

Sammendrag, engelsk

This study juxtaposes the texts of Irenaeus of Lyons and Judith Butler in order to reformulate the soteriological notion of recapitulation. In very different ways, both writers provide insights into human nature, gender, and how we can think about salvation. The reformulation I suggest is intended to critically preserve a traditional model of salvation by making its anthropology contemporary, a recapitulation that does not lock the human being in prediscursive categories. More precisely, that means a soteriology that involves the relationality of the human being in a more radical sense than envisioned by Irenaeus. How can we conceptualize the saved human being?

Irenaeus' notion of recapitulation has had strong appeal in history and contemporary thought. To be saved by God is to be brought to what one is meant to be; it is a transition towards a fulfillment as a human being. This idea seems to presuppose a given subject, created by God. If the I is to become itself in salvation, then it must already *be* something or have ontological or prediscursive roots. A very different way of conceptualizing human existence comes from late modern gender theory, here represented by Judith Butler. She states that there is no essence to our personalities or gender. The real creation of the I happens in life, in discourse, by society, in relation, and not in some prediscursive womb. By juxtaposing these thinkers, a conflict appears: A soteriology that claims that salvation is to be fulfilled as oneself does not seem to harmonize with a self that has no prediscursive essence. How can the I become its authentic self when authenticity is an illusion?

However, the tension between the two views is not as straightforward as it might seem. The human being in the Irenaean movement of returning and growing is not to be equated with the existentialist and modernist idea of an authentic self. It is not as easy to categorize the human being of recapitulation as a metaphysical entity as one might assume. Moreover, although Butler's subject is discursively constituted, it also has traits that allow it to be transposed to a conception of recapitulation. In other words, the tension between Irenaeus' recapitulation and Butler's subject can be resolved.

I have explored how we can understand creation as processual and the human being as constituted in relation, so that creation and social emergence can be part of the same story. If to be a true human means to be relational, then relationality is what the self will be led back to in recapitulation. And if being created in society through the hands of fellow humans is God's way of creating, then we are also in a state of salvation in society through one another. Read with Butler, the soteriology of Irenaeus can, when supplied with a concept of processual, relational creation, facilitate a dynamic, discursive anthropology.

I center my interpretation of recapitulation around the image of the child and its growth. Not only does this organic image incorporate salvation both as continuity and transformation, it also clearly shows how the cumulative experience and continuous creation that happens in life is part of the growth toward fulfillment. It also combines naturally with relationality, without letting go of individuality. But recapitulation cannot be a mere return to childhood; it is also a stepping forward into the unknown future of this child, under the conditions of prelapsarian life. Salvation is therefore only partly a return to the prelapsarian life and is realized through the lapsarian life and completed in the postlapsarian.

The discrepancy between the two thinkers is also intriguing on a more theoretical level: How does theology work when two reasonable but conflicting ideas meet? If diverging ideas are accepted, they must also interact with each other and make up a meaningful whole. I wish to contribute to the theological thinking about the criteria for acceptance, interaction, and meaningfulness when ideas interact.