their uniqueness, their distinctiveness from everyone else – they want their difference embraced as variety rather than a problem to be solved [I will get back to this point in the next chapter when I discuss McDonagh's idea of Letting Be].

When the demand for equal dignity or recognition of difference goes unmet, as is often the case, a struggle to enforce these demands ensues in the form of social commotions, caste or racial hostilities, ethno-religious conflicts, insurrection, terrorism, civil war, and genocide – like Rwanda where the unmet demand for recognition by Hutus began a series of violence culminating in the 1994 genocide against Tutsis.[289] But, struggles for recognition do not always resolve the failure that they set out to address. Rather, they tend to petrify the conflicting positions already taken by

---

[289] See, Antoinette Mathe Balihe, "Historical Injustice and the Absence of Truthfulness About the Rwandan Tragedy," *Africa towards the Priorities of Mission,* 26-47.

the opponents and forestall the option for dialogue or collaboration among them. Like the prior failure of recognition that it aims to address, the struggles typically adopt adversarial or non-ethical means that could worsen the very participatory parity they genuinely seek to achieve.

2.3 Addressing Recognition as a Human Need in Social Ethics

The need for recognition, even when it escalates to a political problem due to negligence or abuse, has to be properly addressed through vulnerable recognition that culminates in responsive ethical actions. While these actions are imperative on the apposite recognizer, ethicists have the vocational obligation to provide practical guides that could help moral agents develop a better view of vulnerability as a capacious condition for recognition and, thus, become ethically responsive to others. Thus, in this section I will explore how the works of Judith Butler and Hille Haker correlate with the need, demand, and struggle for recognition as well as how they can help us effectively address recognition as a vital human need from both philosophical and theological perspectives.

2.3.1 Judith Butler: The Imperative of Ethical Responsiveness

My developing thoughts on ethical responsiveness draws on the insights of Emmanuel Levinas which I access through the works of Judith Butler.[290] However, it was James Keenan, the American Jesuit and moral theologian, who helped me appreciate the central significance of ethical responsiveness to my theological work on recognition. Keenan narrates how he arrived at his thesis

---

[290] Judith Pamela Butler (b. 1956) holds the Hannah Arendt Chair at The European Graduate School / EGS and is the Maxine Elliot Professor in the Department of Comparative Literature and the Program of Critical Theory at the University of California, Berkeley. She is a philosopher and one of the most challenging thinkers of our time. She rose to prominence in 1990 with *Gender Trouble*, which caused an unexpected stir as it unearthed foundational assumptions both in philosophy and in feminist theory, namely the facticity of sex. Controversial debate on the subject(s) extended far beyond academia to which Butler responded, in part, in *Bodies that Matter* (1993). Butler's academic rigor is pursued through innovative and critical readings of a wide range of texts in philosophy, psychoanalysis and literature, challenging the confines of disciplinary thinking. Within, and beyond that, Judith Butler is also known for her critical voice in socio-political discourse and debate. Her qualities as a thinker are reflected in her openness to what is at stake in the present and in her passionate engagement in conversations with contemporaries in and outside academia. See "Judith Butler," *The European Graduate School* (blog), accessed November 29, 2022, https://egs.edu/biography/judith-butler/.

on vulnerability, recognition, and conscience by facing his concern.[291] He notes that ethicists in the United States seemed to be designing ethics courses as if they could have moral, formative impact on their students. They were thinking that, through ethics courses, they were forming the consciences of their students and that, in a way, they were teaching norms, values and virtues to help their students make good judgments about ethical issues. But, eventually, he realized he was having little impact on whether or not his students would be ethically responsive in the first place. Their ethical knowledge did not actually translate into action.

Keenan gave an example of his course on HIV/AIDS and public health in which his students learn a lot about public health ethics, but for only about half of them do they actually become more ethically disposed to be responsive in the first place. In fact, he observed that some of the students who perform best in his courses are among the least ethically responsive. His inference was that these students do well in class discussions and on tests as they know the material better than others, but while they know what to do if they *had* to do something, they are not per se *inclined* to be responsive in the first place. He suggests that, if such students had a role in the Good Samaritan parable [we will discuss this parable in the next chapter], they would be like the priest and the Levite. Like the priest and the Levite, these students knew about the law and principles of

---

[291] James F. Keenan narrates this story in his recent paper titled: *Vulnerability, Conscience and Integrity*. This paper, which is currently in the process of being published was delivered in September 2022 to an association of European ethicists and moral theologians in Zurich, Switzerland. I will simply paraphrase this story here, retaining most of his original words, but for further research on Keenan's thesis and developing works on vulnerability, recognition, and conscience please see his recent works: Keenan, "Vulnerability and Hierarchicalism," *Melita Teologica* 68.2 (2018) 129-142; "The World at Risk: Vulnerability, Precarity and Connectedness" *Theological Studies* 81.1 (2020) 132-149 doi.org/10.1177/0040563920907633; Rethinking Humanity's Progress in Light of COVID-19 *Asian Horizons* 14.3 (September 2020) 713-735; "Linking Human Dignity, Vulnerability and Virtue Ethics," *Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society* 6 (2020) 56-73; https://doi.org/10.30965/23642807-00601004; "Building Blocks for Moral Education: Vulnerability, Recognition and Conscience," David DeCosse, ed. *Conscience and Catholic Education* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2021). Bringing both into the University see "Vulnerable to Contingency," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 40.2 (2021) 221-236. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/787428/pdf; "The Community Colleges: Giving Them the Ethical Recognition They Deserve," *Journal of Moral Theology* 9.2 (2020) 143-164. https://jmt.scholasticahq.com/article/18040-the-community-colleges-giving-them-the-ethical-recognition-they-deserve

conduct but, in many instances, they do not vulnerably recognize the wounded one and so fail to be ethically responsive. *What, then, is ethical responsiveness and why is it important for ethics?*

Butler offers crucial insights on the meaning of ethical responsiveness and its implications for ethics. She discusses ethical responsiveness within the broader context of ethical relations and the responsibility or obligations that such relations entail for social subjects who should be locally established and, at the same time, globally disposed. Her thesis is that, "something impinges upon us, without our being able to anticipate or prepare for it in advance, and this means that we are in such moments affronted by something that is beyond our will, not of our making, that comes to us from the outside, as an imposition but also as an ethical demand."[292] She suggests that these are ethical obligations or, in some places, ethical responsibility that do not necessarily require our consent. She also notes that these are not the result of contracts or agreements into which any of us have deliberately entered. Hence, they are ethical imperatives that obligate us to be responsive to others, irrespective of distance or proximity, through appropriate ethical actions.

To explore the contours of these ethical obligations or responsibility, Butler raises two important questions: First; *does any of us have the capacity or inclination to respond ethically to suffering at a distance and what makes that ethical encounter possible, when it does take place?* Second; *what does it mean for our ethical obligations when we are up against another person or group, find ourselves invariably joined to those we never chose, and must respond to solicitations in languages we may not understand or even wish to understand?*[293] The first question borders on whether or not we have ethical obligations or responsibility to strangers and, if yes, to what extent. The second question borders on whether or not we have ethical obligations to our undesired

---

[292] Judith Butler, "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26, no. 2 (2012): 134–51, 135.
[293] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 134.

neighbors – people we do not choose to, but must, cohabit with in what Butler calls "unwilled adjacency."[294] These two questions sound more or less like: *who is my neighbor?* [We will return to this question at the beginning of next chapter, when we do the parable of the Good Samaritan].

Butler argues that ethical obligations or responsibility ought to be both local and global since, in Hegelian terms, ethical relations are mediated by local and global commitments. Of course, Butler is not oblivious of the various barriers and difficulties in mediating these obligations. She acknowledges that, "obligations to those who are far away as well as to those who are proximate cross linguistic and national boundaries and are only possible by virtue of visual or linguistic translations, which include temporal and spatial dislocations. These kinds of circuits confound any communitarian basis for delimiting the global obligations that we have."[295] But, she insists that one cannot really choose between local and global obligations since, if one's obligation is only local then one's ethics is invariably parochial, communitarian, and exclusionary. Likewise, if one's obligation is only global, then, one's ethics is invariably abstract and non-relational.[296]

Butler's overarching goal is to reformulate what it means to register an ethical demand that is irreducible to either consent or established agreement and that takes place outside of established community bonds, but within the context of ethical relations. She turns to Emmanuel Levinas and Hannah Arendt for more insights on the vexed relations that hold among ethics, proximity, and distance.[297] From Levinas, she notes that ethical relations can neither be based on reciprocity nor on egoism. This is, because, reciprocity results in ethical contingency while egoism is the defeat of ethics itself.[298] Rather, ethical responsibility presupposes the reality of ethical responsiveness,

---

[294] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 134.
[295] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 137.
[296] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 134.
[297] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 138.
[298] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 140.

that is: one's fundamental susceptibility and vulnerability to respond to the call of the other.[299] For Levinas, ethical obligation not only depends upon our vulnerability to the claims of others, but establishes us as [precarious] creatures who are fundamentally defined by that ethical relation.[300]

In this ethical relation lies the matrix that links recognition, vulnerability, and precarity. Recognition has to do with my answerability to the call of the other with whom I must be in ethical relations, and vulnerability is the condition that makes me capable of answering this call, while precarity is the reality that fundamentally opens me to this capacious condition despite the risk. Butler argues that, "ethical relation is not a virtue that I have or exercise; it is prior to any individual sense of self. It is not as discrete individuals that we honor this ethical relation. I am already bound to you, and this is what it means to be the self I am, receptive to you in ways that I cannot fully predict or control. This is also, clearly, the condition of my injurability as well."[301] She also notes that, my answerability and my injurability are bound up with one another: my ethical obligation to recognize and act responsively based to this recognition calls me to embrace my own vulnerability.

Butler uses vulnerability in the sense of injurability, that is, in the sense of a possibility and not an actuality. For her, vulnerability does not mean that I am actually wounded, it means that I can be wounded – it is not yet a reality, it is only a condition that makes a certain reality possible. This reality is my precarity, to which I will return shortly because it is actually at the roots of ethics. meanwhile, it is important to note that Butler insists that the possibility of being wounded, though risky, does not exonerate one from the obligation to duly recognize – "you may frighten me and threaten me, but my obligation to you must remain firm."[302] This is because, according to her:

> This [ethical] relation *precedes* individuation, and when I act ethically, I am undone
> as a bounded being. I come apart. I find that I *am* my relation to the "you" whose

[299] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 142
[300] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 141.
[301] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 141.
[302] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 142.

life I seek to preserve, and without that relation, this "I" makes no sense and has lost its mooring in this ethics that is always prior to the ontology of the ego. Another way to put this point is that the "I" becomes undone in its ethical relation to the "you," which means that there is a very specific mode of being dispossessed that makes ethical relationality possible. If I possess myself too firmly or too rigidly, I cannot be in an ethical relation. The ethical relation means ceding a certain egological perspective for one that is structured fundamentally by a mode of address: You call upon me, and I answer. But if I answer, it was only because I was already answerable; that is, this susceptibility and vulnerability constitutes me at the most fundamental level and is there, we might say, prior to any deliberate decision to answer the call. In other words, one has to be already capable of receiving the call before actually answering it.[303]

It is in this specific sense of my susceptibility and vulnerability that recognition becomes *sine qua non* for ethical responsiveness. That is, it is in the sense that I am already answerable to the other based on my own fundamental susceptibility and vulnerability that my ethical responsibility or obligation to the other actually presupposes my ethical responsiveness to their call; and, in fact, recognition is the threshold of this responsiveness – it is the decisive point when we irreversibly activate this responsiveness as well as the process that sees this responsiveness through to action.

Concerning precarity, the third but most foundational piece in this ethical jigsaw, Butler acknowledges that no one escapes the precarious dimension of social life. She views precarity as the joint of our non-foundation. In fact, she negatively describes precarity as an irreducible fact of politics, which can create the possibility for the annihilation of a population. Yet, she proceeds to highlight the positive ethical value of precarity. She argues that precarity is, essentially, a condition for ethical obligation as it exposes our sociality, that is, the fragile and necessary dimensions of our interdependency.[304] For Butler, the key reality that makes precarity crucial for ethics is sociality:

Sociality, [is] this being already, and from the start, dependent on a world of others, constituted in and by a social world. In this way there are surely others distinct from me whose ethical claim upon me is irreducible to an egoistic calculation on my part.

---

[303] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 142.
[304] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 148.

But that is because we are, however distinct, also bound to one another and to living processes that exceed human form. And this is not always a happy or felicitous experience. To find that one's life is also the life of others, even as this life is distinct and must be distinct, means that one's boundary is at once a limit and a site of adjacency, a mode of spatial and temporal nearness and even boundedness. Moreover, the bounded and living appearance of the body is the condition of being exposed to the other, exposed to solicitation, seduction, passion, injury, exposed in ways that sustain us but also in ways that can destroy us. In this sense the exposure of the body points to its precariousness. At the same time, for Levinas, this precarious and corporeal being is responsible for the life of the other, which means that no matter how much one fears for one's own life, preserving the life of the other is paramount. If only the Israeli army felt this way! Indeed, this is a form of responsibility that is not easy while undergoing a felt sense of precarity.[305]

Hence, for Butler, precarity names the difficulty as well as the necessity of ethics. On the one hand, Butler acknowledges that, "it is surely hard to feel at once vulnerable to destruction by the other and yet responsible for the other."[306] Thus, precarity makes ethics difficult. But, on the other hand, precarity obligates us to recognize and protect one another in our mutual vulnerability. Thus, it makes ethics necessary. It is in this specific sense that precarity is the basic condition for ethics.

Butler explains that, it is not from pervasive love for humanity or a pure desire for peace that we often strive to live together. Rather, we live together because we have no choice.[307] My own argument has been that a failure to concede this lack of choice and genuinely relate to others according to this reality is primarily a failure of recognition – a failure to recognize our mutual need. This failure is the root of the crisis of recognition that manifests itself in the form of various irruptions of recognition like the cases narrated in chapter one. As I mentioned in the introduction, Charles Mathewes notes that, "we face a large-scale crisis of solidarity, a crisis of recognizing, and acting on the recognition, that our own lives, hopes, and destinies are inextricably intertwined

---

[305] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 141.
[306] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 141.
[307] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 150.

with those of others."[308] This crisis is created, sustained, and reinforced by our continued failure to vulnerably recognize the reality of our sociality and the unchosenness of our cohabitation and interdependence. Butler turns to Arendt for insights on the unchosenness of our cohabitation and interdependence.

From Arendt, Butler notes that the unchosen nature of earthly cohabitation is the condition of our very existence as ethical and political beings.[309] She notes that, while we can choose who to live with and where to live, we cannot choose who to inhabit the earth with, without deciding which portion of humanity is to live and which is to die – this would imply a choice to commit genocide, and this choice is unconditionally and irreversibly barred to us.[310] The unchosenness of earth's cohabitation implies an equal right to inhabit the earth by all people as well as the irreversible plurality or heterogeneity of earth's population. No race, nation, clan, community or party can claim the earth to itself. The unwilled proximity and unchosen cohabitation form the basis for our local and global ethical obligations, and also yields the radical potential for sociality and politics.[311] Butler concludes that precarity makes sense only if we are able to recognize our vulnerability – dependency, need, hunger, susceptibility to injury and destruction, forms of social trust – that let us live and thrive, and the passions that link to our persistence.[312] Hence, Butler ends by affirming the need for mutual intersubjective recognition.

Butler exposes a crucial condition that actually precedes recognition, namely: *Grievability*. She describes grievability as a presupposition for the life that matters. She sees grievability as the precondition for recognizability. According to her, in most cases:

---

[308] Charles Mathewes, "Vulnerability and Political Theology," in Heike Springhart editor and Günter Thomas (eds.), *Exploring Vulnerability*, V & R Academic (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017):165-83, 166.
[309] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 143.
[310] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 143.
[311] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 145-6.
[312] Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 147.

> We imagine that an infant comes into the world, is sustained in and by that world through to adulthood and old age, and finally dies. We imagine that when the child is wanted, there is celebration at the beginning of life. But there can be no celebration without an implicit understanding that the life is grievable, that it would be grieved if it were lost, and that this future anterior is installed as the condition of its life. In ordinary language, grief attends the life that has already been lived, and presupposes that life as having ended. But, according to the future anterior (which is also part of ordinary language), grievability is a condition of a life's emergence and sustenance. The future anterior, "a life has been lived," is presupposed at the beginning of a life that has only begun to be lived. In other words, "this will be a life that will have been lived" is the presupposition of a grievable life, which means that this will be a life that can be regarded as a life, and be sustained by that regard.[313]

Butler insists that grievability makes life worthy of recognition. She notes that, without grievability, life would not be worth living as such life would not be sustained by any regard or testimony, and will be ungrieved when lost. Hence, she concludes that, "the apprehension of grievability precedes and makes possible the apprehension of precarious life. Grievability precedes and makes possible the apprehension of the living being as living, exposed to non-life from the start."[314] That is, to recognize a precarious life, that life has to be considered grievable *ab initio.*

Butler suggests that one way of posing the question of who "we" are is by asking whose lives are considered valuable; whose lives are mourned and whose lives are considered ungrievable. According to her, "an ungrievable life is one that cannot be mourned because it has never lived, that is, it has never counted as a life at all. We can see the division of the globe into grievable and ungrievable lives from the perspective of those who wage war in order to defend the lives of certain communities, and to defend them against the lives of others—even if it means taking those latter lives."[315] Butler's idea is that the unrecognized life is usually a life that is already deemed ungrievable. If they are not grieved; they do not matter.

---

[313] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London; New York: Verso, 2009), 15.
[314] Butler, Frames of War, 15.
[315] Butler, Frames of War, 38.

For instance, George Floyd and others like him were "disposable" because lives like theirs are historically considered "ungrievable." Therefore, what the BLM protesters were doing was to make white supremacists like Derek Chauvin recognize that these lives are grievable; that black lives matter like any other life should. Basically, Butler argues that before addressing the question of, who is recognized or not, we need to ask the question: *whose lives are grievable and whose are not?*[316] She further explains that, "the most individual question of morality---how do I live this life that is mine?, is bound up with biopolitical questions distilled in forms such as these: Whose lives matter? Whose lives do not matter as lives, are not recognizable as living, or count only ambiguously as alive?"[317] Thus, my ethical life is bound by how other lives matter to me or not.

Butler's idea of grievability reconnects us to the *telos* of the Hegelian theory of recognition – the ethical "We." Butler writes: "I think this is finally a Hegelian point, and one worth reiterating here. The reason I am not free to destroy another—and indeed, why nations are not finally free to destroy one another— is not only because it will lead to further destructive consequences. That is doubtless true."[318] She argues that, "what may be finally more true is that the subject that I am is bound to the subject I am not, that we each have the power to destroy and to be destroyed, and that we are bound to one another in this power and this precariousness. In this sense, we are all precarious lives."[319] This mutual precarity makes us grievable. Its also makes us responsible to recognize one another as beings whose lives matter enough to be mourned, if lost. Therefore, we have the responsibility to mutually recognize every life as a life that is grievable; a life that matters.

---

[316] See Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015) 190-98.
[317] See Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly,* 190-98.
[318] Butler, Frames of War, 43.
[319] Butler, Frames of War, 43.

2.3.2 Hille Haker: The Interplay of Recognition and Responsibility

At this juncture, the relevance of recognition to ethics in general seems to have been fairly established mostly through the works of philosophers. But, how this plays out for theological ethics in particular, nay Catholic social ethics, is a question that theologians are just beginning to address. Hence, research interests in the subject of recognition are beginning to emerge from the margins of theological discourse to the center with renowned theological ethicists, like Keenan and Haker, championing this cause.[320] Therefore, while I intend to begin my theological engagement with this discourse in the next chapter, I will briefly highlight the emerging works of Haker who, perhaps, has produced the most profound theological reflections on this subject so far. I do not intend to exhaust Haker's works on recognition here – which is still quite nascent and developing, anyway.

I will simply highlight some key points that might be helpful for us to duly appreciate her work and to situate my work within the ongoing conversation on recognition in theological ethics. Hence, I will briefly explore why Haker thinks recognition is relevant to ethics in general and theological ethics in particular. Also, I will review the theological basis of her emerging normative ethics of recognition and responsibility. I will discuss her choice of critical theory as the method for this ethics. Finally, I will highlight her caveats about using this ethics to provide the tools for concrete, contextual analyses of various social issues like gender equality and distributive justice.

---

[320] **Hille Haker** holds the Richard McCormick S.J. Endowed Chair in Catholic Ethics at Loyola University Chicago. She has taught at Frankfurt University (2005 to 2009), and Harvard University (2003 to 2005) and holds a Ph.D. (1998) and Habilitation (2002) in Christian Theological Ethics from the University of Tübingen, Germany. She has served on several Bioethics Committees, including the *European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies* to the European Commission (2005-2015). From 2015-2018 she was the President of *Societas Ethica, European Society for Research in Ethics*, and serves on its Board. She was a Fellow at the *Frankfurt School Institute of Social Research* and a member of the Cornelia Goethe Institute for Women Studies. She has published multiple articles and co-edited several books in the field of bioethics and social ethics. She has written four monographs: *Towards a Critical Political Ethics: The Renewal of Catholic Social Ethics, Würzburg, Schwabe Verlag (2020); Hauptsache gesund? München, Kösel (2011); Ethik der genetischen Frühdiagnostik, Paderborn, mentis (2002); Moralische Identität. Literarische Lebensgeschichten als Medium ethischer Reflexion* (1999). She is doing a book on *Recognition and Responsibility*.

Haker highlights the normative dimension of mutual recognition of self and other in their free encounters and in just institutions. She notes that narrative biblical ethics reminds ethical theory that any normative claim is made on the basis of a prior acknowledgment. According to her, "the demand to attend to the other will be complemented with the respect to the other's uniqueness, and the accountability for individuals' or collectives' actions."[321] She notes that the divine call for human response is expressed in ethical terms right from the beginning of history, that is, after the Fall and the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. However, Haker laments that recognition theory still lacks a detailed theological-ethical analysis, unlike the concept of responsibility, and sets out to effectively fill this gap.[322] She attempts to fill this gap by developing a normative ethics of recognition and responsibility.

Haker begins her project by exploring the importance of existing theories of recognition for the development of self-identity, with particular interest in the experiences of misrecognition. Using insights from Taylor, Honneth, Fraser and others, she argues that recognition theories are relevant for ethics because they "interpret the human desire to be seen and acknowledged by others, a condition that defines the dialectic of personal and social identity."[323] Then, she proceeds to analyze the concept of responsibility in the phenomenological tradition, especially from Levinas, Ricoeur and Jessica Benjamin, grounding it in the perception theory of *pathos* and response. She identifies the normative dimension of responsibility as the command to care for the other as well as an obligation to justify one's actions, implying that the answerability for one's actions originates in one's capability to act.[324] Therefore, she concludes that recognition precedes responsibility.

---

[321] Haker, Recognition and Responsibility, 9-10.
[322] Haker announced this project in her 2021 article titled: Recognition and Responsibility, which was published in *The Provinces of Moral Theology and Religious Ethics*, a Special Issue of the journal *Religions* 2021, 12(7), 467; https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12070467. This subsection is largely based on this article.
[323] Hille Haker, "Recognition and Responsibility," *Religions* 12, no. 7 (July 2021): 467, 1-18, 2.
[324] Haker, Recognition and Responsibility, 10.

Regarding the relevance of the normative ethics of recognition and responsibility, Haker argues that such ethics allows us to see the drama of misrecognition unfold in social and political spheres like the irruptions discussed in the last chapter. In terms of its methodology, she notes that this has to be a critical ethics that focuses on experiences of misrecognition to closely address and analyze the given and chosen relationships. She explains that critical theory is not to be confused with criticism. First and foremost, according to her, the critique involved in critical theory is a method of discernment that analyzes social practices, attitudes and psychological structures as well as political institutions.[325] Secondly, she insists that critique does not mean that critical theory shies away from constructive discernments. Rather, critical theory approaches its object of study from an "engaged" perspective; its partiality renders any neutrality or indifference towards suffering, moral harm, and injustice impossible. Finally, she concludes that this combination of critique and engagement makes it an interesting method for doing her ethics in Christian theology as well.[326]

On the theological basis of her normative ethics of recognition and responsibility Haker turns to the etymology of *person* and *gaze* in biblical hermeneutics. First, she claims that her ethics, "combines the necessity to be seen and acknowledged with the necessity to be responsive to each other in the self-other encounters."[327] Then, she proceeds to situate this ethics within the context of the theology of encounter drawing on the biblical interpretation of the perceptions of person and gaze in the three main biblical languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. According to her,

> The three main classical languages of Christian theology all emphasize the gaze as an intimate and morally exceptional moment: in the Hebrew Bible, coming into the gaze of the other means to come face to face with them: panim-el-panim. When another person appears before someone, it means that someone appears to someone else as a person. Their gaze is a gaze toward someone: prosopon, the literal meaning of the Greek term "person". Further, in Latin, the other is present as persona, as a mask that shows the outer side of identity, but never the inner side of the self that

---

[325] Horkheimer, 1972. Cited in Haker, "Recognition and Responsibility," 7

[326] Metz, 2007. Cited in Haker, "Recognition and Responsibility," 8.

[327] Haker, Recognition and Responsibility, 7.

is concealed from the gaze of others. "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live," God warns Moses (Ex 33:20). The ban on making an image of God is the first commandment that carries even more weight when seen through the lens of recognition: every image of God entails a misunderstanding or mis-recognition.[328]

She notes that, just like the self-other relation has generated the terms of entanglement and inter-corporeity, ethics may speak of the entangled interactions and co-actions between or among moral agents as the appropriate starting point of any ethics, especially social ethics. However, she insists that the entanglement also concerns diachronic relations: there is an entanglement with histories.

Methodologically, Haker goes further than merely appropriating critical theory in and for theological ethics. She argues that, while critical theory is key to understanding misrecognition, theology is capable of deepening critical theory's own understanding of the dialectic of recognition and responsibility. Her point is that recognition and responsibility belong together as concepts since they express a *Gestalt* shift in the doubling of the positions of self and other.[329] For her, both concepts commonly express the constant shifting of positions between addressee and respondent, highlighting the different functions and roles within the agency concept.[330] Her argument is that, "because recognition is linked to the desire to be recognized, the experience of being seen, heard, and responded to does indeed stabilize the self-consciousness in self-other relations, social belonging, and legal status—just as misrecognition destabilizes the self's trust in the world."[331] Thus, like Butler, Haker comes to the conclusion that ethical reflections on recognition are closely related to the analyses of the vulnerability of individuals and groups to moral and structural harm.

On the normative dimension of responsibility, Haker notes that responsibility focuses on the function of the responses and the role of the agent as a "respondent," which also includes the

---

[328] Cited in Haker, "Recognition and Responsibility," 7.
[329] Haker, Recognition and Responsibility, 10.
[330] Haker, Recognition and Responsibility, 10.
[331] Bernstein 2015. Cited in Haker, "Recognition and Responsibility," 10-11.

answerability for their actions or omissions for which agents are either praised or blamed.[332] In other words, responsibility already involves recognition for which an agent could be praised or blamed. She also notes that human interaction is dynamic as it includes verbal communication as the practice of understanding, meaning-making, and interpretation. She, then, argues that human beings can actually see each other as "of one kind" or as equals since they "can share certain goals and cooperate in pursuing them, for instance in friendships, collegiality, social movements, or political actions. These collective actions, alongside social experiences and historical memories, create as many bonds of belonging as unresolved conflicts can spark recurring hostility."[333] Hence, she concludes that responsibility is also normative just like recognition.

Finally, Haker warns that the concepts of recognition and responsibility must both be spelled out in critical ethics, especially one that provides the tools for concrete, contextual analyses on the levels of personal relationships, social practices, and political institutions.[334] The caveat is that both concepts can be misused ideologically. This occurs when both concepts are "privatized" way beyond the capabilities of persons in highly diverse societies, without providing them with the means to address their existential challenges.[335] She notes, for instance, that the libertarian position has resulted in a culture of "responsibilization" that mostly deflects from the failures of political responsibility, but which also incorporates social biases regarding women, poor people, and ethnic minorities, with increasing vulnerability when these categories intersect. Practically, women are overburdened with responsibilities to care for children or the elderly, while men are faced with the toxic masculinity that force them to be "in charge" even when the means are lacking.

---

[332] Haker, "Recognition and Responsibility," 11.
[333] Haker, "Recognition and Responsibility," 11.
[334] Haker, Recognition and Responsibility, 11.
[335] Haker, Recognition and Responsibility, 11.

Thus, Haker concludes that the call for mutuality of recognition and responsibility in interactions, must account for the vulnerability of agents, in its ontological, moral, and structural dimensions.[336]

How do we account for the vulnerability of social subjects, in its ontological, moral, and structural dimensions? My quick answer is that we need to address their need for recognition as a vital human necessity through responsive ethical actions. So far, we have highlighted the ethical value of recognition as a vital human need. I reiterate Taylor's central thesis that due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need. Hence, as a vital human need, recognition is not to be confused with privilege, honor or any kind of optional affirmation that has to be earned by a social subject or granted, withheld, or denied a social subject by another. It is a vital human need that can be addressed through responsive ethical actions.

2.4 Conclusion

The vital human need for recognition is often neglected or abused. Every now and then, human beings are "systematically denied recognition for the worth of their culture or way of life, the dignity of their status as persons, and the inviolability of their physical integrity."[337] Their need for recognition as social subjects is failed by negligence or abuse. This failure of recognition – nonrecognition or misrecognition – is inimical to the common good. As Emperor Selassie rightly noted, so long as the need for recognition is unmet, any vision of sustainable peace in human society remains a mirage; this is bad news for ethics and the common good.

An Angolan proverb says that: *the one who throws the stone forgets; the one who is hit remembers forever.*[338] Hegel, Taylor, Honneth, Fraser, Butler, Haker, and Keenan mostly affirm

---

[336] Haker, Recognition and Responsibility, 11.
[337] Joel Anderson, "Translator's Introduction" in Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press, 1995), x.
[338] See David W. Augsburger, *Conflict Mediation across Cultures: Pathways and Patterns*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 259.

that nonrecognized and misrecognized social subjects suffer real harm. They seek to redress this harm by demanding or even struggling for recognition, from the apposite recognizer, whenever they can. This usually triggers a vicious cycle of violence, retaliations and reprisals, thereby, culminating in intractable conflicts like South Sudan, Syria, Libya, DRC and Yemen etc.

Victims of nonrecognition or misrecognition do not easily let go. They often tend to seek a redress for the harm caused them by the failure of the apposite recognizer, who ignored or abused their need for recognition. The apposite recognizer often wants to let go. This could begin another failure of recognition when the victim's honest demand or struggle for recognition is misconstrued as a quest for undue advantage or supremacy. They re-victimize these victims by shaming them for not letting go of their demands like white slavery beneficiaries shaming the black descendants of enslaved people in USA for demanding due restitution or blaming the "prior lives" of Dalits in India for their caste ordeals or by outrightly claiming to be the victim like the Rittenhouse saga.

The bad news is that genuine efforts by social ethicists around the world towards conflict resolution, reconciliation, and peacebuilding often get marred as parties tend to overlook the unmet need for recognition, often the underlying cause for conflicts, focusing instead on its consequences. As the ethical value of the human need for recognition becomes largely ignored, meeting this need becomes more visible in social ethics. On the contrary, the consequent demands and struggles for recognition continue to capture the attention of astute ethicists around the world; mostly, for the wrong reason. Thus, certain conflicts keep receiving inadequate or less effective responses due to undue focus on these symptoms; until these conflicts become intractable, costly, and abandoned

The reality for ethics is that the need for recognition cannot be entirely denied or ignored since recognition obligates ethical action. As I already mentioned in the introduction, a key theory underlying this research is that the end of ethics is action. From Butler, we can see how recognition

is the beginning of personal and social action in ethics since it marks the decisive threshold that a moral agent has to cross in the mechanics of ethical responsiveness, when they freely move from merely being awakened to their ethical responsibilities to actually fulfilling these responsibilities through responsive ethical actions. Hence, recognition is also the condition of our answerability.

Recognition involves a moral awakening in the recognizer occasioned by an encounter with the recognized that obligates the recognizer to duly respond to the need of the recognized. From Haker, and Butler, we can now see how the ethical obligation of the recognizer presupposes their ethical responsiveness since their ethical responsibility to recognize the other is already preceded by their awakening to this responsibility as part of the process of recognition. Thus, the prior awakening of the moral agent to their ethical responsibility imposes an ethical imperative on them to act according to this recognition even towards strangers.

Both Haker and Butler offer a suitable preface to my lengthier and more detailed response. Haker argues that recognition is prior to responsibility [Keenan, in his Zurich paper and elsewhere, argues that recognition is even prior to conscience] and Butler argues that ethical responsibility presupposes ethical responsiveness. I wish to stretch both arguments further by arguing that responsibility is also a product of recognition and that ethical responsiveness is a culmination of the process of recognition. Hence, I am focusing on recognition but not overlooking other concepts. Here, then, is my point of departure: that recognition is so fundamental that addressing its basic form – as a vital human need – has to be the beginning and constitutive way of doing a proper social ethics, especially, Catholic social ethics.

In the next chapter, I will argue that McDonagh provides key insights for addressing the need for recognition in theological ethics, noting that recognition embodies the reality of our

mutual vulnerability, common origin and ultimate destiny in God.[339] I will discuss in more details,

Butler's crucial notion about grievability as the precondition for recognizability. Then, like Haker,

I will argue that the presence of the other, as *imago Dei*, is a divine gift that embodies a divine call

to human recognition. This call is at the heart of Christian moral traditions where it also comprises

the call to vulnerably recognize the other in their precarious otherness. This entails three principal

acts of love, namely, *letting be*, *letting go* and *letting God*.

---

[339] Enda McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy: In Faith, Morality and Art* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2004), 19.

Chapter Three

Addressing Recognition as a Need: Theological Framework and Ethical Paradigm

The last chapter attempted to establish the philosophical foundations of my principal thesis that recognition is *a human need* that ought to be *primarily* addressed as a need and, that every human being is both deserving of recognition by others and obligated to recognize others. This thesis is influenced by Charles Taylor's proposition that recognition is *a vital human need*. First, Taylor's proposition was traced back to its Hegelian roots amid other philosophical traditions. Afterwards, its key claims and implications were evaluated in light of Judith Butler's philosophical work on vulnerability and ethical responsiveness as well as Hille Haker's theological ethical work on recognition and responsibility. Building on those philosophical foundations and leveraging the Catholic social tradition, this chapter will develop a theological framework and ethical paradigm for addressing recognition as a need. The premise is that addressing the need for recognition makes true friendship possible, which is necessary for attaining the common good of every human society. To provide a theological context for this exercise, this chapter begins with three biblical parables.

A [Jewish] lawyer had asked Jesus: *who is my neighbor?*[340] "Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. "Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. "Likewise, a Levite,

---

[340] A two-part dialogue between Jesus and an expert in the Mosaic law had led to this parable. The first part addresses the lawyer's first question, "*What shall I do to inherit eternal life*?" The second addresses the lawyer's second question, "*And who is my neighbor*?" The context is that, some Rabbinical teachings during this time stated that one's neighbor can be narrowly defined to mean a fellow observant Jew. Thus, tax collectors, gentiles, and especially Samaritans may not be recognized as neighbors: such persons would be excluded from the schemas of recognizability. We will return to these schemas later. But, by narrowing the definition of his neighbor, the lawyer sought to claim righteousness by excusing himself from the universality of God's Law. Perhaps, this explains why St. Luke prefaces the lawyer's second question with the narratorial insight, "But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus…" (Luke 10:29a). See Tom Bastress, "'And Who Is My Neighbor?' Reflections on the Gospel and Racial Reconciliation," *Grace Bible Church* (blog), June 18, 2020, http://gracebiblecw.com/blog/2020/06/18/and-who-is-my-neighbor-reflections-on-the-gospel-and-racial-reconciliation.

when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. "So, he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. "On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' "So, which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, *'Go and do likewise'*" (Luke 10: 25-37).

Jesus also told another parable: "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. "But, there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, "desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. "So, it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. "And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' "But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, 'for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' "Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' "And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' "But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead'" (Luke 16:19-31).

Elsewhere, Jesus told this parable as well: On the last judgment, [the King] will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then, the king will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 'for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 'I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 'When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 'Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 'for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 'I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' "Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me'" (Matthew 25, 31-46).

These parables can be interpreted in sundry ways. But, in our context, they vividly illustrate how moral agents can be ethically responsive by recognizing others in their otherness, despite the precariousness of their situation. This illustration becomes clearer if we ask a fundamental question: *what did the Samaritan and the sheep [the good characters] do that the rich man, the priest, the Levite, and the goats [the bad characters] did not do?* The Samaritan and the sheep were ethically responsive to the wounded traveller and to the least of Jesus' brethren, respectively. They properly

recognized them as social subjects in their own rights, despite the precariousness of their situations, which also exposes their mutual vulnerability. Following this vulnerable recognition, they ethically responded to their needs. The rich man, the priest, the Levite, and the goats did not do *likewise*.

Recognition is basically normative in these parables. Each ended in either commendation or condemnation: the good characters were all commended and some were hugely rewarded for recognizing, while the bad ones were all condemned and some were punished for not recognizing. Thus, in light of these parables, it is clear that the bible regards the act of recognition as an ethical obligation or responsibility that human subjects can and ought to fulfill. As noted in the last chapter, Butler argues that every human being has ethical obligations towards other human beings. These obligations are responsibilities that do not necessarily require one's consent, permission or, even, choice. The decision to fulfill one's ethical obligations is not determined by one's egoistic interests or disposition nor even the ability of the other to reciprocate.

With insights from Emmanuel Levinas, Butler notes that egoism is the defeat of ethics and that reciprocity leads to ethical contingency.[341] Her point is that ethics is not just about our personal interests and that ethical obligations have a more stable basis than mere reciprocity. For her, ethics is about right relations with others and ethical obligations are based on ethical responsiveness: our unconditional answerability to respond positively to the call of another human being – especially in precarious situations when they cannot reciprocate. For instance, the rich man ought to treat Lazarus as a human being, even if this does not serve his egoistic interests and despite the fact that the chances of Lazarus reciprocating looked very unlikely. Hence, ethical obligations are not the result of contracts or agreements between parties. Rather, they are unchosen primordial norms that already obligate a moral subject to be ethically responsive to others through appropriate actions.

---

[341] Butler, "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation," 140.

Essentially, ethical obligations exist prior to our encounter with the other.[342] Hence, they are neither optional nor contingent; they are essential and stable. In fact, ethical obligations presuppose ethical responsiveness. Human beings do not just have ethical obligations but also the natural capability to ethically respond to the other, in fulfilment of these obligations. For instance, the priest and the Levite have similar capabilities as the Samaritan. Their obligation to respond means they are capable of responding. Hence, it is not a about "if they can," it is about "whether or not they were bothered as much they should." Their obligation is consistent; they ought to help the wounded traveler, even if they did not want to – even if it risked putting themselves in harm's way or disrupting their personal schedules or, even, violating their strict religious laws. Their ethical obligations to the wounded traveler do not depend upon their own comfort or religiosity. Rather, these obligations depend upon their fundamental answerability to the call of the wounded one. Butler notes that, one's answerability is bound up together with one's vulnerability.

Ethical responsiveness entails fully embracing one's vulnerability. One's ethical obligation to recognize and act ethically towards another not only makes one answerable, but also calls one to wholly embrace one's own vulnerability. Here, vulnerability is understood as the possibility of becoming wounded as opposed to the actuality of being wounded. Vulnerability, in this sense, is the capacious condition for compassion as it gives impetus to ethical responsiveness. For instance, the Samaritan "saw" [apprehended] the victim, just like the priest and the Levite. But, unlike them, he had compassion. This is a pivotal point in the parable. He had compassion and acted, despite the risk: he embraced his vulnerability. The Samaritan embraced his vulnerability so as to respond ethically to the wounded one. He was also vulnerable. Yet, he stopped in a dangerous crime scene and dared to help a victim. He could be a victim too. He could flee the scene for his own safety.

---

[342] See Butler, Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation, 134–51, 135-142.

But, he stayed. On the contrary, the priest and the Levite fled the scene. In the words of Jessica Benjamin, unable to embrace their own vulnerability, they [the priest and the Levite] denied their own "vulnerable selves" and fled the precarious scene.[343] Thus, they failed to vulnerably recognize the wounded one and could not ethically respond to him.

Ultimately, the Good Samaritan and the sheep were praised and rewarded for vulnerably recognizing while the rich man, the priest, the Levite, and the goats were all blamed and severely punished for failing to vulnerably recognize Lazarus, the wounded one and the least of the brethren. All these characters had similar opportunities as well as binding ethical obligations to properly address recognition at the point of need – as a vital human *need* – without necessarily waiting for it to self-escalate to the point where it is either *demanded* or *struggled* for. Although, their comfort or safety were at stake, they did not have the option to prioritize these over the needs of others. Moreover, by praising the Good Samaritan and rewarding the sheep together with Lazarus while punishing the goats and the rich man, Jesus indubitably affirmed that recognition is, primarily, a vital human need. But, Jesus did not just stop at affirming recognition as a vital human need. He also affirms that human beings are capable and obligated to fulfill this need for others. In fact, Jesus sets the Good Samaritan – and the sheep – as models for addressing recognition as a need. Hence, he gave the lawyer [indeed, everyone else] the injunction to: *go and do likewise.*

This chapter focuses on one out of several ways that we can *go and do likewise*, vis-à-vis, addressing the need for recognition. It argues that addressing the need for recognition is a veritable means to building true friendship with God and neighbor; and, that such friendship is necessary for attaining the common good in every society. Thus, drawing on the concept of human identity as *imago Dei*, I will propose a theological framework and ethical paradigm that can help us address

---

[343] Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon, 1988) 53.

the need for recognition as a basis for true friendship in society. This will be done in three main stages. First, I will argue that the parables primarily addressed recognition as a need. I will do this with the help of Butler's philosophical insights on precariousness, grievability, and recognizability. Second, I will explore how Enda McDonagh's tripartite act of love – *letting be*, *letting go*, *letting God* – can serve as a paradigm for responsive ethical action that is ordered towards true friendship. Lastly, I will explore what this paradigm entails for Catholic social ethics, vis-à-vis how it can help us re-imagine its traditional criteria for the common good – human dignity, solidarity and subsidiarity – as norms for true friendship in modern multicultural and pluralistic societies.

3.1 Recognition as a Vital Human Need: Insights from the Parables

Many crucial insights can be drawn from Jesus and the key characters in the above parables. On the one hand, Jesus, the Good Samaritan, and the sheep serve as important biblical models for addressing recognition as a vital human need. On the other hand, the rich man, the priest, the Levite and the goats serve as the antithesis. We can appreciate these insights by simply asking: *How did Jesus and the characters primarily approach recognition in the three parables above?*

3.1.1   The Parables: A Biblical Ethical Approach to Recognition

In the parables, Jesus approached recognition, first and foremost, as a vital human need. The good characters – those who addressed this need – were praised and rewarded, while the bad characters – those who failed to address this need – were condemned and punished. In approaching recognition primarily as a need, the parables show us how to avoid the issue of *responsibilization*. As discussed in the last chapter, Hille Haker described responsibilization as two concurrent acts of negligence. On the one hand, responsibilization means burdening victims with the responsibility to change their own precarious situations, while neglecting the need to provide them with the requisite means for fulfilling such responsibilities. For instance, Lazarus is full of sores and unable

to work. One should not expect him to stop begging without, first, getting him healed and able to work. On the other hand, responsibilization means deflecting the responsibility from the perpetrator who, perhaps, controls the means and resources for fulfilling those obligations.[344] For instance, the parable could not have been told in a way that exonerated the rich man who failed to use his wealth to help Lazarus get back to good health and, perhaps, help him get a job.

Responsibilization is a smoke screen to avoid the responsibility to recognize; an attempted self-excuse from recognizing. It is a failure of recognition, especially, a failure to acknowledge the prevailing "*structures of domination*" in society.[345] For instance, the descendants of formerly enslaved black people in America cannot be expected to simply move on without the white people and the authorities intentionally and sincerely dismantling white superiority, de-centering whiteness in all its ramifications and providing proper restitution to the victims. This is notwithstanding the obvious generational gap between slave holders and current beneficiaries. The beneficiaries may not own slaves themselves and cannot be held responsible for the actions of their forebears. But, Abraham's response to the rich man's second request suggests that each generation has the responsibility and resources to right the wrongs for which they are beneficiaries. Abraham argued that sending someone from the dead to "warn" the rich man's brothers does not guarantee any positive change. The brothers may rightly absolve themselves from the "failures" of their brother. They might take affirmative actions like giving scholarships, creating reservations, and "admitting" some of Lazarus' descendants or relatives into their power structure. But, at the same time, they may strongly resist genuine efforts to alter the prevailing structures of domination or create a participatory parity or balance of power for the common good.

---

[344] See Hille Haker, "Recognition and Responsibility," *Religions* 12, no. 7 (July 2021): 467, 1-18, 11.
[345] See James F. Keenan, "The Color Line, Race, and Caste: Structures of Domination and the Ethics of Recognition," *Theological Studies* 82, no. 1 (March 1, 2021): 69–94, https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563921992550.

3.1.2 Vulnerability, Grievability, and Recognizability: Preconditions for Recognition

There are several reasons why people resist real change in society. One reason is that the resisting force may have already framed the potential beneficiaries of such change as disposable. In her pivotal book, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* Butler highlights how the western media's distorted portrayal of state violence influences the understanding of human life. Precisely, such portrayal leads to the abusing and disposing of whole populations. Rather than protect and help such populations flourish as part of the human family, they are cast out as existential threats or nuisance. Butler argues that these lives are framed as disposable, only because their deaths had already been framed as un-grievable. In the distorted logic that tends to rationalize their deaths, the loss of such lives is deemed necessary to protect the lives of "the living" whose deaths are grievable. As long as they are framed out of "the living", such lives are already framed into "the dead". Hence, such lives do not matter to the resisting power; they are disposable and their deaths are not grieved.

Butler's thesis is that the human society makes an unfair disparity between lives that are grievable and those that are not. She argues that such disparity has profound implications for why and when we feel horror, outrage, guilt, loss and righteous indifference both in the context of war and, increasingly, in everyday life. This is, because, "if certain lives do not qualify as lives or are, from the start, not conceivable as lives within certain epistemological frames, then these lives are never lived nor lost in the full sense."[346] Butler draws attention to the problematic epistemological frames through which we "apprehend or, indeed, fail to apprehend the lives of others as lost or injured (lose-able or injurable)."[347] Simply, these frames determine our ability to recognize or not.

---

[346] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London; New York: Verso, 2009), 1.
[347] Butler, *Frames of War*, 13.

From the last chapter, I noted that recognition is a process that occurs within the context of a mutual intersubjective encounter. This process has three key stages: *awareness* [apprehension], *acknowledgment* [identification] and *response* [action]. It starts with apprehension and culminates in a responsive ethical action. Without apprehension, the process cannot begin, even if there is an encounter. This is what nonrecognition is all about. For instance, there was no indication in the parable that the rich man ever apprehended Lazarus except, later, in the bosom of Abraham. But, there was an encounter; Lazarus sat at his gate. Also, if the apprehension is wrong *ab initio*, the process of will certainly go wrong. This is what misrecognition is all about. For instance, the goats apprehended the least of Jesus' brethren. But, they did not properly apprehend them to be worthy and as such, did not see them as Jesus.

Even with proper apprehension, the process of recognition can stall. It may not get to action. For instance, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, all three passersby – the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan – apprehended the wounded one and acknowledged him as a human being, albeit in a precarious situation. But, only the Samaritan acted. Without action, there is no ethics as the end of ethics is action.[348] This lack of action in the parables is not unique, it is a daily experience even in our time. Butler notes that, "we read about lives lost and are often given the numbers, but these stories are repeated every day, and the repetition appears endless, irremediable."[349] She advocates that we ask, "w*hat would it take, not only to apprehend the precarious character of lives lost in war, but to have that apprehension coincide with an ethical and political opposition to the losses war entails?*"[350] In other words, Butler is suggesting that we appraise the cost recognition as a process from its inception through apprehension all the way to its culmination in responsive action.

---

[348] Cf. Joe Sachs, "Aristotle: Ethics," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed March 4, 2023, https://iep.utm.edu/aristotle-ethics/.
[349] Butler, *Frames of War*, 13.
[350] Butler, *Frames of War*, 13.

Butler explains that apprehending a precarious life is very important, but not simply enough. The precariousness ought to be recognized as an aspect of what is apprehended in a living being. The apprehension of this precarious life should usher us into the larger world of the being as we embark on the process of recognition. The being whose life is precarious ought to be recognized as one whose existence matters. This can only happen when we identify them as a subject whose life is valuable and, thus, will be mourned when lost. Otherwise, Butler insists that,

> Precariousness itself cannot be properly *recognized*. It can be apprehended, taken in, encountered, and it can be presupposed by certain norms of recognition just as it can be refused by such norms. Indeed, there ought to be recognition of precariousness as a shared condition of human life (indeed, as a condition that links human and non-human animals), but we ought not to think that the recognition of precariousness masters or captures or even fully cognizes what it recognizes. So although I would (and will) argue that norms of recognition ought to be based on an apprehension of precariousness, I do not think that precariousness is a function or effect of recognition, nor that recognition is the only or the best way to register precariousness.[351]

Butler's point is that we cannot properly recognize precariousness, even after apprehending it, without also properly acknowledging the living body whose life is precarious as every precarious life is an embodied life. For instance, we cannot properly recognize the precarious life of the wounded traveler, without acknowledging that the traveler is a human being whose life is precious.

A precious life is a grievable life. It is a life that can be mourned when lost and, so, ought to be protected while living. Precariousness does not make a life less precious. When we say that a life is precarious, we are simply acknowledging that such life is injurable [vulnerable] or "that it can be lost, destroyed, or systematically neglected to the point of death, is to underscore not only the finitude of a life (that death is certain) but also its precariousness (that life requires various social and economic conditions to be met in order to be sustained as a life)."[352] This is the essence

---

[351] Butler, *Frames of War*, 13.
[352] Butler, *Frames of War*, 13-14.

of living in society. Butler notes that, "precariousness implies living socially, that is, the fact that one's life is always in some sense in the hands of the other. It implies exposure both to those we know and to those we do not know; a dependency on people we know, or barely know, or know not at all. Reciprocally, it implies being impinged upon by the exposure and dependency of others, most of whom remain anonymous."[353] This is why ethical relations is a *sine qua non* for true society.

Butler argues that ethical relations are not necessarily relations of love or even of care. But, "they constitute obligations toward others, most of whom we cannot name and do not know, and who may or may not bear traits of familiarity to an established sense of who "we" are. In the interest of speaking in common parlance, we could say that "we" have such obligations to "others" and presume that we know who "we" are in such an instance."[354] She explains in a recent book:

> We do not have to love one another to engage in meaningful solidarity. The emergence of a critical faculty, of critique itself, is bound up with the vexed and precious relationship of solidarity, where our "sentiments" navigate the ambivalence by which they are constituted. We can always fall apart, which is why we struggle to stay together. Only then do we stand a chance of persisting in a critical common: when nonviolence becomes the desire for the other's desire to live, a way of saying, "You are grievable; the loss of you is intolerable; and I want you to live; I want you to want to live, so take my desire as your desire, for yours is already mine." The "I" is not you, yet it remains unthinkable without the "you"— worldless, unsustainable. So, whether we are caught up in rage or love—rageful love, militant pacifism, aggressive nonviolence, radical persistence—let us hope that we live that bind in ways that let us live with the living, mindful of the dead, demonstrating persistence in the midst of grief and rage, the rocky and vexed trajectory of collective action in the shadow of fatality.[355]

But, Butler concedes that the social implication of this notion of ethical relations is precisely that the "we" does not, and cannot, realize by itself, that it is not monistic. It is actually fragmented

[353] Butler, *Frames of War*, 14.
[354] Butler, *Frames of War*, 14.
[355] Judith Butler, *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind* (London; New York: Verso, 2020).

from the start, interrupted by alterity [the otherness of the other]. Hence, the obligations "we" have are precisely those that disrupt any established notion of the "we."[356]

Butler's point is that it is not simply enough to cohabit a space with others, even if we have accepted their unchosenness as our neighbors. Rather, it is also crucial to engage with those outside our immediate circles of love or zones of comfort to reevaluate our actions in the eyes of the other. For instance, the rich man does not realize that he was not ethically responsive to the beggar at his gate as there was no known engagement with Lazarus. Also, the priest and the Levite did not engage with the wounded man. Each of these characters either stayed in their comfort zone [in the case of the rich man] or fled the slighted opportunity to step out of it [in the case of the priest and the Levite]. Even the goats were condemned for not properly engaging with others, which could have helped them realize they were not fulfilling their ethical obligations to them.

One reason we may stay in our circles of love and zones of comfort is poor *socialization*. In sociology, "socialization is a process that introduces people to social norms and customs. This process helps individuals function well in society, and, in turn, helps society run smoothly. Family members, teachers, religious leaders, and peers all play roles in a person's socialization."[357] During socialization, a person learns to become a member of a group, community, or society. This process not only accustoms people to social groups but also results in such groups sustaining themselves. For example, a new member is socialized into a family's customs and traditions to use and uphold. But, socialization *per se* does not keep people from interacting or engaging with another group. The process of socialization typically occurs in two stages: primary socialization is from birth through adolescence and secondary socialization is lifelong. [358] Secondary socialization is

[356] Butler, *Frames of War*, 14.
[357] Nicki Lisa Cole, "What Exactly Is Socialization?" in *ThoughtCo* (blog), January 30, 2020, https://www.thoughtco.com/socialization-in-sociology-4104466.
[358] Cole, What Exactly Is Socialization? ibid.

supposed to help one adapt to new circumstances and wider realities, especially those in which they interact with individuals whose norms or customs differ from theirs. This is where we become culpable.

One's frames of precarity, grievability and recognizability can be created during primary socialization. This reiterates Jessica Benjamin's point that a child's first encounter with humanity through mutual recognition is their most vulnerable experience in a lifelong developmental process. The child learns to either embrace their vulnerability or deny it.[359] Like Benjamin, Butler stresses the importance of our childhood experiences in framing precarity, grievability, and recognizability. She argues that, "it is not that we are born and then later become precarious, but rather that precariousness is coextensive with birth itself (birth is, by definition, precarious), which means that it matters whether or not this infant being survives, and that its survival is dependent on what we might call a social network of hands."[360] This social network is not only crucial for our survival, it also initiates our learning that life is precious and everyone else deserves to survive as we do.

Precisely, for Butler, we learn that: "because a living being may die, it is necessary to care for that being so that it may live. Only under conditions in which the loss would matter does the value of the life appear. Thus, grievability is a presupposition for the life that matters."[361] This is how we learn the essential task of examining existing frames, discarding erroneous ones and developing the correct ones. This lifelong learning [part of our secondary socialization] occurs as we encounter others in their otherness. Butler's point is that these encounters ought to make us reevaluate those frames by confronting "an existential concept of finitude that singularizes our relation to death and to life" and acknowledging how our own "precariousness underscores our

---

[359] Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon, 1988) 53.
[360] Butler, *Frames of War*, 14.
[361] Butler, *Frames of War*, 14.

radical substitutability and anonymity in relation both to certain socially facilitated modes of dying and death and to other socially conditioned modes of persisting and flourishing."[362] We learn from our own precariousness that every life is grievable and that without grievability, there is no life. Instead, "there is a life that will never have been lived," sustained by no recognition, no witness, and ungrieved when lost. It is in this sense that "the apprehension of grievability precedes and makes possible the apprehension of precarious life. Grievability precedes and makes possible the apprehension of the living being as living, exposed to non-life from the start."[363] Thus, grievability is a condition for recognizability.

3.1.3   Recognizability: Towards Framing the Right Schemas of Intelligibility

A subject can be duly recognized, as a subject, only if it is already recognizable as a subject. There must be a normative condition that facilitates the ability of other subjects to duly apprehend, acknowledge and respond to that subject as a subject. This condition, which precedes and makes recognition possible, is what Butler refers to as *recognizability*. Butler defines recognizability as the universal conditions on which basis recognition can, and does, take place.[364] In our context, one can say that recognizability is the universal condition that makes the wounded traveler, Lazarus, and the least of Jesus' brethren recognizable as humans persons. The idea here is that recognition is not an arbitrary process. It has a norm that makes it objective, predicable and universally applicable irrespective of the specific circumstances or individuals involved. This implies that recognition is normative as its denial amounts to a violation of the recognizability of the subject.

---

[362] Butler, *Frames of War*, 14
[363] Butler, *Frames of War*, 15.
[364] Butler, *Frames of War*, 6.

Recognizability precedes recognition. It determines whether or not recognition occurs. It presupposes that the act of recognition typically involves no less than two subjects. Thus, Butler argues that, "if recognition characterizes an act or a practice or even a scene between subjects, then 'recognizability' characterizes the more general conditions that prepare or shape a subject for recognition – the general terms, conventions, and norms 'act' in their own way, crafting a living being into a recognizable subject, though not without errancy or, indeed, unanticipated results."[365] Butler emphasizes that these categories, conventions, and norms that prepare or establish a subject for recognition both precede and make recognition possible. In other words, recognizability is, itself, a product of socialization. Socialization not only influences how we encounter others, but also whether or not we *apprehend* the other rightly as subjects or wrongly as objects. Hence, Butler suggests that we pay attention to our schema of apprehension.[366]

A very crucial aspect of Butler's definition of recognizability is this idea of universality, which implies that recognizability is not a character or potential of individual human persons. Rather, it is a universal character or potential that belongs to every human person, unconditionally. Hence, according to Butler, we install a normative character or potential as a preexisting condition for our apprehension of others as human persons. Her point is that, by installing this preexisting condition [recognizability], "we have, in effect, already "recognized" everything we need to know about recognition." [367] Thus, recognizability is also the norm against nonrecognition and misrecognition. It is the parameter for judging acts of nonrecognition and misrecognition as these actions must fall short of recognizability – the universal conditions on which basis recognition should take place.

---

[365] Butler, *Frames of War*, 5.
[366] The topic of schemas will be taken up later in this sub-section.
[367] Butler, *Frames of War*, 6.

For instance, in the above parables, the wounded traveler, Lazarus and the least of Jesus' brethren ought to have been duly recognized as human persons deserving of love or compassion, especially, given the precariousness of their situations. Of course, each of them have specific needs like medication, food, shelter, clothing and company, but these needs can only be provided if the priest, the Levite, the rich man and the goats had already recognized them as persons deserving of their attention to those needs. They would have recognized and, probably, addressed those needs if only they had bothered as much as they should since the personhood of the needy ones already makes them unconditionally recognizable as subjects who are eligible for love or compassion. This brings us to notion that sin is a failure to bother to love, in the first place.

Theologically, sin is a failure to bother to love as much as one should. It is not just about choosing a particular wrong action or even the failure to choose the right one. Instead, sin is a fundamental disposition – "the failure to be bothered in the first place."[368] Clearly, the apposite recognizers – the priest, the Levite, the rich man and the goats – failed to bother as such. In a sense, to deny anyone compassion or any of its specific real-life variations depicts a prior failure of recognition – a failure to uphold the other's recognizability as persons that deserve compassion or those specific responsive ethical actions, which implies that recognition precedes the act of compassion and so does the failure to recognize precede the failure to be compassionate. Of course, I do not equate recognition with specific acts of love and compassion or any other particular need. Rather, I am arguing that recognition is a universal condition that makes those specific needs like loving, showing compassion, and other responsive actions possible in the context of intersubjective encounters. This is to say that, recognition is the threshold that the moral agent has to decisively

---

[368] James F. Keenan, "Raising Expectations on Sin" in *Theological Studies* 77, no. 1 (2016): 165-80, 176.

cross so as to initiate ethical responsiveness in the form of specific actions like caring for the wounded, feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless and visiting the imprisoned.

Recognition, by itself, is not sufficient in initiating ethical responsiveness in the form of specific actions. However, it is a necessary point of departure towards responsive ethical actions. While these actions can be done without prior recognition, maybe out of ignorance like in the case of the sheep, there would have been a clear disposition to be bothered in the first place – the sheep gave the right responses anyway, while the goats did not. Apparently, both were ignorant of the identity of the needy ones, but the sheep showed a predisposition to be bothered. Moreover, without duly recognizing the other as a human subject with inherent dignity, we might do the right thing for them but for the wrong reasons like feeding slaves so they can do more work or giving to aids to poor countries so as to influence their internal affairs or steal their wealth.

Of course, as already noted, there is the reality of sin or not bothering to act in accordance with one's prior recognition. Hence, mere recognition does not guarantee an ethical response and, even if there is a response, there is no guarantee that it would be the right response. This is why I emphasize "due" recognition as a process, within the context of a right encounter, from when we rightly apprehend the other all the way to offering a right response. My point is that due recognition is a necessary, albeit insufficient, condition for ethical responsiveness as without it, there would be no suitable responsive action at all. For instance, the rich man, the priest, the Levite and the goats clearly did recognize the victims as human subjects to whom they are obligated to show compassion in the first place. But, they probably would have shown compassion if they had duly recognized or had bothered as much as they should to recognize the other in the first place. In contrast, the Good Samaritan and the sheep duly recognized and, so, showed compassion. Hence,

none of these characters were judged unfairly or arbitrarily, since human recognizability is guided by *human personhood* as its universal norm.

Personhood is the universal norm of recognizability. According to Butler, personhood has traditionally served as the norm of recognizability.[369] The idea is that personhood is a universal or general condition for recognizing a human being. But, an ethical problem begins to emerge here. The problem is not whether or not personhood is the norm of recognizability for human beings. For Butler, the problem is about how existing norms allocate recognition differentially through a distorted notion of personhood.[370] It is about the tendency, in society, to distort personhood and use it in a way that undermines the ethics of recognition. Precisely, personhood can be employed to render one subject more recognizable than normal while relegating the other's recognizability, if at all they are deemed recognizable. For instance, the rich man hyped the recognizability of his brothers to the point of demanding a mission from the dead as the only act of recognition befitting their "larger-than-life" personhood while at the same time relegating Lazarus' recognizability by talking over him to Abraham. Obviously, he did not accord equal "personhood" to these humans.

History shows that human beings are not always accorded equal "personhood" in society. This is grave as it ultimately determines whose life matters and whose does not matter in society. For instance, slavery, colonialism, casteism, apartheid, segregation, racism, sexism, and Nazism are all based on misconstrued disparities of personhood. This is not a thing of the past, some human beings are still not duly recognised.[371] Of course, we cannot use person and human interchangeably since being a person is not co-extensive with being human. But, "personhood is a morally objective

---

[369] Butler, *Frames of War*, 6.
[370] Butler, *Frames of War*, 6.
[371] Charles W. Mills, "The Political Economy of Personhood," *OpenDemocracy: Free Thinking for the World* (blog), June 16, 2015, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/political-economy-of-personhood/.

fact, independent of whether it is socially recognized or not."[372] It is in this sense that it qualifies to serve as a norm for recognizability. Butler argues that, "if we claim that recognizability is a universal potential and that it belongs to all persons, then, in a way, the problem before us is already solved. We have decided that some particular notion of 'personhood' will determine the scope and meaning of recognizability."[373] Therefore, she invites us to explore ways of guaranteeing that equal "personhood" is objectively accorded every human being irrespective of their circumstances.

Butler suggests that one way of proceeding in this exploration is to reframe wrong *schemas of intelligibility*. For her, intelligibility is "the general historical schema or schemas that establish domains of the knowable."[374] She distinguishes intelligibility from apprehension, which is "a mode of knowing that is not yet recognition" or may never be recognition as "not all acts of knowing are acts of recognition," but not *vice versa*. She argues that, "a life has to be intelligible *as a life*, has to conform to certain conceptions of what life is, in order to become recognizable. So just as norms of recognizability prepare the way for recognition, so schemas of intelligibility condition and produce norms of recognizability."[375] Butler's point is that our act of apprehension only proceeds through acknowledgment to responsive action, and so becomes an act of recognition, if what we apprehend is within our scope of comprehension. That is, only if we can properly understand them.

A subject's erroneous schemas of intelligibility can impede the recognizability of another, and culminate in a failure of recognition. For instance, if my schemas of intelligibility for a human person is erroneously limited to someone that looks like me, I may not accord equal personhood to anyone that looks otherwise. I can tolerate them as my unchosen neighbors without recognizing

---

[372] Mills, The Political Economy of Personhood, ibid.
[373] Butler, *Frames of War*, 5-6.
[374] Butler, *Frames of War*, 6.
[375] Butler, *Frames of War*, 6.

them as equal persons to me or my kind. I might even attempt to erase them through genocide like the Holocaust, Biafra and Rwanda or put them "in their place" through acts of extreme violence like lynching or police brutality or just keep them away from me and my kind through segregation, Apartheid, incarceration, redlining or impoverishment. I do this because my erroneous schemas of intelligibility wrongly portray them as unequal to me and my kind. Hence, they are unrecognizable to me as persons whose lives have equal value as mine and whose deaths should be grieved as mine, when they die. Thus, my erroneous schemas of intelligibility distort the recognizability of these people as equal persons and make their nonrecognition or misrecognition possible.

Correcting wrong *schemas of intelligibility* entails framing the right personhood for every human being. Butler suggests that one crucial way to frame the right personhood is "to *give face*" to every human person.[376] Indeed, at the root of "personhood" is the idea of a *face*. Etymologically, the word "person" is derived from *persona* (Latin) or *prosopon* (πρόσωπον; Ancient Greek), which originally referred to the masks or face worn by actors on stage. According to Emmanuel Levinas, ethics begins in the face of the other. This is because, "the face is, before all else, the channel through which otherness presents itself to us, and as such it lies outside and beyond what can be seen or experienced."[377] Hence, Butler argues that, "if, as the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas claims, it is the face of the other that demands from us an ethical response, then it would seem that norms that would allocate who is and who is not human arrive in visual form. These norms work to *give face* or to *efface*."[378] Thus, these norms can be either be rightly or wrongly framed or applied.

---

[376] Butler, *Frames of War*, 77.
[377] Mitchell, Plantations and Death Camps, 48. Citing Emmanuel Levinas,
[378] Butler, *Frames of War*, 77.

The norms that govern our schemas of intelligibility can be framed in ways that project the human face or destroy it. On the one hand, these norms can be framed to highlight the dignity of every human being in all its frailty, vulnerability, and precarity. This allows us to react with outrage when any human life is degraded and grieve it when it dies. For instance, in the parables, Jesus frames compassion as a universal norm for every human person. Thus framed, compassion enables the Good Samaritan or the sheep to appreciate the dignity of every human person and respond to the wounded traveler or the least of Jesus' brethren. On the other hand, compassion can be framed in a manner that excludes some human beings as underserving of it. For instance, the rich man expressed compassion only for his brothers – Lazarus was practically excluded. Thus, this parable also illustrates how our ambivalence in applying these norms to various contexts could constitute barriers to our ability to duly recognize another. This ambivalence hinders our quest to frame the right personhood for everyone as it makes human recognizability contingent. This does not mean that we cannot show more love to family or persons closer to us. It means that we ought to accord people, even strangers and unchosen neighbors, at least the minimum recognizability due to them.

3.2 Human Identity as *Imago Dei*: Theological Norm for Recognition

Christian theological anthropology posits that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God (*imago Dei*). *Imago Dei* designates the divine character of human personhood. Every human person is endowed with this divine character as an essential feature of their identity. Ethically, *imago Dei* denotes a common humanity where all human beings are equal. This notion of human equality is, actually, a modern reading of the doctrine of the *imago Dei*. Over the years, this doctrine has gone through a complex and nuanced evolution from biblical to modern times. In the past, the imago Dei was identified with rationality, reason (logos) or the soul or freedom etc. Later, there were debates about whether some persons have insufficient reason or are 'natural'

slaves or even lack a soul. But, a more recent notion of the *imago Dei* (which I use in this work) is that every human being – comprising of body, mind, spirit and soul – is created equal in the image and likeness of God.[379] I understand that expounding this history is vital to appreciating the full theological stature of *imago Dei*. But, it does not fall within the purview of this work.

My focus is to present the *imago Dei* as the norm for human personhood since it is common to all human persons. My argument is that human identity as *imago Dei* denotes the equality of all human beings because of which all human lives ought to matter and be properly grieved. Of course, we cannot grieve all deaths equally as I would grieve more intensely for my family than strangers. Still, those strangers ought to be grievable like my family or relatives even if less intensely. Hence, highlighting the equality of human personhood helps us address myriad biases and structures that tend to obscure the identity of those strangers as *imago Dei*. American pastor, Jerry Streets notes that, "the desire to protect group customs and group identity receives priority over the religious proclamation of our mutual brotherhood and sisterhood. Then religion functions to reinforce our tribal sense of self. Subtly, sometimes overtly, usually unconsciously, religious institutions become a means of preserving our divisions rather than affirming our common humanity." [380] Thus, religion is used in an ambivalent way for peace and conflict as we would discuss in the next chapter.

Yet, *imago Dei* is crucial for ethical living in society as it affirms human equality despite contingent differences like race, wealth, and power. Streets notes that the early 20th century social gospel and, later, the civil rights movements were largely motivated by the values framework of

---

[379] For more, see Daniel Simango, "The Imago Dei (Gen. 1:26-27): A History of Interpretation from Philo to the Present," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 42, no. 1 (2016): 172–84; George Hobson, *Imago Dei: Implications for Theology, Pastoral Care, Eucharist, Apologetics, Aesthetics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019), 29–109; Joseph Drexler-Dreis and Kristien Justaert, eds., *Beyond the Doctrine of Man: Decolonial Visions of the Human*, First edition (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2020), 91–112.

[380] Jerry Streets, "The Politics of Imago Dei: An Interview with Jerry Streets '75 M.Div.," *Reflections - Yale Divinity School*, Making Good: Can Faith Repair the World? no. Spring (2021), https://reflections.yale.edu/article/making-good-can-faith-repair-world/politics-imago-dei-interview-jerry-streets-75-mdiv.

Imago Dei — the prophetic ministry of justice, the assertion of our common humanity.[381] He acknowledges that "Imago Dei" *per se* is not an explicit part of these movements. But, he argues that "the values of Imago Dei are at stake whenever we fight against the evils of racism, sexism, homophobia, poverty, materialism, and militarism."[382] Hence, *imago Dei* is not a mere religious idea, it has a framework of values that can be universally applied within and outside religion.

The doctrine of *imago Dei* is at the core of the theological anthropology of several religious traditions like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. From the Torah to the Pauline Epistles and the Hadiths, the sacred texts affirm that human beings were created in the image and likeness of God. For instance, texts like Genesis 1:26–27, 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15; Sahih al-Bukhari 6227; and Muslim 2612 and 2841, all affirm *creatio imago Dei.*[383] Other world religions also espouse the doctrine of *imago Dei* in one form or another.[384] For instance, Zen Buddhism teaches that human beings undergo three distinct stages of transformation. The first of these stages corresponds to the Christian doctrine of *imago Dei.*[385] Also, in African anthropologies like the Asante of Ghana, humans are viewed as microcosms of, yet unique beings from, God.[386] These religious traditions commonly hint at the essential divine character of human personhood. However, what it actually means to be created in God's image and likeness is strongly debated in many religious traditions.

Among Christian scholars, these debates are mostly based on their varying interpretations of the creation narratives, especially Genesis 1:27: "*So God created man in His own image; in the*

---

[381] Streets, The Politics of Imago Dei, ibid.
[382] Streets, The Politics of Imago Dei, ibid.
[383] See Matthew Puffer, "Human Dignity after Augustine's Imago Dei: On the Sources and Uses of Two Ethical Terms," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 37, no. 1 (2017): 65, https://doi.org/10.1353/sce.2017.0010..
[384] See David Rowsome, "The Five Major World Religions and the Image of God," *Daily Declaration* (blog), October 28, 2021, https://blog.canberradeclaration.org.au/2021/10/29/world-religions-image-of-god/.
[385] See Jiani Fan, "Images of Mind, Images of God: Mirror as Metaphor in Chinese Buddhism and Early Mysticism," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 38 (2018): 173–85, 173, https://doi.org/10.1353/bcs.2018.0017.
[386] See Eric Antwi, *Human Creation in the Image of God*, 2018, https://www.peterlang.com/document/1056573.

image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (NKJV).[387] Three broad views have emerged over the past two millennia: *substantive*, *relational* and *functional* views. Substantive views interpret the *imago Dei* as consisting in some features [psychological, physical and spiritual] that are intrinsic to human nature; relational views interpret the *imago Dei* as pertaining to the relationship between God and humans as well as among human [which is understood as extrinsic to the human nature]; while the functional views interpret the *imago Dei* as the human capacity to function in certain unique ways [like being rational] that differentiate them from other creatures like animals and plants.[388] Perhaps, the distinctions implied by these views are crucial for understanding the evolution and debates about the doctrine of the *imago Dei* within the Christian tradition. But, the lines between these distinctions get blurred in the actual application of this doctrine to real life situations since human personhood is so complex and profound that one can actually define the *imago Dei* as a combination of all the three views.

In this context, therefore, I mostly define the *imago Dei* as a divine attribute that is both a *substantive* part of the human personhood and the infinite source of the dignity of the human person as a being who shares a unique *relationship* with God by which we are endowed with faculties to *function* in unique ways. By this definition, I mean that the *imago Dei* is substantive to human identity as an integral and essential part of being a human person. The human identity draws its profound dignity from its unique relationship with God, who created humans in God's own image and likeness, and endowed them with the capability of performing certain functions that

---

[387] See Daniel Simango, "The Meaning of the Imago Dei (Gen 1: 26-27) in Genesis 1-11," *Old Testament Essays* 25, no. 3 (January 2012): 638, https://doi.org/10.10520/EJC132559.

[388] See Simango, The Meaning of the Imago Dei, 838-9. For more, see: Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 498. Joshua R. Farris, "An Immaterial Substance View: Imago Dei in Creation and Redemption," *Heythrop Journal* 58, no. 1 (2017): 108–23, https://doi.org/10.1111/heyj.12274; Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*, 1st ed., Matrix of Christian Theology 1 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); Marc Cortez (Marc Allen) editor and Michael P Jensen (Michael Peter) editor, *T & T Clark Reader in Theological Anthropology* (London, UK ; New York, NY, USA: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018).

distinguish them from other creatures. While the inability of specific individuals to perform these functions does not diminish their status as human persons, the importance of enabling all human beings to attain their best possible level of this unique functionality is the essence of human society and the hallmark of Christian ethics. For instance, human flourishing is about maximizing our potentials to contribute to and benefit from society by collaborating towards the common good using our unique endowments as humans.

Moreover, the examples of Jesus in the parables apparently refer to normally functioning human beings who find themselves in precarious circumstances in which they need the compassion of other persons in the society to enable them function as they should. This category of people includes the wounded traveller, poor and ailing Lazarus, Jesus' hungry, thirsty, homeless, naked, sick and incarcerated brethren. The judgment, here, is whether or not we are bothered enough to help such people as much as we should. Clearly, the good characters were so bothered while the bad characters did not – this is the decisive difference here. The point is that, if even that one broad category of human beings were to be duly recognized and treated as human persons in the society by the apposite recognizers, then, much of the injustices and suffering in the world would be amply alleviated and humanity could flourish better. Of course, there may be borderline cases that do not fit in this category, but those can be more suitably addressed in other works. Hence, to buttress the above point, I will restrict myself to presenting the *imago Dei* as a reliable theological norm for human personhood without necessarily delving into the systematics of the doctrine of *imago Dei*.

Primarily, I use the term "human personhood" in the basic theological sense articulated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), according to which, "the human person, created in the image of God, is a being at once corporeal and spiritual" (§362). The Catechism explains that, this theological understanding of human personhood is affirmed in the biblical creation account

when God created humans out "of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and [hu]man became a living being" (§362). On the dualistic attempts by some scholars to distinguish between soul and body, and identify the human person with the soul alone, the Catechism argues that the human person comprises both soul and body – whole and entire. Indeed, it acknowledges that the term "soul" often refers to human life or the entire human person in Sacred Scripture. But, it insists that the soul also refers to "the innermost aspect of [hu]man, that which is of greatest value in him, by which he is most especially in God's image, which signifies the spiritual principle in man. The human body also shares in this dignity of "the image of God" (§363-364).[389]

Human personhood draws its characteristic dignity and profound mystery from its identity as the *imago Dei*. The Catechism teaches that, "[hu]man alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life . . . This is the fundamental reason for his dignity. Being in the image of God, the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone" (§356). This dignity is profoundly etched in the mystery of the human personhood. The American poet and theologian, George Hobson notes that "all creatures, God-made, are mysterious, for they participate in being and cannot be comprehended or defined merely by enumerating their properties, even if this were possible."[390] Still, Hobson proceeds to argue that the human identity as *imago Dei* confers human personhood with a mystery that is more profound than that of other creatures. According to him, "the mystery of the human person is far deeper than that of other creatures. Made in God's image, we participate in his infinity. We are spiritual beings. Every man and woman is unfathomable, open in principle, through his or her spirit, to the spirit of God, and so open also, in communion with the author of all being, to range upon range, dimension upon

---

[389] Saint Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 120/140 – c. 200/203) was the first known Christian scholar to situate the notion of *imago Dei* in the body. See M. Shawn Copeland, "Enfleshing Love: A Decolonial Theological Reading of Beloved, " in Drexler-Dreis and Justaert (eds), *Beyond the Doctrine of Man,* 91-112, 93.
[390] Hobson, *Imago Dei*, 101.

dimension, of reality."[391] He notes that, as *imago Dei,* human beings are rooted in God's eternity and human destiny is unto everlasting life in God's love – union or friendship with God.

By its origin as *imago Dei* and its destiny in God, human personhood is endowed with both a proctological mystery and an eschatological profundity. Regarding this profundity, Hobson notes that, "our being and destiny, individually and corporately, are eschatological, that is, they go out beyond the frame of this space-time world and find their home in God."[392] This integral profundity concomitant with the human identity as *imago Dei* makes human personhood both consistent for every human being and stable in every circumstance. As a consistent and stable norm for human personhood, then, *imago Dei* accounts for the unconditional recognizability of all human beings. This is because, the *substantive* divine attribute that marks a human person's unique *relationship* with God by which we are gifted with unique *functional* capabilities can still be recognized equally for every human being despite the differentials in our particular experiences or life situations. In other words, *imago Dei* is the universal attribute or *quid* that identifies a human being as a person.

American theological anthropologist, Ryan Peterson, argues that *imago Dei* is humanity's identity, and that this identity is basic to all human existence.[393] Here, identity means, "the condition of fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else."[394] The identity of every human person is determined by the fact of their being created in the image and likeness of God. As a fundamental human identity, *imago Dei* is crucial for understanding why human beings are spiritual, rational, physical, and relational, and why they have the particular set of relationships. All human attributes and capabilities are, in fact, consequent upon and subsequent to their basic

---

[391] Hobson, 101.
[392] Hobson, 101.
[393] Ryan S. Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity: A Theological Interpretation* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016), 1.
[394] Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity*, 54.

identity as *imago Dei*.[395] Hence, *imago Dei* is crucial in highlighting the links between identity and recognition. This was the impetus for Charles Taylor's proposition that: "due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need."[396] Taylor describes identity as a person's understanding of who they are or of the fundamental features that define them as human beings.[397]

As I explained in the last chapter, Taylor's socio-political ethics investigates how people form their identities amid diverse conceptions of selfhood. He argues that we become selves only in dialogue with others since our identity is intricately linked to recognition or otherwise by others. This implies that our identity can either be affirmed or distorted by others. It also implies that our recognizability or otherwise is largely a function of whether our identity was properly framed or not; whether we are properly identifiable as human beings within the schemas of intelligibility of the apposite recognizer or not. For instance, in the parable of the last judgment, the schema that framed Jesus into recognizability had framed his brethren out. The implication was that the dignity and rights that would have been accorded to Jesus were denied his brethren.

Imago Dei provides a firm theological foundation for establishing the inviolable dignity of every human person and for claiming their fundamental rights as humans beings. American moral theologian, Darlene Weaver describes human dignity as "a value commitment of inclusive regard for the equal moral worth of fellow human beings and a corresponding responsibility to dignify our own and others' lives, especially the most vulnerable, by cultivating the human and common good."[398] Weaver identifies a fourfold meaning of human dignity in Catholic tradition: "dignity is

---

[395] Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity*, 3.
[396] Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, 26.
[397] See Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann, Revised edition (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25.
[398] Darlene Fozard Weaver, "DIGNITY: A Catholic Perspective," in *Value and Vulnerability*, ed. Matthew R. Petrusek and Jonathan Rothchild, An Interfaith Dialogue on Human Dignity (University of Notre Dame Press, 2020), 32, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv19m64x1.6.

(1) an affirmation of human worth, (2) an encapsulation of the human good, (3) a moral criterion that constrains and entitles, and (4) a moral expression of Christian humanism."[399] As an inherent worth, human dignity affirms the non-instrumental value of human beings. This means that human beings cannot completely lose their dignity and that they cannot be treated as objects.[400] This echoes Jessica Benjamin's point in the last chapter that the concept of intersubjectivity was meant to address "the problem of defining the other as object."[401] The constant danger posed by this problem entails that dignity is not simply a dormant or latent worth that humans possess, but a moral ideal that we must always strive to affirm in our relationship with others by living virtuously and acting purposefully in a manner that does not subjugate any human being to the level of an object.[402] In other words, it is not enough to acknowledge that people have dignity; we also have the obligation to act decisively in affirming, promoting and protecting this dignity in human society.

Of course, the significance of dignity as a moral concept is contested. Its critics "argue that the grounds of dignity are either problematic or overly particular, that dignity is ineffective as a moral concept, and that appeals to dignity impose one group's cultural or religious convictions on others."[403] They present the persistent violation of human life and rights on a massive scale as millions face unimaginable horrors from racism, homophobia, violence, and human trafficking as strong evidence against the effectiveness of dignity as a moral concept. But, its proponents argue that "appeals to human dignity are meant to respond to such atrocities, to exhort our consciences, and to ground moral understanding of and solutions for social problems."[404] Thus, in the face of many complex and seemingly intractable problems, appeals to human dignity based on *imago Dei*

---

[399] Weaver, Dignity: A Catholic Perspective, 31-32.
[400] Weaver, Dignity: A Catholic Perspective, 32.
[401] Jessica Benjamin, "An Outline of Intersubjectivity: The Development of Recognition," *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 7, no. Suppl (1990): 34.
[402] Weaver, Dignity: A Catholic Perspective, 36.
[403] Weaver, Dignity: A Catholic Perspective, 31.
[404] Weaver, Dignity: A Catholic Perspective, 31.

remains crucial for cultivating true friendships aimed towards the common good of every society. This is the end of Catholic social ethics as well as the social implications of *creatio imago Dei.*

The social implications of *creatio imago Dei* is popularized in modern ethical discourse by the language of human dignity and human rights. The American ethicist, Matthew Puffer argues that modern proponents of *imago Dei* often treat God's image as interchangeable with human dignity. Pope Francis appeals to *imago Dei* and human dignity almost interchangeably in ecclesial documents and in the public square.[405] This interchange is not restricted to a religious usage alone. The German philosopher Jürgen Habermas argues that the concept of *imago Dei* translates into the equal dignity of all human beings and that it is the unconditional grounding for human rights.[406] Of course, not all scholars would share this idea.[407] But, it is indubitable that human dignity and human rights have become crucial concepts in the secular arena – from presidential addresses and New York Times op-eds to the Irish, German, and South African constitutions and International Criminal Court rulings, they have emerged as key terms in the modern socio-political vocabulary – and that these terms have strong theological foundations in the doctrine of the *imago Dei*.[408]

---

[405] Puffer, "Human Dignity after Augustine's Imago Dei," 65.

[406] Puffer, "Human Dignity after Augustine's Imago Dei," 66.

[407] Puffer points out that the appeal to human dignity is deeply contested as "not all philosophers and political theorists share Habermas's judgments about the image of God, its straight forward translation into human dignity, or its potential for grounding human rights. Analytic philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff, for example, contends that the "image of God is not adequate ... for grounding natural human rights." It might provide a basis for some value, but according to Wolterstorff, the status of inviolable dignity needed to ground human rights does not derive from the image of God but from a separate divine conferral of worth. Legal theorist Jeremy Waldron considers the translation question a bit more complicated. He recognizes that the image of God, like human dignity, has a long history and a wide range of meanings: "if [the image of God] is looked to as a ground [for human rights], [which interpretation we select] may make a considerable difference to the character of the rights theory we erect on its foundation." That is, depending on what the image of God names, its moral and legal entailments will vary considerably. Still other scholars are far less sanguine about the utility of human dignity, whether for bioethics, human rights, or the public sphere. Ruth Macklin famously argues that "dignity is a useless concept," and Stephen Pinker similarly perceives invocations of human dignity as a ploy manifesting the "stupidity" of cultural "theocons." On the other hand, many Thomists, humanists, Kantians, and legal scholars consider an affirmation of human dignity essential for precisely those debates in which Macklin and Pinker dismiss it. Theorists and advocates on both sides of a range of contemporary social and political issues - from abortion, assisted suicide, and genetic experimentation to torture, immigration policy, and reparations - invoke human dignity to buttress their respective claims and positions." Puffer, *ibid*, 66.

[408] Puffer, "Human Dignity after Augustine's Imago Dei," 66.

By presenting the *imago Dei* as the theological norm of human personhood, I do not equate God's image with human personhood nor do I argue that being created in God's image and likeness is the only parameter for being a human person. Rather, I argue that the doctrine of *imago Dei* is a corrective for framing the right personhood for every human being as it gives consistency to human personhood irrespective of circumstantial disparities like race, wealth and power. *Imago Dei* as the common human identity makes human recognizability more stable as every human person can be recognized as one endowed with this unconditional divine attribute or what the Irish theologian, Enda McDonagh, calls the "divine concentrate." Therefore, as I will highlight in the next section, recognition or its failure becomes a matter of whether we accept or reject this divine concentrate when encountering the other: do we recognize the other "as *imago Dei*" in their otherness?

3.3 Encountering the Other "as *Imago Dei*" in their Otherness: A Paradigm for Recognition

Enda McDonagh is one of the foremost contemporary moral theologians who underscored the significance of human experience for morality and ethics.[409] McDonagh does not opt for sheer subjectivism. Rather, he opposes the kind of moral investigation that starts from abstract systems and values [religious or secular] that are not rooted in pertinent experience.[410] McDonagh argues

---

[409] Enda McDonagh (1930-2021) was a renowned Irish priest and moral theologian. "Born in Bekan, County Mayo in 1930 to school-teacher parents, Enda studied at St Jarlath's College, Tuam and entered St Patrick's College, Maynooth in 1948, where he was ordained to the priesthood in 1955. At Maynooth he took a BSc, BD, and STL, followed by a DD in 1957. Following his degrees in Maynooth he studied at the Angelicum University in Rome and at the University of Munich. At Munich he completed a second doctorate in Canon Law (DCL), its subject being church–state relations in the Irish constitution. He had already been appointed as Professor of Moral Theology and Canon Law at St Patrick's College, Maynooth in 1958 when he was just twenty-eight years old – an indication that the leadership at Maynooth had recognised his intellectual brilliance and future promise. Apart from occasional short-term appointments at the University of Notre Dame (1979–82) and St John's University New York (1990) as well as time spent in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) (regularly between 1973 and 1978) on behalf of the Catholic Institute for International Relations, his career and retirement were mainly spent in Maynooth. Yet this rootedness in Maynooth belied an extraordinarily cosmopolitan life and global orientation. He retired from the Faculty of Theology in 1995 and continued to write, teach, advise and advocate on behalf of those who are vulnerable until his death on 24 February 2021." Linda F. Hogan, "Doing the Truth: The Life and Religious Vision of Enda McDonagh," *Studies* (Dublin) 111, no. 441 (2022): 26, 28.

[410] Enda McDonagh, *Gift and Call: Towards a Christian Theology of Morality* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975), 9.

that human experience should be the starting-point of moral investigation.[411] In his own moral investigations, recognition ranks among the key human experiences that can be regarded as the starting-point for his social ethics. His thesis was that recognition, as a profound human experience, is essential for answering the divine call to holiness in human society. He argues that there is a deep connection between otherness and holiness since God is the ultimate other.[412] This connection is activated, mediated, and actualized through the process of recognition when we encounter the other *as imago Dei.* Hence, recognizing the other in their otherness as *imago Dei*, with their fancies and flaws, is fundamental to our holiness as it renders us vulnerable to God – the ultimate Other.[413]

Theologically, recognition is not just a fundamental starting-point for moral investigation. It also mediates moral investigation. As a lived human experience, recognition is a vital constituent of the moral life. As a product of otherness, recognition is constitutive of moral living as long as we encounter others in their otherness. In recognizing the other as *imago Dei,* as mediator of the holy, we exploit the innate potential of every human encounter to be a sanctifying experience as we mutually render each other vulnerable to the holy.[414] No human encounter is morally neutral: "every person, place or time we encounter has the beauty and horror that can render us vulnerable to the holy."[415] Hence, moral investigation is a question of whether or not the other's recognizability "as *imago Dei"* is either enhanced or diminished by the beauty and horror of our daily living.

---

[411] McDonagh, *Gift and Call,* 8.
[412] Enda McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy: In Faith, Morality and Art* (Dublin: Columba Press, 2004), 7.
[413] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 13.
[414] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 7.
[415] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 12.

In daily living, our experience of beauty and horror can expose or conceal both our identity and inherent dignity as *imago Dei.* McDonagh notes that, "in daily human interchange, the divine concentrate is both revealed by a smile of recognition and concealed by the scowl of rejection." [416] The idea of smile echoes the idea of face in Levinas and Butler – we reveal the face of the *imago Dei* by recognizing the other in their otherness.[417] Our encounter with the other can give *face* to the *imago Dei* or *deface*, if not *efface*, it. Giving face to the other can mediate compassion like in the parable of the Good Samaritan. But, defacing or effacing the other can mediate their extermination. For example, Europeans labeled Native American Indians as "violent savages"*,* white supremacists labeled blacks as "subhuman animals", Ottoman Turks labeled Armenians as "spies, infidels, and traitors", Nazis labeled Jews as "rats", and Hutus labeled Tutsis as "cockroaches."[418] These acts of defacement by human subjects who used false labels to relegate their fellow human beings as mere object culminated in various evils like genocides, slavery, racism, the Holocaust, and Apartheid.

Encountering the other "as *Imago Dei"* morally obligates us to properly recognize their inherent value and inviolable dignity, which is due to an *imago Dei*. Based on this recognition, we ought to treat every human being [Jesus' brethren] as we would treat Jesus himself as he is the principal and perfect *imago Dei*: "He [Jesus Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn

---

[416] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 13.

[417] Indeed, Emmanuel Levinas was influential to McDonagh's discovery of the significance of the other for morality and ethics. see McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 8.

[418] For more, see: David Livingstone Smith, *Less than Human: Why We Demean, Enslave, and Exterminate Others*, 1st ed.. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011);.Beverly Eileen Mitchell, *Plantations and Death Camps: Religion, Ideology, and Human Dignity*. Innovations (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 39; John Skinnader, "Inter-Ethnic Conflicts in Africa – the Rwandan Tragedy" in *Africa Towards the Priorities of Mission,* (eds.) Paulinus Odozor, Chinedu Amadi-Izuogu & Elochukwu Uzukwu (Enugu: Snaap Press, 2000), 49; Antoinette Marthe Balihe, "Historical Injustice and the Absence of Truthfulness about the Rwandan Tragedy" in *Africa Towards the Priorities of Mission,* 26; J. J. Carney, *Rwanda before the Genocide: Catholic Politics and Ethnic Discourse in the Late Colonial Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2-3; Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, First edition.., Oprah's Book Club. 2020 Selection (New York: Random House, 2020); Keenan, "The Color Line, Race, and Caste."

over all creation."[419] St. Augustine notes that Jesus Christ, the first-born of all creation, is the principal image of God who reflects God perfectly.[420] Hence, following the parable of the last judgment, when we accept the other in their otherness by a smile of recognition, we are accepting Jesus in the other. Likewise, when we reject others by a scowl of nonrecognition or misrecognition, we are rejecting Jesus in the other. Moreover, we can both reveal and conceal our own value and dignity as *imago Dei* depending on how we treat others. A smile of recognition reveals our own dignity and affirms the equal dignity of others as *imago Dei* while a scowl of rejection conceals or distorts this equal dignity. Therefore, in recognizing others, we also make ourselves recognizable.

Unfortunately, we seem to be more inclined to reject than to accept others, especially those we encounter in precarious situations. This is because we are more likely to be scared by the horror of their situation than to be attracted by the beauty of our common humanity. Of course, there are deeper theological reasons for our sinful inclination like the original sin and *libido dominandi*. In summary, the doctrine of the original sin holds that, as a result of the first sin by Adam and Eve (cf. Genesis 3), human beings inherit a tainted nature that has a proclivity for sin; while *libido dominandi* or "lust for domination" is a phrase used by St. Augustine in the preface of the *City of God* to argue that this proclivity for sin is the overarching motivation for relations in human society. But, as noted above, I will not delve into the systematics of these theological concepts here.[421] I

---

[419] Colossians 1:15 (New King James Version)

[420] Augustine. 1988. St Augustine: on the Holy Trinity; doctrinal treatises; moral treatises. In *Post-Nicene Fathers.* Edited by P. Schaff, Nicene and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 3: 142. Cited in Daniel Simango, "The Imago Dei (Gen. 1:26-27): A History of Interpretation from Philo to the Present," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 42, no. 1 (2016): 174.

[421] For more, see: Simango, 174; Thomas G. (Thomas Gerard) Weinandy, "St. Irenaeus and the Imago Dei : The Importance of Being Human," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 6, no. 4 (2003): 15–34, https://doi.org/10.1353/log.2003.0048; Clodagh Weldon, "Original Sin," in *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion*, ed. David A. Leeming, Kathryn Madden, and Stanton Marlan (Boston, MA: Springer US, 2010), 646–47, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-71802-6_480; Hans Madueme and Michael R. E. Reeves, eds., *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin: Theological, Biblical, And Scientific Perspectives* (Grand Rapid, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2014); Gerald Boersma, *Augustine's Early Theology of Image: A Study in the Development of pro-Nicene Theology*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016); "Catechism of the Catholic Church," 404, accessed March 26, 2023, https://www.usccb.org/sites/default/files/flipbooks/catechism/102/; "Catholic Encyclopedia: Original Sin," accessed March 26, 2023, https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11312a.htm#I. Irenaeus.

simply wish to highlight McDonagh's observation that "we often engage in mutual degradation rather than mutual sanctification because we fail to see the otherness of others as mediation of the ultimate other."[422] Thus, there seems to be a prevalence of rejection in our societies.

Theologically, rejecting our fellow human beings is the beginning of social sin.[423] It tends to eclipse our common humanity and sense of community. As we estrange others and ignore our mutual need for recognition from one another. Our "mutual estrangement and conflict goes against God's call to mutual loving, peace and fulfillment."[424] And, ethically, it goes against the call to true friendship with God and neighbor; and this friendship is based on mutual recognition. Hence, addressing recognition as a vital human need ought to be a fundamental and constitutive point of departure for doing a proper social ethics as it is a *sine qua non* for true friendship that is aimed at human flourishing and the common good. Therefore, this section explores how McDonagh's tripartite act of love – *letting be, letting go,* and *letting God* – can serve as an ethical paradigm for addressing the need for recognition in a manner that can enable us build true friendship with God and neighbor in modern multicultural and pluralistic societies like Nigeria, USA, and India.

As we would see shortly, the concept of *letting be* highlights the importance of recognition as an unconditional acceptance of the other as a distinct other as well as a genuine effort to enable them flourish in their otherness. *Letting go* marks the fullness of *letting be* when the other is

---

1953. Against Heresies. In *Ante-Nicene Fathers.* Edited by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1: 528. Cited in Simango, "The Imago Dei," 174. Michael R. Kelly and Brian T. Harding, "Bergson's Theory of War: A Study of Libido Dominandi," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 44, no. 5 (2018): 593–611, https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453718762621; Luke Zerra, "Escaping the Libido Dominandi: Authority and Accountability in Jenson's Ecclesiology," *Pro Ecclesia (Northfield, Minn.)* 28, no. 2 (2019): 193–209, https://doi.org/10.1177/1063851219842404; Jiani Fan, "From Libido Dominandi in Disguise to an Apologetic Device? Invention and reinvention of Sweetness (Douceur) in La Rochefoucauld's and Pascal's works," *Papers on French seventeenth century literature* XLVIII, no. 95 (2021): 319-, https://doi.org/10.2357/PFSCL-2021-0023.
[422] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 8.
[423] Miroslav Volf, "Exclusion and Embrace – Theological Reflection in the Wake of Ethnic Cleansing," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 29, no. 2 (1992): 230-; Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*, Revised and updated.. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2019).
[424] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 8.

genuinely respected and regarded as a distinct human subject that can engage in ethical relations in their own rights and fulfill their ethical obligations as free and rational beings. Finally, *letting God* marks the temporal and ultimate end of the human letting be and letting go, which is opening up to true friendship with God towards our final destiny as *imago Dei* – union with God. This opening, which links us back to the Hegelian concept of *Freigabe* discussed in the last chapter, makes us vulnerable to God – the ultimate and holy Other. Hence, McDonagh's paradigm is crucial for depicting the various ways that we can address recognition as a vital human need in society despite the precariousness of human life. It also highlights how our vulnerability derives impetus from God's own vulnerability and how our mutual recognition orders us to our eschatological end.

3.3.1 *Letting Be* – Recognition as Acceptance and Enablement of the Other

Letting be basically means allowing and/or helping the other to be their authentic self. It can be active or passive. Actively, *letting be* involves the actions that enable the other to flourish in their otherness. Passively, it is the sincere disposition to fully accept the other in their otherness. McDonagh explains that, "this human letting be, in its accepting and enabling senses, renders each human vulnerable to the holy, to the immediate sacredness of every human being, including the self as other, and to the sacred character of the universe itself as created by, reflecting and even participating in the holiness of God."[425] He takes this idea from the creation formula in chapter one of the Book of Genesis: "And God said: Let there be ... And God saw that it was good."[426] He notes that, immediately following the creation narrative, the Fall in chapter three of Genesis, basically, "reveals the deeper drama of light and darkness, of good and evil involved in the confrontation between a divine authority and human freedom, requiring a new, prolonged, painful

---

[425] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 16.
[426] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 12.

but finally redemptive 'Let there be' by the creator turned redeemer God."[427] Therefore, the human act of *letting be* is a form of participation in God's ongoing creative-redemptive work in human society.

Letting be is, fundamentally, an ethical response to the call of the other – God, neighbor and nature. Theologically, it is an ethical response to the divine call for human participation in God's holiness. Letting be – which, in practical terms, involves accepting and enabling the other – reflects the redemptive-creative work of God as it opens us to the holy in other human beings and in all creation.[428] McDonagh notes that, "human otherness and that of the rest of the natural world demands a recognition and respect which ultimately rests in its rootedness in God and God's continuing creative activity, the divine letting be in which humans are invited and empowered to partake." [429] He distinguishes the divine letting be from the human letting be. The divine letting be is, "the creative and saving Word of God," who also enjoys human forms through the creation of humanity in God's image and the incarnation of the divine Word in Jesus Christ. The human letting be was doubly endorsed in the mystery of redemptive incarnation, following the mystery of *creatio ex nihilo* through which humanity was first endowed with the mysterious divine concentrate – *Imago Dei*.[430] Moreover, *letting be* applies to "the natural world with its othernesses offering human beings beauty and sustenance and at the same time demanding recognition and respect."[431] Hence, McDonagh argues that letting nature be is the beginning of environmental wisdom [i.e. the wisdom to *work with* the earth as kin and not *work against* it as rulers or "negligent" stewards].[432]

---

427 McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 12.
428 McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 12-13.
429 McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 15.
430 McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 12.
431 McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 14.
432 McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 14.

Letting be allows for diversity. It helps us recognize the other as God' image, even if they may also be sinful – just like ourselves. McDonagh views moral investigation as, primarily, about discovering and enacting the complex demands of passive and active letting be, which is a lifelong task for human beings as well as a creation-long commitment of the Creator. This lifelong striving to discover and enact the task of letting be is the context for human holiness. In other words, "it is in that loving recognition and acceptance of the other that one first becomes vulnerable to the holy."[433] This is why all human togetherness has the potential to be sanctifying as each renders the other vulnerable to the holy. But, human holiness is already tainted by sin. Thus, it is disguised and distorted – it needs grace. Hence, humanity has to open up to the sanctifying presence of not only the human other, but also of the ultimate other – God. This act of opening up to God – the ultimate other – is *letting God.* We will discuss this in more detail in the subsection after next. In this subsection, however, we shall highlight how the human act of letting be is modeled or structured after God's examples of letting be in human history.

Ethically, "letting be" is shown in acts of love that are rooted in social justice and freedom. Such acts of love are not merely aimed at individual subjects, but for the flourishing and peace of society as it helps us to properly celebrate otherness.[434] McDonagh views social justice as the basis for society. He describes it as "a moral quality of human relationships and structures as they cohere to form a particular or worldwide society" and that, as a moral quality, social justice is intricately linked to Christian faith."[435] He suggests that human justice has to be modelled after God's own justice since "justice is the basic characteristic of God's relationship with humankind."[436] Also, he

---

[433] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 13.
[434] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 14
[435] Enda McDonagh, *The Demands of Simple Justice: A Study of the Church, Politics and Violence with Special Reference to Zimbabwe* (Dublin; New York: Gill and Macmillan, 1980), 19.
[436] Enda McDonagh, *The Making of Disciples: Tasks of Moral Theology*, Good News Studies; v. 5 (Wilmington, DE, Wilmington, Del.: MGlazier, 1982), 119.

suggests that human freedom has to be modeled after God's respect for humanity. He notes that, "his (God's) regard for their freedom, the detailed expression of concern for their genuine development, his judgment on their failure, and his fidelity to his commitments, provide the basis, the model and the capacity for their respect for one another. That respect translates into justice as the form of loving which refuses possession but overcomes indifference."[437] We will see shortly that this non-indifferent refusal to possess the other is letting go.

Active letting be can be interpersonal or socio-political. It involves responsive actions like a smile of recognition, a seat on a bus for an older passenger, letting another through the door first. These acts of social politeness are the enactment of the recognition and acceptance of the other in their otherness, as equally and fully person.[438] Hence, the decline of social politeness can actually be an indication of a societal failure of recognition – an *irruption* of the global crisis of recognition. McDonagh argues that, while the decline of many conventions that express social politeness may be no more than a passing phase for the younger generation, "it may also be a symptom of declining respect for people, particularly the elderly or the otherwise limited in physical or mental energy and social aggression."[439] Family, friends and professional care-givers have historically provided acceptance and enabling, but letting be actually ought to be the primary goal of politics. According to McDonagh, "letting be as enabling people to realize their full potential as human beings and citizens is the first and most important task in politics." [440] Certainly, the meaning of a full potential and how to attain it might vary from place to place and from generation to generation, political leaders at all levels should always prioritize the task of actively guaranteeing citizens' *letting be*.[441]

---

[437] McDonagh, *The Making of Disciples,* 119.
[438] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 13.
[439] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 13.
[440] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 13-14.
[441] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 17.

Passive letting be is not sheer tolerance or mere indifference. It is an act of genuine love in which we passively let the other come into existence as God's creature by accepting and respecting them in their otherness while actively enabling them to flourish.[442] Although, accepting the other is a human act, letting be is primarily a sacrament of God's patient love for humanity. When modeled after the divine love, the full meaning of the human passive letting be as an act of love emerges. It becomes the patient and loving recognition and acceptance of the otherness of the other as a divine gift rather than rejecting it as a personal or socio-political threat. McDonagh notes that, "the justice of respect, concern, fidelity and commitment gives content to the enabling power of love by restraining its thrust to domination and oppression while harnessing its energies to the authentic work of enablement."[443] In this sense, passive letting be can be a veritable paradigm for restraining our *libido dominandi* in inter-personal and socio-political relations in spite of the Fall.

Passively accepting the other as they are does not preclude helping one another to correct our failures nor does it deny the moral distortions caused by the original sin. Actually, the human letting be draws its impetus from the divine letting be as a form of grace. McDonagh argues that, justice involved in letting be must also express the righteousness of God as it provides the criterion for human responsiveness, judgement of human failures or distortions as well as the source of forgiveness and power in for overcoming these failures and distortions.[444] He notes that, "such justice must also reflect the clear-sighted judgment of god on the failures and distortions of human love and power. It can thus provide the insight and commitment to overcome these failures and distortions on the model of the persistent and transforming activity of Yahweh and Jesus."[445] Thus,

---

[442] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 14.
[443] McDonagh, *The Making of Disciples,* 119.
[444] McDonagh, *The Demands of Simple Justice,* 19.
[445] McDonagh, *The Making of Disciples,* 119.

the human justice has to draw on God's righteousness in all its divine depths of gift and call, judgment and saving power, in Jesus Christ. Though a human act, it is enabled by divine grace.

The telos of *letting be* is to enable all human beings exercise agency as distinct subjects. By fully accepting and enabling all to flourish, social justice could be given appropriate historical expression in the emergence of each and all as subjects of their own history and in human history.[446] It is in this justice that divine love finds genuine expression and political power is rightly exercised. McDonagh argues that, "it is only as historical subjects that human beings can respond to God and to one another, that they can become disciples of Jesus, sons of the Father and participate in the inbreaking kingdom."[447] Thus, it is a crucial task of discipleship to provide and promote this historical subjecthood and to model it after the example of Jesus attending primarily to the socially marginalized and historically invincible. This is the point of the above parables. It is also the basis for the preferential option for the poor and marginalized in Catholic social teaching.

3.3.2 *Letting Go* – Recognition as Respect for the Other's Distinctive Subjecthood

Letting go is the full attainment of *letting be.* It is accomplished when the other is not only enabled to flourish, but also fully allowed to live as a distinct subject.[448] McDonagh illustrates the link between *letting be* and *letting go* using the analogy of an artist and their work. He notes that,

> Letting be and letting go are aptly illustrated in the work of artists. The painful labor whereby a writer or other artist brings a work into existence, enables it to be, can lead to the pain of deciding when the work is finished, and when it may be offered to publisher or public, when its creator will let it go. For some artists and some work these decisions may prove impossible so the artist is trapped by the unfinished or unfinishable work and the public deprived of the pleasure of it. Acceptance of the work with its flaws and in its otherness means letting it go so that it is no longer simply under the artist's control, but in a strange world where its reception may offer reassuring encouragement or dispiriting discouragement. In the releasing as

---

[446] McDonagh, *The Making of Disciples,* 119-20.
[447] McDonagh, *The Making of Disciples,* 120.
[448] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 16.

in the making, the joy and the pain will be mixed but both may contribute to the growth of the artist and the enrichment of her society.[449]

As an act of love, *letting go* is mostly characterized by the respect for the freedom and privacy of the other as a subject in their own right. This is not optional. It is part of our ethical responsibility toward the other. Basically, *letting go* is a responsive act that expresses our recognition of the other's distinctive subjecthood and an affirmation of their fundamental rights to be different from anyone else. Recognition, as *letting go,* involves both acknowledging and respecting the other's difference. This encompasses Chares Taylor's idea of politics of difference. For Taylor, as for McDonagh, recognition is not only about our sameness. It is also, largely, about our difference.[450] McDonagh notes that human rights derive from the recognition of each person's distinctiveness or "differentiation" from everyone else, both individually and collectively, as well as the codification and institutionalization of such recognition through laws.[451]

Letting go is, essentially, a full embrace of our natural limitedness and mutual vulnerability. It entails fully surrendering one's desire to dominate [*libido dominandi*] and control others. In this sense, McDonagh's concept of *letting go* echoes an ethic of risk that had been earlier proposed by American social ethicist, Sharon Welch, as an alternative to the ethic of control that has been "the dominant ethic and theology of the West."[452] Like McDonagh's *letting go*, Welch's ethics of risk calls for decentering power and privilege as the central criterion for social morality. This implies a genuine shift from an ethic that employs grand narratives to universalize particular viewpoints

---

[449] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 18.

[450] Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, 38. See also Gerard Ryan, "Charles Taylor and the Political Recognition of Difference as a Resource for Theological Reflection on Religious Recognition," *Open Theology* 2, no. 1 (November 3, 2016): 907, https://doi.org/10.1515/opth-2016-0069.

[451] Enda McDonagh, *Social Ethics and the Christian: Towards Freedom in Communion* (Manchester: University Press, 1979), 58–59.

[452] Rebekah Miles, review of *Review of A Feminist Ethic of Risk*, by Sharon Diane Welch, *The Journal of Religion* 73, no. 1 (1993): 122. See also Sharon D. Welch, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*, Rev. ed.. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).

as the norm to one that fosters sustainable network of ideas through dialogue in the community.[453] Such dialogue is possible when the otherness of the other, their distinctive subjecthood as moral agents, is fully appreciated as a gift while still acknowledging the sinful and tragic dimensions of our fallen nature, whereby "the other constitutes not only a gift but also a threat."[454] McDonagh argues that it is, in fact, these twofold aspects of the human subject – as an actual gift and a potential threat – that call us to personal conversion, genuine liberation and true friendship based on mutual recognition.[455] It is this mutual recognition of our vulnerability to one another that makes ethical relations possible as we come to surrender our mutual suspicions and build mutual trust.

As an act of surrender, *letting go* entails vulnerability at its very core. It entails that, even if I dread the precarity of the other's risk as a potential threat, I still let go of them by surrendering my resistance to their human dignity. By supportively respecting the other as a human subject, we become vulnerable to another human subject who can now assert their equal dignity and claim their rights upon us. We are not only bound by our duty to them, but also exposed to the possibility of rejection or nonreciprocity from them. Hence, *letting go* is often a very difficult experience – probably, the most difficult of McDonagh's triad. This is especially true for parents who mostly learn to "let go" the hard way as they watch their children grow up and grow away from them.[456]

Although, letting go is already anticipated in the process of giving birth. Parents tend to become possessive of a child and refuse to let it go into the wider world in which it has to mature. But, refusing to let go [even in the basic sense of retaining the child in the womb], is not a viable option – it is destructive to both mother and child. McDonagh notes that, "such destructive

---

[453] Paula M. Cooey, "Welch, Sharon D., 'A Feminist Ethic of Risk' (Book Review)," *A Journal of Church and State* 33, no. 4 (1991): 828. For more on Western Christian grand narratives and its destructive effects on African traditional values and religious identity see Laurenti Magesa, 'The Council of Trent and the African Experience', in James F. Keenan (ed.). *Catholic Theological Ethics Past, Present. and Future*, Maryknoll, New York. 20II, 48-60.
[454] Charles E. Curran, "The Risks of Theology: Enda McDonagh and Vatican II," *The Furrow* 57, no. 7/8 (2006): 419.
[455] McDonagh, *Gift and Call*, 39.
[456] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 16.

possessiveness extends to the whole range of human relationships with other humans but also with non-human animate and inanimate objects. And in a paradoxical and ultimately tragic way, a person's possessiveness translates into that person being possessed and so enslaved by her possessions in money or property or even in family or other human love."[457] Therefore, despite being very difficult, letting go is necessary for and constitutive of the flourishing of all creation.

The ability to let go in a positive and respectful manner is the beginning of rule of law and social peace. It is the guarantee for personal and social freedom as well as for the overall security of human society. Thus, the act of *letting go* is crucial for the formation and sustenance of a just and equitable society. For example, as an ethical paradigm, *letting go* is the practical end of post-conflict reconciliation and sustainable peacebuilding for individuals and communities especially in fostering forgiveness. hence, it is the final part of the peace process. Obviously, it is much more difficult to let go where the other has caused much pain and betrayed our trust, thereby, exposing not only our vulnerability to them but also making our live precarious. Still, McDonagh argues that refusing to let go is not a viable option as harboring grudges might, ultimately, become a more destructive obsession. He insists that forgiving and loving one's enemy, though all the more painful when the move is not reciprocated, is necessary for the grudge-bearer's final liberation. Hence, he argues that, "loving one's enemies is the great human letting go."[458] This is because, "it is the loving attention to the other as other, to the holy in the enemy, that releases the loving one from the fear of that other and renders the loving one vulnerable to the holy in opponent or enemy."[459] This enemy or opponent that has to be forgiven is typically another person, distinct from oneself. But, it can also be one's self.

---

[457] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 16.
[458] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 16.
[459] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 17.

The act of letting go is not only intersubjective. It can also be intrasubjective since oneself can be the other *per se*. Similarly, one's self might become the enemy for many reasons – physical, emotional and spiritual. For instance, it is common to hear people talk about self-forgiveness. McDonagh notes that, perceived or imagined personal threats, flaws or failures can restrict normal living and relationships to the point of neurosis, mental breakdown or even suicide. He argues that, a recovery of the sense of self as valuable and lovable will not be achieved by sheer concentration on the self, which intensifies the vicious circle. Rather, it is "in the circle of loving others, including the still troubled self as other, the value, the unique otherness of the self, its holiness can be restored. The self also must be continually renewed in its openness to its own holy otherness, in Christian terms to its mediation of the ultimate otherness of its creator and healer God."[460] Thus, letting go of oneself is an act of self-love, which is the moral benchmark for genuine love of neighbor.[461] Intra-subjective letting go can also be a genuine effort for personal conversion. This involves acts like the examination of conscience to identify and let go of our bad habits and sinful inclinations.

As a paradigm for responsive ethical action, *letting go* has much broader application and much deeper roots than the inter-personal or intrapersonal relationships highlighted above. While such relationships clearly depict the inevitability of *letting go*, its usual painfulness and the futility of trying to possess the other, it is in the political sphere that *letting go* assumes its paradigmatic form as the attainment of *letting be*. It is also in this sphere that both *letting be and letting go* would "encounter their own needs and their own temptations."[462] For instance, McDonagh notes that:

> At the most basic levels people must be helped simply to live in contexts of war
> and terror, of famine, drought and kindred natural disasters, of HIV-AIDS and
> similar plagues. This is the global political situation which the dominantly
> economic globalization at work at present is exacerbating rather than relieving.
> Despite the rhetoric and the promises from the Millennium Development Goals at

---

[460] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 17.
[461] Mark 12:30-31
[462] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 17.

the UN summit in 2000 to the Dublin Declaration on HIV-AIDS in 2004, action is so slow, inadequate and uncoordinated that the 'letting go', which might have been liberation from much of their enslavement for many of these peoples, has become abandonment of them to their continuing suffering and premature dying.[463]

McDonagh acknowledges that such abandonment of the powerless by the powerful has complex roots. He notes that the temptations of profit, power and pleasure obscure the human needs of others, their innate dignity and its accompanying rights, their sacredness and holiness as persons.

The telos of *letting go* is the ultimate liberation of all social subjects – both the powerless and the powerful: "ethnic and racial differences, religion, culture and gender compound the power-games and prevent the kind of vulnerability to the stigmatized others which could be liberating for both sides."[464] McDonagh cites the example of Mahatma Gandhi, whom he calls one of the 'holy' figures of twentieth-century politics due to his sensitivity to the enemy-other. Gandhi addressed the need for emancipation by both the British colonizers and the colonized Indians. McDonagh insists that oppressive power in whatever arena, political, economic, military, religious, gender or race, is eventually enslaving of both the oppressor and the oppressed. Thus, he concludes that *letting go* of such power in the process of letting be and letting go of the oppressed is the liberation and fulfilment of the oppressor. Whereas not *letting be* and *letting go* of the oppressed necessitates recurring insecurity and eventual loss of power.[465] Hence, *letting be* and *letting go* are inevitable.

3.3.3   *Letting God* – Recognition as Opening Up to Friendship with God

Letting God means opening up oneself to a special friendship with God – the ultimate Other. It, basically, involves a profound acknowledgment of one's primal origin, as *imago Dei,* and the persistent striving to attain one's final destiny, union with God, by living virtuously with neighbor

---

[463] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 17-18.
[464] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 18.
[465] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 18.

and nature in society.[466] Theologically, this is the overarching motivation and culmination of the ethical life. Hence, it is the ultimate *telos* of all our *letting be* and *letting go*. Of course, the concept of ultimate origin and destiny can have different meanings for different persons and communities. For the theologian, as for the religious believer and faith-community, God is the primal origin and ultimate destiny of all creation. God is the ultimate Other from whom all things come and to whom they all must return: "for of Him and through Him and to Him are all things."[467] St. Augustine clearly affirms that God had created us for Godself, and that our hearts are restless until they rest in God.[468] Moreover, as *imago Dei,* every moral agent is called to holiness: "you shall be holy; for I *am* holy."[469] In Catholic moral theology, this injunction is typically regarded as a universal call to holiness.[470] It requires every sphere of our ethical life to reflect God's holiness despite our own imperfections: "as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct."[471] Thus, though a religious concept, *letting God* is ethically relevant for every human subject, as *imago Dei.*

The ultimate *telos* of *letting God* is to attain full union with God, our creator and redeemer. At its very core, *letting God* entails being vulnerable to God – the holy Other. Practically, it implies "letting God in" and surrendering oneself to God so as to build a special friendship with God. Such surrender finds its fullness in our final destiny, which is, union with God. This is best appreciated in light of charity since, according to Thomas Aquinas, union with God is also the beginning and the end of charity. As a theological virtue, charity is a kind of friendship with God. This friendship

---

[466] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 19.
[467] Romans 11:36 (NKJV).
[468] See St. Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 1,1.5.
[469] Leviticus 11:44; cf. 1 Peter 1:16; Matthew 5:48 (NKJV)
[470] See Pope Francis, "Gaudete et Exsultate: Apostolic Exhortation on the Call to Holiness in Today's World," Papal Encyclical, March 19, 2018, #10, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html#_ftn10; Vatican Council II, "Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" (Pope Paul VI, November 21, 1964), #10, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html;
[471] 1 Peter 1:15 (NKJV). See also Leviticus 11:44

is based on God's communication of Godself to humans. According to Aquinas, "since there is a communication between man (sic) and God, inasmuch as He [God] communicates His [God's] happiness to us, some kind of friendship must needs be based on this same communication… The love which is based on this communication, is charity: wherefore it is evident that charity is the friendship of man (sic) for God."[472] Charity, as friendship with God, culminates in *union* with God. Similarly, *letting God* – opening up oneself to God's friendship – finds its perfection in *union* with God. In this sense, *letting God* can be described as an exercise of the virtue of charity.

Letting God is a divine initiative. As a result of God's self-communication, any genuine act of friendship with God is by divine initiative and invitation: "I have called you friends."[473] Likewise, *letting God* is based on God's initiative to make Godself vulnerable to human beings through creation and redemption. McDonagh notes that, in the *creatio imago Dei*, "God is not only letting be, but also letting go."[474] Fundamentally, creation is a decisive act of the divine letting be: "God said, let there be..."[475] For McDonagh, "this is the risk of creation for God, introducing into being other reality distinct from Godself."[476] He notes that, following *creatio imago Dei*, God rejoiced in the otherness of the human subject as gift. Unfortunately, at the Fall, "the gift turned threat, alien to and alienated from God in its climactic creatures, man and woman."[477] This alienation from God is also humanity's alienation from the holy to whom it ought to be vulnerable.

McDonagh describes humanity's Fall as "an offence to God's own holiness, the divine otherness as mirrored particularly in the human, and indeed to the holiness of the whole universe as it was alienated from its human stewards (Genesis 3)." He notes that, by the fall, "God's holiness

---

[472] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa, IIae, 23:1.
[473] John 15:15b (NKJV)
[474] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 19.
[475] This is the creation formula in the account of creation in the Book of Genesis Chapter 1.
[476] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 19.
[477] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 19.

is restricted by human selfishness and sinfulness."[478] Hence, in human terms, the fall occasioned "a divine temptation to undo the divine handiwork and wipe out creation in order to restore the previous pristine holiness."[479] This temptation nearly led to the annihilation of God's creation in the narrative of Noah and the Flood when: "And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth."[480] However, by a decisive act of the divine letting go, God forgave sinful humanity.

Letting God is a human act of love in response to God's own preeminent love for humanity. As a profound act of love, God set in motion the economy of human redemption leading to the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."[481] Thus, God became even more vulnerable "in pursuit of the true otherness of humanity and the universe" by entering into the precariousness of human and cosmic otherness.[482] McDonagh notes that,

> This letting go by God of God in incarnation transcends all human imagining and yet seems itself transcended in the surrender unto death on a cross by the Son of God made man. It is in that dying into resurrection and the sending of the Spirit, which completes the divine letting be of creation and the divine letting go of incarnation by letting God, by letting God be God in God's trinitarian self and in God's universe. Jesus' insight about the seed falling into the ground and that whoever would save his life must surrender it, seems to apply to the Creator no less than to the creature. As it applies to the human creature in the thousand cuts and losses of her mortal life, it prepares her for the final letting be, letting go and letting God of her own death. At that last vulnerable time the holiness of the others she has encountered, human and cosmic, poetic and prosaic, and the holiness of the self which has been blessed by them and by her God, may face in hope and in peace, if not yet free of all anxiety, the ultimate creative, forgiving and sanctifying Other.[483]

---

478 McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 19.
479 McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 19.
480 Genesis 6:9-9:17.
481 John 3:16 NKJV
482 McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 19-20.
483 McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 20.

The telos of divine *letting be* and *letting Go* is the human *letting God* – a gratuitous reconciliation towards union rather than a just retribution.[484] Hence, God's redemptive plan was accomplished, not by a murderous intervention of the Lord of Hosts like the flood, but by the suffering and death of the Messiah. Even so, this reconciliation entails a genuine human repentance, without which there can be no true friendship with God: "holiness, without which no one will see the Lord."[485] While both the divine letting be and letting go are primarily aimed at human return to its original blessedness, its true otherness to God, they also embody God's injunction to make the divine creative otherness or holiness fully efficacious in the world through virtuous living in society.[486] This is the key point of Jesus' injunction in the parable of the Good Samaritan – *go and do likewise*.

Letting God opens us up to Friendship with God by moving us to repentance (*metanoia*). No human subject can *go and do likewise* without genuine repentance. Hence, it is vital for ethical relations in society.[487] Repentance is a culmination of the process of conversion consisting in a profound change and a radical turn from one's old ways of living to a new one.[488] It entails a, "shift of one's fundamental orientation, an about-face, from self-absorption or self-enclosure to self-transcendence in a particular domain of one's operations as a human being."[489] *Letting God* is, essentially, about overcoming one's sinful inclination towards self-absorption by opening oneself up to friendship with God especially by relating ethically with our neighbors and nature in society. Our friendship with God flourishes in human community and is mostly expressed in recognition

---

[484] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 19.
[485] Hebrews 12:14b (NKJV)
[486] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 19.
[487] Enda McDonagh, *Faith in Fragments*, Maynooth Bicentenary Series (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Columba Press, 1996), 7.
[488] See Fred Lawrence, "The Fragility of Consciousness: Lonergan and the Postmodern Concern for the Other" in *Theological Studies* 54 (1993), 55-94, 63. Also see Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, Ch. 10.
[489] Robert M. Doran's lecture (2011), "What Does Bernard Lonergan Mean by 'Conversion', at: https://www.lonerganresource.com/pdf/lectures/What%20Does%20Bernard%20Lonergan%20Mean%20by%20Conversion.pdf), retrieved September 5, 2019.

of others since "recognition of others in their otherness is the primordial basis of friendship."[490] It is also crucial for our own self-realization. Recognition of our primal origin and final destiny in God is actually the beginning and end of fulfilling our quest for self-realization as *imago Dei.* Such recognition enables a fuller recognition of self since other-recognition also develops and deepens self-recognition and self-understanding.[491] Hence, friendship with God is also friendship with self.

Letting God is, in every sense, a human response to the divine call to mutual recognition. By creation and redemption, the divine acts of *letting be* and *letting go,* God already initiated the call to recognition. *Letting God* is the human response to this divine initiative and invitation. McDonagh notes that the presence of the other embodies this call as we continue to encounter the other in their otherness through the beauty and horrors of our daily living. This call to recognition is at the heart of moral relationships in Christian traditions – it is at the core of the quest for the common in good Christian social ethics. This response has to be mutual as, "recognition of the other becomes possible in the first place by recognition from the other."[492] *Letting God* makes this response possible since, "the mutual recognition, respect and response, the moral demands of all authentic human relations, however fleeting, need time, story-time and story-line to flower in friendship."[493] Friendship is a risky wager as it entails being vulnerable to another. Indeed, "there is no life or love without risk but God's risks at creation encourages and enables us to take our own risks."[494] Hence, *letting God* enables us to develop true friendship with God and others.

---

490 McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 97.
491 McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 98.
492 McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 98.
493 McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 98.
494 McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 105.

3.4 Ethics of Recognition: Towards True Friendship in Contemporary Societies

The human acts of *letting be, letting go* and *letting God* diversely respond to the divine call to holiness and converge in one great act of love – friendship with God, self, neighbor, and nature. This tripartite act of love is a paradigm for responsive ethical actions that are motivated by and can culminate in true friendship in human society. McDonagh notes that true friendship is a prime expression of human and Christian love.[495] Friendship is a defining characteristic of Christian love and the fellowship depicted in the Acts of the Apostles: "the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common."[496] This applies to love and fellowship among all human beings.

The Catechism highlights five crucial senses of friendship: 1. Friendship as God's opening of Godself in an inexhaustible outpouring of happiness, peace, and communion (§1045); 2. Friendship with God as the state of original holiness and justice, and the source of the happiness of human existence before the fall (§384); 3. Friendship with God as the prerequisite for beatific vision after death (§1023); 4. Friendship with God as the root of harmony with self and all creation (§374); 5. Friendship as *social charity*: a direct demand of human and Christian fellowship dictated and imposed by our common origin and equal dignity (§1939).[497] This fifth sense is crucial for Catholic social ethics especially regarding its overarching goal of constructing and promoting the common good in modern multicultural and pluralistic societies.

---

[495] Enda McDonagh, *Immersed in Mystery: En Route to Theology* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2007), 76.
[496] Acts 4:32 (NKJV)
[497] I subscribe to this fifth notion of friendship. But, I do not use the phrase "social charity" as it can be used in a condescending manner just like philanthropy, generosity, altruism etc. Moreover, social charity does not fully portray the sense of equal relationship that is central to my key concepts like recognition, common good, and friendship itself. Moreover, social charity does not evoke a strong sense of mutual vulnerability like friendship does and it is based on the good will of the parties involves, while friendship with God and neighbor is both the beginning and the end of our human existence.

The crucial task of formulating and promoting the common good in contemporary societies can be best achieved in the spirit of true friendship based on the ethics of recognition: an ethic that addresses recognition, primarily, as a vital human need and, therefore, guides moral agents to be ethically responsive to other's need for recognition. This is not a new ethics, but a call to prioritize the ethical dimension of recognition by addressing it at the point of need rather than the prevailing tendency to treat recognition, mainly, as a demand or a struggle. In doing this, ethicists can take a cue from McDonagh's tripartite act of love whereby the crucial task of formulating and promoting the common good can be reimagined as a process of cultivating true friendship in human society.

3.4.1   Necessity of True Friendship: Common Good and Authentic Identity

No human society can ever flourish without true friendship. Aristotle argues that society depends on friendship (*philia*) as friendship is the motive of society.[498] For him, friendship is the pursuit of a common social life. It is even more important than justice as it creates harmony in the society. He notes that friendship is necessary for justice and that the art of politics has to be devoted to creating true friendship. The Catechism also describes friendship as a form of social charity that "represents a great good for all."[499] Therefore, one definite way of pursuing true friendship is by working towards the common good. In fact, the common good is the ultimate *temporal* end of the social and political order, as well as of the human person, analogous to their final end in the fullest sense – union with God.[500] With roots stretching back to Augustine and Aquinas, the common

---

[498] See Eleni Leontsini, "The Motive of Society: Aristotle on Civic Friendship, Justice, and Concord," *Res Publica* 19, no. 1 (February 2013): 23, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11158-012-9204-4. Aristotle had emphasized the importance of friendship (philia) to social morality that it appears in most of his major ethical works like the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the *Eudemian Ethics*, the *Rhetoric*, and the *Politics*.

[499] The Holy See, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican), 1939, 2347, accessed March 26, 2023, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM.

[500] See Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, "The Principle of the Common Good," in *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2004, ¶¶164-170. See also Catechism of the Catholic Church, "Participation in Social Life," Pt. 3:1, Ch. 2:2, ¶¶195-1917.

good has long been a – if not the – definitive principle of the Catholic social and political tradition. And, it remains so for contemporary Catholic ethics. In response to the urgency of embracing the increasing diversity of modern societies as a gift rather than a threat, Catholic ethicists have invested much interests in reconstructing the traditional notion of the common good in a manner that addresses contemporary questions about liberalism, individualism, pluralism, and secularism.

Jesuit theological ethicist David Hollenbach argues that developing a plausible notion of the common good in diverse societies is one of the greatest needs of our time. He notes that, "service to the common good was central to the normative vision of the good life through much of Western thought, from classical Greek Moral Philosophy to medieval European Christian theology, to a form of early modern Christian spirituality in its initial encounter with the global realities that have become so central in contemporary consciousness." [501] Hollenbach insists that, "any understanding of the common good that can be meaningful today will be one that challenges cultural, racial, ethnic, and national definitions of who counts as part of the community."[502] Hence, pursuit of the common good in contemporary society has to begin with and must continue to address the question: *Who is recognized as belonging to society and worthy participant in formulating the common good?* This question is vital for Catholic social ethics as it is a *sine qua non* for formulating and promoting the common good in contemporary societies.

The common good has been described as "the totality of social conditions allowing persons to achieve their communal and individual fulfilment."[503] Hollenbach contrasts it with some similar modern concepts like *general welfare*, *public interest* and *public goods*. General welfare sums up

---

[501] David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 6-7.
[502] Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, ibid, xiv.
[503] Benedict XVI, "Address to Participants in the Fourteenth Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences" (The Holy See, May 3, 2008), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080503_social-sciences.html.

the economic welfare of the individual members of the society into one aggregate. The common

good is different from the largely economic and utilitarian concept of the general welfare because,

"this aggregative good can increase while the well-being of some or many of a society's members

declines."[504] Hence, the *general welfare* needs not be *common* to all the members of a society. The

idea of public interest builds upon the commitment to protect the fundamental dignity and rights

of all persons seen as in everyone's interest.[505] It is a disaggregative concept as it breaks down the

public good into the effects it has upon individuals. Thus, it "lacks the richer understanding of the

common that is implicit in many of the authors who shaped the pre-modern tradition of the

common good."[506] Public goods like sunshine and air are external to the relationships that exist

within the community. Hence, they lack the essential relational character of the common good.

The necessity of true friendship for realizing the common good in human society lies in its

relational character. To attain the common good, a genuine friendship among the members of the

community is indispensable. Without this relationship, a true friendship, the pursuit of the common

good would be a futile effort as there would be no common ground for its pursuit. Moreover, true

friendship is itself a common good. The very fact of living together in a community is a good that

is common to the members and espoused in their actual relationships. Hence, the quality of social

relationships is itself a significant constituent of the common good. According to Hollenbach,

> One of the key elements in the common good of a community or society, therefore,
> is the good of being a community or society at all. This shared good is immanent
> within the relationships that bring this community or society into being. Aristotle
> for example, understood the *polis* as an assembly of citizens engaged in debate
> about how they should live together. The relationships of reciprocal interaction
> among citizens brought this community into being and went beyond the general
> welfare achieved by their economic exchange or the public good of the architecture
> of the forum where they conducted their debates. Similarly, for Thomas Aquinas,

---

[504] Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 7.
[505] Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 7.
[506] Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 8.

the common good included the bonds of affection and even love that linked people together in communities.[507]

Hence, cultivating true friendship is essential for constructing the common good, especially, in light of the tendency of multiculturalism and pluralism to revive the primordial human inclinations to preserve their "authentic" identity amid emergent collective identities. Thus, ethicists now focus on those social constructs that frame our *identities* like race, religion, gender, tribe and sexuality.

African American philosopher and cultural theorist Kwame Appiah argues that these social constructs have strong ethical significance as they not only frame our identities, but we actually tend to organise our lives according to them. Appiah notes that this raises critical ethical questions regarding the required distinction between autonomy and identity since identity always has both personal and social dimensions that ought to be properly reconciled. He queries if we can imagine individuals without any involuntary ties, unbound, utterly free. According to him,

> Throughout our lives, part of the material that we are responding to in shaping our lives is not within us but, outside us, out there in the social world. Most people shape their identities as partners of lovers, who become spouses and fellow parents; these aspects of our identities, though in a sense social, are peculiar to who we are as individuals, and so represent a *personal* dimension of our identities. But we are all, as well, members of broader collectivities. To say that *collective* identities – that is, the collective dimensions of our individual identities – are responses to something outside our selves is to say that they are the products of histories, and our engagement with them invokes capacities that are not under our control.[508]

Appiah insists that our collective identities are partly constituted by socially transmitted notions of how a person of possessing such identities ought to behave. His point is that, "people don't, as a rule, imagine themselves as having arrived at their own conception of the good life: their conception of the good or well-lived life would be undermined by their imagining it to be a wholly

---

[507] Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 9.
[508] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton: University Press, 2005), 21.

volitional affair, chosen among equally qualified candidates."[509] Hence, Appiah wonders if it makes sense, in any society, to speak of individuals choosing their own end by themselves.

Other scholars have also emphasized the need to properly reconcile autonomy and diversity as a prerequisite for the common good in multicultural societies. As I already mentioned in the last chapter, Charles Taylor argues that, a "self exists only within…webs of interlocution."[510] These are also webs of social relationships that ought to be genuine for the dialogue and cooperation that is needed in formulating and promoting the common good. Michael Walzer argues that "the effort to describe a society of self-fashioning individuals is necessarily self-defeating."[511] This implies that no individual or even a constituent group can flourish on their own in a society. They need genuine social relationships within and across their groups to flourish. Michael Sandel argues that,

> We cannot regard ourselves as independent in this way without great cost to those loyalties and convictions whose moral force consists partly in the fact that living by them is inseparable from understanding ourselves as the particular persons we are – as members of this family or community or nation or people, as bearers of this history. To imagine a person incapable of constitutive attachments such as these is not to conceive an ideally free and rational agent, but to imagine a person wholly without character.[512]

Such relationships are crucial for the proper socialization, conscience formation and overall moral development of every member of the society. Thus, Daniel Bell notes that one's social world sets the authoritative moral horizons within which one determines what is worth striving for.[513]

The implication is that Catholic social ethicists have to pursue, build and uphold genuine friendships that can create harmony in contemporary multicultural and pluralistic societies as a *sine qua non* for attaining the overarching goal of constructing and promoting the common good.

---

[509] Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity,* 47.

[510] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 36.

[511] Michael Walzer, "On Involuntary Associations," in *Freedom of Association*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 70.

[512] Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 179.

[513] See Daniel A. Bell, *Communitarianism and Its Critics*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 37.

In effect, Catholic social ethicists have to prioritize addressing the human need for recognition, not only as a starting point for moral investigation but also as an organic constituent of the process of doing a proper social ethics. it is in this way that we can unpack and appropriate the full riches of recognition as an ethical concept as opposed to the prevailing practice of addressing recognition mostly as a political problem. We can begin by asking: *who is recognized as belonging to society and, so, accepted as worthy of participating in the common good of that society; and, who is not?* This breaks the ice on other critical questions about whether or not any human being ought to be disposable or questions like: *Who is recognizable within our moral schemas and who is not? Whose lives matter and whose do not? Whose deaths are grievable and whose do not*? Addressing these questions honestly and efficiently, will entail correcting our wrong moral schemas.

3.4.2   Re-Imagining the Criteria for Common Good as Norms for True Friendship

In practical terms, ethicists can begin to correct our wrong moral schemas by re-imagining our traditional criteria for the common good. In the Catholic tradition, the dignity of the human person together with the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity serve as the traditional criteria for the common good.[514] Here, human dignity is typically presented as the firm foundation for practising solidarity and subsidiarity in social contexts. According to *Gaudium et Spes*,

> Whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia or wilful (sic) self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are supreme dishonor to the Creator. Respect and love ought to be

---

[514] See Karen Shields Wright, "The Principles of Catholic Social Teaching: A Guide for Decision Making from Daily Clinical Encounters to National Policy-Making," *The Linacre Quarterly* 84, no. 1 (February 2017): 10–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/00243639.2016.1274629.

extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political and even religious matters. In fact, the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them.[515]

While human dignity is the basis for solidarity and subsidiarity, they all combine as the principal criteria for the common good as each is absolutely necessary for its attainment. Therefore, using McDonagh's concepts of *letting be, letting go* and *letting God*, we can reimagine these criteria in a manner that makes them operate, not just as abstract ethical principles, but as experience-based realities and action-oriented norms for pursuing, building and sustaining true friendships, rooted in mutual recognition, in modern multicultural and pluralistic societies like Nigeria, USA and India.

Having highlighted the Catholic concept of human dignity, I wish to stress here that human dignity, *inter alia,* essentially denotes the inherent and inviolable value of the human person as one created in the image and likeness of God and redeemed by Jesus Christ.[516] Reimagining human dignity in light of *letting be, letting go* and *letting God* obligates us to recognize the other as *imago Dei* and to unconditionally accord them the full respect and equal rights due to *imago Dei*. This entails letting the other be their authentic self by completely accepting them in their otherness amid the plurality of identities in society and genuinely enabling them to flourish as equal participants in the common good of the society. This ought to be the minimum standard for true friendship among diverse individuals and groups constituting our multicultural and pluralistic societies today.

True friendship is a profound expression of the Christian virtue of charity to every human being - believers and nonbelievers alike. It was clearly lacking in the various cases narrated in chapter one about police brutality against the #EndSARS Youth Movement in Nigeria, the Black

---

[515] Vatican Council II, "Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on The Church in The Modern World" (The Holy See - Pope Paul VI, December 7, 1965), 27–28, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.
[516] Benedict XVI, "Address to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences."

Lives Matter Movement in the United States, and the Dalits in India. These cases are not unique, they are pervasive. In fact, lack of true friendship is a result of the global crisis of recognition that is destroying the sense of community in modern societies. But, this is not a new problem as we can also detect the lack of true friendship in the actions of the bad characters in the above parables. Yet, as we can observe from the counter-narratives in chapter two regarding acts of kindness by several police officers and the actions of the good characters in those parables, true friendship is not only possible among diverse persons and groups, it is both desirable and necessary for society. Thus, this lack of true friendship in human society is a problem that has to be properly addressed. As a consequence of the crisis of recognition, we can begin addressing this problem by prioritizing the recognition of the inherent dignity of every human person without prejudice to their legitimate differences and individual or collective identities based on race, religion, gender, and tribe. This entails reimagining human dignity as a norm for true friendship with all human beings, which obligates us to act towards *letting them be* in their otherness and *letting them go* as distinct subjects.

Recognizing the dignity of other human beings by gently accompanying them to flourish as well as letting them be authentic in their individual and group identities – race, religion, gender, and tribe – has to be prioritized and accentuated by moral theologians and ethicists as the basic norm for true friendship in multicultural and pluralistic societies like Nigeria, USA and India. The Christian love, when expressed as true friendship with all, can become more relevant to the human experience across various identity lines in these diverse contexts. This is a key point in the above parables where true friendship was expected across various identity lines: between Samaritans and Jews, rich and poor, familiar faces and strangers. The Samaritan and the sheep duly expressed this friendship by being ethically responsive to the wounded one [probably, a Jew] and to Jesus' brethren [strangers], respectively. They recognized these as social subjects in their own rights and

ethically responded to their various needs as people who have dignity. But, the rich man, the priest, the Levite, and the goats did not do likewise – they failed to let the others be and, so, did not express true friendship to them. This was the culmination of their prior failure of recognition.

Reimagining human dignity in light of *letting others be* as a norm for true friendship with others is possible only if we already recognize their otherness as a gift to be accepted with a smile and not a threat to be rejected with a scowl. This culminates in *letting them go* as we fully recognize them as distinct social subjects, in their own right, that should never be subjugated or relegated to mere objects by other social subjects. In other words, they should never be subordinated to another social subject in any form or guise – as slaves, an inferior race, a lower caste or the weaker sex. In practice, recognizing the dignity of others by expressing true friendship to them in their otherness as social subjects and enabling them to flourish is actualized through solidarity and subsidiarity.

Solidarity means enabling the entire human family to fully and equitably partake of the vast material and spiritual goods with which creation has been richly endowed by the creator.[517] It expresses the need for every human being to share and participate in achieving the goal of common growth in society. This entails both personal and communal sacrifice, which "translates into the willingness to give oneself for the good of one's neighbour, beyond any individual or particular interest."[518] Thus, solidarity promotes agreement where attitudes of separation and fragmentation prevailed as well as ensures that nothing is lacking in the common cause of human society. Here is the close bond between solidarity and the common good – it commits us to the common good.[519]

---

[517] Benedict XVI.

[518] Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, "Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church" (The Holy See/Pope John Paul II), #194, accessed April 20, 2023, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_com pendio-dott-soc_en.html.

[519] *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, par. 194 (Dublin: Veritas Publication, 2004), 93.

Solidarity is, fundamentally, an expression of a sincere commitment to the common good. It is an expression of true friendship in recognition of our mutual vulnerability and need for one another. It puts into practice the idea that the one's particular good is inseparable from the common good as the good life of one portrays the quality of life shared with others in the society. Aristotle notes that a good life is oriented to goods shared with others – the common good of the larger society of which one is a part.[520] He argues that the common good of the society is a higher good than the particular goods of persons within it: "even if the good is the same for the individual and the city, the good of the city clearly is the greater and more perfect thing to attain and to safeguard."[521] He admits that the attainment of the good life for an individual brings happiness. But, he insists that, "to secure it for a nation and for cities is nobler and more divine."[522] Aquinas affirmed Aristotle's argument that the common good is more "god-like" or "divine" than the good of the individual.[523] He argued that, "the supreme good, namely God, is the common good, since the good of all things depend on God."[524] Hence, the good of each person is linked with the good shared with others in community and they culminate in God – the ultimate common good.

But, this does not mean that the good of the individual is to subsumed by the common good. It means that any genuine effort towards the common good has to involve the provisions for *letting individual and group members be* by genuinely enabling them to flourish in the society as well as *letting them go* as distinct subjects by accepting their legitimate differences, including different tastes of the good life. This entails engaging with different quests for particular good, in the spirit

---

[520] Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 3.
[521] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics,* 1094b. This is an adaptation of Martin Oswald's translation (Indianapolis: Boobs-Merrill, 1962), cited in Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 3.
[522] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics,* 1094b.
[523] Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 3.
[524] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 17. This is an adaptation of Anthon C. Pegis (ed.), *Basic Writings of Aquinas*, Vol. II (New York: Random House, 1945), 27. Cited in Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 4.

of true friendship, as a possible contribution and gift to the common good rather than a threat to it. This obligates us to recognize various constituents of the society as sources for the good life, both for themselves and for everyone in the society. This is where subsidiarity becomes relevant as it makes the practice of genuine solidarity possible.[525]

Subsidiarity is first and foremost a form of friendship that fully recognizes human freedom. It is the fullness of *letting go* as it depicts the full recognition of the other as an independent subject who is capable of self-love and can make crucial contributions to the common good of the society like everyone else. Subsidiarity is meant to ensure that solidarity provides necessary care and full support to individuals or groups when they are unable to accomplish certain things on their own. However, it safeguards the dignity of such persons and groups so as to emancipate them from any potential subjugation or relegation to objects through such supportive interventions. It ensures that everyone is enabled to flourish as distinct subjects and that no one person or group is locked into a state of dependence that can foster their oppression and exploitation in society. Hence, it "fosters freedom and participation through assumption of responsibility."[526] The goal of subsidiarity is to guarantee freedom for all social subjects and parity of participation in the common good of society:

> *The characteristic implication of subsidiarity is participation, which is expressed essentially in a series of activities by means of which the citizen, either as an individual or in association with others, whether directly or through representation, contributes to the cultural, economic, political and social life of the civil community to which he belongs. Participation is a duty to be fulfilled consciously by all, with responsibility and with a view to the common good.*[527]

To ensure participation, subsidiarity entails the coordination of society's activities in a manner that supports the internal life of its constituents.[528] In practice, it means that issues should be decided

---

[525] *Compendium,* #185.
[526] Benedict XVI, "Caritas in Veritate" (The Holy See, June 29, 2009), 57, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html.
[527] *Compendium*, #189.
[528] Benedict XVI, "Address to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences."

at the lowest possible level that involves all those who are most affected since not all issues are of a global nature that they cannot be resolved efficiently by local individuals or groups, if enabled.

Reimagining subsidiarity as norm for true friendship is timely, if not urgent, for ethicists as more countries and nations around the world, in both northern and southern hemispheres, are beginning to stand up to the prescriptive and bullying attitudes of hitherto dominant countries – like the Namibian President telling off the German foreign minister or the Congolese president standing up against the French president or the French president himself advocating for EU's greater autonomy from the United States – just as other countries are joining NATO and BRICS. As we descend to the particularities of these and similar experiences in our ethical reflections and moral investigations, reimagining subsidiarity as a basic norm for true friendship in light *letting go* helps us affirm the inalienable freedom of the human subject at all levels of social life – personal, local, and global. It helps us reframe subsidiarity to be more relevant to everyone in the society as an obligation to respect human dignity and freedom by duly recognizing in every human person a social subject that can practice self-love and also contribute immensely to the common good.[529]

Reimagined as an act of *letting go*, subsidiarity becomes a realistic act of love that *truly* expresses the full recognition of the other's distinctive subjecthood and an affirmation of their fundamental rights to be different and still participate without hindrance in formulating and promoting the common good of the human society. This is difficult as it obligates persons, groups and nations to fully acknowledge and respect the other's differences. But, this is inevitable since recognition is also about our legitimate differences and crucial diversities. However, this calls for ethicists to be vigilant so as to not overlook our commitment to unity and ethical relations in society. Hence, "*subsidiarity must remain closely linked to the principle of solidarity and vice versa*, since

---

[529] Benedict XVI, "Caritas in Veritate."

the former without the latter gives way to social privatism, while the latter without the former gives way to paternalist social assistance that is demeaning to those in need."[530] This bond can be better appreciated when reimagined in light of the fact that *letting go* is the fulfillment of *letting be* and that both letting be and letting go have their original motivation and final destination in *letting God* – the ultimate Other – the firm basis for human dignity and the final end of our friendships.

Re-imagining the criteria for the common good as norms for true friendship enables us to effectively apply those criteria in our daily interchange in a manner that reveals the beauty of our common identity as *imago Dei* despite the horrors of our fallen nature. This is crucial since every human person we encounter has the beauty and horror that can render us vulnerable to the holy. In daily living, our experience of beauty and horror can expose or conceal the divine concentrate in us as *imago Dei*. This divine concentrate is both revealed by our smiles of recognition and concealed by our scowls of rejection. We can make the smiles of recognition the norm of our social life, instead of the prevalent scowls of rejection, by pursuing true friendship with everyone in their otherness. This entails recognizing their otherness as a gift and not a threat. Such recognition is the primordial basis for true friendship at all levels of socio-political living and intersubjective engagement in the human society.

3.5 Conclusion

We can delineate from the various cases presented in the previous chapters and the parables narrated at the beginning of this chapter that true friendship is a product of genuine recognition of the other in their otherness, while the lack of it is a consequence of a dismal failure of recognition. Despite the prevalence of these failures in many contemporary societies, true friendship remains necessary for community building, human flourishing and pursuit of the common good. No human

---

[530] Benedict XVI.

society can ever flourish, even exist in the real sense of being a community, without true friendship. And, true friendship is the basis for all our ethical relations, social engagements and political commitments aimed at constructing and promoting the common good of our society. Hence, the primary task of politics is the cultivation of true friendship. Thus, true friendship is *a sine qua non* for the common good – the ultimate *temporal* end of the social and political order as well as that of every human person analogous only to our final end in the fullest sense, that is, union with God – the ultimate Other.

Friendship is a risky venture that makes us vulnerable to another. This is a principal reason why people may hesitate from pursuing friendship with the non-recognized or mis-recognized other. The results is that we wrongly designate some relationships as desirable and others as undesirable. Those persons or groups whose relationships fall within our schemas of desirability also become recognizable as ones whose lives matter to us and whose deaths are grievable by us, when lost. Thus, we tend to protect such lives at all cost including disposing those lives whose loss are not framed into our schemas of grievability as their relationships are not desirable *ab initio*. This rather unethical framework tend to be the norm of socio-political relations and have led to the large-scale killing of peoples like the Biafran Igbos, Namibian Hereros and Namas, Rwandan Tutsis, Ottoman Armenians, German Jews, Native American Indians, the Irish and all subjugated people. Rather than protecting and helping such populations to flourish as part of the human family, they were rejected as threats or nuisance to the "desirables." Thus, were discarded as "undesirables."

Designating some human beings as undesirable is a grave assault on our common humanity. Every human being is created equal in the image and likeness of the creator God – *imago Dei* – and this common identity is the root of our inherent dignity and fundamental rights as humans. Recognition of our common humanity is an ethical imperative that not only impels us to wholly

accept other human beings in their otherness as distinct subjects but also obligates us to embrace the unchosenness of our neighbors, even if we do not like them, and to be ethically responsive to their needs, even when they cannot reciprocate. This is why ethical relations can neither be based on egoism nor on reciprocity since reciprocity results in ethical contingency while egoism is the defeat of ethics itself. Hence, ethical relations is based on our susceptibility and vulnerability to respond to the call of the other. Here lies the matrix of recognition, vulnerability, and precarity. Recognition is my response to the call of the other with whom I must engage in ethical relations, and vulnerability is the condition that makes me capable of responding to this call, while precarity is the fundamental reality that my response also opens me up to the risks entailed by friendship.

Mitigating these risks at all levels of friendship is the crucial task of social ethicists. We must ensure the preeminence of ethical relations in human society despite our sinful and harmful inclinations as humans. Since recognition is the primordial basis for true friendship and the mutual need for recognition is foundational to ethical relations, cultivating a sustainable friendship entails addressing this need in an honest, effective and sustainable manner. Hence, my overarching thesis is that addressing the need for recognition ought to be a fundamental and constitutive point of departure for doing a proper social ethics in contemporary societies like Nigeria, USA, and India. Mindful of the diversity that characterizes these societies, ethicists have to pursue, build and uphold genuine friendships that can help address the need for recognition as a vital condition for the common good.

Ethicists can start correcting our wrong moral schemas by reimagining the criteria for the common good so as to address the critical question of: *who is recognized as belonging to society and, thus, accepted as worthy of participating in the common good; and, who is not?* Sincerely addressing this question paves the way for the recognizability of every human person as a desirable

gift whose life matters and whose death ought to be avoided, or properly grieved when finally lost. True friendship is incomplete even at death and so is recognition: both are open-ended.[531] Pursuit for the common good, built on true friendship and rooted in mutual recognition, has to draw its depths from this eschatological reality. Hence, I have proposed McDonagh's tripartite act of love – *letting be, letting go,* and *letting God* – as a paradigm for ethics of recognition in modern societies. The implication is that our re-imagination of the criteria for the common good [human dignity, solidarity and subsidiarity] in light of *letting be* and *letting go* must reflect our friendship with God – *letting God* – even in secular states like Nigeria, USA, and India. The next and final chapter will explore how this proposal works out in the Nigerian society. Its over 200 million population drawn from over 250 ethnicities speaking more than 350 languages with multi-faith affiliations present a fascinating case study for my proposed paradigm towards developing an ethics of recognition.

---

[531] McDonagh, *Vulnerable to the Holy*, 99-100.

Chapter Four

Nigeria's Corrupt Politics, Sectionalism, and Ethics of Recognition

Nigeria is the most populous black nation in the world and the largest economy in Africa. Located around the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa, Nigeria has a total land area of 923,770 km² (356,669 mi²) and a total coastline of 853 km (530.0 mi). Its population is over 200 million people drawn from over 250 ethnicities that speak more than 350 dialects as well as English and pidgin. It is, therefore, sensible to argue that Nigeria's integral potentials to be a prosperous country seems to be intricately tied to its ability to harness its diverse heritage toward building a strong union. But, this is possible only if all Nigerians are duly recognized as human subjects who can freely engage in ethical relations with others and equitably participate in the common good of the human society without being subjugated as objects. Hence, no Nigerian or any human being ought to be treated as a slave, lower caste, or an inferior race both within and outside Nigeria.

Despite the respectable national image that Nigeria projects about its great diversity, it has a prevailing culture of impunity that frivolously allows sectional interests to undermine national interests by undercutting Nigerian laws and treating its patriotic citizens as disposable objects. I had presented this issue in Chapter one using the #ENDSARS narrative. Now, in light of what we did in chapters two and three, I will revisit this case as well as similar cases, to argue that Nigeria urgently needs a culture of recognition to correct this culture of impunity. My thesis is that any society that does not duly recognize and treat its citizens as human subjects is inherently unethical and cannot truly flourish. Still, I acknowledge that no society can duly recognize its citizens, indeed anyone for that matter, without a systemic, intentional and sustainable culture of recognition since no one can actually give what they do not have – *nemo dat quod non habet*. Hence, we need to develop a thriving culture of recognition in Nigeria before expecting a true practice of recognition.

By culture, I mean the totality of a people's way of life. Thus, a culture of recognition prevails in a society if the totality of its way of life intentionally encourages ethical relations in a consistent manner, which is sustained by mutual intersubjective recognition. Here, "way of life" comprises all the elements that constitute a normal life for a society, especially those that are passed down from generation to generation, including: wisdom, knowledge, secrets, values, morality, ancestry, language, religion, rituals, arts, wealth, customs, goals, skills, fashion, leisure, politics, institutions, relationships, laws and taboos. Thus, any society where these elements of normal life are ignored or abused without proper sanctions or penalties can be said to have a culture of impunity, as opposed to a culture of recognition.

Nigeria brims with a culture of impunity because it lacks a thriving culture of recognition. A culture of recognition builds social trust by creating, nurturing, sustaining, and protecting the elements of normal life in a society. In contrast, a culture of impunity assails those elements thereby destroying social trust. A culture of recognition would ensure that all human beings are duly treated as subjects, and not as objects in every encounter with other members of the society. In this way, a culture of recognition orders a society towards recognizing all human beings as social subjects, with inherent dignity and fundamental rights, who can engage in ethical relations – in their own rights as subjects - with other social subjects. Therefore, the absence of this culture enhances the natural tendency of human beings to objectify others; especially, those deemed to be disposable, undesirable, and ungrievable.

Nigeria's history is fraught with a culture of impunity, which treats its citizens like objects. The EndSARS case narrated in the first chapter indicates that Nigerians are not always recognized or treated as social subjects, even in their own country. Throughout Nigeria's century-old history, there have been repeated failures to recognize and treat Nigerians as human subjects with

inalienable dignity and fundamental rights. In fact, the 2020 Lekki Toll Gate massacre is not the

first of its kind in Nigeria's history. Instead, from the colonial through military to democratic

regimes, there are myriad cases of the unjustifiable killing of Nigerian citizens by the Nigerian

military, within Nigeria's territory, and under the watch of the Nigerian government. Three similar

cases come to mind – the brutal massacre of innocent Nigerians in Aba (1929), Enugu (1949), and

Odi (1999).

In 1929, the colonial army killed about 100 women in Aba. The incident is known as the

Aba Women's War.[532] They were protesting their unfair taxation by the colonial rulers. About

twenty years later, in 1949, the British colonial army killed about 21 men. The incident is known

as the Iva Valley Massacre.[533] The victims were peacefully protesting the non-payment of their

wages at a government-run coal mine in Iva Valley, Enugu. Fifty years later, in 1999, the Nigerian

army invaded and burnt down Odi, a rural town in the Niger Delta, after indiscriminately shooting

and killing over 900 civilians. This incident, known as the Odi Massacre, was in connection with

---

[532] For more, see Ibe, *Women War*; Samuel Chukwuemeka Edeh, "7 Causes of The Aba Women Riot of 1929," *Bscholarly* (blog), August 2, 2020, https://bscholarly.com/7-causes-of-the-aba-women-riot-of-1929/; Adaobi Onyeakagbu, "The Real Story behind the Aba Women's Riot and the List of People That Died," Pulse Nigeria, 05:00 100AD, https://www.pulse.ng/lifestyle/food-travel/the-real-story-behind-the-aba-womens-riot-and-the-list-of-people-that-died/605kbl1; Ibrahim B. Anoba, "The Aba Women's Riots of 1929: Africa's Great Tax Revolt | Ibrahim B. Anoba," September 29, 2018, https://fee.org/articles/the-aba-women-s-riots-of-1929-africa-s-great-tax-revolt/; Edeagu, "Critiquing Witness Testimonies in African Colonial History"; "Women's War of 1929," Stanford History Education Group, accessed March 8, 2022, https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons/womens-war-1929; Alyssa Qualls, "Women in Nigeria Today," *African Postcolonial Literature in English* (blog), accessed May 17, 2022, http://www.postcolonialweb.org/nigeria/contwomen.html; Bernhardt Arielle, "Igbo Women Campaign for Rights (The Women's War) in Nigeria, 1929 | Global Nonviolent Action Database," trans. Rennebohm Max, October 4, 2010, https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/igbo-women-campaign-rights-womens-war-nigeria-1929; Matera et al., *The Women's War of 1929*; Van Allen, "Aba Riots or the Igbo Women's War?"

[533] For more, see Agwu Akpala, "The Background of the Enugu Colliery Shooting Incident in 1949," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3, no. 2 (1965): 335–63; S. O. Jaja, "The Enugu Colliery Massacre in Retrospect: An Episode in British Administration of Nigeria," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 11, no. 3/4 (June 1982): 86–106; Nduka Eze, "The Iva Valley Miners Strike and Massacre at Enugu Colliery, 1949 | Libcom.Org," *Libcom.Org* (blog), January 24, 2018, https://libcom.org/article/iva-valley-miners-strike-and-massacre-enugu-colliery-1949; Saheed Aderinto, *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture, and Public Order* (Indiana University Press, 2018), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt2204p6x; Brown, "Locals and Migrants in the Coalmining Town of Enugu (Nigeria)."

a protracted conflict between government and oil-producing communities over indigenous rights and environmental protection.[534] The list is almost endless and still growing with no end in sight.

The brutal mass murder of these Nigerians forced others to grieve and protest their deaths. In their grief, many came to realize that they themselves were actually recognizing the humanity of fellow subjects, who had been treated as objects by others. Hence, they sort to redress this ill-treatment through protests and other corrective actions that culminated in violent irruptions. I am capitalizing on these irruptions to make explicit what was implicit in the shock of these atrocities – a persistent failure of recognition. This is why I brought those irruptions to the fore in the first chapter and I am now returning to them in this final chapter to emphasize that the historical failure to duly recognize and treat all Nigerians as equal social subjects is the root cause of many past and current conflicts in Nigeria. This is not to say that recognition alone is sufficient for the long journey of peacebuilding in front of my country. My point is that, to make this journey successful going forward, we must address the hitherto unmet need to recognize and treat our our citizens as human subjects and not allow them be treated either as objects or persons whose humanity can be unrecognized or misrecognized by others, within and outside Nigeria, without apt consequences.

---

[534] For more, see Ebuka Onyeji, "INTERVIEW: Odi 1999 Massacre: Why We Will Never Forgive Obasanjo, Alamieyeseigha – Odi Community Chairman," *Premium Times Nigeria* (blog), November 23, 2019, https://www.premiumtimesng.com/features-and-interviews/364370-interview-odi-1999-massacre-why-we-will-never-forgive-obasanjo-alamieyeseigha-odi-community-chairman.html; Punch News, "Odi Massacre: Anyone with Tribal Marks on Their Chest Was Slaughtered, Corpses Littered Everywhere –Bolou, Former Bayelsa Commissioner," *Punch Newspapers* (blog), December 16, 2017, https://punchng.com/odi-massacre-anyone-with-tribal-marks-on-their-chest-was-slaughtered-corpses-littered-everywhere-bolou-former-bayelsa-commissioner/; "NIGERIA: Focus on the Deployment of Troops in Odi [19991230]," accessed May 19, 2023, https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Newsletters/irinw-123099.html; "About: Odi Massacre," accessed May 19, 2023, https://dbpedia.org/page/Odi_massacre; Samuel Oyadongha and Emem Idio, "Nigeria: 15 Years After Massacre, Odi Boils Again," *Vanguard*, December 29, 2014, sec. News, https://allafrica.com/stories/201412292803.html; Samuel Oyadongha, "Nigeria: Killing of Security Operatives - Don't Trigger Repeat of Odi Massacre, Dickson Warns Militants," *Vanguard*, May 12, 2016, sec. News, https://allafrica.com/stories/201605120529.html; Onyebuchi Ezigbo, "Nigeria: Obasanjo's Aide Justifies Odi Massacre," *This Day*, November 20, 2012, sec. News, https://allafrica.com/stories/201211200663.html.

Surely, as we will soon see, there are genuine efforts to promote human dignity in Nigeria. These include several well-thought-out political, economic, religious and educational initiatives. But there is a catch-22 kind of dilemma that has bungled each of these initiatives, that is: the prime solution to Nigeria's problem of recognition is inherently denied by Nigeria's failure of recognition. In other words, the very resource that Nigeria needs to solve her vital problem of nonrecognition or misrecognition of the dignity of Nigerians as human subjects is denied by that same problem. Let me explain: human dignity can only be affirmed, protected or promoted in any society if there is a thriving culture of recognition in that society. Paradoxically, this very culture of recognition is what Nigeria currently lacks and this lack underlies Nigeria's recurrent socio-political woes. Hence, any practicable initiative aimed toward promoting human dignity in Nigeria has to begin with creating a systemic, sustainable and intentional culture of recognition.

My goal here is to explore how addressing the human need for recognition can help Nigeria establish this much-needed culture of recognition. Again, I admit that this culture is not sufficient in solving all of Nigeria's socio-political woes or even guarantee an end to our crisis of recognition. However, establishing a culture of recognition is an essential starting point and should be integral in our efforts to ensure that Nigerians everywhere are treated as human subjects with fundamental rights and inalienable dignity. It is only when this culture is firmly established that Nigerians can truly flourish and suitably contribute to the common good of the human society. In fact, until this culture is established, Nigerians will hardly engage in proper ethical relations as the prevailing failure of recognition would continue to ruin our best efforts to live in an ethical society. Moreover, developing a culture of recognition is inevitable because any further attempt to treat Nigerians as objects will likely boomerang in the form of awkward demands and, perhaps, violent struggles culminating in similar past conflicts that have brought Nigeria to its current catch-22 quagmire.

As I noted earlier, in the second chapter, recognition is a vital human need that tends to self-escalate into a demand and, ultimately, a struggle when not properly addressed as a need. This is, because, human beings naturally expect recognition from others since part of their individual and social identity formation is significantly influenced by such recognition or its absence. Hence, to efficiently circumvent or sufficiently alleviate this dangerous escalation and ensuing irruption, I proposed a paradigm for addressing recognition as a vital human need, in the very last chapter. This paradigm, drawn from Enda McDonagh's tripartite act of love – letting be, letting go and letting God, is based on human identity as imago Dei. I further explored what this paradigm entails for Catholic social ethics vis-à-vis reimagining its traditional criteria for the common good – human dignity, solidarity and subsidiarity. The goal was to make them more relevant to human flourishing as effective guides in cultivating the required friendship for attaining the common good in modern multicultural and pluralistic societies like Nigeria, USA and India.

In this closing chapter, I will descend to particularities by focusing on the Nigerian context. The strategy is to explore the relevance of ethics of recognition in attaining Nigeria's age-long goals of national unity, peaceful coexistence, human flourishing and the common good. Nigeria's best initiatives at attaining these crucial goals have been effectively bungled by the problem of sectionalism and its attainment now looks hopeless. I will basically argue that this hopelessness is, partly, caused by Nigeria's lack of a culture of recognition and that any viable efforts to address sectionalism in Nigeria has to begin with developing a thriving culture of recognition. I will divide this chapter into three sections. The first section will trace the background of the above situation focusing on Nigeria's corrupt politics and its associated problem of sectionalism. The second will briefly review various efforts that are being made to address Nigeria's problem of sectionalism and describe how these efforts had mostly failed due to a prevailing culture of impunity. Finally,

the third will explain why a culture of recognition is necessary for addressing this problem and propose ways to create, promote and sustain this culture through influential channels like education, politics, law, sports, music, movies, the media and experts in light of the ethics of recognition.

4.1 Nigeria's Corrupt Politics and the Problem of Sectionalism

As noted above, Nigeria is a behemoth comprising diverse identities like ethnicity, language, religion etc. More often than not, these identities tend to influence the socio-political and economic life of the country. Attempting to leverage any or some of these identities to control people and resources is what I call identity politics. In Nigeria's identity politics, the most potent identities that are often leveraged include ethnicity and religion. As in other African countries, religion permeates all aspects of social life in Nigeria as the most influential factor in its national ethos.[535] This is, because, religion is the most popular identity-marker that has succeeded in uniting many Nigerians across all of its multi-cultural, ethno-political and socio-economic lines.[536] Some of the major religious groups in Nigeria include Christians (40-45%), Muslims (40-45%) and adherents of the indigenous religions (10-20%).[537] Expectedly, Nigeria's religious demography is as complex and nuanced as its land mass and the composition of its diverse population.[538] But, in general, the South is predominantly Christian and the North is predominantly Muslim. Other religious groups active in Nigeria include Jews, the Baha'i, and non-affiliates of any religion.

---

[535] John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1985), 1.

[536] Cletus Gotan, "Nigeria's Religious Conflicts: A Call for A Dialogue of Life" in Cyril Obanure (ed) *Religion, Violence and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria* (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2008), 93.

[537] These figures are mostly speculative as many Nigerians simultaneously practice the indigenous religious and either Christianity or Islam even when they identify with a particular religious identity. Moreover, the statistics given by government on religious and other national identities are typically manipulated for political and economic advantages. Nonetheless, a 2012 survey by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life estimated the population to be 49.3% Christian and 48.8% Muslim, while the remaining 2% belong to other or no religions.

[538] For more, see Rimamsikwe Habila Kitause and Hilary Chukwuka Achunike, "Religion in Nigeria from 1900-2013," *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 3, no. 18 (2013): 45–56.

4.1.1 Persistent Rise of Sectional Conflicts and Decline of National Peace in Nigeria

Religion has an ambivalent impact on Nigeria's quest for peaceful coexistence and national unity. It has successfully united Nigerians under large viable groups, like Christians and Muslims. For instance, in 2019, Nigeria had the world's fifth-largest Muslim population (90 million) and sixth-largest Christian population (87 million).[539] However, this has not really translated into peaceful coexistence within and among these groups. Instead, religious practice in Nigeria is tainted with mutual intolerance as a result of a divisive identity politics that employs exclusivist worldviews, extremist postures, radicalization and bigotry to push through unpopular religious and nonreligious agendas. [540] This divisive identity politics has led to all forms of sectional violence including a jihad in 1804 when a Fulani Muslim, Usman dan Fodio, launched a jihad that overran most of the North as well as huge parts of central and western Nigeria.

Despite the jihad, scholars tend to trace the rise of sectionalism in Nigeria to the conquest, colonization and partitioning of what would become Nigeria into two unions known as Northern and Southern protectorates in 1900 by Britain.[541] This forced partitioning was done to fortify the British occupation and control of the local tribes who had not yet fully submitted to colonialism. But, the primordial identities of these diverse indigenous tribes were mostly ignored or deliberately subjugated. In many cases, a complete erasure of local cultures and customs were attempted by the colonists through suppressing local authorities, criminalizing traditional customs misconstrued as "uncivilized", substituting local first names with foreign names for official registrations, banning local languages in schools and the forceful conversion of children.

---

[539] Jeff Diamant, "The Countries with the 10 Largest Christian Populations and the 10 Largest Muslim Populations," *Pew Research Center* (blog), accessed April 26, 2023, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/04/01/the-countries-with-the-10-largest-christian-populations-and-the-10-largest-muslim-populations/.

[540] O. C. O. Uche, "Religion and Violent Conflicts in Africa" in *Nigerian Democracy and Global Democracy,* Ike Odimegwu (ed) (Awka: Fab Educational Book, 2008), 388.

[541] Bashir Alhaji-Shehu, "Ethno-Religious conflicts/Violence in Northern Nigeria" (Thesis for the award of Master of Arts: Universität Wien, 2012), 4.

The British ruthless colonialism paved the way for frequent friction, conflicts and struggles within the protectorates as old foes, now new unchosen neighbors, struggled to coexist and forge a new collective identity. Each protectorate fairly managed to forge a unified political agenda and regional identity. But, the overall result of the partitioning was a drastic and persistent decline in social peace especially in the North where Islam had become influential following the jihad. The problem of declining social peace was paralleled by a persistent rise in sectionalism as constituent groups struggled to protect their primordial identities and promote their socio-political interests. This situation was worsened by the eventual forced amalgamation of the two protectorates into the present-day Nigeria in 1914.[542] Again, the amalgamation was done for colonial administrative convenience as it made for a large contiguous territory under one governorship. Still, the colonists continued to ignore the diverse identities and disparate socio-cultural views of the local people.

The colonists failed to recognize the obvious progress already recorded by the locals in coexisting within their respective protectorates. They also did not reconcile the stark socio-political, religious and economic differences that have emerged between the two regions over this decade. In fact, the colonists exploited these obvious differences to impose a "divide and rule" system that created new ethnoreligious sectional rivalries and amplified existing ones across the new nation. Hence, by Nigeria's Independence in 1960, sectional violence had become a key national problem. Leading up to Independence, Nigeria had gradually become sharply divided into three geo-political regions: the Northern region dominated by Hausa and Fulani Muslims, the Eastern region dominated by Igbo Christians, and the Western region dominated by Yoruba with a relatively balanced-mix of Christians and Muslims. Predictably, the emerging sectionalism among various

---

[542] Osisioma B. C. Nwolise, "Terrorism: What is to be done about an Emerging Threat to Democracy, Good Governance, Development, and Security of Nations in the 21st Century?" in *The French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA), Ibadan Special Research Issue,* 1:1-35 (Ibadan: Gold Publishers, 2005) 1-35.

identities were leveraged by local leaders who adopted the British divide-and-rule strategy in their struggle to gain power at regional and national levels before, during and after independence.[543]

Local political and religious leaders openly avowed commitment to the national project of building unity in diversity. But, they secretly used ethnocentric, nepotistic and exclusivist religious sentiments to sway the masses for political advantages. Hence, successive indigenous governments could not reconcile the emerging sectional crisis in post-independence Nigeria. Instead, some leaders subverted the goal of national unity to promote their selfish interests using regional identity politics. This led to widespread election frauds and corruption that became an excuse for Nigeria's first coup d'état in 1966. Still, the ensuing military dictatorships worsened the already bad situation.

Military rulers not only failed to address the existing problem of sectionalism, but actually incited new sectional conflicts in a bid to strengthen their power grab. With repressive decrees and brutal crackdown on opposing groups as well as persistent sabotage of democratic institutions, successive juntas deepened the existing social mistrusts and radicalized many Nigerians. The direct consequence was a vicious civil war (1967–1970) between the Eastern region (the defunct Biafran Republic) and the rest of Nigeria. Many Nigerians, including over 3 million ethnic Igbos Christians perished in this war. The impact of the civil war was so deep that many reconciliatory efforts proved ineffective.[544] In the aftermath of the war, with the collateral proliferation of light weapons, a new era of more sophisticated ethnoreligious violence across Nigeria emerged.

[543] Uche Eme-Uche, *A Review of the Efforts at National Unity in Nigeria*, 2022, 2. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357974235_A_Review_of_the_Efforts_at_National_Unity_in_Nigeria [accessed May 01 2023].

[544] At the end of the civil war in 1970, the Federal Government launched a nine-point program of Rehabilitation, Reconciliation and the Reconstruction of war-affected areas based on the slogan: "No Victor, No Vanquished." This was aimed at re-integrating the Eastern region into Nigeria's socio-political and economic life and initiated many other post-civil war efforts to foster national unity and revive Nigeria's failing project of peaceful coexistence. For more, see Ousman Murzik Kobo, "'No Victor and No Vanquished' - Fifty Years after the Biafran War," *Origins: Current Events in Historical Perspective* (blog), January 2020, https://origins.osu.edu/milestones/nigerian-civil-war-biafra-anniversary?language_content_entity=en.

Worse still, the Nigerian Government began to execute punitive policies against the ethnic-Igbos. For instance, after Biafra lost the war, its currency known as the Biafran Pounds ceased to be a legal tender. The Nigerian Government then issued a policy known as the Twenty Pounds Policy. This policy stipulated that only a maximum of 20 Nigerian Pounds would be given to the Igbos in exchange for any amount of Biafran pounds they would submit to the Nigerian Government within a stipulated period. Also, there was the Abandoned Property Policy that designated all properties owned by Igbos in any part of Nigeria, except in the Eastern Region, as "abandoned properties." Such properties were confiscated by the Nigerian government and auctioned off to the highest bidder. But, due to the Twenty Pounds Policy, the original owners and other Igbos were mostly out bid.[545]

These and similar policies have been described as part of Nigeria's "politics of oblivion."[546] They raised concerns about Nigeria's commitment to post-war reconciliation and government's sincerity about building an all-inclusive nation, which is the basis for peaceful coexistence and national unity.[547] The those polices further deepened pre-war divisions such that, by 1980, sectional conflicts had become so frequent that Nigeria began to rank as a hotbed of sectionalism, suffering a terrible setback for its century-old quest for unity.[548] Surprisingly, there has been a steady uptick in sectional violence since the return to democracy in 1999. From the sharia riots to Boko Haram insurgency, Nigeria's sectionalism became a global problem as the Islamic State

---

[545] For more, see Benjamin O. Aduba, "Opinion: The Nigerian Twenty Pounds Policy of The Seventies' Implementation," *The Will*, August 31, 2017, https://thewillnews.com/opinion-the-nigerian-twenty-pounds-policy-of-the-seventies-implementation/; Grace O. Akolokwu, "A Review of the Abandoned Property Saga and the Constitutional Right to Own Property," *Port Harcourt Law Journal* 4, no. 1 (2012): 115–33.

[546] Basil Ugorji, "Nigeria-Biafra War and the Politics of Oblivion: Implications of Revealing the Hidden Narratives through Transformative Learning" (PhD Dissertation, Florida, Nova Southeastern University, 2022), https://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1190&context=shss_dcar_etd.

[547] Eme-Uche, *A Review of the Efforts at National Unity in Nigeria*, 3.

[548] Hussaini Abdu, "Ethnic and Religious Crises in Northern Nigeria; Issues and Informer Repression*"* http://hussainiabdu.info/mydocs/Ethnoreligious%20Crisis%20in%20Northern%20Nigeria.pdf.

West Africa Province (ISWAP) and the West African Fulani militia began to terrorize Nigeria and its neighbors.

Nigeria's sectionalism has worsened and now accounts for widespread insecurity, abuse of women and children, rising crime rate, political instability, declining faith in the national identity, kidnap for ransom, excruciating poverty, ideological polarization, socio-economic crisis and the wanton loss of lives and properties in Nigeria.[549] Also, many Nigerians have been displaced from their homes and now live as internally displaced persons (IDPs). In 2020, Nigeria had over 2.7 million IDPs, one of the highest in sub-Saharan Africa. About 40% of these IDPs live in makeshift shelters usually without basic needs and amenities such as potable water, food, clothing, healthcare, education, and security. Thus, many IDPs are plagued with poverty, malnutrition, overcrowding, poor living conditions and lack of health care, mental health and post-traumatic stress disorder.[550]

4.1.2   Major Factors Influencing Identity Politics and Sectionalism in Nigeria

Nigeria's identity politics is influenced by numerous factors that culminate in sectionalism. These include corrupt politics, intolerance, fanaticism, poverty, unemployment, and global affairs. I will briefly discuss a few of these factors here to depict how they instigate sectionalism in Nigeria. Perhaps, the most influential factor here is Nigeria's extremely corrupt politics of resource control. This corrupt politics is largely organized around the distribution of the nation's crude oil revenue from the federal government to state and local governments, which is opposed to a typical federal system where the federating units create wealth and make meaningful contributions to the center.

---

[549] Innocent Owutu, "Violence and Secret Cult life in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria," Paper presented at Ikoyi Lions Club District 404A, Osborne Lagos in 2012, 2.

[550] See Olayinka Akinrolie et al., "Physical Inactivity among Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria," *Journal of Migration and Health* 6 (October 18, 2022): 100140, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmh.2022.100140. S. Egwu, "Political Economy of Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Nigeria" in Festus Okoye (ed). *Ethnic and Religious Rights in Nigeria* (Kaduna: Human Rights Monitor, 1998),16-29. Also, see David Oyedepo, Towards the Rescue of a Nation on the Brink of Collapse: Necessarily for a New Generation of the Tinkers. The Nation, (Saturday June 30, 2012), 7.

Thus, instead of motivating its constituents to flourish, Nigeria's politics instigate various sections to struggle for political influence and power in a bid to gain access and control over these resources; and, to determine which section gets what from the national wealth. Key players in this struggle often sell their political interests using divisive ethno-religious sentiments, thereby, engendering other vital factors like religious intolerance, politicization of identity, ethnocentrism, and nepotism.

By religious intolerance, I mean a deep-seated resentment for other religions or views that differ from a particular faith perspective. This is mostly driven by inability to openly accommodate diversities within and outside one's religion regarding varying scriptural interpretations, doctrinal development, new insights on religious ethics, acculturation and conscience formation. [551] Nigeria's problem of religious intolerance is compounded by a general ignorance or misconception of the core teachings of one's own religion and the basic teachings of other religions. This is typically displayed through fundamentalism or fanaticism, that is, the unfounded or irrational belief that one's religion is either the only true religion or is superior to others, which then leads to various attempts to persuade or coerce others to either convert to or abide by the tenets of this religion.[552] This underlies the distrust, suspicion, and fear of domination among various sections of Nigeria. For instance, the unprecedent decision of the ruling party to field only Muslim candidates for the 2023 presidential election stokes the Christians' fear of being dominated in Nigeria's politics.[553]

---

[551] K. Balogun, "Religious Intolerance as a Cause of National Disintegration" in S. Mala (Ed.) *Religion and National Unity* (Ibadan: University Press, 1988), 166.

[552] Ikenga Metuh, "Two Decades of Religious Conflict in Nigeria: A Recipe for Peace." *Bulleting of Ecumenical Theology* 6 (1): 69-93(1994), 88-89.

[553] See Douglas Burton, "Muslim-Muslim Ticket Proclaimed Winner of Nigeria's Presidential Election amid Protests," *Catholic News Agency (CNA)* (blog), March 1, 2023, https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/253773/muslim-muslim-ticket-proclaimed-winner-of-nigeria-s-presidential-election-amid-protests.

Such fear of domination and oppression by others instigate sectional conflicts in Nigeria.[554] This fear, which is mainly stoked by implicit socio-cultural, economic and political biases, is not always about religion. In many cases, religion is used as a viable disguise for nonreligious interests like the protection of primordial identities, negotiation for resource allocations, election into public offices and pursuit of sundry sectional or selfish interests. In this case, it is also used as a viable platform by many interest groups to form strong alliances aimed at mitigating their common fear of being dominated by others or to deceive genuine religious followers into helping them achieve a hidden desire to dominate others. This has brought deceit and corruption into many aspects of Nigeria's national life. For instance, there is widespread corruption in the Nigerian census, which can be traced to the fear of domination. Census statistics are constantly manipulated to enable those in power perpetuate themselves as a permanent majority while permanently minoritizing others.[555]

Corrupt practices like manipulating national statistics to favor some sections of the country against others threaten Nigeria's fragile unity. Aggrieved citizens tend to either opt out of the union or push for its radical reform as they fear being permanently dominated and oppressed as minorities. This fear has led to the politicization of sectional identities, which are usually prioritized over the national identity, as both victims and perpetrators jostle to form new alliances so as to protect their sectional interests against perceived rivals. Among Nigeria's sectional identities, religious identity is the most politicized as it is frequently used to promote political and socio-economic interests like determining who is excluded or included in policy-making or who can and cannot easily access resources, opportunities and privileges at various levels of Nigeria's social life.[556]

---

[554] S. Bako, "World Recession and Growth of Religious Intolerance" in Nigeria in J. Olupona (ed.) *Religion and Peace in Multi-Faith Nigeria,* (Ile-Ife: O.A.U., 1992), 147-76.

[555] S. Awoniyi, "A Discourse on Religious Conflict and Tolerance in Multi-Faith Nigeria" in European Scientific Journal July 2013 edition vol.9, No.20.

[556] C. Kwaja, "Strategies for [Re] Building State Capacity to Manage Ethnic and Religious Conflict in Nigeria in the Journal of Pan-African Studies. Vol. 3, no. 3 (2008).

One negative impact of politicizing sectional identities in Nigeria is that national debates on issues like the allocation of resources, election into public offices and citizenship rights often degenerate into sectional disputes, usually characterized by "accusations or allegations of neglect, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism and bigotry."[557] For instance, in 1977-1978, a national conference aimed at improving Nigeria's legal system was derailed by a Muslim/Christians dispute. Muslims pushed hard for incorporating the Sharia Law into the new legal system arguing that the Common Law inherited from Britain was essentially Christian in concept and orientation. But, Christians pushed back arguing that the Sharia Law would be inappropriate for a diverse society that operates a secular constitution.[558] This debate ended in a stalemate. But, in 1999, many Muslim-dominated states in the North began to incorporate the Sharia Law into their legal system. Moreover, since 1986, there has been another national debate over the actual status of Nigeria as a state. This was instigated by the covert enrollment of Nigeria into the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) despite its secular status.[559] Issues like this continue to stoke fears among Christians of plans to Islamizise Nigeria.

Other negative impacts of politicizing sectional identities in Nigeria, besides prioritizing particular interests over the common good, are severe poverty and prevalent youth unemployment. First, Nigeria's excessive focus on the export of crude oil has hampered the development of other sectors of the economy like agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, industry, technology, and services. The result is that, "Nigeria currently has the unenviable status of being the country with the highest number of persons living in absolute poverty, and these persons constitute about 48% of the

---

[557] Ifeanyi C. Onodugo, Benjamin A. Amujiri, and Bethram N. Nwuba, "Ethno- Religious Crisis and Nigerian Democracy," *IJISET - International Journal of Innovative Science, Engineering & Technology* 2, no. 5 (2015): 368.

[558] Ibrahim Mua'zzam and Jibrin Ibrahim, "Religious Identity in the Context of Structural Adjustment in Nigeria" in Attahiru Jega (ed) *Identity Transformation and Identity Politics under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria* (Stockholm: Elanders, 2000), 64.

[559] See S. Anyanwu. & I. Nwanaju, *Boko Haram Religious Conflicts and Dialogue Initiatives in Nigeria* (Owerri: Edu-Edy, 2010), 125.

population (i.e., about 98 million people)." [560] Similarly, the excessive dependence of the federating units on receiving monetary allocations from the center has hampered their ability to explore their potentials for wealth creation or their willingness to share their resources. Thus, the developmental disparity between the South and North gets wider, with the North being comparatively poorer.

A key impact of Nigeria's developmental disparity is terrorism and a widespread insecurity. Particularly, poverty among the unemployed youth in Northern Nigeria has been identified as a major cause of rife insecurity by terrorist groups like ISWAP, Boko Haram, and Fulani bandits. For instance, Boko Haram has recruited numerous unemployed youths from the Almajiri system as fighters and suicide bombers. Almajiri is a religious scheme involving mostly destitute children in Northern Nigeria, who are learning to recite koranic verses under an Islamic scholar.[561] These children suffer various abuses and exploitation by their teachers who deploy them to beg for alms on the streets. Boko Haram and other Islamic terrorists usually entice and radicalize such children by providing them with food, shelter and money.[562] Moreover, politicians use such children as thugs to cause violence during elections or whenever their selfish interests are threatened.

4.2 Nigeria's Failed Attempts to Address its Problem of Sectionalism

Having presented Nigeria's problem of sectionalism and some factors influencing it, I will now highlight some efforts being made to address it. Of course, Nigeria is not lacking in initiatives about how to solve this central problem. In fact, there are many great proposals toward that end. For instance, in 2015, I proposed a "strategic dialogue" among Nigerians to address the problem

---

[560] Uduak Akpan and Salisu Isihak, "The Geography of Poverty in Nigeria," Working Paper Series (Uyo: Development Bank of Nigeria, 2021), 129.

[561] S. Awoniyi, A Discourse on Religious Conflict, *ibid.*

[562] Casimir Ani, C. T. Nwaoga, and Chrysanthus Ogbozor, "Religion, Violence, Poverty and Underdevelopment in West Africa: Issues and Challenges of Boko Haram Phenomenon in Nigeria," *Open Journal of Philosophy* 04, no. 01 (January 26, 2014): 62, https://doi.org/10.4236/ojpp.2014.41009.

of sectarian conflicts.[563] This dialogue was to be based on the framework of *principled negotiation*, comprising four reconciliatory strategies: separating people from problems, prioritizing interests over positions, exploring mutual benefits, and grounding agreements on objective criteria.[564] Other crucial proposals by several scholars include: protecting religious freedom, building social trust, normalizing the diversity of opinions, developing human and material resources, job creation, fair journalism and good governance.[565] These brilliant proposals have inspired several well-meaning initiatives that are aimed towards addressing sectionalism in Nigeria. I will briefly review some of these initiatives under some broad categories: socio-political, educational, economic and religious.

---

[563] My earlier proposal was based on the framework of *principled negotiation*, which was developed in 1977 by the Harvard Negotiation Project as part of the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School. The mission of the project was to improve the theory, teaching and practice of negotiation and dispute resolution, with the vision to enabling people deal more constructively with conflicts. The Project developed a new framework for an interest-based and cooperative approach to dialogue as an alternative to the traditional approach, which is position-based and competitive. The strategy of principled negotiation was first summarized in a 1981 book, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreements without Giving In*. In a later edition, the authors touted the importance of the new strategy arguing that traditional strategies for negotiation were mostly disappointing, tiring and alienating. They tend to lead negotiators into the dilemma of choosing between two mutually exclusive approaches: *soft negotiation* whereby negotiators avoid conflicts by readily conceding to agreements that might leave them feeling exploited and bitter or *hard negotiation* whereby they engage in a contest of wills that must be won at all cost including taking an extreme position that might leave the parties exhausted and distraught. Other traditional strategies fall in-between hard and soft negotiation, with similar dismal effects especially on the relationship of the parties. The authors proposed a third strategy, which blends soft and hard features, where negotiators are soft on people and hard on issues. Issues are decided on merits based on some fair and objective criteria rather than on might or the subjective will of the parties. Thus, this strategy transforms conflicts into opportunities for positive social change, while strengthening the relationship of the parties. See Ogonna Hilary Nwainya, "Designing a Strategic Road Map for Religious Peace in Nigeria: A Case for Principled Negotiation" in Luke Emehiele Ijezie, Stephen Audu, and Agnes I. Acha, eds., *The Church in Nigeria and Ecumenical Question* (Port Harcourt: Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHAN), 2015), 660–80.

[564] Separating people from problem is crucial for getting to the real issues. It allows the parties to address the issues without damaging their relationships as they think of each other as partners rather than as adversaries. As partners, they focus more on mutual interests than divisive positions. Position is usually a product of decisions, while interests are the core reasons informing such decisions. Negotiating a problem in terms of positions means that at least one party will lose their ground. But, in terms of interests, it is possible to create a common ground. Hence, parties might state their interests, but ought to be open to explore different proposals and positions. This entails generating several viable options for a possible solution. Of course, this is not easy; parties might insist on a particular option and fail to consider alternatives or assume that one side to win and the other to lose or abdicate their responsibility to jointly work out a solution. Finally, when interests are directly opposed, objective criteria like national and international conventions, legal frameworks, cultural norms, ethical principles and law can be used as a common ground. See Nwainya, Designing a Strategic Road Map for Religious Peace in Nigeria, 674-80.

[565] See Abdullahi Shuaib, "Towards Achieving Ethno-Religious Peaceful Co-Existence In Nigeria - ICERMediation" (The International Center for Ethno-Religious Mediation (ICERM), New York, USA, October 1, 2014), https://icermediation.org/ethno-religious-peaceful-coexistence-in-nigeria/.

4.2.1   Initiatives for Addressing the Problem of Sectionalism in Nigeria

One important socio-political initiative is the deliberate use of national symbols like the Constitution, the Currency, National Anthem, National Pledge, national memorials and various monuments as objects of unity for all citizens. These national symbols are meant to foster unity by signifying and promoting a common identity for citizens, at home and abroad. Like many countries, Nigeria attempts to use her national symbols to promote national unity, peaceful coexistence and the common good. For instance, the National Anthem exhorts citizens to "serve with heart and might, *one nation* bound in freedom, peace and unity." An earlier version, adopted at Independence in 1960, explicitly expressed this quest for *unity in diversity*: "though tribe and tongue may differ in brotherhood we stand...serve our sovereign mother land."[566] The Nigerian currency, particularly the Fifty Naira bill, carries an image depicting the multi-ethnic diversity of Nigeria with the slogan "Unity in Diversity." Similarly, the national pledge of loyalty commits Nigerian citizens to defend her unity, and uphold her honor and glory while abiding by her laws as enshrined in the constitution.

Talking about the Constitution, it actually summarizes the commitment of all citizens to promote Nigeria's national unity, peaceful coexistence and the common good. Basically, its stated objective is to guarantee the corporate existence of Nigeria, protect her sovereignty, and stipulate how it will govern itself. For instance, in 1979, the post-war Constitution changed Nigeria's system of government from parliamentary to presidential democracy. Perhaps, to forestall future secession attempts, it adopted a highly centralized federal structure that curtailed the autonomy of the regions. The constitution stipulated that Nigeria's president will be elected to govern the whole federation as one polity, not only based on a majority of votes cast in a general election, but also a quarter of votes cast in each of, at least, two thirds of the states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja.

---

[566] Eme-Uche, *A Review of the Efforts at National Unity in Nigeria*, 4-5.

It also mandated the President has to appoint at least a Minister from each state to ensure equitable policies from the executive. As for the legislature, the Senate is composed of three senators from each state and one from the FCT. Similar measures were meant to ensure equitable representation.

To ensure the active participation of all citizens in Nigeria's politics, the constitution also mandated political parties to have active membership and offices in most parts of the country. This is also meant to avert the emergence of political parties that only represent sectional interests and, thus, undermine national unity.[567] There were also other initiatives like the establishment of the Federal Character Commission in 1978 based on a Federal Character Policy. This policy was meant to foster unity amongst the federating units through equitable representation of all sections of the nation at the federal level. Hence, the Commission is charged with implementing the terms of the policy by ensuring that the federal government and its agencies are composed and operated in a manner that justly reflects Nigeria's federalism.[568] Thus, it aims to prevent the predominance of any ethnic, religious or sectional interests in Nigeria's federal government and its agencies.

Beside national symbols, there are myriad other socio-political initiatives that were meant to inspire mass mobilization, adequate socialization, social trust and national integration in Nigeria. These include government initiatives like the Mass Mobilization for Self-Reliance, Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER). Established in 1987, MAMSER morphed into the National Orientation Agency (NOA) in 1993. This initiative was meant to "develop a Nigerian society that is orderly, responsible and discipline, where citizens demonstrate core values of honesty, hard work and patriotism."[569] For instance, MAMSER's published objectives included: 1) Propagation of the need to eschew all vices in public life, inclusive of corruption, dishonesty, electoral and

---

[567] Eme-Uche, *A Review of the Efforts at National Unity in Nigeria*, 7-8.
[568] Eme-Uche, *A Review of the Efforts at National Unity in Nigeria*, 6.
[569] Garba Abari, "National Orientation Agency – Change Begins With Me," accessed June 26, 2023, https://www.noa.gov.ng/.

census malpractices, ethnic and religious bigotry; 2) Shed all pretenses of affluence in Nigerian lifestyle; 3) Re-orient Nigerians to shun waste and vanity; 4) Inculcate in Nigerians a dependence towards locally made goods; 5) Mobilize Nigerians to participate in up-coming elections and political debates; etc.[570] Similarly, the NOA states its main objectives as to ensure that Government programs and policies are better understood by the general public and Mobilize favorable public opinion for such programs and policies.[571] Hence, it is expected to consistently raise awareness, positively change attitudes, values and behaviors; accurately and adequately inform; and sufficiently mobilize citizens to act in ways that promote peace and harmony.

There are also very crucial educational initiatives like the establishment and running of public schools that are highly subsidized by the government. For instance, the federal government currently owns the oldest and most affordable universities in Nigeria. Of Nigeria's 170 universities, 43 were established by the federal government between 1948 and 2021.[572] In fact, the largest university in Nigeria, National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), is federally owned. With headquarters in Abuja, NOUN has a total enrollment of over half a million students studying in about 76 campuses and study centers across the country. Presently, NOUN is the largest open and distance learning institution in Africa and, perhaps, one of the largest, globally.[573]

In addition to universities, the federal government also owns 27 of Nigeria's 152 colleges of education and more than 80 secondary schools known as "unity schools" all over Nigeria.[574] The goal is to use education as a tool for fostering national unity and peaceful coexistence. Hence,

[570] Afam Nkemdiche, "National Orientation and Patriotism," *The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News*, May 10, 2018, https://guardian.ng/opinion/national-orientation-and-patriotism/.
[571] Abari, "National Orientation Agency – Change Begins With Me."
[572] Doris Dokua Sasu, "Universities in Nigeria," *Statista: Society - Education & Science* (blog), February 6, 2023, https://www.statista.com/topics/8520/university-in-nigeria/.
[573] Sasu, Universities in Nigeria, ibid.
[574] The Federal Ministry of Education Nigeria, "Federal College of Education," *FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION* (blog), accessed May 3, 2023, https://education.gov.ng/federal-college-of-education/.

The admission policies of these institutions were designed to bring young Nigerians of diverse ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds together in line with the principle of federal character. The policy makers thought that by living together in boarding schools special bonds of friendship would develop, these young Nigerians would get to appreciate and respect cultures / religions other than theirs and the benefits of diversity. In addition, the curricula at all levels were designed to impart knowledge, skills and dispositions that could foster patriotism, cooperation, tolerance and national unity. Integrative values were imparted through the instrumentality of the curricula with a view that they would become patriotic Nigerians. To achieve these; social studies, civics, and citizenship education were introduced into the curricula of educational institutions as school subjects or integral part of General Studies programs of tertiary institutions.[575]

This initiative was meant to provide fair educational and employment opportunities to all Nigerians. It was also meant to bring together at a very early age many Nigerians from diverse backgrounds.

Another educational initiative is the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme that was established in 1973 as part of the post-war reconciliation efforts. The idea behind the scheme is to send young graduates across Nigeria as ambassadors of national unity. These graduates serve in states other than their own for a whole year, where they provide manpower and get exposed to Nigeria's diversity. The goal is to help them develop a spirit of patriotism, cooperation, tolerance and respect for other cultures and religions in Nigeria. Other educational initiatives are scholarship schemes, civic education and national school competitions comprising quizzes, debates and sports. For instance, the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education has a Federal Scholarship Board (FSB) that ensures a balanced and efficient utilization of foreign and local scholarship and fellowship awards to deserving Nigerian undergraduate and postgraduate students.[576] There is also the Federal Government Colleges Games competition for the Unity Colleges. In 2022, the 16th edition of this

---

[575] Eme-Uche, *A Review of the Efforts at National Unity in Nigeria*, 4.
[576] See Federal Ministry of Education Nigeria, "Federal Scholarship Board – Nigerian Scholarship," accessed June 26, 2023, https://education.gov.ng/fsb/.

biennial competition was held in Lagos where about 85 of these colleges engaged in sporting activities like athletics, long and high jump, shot put, javelin, chess and scrabble etc.[577]

There are also some economic initiatives like the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP). NAPEP was introduced in 2001 to train young Nigerians in vocational trades, to support internship, to support micro-credit, and create employment in the automobile industry. It aims to achieve its goal using diverse methods like Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP) with an emphasis on skills acquisition and training for self-reliance.[578] Likewise, ERGP was a Medium Term Plan, 2017 – 2020, that was meant to ensure sustained inclusive growth and to consolidate national cohesion; a structural economic transformation; improving efficiency in both public and private sector; increasing national productivity; achieving sustainable diversification of production; to significantly grow the economy and achieving maximum welfare for the citizens by ensuring food and energy security.[579]

Furthermore, there are various religious initiatives like the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC). NIREC was established in 1999 a voluntary association of Christians and Muslims. Its establishment was meant to address Nigeria's incessant ethno-religious crisis. As a permanent and independent Body, MIREC provides a common platform for religious and traditional leaders to engage in dialogue and collaborative efforts towards peaceful coexistence of Nigerians and to lay stronger foundations for sustainable peace and religious harmony in Nigeria.[580] There are also

---

[577] See Bioluwatife Akinyemi, "FG Pledges Continuous Support for School Sports," *Tribune Online* (blog), December 4, 2022, https://tribuneonlineng.com/fg-pledges-continuous-support-for-school-sports/.

[578] See Babayo Sule, Umar Adamu, and Muhammad Aminu Yahaya, "National Poverty Eradication Programme in Nigeria (NAPEP): A Case Study of Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP) in Gombe State 2003 - 2015," *Journal of Public Administration and Governance* 9, no. 2 (2019): 230–47.

[579] See ERGP, "Economic Recovery and Growth Plan – The Statehouse, Abuja," accessed June 26, 2023, https://statehouse.gov.ng/policy/economy/economic-recovery-and-growth-plan/.

[580] See NIREC, "Welcome to NIREC," accessed June 26, 2023, https://www.nirec.org.ng/. Also, see Carits Canada, "Joint peace initiative by Muslim and Christian groups in Northern Nigeria," *Développement et Paix* (blog), accessed June 26, 2023, https://www.devp.org/legacy/joint-peace-initiative-muslim-and-christian-groups-northern-nigeria/.

other non-governmental or non-profit faith-based organizations that work to address sectionalism in Nigeria like the Inter faith Partners for Peace and Development (IPPD), which aims to promote peaceful coexistence between different ethnic and religious communities in Nigeria who have been affected by violent ethno-religious crisis.[581] These NGOs target unemployed youth, market women, politicians, youth with unstable education, government officials, parents and security agencies.

4.2.2   Failure of Socio-Political Initiatives to Address Sectionalism in Nigeria

With all the brilliant initiatives, one wonders why sectionalism is still a problem in Nigeria. In reality, many of these initiatives have not translated into effective solutions to Nigeria's problem. The initiatives largely fail to achieve their intended goals, not because they were poorly conceived or that Nigerians are incapable of rightly implementing them, but mostly because they were either deliberately undermined by those who ought to promote them or their abuse by some individuals and groups have been utterly ignored by those who ought to enforce them. Particularly, the actions and inactions of several Nigerian governments as well as those of their agencies and beneficiaries have been severally implicated in many of these failures. In many cases, there is either a flagrant abuse of the policies backing these initiatives or a lack of the political will to enforce them. I will buttress this crucial claim by briefly reviewing a few of the initiatives. For want of time and space, I will focus on socio-political initiatives. But, the outcome of this review can also be applied to the educational, economic, religious and sundry categories since they all have the same causal problem.

Socio-political initiatives, indeed all categories, are mostly bungled by Nigeria's culture of impunity. This culture largely fosters the serial neglect, abuse and violation of our sterling policies and hampers best practices without appropriate penalties or consequences. Despite the impeccable

---

[581] Peace Direct, "Inter Faith Partners for Peace and Development (IPPD)," *Peace Insight* (blog), October 2021, https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/organisations/ippd/.

ideas and excellent purposes discussed above, the reality is that Nigeria's national symbols have been serially ignored, abused and violated. And, this is not typically done by ignorant citizens or scornful foreigners or, even, Nigeria's enemies. Rather, the Nigerian government and its agents – especially the security agencies who swear allegiance to these symbols and are commissioned to defend them – seem to be the usual culprits. For instance, as I noted in the first chapter, many of the young Nigerians that were killed in the 2020 #Lekki Massacre were waving the Nigerian flag and singing the national Anthem. These gestures were supposed to symbolize patriotism.

Awfully, the Nigerian military ignored those gestures and violated the national symbols. The Nigerian government and its military failed to recognize the heroic patriotism of their compatriots who put every faith in their common identity as Nigerians. Being already familiar with Nigeria's culture of impunity, the protesters had actually anticipated a face-off with security agencies. But, they did not expect to be murdered by their own military. They had expected that the security personnel would, at best, protect them or, at worst, disperse them using batons or tear-gas or, maybe, arrests. But, according to an eyewitness, "we were sitting on the ground and singing the Nigerian national anthem and most of us had flags in our hands and we raised it up. Then they opened fire directly straight at us and they kept on advancing and advancing. One or two people got hit. Everybody got up and it became total chaos."[582] Sadly, the Nigerian military destroyed the lives and violated the national symbols they were meant to protect.

Those courageous patriots paid the ultimate price because they put a lot of faith in Nigeria. Unfortunately, Nigerian leaders and its national symbols failed them in the worst possible way – with a display of unbelievable impunity. For instance, days before the massacre, a message had spread on social media that the Nigerian military would *never* shoot unarmed civilians, nay while

---

[582] See Nduka Orjinmo, "Nigeria Sars Protests: Horror over Shootings in Lagos," *BBC News*, October 21, 2020, sec. Africa, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54630592.

they are waving the Nigerian flag and singing the national anthem. Hence, as the platoon of around 20 armed soldiers closed in on the protesters, they sat down, locked hands and began singing in unison. This is, in fact, when the shooting began. The national anthem was drowned out by the sound of tax-payers' bullets. In one emotional video, a man raised his voice above the chaos in a futile bid to save the anthem. But, it too began to wane as the shootings amplified.[583] By the time it subsided, more than a dozen of the protesters were lying dead, covered in bloodied Nigerian flags.

As awful as death is, it is neither the worst nor the last of the serial impunity in this case. Death is very much at the beginning as it ushers in the prevention of society to grieve the dead and a cruel hunting of survivors. The massacre itself was serially denied as government took extensive steps to cover up their crime. Just before the shooting, CCTV cameras, security lights and street lights were turned off.[584] During the shooting, most of the bodies were seized and, later, carried away by the military.[585] After the shooting, the government vehemently hounded the survivors and witnesses to silence them.[586] Even when they did, they refused to take responsibility or punish the perpetrators. In fact, three years on, there has been no acknowledgement, justice or accountability for the victims and survivors of this massacre. Hence, the victims' deaths are yet ungrieved, may never be grieved, and survivors remain ignored. This is not unique – we have a culture of impunity.

---

[583] See Ademola Olonilua, "#EndSARS: DJ Switch, Others Help Protesters Shot at Lekki Toll Gate," *Punch Newspapers*, October 20, 2020, https://punchng.com/endsars-dj-switch-others-help-protesters-shot-at-lekki-toll-gate/.
[584] See Osai Ojigho, "Nigeria: Killing of #EndSARS Protesters by the Military Must Be Investigated," *Amnesty International* (blog), October 21, 2020, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2020/10/killing-of-endsars-protesters-by-the-military-must-be-investigated/.
[585] See Oyindamola Olubajo, "#EndSARS: Pathologist Presents Bodies of 99 Protesters Killed in Lekki, Other Parts of Lagos," *Peoples Gazette* (blog), June 5, 2021, https://gazettengr.com/endsars-pathologist-presents-bodies-of-99-protesters-killed-in-lekki-other-parts-of-lagos/.
[586] See Amnesty International, "Nigeria: Two Years on, More than 40 #EndSARS Protesters Still Languishing in Jail," *Amnesty International* (blog), October 20, 2022, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/10/nigeria-two-years-on-more-than-40-endsars-protesters-still-languishing-in-jail/.

Nigeria's culture of impunity has not spared, even, the constitution from neglect and abuse. Despite those impeccable laws and excellent provisions discussed above, the Nigerian constitution is also serially neglected, abused, and violated. As usual, the culprits are not uninformed citizens or disrespectful strangers or, even, Nigeria's adversaries. Rather, these acts are mostly perpetrated by the Nigerian government and its agents – especially the security agencies who swear allegiance to the constitution and are commissioned to defend it at all cost. For instance, despite constitutional measures to guarantee the free and fair election of public officers in Nigeria, elections have been serially and shamelessly rigged up to the very last general elections held this February and March, 2023; which has been described as one of the – if not the – worst election in our recent history.

A new electoral law, 2022 Electoral Act, which had given much hope to Nigerians were blatantly undermined by government and the electoral umpire.[587] The law, which put technology at the center of our election is, perhaps, the most significant electoral reforms in Nigeria. This new law, *inter alia*, mandated the electoral umpire – the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) – to procure and use an electronic voter accreditation system known as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) in conducting future elections.[588] The BVAS machines are designed to electronically collate, upload and transmit election results from the polling units to the INEC server in real time. This was meant to prevent the usual manual manipulation of such results on transit to the national collation center at Abuja and to grant Nigerians access to view the results as they arrive on the Internet Result Viewing Portal (IReV) in real time. Sadly, this well-

---

[587] See Emmanuel Egobiambu, "2023 Presidential Election Worst In Nigeria's Recent History, Says Peter Obi," *Channels Television* (blog), March 16, 2023, https://www.channelstv.com/2023/03/16/2023-presidential-election-worst-in-nigerias-recent-history-says-peter-obi/.

[588]See Federal Government of Nigeria, "Electoral Act, 2022," *Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette*, March 29, 2022.

intentioned law was flagrantly contravened during its first main test during the election of February 25, 2023.[589]

Despite our laudable laws and technological provisions, there are credible allegations that the BVAS and IReV systems were deliberately sabotaged on the election day by the administrators. While the results of the national assembly elections were successfully uploaded in real time as stipulated by the prevailing electoral law, attempts to upload those of the concurrent presidential election failed nationwide. This was recently confirmed when, "two officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), on Thursday [June 8, 2023], told the Presidential Election Petitions Court [a special election tribunal sitting in Abuja] that they could not upload the February 25 presidential election results on the Result Viewing Portal (IReV) even though they were able to upload the Senatorial and House of Representatives results on the portal."[590] Hence, the election is being challenged in the court as there are credible allegations that results were "being taken to government houses for manipulation" before being released manually to the public.[591]

Though, the INEC had earlier claimed they purposely halted the upload to prevent attempts by hackers to access their servers, they recently told the court they had a technical glitch.[592] But, from witness testimonies to the court, an authorized back-end administrator is suspected to have

[589] See Temitayo Jaiyeola, "How BVAS, IReV Failed First Election's Stress Test," *Punch Newspapers*, March 6, 2023, https://punchng.com/how-bvas-irev-failed-first-elections-stress-test/.

[590] See Dele Omoyeni, "Two INEC Officials Tell Tribunal They Couldn't Upload Presidential Results To IReV," *Channels Television* (blog), June 8, 2023, https://www.channelstv.com/2023/06/08/two-inec-officials-tell-tribunal-they-couldnt-upload-presidential-results-to-irev/.

[591] Chijioke Iremeka, "Electoral Fraud, Technology and Future of Nigeria's Democracy," *The Guardian Nigeria News*, April 8, 2023, Saturday Magazine edition, https://guardian.ng/saturday-magazine/electoral-fraud-technology-and-future-of-nigerias-democracy/.

[592] See Sahara Reporters, "Buhari's Minister, Lai Mohammed Contradicts INEC, Says Electoral Body Deliberately Didn't Upload Presidential Results On IReV," *Sahara Reporters*, April 4, 2023, https://saharareporters.com/2023/04/04/buharis-minister-lai-mohammed-contradicts-inec-says-electoral-body-deliberately-didnt; Premium Times and Agency Report, "INEC Deliberately Withheld Uploading Presidential Election Results on IReV - Lai Mohammed," accessed June 28, 2023, https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/591712-inec-deliberately-withheld-uploading-presidential-election-results-on-irev-lai-mohammed.html; Ignatius Igwe, "It's Unfair To Judge Us For Result Upload Glitch – INEC," *Channels Television* (blog), June 27, 2023, https://www.channelstv.com/2023/06/27/its-unfair-to-judge-us-for-result-upload-glitch-inec/.

tampered with the passwords of ground staff and denied them access to the presidential portal on the IReV, thus, undermining the entire process. By law, all results were supposed to be uploaded directly from polling units on election day. Shockingly, more than 18,000 of the uploaded sheets amounting to millions of votes are either blurred or have their figures mutilated.[593] Other uploaded images were not result sheets, but human, animal, vehicular and sundry images that had nothing to do with the said election. Also, INEC has not uploaded the images of many of the result sheets, more than three months after the election, thus, contravening the relevant constitutional provision.

Consequently, local and foreign observers have raised grave concerns about the credibility of the election and had only stopped short of accusing the governing party of colluding with INEC to rig the election with impunity.[594] Some notable Nigerians even opposed the swearing-in of the declared winner of that election and his inauguration as Nigeria's president, pending the outcome of court cases challenging the declared results. For instance, John Cardinal Onaiyekan, former Archbishop of Abuja, argued that it "makes no sense" to swear in the president-elect, Mr. Bola Ahmed Tinubu, before the court cases were concluded.[595] However, on May 29, 2023, Mr. Tinubu was sworn-in as President of Nigeria. While the court cases against his controversial win are still ongoing, Tinubu now has the executive power to intimidate, control or fire the judges – if not arrest the plaintiffs, sack the tribunal to silence the cases or simply ignore an unfavorable judgment.

---

[593] Lucky Obewho, "Tribunal: LP Presents Over 18,000 Blurred PU Result Sheets, INEC Alleges Ambush," *Channels Television*, June 15, 2023, https://www.channelstv.com/2023/06/15/tribunal-lp-presents-over-18000-blurred-pu-result-sheets-inec-alleges-ambush/.

[594] Ruth Maclean and Elian Peltier, "Opposition Parties in Nigeria Call for Election Rerun, Citing Vote Rigging," *The New York Times*, February 28, 2023, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/28/world/africa/nigeria-election-challenges.html.

[595] See Nathaniel Shaibu, "Swearing in Tinubu before Tribunal's Verdict 'Doesn't Make Sense' – Onaiyekan," *Punch Newspapers*, May 4, 2023, https://punchng.com/swearing-in-tinubu-before-tribunals-verdict-doesnt-make-sense-onaiyekan/; Sahara Reporters, "It Doesn't Make Sense To Swear In Tinubu, Others Whose Victories Are Being Challenged In Court Yet –Cardinal Onaiyekan," May 4, 2023, https://saharareporters.com/2023/05/04/it-doesnt-make-sense-swear-tinubu-others-whose-victories-are-being-challenged-court-yet.

As bizarre as these may sound, they are all possible due to Nigeria's culture of impunity. This culture means that the government and its agencies constantly fail to abide by the rule of law including disobeying court orders, without appropriate consequences. For instance, as president, Muhammadu Buhari disobeyed a record number of 40 court different orders or more between 2015 and 2019, alone. These include the prolonged detention, despite acquittal or restraining orders, of an ex-National Security Adviser (NSA), Sambo Dasuki; the leader of the Shiite Islamic Movement in Nigeria, Ibrahim Zakzaky; the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Nnamdi Kanu; the leader of #RevolutionNow movement and publisher of Sahara Reporters, Omoyele Sowore, among several others. [596] A legal adviser to Amnesty International, Kolawole Olaniyan has strongly criticized the former president's attitude describing it as a "stunning disregard for the rule of law and human rights."[597] Hence, given these precedents that are made possible by Nigeria's culture of impunity, there is no guarantee that the judiciary will not be muzzled or that President Tinubu will obey any verdict against his own election, if it ever happens.

4.3 Addressing Sectionalism in Nigeria through an Ethics of Recognition

The impudence and complexity of these cases indicate that sectionalism simply typifies a deeper conundrum in Nigeria – a catch-22 paradox. This is not an ordinary dilemma. It is actually a complex vicious circle in which a problem reinforces itself because it actually hampers access to its own solution, and, this solution is made untenable by the problem. By this I mean that the very culture of recognition that Nigeria direly needs to address the problem of sectionalism is actually hampered by this problem while the lack of this culture infinitely thwarts all of Nigeria's initiatives

---

[596] Daily Trust, "How Disobedience of Judgments Affects Nigeria's Democracy," *Daily Trust*, March 22, 2022, https://dailytrust.com/how-disobedience-of-judgments-affects-nigerias-democracy/.

[597] Sahara Reporters, "Buhari Has Disobeyed 40 Court Orders, Says Amnesty International's Lawyer," November 25, 2019, https://saharareporters.com/2019/11/25/buhari-has-disobeyed-40-court-orders-says-amnesty-international%E2%80%99s-lawyer.

aimed at resolving this problem. Basically, sectionalism is a failure of recognition. However, due recognition is the only viable solution to sectionalism. But, in fact, there can be no recognition until sectionalism ends; and, sectionalism cannot end without due recognition. Hence, to address its problem of sectionalism [which is essentially a consequence of a missing culture of recognition], Nigeria needs to cultivate this culture [which is actively prevented by the problem].

The only feasible way out of this catch-22 situation is a proper social ethics – an ethics of recognition – an ethics that can effectively break its huge jinx of sectionalism through recognition. This ethics is necessary to guide us in our long journey of building a united and flourishing nation. Our journey as a nation has to begin with us deliberately creating a thriving culture of recognition, which is necessary to counter the prevailing culture of impunity that continues to nurture, promote and sustain sectionalism in Nigeria. To this effect, we need an ethics that can successfully correct the corrupt politics that birthed sectionalism, in the first place, and dismantle the unjust structures that perpetuate the culture of impunity in Nigeria. Of course, this ethics can be drawn from various sources using theological, philosophical, anthropological, psychological, sociological, economic, political, educational, scientific and legal frameworks. However, regardless of its framework, this ethics has to be an ethics of recognition – an action-oriented ethics that can establish, nurture, and sustain a culture of recognition by normalizing and prioritizing the need of all human beings, nay Nigerians, to be duly recognized and treated as social subjects and not as objects.

4.3.1   Nigeria's Catch-22 Situation: Necessity of a Culture of Recognition

In the Nigerian context, the prime goal of the ethics of recognition would be to efficiently guide us toward creating a systemic, intentional, and sustainable culture of recognition. Practically, this entails that the entirety of the way we live in Nigeria and as Nigerians must guarantee that all human beings, including Nigerian citizens, are duly recognized as persons who possess innate

dignity and equal rights, irrespective of any differences. All the above initiatives were designed to affirm the equality of all Nigerians before the law and they presumed the willingness of citizens to also affirm this equality and, at least, the political will of leaders to enforce the policies backing the initiatives. But, there was no culture with robust values to inspire citizens' affirmation or strong institutions to constantly hold violators accountable. If Nigeria had a thriving culture of recognition, there would be no place for a serial impunity against its citizens, within and outside the country. Even if problems like sectionalism sneaked into the Nigerian society, they would not have defied myriad well-thought-out initiatives and thrive for so long with little or strong resistance.

Here lies the core of our catch-22 *status quo*. A sound and thriving culture of recognition would have ensured that our best initiatives would largely succeed in addressing myriad problems like sectionalism. The fact that sectionalism still thrives and our best initiatives keep bungling is a clear and persuasive evidence that Nigeria lacks a much-needed culture of recognition. The gap created by this lack has actually been filled by a culture of impunity. This opportunistic and destructive culture has ruined all our efforts and initiatives to address the problem of sectionalism and actively prevents us from building the social trust or true friendship that we absolutely need to achieve our agelong quest for national integration, peaceful coexistence, human flourishing, regional leadership, global influence, and the common good. These quests are becoming hopeless.

The culture of impunity mostly frustrates our national pursuit of these goals by encouraging the serial neglect, abuse and violation of the veritable means for realizing the common good in Nigeria. For instance, the abuse of our national symbols during the 2020 #Lekki Massacre was a direct assault on our quest for national unity and human flourishing. Apart from soccer, nothing has united Nigerian youths like the #EndSARS protests, in which tens of millions of Nigerians protested simultaneously in every part of Nigeria without differentiating themselves based on any

other identity than being Nigerians. The protest organized by young people from all over Nigeria, put their trust in the military who not only shared this singular identity with them, but also vowed to defend it. So, they used our national symbols to signal their unity under this singular identity. But, this unity was brutally shattered through the massacre of these young patriotic Nigerians as the military violated their won national symbols ignored the patriotism of their compatriots, and ruined the crucial goal of national unity that has already been achieved by these patriotic youths.

The military can only do these things unpunished due to a prevailing culture of impunity. Indeed, the massacre was neither the beginning nor the end of a series of impunity that marred the #EndSARS saga. In the first place, the protest began as a reaction to a rife impunity – extrajudicial killings and acts of brutality by the Nigerian police. Initially, the government ignored the protesters with impunity – they neither engaged with the protesters nor did they address their demands until the protest escalated. Then, they violently reacted with fierce impunity – they harassed, brutalized, arrested, froze accounts, seized passports, censored communications, restricted movements, and imprisoned the protesters. When all these measures failed to quell the protest, they brutally crushed the protest with utmost impunity – they killed protesters, stole their bodies, deprived them of proper burial, denied families and survivors their rights to grieve, rejected their own judicial panel report, refused to apprehend the killers and have not publicly acknowledged the victims' patriotism either by declaring a national mourning for the dead or setting up a memorial. Moreover, some of the survivors are still being held in jails without trial, despite mounting local and international condemnations.[598] Still, this horrible display of serial impunity is not unique to the #EndSARS case.

---

[598] See Sahara Reporters, "Amnesty International Calls For Immediate Release Of #EndSARS Protesters Still In Nigerian Prisons," January 11, 2023, https://saharareporters.com/2023/01/11/amnesty-international-calls-immediate-release-endsars-protesters-still-nigerian-prisons; C.J Nelson, "Nigeria's #EndSARS Protestors Still Face Frozen Bank

The 2023 general election in Nigeria also display a disturbing pattern of serial impunity. For instance, the young people were once again united in their common quest and pursuit for good governance. They changed their approach from protest to politics. They registered as voters, joined political parties, crowd-funded young candidates and campaigned vigorously for candidates who had proven their commitment to national unity, human flourishing, peaceful coexistence and the common good. Indeed, about 10 million new registered voters for the election were attributed to the political awareness created by the #EndSARS movement and many youth influencers who organized and funded massive rallies within and outside Nigeria. Indeed, INEC acknowledged that 84% of these new registrants were aged 18 to 34, "many within this age group were at the forefront of the Endsars movement."[599] Thus, young people became a formidable force in Nigerian politics.

Undoubtedly, these patriots voters wanted to fulfill their civic duty. They dared to put their faith in Nigeria again, by working hard to elect leaders that would, not only address unemployment, poverty, insecurity, corruption, and other domestic issues but also, help Nigeria to play its rightful role as a regional power, Giant of Africa, and a global leader. Their defiant confidence in this cause was buoyed up by the 2022 Electoral Act, which brought election to their own domain – internet, technology, and social media. Yet again, the hopes of these young Nigerians were dashed by INEC who brazenly flouted the electoral laws and broke its own rules with absolute impunity. INEC's failure to upload the presidential results from the Polling Stations on election day was neither the first nor the last of its serial impunity regarding this particular election.

Accounts and Jail Time," *Vice* (blog), February 4, 2021, https://www.vice.com/en/article/dy8e3m/nigerias-endsars-protestors-still-face-frozen-bank-accounts-and-jail-time.

[599] See James Eshokeme and David Taylor, "2023 Election: Nigerians on the Impact of the #ENDSARS Movement," *Africanews*, February 24, 2023, https://www.africanews.com/2023/02/24/2023-election-nigerians-on-the-impact-of-the-endsars-movement/.

First, INEC was credibly accused of deliberately frustrating and outrightly preventing prospective voters from registering, especially the youth and people from places that were regarded as the key stronghold of the main opposition candidates.[600] In fact, it is alleged that "in several parts of the country, thousands of Nigerians could not register due to alleged sharp practices by some officials of the INEC, who often colluded with corrupt politicians to frustrate attempt of eligible voters from registering to enable them get their Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs), in areas, where they or their parties are not popular."[601] Then, INEC invalidated about one million new voter-registrations, due to some "clean up", but the final register shockingly had multiple registrations, foreign names, and photos of minors mostly from the North.[602] Thus, Nigerians became suspicious of INEC's "cleanup excuse" and questioned the real motive behind the cancellation of such a huge number of potential voters especially from places where opposition candidates were very popular.

INEC's serial impunity did not stop at voter registration. It got into the actual election, and continues at the ongoing post-election petition court. The PVCs of some new registrants, which is physically required for accreditation on election day, were either withheld or discarded.[603] Reports from multiple sources and viral videos on social media claimed that many PVCs were hidden away in unidentified offices. There were also reports about many PVCs being found in drainages and

---

[600] See Luke Onyekakeyah, "Is INEC's Voters' Registration Being Bungled?," *The Guardian Nigeria News*, June 14, 2022, https://guardian.ng/opinion/is-inecs-voters-registration-being-bungled/.

[601] See Iwok Iniobong Kwen James, "How INEC Deregistered Voters in S/S, S/E Raises Concerns," *Businessday NG*, November 13, 2022, https://businessday.ng/politics/article/high-inec-deregistered-voters-in-s-s-s-e-raises-concerns/.

[602] See Sahara Reporters, "Multiple Registrations, Strange Names, Pictures Of 'Minors' On 2023 Voters' Register Released By Nigerian Electoral Body, INEC," November 14, 2022, https://saharareporters.com/2022/11/14/multiple-registrations-strange-names-pictures-minors-2023-voters-register-released.

[603] See News Agency of Nigeria, "2023: INEC Frustrating, Preventing Us from Getting PVCs, Abuja Residents Say," *Peoples Gazette* (blog), June 28, 2022, https://gazettengr.com/2023-inec-frustrating-preventing-us-from-getting-pvcs-abuja-residents-say/.

trash dumps.[604] On election day, some voters who came to vote were prevented from voting, even with their valid PVCs. Many shockingly discovered at the venue that they had been deregistered by INEC without prior notification or explanation. Likewise, some candidates discovered their parties were unlisted on the ballot papers and could not be voted for.[605]

Even after the voting had been concluded and results counted, INEC refused to give copies of the original result sheets to official party agents who refused to sign the manipulated or doctored versions of the result, which is against the electoral law.[606] Now, at the ongoing election petitions court, INEC is accused of acting like a contestant in the election for which it was an umpire. For instance, INEC has refused to release required electoral documents to petitioners as stipulated by law, despite the petitioners paying them the required service fees. Also, INEC officials have been accused of refusing to accept or honor court subpoenas to testify before the tribunal.[607] Hence, INEC's series of impunity is still unfolding and the ongoing case in the election petition court has been described as one of the biggest tests for Nigeria's Judiciary – the last hope of the citizens.[608]

This serial impunity, which is the bane of numerous well-thought-out initiatives that failed to succeed in Nigeria, is symptomatic of a deeper social malaise – a pervasive crisis of recognition.

---

[604] Elizabeth Agbaegbulem, "INEC Probes Video of Thousands Uncollected PVC's Buried in Rivers Drainage," *Nigerian Observer*, July 14, 2022, https://nigerianobservernews.com/2022/07/inec-probes-video-of-thousands-uncollected-pvcs-buried-in-rivers-drainage/.

[605] Adekunle Sulaimon, "BREAKING: Labour Party's Logo Missing on Ondo Ballots," *Punch Newspapers*, February 24, 2023, https://punchng.com/breaking-lps-logo-missing-on-ondo-ballots/; James Sowole, "NNPP to Sue INEC over Omission of Party's Name on Ballot Paper," *THISDAYLIVE*, March 19, 2023, https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/03/19/nnpp-to-sue-inec-over-omission-of-partys-name-on-ballot-paper.

[606] See Kunle Olasanmi, "We Were Instructed Not To Give Election Result Copies To Agents, Another INEC Staff Tells Tribunal," *Leadership*, June 9, 2023, sec. News, https://leadership.ng/we-were-instructed-not-to-give-election-result-copies-to-agents-another-inec-staff-tells-tribuna/.

[607] See Ameh Ejekwonyilo, "Atiku Accuses INEC of Refusal to Release Electoral Documents despite Paying N6 Million," *Premium Times Nigeria*, June 6, 2023, https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/602887-atiku-accuses-inec-of-refusal-to-release-electoral-documents-despite-paying-n6-million.html; Wondrous Nnaemeka, "TRIBUNAL: INEC Chairman Refusing Obi's Subpoena To Release Documents, Lawyer Tells Panel," *The Whistler Newspaper*, June 14, 2023, https://thewhistler.ng/tribunal-inec-chairman-refusing-obis-subpoena-to-release-documents-lawyer-tells-panel/.

[608] Sunny Green Itodo, "Presidential Election Petitions Tribunal, Test of Nigeria's Judiciary - Group," *Daily Post Nigeria*, May 8, 2023, https://dailypost.ng/2023/05/08/presidential-election-petitions-tribunal-test-of-nigerias-judiciary-group/.

Each act of impunity, in the above series, happened only because there was no act of recognition. For instance, extrajudicial killings and acts of police brutality became rife only because police did not duly recognize young Nigerians as human subjects worthy of their services and protection as stipulated by law. The government ignored protesters and cracked down on them only because they did not recognize some of their citizens as worthy of their attention or respectful dialogue. The military killed the protesters and stole their bodies only because they did not recognize their lives as ones that mattered and, so, their deaths were not recognized as grievable.

Likewise, INEC frustrated the registration of potential voters only because they did not recognize those citizens as people whose votes should really count. They excluded millions of registered voters only because they did not recognize those citizens as worthy of participating in their country's crucial election. They kept or disposed the PVCs of some citizens only because they did not recognize those citizens as worthy of using them to determine their own future as citizens. They unilaterally deregistered valid voters only because they did not recognize the voters as worthy of fulfilling their lawful civic duties in a manner that would eventually count. They omitted opposition candidates only because they did not recognize those citizens as worthy of being voted for by fellow Nigerians. They are now frustrating the judiciary with similar impunity.

Truly, the failure of recognition may not be the only reason for these serial acts of impunity. But, a timely act of recognition could have anticipated, countered, corrected or barred the series of impunity. For instance, there would be no protest if there were no extrajudicial killings and acts of police brutality that assaulted Nigerians' needs to be recognized and treated as human subjects whose life mattered. The protests could have been resolved if the government had engaged with the protesters in respectful dialogue early enough and honestly addressed their demands for due recognition. If it continued, the protests could have remained largely peaceful and, probably, ended

well had the military not used deadly force on fellow human beings who were nonviolently struggling for due recognition as *bona fide* citizens and true patriots.

Likewise, if INEC had addressed the need of all Nigerians to be recognized as *bona fide* citizens worthy of participating equally in their country's general election, both as candidates and as voters, there would be no protests on the streets, social media, news outlets or in the court. These protests could have been timely resolved if INEC had followed the rules and displayed untampered results in real time as stipulated or allowed unhindered access to these results for those candidates who are seeking redress in court as stipulated by law. Of course, there are myriad possible excuses for all these failures, but we neither excuse or fail to acknowledge a clear pattern here that indicates something more deliberate, entrenched and cultural than mere mistakes, oversight or glitches. Thus, I argue that these failures indicate a deeper problem – a crisis of recognition, orchestrated by the lack of a culture of recognition in Nigeria.

The global crisis of recognition crisis, which I had described in earlier chapters, manifests in the serial failure of a society like Nigeria, USA, and India to duly recognize its citizens as human subjects and treat them according to this recognition. This persists especially when there is no flourishing culture of recognition that normalizes, prioritizes and sustains acts of recognition over competing acts of impunity in a society. This is because the natural human lust to dominate others and use them as objects for selfish ends remains viable without a culture that firmly discourages it as a vice and promote its corrective virtue. Until such a culture is firmly established, we will continue to waste great opportunities for recognition.

For instance, myriad great opportunities for recognition were wasted in the above cases because there was no robust culture of recognition. especially, the security agencies had great opportunities to protect Nigerians, but they extorted, killed, and brutalized them because protecting

Nigerian citizens is not the norm. Instead, assaulting and killing Nigerian citizens within and outside the country has been the norm for too long. [609] Likewise, government had great opportunities to address the demands of protesting Nigerians, but woefully failed. They ignored them by using extreme measures to destroy their legitimate calls for necessary attention. This is because listening to Nigerian citizens is not the norm. Instead, ignoring them and stifling their legitimate struggles, within and outside the country, has been the norm for far too long.[610] Even when a new opportunity came up through the 2023 general election to start correcting governments dismal handling of the #EndSARS protests and similar national fiascos, the government bungled it. Of course, this might sound quite extreme, but it is the shocking truth about the lack of a culture of recognition in Nigeria, indeed anywhere. Hence, I am calling for it to be urgently and adequately addressed through ethics.

4.3.2   Creating a Nigerian Culture of Recognition: A Way of Proceeding

The most practical way to address Nigeria's lack of a culture of recognition is to create one. Going by my earlier definitions, creating a culture of recognition requires a complete, deliberate, and realistic review, reimagination, and redeployment of the totality of our way of life in a manner that consistently normalizes, prioritizes and guarantees the due recognition of all Nigerians, indeed all human beings, as subjects endowed with inviolable dignity and inalienable rights, irrespective

---

[609] See Livia Borghese, Sarah Dean, and Jorge Engels, "Italy: Nigerian Street Vendor Killed in Broad Daylight, Sparking National Outrage | CNN," *CNN* (blog), accessed July 2, 2023, https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/01/europe/italy-nigerian-man-alika-ogorchukwu-killed-intl/index.html; Amnesty International, "Human Rights in Nigeria," *Amnesty International* (blog), 2022, https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/west-and-central-africa/nigeria/report-nigeria/; UNHCR, "Killings, Kidnappings and Looting Force 11,500 Nigerians to Flee to Niger," *UNHCR* (blog), December 3, 2021, https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/killings-kidnappings-and-looting-force-11500-nigerians-flee-niger.
[610] See Editorial Board, "The Humiliation of Nigerians Abroad," *The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News*, April 12, 2017, https://guardian.ng/opinion/the-humiliation-of-nigerians-abroad/; Patrick Egwu, "'Put South Africa First' Breeds Hate Toward Other Africans," *Foreign Policy*, November 24, 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/11/24/south-africa-anti-foreigner-nigerian-xenophobia/; Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani, "Perspective | Trump Trashes Nigeria and Bans Its Immigrants. Nigerians Love Him for It.," *Washington Post*, February 7, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/trump-trashes-nigeria-and-bans-its-immigrants-nigerians-love-him-for-it/2020/02/07/ed985a4c-4853-11ea-ab15-b5df3261b710_story.html.

of our many differences and diverse interests. This all-important exercise has to involve all the elements that now constitute a normal life in Nigeria, especially those, as listed earlier, that are passed down from generation to generation. As a way of proceeding, I will propose some action points for developing a culture of recognition in Nigeria. This proposal will focus on educational and socio-political action points, but it can also apply to other vital areas that I cannot address here.

Educationally, we can deliberately tailor our formal and informal processes of socialization and conscience formation towards effectively cultivating genuine friendships with all people, in all circumstances. At the earliest possible time, every Nigerian has to be intentionally exposed to ideals, experiences, histories, literature, games, trips, movies, music, arts, beliefs and services that clearly communicate the absolute necessity of true friendship for building and sustaining an ethical society. Particularly, our prominent agents of socialization – parents, guardians, families, nannies, teachers, preachers, mentors, peers, supervisors, government officials, social influencers, content creators, entertainers, journalists, actors, musicians, authors, analysts, counselors, and the media – who communicate our societal expectations and reinforce our accepted norms, have to be trained and well-equipped with resources to emphasize true friendship as a social expectation and norm.

For instance, our bedtime stories, school assignments, curriculum, sermons, games, movies, music, clubs, jokes, arts, sports, policies and social media postings ought to deliberately emphasize true friendship as a *sine qua non* for ethically living in Nigeria and for ethically relating with every Nigerian. Our socialization agents need to use their privileged status, popular channels and trusted outlets to consistently make the case that true friendship creates harmony, guarantees social justice, and makes the common good realistic.[611] They need to insist that Nigerians can only attain the common good as friends, and not as rivals or forces of domination. They need to expose Nigerians

---

[611] Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1939, 2347.

to the reality that our pursuit for peaceful coexistence, national unity, human flourishing and the common good would remain futile without true friendship as there would be no common ground for these well-meaning goals or for implementing the well-thought-out initiatives for their pursuit.

As a nation, we need to work together to build safe educational spaces, develop human-centered curriculums, introduce dignifying non-academic activities, create play grounds and train life coaches that deliberately emphasize our mutual need for one another. In doing this, we can take a cue from our traditional palaver system and reform it with insights from global best practices that might be lacking in our traditional societies.[612] For instance, in a recent publication, I discussed how traditional African societies used the *Palaver* model "as a style of communication as well as a place for learning and socialization especially for the adult male members of the community."[613] To buttress this point, I cited Nelson Mandela, the legendary Former President of South Africa, who narrated how he essentially learnt democratic values and inclusive leadership from observing the palaver approach of his guardian, the Xhosa Regent, and his court at the *Great Place*:[614]

> During regular tribal meetings, the regent introduces the topic for discussion. He then listens quietly to the participants--mostly adult married men--while: Everyone

---

[612] The term "palaver" seems to have a Portuguese origin. Julia Cresswell notes that the Portuguese *palavra* developed from Latin *parabola* 'parable': "When early Portuguese traders in West Africa had disputes or misunderstandings with the locals they used the Portuguese word *palavra,* literally 'word, speech', to mean 'a talk between local people and traders'. The Africans picked up the term from them, and in time passed it on to English sailors. In English palaver first meant a prolonged and tedious discussion, then in the late 19th century a fuss, commotion, or rigmarole." Julia Cresswell, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Word Origins*, 2nd ed., online version, s.v. "Palaver" (Oxford University Press, 2010), http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199547920.001.0001/acref-9780199547920-e-3511.

[613] Nwainya, "African Palaver Ethics, the Common Good, and Nonrecognition of Women," 190.

[614] "The Great Place at Mqhekezweni hardly conforms to the European image of a royal palace. Even today it remains ruggedly inaccessible, and is difficult to reach by car. To the Western visitor today the Great Place may seem small and remote, but to the young Mandela in 1927 it was the center of the world, and Mqhekezweni was a metropolis compared to the huts of Qunu. It was here that Mandela spent his most formative years and gained the impressions of kingship which were to influence his whole life. He would never forget the moment when he first saw the Regent arriving in a spectacular motorcar, welcomed by his people with shouts of "Aaah! Jongintaba!" (The scene would be reenacted seventy years later, when President Mandela was hailed by cries of "Aaah! Dalibunga!") Mqhekezweni was more prosperous then, and almost self-sufficient; its chief was then also regent, attracting tribesmen from all over Tembuland to consult him." Anthony Sampson, *Mandela: The Authorised Biography* (HarperCollins, 1999).

who wanted to speak did so. It was democracy in its purest form. There may have been a hierarchy of importance among the speakers, but everyone was heard, chief and subject, warrior and medicine man, shopkeeper and farmer, landowner and laborer. People spoke without interruption and the meetings lasted for many hours. The foundation of self-government was that all men were free to voice their opinions and equal in the value as citizens.[615]

One key insight from Mandela's description is that people were neither ignored nor brutalized in the palaver like the Nigerian government and its security agencies did to various protesters in our recent history. Hence, it is inherently unacceptable and untenable to normalize these anomalies.

Another key insight is that Mandela's narrative, which is corroborated by myriad other African works like Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, does not speak of a one-off event or a unique experience but about a thriving culture of recognition that prevailed in traditional African societies. Therefore, even if we can retrieve just this particular of ethics of recognition that was essentially practiced in our traditional palaver institutions, it can serve as a point of departure and a constitutive guide in our journey toward developing a modern culture of recognition that supports our future educational initiatives and genuine efforts aimed at addressing issues like sectionalism, identity politics, religious intolerance, nepotism, poverty, unemployment, insecurity and terrorism.

One traditional wisdom that the palaver ethics of recognition normalizes and prioritizes is the proper use of dialogue – including words and silences – to effectively resolve conflicts, foster reconciliation, and build sustainable peace. The palaver basically runs on an ethics that normalized and prioritized "free expression; it was possible to pour out one's heart, to give testimony or analyze together a conflict which might endanger the existence or life of the community."[616] This ethics obligates the leader to listen attentively to everyone and discern wisdom in each person's

---

[615] Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*, 1st paperback ed. (New York: Back Bay Books, 1994), 21. Cited by Nwainya, "African Palaver Ethics, the Common Good, and Nonrecognition of Women," 190.

[616] Anna Floerke Scheid, "Under the Palaver Tree: Community Ethics for Truth-Telling and Reconciliation," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 31, no. 1 (2011): 18.

speech without fear or favor. In expressing this wisdom, poetic speeches like proverbs, fairytales, and parables are very important not only for their flowery language, but also for the wisdom they convey and for their ethical character.[617] Hence, Achebe notes that, "among the Igbo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten."[618] The metaphor of words as food is highly appropriate since food is necessary for the sustenance of life and communication is vital for the sustenance of any culture.

Another crucial wisdom from the palaver, is that communication is not only verbal. Gestures and silences are also crucial. For instance, the Nigerian Sociolinguist, Gregory Nwoye notes that "silence is a highly marked form of behavior. It is not regarded merely as the absence of speech, but in almost all instances, silence is interpreted as having significant communicative functions. In short, silence can be very eloquent."[619] Given the myriad languages in Nigeria and the vast differences between them, words can be a huge barrier for social interaction. In some cases, the right use of silence and gestures can be more eloquent than words. Thus, intentionally teaching contemporary Nigerians the traditional African wisdom and practice of nonverbal communication is crucial for developing a culture of recognition, especially, where language is inadequate.

Socio-politically, we can purposely engrain the unconditional affirmation of human dignity into all our social encounters as the basis of our friendships and the norm for the Nigerian politics. Our pursuit for national integration, peaceful coexistence and human flourishing has to abide by

---

[617] Benezet Bujo, *Foundations of an African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2001), 51.

[618] Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 7. This quote, from the narrator's recounting, in chapter 1, of how Unoka calmly interacted with someone to whom he owed money, alludes to the highly sophisticated art of rhetoric practiced by the Igbo. This rhetorical formalness offers insight into the misunderstandings that occur between the Igbo and the Europeans. Whereas the latter value efficiency and directness in their dealings, the Igbo value an adherence to their cultural traditions, which include certain patterns of dialogue considered inefficient by Western standards. See "SparkNotes: Things Fall Apart: Important Quotations Explained, Page 3," accessed May 9, 2020, https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/things/quotes/page/3/.

[619] Gregory O. Nwoye, "Eloquent Silence Among the Igbo of Nigeria," in *Perspectives on Silence*, ed. Deborah Tannen and Muriel Saville-Troike (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1985), 185.

the criteria of the common good especially the unconditional affirmation of human dignity. This has to be impressed on the mind and activities of Nigerians from our earliest encounters with others, especially people from other ethnic or religious identities using effective means of communication. Rather than being used to emphasize our differences and stigmatize others, our popular channels of communication has to be intentionally used to project our shared identity and the unconditional dignity of every human person, irrespective of their differences.

Our relatively young and semi-literate population largely depends on movies, music, and viral gist from app-based and internet-driven platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok, 2go Chat, YouTube, Bulk SMS, and blogs for relevant information, especially about current affairs, as opposed to radio, television, books, newspapers, magazines, library, pubs, and other traditional news sources or information channels. Hence, the intentional use of these popular channels is indispensable for forming, nurturing, sustaining and promoting a popular Nigerian culture of recognition that will resonate across various identity lines and aptly engage with our population. At this popular level, Nigerian government through relevant agencies, like the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVC), has to be proactive, more responsive and less suspicions in its socio-political engagements with key players in the entertainment industry and various social media platforms like Nollywood, Afrobeat, NaijaBlog, and Instablog9ja that control and influence our popular channels of communication.

For instance, rather than being used as reactionary watchdogs that classify contents and ban "offensive" movies, agencies like NFVC can be used as a more cordial and open-access platform for government to parley with professional bodies like Actors Guild of Nigeria (AGN) and Performing Musicians Employers' Association of Nigeria (PMAN). These viable associations have an enormous membership and command the loyalty of millions of influential performers,

entertainers, artists and stars comprising actors, musicians, influencers, comedians, models, artists, producers and content creators who have unimpeachable access to the ears and hearts of Nigerians. Government can use such platforms to brainstorm, create, review and promote policies that would enhance human dignity in Nigeria and protect the dignity of Nigerians everywhere. The influence of this influential group were felt by the government during the #EndSARS protests and the just concluded general elections as they effortlessly rallied the youth for protests and campaigns without bribing them as the politicians usually do. Rather than ignore, abuse or try to stifle them, which is practically impossible, government ought to sincerely liaise with them to efficiently guide public opinions and popular dispositions towards the unconditional affirmation of human dignity.

We also need to build a very solid rational framework to sustain our culture of recognition. For all Nigerians [especially the beneficiaries of the current system] to have the political will to forgo the prevailing culture of impunity and embrace the proposed culture of recognition, our politics has to be strictly based on objective and consistent principles. Hence, we need to create, fund, and empower various universities, think-tanks, experts, analysts, and strategic planners that can help us to intentionally adapt, reimagine and apply pertinent principles to the Nigerian context. One crucial goal for this intellectual enterprise is to consciously and effectively correct the wrong schemas of recognizability that inform our culture of impunity. This homegrown resource can help us reimagine and reframe our socio-political schemas in a way that could make all Nigerians to be recognizable as social subjects who can benefit from and contribute to the common good of the human society, within and outside Nigeria. For instance, as a theological ethicist and potential player in such enterprise, I would bring to bear my proposal for reimagining the traditional Catholic criteria for the common good – human dignity, solidarity and subsidiarity – as norms for true

friendship based on Enda McDonagh's acts of *letting be, letting, and letting God.* I discussed this extensively in the last chapter, but I will summarily depict how it can apply to the Nigerian context.

Reimagining human dignity in light of letting be, letting go and letting God obligates us to recognize every Nigerian as an *imago Dei* and to unconditionally accord them the full respect and equal rights due to the *imago Dei*, regardless of their ethno-religious identity and social status. This entails letting all Nigerians be their authentic self by completely accepting them in their otherness amid the plurality of identities in Nigeria and genuinely enabling them to flourish as equal participants in the common good of their society. This ought to be the minimum standard for socio-political interaction among the diverse individuals and groups constituting Nigeria and, indeed, all multicultural and pluralistic societies. In this way, Nigerians can be encouraged to build social trust and genuine friendships that can create harmony in Nigeria and beyond.

Reimagining human dignity in light of letting others be as a norm for true friendship with others is possible only if we already recognize their otherness as a gift to be accepted and not misrecognize them as a threat to be avoided or destroyed. As I already mentioned, this threat is at the root of sectionalism in Nigeria as it both orchestrates the fear of domination by others and tends to unleash the lust to dominate others. The corollary is that Nigerians continue to rival each other as enemies without a viable common ground for collaborative work towards building the strong and prosperous union that we have been chasing after for over a century. The result is that things have continued to fall apart in Nigeria and the center can no longer hold.[620]

Ironically, Nigeria's socio-political center was greatly weakened by the over-centralization of power leading up to the civil war and going forward. To make this center hold again, all Nigerians must be enabled to flourish as individuals and groups. This entails letting them go by

---

[620] See Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 2009th ed. (Canada: Anchor, 1958), 176.

recognizing them as distinct social subjects, in their own right, that should never be subjugated or relegated to objects. No Nigerian should ever be subordinated to or subjugated by any other social subject in any form or guise – as slaves, an inferior race, a lower caste or the weaker sex – within or outside Nigeria. Hence, letting Nigerians be by genuinely enabling individuals and groups to flourish in society as well as letting them go as distinct subjects by accepting their legitimate differences, including their different tastes of the good life, is essential for fostering human dignity in the Nigerian society and elsewhere. This can be best actualized through the right practice of solidarity and subsidiarity. The practice of solidarity and subsidiarity should be aimed towards enabling all Nigerians, indeed all people, to equitably partake of as well as duly contribute to its vast human, material, and spiritual wealth. Therefore, any genuine effort to promote human dignity in Nigeria has to involve the provision of the basic needs of all Nigerians such as food, clothing, shelter, education and security of lives and property.

When rightly practiced as a norm for true friendship, solidarity can ensure that the basic needs of Nigerians are duly provided. This can promote national unity, peaceful coexistence and the common good by inspiring due recognition and collaboration among Nigerians in places where ethno-religious rivalry and sectionalism currently prevail. Indeed, solidarity ought to be the yardstick for evaluating the common good in Nigeria since the quality of the good life in Nigeria has to be determined by the quality of the good life enjoyed by each Nigerian. Hence, we cannot measure Nigeria's growth and progress only in terms of its GDP. The actual experience of the good life by Nigerians must be prioritized over abstract data and statistics. The right practice of solidarity has to guarantee that every Nigerian is treated with dignity, as a social subject. It has to give full agency to the people through the right practice of subsidiarity. As the fullness of letting go, subsidiarity depicts the full recognition of all Nigerians as independent subjects who are

capable of self-love and can make crucial contributions to the common good of Nigeria. Hence, when reimagined as a norm for a genuine friendship, subsidiarity enables us to fully recognize human freedom in Nigeria – which is essential for true federalism since it obligates us to recognize all the federating units as credible sources for the good life, both for themselves and for all Nigerians. Thus, in light of true friendship, subsidiarity enables us see the various quests for particular goods as a veritable addition to the common good rather than a subtraction from it.

A proper practice of subsidiarity will ensure that acts of solidarity actually promote human dignity by providing the necessary care and support to individuals or groups when they are unable to accomplish certain things on their own, without dehumanizing them or objectifying them. It safeguards the dignity of Nigerians so as to emancipate them from any potential subjugation or relegation by others within and outside Nigeria. Hence, reimagining subsidiarity as a norm for true friendship would promote the freedom of all Nigerians and guarantee their proper participation in every society. For instance, this obligates Nigeria's central government to respect and support the federating units. Local and state governments should have more powers to handle policing, natural resources, and other issues that directly affect the locals. Thus, when reimagined as an act of letting go, subsidiarity becomes a realistic act of love that expresses the full recognition of the distinctive subjecthood of all Nigerians and an affirmation of their fundamental rights to be different – being different in Nigeria should not hamper one's ability to contribute to the common good. This is a daunting task for Nigerians given the pervasive fear of domination that propels ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. However, we are obligated to fully embrace and respect the differences of all individuals and groups in Nigeria as a gift, and not reject or fear them as a threat.

Both letting go and letting be have their original motivation and ultimate destiny in letting God – the ultimate Other – the firm basis for human dignity and the final end of all true friendships.

As a deeply religious people, Nigerians must also open up to true Friendship with God. This begins with genuine conversion. No human subject can go and do likewise without genuine conversion; this is true for all Nigerians. Hence, conversion is vital for cultivating true friendship in Nigeria. Here, conversion is understood as a process involving a profound change of heart and radical turn from one's old ways of living to a new one. This process culminates in the act of repentance. Thus, letting God will enable Nigerians to overcome our vices and sinful inclination to selfish interests, ethnocentrism, tribalism and religious intolerance. By opening ourselves to God's friendship, we become more inclined to relate ethically with our neighbors and nature since friendship with God is best expressed in our relationship with other human beings and the environment. Letting God is also crucial for our own self-realization since recognition of our primal origin and final destiny in God is actually the beginning and end of fulfilling our quest for self-realization as imago Dei. Such recognition enables a fuller recognition of self since other-recognition also develops and deepens self-recognition and self-understanding. Hence, friendship with God is also friendship with self.

Of course, friendship is a risky venture that makes us vulnerable to another. This explains why Nigerians might hesitate to pursue friendship with their unchosen neighbors, especially those historically outside their schemas of recognizability, whom they have always perceived as threats. But a society built on the wrong assumption that relationship is desirable with some citizens, and not with others is unsustainable. Those whose relationships fall within our schemas of desirability become recognizable as ones whose lives matter because their deaths are deemed grievable by us. We tend to protect those lives at all cost including disposing of those whose loss are not framed into our schemas of grievability since their relationships are already deemed as undesirable. This wrong schema has led to the unjustifiable killing of unarmed Nigerians by the Nigerian military, within Nigeria's territory, and under the watch of the Nigerian government through police brutality,

civil war, ethnoreligious violence, terrorism, banditry, and widespread corruption. Rather than protect and help the victims to flourish as subjects in the Nigerian society, they were rejected and massacred as threats to those deemed as "desirables." Hence, they were discarded as "undesirables."

To hit the ground running on this long and arduous journey of developing the all-important culture of recognition in Nigeria, we can simply ask: *who is duly recognized as a Nigerian citizen and, so, accepted as a worthy participant in the common good of the society; and, who is not?* This helps us break the ice on critical issues about whether or not any Nigerian deserves to be treated as an object or rejected as undesirable. It also helps us to raise other important questions like: *Who falls within our schemas of recognizability as a Nigerian and who does not? Whose life matters in Nigeria and whose does not, as well as whose deaths are grievable and whose are not?* Ethicists who are committed to developing this culture can help Nigerians begin addressing these questions by prioritizing the recognition of the inherent dignity of all human beings in their ethical discourse. This entails a conscious effort to reimagine human dignity, not just as an abstract principle or part of a checklist for the common good, but as a binding norm for true friendship with and among all Nigerians, nay all human beings, irrespective of their differences. This obligates all Nigerians to act towards letting others be in their otherness and letting them go as human subjects with dignity.

To develop a relevant culture of recognition, we must descend to particularities by asking and answering specific questions like: *were the victims of several massacres in Nigeria recognized as persons with dignity and rights?* The answer is NO. Clearly, the victims were not recognized, and could not have been recognizable, as human subjects in the Nigerian society as the prevailing schemas of recognizability that is integral to our current culture of impunity typically treat human beings like disposable objects. Of course, these wrong schemas may have evolved from various immoral systems like colonialism, sectionalism, and corruption, they all have one thing in common

– the failure of recognition. Influenced by these schemas, beneficiaries of those systems cannot normally recognize others as human subjects whose lives matter because their deaths are grievable. Hence, they massacre even their compatriots like disposable objects and violently preclude others from properly grieving them or even genuinely memorializing their lives. Unfortunately, those wrong and destructive schemas that had orchestrated myriad massacres in Nigeria are still actively operative and thriving in Nigeria. The fact that there is yet no national grieving for these massacres indicates that such Nigerian lives still do not matter, and may never matter, as long as the status quo persists. Hence, these schemas and the culture that support them ought to be properly corrected.

We need to urgently begin this corrective task by creating a thriving and sustainable culture of recognition in Nigeria that is based on an ethics of recognition. The urgency here is crystal clear: either we correct the prevailing culture of impunity or be consumed by it as there are many reliable warning signs of an imminent second civil war that could be more catastrophic than the first, if do not urgently address Nigeria's corrupt politics, problem of sectionalism and culture of impunity. This might sound very extreme, but it is a fact attested to by statistics about the increasing number of Nigerians calling for the dissolution of the country. For instance, in a 2020 poll by the Centre for Social Awareness, Advocacy and Ethics (CSAAE), 72% of the 185 respondents wanted Nigeria's disintegration into various sovereign nations.[621] Specifically, some respondents in favor

---

[621] The poll followed a public debate on Nigeria's unity held on October 1, 2020 by CSAAE. The debate brought together youth representatives from major ethnic pressure groups in Nigeria including: the National Publicity Secretary of the Supreme Forum for Yoruba Youths (Comrade Balogun Ridwan Fasasi); Biafran Agitator and Legal Practitioner (Simon Ekpa); the National Youth Coordinator of the Middle Belt Forum (Comrade Adakole Ijogi); the Public Affairs Analysts and Spokesperson for the Niger Delta Rights Advocates (Darlington Nwauju); the IPOB Global Youth Coordinator (Armstrong Onozogie Omijie) and; the General Secretary of Arewa Youth Forum (Ahmed Usman). On Nigerian unity, the Niger Delta Youth representative upheld the notion of one Nigeria blaming poor leadership as the cause of the Nigerian problem, while his Middle Belt counterpart argued that for there to be a better Nigeria there should be restructuring of Nigeria into six geopolitical zones. The Yoruba Youth representative agreed with the Middle Belt representative on restructuring with emphasis on devolution of power with resource control to the 6 geopolitical zones. The IPOB youth delegates argued that there should be complete disintegration of Nigeria into 4 nations (Arewa, Biafra, Oduduwa and the Middle Belt) insisting that the contraption called Nigeria is the first problem of Nigerians. The Arewa Youth representative disagreed with everyone insisting that Nigeria should remain the way it is. He agreed that states should control their resources but insisted that the police should be controlled by

of disintegration would love to see a Nigeria that is broken into the following major ethnic groups: Republic of Biafra, Oduduwa Republic, Arewa Republic, Niger Delta Republic and the Middle Belt Republic. These statistics might explain why Nigeria appears to be increasingly fragile and more susceptible to disintegration than at any time in its volatile history.

What is more worrisome is the demographics of the respondents: Young people aged 18-44 accounted for 55%, middle-aged adults aged 45-54 made up 32% and older citizens aged 55-64 accounted for 21%. About 2% of the respondents did not fall into any of the predefined age categories. Also, about 28% preferred a restructured Nigeria as the way forward. On a scale of 100%, 41% of this second group desired restructuring on the basis of the devolution of federal government powers so states can control their resources, while 41% preferred the devolution of powers with resource control to the geo-political zones, and 18% favored the devolution of powers with resource control to the three regions that made up Nigeria at Independence in 1960 – Eastern, Western and Northern regions.[622] Thus, as about 60% of our population is below 25, this statistics portends a bleak future for Nigeria unless we start now to develop a thriving culture of recognition.

As I conclude this project and hope to move on to more practical and advanced questions, it is my great hope that my readers can now appreciate the catch-22 situation that has been my life experience growing up, trying to live ethically and participate in negotiating the common good in my country, which is: that Nigeria is a contraption of the British empire, which was recklessly, unethically and negligently fabricated by foreigners who were driven by nothing but *libido dominandi*. Hence, like slavery in the United States, imperial impunity and the abysmal non-

---

the Federal Government. Roseline Reuben, "72 Percent of Nigerians Call for Disintegration," *Centre for Social Awareness, Advocacy and Ethics (CSAAE)* (blog), November 2, 2020, https://csaaeinc.org/72-percent-of-nigerians-call-for-disintegration/.

[622] See The Economist, "Nigeria's Fragile Unity Is Under Pressure," *The Economist Group*, July 12, 2017, https://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=135670197&Country=Nigeria&topic=Politics_1.

recognition of my people as equal human subjects created in *imago Dei* is not only at the very foundation of Nigeria but, in fact, constitutes its original sin.[623] Hence, this work is like a voice crying out loud in the wilderness to draw urgent attention to the global crisis of recognition discussed here and stimulate conversations about possible homegrown solutions in countries like mine. Thus, even if a simple appreciation of the problem being diagnosed is the only achievement of this work, it is already a huge step forward and my modest goal here would have been achieved.

Of course, as I have mentioned a couple of times, this is not sufficient by any means, but I believe it is provocative enough to stimulate fellow ethicists and others to move from asking why Nigeria (and other countries alike) has repeatedly failed to recognize its citizens as human subjects or treat them with the dignity they deserve to asking how can we practically move forward. But, my modest goal in this work is not to settle or resolve this matter, but to stimulate relevant practical questions that have actually shaped me and, indeed, other scholars like me who think that the root of our problem is being misdiagnosed by the very people that have created and kept us in this catch-22 situation. For instance, the renowned Ugandan ethicist and moral theologian, Emmanuel Katongole has consistently pushed back against the paternalistic tendency to prescribe "solutions" to African problems like teachers sometimes do for their students. Katongole notes that, "like Christian social ethics, social ethics in Africa is driven by a prescriptive agenda, often accompanied by packaged "solutions" from the west."[624] He argues that the problem with this prescriptive approach to social ethics in Africa is that it individualizes socio-political problems assuming that removing particular individuals or regimes would solve the problems.

---

[623] Barack Obama, "Transcript: Barack Obama's Speech on Race," *NPR*, March 18, 2008, sec. Election 2008, https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=88478467.
[624] Emmanuel Katongole, *The Sacrifice of Africa: A Political Theology for Africa*, Eerdmans Ekklesia Series (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2011), 51.

This individualistic approach does not only disregard the communitarian worldview of African cultures, but sometimes expresses a disdain for these cultures. In fact, "some view African culture as the obstacle that needs to be overcome for Africa to achieve peace and development. They point to Africa's bondage to its cultural past as the cause of its current poverty and various conflicts."[625] Of course, this mis-diagnosis has led to repeated failures to effectively address these problems. But, as we can infer from the above well-meaning initiatives and efforts, the lack of practical recommendations is not the key problem facing Africa. Rather, our key problem is the failure of imagination that has crippled the flourishing of Christian social ethics in Africa.[626] Hence, I am not merely diagnosing the problems but also trying to stimulate our collective imagination toward negotiating practicable and effective solutions to these problems. Thus, I suggested the reimagination of our traditional criteria for the common good as norms for true friendship.

But, rather than prescribing solutions, I am more interested in emphasizing the need for us to work together to both diagnose our problems and gradually work out practicable "solutions" to them. In fact, if my readers consider that this work has really diagnosed our catch-22 situation in a reasonable and understandable way, then it is a huge success as it only means that we are now poised to channel our collective effort toward collaborating to develop practicable "solutions" by actively participating in negotiating the common good of our societies, while sincerely avoiding the temptation of prescribing our personal opinions as a quick fix to historical problems. Therefore, this work is only the beginning of my life-long contribution to this collaborative effort towards resolving our catch-22 situation. In it, I have simply highlighted the urgency of building a culture that is based on the ethics of recognition as a rallying cry to my colleagues. The actual practicalities of building this all-important culture will be a concerted, rigorous and forward-looking pursuit.

---

[625] Katongole, The Sacrifice of Africa, 54.
[626] Ibid., 59.

Conclusion

Like all human beings, every Nigerian is created in God's image and likeness – *imago Dei*. This divine attribute, which constitutes the *quid* of our identity as human persons, is essential to our inherent dignity and fundamental rights as social subjects. This is true for all human beings, at all times, in all places and in all life's situations. Hence, it is not permissible to treat any human being, nay Nigerians, like an object or in any other way underserving of the *imago Dei*. Treating any Nigerian as an "undesirable" neighbor or a "disposable" object assaults human dignity; which has dire consequences, not just for the specific victims but also, for the entire human family since injustice anywhere portends injustice everywhere.[627] As long as the violation of human dignity and rights persists in Nigeria, humanity will be worse off. Unfortunately, such violations are routine in Nigeria and, indeed, globally. This is why, in chapter one, I reviewed in detail not just the EndSARS tragedy in Nigeria, but also the BLM protests in the USA and the Dalit protests in India as local symptoms of an ubiquitous crisis of recognition. Those cases were meant to illustrate the political irruption of recognition in the form of problematic demands and violent struggles in diverse societies where recognition is not being duly addressed as a vital human need.

As I noted repeatedly, the ubiquity of these irruptions depict a global crisis of recognition. This crisis is borne out of our collective failure to duly recognize or act on the recognition that our own lives, hopes and destinies are inextricably intertwined with those of others with whom we are mutually vulnerable and are obligated to enter into ethical relations in society. One key aspect of this crisis is our systemic failure to primarily address recognition itself as a vital human need. But, despite the ubiquity of these cases and our dismal failure to address their root causes, there are still genuine efforts to address this crisis of recognition. Hence, chapter two presented three counter-

---

[627] Martin Luther King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," April 16, 1963, https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html.

narratives that depict attempts to address the human need for recognition in the same societies. These counter narratives, *inter alia*, depict that human beings are inherently capable of addressing the need for recognition. Thus, the chapter proceeded to establish the philosophical foundations of the overarching thesis of this work, which is, that recognition is a vital human need that ought to be primarily addressed as a such and, that every human being is both deserving of being recognized by others and obligated to duly recognize others. These foundations, which were spear-headed by Taylor's proposition, was traced to Hegel amidst other traditions attributed to Kant and Bergson. Against this backdrop, Taylor's crucial insights on the politics of recognition was reviewed in light of other relevant scholars like Levinas, Arendt, Honneth, Fraser, Butler, Haker and Benjamin.

Building on the established foundations and leveraging the common good tradition of the Catholic social ethics, chapter three developed a theological framework for addressing recognition as a need in modern multicultural and pluralistic societies. This framework, which is based on the Christian doctrine of *creatio imago Dei,* emphasizes the equality of all human beings as persons created in the image and likeness of God. This chapter argued that properly addressing the human need for recognition is a veritable means to building true friendship with God and neighbor, which is necessary for negotiating, pursuing and, probably, attaining the common good. Thus, it proposed McDonagh's tripartite act of love – *letting be, letting go and letting God* – as a paradigm for any responsive ethical action that is ordered towards true friendship. It, then, explores the implications of this ethical paradigm for Catholic social ethics, especially how it can help us reimagine the traditional Catholic criteria for the common good – human dignity, solidarity and subsidiarity – as viable norms for cultivating true friendship in modern multicultural and pluralistic societies.

To contextualize the proposed paradigm, chapter four explored the import of the ethics of recognition in attaining the common good in a particular society. It uses Nigeria as a case-study,

focusing on its century-old goals of national unity, peaceful coexistence, and human flourishing. It argued that Nigeria's best initiatives for attaining these crucial national goals have bungled due to sectionalism orchestrated by corrupt politics and a culture of impunity, which persist due to lack of a culture of recognition. Therefore, it insists that any viable solution to Nigeria's problem of sectionalism must begin with developing a thriving culture of recognition – a culture that upholds the recognition of our common humanity as an ethical imperative, which compels us to wholly accept others in their otherness as distinct social subjects. Practically, this recognition obligates us to be ethically responsive to the need of all Nigerians, even when there is no known material gain for us or even the guarantee of reciprocation.

As noted above from Levinas, Arendt and Butler, ethical relations cannot be based on either reciprocity or egoism as reciprocity is contingent and egoism is antithetical to ethics. Thus, ethical relations in the Nigerian society or among Nigerians cannot be strictly based on pursuing particular interests or even on ensuring the reciprocity of favor. Prioritizing reciprocity renders our ethical relations contingent as it would depend upon our ever-changing secular interests that are usually masked in stable ethno-religious garbs. Worse still, the continued pursuit of our particular interests as a priority over our national interests would defeat our national ethos and the very social ethics that is necessary for building the strong and prosperous union that has eluded Nigeria for over a century. Indeed, this is the catch-22 situation that has grounded Nigeria for over a century. Thus, rather than continue to viciously compete with one another as rivals for particular interests or trying to form divisive ethno-religious alliances that are solely based on mutually reciprocating the particular needs of our chosen friends, every Nigerian ought to collaborate as true friends in negotiating a practical approach to our common good and equitably participate in its pursuit. We

can make this possible, especially, by sincerely re-imagining our criteria for the common good and correcting our prevailing schemas for ethical relations in Nigeria and, indeed, elsewhere.

In practice, cultivating true friendship requires fully embracing our mutual vulnerabilities as human beings, duly recognizing our susceptibility to respond to the call of other human beings, and developing the disposition to always act on this recognition for all people and in all contexts. Of course, I am well aware that friendship is a risky venture as it exposes our vulnerability to the precariousness of human life whereby we must relate and collaborate with other social subjects. These subjects may or may not mean well for us. In fact, they can abuse our friendly dispositions towards them or may not even want to be friends with us at all. But, these realities can be symptoms of the same crisis and should not excuse or deter us from doing the needful, that is, trying our best to cultivate a thriving culture of recognition that mitigates the risk of friendship by encouraging the habit of recognition in our societies. Actually, this is where we need the services and expertise of trained moral theologians and social ethicists like myself and numerous others. We need to fully appreciate that developing, sustaining, and implementing effective ethical frameworks that foster true friendship and encourage the habit of mutual recognition is a crucial task that all Catholic social ethicists, moral theologians, and other professionals must urgently and diligently undertake.

In particular, we need to intentionally encourage ethical responsiveness that is borne out of mutual recognition so as to foster ethical relations in human society, in spite of the reality of sin. Indeed, despite our natural inclination to use others as objects, due to sin and *libido dominandi*, human beings are still inherently capable of cultivating true friendship with God and neighbor. In fact, such friendship is constantly demanded of us in the bible as exemplified by the parables narrated in chapter three. They, *inter alia*, depict mutual recognition as the primordial basis for true friendship and the mutual need for recognition as the basis for ethical relations in human

society. Hence, cultivating true friendship entails addressing the human need for recognition in an honest, effective, and sustainable manner by Nigerians, and everyone. Catholic social ethicists can lead the way in building social friendship and guiding society towards attaining the common good, which is both our temporal and ultimate end. Therefore, this work has consistently argued that the human need for recognition ought to be properly addressed both as a fundamental departure point in our moral investigations and a constitutive way of doing a proper social ethics in contemporary societies like Nigeria, USA and India.

Mindful of the diversities that characterize modern societies, ethicists have to pursue, build and uphold friendship in a manner that addresses people's need for recognition as a vital condition for creating the common ground needed to negotiate a practical approach for the common good. For instance, we can begin fostering true friendship by correcting the wrong moral schemas that had fostered the culture of impunity and other structures of domination, globally. These schemas – which manifest in the form of ethnocentrism, tribalism, nepotism, bigotry, quest for domination, fear of subjugation, corruption and racism – can be effectively corrected by reimagining the criteria for the common good in a way that addresses the critical question of: *who is recognized as a social subject in our societies and is, thereby, accepted as worthy of collaborating in negotiating our common good and participating equitably in its pursuit; and, who is not?* If we can frankly address even this one question, we would make progress in correcting our schemas of recognizability to ensure that every member of the society is recognizable as a social subject whose life matters and whose death ought to be prevented, and properly grieved when inevitably lost. It can also help us to appreciate the diversity inherent in modern multicultural and pluralistic societies as a gift to be embraced rather than a threat to be avoided or destroyed. This appreciation is crucial for harnessing our diverse heritage and maximizing our potentials for the common good and human flourishing.

Having tried to expose the problems posed by the failure of recognition in our societies, such as Nigeria's culture of impunity, and having attempted to propose a remedy that involves building a thriving culture of recognition, it is now time to address the question of how do we get from the diagnosed problems to the proposed remedy. For instance, *how do we get from the culture of impunity to the culture of recognition in Nigeria?* Clearly, I am convinced that all human beings – including those already divided by region, religion, tribe etc. – are innately capable of changing positively and, hence, can collaborate to educate and form our young people and future generations differently than the *status quo*. However, one can rightly ask: aren't the teachers, mentors, coaches, pastors, parents who are supposed to lead this new cultural formation the very same people who presently are imbued with the culture of impunity and the deep divisions that I have described so tellingly? What may have changed them? How will they be transformed? Am I just relying on moral exhortation to rectify deeply rooted cultural ills? In fact, I very much anticipate these and similar questions or reactions to this dissertation project.

Of course, these crucial questions and reactions come down to: *how do we constructively engender a habit of recognition in societies that are already entrenched in impunity and other ills?* I understand that training people and encouraging them to engage in genuine acts of recognition is not the only way to do this, or even sufficient to create the much-needed culture of recognition *per se*. Still, I believe that it is a necessary beginning for the long and arduous process of conversion, reorientation and social transformation that can help us intentionally move away from prevailing cultural ills like impunity towards the much-needed culture of recognition despite the ubiquity of these ills. Of course, this is a complex process involving more than one approach or perspective. Hence, my proposal is not meant to be the only remedy for curing the malaise that I have diagnosed in our societies nor is this research meant to say the final word on the ethics of recognition. Rather,

it is meant to be the very beginning of my contributions to the ongoing conversation on recognition. Hence, as I clearly disclaimed in the introduction, this dissertation will mostly focus on discussing *why* it is necessary for society to address the human need for recognition while my future works and the works of others who may be inspired by this work can engage with the complex question of *how* do we get from the identified problems to the proposed solutions.

Yet again, I completely concede the insufficiency of just asking *why*, but I am convinced that it is only natural and necessary that I join this emerging conversation from the fundamentals. Hence, although I have briefly broached how a society like Nigeria can develop a thriving culture that can effectively normalize and prioritize the habit of mutual recognition, I have largely devoted this work to: highlighting the failure of recognition in modern societies, arguing that an ethics of recognition is a consequential missing link in the current moral schemas driving these failures and, therefore, proposing a theological ethical paradigm for integrating this ethics in our national ethos through a culture of recognition. In other words, focusing this work to highlighting the problem as well as proposing a solution, but not delving into the nitty-gritty of implementing the proposed solution, should not be seen as a limitation to this dissertation project or a lacuna in its delivery. Rather, it is part of the strategy for delivering its stated goal considering the scope of this work, the nascency of the theological ethical discourse on recognition, and the complexity of the process of implementing the proposed remedy. Therefore, this dissertation project is to be appreciated as an open-ended work at the inception of a life-long venture. It is simply meant to break the ground and, afterwards, launch us into addressing more applied questions like: *how do we cultivate the culture of recognition in societies that are already entrenched in cultural ills like impunity?* Indeed, addressing this crucial question and its numerous variants is a significant part of my research plan and career goals going forward.

Bibliography

Abbott, Owen. "The Self as the Locus of Morality: A Comparison between Charles Taylor and George Herbert Mead's Theories of the Moral Constitution of the Self." *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 50, no. 4 (2020): 516–33. https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12258.

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. 2009th ed. Canada: Anchor, 1958.

Adediran, Ifeoluwa. "How Hoodlums Took Advantage of #EndSARS, Wreaked Havoc in Lagos." *Premium Times*, October 25, 2020. https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/422983-how-hoodlums-took-advantage-of-endsars-wreaked-havoc-in-lagos.html.

Adelman, Bob. *"I Have a Dream": A 50th Year Testament to the March That Changed America*. Pearson FT Press, 2013.

Aderinto, Saheed. *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture, and Public Order*. Indiana University Press, 2018. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt2204p6x.

Aduba, Benjamin O. "Opinion: The Nigerian Twenty Pounds Policy of The Seventies' Implementation." *The Will*, August 31, 2017. https://thewillnews.com/opinion-the-nigerian-twenty-pounds-policy-of-the-seventies-implementation/.

Agbaegbulem, Elizabeth. "INEC Probes Video of Thousands Uncollected PVC's Buried in Rivers Drainage." *Nigerian Observer*, July 14, 2022. https://nigerianobservernews.com/2022/07/inec-probes-video-of-thousands-uncollected-pvcs-buried-in-rivers-drainage/.

Akinrolie, Olayinka, Ali Mamma Masta, Unyime S Jasper, Henrietta O Fawole, Ogochukwu Kelechi Onyeso, Omobolade Akinrolie, and Ugochukwu Samuel Jumbo. "Physical Inactivity among Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria." *Journal of Migration and Health* 6 (October 18, 2022): 100140. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmh.2022.100140.

Akinwotu, Emmanuel. "Outcry in Nigeria over Footage of Shooting by Notorious Police Unit." *The Guardian*, October 6, 2020, sec. World news. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/06/video-of-nigerian-police-shooting-man-in-street-sparks-outcry.

Akinyemi, Bioluwatife. "FG Pledges Continuous Support for School Sports." *Tribune Online* (blog), December 4, 2022. https://tribuneonlineng.com/fg-pledges-continuous-support-for-school-sports/.

Akolokwu, Grace O. "A Review of the Abandoned Property Saga and the Constitutional Right to Own Property." *Port Harcourt Law Journal* 4, no. 1 (2012): 115–33.

Akpala, Agwu. "The Background of the Enugu Colliery Shooting Incident in 1949." *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3, no. 2 (1965): 335–63.

Akpan, Uduak, and Salisu Isihak. "The Geography of Poverty in Nigeria." Working Paper Series. Uyo, Nigeria.: Development Bank of Nigeria, 2021 2019. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.devbankng.com/cms/uploads/7.%20The%20Geography%20of%20Poverty%20in%20Nigeria.pdf.

Al Jazeera. "Timeline: #EndSARS Protests in Nigeria." *Al Jazeera*, October 22, 2020, Online edition. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/22/timeline-on-nigeria-unrest.

Alexander, Jeffrey C., and Maria Pia Lara. "Honneth's New Critical Theory of Recognition." *New Left Review*, no. 220 (1996): 126–36.

Alfonseca, Kiara. "Police Have Killed More than 100 Children since 2015 in US, Data Shows." *ABC News*, April 28, 2021. https://abcnews.go.com/US/police-us-killed-100-children-2015-data-shows/story?id=77190654.

Ali, Subhashini. "Attacks on Dalits in MP during the Bharat Bandh." *Peoples Democracy* XLII, no. 19 (May 13, 2018). https://peoplesdemocracy.in/2018/0513_pd/attacks-dalits-mp-during-bharat-bandh.

AllAfrica. "Nigeria Army Threatens Action as #EndSARS Protests Intensify." *AllAfrica*, October 16, 2020, Online edition, sec. inFocus. https://allafrica.com/view/group/main/main/id/00075305.html.

Amnesty International. "#EndSARS Movement: From Twitter to Nigerian Streets." Amnesty International, February 8, 2021. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2021/02/nigeria-end-impunity-for-police-violence-by-sars-endsars/.

———. "Human Rights in Nigeria." *Amnesty International* (blog), 2022. https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/west-and-central-africa/nigeria/report-nigeria/.

———. "Nigeria: Two Years on, More than 40 #EndSARS Protesters Still Languishing in Jail." *Amnesty International* (blog), October 20, 2022. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/10/nigeria-two-years-on-more-than-40-endsars-protesters-still-languishing-in-jail/.

Anoba, Ibrahim B. "The Aba Women's Riots of 1929: Africa's Great Tax Revolt | Ibrahim B. Anoba," September 29, 2018. https://fee.org/articles/the-aba-women-s-riots-of-1929-africa-s-great-tax-revolt/.

Antwi, Eric. *Human Creation in the Image of God*, 2018. https://www.peterlang.com/document/1056573.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *The Ethics of Identity*. Princeton: University Press, 2005.

Arango, Tim, Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs, Audra D. S. Burch, Maria Cramer, and John Eligon. "How George Floyd Died, and What Happened Next." *The New York Times*, May 19, 2022, sec. U.S. https://www.nytimes.com/article/george-floyd.html.

Arielle, Bernhardt. "Igbo Women Campaign for Rights (The Women's War) in Nigeria, 1929 | Global Nonviolent Action Database." Translated by Rennebohm Max, October 4, 2010. https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/igbo-women-campaign-rights-womens-war-nigeria-1929.

Ayitogo, Nasir, and Yusuf Kabir. "#EndSARS Anniversary: One Year after, What Has Happened to Protesters' Five-Point Demand?" *Premium Times*, October 20, 2021, Online edition. https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/490594-endsars-anniversary-one-year-after-what-has-happened-to-protesters-five-point-demand.html.

Bagnoli, Carla. "Kant on Recognition." In *Handbuch Anerkennung*, edited by Ludwig Siep, Heikki Ikaheimo, and Michael Quante, 1–5. Springer Reference Geisteswissenschaften. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2020. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-19561-8_18-1.

Bardes, John K. "Redefining Vagrancy: Policing Freedom and Disorder in Reconstruction New Orleans, 1862-1868." *Journal of Southern History* 84, no. 1 (February 1, 2018): 69–113.

Barman, Rup Kumar. "Caste Violence in India: Reflections on Violence against the Dalits of Contemporary India." *Voice of Dalit* 3, no. 2 (2010): 193–I.

Bastress, Tom. "'And Who Is My Neighbor?' Reflections on the Gospel and Racial Reconciliation." *Grace Bible Church* (blog), June 18, 2020. http://gracebiblecw.com/blog/2020/06/18/and-who-is-my-neighbor-reflections-on-the-gospel-and-racial-reconciliation.

BBC. "Bill Clinton Regrets 'three Strikes' Bill." *BBC News*, July 16, 2015, sec. US & Canada. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-33545971.

———. "India Top Court Recalls Controversial Caste Order." *BBC News*, October 1, 2019, sec. India. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-49889815.

Benedict XVI. "Address to Participants in the Fourteenth Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences." The Holy See, May 3, 2008. https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080503_social-sciences.html.

———. "Caritas in Veritate." The Holy See, June 29, 2009. https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html.

Benjamin, Jessica. "An Outline of Intersubjectivity: The Development of Recognition." *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 7, no. Suppl (1990): 33–46. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0085258.

Bergesen, Albert. "Race Riots of 1967: An Analysis of Police Violence in Detroit and Newark." *Journal of Black Studies* 12, no. 3 (1982): 261–74. https://doi.org/10.1177/002193478201200302.

Bergson, Henri. *Key Writings*. Edited by Keith Ansell-Pearson and John Ó Maoilearca. New York: Continuum, 2002.

———. "Matter and Memory: Chapter 2: Of the Recognition of Images. Memory and the Brain." Accessed January 22, 2021. https://brocku.ca/MeadProject/Bergson/Bergson_1911b/Bergson_1911_02.html.

Blunden, Andy. "Honneth's 'Struggle for Recognition.'" Accessed January 28, 2023. https://ethicalpolitics.org/ablunden/works/honneth1.htm.

Boersma, Gerald. *Augustine's Early Theology of Image: A Study in the Development of pro-Nicene Theology*. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Borghese, Livia, Sarah Dean, and Jorge Engels. "Italy: Nigerian Street Vendor Killed in Broad Daylight, Sparking National Outrage | CNN." *CNN* (blog). Accessed July 2, 2023. https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/01/europe/italy-nigerian-man-alika-ogorchukwu-killed-intl/index.html.

Bozalek, V., D. Hölscher, and M. Zembylas, eds. "Nancy Fraser and Participatory Parity: Reframing Social Justice in South African Higher Education. London: Routledge. 2000." *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning* 8, no. 2 (2020): 136–38. https://doi.org/10.14426/cristal.v8i2.371.

Branch, Taylor. *The King Years: Historic Moments in the Civil Rights Movement*. First Simon&Schuster hardcover edition. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013.

Brown, Carolyn A. "Locals and Migrants in the Coalmining Town of Enugu (Nigeria): Worker Protest and Urban Identity, 1915–1929." *International Review of Social History* 60, no. S1 (2015): 63–94. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859015000486.

Brucato, Ben. "Policing Race and Racing Police: The Origin of US Police in Slave Patrols." *Social Justice (San Francisco, Calif.)* 47, no. 3/4 (2020): 115–36.

Bryan, Nathaniel. "White Teachers' Role in Sustaining the School-to-Prison Pipeline: Recommendations for Teacher Education." *The Urban Review* 49, no. 2 (2017): 326–45. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-017-0403-3.

Bujo, Benezet. *Foundations of an African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality*. New York: Herder & Herder, 2001.

Burch, Audra D. S., Weiyi Cai, Gabriel Gianordoli, Morrigan McCarthy, and Jugal K. Patel. "How Black Lives Matter Reached Every Corner of America." *The New York Times*, June 13, 2020, sec.

U.S. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/13/us/george-floyd-protests-cities-photos.html.

Burton, Douglas. "Muslim-Muslim Ticket Proclaimed Winner of Nigeria's Presidential Election amid Protests." *Catholic News Agency (CNA)* (blog), March 1, 2023. https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/253773/muslim-muslim-ticket-proclaimed-winner-of-nigeria-s-presidential-election-amid-protests.

Butler, Judith. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* London; New York: Verso, 2009.

———. "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26, no. 2 (2012): 134–51. https://doi.org/10.5325/jspecphil.26.2.0134.

———. *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind*. London; New York: Verso, 2020.

Butt, Jason. "AJC FALCONS SOCIAL JUSTICE: Why Jones Honored Aiyana Stanley-Jones: Death of 7-Year-Old Girl Asleep during Raid Tugged at WR's Heart." *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution (2001)*, 2020.

Cahill, Lisa. "Liberalism in Progress—From Equal Rights to Global Participation." *Political Theology* 7, no. 1 (February 10, 2006): 29–46. https://doi.org/10.1558/poth.2006.7.1.29.

Carits Canada. "Joint peace initiative by Muslim and Christian groups in Northern Nigeria." *Développement et Paix* (blog). Accessed June 26, 2023. https://www.devp.org/legacy/joint-peace-initiative-muslim-and-christian-groups-northern-nigeria/.

Carruthers, Charlene A. *Unapologetic: A Black, Queer, and Feminist Mandate for Radical Movements*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2018.

Casimir, Ani, C. T. Nwaoga, and Chrysanthus Ogbozor. "Religion, Violence, Poverty and Underdevelopment in West Africa: Issues and Challenges of Boko Haram Phenomenon in Nigeria." *Open Journal of Philosophy* 04, no. 01 (January 26, 2014): 59. https://doi.org/10.4236/ojpp.2014.41009.

Cole, Nicki Lisa. "What Exactly Is Socialization?" *ThoughtCo* (blog), January 30, 2020. https://www.thoughtco.com/socialization-in-sociology-4104466.

Collins, Kaitlan, and Noah Gray. "Trump Briefly Taken to Underground Bunker during Friday's White House Protests." CNN. Accessed July 11, 2022. https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/31/politics/trump-underground-bunker-white-house-protests/index.html.

Cooey, Paula M. "Welch, Sharon D., 'A Feminist Ethic of Risk' (Book Review)." *A Journal of Church and State* 33, no. 4 (1991): 827-.

Cooper, Hannah LF. "War on Drugs Policing and Police Brutality." *Substance Use & Misuse* 50, no. 8–9 (2015): 1188–94. https://doi.org/10.3109/10826084.2015.1007669.

Cresswell, Julia. "Palaver." In *The Oxford Dictionary of Word Origins*. Oxford University Press, 2010. http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199547920.001.0001/acref-9780199547920-e-3511.

Curran, Charles E. "The Risks of Theology: Enda McDonagh and Vatican II." *The Furrow* 57, no. 7/8 (2006): 410–23.

Dahl, Hanne Marlene, Pauline Stoltz, and Rasmus Willig. "Recognition, Redistribution and Representation in Capitalist Global Society: An Interview with Nancy Fraser." *Acta Sociologica* 47, no. 4 (2004): 374–82. https://doi.org/10.1177/0001699304048671.

Daily Trust. "How Disobedience of Judgments Affects Nigeria's Democracy." *Daily Trust*, March 22, 2022. https://dailytrust.com/how-disobedience-of-judgments-affects-nigerias-democracy/.

Davidson, Maria del Guadalupe, Susan Hadley, and George Yancy. *Our Black Sons Matter: Mothers Talk about Fears, Sorrows, and Hopes*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.

DeAngelis, Reed T. "Systemic Racism in Police Killings: New Evidence From the Mapping Police Violence Database, 2013–2021." *Race and Justice*, October 19, 2021, 21533687211047944. https://doi.org/10.1177/21533687211047943.

Deka, Kaushik. "The Dalit Awakening." *India Today*. Accessed July 29, 2022. https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/20180416-dalit-protest-bharat-bandh-sc-st-act-supreme-court-judgement-1206277-2018-04-05.

Delehanty, Casey, Jack Mewhirter, Ryan Welch, and Jason Wilks. "Militarization and Police Violence: The Case of the 1033 Program." *Research & Politics* 4, no. 2 (2017): 205316801771288-. https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168017712885.

Department of Justice. "Conduct of Law Enforcement Agencies." The United States Department of Justice, August 6, 2015. https://www.justice.gov/crt/conduct-law-enforcement-agencies.

Deranty, Jean-Philippe, and Emmanuel Renault. "Politicizing Honneth's Ethics of Recognition." *Thesis Eleven* 88, no. 1 (February 1, 2007): 92–111. https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513607072459.

Derenoncourt, Ellora. "Can You Move to Opportunity? Evidence from the Great Migration." *American Economic Review* 112, no. 2 (February 2022): 369–408. https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20200002.

Diamant, Jeff. "The Countries with the 10 Largest Christian Populations and the 10 Largest Muslim Populations." *Pew Research Center* (blog). Accessed April 26, 2023.

https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/04/01/the-countries-with-the-10-largest-christian-populations-and-the-10-largest-muslim-populations/.

Donald, Heather Mac. "Diallo Truth, Diallo Falsehood." *City Journal*, December 23, 2015. https://www.city-journal.org/html/diallo-truth-diallo-falsehood-12011.html.

Downs, Laura Lee, and Jacqueline Laufer. "Nancy Fraser, Rebel Philosopher." *Travail, genre et societes* 27, no. 1 (March 11, 2012): 5–27.

———. "Nancy Fraser, Rebel Philosopher." *Travail, genre et societes* 27, no. 1 (March 11, 2012): 5–27.

Drexler-Dreis, Joseph, and Kristien Justaert, eds. *Beyond the Doctrine of Man: Decolonial Visions of the Human*. First edition. New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2020.

Dryden, Jane. "Autonomy." In *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Accessed February 11, 2023. https://iep.utm.edu/autonomy/.

Duru, Victor. "She Spent over N400k: Nigerians Praise Policewoman Who Saved Man Shot by Thieves." *Nigerians Praise Policewoman*, December 9, 2021, sec. Legit Nigeria News. https://www.legit.ng/people/1446998-nigerian-policewoman-helps-young-man-shot-by-thieves-spends-n400k-hospital-bills-photos-go-viral/.

Dutt, Yashica. "Feeling Like an Outcast." *Foreign Policy* (blog). Accessed August 5, 2022. https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/17/caste-book-india-dalit-outcast-wilkerson-review/.

Dwary, Anurag. "Not A Single Arrest After Deaths Of 6 Dalits In Bharat Bandh Violence." NDTV.com. Accessed July 27, 2022. https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/not-a-single-arrest-after-deaths-6-dalits-in-bharat-bandh-violence-1834647.

Edeagu, Ngozi. "Critiquing Witness Testimonies in African Colonial History: A Study of the Women's War of 1929." *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 26 (2017): 40–64.

Edeh, Samuel Chukwuemeka. "7 Causes of The Aba Women Riot of 1929." *Bscholarly* (blog), August 2, 2020. https://bscholarly.com/7-causes-of-the-aba-women-riot-of-1929/.

Editorial Board. "The Humiliation of Nigerians Abroad." *The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News*, April 12, 2017. https://guardian.ng/opinion/the-humiliation-of-nigerians-abroad/.

Egobiambu, Emmanuel. "2023 Presidential Election Worst In Nigeria's Recent History, Says Peter Obi." *Channels Television* (blog), March 16, 2023. https://www.channelstv.com/2023/03/16/2023-presidential-election-worst-in-nigerias-recent-history-says-peter-obi/.

Egwu, Patrick. "'Put South Africa First' Breeds Hate Toward Other Africans." *Foreign Policy*, November 24, 2020. https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/11/24/south-africa-anti-foreigner-nigerian-xenophobia/.

Ejekwonyilo, Ameh. "Atiku Accuses INEC of Refusal to Release Electoral Documents despite Paying N6 Million." *Premium Times Nigeria*, June 6, 2023. https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/602887-atiku-accuses-inec-of-refusal-to-release-electoral-documents-despite-paying-n6-million.html.

Eme-Uche, Uche. *A Review of the Efforts at National Unity in Nigeria*, 2022.

Eshokeme, James, and David Taylor. "2023 Election: Nigerians on the Impact of the #ENDSARS Movement." *Africanews*, February 24, 2023. https://www.africanews.com/2023/02/24/2023-election-nigerians-on-the-impact-of-the-endsars-movement/.

ET Online. "Bharat Bandh: 9 Dead; Supreme Court to Hear Case Today." *The Economic Times*, April 3, 2018, English edition. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/bharat-bandh-live-protesters-hits-life-in-several-states-centre-to-file-review-petition-in-sc/articleshow/63575827.cms?from=mdr.

———. "Bharat Bandh: Nationwide Strike Impacts Road and Rail Traffic." *The Economic Times*, June 20, 2022, English edition. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/bharat-bandh-today-live-news-updates-20-june-2022/articleshow/92325214.cms.

Evans, Jonathan, and Neha Sahgal. "Key Findings about Religion in India." *Pew Research Center* (blog). Accessed August 5, 2022. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/06/29/key-findings-about-religion-in-india/.

Eze, James. "#EndSARS: Flavour, Phyno Others Accuse Enugu Govt of Threatening Protesters with Thugs." *Premium Times*, October 18, 2020, Online edition. https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/ssouth-east/421570-endsars-flavour-phyno-others-accuse-enugu-govt-of-threatening-protesters-with-thugs.html.

Eze, Nduka. "The Iva Valley Miners' Strike and Massacre at Enugu Colliery, 1949 | Libcom.Org." *Libcom.Org* (blog), January 24, 2018. https://libcom.org/article/iva-valley-miners-strike-and-massacre-enugu-colliery-1949.

Ezigbo, Onyebuchi. "Nigeria: Obasanjo's Aide Justifies Odi Massacre." *This Day*, November 20, 2012, sec. News. https://allafrica.com/stories/201211200663.html.

Fagan, Jeffrey, and Alexis Campbell. "Race and Reasonableness in Police Killings." *B.U. L. Rev.* 100 (January 1, 2020): 951.

Fan, Jiani. "From Libido Dominandi in Disguise to an Apologetic Device? Invention and reinvention of Sweetness (Douceur) in La Rochefoucauld's and Pascal's works." *Papers on*

French seventeenth century literature XLVIII, no. 95 (2021): 319-. https://doi.org/10.2357/PFSCL-2021-0023.

———. "Images of Mind, Images of God: Mirror as Metaphor in Chinese Buddhism and Early Mysticism." *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 38 (2018): 173–85. https://doi.org/10.1353/bcs.2018.0017.

Farris, Joshua R. "An Immaterial Substance View: Imago Dei in Creation and Redemption." *Heythrop Journal* 58, no. 1 (2017): 108–23. https://doi.org/10.1111/heyj.12274.

Federal Government of Nigeria. "Electoral Act, 2022." *Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette*, March 29, 2022.

Feilmeier, J.D. "Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic: The Search for Self-Consciousness – Writing Anthology." Accessed January 28, 2023. https://central.edu/writing-anthology/2019/07/08/hegels-master-slave-dialectic-the-search-for-self-consciousness/.

Ferrarin, Alfredo. *Thinking and the I: Hegel and the Critique of Kant*. Translated by Elisa Magrì. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2019.

Fisher, Jim. *SWAT Madness and the Militarization of the American Police: A National Dilemma*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2010.

Fox 29. "Hitchhiker Trying to Meet Family Is Treated to Lunch, Bus Ticket by Generous Cops." *FOX 29 Philadelphia*, August 19, 2016, Online edition. https://www.fox29.com/news/hitchhiker-trying-to-meet-family-is-treated-to-lunch-bus-ticket-by-generous-cops.

Fraser, Erik. "The Dalits of India: Education and Development." *E-International Relations* (blog), June 23, 2010. https://www.e-ir.info/2010/06/23/the-dalits-of-india-education-and-development/.

Fraser, Nancy. *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

———. "Recognition without Ethics?" *Theory, Culture & Society* 18, no. 2–3 (2001): 21–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/02632760122051760.

———. "Rethinking Recognition." *New Left Review* 3, no. 3 (2000): 107–20.

———. *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World*. New Directions in Critical Theory. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

Fraser, Nancy, and Axel Honneth. *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. London; New York: Verso, 2003.

George, Alex Andrews. "Reservation in India - Explained in Layman's Terms." *ClearIAS* (blog), March 3, 2019. https://www.clearias.com/reservation-in-india/.

George, Libby. "Why Are Nigerians Protesting against Police Brutality?" *Reuters*, October 16, 2020, sec. World News. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-protests-police-sars-factbox-idUSKBN2711TK.

Grandin, Greg. "Slavery, and American Racism, Were Born in Genocide," January 20, 2020. https://www.thenation.com/article/society/slavery-american-genocide-racism/.

Greene, Viveca S., and Amber Day. "Asking for It: Rape Myths, Satire, and Feminist Lacunae." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 45, no. 2 (2020): 449–72. https://doi.org/10.1086/705005.

Grenz, Stanley J. *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*. 1st ed. Matrix of Christian Theology 1. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Haker, Hille. "Recognition and Responsibility." *Religions* 12, no. 7 (July 2021): 467. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12070467.

Hapke, Laura. "Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America – By Kevin Mumford." *WorkingUSA* 11, no. 3 (2008): 403–4. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1743-4580.2008.00214_2.x.

Harris, Duchess, and Kate A Conley. *The Great Migration*. Harris, Duchess. Freedom's Promise. Minneapolis, MInnesota: Core Library, an imprint of Abdo Publishing, 2020.

Hawkins, Derek. "Officer Charged in George Floyd's Death Used Fatal Force before and Had History of Complaints." *Washington Post*, May 29, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/05/29/officer-charged-george-floyds-death-used-fatal-force-before-had-history-complaints/.

Hill, Evan, Ainara Tiefenthäler, Christiaan Triebert, Drew Jordan, Haley Willis, and Robin Stein. "How George Floyd Was Killed in Police Custody." *The New York Times*, June 1, 2020, sec. U.S. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/31/us/george-floyd-investigation.html.

Hillstrom, Laurie Collier. *Black Lives Matter: From a Moment to a Movement*. Guides to Subcultures and Countercultures Ser. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2018.

Himes, Kenneth R. "The Local Church as a Mediating Structure." *Social Thought* 12, no. 1 (December 1, 1986): 23–30. https://doi.org/10.1080/15426432.1986.10383546.

Hobson, George. *Imago Dei: Implications for Theology, Pastoral Care, Eucharist, Apologetics, Aesthetics*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019.

Hogan, Linda F. "Doing the Truth: The Life and Religious Vision of Enda McDonagh." *Studies (Dublin)* 111, no. 441 (2022): 26–36.

Honneth, Axel. *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*. Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA .: Polity Press, 2007.

———. *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press, 1995.

Honneth, Axel, and John Farrell. "Recognition and Moral Obligation." *Social Research* 64, no. 1 (1997): 16–35.

Huda, Kazi A. S. M. Nurul. "Misrecognition, Social Stigma, and COVID-19." *Developing World Bioethics*, August 10, 2021, 10.1111/dewb.12331. https://doi.org/10.1111/dewb.12331.

Human Rights Watch. "Caste Discrimination: A Global Concern." Human Rights Watch, August 29, 2001. https://www.hrw.org/report/2001/08/29/caste-discrimination/global-concern.

———. "Failure to Meet Domestic and International: Legal Obligations to Protect Dalits - Broken People: Caste Violence Against India's 'Untouchables' (Human Rights Watch Report, 1999)." Accessed July 28, 2022. https://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/india/India994-13.htm.

———. "Nigeria: A Year On, No Justice for #EndSARS Crackdown." *Human Rights Watch* (blog), October 19, 2021. https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/19/nigeria-year-no-justice-endsars-crackdown.

———. "Nigeria: Punitive Financial Moves Against Protesters." *Human Rights Watch* (blog), November 13, 2020. https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/11/13/nigeria-punitive-financial-moves-against-protesters.

———. "'Rest in Pieces': Police Torture and Deaths in Custody in Nigeria." Human Rights Watch, July 27, 2005. https://www.hrw.org/report/2005/07/27/rest-pieces/police-torture-and-deaths-custody-nigeria.

Huttunen, Rauno. "Hegelians Axel Honneth and Robert Williams on the Development of Human Morality." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 31, no. 4 (July 2012): 339–55. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-011-9278-z.

Iati, Marisa, Jennifer Jenkins, and Sommer Brugal. "Nearly 250 Women Have Been Fatally Shot by Police since 2015." Washington Post. Accessed July 16, 2022. https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/investigations/police-shootings-women/.

Ibe, Gerald Oluchi. *Women War: A Story of Aba Women's War 1929*. Independently published, 2018. https://www.amazon.com/Women-War-Story-Womens-1929/dp/1717829171.

Igwe, Ignatius. "It's Unfair To Judge Us For Result Upload Glitch – INEC." *Channels Television* (blog), June 27, 2023. https://www.channelstv.com/2023/06/27/its-unfair-to-judge-us-for-result-upload-glitch-inec/.

Ijezie, Luke Emehiele, Stephen Audu, and Agnes I. Acha, eds. *The Church in Nigeria and Ecumenical Question*. Port Harcourt: Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHAN), 2015.

Ikäheimo, Heikki. "A Vital Human Need: Recognition as Inclusion in Personhood." *European Journal of Political Theory* 8, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 31–45. https://doi.org/10.1177/1474885108096958.

India Today Web Desk. "4 Killed in MP, 1 in Rajasthan as Dalits Clash with Cops in Several Cities." *India Today*, April 2, 2018. https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/bharat-bandh-live-1202578-2018-04-02.

———. "SC/ST Act: From Dilution to Restoration in 5 Months." *India Today*, August 2, 2018. https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/sc-st-act-from-dilution-to-restoration-in-5-months-1303463-2018-08-02.

Iremeka, Chijioke. "Electoral Fraud, Technology and Future of Nigeria's Democracy." *The Guardian Nigeria News*, April 8, 2023, Saturday Magazine edition. https://guardian.ng/saturday-magazine/electoral-fraud-technology-and-future-of-nigerias-democracy/.

Isaac, Jeffrey C. "Beyond Trump? A Critique of Nancy Fraser's Call for a New Left Hegemony." *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 45, no. 9–10 (2019): 1157–69. https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453719872293.

Iser, Mattias. "Recognition." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2019. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2019. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/recognition/.

Itodo, Sunny Green. "Presidential Election Petitions Tribunal, Test of Nigeria's Judiciary - Group." *Daily Post Nigeria*, May 8, 2023. https://dailypost.ng/2023/05/08/presidential-election-petitions-tribunal-test-of-nigerias-judiciary-group/.

Jaiyeola, Temitayo. "How BVAS, IReV Failed First Election's Stress Test." *Punch Newspapers*, March 6, 2023. https://punchng.com/how-bvas-irev-failed-first-elections-stress-test/.

Jaja, S. O. "The Enugu Colliery Massacre in Retrospect: An Episode in British Administration of Nigeria." *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 11, no. 3/4 (June 1982): 86–106.

Jamaica Observer. "What to Know about Nigeria's #EndSARS Protests." Jamaica Observer, October 16, 2020. https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/latest-news/what-to-know-about-nigerias-endsars-protests/.

Jeet, C. "Understanding Jessica Benjamin's Theory on Subjectivity." *Story Power* (blog), August 31, 2022. https://storypower.criticsandbuilders.com/2022/08/31/understanding-jessica-benjamins-theory-on-subjectivity/.

Jensen, Michael P. (Michael Peter). *T & T Clark Reader in Theological Anthropology*. Edited by Marc (Marc Allen) Cortez. London, UK; New York, NY, USA: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018.

Jeremiah, na. "#EndSARS: No To Looting, Vandalism, Arson." *Leadership*, October 30, 2020, Online edition, sec. EDITORIAL. //leadership.ng/endsars-no-to-looting-vandalism-arson/.

Johnson, Donald, and Jean Johnson. "Jati: The Caste System in India." Asia Society. Accessed July 23, 2022. https://asiasociety.org/education/jati-caste-system-india.

JOLIBA. "The Iva Valley Massacre – November 1949." *Joliba* (blog), January 7, 2020. https://joliba-africa.com/2020/01/07/the-iva-valley-massacre-november-1949-2/.

Kahraman, Nilgun. "What Is Ethical Relationship? And Why Is It Important for Psychiatric Nursing Care?" *Journal of Nursing & Care* 5, no. 8 (2016): 143.

Katongole, Emmanuel. *The Sacrifice of Africa: A Political Theology for Africa*. Eerdmans Ekklesia Series. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2011.

Katz, Jack. "Culture within and Culture about Crime: The Case of the 'Rodney King Riots.'" *Crime, Media, Culture* 12, no. 2 (2016): 233–51. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741659016641721.

Keenan, James F. "The Color Line, Race, and Caste: Structures of Domination and the Ethics of Recognition." *Theological Studies* 82, no. 1 (March 1, 2021): 69–94. https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563921992550.

Kelly, Michael R., and Brian T. Harding. "Bergson's Theory of War: A Study of Libido Dominandi." *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 44, no. 5 (2018): 593–611. https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453718762621.

Kendhammer, Brandon. "Analysis | A Controversial Article Praises Colonialism. But Colonialism's Real Legacy Was Ugly." *Washington Post*, December 7, 2021. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/09/19/colonialism-left-behind-a-long-legacy-most-of-it-bad/.

King, Martin Luther. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," April 16, 1963. https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html.

Kitause, Rimamsikwe Habila, and Hilary Chukwuka Achunike. "Religion in Nigeria from 1900-2013." *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 3, no. 18 (2013): 45–56.

Kobo, Ousman Murzik. "'No Victor and No Vanquished' - Fifty Years after the Biafran War." *Origins: Current Events in Historical Perspective* (blog), January 2020. https://origins.osu.edu/milestones/nigerian-civil-war-biafra-anniversary?language_content_entity=en.

Koch, David W., Jaewon Lee, and Kyunghee Lee. "Coloring the War on Drugs: Arrest Disparities in Black, Brown, and White." *Race and Social Problems* 8, no. 4 (2016): 313–25. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-016-9185-6.

Köse, F. Ebru, and Dinkar Sharma. "Spontaneous Recognition: Investigating the Role of Working Memory." *Memory & Cognition* 49, no. 8 (November 1, 2021): 1665–76. https://doi.org/10.3758/s13421-021-01194-x.

Koslicki, Wendy M., Dale W. Willits, and Rachael Brooks. "Fatal Outcomes of Militarization: Re-Examining the Relationship between the 1033 Program and Police Deadly Force." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 72 (2021): 101781-. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2021.101781.

Kramer, Stephanie. "Key Findings about the Religious Composition of India." *Pew Research Center* (blog). Accessed July 24, 2022. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/09/21/key-findings-about-the-religious-composition-of-india/.

Kraut, Richard. "Aristotle's Ethics." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Fall 2022. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2022. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/aristotle-ethics/.

Kukreja, Reena. "Caste and Cross-Region Marriages in Haryana, India: Experience of Dalit Cross-Region Brides in Jat Households." *Modern Asian Studies* 52, no. 2 (March 2018): 492–531. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X16000391.

Kumar, Ajay. "Sexual Violence against Dalit Women: An Analytical Study of Intersectionality of Gender, Caste, and Class in India." *Journal of International Women's Studies* 22, no. 10 (October 1, 2021): 123–35.

Kwen, Iwok Iniobong, James. "How INEC Deregistered Voters in S/S, S/E Raises Concerns." *Businessday NG*, November 13, 2022. https://businessday.ng/politics/article/high-inec-deregistered-voters-in-s-s-s-e-raises-concerns/.

Lawlor, Leonard, and Valentine Moulard-Leonard. "Henri Bergson." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2021. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2021. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/bergson/.

Lebron, Christopher J. *The Making of Black Lives Matter: A Brief History of an Idea*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Leontsini, Eleni. "The Motive of Society: Aristotle on Civic Friendship, Justice, and Concord." *Res Publica* 19, no. 1 (February 2013): 21–35. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11158-012-9204-4.

Levy, Peter B. *The Great Uprising: Race Riots in Urban America during the 1960s*. Cambridge University Press, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108381659.

Loomba, Ania. "The Everyday Violence of Caste." *College Literature* 43, no. 1 (2016): 220–25.

Lynch, Jamiel, Christina Carrega, and Steve Almasy. "Justice Department Won't Pursue Charges against Officers in Tamir Rice Shooting." *CNN*, December 29, 2020. https://www.cnn.com/2020/12/29/us/tamir-rice-shooting-no-federal-charges/index.html.

Maclean, Ruth, and Elian Peltier. "Opposition Parties in Nigeria Call for Election Rerun, Citing Vote Rigging." *The New York Times*, February 28, 2023, sec. World. https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/28/world/africa/nigeria-election-challenges.html.

Madueme, Hans, and Michael R. E. Reeves, eds. *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin: Theological, Biblical, And Scientific Perspectives*. Grand Rapid, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2014.

Malik, Suratha Kumar. "Genesis, Historicity and Persistence of Dalit Protest Literature and Movements in Odisha." *Contemporary Voice of Dalit* 13, no. 1 (May 1, 2021): 81–94. https://doi.org/10.1177/2455328X20987370.

Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. First Paperback Edition. New York: Back Bay Books, 1994.

Manoj, Rohan. "What Does It Mean to Be a Child of an Intercaste Union in Modern India?" *The Hindu*, February 6, 2021, sec. Society. https://www.thehindu.com/society/what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-child-of-an-intercaste-union-in-modern-india/article33757476.ece.

Marchbanks, Miner P. "Trey," Anthony A. Peguero, Kay S. Varela, Jamilia J. Blake, and John Major Eason. "School Strictness and Disproportionate Minority Contact: Investigating Racial and Ethnic Disparities With the 'School-to-Prison Pipeline.'" *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 16, no. 2 (2018): 241–59. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204016680403.

Martineau, Wendy, Nasar Meer, and Simon Thompson. "Theory and Practice in the Politics of Recognition and Misrecognition." *Res Publica* 18, no. 1 (February 1, 2012): 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11158-012-9181-7.

Matera, Marc, Misty L. Bastian, S. Kingsley Kent, and Susan Kingsley Kent. *The Women's War of 1929: Gender and Violence in Colonial Nigeria*. Springer, 2011.

McDonagh, Enda. *Faith in Fragments*. Maynooth Bicentenary Series. Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Columba Press, 1996.

———. *Gift and Call: Towards a Christian Theology of Morality*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1975.

———. *Immersed in Mystery: En Route to Theology*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2007.

———. *Social Ethics and the Christian: Towards Freedom in Communion*. Manchester: University Press, 1979.

———. *The Demands of Simple Justice: A Study of the Church, Politics and Violence with Special Reference to Zimbabwe*. Dublin; New York: Gill and Macmillan, 1980.

———. *The Making of Disciples: Tasks of Moral Theology*. Good News Studies; v. 5. Wilmington, DE, Wilmington, Del.: MGlazier, 1982.

———. *Vulnerable to the Holy: In Faith, Morality and Art*. Dublin: Columba Press, 2004.

McIvor, David Wallace. *Mourning in America: Race and the Politics of Loss*. Ithaca, [New York]; Cornell University Press, 2016. https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501706189.

Mckesson, DeRay. *On the Other Side of Freedom: The Case for Hope*. New York, New York: Viking, 2018.

McNay, Lois. *Against Recognition*. Cambridge: Polity, 2008.

McQueen, Paddy. "Social and Political Recognition." In *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Accessed January 16, 2021. https://iep.utm.edu/recog_sp/.

Mendoza, Jean. "How Many Times Was Martin Luther King Jr. Arrested?" Grunge.com, February 17, 2022. https://www.grunge.com/772575/how-many-times-was-martin-luther-king-jr-arrested/.

Miles, Rebekah. Review of *Review of A Feminist Ethic of Risk*, by Sharon Diane Welch. *The Journal of Religion* 73, no. 1 (1993): 122–122.

Mills, Charles W. "The Political Economy of Personhood." *OpenDemocracy: Free Thinking for the World* (blog), June 16, 2015. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/political-economy-of-personhood/.

Mogul, Rhea. "Anger Mounts in India over Alleged Rape and Murder of Dalit Girl." *NBC News*. Accessed July 29, 2022. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/alleged-gang-rape-murder-9-year-old-dalit-girl-prompts-n1275888.

MPV Web. "Mapping Police Violence." Mapping Police Violence. Accessed July 12, 2022. https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/.

Nair, Christophe Jaffrelot, Malini. "'Educated Dalits Are Mobilising Against Upper Caste Antagonism, Rise of Hindutva Forces.'" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Accessed July 23, 2022. https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/02/04/educated-dalits-are-mobilising-against-upper-caste-antagonism-rise-of-hindutva-forces-pub-75457.

Neal, Elona. "A History of Police Violence in America." *Stacker*, April 29, 2022. https://stacker.com/stories/4365/history-police-violence-america.

Nelson, C.J. "Nigeria's #EndSARS Protestors Still Face Frozen Bank Accounts and Jail Time." *Vice* (blog), February 4, 2021. https://www.vice.com/en/article/dy8e3m/nigerias-endsars-protestors-still-face-frozen-bank-accounts-and-jail-time.

Nerad, Julie Cary. "Leaping into the Fire: Women in United States Race Riots." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 40, no. 2 (September 22, 2007): i–i.

Nicholson, Linda. "To Be or Not to Be: Charles Taylor and the Politics of Recognition." In *The Play of Reason*, 129–44. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019. https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501729225-010.

"NIGERIA: Focus on the Deployment of Troops in Odi [19991230]." Accessed May 19, 2023. https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Newsletters/irinw-123099.html.

Nigeria, News Agency of. "2023: INEC Frustrating, Preventing Us from Getting PVCs, Abuja Residents Say." *Peoples Gazette* (blog), June 28, 2022. https://gazettengr.com/2023-inec-frustrating-preventing-us-from-getting-pvcs-abuja-residents-say/.

NIREC. "Welcome to NIREC." Accessed June 26, 2023. https://www.nirec.org.ng/.

Nkemdiche, Afam. "National Orientation and Patriotism." *The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News*, May 10, 2018. https://guardian.ng/opinion/national-orientation-and-patriotism/.
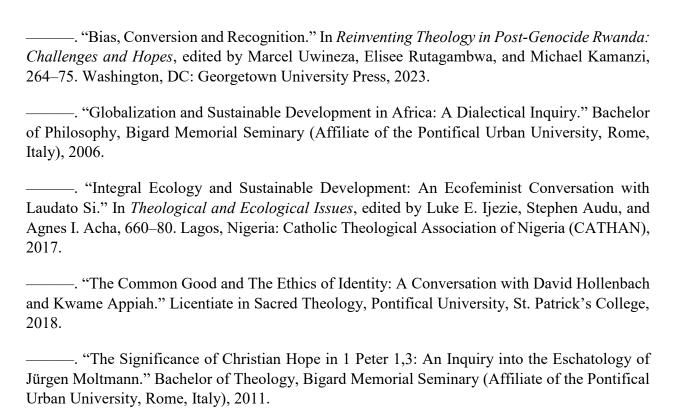
Nnaemeka, Wondrous. "TRIBUNAL: INEC Chairman Refusing Obi's Subpoena To Release Documents, Lawyer Tells Panel." *The Whistler Newspaper*, June 14, 2023. https://thewhistler.ng/tribunal-inec-chairman-refusing-obis-subpoena-to-release-documents-lawyer-tells-panel/.

Nwainya, Ogonna Hilary. "Advancing Religious Peace in Nigeria through Strategic Dialogue: A Case Study of Enohia-Itim in Afikpo Ebonyi State." Master of Science, National Open University of Nigeria, 2015.

———. "African Palaver Ethics, the Common Good, and Nonrecognition of Women." *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 43, no. 1 (June 1, 2023): 189–202. https://doi.org/10.5840/jsce202341882.

———. "Africa's Commitment to the Globalization of Solidarity: A Perspective from Africae Munus n. 86." In *The Church in Nigeria and the Ecumenical Question*, edited by Luke E. Ijezie, Stephen Audu, and Agnes I. Acha, 291–304. Lagos, Nigeria: Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHAN), 2013.

———. "An Eschatological View of the Year of Faith: Witnessing to Hope in Age of Despair." In *Religious Faith and Public Service in Nigeria: Ambiguities and Paradoxes*, edited by Luke E. Ijezie, Stephen Audu, and Agnes I. Acha, 197–207. Lagos, Nigeria: Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHAN), 2014.

———. "Bias, Conversion and Recognition." In *Reinventing Theology in Post-Genocide Rwanda: Challenges and Hopes*, edited by Marcel Uwineza, Elisee Rutagambwa, and Michael Kamanzi, 264–75. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2023.

———. "Globalization and Sustainable Development in Africa: A Dialectical Inquiry." Bachelor of Philosophy, Bigard Memorial Seminary (Affiliate of the Pontifical Urban University, Rome, Italy), 2006.

———. "Integral Ecology and Sustainable Development: An Ecofeminist Conversation with Laudato Si." In *Theological and Ecological Issues*, edited by Luke E. Ijezie, Stephen Audu, and Agnes I. Acha, 660–80. Lagos, Nigeria: Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHAN), 2017.

———. "The Common Good and The Ethics of Identity: A Conversation with David Hollenbach and Kwame Appiah." Licentiate in Sacred Theology, Pontifical University, St. Patrick's College, 2018.

———. "The Significance of Christian Hope in 1 Peter 1,3: An Inquiry into the Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann." Bachelor of Theology, Bigard Memorial Seminary (Affiliate of the Pontifical Urban University, Rome, Italy), 2011.

Nwaubani, Adaobi Tricia. "Perspective | Trump Trashes Nigeria and Bans Its Immigrants. Nigerians Love Him for It." *Washington Post*, February 7, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/trump-trashes-nigeria-and-bans-its-immigrants-nigerians-love-him-for-it/2020/02/07/ed985a4c-4853-11ea-ab15-b5df3261b710_story.html.

Obama, Barack. "Transcript: Barack Obama's Speech on Race." *NPR*, March 18, 2008, sec. Election 2008. https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=88478467.

Obewho, Lucky. "Tribunal: LP Presents Over 18,000 Blurred PU Result Sheets, INEC Alleges Ambush." *Channels Television*, June 15, 2023. https://www.channelstv.com/2023/06/15/tribunal-lp-presents-over-18000-blurred-pu-result-sheets-inec-alleges-ambush/.

Odu, Ikechukwu. "Enugu Police Allegedly Shoots Final-Year Law Student to Death, Refuses to Release Corpse." *Vanguard News*, May 4, 2020, Online edition. https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/05/enugu-police-allegedly-shoots-final-year-law-student-to-death-refuses-to-release-corpse/.

Ojigho, Osai. "Nigeria: Killing of #EndSARS Protesters by the Military Must Be Investigated." *Amnesty International* (blog), October 21, 2020. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2020/10/killing-of-endsars-protesters-by-the-military-must-be-investigated/.

Okeoma, Chidiebube. "Policeman Kills Okada Rider for Not Wearing Face Mask - Punch Newspapers." *Punch*, July 10, 2020. https://punchng.com/policeman-kills-okada-rider-for-not-wearing-face-mask/.

Olarewaju, Oluwafadekemi Areo and Favour. "An Inexhaustible List of Police Brutality Stories and Fundraisers across Nigeria." *Businessday NG*, October 23, 2020, Online edition. https://businessday.ng/bd-weekender/article/an-inexhaustible-list-of-police-brutality-stories-and-fundraisers-across-nigeria/.

Olasanmi, Kunle. "We Were Instructed Not To Give Election Result Copies To Agents, Another INEC Staff Tells Tribunal." *Leadership*, June 9, 2023, sec. News. https://leadership.ng/we-were-instructed-not-to-give-election-result-copies-to-agents-another-inec-staff-tells-tribuna/.

Olonilua, Ademola. "#EndSARS: DJ Switch, Others Help Protesters Shot at Lekki Toll Gate." *Punch Newspapers*, October 20, 2020. https://punchng.com/endsars-dj-switch-others-help-protesters-shot-at-lekki-toll-gate/.

Olubajo, Oyindamola. "Adamawa: Police Kill Commercial Motorcyclist Over N100." *Allnews*, June 2, 2020, Online edition. https://allnews.ng/news/police-kill-20-year-old-commercial-motorcyclist-over-n100-bribe.

———. "#EndSARS: Pathologist Presents Bodies of 99 Protesters Killed in Lekki, Other Parts of Lagos." *Peoples Gazette* (blog), June 5, 2021. https://gazettengr.com/endsars-pathologist-presents-bodies-of-99-protesters-killed-in-lekki-other-parts-of-lagos/.

Omoyeni, Dele. "Two INEC Officials Tell Tribunal They Couldn't Upload Presidential Results To IReV." *Channels Television* (blog), June 8, 2023. https://www.channelstv.com/2023/06/08/two-inec-officials-tell-tribunal-they-couldnt-upload-presidential-results-to-irev/.

Onodugo, Ifeanyi C., Benjamin A. Amujiri, and Bethram N. Nwuba. "Ethno- Religious Crisis and Nigerian Democracy." *IJISET - International Journal of Innovative Science, Engineering & Technology* 2, no. 5 (2015): 363–77.

Onyeakagbu, Adaobi. "The Real Story behind the Aba Women's Riot and the List of People That Died." Pulse Nigeria, 05:00 100AD. https://www.pulse.ng/lifestyle/food-travel/the-real-story-behind-the-aba-womens-riot-and-the-list-of-people-that-died/605kbl1.

Onyeji, Ebuka. "INTERVIEW: Odi 1999 Massacre: Why We Will Never Forgive Obasanjo, Alamieyeseigha – Odi Community Chairman." *Premium Times Nigeria* (blog), November 23, 2019. https://www.premiumtimesng.com/features-and-interviews/364370-interview-odi-1999-massacre-why-we-will-never-forgive-obasanjo-alamieyeseigha-odi-community-chairman.html.

Onyekakeyah, Luke. "Is INEC's Voters' Registration Being Bungled?" *The Guardian Nigeria News*, June 14, 2022. https://guardian.ng/opinion/is-inecs-voters-registration-being-bungled/.

Orjinmo, Nduka. "Nigeria Sars Protests: Horror over Shootings in Lagos." *BBC News*, October 21, 2020, sec. Africa. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54630592.

Oyadongha, Samuel. "Nigeria: Killing of Security Operatives - Don't Trigger Repeat of Odi Massacre, Dickson Warns Militants." *Vanguard*, May 12, 2016, sec. News. https://allafrica.com/stories/201605120529.html.

Oyadongha, Samuel, and Emem Idio. "Nigeria: 15 Years After Massacre, Odi Boils Again." *Vanguard*, December 29, 2014, sec. News. https://allafrica.com/stories/201412292803.html.

Ozulumba, Chiamaka. "Nigeria: What Led to #EndSARS Protests?" *This Day*, October 20, 2021, sec. News. https://allafrica.com/stories/202110200095.html.

Pandey, Vikas. "India Coronavirus: How Police Won Hearts with Cakes, Songs and Sacrifice." *BBC News*, May 12, 2020, sec. India. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-52586896.

Paris, Francesco, and Nita Ghei. "The Role of Reciprocity in International Law." *Cornell International Law Journal* 36, no. 1 (April 1, 2003): 93–124.

Peace Direct. "Inter Faith Partners for Peace and Development (IPPD)." *Peace Insight* (blog), October 2021. https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/organisations/ippd/.

Petrola, John Paul J. "Ethics of Recognition: Axel Honneth's Normative Critique of Modern Society." *Journal of Critical Reviews* 7, no. 11 (2020). https://doi.org/10.31838/jcr.07.11.30.

Pihlström, Sami. "A Pragmatist Approach to the Mutual Recognition between Ethico-Political and Theological Discourses on Evil and Suffering." *Political Theology* 20, no. 2 (February 17, 2019): 157–75. https://doi.org/10.1080/1462317X.2018.1543819.

Planas, Antonio. "New Florida Standards Teach That Black People Benefited from Slavery Because It Taught Useful Skills." *NBC News*, July 20, 2023. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/new-florida-standards-teach-black-people-benefited-slavery-taught-usef-rcna95418.

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. "Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church," 2004. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html.

Pope Francis. Papal Encyclical. "Gaudete et Exsultate: Apostolic Exhortation on the Call to Holiness in Today's World." Papal Encyclical, March 19, 2018. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html#_ftn10.

Premium Times and Agency Report. "INEC Deliberately Withheld Uploading Presidential Election Results on IReV - Lai Mohammed." Accessed June 28, 2023. https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/591712-inec-deliberately-withheld-uploading-presidential-election-results-on-irev-lai-mohammed.html.

Puffer, Matthew. "Human Dignity after Augustine's Imago Dei: On the Sources and Uses of Two Ethical Terms." *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 37, no. 1 (2017): 65–82. https://doi.org/10.1353/sce.2017.0010.

Punch News. "Odi Massacre: Anyone with Tribal Marks on Their Chest Was Slaughtered, Corpses Littered Everywhere –Bolou, Former Bayelsa Commissioner." *Punch Newspapers* (blog), December 16, 2017. https://punchng.com/odi-massacre-anyone-with-tribal-marks-on-their-chest-was-slaughtered-corpses-littered-everywhere-bolou-former-bayelsa-commissioner/.

Qualls, Alyssa. "Women in Nigeria Today." *African Postcolonial Literature in English* (blog). Accessed May 17, 2022. http://www.postcolonialweb.org/nigeria/contwomen.html.

Ransby, Barbara. *Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the Twenty-First Century*. American Studies Now: Critical Histories of the Present 6. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018.

Reuben, Roseline. "72 Percent of Nigerians Call for Disintegration." *Centre for Social Awareness, Advocacy and Ethics (CSAAE)* (blog), November 2, 2020. https://csaaeinc.org/72-percent-of-nigerians-call-for-disintegration/.

Ricoeur, Paul. *The Course of Recognition*. Translated by David Pellauer. 1st Edition. London: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Robinson, Rowena, and Joseph Marianus Kujur. *Margins of Faith: Dalit and Tribal Christianity in India*. Los Angeles, Los Angeles; London: Sage, SAGE, 2010.

Rowsome, David. "The Five Major World Religions and the Image of God." *Daily Declaration* (blog), October 28, 2021. https://blog.canberradeclaration.org.au/2021/10/29/world-religions-image-of-god/.

Ryan, Gerard. "Charles Taylor and the Political Recognition of Difference as a Resource for Theological Reflection on Religious Recognition." *Open Theology* 2, no. 1 (November 3, 2016). https://doi.org/10.1515/opth-2016-0069.

Sachs, Joe. "Aristotle: Ethics." In *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Accessed March 4, 2023. https://iep.utm.edu/aristotle-ethics/.

Sahara Reporters. "Amnesty International Calls For Immediate Release Of #EndSARS Protesters Still In Nigerian Prisons," January 11, 2023. https://saharareporters.com/2023/01/11/amnesty-international-calls-immediate-release-endsars-protesters-still-nigerian-prisons.

———. "Buhari Has Disobeyed 40 Court Orders, Says Amnesty International's Lawyer," November 25, 2019. https://saharareporters.com/2019/11/25/buhari-has-disobeyed-40-court-orders-says-amnesty-international%E2%80%99s-lawyer.

———. "Buhari's Minister, Lai Mohammed Contradicts INEC, Says Electoral Body Deliberately Didn't Upload Presidential Results On IReV." *Sahara Reporters*, April 4, 2023. https://saharareporters.com/2023/04/04/buharis-minister-lai-mohammed-contradicts-inec-says-electoral-body-deliberately-didnt.

———. "It Doesn't Make Sense To Swear In Tinubu, Others Whose Victories Are Being Challenged In Court Yet –Cardinal Onaiyekan," May 4, 2023. https://saharareporters.com/2023/05/04/it-doesnt-make-sense-swear-tinubu-others-whose-victories-are-being-challenged-court-yet.

———. "Multiple Registrations, Strange Names, Pictures Of 'Minors' On 2023 Voters' Register Released By Nigerian Electoral Body, INEC," November 14, 2022. https://saharareporters.com/2022/11/14/multiple-registrations-strange-names-pictures-minors-2023-voters-register-released.

Sahgal, Neha, Jonathan Evans, Ariana Monique Salazar, Kelsey Jo Starr, and Manolo Corichi. "Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation." *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), June 29, 2021. https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/06/29/religion-in-india-tolerance-and-segregation/.

Salau, Gbenga. "Deaths Mount as Lax Enforcement of Victims of Gunshots Act Persists." *The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News*, March 6, 2022, Online edition. https://guardian.ng/news/deaths-mount-as-lax-enforcement-of-victims-of-gunshots-act-persists/.

Sampson, Anthony. *Mandela: The Authorised Biography*. HarperCollins, 1999.

Sasu, Doris Dokua. "Universities in Nigeria." *Statista: Society - Education & Science* (blog), February 6, 2023. https://www.statista.com/topics/8520/university-in-nigeria/.

Scheid, Anna Floerke. "Under the Palaver Tree: Community Ethics for Truth-Telling and Reconciliation." *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 31, no. 1 (2011): 17–36.

Sembou, Evangelia. "Hegel's Idea of a 'Struggle for Recognition': The 'Phenomenology of Spirit.'" *History of Political Thought* 24, no. 2 (2003): 262–81.

Set Free. "The Indian Caste System: Explained." *Set Free* (blog), August 26, 2021. https://www.setfreealliance.org/indian-caste-system-explained/.

Shaibu, Nathaniel. "Swearing in Tinubu before Tribunal's Verdict 'Doesn't Make Sense' – Onaiyekan." *Punch Newspapers*, May 4, 2023. https://punchng.com/swearing-in-tinubu-before-tribunals-verdict-doesnt-make-sense-onaiyekan/.

Sharma, O.P., and Carl Haub. "Change Comes Slowly for Religious Diversity in India." Population Reference Bureau (PRB). Accessed July 28, 2022. https://www.prb.org/resources/change-comes-slowly-for-religious-diversity-in-india/.

Sharma, Smriti. "Caste-Based Crimes and Economic Status: Evidence from India." *Journal of Comparative Economics* 43, no. 1 (2015): 204–26. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jce.2014.10.005.

Shuaib, Abdullahi. "Towards Achieving Ethno-Religious Peaceful Co-Existence In Nigeria - ICERMediation." The International Center for Ethno-Religious Mediation (ICERM), New York, USA, October 1, 2014. https://icermediation.org/ethno-religious-peaceful-coexistence-in-nigeria/.

Silverstein, Jason. "The Global Impact of George Floyd: How Black Lives Matter Protests Shaped Movements around the World," June 4, 2021. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/george-floyd-black-lives-matter-impact/.

Simango, Daniel. "The Imago Dei (Gen. 1:26-27): A History of Interpretation from Philo to the Present." *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 42, no. 1 (2016): 172–90. https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/1065.

———. "The Meaning of the Imago Dei (Gen 1 : 26-27) in Genesis 1-11." *Old Testament Essays* 25, no. 3 (January 2012): 638–56. https://doi.org/10.10520/EJC132559.

Smith, David Livingstone. *Less than Human: Why We Demean, Enslave, and Exterminate Others*. 1st ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011.

Soni, Daniel. "ENDSARS: Crackdown, as Protests Rock Lagos, Abuja, Enugu, Ilorin." *Vanguard News*, October 21, 2021. https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/10/endsars-crackdown-as-protests-rock-lagos-abuja-enugu-ilorin/.

Sowole, James. "NNPP to Sue INEC over Omission of Party's Name on Ballot Paper." *THISDAYLIVE*, March 19, 2023. https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/03/19/nnpp-to-sue-inec-over-omission-of-partys-name-on-ballot-paper.

Springhart, Heike, and Günter Thomas, eds. *Exploring Vulnerability*. V & R Academic. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017.

Stanford History Education Group. "Women's War of 1929." Accessed March 8, 2022. https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons/womens-war-1929.

Streets, Jerry. "The Politics of Imago Dei: An Interview with Jerry Streets '75 M.Div." *Reflections - Yale Divinity School*, Making Good: Can Faith Repair the World?, no. Spring (2021). https://reflections.yale.edu/article/making-good-can-faith-repair-world/politics-imago-dei-interview-jerry-streets-75-mdiv.

Sulaimon, Adekunle. "BREAKING: Labour Party's Logo Missing on Ondo Ballots." *Punch Newspapers*, February 24, 2023. https://punchng.com/breaking-lps-logo-missing-on-ondo-ballots/.

Sule, Babayo, Umar Adamu, and Muhammad Aminu Yahaya. "National Poverty Eradication Programme in Nigeria (NAPEP): A Case Study of Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP) in

Gombe State 2003 - 2015." *Journal of Public Administration and Governance* 9, no. 2 (2019): 230–47.

Tafari, Ras Iadonis. *Selected Speeches of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I*. First Edition. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011.

Tannen, Deborah, and Muriel Saville-Troike, eds. *Perspectives on Silence*. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1985.

Taylor, Charles. *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Edited by Amy Gutmann. Revised edition. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1994.

———. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Taylor, Derrick Bryson. "George Floyd Protests: A Timeline." *The New York Times*, November 5, 2021, sec. U.S. https://www.nytimes.com/article/george-floyd-protests-timeline.html.

Taylor, James Stacey. "Autonomy: Ethics and Political Philosophy." In *Encyclopedia Britannica*, June 20, 2017. https://www.britannica.com/topic/autonomy.

Testa, Italo, Luigi Ruggiu, Italo Testa, Luigi Ruggiu, Italo Testa, Luigi Ruggiu, Italo Testa, and Luigi Ruggiu, eds. *"I That Is We, We That Is I." Perspectives on Contemporary Hegel: Social Ontology, Recognition, Naturalism, and the Critique of Kantian Constructivism*. Brill, 2016. https://brill.com/edcollbook/title/33542.

The Economist. "Nigeria's Fragile Unity Is Under Pressure." *The Economist Group*, July 12, 2017. https://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=135670197&Country=Nigeria&topic=Politics_1.

The Hindu. "Are Internet Shutdowns Healthy for India?" *The Hindu, Politics and Polity*, December 19, 2019, sec. Politics and Policy. https://www.thehindu.com/thread/politics-and-policy/are-internet-shutdowns-healthy-for-india/article30348873.ece.

———. "The Hindu Explains: What Triggered the 'Bharat Bandh'?" *The Hindu*, April 2, 2018, sec. India. https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/the-hindu-explains-what-triggered-the-bharat-bandh/article61870711.ece.

The Holy See. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Vatican. Accessed March 26, 2023. https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM.

Thorat, Amit, and Omkar Joshi. "The Continuing Practice of Untouchability in India: Patterns and Mitigating Influences." *Economic and Political Weekly* 55, no. 2 (January 11, 2020): 7–8.

Tiwari, Badri Narayan. "Six Dalit Public and Political Power: Grassroots Pressures on Democracy." In *The Making of the Dalit Public in North India: Uttar Pradesh, 1950 - Present*, edited by Badri

Narayan Tiwari, 0. Oxford University Press, 2011. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198071877.003.0006.

Tubman, Kadia, Emma LeGault, and Rebecca Harrington. "50 Black Women Have Been Killed by the Police since 2015." Accessed July 16, 2022. https://www.insider.com/black-women-killed-by-police-database-2021-6.

UCA News. "Dalit Anger Challenges Indian Government's Future." ucanews.com. Accessed August 5, 2022. https://www.ucanews.com/news/dalit-anger-challenges-indian-governments-future/82095.

Ugorji, Basil. "Nigeria-Biafra War and the Politics of Oblivion: Implications of Revealing the Hidden Narratives through Transformative Learning." PhD Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, 2022. https://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1190&context=shss_dcar_etd.

UNHCR. "Killings, Kidnappings and Looting Force 11,500 Nigerians to Flee to Niger." *UNHCR* (blog), December 3, 2021. https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/killings-kidnappings-and-looting-force-11500-nigerians-flee-niger.

United Nations. "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." United Nations. United Nations, December 10, 1948. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights.

Uwazuruike, Allwell. "#EndSARS: The Movement Against Police Brutality in Nigeria." *Harvard Human Rights Journal* Volume 34, no. Issue 1 (Spring 2021). https://harvardhrj.com/2020/11/endsars-the-movement-against-police-brutality-in-nigeria/.

Van Allen, Judith. "Aba Riots or the Igbo Women's War? - Ideology, Stratification and the Invisibility of Women." *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 6, no. 1 (1975). https://doi.org/10.5070/F761017476.

Vanguard News. "Five Demands from #EndSARS Protesters." *Vanguard News*, October 12, 2020. https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/10/five-demands-from-endsars-protesters/.

Vatican Council II. "Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on The Church in The Modern World." The Holy See - Pope Paul VI, December 7, 1965. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

———. "Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church." Pope Paul VI, November 21, 1964. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

Volf, Miroslav. "Exclusion and Embrace – Theological Reflection in the Wake of Ethnic Cleansing." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 29, no. 2 (1992): 230-.

———. *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Revised and Updated. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2019.

Washington Post. "Fatal Force: Police Shootings Database." *Washington Post*, July 15, 2022, Online edition, sec. Fatal Force. https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/investigations/police-shootings-database/.

Watson, Ryan. "In the Wakes of Rodney King: Militant Evidence and Media Activism in the Age of Viral Black Death." *The Velvet Light Trap* 84, no. 1 (2019): 34–49.

Watters, Jessica. "Pink Hats and Black Fists: The Role of Women in the Black Lives Matter Movement." *William & Mary Journal of Women and the Law* 24, no. 1 (2017): 199-.

Weaver, Darlene Fozard. "Dignity: A Catholic Perspective." In *Value and Vulnerability*, edited by Matthew R. Petrusek and Jonathan Rothchild, 31–54. An Interfaith Dialogue on Human Dignity. University of Notre Dame Press, 2020. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv19m64x1.6.

Weinandy, Thomas G. (Thomas Gerard). "St. Irenaeus and the Imago Dei: The Importance of Being Human." *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 6, no. 4 (2003): 15–34. https://doi.org/10.1353/log.2003.0048.

Weitzer, Ronald. "Incidents of Police Misconduct and Public Opinion." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 30 (2002): 397–408.

Welch, Sharon D. *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*. Rev. ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000.

Weldon, Clodagh. "Original Sin." In *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion*, edited by David A. Leeming, Kathryn Madden, and Stanton Marlan, 646–47. Boston, MA: Springer US, 2010. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-71802-6_480.

Welsh, Brandon C., Anthony A. Braga, and Gerben J. N. Bruinsma. "Reimagining Broken Windows: From Theory to Policy." *The Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 52, no. 4 (2015): 447–63. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427815581399.

Whitley, Joe D. "'Three Strikes and You're out': More Harm than Good." *Federal Sentencing Reporter* 7, no. 2 (1994): 63–65. https://doi.org/10.2307/20639748.

Wilkerson, Isabel. *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*. First edition. Oprah's Book Club. 2020 Selection. New York: Random House, 2020.

Williams, Robert R. "Hegel and Nietzsche: Recognition and Master/Slave." *Philosophy Today (Celina)* 45, no. 9999 (2001): 164–79. https://doi.org/10.5840/philtoday200145Supplement18.

———. *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Winfrey, Maya, and Elizabeth Stinson. "Pulses from the Multitude: Virtuosity and Black Feminist Discourse." *Women & Performance* 26, no. 2–3 (2016): 208–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/0740770X.2016.1232885.

World Population Review. "Police Killings by Country 2022," 2022. https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/police-killings-by-country.

Wright, Karen Shields. "The Principles of Catholic Social Teaching: A Guide for Decision Making from Daily Clinical Encounters to National Policy-Making." *The Linacre Quarterly* 84, no. 1 (February 2017): 10–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/00243639.2016.1274629.

Zerra, Luke. "Escaping the Libido Dominandi: Authority and Accountability in Jenson's Ecclesiology." *Pro Ecclesia (Northfield, Minn.)* 28, no. 2 (2019): 193–209. https://doi.org/10.1177/1063851219842404.

Zurn, Christopher F. "Arguing over Participatory Parity on Nancy Fraser's Conception of Social Justice." *Philosophy Today (Celina)* 47, no. 5 (2003): 176–89. https://doi.org/10.5840/philtoday200347supplement23.

———. "Identity or Status? Struggles over 'Recognition' in Fraser, Honneth, and Taylor." *Constellations (Oxford, England)* 10, no. 4 (2003): 519–37. https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1351-0487.2003.00351.x.