CHAPTER THREE
RECOGNITION IN CONFLICT (JOHN 5–19)

With John 5 a new phase in the narrative begins. While the first four chapters introduced the stranger from heaven in the story-world without submitting him to significant opposition, and even had the Samaritans welcoming him (yet, see 2:24–25; 3:3–21), Jesus’ dual appearance now gives rise to a pronounced schism among his observers (see the σκόπεω in 7:43; 9:16; 10:19).¹ The political and religious authorities in Jerusalem see Jesus as a threat, so a conflict commences.² Jesus is only recognized by the few. Jesus’ appearance evokes a κρίσις, and this forensic motif pervades the present part of the Gospel.³ Jesus’ first discourse (5:19–47) describes him as the one who judges between life and death (5:22, 26, 30; yet, 8:15), whereas chs. 5–19 conclude when he himself is sentenced to death (18:28–19:16a). In contrast to Pilate’s judgment, however, Jesus’ judgment is just (5:30) and true (8:16, contrary to judgment by human standards; cf. 7:24; 8:15), since the real peripetetic power of human destiny (5:24) lies in the recognition or nonrecognition of Jesus. From the point of view of anagnorisis, we have previously noticed that recognition scenes may establish trial scenarios when identity claims provoke embarrassment and thus lead to a questioning of their legitimacy (e.g., Sophocles, Oed. tyr.; Euripides, El.; Heliodorus, Aeth.; see pp. 64–66). Instead of leading to immediate recognition, trial-like proceedings may come first. Although only some encounters in the following chapters are recognition type-scenes, they all thoroughly thematize the move of cognitive resistance, consisting of interrogations,

¹ Scholars generally agree on this shift in the narrative. See, e.g., Schnackenburg, Johannesevangelium, 211–7; Culpeper, Anatomy, 91; Stübbe, John, 75; Painter, The Quest, 213–214; Smith, John, 129.
³ Lincoln, Truth on Trial, 57–138. Chapters 5 and 7–8 have a certain resemblance with ancient, judicial oratory, as Jesus’ revelation of identity evokes accusations, defense, and counteraccusations (8:31–50). See Atridge, “Argumentation in John 5”; Neyrey, “Jesus the Judge”; Larsen, “Hvem er Manden?” Note, for example, judicial terms like κατηγοροῖο (5:45; 8:6); κρίνω/κρίσις (5:22, 24, 27, 29–30; 7:24, 51; 8:15–16, 26, 50); μαρτυρέω/μαρτυρία (5:31–32, 34, 36; 8:13–14, 17–18); νόμος (7:19, 23, 49, 51; 8:17).
suggestion of other identities applying to Jesus, disputes, and rejection. As the *sēmeia* correspond to the move of token-showing, the disputes in the present chapters may be taken as developments of the move of cognitive resistance in which recognition is discussed, postponed, and turned down.

Now, when recognition becomes an object of controversy its capacity as the conclusion of an enthymeme rises to the surface. When Eurycleia identifies Odysseus, the trajectory of reasoning is the following: (1) Odysseus is said to have a scar on his thigh (general premise), (2) this man has a scar on his thigh (specific premise), hence (3), this man is Odysseus (conclusion). Although Eurycleia may mistake one scar for another, her process of identification is relatively simple when comparing it to the social recognition of thematic roles. This primarily has to do with the different nature of the “scar” or the recognition token. In identifications like the above one, the token is an index sign, pointing toward its owner through physical contact; but in social recognition, anagnorisis relates to the conventional and symbolic coding of thematic roles—as, for example, “The Messiah”: The Messiah is someone who acts and speaks in such and such way and who refrains from doing or saying such and such things. This may also be expressed in an enthymeme: The Messiah does and says x (1), person y does and says x (2), person y is the Messiah (3).  

Story actors in John basically agree on what Jesus says and does (the second, specific premise), for even the antagonists say that he performs signs (10:33; 11:47) and that he makes himself equal to God (5:18; 10:33), but the disagreement pertains to how these sayings and doings correspond to the claimed thematic roles. The discussion of how to acknowledge Jesus’ divine recognition mark becomes a struggle over the first premise, i.e., the proper understanding of the christological roles. The accusers bring forth a whole set of arguments that are intended to contradict Jesus’ messianic claims. He is a Samaritan (8:48); he is from Galilee and not from Bethlehem (7:41–42); his native country is known, whereas the origin of the real Messiah is unknown (7:27); he has earthly parents and is not from heaven (6:42); he speaks of his departure, whereas the Messiah is supposed to remain

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