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ON

CHRISTIAN NARRATIVES OF LOVE

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Promoter   by

Prof. Dr. Lieven BOEVE   **Phillip DAVIS**

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To Jonathan, Ryan, Jeremy and Matthew Davis

sons of the next generation

Leave me alone with God as much as may be.

As the tide draws the waters close in upon the shore,

Make me an island, set apart,

alone with you, God, holy to you.

Then with the turning of the tide

prepare me to carry your presence to the busy world beyond,

the world that rushes in on me

till the waters come again and fold me back to you.

prayer of St. Aidan of Lindisfarne

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PREFACE

Throughout history theology has engaged in a dance between revelation and culture. Theology attempts to explain the faith to succeeding generations in terms which are easily understood by particular people in specific places and times. As the philosophical framework shifts, what was once easily understandable or readily embraced becomes less plausible. A need arises, therefore, to express Christian faith in ways that make sense to people living in the current generation. This thesis attempts to rethink the Christian narrative within a postmodern philosophical context. The goal is to faithfully pass on the "faith once received" to our current postmodern culture. As a theologian, I write out of a particular theological tradition: namely, one inspired by John Wesley. But I attempt to speak to a larger theological world as well. Whether or not I succeed, the reader must decide.

The "event of grace" surprised me repeatedly during this research. Again and again unexpected events happened which allowed this project to continue. First among these is making acquaintance with the promoter of my research. Thanks are especially due to Prof. Lieven Boeve, dean of the Faculty of Theology at KU Leuven, for suggesting this topic. He offered guidance, encouragement, and coffee! during conversations about Lyotard and theology. He also made financial resources available which allowed this research to continue. Words cannot convey the debt owed; in their place, perhaps silence ...

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Thanks Becky for your love and support. Now that the kids are gone, let's have some fun! And finally, thanks to our four sons – Jonathan, Ryan, Jeremy, and Matthew – who lost time with their dad while he worked on his thesis. This work is dedicated to you.

Leuven, April 25, 2014

INTRODUCTION

This study attempts to present a reflection on love which is both plausible for the current postmodern context and faithful to its understanding within the Christian tradition. Such a reflection is required, since Christianity itself is called into question by a postmodern critique. That critique flows, in part, from misery experienced in the previous century – a time when millions died in wars or death camps, while others lived in police states. Nations came under the sway of ideological narratives promising a better future. But these ended violently: in barbed wire fences and smoking ovens, in kangaroo courts and gulags, in sweat shops and economic collapse. Resistance against modernity's vision(s) of utopia began among philosophers and artists, eventually spreading throughout Western culture. The postmodern critique of "grand narratives" touches the Church as well, since the Christian story of love is seen as one more oppressive narrative. Theology must engage this critique, taking seriously the thoughts and fears expressed therein. Our aim, therefore, is to propose a model for thinking love within a postmodern context, which draws inspiration for the Wesleyan theological tradition.

Lyotard and Theology

In engaging with the postmodern critical consciousness, we have chosen to interact with the philosophical thought of Jean-François Lyotard. He achieved worldwide fame with the publication of his report to the Canadian government in 1979, in which he first used the term "postmodern," introducing it to the broader academic and artistic communities.[1] Lyotard, therefore, can rightfully be considered the "father of postmodernism." He enjoyed a close affiliation with Jacques Derrida as well. In his book of mourning Derrida writes of Lyotard, "Jean-François Lyotard remains one of my closest friends, and I don't use these words lightly. He will have been so, in my heart and in my thought, *forever* – a word I use to translate more than forty years of reading and "discussion."[2] Lyotard's thought profoundly affects the worlds of film, literature, and the arts.[3] However, he is not widely received in theology. A survey of

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[1] See Jean-François Lyotard, *La Condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979). The English translation later appeared as Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Vol. 10 Theory and History of Literature. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

[2] See Jacques Derrida, *The Work of Mourning*. Edited by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 214.

[3] For Lyotard's influence, among others, see François Cusset, *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States*. Translated by Jeff Fort. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008). See also Phillip E. Davis, *"St. Lyotard on the Differend/Difference Love Can Make."* In *The Postmodern Saints of France*, edited by Colby Dickinson. London: T&T Clark, 2013, 124.

journal articles and books shows that Lyotard is primarily referenced as a "name" to legitimize whatever arguments people wish to make about the "postmodern." His wide-ranging and complex oeuvre is largely ignored in favor of his famous three word phrase defining the postmodern as "incredulity toward metanarratives."[4] Once authors cite this phrase, they generally fly off in many directions, without looking back at Lyotard's work. Therefore, the name "Lyotard" is functionalized as an *auctoritas*, which legitimates other's arguments. This does a disservice to Lyotard, for it silences him.

Listening to Lyotard

Lyotard levels a withering critique against Christianity. According to Lyotard, Christianity is the grand narrative *par excellence*, which dominated Western civilization for over fifteen centuries. Christianity mastered all the stories of Rome, since its stake came closest to the stake of the narrative genre itself: namely, to link with the event.[5] Lyotard contends that the Christian narrative is able to link to the occurrence through a rule of love – i.e. to love whatever happens *as if* it were a gift from God. The Christian grand narrative of love immediately receives, incorporates, and functionalizes whatever happens, is phrase, or gestured within its narratival border. That which resists incorporation is viewed as a threat to the narrative itself. Historically, therefore, the other was feared and excluded. S/he was an infection that threatened the health of Christendom. This resulted in an oppressive narrative of *love*, which tortured people and burned their bodies. Those who found themselves outside of orthodox Christianity were persecuted and destroyed. Lyotard writes that those authorized as "interpreters of the Scriptures" held their idiolects in suspicion, which sparked the witchcraft trials, resistance to the prophets, and contention against the Reformation.[6] Precisely for this reason the dissertation begins in chapter one with an account of the execution of Jean of Arc and of witchcraft trials in the Low Countries. Thereby we attempt to show the validity of Lyotard's argument. Closed narratives lead to persecution and destruction. For this reason people in the West are incredulous to Christian messages about love. This is a theological problem. For the Christian story *is* a narrative recounting God's love for people as revealed in history.

In chapter two, we present Lyotard's phrase philosophy as enacted in his book entitled *The Differend*. This title is an extremely difficult work which bears witness to the event through the writing of philosophical notes. *The Differend* is divided up into paragraphs, and

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[4] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, xxiv.
[5] See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend, Phrases in Dispute*. Vol. 46 Theory and History of Literature (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 159 [D232].
[6] See ibid., 160 [D234].

the "author" has attempted to write without a particular style. Sentences and paragraphs are dispersed in what appears to be an unorganized philosophical notebook. In fact, however, an argument underlies the book, relating to his "phrase mechanics." We attempt to present that argument to the reader according to the discourse genre of description – to make Lyotard's program *clear*. In this way, a serious attempt is made to listen to Lyotard. However, the writing style betrays Lyotard's project as will become clear to the reader. But this style is deliberately chosen in order to describe (and better perceive) what Lyotard is "saying."

Lyotard and Love

Love lies at the heart of Lyotard's critique of Christianity. Therefore, Lyotard's view of love is critical for any theological reception of his critique. What does Lyotard mean by "love?" How does Lyotard think "love?" In chapter three, we attempt an analysis of love as Lyotard conceives it. This is a difficult task, for Lyotard does not often mention love. References to love are thinly scattered throughout his oeuvre. As a result, one must read widely in order to pull together a picture of Lyotard's conception of love. In chapter three we lay out the fruits of such a reading; what we glean is a subtle view of love, which ranges from love as representation to love as presentation. There we argue that Lyotard prefers love as presentation, and the reasons therefore are discussed. Once we have seriously considered Lyotard's phrase pragmatics and gleaned an understanding of his view of love, we turn to a theological appropriation of his work. To do this, we turn to Lieven Boeve's work and his concept of the "open narrative."

Boeve and the "Open Narrative"

Although theologians have largely panned Lyotard's work, Boeve constructively receives his critique. This Flemish theologian engages with Lyotard from a fundamental theological perspective. We attempt, therefore, a reading of Boeve's theological writings, for Boeve helps theology to fruitfully engage with Lyotard's withering critique – and that for theology's own benefit.

After a deep reading of Lyotard, Boeve acknowledges the criticism he levels. Boeve avoids a too easy "knee jerk reaction" against outside criticism in order to "defend the faith." Rather, Boeve recognizes the validity of Lyotard's claim; too often the Christian narrative functions as a totalizing master narrative. But Boeve identifies such as a degenerated Christian narrative. Whenever phrases within a Christian narrative begin to link automatically according to a rule, the narrative warps into a grand narrative. Narratives too easily fall to this temptation. For narratives link every phrase and event according to a chronological scheme,

whose end is to come to "the good end." Thus, Lyotard's phrase philosophy alerts theology to a tendency narratives share (including the Christian narrative): specifically, of degenerating into an oppressive master narrative. Lyotard, therefore, raises the critical consciousness of Christianity *ex negativo*. He points out the inherent dangers whenever the Christian narrative hardens itself against the other – precisely through a rule of love. Lyotard also challenges theology to strive after finding a way to bear witness to the event – while knowing that any eventual expression must necessarily betray the event.

Boeve recognizes Lyotard's philosophical project as an attempt to remain open to radical alterity, while bearing witness to its otherness. Lyotard, as a philosopher, seeks to reply to the request to phrase the inexpressible – a request experienced as a feeling that one needs to "find the right words." Such struggle testifies to one's attempt to express radical alterity, without reducing the other to another instance in one's own narrative. Therefore, Boeve identifies Lyotard's project as an instance of an "open narrative." According to Boeve, an open narrative is a story that attempts to express the inexpressible, i.e. to bear witness to the event. Lyotard mentions another discourse which strives to remain open to alterity: i.e. Jewish discourse. Boeve therefore asks if there are other discourses which strive to remain open to radical alterity. He answers: the Christian narrative is naturally an open narrative.

Therefore, in chapter four we consider Boeve's model of the "open narrative. Boeve presents the Christian story as a particular, contingent story, which bears witness to a God that somehow reveals Godself through this particular story. As an open narrative, the Christian narrative refuses to take the outside observer position or to universalize its phrase instances, for either move makes a cognitive claim and heads in the direction of hegemony. Rather than defining the truth, as the 'truth content' of our narrative, Christians are called on to bear witness to the truth that transcends our particular narrative. We are called to live *in* the truth in this current context. Naturally theologians use words and phrases as they witness to the truth, but our story can never encompass the One who transcends our (Christian) narrative and interrupts it. For when the Christian narrative threatens to close and exclude the other, God moves to break open its borders once again.

Theologians are spurred towards performing an internal critique by challenges from the critical consciousness coming from outside the borders of the Christian narrative. Such interruptions to our narrative sound a call for the need to recontextualize the faith. Theology must faithfully express the tradition, once again, in plausible terms and categories suitable for today's people. Boeve offers a model for (re)thinking the Christian narrative in the current postmodern context. His category of "interruption" helps theologians reflect on the way that God stops the automatic linking of phrases, which occurs in any hegemonic master narrative. Secondly, Boeve's model provides a framework for evaluating the relative openness or closedness of the narratives we tell about the Christian faith. And, thirdly, he rightly contends

that Jesus' phrases are witnesses *par excellence* to God's love: sentences inviting sinners to participate in a kingdom of love. For God is love. Thus, Boeve argues that the Christian narrative of love naturally functions as an "open narrative of love."

However, Boeve does not offer a border for his "open narrative." How open can a narrative be before it ceases to be a story? A love that is radically open to the other can be extremely gracious; it can also be rapacious. Lyotard, after all, warns against a love that represents the beloved in order to consume the other. Boeve offers no way to protect the other's alterity from a predatory love. We will argue, therefore, that love needs limits. For resources we will later turn to the Wesleyan concept of "holy love." But we benefit greatly from Boeve's reflections, for he offers resources for (re)thinking love in the current postmodern context.

Theological Reflections on Love

Lyotard critiques Christianity as a hegemonic master narrative ruled over by its idea of love. Boeve agrees with Lyotard that the Christian narrative is a story about love and its God of love. However, in contradistinction to Lyotard, Boeve maintains that the Christian narrative is in fact an open narrative of love. Thus, in the conversation between philosophy and theology, much turns on one's understanding of love. So in chapter five we turn to recent theological reflections on love, to see what they offer, as well as what they too easily forget. We consider, therefore, the writings of four theologians: Nygren, Moffatt, Morris, and Jeanrond.

Andres Nygren

We first survey Andres Nygren's book *Agape and Eros*. This work is arguably the most influential treatise on love in the twentieth century. In his book, Nygren makes a claim that motif research can establish the true and original meaning of Christian love. This he identifies as "agape," which is a radically new understanding of love that disrupts ancient forms of love. These older forms he names as "eros" and "nomos," or the Greek and Jewish ideas of love. Nygren tells a story of love where Jesus revealed a new kind of Christian love (*agape*), which confronts selfish human love (*eros*). However, Augustine later polluted Christian love when he blended *agape* and *eros* into a new form of love (*caritas*). According to Nygren's account, Martin Luther restored the original form of Christian love (*agape*) when he revolted against the Catholic Church. Thus, true Christian love is found in the original motif of agape love, which is restored in Lutheran theology. In Nygren's view, human beings can only love in a motivated, selfish manner. This is the exact opposite of his understanding of agape love,

which reveals itself as "spontaneous and unmotivated." For Nygren, no possible way exists for humans to approach God, but God comes down to humanity with the offer of fellowship through *agape*. Human love (*eros*) is, in fact, the exact opposite of God's love (*agape*).

Nygren presents an extremely negative portrait of the human capacity to love. Humans attempt to ascend to God through *eros*, since we love what is attractive. But God loves sinners. We calculate. God spontaneously loves the unattractive. Nygren finds the gulf between divine and human love so great that God must pour *agape* love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5,5). This instrumentalizes the human as a conduit, for human love is portrayed as irretrievably corrupt.

Although Nygren's thought is influential, it presents a Lutheran grand narrative of love. Those who ascribe to Nygren's portrayal of Lutheran love hold a correct opinion; Catholics, on the other hand, have polluted Christian love. Catholics view humans as capable of loving others, but this must be rejected. For Nygren's idea of agape love determines the linking of every phrase in his hegemonic narrative of love. Nygren's modern, enlightenment project of "motif research" claims an objectivity which it does not maintain. Therefore, Nygren's theology suffers the same loss of credibility that other such narratives experience under the postmodern critique of master narratives.

James Moffatt

We turn next to the work of one of Nygren's contemporaries. James Moffatt is best known for his translation of the Bible. Although Moffatt acknowledges interest in Nygren's work, he presents a clear contrast to the latter's view of love. For Moffatt argues for a human ability to love. In fact, he maintains that we are obligated to love. Love is a *duty*. Moffatt, therefore, offers a positive view of human love (contra Nygren). Moffatt makes room for holiness in his reflection on love – sharing this only with Leon Morris, who will do so only tangentially. Jesus Christ's deeds reveal God's love and purpose for humanity, according to Moffatt. People are to respond to God's love through obedience. As a Protestant theologian, Moffatt argues that original sin does not destroy an individual's ability to love, in contrast to Nygren. Human individuals are free to love themselves, their neighbors, and God. But, in response to God's love displayed on the Cross, human love must be perfected through moral diligence. Like Nygren, Moffatt begins and ends his theologizing with redemption, while making room for human love and arguing for the perfecting of human love in holiness.

Leon Morris

Since theology uses words and phrases to bear witness to the love revealed in Scripture, we turn next to Leon Morris' book *Testaments of Love: A Study of Love in the Bible*. This work – published in the latter half of the twentieth century – offers us a study of prominent words which describe love in both the New and Old Testaments. Morris is an exegete known for his solid, sound interpretation of Scripture. The dearth of writing on love, in the most prominent theologies of either testament offered in the twentieth century, confounds Morris. He makes a plea, therefore, for love as *central* to the Bible's message. Scripture proclaims the good news that God loves measly sinners. This is expressed in the declaration of God's everlasting love for Israel in the Old Testament, as well as in the Cross of Christ in the New Testament. Like Moffatt, Morris begins theologizing from redemption. Morris assumes that people can love – since individuals love themselves –, but the Bible calls on believers to perfect their faith and thereby to reflect God (1 Jn 2,5). He insists on the centrality of love in revelation. Morris' work also avoids reducing biblical expressions of love to simply a couple of ideas (contra Nygren), since his word study gives expression to the pluriform and complex ideas of love found in the Bible.

Werner Jeanrond

The last theologian considered in chapter five is the Catholic scholar Werner Jeanrond. He offers theology a recent reflection on love from within our current contemporary context. Jeanrond attempts to think love's potential as a multifaceted, mysterious phenomenon. In contrast to Nygren, Jeanrond does not radically divide human and divine love. Rather, Jeanrond thinks of love as a unity, originating in God, and given as a gift to humanity through Creation. He attempts to understand love as a dynamic phenomenon learned and practiced in particular "institutions of love" (e.g. family, school, community, etc.). Jeanrond emphasizes love as *praxis* rather than as an idea, and he seeks to open up as many potential avenues for love as possible. Thus, Jeanrond strongly rejects a theological tradition originating from Augustine, flowing through Luther, and finding ultimate expression in Nygren: namely, a radical separation between a good divine love (*agape*) and a sinful human love (*eros*). In its place Jeanrond emphasizes the potential of human love and calls people towards participation in God's "project of love." He maintains that theology should begin reflecting on love from creation rather than from redemption, as Nygren and many Protestants do. However, as we will see, Jeanrond does not speak about what love will not do. He speaks of the relation between love and holiness in primarily negative terms, while admitting that his is not a moral theology. Here love remains open – perhaps too open.

Like two of the other theologians mentioned above (i.e. Nygren and Morris), holiness is all but forgotten. Moffatt, on the other hand, speaks of Christian love in specifically moral

terms. For Moffatt, love should grow into perfection, requiring the exercise of moral rectitude. Although holiness is largely ignored in theological reflections on love, we believe that theology should relate biblical expressions of God's love and holiness together. To do so, we then turn to John Wesley's theology of holy love.

John Wesley and a Radical Holy Love

In chapter six, we look at John Wesley's theology of Christian perfection. Wesley was a highly effective Anglican priest who ignited and led the Methodist movement, which swept across England in the eighteenth century. He offers theology a way of closely relating love and holiness. For Wesley conceives of holiness as an expression of God's character, which God wants to restore in human persons. By relating these two divine characteristics (i.e. love and holiness), Wesley helps theology conceive of a border for an open narrative of love.

Wesley argues for sanctification as the means by which God restores the *imago Dei* in individuals who respond to God's prevenient grace. As Wesley understands it, holiness issues in a love for God, neighbor, and self. This is part of God's healing of the individual as Randy Maddox argues. The end of God's work in the individual's life is the restoration of love – a full, complete, and perfect (or mature) love. One who is sanctified thus reflects the character of God, fulfilling Jesus' exhortation to "be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mat 5,48).

Wesley's understanding of love incorporates both desire and holiness, without seeing these as antagonistic to each other. His theology, therefore, provides inspiration for a model of a Christian open narrative of love wherein love (1) radically seeks the o/Other, while (2) radically rejecting sin (as that which harms or destroys the beloved). Wesley's concept of "prevenient grace" functions within such a model as enabling the individual to respond to God's offer of love, while holding him or her responsible for doing so. Our model presents God's love as simultaneously open to sinners but closed to sin. A Christian narrative of love is seen, therefore, as both radically open and closed at the same time. We contend that the border to a Christian narrative of love is porous, delineated by God's holy character (i.e. by holiness). This protects God's character and the human person's irreducible particularity, at the same time.

Method

In the preparation of this thesis, I chose to engage in a close reading of primary texts. The work is intended to investigate the relation of divine love to the model of the "open narrative" proposed by Boeve. This requires a clear understanding of both authors' texts,

since Boeve's model answers to Lyotard's critique. So I started with the philosopher, before moving on to the theologian. My contribution is birthed out of the interaction between these two.

I consulted numerous secondary journal articles regarding Lyotard's oeuvre. These articles are listed in the bibliography. As noted above, Lyotard functions simply as an *auctoritas* in many of these articles. However, two authors stand out from the crowd. Geoffrey Bennington and Bill Readings have both written helpful introductions to Lyotard's thought. Bennington deserves special interest, since he is a primary translator of Lyotard's works into English. His writings bear witness to the many conversations and correspondences shared with Lyotard. Both Bennington's and Reading's writings were helpful in generally introducing key ideas during the early stages of my research.

In this thesis, I present an archaeology of Lyotard's conception(s) of love. Very little has been written on this subject.[7] Secondary sources were practically nonexistent, so I read widely, throughout Lyotard's oeuvre, looking for any mention of love. The fruits of that investigation are offered in chapter three. This archaeology is especially important for theology, since Lyotard identifies Christianity as a grand narrative *par excellence* based on the rule of love.

Similarly, very little has been written on Boeve's work. Aside from a small number of book reviews, little is published on his theological project. Boeve writes prodigiously, so one must consider many journal articles, as well as a growing number of books. But, in this case, work with primary sources was necessary owing to the dearth of materials published on this theologian. Secondary sources were not available.

A weakness in this thesis is the lack of secondary sources in the fifth chapter related to the four theologians summarized there. In a future iteration of this thesis, as a monograph, I hope to correct this deficiency. In addition, primarily sources were consulted, along with secondary sources, in the final chapter on John Wesley's theology. However, the secondary sources could be strengthened in this section of the dissertation as well.

Place of This Study in Wesleyan Theological Discussion

Attempts have been made within Wesleyan scholarship to engage with postmodern thinking. Some theologians see the current postmodern context as a threat, while others perceive possibilities for theological reflection.

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[7] Recently a very perceptive contribution has been made regarding Lyotard's view of Eros. See Rachel Jones, "Dissymmetrical Horizons of Being Between," in *Rereading Jean-François Lyotard: Essays on His Later Works*, edited by Heidi Bickis and Rob Shields. Farnham, GB: Ashgate, 2013, 70-71.

Don Thorsen and Ron Creaseman emphasize conflict between faith and culture in their reflections. Thorsen views postmodern culture as an impediment to "making people more like Jesus Christ."[8] According to Thorsen, postmodern culture constitutes a philosophical and theological threat, since truth claims are problematized and communicated through particular, local stories. Rejection of metanarratives creates theological problems for one who claims that Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life." Thorsen suggests that Wesleyan and Holiness theology needs constant reforming, and he touts The Holiness Manifesto produced by The Wesleyan Holiness Study Project (2004-2007) as an attempt to formulate such a culturally relevant theological expression.[9] But Thorsen does not provide many specifics towards such a reflection other than an emphasis on Wesley's view of salvation as "a redemptive or therapeutic healing of people."[10] Similarly, Creaseman believes theologians will encounter "points of irreconcilable difference" with postmodernism, and he describes an "irreducible" conflict erupting over "the postmodern rejection of transcendence."[11] Although Creaseman reads Lyotard, he only considers the latter's *The Postmodern Condition*. Thus, the picture Creaseman presents is limited and incomplete. As a result, he too easily accepts Steven Connor's critique[12] that Lyotard's "war on totality" is itself a totalizing narrative.[13] Lyotard's argument, therefore, is to be resisted using Wesley's tactics of logic (in the areas of pragmatics and logical consistency), by pointing to a purported logical inconsistency (i.e. that Lyotard's philosophy is itself a hegemonic narrative). Creaseman demonstrates an inadequate understanding of Lyotard's critique, which he uses to argue that Christian faith "must resist the postmodern insistence on the end of all transcendence."[14]

Other Wesleyan theologians take a more positive view of the current postmodern context. These include Chad Short, Douglas Meeks, and Larry Shelton. Short expresses a longing for a more effective Wesleyan theological communication within the postmodern context. He believes this is possible if Wesleyans serve their communities as a holy expression of "love for God and humankind, [which] was the source of true happiness for Wesley."[15] Short cautions that biblically based "negative" incentives are likely to fail with postmoderns, since they will perceive such claims as hegemonic.[16] Douglas Meeks believes

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[8] Donald Thorsen, "Holiness in Postmodern Culture," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 43, no. 2 (2008): 123.

[9] Ibid., 133-134.

[10] Ibid., 132.

[11] Ron Creaseman, "The Loss of Metanarrative: Resources for Formulating a Wesleyan Response," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35, no. 1 (2000): 165.

[12] See ibid., 176. There he refers to Stephen Connor, *Postmodern Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* (London: Blackwell, 1997), 31.

[13] To make such an argument is to completely miss Lyotard's point. See the discussion below in 4.10.

[14] See Creaseman, "The Loss of Metanarrative," 181.

[15] Chad Short, "Wesleyan Theology and the Postmodern Quest for Meaning and Identity," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 39, no. 2 (2004): 242.

[16] Ibid., 241.

theologians should understand the language postmodern children speak. He asks, therefore, if there can be "a postmodern Wesleyan theology?"[17] Meeks mentions postmodern resistance against hegemonic master narratives, and he appeals to Wesleyan theologians to engage "questions of power." Here he cites critiques leveled by Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Indeed, Meeks thinks that engagement with postmodern thought can help Wesleyan theology regain its unique identity in the current cultural context. Contra Derrida, however, Meeks argues that gifts must be returnable. We must be able to return our love for God's gift of sacrifice, else God becomes a "strong man" subjugating us under an order of modern economics.[18] Meeks says that grace enables us "*to be able* to give."[19] We give our lives, therefore, in response to God's offering of the Son. Finally, Larry Shelton sees opportunity in a tumultuous western culture. Perhaps, he thinks, society will be able to hear God once again. Before this can happen Wesleyan theology must "reflect on new cultural landscapes as the context for revisioning new directions."[20] This includes a "contextualization" of the Christian message for the postmodern context. Hereto, Shelton engages with Lyotard; however, once again, this is limited to the latter's *The Postmodern Condition*. His understanding of Lyotard suffers from a similar anemia found, for example, in Connor's reflection. As a result, Lyotard's views are reduced to "a resistance to all metanarratives, or overarching paradigms of truth."[21] Shelton acknowledges that postmoderns often identify Christianity as one of "the most oppressive forms of modernist power structures," but he believes the Wesleyan tradition offers resources for constructing relevant models for the current postmodern context.[22] Shelton calls, therefore, for a contextualization of the Christian message that remains in tension to the culture, without falling into the trap of assimilation.[23]

This study takes up the call for a (re)contextualization of the Christian witness in plausible terms for the postmodern context. It draws inspiration from the Wesleyan tradition, while engaging in a deep reading of Lyotard's works, thereby allowing the philosopher to interrupt the Wesleyan Christian narrative. Of course, the word "interruption" also bears witness to the debt this work owes to Boeve's theological project and his insights into "open narratives." We hope this study offers a unique contribution to Wesleyan theological reflection within the current postmodern context, leading perhaps towards a "postmodern Wesleyan theology."

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[17] M. Douglas Meeks, "Wesleyan Theology in a Postmodern Era: The Spirit of Life in an Age of the Nihil," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35, no. 1 (2000): 22.
[18] Ibid., 34.
[19] Ibid., 37.
[20] Larry R. Shelton, "A Wesleyan/Holiness Agenda for the Twenty-First Century," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33, no 2. (1998): 68.
[21] Ibid., 75.
[22] Ibid., 79.
[23] Ibid., 97.

1. OPPRESSIVE NARRATIVES

1.0 TRAPPED WITHIN AN OPPRESSIVE NARRATIVE

1.1 JOAN OF ARC

On the morning of Wednesday May 30, 1431, a nineteen year old girl was bound to a stake. This young girl, the Maid from Domrémy, who called herself *La Pucelle de Dieu*, considered a threat to the Church, had to be eliminated. To the Church she was an obstinate upstart. To the English she was a military threat. Two destructive emotions swirled around the burning stake that morning: English hatred for a feared military foe; and a love for Christendom which required the destruction of this infamous witch. Both groups had reasons for eliminating the Maid. The Church condemned Joan of Arc for heresy, witchcraft, and disobedience to the Church Militant. She was handed over to the English secular authorities, who neglected to conduct the usual secular trial. The English rightly saw her as their sworn enemy. After all, she had successfully galvanized a beleaguered French army, which repeatedly lost battles to the English for decades before the Maid appeared. Joan's sudden appearance led to a number of decisive French victories, including the liberation of Orléans. Her work culminated in the coronation of Charles VII as King of France in the cathedral at Rheims – the traditional site for crowning French kings.

Joan's stunning victories were attributed to witchcraft. How else could one explain her inspirational effect on French troops or her astonishing victory at Orléans?[24] *La Pucelle* claimed voices had guided her – voices she had not disobeyed until Rheims. However, she would be undone by these voices and their command that she wear men's clothing. Joan claimed that her voices said she would be captured, as happened at Compiègne on May 23, 1430, at the hand of the Burgundians.[25] She was held by Johan of Luxemburg and later delivered over to Bishop Pierre Cauchon of Beauvais. The bishop served as president of the court that would decide her case.

Cauchon worked tirelessly to seal Joan's fate. He realized that Joan's convictions regarding clothing would condemn her. It was neither a crime nor a sin for Joan to wear

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[24] John Holland Smith writes concerning the various opinions Joan induced, "It was universally recognized that the victory of Orléans belonged to Joan and whatever inspired her, whether it was the devil, as the English said, or God as the French had come to believe and she maintained. It was the victory of Orléans that proved to the English high command that Joan was a witch: they could find no other way of explaining the effect she had on soldiers who until that week had proved steady and reliable. For that victory, when they caught her, they burned her, as Glasdale's soldiers had threatened they would." John Holland Smith, *Joan of Arc* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 68.

[25] For Joan's account of the arrest and a description by a Burgundian chronicler see ibid., 98-101. A chronology of Joan of Arc's life can be found on pp. 217-222 of the same book.

men's clothing, especially since she could not go into battle without a helmet or body armor, or bivouac with male soldiers in a dress. However, Joan claimed her voices had commanded her to wear men's clothing; for Joan it was a matter of conscience. Cauchon used this conviction to break Joan by placing her in a dilemma. Either she would submit to the Church's demands (and entreaties) that she wear women's clothes, or she would prove her disobedience by willfully continuing to wear men's clothing. How she chose to clothe her body would prove her obedience or disobedience to the Church.

> Any confession she might make, or any act of faith she might perform, could only be further proof of her general wickedness because it would obviously be insincere. Her reasons for wearing male clothing therefore did not matter: what mattered was that while she wore it, she had not submitted to the church...[26]

Cauchon used Joan's voices against her. No one could see the visions she said she saw. No one could hear the voices she said she heard. But everyone could see the clothes she wore. Thus Joan faced a dilemma: would she obey her voices or the Church?

Joan's dilemma revolved around the legitimacy of the claims made on her. The Maid believed that her voices spoke from heaven and for God. She would obey God. However, the ecclesiastics claimed that such appeals were erroneous, since Christ had given the keys of the Kingdom to Peter and to his successors. What *they* bound on earth would be bound in heaven. The question in their eyes was whether Joan would submit in obedience to the Church Militant – the duty of every faithful Christian.[27] If God's clergy did not believe Joan's voices were from God, how did Joan know what God wants?[28] The more Joan resisted Cauchon's demands, and the longer she persisted in wearing men's clothing, the guiltier she looked. Her voices couldn't be heard, but her disobedience to the bishop's demands *could* be verified. If Joan refused to obey the Church Militant and its leaders, if she continued to wear men's clothing, she would be excommunicated. As an apostate, Joan would face legal and ecclesiastical sanctions in this world, and if she died in that state she would descend into hell. This was a heart-wrenching dilemma, but the Maid could not ignore the voices from heaven.

On Tuesday, March 27th, Joan was interviewed by the court. The judges voiced concern about her soul and said they were "benevolent and pitying, wishing and determined to proceed in this matter with gentleness and grace." They wanted to "bring her back to the

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[26] Ibid., 126.
[27] Ibid., 149.
[28] Ibid., 142.

way of faith and salvation."[29] Then the *libellus* was read to Joan, which contained sixty-seven articles against her. The first charge in the list was that of disobedience. Joan replied,

> "I know very well that our holy father, the pope of Rome and the bishops and other churchmen are there to preserve and defend the Christian faith and punish those who fall from it. But as for me and what I do, I will not submit to them, except to the church in heaven – that is to God and the virgin Mary and the saints in paradise. And I firmly believe that I have not erred in faith…"[30]

On Saturday, March 31st, the judges visited Joan in prison and told her she must submit. She said that she would submit in everything except if they asked "something impossible." The "something impossible" would be to repudiate her visions and revelations or to reveal something which God had not given her permission to do. Although the prelates have authority, she said, "Our Lord is to be served first."[31] On Wednesday, May 2nd, Joan was publicly admonished by Jean de Châtillon through a public reading of the charges against her. She denied the charges, refused to submit to the Church's judgment, and said, "I know that the church militant cannot err or fail, but as far as my words and deeds are concerned, I refer them all to God who made me do what I have done."[32] Still, the threat of excommunication and the fires of hell hung over Joan, and the pressure mounted. Her appeal to conscience was seen as a threat to the Catholic Church. Unless she submitted to the bishop's demands she would be placing herself above the Church. In so doing, Joan allied herself with other people who threatened Catholic unity, such as John Wycliffe and John Hus. Châtillon asked Joan if she did not know that her heresy separated her from the Church and that it was a crime punishable by burning. She answered, "I cannot tell you any different. And if I go to the fire for telling you all I have, I cannot do any different."[33] At this point in her trial, Joan was in real danger of being tortured. However, later at Bishop Cauchon's house, those in charge of the trial determined that a confession elicited by torture would not be necessary. The case against Joan was already clear enough.

On Saturday, May 19th, a letter of condemnation from the University of Paris was read out against Joan. The theologians and lawyers in Paris had determined that she was a heretic, whose obstinacy threatened the "one, holy, Catholic church." Preparations were made for her execution at the cemetery of St-Ouen, and the great public excommunication ceremony was held on Thursday, May 24th. A sermon was preached, the formal excommunication was read,

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[29] Ibid., 152.
[30] Ibid., 152-153.
[31] Ibid., 153-154.
[32] Ibid., 155.
[33] Ibid., 155-156.

and Joan finally broke; she submitted immediately before the sentence could be announced.[34] She would abide by the Pope's decision. However, the judges ignored her papal appeal. So Joan relented even further. She would hold to "all that the judges of the church wanted her to say and to maintain, and to obey their every command and desire."[35] Joan, who was illiterate, signed a statement of renunciation with an "X." She was then returned to her prison cell. That evening the vicar to the inquisitor visited Joan along with several other judges. He noted

> "how gracious the church had been to her, and that she ought to acquiesce quietly in the sentence and obey the church, leaving aside her revelations and madnesses', warning that 'if she were ever to go back to her follies the church would never receive her again, and urging her to accept female dress'."[36]

Joan put on women's penitential clothing, and she let down her hair. But on Trinity Sunday, May 27th, or the next day, Joan dressed once again in male clothing. On Monday, May 28th, the judges visited the prison and saw Joan attired like a man. The clothing symbolized her rebellion against Bishop Cauchon's demands and her allegiance, once more, to her voices. The voices had warned her that she was in danger of the fires of hell, since she had made the public renunciation to save herself from the stake. Joan listened to these voices, and she condemned herself. In the judge's eyes, Joan was a relapsed heretic. She had chosen to go back to her voices and to leave the Church. She was a threat to the unity and authority of the Church. "She was a living symbol," that represented "the shattering of Christendom."[37] Therefore, the court voted for her execution.

> "In deciding that she was a relapsed heretic this latest court was admitting that the church had failed with her and the devil had won: there was nothing for it but to admit the defeat and rid the world of the danger of contamination by her."[38]

Joan was handed over to the English for execution. They worked all night preparing the stake and constructing a low stone barrier. The next morning Joan of Arc was burned at the stake for her alleged crimes, as an infamous witch, on Wednesday, May 30, 1431.[39]

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[34] Ibid., 164.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., 165-166.
[37] Ibid., 156.
[38] Ibid., 171.
[39] An inquiry was made into the trial of Joan of Arc with a view towards the revocation and annulment of the sentence. The inquiry began on November 7, 1455 and lasted eight months. Bishop Cauchon and his handling of the trial were placed under scrutiny. However, he could not testify in his defense since he had died in 1442. The inquiry found that Joan's trial had been corruptly handled and that she was wrongfully condemned. On July 7, 1456, Joan was rehabilitated and her excommunication was

1.2 WITCH TRIALS IN THE LOW COUNTRIES

Many women[40] were accused of witchcraft and burned at the stake within the Low Countries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[41] They were trapped inside a nightmare of accusations, torture, and the stake. In a society deeply influenced by religious faith and superstition, any suspicious behavior had to be suppressed. Religious authorities repressed and punished "witches," believing they were fighting against the devil himself. Secular officials tried and burned those accused of witchcraft thinking they were punishing those who threatened social harmony.[42] Most of the women accused of witchcraft were sent to the stake. They were caught up in a process designed to extract confessions at any cost, in order to remove the contamination of evil from Christendom. The instrument their interrogators used was the *Malleus Maleficarum* or the *Witches Hammer*.[43]

The *Witches Hammer* was a manual for witch hunters, which described how to identify, prosecute, and execute witches. It starts with an argument that it is heresy *not* to believe in the existence of witches.[44] Since witches do exist, according to this manual, it is every Christian's duty to expose and exterminate them. A systematic description of witchcraft follows, which enabled witch hunters to root this (perceived) evil out of society. In the introduction to the French translation of the *Witches Hammer*, Amand Danet compares the inquisitors to the auto defense mechanism of society, whose task is to maintain order, in a community where the

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[40] Most of those convicted of witchcraft were women; however, some men also were executed as magicians. See, for instance, the cases of Willem de Vrient and others, in Fernand van Hemelryck, *Heksenprocessen in de nederlanden* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1982), 34.

annulled. She was eventually canonized by the Roman Catholic Church in 1920. See ibid., 184-185, 192-193.

[41] Prosecutions of "witches" began in Leuven in 1600, with the majority of such proceedings occurring between 1600 and 1612. In Brussels the highpoint came between 1592 and 1601, while prosecutions were carried out in Tienen in 1552-1554 and in 1560-1564. See ibid., 55.

[42] Ibid., 13-14.

[43] The *Witches Hammer* was written by Hendrik Institoris, who was born around 1430 in Alsace, and who was chosen as prior of the local Dominican cloister in 1481. However, the *Witches Hammer* was attributed to Jacob Sprenger, who was born in Rheinfelden in Switzerland in 1436, and who became dean of the theological faculty of Cologne in 1478. Sprenger began working with the inquisitor over the Rhine, Gerard von Elten, around 1479. Although Sprenger was the true author of the *Witches Hammer*, Institoris was listed as the first author, since his high position within the Church would increase the document's authority. See ibid., 28-29.

[44] Question 1 of the first part of the *Malleus Maleficarum* begins with the following question: "Is it so much part of orthodox Catholic [doctrine] to maintain that workers of harmful magic do exist that stubbornly maintaining the opposite is in every respect and in all circumstances heretical?" Of course, this paints the reader into a corner. Either s/he admits to the existence of witches, or s/he is a heretic, outside of the Church's protection and grace. See Henricus Institoris and Jakob Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, trans., Peter George Maxwell-Stuart (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 41.

Church has a position of power.[45] Any means possible could be used, since witch hunters saw themselves engaged in a life and death struggle with the devil himself.[46]

People were extremely superstitious, and any unexplained event could lead to an accusation of witchcraft. Unexplained events could incite finger pointing: *e.g.*, if the children became sick or the cattle fell ill or died in the field, after a woman visited her neighbor's home. Some women were reputed to be witches, and their neighbors scrutinized their lives.[47] Any accusation of witchcraft inflamed the paranoia about witches. Following such incidents, people watched their neighbors more closely, and the number of complaints increased dramatically. As van Hemelryck notes, the public's belief in witches was strongly influenced by witch trials. In people's minds, the very fact of a trial demonstrated the existence of witches, while simultaneously provoking new complaints against other women.[48] The number of complaints and condemnations tended to increase until the paranoia peaked in any particular area.[49] And the paranoia spread like wild fire. It produced a self-reinforcing cycle of superstition, accusation, condemnation, confirmation, and further diligence against witches.

Once a woman was accused and taken into custody, a process began which was designed to extract her confession of guilt. Inquisitors believed they must remain alert throughout the entire process. After all, the devil was extremely cunning. Often promises of leniency were made, at the beginning of the trial, which the prosecutor never intended to keep. His goal was to punish her severely, at the end of the trial, by burning her at the stake. Such deceitfulness was allowed by the *Witches Hammer*, as a way of combating the devil's schemes. The inquisitor (who also served as witch hunter, prosecutor, and judge) must always be on his guard, since he believed the devil could intervene at any moment "to prove the witch's innocence and to save her from the court's hands."[50] Indeed, even the defendant's words, tears, pleas, and screams must be carefully considered, since they could lead the judge astray. At any moment the devil could deceive the judge and a witch could escape justice.

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[45] van Hemelryck, *Heksenprocessen*, 29.

[46] Fernand van Hemelryck writes concerning this manner of thinking, "The authors' mentality was influenced by their inability to live with uncertainties. The *Witches Hammer* witnesses to an oppressive fear of the loss of illusions around a peaceful Christian society, ravaged by disasters, wars, famines, and epidemics. The eradication of evil, in this case witches, offered the possibility of taking away one's own uncertainty. The inquisitor's and witch hunter's dream was to maintain a firm and stable society under the Church's protection." See ibid., 29-30 (my translation).

[47] "They were observed everywhere more than others, since they were the incarnation of evil. In people's eyes they ruled over dark forces. Where they appeared, there was danger." Ibid., 63 (my translation).

[48] Ibid., 57.

[49] See ibid. Van Hemelryck provides a chart showing the number of witch trials in Wallonia and in Flemish Brabant from 1540 to 1629. See ibid, 216.

[50] Ibid., 65-66 (my translation).

Witch trials were not considered as normal trials.[51] A preliminary investigation was made, in which the suspect was interviewed and witnesses were questioned. If the judge remained unconvinced of the suspect's innocence, a trial commenced – the expected outcome being the "witch's" confession and her execution at the stake. Witnesses were questioned in secret in the presence of the accused. Due to the secret nature of the hearing, witnesses needed fear no reprisals from the accused. Their perceptions of the accused were given considerable weight, as were their observations of her behavior. In this way, hearsay entered into the trial as fact. The accused did not have the right of cross examination, nor could she question her judge. The judge could condemn the accused based upon information to which only he had access. Injustice was bound to arise in such a system. The entire process stripped the defendant of her ability to defend herself, and she became simply a passive object at the trial.[52] Her case was prejudiced from the beginning by the commonly held superstitions and the demonology which the elites generally held. But what really counted in the trial was the confession.

Any means could be used to force a confession. Torture arrived in the Low Countries in the thirteenth century from Italy, and all of the hideous implements of torture were at the judge's disposal (*e.g.* Spanish boots, the rack, fire, water, etc.). One commonly used form of torture was the fire test. The accused, being wholly or partially disrobed, was placed as near to a fire as possible. She was left there until she could no longer take it. Anne Scoorx from Zele was tortured in this manner in Dendermonde in 1603. She was exposed to the fire for two days and three nights. After suffering in this manner, Anne died in prison, while preparations were being made for a new means of torturing her.[53] In 1605 in Overbeek, Beatrijs van Overbeek was stripped and tied to the rack. Linen drenched in oil was stuffed in her nose, ears, and so on, and the executioner threatened to light them on fire unless she confessed – which she immediately did. However, the judges were not satisfied, so burning coals were placed under her feet and underarms. She begged for mercy, but the judges still weren't convinced she had given a full confession. Beatrijs was then placed in Spanish boots to torture her lower legs, until new details were elicited and the judges were satisfied.[54]

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[51] This differentiation between witch trials and other trials is seen in the statement from Servaes Haegen, a lawyer from Limburg. In 1580 Haegen wrote: "Witchcraft is a particularly difficult case for a judge, since, although one may not ask a criminal about his accomplice nor believe him when he accuses another person of participating in a crime, this does not apply to magicians or to witches. Whoever they accuse may be arrested and tortured. Witchcraft is a difficult case, because one hardly ever has any proof other than the confession itself. Since witchcraft can occur secretly and be performed by the cunning devil, one rightly asks magicians and witches about their accomplices. It is also a dangerous affair. So many people, in the desperate condition of their soul, seek to bring ruin upon another. God grant that I will not have to pass judgment upon such cases." Ibid., 84 (my translation).

[52] Ibid., 67.

[53] Ibid., 70.

[54] Ibid., 69-70.

Judges considered torture the most reliable way to obtain a confession, and those tortured often died as a result. Margareta Ysermans was tortured for three days and nights in the Mechelen prison after which she died.[55] Indeed, if the poor soul died while on the rack, it was not thought coincidental. Certainly the wily devil had intervened. If she cried while she was tortured, her tears could be a snare for the judge from the devil himself. If she could not feel anything while lying on the rack, it was the devil that made her insensitive to pain. If she obstinately denied being a witch, the devil had made a "pact of silence" with her. If she suddenly began to loudly lament her deplorable situation, it was proof that the devil had abandoned her at that very moment.[56] No matter what the accused said or did she must not be trusted, since the inquisitor believed that he was involved in a personal battle with the devil. He must remain watchful lest the evil one should trap him through his cunning tricks.

Since witch trials were considered as struggles against the devil himself, judges could use any possible deception to defeat their evil foe. They were allowed to lie to their captives, according to the *Witches Hammer*. Judges could promise to release the accused if only she would confess her crimes, even though their only intention was to burn her at the stake. The most reprehensible methods were permitted in order to solicit confessions. This was a fight against the devil, after all.

The accused was always wrong. If she had a poor reputation, that was an indication that the charges were true. If she had a good reputation and came from a respected family, this was *also* an indication of her guilt, for witches would conceal their evil deeds behind an irreproachable name. The lot of one accused was miserable and nearly inescapable.[57]

The high point of the witch trial came when the witch was burned at the stake. Sometimes the prisoner was conveyed to the place of execution by cart. She was accompanied by representatives from the higher courts, aldermen, armed servants, militia, and citizens. The verdict was read aloud to convince the public of her crimes. Then the priest entreated the convicted witch to show contrition for her sins, to acknowledge her crimes, and to ask for forgiveness from God, the ruler, and the court. Therefore, executions had a "Christian" end, which guaranteed the condemned's welfare. But it was essential for the public to witness this,

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[55] Ibid., 82.

[56] Ibid., 83.

[57] Although the vast number of women accused were eventually condemned, escape *was* sometimes possible. Not every woman accused of witchcraft was convicted. In 1613 Maria Mondeel was arrested under suspicion of witchcraft by order of the mayor and the alderman of Veurne. However, she was tortured on the rack in prison without following the usual legal processes. On November 5th the Council of Flanders brought her case to the archduke's attention. Maria had not confessed while she was tortured. Nevertheless, she was banned from living in Flanders for life. This placed her in a precarious situation – cut off from any family assistance and devoid of a means of making a living. Maria complained that she was a victim of a trial conducted under malice and slander. An investigation was made in Maldegem – her previous domicile – concerning her reputation, and it was found that she never had had the reputation of being a witch. As a result the ban was lifted by the Secret Council on March 4, 1617. See ibid., 95-96.

for God's triumph over Satan was demonstrated through the "witch's" burning corpse. It also showed the court's determination and the royal authority's ability to strike back quickly and without mercy. The people had to see this. They played an essential role in the public demonstration of worldly wrath and power. They had to experience God's might and the Church's authority through the "witch's" execution. Her contrition and confession exonerated the court and justified all that had happened from arrest through to execution. After the flames consumed the accused, the prominent people retired to a nearby hostelry to enjoy a full meal.[58]

More than thirty thousands copies of the *Witches Hammer* were published, spreading its ideas throughout Europe.[59] Many people suffered disgrace, panic, torture, and eventual death because of the system presented in its pages. We conclude this section with the story of an accused victim who suffered under the cruel logic of the *Witches Hammer*. Like many other women, Marguerite Moustenne, 38 years old, lived under the terror of scrutiny. Her neighbors observed her every move, since it was generally "known" that she was a witch. Marguerite was the very incarnation of evil itself. Under such social pressure her life became so intolerable that she freely gave herself into the sheriff's hands in 's-Gravenbrakel. Surely he would clear her of these terrible accusations. However, the court saw things differently. She was placed on the rack and tortured. Marguerite quickly confessed that she had given herself to the devil, that she had repudiated God and her baptism, that she had visited the Sabbath, and that she had killed people and animals using magical powders.[60] She was held in custody for forty days. On November 9, 1595, Marguerite Moustenne was convicted of witchcraft and immediately executed.

1.3 CAUGHT WITHIN A GRAND NARRATIVE

Lyotard explicitly mentions Joan of Arc and witchcraft trials in his critique of the Christian master narrative.[61] These two examples illustrate Lyotard's insight that when a narrative closes it oppresses those who do not follow its rule. Those who fall outside of the narrative are turned into victims. Women accused of practicing witchcraft were burned at the stake in the Low Countries. In both cases, women were caught up in a narrative which revolved around the rule of love, but which eventually oppressed, crushed, and destroyed them. Lyotard argues that these women were torn apart in a dispute between genres of discourse, which did real damage and violence against them. Joan's appeal to conscience

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[58] Ibid., 94-95.
[59] Ibid., 30.
[60] Ibid., 63.
[61] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend*, 160 [D234].

comes into conflict with the authoritative claims made by the Church's representatives. Lyotard describes this as a conflict between the genre of obligation and the Christian narrative of love. The conflict ends in the execution of a saint. Women in the Low Countries were also burned at the stake when the courts held their idiolects in suspicion. Their counter claims (of innocence) could not be heard. In their case, torture was deemed necessary to compel them to confess to that which the judge already assumed – that they were witches. Logically the argument went like this: witches exist – to claim otherwise is heresy; therefore, it is every Christian's duty to expose and combat witches – love for Christendom requires nothing less. A subtext runs alongside this primary logic: witches are in league with the devil – the devil is cunning; therefore, you cannot trust anything the witch says, and you must compel her to admit her crime. For the love of Christendom and for the "witch" herself (!) the judge must force her to admit her crime, so that the court may appeal to her (in love) for the salvation of her soul. The inquisitor could salve his conscience, believing that he was acting in love, while brutalizing and plotting his victim's destruction.

Lyotard argues that the narrative is the genre of discourse which most easily forgets the dispute between heterogeneous phrase regimens and genres of discourse. No matter what the accused might say, not say, or do, or not do, her phrases will be linked and organized according to the rule: witches exist and love for Christendom requires that we expose and destroy them. The grand narrative incessantly spins around this rule. Persons and events that don't fit this rule are suppressed, ignored, or forced to conform.

The violence done to these women lays bare the oppressive power of narratives. This violence shows the brutality which the rule of love can sanction. Unfortunately the history of Christianity is replete with such incidents. In this thesis we will consider how the rule of love is used to dominate other narratives. Lyotard argues that it is the idea of love as the rule (of rules) within the Christian grand narrative which enables it to subsume all other narratives to its rule – to love the event itself.[62] Lyotard's critique of narratives, specifically of grand narratives, should be taken very seriously by theologians. Exclusion leads to oppression. Those who cannot live according to the rule governing the narrative are silenced, imprisoned, gassed, shot, burned alive, or reduced to a commodity.

In order to better understand the oppressive nature of grand narratives, we will first consider Lyotard's phrase pragmatics as presented in *The Differend*. Then we will follow Lyotard's argument to its logical conclusion (i.e. that the Christian narrative is a closed narrative that oppresses people through its rule of love). We will attempt to strengthen the case Lyotard makes for his critique of Christianity from a scriptural and historical basis, arguing that Scripture is, in fact, a closed, oppressive narrative. Then we will make an

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[62] Ibid., 159 [D232].

investigation through Scripture and history to show how the Christian narrative has, in fact, closed upon itself and how it is inclined to do so in the present without the interrupting grace of God. Once the case has been made for Lyotard's critique of Christianity, we will turn to the idea of the open narrative as presented by Lieven Boeve.

2. THE DIFFEREND

2.0 LYOTARD'S "PHILOSOPHY" BOOK

Lyotard considered *The Differend* his most important philosophical book. In this work, Lyotard develops his concept of a sentence philosophy – a philosophy of phrases. *The Differend* is a demanding book, which asks much of the reader. S/he is expected to work. It is not intended for someone who wants to "gain time." *The Differend* is a "philosophic, reflective" book, which demonstrates in practice the "sentence" pragmatics Lyotard advocates.[63] Lyotard intends to write without imposing or presupposing a rule to govern his discourse. *The Differend* is a demonstration of Lyotard's understanding of the heterogeneity of phrases, genres of discourse, and grand narratives in language.

2.1 THE DIFFEREND DEFINED

A differend is a dispute between two phrases.[64] It is an unstable state of language. Something must be phrased, but suffers from the wrong of its inability to be expressed. This state is signaled by a feeling: a struggling for the right words… Lyotard says, "In the differend, something 'asks' to be put into phrases, and suffers from the wrong of not being able to be put into phrases right away."[65] A choice presents itself. Either a search must be made for a new rule, which can link the phrases together, or the differend can be turned into a litigation, in which case the linkage is made using an existing rule for the linking of phrases. When the latter is chosen, the warning (signaled by the feeling) is ignored, and the differend is smothered and forgotten.

The differend is most easily understood in a dispute between two people. One claims a damage against the other; however, the idiom which can signify the injury is not available to the victim. The dispute must be "regulated" in the idiom of his or her opponent. As a result, the damage is turned into a wrong that cannot be signified.[66] The victim can testify before the

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[63] Lyotard, *The Differend*, xiv.

[64] This essay begins with a description of the differend in terms of phrases, rather than as a dispute in court between two combatants. This reflects Lyotard's view that thought should be cleansed from any vestiges of anthropocentrism. Lyotard argues that phrases happen. Phrases don't need humans as go-betweens for phrase to occur. However, Lyotard has famously defined a differend as "a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments." He expands this idea to the occurrence of every phrase (or silence) and the phrase with which it links. ibid., xi.

[65] Ibid., 13 [D23].

[66] "This is what a wrong [*tort*] would be: a damage [*dommage*] accompanied by the loss of the means to prove the damage. This is the case if the victim is deprived of life, or of all his or her liberties, or of the freedom to make his or her ideas or opinions public, or simply of the right to testify to the damage,

court, but the court cannot hear the victim's testimony. The victim's testimony is stripped of any authority, and the victim is reduced to silence. This silence is itself a phrase, according to Lyotard. It is signified by a feeling – a sign that something "asks" to be phrased.[67]

The dispute, the silence, the feeling is a sign of the limits of language. It is a call for a new way of expressing something that struggles to be expressed. The event exceeds what can be currently expressed through presently existing phrases. A new phrase, a new rule, a new idiom needs to be found to express the damage suffered, lest it become a wrong.

Lyotard writes against a background of injustice. How does one judge when a universal rule is lacking between heterogeneous genres? Lyotard calls philosophy to bear witness to the differend – to pay attention to the particular need for justice, especially when the victim has lost the ability to phrase the wrong that has been suffered. The victim's particularity should not be forgotten. This is demonstrated throughout *The Differend* by the example of the victims of Auschwitz.

2.2 AUSCHWITZ

The most striking example Lyotard gives of the differend is the silence of the survivors of Auschwitz. Why don't they speak? This silence is met with incredulity by the revisionist historian, Robert Faurisson. He claims that no one died in a gas chamber at Auschwitz, and that there was no "final solution." Faurisson demands that the survivors present evidence for the existence of a gas chamber at Auschwitz.[68] The only evidence he will allow is eye-witness testimony from someone who actually saw the gas chamber in operation. But the survivors cannot present that kind of evidence. Faurisson forces the survivors into a dilemma. If they have seen the gas chamber in operation, they are dead and cannot testify. If, on the other hand, they have not seen the gas chamber work, they have no authority or credibility as witnesses. They have nothing valid to say regarding the existence of a gas chamber at Auschwitz. Faurisson demands that the survivors phrase their complaint in the form appropriate for establishing the reality of a referent (in this case, the gas chamber). Since the

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or even more simply if the testifying phrase is itself deprived of authority (Nos. 24-27). In all of the cases, to the privation constituted by the damage there is added the impossibility of bringing it to the knowledge of others, and in particular to the knowledge of a tribunal." Ibid., 5 [D7]

[67] Lyotard gives the example of a Martinican, whose complaint before the court is that he or she is *not* a French citizen. (The individual considers him or herself the citizen of the island – St. Martin, but not a citizen of France.) But the court cannot hear the person's complaint, since the complaint is lodged in a French court, and since St. Martin is a protectorate of France. However, a complaint can be brought against any crime which damages his or her rights as a French citizen. See ibid., 27 [D36].

[68] "I have analyzed thousands of documents. I have tirelessly pursued specialists and historians with my questions. I have tried in vain to find a single former deportee capable of proving to me that he had really seen, with his own eyes, a gas chamber." Ibid., 3 [D2].

survivors cannot phrase their experience in these terms, they are reduced to silence. (Or, perhaps they choose not to talk to Faurisson…)

Faurisson "believes or pretends to believe" that the survivors remain silent because there were no gas chambers.[69] The survivors are silent because their phrase can be invalidated: through the impugning of the sense, the addressee, the referent, or the addressor.[70] But there are other reasons why victims don't speak, argues Lyotard. First, the survivors don't speak because silence *is* a phrase. It is a negative phrase – a phrase that cannot find expression or linkage within the prior phrase. The survivors cannot at present find a phrase that adequately describes Auschwitz. Secondly, they may be silent because they do not believe that the addressee (Faurisson) is competent to understand or judge the experience. Or, thirdly, the referent (the gas chamber) might not exist. Lastly, the person who remains silent may not consider himself or herself competent to speak on the subject.

The survivors struggle to phrase their experience, but they cannot find the right words. Their silence is a sign of the differend; that something "waits" to be phrased. Lyotard uses the survivor's plight to illustrate the limits of language and point us toward his understanding of the differend. A differend is a dispute that occurs in language at every point in which a linkage must be made with a new phrase. This occurs invariably with the presenting of a phrase.

2.3 PHRASE PRAGMATICS

It may be helpful to briefly lay out Lyotard's system before discussing it point by point. His system, though, can be confusing at first sight. Lyotard describes *The Differend* as a philosophical work in search of its rule.[71] There is a pattern to the book, as "Lyotard" searches for the rule, although it is not apparent on the first reading.[72]

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[69] Ibid., 14 [D27].

[70] "Reciprocally, the 'perfect crime' does not consist in killing the victim or the witnesses (that adds new crimes to the first one and aggravates the difficulty of effacing everything), but rather in obtaining the silence of the witnesses, the deafness of the judges, and the inconsistency (insanity) of the testimony. You neutralize the addressor, the addressee, and the sense of the testimony; then everything is as if there were no referent (no damages). If there is nobody to adduce the proof, nobody to admit it, and/or if the argument which upholds it is judged to be absurd, then the plaintiff is dismissed, the wrong he or she complains of cannot be attested. He or she becomes a victim." Ibid., 8 [D9].

[71] "You really are reading a book of philosophy, the phrases in it are concatenated in such a way as to show that that concatenation is not just a matter of course and that the rule for their concatenation remains to be found." Ibid., 180 [D129].

[72] Even though Lyotard provides the reader with a reading dossier at the beginning of the book, the structure of the argument is initially difficult to follow. The author's ideal is to have "a zero degree of style," and Lyotard confesses that he often thought that his sole addressee is the *Is it happening?* Lyotard claims that the phrases which happen in the book call to the event. See ibid., xiv, xvi.

Lyotard's sentence pragmatics is a system of radical heterogeneity – between phrases, phrase regimens, discourse genres, and narratives.[73] A phrase happens. It seeks to express something that eludes its grasp: namely, the event. This phrase presents a universe in which instances are situated: addressor, addressee, referent, and sense. The situation of these instances is determined by rules of the phrase regimen it follows. A phrase universe is situated differently depending on its phrase regimen (logical, cognitive, rhetorical, speculative, etc.). To this phrase, a second phrase must link (even if it is a silence). The manner of establishing the link is influenced by the genre of discourse in which the second phrase belongs. Each genre of discourse has its own stakes (or way to win or gain), and this influences the manner of linking phrases. The resulting linkage invariably does "damage" to the first phrase, since it forgets its event and makes its stake that of the phrase genre of the second phrase. It also "offends" any other phrase or discourse genre with which it did not link. Just as there is a plurality of phrase regimens, there is also a heterogeneity of genres of discourse. Groups of heterogeneous discourse genres are linked together under the rules formed by narratives. These narratives seek to bring each phrase and genre of discourse under its governance. In this way, narratives neutralize differends. Thus, the phrase that happens is caught in a dispute between phrase regimens, genres of discourse, and narratives, which "compete" with each other over how to link with it.

This brief summary of Lyotard's system needs to be elaborated. But we hope that this summary will help to make his phrase pragmatics more easily understandable. We will now begin to discuss Lyotard's system with the basis of "language" – namely, the phrase.

2.4 THE PHRASE

Only one thing is beyond doubt – the phrase. A phrase exists. It is impossible for there to be no phrase. To doubt its existence requires a phrase: *There is no phrase*. But this, of course, is a phrase. Even the doubtful silence is a phrase. Descartes may doubt everything including his existence; but the thing that survives that doubt is a phrase: *I think…* Lyotard says that the existence of the singular (a phrase) cannot be doubted. "The singular calls forth the plural (as the plural does the singular) and because the singular and the plural are together already the plural."[74] The existence of a phrase (the singular) cannot be doubted. A phrase calls upon another phrase to link onto it. But that phrase is not the first phrase. Other phrases

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[73] For a succinct explanation of Lyotard's plural system of discourses, see Lieven Boeve, "The End of Conversation in Theology: Considerations from a Postmodern Discussion," in *Theology and Conversation: Towards a Relational Theology*, ed. J. Haers and P. De Mey (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 198.

[74] Lyotard, *The Differend*, xii.

(the plural) already exist. These phrases – a plurality of linked phrases – call upon the phrase which occurs to link with them. Language is presupposed.

2.4.1 Phrase Universe

When a phrase happens it presents at least one universe. In a phrase universe four instances are generally situated: sense, referent, addressee, and addressor. "There is what is signified, what it is signified about, to whom and by whom it is signified: a universe."[75] The relation between some or all of these instances forms a universe. For example, the phrase *I saw it* forms a universe in which three instances are situated (addressor, sense, and referent respectively). A space-time orientation can be specified through the phrase *It's there that I saw it*. The fourth instance (the addressee, the *you*) is situated in the phrase *I tell you that it's there that I saw it*.[76] As was just illustrated, not every instance is situated in every phrase. But a phrase presents at least one universe, although it may also co-present multiple universes, since any of the instances can be equivocal.[77] The situation of the instances and their interrelations with each other constitutes a universe.[78]
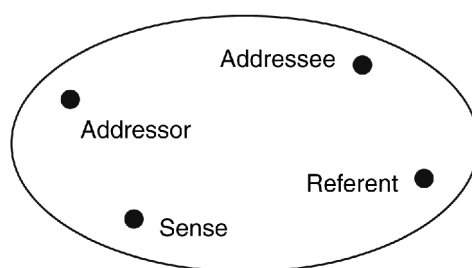
A phrase "is not a message passing from an addressor to an addressee both of whom are independent of it."[79] Rather, the addressor and addressee are situated as instances within the universe which the phrase presents. The addressor and addressee may be marked (by a pronoun or a proper name) or unmarked within the phrase, but they come when the phrase arrives. A phrase does not need will or intention to occur. A phrase is a "what"; it happens. Only one phrase is presented "at a time."[80] The phrase is not presented either to a subject (a someone) or a something. Rather, as stated above, a "subject" is an instance situated within a phrase universe. This includes subjects which are presented as not being in the world, either

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[75] Ibid., 70 [D111].
[76] Ibid., 71 [D115].
[77] Lyotard gives as example the phrase *I can come by your place*, in which *I*, *come by*, and *your* can be equivocal. Possible universes which can be co-presented by this phrase include: *I have the ability to do it*; *I have the time to do it*; *You have a place and I know the address*; *It's possible that I'll do it*; *I desire to do it*; *I desire that you tell me to do it*; and *I have permission to do it*. See ibid., 80 [D137].
[78] Ibid., 49 [D79].
[79] Ibid., 11 [D18].
[80] Time is reckoned both inside the phrase (the time signified by the phrase) and outside the phrase (the time of its occurrence). Ibid., 136 [D184].

as addressor or addressee. An example of this is Descartes' thinking I – a subject situated in the universe presented by a philosophical phrase, which claims that it does not "belong to the world."[81] The subject is situated as "not present" – a transcendental relation – within the universe of a philosophical phrase.

A phrase happens, and it is not limited to human language. Phrases happen in many non-human ways. A cat's tail is an example of a non-human phrase. We can link onto a cat's raised tail with phrases: "*What do you want?*; *You're bothering me*; *Hungry again?*"[82] A phrase "entails a *There is* [*Il y a*]."[83] The phrase is the expression of an occurrence, an event. Lyotard offers other non-human phrases: a dog's wagging tail, a cat's perked ears, the glimpse of land rising from the horizon to the West.[84] And the silence of the "expectant wait" for the event of the *Is it happening?* is a phrase.

The universe presented by a phrase has an inherent social relationship, since the addressor, addressee, referent and sense are situated within it, along with their interrelations. This happens "immediately." That is to say, none of the instances can be deduced from one another, "as if from an origin." The relations between these instances are affected by the phrase regimen in which it belongs. These relations shape that universe. Lyotard gives the example of a geometrical phrase: *The sum of the angles is equal to two right angles*. This phrase presents a universe in which the addressor and addressee are situated within a didactic relationship.[85] In this case, a phrase regimen (mathematics) determines the necessary relation between "teacher" and "pupil."

2.4.2 Phrase Regimens

Phrases are formed according to the rules laid out by various phrase regimens. Lyotard lists a number of regimens: "reasoning, knowing, describing, recounting, questioning, showing, ordering, etc."[86] Phrases belonging to different regimens (or phrase families) are heterogeneous. They cannot be translated into each other's regimen. Nor can a phrase from one phrase regimen link to a phrase from another regimen, without damaging the prior phrase. Each phrase is constituted according to the rules of a phrase regimen, which specifies how each instance is to be situated in relation to the other instances. The way in which a phrase links with other phrases and the manner in which it is validated is determined by the rule for

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[81] Ibid., 71-72 [D119].
[82] Ibid., 77 [D123].
[83] Ibid., 70 [D111].
[84] Ibid., 70 [D110].
[85] Ibid., 139 [D193].
[86] Ibid., xii.

its regimen.[87] However, phrases from heterogeneous phrase regimens can be linked to each other according to the stakes provided by a genre of discourse. In order to illustrate the functioning of phrase regimens, we will briefly consider five phrase regimens below: the logical, nominative, ostensive, cognitive, and descriptive.

2.4.2.1 Logical Regimen

The logical regimen is a phrase family formed around the possibility of truth. A logical phrase delimits the possible range of its referent. For example, a logical phrase says, "It may or may not rain." It does not indicate the actual condition of the weather, but it gives the possible range of conditions which can be expected. *X is p or not-p* is another example of a logical proposition. Such propositions do not attach a sense to the referent – it doesn't tell us if it will be wet or dry today, or whether *x* is *p* or *not-p*. Logical propositions lack sense; they are meaningless. "If a proposition is necessary, it has no sense. Whether or not it is true for a reality is not a question of logic."[88] However, a logical phrase presumes "that something *is*."[89]

A logical phrase places its referent within a field of possibility ranging from tautology to contradiction. This "logical space" delimits its possibility as a statement of truth. On the side of tautology, truth is necessary. The opposite end of "logical space" or contradiction indicates that the logical phrase is necessarily false. Lyotard gives this phrase as an example: *If p, then p, and if q, then q*. The limiting ends of this phrase would be: *p and not-p*, *and q and not-q*.[90] But this statement does not tell us whether or not the statement is true: that is, whether or not the symbols instantiated within the phrase correspond to reality. That is a question for the cognitive regimen. A logical phrase simply indicates the possibility of its being true based on its place within "logical space." Such a phrase as *x is p or not-p* is not absurd. Rather, it is "well-formed," according to the rules of the logical phrase regimen.

Logicians work to construct logical phrases that are "well-formed," and they want to avoid "poorly formed" propositions. A phrase which has "all phrases" as its referent must not include itself within its own phrase universe. This is a "poorly formed" phrase, since it produces a paradox. Lyotard gives as an example the Paradox of the Liar, which says *I lie*.[91] In this phrase, the referent includes all statements which the addressor (in this case, the liar) makes. The paradox is created by including the "current" phrase into the referent referring to all phrases presented by the liar. A dilemma is created through a phrase's ability to take itself as its own referent. Lyotard uses the story of Protagoras and his student Euathlus to illustrate

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[87] Ibid., 49 [D78].
[88] Ibid., 51 [D85].
[89] Ibid., 55 [D91].
[90] Ibid., 51 [D84].
[91] Ibid., 6 [Protagoras Note, § 2].

how this happens. One day Protagoras demands payment from his student. But Euathlus refuses to pay. Euathlus says that he will pay his teacher when he has won his first case before the tribunals. Protagoras' reply turns the situation into a dilemma: "But if I win this dispute (*égô mén an nikèsô*), I must be paid because I've won (*oti égô énikèsa*), and if you win it I must be paid because you've won."[92] The teacher's reply includes the current dispute with his student into the series of litigations under which Euathlus may prevail. When Euathlus wins his argument with Protagoras (the student has, in fact, not yet prevailed before the tribunal) he has triumphed over his teacher. This *is* a victory, and he must pay. By including the "current" argument into the total of cases to be disputed, Protagoras has placed Euathlus in a dilemma. He must pay.[93]

Bertrand Russell proposes a theory of types to avoid "poorly formed" phrases. Russell argues that a proposition must conform to the principle of non-contradiction. Confusion must be kept out of a proposition. So a proposition referring to a totality of propositions must not include itself within that group.[94] (Protagoras must not include his "current" argument into the total number of cases Euathlus argues in determining when he is liable to pay his teacher for the training he has received.) The goal is to clear up confusion, so that one can decide the truth of a phrase. "Protagoras' argument is not acceptable within logic because it bars coming to a decision."[95]

But it is precisely the phrase's ability to refer to itself that is the basis of Hegel's speculative system. What is rejected by Russell, the logician, is presumed by Hegel, the speculative philosopher.[96]

2.4.2.2 Nominative Regimen

The nominative regimen involves naming the referent. An example would be the phrase *This is Caesar*. A name is a designator of reality, which functions within the terms of *I*, *here*, *now*.[97] It can be situated in the addressor, addressee, and referent instances. A name "is a pure mark of the designative function."[98] The proper name is similar to a deictic in this regard;

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[92] Ibid., 6 [Protagoras Notice, § 1].

[93] "Protagoras' argument is not acceptable within logic because it bars coming to a decision. Is it acceptable within another genre?" See ibid., 7 [Protagoras Notice, § 2]. Lyotard answers this question: such an argument is necessary in speculative logic. See ibid., 6 [D8].

[94] Ibid., 6 [Protagoras Notice, § 2].

[95] Ibid., 7 [Protagoras Notice, § 2].

[96] The *double bind*, a dilemma known to the ancients, is a "linchpin of Hegelian dialectical logic." It consists in the use of "two contradictory propositions, *p* and *not-p*, two logical operators: exclusion (*either ... , or*) and implication (*if ... , then*)." The *double bind* is a "poorly formed" phrase, according to the logical regimen. See ibid., 5-6 [D8].

[97] Ibid., 39 [D57-58].

[98] Ibid., 39 [D57].

however, it is a quasi-deictic, since it remains independent of the "current" phrase.[99] Unlike a deictic, a proper name retains its designation across other phrase universes without alteration. A name is able to "traverse" across phrase universes and be situated upon different instances in the phrase universe without alteration. This is the key to its rigidity.

A deictic is a designator of reality, which presents its object as a "given." The object is designated as having "an extra-linguistic permanence."[100] However, this "permanence" is only the case within the "current" phrase. A deictic appears and disappears along with the phrase universe in which it is presented. When it appears, the deictic relates its object to a "spatio-temporal origin" within the "current" phrase. The deictic designates its object in relation to *I*, *here*, or *now*. But its "origin" disappears with the phrase.

A name is rigid, because of its invariability. The name itself doesn't change from phrase to phrase. It is a designator of reality, but it does not have a signification. Rather, a proper name acts like an index, which attracts significations. A name must be given a sense, and this creates a problem. Does signification precede designation, or visa versa? How can we know what a thing is, without first knowing which thing we are referring to? At the same time, how do we know what a name designates without first knowing its sense? A name seems to be necessary to fix the referent.[101] A name must always be able to designate a specific object, without any possibility of error. Lyotard says that this is "a metaphysical exigency and illusion."[102] We presuppose reality before saying anything about it, although "reality" properly called cannot be seen. Two people debating together cannot make something real simply through their argumentation. For example, two sports fans discuss whether or not batons where used in the last Olympic Games. If the two interlocutors agree together wholeheartedly that this was the first Olympic Games where the relay runners competed *without* batons, this does not make it so. The ontological argument is false. Lyotard says, "Existence is not concluded."[103] Secondly, what can be seen cannot be phrased. The fact that we are phrasing about an object indicates that we do not have that thing of which we are phrasing. "Reality" cannot be shown. And as Lyotard says, "Naming is not showing."[104]

Still, it is important to be able to specify the referent. How can we know that the referent is the *same* from phrase to phrase? Names provide this function. They function within a system of names. "Names transform *now* into a date, *here* into a place, *I*, *you*, *he* into Jean,

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[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid., 33 [D50].
[101] "Antisthenes, like a certain Megarans and like the Stoics later on, asks whether signification precedes or is preceded by designation. The thesis of nomination gets him out of the circle. The referent needs to be fixed; the name, as Kripke says, is a rigid designator that fixes the referent." See ibid., 37 [Antisthenes Notice].
[102] Ibid., 38 [D55].
[103] Ibid., 32 [D47].
[104] Ibid., 33 [D49].

Pierre, Louis."[105] These designations are then compiled into calendars, maps, and genealogies and become "indicators of possible reality."[106] They operate within a larger system of names. This network of names rigidly indicates referents and places them in relation to each other. These quasi-deictics (names) designate their referents as "givens" even when they are not there. [107] Lyotard gives the example of Jean Valjean, a fictional character from the novel *Les Misérables*. No one has ever met Valjean, except the other characters presented within the fictional world of that book. They function within the systems of names which produces the "world" of Victor Hugo's imagination. Reality is not bestowed on the referent by its name. But a name is a rigid designator, since it does not change from phrase to phrase. The strength of a name is its rigidity within nominative networks. But it's an empty index.

Names are "hollow." They attract senses. Their rigidity doesn't guarantee that a name will have the same meaning from phrase to phrase. A name can receive different descriptions in various phrases, giving it different senses. Lyotard demonstrates his point with examples of senses ascribed to the name Aristotle: "*The philosopher born in Stagira, Plato's disciple, Alexander's tutor*."[108] These senses are all exchangeable for the phrase *That's Aristotle* without changing the referent (or name) within the network of nominative phrases. Senses can continually be added to the index of a name. How many descriptions can be attached to a name cannot be known. Possible significations can be added in the future of which we are unaware. And this causes a "hollowing out" of the proper name. The referent of a nominative is an "object of history."[109] Such a proper name is "hollowed out" by negation. Lyotard gives two phrases wherein *Bonaparte* is situated as the referent of a proper name: "*Napoleon is a strategist*, and *Napoleon is not a strategist*." In the first phrase, Napoleon is a general, in a network of military names. However, in the second phrase, Napoleon is not a strategist, because he is an emperor.[110] Since the proper name *Napoleon* is an empty designator, there remains uncertainty regarding the meaning of that name. "Negation is at the heart of testimony."[111] Proof that Charlemagne was not a philosopher only establishes that fact (i.e. he wasn't a philosopher), but it doesn't tell us what he was. Proof adduced is always open to refutation. By itself the name is not a designator of reality. But the combination of its rigidity and emptiness allows the number of senses it attracts to swell. Lyotard notes "a 'swarm' of possible senses, of indeterminate quantity and quality, inhabit this 'hollow'."[112]

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[105] Ibid., 39 [D58].
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid., 40 [D60].
[108] Ibid., 47 [D74].
[109] Ibid., 51 [D83].
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid., 54 [D90].
[112] Ibid., 51 [D83].

As an "object of history," *Auschwitz* is strongly situated in its referential function in the network of names. It is sturdily placed within the relations between names, which constitute nominal worlds. But it is weakly positioned in regard to meaning or sense. The name *Auschwitz* can be situated upon the various instances in too many heterogeneous phrase universes. This is also true for names like *Caesar*, *Bonaparte*, and *Karl Wojtila*. Such names are an index designating one and only one person in history. Their function as a referent remains strongly determined. This is because they arise from a world, "which is a fairly stable complex of nominatives."[113] The same can not be said for the "object of perception," which is an item of study for the phenomenologist. "Objects of perception" arise from an individual's field of experience. This field is comprised of "a loose complex of ostensives and deictics." Unlike the proper name, an "object of perception" must be situated in relation to a deictic or an *I*.[114]

The name has the capacity to act as a linchpin between an ostensive phrase and any other phrase because of its rigidity and constancy in traversing phrase universes. It designates, while being free to occupy any instance in the phrase universe. But it is "deprived of sense."[115] A proper name adds no properties or reality to the person designated by the name. It remains an empty, rigid designator, which presents its referent as a "given." There are three conditions for the validating of reality: the referent must be named, signified, and shown. What is named – rigid, functioning within the network of nominatives – must be assigned a meaning (signified), and it must be shown that the example brought forth as evidence does not negate the possibility that it describes reality. These satisfactions are required by the cognitive regimen.

2.4.2.3 Ostensive Regimen

The ostensive phrase is the one that shows. It says, *Here's a case of it*.[116] "In every case, *of it* refers to the cognitive phrase."[117] An ostensive phrase purports to show an example that validates the claim of a cognitive phrase. A traveler says to her friend, *Here it is! Rome.* The phrase claims to show the friend that the place indicated is in fact the city called Rome. (But is it in Italy, or in the states of Georgia, Oregon, or Tennessee? Another phrase is needed to specify which Rome she means, within the network of names.) Like the nominative phrase,

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[113] Ibid., 50 [D81].
[114] Lyotard suggests a range of possible deictics: *I* and *you*, *here* and *there*, *now* and *a little while ago*. See ibid.
[115] Ibid., 43 [D66].
[116] Ibid., 41 [D61].
[117] Ibid.

the ostensive phrase presents its referent as being there, as existing, whether or not it is phrased. The referent is "given" and exists "extralinguistically."[118]

This helps the ostensive to validate the existence of a referent, which might satisfy the claims of a cognitive phrase. The ostensive phrase makes use of deictics (I, here, now) to do this. An example of such an ostensive phrase would be: *This or that is a case of a gas chamber*.[119] The identity of the referent of such an ostensive phrase would be established "each time" that it is presented. To validate a cognitive phrase the referent must be named, signified, and shown. Lyotard uses Auschwitz once again for his illustration: "thus, respectively: in an internment camp, there was mass extermination by chambers full of Zyklon B; that camp is called Auschwitz; here it is."[120] In this example the order of phrases is: signified, named, and shown. A fourth phrase is needed to indicate that all of these referents are the same.

The identity of the referents must be established "each time." An ostensive phrase shows what it shows only at the time that the phrase "takes place." It must be shown whether the referent is the same at instant t as it is at instant $t + 1$. If it appears that *Rome* is the same at both instances, this is due to the name, which is a rigid indicator. How can we know whether or not we are talking about the same city in phrases that occur at two different instants? The name is the linchpin. It holds the sense of any given phrase together with an ostensive phrase and its deictics, "and endows its referent with a reality, that at least remains contingent."[121] Lyotard gives three senses for the identity of the city: *the capital of Europe*; *where the Senate is seated*; and *the city we must lay to siege*.[122] The only means that we have to be able to identify these senses with the ostensive, *This is it*, is through the name (*Rome*). "Reality cannot be deduced from sense alone, no more than it can from ostension alone."[123] A name is required – that is, an empty designator capable of accepting many different semantic values and attributing them to the shown referent.

But like the name, both the perceptive field and the historical world are "hollowed out." Reality is not shown. One does not see "reality" properly called, and any witness who claims to have seen something cannot have seen everything. When we look at an object, we see glimpses of it, across a field of vision, over a period of time. These glimpses are synthesized together to form a perception of our three-dimensional existence in space. A person walking around a tree can only see one side of the tree trunk at any moment. The other side of the tree trunk remains hidden, at that moment, from view. "The phenomenologist says: similarly,

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[118] Ibid., 42 [D64].
[119] Ibid., 16 [D28].
[120] Ibid., 43 [D65].
[121] Ibid., 43 [D66].
[122] Ibid. This is a curious translation from the French: « la capitale de l'Empire. » Compare Jean-François Lyotard, *Le Différend* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1983), 72 [D66].
[123] Lyotard, *The Differend*, 44 [D67].

vision does not take place along a line which puts the viewer and the viewed in contact, but within a field of visibility full of half-glimpsed lateralities."[124] As a result, only an absolute witness (God) can be a certain witness, before whom everything is constantly revealed.[125] Everyone else is relegated to the realm of possibility. Reality becomes "neutralized." An abyss opens before perception. The witness who claims to have seen everything is not credible. A witness who claims only to have seen a portion of the event is not absolutely credible. Both witnesses can be enclosed within a dilemma. Indeed, any witness can be easily refuted:

> either you were not there, and you cannot bear witness; or else you were there, you could not therefore have seen everything, and you cannot bear witness about everything.[126]

Here is a dialectic that regulates the idea of experience. Two things occur simultaneously in an ostensive phrase: the case is shown, and an allusion is made to what is not the case.[127]

Neither the ostensive nor the nominative is a "well-formed" phrase, according to the rules of the logical regimen. However, phrases from these three regimens are used to put the referent under scrutiny. The logical proposition functions like a "lens" to determine the possibility that its sense can be validated by how it is named and shown.[128] "Logical space" determines its possibility. "Logically speaking, *possible* adds nothing to *sense*."[129] However, the ostensive phrase helps in the procedure for validating the referent, by presenting a case which seems to correspond to reality. It does so when it can say, *Here is a case of it*.

2.4.2.4 Cognitive Regimen (Knowledge)

A cognitive phrase is a "well-formed expression" upon which truth and falsehood are at stake. In order to successfully verify or falsify a phrase, scientific statements must be formed according to the rules for forming cognitive phrases. They must follow the rules every time a

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[124] Ibid., 45 [D69].
[125] Ibid., 42 [D64].
[126] Ibid., 45 [D70].
[127] Ibid.
[128] A logical proposition would say *Neil Armstrong was or was not an astronaut*. By itself, such a phrase is meaningless: it doesn't tell us whether Armstrong was in fact an astronaut, nor whether he ever walked on the moon. However, it does tell us the range of possibilities for the sense of the phrase. Together with a nominative and ostensive, the logical proposition helps to fix and thus verify the possibility that the referent corresponds to the cognitive phrase.
[129] Lyotard, *The Differend*, 52 [D86].

phrase is formed so that the referent can be verified every time it is checked. Meaning, in the sense of common parlance, is not pertinent.[130]

Lyotard lays out the minimum rules for the family of cognitive phrases: the referent must be determined; a predicate must be attributed to the subject of the utterance; and a case which proves conclusively must be displayed.[131] A referent is declared to be "real" when it can be signified, named, and shown.[132]

The person setting out to formulate a cognitive phrase assumes that the interlocutor wants to determine the sense of the referent. They discuss the signification of *gas chamber*, and when there is no disagreement over what this explicative phrase signifies, the signification is either accepted or rejected. Consensus is assumed, since the stakes of the cognitive regimen is to establish reality. Agreement over the signification of the referent means that a "well-formed" expression can be formulated: *A gas chamber is…* The ostensive phrase becomes available: *This or that is a case of a gas chamber*.[133] Confirmation that the referent conforms to the claims made by the cognitive phrase is given through naming and showing. This operation appears to validate the truthfulness of the cognitive phrase: *x is y. Here is a case of it*. What can be shown in this manner is accepted as a proof. However, this "proof" can be overturned later by further evidence or a counter-example. Knowledge accepted today can be overturned tomorrow, along with the accepted definition of concepts. This process brings about a fluctuation of scientific definitions, as scientific endeavors continue to refine their definitions of reality. This produces a blurring of concepts, which is a disturbing situation for metaphysics, which seeks to express reality as concepts and wants them to remain fixed.[134]

The truth of a name cannot be validated, since it is an empty index. A name does not confer any property upon the referent; it simply designates it. The cognitive phrase, however, attributes a property to the referent "by means of a description."[135] Then it asks if the referent manifests that property. Does the combination of signs instanced in the cognitive phrase correspond to the reality of the referent? A distinction should always be made between sense and reference. The cognitive phrase differentiates between the sense and the referent. But it can be difficult to hold to this distinction, since sense is determined by the logical possibility that a referent exists. Possibility is a point delimited within the logical field between tautology

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[130] Ibid., 17 [D30].
[131] Ibid., 15 [Gorgias Notice].
[132] Ibid., 42-43 [D65].
[133] Ibid., 16 [D28].
[134] Ibid., 53 [D87].
[135] Ibid, 35 [D54].

and contradiction.[136] This means that "the cognitive regimen presupposes the logical regimen, not that they merge."[137]

A cognitive phrase is validated by an ostensive phrase, which displays its reality or truthfulness.[138] In fact, a phrase from any phrase regimen must be validated by a phrase from another regimen. It cannot be validated by a phrase from within its own regimen.[139]

2.4.2.5 Descriptive Regimen

The descriptive regimen is used in science to remove deictics from ostensions. The deictics are removed so that the validity of the description given to the referent can be validated repeatedly and whenever required. Removal of the deictics (*I, here, now*) is accomplished through the forming of two phrases: cognitive and ostensive. Lyotard gives as example the phrase *Here is a red flower*. In the first step, "red" is defined: "Red corresponds to wavelengths in the spectrum from 650 to 750 millimicrons of the radiation emitted by an object."[140] The ostensive *here* must also be replaced. A system of cross-references independent of the original ostensive phrase (*Here is a red flower*) is employed: "the flower observed by *y* in the botanical laboratory of Institute *x* on April 17, 1961."[141]

Once the deictics have been removed, any referent (i.e. red flower) conforming to the definition of the phrase can serve as an example of it. Reality, then, serves up innumerable examples which can validate the cognitive phrase. However, reality becomes encased within the descriptive phrase; and as a consequence reality is reversed. Rather than the definition conforming to reality, reality must demonstrate that it conforms to the definition. Since the deictics have been removed, every red flower will give evidence of an emission of radiation with "wavelengths in the spectrum from 650 to 750 millimicrons." This, however, is a totality that can never be known. How can one observe every flower in the universe? Even this description, as Lyotard points out, relies on quasi-names (in this case *millimicron*). "Description cannot free itself from denomination, reference cannot be reduced to sense."[142]

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[136] Tautology means that *p is p* – that is, that the possibility is always the case. Contradiction says that *p is not-p* – that is, that the possibility is never the case. Logically speaking, possibility adds nothing to sense, it only marks out the scale of possibility that the referent corresponds to a certain reality.
[137] Lyotard, *The Differend*, 51 [D85].
[138] Ibid., 41 [D61].
[139] "No phrase is able to be validated from inside its own regimen: a descriptive is validated cognitively only by recourse to an ostensive (*And here is the case*). A prescriptive is validated juridically or politically by a normative (*It is a norm that…*), ethically by a feeling (tied to the *You ought to*), etc." See ibid., 29 [D41].
[140] Ibid., 41 [D61].
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid., 41 [D62].

The result of reducing denomination to a merely referential function is an endless refinement of description (or cognition).[143]

Each of the phrase regimens mentioned to this point are used in cognition. Logical phrases present the possibility that a referent exists in the form presented. That referent must be named, but a name is an empty index. By itself a name does not contribute an attribution to the referent. A cognitive phrase is needed to give a sense to the referent. This must be signified and shown: *This is a case of x. Here it is!* Finally, the deictics need to be removed and a descriptive phrase constructed, so that the validity of the referent can be repeatedly shown, whenever required in the scientific endeavor. But this is to prejudice the cognitive genre of discourse. There are other genres of discourse whose stake is something other than determining the reality of the referent.

2.4.3 Heterogeneous Regimens

Each of these phrase regimens (and all others) are heterogeneous. One phrase regimen cannot be translated into another.[144] They can be transcribed into the other regimen, but this affects the way that instances are situated and their relations with each other within the resulting phrase universe. Lyotard gives as an example the phrase *You must come out*. Although *Come out* may be a valid transcription of the first phrase, the situation of the addressee has changed. In the first phrase, the addressee receives a command; however, in the second phrase, the addressee is given an invitation. While the sense of the transcription may be the same (i.e. for the philosopher of logic, who is concerned with definitions of sense), the situation of the instances within the two phrase universes is altered. We would want the transcription to preserve those instances and relations from one phrase regimen to another, but it hasn't. The relations between addressor and addressee change.

Contacts between phrases of heterogeneous regimens cannot be avoided. Differends are "born" from these encounters.[145] A phrase must be linked onto – to link is necessary, also silence is a link – but the mode of linking is contingent. Each phrase regimen has its own rules for the linking of phrases. Therefore, links can be pertinent or inconsistent. "Eliminate the latter, and you escape the differend."[146] A phrase which links in an unsuitable manner with a prior phrase inflicts damage upon it.

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[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid., 49 [D79].
[145] Ibid., 29 [D40].
[146] Ibid.

2.4.4 Presentation

A phrase happens; it is presented. For Lyotard a presentation is the taking place of a phrase. Regardless of the phrase regimen which it follows, the phrase presents a universe. In this universe the instances are situated according to the rules of its phrase genre. The addressor, addressee, sense, and referent may or may not be marked, but a phrase universe situates them and determines the relationships between each. In all cases the presentation is indicated by the phrase *There is* [Il y a].[147] A phrase presents at least one universe; however, as said: instances can be equivocal allowing universes to be co-presented by a phrase. [148]

The phrase is not "given" from someone or something to us.[149] It simply takes place, as an occurrence. "Not Being, but one being, one time, [*un être, une fois*]."[150] Nor is a phrase given by a potency, or the desire of language to realize itself. It simply *is*. The event happens. The *There is* occurs, and a phrase is born. But to the extent that the event can be phrased it will fall short as an occurrence. Something is always forgotten.

A phrase occurs, and "it calls forth its addressor and addressee, and they come take their places in its universe."[151] A situation is formed in the heart of the phrase universe, whereby certain instances and the relations between them are determined. Linkings of a certain form are also called for, depending on the rules of the phrase regimen. Lyotard illustrates a situation beginning with the simple phrase: *I saw it*. In this phrase, the addressor, sense, and referent are situated in a particular time (the past). The addressee instance is left unspecified, however. The space in which the instances are situated is indicated by the phrase *It's there that I saw it*. Finally, the addressee is situated in the phrase universe through a "constative" phrase: *I tell you that it's there that I saw it*. [152] Each of these three sentences forms a different universe, determined by its combination of situations. This grouping forms the presented universe. The number of universes is endless. It equals the number of phrases which have been (or will be) presented.

Lyotard argues that presentation is not a matter of time, but of Being/Not-Being. The phrase is a *what*. We are filled with emotions of anxiety or surprise. There is anxiety that the occurrence will not happen again. It is the nervousness of the last phrase. Silence isn't a suspended phrase, or a phrase that has ceased. It is a non *what*. However, when a phrase is

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[147] Ibid., 70 [D111].
[148] "There is what is signified, what it is signified about, to whom and by whom it is signified: a universe. *At least* one universe, because the sense, the referent, the addressor, or the addressee can be equivocal." Ibid.
[149] "Presentation is not an act of giving (and above all not one coming from some *Es*, or some *It* and addressed to some us, to us human beings)." Ibid., 75 [Aristotle Notice, § 3.1].
[150] Ibid., 70 [D113].
[151] Ibid., 67 [Gertrude Stein Notice, Comment 4].
[152] Ibid., 71 [D115].

presented, we are filled with surprise.[153] The phrase that occurs states the *There is*. We can compare the occurrence to its absence, and this forms a grounding for thought. "There is something rather than nothing."[154]

Descartes grounded his thinking on the Cogito. The thinking *I* was the one thing that he could not doubt. But Lyotard sees problems with this reasoning. (1) *I doubt* assumes other phrases – phrases which Descartes doubts. Thus, *I doubt* presupposes language. But the reality of language as a referent cannot be established, since we have no ostensive phrase that can say *Here is language!* Instead, language is both the referent in a descriptive phrase, as well as a totality which can never be validated. We can describe language, but we can't show it. (2) *I doubt* assumes the serial operator, or succession. *I doubt* presupposes a prior phrase, which it follows. Descartes must have had many prior phrases to doubt. But to be able to doubt this series of phrases and conclude with the Cogito, a first phrase (or first proposition) is needed, which provides for succession (the serial operator). The problem is that this first phrase is asserted to be problematical by the concluding phrase *I doubt*. How can one follow the first proposition as one's rule when it turns out to have been doubtful from the beginning? (3) The linkage of the phrase *I doubt* has transformed the regimen of the prior phrases according to the regimen in which it presented its universe. The prior phrase is asked *What is not doubtful?* In this way, the linking phrase wrongs the prior phrase.[155]

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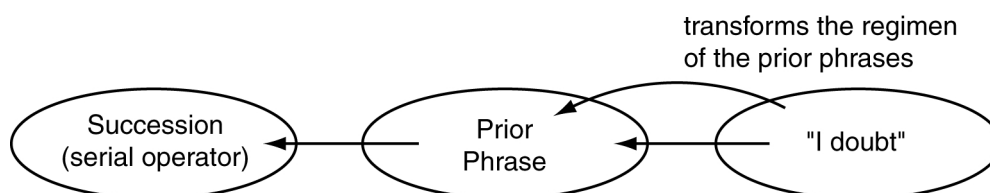
[153] Aristotle struggles with the concept of time. He wants to avoid the usage of paralogisms, which the sophists or eristics employed. Aristotle's categories are an attempt to mark off, or limit, the way in which the referent could be signified. Contrary attributes for a single object at the same time are not allowed. This is to avoid the problem of a Socrates who is both sitting and standing at the same moment. Aristotle uses now (*nun*) and formerly (*protéron*) to enumerate a dyad of *before* and *after*. Thus the referent is seen as a moving object between the before/after signified by the *now* (*e.g.* as a moving body between point *a* and point *b*). However, this does not answer this problem: when is the now? Aristotle hesitates over the status of the *now*. Is the now immersed in diachrony, or is the present transcendent to diachrony? In which time does their synthesis occur? Lyotard comments, "Before it is a not yet now, after is an already no longer now, now is a now between two nows, that is, passing from one to the next. Once again, it is a question of cross-referencings within the heart of the universe presented by the phrase, and thus a question of situation, not of presentation." The *now* is precisely what is not maintained, Lyotard says. As an occurrence, the present is taken as what it is this time (i.e. a phrase event). However, once the occurrence is phrased into another phrase universe it becomes *the now* and undergoes the alteration of diachrony. It is no longer grasped as *a what*, that is, as what it was "(at) the time it happened." See ibid., 72-74 [Aristotle Notice].
[154] Ibid., 75 [Aristotle Notice, § 3.1].
[155] "An offense is not an impertinence, just as a wrong is not the damages (No. 41). An offense is the hegemony of one phrase regimen over another, the usurpation of its authority." Ibid., 84 [D149]; ibid.

A presupposed succession of phrases lies behind Descartes' Cogito. Here again the heterogeneity of phrase regimens and genres of discourse comes to the fore. Both logical and cognitive regimens make a distinction between logical or transcendental priority and a chronological priority. They disregard the fact that *a priori* propositions and axioms, previously formed in ordinary language, function as rules for the formation of their phrases. In contrast to the logical and cognitive regimens, time is required by philosophical discourse. Philosophy searches for its rule, which can only be formulated at the end. As a result, time is necessary to philosophy's pursuit.[156]

Descartes says, "I think, therefore I am." But both pronouns function as deictics within the universe of this phrase. They appear and disappear with that phrase universe. These deictics do not have any significance outside of the universe that presents them. How do we know that the two "*I*"s are the same person? How can they survive the test of doubt? A synthesis must be made between the two. *I* at instant *t* may not be the same person as *I* at instant *t* + 1. The name, of course, asserts the reality of this synthesis, but the name is an empty designator.[157] According to Lyotard's critique, a subject is not a unity of experiences.[158] A differend exists at the heart of the subject.[159]

"It is not the thinking or the reflective I that withstands the test of universal doubt…, it is time and the phrase."[160] The phrase escapes doubt. A phrase is presented and can't be doubted, because as an occurrence it is a *what*. It escapes the logical paradoxes which befall self-referential propositions. These paradoxes reveal themselves when they are subjected to the rules for forming well-formed expressions (a paradox such as *I lie*). But there are phrases

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[156] Ibid., 60-61 [D98].

[157] Ibid., 46 [D72].

[158] Ibid.

[159] Lyotard interprets Kant's *Darstellung* as a situating of instances rather than as a presentation. It is the subject bridging the gap between intuition and conception. Treating a presentation as if it were a situation is a metaphysical illusion, according to Lyotard. He translates the Transcendental Aesthetic into two moments structured as phrase universes. A sentimental phrase speaks matter to an addressee. This matter phrase expresses effort or endeavor. However, the matter phrase is not completely comprehended. So a second phrase is formed, in which the subject situates itself upon the addressor instance, and the forms of space and time are imprinted upon the sensations. This second phrase endows the matter phrase with an "objective" referential value (or the form phrase). Every ostension is the result of two phrases (or quasi-phrases): the matter phrase (when impression occurs), and the form phrase (where impression is put into spatio-temporal form). "Matter receives the forms of space and time which it could not produce and which turns it into a phenomenon." However, the two dialogical partners do not speak the same idiom. As a result, a differend exists between them. The sensation "seeks to phrase itself and does not succeed in phrasing itself in the idiom of space-time." A feeling, an emotional silence signals its inability to communicate in the idiom of the subject (i.e. time and space). The subject knows that something failed in its attempt to communicate. But the subject can only reply in its own idiom. A reply is made, but the expectant wait must be disappointed. The subject can only speak in referential terms. Kant's break with empiricism is made by the implementation of two phrases. Lyotard argues that the Kantian *Darstellung* is the binding of two heterogeneous phrase regimen (the ostensive and cognitive). This activity is required by cognition. "The presentation does not come from anywhere other than the subject…the confrontation…takes place between heterogeneous faculties, that is, between phrases subject to different regimens or genres." See ibid., 61-65 [Kant 1 Notice].

[160] Ibid., 59 [D94].

which are formed under regimens other than the logical and cognitive. Phrases aren't necessarily propositions. One phrase follows another in succession. The conjunction *and* indicates a simple addition. Prepositions indicate that the link follows a categorical order.[161] Paratax signifies the succession of phrases: …and…and…and…and… An abyss opens up between each phrase. It is the void of Not-Being – the threat of oblivion. Will this phrase be able to link to another? The horror of the last phrase threatens. A phrase calls for its successor.[162] It is necessary that there be another phrase, but this is an ontological necessity, not a logical one. Simply by happening, by being *what is occurring*, the phrase, its passage, and time survive the test of universal doubt.

The occurrence is experienced as a feeling: "something asks to be put into phrases."[163] A realization comes that everything that needs to be said has not yet been phrased. In fact, it has already been phrased – as a feeling. The possibility emerges that nothing will happen. This absence of a phrase would be a non-what. So the vigil begins – a waiting on the occurrence.

The event bears upon presentation. It is the occurrence of a phrase addressed to no one, and which cannot be referred to "without falling short of it."[164] The event is the anxious silence that nothing will happen this time. It is impossible for there not to be a phrase…

> That's just it: the feeling that the impossible is possible. That the necessary is contingent. That linkage must be made, but that there won't be anything upon which to link. The "and" with nothing to grab onto. Hence, not just the contingency of the how of linking, but the vertigo of the last phrase. Absurd, of course. But the lightning flash takes place – it flashes and bursts out in the nothingness of the night, of clouds, or of the clear blue sky.[165]

2.5 BEING/NOT-BEING

One of the keys to understanding Lyotard's system is his understanding of Being/Not-Being. This argument is linked to other key concepts in Lyotard's oeuvre (the abyss, the hollow, to forget, passage, blur, and etc.). Simply said, there is a gap between Being and Not-Being, and this abyss is often forgotten or filled in. For Lyotard, a phrase exists. It is presented; it happens; it is a *what*. But between phrases, after the presentation of a phrase, a gulf appears; a gap; an abyss; or Not-Being. In phenomenology, there is something left

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[161] Lyotard gives as examples: "because; if; then; in order to." Ibid., 66 [D100].
[162] "One phrase calls forth another, whichever it may be. It is this, the passage, time, and the phrase (the time in the phrase, the phrase in time) that survives the test of doubt." Ibid., 66 [D101].
[163] Ibid., 80 [D134].
[164] Ibid., 75 [Aristotle Notice, § 3.2].
[165] Ibid., 75 [Aristotle Notice, § 3.4].

unseen, unnoticed. No witness can claim to have seen everything, or they discredit themselves. Something is always forgotten. Something is left not phrased. Even if it is phrased, it will be forgotten by the phrase that links to it. This is due to the radical heterogeneity between phrase regimens and the lack of a single rule to govern their linkage.

2.5.1 Gorgias and Parmenides

Refutation of the reality of the referent has followed a similar form, in the West, since the time of Parmenides and Gorgias, the sophist. Gorgias' reasoning is nihilistic. "Nothing is; and even if it is, it is unknowable; and even if it is and is knowable, it cannot be revealed to others."[166] The argument can be said this way. There is no referent. If it exists, it cannot be predicated. If the referent exists and can be predicated, that attribution cannot be shown.

A simple story is told to illustrate the way that reality is denied. A plaintiff complains to the court that Gorgias borrowed a pot and returned it damaged. The argumentation follows a dialectical pattern. The plaintiff says that Gorgias borrowed a pot. Gorgias replies that he did not borrow a pot. The plaintiff continues: Gorgias borrowed an undamaged pot. Gorgias retorts: it had a hole in it. The plaintiff complains: the pot was borrowed undamaged but returned with a hole in it. Gorgias answers: the pot was returned undamaged. In this case, Gorgias is arguing for the defense, which does not have the burden of establishing the facts.

The case follows the rules of the cognitive regimen of phrases. A referent is determined – in this case the pot. A sense must be given to the referent – or "attribution of a predicate to the subject of the utterance."[167] An example which decisively proves the case must be shown – returned damaged or undamaged.

Gorgias, in his reply to Parmenides, argues for the existence of non-existence. Through a logical argument based on comparisons between Being and Being and Not-Being and Not-Being, Gorgias comes to the conclusion that neither the existence nor the non-existence of reality is necessary. He does this by turning Parmenides' opening words ("for if Not-Being is Not-Being…") into a family of phrases. Gorgias uses a dialectical argument. But ontology follows a different set of rules than those of the dialectic. Gorgias turns Parmenides' two paths (Being and Not-Being) into thesis and antithesis, an intolerable situation to ontology. Gorgias' conclusion, however,[168] will turn reality into something that must be "demonstrated." A case must be brought forward, defended, demonstrated before it can be

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[166] Gorgias, ed., *On Not-Being, Péri Tou Mè Ontos, in 1° Anonymous, "De Melisso, Xenophane Et Gorgia"*, ed. Barbara Cassin, Si Parménide (Lille: 1980). Cited by ibid., 14 [Gorgias Notice].

[167] Ibid., 15 [Gorgias Notice].

[168] "So nothing would be, either because Being and Not-Being are the same thing, or because they are not. If they are, it is because Being is Not-Being; if they are not, it is because Being is not Not-Being, and is only affirmed through a double negation." Contra Parmenides, "Reality is not bestowed by some goddess at the tip of her index finger." See ibid., 15-16 [Gorgias Notice].

used as a referent for cognitive phrases.[169] Still, the possibility that "nothing is" cannot be ruled out in advance.

2.5.2 Refutation of the Referent

The refutation of reality has followed Gorgias' leading: the referent doesn't exist; and if it exists you can't know it; and if it exists and can be known you can't communicate it to anyone. This logical retreat (or concession) is a nihilistic argument. Something cannot be known unless it can be identified, attributed with some sense, and a case of it can be shown. In our court systems, the defense argues for acquittal without the burden of having to supply proof, because it is impossible to establish a negative.

Why do the survivors of Auschwitz remain silent? Their silence indicates that one of the four instances is denied. Either, (1) there is no addressor who is adequate to testify to what was done, or (2) there is no addressee who is qualified to hear what the survivors have to say, or (3) the experience is meaningless, there is no way to signify the experience, or (4) there were no gas chambers, the referent doesn't exist.

Auschwitz is an event which demonstrates the limits of historical knowledge. At Auschwitz most of the evidence was destroyed, and along with it went many of the ways to prove the crime. Even numerical proof is denied to the survivors. It should have been possible, at least, to have proven the quantity of the crime, except that the documents were destroyed. "That at least can be established."[170] As a result, the revisionist historian is able to complain at great length that the quantity of the crime has not been established.

Nor can consensus establish the wrong. The survivors suffered a damage, which is "accompanied by the loss of the means to prove the damage" – in short, a wrong.[171] So the survivors took the avenue available to them, and they began to speak about their experience as a litigation. They used the language of politics and international law to air their grievances, and the nation of Israel was born. But these idioms are inadequate to express the event that was Auschwitz. The wrong waits to be established, and it will continue to wait.

Faurisson insists that the survivors prove the existence of a single gas chamber at Auschwitz, and he plays by the rules of the cognitive regimen. He casts himself in the role of defendant, from which he has only to refute the proofs presented. Can Faurrison's demand for cognitive proof ever be satisfied? It cannot. Does Faurrison actually believe in the veracity of his claims? This cannot be known. Perhaps he's being dishonest, playing by other rules, or …

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[169] Ibid.
[170] Ibid., 56 [D93].
[171] Ibid., 5 [D7].

"But the silence imposed on knowledge does not impose the silence of forgetting, it imposes a feeling."[172] A feeling, a silence, emanates from the survivors. This feeling is a sign that something remains to be phrased, that something suffers from the fact that it cannot be phrased right now. The survivors suffered and continue to suffer a wrong. Their grievance cannot be phrased in accepted idioms. A sign is the referent in a phrase universe, where the referent has no signification acceptable as proof under the cognitive regimen. The addressee is situated as one who has been deeply moved emotionally. And the sense is situated as an unsolved problem (a puzzle or paradox). [173]

History has been hollowed out at Auschwitz.[174] A reality should be able to be expressed, to be testified to. But in place of testimony is silence. That silence "dissipates" history. "Auschwitz is the most real of realities in this respect. Its name marks the confines wherein historical knowledge sees its competence impugned."[175] Lyotard calls upon the historian to pay attention to the differend. This will entail a breaking free from the cognitive regimen of phrases, which have a monopoly on the historian's field. Lyotard encourages the historian to listen to what cannot be presented under the rules of cognition.[176]

2.6 GENRES OF DISCOURSE

The problem of linking phrases from heterogeneous phrase regimens together is regulated by genres of discourse. Phrases formed under a particular phrase regimen cannot be translated into any other phrase regimen.[177] Not only is each phrase regimen heterogeneous to all other regimens, but the phrase universes presented by each phrase regimen are heterogeneous to universes presented by other phrase regimens.[178] Instances within those universes are situated differently in phrase universes formed under the cognitive, performative, exclamative, obligatory, (and etc.) phrase regimens. As a result, there is an

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[172] Ibid., 56 [D93].
[173] Ibid., 57 [D93].
[174] "The silence that surrounds the phrase, *Auschwitz was the extermination camp* is not a state of mind [*état d'âme*], it is the sign that something remains to be phrased which is not, something which is not determined. This sign affects a linking of phrases. The indetermination of meanings left in abeyance [*en souffrance*], the extermination of what would allow them to be determined, the shadow of negation hollowing out reality to the point of making it dissipate, in a word, the wrong done to the victims that condemns them to silence – it is this, and not a state of mind, which calls upon unknown phrases to link onto the name of Auschwitz." See ibid.
[175] Ibid., 58 [D93].
[176] Ibid., 57 [D93].
[177] Ibid., xii.
[178] "The universe presented by a cognitive and the universe presented by an exclamative are heterogeneous. The stakes implied in the tragical genre, its intended success (shall we say, the feelings of fear and pity on the part of its addressees), and the stakes implied in the technical genre, its own success (shall we say, the availability of the referent for the addressor's wants) are, for their part, incommensurable, and they induce heterogeneous linkings, be they on the basis of the same phrase." See ibid., 128 [D179].

incommensurability between phrase regimens. These regimens cannot be subjected to the same law without neutralizing them. But contacts between phrases of heterogeneous regimens cannot be avoided. Genres of discourse facilitate the linking of these incommensurate phrases. A link must be made with the phrase that happens – even if that phrase is a silence. Linkage to the presented phrase is governed under the rules of a genre of discourse.

2.6.1 Pertinent and Inconsistent Links

There are pertinent links, and there are inconsistent links. A pertinent link is one that is relevant to or which pertains to the rules of the phrase regimen in which the prior phrase is instanced. However, a link from one phrase regimen to another cannot be pertinent, since each regimen presents its phrase universe differently. Phrases from different regimens follow different rules. The phrase *Open the door* is "damaged" by the exclamation *What a beautiful door!* The linking phrase is inconsistent (or impertinent), since the imperative phrase expects a phrase to link which will indicate whether or not the order was followed. The relations between the instances change between the two phrases. In the first phrase, the addressor is situated as one who commands, and the addressee is situated as one under obligation. However, in the second phrase the relations are different. The addressor (the former addressee) is situated as one exclaiming in wonder to an addressee (the former addressor) who should share in the joy of the one speaking. The roles between the instances have changed. The second phrase "damages" the first phrase by linking onto it.[179] Another example: the second lieutenant yells *To arms!* and the soldiers are expected to grab their weapons. However, rather than following the order one of the soldiers replies *You have just formulated a prescription.* This is an inconsistent link. However, this inconsistent link might be pertinent, if the stakes are comedy, rather than obligation.[180] The end of a prescription is obedience, but the end of comedy is something else. Thus, the stakes of the phrases have been altered by the linking phrase. A genre of discourse shifts the ends of linking phrases to its own end. In so doing, it solves the problem of linking heterogeneous phrases by making them fit within its rule. The genre of discourse fills in the gap between the phrase regimens.

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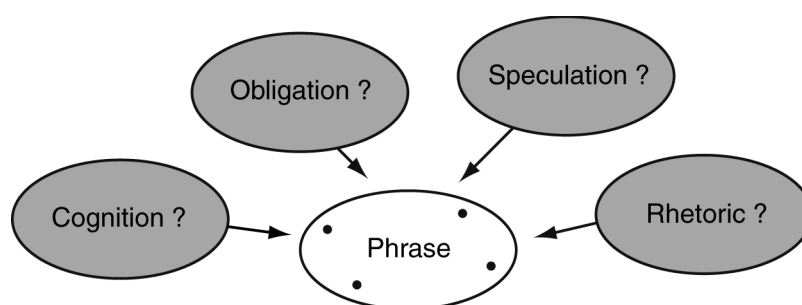
[179] But a damage is not a wrong.
[180] Lyotard, *The Differend*, 84 [D147].

It is necessary to link to the phrase that is presented, but the mode of linkage is contingent. Genres of discourse "seduce" phrases from heterogeneous phrase regimens to link together. They fix rules of linkage, determine stakes, and establish a single finality for phrases from different regimens.[181] As long as the rules for linking are followed – established by the genre of discourse – the differend is avoided. But differends can continue to exist between the phrases. The genre of discourse submits even these to a common end. A rule for linking heterogeneous phrases is provided by the discourse genre. "Genres of discourse do nothing more than shift the differend from the level of regimens to that of ends."[182]

2.6.2 Damages and Wrongs

A genre of discourse damages a phrase by linking onto it. The phrase's expression of the event is subordinated to the ends of the genre of discourse which links onto it. Every linkage creates a differend, since genres of discourse "compete" with each other over the phrase which has been presented. One genre of discourse's success in linking means the rejection of all other possible linkages with other discourse genres. The resulting differends – those linkages which were "forgotten" – are smoothed over, and the abyss separating phrases is filled in. The dispute is turned into a litigation – a "court case" which will be decided under the rule governing the genre of discourse that succeeded in linking with the presented phrase (*e.g.* the wrong is made into a damage, which can be arbitrated by the court).

Lyotard distinguishes between damages and wrongs in his argument. A damage [*dommage*] is a loss of some sort, which an animal, person, or phrase suffers. When a person is affected, s/he functions as the plaintiff in a lawsuit. A claim is made before the court for the loss suffered, and a judgment is made based on legal precedent. The dispute in question is resolved based upon a rule.[183] Disputes between phrase regimens are resolved by the ends governing the genre of discourse by which they are linked.

However, a wrong [*tort*] is a damage [*dommage*] accompanied by the loss of the means to prove the damage."[184] The quintessential example which Lyotard uses is that of the Auschwitz survivors. Faurrison demands that the survivors prove the reality of the referent – namely, that a gas chamber was used to execute people at Auschwitz. In so doing, he insists that they prove their case under the rules of cognition. The survivors are unable to provide eyewitness testimony (required by cognition), and Faurrison uses this inability to discredit their testimony. Thus, the survivors have suffered in two ways: the loss itself, and the ability

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[181] Ibid., 29 [D40].
[182] Ibid.
[183] Animals can suffer damage, for example, and Lyotard notes that many people are more aggrieved over their suffering than that of human victims. Ibid., 28 [D38].
[184] Ibid., 5 [D7].

to prove their loss.[185] Lyotard calls this situation a "wrong," which makes the survivors "victims." They are not able to phrase their complaint in a genre which can be heard by the court. Historically, the Jews turned the wrong they suffered into a litigation (*e.g.* a damage), when they argued for the necessity of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

Those survivors who refuse to speak in terms acceptable as proof before a court of law bear witness to the differend: an inability to receive compensation or satisfaction. A feeling or silence signals the differend. These victims are unable to phrase the damages they have suffered in terms acceptable to the governing genre of discourse (i.e. in cognitive terms which can be heard by the court). This feeling both questions the authority of the current genres of discourse and calls for new idioms, phrase families, and genres of discourse. Their vengeance testifies to the need to express their experience in language which cannot yet be found.[186] But "vengeance has no legitimate authority." Rather, "it disavows the authority of any tribunal of phrases that would present itself as their unique, supreme tribunal."[187] This feeling signals the need to bring something to the knowledge of others.[188] A wrong cannot be expressed in litigation as a damage without itself suffering a loss. Thus, there is a dispute between phrases due to the rules of the discourse genre governing the linking of phrases (here, legal phrases).

Judgment is passed on heterogeneous phrases by a tribunal on the basis of one genre of discourse.[189] Heterogeneous phrases from different regimens are transcribed in accordance with one genre of discourse. This happens whenever a phrase from one regimen is linked onto by a phrase from another regimen. The rules governing the phrase from the former discourse genre are disregarded by the latter. This damages the "witness" that the phrase tries to make to its event. When the link is made, all the deictics in the former phrase are oriented and placed under the rule of the genre of discourse controlling the latter phrase. Since the phrase linking to the former phrase follows the rule of the discourse genre to which it belongs, the "witness" of the former phrase is ignored. Its authority is disregarded. The "gap" that lies between the two phrases, at the presentation of the latter phrase, is forgotten and filled in by the linking genre of discourse, which orients the phrase toward its end. This wrongs and damages the prior phrase, which is judged not on the basis of the rules governing its genre of discourse, but by the rules of another genre of discourse. The disagreement between phrases is turned into a litigation. The differend signaled by the phrase which is presented is forgotten,

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[185] Lyotard notes that victims can be denied the ability to prove the damage they've suffered in a number of ways: by depriving them of life, liberty, freedom to publicize their opinions, or of the right to testify. But there is still one more way to silence them: deprive the testifying phrase of any authority. Ibid.
[186] Ibid., 31 [D44].
[187] Ibid., 30-31 [D44].
[188] Lyotard offers that vengeance cannot be grounded in the "rights of man." Instead, it calls upon the "authority of the heterogeneous." Ibid., 31 [D44].
[189] Ibid., 140 [D196].

and the dispute is adjudicated under the rules of the genre of discourse governing the linkage of the two phrases. The resulting judgment fills in the gaps between heterogeneous phrase regimens. The differend is forgotten. One discourse – and its rule – is made to rule above the others.[190] Genres of discourse help us to forget the differend between heterogeneous phrases. They bury it in a litigation. But genres of discourse also compete with each other over the phrase to be linked.

2.6.3 Ends

Genres of discourse compete with each other over the phrase to be linked. Every linkage with a phrase is a battle between genres of discourse. These genres fight as well over their ends. Ends are set by what is at stake in each genre of discourse (i.e. knowledge, result, obedience etc.). Discourse genres include cognition, speculation, and obligation, among others. Although there are many other genres of discourse, we will discuss these three, since they form major blocks of Lyotard's argument in *The Differend*.[191]

2.6.3.1 Cognition

The cognitive genre of discourse is staked on the acquisition of knowledge. Its end is to establish the referent. As discussed above (2.4.2.4), this is done by naming the referent, assigning a meaning to the referent, and showing an example which verifies the meaning associated with the named and shown referent. Truth, therefore, is at stake in the cognitive genre of discourse.

Auschwitz, however, demonstrates the limits of cognition's pretensions to be able to fix and describe reality. The differend expressed by the survivor's silence indicates that something has not been described in the language cognition uses. A new idiom, regimen, genre, or expression struggles to be found. The wrong suffered cannot be communicated through the cognitive medium. Is there another phrase that can do justice to the suffering the survivors experienced?

2.6.3.2 Speculation

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[190] Lyotard says that the title of the book, *Le différend*, suggests "that a universal rule of judgment between heterogeneous genres is lacking in general." Ibid., xi.
[191] Other genres of discourse mentioned in the text include: narration; dialogue; folksongs; the erotic, dialectic, ethical, rhetorical, ironic, tragic, technological; and etc. See for example, ibid., 129, 136 [D181, D183].

The speculative genre of discourse links phrases together according to the rule of the Resultat. Its end is the formation of a concept. Lyotard, in fact, identifies this genre as a set of rules dictating the formation and linkage of phrases. Truth is expressed in a series of phrases, which disentangle its equivocation. "Everything real is rational, everything rational is real."[192]

Opposition is the mainspring powering this movement through phrases. According to Lyotard, speculative discourse is staked on the rule of the Resultat: "Engender every phrase as the expressed identity of the preceding ones, including the present phrase."[193] Speculation requires ambiguity and doubtfulness. It requires phrases which can co-present several universes. The ambiguous relationship between these presented universes allows the *Selbst* to move forward toward its final univocality in the expression of the speculative concept. Speculation also needs the rule of immanent derivation so that a dilemma or contradiction can form between phrases.[194] The resulting dilemma is "solved" through the expression of the result, which both incorporates the contradictory phrases and eliminates the dilemma.[195] Lyotard transcribes Hegel's method into his system of phrase mechanics. He notes that Hegel maintains the exteriority of the self which is "near itself" and the subject which posits itself (the "we") until the abstract moment, when the exteriority between the two phrases dissolves. It is at this moment when the self comes "in the place of" the "we," which has been removed, and the object of thought thinks itself "for itself."[196] Lyotard describes this process as a serial operation between phrases. He notes that the *Selbst* is instanced sequentially as referent, sense, and addressee.[197] In this movement between phrases the continuous is "given the edge" over the *Ereignis*. Lyotard argues that the before/after passage "bears the name of *Selbst, soi, self*."[198]

Lyotard opposes the pretentions of the speculative genre to be able to explain everything as being rational, as following from its rule. In fact, Lyotard notes that speculative reasoning is only possible *after* the establishment of its rule. The requirement that every phrase be the engenderment and expression of preceding phrases, including the current phrase, can only be followed if the rule itself is presumed. It can only be carried out after it has been founded. Thus, Lyotard argues that the speculative rule has been "presupposed and

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[192] Ibid., 179 [D257].

[193] Ibid., 97 [Hegel Notice, § 4].

[194] Lyotard expresses this rule as: "*If p, then not-p,* and *If not-p, then p. If you win, then you lose; if you lose, then you win,*" or "*If Being, then Not-Being; if Not-Being, then Being.*" This brings dilemma into the speculative process. See ibid., 94 [Hegel Notice, § 2].

[195] The result found is *q*. And the process is described as "*If p, then not-p, then q;* and, *If not-p, then p, then q.*" The "and" is included and required by the last round to incorporate both "rounds" into the result.

[196] Lyotard, *The Differend*, 95 [Hegel Notice, § 3].

[197] "The *Selbst* is removed from one instance to another, from the sense in itself (referent) to the sense for itself (addressee), but it is preserved and raised since it is reflected in the speculum of the phrase universe." Ibid., 93 [Hegel Notice, § 1].

[198] Ibid., 94 [Hegel Notice, § 2].

not engendered."[199] This contradicts the ends of philosophical discourse – to find a rule which is yet to be found, and to link all phrases on the basis of that search for a rule.

Auschwitz is an example of the end of speculative pretentions. It is an example of the "splitting apart" of the *Selbst*. Auschwitz is a name "in which" speculative thought grinds to a halt, jams, and incessantly chews on its lack of result. It is a "name" without a speculative result, which is unable to maintain its being in death, and lacks the magical power to change the negative into Being. There is no "we" at Auschwitz. Rather, there are two phrases (the SS phrase and the Jewish phrase) together in space and time, "but they are not together dialectically."[200] Neither phrase has a marked addressee in their phrase universe. The Nazi phrase excludes the Jew as its addressee (in fact, it excludes all non-Aryans). This phrase speaks as a "legislator:" *That s/he die, I decree it.*[201] The only addressee of the Nazi phrase is the Nazi. Nor can the Jew place him/herself as the addressee within the Jewish phrase: *That I die, s/he decrees it*. The Jew, as addressee, can't recognize the addressor who speaks this phrase. S/he is excluded from the legislating body that made the decree. Therefore, there is no "we" to command the Jew's death. This denies to the Jew the "beautiful death" (for the Jewish people), since the one ordering his or her death is unknown to the Jew. Without a "we," there can be no self-sacrificing of one's life, and there can be no speculative resultat.

The Nazi does not need to consult with anyone else over the laws Nazis make. No one has the right to exist, if they are not of the Aryan race. Genealogy is confused with the good, and this empowers the Nazi campaign to exterminate all those who do not belong to the race. As a result, "there is no passage from the deportee's phrase universe to the SS's phrase universe."[202] The only thing required of the non-Aryan is to cease to exist. But terror reigns within Nazism – the terror of impurity, of not being Nazi enough. This drives Nazis to fulfill the mythic narrative of the Nordic peoples: "if you are Aryan, tell, hear, and carry out the Aryan 'beautiful death'."[203]

Mythic narrative is repetitive: "if you are…, tell, hear, and carry out." This jams speculative dialectics. "What does not enter into this repetition, such as the Jewish idiom, is not sublated but disregarded, it is shoved into oblivion."[204] The Nazi phrase remains isolated, insulated, and defiant. It disregards any other expression of the event – especially the Jewish phrase which is distinguished by its marking of the addressee instance (*Listen, Israel*).

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[199] Ibid., 97 [Hegel Notice, § 4].

[200] Ibid., 104 [D159].

[201] This prescriptive phrase is legitimized by the norm that is based on the genre of mythic narrative, namely that only "Aryans" have a right to life. To be non-Aryan is to be nothing, to be excluded as an addressee of the Nazi phrase, and to have no right to live. The "final solution" is "simply a police action of vitalism, a political or policing Darwinism." See ibid.

[202] Ibid., 102 [D158].

[203] Ibid., 105 [D160].

[204] Ibid., 106 [D160].

Thus, Auschwitz presents speculative thought with an experience without a name. In the death of the camps, there are two silences: silence from the SS and silence from the deportees. Here are two phrases without a passage between them. There is, in fact, no differend between the two phrases. No common idiom exists between them. Nor is there a tribunal which can hear the complaint. Not even the mockery of a trial is possible. "The Jewish phrase has not taken place."[205] Therefore, Auschwitz cannot give us a *determined content* (contra Hegel). There is no determination; no result. Lyotard says that Auschwitz refutes speculative thinking and its claim that "everything real is rational, everything rational is real… This crime at least, which is real… is not rational."[206]

2.6.3.3 Obligation

Obligation, as a genre of discourse, is staked on obedience. It is expressed through the prescriptive phrase – through the law. That phrase says, "You ought to…" Simply by hearing that phrase the addressee becomes obligated. The prescriptive phrase resembles a performative phrase, since it causes what it produces (that is, a feeling of obligation). Obligation is not thought nor deduced. It is felt. Obligation is not simply a question of obedience; rather, it is a state of being obligated, of being held captive, of being a hostage, to the one who calls. This other is not known to be the addressee. The other comes in weakness with a request, and that request binds its addressee.

The demand of the prescription is only heard by the obligated person. For the state of obligation to occur that request must be heard as a call. Simply by hearing that call, the person is instanced as the addressee of a prescription. S/he is assailed by the request of the other, who remains unknown to the addressee, and his or her "I" is taken captive. The "I" is turned into a "You," through the phrase that says, "You ought to…"[207] The self is cleaved, and it can choose to resist or to comply. But it will feel the state of being taken hostage by the other.

Levinas argues that the self is absolutely closed as a fortress upon itself. However, this does not prevent movement from within its enclosed place. Rather, movement is allowed from the outside, that is, from the other, which comes and captures the self. Obligation occurs when the other comes from the outside in all its poverty and weakness with a request. This event discombobulates the sense of the self and turns it into non-sense. The self taken

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[205] Ibid.

[206] Ibid., 179 [D257].

[207] Levinas argues that the otherness of the other makes it a "marvel" for the "I." By befalling the "I," the other turns the "I's" sense into non-sense, as it breaks into the enclosed domain of the self's constitution (*e.g.* the I). Lyotard transcribes this as an unknown addressor instancing the self upon the addressee instance. The scandal is the violent displacement of the ego from the addressor instance onto the addressee instance. In short, a displacement from the I instance to the you instance. See ibid., 110-111 [Levinas Notice, § 1].

hostage, by the request of the other, cannot know who the other is, nor can it comprehend its message. All the self "knows" is that it is obliged to do something. The other comes and takes the self hostage through its liability for the other. Lyotard calls this liability for the other "a fracture in the ego's fortress."[208] Obligation does not flow from a law common to the ego and to the other. It results from our liability – one for the other – which has two sides: freedom and persecution. Freedom is the experience for the ego that says yes to the request from an unknowable other, which is an "undecipherable message."[209] But the other can also become a persecutor, when the "I" protests against the request, against its being taken hostage, and returns to the place where it had been dislodged as a "you." Then the other accuses the one who betrayed it. The other is betrayed and the ego is oppressed.

Lyotard critiques Levinas' analysis of the ego as sounding like a Hegelian move, where there is "no ego without other, no other without ego." Levinas tries to jam the gears of speculative thinking by insisting on the otherness of the other. The ego may be constituted by the action of the other, which causes the narcissistic movement of the ego to reconstitute itself as "for itself." But he insists that the other is truly other, and he says that this can be known by the fact that the other discombobulates the ego. By such reasoning Levinas wants to avoid a "reversible totality." The self is not enriched by the appearance of the other. Rather, it is suppressed "as the subject of an experience."[210] But Lyotard critiques Levinas' claims as the writing of a narrative from the position of one who has passed out of a state of obligation. He offers commentary on an experience from which he has already recovered. Levinas is speaking of the second person (you) in the language of the third person (the you). This can only be done once Levinas has passed through the crisis of obligation, once his spirits have been revived.[211] Lyotard also questions whether speculation is not governing Levinas' commentary, since the phrase that comments instances the "I" and "you" as referents in the universe of its phrase. This phrase gives a sense (or meaning) to each of the terms, and it ascribes meaning to the terms as a whole (in this case, in an asymmetrical relationship). Levinas' commentary speaks from the position of a we, which eradicates the difference between the "I" and "you." Thus, speculation has been operating as a meta-description within the argument. Lyotard questions whether Levinas' attempt to discombobulate speculation has succeeded.

In the opening of the ego to the other, Lyotard sees an indication of the fracturing of the self. The ego's ability to receive the request from the other is a sign that it is not closed off nor insulated from all outside influences. The person under obligation "hears" the call of the

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[208] Ibid., 112 [Levinas Notice, § 2].
[209] Ibid.
[210] Ibid., 113 [Levinas Notice, § 2].
[211] Ibid.

addressor. S/he is immediately instanced as the addressee of a prescription: "You ought to…" The addressee is assailed by the request of the other – one who remains unknown to the addressee – which takes his or her "I" captive. Lyotard describes the ethical condition as the presentation of a universe in which the addressor instance is "left empty," where it might be "absolutely" unmarked. The hostage is estranged from all experience and cognition, since these can only occur in the first person (I), not in the second person (you). It is specifically this inability to testify to the call of the other which marks the ethical universe.[212]

Obligation is signaled to a third party as a sign – i.e. that the person is under obligation. Obligation exceeds cognition. It cannot be described without the obliged person losing the sense of being under obligation. Lyotard argues that "the law is transcendent to all intellection."[213] It can neither be described nor deduced. But the tribunal, which makes judgments based on the cognitive genre of discourse, can require that the obliged person name the addressor of the prescriptive and expose the meaning of its command. If the obligated person does so, s/he is faced with a dilemma: either express the prescription in terms acceptable to cognition, thereby converting the law into a description, in which case he or she will no longer be in a state of obligation; or, recognize that the obligation cannot be expressed in terms acceptable to cognition, in which case the court cannot hear the testimony offered, since it will be viewed as unreasonable. To phrase the obligation is to assume that the "I" can be simultaneously the addressor of experience and the addressee who "assumes" the prescription. "Through this dilemma, the family of cognitive phrases annexes the family of prescriptive phrases, the I effaces the you," Lyotard writes.[214]

"The law is transcendent to all intellection," Lyotard notes, and, as a result, the splitting of the *Selbst* humbles the speculative genre and its claims to total rationality. He implies that the ethical genre of discourse is like the philosophical genre, in that it admits no rule except obligation without conditions.[215] There is an abyss which separates obligation from cognition.[216] This points, once again, to the heterogeneity of genres of discourse.

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[212] Ibid., 115-116 [D172].

[213] Ibid., 107 [D161].

[214] Ibid., 117 [D176].

[215] Ibid., 117 [D175].

[216] In an extended note on Kant, Lyotard points out the difficulties Kant has in establishing the prescription through deduction. Lyotard argues that it cannot be done. Kant's failure to establish the moral law leads Kant to argue that the reality of the moral law "is firmly established of itself." Kant also has trouble establishing the existence of freedom. He attempts this, however, by reversing the direction of his deductive argument. But this makes the law into a quasi-fact (*e.g.* one that cannot be empirically established). Lyotard argues that obligation is not a phenomenon that can be proven in the world of sensibility (thus Kant's difficulties). Rather, obligation is received as a "sort of a fact" by the faculty of desire. Lyotard asserts that the law cannot be deduced. Kant's reversal of the deductive argument – in order to establish freedom – establishes freedom as the conclusion of a deduction made from within the phrase of obligation. Lyotard writes, "Obligation is not a fact that can be attested, but only a feeling, a fact of reason, a sign. Freedom is deduced negatively," since it begins with the quasi-fact of obligation. The necessity for this reversal of the deductive argument points to the heterogeneity

2.6.4 Politics

The question of how to link phrases and genres of discourse is brought to the fore in the area of politics. Lyotard notes that Kant never wrote the Critique of Political Reason; however, politics appears throughout Kant's writings. Lyotard sees this as a sign of what is particular to politics: that politics does not have a particular "object." As a result, the linking of phrases *is* the question of politics. Since only one genre of discourse can link with the phrase, all other competing genres lose. Thus, every linking of a phrase produces differends. Lyotard writes, "It is not a genre, it is the multiplicity of genres, the diversity of ends, and par excellence the question of linkage."[217]

The phrase presents a universe which is "social." This "social" aspect of the phrase is presupposed in every phrase. [218] The phrase's four instances are situated in relation to each other (*e.g.* addressor, addressee, sense, and referent), appearing with the presentation of the phrase. It occurs immediately, even in the smallest phrase, given with the phrase itself. None of the instances is deduced from the other instances. But in the social they are related to human names (*I* or *we*; *you*; and *he*, *she*, or *they*). The addressor, addressee, and referent instances can be situated in a plethora of ways; however, the phrase regimen will determine the manner in which the sense is situated. This "social" aspect of the phrase is presupposed in every phrase. Politics involves the question of linking of phrases. Thus, social discord arrives with the political question – which finality will be the stakes of the linking of phrases? Each phrase must link with another phrase which is governed by a discourse genre. Politics is the field where struggle occurs,[219] where differends are necessarily translated into damages (or litigations) by the tribunal. In a question of how to link to the next phrase, the politician cannot stake his or her work on the good. S/he must choose for the lesser evil. A staking of politics on the good will necessarily lead to differends, since the presented phrase will have to be linked to under the rule of a genre of discourse. This inevitably leads to the filling in, forgetting, or passing over of differends. Thus, the politician should choose for the lesser evil – as the political good. Lyotard defines evil as "the incessant interdiction of possible phrases, a defiance of the occurrence, the contempt for Being."[220] In contradistinction to this, Lyotard wants us to remain open to the differend.

Modern democracies expose the differend through their style of deliberation. Differends are thought to be resolved through an Idea expressed by a canonical phrase (an

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of cognitive and ethical phrases. There is no common language between them. Instead, there is an abyss separating the two phrases. See ibid., 118-123 [Kant 2].

[217] Ibid., 138 [D190].

[218] Ibid., 139 [D193].

[219] Lyotard mentions (civil) war, class struggle, and revolutionary violence. See ibid., 140 [D197].

[220] Ibid.

interrogative prescriptive): *What ought we to be*? Answers can be given to this question such as *free*, *equal*, *happy*, *American*, *rich*, and etc. These values are rarely debated, taken as granted, and presumed to be commonly held. But they are not necessary (*e.g.* one does not have to be free). The canonical phrase is modified by a second question: *What ought we to do in order to be that*? The prescription (*e.g. to be free*) is thus modified and made into a hypothetical (*e.g. if* you want to be this, *then* do that). The means of achieving this desired end is brought to the fore by the additional question: *What about the means*? An analysis of available resources is made (*e.g.* information, opinion polls, inventoried supplies, etc.), and the expertise of scientists, experts, technicians, and consultants is put to use. The question here is the establishment of reality, which lies firmly in the cognitive genre of discourse. Through this process, the cognitive genre is put into the service of the prescriptive genre to bring about its ends (to be *free*, *equal*, *happy*, and etc.). This establishes the givens of the democracy, answering the question of identity (*What ought we to be*?)

Deliberation in political bodies occurs under another canonical phrase: *What can we do*? Scenarios are built up of possible future realities, which are phrases of the imagination. Debates are held, following dialectical and rhetorical genres, where the stakes are on winning. The goal is either to silence your opponent or to win them over to your side. A decision is made, wherein a judgment is rendered, (often by ballot) for the least bad choice. Lyotard remarks that judgment is "the most enigmatic of phrases, the one which follows no rules."[221]

Deliberative politics allows the differend to be exposed. The abyss separating phrases and genres of discourse is brought out into the open, and the "social bond" is allowed to be threatened by schism. What holds the body politic together is the answer to the canonical phrase: *What ought we to be*? It is the nature of politics, as a concatenation of genres, which permits the appearance of the event and of differends. This stands in stark contrast to narratives, which "drive the event back to the border."[222]

2.6.5 The Archipelago

Lyotard pictures the heterogeneity of discourse genres and their relation to the faculty of judgment as an archipelago. Jutting out from the water are islands with distinct shorelines, separate from one another. Each island symbolizes a genre of discourse, which is separate and particular from all other genres of discourse. An admiral (or ship owner) travels between these islands. As he moves about, the admiral secures empirical data (facts) and rules for the formation and linking of phrases (phrase regimens and genres of discourse, respectively). It doesn't matter whether he comes to trade or to attack; the admiral presents on one island what

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[221] Ibid., 149 [D214].
[222] Ibid., 152 [D219].

he found on the other island. This admiral represents the faculty of judgment. He functions as an "as-if" intuition. The admiral does not have his own island; rather, he makes it possible for the object of one faculty (or capacity for cognition) to find "passage" to the other faculties of knowledge.[223] He travels the sea (Kant describes this as a field),[224] which symbolizes the relation of objects capable of validating a phrase to the cognitive faculty.
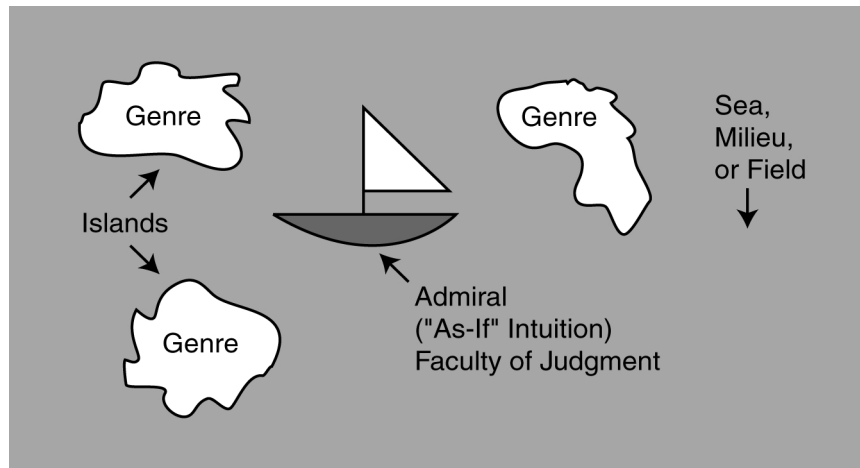
Passages between the faculties (*e.g.* reason, understanding, and sensibility) are made by the faculty of judgment (the admiral), which is the only faculty not having an object within the sea (or milieu, or field). Heterogeneous genres of discourse are synthesized by the admiral, who judges "as if" he has a rule, when a "passage" needs to be made from one genre to another. The judge makes up for what is lacking in the case between the two parties. Kant describes this as "an arrangement to the satisfaction of both parties."[225] Lyotard remarks that this compromise without a rule reflects a principle of respecting heterogeneity. The compromise is called the "guiding thread" (*fil conducteur*), and is the reflective judgment

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[223] Lyotard gives a list of these faculties for the cognitive faculty: the faculty of judgment, the understanding, reason, and sensibility. See ibid., 131 [Kant 3, § 1].

[224] Kant uses other metaphors to depict the dispersion of faculties of the understanding: sometimes as domains, territories, or fields. The metaphor of the field is used by Kant when he tells the founding story of the critical tribunal in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Lyotard describes the place where the battle between heterogeneous families of phrases will take place as the "champ de bataille." In deciding among many claims, the critical judge does not outright exclude the other phrase families, since these other presentations should be possible at some other time. Indeed, he welcomes them. This, Lyotard says, points to the heterogeneity of the family of phrases. When heterogeneous families of phrases make a claim of saying "c'est le cas," the critical judge must examine each assertion upon the critical field of battle. Lyotard uses "family of phrases" in place of Kant's "representation." In *L'enthusiasme*, Lyotard discusses Kant's depiction of "enthusiasm" on the level of genres of discourse. This is in contrast to his discussion on the level of phrase regimens in his earlier work, *Le différend*. See Jean-François Lyotard, *Enthusiasm: The Kantian Critique of History*, ed. Mieke Bal and Hent de Vries, trans., Georges Van Den Abbeele, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 9.

[225] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans., N. K. Smith (New York: 1929). As cited by Lyotard, *The Differend*, 133 [Kant 3, § 3].

looking for singularities, which have been forgotten by the cognitive phrase, in the presumption that there is an order in them. It judges as if there is such an order, on the basis of an end. The end is an Idea lacking an object which can be directly presented.[226] When the judge rules "as-if" there is a rule, he presents a sign, in place of an obstensible, to validate the case before him. The sign points to the presentation of a quasi-phrase, one who's sense cannot be validated under cognitive rules, but which should be considered. This sign is a feeling that something escapes reason; that something waits to be expressed.

Lyotard later modified his presentation of the archipelago in his book *L'enthousiasme* (published three years after *Le différend* in 1986). In this version of the archipelago Lyotard goes further in the direction of the dispersion of the faculties of the understanding than he did in *The Differend*. Lyotard questions whether the faculty of judgment, as presented by Kant in the third *Critique*, is a faculty or not.[227] "That is why we may wonder whether it is indeed a faculty of knowledge in the Kantian sense."[228] In the third *Critique* the faculty of judgment is a "master" which receives a major privilege to unify heterogeneous phrases and to recognize the phrase which can validate a case. Lyotard says that these abilities are presupposed by the critique; namely, that in every case a phrase must encounter an object by which it may be presented for validation. As a result, all of the phrases are made into one whole, through this demand of the possibility of judging all objects. The faculty of judgment judges according to the ideal of the philosophical legislator of human reason, who is "sensitive to the essential ends of that reason."[229] Lyotard argues, however, for the incommensurability of heterogeneous phrase families.

In postmodern thinking there is "the feeling of a fissure in that great deliberative political core."[230] This fission (or radical incommensurability) is characteristic of the state existing between phrase families and genres of discourse. In *Enthusiasm* Lyotard is moving further along the trajectory he set in *The Differend*: to think phrases without the subject.[231] Each island in the archipelago was thought of as delineating a genre of discourse in *The Differend*. Now each island marks out the area of a *phrase family*. This leaves the genres of discourse free to roam around the sea. The faculty of judgment plies trade or war among the

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[226] An example would be accounting for instances which do not fit within a mechanically deterministic world. There is no universal tribunal that can decide between the regimens of cognition and of freedom. In such a case, the passage between the two genres is regulated by the judge's supplementation of the Idea of nature. This idea functions as a "guiding thread" to lead the reflective judgment through the passage between the two regimens.

[227] "I say 'at least' because it is a question, the whole question perhaps, of knowing whether this faculty of judgment is a faculty." Lyotard, *Enthusiasm*, 11.

[228] Ibid., 12.

[229] Ibid., 44.

[230] Ibid., 63.

[231] Lyotard acknowledges that one of the stakes of *The Differend* is "to refute the prejudice anchored in the reader by centuries of humanism and of 'human sciences' that there is 'man,' that there is 'language'…" Lyotard, *The Differend*, xiii.

islands as the philosophical genre of discourse.[232] It constantly seeks to find a "passage" among heterogeneous phrase families in its quest to find the ends of human reason. The critique employs guiding threads and symbols to constantly find a way to present the object. Its stake is to be a legislation of the powers of knowledge. But there are many genres, and the logical conclusion to Lyotard's argument is that there are many captains sailing around the archipelago each with its own stake.

2.6.6 "Strategies – of No-One"

Lyotard does not think that "we" make use of "language." [233] Indeed, he announces at the beginning of the book that one of his stakes is to convince the reader to abandon his or her prejudice that there is either "language" or "man" [*sic*].[234] Rather, he wants to bring the revolution of quantum mechanics or of relativity to "language." Lyotard is building a phrase philosophy. One phrase calls for the event of another phrase. Being does not need people, nor does it need language. Rather, you are situated in the phrase universe of the phrase that happens, either as the addressor, addressee, sense, or referent. The phrase wasn't waiting on you. "You come when it arrives."[235] Language is at peace with itself. This peace is disturbed only by the wills of human beings.

Lyotard rejects the idea that there is any correspondence between phrase regimens and genres of discourse with any human faculties (either of cognition or of the "soul"). He does, however, allow that there may be certain "overlappings" between them (for example, between certain descriptives and the faculty of cognition).[236] Attempts to harmonize phrase regimens and discourse genres with human faculties will fail. However, human drives result from tensions to link to the next phrase in a particular manner as required by the rules of competing

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[232] The question can be asked, "Is philosophy a metanarrative?" The answer, as Boeve notes, is "no." "Perhaps philosophy appears, certainly in the light of the first [discourse], to be a meta-language; however, it can hardly be itself unless it realizes that it is not a meta-language (D228): in other words, it is a genre that has as it rule to always be searching for its own rules – its own presuppositions – through research into other phrases, phrase regimens, discourse genres, ... (D98). This means that the philosophical discourse links phrases together such that it is demonstrated that this linking is not determined, but that the rule for the linking must still be found (D180). And as a genre it has its own place in the heterogeneity of discourse genres without a privileged place from which to make a judgment. It also lacks this pretention; this in distinction from the speculative genre, which certainly does pursue hegemony." Lieven Boeve, "Spreken over God in 'Open Verhalen': De Theologie Uitgedaagd Door Het Postmoderne Denken" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, K.U. Leuven, 1995), 184-185 (my translation).

[233] "'We' do not employ language." See Lyotard, *The Differend*, 55 [D91].

[234] "To refute the prejudice anchored in the reader by centuries of humanism and of 'human sciences' that there is 'man,' that there is 'language,' that the former makes use of the latter for his own ends, and that if he does not succeed in attaining these ends, it is for want of good control over language 'by means' of a 'better' language." Ibid., xiii.

[235] Ibid., 116 [D173].

[236] Ibid., 137 [D187].

genres of discourse. Our "intentions" come from what can be gained or won within the rules of these discourse genres; genres that want to actualize themselves through linkage with the phrase in which we are instantiated as one of the four phrase instances (addressor, addressee, sense, or referent). The fact that we might want to describe this process differently is evidence of our anthropocentrism.[237]

2.7 NARRATIVES

Narrative is the genre of discourse which can most easily forget the dispute between heterogeneous phrase regimens and genres of discourse. Lyotard describes the narrative genre as a provincial settlement: a *vicus*. The *Volk* shuts itself up, within the walls of the settlement. Behind walls constructed of proper names, the *Volk* forgets the disputes between phrases. Conflict is forgotten in the *vicus*: it occurs at the borders. "Narratives drive the event back to the border."[238]

The end of the narrative genre is "to come to an end." So, although a narrative tells stories about conflicts and disputes (differends), it always imposes an end on them. Indeed, the narrative genre assumes that the differend itself can come to an end. It presumes that the last word will be a "good one." Each story is made up of a chain of "turns." Whichever turn is the last one, as presented in the time frame given by the story (diegetic time), its phrase will organize all of the previous phrases back to the beginning, and an end will be impressed on all the prior phrases. The event (the now) is "swallowed up" by the diachronic operator, (the before/after) and the event is pushed out to the *pagus*.

In the border regions, or *pagi*, conflicts occurs, as genres of discourse compete with each other over the presented phrase. It's in the district, the *pagus*, where war is fought and commerce is carried out.

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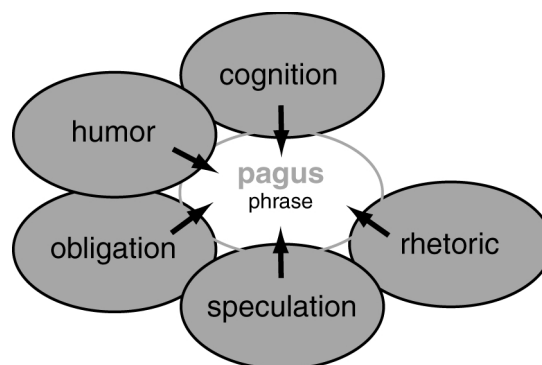
[237] "We believe that we want to persuade, to seduce, to convince, to be upright, to cause to believe, or to cause to question, but this is because a genre of discourse, whether dialectical, erotic, didactic, ethical, rhetorical, or 'ironic,' imposes its mode of linking onto 'our' phrase and onto 'us.' There is no reason to call these tensions intentions or wills, except for the vanity of ascribing to our account what is due to occurrence and to the differend it arouses between ways of linking onto it." Ibid., 136 [D183].
[238] Ibid., 152 [D219].

But peace reigns within the *vicus*, where the *Volk* constructs a home (a *Heim*). A narrative authorized by proper names "shelters" the people as it pushes the event to the border. Peace is made, within the narrative "home," by forgetting the occurrence.[239]

Lyotard uses the Cashinahua tribe to illustrate this point of narrative's forgetfulness. Among the Cashinahua, Lyotard notes, the governance of phrases has been given to narration.[240] Names and named instances fix a world of Cashinahua names, allowing persons and instances to be determined by its name. The tribe's identity is based on a finite number of names, which are carefully distributed among tribal members. These names appear in Cashinahua tales which are told repetitively from generation to generation. Only a person given a Cashinahua name can hear these stories. Naming is central to identity and existence. In fact, to be human one must be named. If a child does not receive a name, that child doesn't exist. When negotiations within the tribe fail and infants are left unnamed they are either aborted or suffer infanticide.[241] The storyteller also has a Cashinahua name, which is one of a limited number of possible names given to him on the basis of his place within one of eight possible kinship groups. Men and pre-pubescent girls may listen to the stories, as long as they bear a Cashinahua name. The names used in the stories revolve around this set of names, so that the person hearing the ancient stories hears about "his" or "her" exploits through the connections made by names. "To be named is to be told about."[242] This system of names protects the tribe from the "now" (i.e. the event) as names continually reactive the Cashinahua world wherein phrase universes are instanced as a-chronic.[243]

Among the Cashinahua, the indeterminate is lost. It didn't happen. The event can never appear in Cashinahua stories because of their rigid world of names. Lyotard describes the indeterminate (i.e. the event) as being sacrificed to the security of names, which shelters the Cashinahua from the occurrence. The event is unacceptable within Cashinahua culture. It's like sacrificial smoke that wafts up and disappears.[244] Narration cannot digest it; however, the event frees itself from narration.

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[239] This is especially true in the mythic genre. Nazis have completely forgotten the Jewish event, because "it never happened." Non-Aryans have no right to exist. Similarly, tribal members of the Cashinahua people are the "true men," [*sic*] since they carry Cashinahua names. Among the Cashinahua, to have a name is to be human; to have no name is not to exist. In both cases, the event of the Other (the person outside of the authorized group) is forgotten because s/he does not bear an Aryan or Cashinahua name. Ibid., 103-106, and 152-155 [D159-160, Cashinahua Notice].

[240] Ibid., 141 [D198].

[241] Ibid., 153 [Cashinahua Notice, § 3].

[242] Ibid., 153 [Cashinahua Notice, § 4].

[243] Each recounting of a Cashinahua story begins with a standard introduction: "Here is the story of …, as I've always heard it told. I am going to tell it to you in my turn, listen to it!" The story ends with a fixed ending: "Here ends the story of… He who told it to you is… (Cashinahua name), or among the Whites… (Spanish or Portuguese name)." As cited from André Marcel d'Ans, *Le dit des Vrais Hommes : Mythes, contes, légendes et traditions des Indiens Cashinahua* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1978), 7. See Lyotard, *The Differend*, 152 [Cashinahua Notice, § 1].

[244] Lyotard, *The Differend*, 154 [Cashinahua Notice, § 7].

Once again, narration easily forgets the dispute between heterogeneous phrase regimens and genres of discourse. When a narrative forgets the event it closes itself off from that which is other to it. In so doing, it makes a claim to be able to represent all of reality. Lyotard wants to resist such a move. He proposes that we pay attention to the phrase (i.e. the sentence) as a way of resisting the claims of grand narratives. His phrase pragmatics gives heed to *how* language works as a way of countering the claims of the grand narrative (*e.g.* of being able to determine *what* language means).

2.7.1 Grand Narratives

A grand narrative (*grand récit*) is a story that asserts its ability to disclose the true meaning of all other "little narratives," by transcending them. The grand narrative puts an end to phrases (or "little narratives") by allegedly revealing the particular truth buried within them. It does this by presuming a cognitive apparatus.[245] For a grand narrative, the purpose of narratives is as source material for the extraction of their meaning. The perspective of an objective, third-party observer is often claimed; specifically, of one who is not directly involved in what is being observed.

Phrases usually link up in serial order, and genres of discourse compete with each other over the phrase as it is presented. But this does not happen with grand narratives. Instead, phrases are linked up in parallel with the grand narrative. At each point of linking, the grand narrative determines the rules of linkage and the instantiation of instances within the phrase universe. Phrases are made to fit within the stakes of the grand narrative.
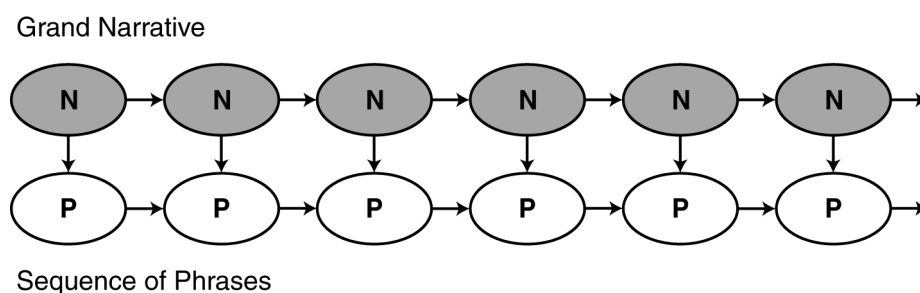
Grand narratives are the product of the Enlightenment. They claim to be able to tell us something about "humanity" (*e.g.* about "humanity's" progress or weakness), and they

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[245] Bill Readings writes, "The implicit epistemological claim of a metanarrative is to put an end to narration by revealing the meaning of narratives. This rests upon the assumption that the force of narratives is synonymous with the meaning that may be found in them, that narrative is to be wholly understood in terms of the production and transmission of meaning, that it is a conceptual instrument of representation." See Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics*, ed. Christopher Norris, Critics of the Twentieth Century (London: Routledge, 1991), 63.

present a totalized history or a project for humanity.[246] In so doing, grand narratives seek to make of their particular claim a universal truth.

2.7.1.1 Mythic Narratives

During the Third Reich, Nazis elevated the mythic genre into the role of grand narrative through an "archaic, modern politics."[247] Nazis claimed that only "Aryan blood" counts. In so doing, the Nazis took a communal politics and made it into a "politics of humanity."[248] Humanity is equated with a particular race, a specific blood, and a specific culture. These claims are asserted aesthetically in the vain of the funeral oration. The addressor of the Nazi story encourages true Germans to tell, hear, and carry out the Aryan "beautiful death." A slippage of pronouns allows the Nazi to instance him or herself on each of the phrase instances. "*We* (*e.g.* past, present, and future Aryans) tell ourselves that we have died well." Therefore, the obligation exists to "hear, tell, and do," just as their ancestors did, and just as they do. Nazis found themselves already located inside this narrative – it could not be entered into (except by a pure birth). Only those with Aryan blood are called on to fulfill the ends of this narrative. Other peoples are already outside of the narrative. They are in the way; they must be eliminated.[249] The Aryan myth makes universal claims about "humanity." Those born of Aryan stock are "human." The others are "animals;" they will be killed.

2.7.1.2 Story of History

One of the Enlightenment projects was to construct a "story of history." Little stories (*petit histories*) were incorporated into larger (meta-) narratives to discover the universal truth of humanity. But this is done at the cost of sublimating particularities into a grand universal. Lyotard resists precisely this move. The Cashinahua tribal narrative can be incorporated into the "story of history" by sublimating all Cashinahua names into the concept of "human." In so

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[246] Ibid.

[247] Lyotard, *The Differend*, 152 [D220].

[248] Ibid.

[249] A striking example of Nazi cynicism is found in Heinrich Himmler's speech to the Reichsfüehrer SS on 4 October 1943: "What happens to the Russians, to the Czechs, does not interest me in the slightest. What the nations can offer in the way of good blood of our type we will take, if necessary, by kidnapping their children and raising them here with us. Whether the other nations live in prosperity or starve to death interests me only insofar as we need them as slaves for our culture; otherwise, it is of no interest to me. Whether 10,000 Russian females fall down from exhaustion while digging an anti-tank ditch or not interests me only insofar as the anti-tank ditch for Germany is finished." See "Nuremberg Trial Proceedings, Vol. 3", Yale Law School http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/12-11-45.asp [accessed April 3, 2009]. For the full text of the speech, see *Nazism, 1919-1945: Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination*, ed. Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, Exeter Studies in History, vol. 3 (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2001), 919-921.

doing, their particular "little story" is made a part of the greater (transcendental) story of humanity. The Cashinahua become simply one of the many diverse peoples on this planet in the metanarrative of the story of history. Their "world" presented by Cashinahua phrases and based upon Cashinahua names is forgotten as a direct result of this sublimation. In fact, this is the stakes of the story of history: the "extinction of names." All we find at the end of the story is "humanity."

But Lyotard argues that heterogeneity exists among narratives as well. How does one link onto the Cashinahua narrative of "true men?" Particular names cannot be linked to an Idea (i.e. "humanity"). As a universal narrative, the story of history requires that the phrase instances be universalized. Names, places, times, and addressees must be applicable to everyone, everywhere, and at all times, since its purpose is to give a cognizable description of humans in a way that extracts the meaning of being "human." A chasm, therefore, opens up between the cognitive genre and the "savage" narrative genre. While conflict exists between the two stories (Cashinahua and "human"), there is no differend. Both stories are narratives, so there is not dispute between heterogeneous genres of discourse in this case. Rather, the sense of names, times, places, and their referents and senses is litigated. But this litigation cannot be heard by any tribunal. Only a "universal" tribunal could decide this case. Thus, the chasm remains open between the narratives (Cashinahua and historical cognition).

Like all narratives, the grand narrative is self-redemptive. It marches toward an end – an Idea – which retroactively orders all of the previous phrases under its rule. With the story of history this end is "humanity"; with capitalism the end is the Idea of freedom from poverty.

2.7.1.3 Capitalism – The Economic Genre

Capitalism is the genre which regulates everything under the rule of the exchange. This rule assumes parity between referents along with the addressors' and addressee's ability to switch places within phrase instances. The economic genre is built upon two phrases: (1) [addressor] x cedes to [addressee] y referent a, this [ostensible] thing; and (2) [addressor] y cedes to [addressee] x referent b, that [ostensible] thing.[250] Capitalism is staked on the rules of this economic phrase – cession and counter-cession.[251] Unlike other phrases which expect a particular "response,"[252] the economic phrase of cession presupposes the phrase of counter-cession. Within the economic genre, the only time that "counts" is the moment of exchange. Time expended to produce a commodity does not constitute economic time. Rather, this

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[250] Lyotard, *The Differend*, 173 [D240].
[251] Ibid., 178 [D252].
[252] A prescriptive phrase expects that it will be put into put into action; a rhetorical phrase expects that the addressee(s) will be moved; etc.

"production" time is stored up in the product until its presentation for exchange. Capital submits phrases of different genres (invention – phrase of the imagination, production – phrase of technical effectuation) to the phrase of exchange. Time spent to design and build a product is "lost" time. Capitalism makes money by gaining time. Both real and abstract times are exchanged with a view to gaining time.[253] Money is an abstraction (an "as if") for the exchange of time – either "real" time, or "stocked-up" time. As a result, currencies are compared and valued based on their ability to give and receive time. Under capitalism the economic genre swallows up all genres. It puts them under one rule: success is having gained time. Although capitalism can present itself as a philosophy of history, (providing better standards of living, security, and power) it is not seeking to build a universal history. Capitalism is constructing a world market.[254]

2.7.2 Signs of History

If there is a universal history, it would be signaled by signs of history, Lyotard claims. A sign of history is a feeling, an enthusiasm, expressed by those who look on at the events of history. Kant gives an example of such a sign in the enthusiasm of peoples outside of France, during the French Revolution.[255] Kant claims that their enthusiasm expressed the hope that something was happening, that humanity was progressing toward a better future. Such a sign of history should be universally felt and publicly apparent during times of historical portent. They signal humanity's expectation of and longing for progress and the betterment of the human condition by those viewing the events of history.

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[253] Time is money, and money is time.

[254] Lyotard, *The Differend*, 179 [D255].

[255] Lyotard discusses enthusiasm in his fourth note on Kant. The enthusiasm of the peoples outside of France functions as a sign, which would be expressed by the phrase: "Humanity is progressing towards the better." Such an idea can only be presented as a sign (*e.g.* an analogy). Cognition ignores such a speculative idea, since no objects of intuition can be supplied which can validate the phrase. It has nothing to say to the critical judge regarding the legitimization of the idea of progress within the historical-political. All that cognition sees in human history is disorder or chaos. But our disappointment at such a conclusion points to another process at work within the faculty of reason. Speculation takes historical phenomena and binds them together to gain a guiding thread – the Idea of a finality of nature. One supposes, therefore, the idea that providence is working throughout human history to bring about a finality wrought by freedom. Lyotard argues that there are two phrases at work here: the cognitive and the speculative. The spectator's enthusiasm points to the operation of the imagination in the extreme sublime phrase. There is the pleasure of finding humanity's role of presenting the unpresentable and pain at not being able to find a sensible object to do so. The imagination breaks all bounds in extending itself to present the Infinite; however, the passage over the abyss between the sensible world (cognition and materialism) and the suprasensible field (speculation, freedom, and finality) is never passed. Rather, the feeling of the spectators of the French Revolution remains in an agitated state vibrating above the abyss. Chaotic historical events stimulate the Ideas of the sublime. In the case of the spectators, phenomenon directly presented (the *gemeine Wesen*) has been confused with the Idea (of a republican social contract) analogically presented. Lyotard remarks that with enthusiasm one has gone as deep as possible within the area of the sublime and "advances far into heterogeneity." See ibid., 161-171 [Kant 4 Notice].

Lyotard uses the feeling of the sublime to resist the hegemony of cognition. Cognition links historical moments in a chain leading towards its desired goal: in this case, a description of the improvement of humanity. In the feeling of the sublime, something happens in the experience of life that comes too early for cognition. Thought is caught in suspension, vibrating, trying to present an object of cognition but unable to do so. This hesitation points to the border of the "island" of cognition. The event (i.e. the French Revolution) cannot be conceptualized at the moment the spectators begin to feel something sublime.[256] There is a limit to the hegemonic claims of cognition. Once the experience is cognized and phrased, something of the event is lost and forgotten. The event is suppressed.

The bravado of the past two centuries has faded, and less hopeful feelings appeared in the twentieth century. Lyotard, who spent much of his adult life working for the promotion of Marxism, questions how Marxism can continue. The feelings (anger, frustration, sadness) expressed in the worker's struggle signify a wrong, which still needs to be phrased; specifically, the subordination of work to exchange. But the proletariat, for which Marx argued, is identified with an Idea: the revolutionary subject. This referent cannot be presented. The ideal "person" cannot be found, nor the political party to which s/he belongs. Thus the International Association of Working Men struggles against the particularities of nations and historical-political realities. The party must put itself forward as the referent for a discourse that cannot be presented. It marks itself through signs/emotions.

That feeling is troubled now. Sorrow exudes from the spectators at the end of the twentieth century. In fact, Lyotard questions whether we still can believe in the concept of a sign of history.[257]

2.7.3 Guiding Threads

If the movement of human history is toward the good, there should be some goal towards which it moves. It was this idea of progress which developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: history is moving toward an end, a goal, or a terminus. This movement is signaled by a providence which beckons humanity toward a better future and which operates under the name of Nature. Reason longs for this progress, because providence is at work to bring human history to a finality or end. "Philosophies of history" were promulgated, which claimed to be able to fill in the abyss between heterogeneous genres and events.

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[256] A poignant example were the moments immediately after the two jets hit the World Trade Center buildings on September 11, 2001. The first collision brought questions to mind: "How could this happen?" "Surely, this was an accident?" But the second collision brought panic: "What's happening?" "Is this an attack?" "Who's attacking us?" "Why?" As each of the four incidents was reported, the panic grew. These events came too early for cognition.

[257] Lyotard asks, "Are 'we' today still able to give credence to the concept of a sign of history?" Lyotard, *The Differend*, 179 [D255].

"Humanity" was the name which could bridge heterogeneous genres of discourse. But there are other names now, Lyotard argues, and these names offer counter claims to those of the "philosophies of history," which said that they could guarantee passage over the event.[258] In light of these other names, Lyotard asks, can we still believe that Nature "continues to signal, to make signs, to hold out guiding threads?"[259]

Lyotard attributes such views of history and economics to a Christian background, which is rooted in the Christian narrative of love. Humanity is seen as redeeming itself; it moves towards the terminus of forgiveness and the Kingdom of God. But narratives can engender universal histories once they have been stripped of any conception of revelation. The idea of freedom replaces the Christian narrative of humanity redeeming itself, and the concept is changed to that of humanity freeing itself (*e.g.* scientifically, politically, economically, etc.). Narratives forged under the Idea of freedom become grand narratives, since they make their claims into universals which apply to "humanity." But this name ("humanity") is merely a concept, which small, popular stories resist. No differend exists between the small narratives. But a differend does exist between these narratives of legitimation (*e.g.* myths of beginnings) and the Idea of freedom which leads to a terminus (the freeing of "humanity"). Lyotard analyzes the current postmodern condition as incredulity towards such finalities.[260]

2.7.4 Rejection of Grand Narratives

Lyotard rejects grand narratives as being totalitarian. The grand (or meta-) narrative controls the linking of phrases by inclusion or negation, according to its rule. Grand narratives claim to be able to provide the rule for the linking of all phrases. They privilege either the referent, narrating subject, or address (*e.g.* cognition, speculation, and obligation) according to their ends. This invariably leads to victimization and to terror in the political arena.

For example, any attempt to cognize or describe what is just necessarily leads to oppression. Once what is "just" is known and can be described, anything or anyone who does not conform to that description is declared to be unjust. Readings writes, "There can be no

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[258] The following Ideas are refuted by the corresponding names: historical materialism ("everything proletarian is communist, everything communist is proletarian) by "Berlin 1953, Budapest 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, Poland 1980; parliamentary liberalism by "May 1968"; economic liberalism by the "crises of 1911 and 1929." See ibid., 179 [D257].

[259] Ibid., 181 [D261].

[260] "Or, is postmodernity the pastime of an old man who scrounges in the garbage-heap of finality looking for leftovers, who brandishes unconsciousnesses, lapses, limits, confines, goulags, parataxes, non-senses, or paradoxes, and who turns this into the glory of his novelty, into his promise of change?" Ibid., 136 [D182].

discussion as to justice, since what justice is has been determined."[261] Lyotard illustrates this with the normative genre of discourse. A norm legitimizes a prescriptive phrase. The prescriptive says, "*You should do…*" But the normative phrase turns this into a phrase of terror: "*It is a norm for x to do…*" The normative phrase operates as terror, since any resistance is *ipso facto* a transgression of the prescriptive phrase. So the victim of a wrong is silenced, since the only options available to the victim are obedience or transgression.[262] This had real-world consequences for those in Soviet Russia who were accused of being anti-Soviet. Once justice had been described (in this sense, the just society is a Soviet, communist society), anyone who resisted in any fashion was immediately made into a transgressor.

To resist the hegemony of the grand narrative, Lyotard argues for phrases (or "little narratives"). These small phrases resist conversion into grand narratives, because of their size. Phrases are presented, one by one, which must be linked to. Linkage is necessary; even silence is a link. A serial operation of presentation and linkage, taking place through time, displaces the parallel linking of phrases, which allows the metanarrative to control (or exclude) linkages between phrases. Lyotard favors small, local stories in place of the pretentious modern subject, who speaks as an originary source.

Lyotard uses the Cashinahua people as a prime example of a small, local story which resists incorporation within a grand narrative. This story displaces the idea that the narrator of a story stands outside of the narrated space from which s/he tells the story. The narrator of the Cashinahua story can only relay the story to others because he once heard the story himself (as narratee) from another, who conveyed it to him precisely as it was told from the beginning.[263] The narrator is himself instantiated within that story by the Cashinahua name he received at birth. This stands in stark contrast to the modern grand narrative. Modernism tries to instantiate one instance of the narrative to a position outside of the narrative in order to govern it. Readings argues that classicalism privileges the referent while modernism privileges the sender. The postmodern condition "is one in which no single instance of narrative can exert a claim to dominate narration by standing beyond it."[264] Indeed, it's Lyotard's purpose to disrupt this claim by insisting that no narrative instance stands apart,

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[261] Readings, *Introducing Lyotard*, 112. Note also Readings' discussion of the use of "we" in American politics. The "we" in "We the people" is instanced as a universal subject "capable of determining the one right linkage at any point." "America" becomes an object of cognition, and the citizen is obligated, therefore, to "Be American" even when the exact nature of that appellation is not known. Ibid., note 24, 169.

[262] Ibid., 112.

[263] The story begins with a traditional formulation, which "guarantees" its reliability. That is: what is being told to you is what has always been told. "'Here is the story of…, as I've always heard it told. I am going to tell it to you in my turn, listen to it!' And this recitation invariably closes with another formula which says: 'Here ends the story of… He who told it to you is… (Cashinahua name), or among the Whites… (Spanish or Portuguese name)." d'Ans, 7. As cited by, Lyotard, *The Differend*, 152 [Cashinahua Notice, § 1].

[264] Readings, *Introducing Lyotard*, 67.

beyond, or outside of narration. His claim is that "the condition of narrative is unsurpassable."[265]

Bennington presents an interesting example of how little narratives undermine the pretentions of a grand narrative. He describes Solzhenitsyn's book, *Gulag Archipelago*, as a collection of little stories which made their way out of the Siberian camps and gnawed away at the credibility of Stalinist Marxism. These stories had a tremendous affect on the changed thinking regarding Marxism among the intelligentsia in France in the late 1960's.[266] According to Lyotard, such stories function as pagan accounts, which work to disrupt and undermine the piety presented by the grand narrative. They use indeterminate judgment and do not subscribe to any theoretical system (or piety). In this way, they "displace the scientific claims of scientific theory,"[267] and they resist their incorporation within grand histories or projects for humanity.

Lyotard reads Kant in a very specific manner in his struggle against metanarratives. He uses the *Third Critique* to cure himself from the affects of the *First Critique*. That is, Lyotard chooses for indeterminate judgment in place of determinate judgment. An event cannot be cognized; it's an "it happens" – not a "*what* is happening." The *what* of an event cannot be known, since the moment it is cognized it is betrayed. Cognition uses determinate judgment (*e.g.* a pre-existing concept) to understand a thing's nature. But Lyotard wants to do justice to the event, so he argues for indeterminate judgment.

A grand narrative necessarily forgets the event, since it forces all events, phrase regimens, and genres of discourse to follow its rule. As a result, the differend is wronged, forgotten, and ignored. It didn't happen. This runs completely contrary to the task of philosophy, which, according to Lyotard, is "to bear witness to the differend."[268]

2.7.5 Philosophy's Task: To Bear Witness to the Differend

Lyotard wants "to save the honor of thinking."[269] To do so, philosophy must confront two of its adversaries: economic discourse and academic discourse. The first reduces everything to a commodity and continually pushes to shorten time (the moment of exchange – "time is money"). The second seeks mastery by imposing a theoretical structure upon every

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[265] Ibid., 69.
[266] Bennington writes, "Lyotard simply notes as an effect of this that the majority of French intellectuals (traditionally never far from the C.P.) are now refusing to recite the Marxist narrative, because they feel it gives rise to serious effects of injustice wherever the attempt is made to carry it through." The proletariat is confined to the roles of addressee and referent. They can never become the narrator in Stalinist Russia. See Geoff Bennington, *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 113.
[267] Readings, *Introducing Lyotard*, 63.
[268] Lyotard, *The Differend*, xiii.
[269] Ibid., xii.

linkage. Economic discourse has no use for philosophic musings (they aren't "good for anything"). Academic discourse drowns the event in theory, through a description of *what* occurs. Time is required to read and to think. Something capitalism has no time for. In contrast to these two approaches, Lyotard argues for the radical heterogeneity of each event, phrase regimen, and genre of discourse. The event remains as something which surpasses expression. The phrase "is an analogical presentation of the event, which is as such unpresentable."[270] Phrase regimens are not translatable into each other's regimens, but they can be linked under the rules of a genre of discourse. But each genre of discourse has its own set of rules based on attaining its end. Genres of discourse, therefore, compete with each other over every presented phrase.

How then can one judge between competing genres of discourse? Conflict is inevitable, between genres of discourse, at every linking of a phrase. Since there is no universal genre of discourse that can govern each linking of a phrase, how can we find the "good" linkage? That is, how can we find the linkage which best bears witness to the differend?

For Lyotard, this is a political question. But it's not the politics of politicians or of "intellectuals." He argues for a philosophical politics: a way of reading that tries to find new ways of linking to the event. The question at the presentation of any phrase is this: with which phrase should it link? This throws the question into the political arena. Conflicts between genres of discourse must be negotiated. The abyss separating the presented phrase from the following phrase must be bridged, and genres of discourse give the appearance of being able to do so. But this is an illusion. Still, a link must be made; even if it's a silence. This politics, however, is a philosophical politics, which seeks for the "good" link. As such, it differs from intellectual politics, which tries to impose the techniques of its discipline on the presented phrase. Nor is it the politics of politicians, whose political system is ultimately legitimized by a narrative, which becomes a grand narrative trying to impose its end on every linked phrase. But a judgment must be made.[271]

Thus, Lyotard values inventiveness, since this allows for the discovery of new ways of bearing witness to the event. Philosophy must be playful and diligent: playful enough to find a new way, and diligent in its thought and reading. Reading becomes "the site of invention rather than cognition. Instead of considering reading in terms of its descriptive or constative fidelity, reading must be understood primarily as an event or act, a performance which should be judged in ethical terms."[272] The trick is to find a way to judge between rival claims put

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[270] Bennington, *Lyotard*, 177.
[271] The phrase of judgment is political, since it is a choice of the lesser evil, which is based on indeterminate judgment. "This is the judgment, the most enigmatic of phrases, the one which follows no rules, although in appearance it is linked to ends, to givens, to means, and to 'consequences'." See Lyotard, *The Differend*, 149 [D214].
[272] Readings, *Introducing Lyotard*, xxiii.

forth by heterogeneous genres of discourse, when no common rule exists upon which that judgment can be made, without wronging one of the parties, while refusing to forget the differend.[273]

2.7.6 Lyotard's Criticism of Christianity: A Super Meta-Narrative

Lyotard argues that the Christian narrative was able to conquer all of the narratives current in the Roman Empire, because it was able to unite them under the goal of narratives: "to link onto the occurrence as such by signifying it and by referring to it."[274] It did so, in fact, by designating the very stake for the narrative genre itself: "to love what happens as if it were a gift, to love even the *Is it happening?* as the promise of good news."[275] This love for the event allows the Christian narrative to link onto any presented phrase. In so doing, it becomes a super meta-narrative, which is able to link not only to all narratives but also to all other genres of discourse. Lyotard proposes that this is possible because of the Christian narrative's love for the event.

The Christian narrative is authorized by the command of an absolute, divine addressor, who gives the prescription to love one another. This command is made transitive and the obligation to love the other is universalized: "if you are loved, you ought to love; and you shall be loved only if you love."[276] The narrative instances are universalized, and the event is "problematized." By its inclusion in the Christian narrative, the occurrence is fixed within the Christian tradition. Thus, the narrative not only tells us what happened, it also prescribes a response of charity towards whatever happens, no matter what it might be. All creatures are commanded to love, and this authorizes them "to tell, to listen, and to be told about."[277]

Lyotard sees the Christian narrative as an inoculation against the "little narratives," which are grounded in the world of names, coming to us from a primordial past. "Little narratives" are founded on the "principle of exclusion." They are naturally limited. Popular stories are "faithful to phrase regimens and to differends," since contradictions are allowed in these tales. Differends are not dispelled; they are defused. In contrast to the small stories, the Christian narrative extends itself out towards all narratives and genres of discourse. This is a tremendous problem for Lyotard, who views justice in terms of finding the "good" link for the differend. The Christian narrative engulfs and forgets the differend in its loving embrace

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[273] "The philosophical genre, which looks like a metalanguage, is not itself (a genre in quest of its rules) unless it knows that there is no metalanguage. It thereby remains popular, humorous." Lyotard, *The Differend*, 158 [D228].
[274] Ibid., 159 [D232].
[275] Ibid.
[276] Ibid., 160 [D232].
[277] Ibid., 159 [D232].

of what happens. Lyotard argues for the radical heterogeneity of genres of discourse, against the hegemony of the Christian narrative.

Joan of Arc's experience is referenced as a way of demonstrating this alleged hegemony. Joan appears before the tribunal as one under obligation; she believes, by God. She is commanded, however, to renounce her testimony by Church officials. The Church's representatives speak to Joan as the authorized interpreters of Scripture (i.e. as those authorized by the Christian narrative). Joan speaks as one obliged; the officials speak as those authorized by the Christian narrative. Through her little story, the "Maid of Orleans" resists the official's claims. She speaks as one wronged. The clergy have become her oppressors.[278]

Suspicion between the two groups emerges out of the conflict between two heterogeneous genres of discourse. Joan, as "obligé," hears the prescription from the Church's authorities with suspicion. They aren't saying what "God" said. All she can do is witness to her obligation: a voice said, "You should take up arms and defeat the English!" The Church authorities also have their suspicions (regarding her idiolect). Lyotard says that it is this suspicion against idiolects that motivated the witchcraft trials, the persecution of prophets, and the continuing resistance to the Reformation.[279] The conflict between Joan and the officials can be diagramed as such.

The authorized interpreter of Scripture ⇕ the presciptions of the authorized interpreter

suspects

The obligated person ⇕ the idiolect of the obligated one
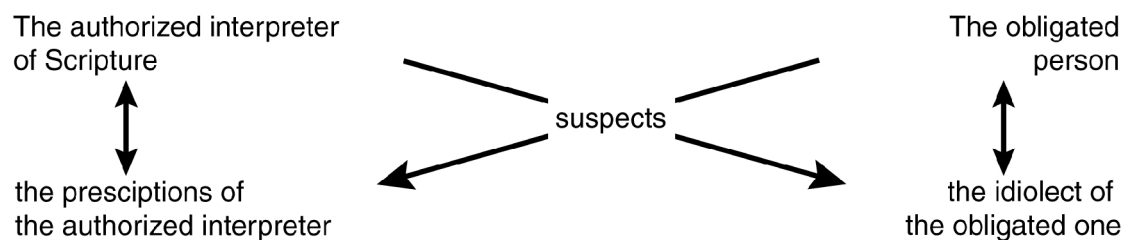
Joan's testimony resists her accuser's claims. Ultimately, however, the differend Jean represents is forgotten, and those who represent the narrative of love burn her at the stake.

Lyotard hints at the dangers of speaking in God's name. To speak in God's name is to assume a universal instantiation within a phrase universe. It is to assert that which cannot be presented as an object of intuition. This is the path not only to transcendental illusion but also to totalitarianism and injustice. To speak in the Lord's name, Lyotard asserts, leads to the blindness of putting oneself in God's place.[280] Naturally, this can have devastating consequences, such as trying to find the "meaning" of Auschwitz in (1) divine judgment

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[278] "The wisdom of nations is not only their scepticism, but also the 'free life' of phrases and genres. That is what the (clerical, political, military, economic, or informational) oppressor comes up against in the long run." Ibid., 159 [D230].

[279] Ibid., 160 [D234].

[280] "If you were to lay bare the Lord's intentions, you would then know His idiolect, how it is spoken, the phrases whose addressor and addressee He is and which presumably engender the commandment, and the senses of those phrases." Ibid., 109 [D169].

against the Jews, (2) God's failure in the death camps is the reason why we should follow God, or (3) God used the S.S. to "sacrifice" God's people, as Abraham sacrificed Isaac.[281] Beyond trying to find meaning in the extermination camp (speculative discourse chokes here), the danger can have deadly consequences. Once justice or God's will is defined, those who resist that definition are marked for imprisonment or execution.

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[281] These examples of poor thinking are given by Lyotard. See ibid., 98, 102, 109 [D155, D158, D169].

3. MAKING LYOTARD'S CASE

3.0 LYOTARD'S VIEW OF LOVE

In order to fully understand Lyotard's critique of Christianity, it's necessary to look at his view of love. Love plays a central role in that critique. However, Lyotard's view of love is sprinkled throughout his oeuvre, and this very dispersion makes it difficult to clearly see the "picture" he paints. In this chapter we will sift through a number of Lyotard's books in an effort to describe his view of love. By pulling together the various we find a nuanced view of love that is deeply impacted by Freudian thought. In this way, we hope to take Lyotard's criticism seriously and include him as a dialogue partner in our quest for an open Christian narrative.

3.1 LOVE AS OPENNESS

Lyotard refers to love in the common sense of an emotion.[282] But he also describes it in his own terms, that is, as a pulsion (i.e. an emotional force) on the great libidinal band. In his book, *Libidinal Economy*, Lyotard compares and contrasts this pulsion with a number of other emotions.[283] He also uses the word "love" in the simple sense of enjoying the experiences of life, such as Cézanne's, Braque's, and Picasso's "expressions of love for the visible world and space."[284] Their works are a tribute to the lines and colors of nature, and they settle a debt to the "sensible acquired in life."[285] Even twentieth century works which are highly abstract – favoring "material" over the subject – show this appreciation for the sensible world.[286] The

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[282] Love as an emotion is compared to anger and "disconcerting surprise." See Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, trans., Iain Hamilton Grant (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 104. Lyotard also names "Georg" as the stake where "love and hate shake hands." See Jean-François Lyotard and Jean-Loup Thébaud, *Just Gaming*, trans., Wlad Godzich, Theory and History of Literature, vol. 20 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 118.

[283] For instance, love, affection, and hatred are correlated. See Jean-François Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews"*, trans., Andreas Michel and Mark S. Roberts (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 34 and 39. Love is a sentiment that can be full of interest in the other or of avarice (i.e. overly concerned with the self), or love can be a sense of loyalty (or faithfulness) and personal integrity towards one's employer. See Jean-François Lyotard, *Postmodern Fables*, trans., Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 53-54 and 156. Love is also an obligation (a debt) that needs to be repaid. See Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, 175 [D245].

[284] Jean-François Lyotard, "The Story of Ruth," in *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 253.

[285] Ibid.

[286] Although Lyotard notes that in the second half of the twentieth century "painters are really interested more in time than in space, in history than in nature." See ibid.

artist stands open to the material world and tries to immediately inscribe his or her gesture on the chosen media (i.e. paper, canvas, marble, and etc.) as an act of love.[287]

In a highly esoteric portion of the *Libidinal Economy*, Lyotard discusses the use of Coitus Reservatus in Taoist erotics. The elite leaders of the Chinese empire could not guarantee the reproduction of the state through the state bureaucracy, so the emperor practiced seminal retention as a way of strengthening his seed. The *Yang* principle of the male erection, which is fire, is threatened by the water of the female *Yin* during coitus. But by exciting the woman into fits of orgasm the female water boils, allowing the penis to safely drink in her water. This enriches the man, who seizes these waters, so long as he does not allow his liquids to spill within her cavity. The woman's forces are seized and the man's vital essence is strengthened since he refuses to ejaculate. His love for the woman is enhanced through "a sensation of voluptuousness."[288] By squeezing the seminal duct the emperor's sperm is intensified and retained, and the semen is required to flow back into the man. Naturally by sleeping with many women and acquiring their power the retained sperm was thought to become increasingly powerful.[289] Lyotard says the emperor would follow these Taoist practices for the love of persons not yet made.[290] Sperm is retained – thus strengthened – as a way of remaining open to and loving a future progeny.

Lyotard also describes the openness of love in abstract political, economic terms. He says that capital loves production rather than the product. The product is only of interest as a *means* of producing. The communist party loves the *means* of producing a revolution more than the revolution itself. Lyotard discusses both of these economic systems as having a love for that which becomes the machination for their project, specifically producing and revolting. These are "the means by which they are *able* to make it happen" (i.e. produce or capitalize on the people's longing for revolution).[291]

In contrast to the openness of love, Lyotard is extremely clear about what he hates. He hates capitalism, "religion, ressentiment, guilt, [and] morality."[292] Indeed, Lyotard says that he (and other libidinal economists) is engaged in a critique of religion. It's a critique that isn't a critique, since critique remains in the sphere of representation – that is religion.[293] But his program is clearly to restart the "destruction of piety," with the goal of an intelligent atheism

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[287] "Every expression [is] loaded with affect." See ibid., 258.

[288] The man who practices coitus *sans* ejaculation strengthens his vital essence, sets his body completely at ease, improves his eyesight and hearing, and his passion and love for the woman will be increased. See Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 204-205.

[289] For a more detailed description of this Taoist practice See ibid., 201-210.

[290] Ibid., 204.

[291] Ibid., 103.

[292] Ibid., 101.

[293] Ibid., 6. As we will see (below), Lyotard levels a withering critique against representation.

in the "economy of desire."[294] Lyotard claims that it was the return to the Zero, to God who is no god, to the *force of lack*, that leads to nihilism.[295] The desire of all libidinal economists is that this force of lack would disintegrate. They love and desire that this zero would no longer be empowered or capable of begetting itself. Lyotard stands open to – that is, loves – the destruction of the Zero and of religion. And he clearly says what he loves in place of religion and morality: "We joyfully love all that appears."[296] That is, Lyotard loves the event.

3.2 LOVE AND REPRESENTATION

To understand why Lyotard so vehemently hates religion and capitalism, one must look at his critique of representation. Lyotard opposes signs and the concept for the distance they create between the event as presented. His pagan, atheistic, materialistic program is one of embracing the event as emotion, force, or action rather than as sign. This is closely tied to his love (and welcoming) for what happens. We turn first to a consideration of his critique of signs and gifts, followed by his proposal of the libidinal band, before returning to the openness of love as understood by Lyotard.

3.2.1 Signs

For Lyotard use of a sign functions as proof that the thing signified is not present. This is important since signs operate within the discourse of representation. A sign represents something that is signified but not present, and it's this very lack of presence that points to the hollowing out occurring with the use of any sign. Signs are an intrinsic part of conceptual, theoretical thinking as we will see in his notions of the theater and of the great Zero.

3.2.1.1 The Theater and the Great Zero

Lyotard claims that Truth (or the True) is generated by the great Zero, which wants to deliver a discourse based on knowledge. Lyotard denies the possibility of such knowledge – since he claims that the great Zero doesn't exist – and calls such erudition "so-called knowledge." This knowledge discourse necessarily uses concepts or ideas built upon the principle of exclusion. Exclusion distinguishes between "this" and "not-this." A distinction made between an "inside" and an "outside" sets up a theater. Authorization for what occurs in

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[294] Ibid., 5.

[295] Lyotard simply dismisses God, the great Zero. "We do not even have to say: this great Zero, what crap! After all, it is a figure of desire." In place of this "original Nothing," Lyotard proposes the libidinal Moebian band which slows and cools to form into a "theatrical volume." See ibid., 11.

[296] Ibid., 101.

the theater must come from outside the theater – i.e. from God, or the great Zero. However, according to Lyotard, there is no Authorizer, so the whole system is nihilistic. Through the use of a sign, the nothingness between the concept and the referent is always in operation. A sign functions within a theory of communication in the context of a network of concepts.[297] Signs are supposed to be able to communicate a message from addressor to addressee, and they are used to signify something about that to which they refer (i.e. the signified). The addressee is assumed to have the means to decode the message conveyed by the sign. When a sign is used it stands in for the signified and hollows it out. The sign's ability to function as a substitute for an object makes it exchangeable within a communicative system. But Lyotard rejects this notion.[298] He also comments that religious people produce the image of "a great signifier" that is never present, "whose only presence is absentification."[299] In libidinal terms, Lyotard calls this the great Zero, the Kastrator.[300] Lyotard does not define this name anywhere in the *Libidinal Economy*; however, he does define castration as "the suffering of the concept, fissure and disfiguration ceaselessly deferred."[301] The name Kastrator, therefore, points to the nothingness at the heart of the concept and to the impossibility of finding any grounding thereof. It points to the Concept as forever hindered and postponed. Lyotard, of course, denies the existence of such a person; rather, it is simply an impossible Concept – an idea that causes all concepts to be ceaselessly delayed. Lyotard names this "unpronounceable" name (*e.g.* the Kastrator) to point out the (possible) religious underpinnings of semiology.

3.2.1.2 Nihilism and Conquest

Signification must be carried on endlessly because nihilism lies at the heart of the sign. Every sign is a denial of the materiality of the signified. As Lyotard writes, "the sign replaces what it signifies."[302] This leads to dematerialization in which the presence of a message means that "there is no material."[303] To speak about a signified is to indicate its absence. But there are innumerable other signs, which are also placed in relation to a signifier (God or signification itself) that is indefinitely postponed. This has led us, therefore, past the search

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[297] Ibid., 43.
[298] In fact, one of the purposes of Lyotard's writing his latter opus is to refute the very existence of "language." See Lyotard, *The Differend*, xiii.
[299] Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 44.
[300] Ibid.
[301] Ibid., 15.
[302] Ibid., 43.
[303] Ibid., 44.

for either God or truth, toward "the search *itself*" (i.e. scientific research).[304] Signification has led to the search for power itself.

Lyotard claims that it was the search for knowledge that inspired the explorers and conquerors who traveled to Africa and the Orient. Their voyages were voyages of "research and conquest" with the objective of financial gain, and no price was too high to pay for the eventual, hoped for payoff. Hardships, privations, disease, and death were hazarded and suffered for knowledge and for gold. The discourse of knowledge was what inspired these voyages of conquest. Were these journeys made for tourism or for conquest? Lyotard says the expenditures made to fund these voyages were simply advances for the hoped for, eventual, final revenue. Expenditures made were recovered – not in time and space – but in the accountant's ledger book.[305] In the process of exploration, Africans, Polynesians, and Orientals became signs. As Westerns capitalists dominated other lands, they amassed a trove of things-become signs which were added to their knowledge systems. Things (i.e. people) were found that could be exploited and enjoyed; their women were to be hoarded – with whom sexual success was guaranteed. But Lyotard says that some men resisted – men who refused to play the "capitalist game of domination": explorers who chose to live as Africans, Jesuits who became Polynesians, and the mutineers who sailed on the *Bounty*.[306]

3.2.1.3 Semiology

Lyotard says it is through the use of signs (semiology) that the subject is construed – something Lyotard resists. After all, if a sign conveys a message, it must be for someone. This leads to the thought that there must be "an instance to which all the predicates … are related."[307] The addressee will accumulate a store of signs, which take the place of events, intensities, and tensors, and will take it that someone or something is speaking to him.[308] He will interpret these emotions as messages and will ask who the sender is. Such "messages" will need to be understood, since he will say, "They speak to me." This splits the ego in a process that is half receptivity and half active, half sensible and half intelligent, etc. The split then becomes "merely a moment in the construction of intentionality."[309] According to semiology, it is in relation to the sign as addressee and decoder of the message that the I is

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[304] We no longer search for causes but for (scientific) effects. The result of this is that all of our efforts regarding signs are now "about power and for power." See ibid., 44-45.

[305] Ibid., 45-46.

[306] Ibid., 47.

[307] Ibid., 48.

[308] Lyotard speaks here about Ulysses and his experiences in Egypt, hearing the sirens, and negotiating a path between Charybdis and Scylla. See ibid.

[309] Ibid.

constituted. But the I also functions as an "inventor of codes." It is in a game of sublation that the I constitutes itself.

Lyotard attacks semiology as nihilism and "religious science *par excellence*."[310] The code that could allow us to read and to understand all of the givens of Creation as messages will never be ours,[311] nor will we be able to construct a code for them. Lyotard thinks this is beautiful. He says that Hugo and Richard de Saint-Victor loved the fact that they would never be able to code these messages, that the negative of the code actually *hides* things. They saw a beauty in this – the comeliness of *dissimilitude*. This hiddenness is one of Lyotard's favorite themes, i.e., the remainder, or that which cannot be represented by a phrase or concept. Lyotard claims that semiology is a religious science "because it is haunted by the hypothesis that someone speaks to us in these givens and ... that its language ... transcends us."[312] Under the specter of the great Zero, powerful emotions are submitted to a nothingness (i.e. to a lack) and forces are given a final state. Lyotard says that semiotic thought suffers from religious melancholy.[313] And Lyotard illustrates this point by critiquing Augustine's sign system to which we now briefly turn.

3.2.1.4 Simulacrum

Lyotard critiques Augustine's sign system in his discussion of the latter's concept of the simulacrum. What is at stake, according to Lyotard, in Augustine's argument is the theological cache of the sign itself. He analyzes Augustine's system as the subordination of the civic and the theatrical to a natural theology. In place of a civil politics, Augustine will institute "a divine citizenship."[314] Augustine's rejection of the theater means that representation is repudiated in favor of a philosophical, natural theology. A city is set up which is a theater, in which he marks off an interior and an exterior. Since his theological system is philosophical, language holds a crucial role in the theater. New statements are invented which have never before been heard along with "prayers, apologias, [and] reflexive metaphysics."[315] These phrases are added to the libidinal band. Once a space has been forged, the civic and theatrical are brought back onstage. Augustine invents "politicians" and

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[310] Ibid., 49.

[311] Lyotard gives an example of this reception of "messages" elsewhere. In a conversation between two people, Lyotard has one of the interlocutors say, "We happen to grasp data (I really mean: what is already given) as if it were *also* signs made in an unknown language. For example, physical effects, cosmic phenomena, recurrent lapses, the color of a landscape, the chromaticism of a string quartet, sentences, words in our own language. Well, it might be that we grasp all that as if it 'said' or meant to say something we don't know." Lyotard, *Postmodern Fables*, 61.

[312] Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 49.

[313] Melancholy is the state of insulating and isolating oneself from the instability of otherness and of lacking interest in alterity. See Lyotard, *Postmodern Fables*, 54.

[314] Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 67.

[315] Ibid., 68.

constructs a social stratum, where women, slaves, and children are placed on the margins of society, but where all men are equals. Rhetoric is reintroduced into the city; however, it has a less important role than the natural. Poetry and mythology are also allowed in the city but considered inferior discourses, since what they offer (*e.g.* epics and novels) is "untrue." "Other investments in language are still possible" but they "are (down)classed as imaginary or fantastic."[316] However, new gods (or affects) are invented,[317] along with "new words and syntaxes," which are inscribed in new languages and bodily movements in the new theatrical, gestural form.

Lyotard argues that all things within this Roman theater are grounded on the principle that "everything is a sign or a mark, but that nothing is marked or signified."[318] These signs are "signs of nothing." But they are brought into a relationship under a Presence, which, although it itself is outside of time, gives a temporal connection under the idea of conscious time. Here the theater is organized by Augustine's system of the similitude. Everything originates with the Father, who engenders the Son – a perfect likeness to the Father. This Son is the Simulacrum itself, i.e. the perfect reflection of the Father, who creates all things in a relation of resemblance. These created things are established within a hierarchy of things, in which those closest to the Trinity have the most resemblance to the Simulacrum, while the thing furthest away from deity is the most dissimilar or nothingness, which is the body – an "illusory simulacrum."[319] According to Lyotard, this places the body in a precarious position, which pleases libidinal economists.

Augustine's thesis of generalized Similitude sets up the theatricality of nihilist representation, since "the *truth* of a being ... turns out to be situated *outside* the sign, and ... *above* it."[320] A being is separated in a hierarchical structure from the Simulacrum of which it is an incomplete resemblance. The being is a sign of something other than itself, namely of the Simulacrum itself. But there is a distance between the thing itself and the Simulacrum, which is also signified in the sign. The truth of a being is separated from that being, since it is located *outside* of the sign or the theater. That truth is located in the Word who is a perfect copy of the Father. As a result, Lyotard charges Augustine with having constructed a whole hierarchy of absences, based upon a Presence, which itself does not exist.[321] In this grand scheme of resemblance, there is a lack of being in every thing, since every being is a sign for something else. This distancing between a being and its sign means the continual deferral of

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[316] Ibid.

[317] "Thus every experience gives rise to a divinity, every connection to an inundation of affects." See ibid., 8.

[318] Ibid., 69.

[319] Ibid., 69-70.

[320] Ibid., 70.

[321] Ibid., 69.

its meaning. Lyotard charges that the whole "theatricality of representation" is based on nothing – nihilism.

> Absent subject, dead life, signification lacking, signs marks of incompleteness, negative temporality, death as deliverance, the transfer of true life to an elsewhere: semiotic metaphysics with all its ins and outs; and nihilist theology. It is on and with this generalized lack that the great Signifier is constructed, the great God, also absent, but alleged principle of all presence and signification. Master of signs and their ek-sistence, amen.[322]

3.2.1.5 Capitalism

For Lyotard simulacrum is the name for the exchangeable.[323] He examines Augustine's system to show that the hierarchical relationship between things and the Simulacrum makes possible a direct relation between signs and things. Language can be employed to present this relationship (between signs and things), because all things are associated with each other within a system of mirrored unity. This system is grounded upon the unity of God. It works by the mirrored relationship between simulacra and God. As a result, signs are generally equivalent and exchangeable for things.[324]

Capitalism functions in a similar way, except that the relationship between things is established by price. Again, one (calculable) standard establishes the connection between all things: money. Goods and services are exchangeable according to a standard which provides a way of determining equivalence among disparate things. Lyotard revolts against such a way of looking at things. He advocates doing away with the "determinant" and the "dominant," which he says comes from the Greeks' logocentric view of life. This view influenced the Romans and eventually the English, who harnessed labor. Lyotard says, "We must everywhere destroy the bastions of alleged economic rationality, as we must those of semiology."[325] He argues that capitalism is influenced by desire.[326] The *jouissance* at work in capitalism is that of conquering, of gaining profit. Capitalism constantly searches beyond its borders for new markets, for new places to exchange goods and services. Lyotard argues that

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[322] Ibid., 71.

[323] Ibid., xv.

[324] Lyotard argues that there is exchangeability even in Klossowski's phantasms (i.e. emotions). For when the voluptuous object becomes intelligible – becomes communicable by forming its own phantasm – it introduces a sign, which is exchangeable, as money, as standing in for that which it is not. As such, the phantasm is "devoted to circulation." Sade's intelligence, however, "fools" the institution "with intransmittable passionate singularity." See ibid., 77.

[325] Ibid., 105.

[326] "All the more so because we are subtle enough ... to recognize that *desire underlies capitalism too*, so that in some sense the former gives the right to the latter, that it is not a libidinal nothing, including in its investment a proper effect of nihilation (that of ambivalence)." See ibid., 106.

the intensities at work in capitalism are necessarily "*conquest* and agitation."[327] Capital seizes energies from natural sources (coal, oil, water, nuclear) and from human sources in order to exploit them for profit. Lyotard's abhorrence of capitalism is clear: "There is in the most 'modern' capitalism, under the name of mercantilism, speculation, imperialism, unequal exchange, a force [*puissance*] not of *order*, but of *zeal*: 'jealousy' comes from 'zeal'."[328]

However, there are things that resist being priced. Within the political economy these things simply don't exist, since no price can be affixed to them. As a result, they cannot be presented in the marketplace. But Lyotard argues for a libidinal economy, where pulsions, emotions, forces, and affects operate outside of a calculable economy. He notes that in the profession of prostitution, for example, there is a mixing of the *exorbitant* with price. The *exorbitant* is that which exceeds the normal, customary, or appropriate limits of intensity. A service is rendered, and a fee is paid. The customer's *jouissance*, which is something voluptuous and exorbitant, is translated into a measurable and exchangeable commodity. By assigning a (monetary) value, passion may be exchanged along with other items by means of the signs exchanged (currency). Passion, which is *exorbitant*, may be priced. Lyotard writes, "That which has no comparison, is paid for, and is therefore evaluated."[329] However, something else might also be at work. The prostitute might become the client and gain *jouissance* from her customer.[330] Here something is gained *without* payment (on her part). Yes, something escapes. A remainder is left over. There is dissimulation within the sign: i.e., *jouissance*.

Capitalism establishes one standard by which all signs are measured. It does so to make all signs exchangeable with each other. But something is forgotten. Not everything "wants" to be pegged to a price. Lyotard argues fervently against the terror of such a system. So he uses what he calls the tensor sign to try and break away from a unitary, or calculable standard.

3.2.1.6 Tensor Sign

In place of a system of signs, Lyotard argues for the ability to keep a sign open as a way of allowing it to signify the incompossibility of all of the possible figures[331] to which it

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[327] Ibid., 222.

[328] Ibid., 239.

[329] Ibid., 82.

[330] Lyotard cites, for instance, Madame Edwarda, who is a madwoman because she enjoys her profession. Her "madness" stems from the fact that critique is "not respected." See ibid., 140.

[331] Leibniz talks about "possible worlds" which could exist together in the mind of God as being "compossible." But God, being perfect, created the "best of all possible worlds," since God could not create inferior (albeit possible) worlds. Lyotard views this as an economic perfection, where perfection is measured by the degree of least investment. God, as perfection, has unlimited resources. So Lyotard talks about "incompossibility" as a way of challenging this logic and its metaphorical economics. The incompossible points to the many worlds that are possible – and possible *together*. See ibid., x-xi.

can refer. He calls this a "wise affirmative madness."[332] Each sign is a "term in a network of significations," something that Lyotard defines as a tensor sign.[333] A tenor sign is the recognition that any sign functions within a theatrical *dispositif* and refers "to an elsewhere." The sign replaces something, which is absent, for a signification. Lyotard wants to bear witness to the incompossible intensities which exceed the sign by introducing a tension within the sign, impeding it from referring to a single designation or to a calculable series of meanings (polysemia).[334]

Lyotard gives us an example of the tensor sign in the *Libidinal Economy*. That person is Roberte – a fictional character, who is a "slut and a thinker."[335] As a slut she functions in the emotional, libidinal discourse; but as a thinker Roberte participates in philosophy and critique. Here are the two tensions Lyotard so often puts in play. Roberte's name contains an incompossibility.[336] She is a harlot and an intellectualist under one name. As a married woman, Roberte enjoys adulterous sex, while her voyeuristic husband watches her affairs. At the same time, she is also the president of the Council on Censorship and a radical socialist! Roberte functions as a literary tensor sign. Lyotard calls her name "the name of the unnameable."[337] Her name is both a yes and a no. It spans the libidinal space which is ablaze in "energetic influxes" which are beyond description or distinction.[338] We will discuss her husband's obsession with Roberte's love below. But it should be noted here that the tensor sign is an important tool for Lyotard, the libidinal economist, as he tries to promote a pagan

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[332] Ibid., 69.
[333] Ibid.
[334] Ibid., xiv.
[335] Ibid., 56. See below for a more extensive discussion of this character.
[336] As an author, Klossowski makes a distinction between the "code of ordinary signs" and the "unique sign." These categories of signs are heteronomous. We use ordinary signs to express ourselves in everyday spoken language. Klossowski, though, uses the unique sign to point to the failure of language, to refer to that which exceeds meaning as is expressible in the ordinary code. Klossowski writes, "I have thought to state the point at which this code (of ordinary signs) was limited, in order to express that which does not always return: that that which sometimes returns does not return at all in the same manner in order to justify its use of the same signs: and, allowing for a variation between the ordinary code of common sense and that which it expresses, namely a larger and larger inadequacy, it seemed to me that everything boils down to variations, to scraps, or to increases in intensity." Castanet notes that a Nietzschean program of semiotic pulsions undergirds these "scraps." Klossowski claims that in our use of ordinary signs a unique sign is always implied, which coincides with and relates to a particular intensity. Klossowski is obsessed with unique signs. Castenent says, that for Klossowski, "the unique sign melts the coherence of thought, the unity of being." Thus, the author bounces between "fixedness and assurance" on one side, and uncertainty on the other. The unique sign here is the name of Roberte, that encapsulates images which explode beyond any synthesis and that more precisely figures obscure pulsional forces. Castenent says that "Klossowski oscillates between these two poles become walls, against which he bumps: '[…] to remain in the coherence of a unique sign is to renounce living in the world constituted by the incoherence that rules in the code of ordinary signs.'" See Hervé Castanet, "Roberte ou l'impossible prostitution selon Pierre Klossowski," *Sociétés*, no. 1 (2008): 113 (my translation).
[337] Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 56.
[338] Ibid.

theatrics.[339] As we will now see, the tensor is at work in Lyotard's notion of the "gift," particularly in light of its exchangeability.

3.2.2 Gift

Although the idea of "gift" plays a pivotal role in his critique of Christianity, it's something Lyotard infrequently discusses.[340] He briefly mentions gift in paragraphs 232 and 233 of *The Differend*, as well as making a passing reference in his discussion of Levinas.[341] However, he does discuss the gift in several places in the *Libidinal Economy* and in *Toward the Postmodern*. And these we will consider here. In the former book gift is related to the exchangeability of signs, while in the latter it is associated with language and inexchangeability. Here, once again, we see the tensor working within the gift. Both perspectives are necessary for understanding Lyotard's idea of the gift.

3.2.2.1 Symbolic Exchange

In the *Libidinal Economy*, Lyotard says that symbolic exchange – the giving of gifts – is thoroughly entrenched in "Western racism and imperialism."[342] The gift as a category remains an idea associated with semiology, and as such it requires a theater. But Lyotard's critique goes further: the whole idea of the gift presumes the subject, with a physical boundary and property, both of which are benevolently exceeded in the giving of a gift. Lyotard's reply is terse, "There is no-one to give, or to receive."[343] Lyotard denies the existence of the subject.[344] The gift, however, is a sign and functions within the theory of

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[339] An atheism where every act or affect has a god or goddess attached to it. A theatrics without critique or representation is what Lyotard strives for. See ibid., 6.

[340] For instance, there is no mention of "gift" in the following books: *Peregrinations*, *Heidegger*, *The Postmodern Condition*, or *Fables*. In *Enthusiasm* the phrase "gift of nature" occurs twice only in passing – in reference to the faculty of judgment and to genius. See Lyotard, *Enthusiasm: The Kantian Critique of History*, 2, 53. There is also a single reference to "gift" in *The Inhuman*. See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans., Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 96. Two references occur (by Lyotard) in *The Hyphen*: the first regards "the gift or grace" that a child might receive "to pray that his *mainmise* be lifted"; and the second occurrence of "gift" appears in a quotation from Romans 3,22-24. See Jean-François Lyotard and Eberhard Gruber, *The Hyphen: Between Judaism and Christianity*, trans., Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999), 16-17.

[341] See Lyotard, *The Differend*, 159-160 [D232-233]. In the Levinas Notice, the only mention is to the assumption of the I's fracture in "saying yes to the gift of the undecipherable message." See ibid., 112 [Levinas Notice §2].

[342] Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 106.

[343] Ibid., 122.

[344] An interesting example of this is found in the introduction to his posthumously published (and incomplete) book on Augustine. In that introduction, his daughter refers to her father with the initials JFL, rather than with his name, except for its mention in the second sentence of said preface. This is reminiscent of her father's use of "A." to refer to himself in the preface to *The Differend*. See Jean-

signs. As a sign, the gift dissimulates what is being given (or manifested) to the one addressed (the recipient). It hides something in giving what cannot be given – since "one never has anything."[345] A polarization among particular bodies is required by the category of the gift. It is necessary for the ones exchanging the gift (the exchangists) to be polarized for the "in-and-out movement" of exchange to operate. These exchangists remain within economic theory. Lyotard says that they are "perforated, like poles or ideas of (mercantilist) reason rather than as existants."[346] He argues for such a hollowed-out view of gift, giver, and recipient to avoid any remnant of a philosophy of the subject or of a philosophy of the body. For these would necessarily include the concepts of self-mastery and possession, as well as of property. With the gift as sign it's what is given that remains hidden.

3.2.2.2 Labor-Force

For Lyotard the gift can also be extravagant – a gift that produces. This is the force of labor, "a force which *gives out* more than it *expends*."[347] The capitalist exploits this capacity in order to gain wealth. So he claims that the capitalist system is founded on an inequality. The original gift of labor-force comes before all other exchanges. Since it gives more than it expends, labor-force is in a "relation of inequality," which is its permanent condition. No later equalization or equality can correct this original victimization. Lyotard claims, therefore, that "labour-force is *exorbitant*, or at least beyond value."[348] Thus, to place a value on labor's contribution is to do a wrong against it. Lyotard calls this a "meta-wrong,"[349] For labor is a force and "*not* an object," which cannot be valued. A value can only be applied in the context of class struggle – a context that he claims is greater than the merely economic context. Once again, labor-force as gift dissimulates a force that produces more than it expends. As such, this gift is open to the employer's exploitation for monetary gain. With the gift as labor-force it's the extravagant extra that labor brings which remains hidden.

3.2.2.3 Desire and the Machine

François Lyotard, *The Confession of Augustine*, trans., Richard Beardsworth (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), vii-ix.

[345] Ibid., 122.

[346] Ibid., 123.

[347] Ibid., 145.

[348] Ibid.

[349] Lyotard claims that this is "a wrong which is not economic but ontological." See ibid. Compare also Lyotard's description of the differend between the wage-earner and the employer in Lyotard, *The Differend*, 176-177 [D250].

The two preceding types of gift (as symbol and labor-force) emphasized the gift as a symbol. Something was given in an economic movement of exchange. What was given, however, remained hidden (the gift as symbol for something else and the abundance which labor contributes). Lyotard also writes about gift in the area of discourse, a giving in relation to communication in which the thing given (the message) cannot itself be exchanged. Communication in such situations flows in only one direction; the speaker speaks and the listener can but listen. In Judaic discourse the unseen Voice speaks, while in psychoanalytic discourse two unseen speakers speak: the analyst's voice as "I" to the patient, as well as the patient's voice as "Id" to the "Ego." Here Lyotard's emphasis is placed on the inexchangeability of communication.

Lyotard discusses the gift in relation to the psychical apparatus as libidinal apparatus in *Toward the Postmodern*. Freud considers the word "desire" as having two meanings: wish (*Wunsch*) and force or energy (*Wille*). Lyotard says there is a tensor force within Freudian desire. It is a force-desire, which can be the force that seeks "its own fulfillment." Wish-desire is an unattainable desire experienced by the subject through representations, images, and dreams. However, desire also functions as a force – a quantum of energy or a charge, within the psychical apparatus, which is conceived of as a machine. Forces acquire a charge, and these have the ability of overloading the machine. But the machine has its own means of "harnessing and draining energy," according to some finality. The apparatus's capacity for holding energy is regulated by a brain, memory, or language.[350] Once the apparatus's threshold (capacity) has been reached, there is a discharge of energy which is related to its capacity and stored energy. This machine is not perfect, as Freud indicates with the "death instinct." Lyotard writes, "The death instinct is simply the idea (as opposed to the concept) that the machine that collects and drains energy is not a well-regulated mechanical device."[351]

Within the machine there are a number of different apparatuses[352] which organize themselves around network connections, from the "investments or blockages of energy" that channel the work of the libido.[353] Each apparatus is a space for "the play of libidinal intensities, affects, and passions."[354] The apparatus functions as a means of "harnessing and draining energy," within Freud's therapeutic project.[355] But, as stated above, the machine has its problems. The "grinding of the psychical apparatus" can be heard in the multiplicity of

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[350] Jean-François Lyotard, *Toward the Postmodern* (London: Humanities Press, 1993), 13.
[351] Ibid.
[352] Lyotard mentions and/or discusses these apparatuses in this chapter: political apparatus, language apparatus, discourse apparatus, and the psychoanalytic apparatus. See ibid., 12-26. He claims that "there are an enormous number of apparatuses! The apparatus is the organization of network connections, channeling, regulating the ebb and flow of energy, in all regions." See ibid., 16.
[353] Ibid.
[354] Ibid., 12.
[355] Ibid., 13.

discourses which express extreme agony and the "scream."[356] One of the apparatuses points to the blocking of libidinal intensities: the language apparatus. Lyotard says that in Western modernity language saves force rather than lavishing it on emotions (intensities). For instance, force is saved and desire debarred from the scientific use of language, since "the fundamental hypothesis of all science is that its object *is* a system or can be *related* to a system."[357] Although the discourse of science regulates intensities with mechanical and logical precision, and although events become parts of a totality, the death instinct points to other apparatuses, which operate outside of the rules of language, and which do not follow the dictates of reason. Two such discourses are important to our topic. They are the Judaic discourse and the analysand's discourse.

3.2.2.4 Judaic Discourse

Lyotard describes both the Judaic and analysand's discourses as figures within the apparatus of discourse.[358] Discourse is an apparatus that always sets up a theater.[359] Politically it can organize itself as a Greek polis, circumscribed as a circle, ringed by the speakers, who face inward with their backs to the barbarian outside. The center of the circle is empty, and the moment of speech itself becomes the event. Intensity is imprinted in that moment – of debate – and refers "to the sole present of the existing speakers."[360] What is spoken is inscribed in a text, so that it can be remembered and re-actualized. The event is recorded so that it can be eternally present. As a form of discourse, the Judaic discourse shows similar characteristics. The Judaic discourse privileges language as a place where desire can roam and ramble. Indeed, language is given an exclusive privilege by the commandment against making images (Ex 20,3). Speakers are limited to using the first and second person pronouns (I/Thou), which are situated as speaker/addressee. However, what is said is actually not as important as that something is said. The importance is placed simply on the fact that something was said, and speech is made into an object. Lyotard quotes Exodus 20,19 in this regard – a passage where the people of Israel address Moses: "Speak to us yourself, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we shall die."[361] As a result of this objectification, it's no longer knowable whether God actually spoke these words or if they are

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[356] Ibid., 13-14.
[357] Ibid., 14.
[358] Ibid., 19.
[359] Narrative in contrast "sets up a scene without the theater hall," while discourse "sets every scene in exteriority." See ibid., 18.
[360] Ibid.
[361] Ibid., 19.

the words of Moses himself.[362] But the words have been inscribed in a book, and the words of the Voice are a gift, since God spoke to the Israelites. "The statement has no value as content, meaning, or information, but rather as a present, a gift sent, whether it was received or not."[363]

The fact of the gift sets up the relations between addressor and addressee. To have heard the Voice is to be placed in a non-reversible relation to the Speaker. This is completely opposite to the modern view of subject and language. In modern linguistic analysis, the "I" speaks to the "You," who is the listener. Then, the "You" can in turn reply – in which case the "You" can now say "I" to the former speaker, who is now positioned as the "You." Both I and Thou are reversible within conversation. But this is not the situation in Judaic discourse, which sets up its paradox. The paradox is that I am spoken to, but I cannot reply. In Judaic discourse, the "You" first speaks to the "I" who is taken hostage by that speech. However, the "I" cannot answer back.[364] And the gift goes further than simply the address, for the gift is one of language. To receive the message as a gift, the "I" must receive the gift of speech, i.e. "language as gift." By receiving the gift of language and of speech, the "I" is "indebted to speech, to *that* speech, to that gift."[365] Therefore, it is sin to refuse that speech, to fail to recognize it, and to turn one's back on one's obligation to it. Since the "I" is seized by the gift of speech, the relations between the Speaker and the addressee (the I and the Thou) cannot be reversed. This Jewish positioning of the "I" and the "You" bars all mediation – no intermediary can enter between the Speaker and the listener. In contrast with the Christian discourse, arbitration is impossible. As Lyotard succinctly writes, "There is no arbiter between 'You' and 'Me'." Even the second person plural is impossible. There is no "Us," which would be an "I-and-You."[366] Judaic discourse is that of the imperative. Before signification, before content, the message arrives. With its arrival the listener is obligated simply by hearing the Voice. S/he is seized. "This seizure arises from the fact that the reversal or the exchange of the instance of speech and of tense is impossible."[367]

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[362] Since God can neither be seen nor represented, and since knowledge is based on hearing (in this instance on what "God" said) and not on seeing, how can one know? Speaking of this, Levinas writes, "about whom it has never been known if He spoke for a long time. Nor do we know if He said all He is credited with, or if He didn't limit Himself to the first sentence, to the first word, or even to the first letter of the Decalogue, which, as if by accident, is the unpronounceable *alef*!" As cited by Lyotard. See ibid., 32.

[363] Ibid., 19.

[364] Lyotard quotes Levinas' translation of Job 9,2-3 to make this point. "Indeed, I know it as you say: how can man be in the right against God? If any were so rash as to challenge him for reasons, one in a thousand would be more than they could answer." See ibid.

[365] Ibid., 20.

[366] Lyotard quotes Job 9,32-34 to make this point: "Yes, I am a man, and he is not; and so no argument, no suit between the two of us is possible. There is no arbiter between us, to lay his hand on both, to stay his rod from me, or keep away his daunting terrors." See ibid.

[367] Ibid.

3.2.2.5 Psychoanalytic Discourse

The psychoanalytic apparatus is similar to the Judaic apparatus, although there are differences as well. But the former apparatus also relates to Lyotard's idea of the gift, which helps illuminate his thinking on this subject. In the psychoanalytic apparatus, language is the only activity and relation involved. Psychoanalysis is a treatment in which destructive "energy" is lost. The therapist helps the patient's psychical machine discharge. Energetic fluxes are collected by means of memories, which are sought after in the form of pictures. Once a memory is found and converted into a picture, the patient translates it into words. In Freud's own words, "The patient is, as it were, getting rid of it by turning it into words."[368] It is a therapeutic move from the libidinal to the political – from pent up energetic fluxes, which are stuck in unconscious scenes, to the language of political economy. Lyotard sums it up as follows: "the movement of the cure runs from the incommunicable to the communicable, from the inexchangeable to the exchangeable, from the scene without the hall to the hall without the scene."[369] Within the therapeutic environment of therapist and patient, there is another discourse at work. This is the analysand's discourse.

The analysand's discourse functions in three terrains: as gift, offer, and request. Like in the Judaic discourse, the patient (analysand) offers words (and payment) to the therapist (analyst). The analyst listens without the need to understand – in a kind of free association – to the patient's words, since the psychoanalytic discourse is not one of knowledge or cognition.[370] But the patient has a request. That request is for the gratification of his or her need for love. Freud believed that this cannot happen during therapy, since it would have disastrous consequences for the patient. He says that the therapist must suspend gratification so as to impel the patient to do the necessary work, to reject the pleasure principle and to allow the libidinal energies, which are located (perhaps) in the body, to discharge towards a new region (i.e. discourse) through a process Freud called "translaboration."[371] In order for this discharge to occur, a conversation must occur between the patient's *id* and *ego*. It is a conversation that is similar to Judaic discourse. Lyotard summaries it as follows: "Id speaks, but 'I' cannot effectively put myself in its place. Id will never be a "You" in the way that the instance of speech is exchanged between 'You' and 'Me'." This is discourse and faith "in the sense of the Judaic paradox."[372] In order to effectuate this internal conversation, a similar imbalanced conversation occurs between the therapist and the patient. During the psychoanalytic session, the patient may say "I" and "You"; however, the analyst must always

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[368] Ibid., 21. As cited from Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, "Studies on Hysteria," *SE* 2, (1895).
[369] Lyotard, *Toward the Postmodern*, 21.
[370] Ibid., 22.
[371] Ibid., 23.
[372] Ibid., 22.

say "You" and never "I" as a means of giving a "gift of affect."[373] Like with the Judaic paradox, the relation is not reversible. Rather, with his or her back turned to the patient, the therapist simply asks questions and listens. The gift of emotion or love is *never* offered in the psychoanalytic relation. The therapist never responds to the patient's request, which to the analyst is an intransitive request: one that "does not contain an object."[374] Discharge of libidinal energy will occur through the figure of discourse, which flows through the network of the offer and the request, rather than through the gift (i.e. the gift of affect). Thus, Freud writes: "The patient's need and longing should be allowed to persist in her, in order that they may serve as forces impelling her to do work and to make changes, and that we must beware of appeasing those forces by means of surrogates."[375] The fact of this irreversible relation shows that the psychoanalytic relation is not an exchangeable discourse.[376]

In fact, Lyotard draws the correspondence between the patient's (analysand's) discourse and the Judaic discourse even tighter. On the level of expression the patient's discourse functions within a paradox similar to the Judaic paradox. The Id, using the imperative discourse genre speaks to the patient. The patient's ego is seized and disseized (i.e. ousted; deprived of the possession of its space). Lyotard says that the Id (or the unconscious) is Yahweh, which takes the Israelite-patient hostage, prior to any request or the fracturing of the "I/You."[377] In both discourses – Judaic and analysand's – Lyotard says there is nothing to refer back to. He also notes that the processes have no outside grounding; therefore, they have a "figural character." These psychical processes are both empty and without signifiers. Lyotard notes that it's important to recognize the fullness of the circumscription made by both discourses. First, libidinal energy is invested upon a domain of language, in an expression of discourse (either Judaic or psychoanalytic) wherein the "I" and "You" are situated. Then a twisting is given to discourse, wherein the "I" and "You" are made to be inexchangeable, according to the "rule" of either of the two aforementioned discourses. Lyotard makes special note of this torsion. The investment of privilege upon language brings about the Greek city space as a place for discourse, i.e. rhetoric and politics, which are exchangeable speech. But both discourses are twisted in regards to the rule of exchangeability, since the "You" refuses to speak. These discourses point to the "generalized relativity of the figural." This means that each apparatus will appear to be irrational when seen from another apparatus's perspective.[378]

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[373] Ibid., 23.
[374] Ibid., 22.
[375] Ibid., 23. As cited from, Sigmund Freud, "Observations on Transference-Love," *SE* 12, (1915): 166.
[376] Lyotard, *Toward the Postmodern*, 23.
[377] Ibid., 24.
[378] Ibid., 25. Lyotard argues that there are many apparatuses. See footnote 330 (above).

Lyotard places the twisting of these two particular apparatuses on the location and "inexchangeability of the positions [of] I/You."[379]

3.2.2.6 Absence

Lyotard relates the idea of gift to absence. The voice heard in the Judaic discourse, which seizes the hearer and requires obedience, to which the hearer submits and surrenders his or her ego, is a "dead voice." The writing which inscribes and permits it to be perpetually re-actualized "is not a message, but rather a gift. It is the true present as absence, and this gift consists in the fact that the subject is grasped by it, seized."[380] Lyotard quotes Levinas who wrote, "The Torah is given in the light of a face."[381] Of course this quote needs to be read in the context of the chapter in which it's found.[382] There Lyotard argues that the "face" refers to names "standing in for something else. They are faceable figures."[383] So, to say it clearly, "The Torah is given in the light of a figure." The Voice is dead, since the word received is merely a figuration … of nothing. For Lyotard, at the heart of the gift there is an absence. This emptiness allows the gift to function either as an exchangeable sign or a message from an unknowable speaker. In the former the gift is exchangeable, but in the latter the relation is one of inexchangeability. The gift is equivocal, because there is nothing at its core. The gift is a cousin to the sign. Lyotard has placed a tensor within the gift: as sign exchangeable, as message inexchangeable.

For Lyotard the notion of gift is filled with religion. He sees this in the problematic of symbolic exchange. Lyotard argues that what he calls the political economy is built upon an advanced closing of the system upon a concept, namely capital.[384] At the heart of this is the great Zero, a castration, a "strange game of hide-and-seek [we play] with ourselves."[385] Within the discourse of capital one figure of desire rules over all affects, which is a theological move. Lyotard also sees religion at work in the great Zero, God, or nothingness at the heart of gift understood as discourse – especially in Judaic discourse. Lyotard recounts a question Freud once posed to a pastor: "Why was psychoanalysis not created by one of all the pious men: why was it for an entirely atheist Jew that one waited?"[386] The answer Lyotard gives is this: a Jew was needed who would refuse to reconcile the problem religiously, who

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[379] Ibid.

[380] Ibid., 34.

[381] Ibid.

[382] That is in "Jewish Oedipus," in ibid., 27-40.

[383] Ibid., 30.

[384] Lyotard says this in a more difficult way. The political economy does not rest on the ignorance of desire but "on the foreclosure of castration ... for us the order of capital." See Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 106.

[385] Ibid.

[386] Lyotard, *Toward the Postmodern*, 40.

would not use representation to serve the function of truth, someone who didn't have to *know*, who wanted to *do* before wanting to *hear*.[387] Lyotard says that an atheist was necessary – someone with an "ear that wants to hear *what* the voice of the Other says, instead of being seized and disseized. This is the atheism demanded by Freud."[388]

Lyotard's notion of the gift is but one of the ways he challenges theory and conceptual thinking. In its place he privileges libidinal intensities across the libidinal band – intensities which are found in every movement on that band (whether white hot or frozen like stone). Lyotard claims that "every intensity, scorching or remote, is always *this and not-this*."[389] This is a challenge to conceptual thinking, to its claims to authority and truth – claims which Lyotard adamantly denies. So Lyotard puts forth his model of the libidinal band, in direct opposition to conceptual thinking and the theater it inevitably sets up.

3.2.3 The Libidinal Band

Lyotard privileges presentation (the event) over representation (conceptual thinking) in his view of love. To understand why this is so, we need to consider his understanding of representation as a libidinal force. Lyotard argues that love as presentation is open to the otherness of the other. However, there is another love which is open to the other but *not as other* – a love that is open for the purpose of acquiring and consuming it. Such a love inevitably leads to terror. As a strict materialist,[390] Lyotard wars against any form of the concept.[391] Functioning under the principle of exclusion, the concept tends to forget whatever lies beyond its borders except to annex it. In his attempt to bear witness to the event, Lyotard favors presentation over representation, as we will see.

To illustrate the functioning of representational thinking, Lyotard proposes the model of the libidinal band. This band is a Moebius band, which turns back upon itself, having neither an interior nor an exterior. The lack of interiority or exteriority on the libidinal band is of crucial importance. The libidinal band illustrates the way that our psychical apparatus

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[387] Lyotard says, "Because there is still too much seeing in hearing." See ibid.

[388] Ibid.

[389] Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 15.

[390] Lyotard's program in the *Libidinal Economy* is one of libidinal materialism. He speaks of two Marquis de Sades: a stupid Sade, and a "libidinal materialist." Concerning the latter, Lyotard writes, "the one we here desire and desire to sustain." See ibid., 64. In fact, Lyotard denies the existence of the subject, since "there is no subject," and "there is no-one to give." See ibid., 123. This, of course, makes one think of the way that Lyotard refers to himself in his summary of the argument of *The Differend* as the "A." An obvious reference to the word "author," although effaced, since, according to Lyotard, there is no subject writing. See Lyotard, *The Differend*, xii-xvi.

[391] The concept makes truth claims which are based upon the logic of the "this and not-this." Lyotard calls upon a vast group of people to resist the assault of truth claims. "Oh women, oh young men, oh ageing friends basking in the full bloom of youth, the unkind, the vehement, the barbarous, the superb, oh homos, oh dependants, oh Arabs, oh blood, help us now to endure this last, constant assault coming from detestable truth and intelligence…" Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 241.

functions prior to any re-presentation, before any constituting of subject, reference, or signification. Of course, this band does not exist in "reality," but it allows Lyotard to show the relationship between emotions (forces or pulsions) and critical, representational thought. Emotions are pure psychical force whereas theoretical thought is the paralysis of emotional force. Lyotard describes the libidinal band as spinning furiously, as glowing white-hot with its raging contingent pulsions, in its twists and turns. Due to its fiery movement, intensities and drives across the libidinal band are indistinguishable. However, the band begins to slow its rotations and it starts to cool. As it decelerates the libidinal band bends and the disjunctive bar forms. Lyotard calls the disjunctive bar the "operator of disintensification," which functions on the principle of exclusion: "either this, or not-this."[392] "The bar stops turning" and "circumscribes" a theatrical volume.[393] Distinctions are made between various pulsions on the libidinal band, and these distinctive separations give rise to theory. Theory requires the theater with its interior and exterior. These boundaries allow one to distinguish between "the ideal and the real, the authentic and the alienated, the useful and the exchangeable, the normal and the perverse, etc."[394] The cooling of forces/pulsions along the libidinal band allows the concept to form. As distinctions harden and the "this" is fixed as a "this" and the "that" as a "that," the disjunctive bar is immobilized and begins to move again, but this time in a gyratory motion, so as to make it impossible to discern the spaces it has generated, and thus "sweeps indistinctly."[395] A freezing of thought occurs finally in the encounter with Medusa and the paralysis of her beautiful logic. Even here, in the frozen state of the stone-cold immobilization of Medusa (i.e. the theoretical genre), there is *jouissance*. Lyotard claims that "theory is the *jouissance* of immobilization."[396] So there is *jouissance* in the furious aleatoric rotations of the libidinal band as well as in the cold, dead, immobility of the frozen theory. The cooling of the libidinal band opens up a theater of representation, which allows for the birth of distinctions, concepts, and representations. As rationality solidifies into theoretical thinking it approaches Medusa in whose gaze it freezes into rigidly logical propositions. In its medusified rigidity, the theoretical genre has the *jouissance* of "an *impregnable* body."[397] This body cannot allow for mistakes. Every statement must be provable by the propositions

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[392] Ibid., 14.
[393] Ibid., 25.
[394] As noted in the glossary included at the beginning of the English translation. See ibid., xii.
[395] Ibid., 242.
[396] Ibid. Lyotard claims that theoreticians are excited by this immobility. "What gives you a hard-on, theoreticians, and throws you onto our band, is the chill of the clear and distinct … the *opposable* … Beautiful and paralyzing, medusifying in fact, the severe disjunction that suspends." See ibid.
[397] Ibid., 246.

from which it is constructed. Its logic is impeccably correct, replicable, and clear. Lyotard's conceptual picture of the libidinal band can be illustrated in this way:[398]

Representation   **Presentation**
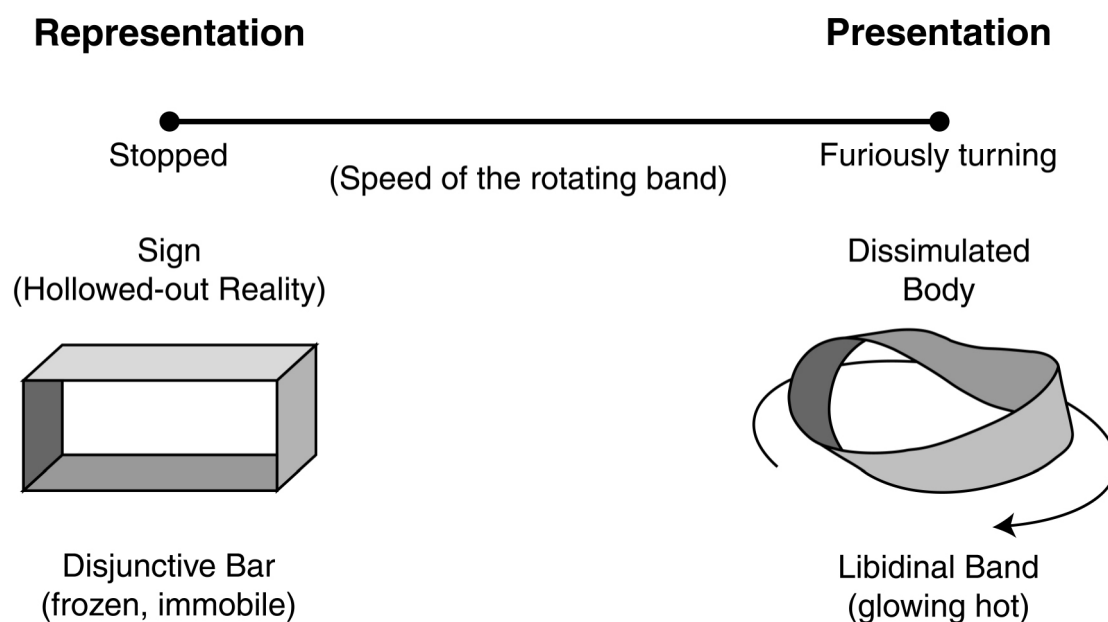
Lyotard rebels against the theoretical demand for clarity. Such clarity requires one to distance him or herself from the object or event, within a theater of representation, in order to make distinctions necessary for analysis. This Lyotard roundly rejects.

> The demand for clarity must be strongly denounced; it requires the power of he [*sic*] who loves, or who speaks, over his intensities. It demands: have power, define the intense. No, we must receive this demand in terror; flee from it, that's all we can do; it is the first imprint of power on the libidinal band.[399]

Lyotard flees in terror from the demand for clarity, i.e., the insistence that distinctions be made. Distinctions lead to concepts, and concepts require exteriorization. The concept instantiated on the theatrical stage must conquer what remains on the outside. "The concept 'will will' its own extension, to master what it had left at the gates of its territory, it will set off for war … towards the outside, in order to annex it."[400] There is love in this: the love of conquest and the "*jouissance* of overthrowing."[401] According to Lyotard, both Augustine and

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[398] This dissertation, naturally, is written in an academic, cognitive genre, with the goal of analyzing Lyotard's thought. It is, of course, quite ironic that at this very point the fixing of the referent – in this case, Lyotard's libidinal thinking – , the act of signifying it, and of showing or demonstrating it (in the footnotes) is done for the sake of *clarity*. One could say that his libidinal thought has been caricatured in this illustration.
[399] Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 258.
[400] Ibid., 14.
[401] Ibid.

Hegel engage in this annexation; i.e. they set off towards the gates of their territory (towards the outside) to appropriate it. The concept provides comfort; it shelters one from the event, from the indiscernible. It does this through a system of thought. Lyotard equates the concept or ideas (i.e. representation) with repression and the Freudian doctrine of the death drive which is "busy consuming everything."[402] That which lies outside of the concept's borders are loved – loved to be brought within the system of the concept.[403] Ultimately the concept embraces the event in order to appropriate it, and, in so doing, it betrays the occurrence.

In establishing the concept, the process of distinguishing between the "this" and the "not-this" sets up borders, which become frontiers. This is done to avoid confusion (i.e. for clarity's sake). By setting up a particular "discourse of so-called knowledge," within the theater of the disjunctive bar, the inside is understood in terms of the outside. The great Zero, Truth, or God are names given to the figuration of the outside. However, Lyotard asserts that the Zero is a zero – an empty center. This nothing at the center of all conceptual representation is nihilism. Lyotard asserts that all semiotics are inescapably nihilistic.[404] Semiotics assign meaning to the other from a "space" of nothingness, and, as a result, the other is seen as a representation rather than as an event. This leads to a love that uses the other for one's own purposes. Lyotard presents a vivid literary example of a man who uses his wife (i.e. his lover) in a quest to know the truth. We briefly considered his wife, Roberte, above. Now we turn our attention towards her unfaithful husband.

3.2.4 An Unfaithful Husband

Octave is a fictional character, penned by Pierre Klossowski, who appears in Klossowski's trilogy on Roberte.[405] Octave is an ageing Catholic scholar in canon law who follows what he calls "the laws of hospitality" (*des Lois de l'hospitalité*) with visitors who stay in their home; namely, he gives his wife to them for their own sexual satisfaction.[406] This unusual arrangement allows Octave to indulge in voyeurism, while affording a sexual education for his nephew Antoine. Naturally this also creates a situation where Octave risks losing his beloved Roberte to her lovers. After all, the husband he is exchanging the

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[402] Ibid., 32.
[403] "How they are loved, these exteriorities! Hence voyages, ethnology, psychiatry, pediatrics, pedagogy, the love of the excluded: enter, beautiful Negresses, [*sic*] charming Indians, enigmatic concepts. All this is theatre; it is the white innocence of the West in expansion, base cannibalistic imperialism." See ibid., 14.
[404] Ibid., xiii.
[405] The trilogy comprises: *Roberte, ce soir* (1954), *La Révocation de l'édit de Nantes* (1959), and *Le Souffleur* (1965). For a general introduction to Klossowski, see John Taylor, *Paths to Contemporary French Literature*, vol. 2 (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 245-250.
[406] For an excellent summary of this marital "arrangement" (i.e. the laws of hospitality), see Castanet, "Roberte."

inexchangeable (*inéchangeable*) – his wife! But Octave believes the risk is worth it, since the transgression of normal marital conventions is necessary in order to re-experience the purity of his first love for Roberte. So the master of the house becomes the grand manipulator who plays everyone involved: Roberte, Antoine, and a number of their guests. As Octave, the voyeur, watches, others ravish Roberte, and he feels a tension that brings on a rapturous elevation of his love for his wife. Octave is obsessed with Roberte's love. He waits to see her face. Octave wants to see her at that moment when she first encounters her lover; he hopes, thereby, to seize her soul. This jealousy is reversible, for he delights in hearing Roberte's cry of tortured jealousy when she sees Octave's interest in another. The unfaithful husband never ceases to love the cry that lacerates his wife's vascular and nervous systems.[407] Octave seeks this cry more than anything else in the world. Lyotard claims that the true reason for Octave's actions is to intensify the forces assaulting her plexus so that she is thrown about "like a lightning strike incomparable to any orgasm."[408] The lightning bolt does not simply strike the victim's body, it expresses the torment experienced by both wife and husband. This torture opens up a presence – a labyrinth from which there is no exit. As Lyotard says, "the cry of your torture victim is not *a* cry: she cries every time, her cries open as many labyrinths."[409] The one crying suffers the terror of wandering around in a labyrinth with no exit.[410] Roberte suffers as a proof of her love at the hands of a lover who is overly concerned with his own love for the one he tortures. Lyotard is not interested in "reguilding the heraldry of the *tragic*," since "the tragic still necessarily presupposes the great Zero." But Octave, the unfaithful husband, also wanders around in a vertigo – this one of *joy* and terror – an emotional, rather than an intellectual, experience. As Lyotard concludes, "he necessarily betrays what he encounters, and necessarily encounters what he betrays."[411]

To say it simply, love may be engaged in representation or in presentation (or both). Under representation love has a drive to gain, acquire, and use the other. It is a drive to exceed itself *and* to consume the other. Klossowski gives us an example of this through Octave, who uses his wife Roberte in the same way a man consorts with a streetwalker to gain *jouissance* (the former through the pleasure of voyeurism and the latter through physical release). However, love also involves itself in presentation. Common to both of these loves are one's need to exceed oneself and for *jouissance* (i.e. to gain something). Lyotard neatly

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[407] Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 38.

[408] Ibid.

[409] Ibid., 40.

[410] Lyotard uses the example of an insect thrown into a maze under the glare of 500 watts of light. The insect desperately tries to escape, but there is no escape. In the same way, terror opens up labyrinths from which there is no exit. Or it leads to labyrinths leading to labyrinths. "Every labyrinth is traced as flight towards an outlet … nobody is the master of encounters. Love is not giving what one does not have; it is having to cry near to areas struck by lightning." See ibid., 41.

[411] Ibid., 42.

summarizes this in two short sentences from Baudelaire: "What is love? – the need to escape oneself ... All love is *also* prostitution."[412] It's understandable that Lyotard does not favor the love of the other as representation, since this leads to violence. He views representation as a great problem in Western thought, which emanates from Plato and continues to be promoted by religion throughout the millennia. Rather, it is loving the other as presented which lies at the heart of Lyotard's philosophical program, as we will now see.

3.3 LOVE AND PRESENTATION

As just stated above, love has a drive to exceed itself. Lyotard uses the word "love" in several ways to indicate this. The word "love" is used to describe one's affinity for others[413] and familial love.[414] Lyotard also says that phrasing and gestures are ways of expressing that which cannot be represented by language. Thus, the desire to build a common life with another person is a way of expressing the inexpressible phrase. And it's the search for expressing the inexpressible that lies at the heart of love for Lyotard.

In *The Postmodern Explained*, Lyotard forthrightly states that lovers involved with presentation are "committed to presence," while being "deprived of representation."[415] Everything revolves around *deixis* for them: "this, now, yesterday, you."[416] The lovers' attempt to find expression for the inexpressible evidences itself in their prattle,[417] while the secret of their love is inaccessible to others, since it is a sentimental matter. Each person experiences this life in a radically singular way, which is an absolutely singular idiom. What I hear, see, taste, and touch cannot be shared by another.[418] While the experience is non-transferable and untranslatable, these experiences can be shared intransitively. Lyotard argues

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[412] Ibid., 79-80 (emphasis mine).

[413] Lyotard writes affectionately of "our great mathematicians, those whom we love, our brothers in pain and joy…" See ibid., 13.

[414] "I mean that to be in love with a woman, to will that she gives you the child she desires to give you, to arrange your life in order to make possible a life in common with her and the child – that also is a way of 'phrasing,'" See Jean-François Lyotard, *Peregrinations: Law, Form, Event* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 4.

[415] Naturally one must account for this statement in view of what has just been said. As with many of his other key terms, Lyotard has a nuanced view of love. Lyotard often holds his terms in tension. The tension between love, representation, and presentation is held together by the tensor bar in his book, *Libidinal Economy*. The indication of the bar's operator is seen in the tensor sign (*e.g.* Roberte – see below). To stress too strongly his claim here – that lovers are deprived of representation – is to fall into the logical trap of rationality, i.e. that something be put in the place of the vanquished theory. Lyotard claims that "it is the place of theory that must be vanquished. And this can come about only through displacement and flight." Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 105. Lovers slide along a scale between avarice and interest in the other. The lovers here are fully engaged in the event of each other. Octave and Roberte are engaged in both themselves and in the other for widely differing reasons.

[416] Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, 201.

[417] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence 1982-1985*, ed. Julian Pefanis and Morgan Thomas, trans., Don Barry et al. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 92.

[418] As Lyotard writes, "*your* point of listening, of contact [*tact*], etc. will never be mine." See ibid.

that we can share singular experiences of similar events.[419] However, love is an exception. Love demands that my field of perspective be permeable and that I surrender it to the other. This results in a relentless quest for a new idiom, a new phrase, a new way of expressing the secret[420] of my sentimental experience with my lover. Love is the revealing of oneself to the other – a stumbling around "in the labyrinth of sensibility, sensuality, and naked speech."[421]

Naturally, one needs to account for the apparent contradiction between the examples of love presented in the *Libidinal Economy* and in the later *The Postmodern Explained*. How is it that Lyotard can say that lovers are "deprived of representation" in the latter book when his earlier work gives precisely such examples of lovers *involved* in representation?[422] Interestingly, the word "presentation" does not appear in the text of the *Libidinal Economy*, although the word "representation" occurs numerous times.[423] Lyotard is busy with a critique of rationality and its forgetting of the force of emotion in the *Libidinal Economy*. His concern is to argue for the importance of emotions (forces or pulsions) and their relation to cold rationality, and his program is to develop a discourse of dissimulation; i.e. a discourse of *concealing* the truth. Therefore, he discusses at length the body of the other, and how the other's skin, bones, and tendons, affect the lover. His interest is in the *dissimulated body*, i.e., the body that *conceals* raging libidinal pulsions which are often dissembled (hidden under some pretense). Lyotard repeatedly discusses the way emotions course around the libidinal band, especially through the *jouissance* of contact with the other. To consider the other as simply an object – a body – as a source of one's own *jouissance* takes one down the path of representation and terror. Lyotard only hints at the "remainder," while arguing for the hidden.[424] His primary focus, though, in *Libidinal Economy* is on love as it embraces representation and the vertigo this creates.

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[419] Lyotard says that in the world, "singularities are present in the plural." See ibid.

[420] Each one of us is imprisoned in an incommunicable secret by the fact of our existence in both a physical body and an "unconscious body." See ibid., 96.

[421] Ibid., 93.

[422] The two main examples found in *Libidinal Economy* are Klossowski's Octave and Roberte, and Schreber, who thinks that he must become a woman so that God can impregnate him in order to bear children for the salvation of humanity. Each of these examples shows someone using another for his or her *jouissance*. See Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 38-41 and 56-61 respectively.

[423] In the *Libidinal Economy* Lyotard takes the tone of a willful bad boy (*méchanceté*), where, for example, the male member is left erect and extended on the flesh become libidinal band. Thus, the rotating libidinal band is viewed as involving a revolving penis. Schehr, in commenting on the *Libidinal Economy*, says, "For I now know what is so *méchant* about this book: the author, or at least your humble narrator, the rhetorical author, within the text is prancing about, intensities gone wild, with a raging hard-on." See Lawrence R. Schehr, "Lyotard's Codpiece," *Yale French Studies*, Jean-Francois Lyotard: Time and Judgment, no. 99 (2001): 68. Lyotard himself later wrote that the *Libidinal Economy* was "my evil book," and he said that it "passed for a piece of shamelessness, immodesty, and provocation … it actually was all that …" Lyotard says that the book is an example of thinking that is dizzied by the realization of "how groundless all the criteria are that are used to respond to the requirements coming from the law." See Lyotard, *Peregrinations*, 13-14.

[424] For a discussion of Lyotard's famous epigram (i.e. "Who knows not how to hide, knows not how to love."), see 3.5 below. The epigram is cited from Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, v.

In *The Postmodern Explained* Lyotard emphasizes a different situation – one where lovers respect alterity. The problem contemplated there is how lovers can share that which cannot be represented, i.e., the lover's hidden thoughts and their desire to share these with each other. Here, in contrast to Octave in the *Libidinal Economy*, the lovers are not trying to understand each other through observation and its attendant cold, rational understanding. Rather, the lovers are in the moment, experiencing the otherness of the other. They are deprived of representation precisely through their search for a new idiom, since there is, as of yet, no phrase that can communicate the event which is the other. Lyotard is holding two different experiences in tension under the same word "love." Love is open to the other either for consumption (representation) or for self-revelation (presentation). Love drives lovers to exceed themselves, as they find that they prostitute themselves by finding satisfaction in each other (both by "selling" themselves to obtain and by "buying" the other to enjoy – i.e. exchanging *jouissance* with each other).[425]

Lyotard uses Roberte, the wife of the unfaithful husband mentioned above, as an illustration of a person who exceeds both the rational and the irrational, finding both satisfaction and shame in her actions. For Lyotard, the name Roberte functions as a tensorial sign. "If Roberte is a tensor, it is not because she is both a slut and a thinker, but because she exceeds, *jenseits*, *both these assignations* in the vertigo of an intensity … beyond reason's capacity to explain."[426] On the one hand, she is an intellectual and a war-time hero. Roberte is the "holder of the Resistance Medal, Commander of the Légion d'Honneur, member of the Commission de l'Intérieur," who is responsible for the moral integrity of the nation. She is a MP who felt that it was her duty to marry the old man, Octave, a professor of canon law, who had been dismissed from the university.[427] On the other hand, she is a slut. Paradoxically, Roberte is also a libertine with a colorful past, who, during the autumn of 1944, intentionally went half-dressed to a deserted church in Rome in order to meet and be seduced by Vittorio at the very holy altar itself.[428] Ironically, it is this same Vittorio (as Victor) who is given access – years later – to Roberte's charms by her husband, Octave, as their guest, under the "laws of hospitality." Octave, of course, was completely unaware of their previous history. Both Octave and Victor are responsible for arranging and/or being personally involved in Antoine's (the nephew's) seduction of his own aunt. Needless to say, Roberte is a complicated person with a variegated past, and Octave has no idea who she truly is. Like Winston, in Orwell's

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[425] That is, as both prostitute and customer.

[426] Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 56. This sentence seems to imply an uncertainty regarding Roberte's function as a tensor (perhaps in Klossowski's book); however, it is clear from the overall argument in *Libidinal Economy* that this is precisely Lyotard's reading.

[427] Pierre Klossowski, *Roberte Ce Soir and the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes*, trans., Austryn Wainhouse (New York: Grove Press, 1969), 113-114.

[428] Ibid., 102-106.

1984, Roberte discloses who she is in her diary entries in *The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes*. She writes concerning Octave,

> The poor old dear hasn't the faintest notion of what I am capable of without any help from him; even though he wear himself to a frazzle conjecturing what happens to me and inventing what he'd like to see me experience, I'll never tell him about the things that have actually happened to me and may well happen to me some more: one word to Octave and Antoine would find out the next minute. The boy wouldn't get another night's sleep.[429]

Roberte confesses the internal contradictions of who she is to her diary: "*It* [her past] was preying on me this morning at the Committee session, I couldn't collect my thoughts; nobody noticed, but just the same … even taking a bath, as I did the last time, isn't enough anymore."[430] For Lyotard, Roberte holds open the incompossible intensities that inform and exceed her name. She functions as a tensor bar within the swirling intensities of the libidinal band: when spinning furiously, she is a passionate, unfaithful lover (slut); when turning haltingly, she is the frozen, moral, intellectual. But, as Lyotard says, if she functions as a tensor, it's because she exceeds both assignations. Her name becomes a sign of a "dissimulatory body *par excellence*," since it hides (dissimulates) at least two different assignations under false appearances: thinker and slut. As a *jenseits*, the name Roberte functions as a sign which points to a referent that is not assignable: intensity through force [*puissance*] is produced through "difference and opposition."[431] To say it another way: the name points to the differend at the core of the unfaithful wife, Roberte.

Octave wants to subordinate this ephemeral Roberte to the permanence of rational knowledge. He's obsessed with *knowing* his wife's soul. However, in representing her to himself, even in observing the moment she meets her lovers, in freezing that moment into a *tableau vivant*, so that he can observe and comment upon it, Octave betrays the Roberte whom he encounters.[432] By transfixing Roberte in a moment of the Medusa-stare, so as to better observe her slightest gesture, Octave begins to analyze the event and, thus, betrays that event, translating it into a cognitive discourse. But there's pleasure in this betrayal, and it's a

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[429] Ibid., 133.
[430] Ibid.
[431] Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 54.
[432] The person fixed in a *tableau vivant* is caught between two poles: a pole of immobilization and a pole of agitation. This is true in "Sadean or erotic narratives in general." In the first case, the body is a "represented body," while in the second case the person's body is plunged "into the most extreme disorder." This is, perhaps, typical for all figurative-narrative organizations. See ibid., 243.

pleasure other than that of the voyeur: the pleasure of *theory*.[433] The old man's love is a voracious love that consumes, acquires, and doesn't let go. Such a love is exemplified by the miser who won't let go of the money in his hands. In this encounter, in his voyeurism, Octave is presented as the one who betrays his beloved by his need to represent her – by his need to *know*.

But there are lovers who are "deprived of representation" and fully involved in presentation. They search for a new idiom to express the sentiment of their love and, in so doing, bear witness to the event of the other. This is clearly Lyotard's program. In fact, the Christian narrative warrants his blistering critique precisely when it refuses to bear witness to otherness. But there are risks to venturing out in love. Love demands that I surrender my field of perspective to another in a new idiom. It's precisely this desire to transcend oneself and the nakedness of presence before the other that makes love so dangerous.

3.4 Love As Threat

Simply being in a relationship with another can be dangerous. There is a love that comes too soon, whose hold on us can dominate our entire lives. And lovers who are searching for an idiom, who engage in lovers-speak, can ask too much. Their very search for the "truth" of the other can lead to vertigo and terror. Love can be dangerous. Love can be a threat. First we turn to the love that comes too early before considering the dangers of knowing too much.

3.4.1 Mainmise

The demand that I open myself to the other can have devastating consequences for me. Lyotard came to this conclusion after a careful reading of Freud. The calamity of love arises in connection with the *mainmise* a parent exercises over his/her child. *Mainmise*, a word which comes from French jurisprudence, originally described someone who had been seized for disloyalty to a feudal lord. The word also described the act of laying one's hand upon, hitting, or taking exclusive control over someone. We were each born into a situation of *mainmise* when we were born from others. We were subject to their *mancipium*, seized (like slaves) and held in their hands.[434] The affect can be disastrous for the child, since the parent's love can so dominate the child's psyche that s/he would never think of rebelling and would

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[433] Lyotard ends his *Libidinal Economy* with a scathing denunciation of the theoretical, in the final chapter entitled "Economy of This Writing." In this chapter, Lyotard indicts those who derive *jouissance* from theory. See ibid., 241-262. We also discuss this subject below in *3.4.2*.

[434] "We were born from others, but also to others, given over defenseless to them." See Lyotard and Gruber, 2.

therefore remain under the parent's *mainmise*. Even should we choose to leave our parent's *mancipium*, our psyche has received such a blow and the wound is so deep that the *mainmise* continues to exert its domination over our lives, even after we think that we have been emancipated.[435] This is the result of a seizure that comes too quickly, before it can be thought. The parent's love opens up and sustains this domination, which is held in place by love.

For both Jews and Christians emancipation comes through listening to the father's voice – to the call of the true *manceps* (i.e. the one "who takes something in hand so as to possess or appropriate it").[436] That Voice is written for the Jew. Since no one knows how Yahweh will keep his promises, one must continue reading, rereading, and interpreting the written letters. This "listening" is required of the Jews. Abraham's justification is based not on works, which he had yet to fulfill, but on his believing God's voice, on surrendering entirely to its command and promise. Lyotard says, "What did he hear in the Voice? Not *what* it said, something he could not understand, but *the fact that* it wanted something of him."[437] Jews continue to read to see what the Voice, now fixed in text, has said. Christians, however, believe that the Voice is made flesh – that the Voice voices itself. As a result, they no longer need to constantly reread and interpret a text, for the covenant is now embodied in the person of Jesus Christ.[438] Love comes as a dialectic of love: "I am coming, here I am, come ... If you have not already come, I cannot come. But also, I come so that you may come. I give you grace or pardon so that you may give me faith."[439] For both Jews and Christians, emancipation comes from surrendering oneself completely to the father's *mancipium*. For the Apostle Paul this hearing involves presenting one's members over to the *slavery* of righteousness (Rom 6,19-23).[440]

Irrespective of the differend between Jews and Christians, Bennington notes that "both sides of the divide agree upon the essential structure of subjection to a higher force, located in the commanding voice."[441] The Voice speaks and one is immediately obliged to hear and obey. Hearing the call throws the hearer off before s/he can constitute an "I," before a subject

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[435] Ibid., 1. Lyotard's use of the word "affect" is in line with Freud's concept of the *Nachträglich*; that is, of a first offense which "touches our mind too soon and the second too late, so that the first time is like a thought not yet thought while the second time is like a not-thought to be thought later." See Lyotard, *Peregrinations*, 9. Lyotard says that the *mancipium* over the adult child is twofold: that exercised by his parents; and that which the adult's own childhood exercises over him or herself. See Lyotard and Gruber, *The Hyphen*, 7.

[436] Ibid., 1.

[437] Ibid., 17. The ambiguity of the call is also seen in the Exodus-event. See ibid., 3.

[438] Lyotard notes that "the Voice is no longer deposited in traces; it no longer marks itself in absence; it is no longer to be deciphered through signs. The Voice speaks the flesh, it speaks flesh. And the mystery has to do only with this – not with what the Voice says." See ibid., 22-23.

[439] Ibid., 23.

[440] Lyotard comments that "one is emancipated from death only by accepting to be 'enslaved to God,' for 'the advantage you get'" (i.e. eternal life). See ibid., 8.

[441] Geoffrey Bennington, "Childish Things," in *Minima Memoria: In the Wake of Jean-François Lyotard*, ed. Claire Nouvet, Zrinka Stahuljak, and Kent Still (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 152.

can be constituted. The call is exclusive to the one who is called, since it's the being of the hearer who is "being-called," and it is ambiguous, since what the voice is that calls is unknown. Thus, the call is oppressive – displacing the person – and it immediately places the hearer under obligation.[442] Paul's preaching, according to Lyotard, is that of the Voice, through Christ, which "speaks clearly and directly, since it speaks only at the price of a dispossession, of a devastating affection."[443] To love the Other is "to love its loving me enough for me to lose the love of myself; it is enough to have this faith in order to be justified, before any letter or any reading."[444] The darker side of the narrative of love is this: it opens us to the voice of the Other, which displaces us, and demands that we listen – that is, love the Lover.[445]

3.4.2 The Love of Truth

There is also a love for representation itself that is manifested in a love for the truth. This is Lyotard's great foe: he argues that representation is rooted in reality hollowed out as a sign; that at the heart of the sign is nihilism. This nothingness at the center of the sign negates that which is presented in the event: something that a strict materialist like Lyotard vehemently resists. But there are those who love the theoretical and the true. Love of the truth enjoys its own *jouissance*, namely the joy of immobility, the frozen Medusa stare. Lyotard abhors the theoretical – and its Platonic quest for the true – since, he says, it leads to terror. True speech "is the weapon of paranoia and power, the grip of unity-totality in the space of words, the return and the terror. So let's struggle against the white terror of truth, by means of and for the red cruelty of singularities."[446]

The theoretician loves a *consistent* discourse, where axioms which build upon each other produce a perfectly immobile, dead body. And there is pleasure in this for those who love logic. Lyotard writes concerning this pleasure,

> Medusa immobilizes, and this is *jouissance*. Theory is the *jouissance* of
> immobilization … What gives you a hard-on, theoreticians, and throws you onto our
> band, is the chill of the clear and distinct; in fact, of the distinct alone, that is, the

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[442] Bennington comments on the ambiguity of the call and its attendant *mancipium*: "For if the oppressive hand weighs so heavily upon us and has left a lasting thumbprint on our being, then it is necessary to recall that there is trouble on the line, and difficulty in assigning the call with any certitude." See ibid., 155.
[443] Lyotard and Gruber, *The Hyphen*, 25.
[444] Ibid.
[445] "Listening is an extreme form of obedience, of opening and giving oneself over to the voice of the other." See Bennington, *Childish Things*, 151-152.
[446] Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 241.

opposable … Beautiful and paralyzing, medusifying in fact, the severe disjunction that suspends.[447]

The "excited" theoretician loves the impregnable, utterly clear, body. He is captivated by it, since it "is utterly consistent within its own terms and can be derived from itself by explicit procedures."[448]

Lovers who demand to know everything about their paramours love in a way similar to the love the theoretician has for theory. Everything must be clear, explained, and put out in the open. Lyotard writes, "Theory's pretension is similar to lovers' demands: there ought to be clear signs; they may be equivocal, the demand is that they be legible, even if this requires a double reading."[449] But like Klossowski's character Octave, the lover who insists on *knowing* and disclosing his wife's soul is on the path to violence and terror. "The theoretical pretension is a pretension to power [*pouvoir*] like every sign-based demand for love."[450] Lyotard's resistance to theory is elucidated at the end of the *Libidinal Economy* in his comments on sexual intercourse: the demand for clarity is resisted by skins and words which "cannot be made transparent." He describes the demand for clarity among lovers in one of his most colorful similes,

> Theory demands the same thing as the amorous mistress and the unkind one: only love should erect the penis, only truth should erect the word! Such was Plato's demand, and so it remains, even in apparently cynical, but in fact very religious, modern discourse.[451]

Lyotard notes that theory will never be satisfied by the discourse given by libidinal economists who have not forgotten Heraclitus – who famously said that no one "steps into the same river twice" – in arguing for an ever-changing universe.[452] Theory wants to fix a standard, to immobilize the body; whereas, Lyotard argues for ductility, polymorphism, and change. If Medusa is as rigid and as cold as stone, then Venus is permeable and as hot as libidinal skin.

The event should be received in a feminine fashion, where the "proof of love" slides in a contingent manner. To fix a standard is to separate one from the object presented in order to

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[447] Ibid., 242.

[448] Ibid., 246.

[449] Ibid., 256.

[450] Ibid., 256-257.

[451] Ibid., 257.

[452] Ibid. Lyotard's work involves itself with the entire history of philosophy. This is most clearly seen in *The Differend*, especially in his Protagoras, Gorgias, and Plato Notices. Keith Crome argues for the importance of the pre-Socratic thinkers in Lyotard's oeuvre. See Keith Crome, *Lyotard and Greek Thought: Sophistry* (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2004).

appropriate it. It remains in the realm of truth where the sign is associated with intensity. Lyotard would rather that we allow for changeability and receive the event as it presents itself. In place of defining the intense, Lyotard argues that we refine ourselves into "anonymous conducting bodies," so that new effects (forces or metamorphoses) will exhaust themselves as they travel through us. Here are *passive* bodies producing "a philosophy of sodomists and women."[453] Effects are not to be analyzed in relation to a cause; rather, we are to passively suffer them as they course through us.[454] Lyotard admires Freud's discourse, but he says that it's still not the discourse he desires, for it's still a search for causes – an analysis. What Lyotard looks for is a feminine relation of "ductility and polymorphism."[455] He speaks for libidinal economists when he declares: "we deliver no message, we bear no truth, bring no revelation, and we do not speak for those who remain silent."[456] Instead, Lyotard waits passively for the event, resisting any attempt to represent the occurrence, which is a hollowing out of its happening into a sign. He ends the *Libidinal Economy* with a cry, "Set dissimulation to work on behalf of intensities." Let bodies, muscles, and skin *hide* libidinal impulses. Let love hide.

3.5 THE HIDDENNESS OF LOVE

In place of truth's demand for disclosure, Lyotard argues for a love that hides. A famous epigram appears at the beginning of the *Libidinal Economy*, which says, "Who knows not how to hide, knows not how to love."[457] Love, or openness to that which presents itself, is aware that not everything is disclosed to cognition in the presentation of the event. The matter that discloses itself conceals itself in its very revelation. It dissimulates. Therefore, for Lyotard, there is both room for and the necessity of ambiguity in love.

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[453] Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 258. One should keep in mind Lyotard's view of the event as coming "from behind," both in the sense of arriving before cognition and as approaching us unawares – as in anal rape. See Geoffrey Bennington, *Late Lyotard* (Lexington, KY: CreateSpace, 2008), 13, 34-36.

[454] This passivity – the making of one's self anonymous – so that the event can flow is worked out in Lyotard's commentary on the Dutch artist Karel Appel. Appel tells Lyotard that "the only control I exercise [over my body] is to not throw too much paint next to the canvas." Perception and motor functions are reversed from their normal use. The body "turns itself towards the event of a visible other. It scuttles its own residence so that the *stranger* visits it. Annoyed by what belongs to it, exposed to the astonishment of a touch that comes from elsewhere." See Jean-François Lyotard, *Karel Appel: A Gesture of Colour*, 5 vols., Writings on Contemporary Art and Artists, vol. 1 (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2009), 215, 217.

[455] Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 259.

[456] Although Lyotard will later appeal for philosophy to bear witness to the differend expressed in the silence of the deportees, who cannot find a genre in which to express the injustices and suffering experienced during "the Final Solution." Lyotard certainly will not co-opt the position of addressee and presume to speak on their behalf.

[457] Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, v.

3.5.1 Dissimulation

Lyotard encourages the libidinal economist to hide within the brightness of the semioticians and structuralists – "our enemies" – , since their light provides a place for obscurity.[458] For the libidinal economist recognizes that difference can exist within identity; passion can dance within reason, and the "chance event" can occur within composition. Something hides under a false appearance: dissimulation. Libidinal intensities (passions) lie concealed within the body. Roberte functions as a tensor bar for Lyotard, because she escapes reduction to either a unitary designation (either slut or thinker) or a series of calculable designations. Rather, her proper name covers an area – perhaps a landscape (see below) – where no specific designation is discernible, for Roberte exceeds assignation. Her name "covers a region of libidinal space open to the undefinability of energetic influxes, a region in flames."[459]

This dissimulation stands in contrast to Octave, who hopes to give a single name to the body of his wife Roberte, as a way of unifying that body under a name, thereby gaining a kind of global view over her body, through observing her adulterous activity.[460] Roberte's intensities are instantiated as a *phantasm*,[461] through the simulacra set up by Klossowski.[462] Octave orchestrates his wife's encounters with other men in order to *expose* her soul. But this will never work, since the secret of who Roberte is lies buried within her body. Octave does not know how to hide, conceal, or dissimulate – he must *know*. Therefore, according to Lyotard's epigram, Octave does not know how to love, because he's focused on what can be seen.

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[458] Ibid., 52.

[459] Ibid., 56.

[460] Ibid., 80.

[461] Klossowski uses the idea of a "phantasm" as a way of thinking about bodiless thinking and communicating. One who expresses one's intentions without a body passes immediately into the mind of another who is dispossessed of a body. See ibid., 73. Lyotard notes that the construction of Klossowski's "phantasm" as a turning away of pulsional force, as a fabricated object, from its "normal" use as a generator, employs the same nihilism which is found in Augustine's theory of the simulacrum. See ibid., 72.

[462] Klossowski's writing is heavily influenced by Latin to the extent that it affects his syntax and diction in French. "Simulacrum" in Latin corresponds to: (1) a statue of a pagan god, (2) a "phantom," (3) a material representation of ideas, and (4) a moral portrait. Klossowski notes that the ancients would call upon and then confine demons within statues of the pagan gods, since it was thought that a soul could not be made to animate them. The resulting demon empowered simulacra were believed to be able to help or harm people. Taylor says that "Klossowski infers a psycho-literary theory from this ancient custom: the emotion contained in a work of art – and thus provoked in the spectator or reader – is correlative to a 'demonic movement.' Klossowski's characters are 'idols' in this literal, as well as ancient, sense." Thus, the *tableaux vivants*, which he presents are the "realization of something that is incommunicable in itself or unrepresentable: literally the phantasm in its obsessional constraint." See Taylor, *Paths*, 245-248.

3.5.2 Scapeland

In *The Inhuman*, Lyotard compares the face to a landscape – a vista where love is concealed by a lover's face. Encounter with a face is an experience where only matter is the question at hand. The form of that matter is not taken into consideration, since the certainty of sensibility is shaken. One finds oneself simply gripped – held fast – by a face. Forms cannot "domesticate" this matter that appears, and the mind is rapidly consumed. Encountering a face may lead one into a landscape, i.e. Scapeland.

For Lyotard, landscapes contrast with places, since landscapes presuppose an estrangement [*dépaysement*], an infinite non-place, the sense of being in a borderland "where matter offers itself up in a raw state before being tamed."[463] Things are fuzzier than when forms are given by sensibility. Lyotard describes the experience of travelers in the borderlands of the *pagus*:

> Things are less clear when it comes to their lower sisters who smell, drink in and touch. For a beautiful visual landscape, walking without any goal, strolling and the desire to wander simply authorize a transfer of material powers to scents, to the tactile quality of the ground, of walls, of plants. Your foot savours the morbidezza of the mossy heathland and the undergrowth which flank and contradict the sharp stones of the path.[464]

A landscape is beautiful, but it's also disruptive – like hard rocks on a trail. Both internal and external conversation stops for the lonely traveler, as an attempt is made to disrupt the mind's defenses, in order to encounter inner desolation. Lyotard says that "a landscape is an excess of presence."[465] The landscape burns away the mind. Without the conflagration of the mind a landscape would only be a place, but the mind is never entirely burned away. Thus, melancholy pervades a landscape.

Place, in contrast with landscape, is a crossroads where knowledge is ordered. And the need to describe one's wanderings in a landscape encounters the problems of describing the indescribable. A framework is needed to relate the "how, where and when it happened." The landscape, though, has the power to "dissolve" or consume thought, and it "makes itself felt in the sense that it interrupts narratives."[466] The mind seized by a landscape regains its composure and begins to develop a narrative. Through the use of temporal indicators the ontological abyss is reduced. In "telling" the story of the landscape, the mind takes over,

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[463] Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, 186.
[464] Ibid., 185-186.
[465] Ibid., 187.
[466] Ibid.

paying a debt to the landscape, which Lyotard calls an "impossible mourning."[467] Encountering a landscape procures estrangement, an absolute estrangement, in which the mind's forms implode. The landscape's mark is an erasure of the mind's support, where the mind fails, slipping, falling, and missing its aim. Such happens when one encounters the face of one's beloved.

One who wanders in a landscape cannot but experience love; but one who abides in a place analyzes and narrates that love experience. However, love is hidden by the face of the lover, just as libidinal impulses are buried in the body. As Lyotard says somewhere else, dissimulation is present even in copulation, since there is no certainty that libidinal intensities will be produced by the effort.[468] Love as an emotional force, as a force hidden in the body, arrives as an event *before* cognition. As event it cannot be pinpointed in space and time. According to Bennington, an event "cannot but dissimulate itself ... and so one therefore always runs the risk of being wrong about it."[469] Love, as event, takes one from behind, accosting the one who finds him or herself to have "fallen in love," having been taken captive. Thus, for the one who loves, love comes too early, and the one who loves finds him or herself walking in a landscape, or, in the terms of *Libidinal Economy*, stumbling through a labyrinth, where the mind dissolves in the presence of an indescribable or indefinable face. As such, the face is "several landscapes," capable of disrupting the other in many ways.[470] But the face, after being a landscape, and in the moment when it still is a landscape, is blanketed by a countenance which discloses it. Passions appear upon the countenance announcing emotions such as disgust, fear, supplication, abandon, etc. Forgotten immediately is the innocent wandering, for prescriptions arrive through the physical features of the face, alterations of the nose, forehead, face, and eyes which must be read and interpreted. Commands are expressed, such as "Come, Wait, You Cannot, Listen I beg you, Go, Get out."[471] The landscape is

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[467] Ibid., 188.

[468] Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 256. Lyotard also discusses the presence or absence of passion in a commercial sense, namely in the prostitute. Lyotard gives two examples of prostitutes who either do or do not experience pleasure while plying their trade. The first character is Mina Boumedine, a victim of her own prostitution, who shudders each time before plying her trade, lying on a table on an oil cloth in a room behind a bar, sucking and shaking like a wounded bird, servicing a hundred men a day, wishing she were dead. See ibid., 115. However, Bataille gives us the other character, a Madame Edwards, who is insane, because she experiences too much enjoyment – an excessive pleasure – from her "services." "The rule of coldness is not respected: it is on the contrary the deregulation from frenzy and orgasm that she dares to obtain under cover of her job." See ibid., 140. There is the parallel of the intensities in the policeman, who, in interrogating one suspected of lewd behavior, is more interested in the passions in the suspect than in the declared interest of upholding morality within society. Lyotard calls this a "*Milieu* of duplicity and dissimulation *par excellence*," which has no need of hiding itself. Thus, the policeman's speech is "the dissimulated-dissimulating speech *par excellence*." See ibid., 83.

[469] Bennington makes this comment in conjunction with Lyotard's book, *The Confession of Augustine*, where Augustine describes his encounter with what he calls God. We are applying Bennington's insight here to Lyotard's understanding of love as event. See Bennington, *Late Lyotard*, 30.

[470] Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, 184.

[471] Ibid., 190.

emptied and disappears as prescriptions circulate between two persons. And yet, for the person who is in love, there is a difference: the beloved's face continues to be a landscape, in the midst of commands flowing from that other person. Lyotard writes,

> If you ever happen to be in love, really in love, the vista of the face continues to grip you even as you bow to the law that emanates from the countenance. And that is why you no longer know where you are. Too innocent for love if you experience only a defeat due to the excess of presence; too cunning if you only try to obey its peremptoriness. What comes from the other in love is no mere demand. In obedience to the imperative of dependency, and even without the beloved knowing it, the nothingness of the landscape that is his/her face wreaks a very different desolation on your mind. You are no longer simply its hostage, but its lost traveller.[472]

Two responses are possible to the event of love: (1) the lover succumbs to this presence and is left too innocent (childlike) to cognize that experience in the "excess of presence;" or (2) the person may attempt to master (or gain victory over) the event by simply obeying the imperial command of love, while maintaining a distance from its presence. Love seen as another piece of knowledge can be ordered, thus, turning a vista into a place. Love can be translated into a rule or an idea, through the construction of a theatre, which for Lyotard always involves a power-play. The child-like lover wanders around in the beautiful desolations wrought by love's arrival, while the latter remains "too cunning" for love. This double-sided experience of love can also be seen in the interest shown by a lover in a potential sweetheart.

3.5.3 Exposing Oneself

"Interesting" is a word that Lyotard showcases in a philosophical dialogue between two interlocutors in *Postmodern Fables*. What happens when a woman finds a man to be "interesting"? Hidden within the woman is an interest. That interest, however, cannot receive "retribution" without exposure, without running a risk. But there is no guarantee that she will receive a return on her investment. Her declaration will indicate that she *will have found* the man to be interesting through the work and risk of her words or gestures. What is hidden will be brought to light, and a space will be opened to see what will happen.

For Lyotard, the word "interesting" is a prudent word that suspends engagement and disengagement.[473] "It fends off at a slight distance. Always followed by ellipses."[474] By circling around the thing that happens, "interesting" allows for a suspension of judgment to

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[472] Ibid.
[473] Lyotard, *Postmodern Fables*, 50.
[474] Ibid.

see what will happen. It creates a space, where the mind opens up to objects which do not yet exist, with a strength that empties thought "so that the unforeseen might emerge."[475] But in circling around, in ellipses, "interesting" shows that there is some interest; i.e. that "the interesting asks to be paid."[476] Lyotard gives the example of art critics who go to see an exhibition of an unknown artist's work. Upon leaving the show, the critics may say, "That's interesting," which indicates their assessment that the artist should be supported. However, if in conversation with a colleague they say an unenthusiastic "Interesting," it is understood that they think the artist should be abandoned. The question, "Do you think this is interesting?" indicates that at that moment they see no value in it and a horrible review will probably follow. Interesting marks "some hesitation and a request for a moment of reflection."[477] Time will tell whether or not the work of art will take hold of the critic's mind. If it does, there is a call to comment, and this will be indicated by the commentary that flows, as the critic takes the risk of working on a text. When this occurs, the critic will know that s/he was interested in the unknown painter's work.

In contrast to this moment of suspension, the broker, the miser, and the egophiliac display a desire to master and control the event. For the former two the area in question is finances, while for the latter it is a matter of the ego. The broker is interested in the calculation of chance, since the broker's job involves advising clients on how best to invest in stocks. However, no broker can guarantee a good return, since there are too many variables at work in the market. No one can master all that is involved in economic fluctuations, so s/he must calculate the probability of a certain return on investment. Thus, interesting here "marks the margin separating probable from certain revenue."[478] The miser, on the other hand, resists the moment of suspension and the promise of a return on investment. Lyotard says that the "hold it in your hands" always triumphs over the "you shall have" with the miser. Since the interesting always proposes something opposite to "holding back" and seduces one toward the hoped for gain, the miser sneers at and denies the interesting. Nothing interests the miser except for the pile of gold, which becomes the meta-finality, since the pile is "worth everything" and a "worth for everything."[479] Possibly the miser is the only one who is interested in nothing, for s/he fears undetermined possibilities. A similar greediness is seen with the egophiliac, who refuses to be affected by anything exterior to the ego (i.e. by a situation, person, or object). No one or anything is interesting, since the egophiliac

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[475] Ibid., 59.
[476] Ibid., 55.
[477] Ibid., 51.
[478] Ibid., 50.
[479] Ibid., 54. Although Lyotard does not draw the analogy here, one can compare the miser's immediate repression of the suggestion interesting makes, to let go of some gold in order to gain a greater return, to the immediate regulation of phrases by a grand narrative in *The Differend*: it did not happen – the event of the interesting never occurred.

overestimates the ego – what it is or has – and appreciates nothing else. There is no risk of investing, since the egophiliac considers everything else to be nothing. This is both an overvaluing (of the ego) and, at the same time, a sure investment. "I am, at least, what I am. I can be invested with mental or emotional energy without risk."[480] However, this extreme greed, which Lyotard calls "the folding back of interest and concentration of the ego," is the mummification of the ego, a dead life, and melancholia as the "loss of interest."[481]

As with the libidinal band, Lyotard sees "interesting" on a spectrum: in this case, moving between a "big appetite" and a "complete anorexia." On one side of the spectrum is dialetics and stock speculation. On the other side is art and love. The former side *calculates* a return, while the latter side relates to the unpresentable. Lyotard speaks of dialetics as using reason to distinguish between things in order to gain a profit to the understanding. Stock speculation distinguishes between opportunities based on the probability of a certain return; thus, the broker calculates between things in an attempt to master chance. This aversion to risk shows itself in the extreme of the miser and of the egophiliac – the latter who is unaware of risk, leading to a mummified ego, which is similar to the frozen, unmovable logical state of the Medusa freeze upon the libidinal band in the *Libidinal Economy*. Calculation, taken to the extreme, leads to death in Lyotard's thought. At the other end of the spectrum, however, are the artist and the lover who invest in order to gain. But they hope to procure something entirely different. They long to find the unexpected: that which no calculation could anticipate. For Lyotard, this is the only interesting thing.

The artist shares something with the scholar and the engineer: a listening and heeding towards "what is not."[482] For them, interesting is a reliance upon "the call of a partner whose language it does not understand."[483] It is the attempt to speak the other's language that is interesting. Wittgenstein gives us the example of encountering someone using tennis balls to play a game like chess or to put together a puzzle. Such a game can be figured out. But suppose that the other is playing a game that is indecipherable. Since we don't have the rules, the game seems incomprehensible and the balls seem to be used in a senseless manner. What is the other person doing? Is that person insane? Lyotard encourages us to play the game. He says that "this is interesting *par excellence*. It's up to you to invent responses that accord with enigmatic messages."[484] One does not doubt that the other is sending messages – i.e. that they're an imbecile –, since "there is something or someone in me who is not speaking 'me,'

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480 See Lyotard, *Postmodern Fables*, Ibid., 54.
481 Ibid.
482 Ibid., 60.
483 Ibid. See footnote 432 (above) for the example of Karl Appel who attempts to speak the language of color through gesture.
484 See Lyotard, *Postmodern Fables*, 62.

my language. How can this clandestine host be ignored?"[485] Even the ego has its other present within. In this way, the ego is like language: "The said keeps the unsaid in reserve." Lyotard continues, "What the interesting is in rendering that unsaid sayable."[486] And that process can continue unceasingly. For example, an artist follows Cézanne. S/he sees what Cézanne "spoke" about Mount Sainte-Victoire in color. This artist *estranges* him or herself from Cézanne's work and creates a new language in paint. For the mountain has not yet been comprehended. Something is left to be said. As a result, a new chromatic idiom is found. Only in the moment of suspension is the interesting prudent – circling around the space opened for thought – since it leads to the boldest imprudence: namely, "attempting to speak the language of the other."[487] Of course this is what lovers do, as they try to speak across sexual boundaries, i.e. male and female.

As was mentioned above, a woman is interested in a man. Her interest asks to be paid.[488] By letting him know of her interest, she runs a risk – a risk that she "takes on." She exposes what was previously hidden, i.e. her interest in him, with no certainty of how he will respond. Her expression of desire is a demand that hopes for retribution. She invests in the man, although, at that moment, she cannot define the interest she hopes to receive back from her declaration of interest. For Lyotard, the beauty of the retribution and of its repayment is that it is not "out in the clear."[489] Something is left unsaid. But what is clear is that there is an interest behind her declaration, just as the critic's commentary on an artist's oeuvre declares interest in that work. The interest is to see what will happen. So an attempt is made to speak the other's language, despite the difficulty of speaking a different idiom within the same language, i.e. male or female idioms in the same language. Words, gestures, strokes, and kisses are grasped as if they are signs spoken in an unfamiliar tongue. A question arises: do these things mean the same thing for the other as they do for me? This exercises the power of *estrangement* – a distancing and a suspension – in order to search for new responses to these perplexing expressions. It is precisely this *estrangement* that ignites love into passion, a passion that "never exhausts itself."[490] The differences between the sexes fuel this passion. But it's precisely this difference that brings about the beautiful obscurity between a woman and a man. As Lyotard writes,

> Our most total giving to each other will not prevent the fact that you are a man and I
> a woman, speaking two languages within the same language. Nor that each strives to

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[485] Ibid.
[486] Ibid.
[487] Ibid., 63.
[488] Lyotard says that "the interesting asks to be paid, be it in order not to be paid." This is the case "in every case, whether money or love." Ibid., 55.
[489] Ibid., 52.
[490] Ibid., 63.

decipher the other's idiom, that is, to give one another what one does not oneself have.[491]

This obscurity is precisely what Klossowski's Octave cannot allow. He must *know* Roberte's soul. Nothing must be hidden. So Octave is willing to reduce his wife to a gift, freely given to their guests under the "Laws of Hospitality." Reduced to a sign, Roberte is exchangeable – the inexchangeable wife – so that Octave can seize her soul. As a result, he does not know how to love. Roberte is interesting to Octave to the extent that he can gain the pleasure of voyeurism or the knowledge that seizes her soul. Both do violence to his wife. In Lyotard's thought, as we have seen, gifts and signs are closely related. To love someone as a sign is to attempt to control that person through a rational calculation or cognitive understanding; it is to reject that which presents itself by translating it into a representation. As Lyotard argues, the sign denies the matter presented (i.e. the event) and points to nothing. This does violence to the person signified and so "loved." In contrast to this, Lyotard argues for a love that has no reason to seize the other through ratiocination or a perceived finality. Rather, it is a unique love, a particular love that happens in a lover each time and asks for an answer.[492] This love hides, although it sometimes reveals itself in declarations of interest. Love is interesting precisely because it risks exposing an interest that is otherwise hidden. This declaration, and the demand it makes on the other, opens up a space that allows one to suspend engagement and disengagement in order to see what will happen. In Kantian terms, it is a sentiment that is turned toward the essential in contradistinction to the understanding and sensibility: namely, "that there is something unpresentable."[493] It is this unpresentable something that strives to express itself. Love hides. It must hide, since it always leaves

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[491] Ibid. An example of decipherable idioms was given at the time of Stephen Hawking's seventieth birthday. In an interview, Hawking admitted that he had spent most of the day thinking about women. "They are a complete mystery," he said. See I. SAMPLE, *Stephen Hawking Admits He Finds Women "a Complete Mystery": Physicist Who Has Grappled with Cosmic Inflation and a Quantum Theory of Gravity Says He Is Baffled by Women* (2012); http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2012/jan/04/stephen-hawking-women-complete-mystery?newsfeed=true [accessed: June 1, 2012]. A sympathetic reply was made by Jean Edelstein who offered "tips on women" to the brilliant scientist. She said, among other things, that, although they are different, men and women are also the same and that, like black holes, "women do not destroy everything." See J. H. EDELSTEIN, *Top Tips on Women for Stephen Hawking: The Scientist Who Explained the Mysteries of the Universe Confesses to Be Mystified by Women. Here Are a Few Pointers*. (2012); http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jan/05/stephen-hawking-top-5-tips-women [accessed: 06-01-2012]. One thinks of the proverb: "There are three things that are too amazing for me, four that I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a maiden." Pr 30,18-19 (NIV).

[492] Lyotard says that great loves and great fears do not inscribe themselves on a register of time and space. In fact, he argues that these loves are particular, having no "continuity or fidelity," since they are unique, individual instances. Each time an encounter occurs it opens up a singular labyrinth from its own singular intensity. There is no continuity or fidelity in the great loves, although, Lyotard claims, "there are labyrinths of continuity, just as there are labyrinths of treachery and interruption." See Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, 38.

[493] Lyotard, *Postmodern Fables*, 57.

something in reserve. As was quoted above, Lyotard's epigram says it in a pithy manner: "Who knows not how to hide, knows not how to love."[494]

3.6 LOVE AND WRITING

Sometimes, however, love does not hide. Every now and then love gives up the hidden. It declares itself in writing – a gesture that offers up that which was concealed. But, as we have seen, this expression can be dangerous. To love someone is to place oneself in a position where one can be grasped and held by another (*e.g. mainmise*), but it also makes one vulnerable to betrayal. Love takes risks in its self-revelation, as we will see. Lyotard presents a nuanced view of love: love has the capacity to enslave and to liberate lovers. His understanding of love moves between two poles: the first being representation, whereby the other is *understood* and mastered, while the second is presentation, wherein the lover exposes the hidden and thereby places him or herself at the mercy of the other. Love is dangerous. To make this point Lyotard uses George Orwell's novel, *1984*, and its portrayal of two lovers: Winston and Julia.[495]

Orwell creates a world in which language and thought are carefully controlled – a totalitarian society where Newspeak reigns. There knowledge is reduced to what is reported on ubiquitous news bulletins, blaring from screens, broadcasting Big Brother's image and voice. Any resistance to the official party line, any original thought, is anathema. People having or expressing their own opinions are guilty of thought crimes. Such criminals must be hunted down and thrown into prison. They must be made to see the error of their ways, to confess their crimes, and to fall in love with Big Brother. What interests Lyotard is the love shared between the protagonist, Wilson Smith, and Julia, a young girl Wilson meets after she secretly passes a note that says, "I love you." Lyotard writes about this story on at least two occasions.[496] Theirs is a love that confesses what is hidden and puts the confessor's life in danger. In Wilson's case this is his secret rejection of the party line, which he first surreptitiously inscribes in his diary and only later divulges to his lover Julia. Wilson's thoughts, revealed in his diary, constitute a crime punishable by death.[497]

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[494] Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, v.

[495] Lyotard writes that Orwell's novel, as an artistic, literary work, "cannot cooperate with a project of domination or total transparency, even involuntarily." This is in contrast to either a theoretical critique of bureaucracy or a political theory. As genres, both criticism and bureaucracy attempt to dominate their own domains. In fact, in writing a novel, Orwell "suggests that the genre of criticism is incapable of resisting the coercive sway of bureaucracy." Thus, *1984* is an act of resistance to control and clarity, according to Lyotard. See Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence 1982-1985*, 87-88.

[496] See ibid., 87-95. See also Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, 201.

[497] Writing in a corner of his room, at a place not visible by the telescreen, Wilson confesses, "Thoughtcrime does not entail death: thoughtcrime IS death." In so doing, he realizes that he is a dead

Newspeak demands that only that which is already known is spoken. The event never happens in Newspeak. There never is a restlessness to say what cannot be said. For Lyotard, language only says what it already knows how to say.[498] Writing, therefore, is an act of resistance to language. "One writes against language, but necessarily with it. To say what it already knows how to say is not writing."[499] Rather, writing is the attempt to say something that has not yet been said – something that one imagines should be said. Lyotard says that the writer violates and seduces language, introducing within it a new idiom, something entirely new.[500] In *The Differend* Lyotard says that writing is a saintly work that witnesses "to the fracturing of the I, to its aptitude for hearing a call."[501] The humbled I, bereft of self-knowledge, disclaims any mastery over itself and bemoans this sacrifice, while it writes and delivers a message. For the reader, however, writing is not the request that the writer's ego must die but, rather, that this ego take on its "liability" to express the inexpressible. It is precisely this request that writing assumes: to bear witness to the event – "a marvel to which writing makes itself accessible."[502] Bearing witness to the event of this request is what writing is all about for Lyotard. The phrases which happen call ahead towards the event, without knowing whether or not they will reach their destination.[503] However, in Newspeak everything that can be said is already known. Newspeak is the condition where language is considered inviolable and dead, where all attempts at writing are futile. For Lyotard, Newspeak is evil, since it incessantly forbids possible phrases, defies the event, and shows contempt for Being.[504] It is not enough for Big Brother (O'Brien) that authorized phrases fill Winston's heart and mind; the master must insinuate himself within the slave.[505]

Winston resists this demand of the totalitarian state through writing. Phrases are added to his diary – a writing that bears witness to the radical singularity that is Winston Smith. He writes in order to keep the wound of the event from closing and healing. For the places, faces, and events that Winston encounters are initiatory incisions that open the sensibility to

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man. The important thing is "to stay alive as long as possible." See George Orwell, *1984* (New York City: Plume, 2003), 29.

[498] As a result, language as conversation is never interesting. "A conversation between two interlocutors speaking the same natural language (or two languages translatable into each other) and setting forth, consequently, the same presuppositions and the same implicit understandings accumulated over the course of history in this language or languages is a conversation that scarcely arrives at anything other than what each of the partners already knows, whether clearly or not. This is most frequently the role of conversation, to confirm what is well known." Lyotard's assessment follows, "Nothing is less interesting than these repeated and rudimentary exercises in communicational pragmatics … What a bore!" See Lyotard, *Postmodern Fables*, 60-61.

[499] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained*, 89.

[500] Ibid.

[501] In this sense, the writer is like the painter Karel Appel, who interrupts and disrupts his body so that color may happen upon his canvases.

[502] Lyotard, *The Differend*, 113-114 [Levinas Notice, §3].

[503] Ibid., xvi.

[504] Ibid., 140 [D197].

[505] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained*, 89.

unknown worlds. The wound is recognizable by the rhythm it keeps, by its continual return, and by its "unnoticed temporality." As Lyotard says, "such initiation initiates nothing, it just begins."[506] Words on paper become Winston's way of fighting the scaring that threatens to close (and heal) the wound. Healing, in this case, is Newspeak – it never happened. Newspeak *categorizes* the initiatory cut as "childishness," and the awe of the occurrence is defiled. This must be resisted. So the "guerrilla of love" writes in order "to save the instant from what is customary or understood."[507]

As a person Winston is absolutely singular. He is separated from every other human being by two bodies: phenomenological and psychoanalytic. The phenomenological body is made up of the same stuff as the world. This body composes the world and is composed by that world. It is also a body that can remove "itself from the world into the darkness of what it has lost, there to come alive."[508] As a body, the phenomenological body is utterly singular, having its own point of view. Lyotard says that this body is an idiom, which deciphers what happens around it in a unique way. This is what is commonly called "existence," which is signaled in language by deictics (*e.g.* I, that, then, here, and etc.). Each person experiences life in a radically singular way, since what is heard, seen, tasted, and touched through the senses cannot be shared by another. Lyotard writes, "*Your* point of listening, of contact [*tact*], etc. will never be mine."[509] The psychoanalytic body is likewise radically singular. This is the phantasm, i.e. the idiom spoken internally by one that speaks in my own idiom. This idiom is a terror concealed in my body that manifests and hides in its presence. The terror is written prior to any emotion. It is the "secret manipulator of affections."[510] I do not speak this idiom; it speaks softly within the idiom I speak. And the phantasm lies along the fracture of my greatest weakness. When the phantasm speaks, I cannot see or hear anything else, since it blinds and deafens me to any scrap of sensibility. The phantasm delineates one's weakness and terror. For Winston this means one thing: his overwhelming fear of rats.

To break Winston, Big Brother (O'Brien) needs to use both bodies (i.e. phenomenological and psychoanalytic) in order to discover that which is hidden by the physical body. Eventually both lovers deliver their beloved over to the police. Julia is able to give Winston up to the police, and vice versa, because of what he revealed of himself to her. Although sensory experiences are non-transferable and untranslatable, such experiences can be shared intransitively. We can share singular experiences of similar events, or, as Lyotard puts it, in the world "singularities are present in the plural."[511] An exception to this is love.

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[506] Ibid., 91.
[507] Ibid.
[508] Ibid., 92.
[509] Ibid.
[510] Ibid., 93.
[511] Ibid., 92.

Love demands that my field of perspective be permeable and that I surrender it to the other. This results in a relentless quest for a new idiom, a new phrase, a new way of expressing the secret[512] of my sentimental experience with my lover. Lyotard describes this groping for a new phrase as the "vertigo where my idiom and yours falter, where they look for exchange, where they resist and discover each other. This is what nakedness declares – I mean the nakedness of the couple."[513] Love is a revealing of oneself to the other – a stumbling around "in the labyrinth of sensibility, sensuality and naked speech."[514] Because of this search for and sharing of a unique idiom, love (and writing) can betray what has been uncovered: "unnameable singularity."[515] All the police need is information about the lover's psychoanalytic body, i.e. his or her greatest fear. This can be used as a fulcrum to pry the rest of what is hidden out of the prisoner. Julia gives up Winston's weakness. In so doing, she gives the police the part of her lover that "waits, hopes, and despairs – that can never be captured and registered."[516] Julia reveals Winston's fear of rats, and that is all the police need. O'Brien confronts Winston with a specially rigged cage of rats and threatens to loose them on his face. The terror of having his face gnawed away to the bone is enough to force Winston to betray Julia to the police. In *1984* Orwell portrays the horror of betrayal and force – an example that Lyotard uses on at least two occasions.[517]

Orwell's novel suits Lyotard's purposes well, since Orwell illustrates the link between the hidden and its revelation both through love and writing. Winston's phrases in a diary leave traces behind of his hidden thoughts, convictions, and loves. Through writing, Winston resists the language of Newspeak, while he tries to find a new way of expressing the inexpressible: namely, what he thinks needs to be said. Like love, writing is also a way of revealing that which lies buried within Winston. In this way Lyotard makes a link between writing and the work of love. He says, "The labor of writing is allied to the work of love, but it inscribes the trace of the initiatory event in language and thus offers to share it, if not as a sharing of knowledge, at least as a sharing of a sensibility that it can and should take as communal."[518] Writing opens itself up to the other and offers to share the event. In this way, writing is similar to Lyotard's understanding of love as presentation: love is a radical opening to the other (i.e. the event) as it "chooses" to present itself, without trying to dominate or

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[512] Each one of us is imprisoned in an incommunicable secret by the fact of our existence in both a physical body and an "unconscious body." See ibid., 96.

[513] Ibid., 92.

[514] Ibid., 93.

[515] Ibid., 94. Winston's love for Julia is seditious, since it is a crime against Newspeak, which monotonously and ceaselessly works towards the "eradication of differends and the annulment of the event to which they are tied." The revelation of his love – both written in a diary and whispered in Julia's ear – is eventually used against him by Big Brother. See ibid., 94-95.

[516] Ibid., 93.

[517] Terror lies at the edges of love, as O'Brien uses Julia's betrayal and Winston's phantasm (or psychoanalytic body) to break him. See ibid., 92-95. See also Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, 201.

[518] Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, 96-97.

master it, either through knowledge or representation. Love as presentation requires one to stumble around with the event, in a dance of babbling sounds, trying to give voice to that which surprises us and asks us to give voice in witness to its event. Perhaps we may even use idioms borrowed from science and technology.[519] In so doing, Lyotard encourages us to

> use these forms in an attempt to bear witness to what really matters: the childhood of an encounter, the welcome extended to the marvel that (something) is happening, the respect for the event. Do not forget that you were and are this yourself: the welcomed marvel, the respected event, the childhood shared by your parents.[520]

3.7 ANALYSIS OF LYOTARD'S CRITIQUE OF CHRISTIANITY

By offering an *analysis* of Lyotard's view of love, we certainly realize the violence done, to some extent, to his thought. An analysis naturally divides a subject into its constituent parts, and further separates them from other aspects of his writings in order to distinguish each from the other: in this case, we are distinguishing between Lyotard's various thoughts on love. Once we arrive at a conclusion (or conclusions), that understanding is then read back into the philosopher's texts in order to gain a more profound knowledge of his argument. The knowledge gleaned is then knit together into a general conclusion based upon a portion of Lyotard's oeuvre. However, we must remember that such a judgment (or analysis) is made from a "universal" point of view.[521] What is at stake in the genre of analysis is to know or understand. There are dangers inherent in pursuing an analysis, as Lyotard so forcefully points out (i.e. translation of another's phrases into another idiom, doing violence to the other, etc.). In fact, it would seem to be especially true in Lyotard's case, since his writings attempt to write (or express) the inexpressible. It would be a mistake to weave together too close(d) a tale – or to make too strong a synthesis – of Lyotard's thought based on his many texts (an error to which the genre of analysis all too easily succumbs), for a plea for radical heteronomy lies at the heart of Lyotard's texts, even among his various, disparate texts. Bennington notes this problem of addressing a Lyotard who has gone before us and whom we now discuss. He writes:

> I am not telling a story here, nor sketching a biography: rather picking out bits of text, tatters, as he said earlier, cuttings or coupons, as he might have said, as I once heard him say, in which the question among other things is that of what makes such a biographical project untellable. Given what we have said about *before*, and what we

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[519] Ibid., 97.
[520] Ibid.
[521] See Lyotard, *The Differend*, 158 [D228].

could have seen differently with respect to event or presentation, these cuttings or coupons do not allow themselves to be bound by narrative form.[522]

However, we are trying to illuminate, as best as possible, the space within which Lyotard thinks love. This is necessary for theology, since Lyotard's view of love is central to his critique of Christianity. We have endeavored, therefore, to conduct an archaeology of Lyotard's thought(s) concerning love, attempting to gain a sharper understanding of his critique, hoping that he can help us, as theology's dialogue partner, to avoid the trap of the master narrative and, thus, to think the Christian narrative as an "open narrative of love." While analyzing his thought, however, we should, at the same time, always bear in mind the event that is his thought. We need to allow Lyotard to speak while we continue to read, realizing that the scraps before us record his attempts to bear witness to the as-yet-inexpressible event. Bearing this in mind, we will now analyze Lyotard's critique of the Christian master narrative and its relation to his understanding of love.

3.7.1 Love as the Principle Operator

We will begin with Lieven Boeve's excellent summary of Lyotard's critique of the Christian master narrative that appears in four statements in *The Differend* (D232-235).[523] Boeve rightly defines the Christian master narrative as "the hegemonic discourse of the Idea of Love."[524] He notes that the Christian master narrative narrates within itself what is at stake in the narrative genre itself: to love the event (i.e. to link onto whatever occurs). As a result, the event with all its interrupting power and surprising freshness is "already narrated from within the narrative."[525] To love whatever happens, i.e. to link onto whatever occurs, is to re-narrate that event from within the master narrative. This love of whatever happens becomes a rule with regulatory power – a power that allowed the Christian master narrative to vanquish all of the other narratives in Rome. The Idea of Love is able to recuperate the power of the event and to situate it within the Christian master narrative.

Boeve points out that there are four characteristics to the Christian master narrative. First, Christianity is legitimized in two directions: from both the beginning (a myth of beginnings) and the end (an eschatological future). Christianity *combines* these two aspects

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[522] Bennington, *Late Lyotard*, 18.
[523] See Lieven Boeve, "Jean-François Lyotard on Differends and Unpresentable Otherness: Can God Escape the Clutches of the Christian Master Narrative?," *Culture, Theory, and Critique* 52, no. 2-3 (2011).
[524] Ibid., 275.
[525] Ibid.

into one powerful legitimation.[526] The idea of history was developed by Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy and Tacitus; however the concept of an *eschatological* end to history is introduced into Western thought by the Apostle Paul and Augustine, according to Lyotard. This idea of an end to history eventually develops into a concept of history completing itself, a perfect, imaginary end to history, which is crucial for the development of Modernity.[527] The second characteristic of the Christian master narrative is the universalization of instances. Boeve summarizes this nicely as follows: "God, who is Love, as addressor tells us (addressees) the story about Love (referent): 'because I, who am love, have loved you, you must love (me)'."[528] Love is found instantiated upon each of the four instances. The Idea of Love circulates throughout the phrase universe, alighting upon each of the phrase instances. Particular instances, therefore, are translated and transformed into something else. They are undone and their particularity is transformed – i.e. made to function in connection with the Idea of Love as they are written into the Christian master narrative. This allows local stories to be inscribed as instances within the larger story of Christianity. The third characteristic of the Christian master narrative is that it makes a cognitive claim: reality is all about Love. As a result, Love gives us a reading key for understanding any event (i.e. whatever happens) in history. Those events which advance history towards its completion in Love are themselves attributed to the power of Love. Events that do not carry out such a development, thus impeding such movement, are considered "evil, sinful, even demonic."[529] The fourth characteristic of the Christian grand narrative is its forgetfulness regarding the other heterogeneous phrase regimens and genres of discourse. Each event is retold and given a meaning as the narrative regulates the linkage of phrases by placing them within a greater whole (i.e. a story). In this process the event is translated from a differend into a litigation. Lyotard argues that the Christian master narrative is very powerful because it is always able to link onto the event through its rule of loving whatever happens. Boeve writes,

> The event is not stashed away, but rather stripped of its interruptive otherness by
> being immediately registered in the Christian narrative as a gracious gift of Love as
> grace. All other discourse genres are subordinated to this: history, prayer, ethics, the
> ritual, the cognitive, the argumentative, etc. They always appear in the framework of
> the hegemonic discourse of the Idea of Love, which forms the permanent background
> of all speech. People who do not respect this background are unbelievers for whom

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[526] Modern master narratives strip away any notion of revelation and are legitimized by an end posited upon a form of republican brotherhood or of communist solidarity. Humanity is seen, then, as a group of people working to emancipate themselves, rather than as creatures moving toward redeeming themselves. See Lyotard, *The Differend*, 160-161 §235.

[527] Boeve, "Can God Escape?," 275. See also Lyotard, *Postmodern Fables*, 96.

[528] Boeve, "Can God Escape?," 276.

[529] Ibid.

there is no salvation; those who step out of the narrative are heretics and / or excommunicated. Both categories of people have therefore no right to speak, since it is precisely one's being in the narrative that grants one authority.[530]

As Lyotard says, love is the "principal operator" in the Christian master narrative (D232). Love as an idea empowers the Christian grand narrative, and its ability to see the other as a gift leads inevitably to mistreating people, in the name of love.

3.7.2 Love as Idea

The love that loves as idea is *rational*. It loves the other through representation. In Lyotard's illustration of the libidinal band, Love-as-Idea finds pleasure in making distinctions between things. There is a love for the impregnable body, as Lyotard points out, where everything is placed in a logical spectrum between a "this" and a "not-this." Love-as-Idea loves the other as it represents the other to itself. This love *distances* itself from the other as the other presents itself. Rather, Love-as-Idea desires to know what the other is, and, as a consequence, it loves the other as an idea (a representation). Emotions may be involved in this kind of love, but what is at stake is to understand whatever happens. The object as represented may or may not exist, since the idea presented (i.e. the representation) functions within the logical realm. Either the representation corresponds to reality or it doesn't. Observations, therefore, must be made to determine whether or not the representation is true. This results in a voyeuristic lover spying upon his wife in order to capture her soul (i.e. the truth of her love).

Lyotard forcefully argues that this re-presenting of the event does an injustice to what happens, for dissimulation is always at work in the *Is it happening?* Something that cannot be represented, which hides within the occurrence, asks to be expressed as it waits for justice. However, it is precisely the semi-automatic linking of phrases within the narrative genre of discourse that ignores the differend and translates the event into a litigation. But this does not mean that the event isn't loved. So long as the representation fits within the conceptual system at play, it will be adored by Love-as-Idea (love functioning under representation) and placed within the narrative's borders.

Lyotard is troubled by this kind of love, because it denies the materiality of whatever happens. He concentrates upon the body as flesh hiding emotional forces for this very reason. Love functioning within the Christian grand narrative sets the event within a conceptual theater in order to understand it. Events are distinguished (gestures, historical events, phrases, etc.) in order to determine whether or not they demonstrate a love for God or God's people, as

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[530] Ibid.

well as evidencing God's love for that event or withholding of the same.[531] Love-as-Idea must stand apart from the event in order to maintain objectivity while making this determination. In so doing, this love hollows out the event, stripping it of its interruptive force, as it re-presents an idea (that no longer is the event) on a stage legitimated by a God presented as being offstage, outside of the theater. But that God never shows up in history. The God of the Christian master narrative is itself merely an idea: able to legitimate a master narrative but devoid of any interruptive power. Someone must speak in the name of this god. One can only so speak if one instantiates him or herself as the Addressee of a phrase operating within the Christian grand narrative.

3.7.3 The Other as Sign

The Christian grand narrative links quickly to any event. In fact, it links too quickly, as it welcomes every occurrence as a sign that we are loved. But the very use of a sign indicates that materiality is lacking: what is signified is absent. As a result, in Lyotard's terms, the concept is castrated; it is forever hindered and postponed. Use of a sign points, in fact, to the event made immaterial. This hollowing out of the event allows the Christian grand narrative to give any referent the signification of the glad tidings that the Creator loves "us," God's creatures. In the master narrative, everything is a sign for something else. But this hollowing-out goes even further. The truth of a being is located *outside* of the sign by which it is signified. Lyotard gives us the example of Augustine's simulacrum – a theater in which everything is signified as "signs of nothing." In his system, everything can be brought together in a relationship under a Presence, since everything is signified as "signs of nothing." Everything is simply a copy or resemblance of the Son, who is the perfect likeness of the Father. As a result, every being is not as it presents itself. It is something else and functions within a language system of mirrored unity. Therefore, meaning is continually deferred between the event and its sign. This allows beings-as-signs to be exchanged in a way that denies their particularity.

The referent-turned-sign becomes a message confirming the proclamation issuing from the master narrative: "we are loved!" This message comes from the Great Lover who commands everyone to love. Every event is linked onto according to the rule of love and is

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[531] One thinks of the American televangelist, Pat Robertson, who claimed that the disastrous 2010 earthquake which devastated Haiti happened because the people had "made a pact with the devil." This comment stirred up a lot of ire in the United States. Robertson, a minister, spoke in the Addressor instance, for a God who is silent, in order to give meaning to an event (the earthquake). Robertson's idea about God's love and its relation to protection and judgment are operating behind his statement. See Stephanie Condon, "Pat Robertson Haiti Comments Spark Uproar", CBS News http://www.cbsnews.com/news/pat-robertson-haiti-comments-spark-uproar/ [accessed January 8, 2014].

immediately signified as a sign of this message. The Christian grand narrative cannot allow for dissimilitude within the event. Every event must clearly declare the love promulgated by the Christian grand narrative. This master narrative gives us the code for understanding and interpreting all of Creation's givens as messages from an Absolute Lover. Events must also confirm the story of love while pointing forward towards the hoped-for culmination of history in the rule of love, i.e. the reversal of the Adamic fall and the redemption of creatures. Lyotard says that such a system (he calls it "religious science") is nihilistic in the extreme. The Christian grand narrative obsessively views events as messages arising from One who communicates with us, but whose language transcends us. Since every event is a sign of something else, everything (as sign) is exchangeable, with the result that any event can be re-narrated within the master narrative. Even events previously narrated in pagan or non-Christian stories can be linked onto, as signs portending the new commandment to love. Every event is a message; however, the translation of the inexpressible event into an expressible message points to its dematerialization. In the Christian grand narrative, every event is loved as a sign of something else.

3.7.4 The Other as Gift

Thus the event-turned-sign is embraced *as if* it is a gift that announces the good news. The message is this: love is working to redeem God's creatures. Two stories operate here: (1) a primordial narrative describing humanity's fall into sin through Adam, and (2) an eschatological story of the final redemption of God's people. Together these two narratives legitimize the Christian story: a master narrative capable of inscribing all local stories within its borders. As noted above, the gift is a cousin of the sign. When the event is received as if it is a gift the materiality of the event is hollowed-out with the following consequences: the event becomes (1) exchangeable when viewed as a sign and (2) inexchangeable when associated with language.

The Christian grand narrative loves the event as a gift in a way that makes it *exchangeable* as one sign among many of God's love as experienced throughout the history of Christianity. Whatever happens is to be received through the prescription of *caritas*. No matter what may happen or what might be, the law of love requires everyone (heroes, narrators, and narratees) to embrace the event. This acceptance of whatever happens is authorized by a universal commandment with attractive force: "Love one another." The commandment is authorized by a primeval story of the god of love whose children rebuffed his love and of the disasters that ensued for humanity. This authorization, then, is broadened to encompass all narratives. Narrators and narratees are all commanded to go to the front of the event and tell its story, as if it proclaims the good news of divine love. This makes

whatever happens problematic, since what it presents is re-told in a phrase with universalized narrative instances. The result of this re-telling is that the occurrence (even if previously narrated in a local story) is made a part of the Christian story, as one exchangeable event among many others, thus denying the event's particularity, as it is placed within the larger Christian tradition.

What is received as a spoken gift is also written, recorded, and re-enacted in the Christian grand narrative. The Voice heard is inscribed in the Scriptures so that later it can be read and re-enacted. This places the gift as message announcing the good news of love into the heart of the Christian tradition. The official interpreters of the Scriptures make pronouncements, in the Christian grand narrative, where they instantiate themselves in the addressee instance, in phrases with universal pretensions. Simply said, they speak in God's voice. In so doing, they serve as signs pointing to a God who is not speaking. The purported speaker is absent. Gift as absence is, in this way, closely related to the sign. This gift as language remains exchangeable, but there is a gift that is *inexchangeable*.

3.7.5 Permission to Speak

One may only speak, hear, or be told about so long as one is instantiated within the Christian grand narrative. Those whose speech resists being incorporated into the Christian narrative are driven out as heretics who threaten Christendom. Joan of Arc speaks in a discourse where messages as signs are not exchangeable – voices that refuse to be re-narrated and fixed within the authorized tradition. She hears voices, and she finds herself taken hostage, as one under obligation. In contrast to this, the Voice in the Christian discourse is known, since the One who spoke was incarnated. In Christianity there is a mediator, a known "You," between God and God's people. However, for the saint, who finds herself under obligation, the Addressor remains unknown. The authorized interpreters of scripture speak for God, but she doesn't recognize their authority. Joan asks herself if what they say is really what God wants. They appeal to the narrative tradition, but she holds their claim in suspicion. She waits to hear the voices again, but they are absent. There is no mediator, arbitration, or compromise. For in the prophetic discourse there is nothing to refer back to; neither is there an outside grounding. A twisting is given to discourse, and the "I" and "You" are made inexchangeable. As a result, Joan's discourse apparatus must appear irrational to the Church authorities, while she, on the other hand, suspects the authority of their tradition. A collision occurs between a faith in narratives and one in signs of obligation. Joan finds herself excluded from the community functioning under the Christian grand narrative, since her appeal to conscience (i.e. to the now) conflicts with the serialization of the before/after working in the

master narrative. This shakes narrative politics and denies the narrative's manner of linking to and neutralizing events. Therefore, Joan of Arc must be silenced.

3.7.6 Love and Terror

Love in the Christian grand narrative inevitably leads to terror. It must do so, since Love-as-Idea demands the theatrical clarity of an interior and exterior. Thus the Christian grand narrative has a hard border, which allows it to distinguish between love and hate, truth and heresy. Since this rational love is related to theory, it enjoys the love of conquest, the *jouissance* of overthrowing, and the pleasure of annexation. Whatever happens is loved and incorporated into the Christian narrative as evidence of the movement of love and redemption towards its culmination in the eschaton. Love-as-Idea loves certainty and definition. So it loves whatever happens through representation, re-presenting the other so as to exceed itself *and* to consume the other. A *rational* love is always hegemonic, since it loves the event in order to gain knowledge from it. This love must *know*, but in so doing it does not know how to love; for the other must be studied, observed, and analyzed in order to be understood. However, what is forgotten is that something always escapes, something always hides, and the information gleaned cannot ever do justice to the other presenting itself.

Love-as-Idea must injure the other, since what is loved is necessarily re-presented within a conceptual theater that it constructs. But there is another love, Love-as-Event, that functions under the rule of presentation, which allows for the interruptive force of the event, while attempting to find a just way to link to what is happening.

3.7.7 Love as Event

On the other end of the spectrum from love as representation is love as presentation, i.e. a love that seeks to link to the other through the event. Love as presentation concerns itself with the *Is it happening?* Lyotard describes this as wandering in a labyrinth or on a landscape, as well as being completely caught up in the moment of the "this, now, yesterday, you." This is love-as-event. Love-as-Event loves the other as the other presents itself to love. It is openness to the other that occurs at the presentation of a phrase, a gesture, or a face. Lyotard argues that love does not inscribe itself on a register of time and space. Rather, he maintains that there are many contingent, particular loves – each of which are unique, individual instances. However, Lyotard does posit labyrinths of continuity, treachery, and interruption, as well. Love can be experienced as a "history" or a story: as the linking of so many words, phrases, expressions, gestures, experiences, and etc. But love-as-event arrives, from behind,

unexpectedly, whenever the other presents him or herself. For a moment (or moments), the lover is swept away, before all cognition, dazzled by the brilliance of its occurrence.

Sometimes love arrives unexpectedly. It evidences itself first as interest. That interest creates a space for consideration at a small distance, as elliptical movements are made around the other. Potentially, the other may declare his or her interest, if such exists, in the one first expressing interest. However, that initial interest is sometimes ignored or rebuffed, and the interested party finds that she or he wasn't all that interested after all. Interesting… Still, occasionally and wonderfully, the other party shows a previously hidden or unknown interest, i.e. until a reply is given, and both parties are surprised to find something more than simple interest. Love happens. It appears and minds melt. This other, so other, becomes suddenly the only interesting thing in life.

Of course, love-as-event can transform itself into love-as-idea. Lyotard is right when he claims that love is both the need to escape oneself and prostitution: i.e. the need for transcendence and for gain. When the emotions begin to cool, and cognition returns, the mind can potentially harden into an icy, logical form that no longer engages in presentation, but distances itself in a quest for objectivity. This is the abomination of a husband who treats his wife like a laboratory fly, or an exchangeable commodity, to experiment on or exchange for knowledge and information. However, love-as-event cannot represent the other since the lover is captivated by, and fully immersed in, the *presence* of the other. Love involved in presentation cannot distance itself from the other. It must make what is hidden permeable. It must share what is hidden. It must ask for engagement, without demanding absolute clarity, for the latter leads inextricably to terror.

Love as presentation runs the risk of surrendering its field of perspective to the other. Love, then, is an intentional capacity to continue trying to link to a phrase, to speak another language, or to express what cannot yet be said: i.e. to remain open to the other as presented and try to do justice to what asks to be expressed in the other as event. So couples happily babble away in lover's prattle, completely oblivious to the world around them, consumed by each other's presence. And it happens every time they see the other's face, hear the other's voice, or feel the other's touch. Such a love requires that I reveal what is hidden in me. My point of view, my individual perspective, my sensory experiences must be shared with the other in words, expressions, and gestures that cannot do justice to what they wish to express. But the attempt is made, and a phrase appears. How will the beloved link to my request?

3.8 Examples Buttressing Lyotard's Case

Lyotard criticizes the Christian narrative as being an extremely powerful master narrative that commits injustice in the name of love. In the analysis just given, we have

attempted to do justice to Lyotard's understanding of love and its relation to the Christian grand narrative. The question therefore arises: can examples be found which buttress his critique of Christianity? Clearly the answer is "yes." Three such examples now follow. First we will consider Christianity's influence on events leading up to and sustaining the American Civil War. Secondly, we will look at claims made today by Creationists, before finally examining Richard Dawkins' call for a "Conscious Atheism." A brief assessment of Lyotard's critique of Christian will follow thereafter. Although the writer of this thesis makes no claim to being either a historian or a scientist, we think it important to strengthen the arguments already presented. Therefore, in an attempt to do justice to Lyotard's critique, we first turn our attention to the ways Christians reasoned, argued, and behaved within two competing Christian grand narratives which led to the bloodiest conflict on American soil.

3.8.1 The American Civil War

The single greatest tragedy in American history was a civil war fought between the northern and southern states, which ripped the country apart. Between 1860 and 1865 the nation experienced horror, as family members lined up on opposite sides of battle fields to kill each other. At the time America considered itself a Christian nation. Its founders thought that America would be a "city on a hill" – a beacon of light and hope for the nations. An extremely pious nation marched to war, empowered by two competing grand narratives, which provoked, legitimized, and extended the carnage. Two master narratives thundered from pulpits all across the nation: one northern, the other southern. The conflict between these two Christian grand narratives brought appalling devastation to those caught up in their orbs.[532]

Faith in God was nearly universal in antebellum America. People considered axiomatic God's existence, presence, and providence,[533] and the Bible was the most influential book in the nation. Early in the nineteenth century the Second Great Awakening swept across the land – a revival that touched almost every church congregation in America –, and this stirred up great fervor among believers,[534] leading to a tremendous expansion of new churches.[535] No

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[532] Between these two narratives there is a litigation, rather than a differend, since both belong to the same discourse genre (i.e. the Christian grand narrative). There certainly was violent conflict between the states, but, as Lyotard noted in another context, this was "a litigation over the names of times, places, and persons, over the senses and referents attached to those names." Since there is no universal tribunal before which this dispute could be decided, the ruling was eventually made by military force. See Lyotard, *The Differend*, 159-160 [D232].

[533] Robert J. Miller, *Both Prayed to the Same God: Religion and Faith in the American Civil War* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 33.

[534] The revival powerfully affected church attendance. Approximately 10% of white southerners were members of a local church in 1800; however, by 1860 membership stood at 40% among the same social group. See ibid., 34.

other institution in antebellum America had as much influence as the Christian churches, and pastors exercised enormous influence in their pulpits. Robert Miller writes,

> The simple fact was that no other antebellum group had as much power to influence the greatest numbers of citizens on a regular basis as did America's clerical religious leaders. Generally better educated than many of their members, clergy were highly influential community leaders, being (in Ahlstrom's words) 'the official custodians of the popular conscience.' As rhetoric in a very religious America heated up around the inflammatory slavery issue, clergy would lead the way in violence of statements and ultimacy of appeal, their pulpits 'resounding with a vehemence and absence of restraint never equaled in American history'."[536]

Thus, when northern preachers began to debate over different scriptural interpretations of slavery, "their clash presented a radical challenge to one of the fundamental supports of American civilization."[537]

The country was founded by people who had rebelled against authority and dreamed of establishing a republic. These people synthesized Christianity with Enlightenment ideals to create a unique culture, and this combination of faith and philosophy colored the way they interpreted Scripture. For antebellum Americans, "self-evident truths" held more authority than tradition, history, or precedent.[538] Christianity and the republic were married together as Americans thought that they stood in a unique relationship with God as the New Israel on a new continent. Generally they rejected skepticism and deism. However, Americans embraced an Enlightenment confidence that a cause/effect relationship existed between the state of public affairs and its citizens' ethical conduct. Thus, more and more American Christians believed

> that they had the power to see things in general as they really were, the power to act effectively against those in the wrong, and the power to choose righteously when faced by moral dilemmas – if, that is, they would only put their minds to the task.[539]

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[535] Between 1790 and 1860 the number of Methodist churches increased from around 700 to almost 20,000 churches. Similar growth rates are seen among the Baptists (less than 900 to over 12,000), Presbyterians (approximately 700 to more than 6,000), and Campbellite churches (from none to more than 2,000). See Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis,*, ed. William A. Blair, The Steven and Janice Brose Lectures in the Civil War Era (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 27.

[536] Miller, *Both Prayed*, 34-35. For the citation see Sidney Ahlstrom, *Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 672.

[537] Noll, *The Civil War*, 22.

[538] Noll notes that denominations which placed a higher value on tradition found themselves speaking "with a foreign accent." See ibid., 22-23.

[539] Ibid., 25.

While Americans were busy building a Christian republic, one group was left out. African-Americans, brought as slaves against their will to the New World, were a financial necessity in the South. Thus, each slave was included in the United States Constitution as a three-fifths person for the purpose of taxation and representation in the House of Representatives. The country was busy founding a republic, but one for white protestants. Miller notes that "America's dissenting Protestant colonists were indeed interested in religious freedom – but primarily for themselves."[540] A tremendous irony played itself out from the very establishment of the nation: liberty and justice for all, yes, but only for whites. America's "Great Paradox" was that a nation founded on the principles of freedom and justice systematically enslaved people from another race. The founding fathers held an "implicit racism." "The Englishmen who colonized America (and their revolutionary descendents) consciously or unconsciously believed that liberties and rights should be confined to people of a light complexion."[541] The compromise reached during the Constitutional Convention in 1787 between the North and South never satisfied either party, and the question of slavery continued to fester until it was eventually settled by force of arms.

A theological crisis was at hand in the land, as indicated by the churches' inability to address the slavery question. Having contributed greatly to forming the national culture, pastors and churches had the caché to address "America's original sin." Tradition and other authoritative voices, however, were rejected. This left each person with a Bible[542] and their own interpretation of what the Scriptures say about slavery. For Southern pastors the Bible could not be clearer; God obviously sanctions slavery as passages like Gn 9,18-27; Ex 21,2-6; Lv 25,44-46; Col 3,22; 4,1; Eph 6,5 and 1 Pe 2,18-21, among others, make clear. As Mark Noll says, "The power of the proslavery scriptural position – especially in a Protestant world of widespread intuitive belief in the plenary inspiration of the whole Bible – lay in its simplicity."[543] This fit the American cultural ideal that "free people should read, think, and reason for themselves."[544] Northern preachers, however, were divided. Some held that slaves were not created with the capacity for democratic-citizenship,[545] while others appealed to a distinction between the "letter" of Scripture and its "spirit." Henry Ward Beecher, for example, admitted that some verses could be used to uphold chattel slavery, but said,

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[540] Miller, *Both Prayed*, 36.

[541] Ibid., 23.

[542] "As the Civil War broke out, the Bible occupied an absolutely central place in American culture. In the early years of the country, Scripture had become the national book *par excellence*, and broad familiarity with its contents characterized both ordinary people and elites." See ibid., 41.

[543] Noll, *The Civil War*, 33. Thomas Thompson forms an example of such a hermeneutic, from the 1770s, in his *The African Trade for Negro Slaves, Shewn to Be Consistent with Principles of Humanity, and with the Laws of Revealed Religion*. Noll describes his interpretive procedure as "open the Bible, read it, believe it." See ibid.

[544] Ibid., 34.

[545] Miller, *Both Prayed*, 54.

> 'I came to open the prison-doors,' said Christ; and that is the text on which men justify shutting them and locking them. 'I came to loose those that are bound;' and that is the text out of which men spin cords to bind men, women, and children. 'I came to carry light to them that are in darkness and deliverance to the oppressed;' and that is the Book from out of which they argue, with amazing ingenuity, all the infernal meshes and snares by which to keep men in bondage. It is pitiful.[546]

This argument based upon the "general meaning" of the Bible was unconvincing to people who held to the perspicuity of Scripture and the individual's rational, republican ability to arrive at a democratic and commonsensical interpretation. More than that, such an approach seemed dangerous, since it appeared to undermine the authority of Scripture itself. Radical abolitionists in the North tended to denigrate the Bible in their arguments against slavery. Thus, northern centrist abolitionists, who wanted to hold to the authority of Scripture, were backed into a corner: "either orthodoxy and slavery, or heresy and antislavery."[547]

A theological crisis developed in the country because the Bible seemed unable to speak clearly on the subject of slavery. Americans read the Bible in their own particular "commonsense" way – everyone reading it in the same manner. Of course, equally fervent Christians read the same book and came to radically different conclusions; America's hermeneutics were in crisis.[548] The lack of a more nuanced theological assessment of slavery in the United States led to disaster, as whites were unable to make a distinction between what the Bible had to say about *race* as opposed to *slavery*.[549] As Miller writes, "By the 1840s, American churches, religious scholars, and preachers were at each others throats over biblical teachings on slavery."[550] The end result was the rending of one denomination after another.[551] These denominational splits were precursors to the Civil War itself.

Both sides had constructed their own grand narrative. Slave owners in the South and Abolitionists in the North alike were confident they knew the divine will concerning slavery. On both sides of the Mason-Dixon line, pastors ascended their pulpits and instantiated

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[546] Henry Ward Beecher, "Peace Be Still," in *Fast Day Sermons; or, the Pulpit on the State of the Country* (New York: Rudd and Carleton, 1861), 287. Cited in Noll, 44.

[547] Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 395.

[548] "The country had a problem because its most trusted religious authority, the Bible, was sounding an uncertain note ... The supreme crisis over the Bible was that there existed no apparent biblical resolution to the crisis." See Noll, *The Civil War*, 50.

[549] This, of course, was a distinction of which the African-American Christians were very much aware. See Miller, *Both Prayed*, 46.

[550] Ibid., 43-44.

[551] The Methodist Episcopal Church, the largest Christian denomination prior to the Civil War, was forced to discuss slavery at the 1836 Methodist Conference, where it was decided that slavery was an evil institution but that southern members could retain their slaves. Then in 1843 twenty-two ministers walked out of the conference and formed a "connection." This abolitionist revolt eventually led to the founding of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Baptists, the second largest antebellum denomination, also later separated and the Southern Baptist Convention was formed on May 8, 1845. See ibid., 64-66.

themselves as divine addressors, clearly announcing God's will on the subject. Examples throughout the period are legion. For instance, a Confederate crowd heard a Southern Methodist minister say in 1862, "Your cause is the cause of God, the cause of Christ, of humanity. It is a conflict of truth with error – of Bible with Northern infidelity – of pure Christianity with Northern fanaticism."[552] In the North, Henry Ward Beecher was beating the war drum: "God is calling to the nations! The despotic thrones are growing weary! It is an age of liberty! God is mustering the great army of liberty under his banners! In this day, shall America be found laggard?"[553] As divine addressors these pastors could declare the universal truth to all humanity: God was at work in American history, and the war's outcome would prove the rightness of their position.

The pastors' addressees were, of course, their congregants. But they also spoke – both rhetorically and in public debate – to the other side as well. For Southern pastors, those in the North were "heretics" who refused to see the obvious truth written in Scripture. They were blinded to the plain truth by greed as they pursued an industrial society. Northern pastors, on the other hand, addressed those in the South as people involved in wickedness. Christians should not participate in holding slaves. Naturally, slavery was the referent over which they disputed; however, very different meanings were assigned thereto by both parties. For southerners slavery was a God-given means of building an agriculturally based, Christian, individualistic, pious society. Northerners, on the other hand, were more socially conscious than their southern brethren. They pursued their vision of the just society, and southern slavery was the foundation of a patently evil society. Both sides made universal truth claims, as pastors thought and spoke providentially. People spoke providentially before, during, and after the war, regarding God's will, the war's progress, and its eventual outcome. On July 4, 1875, John Williamson Nevin spoke to a crowd about the successful completion of the war. According to Nevin, the conclusion of the conflict "stands revealed to our faith emphatically as God's work." He argued that one should have expected a Northern defeat: considering their unpreparedness for war, the South's advantage in fighting on its own territory, and the North's inexperienced president – Abraham Lincoln. These facts indicated to Nevin "that our national deliverance has been wrought out for us, as a world-historical act, by God himself ... God has done great things for us, whereof we are glad; and this, itself, is our best reason for believing that he will do for us, still greater things hereafter."[554] The view on things was very different in the South. John Adger argued that God was disciplining the South for her good! Adger believed in the just cause of the South, but he wrote that "there was one error ... into

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[552] Noll, *The Civil War*, 39.
[553] Cited in Miller, *Both Prayed*, 55.
[554] J. W. Nevin, "The Nation's Second Birth," *German Reformed Messenger*, July 6, 1865.; as cited in Noll, *The Civil War*, 76-77.

which we acknowledge that some Southern ministers sometimes fell ... [to believe] that God must surely bless the right." Rather, God had allowed the righteous to fall into the hands of the unrighteous in history. He said of the war that "the result was with God alone."[555]

These two American grand narratives victimized not only those who fell on both sides of the battlefields, it literally silenced and oppressed the slaves themselves – due, in part, to America's implicit racism. African-American Christians had much to say about chattel slavery, but they were not heard, for they had no voice in nineteenth century American culture. African-American Christians clearly saw that the theological problem revolved around race, white American Christians were completely blind to the humanity of blacks, often seeing them as sub-humans suitable for work.[556] Frederick Douglas – a self-taught former slave – famed for his eloquence, wrote of this:

> Nobody at the North, we think, would defend Slavery, even from the Bible, but for this color distinction ... Color makes all the difference in the application of our American Christianity ... the same Book which is full of the Gospel of Liberty to one race, is crowded with arguments in justification of the slavery of another. Those who shout and rejoice over the progress of Liberty in Italy, would mob down, pray and preach down Liberty at home as an unholy and hateful thing.[557]

Americans equated race-based slavery with biblical slavery; in their minds there was no distinction between what the Bible taught and what commonsense experience said to them. Abolitionist Christian pastors never considered the implications of the Imago Dei – a basic Christian doctrine. God reveals Godself in Gn 1,27 as a Creator who makes humanity "in his image, in the image of God." The Creator builds variety into creation, and no distinction is made among individuals based on race. Of course, this was not missed by African-American Christians. And the claim that blacks have lessened mental abilities is rebutted by the excellent *theological* work done by black preachers.[558]

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[555] John Adger, "Northern and Southern Views of the Province of the Church," *Southern Presbyterian Review*, March 1866 1866.; as cited in Noll, *The Civil War*, 77-78.

[556] Thornton Stringfellow, a Baptist from Virginia, expressed this view in a close association between Scriptural commands and findings gleaned from experience. He wrote, "The African race is constitutionally inferior to the white race. Experience proves this in all the conditions and countries they have ever occupied." This citation is taken from "Slavery, Its Origin, Nature, and History," in *A House Divided: The Antebellum Slavery Debate in America, 1776-1865*, ed. Mason I. Lowance Jr. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003). See Noll, *The Civil War*, 62.

[557] Frederick Douglas, "The Pro-Slavery Mob and the Pro-Slavery Ministry," *Douglass' Monthly*, March 1861.; as cited in Noll, *The Civil War*, 68-69.

[558] For examples, see the chapter entitled "The Negro Question," in Noll, *The Civil War*, 51-74.

Interestingly, one white "theologian" resisted the pull of either grand narrative.[559] President Abraham Lincoln was never a member of a local church, nor did he have formal training in theology. But on 4 March, 1865, as the conflict was winding down, having been reelected for a second term as president, Lincoln wrote and delivered his masterpiece – the Second Inaugural Address. In just 701 words, Lincoln expressed what no one had yet said.[560] Refusing to pose as the conqueror, Lincoln asked a probing question: what if God was not on anyone's side? Through the unending trauma of the conflict, Lincoln came to embrace the idea that "the Almighty has his own purposes." He noted that both parties thought that victory would come quicker and at a lesser cost. "Both read the same Bible," he said, "and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other." Regarding their petitions, Lincoln said, "The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully." The president went on to ask if the war was one of those offenses that Jesus said must come to the world. If this were the case, perhaps the war, its duration, and probable outcome were one of those offenses "which in the providence of God, must needs come." After all, Lincoln reminded his hearers that slavery was the primary cause of the war.

> Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."[561]

Although Lincoln did not hesitate to identify those who started the war, he remained open-hearted to the instigators and to those who suffered from the carnage. His words exemplify Christian grace towards one's enemies:

> With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives
> us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's

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[559] Reinhold Niebuhr identified Lincoln as "the greatest theologian of the war years ... [whose] religious convictions were superior in depth and purity to those held by the religious as well as the political leaders of his day." See Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Religion of Abraham Lincoln," *The Christian Century*, February 10, 1965.; as cited in Miller, *Both Prayed*, 165.

[560] Noll writes, "Here, then, is the great theological puzzle of the Civil War. Abraham Lincoln, a layman with no standing in a church and no formal training as a theologian, propounded a thick, complex view of God's rule over the world and a morally nuanced picture of America's destiny. The country's best theologians, by contrast, presented a thin, simple view of God's providence and a morally juvenile view of the nation and its fate." See Mark A. Noll, "'Both ... Pray to the Same God': The Singularity of Lincoln's Faith in the Era of the Civil War," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 18, no. 1 (1997). Cited in Miller, *Both Prayed*, 165.

[561] Abraham Lincoln's *Second Inaugural Address* is cited in its entirety in Miller, *Both Prayed*, 173-174.

wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and last peace among ourselves and with all nations.

Lincoln's address clarifies at least three theological problems. First, Christians had judged and criticized each other for decades, and Lincoln notes the fallibility of human judgment. He identified slavery as the "offense" which brought about the conflict, but he asks Northerners to restrain judgment: "but let us judge not, that we be not judged." Both parties were guilty, as Miller notes. "Justice for Lincoln was evenhanded – not only for Southern biblically sanctioned slavery, but also for the Northern spirit of self-righteousness and vengeance."[562] Secondly, Lincoln spoke to the question of responsibility for the war especially in light of its horrendous slaughter. Where was God during all the bloodletting and defeat? Miller writes that Lincoln "ended up resolving the conundrum in a metaphysical and spiritual way, with an unexpected answer – *God was the primary actor in this drama!*"[563] God's purposes were mysterious to the president; perhaps the continuance of "this terrible war" was God's will.[564] For, thirdly, a great offence had been committed, as Lincoln's quotation of Mat 18,7 shows: "woe to that man by whom the offence comes." American slavery had been an offence against God, "an Evil that brings a judgment upon the Land, and which was the cause of the war "somehow."[565] America was guilty and the moral consequences had to follow, "until every drop of blood shed by the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword." Yet the president encouraged all Americans to show love to each other – "with malice towards none; with charity for all." A few days after the inaugural Lincoln was assassinated at Ford's Theatre, and these last words became his legacy to the American people: "with malice towards none; with charity for all."

In light of Lyotard's identification of narratives which resist automatic linking – such as his differential philosophy and Jewish thought –, it appears that Abraham Lincoln gave to the American people such a theological explanation for the Civil War: one that refused to take the absolute observer's position, to make universal truth claims, or to exclude those who could not fit within his narrative. It seems, certainly, that Lincoln's address is a theological statement that strives to remain open to the other – written by one living under the stresses of leading a nation through a civil war. It functions, therefore, as an example of a discourse attempting to remain open to alterity.

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[562] Ibid., 170.
[563] Ibid.
[564] Noll notes that "despite the forcefulness of Lincoln's vision, there were few Americans who, in the end, could actually agree both that God was in control and that human observers might not know what he was doing." See Noll, *The Civil War*, 90.
[565] Miller, *Both Prayed*, 171.

3.8.2 Creation "Science"

A contemporary example of a Christian grand narrative can be seen in what is called "creation science." A leading proponent of this cause is Ken Ham, who leads an organization called Answers in Genesis.[566] One of the mission's stated goals is to "proclaim the absolute truth and authority of the Bible with boldness."[567] Ham argues that Genesis chapters 1-11 are historical accounts which must be read literally, in contradistinction to the claims of current evolutionary science. Such a (literal) reading is needed to combat evolution and restore the foundations of Christianity, in a world that is turning its back on God.[568] As a result, Ham pleads with pastors[569] to preach the gospel using "creation evangelism."[570]

According to AiG (Answers in Genesis), our society is caught up in a culture war, where the truth of Christianity, along with its salvific message and morality, is under attack by those who espouse evolutionary theories regarding the origin of life. Carl Kerby and Ken Ham describe this as a struggle over God's absolute truth. They write,

> We are engaged in a war of worldviews. Secular humanism (with its evolutionary and millions-of-years foundation) is fighting tooth-and-nail against biblical Christianity (and the idea that God is the Creator) for the hearts and minds of our children. Over the past generations, we've seen the battle increase and intensify.[571]

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[566] Answers in Genesis was started in the late 1970's in Australia as a "creation ministry." Ham's goal was to build a Creation Museum which "teaches the truth" about human origins. That dream was achieved on May 28, 2007 with the opening of the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky in the United States. Two separate organizations now comprise the ministry begun by Ham: AiG Australia and AiG United States. Along with the museum in the U.S., the ministry is involved in publishing creation books, DVDs, and educational curricula. See "The History of AiG through December 2012" http://www.answersingenesis.org/about/history [accessed May 20, 2013].

[567] AiG's mission statements states: "We proclaim the absolute truth and authority of the Bible with boldness. We relate the relevance of a literal Genesis to the church and the world today with creativity. We obey God's call to deliver the message of the gospel, individually and collectively." See "Answers in Genesis Mission Statement" http://www.answersingenesis.org/about/mission [accessed May 20, 2013].

[568] Pastors "need to understand the importance and relevance of accepting Genesis literally, of rejecting evolution completely, and of understanding the foundational nature of Genesis to the rest of the Bible." See Ken Ham, *The Lie: Evolution* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2009; reprint, October 2009), 138.

[569] Ham writes, "*Pastors! Theologians! Ministers! You must be aware of what evolution is doing to students' minds. You must be aware of what is happening in the school system.* There are fewer children attending our church education programs. There are fewer children interested in religious education in schools. In many schools, religious education classes are not allowed any more. Look at it practically. Is your compromise position working? It is not!" The compromise position Ham refers to is accepting any form of evolutionary thought at all; such thinkers are lukewarm and will be spewed out of Christ's mouth (Rev 3,15-16). See ibid., 132.

[570] Ibid., 116.

[571] Carl Kerby and Ken Ham, "The 'Evolutionizing' of a Culture," in *War of the Worldviews: Powerful Answers for an "Evolutionized" Culture*, ed. Gary Vaterlaus (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2005; reprint, January 2008), 8.

Kerby and Ham decry the loss of Christian culture in the West, and they argue that today's youth are being educated against faith. Since young people are taught to doubt the historicity of the biblical accounts of creation, they question everything else the Bible has to say. Ham repeatedly says that Genesis 1-11 is a fundamentally crucial section of scripture; it is the history that grounds doctrinal teachings about life, marriage, sin, and etc. Therefore, there can be no compromise in this cultural war. "Secularism, with its moral relativism, is in direct opposition to Christianity and its absolute morality. For Ham the battle is between two worldviews: one which stands on God's Word and one which accepts man's opinions."[572] In war one must choose sides; neutrality doesn't exist.[573]

Ham presents the conflict between creation science and evolution as a spiritual battle. He writes, "It is my contention that this spiritual conflict is rooted in the issue of origins (creation/evolution)."[574] According to Ham, both the creation scientist and the evolutionary scientist have the same evidence before them. What is not in question is the evidence itself but rather the *interpretation* given based upon the scientist's prior bias: either towards the Creator or towards atheistic materialism. Ham claims that evolution is not science but "a belief system about the past."[575] Evolution cannot claim to be science, because it deals with events in the past which are not subject to the scientific method (i.e. repeatable testing and observation). What is available in the present to scientists is the fossil evidence, rather than the living plants and animals. However, "creation science" is distinguished from evolution in what it can know about the past. Ham writes,

> It is important to understand that special creation, by definition, is also a belief about the past. The difference is that creationists base their understanding of creation upon a book which claims to be the *Word of the One who was there*, who knows everything there is to know about everything, and who tells us what happened. Evolution comes from the words of men who *were not there* and who do not claim to be omniscient. This whole issue revolves around whether we believe the words of God who was there, or the words of fallible humans (no matter how qualified) who were not there.[576]

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[572] Ibid., 11.

[573] Kerby and Ham write, "There is no such thing as neutrality. As the Bible states in Matthew 12,30: 'He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.'" See ibid., 9. One side or other in the culture war will impose its beliefs on society. However, "many Christians have been deceived into believing they have no right to impose their views on society." This has led to moral evils in society today, according to Ham. See Ham, *The Lie*, 19.

[574] Ham, *The Lie*, 21.

[575] Ibid., 21, 24.

[576] Ibid., 24.

For Ham the conflict between creationists and evolutionists is not a war between religion and science but between two opposing religions. The atheist cannot even consider the idea of a Creator, for to do so would mean that s/he is no longer an atheist. An agnostic is unable to be absolutely certain of his or her knowledge about origins; otherwise, s/he would no longer be an agnostic. Likewise, a revelationist is unable to consider evolutionary claims since s/he begins with the presupposition of a Creator and the truth of the Bible.[577] Each of these people are biased in different ways. Thus, Ham argues that "evolution is basically a religious philosophy," and "evolution is *not* science but *religion*."[578] Of course, Ham also says that "creation is religion." However, creation science differs from evolution, since it is based on the God who knows everything. Creation scientists build their models upon God's Word and what God has said about past events. Taking this as their starting point, creation scientists look first to the Bible to see what it says, imagine what this must have meant at the beginning of creation, and then check to see if the evidence corroborates with their hypothesized model.[579] However, like evolution, creation science cannot prove anything in the past. "Neither creation *nor* evolution can be proven scientifically."[580] Thus, what we are left with are "two religions in conflict."[581]

Creation science puts forth alternate explanations for the evidence found in the world (*e.g.* fossils, rock formations, etc.). Fossils and geological stratification are explained as evidence of a worldwide primordial flood. To bolster their case, creation scientists point to the prevalence of flood stories found around the world. Ham contends that this tends to confirm a young earth and the biblical accounts of the flood and human origins. He writes, "This is powerful evidence that these stories have been handed down generation after generation."[582] According to Ham, anyone looking at the world from an evolutionary perspective – where history involves millions of years – would not expect to find such a widespread dispersal of flood stories. The fact that they exist points to a collective human memory of a prior cataclysmic event. However, accounts differ widely among cultures, since this memory was corrupted as it was handed down from generation to generation.[583] Some Old Testament scholars have posited a link between ancient Babylonian flood stories, the Jewish exile in Babylon, and the development of the Genesis flood account. Ham, however, confidently

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[577] Ibid., 24-25.

[578] Ibid., 32. As noted above, observation is only possible for present events, therefore, evolution cannot be considered science, according to Ham, since past events are not repeatable. As Ham says, "No living scientist was there to observe the first life forming in some primeval sea. No living scientist was there to observe the big bang that is supposed to have occurred 10 or 20 billion years ago, nor the supposed formation of the earth 4.5 billion years ago (or even 10,000 years ago!). No scientist was there – no human witness was there to see these events occurring." See ibid.

[579] Ibid., 42.

[580] Ibid., 44.

[581] Ibid., 48.

[582] Ibid., 42.

[583] Ibid., 44.

asserts that no connection exists between the biblical flood accounts and those of the Babylonians; the latter stories in no way influenced the Jewish account. The Babylonian narratives are "rather grotesque and quite unbelievable in almost every aspect," whereas the biblical account "is certainly more reasonable."[584] God has preserved the true history of Noah, according to Ham. He writes, "The biblical records have been handed down in written form, carefully preserved by the superintendency of God and have not been corrupted."[585] Once again, what creation scientists claim to know about the past is guaranteed by God's witness to history – given to us in the Bible.

Creation scientists look at other evidence as well and give alternative explanations to those provided by secular science. In this case creation scientists argue for a young earth while criticizing evolution's long view of history.[586] For example, Jason Lisle contests big bang cosmology and points to the moon to argue for a young earth of approximately 6,000 years versus a "secular astronomical" projection of 4.5 billion years.[587] Lisle notes that the moon recesses away from the Earth at an approximate rate of one and a half inches per year. Projecting back into the past Lisle argues that the distance between the earth and the moon, six thousand years ago, would have been approximately 800 feet less than it is today. However, assuming the current rate of recession the moon would have been touching our planet 1.4 billion years ago. Lisle says, "This problem suggests that the moon can't possibly be as old as secular astronomers claim."[588] Similarly, arguments are put forward in the area of genetics. Bodie Hodge argues against the idea of the evolutionary development of species by noting that mutation can be either beneficial or often harmful to individuals. He writes that genetic mutations which are beneficial for an individual must bring forth new information. With any mutation one of two possibilities occurs: either information is lost or gained. A beetle on a windy island who loses information for making a wing benefits, since that

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[584] Ibid.

[585] Ibid.

[586] Although creationists are quick to argue that the issue is ultimately not about science but about faith (i.e. one's "biases"). Ken Ham and Terry Mortenson write, "The 'war of the worldviews' is not ultimately one of young earth versus old earth, or billions of years versus six days, or creation versus evolution – the real battle is the authority of the Word of God versus man's fallible theories." See Ken Ham and Terry Mortenson, "What's Wrong with Progressive Creation?," in *War of the Worldviews: Powerful Answers for an "Evolutionized" Culture*, ed. Gary Vaterlaus (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2005; reprint, January 2008), 109.

[587] According to NASA's "Cosmicopia" website, "Current scientific thinking puts the Earth at about 4.5 billion years old." See Eric Christian, "Ask Us: Earth and Moon", NASA: Goddard Space Flight Center, Heliophysics Science Division http://helios.gsfc.nasa.gov/qa_earth.html#ageofearth [accessed May 20, 2013].

[588] Jason Lisle, "Does the Bible Say Anything About Astronomy?," in *War of the Worldviews: Powerful Answers for an "Evolutionized" Culture*, ed. Gary Vaterlaus (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2005; reprint, January 2008), 64-65.

individual is less likely to be blown into the ocean and die.[589] Although genetic information was lost, the result was a benefit to the beetle. On the other hand, genetic mutations may also increase information. Hodge notes that such mutations do occur, but rarely. He says that for a species to evolve two things must occur: information must be increased and mutations need to enhance survivability.[590] While beneficial mutations do occur and sometimes information is increased, Hodge contends that "molecules-to-man evolution" is not likely to happen.

> There have been a few arguable cases of information-gaining mutations, but for evolution to be true, there would need to be *billions* of them. The fact is, we don't observe this in nature, but rather we see the opposite – organisms losing information. Organisms are changing, but the change is in the wrong direction! How can losses of information add up to a gain?[591]

Hodge explains this deterioration of the genetic code, confirmed by observations showing the loss of information in an overwhelming number of mutations, as resulting from the Curse given in Genesis 3. He concludes by writing, "The accumulation of mutations from generation to generation is due to man's [*sic*] sin."[592] Here, of course, a *theological* explanation is given to a scientific question. Many other examples could be given of alternate explanations put forward by creation scientists for evidence found in the world.

Ultimately, for Ham and AiG, "Genesis matters." It is not only a starting point for scientific research, but it also reveals God's absolute truth about origins. Ham repeatedly writes that the Book of Genesis is the foundation for Christianity's doctrines and ethics, and this foundation is under assault by those who believe in evolution. Ham believes that "if one wants to destroy Christianity, then destroy the foundations established in the Book of Genesis."[593] Those who undermine the creation accounts in Genesis have weakened the moral state of the culture. The results are clear: abortion, homosexuality, pornography, drug addiction, adultery, witchcraft, and etc. People are free to reject the historicity of Genesis, but any society that rejects God's absolutes faces consequences. Ham believes that reversing the moral slide in culture must begin with taking Genesis literally again.[594] Therefore, AiG engages the world through "creation evangelism": i.e. presenting arguments for the literal historicity of the Genesis account. Creation evangelism is a ministry which Ham believes God

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[589] Bodie Hodge, "Are Mutations Part of the 'Engine' of Evolution?," in *War of the Worldviews: Powerful Answers for an "Evolutionized" Culture*, ed. Gary Vaterlaus (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2005; reprint, January 2008), 33.
[590] Hodge lists five basic types of genetic mutations that occur on a genetic level: point, inversion, insertion, deletion, and frame mutations. More complex mutations also occur. See ibid., 33-37.
[591] Ibid., 38.
[592] Ibid., 41.
[593] Ham, *The Lie*, 59.
[594] Ham says that "this emphasis on a literal Genesis must be accepted." See ibid., 71.

has called him too,[595] and his work has stirred up a reaction. "We see extreme emotionalism in reaction to the creation ministries around the world because the evolutionists' religion is being attacked by a totally different belief system."[596]

Creation science is an example of a grand narrative which declares the absolute universal truth about the creation of the earth and the origin of life thereupon. Ham and his followers construct a story where hermeneutics plays hardly any role. Since Genesis 1-11 is taken as literal history, there is no need for interpretation. The rule governing this master narrative is literal, historical revelation; this is why Ham calls creation scientists "revelationists." A revelationist is "a person who believes that the God of history has revealed the truth about himself [*sic*] by means of a book."[597] One is simply to accept the literal transfer of information from the all-knowing God via the Bible. Ham describes his hermeneutical method as follows:

> Once one accepts Genesis as literal and understands it as foundational for the rest of
> Scripture, it is an easy step to accepting as truth the remainder of what the Bible says.
> I take the Bible literally unless it is obviously symbolic. Even where it is symbolic,
> the words and phrases used have a literal basis.[598]

Ham gives his readers no means for determining when the scripture "is obviously symbolic." Even with this caveat, however, the information conveyed still has "a literal basis." What is at stake for creation science is the (literal, absolute) truth, which is directly tied to the veracity and perspicuity of scripture. Indeed, to question absolute truth is dangerous; for that path leads to moral relativism and societal disaster.

For creation science, knowledge is simply the retelling of what is already known. In a move similar to Lyotard's critique of Christianity, the creation science grand narrative declares that what God wants us to know has already been narrated in scripture.[599] Genesis 1-11 is important for creation science for there knowledge is revealed about the foundations of life and God's dealings with humanity. The creation science grand narrative functions in a

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[595] Ham writes, "The Lord has not just called us to tear down the barriers of evolution, but to help to restore the foundation of the gospel in our society. If churches took up the tool of creation evangelism in society we would see a stemming of the tide of humanistic philosophy, which is making our nations more pagan with each passing day." See ibid., 122.

[596] Ibid., 52.

[597] Ibid., 25.

[598] Ibid., 97.

[599] Knowledge about the origins of life are addressed in a manner similar to the way "the divine interpreters of the Scriptures" answered Joan of Arc. To the question regarding God's will, the answer is given: "He declared His will at the beginning." According to Joan's interrogators, she must wear women's clothing regardless of what her voices (i.e. the discourse of obligation) require. Similarly, what we can know (or scientifically learn) about the origin of life has already been declared – narrated within a closed, hegemonic Christian creation science master narrative. See Lyotard, *The Differend*, 160 [D234].

circular manner typical of master narratives. God, who knows *the literal history of creation*, reveals this to all peoples everywhere and calls on them to know *the literal history of creation*, so as to live out the knowledge of *the literal history of creation* and reveal it to others. To do otherwise is to court cultural disaster and divine judgment. As with other grand narratives, the instances are universalized. God is the absolute addressor who declares the absolute truth. The addressees are "humanity," and the referent is the creation of all life. The meaning given to this referent is that Genesis 1-11 provides us with the literal, absolute truth about the history of the origin of life. The story has a fixed, rigid border which fights against that which lies outside of its narrative border (i.e. evolutionary theory). Scientists must, therefore, confirm what has already been declared to us.

With the creation science grand narrative both science and faith are brought together under one narrative: science is subsumed under Christianity. In this way science is not respected as an irreducible, particular discourse. Its boundaries are transgressed by creation science in an attempt to make an ideological claim on knowledge about history and the physical world.[600] Science as a discourse is incorrectly assessed regarding its "domain, scope, and truth claims."[601] In fact, science is not even allowed to define itself. Nor is science's agnostic methodology for discovering things about the physical world appreciated.

Another grand narrative appears on the other end of the creation versus science debate. Here those involved in science transgress the boundaries of theology to make universal claims about the nature of reality. We now turn and consider claims made for science by the bestselling author, Richard Dawkins, before offering a critique of Lyotard's view of the Christian narrative.

3.8.3 Dawkins' "Conscious Atheism"

In his book, *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins argues that people should leave religion. Religious faith is portrayed as a seedbed from which all sorts of intolerant fundamentalist attitudes and actions grow, and he wants people to understand that they can leave religion. Dawkins seeks to encourage the person who would say, "I didn't know that I could [leave religion]!"[602] In religion's place, Dawkins wants people to embrace reason and

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[600] Lieven Boeve notes that this is true when faith and science are seen as being in conflict with each other. Faith crosses the boundary of science, intruding into its discipline, "in an effort to explain the physical world on the basis of its own traditions." However, science likewise does not respect faith when it exceeds the boundaries of its own discipline "in order to adopt ideological positions against specifically religious truth claims." See Lieven Boeve, *God Interrupts History: Theology in a Time of Upheaval*, trans., Brian Doyle (New York; London: Continuum, 2007), 121.

[601] Ibid., 123.

[602] Dawkins wants children to leave their parents' religion, and he thinks that too few realize that this is a real possibility. To such individuals Dawkins writes, "If you are one of them, this book is for you. It

the glorious understanding of life as a materialistic outworking of the process of natural selection. An evangelist for evolution,[603] Dawkins sounds forth a warning that religious faith inevitably leads to violence.[604]

Dawkins makes a hard distinction between people whose minds are informed by science and those controlled by what he calls the "religious mind." He views science and religious faith as opponents in conflict with each other,[605] especially as faith leads to fundamentalism. Dawkins admits to being passionate about evolution, but he distinguishes his enthusiasm from religious conviction:

> ... it is all too easy to mistake passion that can change its mind for fundamentalism, which never will. Fundamentalist Christians are passionately opposed to evolution and I am passionately in favour of it. Passion for passion, we are evenly matched. And that, according to some, means we are equally fundamentalist. But, to borrow an aphorism whose source I am unable to pin down, when two opposite points of view are expressed with equal force, the truth does not necessarily lie midway between them. It is possible for one side to be simply wrong. And that justifies passion on the other side.[606]

Dawkins claims that his scientific passion is validated by his "passionate commitment to evidence." The argument in his book is set up in this manner: either one is committed to "biblical fundamentals" or to scientific evidence. A Christian fundamentalist will never overturn his or her religious convictions based on whatever evidence is found (either past, present, or future), because s/he has already read the truth in a scriptural text. Dawkins writes, "If the evidence seems to contract it [i.e. a holy book], it is the evidence that must be thrown

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is intended to raise consciousness – raise consciousness to the fact that to be an atheist is a realistic aspiration, and a brave and splendid one." See Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008), 23.

[603] Dawkins writes, "If this book works as I intend, religious readers who open it will be atheists when they put it down." See ibid., 28.

[604] In this regard, Dawkins mentions the Crusades, witch-hunts, Gunpowder Plot, persecution of the Jews, Taliban bombing of ancient statues, public beheadings, flogging of women, and the twin Towers. Religion creates such a violent world. See ibid., 23-24.

[605] Dawkins admits to being puzzled by the faith of fellow scientists such as Peacocke, Stannard, and Polkinghorne. "I remain baffled, not so much by their belief in a cosmic lawgiver of some kind, as by their belief in the details of the Christian religion: resurrection, forgiveness of sins and all." See ibid., 125. Dawkins approvingly quotes Jerry Coyne, a Chicago geneticist, who writes about "the conflict" between evolution and creationism: "To scientists like Dawkins and Wilson [E. O. Wilson, the celebrated Harvard biologist], the *real* war is between rationalism and superstition. Science is but one form of rationalism, while religion is the most common form of superstition. Creationism is just a symptom of what they see as the greater enemy: religion. While religion can exist without creationism, creationism cannot exist without religion." Cited from the August 2006 issue of *Playboy* magazine in ibid., 92.

[606] Ibid., 18.

out, not the book."[607] However, Dawkins retorts, "My passion is based on evidence. Theirs, flying in the face of evidence as it does, is truly fundamentalist."[608] Therefore, science is reasonable, whereas religion is superstitious.

As his book's title makes clear, Dawkins strongly rejects the idea that a creator designed the universe. God is a delusion. Rather, the question of God's existence is a scientific one, and Dawkins claims that science makes it clear that the existence of such a being is highly improbable. Dawkins calls such assertions of the existence of a divine creator the "God Hypothesis." In contradistinction to such a hypothesis, Dawkins argues for another position – namely, God as the end-product of evolution itself. Dawkins writes, "any creative intelligence, of sufficient complexity to design anything, comes into existence only as the end product of an extended process of gradual evolution."[609] Not surprisingly, therefore, Dawkins rejects the possibility of a God who created the universe. Instead, he argues for natural selection as the crane by which life emerged on this planet, and he asserts that this "alternative view" is based on evidence, rather than upon founding traditions or "private revelation."[610] Science and observable evidence establish the truth about reality itself. Therefore, God's existence "is a scientific fact about the universe, discoverable in principle if not in practice."[611] Since Dawkins sees no evidence that demonstrates the existence of such a designer, he rejects any arguments starting from design. Rather, he says that natural selection produces "the appearance of design,"[612] while arguing that any appeal to design produces an even greater problem: "Who designed the designer?"[613] Dawkins maintains that life results from natural selection, and not from chance or design.[614] Life evolves from simple to more complex organisms. How then could a life-form complex enough to design our complex universe emerge at any time other than at the *end* of the evolutionary process? Such a designer is statistically improbable; however, Dawkins argues that the emergence of ever more complex life-forms, through small evolutionary steps, "is slightly improbable, but not prohibitively so."[615] In place of an improbable designer, what is needed is a powerful crane to "do the business of working up gradually and plausibly from simplicity to otherwise improbable complexity."[616] Dawkins finds such a crane in natural selection.[617]

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[607] Ibid., 319.

[608] Ibid., 19.

[609] Ibid., 52.

[610] Ibid.

[611] Dawkins says that "if he existed and chose to reveal it, God himself could clinch the argument, noisily and unequivocally, in his favour." See ibid., 57.

[612] Ibid., 188.

[613] Ibid., 146.

[614] Dawkins claims that natural selection is the only real solution that has been proposed to the problem of explaining the origin and development of life in the universe. Not only is natural selection a "workable solution, [but] it is a solution of stunning elegance and power." See ibid., 147.

[615] Ibid.

[616] Ibid., 188.

Dawkins is in conflict with religion; thus he posits two alternative explanations for the emergence of life on this planet: either the design theory, or the anthropic principle. According to the design theory, God created the world, placing it in a location which favors life – a sort of "Goldilocks zone." In so doing, God "deliberately set up all the details for our benefit."[618] However, Dawkins argues that people who contend for a creator can find no real help in the anthropic principle, since it "is an *alternative* to the design hypothesis," providing "a rational, design-free explanation for the fact that we find ourselves in a situation propitious to our existence."[619] Our planet is one of a very small minority of planets in the universe situated in conditions so favorable to life. The fact that we are able to ponder that fact means not only that our planet is so located but that such a situation is possible. Life emerges where conditions favor life. Thus, Dawkins writes, "What the religious mind then fails to grasp is that two candidate solutions are offered to the problem. God is one. The anthropic principle is the other. They are *alternatives*."[620]

What is needed is a consciousness raising to the power and possibilities of natural selection to "tame improbability," according to Dawkins.[621] In place of a "Divine Knob-Twiddler," people need to gain the insight biologists have regarding natural selection's ability "to explain the rise of improbable things."[622] Rather than a god who set all the variables so that life could emerge – a theist's explanation which Dawkins finds "deeply unsatisfying" – , Dawkins proposes a simple explanation for the origin of life in something like the multiverse. Since "each one of those universes is simple in its fundamental laws, we are still not postulating anything highly improbable," writes Dawkins, in contrast to a God, who "would have to be highly improbable in the very same statistical sense as the entities he is supposed to explain."[623] Dawkins wonders why people remain amazingly blinded to the improbability of God's existence. Such incomprehension must result from a lack of consciousness raising regarding the wonders of natural selection.

Evolutionists like Dawkins cannot miss the irrationality of religion, since its rituals "stand out like peacocks in a sunlit glade."[624] Dawkins asks, how does one explain religious behavior? What could be the benefit for practices which consume so much time and energy? We will consider only three of the number of possible explanations Dawkins gives. First, he

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[617] Dawkins says that the creationist constantly misses seeing the possibilities found in natural selection, because he "insists on treating the genesis of statistical improbability as a single, one-off event. He doesn't understand the power of *accumulation*." See ibid., 147.

[618] Ibid., 163.

[619] Ibid., 164.

[620] Ibid.

[621] Ibid., 172.

[622] Ibid.

[623] Ibid., 176.

[624] Dawkins cites Dan Dennett's phrase here. See ibid., 192.

argues that religion in fact benefits something: namely, "the religious ideas themselves."[625] These ideas replicate themselves much like genes do; Dawkins calls these ideas "memes." In fact, he likens these ideas to "mind-viruses" which spread from parents to children.[626] While trusting everything a parent says may help a child survive to adulthood, such gullibility opens the child to an inability to discern the difference between bad and good advice. A second explanation he proffers is that religion thrives as a part of "group-selection." Those who belong to a group are more likely to survive. In this context, Dawkins cites Colin Renfrew's idea that the idea of brotherly love gave Christians a better chance of survival in contrast with other groups who were "less religious."[627] A third explanation Dawkins gives is that religion results from our psychological need for comfort. Much like children concoct imaginary friends, for comfort and advice, adults may retain childhood characteristics.[628] We derive comfort from imaginary gods who have unlimited time to devote to our needs as our "imaginary friends." Dawkins gives other reasons for the survival of religion throughout the human species as well, and, in each case, religious activity is an unfortunate byproduct of evolution – a "misfiring" of natural selection. Such behavior may be "an unfortunate byproduct of an underlying psychological propensity which in other circumstances is, or once was, useful." Thus, what natural selection chose was not "religion *per se*" but the accompanying behavior.[629]

Dawkins wants to do more than simply debunk the "God Hypothesis;" he also argues that religion is a useless source for providing moral guidance. Indeed, he argues that the Bible is full of stories displaying gross immorality.[630] He especially scorns the story of Abraham's offering of his son Isaac as a sacrifice to God. After God commands Abraham to build an altar for a burnt offering and Isaac is bound in place, God relents in "a last-minute change of plan: God was only joking after all, 'tempting' Abraham, and testing his faith."[631] Dawkins' comments are scathing:

> A modern moralist cannot help but wonder how a child could ever recover from such
> psychological trauma. By the standards of modern morality, this disgraceful story is
> an example simultaneously of child abuse, bullying in two asymmetrical power

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[625] Ibid., 193.

[626] Ibid., 205. Children are born dualists who naturally divide mind and matter and believe, therefore, in disembodied spirits, Dawkins notes. Most scientists, however, are not dualists. See ibid., 209-210.

[627] Ibid., 200.

[628] Ibid., 391-392.

[629] Ibid.

[630] Dawkins cites a number of disturbing stories including these: "offering your daughter for gang rape" (cf. Gn 19,8); God's "inciting Moses to attack the Midianites ... slaying all the men ... [burning all the Midianite cities]," killing all the boys and women, but keeping the virgin women alive for the Israelites use (Nu 31,18); and the destruction of pagan altars, images, and groves (Ex 34,13-17). See ibid., 269-279.

[631] Ibid., 274.

relationships, and the first recorded use of the Nuremberg defence: "I was only obeying orders." Yet the legend is one of the great foundational myths of all three monotheistic religions.[632]

Dawkins acknowledges the rebuttal that "times have changed" and that no responsible religious leader in our current world would instruct his or her followers to behave in such a way. But that is his point. "All I am establishing is that modern morality, wherever else it comes from, does not come from the Bible."[633] He argues that there is a disconnect between biblical and modern morals; that very disjunction demonstrates that God is not needed for morality in our modern civilized culture. And Dawkins charges that the holy books give no rules for distinguishing good principles from bad ones.[634] But his contention is even more biting: religious faith leads to violence.

Dawkins is openly hostile to religion, since it creates a climate which breeds intolerance and violence. When questioned about his own hostility, Dawkins retorts that it "is limited to words."[635] However, he is troubled by groups committing actual physical violence against their opponents. Dawkins repeatedly mentions the Taliban for their barbaric bombings and beheadings, but he also severely criticizes fundamentalist groups in the United States as well. Among these groups are the Westboro Baptist Church for organizing protests against homosexuals, Operation Rescue for using intimidation tactics against abortion providers, and Catholics for Christian Political Action for promoting a government controlled by "the Christian majority."[636] Dawkins places each of these organizations within a group others have coined "the American Taliban."[637] Most poignantly, he mentions interviewing Paul Hill – a convicted murderer – who was executed in 2003 for slaying Dr. John Britton and James Barrett with a shotgun in Pensacola, Florida on July 29, 1994. Hill serves as a good example

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[632] Ibid., 275.

[633] Ibid., 279.

[634] "Some of these good principles can be found in holy books, but buried alongside much else that no decent person would wish to follow ..." See ibid., 298.

[635] "I am not going to bomb anybody, behead them, stone them, burn them at the stake, crucify them, or fly planes into their skyscrapers, just because of a theological disagreement." See ibid., 318.

[636] Ibid., 328-329.

[637] Ibid., 326. Dawkins cites some extremely distasteful quotes from these groups. Among these are (1) a slogan displayed at Westboro Baptist protests which read "THANK GOD FOR AIDS," and (2) Randall Terry's statement, as founder of Operation Rescue, regarding doctors who perform abortions: "I want you to just let a wave of intolerance wash over you. I want you to let a wave of hatred wash over you. Yes, hate is good ... Our goal is a Christian nation. We have a Biblical duty, we are called by God, to conquer this country. We don't want equal time, We don't want pluralism." Their goal as an organization is clear: "We must have a Christian nation built on God's law, on the Ten Commandments. No apologies." For the Randall Terry quote, see "The American Taliban", Rational Thought: a student group at the University of California San Diego http://adultthought.ucsd.edu/Culture_War/The_American_Taliban.html [accessed December 24, 2013]. As cited in Dawkins, 330. For the Westboro Baptist Church slogan, see ibid., 329.

"of what happens when people take their scriptures literally and seriously."[638] This demonstrates something Dawkins calls "the dark side of absolutism."[639] For, according to Dawkins, Hill was not insane, but he was dangerous precisely because he was religious. Hill believed he was justified in killing two men, because he was saving "innocents" (i.e. unborn babies) from the hands of their executioners (i.e. those involved in performing abortions). And Hill showed no remorse for his action, declaring as guards led him to the execution chamber, "I expect a great reward in heaven ... I am looking forward to glory."[640] Dawkins comments, "What was wrong with Hill was his religious faith itself ... his mind had unfortunately been captured by poisonous religious nonsense."[641]

Along with detesting religion for inciting violence, Dawkins opposes religion because of fundamentalism's hostility to evolutionary science. Scientists support evolution because of observable evidence, and it genuinely distresses Dawkins that not everyone can see something so obvious to him.[642] As a result, Dawkins disavows being a fundamentalist, because he is willing to change his mind regarding evolution if new evidence should emerge that would contradict the theory. This attitude stands in stark contrast to the religious fundamentalist who already *knows* the truth, because it is found in a holy book. Dawkins could not be clearer: "As a scientist, I am hostile to fundamentalist religion because it actively debauches the scientific enterprise. It teaches us not to change our minds, and not to want to know exciting things that are available to be known. It subverts science and saps the intellect."[643] Dawkins believes in evolution, because he has seen the evidence. But he refuses the moniker "fundamentalist."

According to Dawkins, religion is a form of child abuse. For it "teaches children that unquestioned faith is a virtue."[644] Dawkins writes, "Faith is an evil precisely because it requires no justification and brooks no argument."[645] Such a world-view can only produce future suicide bombers or crusades. Thus, implanting faith into an innocent child's trusting mind is a "violation of childhood by religion."[646] Therefore, Dawkins is incensed by the labeling of children according to their parents' religious faith. He argues that young children cannot possibly know what they believe. Such labeling deprives children of the time needed

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[638] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 326.
[639] Ibid., 323.
[640] See ibid., 334. As cited from "Abortion Doctor's Murderer Dies by Lethal Injection," Fox News http://www.foxnews.com/story/2003/09/03/abortion-doctor-murderer-dies-by-lethal-injection/
[accessed December 24, 2013]. Note: the website address cited in Dawkins' book (http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,96286,00.html) connected to the address just cited on the day of this writing.
[641] Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 335.
[642] Dawkins writes, "It is because of the evidence for evolution is overwhelmingly strong and I am passionately distressed that my opponent can't see it – or, more usually, refuses to look at it because it contradicts his holy book." See ibid., 320.
[643] Ibid., 321.
[644] Ibid., 346.
[645] Ibid., 347.
[646] Ibid., 348.

to come to their own religious convictions, and he equates this with abuse: namely, "the religiously indoctrinated mind."[647] Dawkins writes, "Even without physical abduction, isn't it always a form of child abuse to label children as possessors of beliefs that they are too young to have thought about? Yet the practice persists to this day, almost entirely unquestioned."[648] All forms of religious instruction, therefore, are forms of mental abuse, leading children towards accepting the delusion that God exists. The alternative Dawkins promotes is consciousness raising for children; specifically, giving them the opportunity to know that they can be atheists.[649] Clearly Dawkins sees himself engaged in a conflict with faith, whether the latter expresses itself as religious instruction, religious practice, or intelligent design. His opponent is anyone who espouses religious faith and *really* believes it.[650] He labels such individuals "fundamentalists," who are too closed minded to consider the evidence that demonstrates natural selection.

Dawkins' book, presents us with a grand narrative based upon the rule of natural selection. The truth about the universe can be discovered in the complexification of natural elements which brings forth life through the process of evolution. Dawkins assumes the position of the universal addressor, who is enabled through scientific observation (i.e. evidence) to declare the truth about natural selection to all those living, who themselves are products of natural selection. Thus, every phrase instance is universalized by the idea of natural selection, and the great glorious task to which Dawkins devotes his life is disseminating the good news of natural selection. The circulating logic within this story can be summarized as follows: *Natural selection* "addresses" all living beings about *natural selection* in order to demonstrate the truth that they themselves are products of *natural selection*. This master narrative follows the rules for establishing the referent found in the cognitive discourse genre: i.e. through observable evidence. Dawkins claims that he will change his mind only if further (contradictory) *evidence* is produced.[651] However, we should note that even here Dawkins continues functioning within a cognitive master narrative discourse genre, with its demand for observable proof, while subsuming all other disciplines

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[647] Ibid., 353.
[648] Ibid., 354.
[649] Thus, Dawkins favors multifaith religious education as a means of consciousness-raising, allowing children to see that all religions are "mutually incompatible." He quotes Nick Seaton's objection to multifaith religious education as being "extremely dangerous," since "children these days are taught that all religions are of equal worth, which means that their own has no special value." To which Dawkins retorts, "Yes indeed; that is exactly what it means." See ibid., 382.
[650] In illustration of this point, Dawkins writes, "Suicide bombers do what they do because they really believe what they were taught in their religious schools: that duty to God exceeds all other priorities, and that martyrdom in his service will be rewarded in the gardens of Paradise. And they were taught *that* lesson not necessarily by extremist fanatics but by decent, gentle, mainstream religious instructors, who lined them up in their madrasas, sitting in rows, rhythmically nodding their innocent little heads up and down while they learned every word of the holy book like demented parrots." See ibid., 348.
[651] Ibid., 19.

under its own rule (*e.g.* theology).[652] Anything bearing witness from outside of the master narrative's borders cannot be heard, since that which asserts itself without observable evidence is "unreasonable."

One can question, therefore, how truly open Dawkins is to changing his mind. At the same time, he mocks those who cannot enter into his atheistic, materialistic narrative for their closed-mindedness, while hoping to convert some away from their deluded faith in God. Dawkins confesses to being mystified by scientists who embrace both evolutionary science *and* Christian faith, although he is less troubled by these people than by creationists who oppose evolutionary theory. The latter are religious fundamentalists who have been infected by "religious mind-viruses."

3.8.4 No Possible Conversation

As we can see, disrespect flows equally between both camps.[653] As Boeve writes, "In both the cases of creationism and scientific materialism, the fundamental difference between religion and science is no longer respected."[654] Here the possibility of dialogue with the other discourse becomes impossible: no direct way to link phrases between the two discourses exists, nor is there a common language shared between them.[655] Ham, the founder of Answers in Genesis, is unable to enter into conversation with any scientific discourse that challenges his presuppositions. This is clearly seen by the way he defines the other discourse. "Evolution is an anti-God religion held by many people today as justification for their continued pursuit of self-gratification and their rejection of God as Creator."[656] Surely there is no room for entering into dialogue with that which is rejected as heresy, as that which leads to rebellion against God. The only appropriate response for such a threat is to strike back. Ham writes, "An all-out attack on evolutionist thinking is possibly the only real hope our nations have of rescuing themselves from an inevitable social and moral catastrophe."[657] Creation science is at war with science; nothing but conflict. Nothing but victims.

In a similar way, Dawkins shows a total disdain for people of faith – i.e. for those who truly embrace what their religion teaches them – and particularly for those who attempt to

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[652] Dawkins questions the validity of theology as a discipline. "I have yet to see any good reason to suppose that theology ... is a subject at all." See ibid., 80.

[653] Science can also intrude into the realm of metaphysics and theology as well, using its methodological agnosticism as the basis for an ideological claim of radical atheistic materialism. See Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, 125.

[654] Ibid.

[655] However, as Boeve points out, both religion and science talk about "the same reality." See ibid., 124. He proposes another model of speaking between the two discourse genres: namely, from a conflict/rupture model to a difference model, which recognizes two irreducibly different language registers. See ibid., 125-127.

[656] Ham, *The Lie*, 82.

[657] Ibid., 83.

explain the origin of life along a creation narrative. Dawkins is unable to enter into conversation with either people of faith or with theology, both of whom he sees as enemies working to undercut the truth of natural selection. Dawkins confesses an absolute confidence in what he terms "evidence." Although he sees the danger of absolutism, Dawkins remains oblivious to his own particular form of hegemony, since he justifies his own intellectual hostility by a pursuit of the truth – an endeavor in which only demonstrable evidence may be considered. One is immediately reminded of Lyotard's complaint against Faurisson: i.e. the latter's silencing of the deportees from Auschwitz by demanding that they only speak as eye-witnesses of a working gas chamber at that death camp. In a similar way, Dawkins builds a modern scientific grand narrative governed by the idea of natural selection. Those who speak in other terms – for instance, theologians – are silenced as fanatics, or are described as good decent people who nevertheless infect the next generation with ideas leading to intolerance and violence. In Dawkins' narrative, science is at war with faith and theology. Conversation between science and faith is therefore impossible.

3.9 LYOTARD AND THE CHRISTIAN NARRATIVE

The validity of Lyotard's critique of master narratives should now be apparent to the reader. Narratives which make universal claims and promise utopia (i.e. grand narratives) are hegemonic, dangerous, and destructive. We concur with Lyotard that the Christian narrative both can and has functioned as a master narrative – making victims throughout human history. Theologians can benefit from taking this critique seriously. But Lyotard can be criticized, as well, for too quickly identifying the Christian narrative as being a closed, hegemonic narrative. He should also be questioned from a fundamental-theological perspective, since he makes *theological* claims in his critique of Christianity. Lyotard makes assertions regarding the existence of divine, theological events, and the nature of Christian love, all of which impinge upon theology.

Lyotard's critique begins and ends with the presupposition that God does not exist. In his own words this non-existent God is the great Zero, the Kastrator. Naturally, theologians cannot begin with this supposition, since we are involved in a tradition that bears witness to a God who involves Godself in human history. Lyotard's claim – that there is no God – reduces any theological claim to a mere concept presented on a conceptual stage, legitimated from the outside by a God that isn't there. Lyotard should be praised for building a philosophical discourse that intentionally tries to remain open to the event; however, he either forgets or does not think that theology has its own witness: namely, to God's interaction with people in history. In his critique – offered from within his own open, differential thought –, Lyotard links to the theological phrase as the presentation of an empty idea (i.e. a concept), forgetting

that something asks to be phrased but is unable at present to do so in the genre of philosophical discourse. As a result, Lyotard translates the event into a litigation, forgetting the differend, and, thus, silences the one wishing to bear witness to that event. His mocking of the Christian phrase (especially in the *Libidinal Economy*) is, therefore, itself hegemonic. Lyotard becomes, in his own way, the oppressor of what's happening. He simply dismisses those who wish to bear witness to a theological event as arguing for castration (i.e. the concept ceaselessly deferred).

Secondly, Lyotard makes claims regarding theological events in general. When people witness to the interrupting event of God's involvement in their story or history, Lyotard analyzes these events through a psychoanalytic/philosophical filter. According to Lyotard, the Voice of God is no voice at all; rather, it is something heard by the subconscious before the "I" can be constituted. A phrase happens, and the person hears it in such a way that it really doesn't matter what the voice says – all that matters is that a voice was heard. In this way, voices heard in a garden, or at a sacrifice, or before a battle are reduced to merely the happening of a phrase across the synopses of the brain of three individuals before they could constitute their own identities. This, of course, silences Augustine, Abraham, and Joan of Arc, who bear witness to God's interruptive work in their lives. Such spiritual events are, by definition, ruled out of the question, since the philosopher declares beforehand that there is no God that could voice such phrases. Thus, three witnesses to theological events are made "jews" by a philosopher who so forcefully argued for striving after justice, by helping people find a way to bear witness to the differend. Lyotard is inconsistent here in regards to his entire philosophical project. This inconsistency is due, of course, to his disdain for Christianity.

Finally, Lyotard can be questioned regarding his relegation of love within the Christian narrative exclusively towards representation. As far as we can find, Lyotard simply does not address love as presentation in his analysis of Christianity. On the one hand, this is not surprising, since he thinks the Christian narrative was constructed upon an idea lacking any materiality or basis in reality. For Lyotard there is no Absolute God who commands us to love. Thus, according to Lyotard, Christians are involved in a conceptual theater, in which all others are loved in a hierarchical relationship – through the Son – to One who isn't there. But Lyotard should be asked if it is still impossible for Christians to love the other as s/he presents him or herself, simply out of the conviction that this is the best way to live, irrespective of whether or not they are deluded. Has love as presentation *no role* to play in Christianity? Must Christians love others "*as a gift*," and does this necessarily (delusion or not) preclude loving the other as presented? Do not the scriptures teach us to love the other (*e.g.* the sojourner) as radically other – through love as presentation – without the need or desire to

acquire the other?[658] On the other hand, Lyotard's lack of interest in love as presentation within Christianity is surprising, since he rightfully notes that love stands at the very heart of the Christian narrative. Lyotard can be taken to task for identifying the love operating in the Christian narrative as functioning exclusively through representation. We can (and should) ask this question: is there another love that can govern the linking of phrases? Can Love-as-Event do justice to the interruptive force of the uniquely particular event? Can *this* love both link to the event and help the Christian narrative resist its natural tendency to close into a master narrative?

We now turn to consider Lieven Boeve's model of the open narrative. As we will see, Boeve argues that the Christian narrative is rightly seen (and most naturally functions) as an open narrative of love. We will argue that Lyotard's insight of love as presentation will require such a narrative of love and that it can help the Christian narrative to resist closing into a hegemonic, master narrative. But first we move on to the model of the open narrative as put forward by Boeve.

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[658] See, for example, the injunctions to feed the hungry stranger (Lv 23,22 and Mt. 25,34-46).

4. THE CHRISTIAN OPEN NARRATIVE

4.0 ENGAGING LYOTARD'S CRITIQUE

Lieven Boeve believes that theology can benefit from a confrontation with the current philosophical critical consciousness. Through this encounter theology can learn to address a problem with its own discourse: i.e. a Christian narrative too easily degenerates into a closed, hegemonic narrative. This realization is gleaned through an intense conversation with Lyotard: specifically, with his language pragmatics and critique of Christianity. This dialogue can be made fruitful for theology since it provides both a philosophical critique of narrativity and insight into the current philosophical context in which we work, allowing one to begin constructing what can truly be called a "postmodern theology."[659] The goal of Boeve's project is to produce a plausible theology for the current postmodern context, which can make a claim, at the same time, of being theologically valid.[660] Such a theology attempts to think about the Christian narrative in ways that remain open to alterity, while staying conscious of the fact that any attempt must necessarily fall short of its end (to represent the unrepresentable). To this end, and in response to Lyotard's philosophical thought, Boeve offers the model of the open narrative – a model that helps theology critically engage with the current critical context.

4.1 BOEVE'S DUAL-APPROACH

Boeve is aware of the importance of language, thought, and context for any theological reflection. Therefore he uses a two-pronged approach for theologizing, working concurrently on the levels of the contextual-theological and the philosophical-theological. On the level of the contextual-theological he thinks through the development of Christian tradition, its historical embeddedness, and the place of Christian faith within the current pluralistic Western context. Secondly, on the level of the philosophical-theological Boeve engages a form of the current critical consciousness (*e.g.* Lyotard's differential thought) as a way of confronting theology with another discourse at the border of its own narrativity. Through this

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[659] Boeve's starting principle is in contrast with Saskia Wendel, who argues that Lyotard has nothing to offer theology. Boeve takes Lyotard seriously, as a dialogue partner, not in order to construct a trendy or "cool" postmodern theology. Rather, he dialogues with Lyotard's thought in order to construct a theology that may be plausible for the current critical consciousness. See Lieven Boeve, "Method in Postmodern Theology: A Case Study," in *The Presence of Transcendence: Thinking 'Sacrament' in a Postmodern Age*, ed. Lieven Boeve and John C. Ries (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 27-39.

[660] Boeve argues that what is needed is a recontextualization of faith: i.e. a theological program "in which insight into the intrinsic link between faith and context inspires theologians to take contextual challenges seriously, in order to come to a contemporary theological discourse that can claim both theological validity and contextual plausibility." See Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, 3 (footnote 4).

encounter theology is questioned by that which is other to its discourse. This confrontation helps theology perform a self-critique from within the borders of its own discourse – and that for its own benefit.

Boeve's theologizing is complex and sophisticated, running on two separate tracks. Thus, any presentation of his theological project faces a conundrum: how to tell the story of what he's doing? Both approaches – contextual-theological and philosophical-theological – drive the reader towards the need to recontextualize Christian faith for today's postmodern people. For clarity's sake, therefore, we will keep the two approaches separate. We will begin first with Boeve's contextual-theological analysis of the current context and show how a shifted cultural context stimulates theologians to recontextualize the Christian faith. Strategies employed by theologians to deal with this shifting context will follow. Then we will consider the second part of Boeve's work – namely the philosophical-theological – , where we will see how changes in the critical-consciousness inspire theology towards a recontextualized expression of faith understanding which is plausible for the current philosophical horizon. Boeve's assessment of the theological problem will be given, followed by a description of what he means by "recontextualization." Once this foundation is laid, we will consider Boeve's concept of the open narrative and his theology of the Christian open narrative.

4.2 THEOLOGY AND CONTEXT

Boeve argues for a link between tradition, history, and context, where the three are intimately intertwined with each other. As history moves on and contexts change, theologians respond with new ways of expressing and understanding the faith. Thus, since the context has shifted once again, Boeve thinks that a new theological reflection is required for the current postmodern context. He argues that theological reflections are necessarily contextual constructions, which seek to express the truth received through faith and tradition in an understandable manner for people at the time the reflection is formulated. Theologians attempting to formulate a reflection on the faith suitable for their context follow Anselm's dictum of *fides quaerens intellectum*.[661] Theologians are helped by philosophical thought patterns as they (1) pursue an understanding of the faith and (2) seek to express their insights in plausible ways for their own particular, historical context. For Boeve there is an intrinsic link between language and historical context:

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[661] "Faith seeking understanding" results in a theological reflection, which Boeve elaborates as "the one who participates in reality as a believer wants to make his or her faith a source of insight in order to arrive at a Christian understanding of reality." See Lieven Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition: An Essay on Christian Faith in a Postmodern Context*, trans., Brian Doyle, Louvain Theological & Pastoral Monographs, vol. 30 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 24-25.

> The absolute Truth of faith cannot be put into words in a supra-contextual, absolute, timeless manner. To express the Truth, one needs words, concepts, sentences, interpretative models, discourses, and stories, which originate in and are indissolubly related to a particular context.[662]

In the story of the development of the Christian tradition one can see its embeddedness in history and context. By examining the development of that tradition, one perceives the series of historical reinterpretations of the faith which have occurred throughout history. After looking at that history, we will briefly consider Boeve's understanding of the current context, leading to his call for a recontextualization of the faith for our current context.

4.2.1 Contextual Plausibility

Contexts, of course, change over time as Church history clearly shows. As one particular context shifted into another, theologians began reflecting on their faith in new ways. New means of establishing the plausibility of the Christian faith were needed for each new era. Contextual shifts continued to occur as history progressed, resulting in a continual and open reinterpretation of the faith according to (the then) current thought patterns, which were borrowed from philosophers who worked to express their own contemporary critical consciousness. This process has continued for two millennia, and examples of these shifts and renewed interpretations are easily found. For example, the Church Fathers drew inspiration from (neo-)platonic thought patterns for their theological reflections. Scholars in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, were motivated by Aristotle's philosophy and by Arabic commentaries upon his texts. Similarly, theologians from the last century were influenced by the explosion of scientific discoveries and philosophical reflections, as scientists and philosophers sought to expand our knowledge of the world, society, individuals, history, and etc.[663] With each shift in context the critical consciousness changed, putting the previously constructed theological reflection under pressure. Since theological expressions and thought patterns only remain plausible within the particular context from which they emerge, new

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[662] Lieven Boeve, "Bearing Witness to the Differend: A Model for Theologizing in the Postmodern Context," *Louvain Studies* 20, (1995): 363.

[663] Lieven Boeve, "Critical Consciousness in the Postmodern Condition: A New Opportunity for Theology?," *Philosophy & Theology* 10, (1997): 449-450. This article was later republished as Lieven Boeve, "Critical Consciousness in the Postmodern Condition: New Opportunities for Theology?," *Roczniki Teologiczne*, no. 2 (2003): 81-82. Boeve also mentions as recontextualized theologies "the formulation of Jesus' simultaneous humanity and divinity at Chalcedon (451)" and Anselm of Canterbury's (cir. 1109) use of Germanic legal theory. See Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 22-23.

theological reflections were needed. Boeve notes that "plausibility is always essentially contextual," made up of what is (or was) currently plausible for a particular context.[664]

4.2.2 Tradition and Context

Since a theological reflection can only *effectively* refer to truth when expressed in words and sentences which function within a specific context, every theology is, therefore, necessarily related to a particular historical, philosophical, and cultural context. As a result, tradition, theology, and history are necessarily linked. Every theological reflection, which entered into, affected, and became part of the tradition[665] "is inseparably *embedded in a specific historical context* that has made an essential contribution to the form thereof."[666] Thus, as Boeve argues, there is a dynamic relation between tradition and context.[667] A theologian working to reflect upon and establish the plausibility of the faith in a particular theological reflection does so from within a commitment to that faith tradition. The theologian inherits the tradition, which is interwoven with a number of theological reflections, and s/he produces a new reflection upon the faith that is (hopefully) more plausible for the (then) current, particular context. This theological activity continues in dynamic processes of "repetition and interpretation, processes of handing down and selection."[668] Boeve describes this as a kind of reflective dance:

> In this regard, tradition and context are dynamically interrelated. Changes in context challenge the reading of tradition, while this reading sheds new light on the changed context. Newness, shifts in the context, urge recontextualization because of the pressure they exert on the contextual plausibility of the then elaborated theology. A

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[664] Boeve, "Critical Consciousness," 449. Boeve cites Diogenes Allen, who writes, "The attempt to relate human knowledge to the Christian revelation took on a different character when it was Aristotle and not Plato who was the prime representative of human capacity and achievement. So the boundaries between nature and grace, faith and reason, philosophy and theology were drawn and redrawn again and again." See Diogenes Allen, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 109. Boeve cites this in Boeve, "Bearing Witness," 365.

[665] Boeve argues that the tradition took form from *within* an "*authentic religious life* or spiritual dedication to the God of Jesus Christ." Doctrine is elaborated in order to protect a "broader ecclesial framework," starting from the beginning of the early Church. Tradition is identified both with the "content and process of the transmission of Christian truth" in Catholic theology. Thus, tradition is a truth that continually "unfolds" under the Holy Spirit's leading and reaches its goal in ecclesial life. This idea, of course, was opposed by the Reformation, which claimed that "sola scriptura" was authoritative as revelatory truth. In reaction to Luther's doctrine, the Council of Trent (1545-63) asserted that both oral tradition and Scripture are authoritative and sources of tradition. The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) took this dual-source theory a step further insisting that there is an embedded and dynamic character to truth as it is revealed from generation to generation in the Church's life and teaching. See Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 19-20.

[666] Ibid., 22.

[667] Boeve, "Critical Consciousness," 450.

[668] Ibid.

> successful recontextualization takes place when one succeeds in understanding faith anew in a contextually plausible way.[669]

Incorporation of the resulting recontextualized theology into the tradition produces a "different" tradition as opposed to "more" tradition. Through the influence of the current context, a radical change occurs from within the tradition. Here we see the importance of Boeve's contextual-theological analysis. Boeve writes, "Under the influence of the context, our way of looking at things, the very paradigm with which we experience and conceptualise faith and tradition is changed."[670] The importance of context and philosophical frames of thought is illustrated by a question Boeve poses. Since our context frames how we understand and experience reality, Boeve asks whether we, in fact, read the same doctrinal statements or the same Bible as believers did in the fourth or fifth centuries. To put the question more powerfully, do we even worship the *same* Jesus Christ or a *different one* than the Church Fathers? We read the same words and texts which Christians have read and continue to read; yet the tradition is read and interpreted from within a very specific, context-bound language by believers throughout the centuries, who search "for the ultimately incomprehensible core of the Christian faith."[671] Boeve, thus, suggests that a contraction of the tradition occurs "at some indeterminate point" allowing for a highly contextual, transitory, and incomplete expression of identity.[672] Once a believing community has contextualized tradition and context in a new fashion, that community continues to narrate the Christian narrative as being paradoxically both the *same* but also *different*. The Christian narrative is retold in a new articulation that endeavors to retell the same old narrative in a way that is in tune with the current context. At the same time, the older form of the tradition no longer speaks as forcefully as it once did to the community, as a result of the shifted context. Many elements from the older theological expression may be used in the new theological expression (*e.g.* symbols, narratives, terms, images, and etc.), while, at the same time, for some believers the older expressions of the tradition will continue to be meaningful in their lives. As Boeve succinctly writes, "Identity and rupture go hand in hand at this juncture."[673] Both continuity and discontinuity are evident in the newly reconstructed expression of the faith.

4.2.3 Changed Context

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[669] Ibid.
[670] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 23.
[671] Ibid., 33-34.
[672] Ibid.
[673] Ibid., 34.

Each change in the cultural context puts pressure upon both the tradition and theology; therefore, due to the enormous change in the recent Western context, the present Christian narrative may no longer be able to plausibly offer "orientation and integration" to individuals and society today.[674] The shattering of the all-embracing Christian horizon of meaning, as the basis for Western culture, means that no single narrative can unify knowledge or regulate the process of differentiation between the various areas of human endeavor within the life-world. This poses a problem for Christianity and its claim to be a living and life-giving narrative that can provide meaning and direction for people's lives – for people who must now construct their own personal identity in a pluralistic context.[675]

4.2.4 Identity and Plurality

The sheer number of possible life options and meaning-giving narratives has exploded in the Western context. As a result, people today live in a pluralized context, which makes them sensitive to the contingency of their own narratives. This awareness of other narratives has vast implications for particular histories and contexts. After all, things could have been different. People now face a pluralized world where the integrating narratives have lost their legitimacy. Previously, identity (both personal and group) was anchored in religious or social narratives; however, with the shattering of the life-world into many, diverse, irreducible, fundamental life-options, identity is now at risk. As people become attentive to plurality, they begin to realize that each personal life-story is an increasingly particular take on reality. Our personal narratives are exposed as limited, particular stories as they confront other narratives within a complex pluralized life-world. The awareness of other narratives and their own particular, irreducible claims also affects our understanding of the Christian tradition and its place within a pluralized context. Our Christian narrative is determined by the particular historical and contextual milieu in which it developed. This milieu gives us a particular perspective upon reality, in contrast with other perspectives (*e.g.* Hindu, Muslim, agnostic, or atheist).[676] As a result, contingency is involved in our identity, since it is influenced by the particular (Christian) narrative related to the context in which we live. We are made aware of

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[674] Lieven Boeve, "Thinking Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context: A Playground for Theological Renewal," in *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, ed. L. Boeve and L. Leijssen, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 17.

[675] An individual is free to choose whatever personal identity s/he might want from a market of options. The person's chosen identity profile is no longer automatically fixed by his or her social status, gender, or social group. Along with the possibility of choosing one's profile comes, as well, "an obligation to choose." One is expected to construct one's own identity. The end result of this is that "personal identity is no longer preconceived: it has become more and more *reflexive*." See Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 53. However, this very market problemizes the stability of whatever personal identity the individual might choose, for the market will always offer new and additional options to whatever choice is made. See ibid., 55.

[676] Ibid., 93.

the particularity of our own Christian narrative. Boeve writes, "Our narrative is not *the* narrative about humanity and the world in which we live: it is *our* narrative. It is always a specifically-situated narrative, bound to a community in space and time."[677]

4.3 METHODOLOGY

The shift from an all-encompassing Christian cultural horizon to a pluralized context did not happen overnight, but occurred gradually during modernity. In the past two centuries theologians found themselves defending Christian traditions and the Church's authority against the critics of modernity, who promoted science and emancipation against faith. These critics severely criticized Christianity as a superstitious wellspring of estrangement and oppression.

> From the nineteenth century onwards, the great ideologies of science and emancipation adopted an offensive strategy in their attack. The positivism of Auguste Comte, for example, considered religion as the first phrase, the infancy, of human growth towards the authentic knowledge of the sciences. Liberalism underlined the individual autonomy of the modern human person at the political and moral levels against the authority of Church and state. Socialism and communism viewed religion as a conservative power at work in the oppression of the worker, a power that helped to legitimate the unjustified status quo.[678]

Theologians responded to these critiques methodologically in one of two general directions. Either they tended to veer towards *adaptation* to the context or away in *rejection* thereof. We will first consider those who chose adaptation as a strategy for relating to the modern context, before considering those theologians who reject modern rationality.

4.3.1 Correlation Theology as Adaptation

A group of theologians in the twentieth century, specifically post-Conciliar theologians like Edward Schillebeeckx, David Tracy, and Hans Küng, among others, have used correlation as a method for answering questions concerning how theology relates to the modern context.[679] Their methodological starting point is the intuition that faith, tradition, and reflections on Christian faith are intimately connected with the context from which they

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[677] Ibid.
[678] Ibid., 44.
[679] Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, 30.

arise.[680] For centuries Western culture resided in a Christian cultural horizon. Since there was a close relationship between faith and culture, correlations could be drawn between the two as theologies continued to develop throughout the ages. However, during the modern era, the simple correlation between Christianity and context came into question, as the context started to separate itself from the Christian faith. As Boeve notes, "The question of correlation becomes a pertinent issue in the modern period ... when the context is progressively established and recognized as autonomous on account of secularization."[681] Theologians, like Paul Tillich, attempted to build a bridge between tradition and the modern, secular context. By translating the heart of Christian faith in terms of a modern rationality, they attempted to make "correlations" between faith and the modern context. Boeve calls this approach "a resolutely *modern* way of conceiving the relationship between tradition and context."[682]

During modernity, people sought to free themselves from the Christian religious horizon in a quest for rationality and self-autonomy. Initially, theology and the church rejected the resulting emerging secular context which emphasized human freedom, social liberation, and rationality. Those who adhered to the faith saw the *de facto* divorce between Western culture and the previously "all-encompassing religious horizon" as a threat. However, these shifts helped people see things about themselves which they might not otherwise have known. As Boeve writes, "They discovered themselves as subjects both capable of and responsible for their achievement of maturity as subjects."[683] Theologians began to see rationality, social liberation, and human freedom as *loci theologici* from which new reflections on the faith could be conceived for a modern context; thereby emphasizing God's salvific work through history for the sake of human beings. God was understood to be active wherever human subjectivity struggled for authenticity and wherever social injustices were being righted. As a result, "secular culture was no longer considered to be alienated from Christianity."[684] Correlation theologians attempted to connect modernity with faith – to associate the Christian message of salvation with the (then) current modern context. They also thought they had theological grounds for doing so, since God is believed to be present wherever rationality, freedom, and human dignity are being pursued.[685]

Boeve notes that correlation theologians presume a single dialogue partner for theology – namely, a modern secular culture. This partner is given a privileged position in regards to

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[680] Boeve identifies context as the "life, culture, society, [and] history" in which "faith, faith tradition, and reflection on faith" are embedded. See ibid., 31.

[681] Ibid., 32.

[682] Ibid.

[683] Ibid.

[684] Ibid., 33.

[685] As Boeve told me in a private conversation, correlation theology is a modified strategy to maintain contact with an increasingly separate and antagonistic secular culture. In modernity correlation strategies end in adaptation to modernity.

epistemology: i.e. the modern context establishes the standard for defining rationality. The rational is understood as being universal, transparent, and communicable.[686] If science has determined "the truth," Christian faith must simply acquiesce to secular claims. Secular claims of acquiring the truth about something are privileged over Christian claims. Only that which can be established by modern rationality (*e.g.* the scientific method) can be known as "truth." As a result, in the modern context, faith simply "adds to, or qualifies, what human beings know by secular reason alone."[687] Christian acts of faith, therefore, are accomplished by adding something to reason through an act of the will. As a result, Christian faith was relegated to the realm of ethics, since its claims cannot be established scientifically, and since they do not necessarily conform to modern definitions of rationality. Here, however, correlation theologians saw an opportunity for theology, since God chooses to express ultimate truth in the stories and practices – i.e. in the particularity – of Christian faith. Christian particularity, therefore, reveals and communicates "universal truth ... in its fullest realization."[688] Precisely in this correlation between the methods of modern rationality and correlation theology, though, one can see acceptance of the idea of a continuation between the modern, secular culture and Christian faith. The assumption is that there is no inconsistency in being both "an authentic Christian" and "a sincere modern human being." Lying behind this presupposition, of course, was the common cultural horizon that existed between Western culture and Christianity. But this cultural overlap crumbled in the 1980's as postmodern authors began to question the epistemological standards which guided modernity (i.e. transparency, communicability, and universality).[689] Today a far smaller percentage of the population in Western Europe today continues "to take their Christian identity for granted as something automatically given at birth."[690] The collapse of the shared (Christian) cultural horizon has dealt a death blow to correlation strategies. As Boeve notes, this theological method does not seem to work in the present context.[691]

4.3.2 Theology as Rejection

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[686] Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, 33.
[687] Ibid.
[688] Ibid.
[689] Ibid., 34.
[690] Ibid.
[691] "This form of theologizing no longer appears to function today. As a result of the processes of detraditionalization, correlation strategies and their implicit, modern presuppositions, tend to be the subject of serious question." See ibid.

A second group of theologians rejected modernity outright.[692] According to these theologians, the secular, modern context had nothing to offer to Christianity. Modernity, with its emphasis upon progress, science, emancipation, and rationality, was viewed as being completely hostile to the Christian tradition. Any accommodation to this culture "led unavoidably to injury and loss."[693] These theologians viewed the moderns' critique of Christianity as exhibiting the height of arrogance and pride, so they counterattacked as they rushed to defend the Christian tradition. In an attempt to defend Christianity, some theologians began to construct their own Christian master narrative to push back against the master narratives of modernity. The Christian tradition, as it had been received, was held to obstinately despite any criticism that came from modern scholarship or culture. Boeve writes,

> In the form in which it had been inherited, the Christian tradition related the true narrative about God, humanity and the world, and this was valid for everyone, past, present and future. This truth was unassailable, revealed and entrusted to humanity in the Bible and the tradition and not simply placed at humanity's disposal. The Church, and more specifically the Magisterium, was responsible for protecting the integrity of this salvific truth. The result was a sustained and inflexible dogmatisation of the historical form of the anti-modern Christian master narrative.[694]

A similar strategy is promoted by some of the recent post-modern theologians (*e.g.* those participating in the "Radical Orthodoxy" movement), who make a radical separation between Christianity and the current postmodern context. These theologians use postmodern philosophical critique in order to criticize modernity; however, they maintain this critique only to the point of rejecting modernity for its superficiality and loss of meaning. Once this criticism is leveled against modernity, postmodern philosophical reflection is abandoned for "a return to a neo-Augustinian conceptual framework."[695] Such a theological project gives up on the current context as lost and nihilistic, which can only be redeemed by "opening it up to a more original dependence on God."[696] The correlation project is completely rejected; there is no continuity between Christianity and the contemporary context. "Theological discourse is at odds with modern human discourse."[697]

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[692] Boeve mentions anti-modern theologians such as J. Ratzinger and the theological movement called "Radical Orthodoxy," which is led by John Milbank. Such theologians tend to stress a radical discontinuity between the current context and faith and look back to pre-modern conceptual patterns. See ibid., 31.

[693] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 46.

[694] Ibid., 47.

[695] Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, 36.

[696] Ibid., 37.

[697] Ibid.

4.3.3 Beyond Adaptation and Rejection

Boeve questions both of these approaches: i.e. modern correlation and anti-modern theologies. Correlation theologies, which attempted to establish commonalities between the Christian faith and secular culture, have suffered from the same loss of plausibility as befell modernity, due to a postmodern critique of modernity's universal presumptions and presuppositions regarding emancipation and rationality. As we saw above, theologians can no longer assume that their dialogue partner is a modern, secular culture. Rather, we find ourselves awash in a sea of plurality. Radical plurality and the lack of a common Christian cultural background mean that correlations between faith and context are no longer easily found, leading to the current impotence of (modern) correlation methodology.[698] At the same time, Boeve also sees problems with approaches put forward by anti-modern theologians. Anti-modern theologies radically reject both modern and postmodern contexts, and they disparage correlation theologies as contaminated by the modern context. Both contexts are dismissed, and an opposing (thus, competing) narrative is offered in their place. Thus, a disruption occurs between theology and context. Such a separation means that a thorough-going recontextualization of the Christian faith is no longer possible. Boeve shares some of the concerns voiced by anti-modern theologians about the problems correlation theologies have recently faced; however, he strongly rejects the idea that theology must break itself away from context. Boeve suggests that "modern correlation theology is *not* suffering from *too much* recontextualization but rather *too little*." And he rightly claims that "a consistent recontextualization of the correlation method leads to a more profound methodological reflection on 'recontextualization' as a theological method today."[699] In contrast with anti-modern theologies, Boeve begins with the "intrinsic link" between the current context and Christian faith.[700] Thus, he speaks of moving "from correlation to recontextualization," by radicalizing "modern correlation theory." Christianity is radically embedded in history and context, and Boeve thinks that theology needs to pay attention to this. Along with the idea of continuity, place must be made for "particularity, contextuality, narrativity, historicity, contingency, and otherness."[701]

4.4 PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

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[698] As we will see, Boeve calls theology to a *radicalization* of the correlation method. See 4.5 and 4.5.2.1 below.

[699] Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, 37.

[700] Boeve claims "an intrinsic link" between context and Christian tradition. He writes, "History and context make an essential contribution to the development of tradition and the way in which Christian faith is given shape in space and time." See ibid., 38.

[701] Ibid., 40.

The second track of Boeve's theological program is the philosophical-theological. Here Boeve engages in a deep and sustained dialogue with Lyotard, in order to gain a profound understanding of the current critical consciousness, as a means of moving towards a needed postmodern recontextualized theology. Lyotard offers theology an insightful critique both of oppressive modern master narratives as well as of the Christian narrative. Lyotard sensitizes theology to the fact that the modern master narratives have lost their mantle of credibility in the postmodern context. The particular is privileged over the universal, and, as a result, the postmodern critical consciousness is sensitive towards irreducible particularity and plurality, while being alert to overarching, oppressive narratives. Boeve notes that this shift in critical thought spurs theology on to reflect once again upon Christianity's truth claims.

4.4.1 Lost Plausibility

What Lyotard terms "incredulity toward master narratives,"[702] (i.e. the postmodern), Boeve identifies as the lost plausibility of these same stories.[703] Modern master narratives have lost credibility because they were unable to achieve their goals. Lyotard in fact provides us with counter examples to prove this point.[704] Boeve, echoing Lyotard, says that the promises themselves became impediments to human well-being.[705] Master narratives function either as stories of rationality and technology or of emancipation. The former narratives strive for "complete transparency and thereby at an unlimited mastery and use of reality"[706] The latter emancipatory narratives establish a utopia towards which history aspires. A critique of the (past and) present context is set up, against which the narrative struggles, in order to bring the hoped for utopia to fruition. Humans are thought to find their fulfillment in this utopia. Scientific positivism is an example of a master narrative striving for absolute clarity and technological mastery of reality; whereas, capitalism, liberalism and communism are examples of emancipatory narratives which promote various versions of utopia. When these stories fail the postmodern consciousness is stimulated. Each of these master narratives presumes to be able to explain reality in an absolute and universal manner and reduces complex reality to the simplicity of a single narrative's internal logic.[707] However, each of

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[702] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, xxiv.

[703] Boeve writes, "Our definition of 'postmodernity' focuses on the manifest loss of plausibility of the so-called modern master narratives (as well as the erosion of the reactionary antimodern narratives)." See Boeve, "Thinking Sacramental Presence," 14.

[704] See footnote 236 (above).

[705] Boeve, "Thinking Sacramental Presence," 14.

[706] Ibid. Boeve calls these "the modern master narratives of science and emancipation." See Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 48.

[707] Boeve also points out that premodern narratives have this same tendency to reduce all of reality to one story and its cognitive claim. See Boeve, "Thinking Sacramental Presence," 14-15.

these master narratives lost plausibility when they proved incapable of bringing forth what they promised.[708]

Rather than stressing the universal, postmodern critical consciousness is sensitive to irreducible particularity. Boeve says there is an increasing awareness of fundamental plurality in the postmodern condition.[709] The loss of an all-encompassing, universal story to integrate the life-world leads to a recognition of the plurality of human existence. No objective, universal pattern can claim to regulate the linking of all phrases in our world. As Boeve says, "There is no longer a universal perspective."[710] Thus, every discourse and narrative is unmasked as being both particular and contingent. So extensive is this radical plurality that Boeve can say, "Not even a narrative of plurality exceeds the limits of a specific context. There is no universal perspective, no fixed kernel, no irreducible substrate of truth to be expressed."[711] Modernity's attempt to regulate differentiation according to master narratives is abandoned. In the postmodern condition, particularity – in all its radical irreducibility – is pursued. However, this does not mean the end of the processes of modernization. Rather, it means the detachment of modernization from the regulation of master narratives as a means of controlling the processes of differentiation. Thus, one may also legitimately speak of the postmodern context as one of hyper-modernity or "radicalised modernity."[712] Pluralization "can no longer be kept together under one single perspective."[713]

4.4.2 Radical Heterogeneity

This shattering of any single, universal, or absolute perspective leads to the discovery that our narratives and discourses are fundamentally contingent and particular.[714] Included in this understanding of particular, contingent narratives are stories which found a nation or describe a people. They too are irreducibly particular, for a people's history is particular to that people, to their place, and to their time. Their story did not have to be what it is – it could have been different. Lyotard argues for the radically particular – not simply in events, phrase

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[708] An exception to this, Lyotard argues, is Capitalism. The feeling that something is happening (i.e. the sign of history) and the philosophies of history are surpassed by Capitalism which "does not constitute a universal history" but rather tries "to constitute a world market." See Lyotard, *The Differend*, 179 [D255].

[709] "The loss of plausibility in master narratives is coupled with a growing consciousness of: (1) the fundamental plurality of the postmodern condition, (2) the radical particularity and contextuality of one's own narrative, and (3) the irreducible heterogeneity which emerges in the midst of that plurality and which precipitates a specific contemporary critical consciousness." See Boeve, "Thinking Sacramental Presence," 15.

[710] Ibid.

[711] Ibid., 16.

[712] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 51.

[713] Ibid.

[714] Boeve, "Thinking Sacramental Presence," 16.

regimens, and discourse genres – , finding this also present in the *individual*. Several addressors occur within the same person, which can complicate or impede communication.[715] Rather than rejecting the other's language game, we can learn to play the other's game and approach it "as something new, something unknown, as an occurrence, an event."[716] Awareness of the other as radically particular or heterogeneous is the hallmark of postmodern critical consciousness. This consciousness manifests itself in sensitivity to alterity, i.e. to his/her/its irreducible alterity, as well as in the attempt to give witness to its radical particularity. Attempts to reduce the other to a common generality or to a mere example of a universal are criticized. Boeve describes the postmodern critical consciousness in this manner: "From the postmodern perspective it would appear that only those narratives which admit to the specificity and limitedness of their perspective and which witness to the impossibility of integrating the remainder are worthy of any claim to legitimacy."[717]

Of course, an encounter with the other will provoke conflict. In fact, conflict is unavoidable, since the other's narrative confronts our narrative with its claims, its otherness, and its witness to the event. This claim challenges our narrative and causes us to do an internal critique of our own story as well as calling us to bear witness to its eventness, to its alterity. Thus, we are made conscious of both "irreducible plurality and undeniable particularity."[718] The other's narrative resists and refuses to be reduced in its confrontation with our story, and we are made aware, in this encounter, of the limits of our own narrative. Our engagement with fundamental heterogeneity leads to an awareness, or sensitivity, to alterity, which can help us resist hegemonically incorporating the other into our own story. We can resist such a move by recognizing the other's undeniable, fundamental heterogeneity and by reminding ourselves of the narrative's natural tendency to lapse into hegemony.

4.4.3 Differend

This awareness of radical plurality comes from Lyotard's linguistic analysis: namely, that at the presentation of a phrase a multitude of heterogeneous phrases can link to the presented phrase. Thus, the dispute raging over linking with the presented phrase always leads to an injustice, because only *one* of these phrases will succeed in making the link. Since "no phrase can be seen as the definitive expression of the event," several things necessarily follow: (1) a radical plurality exists at the linking of every phrase, gesture, or event; (2) a fundamental heterogeneity comes to light in the act of linking of phrases; and (3) an injustice

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[715] Boeve, "The End of Conversation," 205-206. See also Lyotard, *The Confession of Augustine*.
[716] Boeve, "The End of Conversation," 206.
[717] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 91.
[718] Boeve, "Thinking Sacramental Presence," 16.

is always done to the event, since the phrase that follows can never fully express the event of the presented phrase.[719] As the outcome of his linguistic analysis, Lyotard argues for a philosophy that remains intentionally open to radical heterogeneity, i.e. as a discourse of the Idea of Heterogeneity. Boeve summarizes Lyotard's position nicely:

> It is the task of contemporary philosophy to bear witness to the *differend*, i.e. this untimeable and ungraspable moment that separates two phrases, which is forgotten with each new phrase. Philosophy attempts to remind us that while concatenating phrases in discourses we tend to forget, and that often even this forgetting is forgotten. The latter is definitely the case with grand or master narratives. These are hegemonic discourses which immediately transform *différends* into litigations by regulating every concatenation of phrases on the basis of its own logic. Philosophy is therefore first of all the critique of master narratives.[720]

Lyotard's differential thought is an attempt to remember this forgetting. Philosophy receives the task of bearing witness to the differend, as an attempt to resist the narrative's propensity to situate the event within its own finality and the totalizing whole this produces, as the narrative advances. "Or, as Lyotard states tersely, you cannot step out of it [i.e. the narrative]; questions about extra-narrative legitimation are of no significance."[721] As a result, the shock of the event's occurrence is confined, and its abrupt, jarring character is tamed. The narrative totalizes everything and draws whatever happens within the boundaries of its encompassing whole. Narratives are powerful. Boeve cites Lyotard on this point:

> [The story] encompasses the multiplicity of families of phrases and possible genres of discourse; it envelops every name, it is always actualizable and always has been; both diachronic and parachronic, it secures mastery over time and therefore over life and death. Narrative is authority itself. It authorizes an infrangible we, outside of which there is only they.[722]

This enclosing and forgetting of whatever occurs leads directly and inevitably to the oppressive, totalitarian master narrative. Boeve identifies such master narratives as "discourses of an Idea." He notes that master narratives are "degenerated discourses of the

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[719] See Lieven Boeve, "Naming God in Open Narratives: Theology between Deconstruction and Hermeneutics," in *Paul Ricoeur: Poetics and Religion*, ed. J. Verheyden, T.L. Hettema, and P. Vandecasteele (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 89.

[720] Boeve, "The End of Conversation," 198.

[721] Boeve, "Can God Escape?," 272.

[722] See Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained*, 33. As cited in Boeve, "Can God Escape?," 273. (Note: Boeve's footnote is incorrect here. The actual page referenced in the English translation of Lyotard's book should be p. 33.)

Idea, where the Idea as Idea, that is to say as an unpresentable general concept, is not respected."[723] Boeve does not argue against the genre itself – i.e. discourses of an Idea – but of its desire for regulatory dominance.[724]

4.4.4 The Christian Master Narrative

As with other master narratives, the regulative pretensions of the Christian master narrative are clear; however, this discourse attempts to control the linking of all phrases, gestures, and events by the rule of *love*. As Lyotard points out, the Christian master narrative is the discourse of the Idea of Love, but, as Boeve notes, this is a *degenerated* discourse of an idea. In fact, Boeve argues that the discourse of the Idea as a genre of discourse belongs within the multiplicity of discourse genres. It is not the genre itself that is in question but its perversion.[725] The Christian master narrative, as a degenerated discourse of the Idea of Love, is totalitarian, hegemonic, and oppressive. This master narrative does not respect the idea of love as "an unpresentable general concept";[726] rather, the Christian master narrative instantiates love upon every instance within the phrase universe and universalizes each of these instances. In this way, the Christian master narrative forgets the otherness of the other, which is immediately re-narrated within the Christian story.

Boeve mentions Lyotard's point that the Christian master narrative achieved dominance over every other narrative in ancient Rome by immediately embracing the event, by linking automatically to whatever happens, and by viewing each event as a gracious gift from God.[727] Such an approach strips the event of its jolting, disruptive alterity. This force is then immediately recouped within the Christian narrative. Thus, the Christian master narrative fulfills the end of the narrative discourse genre in an unparalleled way: which is, namely, to re-narrative the event.[728] Christianity is able to regulate the linking of every phrase by the Idea of Love. As a result, Christianity became the master narrative *par excellence*, which surpassed all other narratives in Rome.[729]

Boeve notes that the Christian master narrative fulfills all four characteristics of a master narrative. The first two characteristics apply to all narratives: specifically, (1) that the master narrative makes a *cognitive claim* to be able to describe reality accurately, and (2) that

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[723] Boeve, "Can God Escape?," 274.

[724] Ibid.

[725] Ibid.

[726] Ibid.

[727] As discussed in ibid., 275. See also Lyotard, *The Differend*, 159 [D232].

[728] This is the point that Lyotard makes, saying that the Christian narrative "designated what is at stake in the [narrative] genre itself." See Lyotard, *The Differend*, 159 [D232]. On this point see also Boeve, "Can God Escape?," 275.

[729] Lyotard, *The Differend*, 159 [232].

it exhibits a *totalizing power* through the semi-automatic linking of phrases according to its rule, which allows the narrative to incorporate (and dominate) all other discourse genres within the borders of its own story. Christianity makes a claim that reality is all about a loving God who created people to be in a love relationship with Godself. Therefore, history will find its completion in Love, and all historical events contributing to this end are attributed to the power of Love. As Boeve writes, "Love is what reality is about, and it offers us a reading key to approach and evaluate whatever 'happens'."[730] As has been noted above, the Christian master narrative is highly effective at regulating the linking of phrases, since its rule is to love the event – whatever he/she/it may be. Whatever happens is immediately grasped onto as a gift and re-narrated under the regulatory rule of Love. The event itself is not denied, but it is retold within the Christian narrative. A meaning is assigned to the event, and it is placed within the orb of the narrative's encompassing whole. "All other discourse genres are subordinated to this: history, prayer, ethics, the ritual, the cognitive, the argumentative, etc. They always appear in the framework of the hegemonic discourse of the Idea of Love, which forms the permanent background of all speech."[731] So the radical plurality of incommensurable phrase regimens and discourse genres is forgotten, and irreducible heterogeneity is managed by an idea: namely, the rule of Love.

Two other characteristics, which are emblematic of modern master narratives, also function within the Christian master narrative. These are (3) a *legitimation coming from both the beginning and the end* and (4) the *universalization of the instances* within a phrase universe. Modern master narratives are legitimated by leading history towards an end, *e.g.* Communism attempts to realize within history the workers' paradise. But Christianity is unique in that it legitimizes itself both from an end and a beginning. The Christian narrative is authorized by a *primordial story*, of a God of Love who is not loved by the people God creates, and by an *eschatological end*, i.e. the coming Kingdom of God and reign of Love.[732] Lyotard finds the first "traces of modernity" in the writings of Paul of Tarsus and Augustine who write about the eschatological culmination of human history in the return of Christ and the City of God. This gives a direction to history, towards an end goal, and establishes the idea of a flow of history towards its completion. Such a concept, relieved of the idea of

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[730] Boeve, "Can God Escape?," 276.

[731] Ibid.

[732] In *The Differend* Lyotard describes Christianity as being legitimated by a finality. It is a story which moves "toward the redemption of creatures." See Lyotard, *The Differend*, 160 [D235]. He also writes that Christianity is a story of "the salvation of creatures through the conversion of souls to the Christian narrative of martyred love." See Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained*, 18. But the Christian story, at the same time, is legitimated by a narrative of the origin, for he can speak of Christianity as "the Christian narrative of the redemption of original sin through love." See ibid., 25.

redemption, is later necessary for the modern project.[733] The concept of regaining a lost perfect paradise in an eschatological future becomes the "prototype of the modern expectation of the reconciliation of the subject with itself at the end of history."[734] Modern narratives which jettisoned this redemptive Christian tradition are authorized solely by their end, which evolved from love into republican brotherhood or communist solidarity.[735]

Love functions everywhere within the Christian master narrative. Each of the instances in the phrase universe (addressor, addressee, referent, and sense) are seized by the Idea of Love in the Christian master narrative and displaced by the concept of love. The Idea of Love circulates relentlessly among the instances. Boeve summarizes the message of the Christian master narrative in this manner: "God, who is Love, as addressor tells us (addressees) the story about Love (referent): 'because I, who am love, have loved you, you must love (me)'."[736] The Christian master narrative undoes the particularity of each instance by placing its Idea over them. God is the absolute Lover, the addressees are all people who are already loved by their creator, the referent spoken of is love, and the meaning given is love. Love rules supreme and is found everywhere dispersed in every phrase universe. Thus, the otherness of whatever happens cannot be respected, and its radical particularity is already forgotten, since it is a gift to be received, embraced, and implanted within the narrative of Love. As a result, small narratives cease to function as local identity producing stories. Rather, they are "inscribed within the master narrative and start to function with reference to the Idea of Love."[737]

Therefore, the implications of the Christian master narrative are massive. There is no escape from its all-encompassing horizon, nor can its legitimacy be called into question, since no story can challenge its claims from the outside. Those outside of its story are sinners and heretics who have no right to speak. The linking of all phrases is regulated by the rule of love, and in this way the Christian master narrative attempts to exert control over all aspects of life (*e.g.* social, political, ideological, ethical, and etc.). Local stories are deprived of the right to legitimate culture or to provide an identity for individuals. Rather, these small stories are immediately inscribed within the Christian master narrative and made instances and examples

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[733] Eschatological thought posits a subject who experiences a lack in him or herself. This lack will only later be satisfied. For Paul and Augustine this reconciliation will occur "at the end of time with the remission of evil, the destruction of death, and the return to the Father's house, that is, to the full signifier." Thus, Christian eschatological anticipation transforms Greek reason from deliberative debate within the *polis* into the ethics of virtue and pardon. This leads eventually to modernity where the subject is promised a future reconciliation with him or herself (i.e. the overcoming of his or her internal separation) through the particular end promoted by a grand narrative. See Lyotard, *Postmodern Fables*, 96-98.
[734] Boeve, "Can God Escape?," 275.
[735] Lyotard, *The Differend*, 160-161 [D235].
[736] Boeve, "Can God Escape?," 276.
[737] Ibid.

of Christianity's march towards a redeemed "humanity." Simply said, the Christian master narrative is hegemonic to the extreme: the master narrative *par excellence*.

Boeve believes that theology needs a third-way between a too facile correlating of the Christian faith with the current context (*e.g.* modern correlation theologies) and an outright rejection of that present context (*e.g.* anti-modern theologies). In contrast with the assumption made by modern correlation theologians of continuity between faith and context, Boeve argues that theology needs to begin its work from a position of difference.[738] Any postmodern theological reflection on the Christian tradition needs to take heterogeneity, difference, and plurality into account. Such a strategy more accurately reflects the current cultural context, which can be analyzed as one of individualization and pluralization within a detraditionalized Western culture.[739] However, Boeve does not argue for abandoning the correlation method of theologizing; rather, he asserts that it should be radicalized; i.e., room should be made for "particularity, contextuality, narrativity, historicity, contingency, and otherness." In order to fashion an expression of the Christian faith that may be plausible for the current context, theologians should begin with a "determination to take the radical historicity and contextuality of the Christian faith and of theology seriously."[740] At the same time, theologians should receive the Christian tradition as tradition, i.e. as an expression of the witness of believers during the past two millennia, as an inheritance. A recontextualized faith is not built simply to provide a plausible account for the current context; the faith is also recontextualized as a way of searching for the truth today. But, in order to do this, "one has to inherit [the tradition] in order to pass on one's inheritance."[741]

4.5.1 A Tendency Towards Ontotheology

On the way to developing a recontextualized understanding of the Christian faith, theologians need to be cognizant of the totalizing tendencies of narratives. In fact, theologians have not always been sensitive towards the contingent particularity of our Christian narrative. The usual procedure followed is to posit universal truth claims and ignore the particular context and history from which they emerge.[742] However, Boeve argues that theology needs

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[738] Boeve works this out under the category of "interruption." See 4.6.2 below.
[739] See Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 51-62.
[740] Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, 40.
[741] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 64.
[742] Boeve, "The End of Conversation," 207.

to fight this impulse: a force which he says seems to possess theology.[743] Various theologies forget the event, i.e. that "something" happens.

> Discourses pretending to have the rule to regulate exclusively the linking of phrases are forgetting, and even denying, that there is an event, that 'something' happens. They are qualifying the event in such a way that it suits their pursued goal. A discourse that is not only coping with the differend but is also handling the plurality of genres of discourse, we call a story. The modern master-story is one kind of story, an example of a closed story. Concerning the linking of phrases and discourses, the master-story considers itself a supreme instance and decision-maker.[744]

In what follows, we will briefly consider how this tendency makes itself known in modern and pre-modern theologies, as well as in sacramentology, before moving on to theology's need to recontextualize itself once again.

4.5.1.1 Modern Theologies

Boeve sees tendencies in modern theologies which propel them towards becoming closed, hegemonic discourses. This inclination can be identified when one considers the four characteristics of the modern master narrative. For example, modern theologians inspired by neo-Marxism legitimate their theologies by the goal of history: the realization of complete and total Love in the subjecting of everything to God, i.e. "God all in all" (1 Cor 15,28).[745] Secondly, all particular instances are universalized and lose their significance under the Idea of Love, being reduced simply to examples of the Idea of Love. Thirdly, historical events are likewise appraised under the Idea of Love, since the cognitive claim is asserted that reality is all about Love. This permits theologians to judge events based upon their relation to the end of history: i.e. the realization of Love. Boeve mentions specifically the work of Johann Baptist Metz and his "eschatological reservation." Metz considers sin in light of the anticipated fulfillment of history; namely, that it "is a condition of too little love."[746] Fourthly, the Idea of Love governs the linking of phrases in modern theologies. The Idea of Love immediately inscribes the event into its narrative, i.e. "the story of the Idea of Love," "as manifestation of Love, opening the ultimate horizon of Love and urging a[n] answering praxis of Love."[747] In this regard, Boeve mentions Schillebeeckx's theology with its "positive and

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[743] Ibid., 208.
[744] Boeve, "Bearing Witness," 371.
[745] Ibid., 372.
[746] Ibid.
[747] Ibid.

negative contrast-experience," where a horizon of wholeness opens "in an experience of extreme suffering or joy."[748] Gifts of Love are available to those who remain inside the story. As Boeve says, "the one who is outside the discourse or leaves the discourse, is a sinner and does not partake in the gifts of Love."[749]

4.5.1.2 Pre-Modern Theologies

The problem of Christian theology collapsing into closed narratives is not limited to modern theologies; it can also be seen in pre-modern theologies, as well. Here Boeve identifies Joseph Ratzinger's theology as being a neo-conservative theology, which can be described as a discourse of the Idea of Truth. This discourse legitimates itself not from a historical finality but from a "protology" founded in "the framework of Trinity and Logos-christology."[750] Secondly, the universal pretensions of the discourse of the Idea of Truth are evident in its equating of Truth with a specific story of Christ and the church. Thirdly, the cognitive claim of this discourse is that the complete Truth has been given in revelation, which allows the theologian to rightly divide between what is false from what is true. "History then is the history of fall and reconciliation. In the resurrection of Jesus Christ the original living in Truth before the fall has been restored."[751] Fourthly, the discourse of the Idea of Truth assumes that the event and its linking to any phrase take part in the Truth. This discourse, being legitimated by a specific narrative as the Truth and by the origin, places a blueprint of deductively linking phrases together. Thus, this discourse is "an exclusivistic and hegemonic discourse,"[752] similar to modern theologies which also forget the interrupting heterogeneity of the event and expropriate its power for their own ends.

4.5.1.3 Sacramentology and Ontotheology

A similar strategy of founding theological reflection upon the beginning is evident in sacramentology. Boeve notes that there is an implicit conception lying at the core of sacramento-theology: namely, "a neo-Platonic cosmology, or onto(theo)logy. The conceptual framework upon which it functions is the *analogia entis* (analogy of being); specifically, that the quality of a creature's being determines its order in a continuum that runs from God and returns to God.[753] This theological explanation remained the basic paradigm for explaining the

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[748] Ibid., 372-373.
[749] Ibid., 373.
[750] Ibid.
[751] Ibid.
[752] Ibid., 373.
[753] Boeve, "Thinking Sacramental Presence," 6.

relation of God to God's creation throughout the medieval ages. While the neo-Platonic system was adjusted by the scholastics,[754] it remained the foundation for theological epistemology among the scholastics. Aquinas argued that the "simple perfections," – such as goodness, justice, wisdom, and mercy – pre-exist the creation of the world in God's being. God is, therefore, the source and cause of all perfections. There is, thus, an analogy between what people experience or manifest and their simple perfections built upon a neo-Platonic foundation in which "the being of that which is caused depends first on the being of the cause, or source."[755] Such a framework establishes "a background 'logic of the same'; ultimately theology is necessarily a homology. In this perspective, theological truth is supported by ontology."[756] As a result, within an onto(theo)logical reflection, human gestures of empathy, love, judgment, and etc. are stripped of their particularity and inscribed within the discourse of Divine Being.

4.5.1.4 Theology's Ontotheological Impetus

Whether pre-modern or modern, theology too easily structures its discourse as a closed narrative. In this way, theology demonstrates its ontotheological impetus. Regarding both modern and pre-modern theologies, Boeve writes, "Both are recognized as closed stories, not only subordinating the other discourses to realize their own goal, but also functionalizing the event as a supportive moment of the story itself."[757] The event is received as something already known, "which functions in the narrative."[758] Thus, according to Lyotard, in the Christian master narrative the event is already loved as a gift which serves within the circular, closed, all-encompassing story of Love. In Boeve's terms, the differend is identified and encapsulated "from the beginning."[759] The event as shattering moment of disrupting alterity is denied. It's already recognized and appropriated as something else. It never happened.

The theologian's task, therefore, is to protect the Christian truth claim. This should be done in a way that remains mindful of the contextuality and radical particularity of the Christian truth claim, while, at the same time, avoiding a relativization of that same claim.[760] Lyotard warns theology that it too easily encloses the differend within theological reflections, making the event both function as an instance within a particular story and work for whatever is at stake in that discourse, whether it be love, truth, similitude or some other concept. To

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[754] Boeve notes that the neo-Platonic scheme was modified in view of a theology of creation by emphasizing *creation ex nihilo*. See ibid.
[755] Boeve, "Thinking Sacramental Presence," 7.
[756] Ibid.
[757] Boeve, "Bearing Witness," 373.
[758] Boeve, "The End of Conversation," 208.
[759] Ibid.
[760] Ibid.

gain plausibility within the current postmodern context such practices must be avoided. Heterogeneity, plurality, and difference need to be respected. Boeve argues that theology must find a way to leave behind ontological foundations which were developed during the pre-modern and modern eras, along with modes used to authorize modern philosophies of history.[761]

4.5.2 Theology Must Recontextualize

The change in context from a modern to a postmodern world necessitates a recontextualized postmodern theology. This should not be done in order to present a new, trendy theology.[762] Rather, theology should take postmodern sensitivities to plurality and otherness into account in order to present a reflection on the Christian faith that may be plausible for this current context. Narratives which forget the event – and forget this very act of forgetting – should be avoided, since such closed narratives are deemed to lack credibility. Thus, ontotheological patterns of reflection which forget particularity, reduce otherness, and order all creatures in an analogous conceptual framework based on perceptions of the divine being should be abandoned.[763] Anti-modern theologies, which view the modern context as contamination, divorce themselves from the current context and propose alternative radical narratives. For anti-modern theologians, there is discontinuity between faith and context – i.e., the relationship between the two is ruptured. As a result, "far reaching recontextualization would thus also appear to be out of the question."[764] The end result, of course, is another closed master narrative that attempts to integrate the pluralistic life-world in a pre-modern conceptual framework. Thus, the view of discontinuity between faith and context is a theological dead end, if one wishes to produce a contextually plausible account for the postmodern context.

4.5.2.1 Radicalizing Correlation Theology

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[761] Boeve, "Thinking Sacramental Presence," 23.

[762] Boeve, "Method," 37.

[763] In a critique of Saskia Wendel's work, Boeve notes a problem with her theological hermeneutics in regards to the question of recontextualization: namely, that her conceptual framework is too metaphysical. According to Boeve, Wendel fetters "the God of the Christian tradition to concepts, like those that were developed in the recontextualisation of the Christian narrative at the time of the philosophical dominance of metaphysics." Wendel contends that to think God other than as unity, identity, and origin does damage to God's "essence." For Boeve it is clear that Wendel continues to think within thought patterns borrowed from philosophy, which were used to recontextualize the Christian faith in God during an era when the frameworks of thought were fixed by classical metaphysics. Boeve writes, "This certainly raises serious questions from a methodological perspective in terms of recontextualisation." See ibid., 38.

[764] Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, 37.

Boeve suggests that a more profound theological reflection can be had through a "consistent recontextualization of the correlation method" itself.[765] Correlation theologies, which assume a dialogue partner with the secularized world, should not be abandoned; rather, they should be *radicalized*. Correlation theologies no longer seem to function well, because they don't take the current radically pluralized context into consideration. However, as Boeve rightfully points out, "History and context make an essential contribution to the development of tradition and the way in which Christian faith is given shape in space and time."[766] So he recommends that theology continue its conversation with the context, in contrast to approaches that discontinue the dialogue. Contrary to modern correlation theologies, however, Boeve does not presume that continuity exists between the Christian faith and the contemporary context. He argues that theology needs to rethink the relation of tradition with context, since this offers theology a way through the current quandary.[767]

4.6 RECONTEXTUALIZATION

The concept of recontextualization is "a contemporary systematic-theological approach which intrinsically relates theological truth to context and history."[768] For Boeve recontextualization becomes a reading key which can be used to describe the history of the establishment of theological truth from the viewpoint of theology.[769] It also functions simultaneously as "the normative framework from which any contemporary and future establishing of such truth is perceived."[770] This concept provides a structure for attempts to construct a theological expression of faith that can be "theologically true today and tomorrow."[771] As a concept, therefore, recontextualization functions on the two levels previously mentioned: contextual-theological and philosophical-theological. It radicalizes intuitions found in modern theology, [772] particularly those of Edward Schillebeeckx and Hans

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[765] Ibid.

[766] Ibid., 38.

[767] Ibid. As answer to this dilemma Boeve will propose the category of "interruption." See 4.6.2 below.

[768] See Lieven Boeve, "Systematic Theology, Truth and History: Recontextualisation," in *Orthodoxy, Process and Product*, ed. M. Lamberigts, L. Boeve, and T. Merrigan (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 27.

[769] As a descriptive category the concept of recontextualization assists theology "by analysing the ways in which tradition has been challenged by contextual change and novelty." It thus points out historical reactions ranging from the "stubborn condemnation and suppression" of novelty, as a ploy to preserve the tradition from corruption, to "the uncritical embracing of and adaptation to cultural newness at the risk of watering down the tradition's specificity." See ibid., 36.

[770] Ibid., 27. "As a *normative* category, recontextualisation calls for a theological programme wherein the insight into the intrinsic link between faith and context inspires theologians to take the contextual challenges seriously in order to come to a contemporary theological discourse which at the same time can claim theological validity and contextual plausibility. This involves a critical constructive engagement of the new context..." See ibid., 36-37.

[771] Ibid., 27.

[772] Recontextualization as a theological method has as its goal the radicalization of "modern correlation theory" through recontextualizing that very theory. Therefore, "the radical historicity and contextuality

Küng.[773] This radicalization throws light upon the particularity of Christian truth claims and points one towards reconsidering the interplay between history, narrativity, and theological truth.[774]

4.6.1 A Reading Key

As stated above, the first function of recontextualization is to provide theology with a reading key for understanding how theological truth develops through time. Recontextualization begins with "the firm presumption that history is co-constitutive for theological truth."[775] Boeve's model, therefore, views the development of tradition from a particular viewpoint – i.e. from the theological epistemological – and seeks to understand how we arrive at particular conceptions of theological truth. Other methods – such as the cumulative and a-historical – attempt to work out the association between tradition, its development, and theological truth. Boeve's approach differs from these methods in that he

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of the Christian faith and of theology" is taken seriously, resulting in an acknowledgement of the "particularity, contextuality, narrativity, historicity, contingency, and otherness" of the Christian faith. See Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, 40.

[773] From Schillebeeckx theology receives the concept of successive relationships which emerge between a particular horizon of meaning and the faith-understanding that develops therein. Christianity, therefore, does not consist of an unchangeable core passed from generation to generation. Rather, the relationship between faith-understanding and the current horizon of meaning needs to be renewed whenever the context shifts in history. The development of tradition is viewed as a continuous process occurring through history where experience and context are in conversation with each other. As new experiences are encountered pressure is placed on older interpretations of the Christian faith, which emerged out of earlier contexts, towards a further development of the tradition. In this development, Boeve writes, "ruptures do not threaten the continuity of tradition, but may be urged precisely to guarantee this continuity [of development]" (p. 30). With each change of context the dialectical relationship between tradition and context must be renewed once again.

Küng, on the other hand, stresses paradigms as ways of seeing, interpreting, and understanding the world. Borrowing from the notion of paradigm shifts in the sciences, and applying this idea to theology, Küng called for a new "postmodern ecumenical theological paradigm" in the late 1980's and beginning of the 1990's. A paradigm is comprised of all the accepted means of viewing, perceiving, and understanding the world. Scientists look at reality through the techniques, assumptions, knowledge, and principles held in common by the scientific community. A paradigm shift occurs in the sciences when a new and revolutionary way of understanding the world proves to be more effective in the scientific quest to understand reality. Old beliefs and practices are abandoned for the new paradigm. Küng argues that something similar happens in theology. Boeve writes,

> When crisis situations occur, they are first of all dealt with from within the existing paradigm, often revealing its limits and contradictions, challenging and questioning it. Shifts in the context may therefore cause crises in the existing paradigm, leading to an eventual change of paradigms. Such paradigm change then is not an organic shift from one paradigm to another; rather it implies a revolution, drastically pushing changes in vocabulary, thing patterns, etc. One does not just change paradigms but really 'converts' from one paradigm to another. (p. 32)

Once one has shifted into the new paradigm it is nearly impossible to imagine oneself thinking according to the older paradigm. See Boeve, "Systematic Theology," 29-32.

[774] Ibid., 27.

[775] Ibid., 28.

postulates the co-constitutive character of history, assuming the necessary establishment of truth and an understanding thereof precisely *in time*. In this regard Boeve writes,

> Whereas a-historical models of tradition development accentuate the timelessness of truth and the asymmetry between the orders of the eternal and the temporal, the model of recontextualisation starts from the intrinsic bond between both, without, however, reducing the one to the other.[776]

So long as truth is seen as incommensurable with time, history can only play an external and extrinsic role in disclosing theological truth. Such is the case among cumulative models of tradition development, where troubling events or disruptive concepts cannot really touch the core of the truth expressed.[777] Ideas and events may provoke a further development of the tradition, but the truth itself remains intact. History's role, therefore, is relegated to "a mere occasion for further elucidation and explication of what is in principle, be it only implicitly, known from the very beginning."[778]

Advances in epistemology and philosophical hermeneutics in the later half of the twentieth century stimulated a changing view of tradition development, resulting in models which postulate the intrinsic connection between history and truth, in lieu of cumulative models. Boeve writes that this shift in conceptual models "has far reaching consequences, not only for one's perspective on the history of Christianity and Christian theology, but also for the way theology perceives of its tasks today."[779] Theologians begin to appreciate theological truth as the product of a "process" that involves contextuality and historicity as "a distinctive feature of this truth itself."[780] They noted

> (a) that Christian sources and theologians have attempted from the very beginning to understand and express the Christian faith in relation to the context in which this faith was lived and practised, (b) that interpreting these attempts can only legitimately succeed when one takes this past context (and one's own context) into account, and (c) that the current task for theology consists precisely of relating ('correlating') anew Christian faith and the contemporary context – the latter often on the basis of diagnosing the gap between the inherited tradition and the contextual newness which challenges this tradition.

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[776] Ibid.

[777] For such models of tradition development "the truth is already available and has only to be unearthed and unravelled, or to be specified and applied to new circumstances and questions." See ibid.

[778] Ibid.

[779] Ibid. Boeve notes the increasing import of the current context in theologian's methodology as well as for contemporary understandings of faith. See ibid., 29.

[780] Ibid., 28-29.

As Boeve points out, theological truth is "realised in history" and expressed in human thought and language.[781] A fundamental change has occurred in the past few decades; modern theologians began to realize that our understanding of faith and comprehension of what truth transmits to us is directly influenced by shifts in language and thought through history and time. "History is not only the framework in which truth is expressed, but is, from an epistemological viewpoint, co-constitutive of this truth," says Boeve.[782]

4.6.1.1 Descriptive Category

Recontextualization, therefore, as a concept helps theology to examine the effects that change and surprising innovations in the context have had on the Christian tradition. In this manner, the concept functions as a *descriptive* category.[783] When contextual novelty occurs reactions vary from "stubborn condemnation and suppression" to "uncritical embracing of and adaptation to cultural newness."[784] Stubborn refusal of cultural novelty is an attempt to maintain the tradition precisely as it was received, while uncritical adaptation threatens to dilute the tradition's specificity. The former attempts to preserve the tradition as untainted by the current context, while the latter runs the risk of watering down the tradition precisely by attempting to make it contextually relevant. Boeve notes that "stubborn condemnation" of theological newness is itself a recontextualization, since the received tradition is viewed as having a purity which must be protected against culture – where culture is perceived as being adversarial to Christian truth. Of course the received tradition is already the product of a recontextualized faith, which was previously reconstituted for a prior (and now lost) context. Suppression of the new understanding of theological truth is a reaction against the changed relationship between tradition and context. This backlash signals, in fact, a recontextualization of the tradition: albeit, in this case, a retrenchment *against* the current context.[785]

4.6.1.2 Normative Framework

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[781] Ibid., 29.
[782] Ibid. Boeve also writes, "To be sure, faith cannot be reduced to history and context, nor can the development of tradition be described as a mere adaptation to both of them. Nevertheless, there is an intrinsic bond between faith and tradition, on the one hand, and history and context, on the other. Hence, contextual novelty puts pressure on historically conditioned expression of faith and their theological understanding, and drives towards a recontextualisation." See ibid., 35-36.
[783] Ibid., 36.
[784] Ibid.
[785] "Because the context has changed, so also the relation of a seemingly unaltered tradition to this context has changed." See ibid.

A second function of Boeve's concept of recontextualization is to provide a normative framework for grasping what is happening in any formation of theological truth.[786] As a *normative* category recontextualization challenges theology to produce an understanding of the Christian faith that is plausible for the current context as well as theologically valid in its own right.[787] Boeve calls for a theological program that takes change in the context seriously, because of the essential link between context and faith. Throughout the history of theology, theologians have used philosophical resources in order to plausibly express the faith in their context. Today theologians use philosophical, scientific, psychological, sociological, and etc. resources in order to pursue an understanding of the faith. They work to give a new expression to theological truth, which "is never absolutely grasped or completely understood."[788] Such recontextualized articulations of the faith are often greeted with resistance. Boeve writes, "As new models put aside the older and existing ones, this has often caused – as the history of theology amply shows – discussion, conflict, and even condemnation."[789] However, theologians who want to speak plausibly to the current postmodern context will engage contextual newness. By receiving the faith passed on to them, theologians find their identity within the tradition; however, by rethinking the tradition, they make a break with prior expressions of the faith. As Boeve rightly contends, "Identity and rupture, here, go hand-in-hand."[790] This process is not only theologically valid; it is theologically necessary. For theology "only exists as contextual theology, and the development of tradition as the ongoing process of recontextualisation."[791]

4.6.2 Interruption

As we have seen, the modern correlation method stalled and no longer functions properly. Those who criticize this method see the answer to the current conundrum in rejecting the postmodern context and reinstituting a neo-Augustinian model of rationality.[792] Boeve, however, argues for a third way, which preserves both continuity and discontinuity, between Christian experience and context. He believes that theology should hold on to correlation theology's basic intuition – i.e. the intrinsic relationship between faith and context –, while acknowledging the particularity of Christian experience in both modern and postmodern contexts. However, this intuition should be *radicalized*; difference between Christian faith and a pluralized context should be recognized and engaged as co-constitutive

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[786] Ibid., 27.
[787] Ibid., 36-37.
[788] Ibid., 39.
[789] Ibid.
[790] Ibid.
[791] Ibid.
[792] Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, 83.

of a new understanding of the Christian faith. Therefore, Boeve argues for the concept of "interruption." To put it simply, Boeve calls theology to open itself to that which interrupts its own narrativity. The Christian narrative is interrupted *contextually* by contextual novelty and newness. The tradition is interrupted *theologically* by the postmodern sensitivity to radical particularity and alterity.

For Boeve, this concept of interruption functions on two levels. On the level of the contextual-theological, interruption holds simultaneously to continuity and discontinuity within religious experience, while acknowledging that something has changed. On the level of the philosophical-theological, the concept enables theology to interact with postmodern differential thinking, as a way of thinking the event as the event of grace in contextually plausible terms. In the discussion that follows, we will first consider the category of interruption from a contextual-theological perspective before looking at the philosophical-theological. Thereafter, we will see how Boeve uses Lyotard's thought as a resource for recontextualizing an understanding of Christian faith for the postmodern context. This will naturally lead into a consideration of Boeve's model of the open narrative.

4.6.2.1 Contextual Interruptions

Boeve argues that religious experience should be thought of according to the idea of "interruption." Here there is no need to think the relation between Christian experience and context as being completely ruptured.[793] Nor does one think of theology as being in dialogue with one partner (i.e. a modern, secular context). Rather, theology allows itself to be interrupted by a plural context. Christian experience then continues in the received tradition but as interrupted and thus changed.

A twofold interruption occurs on the contextual level in regards to a theological concept of experience. According to Boeve, the first interruption occurs on the level of experience in faith and context. He believes that theology is no longer well served by a category such as "religious experience," since to the extent that it refers to a general experience it cannot do justice to the specificity of Christian experience. People living today in a pluralized society have many life-options. Living as a Christian has become an intentional choice. Christian experience is an extremely specific way of navigating through life, involving one's immersion in a tradition and living in a faith community. As Boeve writes,

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[793] This, of course, is the argument made by anti-correlation theologians such as John Milbank. These theologians "no longer conceive of Christian faith and faith experience as in continuity with context and contemporary thinking, but rather as in a ruptured relationship." See ibid., 76. Here the relationship between Christian faith and context is viewed as being extrinsic. See ibid., 81.

> Religious experience as faith experience, the actual living out of the Christian narrative through becoming experienced in this faith, refers from a theological-epistemological perspective to the density of the concrete, contextually situated faith life, in which narrative, interpretation, *savoir-faire*, perception, praxis, signification, and reflection are interlocked.[794]

To the extent that theologians use "religious experience" as a category, they also participate in the modern, scientific presuppositions which undergird such a concept. Any notion of a continuation between general human and Christian experience will share in the modern presuppositions of truth and rationality. Thus, Christian faith experience indicates an interruption "to the prevailing modern theological concept of experience, regarding its presumption of continuity between faith and context."[795]

But this is not to say that confrontation or conversation with the context is unnecessary. Boeve does not think that it is helpful when anti-correlationist theologians appropriate the postmodern critique in order to do away with the current context. Their claim that correlation theologians can do no better than begin constructing hegemonic narratives, along with making unsubstantial universal claims, when they engage with the context, precludes a way of engaging with the current context. Since the postmodern context is viewed as cynical, nihilistic, and superficial, anti-correlationists renounce the current context and seek to introduce another (faith) rationality in its place. As Boeve comments, "It is here that dialogue with the context stops for these critics."[796] But Christians today not only live in a postmodern context, they are people who live within a new contextual postmodern paradigm. Christian faith experience, therefore, includes a "greater awareness of the specific narrativity and reflexivity, historicity and contingency, which define one's footing in the faith, the tradition and the faith community."[797] Boeve sees here the restless, ongoing work of recontextualization.[798] Those theologians who reject the postmodern context show that they cannot fruitfully engage with the challenges which the current context makes to faith (namely, alterity and difference). Boeve writes, "This implies *a second interruption* to a theological concept of experience, namely, regarding its claim that the breach between tradition and context would become manifested precisely in religious experience."[799] People who choose to live within the Christian tradition today do so precisely within the current postmodern

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[794] Ibid., 83.

[795] Ibid.

[796] Ibid.

[797] Ibid., 84.

[798] "In this sense, recontextualization – as the descriptive indicator for the way in which faith and tradition relate to the context – is always already at work." See ibid.

[799] Ibid.

context: implying both continuation in the received tradition, as well as discontinuation with the former (modern) context.

4.6.2.2 Theological Interruptions

Boeve also sees interruption working "theologically" in a twofold manner with reference to Christian experience of the divine. Contra to the critics mentioned above, Boeve believes that theology is able to rethink the category of "religious experience" in a new way precisely through its confrontation with the postmodern context. Specifically, dialogue with the current critical consciousness allows Christian theology to recognize anew the particularity of its experience of God in a pluralized context. As a result, the Christian narrative is seen as irreducibly particular in its narrativity and praxis. Boeve works "within the framework of a radical-hermeneutical theology, which takes its primary point of departure from the irreducible and particular narrative character of Christian faith, deeply qualified by radical historicity and contingency."[800] For God reveals Godself to people within the particularity of history. In fact, Boeve argues that divine revelation must be grasped in and through the contingencies of history. God reveals Godself "in the all-too-particular ... and this revelation cannot be dissociated from the said particularity in any way."[801] Adherence to the "radical-hermeneutical tension" of God revealing Godself in and through the all-too-particulars of contingent history will greatly affect one's theological reflections on Christian religious experience.[802] The realization that one participates in *Christian* religious experience points to the first theological interruption of religious experience. This awareness of the particularity of Christian experience, in a world of many possible faith options, already indicates the influence of the current critical consciousness. Christians know that they have chosen to engage themselves in "a historically mediated relationship with the God of Jesus Christ."[803] This marks them off from those who participate in other forms of religious experience and specifies the irreducible particularity of experiencing God in and through the Christian faith.[804]

A second "theological" interruption occurs as well within the Christian tradition through the Christian faith experience. The current critical consciousness can inform theology about the dangers of escaping into one's own identity, since this often leads to totalitarian violence and oppression. For this reason, Boeve says that "a hermeneutics of contingency

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[800] Ibid.

[801] Ibid., 85 (footnote 50).

[802] Ibid., 84.

[803] Ibid., 85.

[804] Boeve writes, "This experience differentiates Christians from non-Christians, including those who believe in a god, a higher power, something deeper, etc. (the god of the statisticians is not always the "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob"), or even the other monotheistic religions." See ibid.

must go hand-in-hand with a hermeneutics of suspicion."[805] We are taught to suspect any retreat into our own identity, for this too easily leads to eliminating otherness, to utilizing or functionalizing difference into our own story. Postmodern philosophical thought suggests an answer to this problem by arguing that identity is broken open through an encounter with the other in his/her/its irreducible alterity. Boeve argues that such thought patterns can fuel a new theological reflection on identity. "The Christian experience of transcendence does not simply establish identity, it also problematizes it from within."[806] Problematization comes within Christian experience since there is an otherness that escapes the Christian narrative which is nevertheless spoken of by that narrative. One can only speak of this transcendent otherness as a Christian from within the Christian narrative tradition; however, this very otherness transcends our every attempt at encapsulating it within our narratives. Any attempt to make a claim on universality or transcendence quickly takes one down the path towards developing a totalitarian narrative; this is something that theology should avoid.[807] An encounter with the current critical consciousness also helps theology perform a critique on narratives themselves, to see if they have already closed or are in the process of closing.

Insights gained from an encounter with the current contextual critical consciousness can be translated into theological language in order to help theology rethink faith experience. As a result, faith experience may be understood as an encounter with God "in concrete, historically mediated ways." Boeve performs the translation himself:

> As the Other of the Christian narrative, God withdraws from it, even though it is only in and through this narrative that God is revealed, i.e., comes to speak. The God who ultimately has everything to do with this narrative cannot be grasped by it; instead as the Other of the narrative, God questions the narrative from within, interrupts it, forces it to collide with its borders. Only when faith experience reckons with this interrupting aspect of a God who refuses to be reduced to the Christian narrative (even though God cannot be conceived of without it), can the development of tradition be reflected upon theologically today. It is for this reason that encounters with others, reading texts, reflecting on events, confrontation with joy and sorrow, wonderment and horror, etc. can serve as moments of interruption in which Christian identity formation is paradoxically questioned from within, because for Christians it is precisely in these opportunities that God is announced as the One who interrupts.[808]

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[805] Ibid.
[806] Ibid., 85-86.
[807] Ibid., 86.
[808] Ibid.

Tradition is formed historically through encounter with the context through either confrontation or dialogue with the same; however, Boeve argues that the difference between tradition and context must be respected.[809] The two participate in a mutual encounter, but a presumed continuity should be resisted in the current context.

Boeve conceives of Christian experiences of transcendence as events of "interruption." Faith experiences are therefore concrete, historical encounters with a God who cannot otherwise be revealed to us, since God "is not an object of immediate experience."[810] But, at the same time, God should not be identified with the narratives and histories without which we could not come to know God. However, narratives, are prone to close in upon themselves, as we have seen; therefore, God breaks open our narratives and "frustrates from within every attempt to capture God in word and narrative."[811] To live by faith in the Christian community is to place oneself within the *continuity* of the tradition. But one's faith experience will also question and threaten that continuity, since the Christian experience of faith is one of being interrupted – both from within the tradition, as well as from without. This is due to "the radical-hermeneutical structure of the Christian discourse about God."[812] Boeve sums up this radical relationship in this way: "Christian faith experience is both the experience of the interruption by tradition and context and interrupts tradition and context."[813]

Christian faith experience, therefore, is "theologically" interrupted by the encounter with God and the other. Boeve calls this a "theology of interruption," where Christian experience opens itself up to the God who reveals Godself in the interruptions of ordinary life. Here God comes intimately close to believers through an encounter with the poor or the oppressed. To discern God's interruptive approach, however, calls for openness to what God may be doing in the particulars of life today. Boeve says that hermeneutical care must be given to such concrete experiences, for God reveals Godself thereby. "God halts our Christian narratives and throws them open to what is proclaimed therein as the Kingdom of God, which is both realized and promised in Jesus Christ."[814] Thus, Christians must also become interrupters who interrupt totalizing structures on behalf of the poor, for as Boeve writes, "the faith experience of interruption causes interruption."[815]

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[809] Ibid.

[810] Ibid., 87.

[811] Ibid.

[812] Ibid.

[813] Ibid.

[814] Ibid., 88.

[815] Ibid. Experiences of encounter with the other can be a "productive interruption of one's own Christian narrative by the narrative of the other. Such experiences challenge Christians to reshape and reprofile their faith in a God who is revealed in history and is concerned with history." See ibid., 91.

4.6.3 Lyotard as Philosophical Resource

Boeve suggests that Lyotard offers theology a way forward towards constructing plausible theological reflections for a postmodern context. For theology comes in contact with "a plausible form of current critical consciousness with which theology can confront itself to its own benefit" in an encounter with Lyotard's differential thought.[816] More specifically, theology receives "a language for speaking about reality (in this case language)."[817] For Lyotard helps theology come to terms with the current critical consciousness: namely, that no sentence can express its own being-event, and that any sentence which tries to express the event of the presented phrase must ultimately fail in the attempt. The differend will always be translated into a litigation. The inexpressible phrase, once expressed, loses something. Its eventness is always compromised.

4.6.3.1 Language for Recontextualization

This has direct implications for theology, since theological terms used to refer to God (such as Creator, Logos, Father, and Trinity) may be taken too literally. We easily forget that these terms were originally developed as metaphors to allow believers to speak about the God they worshipped. When we forget that they are metaphors (i.e. names used to try to express the otherness of God) they stop working as ways of expressing the inexpressible. As Boeve writes, "These terms actually cease to function when they really become literal."[818] Such metaphors were originally used to express something about God in a plausible way for people living in a context where classical metaphysics "determined the frameworks of thought."[819] Changes in the current conceptual context not only affect theological terms they influence Catholic sacramentology, as well. For it is no longer plausible in a postmodern context to think the actual "now" as a participation in an eternal continuum between God and creation (and back) as in a pre-modern era that reflected within a neo-Platonic philosophical framework. Nor is the "now" perceived to be constantly erased by the progression of time towards a future, as was commonly held during modernity. Rather, time is currently conceived of as the interruptive "now," in our contemporary postmodern context. As a result, Boeve suggests that sacramental time be understood as "the interruptive, apocalyptic 'now-moment' ('kairos')," as "the event which opens up the particular and contingent, placing it in the perspective of the transcendent God, but without nullifying or cancelling its particularity

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[816] Boeve, "Method," 38.
[817] Ibid.
[818] Ibid., 39.
[819] Ibid., 38.

and contingency."[820] Thus, grace is the event that opens up the Christian narrative, undoing its hegemonic tendencies, and both witnesses to and celebrates that openness. Boeve calls this both "the event of grace" and "the grace of the event."[821] Boeve offers such a theological reflection on the sacraments in a way that may be more plausible for postmodern people, which is inspired by language Lyotard makes available for a discussion of reality in the current conceptual context. Such language flows from Lyotard's philosophical attempt to bear witness to radical heterogeneity.

4.6.3.2 Lyotard's Open (Philosophical) Discourse

Lyotard develops a discourse that tries to do justice to the differend that erupts at the presentation of every phrase. He wants to give expression to the inexpressible, i.e. to the event. Lyotard's philosophical discourse attempts to link together phrases without a pre-determined rule for governing the linking of phrases. The only "rule" Lyotard proposes is to read and re-read again searching for a way to express the indeterminable, i.e. to bear witness to the event. However, Lyotard remains aware of the fact that every witnessing to the differend – in the very act of giving it expression – closes off that very dispute. The witness thus prevents any other phrase from giving an alternate expression to the event. Forgetting the differend necessarily follows.[822] In contrast especially with the narrative genre of discourse, Lyotard's differential thought wants to remember this forgetting that occurs in its bearing witness to the event. It is, in fact, this awareness of the inexpressibility of the event that Lyotard views as postmodern consciousness.[823] Boeve expresses the problem of expressing the event as follows:

> Bearing witness to the differend means linking in such a way that the inexpressibility
> of the inexpressible is referred to. The experience of the differend, therefore, is the
> sensing of the impossible phrase: the sensing of the impossibility of the phrase,
> which would succeed in expressing the inexpressible – the phrase that would succeed
> in articulating the event.[824]

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[820] Ibid., 39.

[821] Ibid.

[822] "In the first sense the word 'differend' is pointing at the condition of plurality and the necessary but at the same time unconditioned linking, the choices that have to be made. The second sense bears witness to an idea of heterogeneity that accompanies all linking, all decision-making, all choosing. In this sense, plurality is not primary but a sign, a reference, even a consequence of the fundamental heterogeneity. In other words, the unspeakable accompanies and provokes each and every uttered word, yet can never be identified with it. There is plurality because no phrase can be seen as the definitive expression of the event, the unspeakable, and the heterogeneity. It will always fail to do so, and even cause injustice to the event by closing it off." See Boeve, "Bearing Witness," 370.

[823] Ibid.

[824] Boeve, "Can God Escape?," 268.

However, as Boeve writes, no other phrase ever "succeeds in signifying the relative nothingness, the indeterminacy, the rule-lessness, or the *heterogeneity* that separates the first phrase from the second."[825] Separating the two phrases is a "radical otherness," which cannot be expressed in the second (linking) phrase. Any attempt to present that difference does an injustice, since the phrase that follows can never put into words that which asks to be expressed. Boeve describes this "bearing witness to the differend" as follows:

> The inexpressible (inconceivable, non-presentable) accompanies speech (conceiving, presenting), even invites us to speak, but is never to be identified with the resulting articulated word or phrase. There is plurality because no one phrase can exhaustively bring into discussion the inexpressible that asks to be put into phrases."[826]

It's this very impossibility and the necessary forgetting that occurs with the linking of every phrase that Lyotard wants us to remember – even as he knows that we always forget. So scrutinizing how the differed is addressed is one of philosophy's primary responsibilities.[827] A discourse forgets the differend when it pretends to have the rule that can exclusively settle the linking of phrases. This forgetting is, in fact, a denial of the event. Rather than acknowledging that "something" happens, such discourses use the event as a means of furthering the discourse's own goal. As has been discussed above, the narrative is a discourse that does even more; it copes with the differend, while simultaneously managing the plurality of discourse genres.[828] Hegemonic narratives, making cognitive claims, with universal pretentions, legitimated by a presumed goal of history, are closed modern master narratives. They are the antithesis of Lyotard's open philosophical discourse, which strives to remain open to the radical heterogeneity of the event, while attempting to find expression for the inexpressible phrase (i.e. the phrase that can articulate the event.), all the while knowing that no phrase will successfully articulate the event. Thus philosophy's task is to critique any attempt to incorporate the event into a hegemonic narrative, while resisting the temptation to turn its

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[825] Ibid., 267.

[826] Ibid., 267-268.

[827] Boeve notes that in a situation where there is no metalanguage or "all-encompassing discourse-type" the expectation opened up by the presentation of a phrase cannot be sufficiently filled in by any phrase. "No single sentence succeeds in totally adequately expressing the multiplicity of possible linking sentences, or better still, the moment of indeterminacy, of heterogeneity. Here we see the postmodern disavowal of the modern ideal of self-grounding thought worked out in a theory of language: according to Lyotard, no single sentence is capable of pronouncing at the same time its own being-event. The feeling of 'it happens' cannot be contained in words, in a sentence. Nor can it be mastered hegemonically. What Lyotard evokes as the 'sensibility for the impossible sentence', can itself not be stated, but only referred to." See Boeve, "Thinking Sacramental Presence," 19.

[828] Boeve, "Bearing Witness," 371.

own philosophical discourse into a meta-language.[829] Lyotard's differential thinking tries to remain open to the radical otherness of the differend, without too quickly closing its radical occurrence off, by linking to it and thus giving it one specific expression (of a plurality of possible expressions); for to link to the presented phrase is to determine the differend.[830]

4.6.3.3 Jewish Thought

Lyotard recognizes that his differential thinking is not the only discourse that attempts to remain open to the differend. He finds another form of differential thinking in the Judaic tradition. In fact, Lyotard is fascinated by Jewish thought and its determination to study and read in order to understand. He writes that the Jews, while reading the scriptures, embrace it as "an obscure message addressed by an unknowable or even unnameable agency." Lyotard says that in "a verse of the Torah, one must listen to the phenomenon, decipher and interpret it, of course, but with humour, without forgetting that this interpretation will itself be interpreted as a message no less enigmatic … than the initial event."[831] This stance of contemplative openness is summarized by Boeve as a disposition "not to ask for an answer, but to ask in order to remain questioned."[832] According to Lyotard, Jews believe that the Voice – that voiced promises to the patriarchs – is now written. No one knows how Yahweh will keep his promises, so the Jew must continue reading, re-reading, and interpreting these written letters. It is precisely this sort of "listening" that is required of the Jews.[833] But one must listen without forgetting, for the Law commands them not to forget.[834] Such a discourse (i.e. Jewish thought) witnesses to the differend as being radically un(re)presentable – to a state where no one particular phrase can adequately articulate that event. Thus, "an irreducible

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[829] "Philosophy, therefore, can only pursue this task when it realises that it is not a meta-language (D228): in other words, it is a discourse genre that has as its rule the constant search for its own rule – its own presuppositions – with every investigation of other phrases, phrase regimens, and discourse genres (D98). The philosophical discourse ought to link phrases to each other such that it demonstrates that this linkage is not determined, but that the rule for the linkage still must be found (D180…)." Boeve, "Can God Escape?," 268.

[830] To think and to delay rushing to a conclusion is to remain open to the event. Lyotard writes, "To think is to question everything, including thought, and question, and the process. To question requires that something happen that reason has not yet known. In thinking, one accepts the occurrence for what it is: 'not yet' determined. One does not prejudge it, and there is no security. Peregrination in the desert." See Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, 74.

[831] Ibid.

[832] Boeve, "Can God Escape?," 269.

[833] Lyotard argues that Abraham was justified not on the basis of his works but on the fact that he believed what the voice of God promised. God's pardon is granted on the basis of Abraham's complete submission to the divine commandment and promise. Lyotard writes, "What did he [Abraham] hear in the Voice? Not *what* it said, something he could not understand, but *the fact that* it wanted something of him." See Lyotard and Gruber, *The Hyphen*, 17.

[834] Boeve, "Can God Escape?," 269 (footnote 3).

plurality of phrases and discourses" is involved in the linking of any phrase.[835] Lyotard points to Jewish thought as a discourse without a governing rule for the linking of phrases, which remains open to the event, as an example of how philosophy should bear witness to the differend.[836]

As we have seen, Lyotard identifies two discourses which attempt to remain open to radical difference and otherness: Lyotard's differential thought and Jewish thought. We have, therefore, two specific genres of discourses which intentionally try to remain open to radical heterogeneity: namely, philosophical and theological. Lyotard's analyses of these distinct discourse genres lead us to a question. Are there other discourse genres which intentionally attempt to bear witness to the event? Are there, thus, other "open" discourses? As we will shortly see, Boeve suggests that there are.

4.7 TOWARDS AN OPEN NARRATIVE: BOEVE'S CRITIQUE OF LYOTARD

Boeve says that theology can certainly learn from Lyotard's differential thought. Theology gains the understanding that, as a particular discourse, the Christian narrative can too quickly link to the event as a gift of grace and thereby functionalize what happens within its own narrativity. As a result, the event is received from beforehand as something already known. Lyotard's philosophical discourse strives to link to the differend without forgetting that every linking does, in fact, close off the expectation created by the presentation of a phrase. Boeve says that theologians can be challenged by Lyotard's philosophy not to functionalize the event. Theologians necessarily use language and link phrases in their reflections on the Christian faith. In so doing, the differend cannot avoid being translated into a litigation and forgotten. However, Boeve says, "We should learn to do this in a way which does not forget this forgetting."[837] Through an encounter with Lyotard's philosophy, theology gains access to a current critical consciousness with which it can dialogue for its own benefit: specifically in its task of recontextualizing the Christian faith as a way of renewing Christians' understanding of their faith (*ad intra*) and of producing a plausible explanation of the faith to the world (*ad extra*).

As Boeve argues, Lyotard's concept of philosophy is a specific discourse that attempts to remain open to otherness and difference. It is a philosophical discourse that tries to link to the presented phrase without forgetting the differend. Such a philosophy rightly criticizes other discourses when they encapsulate and functionalize the event. According to Lyotard, philosophy's task is to search for a way to link to the presented phrase in a way that

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[835] Ibid., 269.
[836] Ibid.
[837] Boeve, "The End of Conversation," 208.

references the "original openness of the differend," while remaining cognizant of the fact that to link to the presented phrase is to close off the moment of expectation inaugurated by the event. Boeve identifies Lyotard's concept as "a particular instantiation of a discourse attempting, in its linking of phrases, not to forget that an event happens – an event which can never be expressed in its event-character by the phrases which follow."[838] And Boeve points out that Lyotard must use language in his bearing witness to the differend. Thus, Lyotard cannot avoid doing an injustice to the event, even with his differential thinking.[839] Bearing witness inevitably means linking to the presented phrase – and thus determining the indeterminable. Rorty also points out that Lyotard's witnessing to the differend is of a radically particular type. It's a philosophical discourse that uses a precise vocabulary, functions within a specific time context (both diachronic and synchronic), and employs certain phrases and procedures for linking phrases.[840] Lyotard's concept of philosophy results in a witness that is essentially a particular recontextualization, since a fixed, stable narrative is broken open as it is compelled to bear witness to the otherness of the event.[841]

Lyotard's philosophical discourse is one that continually searches for a rule that would allow for a link to the presented phrase that can adequately express its event. Thus, it is a discourse that attempts to function without a governing rule.[842] Boeve writes that Lyotard's discourse is "the attempt to raise the consciousness that one should not forget, that in all speech and identity constitution, difference and heterogeneity all too often are forgotten."[843] Boeve notes that this differential discourse is contextually and historically situated, and he analyzes it as being a particular case of an "open narrative." An open narrative intentionally remains open to the event and bears witness to it through language and phrases – which are integral to its witness – even though they cannot fully respect that event. And as was mentioned above, Lyotard seems to think that there are a number of discourses that can function in an open manner.[844]

Boeve believes that theology can benefit from a conversation with Lyotard's thought as a source for "contextually plausible models, patterns and strategies for thought, and a

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[838] Boeve, "Naming God," 92.

[839] Boeve writes, "Philosophy, being a discourse itself, in the end also situates the event. For the indeterminable can only be referred to in a determined way. Language in one way or another never succeeds in fully respecting the event." See ibid.

[840] Boeve, "Critical Consciousness," 462.

[841] Ibid.

[842] "Philosophical discourse has as its rule to discover its rule: its *a priori* is what it has at stake. It is a matter of formulating this rule, which can only be done at the end, if there is an end." See Lyotard, *The Differend*, 60 [D98].

[843] Boeve, "Naming God," 91. The narrative discourse's goal is to constitute identity. Boeve also writes, the "narrative is the genre par excellence through which meaning and identity are constituted." See ibid., 89, 94.

[844] 4.6.3.2-4.6.3.3 above. See also ibid., 92.

vocabulary for recontextualization."[845] In such an engagement, Boeve says, the maxim *philosophia ancilla theologiae* functions by providing a contextually plausible means of engaging the current context for a theology which embraces the adage *fides quaerens intellectum*.[846] Through Lyotard's philosophy of phrases, theology gains perspectives for thinking about "reality" in language.[847] Lyotard presents his own take on thinking about transcendence and immanence, where the question of what "language" is comes to the fore. For Lyotard, something is revealed as being transcendent to both the phrases that happen and to the genres of discourse which regulate the linking of phrases. This transcendence appears in the midst of a conflict between discourse genres as they compete over the rule to govern the linking of a phrase with the presented phrase. In this moment of expectation and indeterminacy the event calls for a phrase, gesture, or silence that can bear witness to its radical difference. This transcendence, which appears in the happening of the presented phrase, is other to the phrase that eventually links, as is evidenced by latter's betrayal of the former phrase. Persons who are sensitized to radical heterogeneity, as occurs at the presentation of every phrase, who maintain an open attitude towards irreducible alterity, will want to cultivate an open discourse. However, the event always remains transcendent to either the phrase presented or to the phrase which follows. As Boeve says, "The event is never a phrase among phrases, or to be traced back to a phrase."[848] In his dialogue with Lyotard, Boeve gains another way of thinking the Christian narrative, in contrast to structures which develop master narratives. The result of Boeve's theological model is a discourse functioning in the arena of the historico-political as opposed to Lyotard's philosophical narrative. Both discourses could then be called "open narratives." Theology would thus benefit from the possibility of dialoguing with another (open) discourse, with which it could confront itself internally, as well as be questioned externally by another discourse.[849]

We have shown that Lyotard favors discourse genres which strive to remain open to difference and otherness (*e.g.* his philosophical discourse, Jewish thought, etc.). Thus, Lyotard argues for "little narratives" in contrast to grand hegemonic narratives with their cognitive pretensions and universal goals.[850] However, as Boeve points out, Lyotard does not

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[845] Boeve, "Thinking Sacramental Presence," 5.

[846] Ibid.

[847] Boeve argues, for instance, that Johann Baptist Metz could benefit from encountering Lyotard as a dialogue partner, as a way of clarifying some of Metz's intuitions. Something Boeve is certain Metz would refuse to do. See ibid., 13 (footnote 31).

[848] Boeve, "Method," 36.

[849] Ibid., 36-37.

[850] Lyotard writes, "Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. Its principle is not the expert's homology, but the inventor's paralogy." See Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, xxv. Boeve mentions that paralogy is one discursive strategy for opening up closed discourses by transcending the rules governing such discourses and enabling one to bear witness to the event. See Boeve, "Bearing Witness," 371-372.

provide the reader with many ideas on how to promote the "narrative dimension" of narratives which attempt to bear witness to the different.[851] So Boeve suggests that theology will have to look to other sources for inspiration on thinking the narrative side of the open-narrative.[852]

4.8 THE OPEN NARRATIVE

Boeve describes open narratives as "postmodern" stories which permit themselves to be influenced by postmodern critical consciousness. He offers the model of the open narrative as a means of testing if a narrative has the ability to integrate with the current critical consciousness. This model is largely based upon insights reaped from Lyotard's philosophical discourse, and it takes heterogeneity seriously. Insights from Rorty's work are also incorporated in this model: namely, the particularity and embedding of each narrative in a specific context.[853] The model of the open narrative gives theology a set of characteristics and standards for judging how well a narrative fits within the contemporary critical consciousness. Boeve stresses that this model is simply a conceptual pattern. "There is no such thing as *the* open narrative as such," he writes.[854]

4.8.1 Open Narratives

The model of the open narrative offers a way to conceptualize a story that remembers, celebrates, and experiences openness. Not only does the open narrative remember difference it also opens narratives which have become self-enclosed.[855] An open narrative eschews the pretense of being an all-inclusive discourse – able to rule over the linking of all phrases and dominate all genres of discourse. As a discourse, an open narrative attempts to bear witness to the differend by remembering the plurality of phrases and discourses and by refusing to submit or reduce them to a single finality or goal. Boeve says that an open narrative is able to "refer to the Idea of heterogeneity or indeterminance appearing in the event of the linking."[856] As a result, an open narrative "stand[s] *open for the event and accept*[s] *the claim which this makes on the narrative*."[857] Witness is made to the event; however, this witness is always made with the awareness that it is necessarily a "radically particular" expression offered in a

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[851] Boeve mentions, for example, the lack of an explanation concerning the dynamic relationship between openness and narrativity. See Boeve, "Naming God," 94.
[852] For example, Boeve mentions the work of Paul Ricoeur as a possible resource for reflecting upon the model of the open narrative. See ibid., 94-100.
[853] Boeve, "Critical Consciousness," 464.
[854] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 92.
[855] Boeve, "Method," 39.
[856] Boeve, "Bearing Witness," 372.
[857] Boeve, "Critical Consciousness," 462.

specific contextual manner. Such a witness can never express the being-event; it can only bring the event's inexpressibility into the discussion by means of reference.[858] In contrast to closed master narratives, open narratives "refuse to put forward claims to absoluteness and universality and are always prepared to recontextualize."[859]

4.8.1.1 Awareness of Plurality

People are confronted by many narratives today, and this realization leads to the intuition of the "incontestable plurality" of stories. In such a varied narrative landscape, no single story can claim absolute status over the other narratives. This understanding challenges the Cartesian project of the objective onlooker. As Boeve writes, "There are no observers any more, only participants."[860]

Such a realization has a direct consequence: the realization that our narrative is particular. Not only is it *our* narrative, but it is a "specifically-situated narrative," meaning that it is tied to a particular place and time. Therefore, we are seen to be situated participants positioned "on the field of fundamental life-options,"[861] placed within a particular community. It is hubris to take our particular narrative and make of it a universal story. As Boeve says, "Our narrative is not *the* narrative about humanity and the world in which we live: it is *our* narrative."[862] We cannot help but continue telling stories, for these narratives give us a sense of identity and purpose. But our narrative is a "small" narrative. It is "a historically and contextually determined and determinative perspective on reality."[863] Since our narratives are rooted in a specific place, time, context, and culture, they are in some way contingent. We could have grown up in another time and another place. Boeve writes, "It could all have been different."[864]

Acknowledgement of the contingency of our narratives renews our determination to hold onto our own narratives. We are shaped by our own stories. They define us and give us our identities. These stories give us our views of life and reality. As Boeve says, we cannot "simply bracket [them] out of our lives."[865] Rather, we must take them seriously since they ground our way of looking at reality. Our view of life may shift with time, but it remains *our* perspective, and, as such, it needs to be respected for its own sake.

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[858] Ibid.
[859] Ibid.
[860] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 93.
[861] Ibid.
[862] Ibid.
[863] Ibid.
[864] Ibid.
[865] Ibid., 94.

4.8.1.2 Sensitivity Towards the Irreducible Other

Insight into the particularity of our own narratives can sensitize us to the irreducible claims others make through their own narratives. An open narrative reflects this awareness of the plural field of fundamental life-options available within the current postmodern life-world. Because of the multitude of particular narratives in a plural context, confrontation with other narratives and their specific claims is unavoidable. Boeve describes this plural field as a sphere where many stories, all with their own particular claims, are "caught up in a dynamic game of challenge, interrogation, confrontation, threat and conflict."[866] Such a situation presupposes "conflict and irreconcilability." Our narrative's borders suddenly become manifest when another narrative challenges the claim it makes. These "border experiences" can challenge us to engage the other in a mutual dialogue of respect and openness, with one who refuses to be reduced to a moment within our story. Such encounters can help us to internally critique or further develop our own stories. We can learn and change our perspective on things, or we can see the other as a threat and try to contain or neutralize them. Those who intentionally try to structure their stories as open narratives will resist the temptation to master the other, i.e. to functionalize those who are irreducibly other by enclosing them within hegemonic narratives. Boeve says that "narratives are challenged time and again to relate to plurality."[867] An open narrative reflects a basic attitude of openness that is sensible to the other whose witness calls for openness to its radical particularity. As Boeve says, confrontation with otherness challenges theology to a critique of "self and world."[868]

4.8.1.3 The Structure of the Open Narrative

Boeve says that the open narrative has a three-part structure. These individual parts should be seen as intertwining each other, making it difficult to distinguish between the particular elements. This, he says, illustrates the openness implied in the open narrative.

The first characteristic of an open narrative is "an *open sensitivity to otherness*." Boeve describes this as an open vulnerability to that which happens at the border of our own narrative. It is an attitude that looks for whatever interrupts our narrative at its border, with a trusting deference to that which is unexpected and strange. He says this disposition needs to be cultivated – a willingness to remain attentive to what is happening in border experiences. We should pay attention to what happens at the borders of our own particular narratives to interrupt them, rather then trying to fortify our narratives against the unpredicted. Boeve says

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[866] Ibid.
[867] Ibid.
[868] Ibid., 120.

that this open attitude to otherness "demands the disruption of our natural tendency to include the harmless and exclude all forms of alienating newness."[869] A sensitivity to otherness will motivate one to respect the event, while maintaining a spirit of vulnerability and susceptibility thereto and refraining from too quickly linking with the *Is it happening?*

Secondly, an open narrative "attempts to express its *interruption*."[870] In recognizing the other, an open narrative simultaneously identifies it own limits. That which refuses to be included in our narrative marks out our narrative's border. An open narrative immediately perceives and accepts its own particular boundaries. The other that refuses to be included in our narrative clarifies the limits of that narrative. Persons who try to structure their own individual, tangible story as an open narrative will recognize and accept these limitations. This will be expressed in "word and deeds"; i.e. by a refusal to reduce the *Is it happening?* to one more event concatenated into our own personal story. And this encounter with alterity can be fruitful for us. Boeve writes, "The very encounter with otherness that cannot be made our own, structures our particular narrative."[871] For we remain oblivious – until the moment our narrative is disrupted – to that which lies outside of our experience: i.e., that which "already escapes our (necessarily particular) witness."[872] However, in that disruption we suddenly become very aware of the borders of our particular narrative and of its limitations. We learn that other options (political, ethical, etc.) exist and that our story, although it is *our* story, is not *the* story for everyone, everywhere, at all times. As Boeve says, "There is more to religion/ethics than our religion/ethics."[873] Therefore, our perspective (i.e. the Christian view) is disclosed as a particular and "highly specific" point of view. It is "one perspective among many."[874]

A third characteristic is the "*critical praxis of an open narrative.*" Encounters with the other(s) may also stimulate within us a critical consciousness. They encourage us to carry out both an internal and an external critique; Boeve calls these "*self-critical* and *world-critical* judgments and actions."[875] These are carried out on the level of behavior, where one recognizes and acknowledges alterity, while, at the same time, giving up on any attempt to nullify his/hers/its otherness. Boeve gives an example of such a praxis in the refusal to use God to legitimate and absolutize *my* truth, as, for example, the Nazis did ("Gott mit uns").[876] He summarizes the critical openness to others in this fashion: "Where the other is restlessly

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[869] Ibid., 95.
[870] Ibid.
[871] Ibid., 96.
[872] Ibid.
[873] Ibid.
[874] Ibid.
[875] Ibid.
[876] Ibid.

included or excluded, and thus not respected in his/her/its otherness, our sensitivity towards the other gives rise to a critique of closed narrative patterns."[877]

4.8.1.4 The Open Narrative in Practice

Boeve argues that this model of the open narrative can be realized in the midst of many different stories, traditions, and fundamental life-options. The model provides three structural elements of a type of narrative that practices an openness to otherness. He writes that other narratives may be capable of nurturing both a sensitivity to and space for such an openness towards the other from within their own particular narrative setting. The three structural elements described above work together, enabling narratives to restructure themselves, in order to bear witness to the other. Narratives which allow these elements to function in an interconnected way reconstitute themselves as open narratives. This restructuring of a specific narrative gives it a resilience to the "interruptive discontinuity of the other," while allowing it to maintain its own particularity.[878]

It may be impossible to abolish every meta-narrative that seeks to negate otherness by reconciling alterity within its own narrative borders. However, we can strive through self-criticism and mutual respect for others to maintain less totalizing narratives. We need to learn to handle a pluralized environment filled with multiple irreducible narrative and life-options in a non-hegemonic or non-totalizing way. Boeve claims that it is this very openness to the other that can resist the pull towards relativism. Rather than seeing the other as "more of the same," as many "master narratives of postmodernity" do, practitioners of the open narrative are attentive to the irreducible other. They will resist the market's attempt to reduce the particularity and context of a person, object, or experience to an exchangeable commodity. As Boeve writes,

> Only when concrete particular narratives are seen to be concerned with the otherness that ultimately escapes them and are able to discern the presence of this otherness in the concrete other who confronts them, will they avoid being submerged by particularism and contexualism.[879]

4.8.1.5 The Question of Truth

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[877] Ibid.
[878] Ibid., 97.
[879] Ibid., 98.

Open narratives eschew taking the position of the observer's perspective, as was normative during the Enlightenment project. Such an open stance towards the other's claim may be criticized as leading inevitably to "a profound relativism with respect to the question of truth."[880] But people who endeavor to live according to the praxis of the open narrative view themselves as participants rather than as observers. They participate in the truth without claiming to have ownership over "an all-encompassing objective truth as such."[881] The goal is no longer to incorporate the other within one's own all-encompassing objective narrative; in fact, this is rightly viewed as being impossible to do, since the attempt necessarily negates the irreducible alterity of the other. Such a praxis does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that "everything is true" or that truth is no longer of importance in a dialogue with the other. Rather,

> it does imply that truth is no longer exclusively bound to the 'truth *content*' of a narrative. It is more a question of *living in the truth*, of relating to the truth that no particular narrative can exhaust. Narratives must point to the truth and give witness to it. Narratives *live in the truth* when they are able, from within their own particularity, to point to the elusive other, to that which continues to escape them, to that which demands witness and invites the sharpest self-criticism at one and the same time.[882]

Boeve contends that the question of truth is ultimately one of relationship and praxis. It's that of aligning oneself properly to the Truth in all its intangibility, while witnessing to a Truth that ultimately escapes all efforts to express, understand, or explain it.[883]

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[880] Ibid., 99. One of the temptations which people face in the postmodern context is to revert back to a hardened, closed tradition. With the collapse of the modern master narratives, individuals are tempted to lapse into a form of fundamentalism or, perhaps, right-wing extremism as a way of uniting truth and salvation. Boeve comments, "In these last forms of reaction to the postmodern condition there is an awareness that as the universality of the modern grand narratives, for whatever reason, is no longer available, particular, contingent traditions are all that's left. Obviously one does not have to immediately give up every truth claim, when one discovers the particularity and contingency of one's own traditions, even though it seems for many people that a dogmatic hardening of these traditions is the only remedy when relativism wishes to thoroughly pull the worth of these traditions out from under them. In this context perhaps we can better speak of making one's own particularity absolute, than of the universalization thereof: where truth in modernity necessarily presupposed the universalizing of the particular (whereby contingency as well was ruled out), in postmodernity this seems to imply making the truth claim of the contingent particularity absolute." See Lieven Boeve, "De weg, de waarheid en het leven. Religieuze traditie en waarheid in de postmoderne context," *Bijdragen. Tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie* 58, (1997): 166-167 (my translation).

[881] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 99.

[882] Ibid.

[883] The question of truth should be closely tied to practice for theology. Boeve writes, "In such postmodern talk the theologian finds not merely inspiration or models for attesting theologically to the impossibility of the grand narrative, including the Christian grand narrative. He or she discovers, at the same time, and in close connection with this, a manner of expressing contextually and understandably the evangelical option for the poor, the refugee, the "sinner," on religious, socio-economic, political and cultural grounds, and he or she discovers a vocabulary to indicate the injustice done to those who do not fit into the ruling discourse … [This inspires the theologian towards] the imitation of he who

4.8.2 The Christian Open Narrative

The question naturally arises as to whether the Christian narrative can accurately be viewed as an open narrative. Boeve argues that this is indeed the case; the Christian narrative is one that encourages people to open themselves to the Other, to the inexpressible, and to the event of the in-breaking of transcendent grace. For Boeve, theology should not posit a Christian open narrative merely because the current context demands such a story. Rather, if theologians discover that the Christian narrative is itself an open narrative and can justify such a finding,[884] then theology can use the model as a way of assessing the plausibility of current contextualizations of the faith and as a tool for a recontextualization of the narrative as both "truly Christian and truly postmodern."[885]

In order to gain plausibility within the current critical context, the Christian faith must abandon any claim to an "*absolute* (observer's) *perspective*," in contrast to the Enlightenment project, since this must take theology down the path towards totalitarianism.[886] Rather than constructing a rational theatre, from which to objectively observe the other, theology finds that the Christian narrative attempts to give witness to that which cannot be represented. It tries to give expression to that which ultimately always escapes expression, and, in so doing, theology discovers that the Christian faith has a similar structure to that of the model of the open narrative. Boeve claims, rightly, that this is the starting point for a theological recontextualization inspired by the postmodern critical consciousness.[887] He writes, "At its best, the Christian narrative aims at representing the unrepresentable … in such a way that the unrepresentability is not nullified in the representation."[888] Theology learns that there is a relation between an "open Christian narrative" and the unrepresentable. The Christian narrative is a particular and contingent narrative; however, this in no way invalidates its authenticity or truth. Rather, the narrative's very particularity and contingency are constitutive of it, since "the Christian narrative always relates contextually to that which ultimately withdraws itself time and again from every narrative, every truth claim."[889]

For the philosopher (i.e. Lyotard), truth is but one discourse genre among many and transcendence is simply a matter of the inexpressible and ungraspable. However, for the theologian, that which transcends the Christian narrative is in fact narrated *within* that

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stood up for the one who was shut out of religious and social discourse, and he, who in reference to the Father described himself as 'the way, the truth, and the life,' who demands a praxis which ought always in changing contexts to once again recontextualize and incarnate itself; also here and now in a context of plurality and conflict." See Boeve, "De weg," 185-186 (my translation).

[884] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 109.
[885] Boeve, "Critical Consciousness," 466.
[886] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 110.
[887] Boeve, "Critical Consciousness," 465.
[888] Ibid.
[889] Ibid.

narrative. This transcendence both exceeds the story and is *constitutive* for it.[890] Stated plainly, God as the transcendent One surpasses the Christian narrative, while, at the same time, constituting this story through divine encounters with individuals in history. God cannot be contained within or limited inside the narrative's borders. This understanding allows for thinking the relation between God and human individuals in terms of the relation between the inexpressible to the particular narrative, i.e. of a dynamic relation between transcendence and immanence, starting at the occurrence of the event.[891] As a result, theologians no longer need to think transcendence and immanence from within an exclusively ontological structure that seeks to secure a place for God within a metaphysically conceived universe. Rather, transcendence and immanence may be thought in these terms: "transcendent heterogeneity breaking in, interrupting, the immanence of discourses and narratives."[892] God's inexpressibility must be accounted for in any theological reflection bearing on the deity. This requires theologians to recognize their "involvement in particularity and contextually embedded relatedness" as attempts to "bear witness to" inexpressible and ungraspable Alterity.[893]

Theological reflections which acknowledge "radical contingency, particularity and plurality" – and which endeavor to remember that in every ventured expression of the inexpressible something is forgotten – attempt to recontextualize the Christian narrative for a postmodern context. Such a narrative – that remembers plurality and the irreducible other – tries to form itself into a Christian open narrative.

4.8.2.1 A Very Specific Form of Open Narrative

The Christian narrative is one that confesses that God is at work in history for the salvation of people through the person of Jesus Christ. This narrative is unique in that "its primary aim is to confess that God has definitively revealed Godself in a specific human person, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the Christ."[894] This story is animated by the belief that God has entered history in order to save people from sin and the conviction that God continues to approach people in history. Boeve asks whether this Christian narrative – based upon the Jesus narrative – can rightfully be viewed as an open narrative. Boeve answers with "an explicit affirmation."[895] He recognizes in the Christian narrative elements which are

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[890] Ibid., 466.
[891] Ibid.
[892] Ibid.
[893] Ibid.
[894] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition,* 115.
[895] Ibid., 143.

characteristic of the model of the open narrative, which allow for a recontextualization of the faith in a plausible manner for the current critical consciousness.

One of these characteristic elements is the difficulty of defining the *person* of Jesus. Who *is* he? There are indications in the New Testament that the early believers had problems bearing witness to the event of Jesus, especially as it was seen after the resurrection. This confession is recorded in the Christian narrative, which is actually a grouping of gospels and letters recounting Jesus' life, teaching, miracles, death, and resurrection.[896] Jesus always stands at the center of the Christian narrative, and a confession arises in the narrative itself that this specific, historical person continually defies description. This is reflected in the images used to describe Jesus in the New Testament: *e.g.* Son of David, Son of God, Son of Man, Prophet, Word, Lord, etc. As Boeve says, "One has a sense that even at this early stage it was difficult to express precisely what one wanted to express about Jesus."[897] These images bear witness to the event of Jesus Christ, while simultaneously indicating that something is lost in their naming of Jesus. Images, therefore, evoke thought, confession, reflection, and worship.

As the centuries of Church history rolled by, some of these images seemed to lose their ability to function as effectively as previously. Therefore, new images had to be found that could communicate the Church's confession of who Jesus is. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, exemplifies someone who offered a recontextualized image of Jesus. In his reflection upon the redemption offered in Jesus Christ, Anselm used the then prevailing Germanic feudal understanding of one's proper obligations to one's lord (i.e. obedience, honor, and devotion). The resulting image is one that matched the then current social and legal concepts of a feudal order. Jesus' death upon the cross is an expiatory offering given to restore God's honor which was wounded by humanity's sin against its King. This King's innocent Son dies on the cross in order to restore order to creation and functions "as a sign of God's supreme mercy and charity."[898]

Images continue to shift as contexts change. It appears that an image like "King" no longer functions with the same power as it did in feudal Europe. As Boeve notes, "the differences between our *actual context* and the context in which many images came into

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[896] Boeve notes that the Jesus story is told through four gospels and letters written and circulated around the early churches. The plurality of accounts shows how the narrative evokes "a plurality of images and narratives," for as Boeve points out, each of the four gospels has its own theological perspective on Jesus' life and person. He writes, "Evidently, the young churches did not take such contradiction and diversity to be disruptive. What lay at the foundation of the decision to recognise the four gospels as canonical was the insight that it was impossible to grasp the truth about Jesus Christ unmediated, and that this truth could only be evoked via a plurality of images and narratives." See ibid., 141.

[897] Ibid., 140.

[898] Ibid., 118.

existence are clearly substantial."[899] Thus, new images are needed for a new context which can speak convincingly to people who live in a different age. Accordingly, Boeve proposes a new recontextualized image of Jesus for a postmodern context: "Jesus as God's *interrupter*, interrupting closed narratives on behalf of God."[900] This image is grounded, in fact, on how the evangelists present Jesus in the Gospels. Boeve argues that this image of Jesus presents a contextually sensitive understanding of the Son of God, which is situated within a conviction that "*Jesus is the very paradigm of the open narrative.*"[901] As a result, Boeve contends that the Christian narrative is an authentic open narrative. Indeed, it only functions properly as an open narrative.[902]

4.8.2.2 Characteristics of the Christian Open Narrative

As we have seen, an open narrative contains three structural elements: "the basic attitude of openness, the witness of the other who challenges and calls us to openness, [and] the critical consciousness of self and world."[903] All three of these elements lie at the foundation of the Christian narrative, and they function in an interconnected way through the person of Jesus Christ. They exist not only in the confessions made about Jesus, but they are manifest in his praxis, as well. Boeve handles these three elements in reverse order in his book, *Interrupting Tradition*, and we will consider them in the order presented there.

4.8.2.3 The Critical-Liberative Power of Jesus' Open Narrative

The Christian open narrative demonstrates a "*critical consciousness of self and world.*" Those who try to live in imitation of Christ are keenly aware of closed narratives and the injustices done to other people. Boeve identifies this as "*the critical-liberative power of Jesus' open narrative of God's love for human persons.*"[904] Jesus reveals to the world God's love for sinners and God's action to set them free from closed, oppressive narratives. Boeve gives a number of examples from the Gospels, but here we will focus on only two instances: the woman caught in adultery and the cleansing of the temple.

A woman caught in the act of adultery is brought before Jesus (Jn 7,53-8,11). The scribes and the Pharisees, who sit as judges over the Law, ask Jesus what should be done to the woman. Boeve comments that in the process the woman "is reduced to an object of

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[899] Ibid., 118-119.
[900] Ibid., 119.
[901] Ibid.
[902] Ibid.
[903] Ibid., 120. See also 4.4.1.3 above.
[904] Ibid., 121.

juridical dispute."[905] This reduced woman is submitted to a damning logic; the Mosaic Law decrees the death penalty for acts of adultery (Lev 20,10; Dt 22,23-24), and the Pharisees draw the conclusion: "she must be stoned."[906] However, Jesus shatters this condemning logic by saying, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." One by one the Pharisees leave the scene. Jesus then reinstates the woman as a person able to speak. "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" Boeve says that Jesus "liberates her from the logic of sin and punishment," when he says, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."[907]

Boeve notes that Jesus undoes the closed narrative's logic in three ways. First, the Law was given to found a nation on a covenantal relationship with God. However, for this woman the Law has become a closed repressive narrative condemning her as one caught in adultery. Jesus does not undermine the Law, but he reveals the repressive nature of its current manifestation. For Jesus exposes the fact that this narrative is closed towards God. Boeve says this repressive narrative lacks "any openness towards God."[908] The narrative is closed by those who instantiated it: i.e. by the Pharisees who take the addressor(s) position in the narrative. By claiming to speak in God's place, the Pharisees close the narrative around their own petty goals: namely, to trap Jesus by destroying a woman's life. But Jesus doesn't play by their rules. Rather, he says, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." This answer "pushes the Pharisees and the scribes away from the 'addressor' stance of lawmaker and judge, and makes it clear to them that they too are addressees and that the 'addresser' stance itself must remain open."[909] Jesus' words and actions (writing on the ground) interrupt the automatic linking of phrases within the Pharisees' and scribes' master narrative and, in so doing, re-establish the covenantal story to its original purpose: namely, to invite God's wayward people into a love relationship with their God. Secondly, Jesus destroys the Pharisees' and the scribes' misuse of the Law. They refer to Moses and use the Law in order to trap Jesus. This demonstrates an utter lack of respect for the Law. They not only instantiate themselves in the addresser's position, but they also forget that they themselves are addressed by that Law. Thus, the Pharisees and the scribes neglect reverencing the Law. Jesus' words to them, therefore, remind these men of their accountability to the Law and break through a second level of closedness within their hegemonic narrative of the law. Thirdly, Jesus asks the woman to speak, thus granting her the right to bear witness once again, as we saw above. Boeve notes that the "closed narrative of the law – which is what the law had become – is radically undone of its closedness by Jesus and thus restored in this

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[905] Ibid.
[906] Ibid.
[907] Ibid.
[908] Ibid., 122.
[909] Ibid.

referential power."[910] The woman is no longer silenced by a hegemonic narrative but set free from guilt and sin. Here the woman learns who God truly is, through Jesus' words and actions, for Jesus handles the situation as God would handle it. Boeve quotes Schnackenburg, in this regard: "It is not a question of the condemnation of sin but of the appeal to sinners, nor is it a question of the law but of an event. In God's name, Jesus takes the side of the sinner; he does not desire to condemn but rather to save."[911]

Another example of Jesus breaking open a closed oppressive narrative is found in the Gospel accounts of the temple cleansing (Mk 11,15-19 and Jn 2,13-25).[912] Here we see the critical-liberating praxis being carried out through Jesus' actions. The issue at hand is the marketization of the temple area. This is made clear in his charge that the "house of prayer" has been made into a "den of robbers." Boeve points out that a place of prayer, i.e. the site of "mediation between God and people," was turned into a market for selling animals and exchanging money. Worshippers could not use their pagan coins but had to exchange them for temple currency, at an exchange rate that favored the moneychangers. In the temple market system "religion had become linked to the sale of animals for sacrifice" and "profit took precedence over prayer."[913] Boeve correctly notes the *critical-liberative power of the open narrative* in Jesus' *actions* by freeing people from economic abuse carried out in a temple market. However, Mark's Gospel makes it clear that another repression is also at work in the closed temple narrative. Gentile worship is being denigrated. Isaiah said that the day would come when "foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to serve me" would be brought to the holy mountain, and there "their offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar" (Is 56,6-7). Indeed, God makes room for the Gentiles to worship, as the prophet continues, ""For my house will be called a house of prayer *for all nations*" (Is 56,7 – emphasis mine).[914]

> By allowing the Court of the Gentiles, the only place in the temple area where Gentiles were allowed to worship God, to become a noisy, smelly public market, the Jewish religious leaders were preventing Gentiles from exercising the spiritual privilege promised them. How could a Gentile pray amid all that noise and stench?[915]

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[910] Ibid., 121.

[911] R. Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium*, Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, vol. 2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1965-1975), 232 (Boeve's translation). As cited in ibid., 122-123.

[912] Parallel accounts are found in Mt 21,12-17 and Lk 19,45-48.

[913] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 124.

[914] Mark is the only gospel that cites the entire phrase as recorded in Isaiah (i.e. "for all nations"). The other three gospels do not include the whole phrase in their accounts. For example, Matthew quotes Jesus as saying, "'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers'" (Mt 21,13 NIV). This, of course, removes any mention of the temple as a place of prayer for all peoples.

[915] Werner G. Jeanrond, "Love and Eschatology," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 50, no. 1 (2001): 727-728.

Rather than being given access to the altar, the Gentiles were consigned to a crowded market. When Jesus speaks he refers to Isaiah's promise and ties it to Jeremiah's critique that in his day the temple had been turned into a robber's den (Jer 7,11). Jewish prejudice towards the Gentiles needs to be addressed, so Jesus moves to break open this closed temple narrative. With a whip and words, Jesus *acts* to open the narrative for Gentiles, who for all intents and purposes were shut out of worshiping God.[916] Jesus cleanses the temple to open up a religious narrative that had collapsed into a closed narrative. He reveals how God would act in such a situation – setting people free to worship God in liberating love.

4.8.2.4 Bearing Witness to the Kingdom of God

The Christian narrative also "*witnesses to the other who challenges and calls us to openness.*" Jesus' life continually witnesses to the reign of God in a way that invites people to believe, follow, and obey. Boeve argues that Jesus' witness "reflects a non-dominating, *evocative, witness-bearing* approach to language and to the *inexpressible salvific reality* of God."[917] His primary way of bearing witness to the kingdom is through parables, which Boeve says are "literally *open* narratives."[918] In contrast to master narratives, which make universal claims, these parables evoke something within their hearers, encouraging them towards a life of discipleship. Parables call for "the generation of new insights" by stimulating people to open themselves to its message: *e.g.* the kingdom has come, join the marriage feast (Lk 14,16-24)! Boeve calls parables "word-events," and he says they function in two ways: (1) parables "bear witness to the event of grace;" and (2) they interrupt people's lives, as they try to communicate this same grace to the hearer.[919] Each small story (or parable) comes as an interruptive invitation, calling into question things that people take for granted and inviting them into a life of commitment and conversion.[920]

For example, Boeve discusses the parable of the good Samaritan (Lk 10,25-37) as witness bearing that both challenges and calls for openness: in this case to the other. This parable's purpose is to explain the basic commandment to love, rather than to reveal the kingdom of God.[921] A lawyer challenges Jesus with a question about what must be done to inherit eternal life. Jesus replies by asking for a reading from the Law. What does the Law

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[916] Mark emphasizes the fact that the Gentiles were being robbed of their rightful claim to be able to worship God. This right was stolen from them by Jews who were carrying out commerce in the exact area of the temple designated for Gentile worship. Privileges belonging to the Gentiles in the new age are procured by Jesus. His actions to secure these privileges would have been well received by Mark's Gentile readers. See ibid.

[917] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 127.

[918] Ibid.

[919] Ibid., 128.

[920] Ibid.

[921] Ibid., 129.

require? The lawyer answers by uniting two commandments[922] into a single phrase: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Lk 10,27 NIV). Jesus affirms his reading and then replies, "Do this and you will live" (Lk 10,28). But the lawyer, wanting to justify himself, asks, "And who is my neighbor?" That question sets the stage for Jesus' parable, which both explains the concept "neighbor" and ends with a command (Lk 10,37). Boeve points out that this parable ends remarkably with a question: "Which of these three [the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan] proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"[923] The answer is, of course, the Samaritan. By posing this question, Jesus moves the "neighbor," from the passive role (as object of our love) to the active role of lover, who in the process of loving becomes-neighbor. Jesus inverts the roles through the question he poses. The "neighbor" is no longer simply the object of *our* love (*e.g.* "Love your neighbor as yourself"); the "neighbor" is now the one who loves (i.e. the one who finds the stripped victim, clothes him, lodges him in an inn, and pays for his expenses). The Samaritan *becomes* neighbor by moving to save a man in his hour of need.[924] The lawyer sought to justify himself by starting a theoretical discussion with Jesus, but the latter wants to break open the closed discourse of explanation. Only a praxis of love makes one capable of inheriting eternal life (Lk 10,25b). The parable seeks to evoke two realizations in its hearers: (1) that "mercy towards one's neighbor is salvific," and (2) that "we must actually become neighbour to the other."[925] Boeve points to the "double interruption of the traditional religious narrative" going on in this parable.[926] Jesus addresses the caustic relations between Jews and Samaritans by making the *Samaritan* the hero of the story. The person the Jews considered an apostate is the one who becomes neighbor to the robbed man, the one who obeys the Mosaic Law. Finally, Jesus interrupts the narrative of "classical Jewish religiosity" by portraying the priest's and Levite's unwillingness to help as rooted in fear of ritual impurity and consequent disqualification from serving God.[927]

Perhaps no other parable witnesses to the love of God as powerfully as the parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15,11-32). This parable tells us about a merciful father who in welcoming his prodigal son offends his eldest, obedient son. "The narrative does not portray God as a stern judge who is unrelenting in his lust for obedience, thus inspiring fear and angst among his followers, but as a loving father who welcomes the return of his youngest son with

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[922] Deut 6,4-5 and Lev 19,18 respectively.
[923] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 129.
[924] Ibid.
[925] Ibid.
[926] Ibid., 130.
[927] Ibid.

open arms."[928] Boeve mentions that this parable's intended audience is probably those who obey their Father with military precision – like the eldest son –, but who are motivated by fear. Therefore, it appears that Jesus intended this parable for the Pharisees: people who were meticulous in their obedience but hounded by fear. The parable bears witness to a God who is different. Suddenly the eldest son is "confronted with the possibility that another father exists, a father characterised by intense goodness, incredible compassion and unending solicitude."[929] Boeve says this was Jesus' own experience of God – an experience witnessed to in this parable: "God is different, God *is love* (1 Jn 4,8)."[930]

4.8.2.5 Jesus' Open Abba-Relationship as Basic Attitude

The third structural element of the open narrative is a "*basic attitude of openness*." Jesus maintained an attitude of openness to both God and neighbor. Since his relationship with God was grounded in an Abba-relationship with the Father, Jesus allowed the Other to interrupt his own personal story. God reveals Godself in times of interruption, often using encounters with other people as a way of teaching and guiding God's people. Therefore, the person who lives according to the praxis of the Christian open narrative will maintain a "*fundamental contemplative attitude*," to discern what God may be revealing through life's interruptions. As the gospels clearly show, Jesus lived and modeled such a contemplative attitude: an attitude that flows out of "*an authentic relationship with God and one's fellow humans*."[931]

However, the Pharisees lacked this attitude, and Jesus upbraids them for their total "lack of a contemplative openness" towards God. To illustrate this point, Boeve points to Jesus' indictments against the Pharisees in Matthew's gospel (Mt 23,1-12) as well as to the seven "woe statements" that follow (Mt 23,13-36). The Pharisees forgot that they were addressed by God through the Law. Boeve says they instantiated themselves in the addressor position, while neglecting to acknowledge that they too were addressees of the Law's phrases.[932] The Pharisees polluted their faith by seeking glory for themselves rather than for God. This manifests itself in the Pharisees' lust after "broad phylacteries, places of honour at feasts and the best seats in the synagogue."[933] Their focus was on social standing, personal honor, and preferred seating. The idea of serving others never entered their minds, as they clamored for prestigious titles such as "rabbi, father and leader." Jesus condemns their closed

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[928] Ibid.

[929] L. Aerts, "De bijbel: het verhaal blijft open," *TGL* 52, (1996): 151. As cited in Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 131.

[930] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 131.

[931] Ibid.

[932] Ibid., 132.

[933] All of this is criticized by Jesus in Mt 23,5-6. See ibid.

attitude towards others and God in two statements. Rather than fighting each other for places of honor, the Pharisees should have served their neighbors, for Jesus says, "The greatest among you will be your servant" (Mt 23,11). Instead of attempting to find honor for themselves, the Pharisees should have promoted God's glory: "Do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven" (Mt 23,9). A religious narrative that remains open to God will have three fundamental relational attitudes: justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Jesus attacks the Pharisees for neglecting these and preferring a scrupulous adherence to the Law in properly measuring their spice offerings. In so doing, they have "neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness" (Mt 23,23). As Jesus says, "You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former" (Mt 23,24). He does not criticize the Pharisees for their determination to seriously adhere to the stipulations in the Law; rather, Jesus' aims his condemnation at their basic closed attitude to God. Boeve notes that the woe sayings end with Jesus' charge that the scribes and Pharisees "have murdered those who bear witness to religion as an open narrative, namely the prophets (and Jesus himself whom they are planning to murder). Their closed narrative leads to death and creates victims. It will ultimately turn against them."[934]

On the other hand, Jesus gives a positive picture of a life of discipleship marked by a contemplative attitude of openness to God in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5,2-7,27). Disciples who are sensitive and open to the other exhibit a radical love that dares to love even their enemies (5,43-48). They will be honest in how they give to the poor (6,1-4) and pray before God (6,5-7). People who follow Jesus' way do not center their existence on acquiring treasure (6,19-21), but live without anxiety, trusting their heavenly Father to care for their needs (6,25-34). They will suspend judgment over others (7,1-5) and trust God for provision (7,7-11). Individuals, who are open to God, as modeled by Jesus, will "become like little children" (Mt 18,1-5) who are willing to suffer persecution (Mk 13,9-13). Such a fundamental contemplative openness does not come automatically or easily, as Boeve points out. Jesus had to fight for such an attitude during his temptation in the desert. Boeve notes that this was a three-part temptation: "the temptation to self-preservation, prestige, possessions and power."[935]

Jesus' open Abba-relationship to his Father helps him see hegemonic narratives for what they are: narratives which are "extensively filled in, closed from the start."[936] These narratives always make victims. Someone is excluded, marginalized, and silenced. Boeve says that it's Jesus' very openness to God that sensitizes him to situations which are closed. Those who choose to follow Jesus will also remain open to the "event of interruption" and

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[934] Ibid.
[935] Ibid., 133.
[936] Ibid.

thus be vulnerable in two ways: sensitivity towards interrupting otherness and "yet open to injury."[937] Injury occurs when a hegemonic narrative negates all other narratives. Someone or something asks to be heard but is silenced by a master narrative that pushes all other narratives to the side. Boeve notes that these people are not allowed to "have their say."[938] Jesus' basic attitude of openness helps him recognize when this occurs in the people and places he encounters. Boeve calls it an "attention for what is not brought to speech."[939] It's this awareness of violence done against people that inspires Jesus' critical-liberating ministry. Jesus promises salvation to those who adopt this fundamental attitude of openness to God and others, even to the extent of suffering injury themselves (Mt 5,1-12).

4.8.3 The Event of Grace

Narratives have a natural tendency to close – as they re-present the event as but one more act in a string of occurrences –; however, the Christian open narrative need not configure itself as a hegemonic, oppressive, master narrative. In fact, it can resist this tendency and function as a non-hegemonic Christian story.[940] Lyotard gives theology a hint on how this is done in *The Differend*. There he identifies two different ways of treating the event in Christianity: namely, the traditionalist and the prophetic discourses.[941] The difference between the two competing Christian discourses (i.e. traditionalist and prophetic) is where the event of grace is located with reference to the narrative: specifically, whether the event of grace is understood as being immanent or transcendent to the narrative itself. Boeve understands the event of grace as "the gift of divine Love," which urges individuals towards "an answering praxis of love."[942] For the traditionalist, God is immanent within the Christian story, i.e. God is *instantiated* in the narrative itself. As a result, the event of grace is situated within (and not, therefore, outside of) the Christian narrative's boundaries. Boeve writes, "In other words, God is a known actor in the story and is the demonstrable addressor of the obligation [to love]."[943] According to Lyotard, the traditionalist maintains that one loves because one is commanded to love by an addressor (i.e. God) located in the Christian narrative. Said simply, one loves because "the divine addressor of/in the story has told him/her to do so."[944] However, the prophet loves out of a sense of obligation to One who is not locatable (as being either inside or outside of the Christian narrative). This feeling of

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[937] Ibid.
[938] Ibid., 134.
[939] Ibid.
[940] Boeve, "Bearing Witness," 374.
[941] Lyotard, *The Differend*, 160 [D234].
[942] Boeve, "Bearing Witness," 374-375.
[943] Ibid., 375.
[944] Ibid.

obligation just happens; one is seized by the event which obligates, and, as a result of being obligated, the prophet "questions all former answering praxis of love."[945] In sharp contrast with the traditional discourse, the prophetic discourse is neither authorized by the Christian narrative nor found in it. Thus, the prophetic discourse confronts the traditional discourse as something alien, as a critique of the traditional narrative. So the authorized interpreters of the Scriptures (or the tradition) will almost invariably see the prophet's message as "a violation."[946] This often sets up a confrontational relationship between the traditionalist and the prophet; the latter who often feels him or herself to be under obligation to reprimand the received tradition, a narrative out of which the prophet emerges. Boeve summarizes the conflict in this manner:

> The traditionalist approach functionalizes and masters the event of grace in order to continue the story. In contrast, the prophetic approach itself is mastered by the event of grace. For the prophet this means that "the authority of the commandment to love is not necessarily called back into question, but the repetitive, narrative mode of its legitimation certainly is. To judge that one ought to do *this* thing because *that* thing has already been prescribed is to defy the occurrence and the addressee's responsibility before it."[947]

Boeve writes, "The prophet and his or her message are seldom accepted as a corrective challenge that is most fruitful for the existing story."[948] But Boeve suggests that this is precisely what the event of grace can do for closed narratives. The event of grace, or God's loving action, can break open narratives which have closed, which have become hegemonic discourses harmful to people.

4.8.3.1 Breaking Open Oppressive, Closed Narratives

As was argued above, the Christian narrative can easily collapse into a closed hegemonic master narrative. This happens whenever the event of grace is too quickly equated with the Idea of love. Boeve suggests, however, that a sound theological discourse could name "grace" as "the unnameable gift of love by the Unnameable, the One who is not merely part of the Christian narrative but transcends it radically in principle (Deus simper major)."[949] Grace, then, could be seen as the love of God breaking through the hardened boundaries of a

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[945] Ibid.
[946] Ibid.
[947] Ibid. The citation within the quote is taken from Lyotard, *The Differend*, 160 [D234].
[948] Boeve, "Bearing Witness," 375.
[949] See Boeve, "Naming God," 93.

closed narrative. By opening up the immanence of the narrative, the event of grace helps theology in the restructuring of the Christian narrative as an open narrative of love. Such a narrative is open to that which is other to it. The event of grace, therefore, leads theology to criticize every attempt to functionalize the event within closed narratives. "The event of grace does not function primarily as an affirmation of discourse strategies, a legitimation of the current Christian narrative, but questions all speech, all linking of phrases, indeed even the ongoing Christian narrative itself."[950] At the same time, the event of grace evokes a witnessing to that which has been silenced by a closed Christian narrative. Boeve calls this its *kerygmatic aspect*. Theology is challenged to witness to the event of grace, while realizing that every phrasing of the event will necessarily fail to express its being-event; the event of grace, therefore, cannot be captured in any particular phrase. Boeve rightfully contends that "because of the event of grace the Christian is urged to retell the narrative of love over and over, and tell it in such a way that it bears witness to the ungraspable, unnameable and incomprehensible origin of the event of grace."[951]

The event of grace, or the grace of the event, is the inexpressible that interrupts the Christian narrative and helps to construct it. But those who are the guardians of the tradition often miss the events of grace which occur. For the authorized interpreters of the Scriptures draw their authority from the Christian narrative, and, as a result, they tend to closely adhere to the Christian tradition and to legitimize it according to the "repetitive, narrative mode" of narration.[952] These authorities are disposed to forget the event, since they can already declare God's will on all matters, in advance. After all, God's word is inscribed in the text of Scripture. When leaders forget the shattering effect of the event of grace, they tend to establish master narratives.[953] This leads to the pretense that they can speak for God "in a too direct and exclusive way."[954] A modest restraint is needed when making dogmatic statements or in ministering "in God's name," since their theological claims can easily be translated into ideological claims such as "God is on our side," or that "God is with us." Boeve argues that theology should remain attentive to interruptive boundary experiences and confrontations with alterity, since these help us break open our own narratives. In fact, he says that these sorts of events seem to be the fertile ground from which the Christian narrative grows. Boeve writes that "in the very experience of alterity, the believer recognises the elusive God who

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[950] Ibid.
[951] Ibid.
[952] Traditionalists believe in "the narratives of love," and the prescriptive is grounded in what "has already been prescribed" in those narratives. Suspicious of these, the prophets bring forth "signs of obligation" as grounds for critiquing these same closed narratives. See Lyotard, *The Differend*, 160 [D234].
[953] In this regard, see Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 151.
[954] Ibid., 109.

always beckons further."[955] Abraham, Moses, and the prophets experienced interrupting events of grace. Indeed, Boeve says that the Christian narrative seems to exist because of such events of grace, and that the Jesus narrative seems to be "the narrative *par excellence* that refuses to be 'closed'."[956] The Jewish leaders wished to silence Jesus and to end his story; however, God breaks wide open the story they attempted to seal shut by raising Jesus out of the grave. Boeve writes that Jesus' narrative was "newly and radically 'opened' by God in the resurrection."[957]

4.8.4 The Christian Narrative Is Most Naturally an Open Narrative

The Christian narrative is a narrative that is founded in the experience of God breaking into history in order to reveal Godself as a God of love preeminently in the life of Jesus Christ. This particular, historically conditioned revelation of love calls those who chose to follow Jesus to a life of love, which is manifested by the way one loves God and one's neighbor. Thus, functionally, the Christian narrative only operates authentically as an open narrative.[958] As we have already seen, the Jesus narrative in particular refuses any closure and remains open through the radical experience of Easter resurrection. As Boeve writes, "The Jesus narrative as such would appear to be the narrative *par excellence* that refuses to be closed."[959]

4.8.4.1 For Believers, Jesus Is the Very Paradigm of the Open Narrative

Jesus models the open narrative in his words and ministry to others, offering forgiveness and a way to liberate people from bondage to the hegemonic narrative in which they are trapped. Boeve points out that an individual may be simultaneously trapped by a number of different closed narratives. For example, he notes that in the story of the healing of the ten lepers (Lk 17,11-19) "different closed narratives intersect each other."[960] These include personally, socially, and racially closed narratives: (1) against the leper as sinner, with the disease as punishment for sin; (2) banishment of the leper from society; and (3) mutual isolation of Jews and Samaritans from each other. Each of these closed narratives is demolished by the Samaritan who is healed and returns to Jesus. Regarding this narrative, Boeve writes, "When narratives are opened, God enters into the discussion: the healing results

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[955] Ibid., 110.
[956] Ibid., 106.
[957] Ibid.
[958] Ibid., 119.
[959] Ibid., 106.
[960] Ibid., 125.

in praise of God – and ultimately, as verse 19b reveals, have everything to do with faith: 'Your faith has made you well'."[961] In Jesus Christ we see the very model of the open narrative in praxis, opening himself contemplatively to God, receiving the other, and shattering oppressive, hegemonic, closed narratives.

4.8.4.2 Jesus as God's Revelation of Love Par Excellence

Christians believe that in Jesus Christ God has revealed Godself as love. Jesus' life, work, and teachings come as interruptions that shatter strongly held and cherished conceptions of truth: narratives which are exposed as closed and oppressive stories. The Christian tradition confesses that love is preeminently revealed in the contingencies of history through one man's life from Nazareth. Boeve calls Jesus "God's interrupter," who is the revelation of God's love *par excellence*.[962] Through a confrontation with the current critical consciousness, faith learns that it cannot justify itself on philosophical or ontological grounds. "Faith remains faith," Boeve writes, "a desire to enter into the narrative, and [this] implies an ongoing search for God and God's salvific will for human persons and the world."[963] This results in a "religiously-motivated critical consciousness" that resists appropriating the o/Other or seizing it in order to comprehend it for our own benefit. A praxis of the open narrative thus emerges, which Boeve describes in these terms: "No more idols, no more sacrifices, no more *Gott-mit-uns*, but rather a God who becomes visible in the poor, in the marginalized and the oppressed, in those who desire to share the vulnerability of the vulnerable."[964] This conviction to pay attention to the "threatened other" and to resist the "threatening other" is complementary to the critical consciousness Jesus displayed in his rebuke of the Pharisees, and Boeve argues that such a response may be needed at times against some manifestations of Christian faith which cannot remain open to the excluded other.

The Christian narrative as an open narrative can never be made completely transparent. Only those who commit to a life of discipleship, bound to Jesus and the love he reveals, will participate in that particular *Christian* love. Attempts to communicate Christianity in precise and comprehensive detail must always fail, since disciples learn to enter into and live within that particular (open) narrative. Efforts made in modern times to explain Christianity with utter lucidity tended to reduce Christianity to "ethics and the upholding of values."[965] Boeve suggests that Christians engaged in the public square reintroduce the *arcanum* (i.e. the

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[961] Ibid., 126.
[962] Ibid., 179.
[963] Ibid.
[964] Ibid., 180.
[965] Ibid.

"secret," "about which one remains silent") as a means of living out the impossibility of completely describing the experience of relating to One who eludes complete rational description within any discourse.[966] Such a posture is theologically justified based upon God's relationship with humanity. As Boeve notes, "There remain dimensions that cannot be communicated to those who do not share this faith, dimensions that have their roots in the said relationship."[967]

Another aspect of the Christian open narrative is demonstrated by those who follow Christ; namely, Christians witness to others that they have been called to such a life by Jesus Christ. While living within the Christian tradition gives believers a sense of a particular, stable identity within a pluralistic world, this is not their primary reason for pursuing a life of obedience and discipleship. It is, rather, the call of God that serves as their *arcanum* among people who have chosen other fundamental life options. What makes a Christian different is this witness to an Other who beckons them into a life-long call into Christian love. A byproduct of the Christian faith is a stable identity constructed within the postmodern context. However, as Boeve writes, "For Christians, faith and tradition can never be reduced to such socio-cultural functionality."[968] Christians are those who testify to having a vocation and the obligation to pass this faith on to others. The witness given is that Jesus is the revelation of God's love *par excellence* and the invitation to involve oneself in his open narrative of love.

4.9 A THEOLOGY OF THE OPEN NARRATIVE

A theology of the open narrative begins with a dialogue between theology and philosophy in which theology looks to engage the current critical consciousness. Theology does this for its own benefit, without seeking to dominate philosophy or to incorporate that discourse into its own story. What theology hopes for is to find inspiration from current philosophical thought that can help in the work of recontextualizing the faith for the present postmodern context. Differences between the two discourses are respected, and neither discipline is considered capable of mastering the other in order to "dictate its proper rationality."[969] As Boeve writes, the purpose of the dialogue is not to "enter [into] competition, but from the theologian's perspective, [to] relate intrinsically to each other."[970] What theology gains from this conversation is a contextually plausible language for referring to that which cannot be represented.

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[966] Ibid., 180-181.
[967] Ibid., 181.
[968] Ibid.
[969] Boeve, "Thinking Sacramental Presence," 23.
[970] Ibid.

Lyotard's philosophy of heterogeneity points theology towards discourses which strive to remain open to alterity and to bear witness to the differend: i.e. to the dispute that breaks out at the linking of every phrase, since no single phrase is able to adequately express the event. As we have seen, there are narratives which attempt to respect radical heterogeneity, while resisting the narrative genre's tendency to re-narrate the event, to forget its occurrence, and to recoup its interruptive power. Such narratives can be considered "open narratives." Boeve notes that an open narrative "functions only in so far as it is actually, consciously, particularly 'narrative' and 'open'."[971] He argues that "'open narratives' bear within themselves the impetus towards continual radical contextualization."[972] It is these two characteristics that are particularly helpful for a recontextualization of the Christian faith within a postmodern context: the ability to refer to the unpresentable, and the possibility of continually recontextualizing the faith.

The Christian tradition, therefore, serves as a source of inspiration for theologians, who work towards thinking Christianity as an open narrative, regarding ways that one might be able to refer to the event of God's grace, as it works among individuals in a contingent history. Attempts to bear witness to such interruptive moments of grace, within the tradition, are necessarily contextual, since they use the (then) current critical consciousness to explain God's gracious activity in history in a way that is plausible to the context in which they were first expressed. However, readers who are inspired by an intentional openness to alterity find a "constant source and inexhaustible resource for bearing witness to the event" in the narrative tradition, since every re-reading of the tradition must be made from "within the framework of the present context."[973] The event of grace is continually re-described in a process that relates what has already been written with what is currently plausibly held to be possible, which pushes forward a process of "continual radical contextualization."

4.9.1 Referring to the Unpresentable

In bearing witness to God, a theology of the open narrative attempts to refer to that which ultimately transcends all reference but which is (re)presented in the Christian narrative. It is precisely in and through that narrative that the Christian God is made accessible to theology; however, as has been said, God cannot be enclosed and encapsulated by the Christian narrative. As Boeve writes, "When the narrative closes itself and determines to enclose God, openness disappears and God withdraws."[974] Theology thinks and makes its

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[971] Boeve, "Critical Consciousness," 463.
[972] Ibid.
[973] Ibid.
[974] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 175.

confession concerning God through an interaction with the Christian narrative and tradition. A theology of the open narrative attempts to do so in a way that always allows for the possibility of the interruption of its narrative by the other/Other. As we have seen, this is not only culturally necessary, in order to regain plausibility in a postmodern context, but theology finds that the Christian narrative is, in fact, most naturally an open story: one that God refuses to allow to remain closed in upon itself. For when the narrative closes itself off and becomes a tyrannical, oppressive story, God acts in history to break it open (*e.g.* through an event of grace or a prophet's voice).

A theology of the open narrative should always remember that it ventures to refer to the unpresentable. As Boeve notes, "Theologians link phrases to each other to confess the God who reveals Godself in history, but can never be grasped or encapsulated in it."[975] And yet, in order to bear witness to the event of grace, theology must use words and phrases. It can do no other. But in referring to the unpresentable theology can humbly remember that its thoughts are particular, contingent, historical statements which attempt to witness to its involvement with a God that escapes all too-determined, universal, abstract determinations.

4.9.2 God Escapes Every Attempt to Enclose God

References made of God should endeavor to evoke Gods inexpressibility. As we have already seen, traditionalists make the mistake of locating God within the text of scripture. All that can be known about God is thought to lie within the boundaries of the Christian narrative. However, God resists any attempt to enclose Godself within a narrative, or any endeavor to determine (and thus control) God. Boeve points out three instances in scripture where individuals tried to understand or cling to Jesus but were thwarted. The first is the Marcan "messianic secret," where the disciples cannot comprehend the open nature of Jesus' ministry as Messiah who must die. Boeve says that their miscomprehension is a model for "those who want to close the painful openness of the Christian narrative out of misunderstanding or a concern for self-preservation."[976] Secondly, Boeve points to the transfiguration narrative (Mk 9,2-10) where three of Jesus' disciples are overwhelmed by the sight of the transfigured Christ in conversation with Moses and Elijah. Peter, hoping to extend the moment, suggests that tents be set up (Mk 9,6). But precisely as he utters this suggestion the event ends. Boeve comments, "The glorified Christ cannot be grasped in his earthly form."[977] While the evangelist indicates something about Jesus by relating this story, he lets God characterize Jesus. A voice cries out, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" (Mk 9,7). Finally,

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[975] Boeve, "The End of Conversation," 209.
[976] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 139.
[977] Ibid.

Boeve points to the account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24,13-32). Once again Boeve argues that "the risen Christ is not to be grasped in his earthly form," although it is in some sense "inseparable from his earthly form." After a journey together on foot, while sitting together at table, Jesus reveals himself as the Christ "in word and deed." Boeve calls attention to the fact that it is precisely at this moment of recognition that Jesus absents himself from the scene.[978] The person of Jesus and what he reveals about God cannot but resist a too-determined description, and a theology of the open narrative will attempt to evoke its theological conceptions with sensitivity to that which Lyotard tried to evoke: the feeling of the inexpressible phrase that, nevertheless, asks to be phrased. A theology of the open narrative will attempt to refer to a referent that cannot be presented directly (i.e. God), while constantly anticipating the interruption of its own narrative from the outside (i.e. through the other/Other as an event of grace).

4.9.3 Regaining Contextual Plausibility

In order for theology to regain contextual plausibility within this current postmodern context, a theology of the open narrative will resist the temptation to (re)establish a pre-modern or a modern ontology, and it will abandon the search for legitimization proffered by the schemas of modern philosophies of history.[979] Rather, theology shapes its own reflections in sympathy with the current postmodern critical consciousness, in its attempts to bear witness to the *differend* and to remember the forgetting that is too easily forgotten in the concatenation of phrases. Boeve argues that the category of interruption allows theology to bear witness to its own particular claim of relating to the Christian God, through Jesus Christ, in a contextually plausible manner. As a result, a theology of the open narrative makes room for the interruption of God's grace through experiences at the border of its own narrative, which challenge that narrative with the claim of the other externally and stimulate theology towards an internal self-reflection upon its own particular claim. Event experiences then stimulate theology to "the cultivation of a contemplative openness, and testify in word and deed to that which reveals itself in this openness as a trace of God."[980]

4.10 THEOLOGY AS AN OPEN DISCOURSE OF THE IDEA OF LOVE?

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[978] Ibid.
[979] Boeve, "Thinking Sacramental Presence," 23.
[980] Ibid.

Lyotard asked (rhetorically) if his philosophy was simply the narrating of a master narrative declaring the end of master narratives.[981] His answer was an emphatic, "No." The task of philosophy, for Lyotard, is to analyze the concatenation of phrases, noting that with the linking of any phrase there are far more possible links excluded than the one that succeeds. An analysis is made of phrases, phrase regimens, and discourse genres, along with the rules by which links are made between phrases. Lyotard's goal is to keep the possibility open, which the heterogeneity of various phrases and discourse genres offer, for as long as possible, in order to search for a phrase that can express the inexpressible event that occurs with the presentation of any phrase. Ultimately, however, a link must be made and the differend is thus translated into a litigation. However, this effort to bear witness to the differend lies at the heart of Lyotard's thought. Boeve, therefore, identifies Lyotard's philosophy as a "discourse of the Idea of heterogeneity," as we noted above.[982] Boeve also writes that the philosopher's task is "to foster this consciousness of heterogeneity – the consciousness that realizes at every event that this event is not to be grasped in language but that we cannot do anything else but precisely this."[983] Yet, to resist inscribing the event within a hegemonic discourse is precisely what Lyotard attempts to do, as he bears witness to difference. Thus, as Boeve notes, philosophy "can only pursue this task when it realizes that it is not a meta-language."[984] As a discourse in constant search of its own rule, Lyotard's philosophy can be thought of as a discourse of the Idea of heterogeneity – a non-hegemonic, open discourse of that idea.

Boeve, therefore, asks if theology can function in a way similar to Lyotard's open philosophy, since theology finds that the Christian narrative is in fact an open narrative. Can Christianity be thought of as a discourse of the Idea of love? Lyotard makes it clear that the Christian narrative can function as a master narrative. Boeve identifies this as the actions of a "hegemonic discourse of the Idea of love."[985] However, Boeve argues that it would be wrong to reduce Christianity to a closed, hegemonic master narrative. Rather, one should realize that such a narrative is a degenerated discourse, which has been woefully inattentive to the irreducible, radical alterity of the other/Other. In place of using the other and disregarding his/her/its witness, the Christian narrative should strive to allow difference to manifest for as long as necessary to bear witness to it. It's in such boundary experiences that Christians

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[981] Lyotard asks, "Could it be that 'we' are no longer telling ourselves anything? Are 'we' not telling, whether bitterly or gladly, the great narrative of the end of great narratives?" See Lyotard, *The Differend*, 135 [D182]. Boeve answers Lyotard's question as well in the negative: "philosophy is not the all-encompassing linkage of phrases according to a hegemonic rule, but is a discourse always in search of its rule." See Lieven Boeve, *Lyotard and Theology: Beyond the Christian Master Narrative of Love*, Philosophy and Theology (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 72.

[982] See 4.2.3 above.

[983] See Boeve, *Lyotard and Theology*, 27.

[984] Ibid.

[985] Ibid., 49.

receive the other as means by which God challenges our stories. Boeve contends that Christianity "lives from the experience of grace, or better, from the event of grace, the gift of love."[986] But he recognizes, as well, that the Christian faith does not always live up to the promise offered in such gifts of grace. Boeve suggests that theology, therefore, should strive to function as an open discourse of the Idea of love.

4.10.1 Referring to Love as Unpresentable

An open discourse of the Idea of love would be a discourse wherein "the Idea of love is respected qua Idea."[987] Love as a referent cannot be directly presented, and thus love must be presented indirectly through signs or symbols. Therefore, love functions as an idea within theological reflections. However, a theology of the open narrative respects the idea of love as a means of conceiving and relating what God does through the event of grace. Love functions, therefore, as a naming for the event of grace: i.e. as a name for the in-breaking, loving action of God within history. Love as a name is a rigid indicator that designates something about reality. Various meanings can be assigned to this name; thus, the debate revolves around which name (or names) should be used to designate something about God's real, concrete action of grace towards people.

Believers witness to divine love and thus attempt to somehow express that which remains unpresentable to reason (particularly for those without a relationship to the Christian God). Lyotard says that Christian preaching is more akin to the sublime than to rhetoric – the latter uses "figures" that are manipulated in order to persuade the congregation of Jesus' presence. However, Lyotard writes, Jesus is present "in the heart." His incarnation in the world is "our tears sprung from joy," according to the philosopher.[988] People do not respond with affection based upon the preacher's words, figures, or logic; rather they cry "in response to grace." The conclusion Lyotard draws is that Jesus (in the heart) "is thus sublime, an insensible affection, a sensible presence in the heart only."[989] Boeve notes that Christian witness functions more like the sublime as "disquiet and powerlessness" than it does within the "(aesthetic) beauty of dogmatic systems."[990] As Lyotard writes, "It is not Jesus' beauty that makes him true."[991] Boeve comments that in witnessing to the risen Christ, believers testify more in the sense of the sublime than in an attempt to define or prove the deity's

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[986] Ibid., 73.
[987] Ibid., 71.
[988] Lyotard, *Heidegger*, 34-35.
[989] Ibid., 35.
[990] Boeve, *Lyotard and Theology*, 66.
[991] Lyotard, *Heidegger*, 34.

presence with doctrinal clarity: truth is not the governing discourse genre in this case.[992] He notes that there is an analogy to the way that Lyotard understood the relationship between the enthusiastic feeling that something is happening in history (*e.g.* the French Revolution and the sign of history) and the aesthetic.[993] It is the attempt, in bearing witness, to evoke that which cannot be directly presented. As a result, an open discourse of the Idea of love should respect its use of love as an idea, in referencing the unpresentable. Naturally, conflicts will arise between theologians as they try and fill in the name of love with various meanings, while bearing witness theologically to the event of grace.

4.10.2 Avoiding Oppressing the Other through Love

Theologians who work to recontextualize the Christian narrative as an open discourse of the Idea of love will strive to bear witness particularly to the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed. Boeve's concept of interruption is inspired by the work of Johan Baptist Metz, who wrote that "the shortest definition of religion is interruption."[994] Metz wanted theology to remain mindful of the fact that tension, turmoil, danger and menace are an integral part of the Christian faith. He believed that it was too easy for faith to glide into a comfortable bourgeois religion, which seeks respectability and a connection with culture, rather than to witness to the subversive message of the death, burial, and resurrection of God's son. As Boeve comments, "Such religion seeks a too-facile reconciliation, forgetting in the process the tragic suffering that confronts human existence."[995] Rather, those who understand the Christian narrative as an open narrative will maintain what Boeve calls a "preferential option for the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed."[996] He calls this a "theologically-motivated task," which remains sensitive to the "threatened other" and resists especially histories maintained by conquerors over their victims.[997] Such oppressive ideologies should be interrupted, resisted, and ultimately broken open by Christian narratives which refuse to close themselves upon injustice. Confrontation with excluded and threatened others can also help believers carry out

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[992] Those who are interested in Christianity must explore the faith for themselves. As Boeve says, they "will ultimately have to develop a taste for it. Only those who enter into discipleship can come to learn what it means to believe that God is love, that we have been given the gift of grace in Jesus, and so forth. Christianity cannot be explained and communicated to the last detail and cannot be made completely transparent." See Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 180.

[993] Boeve writes, "The analogy that Lyotard saw between the aesthetic and the historico-political thus may count as well for the religious." See Boeve, *Lyotard and Theology*, 65.

[994] Johan Baptist Metz, *Glaube in Geschichte und Gesellschaft: Studien zu einer praktischen Fundamentaltheologie* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1977), 150. As cited in Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, 203.

[995] Ibid.

[996] Ibid.

[997] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 180. See also Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, 203.

a self-critique of their own narratives, in an intentional drive to avoid using love as a rule for oppressing others.

4.10.3 Remaining Open to the Possibility of Receiving the Event of Grace

An open discourse of the Idea of love will be able to think transcendence and immanence together through the happening of the event, without having to anchor God within an onto(theo)logical structure. The event of grace is thought of as the in-breaking of divine love through a disruptive presentation of grace and love. This is a transcendent heterogeneity which interrupts discourses and narratives from outside of their borders. Boeve explains the disruptive grace event in this way: "Theologically speaking, the transcendent God, as event, as the Other, is conceived then from the infringement which the event opens in the narrated narrative."[998] Any reflection upon God should, therefore, bring God's inexpressibility into consideration, while acknowledging God's interruptive "involvement in particularity."[999] For God acts to break open the Christian narrative when it closes. Indeed, Boeve gives counter-examples to show "how critical, innovative and creative an open reception of the event of grace can be."[1000] In this regard, Boeve mentions the breaking open of the Christian narrative which had closed upon feudal structures in the Middle Ages by the appearance of the Mendicant Orders; the conversion of St. Francis of Assisi, which may be viewed as a paralogy, which identified deeply with the poor; and the enthusiasm felt at the announcement of the second Vatican Council by John XXIII.[1001] These counter-examples show the possibility of receiving the event of grace, as God acts to break open narratives and theological structures which need to "breathe" and bear witness to that which is other to them (i.e. to bear witness to the other/Other).[1002]

4.10.4 Participation (Living) in Love Analogous to Living in the Truth

Although Boeve does not make this suggestion, it seems that there may be an analogy between living in the truth and participating in love, for those who attempt to keep their Christian narratives open. Boeve does argue that those who follow the model of the open narrative will not make claims to possessing an "all-encompassing objective truth as

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[998] Boeve, "Critical Consciousness," 466.
[999] Ibid.
[1000] Boeve, "Bearing Witness," 376.
[1001] Ibid.
[1002] Boeve's counter-examples for the gracious in-breaking of the love of God into closed narratives in order to break them open are, of course, positive examples which contrast with the counter-examples offered by Lyotard to show how the modern master narratives lost plausibility through their inability to achieve the ends of history they had promised. See Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained*, 28-29.

such,"[1003] for the truth cannot be encapsulated, either in a plurality of stories, or in one all-encompassing narrative. The need to bear witness to radical heterogeneity points to the limitedness of any narrative claiming to be able to fully and completely express the truth. Truth cannot be contained in any one narrative; rather, narratives bear witness to truth. As Boeve puts it, "Truth is no longer exclusively bound to the 'truth *content*' of a narrative. It is more a question of *living in the truth*, of relating to the truth that no particular narrative can exhaust. Narratives must point to the truth and give witness to it."[1004] One can recognize an open narrative living in the truth by the way it relates to the "inexhaustible, incomprehensible and inexplicable" Truth, which remains intangible as the elusive other.[1005]

In an analogous manner, an open discourse of the Idea of love, i.e. an open theology of love, relates ultimately to a Love that can never be fully expressed or encapsulated by its narrative. But an open narrative of love will bear witness to this very Love which no witness can completely represent. In fact, any attempt to locate divine Love exclusively within the borders of the Christian narrative will inevitably create a hegemonic Christian master narrative of love. As we have seen, the prophets resisted such a move. Rather, Love breaks in from the outside of the narrative as a divine event of grace, which challenges the Christian narrative towards self-criticism and demands that a witness be made of its interruptive power. Love presents itself as a disruptive invitation – inviting the other to live in a life of Love. However, as Boeve writes, the Christian narrative also sounds a warning.

> The Christian narrative of Jesus Christ does not only speak of a God who easily reconciles and who binds in harmonious love. It also speaks of the God of apocalyptic judgement, the God who interrupts time and undermines every endeavor – whether Christian or not – to be self-reliant.[1006]

Although love is not tied to the content of any narrative, it is experienced as suddenly presenting itself at the border of each one's personal narrative. Perhaps such an analogy between Truth and Love is theologically appropriate, since both sides of the analogy try to bear witness to a God who reveals Godself as both Truth and Love – a God whose person and activity can never be fully enclosed in any narrative we could tell.[1007] The Christian open narrative, therefore, attempts to bear witness (in language) to a God whose love and truth are inexhaustible.

[1003] Boeve, *Interrupting Tradition*, 99.
[1004] Ibid.
[1005] Ibid.
[1006] Boeve, *God Interrupts History*, 90.
[1007] See for example Deut 7,7-13 and Jn 14,6. Boeve defines Christian faith as "faith in a God who reveals Godself as and in concrete love – faith in the God who, as Love, becomes the key for reading the very particularities and contingencies of history." See ibid., 154.

4.11 IN CONVERSATION WITH BOEVE

In the model of the open narrative, Boeve offers theology a powerful tool for recontextualizing the Christian faith. Boeve's work helps theology to see that the Christian narrative most naturally functions as an open narrative and identifies the Jesus narrative as a narrative that refuses to close. Boeve's contribution gives theologians room for thinking Christianity along the lines of a Christian open narrative. Boeve is correct in suggesting that Christian theology should be considered as an open discourse of the Idea of love. As a unique and particular discourse, theology attempts to bear witness to the other/Other as it uses language, i.e. to link phrases together which describe life as the possibility of experiencing the interrupting power of the event of grace. In making its claim, theology must use language, since this is the only tool that we have. God has used language, as well, to reveal Godself to people throughout time. Thus, theology must think, speak, and bear witness to a Love through language, knowing at all times that this love cannot be directly represented. It must, rather, be evoked through signs and symbols.

Boeve's category of interruption is a powerful theological tool for understanding transcendence and immanence beginning at the point of the occurrence of the event. Interruption helps to indicate how God reveals Godself within time and space. It also provides a way of thinking that aids theology in conducting a constant, radical recontextualization of the faith. Interruptions occurring at the border of one's particular Christian narrative can help us as we perform a self-critique and interpret both the current context and Christian tradition if we pay attention to them. This can aid theology in being sensitized to God's interrupting presence which may be found in one's confrontation with radical, irreducible alterity. As Boeve says, "Every concrete encounter with the other/Other is a potential location for God to reveal Godself today."[1008]

Questions arise out of Boeve's work, however, which need to be answered. Boeve argues that an open narrative must be both "open" and a "narrative." This leads one to question how open the Christian open narrative can be before it ceases to be a narrative. Boeve reminds us that narratives have borders. Since each narrative is particular, and since we have given up on offering all-encompassing narratives, is there anything common that potentially forms a border among diverse, particular Christian open narratives? Does love itself have a border? Boeve argues that the Christian open narrative is a story of love. Therefore, one's definition of "love" becomes critically important, if Christian theology is an open discourse of the Idea of love. For the event of love, as the gracious in-breaking of God's love, is experienced as revealing itself in presentation. The definitions which theologians give

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[1008] Ibid., 205.

for the word "love" will be determinative for their own theological reflections on such events, as we will see. One also needs to ask how "love" is understood in the current cultural context. Does "love" as it is generally understood in our postmodern culture have a border, or does "love" simply embrace everything as it presents itself?

Boeve's suggestion that particular theological reflections on love should be viewed as individual discourses is very helpful. An open discourse of the Idea of love, therefore, attempts to respect an idea of love as an idea, while it locates itself as an island (among other islands) in Lyotard's philosophical Archipelago. Between discourses on love there will be trade and conflict. This will become apparent in the next chapter. For discourses on love, built up from heterogeneous conceptions of love, borrow from and war against each other in an attempt to dominate all other competing discourses. As we will see, in the process of recontextualizing the Idea of love, Agape has borrowed from and compromised with other cultural concepts of love (*e.g.* Nomos and Eros). However, we will argue that God's grace sometimes interrupts and breaks open discourses which are based upon ideas of love: prophetic witnesses sometimes contradict those who are the official interpreters and guardians of the Christian tradition.

Boeve suggests that border experiences with alterity are opportunities for learning from the interrupting grace of God. In fact, Boeve ends his book *God Interrupts History* with the suggestion that Jesus of Nazareth learned how to open up his narrative even further through an encounter with the Syro-Phoenician woman. Boeve writes, "God is manifest outside the boundaries of Israel in the faith of the Canaanite woman."[1009] This is a very suggestive idea: that God uses confrontation with the other/Other to break our narratives open at the border of our experience. However, the emphasis on Boeve's work is on *positive* experiences with alterity. How would Boeve deal with evil and deception? A person can present him or herself deceptively: i.e., the person interrupting can be an evil person or the Evil One himself. Jesus, of course, experienced border encounters with demons, demoniacs, and his disciple Peter! Behind his encounter with Peter, Jesus discerned Satan's temptation in the disciple's words (Mt 16,23 and Mk 8,33). How can theology deal with border experiences which purposely choose to conceal or deceive? A theologian's task is to (1) faithfully keep the tradition while (2) recontextualizing the faith for the current context. Since border experiences are never fully perspicuous, and since an attempt is sometimes made to deceive, how do theologians discern what is happening in border experiences with alterity? To put it practically, how do *we* avoid

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[1009] The woman pleads with Jesus for her daughter's healing, but Jesus refuses her request. Jesus tells her that he has been sent to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" and notes that "it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." However, the woman's response touches Jesus. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters." Boeve identifies this as a moment of interruption that allows Jesus to open his story up to include non-Jews, to make a space for them within his narrative. See ibid., 206.

"burning Joan of Arc at the stake?" How do we guard and pass on the faith, while listening to prophets *and* heretics?

To say this positively, how do we discern God's activity in border experiences which challenge our narrative (whether closed or closing)? How do we recognize the prophet who speaks as one under obligation for having heard God's voice? In a similar vein, are some border experiences simply "ordinary" contacts with alterity? If so, how do we distinguish between the ordinary and the (potentially) extraordinary? How do we recognize those ordinary experiences which in fact present events of grace? One thinks of Jesus' recognition that his ministry on earth was finished when *Greeks* came looking for him.[1010] How did Jesus discern God's uniquely particular activity in this event? Did the promises given in Isaiah or some other Old Testament text aid in his recognition of the situation? How does theology deal theologically with ordinary events, which may or may not contain events of grace?

It is important to remember, as Boeve challenges us, that in any event something always escapes. An event presents itself as something inexpressible that asks to be expressed. Theology, therefore, should not be surprised when it finds itself "babbling" in lovers' prattle, trying to express the experience of being confronted by the loving event of God's grace. Language always fails on some level in its attempt to express the love relationship present between God and God's people. But, as Boeve reminds us, theologians must use language. We must somehow represent that particular love in trying to bear witness to it and in attempting to do justice to the event of its coming. For Christians, of course, the Incarnation is God's interruption *par excellence*. In Jesus of Nazareth God enters time and space as a man, who *shows* us the Father's love for us. But theology's witness to that event will always fall short; something will always be forgotten. Even the disciples missed what was present before their eyes. Philip asks to see the Father. That will be enough, he says, for the disciples. God is presented in the Incarnated Jesus, but even this interruption is misunderstood. Jesus replies, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14,9). Even in this presentation something is lost. And, yet, we must "babble" on, giving witness to an expression of that event of grace.

Boeve's stress upon the particularity and contingency of our own individual narratives should be expanded out to the Idea of love. When love presents itself, does it come as a particular, contingent love? Is God's love for each individual unique? Are there ways in which God's particular, contingent love might be similar? For example, when love presents itself, does it arrive as an undifferentiated something or with a particular character (*e.g.*

[1010] In John's gospel some Greeks come to Philip and ask to see Jesus (Jn 12,20-21). This occurs immediately after the Pharisees say, "Look how the whole world has gone after him!" (Jn 12,19). Upon hearing about the request, Jesus replies, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (12,23). Theologically the signal for the end of Jesus' earthly ministry is given by the appearance of these Greeks who have heard about and wish to see Jesus.

holiness)? Does the description of the apostle John as "the disciple Jesus loved" point to Jesus' particular and unique love for this disciple – and ultimately for each of us?

A critique can be made of Boeve's portrayal of Lyotard's thought: namely, that it is not as complete as it could be. For Boeve receives the Kantian side of Lyotard's work but has not received the libidinal aspect of Lyotard's philosophical project. Psychoanalysis and the libidinal are important for Lyotard, as can be seen in works at the beginning and end of his oeuvre.[1011] Lyotard recognized the lack of libidinal thinking in *The Differend* and hoped to remedy this.[1012] Pulsions, or emotional forces, are important to Lyotard and they are integral to his understanding of love (particularly as presentation of the inexpressible). Much of what Boeve has accomplished theologically has been in conversation with Lyotard's difference thinking and phrase pragmatics, as are worked out, for example, in his "philosophical" book, *The Differend*. However, any consideration of Lyotard's view of love, and of his critique of the Christian master narrative, should also take into consideration his understanding of the libidinal.

Finally, as a personal observation, Boeve's ideas which are presented in his oeuvre have formed the inspiration for my work in evangelism both in Belgium and in the United States. His concepts of particularity, contingency, and the model of the open narrative have been very helpful in designing a strategy for witnessing to postmodern people. Conversations with atheists, agnostics, and people of other faith have been very positive. A greater openness to consider the claims of Christ has been observed. Perhaps such anecdotal "evidence" does not belong in an academic, theological dissertation; however, it demonstrates to the author (at least) that Boeve's thought connects with the current cultural and critical context. This indicates to the author that Boeve's analysis is, in fact, a strong foundation upon which to build a recontextualized Christian narrative for the current postmodern context.

In regards to some of the questions asked in the critique of Boeve's work (above), we will suggest that the Idea of holiness can play an important role in understanding both (1) the border of a Christian open narrative and (2) divine love as it reveals itself to people in the event of grace. We will argue that when divine love presents itself in the event of grace it reveals itself as a holy love, which is simultaneously both radically open to sinners and radically closed to sin. In the next chapter we will consider four theologians and their views on love. We will then take their observations into consideration, as we attempt to fill the "name" of Christian love – what Lyotard calls a rigid designator of reality – with meaning.

[1011] See for example one of his early major works, Jean-François Lyotard, *Economie libidinale* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1975). The libidinal also appears in his posthumously published work: Jean-François Lyotard and François Rouan, *La confession d'Augustin* (Paris: Galilée, 1998).
[1012] See Bennington's short discussion in Bennington, *Late Lyotard*, 90, see also footnote 79.

5. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON LOVE

5.0 DISCOURSES ON THE IDEA OF LOVE

The Christian open narrative attempts to give expression to people's experiences of being confronted by divine love through the person of Jesus Christ. This experience of the event of grace (i.e. of divine love) comes as a radical in-breaking revelation of God's grace and favor. Expressed in Lyotard's terms, the event arrives as a presentation, during which the recipient finds him or herself captivated by love. The person finds him or herself babbling away, trying to give expression to that event. Once the event passes, once the jarring appearance of Radical Love recedes, it must be reflected upon. Again, in Lyotardian terms, it must somehow be *translated* into a phrase. Divine love, as presented to the believer, must be named (i.e. represented). This naming produces a discourse which is based upon an Idea of love. Since a name, as a rigid designator, can hold many definitions, theology produces a number of heterogeneous discourses based upon sometimes competing definitions or representations of love. Christianity has rightfully been called a religion of love. Thus, Boeve is correct when he identifies Christian theology as a discourse on the Idea of love, for love is the central point in Christianity. Indeed, there could be no Christian faith without God's love displayed on the Cross.

Throughout Church history, a number of specific discourses have shaped the Christian idea of love. We will now consider reflections by four theologians who pay attention to the development of this idea, while keeping in mind what Lyotard teaches us: that heterogeneous discourses sometimes trade with or go to war against each other. Conflict erupts on the Archipelago, as well, over different theological reflections. Since the Idea of love is found at the heart of Christian theological reflection, a solid understanding of love is necessary if we are to recontextualize the faith, in a plausible manner, for the current, postmodern context.

5.1 NYGREN: AGAPE AND LOVE

Anders Nygren (1890-1978) was born in Gothenburg Sweden, as the third of four boys, to a highly religious Lutheran family. The faith which he heard taught by his parents and preached at the Evangelical Lutheran (State) Church of Sweden deeply impacted his life. Nygren completed his Bachelor of Divinity degree at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Lund and was ordained for the ministry in 1912. While working as a pastor, Nygren continued to study exegesis, philosophy, and systematic theology. Taking leave of his diocese in Gothenburg, Nygren continued his theological education in Germany. This training

culminated in the successful defense of his dissertation and appointment as assistant professor at the Faculty of Theology of Lund University in 1921. Nygren was awarded a full professorship in 1924 and lectured in systematic theology, with an emphasis on the philosophy of religion. In 1930 he published the first part of his most influential work, *Agape and Eros*. Through his work at the university, Nygren was instrumental in helping develop what became known as the Lundensian system for theological reflection. This Lundensian approach eventually spread from Sweden to countries around the world. In 1947 Nygren became the first president of the Lutheran World Fellowship. One year later, he stepped down from Lund University and was ordained as bishop in the diocese of Lund, on May 22, 1949, where he served until his retirement in 1959. Ecumenical work and a small number of visiting professorships marked his later years. Nygren died on October 20, 1978 and is buried in Lund, Sweden.[1013]

His book, *Agape and Eros: The Christian Idea of Love*, is perhaps the most influential theological work on love in the twentieth century.[1014] This book was originally published in two parts in Stockholm in 1930 and 1936. In *Agape and Eros* Nygren carries out his program of "motif research" as a way of investigating the meaning of the Christian idea of love. Nygren uses motif research to understand fundamental motifs rather than to appraise them.[1015] For Nygren a fundamental motif is a recurring idea that gives an answer to a categorically fundamental question.[1016] It is a "clearly formulated idea" or a "general underlying sentiment" that brings coherence and meaning to a religion.[1017] Historically in the West, these fundamental questions have concerned the Good, the True, the Beautiful, and the Eternal.[1018] The answers Christianity gave to these questions determined the Christian idea of love. At the dawn of Church history, the ancients asked the religious question: "What is God?" The First Epistle of John declares: "God is *agape*." Similarly they raised the ethical question: "What is the Good?" The answer Christianity gives is that the Good is *agape*, an ethic that is expressed

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[1013] This biographical summary is drawn primarily from an introduction by Walter Capps in Anders Nygren, *Anders Nygren's Religious Apriori: With an Introduction by Walter H. Capps*, vol. 2 (Linköping, Sweden: Linköping University Electronic Press, 2000), 13-15. Reference was also made to the biographical information given at this website: "Boston Collaborative Encyclopedia of Western Theology: Lundensian Theology" http://people.bu.edu/wwildman/bce/mwt_themes_720_lund.htm [accessed July 17, 2013].

[1014] Werner Jeanrond calls it "the most successful and influential theological book on love in the twentieth century." See Werner G. Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 113.

[1015] Nygren writes, "The task of science is to understand, not to appraise." See Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans., Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1953), 38.

[1016] Ibid., 42-43.

[1017] Ibid., 37.

[1018] Nygren defines a fundamental motif as "that which forms the answer given by some particular outlook to a question of such a fundamental nature that it can be described in a categorical sense as a fundamental question." These fundamental questions have been answered by fundamental motifs since early on in the history of philosophy. See ibid., 42.

in the Commandment of Love towards God and neighbor.[1019] Nygren argues that something revolutionary and new appears in the ancient world in the idea of Agape. This fundamentally new idea of love comes into contact with the prevailing views of love – namely Nomos and Eros –, and the conflict between these fundamental motifs of love will determine the development of the Christian idea of love in history. However, Nygren says, it will be the confrontation between the Agape and Eros motifs, their synthesis and ultimate divorce, which will dominate the Christian understanding of love.

5.1.1 The Agape Motif

A new fundamental motif appeared in the ancient world through the ministry of Jesus Christ. This new offer of fellowship with God was viewed by some as a direct assault upon the traditional view of how one gains fellowship with the divine. Nygren claims that Jesus came not with a new conception or idea about God but the offer of "a new fellowship with God."[1020] This new offer, however, guarantees a confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders, for it went right to the heart of religious life, since "it concerns the very nature of fellowship with God itself."[1021]

5.1.1.1 Jesus: The Revelation of God's Agape-Love

Jesus upended the values of Jewish faith when he declared, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mk 2,17). For one was righteous under Judaism by his or her relationship to the Law; since the blessed delighted in the Law, meditating on it "day and night" (Ps 1,2). Therefore, those who devoted themselves to the Law were shocked when Jesus dined with sinners and publicans. Not only did he socialize with the "unrighteous," but he called sinners to himself. As Nygren writes, "We can see at once that those who had grown up in religious devotion to the Law were bound to see in this a violent assault on the very foundations of their inherited religion and morality."[1022] Those whose conception of divine love was based on the Nomos motif were scandalized by the announcement of this new fellowship with God, and tension rose to a boiling point when Jesus announced that this is how God sees the situation. Jesus' claim went right to the heart of legal piety; for, in seeking the sinner, God shows God's love to the *sinner* rather than to the righteous. This love forgives

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[1019] Ibid., 47-48. Nygren asserts that Agape is the center of Christianity: "the Christian fundamental motif *par excellence*, the answer to both the religious and the ethical question." As such, "Agape is Christianity's own original basic conception." See ibid., 48.
[1020] Ibid., 68.
[1021] Ibid.
[1022] Ibid., 69.

and is freely given. In confrontations between Jesus and the Pharisees the "religion of law" protests against "the religion of love." Two different kinds of fellowship with God confronted one another here, and conflict was inevitable. The more earnest those on each side were the less the clash could be avoided."[1023]

Nygren argues that Agape-love is "spontaneous and unmotivated." God's love is spontaneous, since God has no reason or motivation for loving a particular individual. God simply loves because *agape* is God's nature. Agape-love is not grounded in the value of the beloved; rather, it is a creative love. God loves a sinner and makes a saint. Thus, the only way to enter into fellowship with God is through God's *agape* love. Nygren writes that "there is from man's [*sic*] side no way at all that leads to God."[1024] Rather, God must approach humanity and offer fellowship to us, "since Agape is God's way to man."[1025] God approaches humanity in the sudden arrival of God's incarnated Son, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

5.1.1.2 Paul: The Agape of the Cross

The Apostle Paul's understanding of Agape is indelibly linked with his experience of conversion, for the persecutor became an apostle.[1026] At the point of his most ardent and devoted service to God, *en route* to Damascus to arrest Christians, in "his very pursuit of righteousness," Paul became the "chief of sinners."[1027] In a shattering encounter with the risen Christ, the grace of Agape-love confronted Paul in the voice of One who "came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mk 2,17). Through that event Paul learned that from our side there is "no way whatsoever to righteousness,"[1028] for everyone has sinned and "fall[s] short of the glory of God" (Rom 3,23). Rather, the righteousness which is "apart from law" (Rom 3,21) makes itself known in Agape-love, or God's approach to humanity.

For Paul, the Cross of Christ dominates the way of salvation, and divine love is revealed to humanity precisely at that cross. Paul's idea of love as "the Agape of the Cross,"[1029] is one of a self-giving, sacrificial love that "gives itself away ... even to the uttermost."[1030] Again, it is a spontaneous and unmotivated love that pours itself out for sinners, rather than for the righteous. In fact, Paul pushes this to its extreme: Christ died for

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[1023] Ibid., 70.
[1024] Ibid., 80.
[1025] Ibid., 81.
[1026] Ibid., 110.
[1027] Ibid., 113.
[1028] Ibid., 112. According to Nygren, Paul is converted from "righteousness" obtained through the Law. The revelation of God and the Agape of Christ puts an end to Israel's pride in the Law, since this is counted as belonging to the flesh, according to Paul. See ibid., 111.
[1029] Ibid., 117.
[1030] Ibid., 118.

the "ungodly" or godless men [*sic*]."[1031] Therefore, for the apostle, "sacrifice is no longer man's way to God, but *God's way to man*."[1032] This radically deepens the Agape motif, according to Nygren, by connecting God's love with the Cross of Christ.

However, Paul hesitates to use the term *agape* with reference to the individual's love for God, since for the apostle *agape* is without question a spontaneous and unmotivated love. The believer can only respond to God's love; s/he cannot instigate that love as an independent, autonomous being. According to Nygren, our best and highest love can only be a reflexive response and thus remains motivated. Human love, therefore, is "the very opposite of a spontaneous and creative love; it lacks all the essential marks of Agape."[1033] Rather, Paul refers to the believer's devotion to God as *faith*, reserving the term *agape* for naming God's love. But Paul does use *agape* to denote the Christian's attitude towards his or her neighbor, since, for Nygren, the love with which the believer loves a neighbor is infused by God into his or her being (Rom 5,5). Nygren equates Paul's description of divine love with "a kind of 'pneumatic fluid,' which is poured into a believer's heart and without which s/he would have nothing to give to his or her neighbor.[1034] Christian love for the neighbor is, therefore, the very opposite of self-love. It is Agape-love.

5.1.1.3 John: Agape's Final Formulation

Nygren argues that in the Synoptic Gospels *agape* is closely linked to fellowship with God, but this connection is made much stronger in Paul's reflection on the Cross as the principal demonstration of God's Agape-love. However, the apostle John takes the final step in his first epistle, when he gives the supreme formal statement to the primitive Christian Agape motif: "God is Agape" (1 Jn 4,8.16). By identifying God and Agape, John "gives to the primitive Christian idea of Agape its final form."[1035]

John views Agape as working smoothly between God and humanity: it flows in two directions. The believer's love for God and Christ is evidenced by his or her absolute submission to God's will and obedience towards his commands (1 Jn 2,5 and Jn 14,15.23-24).[1036] John does not hesitate to speak of our love for God, in contrast to Paul. Like the view presented in the Synoptic Gospels, "Agape-love is the *fellowship* of love."[1037] However, the

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[1031] Nygren refers to Rom 5,6 at this point. See ibid., 119.
[1032] Ibid., 122.
[1033] Ibid., 125-126.
[1034] Ibid., 129.
[1035] Ibid., 149.
[1036] Ibid., 148.
[1037] Ibid., 154. Neighborly love, however, is not something that should be given universally or to one's enemy; rather, there are limits to neighborly love which are quickly attained. "Unlimited spiritual fellowship and unity are possible only between 'the brethren' who are united in God." See ibid.

heightening of the "warmth and intensity" of Christian love tends also towards the exclusion of their enemies or of those who stand outside of the small community. By limiting Christian love to "the brethren," *agape's* spontaneous, unmotivated character is imperiled. Nygren argues that the Johannine corpus suggests a shift in the meaning of the word *agape*, since there is an *agape* that rejects the world (1 Jn 2,15). The Christian idea of love is transitioning to something different – that is being influenced by both the Eros and Agape motifs.[1038]

5.1.2 The Eros Motif

The fundamental prevailing motif in the ancient world was the Eros motif. Nygren calls Eros the dominant "fundamental religious motif of declining antiquity."[1039] This motif, which emerged out of Orphism, offered a way of salvation which fused together the "religious longings and the idealistic trends of late antiquity."[1040] A spiritual hunger gnawed away at the ancient heart, and the doctrine of Eros attempted to fill this yearning for salvation. Plato placed his stamp upon Eros by synthesizing Greek rationalism together with Oriental mysticism, and the philosophy that emerged from this union would have a tremendous influence on the history of human thought.[1041]

5.1.2.1 Plato

Nygren notes that Plato's philosophy is both dialectic and salvific; for Plato offered a means of salvation, and his dialectical arguments are often interrupted by small myths.[1042] Plato expresses the Eros motif philosophically, but its roots are found in Orphism and the myth of Zagreus. According to this myth, humans share a dual nature: from the ashes of the Titans evil, but from Zagreus (the son of Zeus) the divine. According to Campbell, "to subdue the Titanic to the divine, and to reunite what has been violently sundered, is therefore the highest task of humanity."[1043] From this mythological dualism, Plato creates a sharp division between two worlds: namely, of sense and of Ideas. Salvation is found in the higher world of Ideas; therefore, a person must turn away from the lower world of the senses and long for the

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[1038] Ibid., 158.
[1039] Ibid., 160.
[1040] Ibid., 161.
[1041] Ibid., 166. The Eros motif emerges out of the Mystery-religion and is adapted by Plato. He is the one who "gave the Eros motif a characteristic form, in which its meaning and structure are revealed with special clarity." See ibid., 162.
[1042] Ibid., 166. One thinks, for example, of the allegory of the Cave in the *Republic* – among others.
[1043] Lewis Campbell, *Religion in Greek Literature: A Sketch in Outline* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1898), 247.

perfect world of Ideas. Only the Eros dwelling in every human soul can give one victory over sensual things. Nygren summarizes the interaction between persons and Ideas nicely:

> The Ideas do not participate in things, but things participate in the Ideas. When man [*sic*] glimpses the Ideas in things, he is seized by Eros, the longing for the pure world of Ideas. *Eros is man's conversion from the sensible to the supersensible: it is the upward tendency of the human soul; it is a real force, which drives the soul in the direction of the Ideal world*.[1044]

This upward movement is empowered by Eros and the soul's longing for the beautiful. For Plato teaches that the soul in its pre-existent state saw the true, beautiful, and good in a vision of the Ideas. Memory of this glorious higher world pulls upon the soul, even if it does not understand this attraction. Therefore, the longing to partake of divine life is described by Plato as "heavenly Eros." This is a desire for what the soul lacks, and this upward attraction of the soul is Eros. Nygren comments that Eros is acquisitive love, i.e. humanity's way to the Divine, and thus egocentric love. He notes, "The entire structure of Platonic Eros is egocentric. Everything centres on the individual self and its destiny."[1045]

5.1.2.2 Aristotle

Aristotle expands the classical idea of Eros into one with "cosmic significance."[1046] For Aristotle, the entire lower world longs for the higher world and is set in an upward motion towards the Pure Form. Matter everywhere strives for form, and this massive upward movement comes together at the Divine (or Pure Form). For Aristotle God is the "absolutely Unmoved." According to Aristotle, the completely unmoved sets everything else in motion "by being loved."[1047] The longing of the lower for the Divine sets the entire cosmos in its upward movement.

5.1.2.3 Plotinus

Ancient culture changed in the five hundred years separating Plato and Plotinus. Late ancient people were extremely interested in religion, so that philosophical questions tended towards answering practical religious questions more than discussing theoretical problems

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[1044] Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 170.
[1045] Ibid., 179.
[1046] Ibid., 183.
[1047] Ibid., 184.

related to "objective experience."[1048] Plotinus and Neo-Platonism gave an answer to people's longing for salvation by returning Eros to its roots in Mystery-piety.[1049]

The one essential thing for Plotinus is the soul's return to God. Plotinus worked within what has been called the Alexandrian world-scheme, where a hard separation is made between God and matter. Because of this hard separation an adequate number of intermediate beings becomes necessary. Thus Neo-Platonism constructs a system that provides for the mediation of communication between the two worlds of matter and the One, i.e. the Divine. However, unlike with Plato and Aristotle, the Alexandrian world-scheme provided for *downward* as well as *upward* movement. The Neo-Platonic idea of emanation is one of descending movement, and it seeks to answer the question of how a divine soul could fall and become entrapped within a human body. To escape imprisonment, the soul must reverse the process of its fall in an ascent back to the One. To begin the process of ascent, the soul must learn to discount as worthless those things in the sense world which it cherishes, while remembering its divine value and origin. Beauty within the sense world awakens within the soul a desire for the Primal Beauty. Eros powers the process of the soul's movement as it turns to ascend towards the Beautiful. The soul reaches its goal when it achieves the pinnacle of perfection, i.e. when it becomes one with God, through ecstasy.[1050]

5.1.2.4 The Fundamental Contrast Between Agape and Eros

Nygren says that in Plotinus salvation is an erotic ascent that undoes the descent that imprisoned the soul in matter, whereas in Christianity fellowship with God is established by God's coming down in Agape-love to humanity, not by humanity's climbing up in Eros to God. The contrast between the two motifs is elemental.

As Nietzsche said, Christianity is a "transvaluation of all ancient values."[1051] Agape upends Jewish legal piety's entire value system: God calls not the righteous but *sinners*.[1052] Similarly, Agape challenges the ancient Greek idea concerning the gods, for they were certain that the gods could not love, since they had everything they could possibly want. Love was understood by the Greeks as Eros, i.e. as acquisitive love – a calculating, motivated love. But

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[1048] Nygren writes, "In late antiquity, philosophy was not thought of as primarily a scientific discipline but as a practical religious affair. What men [*sic*] asked of it was less a theoretical discussion of the problems of objective existence than a basis and support for the inner life, and finally a way to the Divine and blessed life." See ibid., 187.

[1049] The move towards the secularization of Eros under Aristotle is reversed under Plotinus, who returns Eros to its embedding in Mystery-piety. "In Plotinus ... the religious interest is uppermost and dominates his entire thought." See ibid.

[1050] Like Plato, Plotinus argued that union with the Divine cannot be reached ultimately though discursive thought or dialectic – only through ecstasy. See ibid., 193.

[1051] Nygren agrees with Nietzsche and says that "Agape is like a blow in the face to both Jewish legal piety and Hellenistic Eros-piety." See ibid., 200.

[1052] Ibid., 200-201.

for the Christian love is Agape – a self-giving, sacrificing love that is spontaneous and unmotivated. According to Nygren, the distinction between the two ideas of love could not be more clearly drawn.

This sharp distinction between Agape and Eros is also marked in love for neighbor and for self. For Plato everything else must ultimately be abandoned in the soul's ascent to the Divine. One's neighbor is merely a stepping stone in the soul's ascent. However, in Agape-love one loves one's neighbor or enemy in response to and inspired by God's love. God's love causes the Christian to love his or her neighbor. However, Agape "excludes all self-love."[1053]

5.1.2.5 Fundamental Motifs in Conflict

Nygren says that Eros and Agape, as two separate love motifs, are "historically quite distinct."[1054] These ideas of love, in fact, emerge out of "two separate spiritual worlds."[1055] In their original incarnations the two motifs are absolutely incompatible; however, throughout the history of the Church, they competed with each other.[1056] In the process the Christian idea of love was Hellenized, as the Eros motif "victoriously invaded Christian territory and transformed it from within."[1057] This transformation happened so quietly and subtly that the hegemony the Eros motif gained over the Christian Agape motif has rarely been noticed throughout much of that history.

5.1.3 The Caritas Motif

As the Agape motif began to make its claims in the ancient world, it came into contact with the Nomos and Eros motifs operating in Jewish and Greek cultures. People who grew up under the influence of the later two fundamental religious and ethical motifs responded differently to the radically new Agape motif, with reactions based upon the presuppositions they held. This resulted, therefore, in a plurality of heterogeneous ideas concerning Christian love. Augustine forged a synthesis between the Agape and Eros motifs and produced an entirely new and unique idea of love: the highly influential Caritas motif.

[1053] Ibid., 217.
[1054] Ibid., 236.
[1055] Ibid., 235.
[1056] Nygren says that "a conflict waged throughout the history of Christianity, in which each of the two motifs strives to determine the meaning of Christian love and the interpretation of Christianity in general." See ibid., 238.
[1057] Ibid., 240.

5.1.3.1 Caritas as Love to God

Caritas refers primarily to love to God. Christ entered the world in order to teach us how to rightly love God.[1058] The center and focus of the Christian's love is to be love to God. In fact, love to neighbor is only legitimate so long as it refers in the end to God alone and *not* to one's neighbor. For Augustine, Caritas means clinging passionately to God, as Nygren writes, "in the abandon of the heart's undivided love he [i.e. Augustine] will cleave to God as his highest and only good."[1059]

Agape plays an important part in Augustine's idea of Charity. Nygren argues that Neo-Platonism gave Augustine a perspective which allowed him to see the importance of love for Christian faith. But it also blinded him to a full understanding of Agape. Augustine often cites Paul's statement that "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Rom 5,5 NIV). Love descends and infuses itself in the believer's heart by the Spirit, and a Christian can only have love to God through this Caritas given from above. God's spontaneous and unmotivated love is also seen in Augustine's doctrine of Predestination, where God graciously chooses the sinner before s/he responds in love and faith. In this sense, Augustine writes about "præveniens" and "gratis data" with reference to God's grace.[1060] However, according to Nygren, "he never knew Agape in its Christian fullness."[1061]

5.1.3.2 Settling the Issue Between Eros and Agape

For Augustine, the way to salvation was through Eros, i.e. through the soul's ascent to God. But Augustine was not completely convinced that we can enter into God's presence through Eros; the wings of our desire are simply too weak to carry us up to God, since the human heart can long for many things other than the vision of God. "God has created man [*sic*] such that he *must* desire, *must* love and long for something."[1062] However, people can direct their love downwards and try to find their "bonum" in created objects. Placed in an intermediary position – between material and spiritual realms –, people are prone to making this mistake. God, therefore, descends to us in Agape love so that we can find our "bonum" once again in God. Those who begin the ascent to God are prone to pride and self-sufficiency, but Agape functions as a corrective for superbia. The *humilitas* of the descending Son of God

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[1058] Ibid., 453.
[1059] Ibid.
[1060] According to Nygren, the ideas of "prevenient grace" and "gratuitous grace" clearly demonstrate Augustine's understanding of God's Agape as unmotivated and spontaneous love. See ibid., 468.
[1061] Ibid., 470.
[1062] Ibid., 482.

who comes to die on the Cross helps to destroy human pride. Still, in seeking to "take heaven by storm," Eros "seeks its own." Agape, on the other hand, loves without placing a value on the object of its love. Rather, it loves self-sacrificially. Although Augustine succeeded in synthesizing the Eros and Agape motifs together and creating a new motif, he never perceived the "fatal contradiction" between these two motifs, according to Nygren. Augustine "wanted to maintain both Eros and Agape at once. He was unaware that they are diametrically opposed to each other and that the relation between them must be an Either – Or; instead, he tried to make it a Both – And."[1063]

5.1.3.3 Caritas, Cupiditas, and "Quies"

Happiness is something that all people want, according to Augustine, since everyone seeks his or her own happiness. When a person places his or her "bonum" on an object, that object begins to pull on the individual; it exerts a force upon the soul. We cannot help but desire objects, for God created us precisely so, in order that we will be directed heavenward to (eventually) love our Creator. But love can direct itself downwards towards a created object; this leads inevitably to nothingness.[1064] This downward love for a created thing Augustine names Cupiditas. The rightness or wrongness of love is determined by the object to which it is drawn. People are "curvatus" in Augustine's thinking: pulled down to the earth and its sensuous objects. God, therefore, must help us to fix our gaze upwards, so that Eros can wing us up to the eternal, where we can find the true happiness, our "*quies*" or eternal rest in God.[1065] Only in God as "the immutable, inalienable good" can an individual find ultimate satisfaction. Thus, in Augustine's way of thinking, everyone loves God without exception, as Nygren writes, "whether they know it or not."[1066]

5.1.3.4 A Uniquely Creative Idea of Love

Nygren says that Augustine managed to create a unique and creative new concept of love by synthesizing the Eros and Agape motifs together. His concept of Caritas would have a profound affect upon both the Medieval Church and Catholic theology.[1067] Through this synthesis, Augustine proffered an answer to a question which had occupied the thoughts of

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[1063] Ibid., 470.

[1064] Turning away from God, the person sinks farther down towards "nothing." Nygren writes, "This sinking, this loss of Being and Goodness ... is for Augustine the meaning of *evil*." See ibid., 488-489.

[1065] Nygren says that "*quies* is the key-word of Augustine's thought." See ibid., 487.

[1066] Ibid., 497.

[1067] Nygren argues that Augustine's ideas made him "the founder of the Catholic doctrine of grace." See ibid., 531.

many ancient philosophers: namely, "What is the 'highest good'."[1068] Augustine said that divinity itself is the highest good to which a person's desire may aspire. God is the "summum bonum," since only God is eternal, immutable, and utterly dependable. God alone is able to give *quies* to the human soul, since God is the soul's true "bonum." Therefore, according to Augustine, the question asked by ancient philosophy, concerning the "highest good," is answered in the Christian Commandment of Love.[1069]

Augustine interprets the Incarnation as God coming down personally to earth in order to remove the barrier of distance between Creator and creature.[1070] Christ's proximity to us makes it possible for us to see and desire God. Agape descends to the creature so that s/he can desire God. This grace precedes any faith or works on our part. As Nygren says, "Grace ... awakens delight in the good."[1071] Caritas makes it possible for a person to desire heaven; it is the power under the wings that allows our longing to soar heavenward, thereby opening a new direction for our desire through a new object. As a result, the ascent to God is no longer a burden – no matter how difficult the way may prove to be.

Yet this easy combination of Caritas and Eros troubles Nygren, since he views the latter as the controlling idea behind Augustine's concept of Caritas. Fellowship with God is established principally through the ascent – and only secondarily through grace and the Incarnation –, and this results in the Eros motif's dominance over the original Christian idea of Agape in Augustine's conception of Caritas. A pagan idea of ascent undergirds his idea of ascending love. Therefore, Nygren argues that by setting forth to answer the eudæmonistic question Augustine ends up weakening the Christian idea of love. "In this union the Christian idea of love is the losing partner, and that is simply because ancient thought is allowed to put the question."[1072]

5.1.4 The Renewal of the Agape Motif in the Reformation

The two motifs which Augustine synthesized, however, remained in tension with each other in the Caritas-synthesis. But the union eventually tore itself apart, and the Eros and Agape motifs were taken up, once again, by the Renaissance and the Reformation respectively.[1073] Once again the long neglected early Christian understanding of Agape came to the fore in Luther's "Copernican Revolution."[1074]

[1068] Ibid., 501.
[1069] Ibid., 503.
[1070] Ibid., 513.
[1071] Ibid., 528.
[1072] Ibid., 503.
[1073] Nygren writes, "The result of the disintegration may be expressed thus: *the Renascence takes up the Eros motif, the Reformation the Agape motif.*" See ibid., 669.
[1074] Ibid., 681.

Luther worked feverishly to dismantle Medieval theology which he viewed as a corruption of the Christian faith through its concentration upon human desires and needs. He waged a campaign "against all egocentricity whatsoever."[1075] Luther criticized Catholic piety for allegedly centering everything around the individual's interests and desires. Salvation is produced by the believer's works and not accomplished through Christ himself. Righteousness is attained through the good the believer accomplishes under the Medieval idea of merit. However, Luther saw that believers did the good less out of obedience to God than for the profit they expected to receive, i.e. from the satisfaction of personal desire. Nygren writes, "Everything is measured by the standard of human desire and judged by the importance it has for man [*sic*]. This applies even to God Himself" (i.e. as the believer's *summum bonum*).[1076]

The field of conflict between the Medieval Church and Luther is demarcated by two different views of how one is to have fellowship with God. Nygren says that the Medieval Church placed fellowship with God on the plane of God's holiness, while Luther situated this upon the human level. In Catholicism, fellowship with God was based on holiness on the divine plane; whereas, for Luther, that fellowship was based upon human sin here on Earth. Indeed, it was Luther's insistence that the believer remains a sinner, while s/he is accepted and justified by God that caused the greatest stir between Catholics and Lutherans.[1077] The two competing discourses faced off against each other in 1521 at the Diet of Worms, where it became evident that the synthesis between Eros and Agape would no longer hold together.

5.1.5 Luther

Luther claimed that the entire Catholic Caritas-discourse is built upon a foundation of the individual's love in a system that remains essentially egocentric. He saw this as a perversion of the faith, since Christian love remains nothing more than acquisitive love. Caritas is in the end simply self-love.[1078]

5.1.5.1 A False Way of Salvation

The revolution brought about by the Reformation was first birthed in Luther's heart. Luther sought desperately to obey the greatest commandment and to love God with all his heart; however, this extremely sensitive monk found it practically impossible. For Luther

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[1075] Ibid., 682.
[1076] Ibid.
[1077] See Nygren's discussion in ibid., 690-691.
[1078] Ibid., 683.

realized that "the more seriously he takes the commandment to love God with all his heart, and the more strict the demand that his love for God shall be pure and unselfish, the more impossible it becomes."[1079] A pure love had become tyrannical for Luther, and his conscience was troubled. He sought a pure and unselfish love for God through contrition, but failed. Yet his wrestling with a disquieted, churning soul led to a profound understanding of God's merciful love. Agape gives to those who are completely undeserving; it creates and restores by pouring out its grace on the one who is most lost. As Luther worked through the Epistle to the Romans he saw that the Church had misunderstood the path to salvation. Caritas is a false way to salvation. Nygren writes, "Our Caritas is not a way to God. Man [*sic*] is justified not by ascending to God in Caritas, but solely by receiving in faith God's love, which has descended in Christ. With this, the Caritas-synthesis has fallen to pieces, vanquished by God's Agape."[1080]

5.1.5.2 Luther's Campaign Against Self-Love

Good works, as such, were not a problem for Luther, but the intention in which they were done. Augustine taught that self-love could be the right kind of love for a Christian, so long as it ultimately finds its satisfaction in God alone. But self-love becomes condemnable when it seeks satisfaction in transient and material things. Self-love was not a problem for Augustine – simply the object in which it attempts to find satisfaction. But Luther wanted to destroy all self-love. "Self-love is not to be ennobled, but totally annihilated," writes Nygren.[1081] Luther rejected the Medieval ladders of merit, speculation, and mysticism, by which the believer climbs up to heaven. He wanted the good to be done freely to help the neighbor and bring glory to God – not for the merit that one might gain, nor as a way of climbing into heaven.

5.1.5.3 The Difference Between Divine Love and Ordinary Human Love

Nygren says that Luther succeeded in smashing the Caritas-synthesis into its two constituent motifs, a synthesis that had served as the Catholic idea of love for over a millennium. According to Luther, humans are naturally selfish and bent, since everything returns to what will benefit us. For Luther the seeking of one's own is the essence of sin, for it flatly contradicts the apostle Paul's description of love: "Love seeketh not its own." Thus,

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[1079] Ibid., 694.
[1080] Ibid., 695.
[1081] Ibid., 709.

"the whole of natural human life proves to be under the dominion of sin."[1082] Luther was furious that the Catholic idea of love constituted a system where – even in the pursuit of fellowship with God – one seeks one's own desire.

5.1.5.4 The Uniqueness of Christian Love

Nygren argues that Christian love is spontaneous and unmotivated, loving the other person irrespective of any desired intrinsic value that might be found.[1083] Agape loves precisely the unlovely, the sinner, and the rebel. It stands in absolute contrast to natural human love, which is indelibly stamped with the mark of seeking one's own.[1084] Human love is therefore utterly sinful. The individual is unable to love God with all his or her heart or the neighbor as self. God's love, however, "impart[s] from the fullness of its riches" and thereby creates something in the person loved; the foolish are made wise, the weak become strong, and the evil are changed into saints.[1085]

For Luther Christian love is a love poured into the Christian's heart, with the intention that it be shared with others. The neighbor is not used as a means of enjoying God, contra Augustine. Rather than directing the stream of love upwards, Luther adamantly maintains that it must flow downwards.[1086] The Christian is a channel through which God can pour love down upon the world, but Agape love can only be given to others after it has been personally received from God. As Nygren writes, "Christian love is not produced by us, but it has come to us from heaven."[1087] Once received, this love is to be extended both to God and to neighbor.

5.1.6 Assessment of Nygren's Thought

Nygren tells a story of the revelation of God's Agape love in the early church, its confrontation with the ancient idea of Erotic love, its ultimate synthesis with Eros in Caritas, and the final reemergence of the idea of Agape love through Martin Luther's shattering of the Catholic idea of Caritas. Nygren forcefully argues for a confrontation between competing ideas of love, where the ultimate victor is Agape love emancipated through Luther, the gallant victor. It is quite easy, in fact, to read Nygren through Lyotard's eyes. What Nygren calls motifs – i.e. recurring themes within theology based upon specific ideas of love – can readily

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[1082] Ibid., 714.
[1083] Christian love is "free from all selfish calculation or ulterior motive." See ibid., 726.
[1084] Ibid., 723.
[1085] Ibid., 725.
[1086] Ibid., 735.
[1087] Ibid., 733.

be related to Lyotard's concept of the master narrative. Nygren makes a case for the radical heterogeneity of these various ideas of love – i.e. Nomos, Eros, and Agape – and the competing motifs (or stories) which emerged.

Although Nygren claims to withhold judgment in regards to the specific, particular motifs presented throughout Church history, his narrative undercuts this stated goal. Nygren says that he wants to maintain the objective, scientific stance of an impartial observer, but he does not succeed in doing so. Ultimately Nygren takes a partisan stand – as a Protestant in an ongoing disagreement with the Catholic Church –, rather than the objective stance of a rational observer, as he asserts. For Nygren, motif research leads to an objective, true recovery of Agape love. What he discovers is true of Agape for all people, everywhere, at all times. Thus, in Lyotardian terms, Nygren has constructed a grand narrative of the Lutheran recovery of Agape love. Luther is right about Agape, and the Catholics are wrong. Worse than that, Catholics have polluted and destroyed a true, Christian understanding of Agape.

Of course, one can take a more sympathetic reading of Augustine's concept of Caritas, in conversation with Boeve. Caritas is seen as Augustine's attempt to recontextualize the Christian idea of love for his particular time and philosophical context – a recontextualization that influenced the Church for over a millennium. Certainly, however, Augustine's theological approach – inspired by Platonic ideas – has become problematic in the current postmodern context. But Nygren's theological construct also comes under critique by the current postmodern critical consciousness. Nygren, however, helps us see what happens when theological ideas forget their status as *ideas* and claim to be the truth itself. Different motifs (i.e. discourses on the idea of love) emerge in history, compete with each other, only to degenerate into closed theological narratives. But this is to read Nygren through a lens provided by Lyotard and Boeve.

Werner Jeanrond comments on the radical disjuncture between human desire and divine love made in Nygren's theology. Jeanrond writes, "Nygren presented a radical dichotomy to his readers: either one accepts Luther's understanding of love or one has already departed from Christian love altogether."[1088] The human person is stripped of all ability to love in a Christian sense and is seen as simply a "channel of God's down-pouring love."[1089] Nygren provides no phenomenology of love, since his "chief interest was to rehabilitate the Lutheran doctrine of justification as the only legitimate framework for a Christian understanding of love."[1090]

[1088] Jeanrond, *Theology*, 119.
[1089] Cited by Jeanrond from *Agape and Eros*, 1982 University of Chicago Press edition, 733. See ibid., 120. This quote appears on another page in the earlier edition: Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 735.
[1090] Jeanrond, *Theology*, 120.

Finally, since Agape love descends exclusively from heaven, the human individual has no potential for growth in this form of love. Nygren discusses holiness only in a negative manner – i.e. in regards to a sinful desire to "enter into fellowship with God" expressed by "a will to order our relationship to God ourselves."[1091] According to Nygren, we cannot love God with an "absolutely spontaneous and entirely unmotivated" love; therefore, we cannot love God with Agape love.[1092] He gives only cursory attention to the command to love God "with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Dt 6,5), and there is no sense that a believer can cooperate in the perfection of love in his or her life. The word "sanctification" appears only once in *Agape and Eros*, where Nygren denigrates a person's "every attempt to make one's way to God by self-sanctification."[1093]

5.2 MOFFATT: LOVE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Scottish theologian James Moffatt (1870-1944) was an ordained pastor in the Church of Scotland. Graduate of Glasgow University, Moffatt spent sixteen years in pastoral ministry, during which time he wrote his *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*. One year later, in 1911, he joined the faculty at Mansfield College, Oxford University as Professor of Greek and New Testament Exegesis. Moffatt is best known for his translation of the Bible, which appeared in two parts (New Testament in 1913; Old Testament in 1924). He worked as Professor of Church History at the University of Glasgow from 1915 to 1927. Thereafter, Moffatt moved to New York City where he held the position of Washburn Professor of Church History at the Union Theological Seminary from 1927 until his retirement in 1938.[1094]

5.2.1 Is Christianity the Religion of Love?

Among his writings, Moffatt produced a study on love in 1929 entitled *Love in the New Testament*. In that book, Moffatt investigates "in what sense Christianity, as depicted in the literature of the NT, may be called a religion of love."[1095] Moffatt is interested in both terms:

[1091] Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 685. For Nygren's discussion of holiness as humanity's attempt to earn fellowship with God, see ibid., 684-688.

[1092] Nygren argues for "the virtual exclusion of man's [*sic*] love for God from the Pauline idea of Agape," which signals Paul's ascendancy to the highest level in the history of the idea of Agape. See ibid., 125. All of this is said in context of the great commandment (Dt 6,5). See ibid.

[1093] Ibid., 688. There is also a reference to this statement in the index under "self-impartation." For the index reference, see ibid., 763.

[1094] See "James Moffat: Scottish Bible Translator," http://m.ccel.org/browse/authorInfo?id=moffat & device=mobile [accessed February 3, 2014].

[1095] James Moffatt, *Love in the New Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929; reprint, October 1930), 321.

as a religion of *love*, as well as a *religion* of love. He contends that the term "love" in the New Testament is not so much a noble statement as a demonstration of God's love revealed through the life, teachings, and works of Jesus Christ. Through this person, something happened in history which revealed the "scope and reach" of divine love.[1096] This revelation of God's love is radically different than what the Greeks could imagine; for love was never really shared between any god and human persons in Greek religious thought.[1097] Likewise, apocalyptic Judaism never presented a messiah who would love and heal people as Jesus did. In the New Testament love is given a new expression evidenced in three ways: love of God for human persons; human love for God; and the love of one human for another.

God's love for humanity includes their moral welfare; thus, the end of divine love is obedience, fellowship, or holiness.[1098] Therefore, God's love also includes "moral severity and justice ... [reacting] sternly against those who degraded or misled human souls."[1099] However, this sternness, or hatred of sin, never seeks revenge, since its goal is the restoration of a person's soul. God's love instantiates "a new moral relationship," with people "in whom God has ends of His own."[1100]

Love in the early Church was not an emotion but an affection, according to Moffatt.[1101] As an affection, Christian love demands one's intellect and will. Whatever challenges or opposes the divine will is to be hated, even as Jesus did. However, Christian love must not degenerate into ecstatic emotionalism; rather, Christians were encouraged to love God with their minds as well as with their hearts. Christian love is a demanding love, and God requires us to demonstrate our loyalty to God and God's people through the decisions we make – as we gird our minds to see the other as someone in whom God has a purpose.

5.2.2 Jesus' Teaching in the Synoptic Gospels

A striking thing about Jesus' teaching is that he neither addresses God directly as love nor speaks of God as loving people.[1102] Rather, these things are implied or stated in general terms. Jesus encourages his disciples to imitate God's loving, giving, and forgiving character.

[1096] Ibid., 6.

[1097] The favor and help Athena gives to Odysseus, as depicted by Homer, is as close as the Greeks get to such a relationship. "In Greek thought, love as divine love for men is equally absent." See ibid., 10.

[1098] It is "the spirit of the divine love which creates the character and fellowship of men [*sic*]." See ibid., 22.

[1099] Ibid., 31.

[1100] Ibid.

[1101] Moffatt uses "affection" in the archaic sense of "a mental state; an emotion." See "Affection", Oxford University Press http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/affection?q=affection [accessed June 1, 2013]. Moffatt notes that "from the very first, love in Christianity was an affection rather than an emotion; it involved mind and will in the Church as it lived and moved." See Moffatt, *Love*, 54-55.

[1102] Moffatt, 67.

This is summed up in the words, "You must be perfect (τέλειοι), as your Father in heaven is perfect."[1103] While God's children cannot attain an absolute perfection, they can strive to exemplify the same quality of generosity to others that the Father shows. The disciples are to be "perfect" by showing lovingkindness to those who don't deserve it, thereby reproducing God the Father's character in their own lives.

5.2.2.1 God's Love: Caring and Stern

Love to God is shown by one's "reverence and duty" in carrying out God's ends for humanity. Reverence is called for in the only (indirect) reference Jesus makes to God's holiness: "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name" (Mt 6,9 and Lk 11,2).[1104] Perhaps Jesus avoids references to God's holiness because of the particularity Jews attached to that concept; specifically, their possible exaggeration of God's remoteness from sinful people or from those who were not part of Israel. However, the disciples must reverence and fear God as they call God "Father" – a royal, high and exalted Father.[1105] Moffatt thinks that Jesus refrained from using the term "holy" because of "the need he felt for using other terms to express the same truth of God's high majesty, terms which would not conflict with the truth of His fatherly relation to those who accepted his authority."[1106]

God's love requires devoted service, and those who fail to do God's will suffer loss. Sins are mentioned which bring condemnation: attributing Jesus' ministry and miracles to the devil; putting stumbling blocks before those weak in faith; being heartless to others, and cowardice.[1107] God the Father's love is demanding, and it stirs up awe and fear. Jesus' revelation of the Father is a two-sided coin. On the one hand, the heavenly Father cares for us, protects us, and numbers the very hairs on our heads. On the other hand, God demands "courage, love, and faith." Moffatt writes, "Both conceptions of God are needed in order to understand Him."[1108] Jesus does not use the term "love" in connection with the Father; rather, that love is revealed "as a will of good."[1109]

[1103] Moffatt cites his own translation of Mt 5,48. See ibid. For the translation, see James Moffatt, *The New Testament, a New Translation*, Parallel ed. (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1922), 11.

[1104] Moffatt points out that Jesus does not quote the Old Testament command, "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lv 19,2 KJV). See Moffatt, *Love*, 68.

[1105] Ibid., 68-69.

[1106] Ibid., 69.

[1107] These sins are in order: (1) the unpardonable sin (Mt 12,22-32; Mk 3,20-30; Lk 12,10); (2) causing the weak in faith to sin (Mk 9,42 and Lk 17,1-2); (3) callousness (Lk 16,19-31); and (4) cowardice (Mt 10,26-28 and Lk 12,4-9).

[1108] Moffatt, *Love*, 75.

[1109] Ibid., 81.

5.2.2.2 Love to God

Although Jesus does not often speak of loving God in the Synoptic Gospels, he emphasizes a well-known portion of Jewish faith from the Shema: "You must love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with your whole mind. This is the greatest and chief command" (Mt 22,34f).[1110] Unqualified devotion and abandonment to God's kingdom is the mark of one's love to God, expressed in an attitude of complete service to God. Moffatt notes that "twice and only twice does Jesus refer to love for God."[1111] In the first instance, Jesus denounces the Pharisees for neglecting the more important aspects of the law – "justice, mercy and faithfulness" – while concentrating rather on exceeding the tithing obligations in the Law. They disregard "justice and love for God," choosing fastidiousness to the Law over treating people fairly (Lk 11,42).[1112] The second instance occurs in a saying regarding Mammon; a choice must be made between God or Mammon (Mt 6,24).[1113] The service Jesus seeks, according to Moffatt, is "whole-hearted, spontaneous and uncompromising."[1114] One must decide to devote oneself to God, to live in and work for God's Kingdom. Jesus sets a high standard: one must choose the master s/he will serve, without compromise.

Such love extends to Jesus as well. Only twice does Jesus mention love for himself in the Synoptic Gospels. Along with entire devotion to the Father, the disciples' love for Jesus must supersede all others. The one who loves father or mother above Jesus is not worthy of him (Mt 10,37f). For Moffatt, these are stern words given to men entrusted with a special assignment that would require cutting the closest of relational ties.[1115] This word to them is "for a crisis which demands a special vocation."[1116] The second example of personal love and devotion to Jesus is seen in the sinful woman who pours out her love on his feet (Lk 7,36-50). Jesus accepted her love, and says to her, through Simon, "I tell you, many as her sins are, they are forgiven, for her love is great" (Lk 7,47).[1117] The Master's open-hearted love gave this woman hope and faith to believe that she could still be God's daughter. The last words spoken to the penitent woman state that it was her *faith* that saved her, not her *love*. Jesus rarely speaks of people's love for God, or of God's love for people, preferring rather the term "faith" (πίστις). The disciples are to trust God – to have "confidence or faith in the Father's loving

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[1110] Moffatt's translation. See ibid., 83. The parallel passages are found in Mk 12,28f and Lk 10,25f.
[1111] Ibid., 84.
[1112] Moffatt's translation. See ibid., 86.
[1113] Ibid., 87.
[1114] Ibid., 88.
[1115] Ibid., 89-90.
[1116] Ibid., 90.
[1117] Moffatt's translation, see ibid., 92.

care."[1118] What the Old Testament calls fear (φόβος), Jesus calls faith (πίστις) in the New Testament. Those who love God understand that God is both gracious and morally powerful, kind but firmly in control of their lives. Moffatt writes, "Love to God, as Jesus teaches, is best shown by trust in His goodwill, a trust that often requires moral course."[1119]

5.2.2.3 Love for Neighbor

The first "school" where one learns to value life is having love for oneself. Lessons learned there are then applied to one's neighbor, for Jesus commands us to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 22,39; Mk 12,31).[1120] Moffatt argues that one only realizes the value of others once s/he has learned "one's value to God."[1121] Such a self-love expresses itself not in a fondness for oneself, but in a determination to develop and preserve one's abilities, as a person entrusted by God with the gift of life. Moffatt writes, "One must never neglect one's capacities, nor fail to live up to the full measure of one's powers." This is achieved through self-denial, as a way of setting aside all distractions from full obedience to God's mission and cause. Love for self means valuing one's personal character and preventing a loss of respect for oneself through "degrading passions." God's love is a holy love, so self-love involves safeguarding the integrity of one's personal character through one's honor.[1122]

Love for one's neighbor demands more than justice – or a simple calculation of what is right or fair. Rather, "whatever you would like men [sic] to do for you, do just the same to them; that is the meaning of the Law and the prophets" (Mt 7,12; Lk 6,31).[1123] Love entails forgiving others with a patient and merciful heart, thus exceeding justice and showing generosity. This kind of active service to those in one's community (i.e. to those within Israel) is known in the Old Testament, but Jesus was the first to teach and live a life of love that reached intentionally beyond his own cultural borders. As Moffatt says, he "broke with particularism" and saw the neighbor as "being anyone who needs our help, irrespective of creed or nationality."[1124]

Love initiates and works to restore broken relationships (Lk 17,3f). Since God offers forgiveness in Christ, we are obliged to love and forgive others, because a humble love

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[1118] Ibid., 95.
[1119] Ibid.
[1120] Jesus, of course, cites here the command in Lv 19,18. See ibid., 97.
[1121] Ibid.
[1122] Ibid., 99.
[1123] Moffatt's translation, see ibid., 101.
[1124] Moffatt notes that no clear evidence exists of such a teaching within rabbinism prior to the second century A.D. See ibid., 103.

"makes the first move."[1125] This love must extend even to one's enemies, and in so doing the disciples manifest God the Father's character. "Love your enemies and pray for them ... that you may be sons of your Father in heaven" (Mt 5,44f).[1126] This command goes right to the heart of one's character, to the hidden level of motive. We are to love those who are outside of our familial and community circles, as far as to our enemies. Whoever is in need becomes our neighbor. Jesus knits together the Shema and the command to love the neighbor in Leviticus 19,18. He was unique in putting these two commandments so closely in relation to each other. Ultimately, love for one's neighbor is aroused by love for God. There is no conflict between the two in Jesus' mind.[1127]

5.2.3 Paul's Teaching

According to the apostle Paul, the Gospel is the good news of God's love which redeems and delivers people from sin. The Cross is the ultimate proof of divine love for those who justifiably deserve wrath. However, God's righteousness is revealed in the way in which God condemns sin and calls people to a restored relationship with God in Christ.

5.2.3.1 God's Love Demonstrated in Salvation

The Cross of Christ is the most magnificent display of God's love for sinful people that pulls us towards fellowship with God. God's love in Jesus Christ exceeds the national boundaries of Israel and is manifest to all people. This love revealed in the Cross was far more than a theory for Paul, who wrote about "the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me" (Gal 2,20).[1128] Moffatt writes, "It is emotion evoked by experience."[1129] For in Christ, God offers God's life for the rebellious, and provides order to the lives of those who choose to live in the new Kingdom of Love. No separation, however, exists between forgiveness and God's moral character. For God condemns sin at the Cross. When Paul uses the word "righteousness" he views God's love from "the predominant aspect of holiness, with a supreme regard for moral realities."[1130] At the Cross of Christ, God calls people to a similar attitude regarding sin. For Paul, "'righteousness,' 'grace,' and 'love' are all expressions for the same reality in God's love'."[1131]

[1125] Ibid., 106.
[1126] Moffatt's translation. See ibid., 108.
[1127] Ibid., 124.
[1128] Moffatt's translation. See ibid., 136.
[1129] Ibid.
[1130] Ibid., 138.
[1131] Ibid., 139.

God's love means self-sacrifice, and Paul was broken when he realized that Christ had died a cruel death for him. The apostle taught that God's mercy and grace are extended to even Gentiles, who are called to be sons (ἅγιοι) of God.[1132] This was part of God's plan from before the foundation of the world in Jesus Christ. Thus, Christians are under a great sense of obligation to live out their calling as saints.

5.2.3.2 Love to God or Christ

Like Jesus, Paul seems reticent to speak too freely of one's love for God. Only a handful of passages mention love for God; among which is this: "What no eyes has ever seen, what no ear has ever heard, what never entered the mind of man, God has prepared all that for those who love him" (1 Cor 2,9).[1133] Another example occurs in Romans: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom 8,28 NIV). In Paul's ministry, the Old Testament expression of God's love for Israel is given a universal perspective, as exceeding those historical and cultural boundaries, to a new People of God.[1134] Other brief references are made to love for God, as well. However, one can see how seriously Paul takes love for God or Christ at the end of his letter to the Corinthians: "I Paul write this salutation with my own hand: 'If anyone has no love for (οὐ φιλεῖ) the Lord, God's curse be on him (ἀνάθεμα)!"[1135] Moffatt suggests that the apostle generally preferred to speak of faith or trust to love, while referring to himself as the Lord's servant (δοῦλος), because his reverence for Christ is demonstrated by action. Moffatt writes, "He could suffer and did suffer for his Lord; he spent himself gladly for his sake. And it was this, rather than love-language, which formed the channel for expressing his utter devotion to Christ."[1136] By employing faith-language, Paul also avoided "the presumptuous idea of love-play on an equal footing with the Beloved."[1137]

5.2.3.3 Brotherly Love

A close bond between love to God and love for the brethren is evident in Paul's writings, even as in the teachings of Jesus. To the Thessalonians, Paul writes, "You need no one to write to you upon brotherly love, for you are yourselves taught by God to love one

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[1132] Eph 1,5. See ibid., 145.
[1133] Moffatt's translation, see ibid., 154.
[1134] Ibid., 155.
[1135] Moffatt's translation, see ibid., 157. Moffatt believes that φιλεῖν is synonymous with ἀγαπᾶν here, so that the negative should be understood as "has no heart for," or "is indifferent to." See ibid.
[1136] Ibid., 161.
[1137] Ibid., 163.

another, as indeed is your practice towards all the brothers throughout all Macedonia" (1 Thes 4,9f).[1138] However, their warm love apparently did not lead to moral purity (vs. 3-8). On the other end of the spectrum, it seems, were the Romans, who are counseled to "put affection into your love for the brotherhood" (Rom 12,10).[1139] Perhaps in Rome the danger was a tendency towards formality, rather than the warm-hearted relations found among believers in Macedonia. In either case, the word *philadelphia* (φιλαδελφία) is used twice[1140] to describe the mutual affection which believers should share in the Lord Jesus – a term used among the Greeks "for affection between brothers in blood or for sympathy between those knit by some common tie of descent and kindred."[1141] The term Paul more commonly uses, however, is *agape* (ἀγάπη or ἀγαπάω).[1142] Christian love is a "mutual love which is rooted in faith."[1143] That faith directs all of life towards Christ, where the character of Christ, exemplified in "self-sacrifice and unselfishness," leads to a life of self-renouncing love, characterized by the presence and fruit of the Holy Spirit.[1144]

Paul sees the believer's obligation to love fellow-Christians as flowing most often from his or her connection with the Spirit, rather than from following Jesus' example or attempting to obey his command. For the Spirit is the Lord's power dwelling in the midst of the community, and "the fruit of the Spirit is love" (Gal 5,22). Brotherly love helps a highly diversified church, such as the Corinthian church, to care for members of many backgrounds and abilities. To this church Paul writes his "Hymn of Praise to Love" in 1 Corinthians 13. The personal rapture of individual speaking, either in tongues or in prophecy, is of no benefit to the larger group without the spirit of love. For "love is very patient, very kind ..." (1 Cor 13,4).[1145] This love is "greater even than faith," for, as the hymn ends, "the greatest of all is love" (vs. 13).[1146]

To the Thessalonians, Paul writes,

> May the Lord make you increase and excel in love to one another and to all men [*sic*] (as is my love for you), so as to strengthen your hearts and make them blameless (ἀμέμπτους) in holiness before our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones (τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ).[1147]

[1138] Moffatt's translation, see ibid., 164.
[1139] Moffatt's translation, see ibid., 165.
[1140] The two references are found in 1 Thes 4,9-10 and Rom 12,10.
[1141] Moffatt, *Love*, 164.
[1142] *Phileo* (φιλέω) is rarely used as, for example, in Titus 3,15. See ibid., 165.
[1143] Ibid.
[1144] Ibid., 166.
[1145] Moffatt's translation, see ibid., 180.
[1146] Moffatt's translation, see ibid., 181.
[1147] 1 Thes 3,12f. Moffatt's translation, see ibid., 187.

"Holiness" is not a word Paul often uses. In this instance it modifies the prior word "blameless," helping to give further clarity to that word.[1148] Here holiness is seen as "the perfect outcome of love," which expresses an ardent moral purity.[1149] Christians are to avoid sexual immorality and live consecrated lives of holiness.[1150] Moffatt believes that the apostle preferred to use the word *love*, because of the negative associations which adhere to the word *holiness*. But "real *holiness* is attained ... by the practice of brotherly love. Like Jesus, he makes such brotherly love the final test of men at the Judgment."[1151]

Paul wants the love of the Church to "increase and overflow," both for those inside and outside of the church (1 Thes 3,12). As those who live in a community, Christians need to learn to use the freedom they have in Christ, not to indulge in sinful perversions, but to willingly submit themselves to the Lord's commands. Thus, Christian love comes under divine authority and thereby realizes its freedom – a freedom to obey the commands of the One who has set us free from sin.[1152] A love that is "blameless in holiness" will fulfill its obligation to excel in brotherly love, and this is the sign of a "holy church" (1 Thes 3,12f). Paul gives an argument in Colossians 3,14 that parallels Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5,43-48; for, to the church in Colossae, the apostle writes, "above all you must be loving, for love is (σύνδεσμος τῆς τελειότητος) the link of the perfect life."[1153] Love helps the community avoid divisions caused by selfish words and feelings. Perfection (τελειότης) means a mature love within the church fellowship. Here Moffatt quotes from a letter written by John Wesley to his brother Charles: "By perfection I mean the humble, gentle, patient love of God and man, ruling all the tempers, words, and actions, the whole heart and the whole life."[1154] Such an all-encompassing, mature love was needed if believers were to experience such a "perfect" communion in the local church.

5.2.4 The Primitive Church

Moffatt also considers a group of writings which emerge out of those churches extant during the apostle Paul's lifetime or a generation thereafter. These documents illustrate the common faith and devotion the early Christians had towards Jesus as Lord. Common among

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[1148] Moffatt mentions Paul's frequent use of the word *saints* (ἅγιοι) to refer to Christians. See ibid.
[1149] Ibid.
[1150] Moffatt writes, "The perfecting of the Church *in holiness* is called its ἁγιασμός (1 Thessalonians iv. 3) or *consecration*, which denotes positively its relationship to the life of the Holy One or the Giver of the Holy Spirit (ver. 8), and negatively an avoidance of impurity and moral laxity." See ibid., 188.
[1151] Ibid.
[1152] Ibid., 190.
[1153] Ibid., 191.
[1154] Ibid. Moffatt says that this letter was "written about 1762," but letter No. 189 was written to Charles from London on January 27, 1767. See *Charles Wesley: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 391.

these writings "is the conviction that God was good or loving, and that the world was a place where they could count on His presence and help, through Jesus Christ."[1155] Rather, this inspires an obedience and loyalty to God which is lived out in the context of brotherly love, just as Paul also taught.

5.2.4.1 God's Love

Few references are made to God's love among the writings of the primitive Church in the New Testament canon. No references to God loving people appear in either Acts or James, nor in the Pastoral Epistles except in Titus 3,4f. Peter describes God as a faithful, caring, merciful Father; but one never reads of God's love for people in his epistles. However, in the Apocalypse, God's love for the persecuted Christians is made clear, although there God is not referred to as their Father.[1156]

In the Pastoral letters,[1157] God's pity for his people is mentioned only in Titus 3,4-5. Paul prefers to use the word pity (ἔλεος) to use to express God's gracious love for those who believe (Eph 2,4). Jude also writes to those who "have been called, who are beloved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ" (Jd 1).[1158] Moffatt notes that here Christians are kept as the elect, beloved of God, so long as they are watchful and morally alert. He also argues that the fundamental assumption of God's love in such a small letter should be kept in mind in view of the paucity of this truth in other writings from the early Church.

John the prophet writes the Revelation to a suffering church. In his letter, he reminds the Church who their Lord is, as well as of the love he showed for them through his redemptive death on the Cross. Love is demonstrated through the "shedding [of] his blood," which kindles a sense of obligation to him. As Moffatt says, "It is when Christians have this vital sense of what they owe to the Lord that they become conscious of a strength which enables them to face anything for his sake."[1159] And this they would have to do themselves, showing their loyalty by laying down their lives for the Lamb. In a struggle between the world and the faith, believers would show "moral heroism," so they were reminded that Christ gave his own blood for us, in love, in order to fulfill God's plan. The Church is called, therefore, to be faithful to their Lord.

5.2.4.2 Love to God

[1155] Moffatt, *Love*, 212.
[1156] Ibid., 213-214.
[1157] Moffatt attributes the letter to Titus to "the Pauline author." See ibid., 214.
[1158] Moffatt's translation, see ibid., 216.
[1159] Ibid., 219.

Among the writings of the primitive Church, there is also a scarcity of material regarding how believers thought about love to God or Christ. We know, however, from the letters of Hebrews and First Peter, that Christians were suffering and needed to endure in their faith. Three times, in regards to suffering, the relation between endurance and love for God is expressly mentioned (Jas 1,12; 2,5; and 1 Pe 1,8). In the Pastoral Epistles, two indirect references to love for God are made (2 Tim 3,1-4 and 4,8-10). For two groups of people will be evident in the last days: those who love pleasure, and those who love Christ's appearance. Only the latter will receive the crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4,8).

The way the early Church speaks about God the Father corresponds to the way Jesus spoke. For the early Church tends to avoid love-language when speaking of God; not that they lacked a loving affection for God, but, rather, they demonstrate their fear of God by remaining true to the faith in the face of trials. By not giving in to the temptation to apostatize, they showed their allegiance to God's cause and thus their love.

5.2.4.3 Brotherly Love

A remarkable characteristic of these early documents is how reticent the writers are to speak of brotherly love. Moffatt notes that these writings come from a variety of regions where the Church was established over a timeframe of more than sixty years.[1160] Still, a view of love emerges which accords in large measure with Paul's conception, even as its theological formation remains less sharply defined.

In comparison to the relatively sparse discussion of God's love or love to God, however, the primitive Church had more to say about brotherly love. For example, Christians are referred to as "beloved" in the epistles of Judas, Hebrews, First and Second Peter. James addresses believers as "my beloved brothers" in three places.[1161] Although James and Paul approach theology form different angles, both refer to Jesus' "Rule of Love." James calls loving the neighbor as self the "royal law" (Jas 2,8), by which believers show their participation in Jesus' kingdom by obeying this command. James applies this rule to the poor among the Church. Those who favor the rich will not fare well during the judgment (Jas 2,12f). But service rendered to others as brotherly love will be remembered on that terrible day, according to the writer of Hebrews. "God will not forget what you have done, or the love you have shown for his sake in ministering to the saints" (Heb 4,10).[1162] But those who

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[1160] Ibid., 248.

[1161] Ibid., 230. Christians are encouraged to add brotherliness (φιλαδελφία) to piety and Christian love (ἀγάπη) in 2 Pe 1,7. The writer to the Hebrews exhorts believers to show hospitality and brings this into correspondence with φιλαδελφία; just as the author of First Peter relates it to love (ἀγάπη) (1 Pe 4,8f). Compare also a similar treatment in 1 Pe 3,8. See ibid., 230-231.

[1162] Moffatt's translating, see ibid., 233.

merely spoke about love will receive no mercy. Moffatt comments, "Harshness and the unbrotherly spirit are thus pronounced sins that exclude a Christian from heaven, as they had been by Jesus in other terms."[1163]

But love can undergo a strain, where the church no longer loves as it once did. Love's ardor can cool, as in the Ephesian church (Rev 2,4). This church maintained its orthodoxy while contending with the Nicolaitans, but their zeal for true doctrine was accompanied by an erosion of brother love. Such a lack of love was damning in the prophet's eyes, leading to the possible removal of their lampstand (Rev 2,5). Still, love can be too warm and open-minded as the church at Thyatira demonstrates. This church is praised for their loyalty, service, and perseverance (Rev 2,19). However, they were too lax in tolerating those in their midst who too easily associated with the guilds and thus accommodated impurity. Moffatt notes that the Thyatiran Christians needed "a dash of saving intolerance."[1164] For, as Peter writes, obedience to the truth purifies the soul for a brotherly love (1 Pe 1,22f).

5.2.5 The Johannine Interpretation

In the Johannine corpus we encounter a new interpretation of Christian love. Each of the three aspects of love are treated in a unique manner, while also being "fused into a remarkable unity."[1165] Theological reflection on love reaches its height within the Johannine community, particularly in the declaration that "God is love" (1 Jn 4,16).[1166]

5.2.5.1 God's Love

God's love is seen, known, and understood in Jesus Christ, who works to bring life to those who believe. This love is revealed as a love that pours itself out "in self-sacrifice and vicarious suffering."[1167] God loves the world despite humanity's rebellion against God's rule. as a result, the glad tidings resound that people from every race and nation can be called God's children (1 Jn 3,1). Because God loves the world, life is given to those who believe (Jn 3,16), and sin is forgiven at the Cross of Christ. As the first epistle declares, Jesus "is himself the propitiation (αὐτὸς ἱλασμός ἐστιν) for our sins" (1 Jn 2,1).[1168] Indeed, the One who propitiates is also our advocate (παράκλητον) (1 Jn 2,1). Here neither righteousness nor propitiation are set against love. As Moffatt says, "John's mind is neither sacrificial (in the

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[1163] Ibid.
[1164] Ibid., 238.
[1165] Ibid.
[1166] Interestingly, Moffatt does not reference 1 Jn 4,8 here.
[1167] Moffatt, *Love*, 268.
[1168] Moffatt's translation, see ibid., 254.

strict sense of the term) nor legal; he is merely employing such terms in order to explain that the alienation between God and sinful man [*sic*] had been overcome *because God desired it to be overcome*."[1169] His blood continually cleanses the believer's life from anything that could separate one from God (1 Jn 1*,*7).[1170]

Christ's suffering evidences how seriously God takes human sin, while it invites people to enter into a new relationship of love. Naturally, selfishness is the exact opposite of divine love.[1171] Moffatt thinks John addresses the weariness that occurs in the heart of those who have maintained a good moral life (*e.g.* Nathanael and Nicodemus), who "are weary of self and require a new centre for life, something to take them out of themselves."[1172] The revelation of divine love and the unfolding of life's meaning corrects a self-love that focuses itself on things in the material world, which deaden the soul to God and lead to death.

The Father's love for the Son is expressed nowhere so clearly as in the Fourth Gospel.[1173] Stress is placed on this love, while the Son's love for the Father is only stated once. That love is compared to Jesus' love for his disciples when he says "as the Father has loved me, so I have loved you" (Jn 15*,*9).[1174] In fact, Jesus' love for his disciples is remarkably linked to the Father's love for the Son. Because the Father loves humanity, the Son is sent to fulfill God's will. The Son responds in love through obedience: "I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love" (Jn 15*,*10).[1175] This connection between love and obedience is summarized by Moffatt: "In other words, the love of the Father for the Son carries with it moral obligations to self-sacrifice for the sake of men [*sic*]."[1176] The Son's vicarious suffering for His friends is the example *par excellence* of love: "We know what love is by this, that He laid down his life for us" (1 Jn 3*,*16).[1177] The Cross, of course, is the preeminent example of Moffatt's contention that in the Johannine corpus God's love is not simply a matter of words but of deeds.[1178]

5.2.5.2 Love to God or Christ

[1169] Ibid., 255 (emphasis mine).

[1170] Moffatt's translation, see ibid., 255.

[1171] Ibid., 256.

[1172] Ibid., 257. Moffatt notes that tax collectors and sinners do not play a prominent role in the Gospel of John as they do in the Synoptic Gospels. He says that even the woman of Samaria "is not like the sinful women of the synoptic stories." See ibid., 256.

[1173] Moffatt says that "although it was present to the mind of Paul it acquires a definite range in the Fourth Gospel." The only previous indication of the Father's love for the Son is the title "Beloved" applied to Jesus. See ibid., 258.

[1174] Moffatt's translation, see ibid.

[1175] Moffatt's translation, see ibid., 259.

[1176] Ibid.

[1177] Moffatt's translation, see ibid., 263. A similar idea appears in the Fourth Gospel: "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15*,*13 NIV).

[1178] Ibid., 265.

Love to God or Christ is the natural response for those who belong to Christ, and this evidences itself in obedience to God's commands (1 Jn 5,3). By obeying Christ, the believer obeys God, for the words Jesus speaks come from the Father (Jn 14,24). Love to God plays a central role in the First Epistle, perhaps in response to the threat of love reducing love to merely a feeling.[1179] Apparently some in the community could easily and enthusiastically express their love for God publicly while harboring a hard heart towards their neighbor. To such people, the writer says, "If anyone declares, 'I love God,' and yet hates his brother, he is a liar" (1 Jn 4,20). Love must move believers to action: "My dear children, let us put our love ... not into words or into talk but into deeds, and make it real" (1 Jn 3,18).[1180]

Apparently, the Johannine community spoke more often of "knowing God" then of "believing in God." Again, obedience to God's commands are linked with knowing God (1 Jn 2,4-6). The one who is truly united with God (i.e. "in Him") is controlled and inspired by God's love. This union brings life and knowledge of God's love, which is God's very nature. Moffatt comments, "Love alone knows the God who is love."[1181]

Love for Christ, therefore, in Johannine theology, can be summarized as follows. One must believe that Jesus "came from the Father," sent to fulfill a unique ministry (Jn 16,27). This knowledge gives the believer life and inspires obedience to Jesus' commands: Moffatt notes, "especially the command of brotherly love in the Community."[1182] Christ's interests, therefore, become the believer's interests, as s/he learns to put away selfishness.[1183] The most natural response to God's love is to love God or Christ as well in turn. "If love is the deepest thing in God, it must correspond to the deepest thing in man, and the Johannine interpretation speaks simply of this as 'love,'" Moffatt writes.[1184] God's love calls for a love that acts with deeds, with a moral sense of duty. For, as Moffatt says, "to love God is to do His will."[1185]

5.2.5.3 Love for Individuals

There are few references to brotherly love for specific individuals in the Johannine literature. Moffatt cites two instances given by the Presbyter: to "the elect Lady and her children" (2 Jn 1); and to "the beloved Gaius" (3 Jn 1). Brotherly love must be shown to those

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[1179] Moffatt notes that "in the First Epistle it is love to God, not love to Christ, which is uppermost." See ibid., 272.

[1180] Moffatt's translation, see ibid., 271.

[1181] Ibid., 276. On the other hand, to refuse to believe Christ as the One sent by God is to show that one is of the devil's lineage (Jn 8,42-47). See also ibid., 277.

[1182] Ibid., 279.

[1183] In this regard, Moffatt notes Jesus' words to his grieving disciples: "If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father – for the Father is greater than I am" (Jn 14,28). Moffatt's translation, see ibid.

[1184] Ibid., 280.

[1185] Ibid., 287.

who "know" Christ and adhere to the Church's teachings about Christ. But this does not apply to everyone who comes and preaches Christ, since there are "semi-Christians" who proclaim a different theology (*e.g.* Docetics, who deny that the Christ died upon the Cross).[1186] Within the Johannine Community, a "brother" is one who accepts Jesus as the incarnated Son of God. Those who travel about faithfully preaching the Gospel should be helped (3 Jn 5-6a). Two groups should receive aid: traveling evangelists and the poor. These are "the two specific forms of brotherly love in the Johannine literature."[1187]

Christian love is not a matter of uniting oneself with the Absolute or of contemplating Infinity; it must be practiced.[1188] Love meets real needs in the material world. God's love incarnated itself in this world in the person of Jesus, so Christians are called to demonstrate love in practical ways. Christian love is practiced.

5.2.6 Conclusion

Jesus' life and work revealed what is truly original about love in the New Testament. For he did not simply bring new lofty words about divine and human love. Rather, Jesus' death on the Cross becomes the quintessential expression of self-sacrificing love which reveals the divine character of God. "God proves his love for us by this, that Christ died for us when we were still sinners ... This is how the love of God has appeared for us, by God sending his only Son into the world, so that by him we might live" (Rom 5,8 and 1 Jn 4,9).[1189] The love which Jesus showed to his disciples made a lasting impression. That love creatively inspired them to become lovers themselves, as they acted out the principle of what had been deeply implanted into their lives. Love was the example Christ left. It was the unveiling of His character.

God's love is experienced both personally and communally. Christians must see their neighbors as God sees them: with eyes of compassion, pity, and patience. The early Church gathered as a body of people drawn to God in order to be God's people. Thus, they were called to fulfill God's ends and purposes in this life. Moffatt concludes by saying that Christianity "may be called a religion of love," since the early Christians saw it as such.[1190]

5.2.7 Assessment of Moffatt's Thought

[1186] Ibid., 286. Moffatt also briefly mentions the problem of a loose morality promoted by some Gnostic teachers. See ibid., 288.
[1187] Ibid., 283.
[1188] Ibid., 288.
[1189] Moffatt's translations, see ibid., 309.
[1190] Ibid., 321.

Moffatt argues that love in the New Testament is seen as something that must be expressed in action. Love cannot remain as metaphysical speculation or flowery words. Rather, in the New Testament, a new unfolding of God's love is given in the deeds of Jesus Christ. His works reveal God's purpose for humanity. As Moffatt writes, "The love of God, like His holiness, is revealed not in His being but in His purpose, in His attitude and action towards men [*sic*]."[1191] That purpose is disclosed most forcefully in the Cross of Christ, for there God condemns sin and wrests freedom for those who will believe in Christ and submit to His reign over their lives.

God's love, so demonstrated, creates a reaction of love in the one who sees and understands the Cross. Two human responses come immediately to the fore. First, the natural response to God's love is affection. This is seen in the tearful woman who pays homage to Jesus by washing his feet with her hair. Such a heart-rending emotion of gratitude and liberation compels a response of obedience, of placing one's life in the hands of the kind liberator. A second reaction, therefore, is to live a life of obedience which brings joy to the God who has set one free from sin. As Moffatt points out, in the New Testament, the believer's affection for God and Christ is most often expressed through obedience, rather than through love-language. For love-language runs the risk of blurring the distinction between Majesty and created being and of producing the effect of a too-easy parity between divine and human lovers.

In the New Testament, as Moffatt shows, affection is expressed through obedience and faith – i.e., a steadfast trust in God's everlasting goodness. Thus, love has a thoroughly moral nature, which begins with God. God's purpose for humanity is the creation of a community of people who love, honor, and obey God, within a fellowship of holy love. Anything impeding a person's love for God is strongly opposed. Therefore, God responds sternly to sin, hating the destruction it wreaks on the soul. God declares God's verdict on sin at the Cross, while, at the same time, clearly manifesting God's agape love as self-sacrificial love. So, in the New Testament, love is a strong, moral, muscular love, which is intent on doing the Father's will. God's purpose is to form a people who blamelessly love in holiness (1 Thes 3,12f), thereby reflecting God's perfection in love (Mat 5,43-48). The fruit of such a complete love being a quiet heart before God's judgment throne (1 Jn 4,17f).

In this book, Moffatt does not try to produce a general theological reflection on love from a Christian perspective. Rather, he focuses on the idea of love as it is presented in the New Testament. As a result, Moffatt clearly expounds a moral view of love, which responds to the prior initiative of God's redeeming purposes. God, therefore, holds each of us responsible to love in action. We are to love God, Christ, and our neighbor. This is our moral

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[1191] Ibid., 1.

responsibility. A lack of love, demonstrated through selfishness, harshness, or lack of brotherly love, is a damnable sin. Thus, in contrast to Nygren, Moffatt assumes that people can love,[1192] since original sin does not annihilate the individual's ability to love. In fact, Moffatt makes room for self-love, as the first school where a person learns to value life and one's neighbor. Certainly Moffatt has a more positive view of human love than Nygren. However, Moffatt qualifies self-love as a moral good. It is grounded in the doctrine of redemption rather than in creation. Self-love should not be expressed as a fondness for the creatureliness of one's own creation. Rather, self-love is viewed as a moral determination to develop those abilities which God has entrusted to each individual as a gift. For Moffatt, redemption leads to perfection through moral diligence. But the goodness of one's own creation as a part of Creation is neglected. As Moffatt repeatedly points out, in the New Testament, one is a child of God through faith and obedience to Christ, not simply through creation.

In Moffatt's thought, love is constantly filtered through the sieve of morality. Perhaps this should not surprise us, for the Cross is never far from Moffatt's mind. His theological reflection on love begins and ends from the perspective of redemption. What is largely forgotten, however, is the human capacity to love through *desire*. While Moffatt has much to say about *affection*, as the individual's response to the agapeic self-sacrificial love of God, human longing for another is only touched upon here and there.[1193] Rather, Christians' affection to God is expressed as "loving interest" through "reverence and duty," which contrasts with God the Father's character as "absolutely disinterested lovingkindness."[1194] What Jesus sought to teach his disciples was to love God "spontaneously" and with their whole hearts.[1195] Erotic desire is not developed in Moffatt's thought, since moral affection is emphasized in the New Testament.

5.3 MORRIS: TESTAMENTS OF LOVE

Leon Morris (1914-2006) was the most prolific theological author in Australia. He wrote over fifty books of commentary and theological reflection, and sold more than two million copies worldwide. Morris was the son of an iron worker. In 1940 Morris began serving as an Anglican priest in Southern Australia as part of the Minnipa mission, where he worked for five years, studying Greek as his wife Mildred drove them around the outback. He earned a Bachelor of Divinity degree from London University in 1943, followed by a Master

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[1192] Moffatt is certainly aware of Nygren's work. For he specifically mentions that Nygren "recently" published a study of "Eros and Agape" in *Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie*. See ibid., 37.
[1193] An example is his brief treatment of 2 Tim 4,8-10. See ibid., 224-225.
[1194] See ibid., 68-69.
[1195] Ibid., 88.

of Theology degree in 1946. In 1951, Morris successfully defended his dissertation at Cambridge University and was awarded a Ph.D. Morris served as warden at Tyndale House in Cambridge from 1961 to 1964. He then returned to Australia to serve as principal of Ridley College, which he led until 1979. During his tenure, Ridley College became the first college to accept both male and female students. In his retirement, Morris continued to write, lecture, and preach.[1196] He suffered from Alzheimer's disease and died from pneumonia in 2006.

5.3.1 A Curious Omission

Morris makes a plea for love as central to the message of the Bible in his book *Testaments of Love*. Morris finds it "very curious" that almost no room is given to love in most of the major theological works of his time.[1197] It astounds him that so much is written about the Old Testament, for example, with little attention paid to love's importance in God's dealings with humanity. In fact, Morris contends that an understanding of love is essential to understand this first testament: for the "surprising truth that God loves puny and sinful man [*sic*] underlies almost everything that is written throughout the entire Old Testament."[1198] God's love for humanity stands at the very heart of the Bible; it drives the whole story. Thus, Morris contends, "Love is not to be treated as peripheral."[1199] His book is an investigation into what the Bible says about love and what this "means for God's people today."[1200]

5.3.2 God's Everlasting Love in the Old Testament

The Old Testament is a book that reveals God's love for people and nations. God interacts with a rebellious people, who are nevertheless loved by God. Although evident in the earlier portions of this first testament, the expression of God's love reaches a crescendo in the pathos of the prophets. There the prophets picture Israel as a willful and unfaithful wife, whose behavior can only bring about her destruction. But her adulterous rebellion can destroy

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[1196] Peter Adam and Paul Barker, "Theologian Left a Legacy of Faith and Biblical Text," The Age http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/theologian-leaves-legacy-of-faith/2006/08/14/1155407739275.html [accessed July 16, 2013]. See also Peter Adam and Paul Barker, "Scholarship Via Bush Roads: Leon Morris, 1914-2006," The Sydney Morning Herald http://www.smh.com.au/news/obituaries/scholarship-via-bush-roads/2006/08/13/1155407666913.html [accessed July 16, 2013].

[1197] For example, the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* does not have a single article about love in its 5,444 columns and four volumes of information, despite the fact that the Old Testament has much to say about love. Morris gives a number of examples of the neglect of love in important theological works. See Leon Morris, *Testaments of Love: A Study of Love in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1981), 4-6.

[1198] Ibid., 5.

[1199] Ibid., 6.

[1200] Ibid., 7.

neither God's love for her, nor God's plans for her future restoration and loving return. And no prophet declares God's declaration of everlasting love so clearly as Jeremiah.

5.3.2.1 Jeremiah

As God's bride, Judah has betrayed her husband and played the harlot. "How well you direct your course to seek lovers! So that even to wicked women you have taught your ways" (Jr 2,33).[1201] Her behavior will end in disaster; the cataclysm cannot be avoided. Morris writes that "there is nothing to alleviate the picture, nothing to indicate that deep down Judah may harbor a lingering affection for Yahweh. The nation is wholly set on her dalliance with the idols."[1202] But their powerlessness will be seen when God destroys them. However, in the middle of this impending gloom, a shattering phrase sounds: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you" (Jr 31,3). This message disrupted the prophet's devastating words and opens up the possibility of hope. God has not utterly abandoned the nation; God still cares about their welfare. Morris calls this a "tremendous affirmation of love."[1203] Judgment must fall, and for seventy years they will be slaves in a foreign land, but some will return to the land promised to their fathers (Jr 29,10f). God loves the people with an everlasting love; therefore, they still have "a future and a hope" (Jr 29,11). Morris writes, "God loves not because the objects of his love are upright and winsome, but because he is a loving God."[1204]

5.3.2.2 Hosea

The concept of God's faithful love is also important to the other prophets. Although they do not always use the word "love," the idea appears in their prophecies.[1205] An example is the image of the bride, and this picture is used in Hosea's marriage to Gomer – "a wife of harlotry" (Hos 1,2). Hosea loved his wife, and her unfaithfulness caused untold pain. Even after she was sold into slavery, Hosea went and brought her freedom (Hos 3,2). The prophet didn't approve of his wife's adultery, but he continued to love her. God's love for Israel is revealed through Hosea's marriage. Assyria would attack the nation, but they would be unable to confidently turn to God for salvation. Morris writes, "Because the people refused to return to God's love, they forfeited these resources, and Hosea foresaw that they would fall,

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[1201] See ibid., 8. Citations from the Old Testament in this section are taken from the Revised Standard Version, while those from the New Testament are Morris' own translations.
[1202] Ibid., 9-10.
[1203] Ibid., 10.
[1204] Ibid., 12.
[1205] Ibid., 14.

just as Gomer had."[1206] Israel's lewdness would be uncovered, and the nation would be punished (Hos 2,10-13). All this saddened Hosea. As Morris comments, "Love is never harsh, but it can be stern."[1207] Still, the day would come when God would woo his errant bride "and speak tenderly to her" (Hos 2,14). On that day, Israel will acknowledge God as "my husband" (Hos 2,16).

5.3.2.3 Unmerited Love

The message of God's love for the patriarchs sounds over and over again. Deuteronomy 10,15 clearly states, "The Lord set his heart in love upon your fathers and chose their descendants after them."[1208] No reason is given, except the one Moses supplies: "For you were the fewest of all peoples" (Dt 7,7). Jacob, Zion, and the gates of Jerusalem are also loved by God (Ps 47,4; 76,68; and 87,2 respectively).[1209] God also loves "the righteous" (Ps 146,8). While God clearly loves individuals, the emphasis in the Old Testament falls heavily on God's love for the nation *en masse*: a people who prove to be "an unworthy nation." Morris notes, "God's love for individuals ... simply was not the center of Old Testament interest."[1210]

5.3.2.4 Righteousness

The fact of God's spontaneous, gracious love should not obscure another fact: God loves certain characteristics in people. Among these is righteousness. The Psalmist sings of God's righteousness: "For the Lord is righteous, he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face" (Ps 11,7). As Morris points out, this also gives an implicit warning: the guilty "place themselves outside the sphere of his blessing."[1211] God "loves the righteous," (Ps 146,8) but God also places the foreigner who sojourns in the land under the same protection offered to Israel.[1212]

5.3.2.5 The Centrality of Love

[1206] Ibid., 17.
[1207] Ibid., 18.
[1208] Ibid., 28.
[1209] Ibid., 29-30.
[1210] Ibid., 31.
[1211] Ibid., 31-32.
[1212] The resident alien was a dependent foreigner who lived in Israel and was granted legal protection as if s/he was an Israelite. See ibid., 32-33 (footnote 54).

Morris insists on the importance of love in the Old Testament. Many passages do not use the word "love," but they reveal the loving nature and character of God. This is seen in God's interaction with individuals and nations. These incidents point to God's love. Morris writes, "This point must be insisted upon in the face of the contention sometimes made that the idea of God as a loving God is far from characteristic" (of the Old Testament).[1213] God's love is foundational for the entire Old Testament, from the patriarchs through to the prophets. If love is not seen "as the foundation, nothing in the Old Testament makes much sense."[1214]

5.3.3 Human Love in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament we see people loving others as they engage in life.[1215] A lack of love is considered aberrant, for people were created to live in community. God cares deeply that people love others and commands them to do so – specifically, to love their neighbors. This love should cross social strata. The word for "love" (*'hb*) is used with reference to a superior for an inferior and vice versa.[1216] It appears as well in the feeling a slave has for his master (Dt 15,16), as well as in a woman's emotion for a potential husband (1 Sm 18,20).[1217]

Among the patriarchs, the word "love" refers more often to love between people in the Pentateuch, although it can also reference love for God.[1218] But the word usually describes a man's sexual love for a woman, such as Isaac's passion for Rebecca (Gn 24,67). Sexual love also has a darker side: *e.g.* Shechem's desire for Dinah, which leads either to fornication or (possibly) rape (Gn 34,2f).[1219] Morris notes that "the term refers to the emotion, the attitude, and not to its rightness or wrongness."[1220] In the Pentateuch the word "love" means more than simple physical love; it includes parental love for children (*e.g.* Abraham's love for his son Isaac). A family slave could also express love for his master, wife, and children by refusing manumission (Ex 21,5f; Dt 15,16f). Israelites were expected to love those outside of the family circle, for the Law commanded saying, "You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lv 19,18). Resident aliens and strangers must also be loved, for the Israelite should remember that "you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Lv 19,34; Dt 10,19). Israel would thereby

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[1213] Ibid., 33.

[1214] Ibid., 34.

[1215] In this section, we will be dealing with words which are part of a cluster built upon the *'hb* stem. Another important word cluster based on the *ḥsd* stem will be considered in 5.3.3 below. See ibid., 9 (footnote 3), 65 and 85.

[1216] See ibid., 36 (footnote 3).

[1217] Ibid., 36.

[1218] Twenty times the word "love" is used for the love of one human for another; thirteen times love is spoken of with reference to God. In the later case, the verb occurs exclusively in Deuteronomy, except once in Exodus 20,6. See ibid., 37.

[1219] Ibid., 38.

[1220] Ibid.

reflect God's character; for God "loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing" (Dt 10,10).

The historical books usually speak of love as shared among individuals. As in the Pentateuch, the word usually refers to love between the sexes.[1221] Here apparently the word expresses a real – but passing – love, such as Michal's love for her husband, King David (cf. 1 Sm 18,20 and 2 Sm 6,16.20). Passionate love seems to have turned into repudiation.[1222] Love is shared between friends as well, as in Jonathan's love for David (1 Sm 18,1.3). The love of friendship could be short-lived as King Saul's love for David demonstrates, which disintegrated into a destructive rage, bent on destroying one who was once a friend.

In the poetical books the noun is used more prominently than the verbal forms for love.[1223] People who have received God's gracious salvation praise and love God. Joy is jubilantly expressed for God's Law in Psalm 119. True believers know God and God's love, and they respond "with a true love for him, they cannot live self-centered lives."[1224] Thus, like God, they love righteousness (Ps 45,7), in contrast to the wicked who love evil. They strongly oppose corruption: "You who love the Lord hate evil" (Ps 97,10 RSV). As Morris writes, "Love for God cannot co-exist with a love for evil. The very fact of the believer's love for God means that he [*sic*] is dedicated to stamping out evil."[1225] Love may also depict physical love between the sexes, but this occurs exclusively in the Song of Songs. There the glories of physical love are praised in a graphic manner that sometimes embarrasses Christians.

Love for God is not much discussed in the wisdom literature, but much is said about "the love of things."[1226] A recurring theme appears, however, in this literature of fearing God. Morris writes, "If it is true that God loves men [*sic*] and that they should return that love, it is also true that God is one who is rightly to be feared. Believers have an obligation to walk in his ways."[1227] In the Old Testament, fear is a corollary to God's love, because God's "greatness, righteousness, and holiness" should be respected.[1228] Repeatedly the word sounds that "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job 28,28).[1229] One who fears God should not cringe in dread; rather, a humble obedience should be cultivated for One who is so much greater than human beings.

[1221] Love for God is referenced five times, while love between people is mentioned thirty-three times. See ibid., 43.

[1222] "Did her early love for David last through these turbulent, disappointing years? We have no way of being sure. Such evidence as we have seems to indicate that it did not, for the last word we have about Michal's attitude toward David is that she despised him in her heart." See ibid., 44.

[1223] For an enumeration of usages, see ibid., 49.

[1224] Ibid., 50.

[1225] Ibid., 53.

[1226] Ibid., 54.

[1227] Ibid., 58.

[1228] Ibid.

[1229] Ibid., 59. Cf. also Pr 1,7; 9,10; 14,26f and Ec 12,13.

The prophets concentrate their attention on people's love for evil things. Repeatedly, the children of Israel go astray, as they pour their love out before worthless idols. But God expects people to respond in love to His expression of love for them. Brides, of course, should love their husbands; but the people have not done so for God. As Hosea complains, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos 4,6), a reference with not so subtle sexual overtones, since in the Old Testament knowledge often implies sexual intercourse. Morris notes that "there is nothing lasting or deep about Israel's early love – in fact, even in the wilderness Israel's love was found wanting several times."[1230] The prophets, though, also spoke positively of love, as that which God seeks. Zechariah, for example, calls the nation to "love truth and peace" (Zch 8,19), and Amos exhorts Israel to "hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate" (Am 5,15). What dominates their thought, however, is the gracious love of God, and the love this merits from God's people. Their lack of a proper response – even worse, their lavishing of love on worthless idols – consumes the prophets. God's initiating love demands a response of grateful love – something the people refuse to give.

5.3.4 Love and Loyalty

Ḥesedh is a crucial word for understanding the message of the Old Testament. This word describes the heart of God's dealings with the people, but there is no equivalent word in English. Translators have used a variety of words and expressions to try to convey the meaning of *ḥesedh* to their readers. Among these attempts are these: "love," "loyalty," "fidelity," "devotion," "mercy," and "faithful love," among others.[1231] One sees the difficulty of conveying this key Old Testament idea in the variety of attempts which are made. What becomes clear is that *ḥesedh* has three primary connotations in English: "love, kindness, and loyalty."[1232] Here the stress falls heavily on love.

Ḥesedh emerges out of relationship. It may refer either to family, tribal, or fraternal relationships; likewise, it can also denote the relationship of a ruler to a subject, or of a host to a guest. This relationship can be to a stranger in need, as well, who is expected to respond in turn when able.[1233] Along with the relationship, often a deep, devoted attachment to the other person exists. Morris says that *ḥesedh* is "an attitude of goodwill ... [of] love strengthened by

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[1230] Ibid., 61.

[1231] Morris gives a list of various words and "dynamic equivalent" phrases, along with a chart comparing translations of the Bible. See ibid., 65-67.

[1232] Ibid., 67.

[1233] Ibid.

loyalty."[1234] A sense of duty accompanies loyalty. Thus, any consideration of *ḥesedh* needs to take both aspects of love and loyalty into account.

God's relationship with the people of Israel is founded upon the covenant made after the exodus from Egypt (Ex 24,1-8). This covenant is the key to all of God's subsequent interactions with the children of Israel. In this covenant, God expresses love and freely begins a relationship based on loyalty and faithfulness. The prophets describe this relationship as a wedding ceremony. God promises, "I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness" (Hos 2,19f).[1235] Of course, the people are expected − and required − to be faithful. But Hosea laments, "There is no faithfulness ... or kindness [*ḥesedh*], and no knowledge of God in the land" (Hos 4,1).[1236] Morris says, "Hosea saw clearly that the nation's unfaithfulness could not destroy God's faithful love. God's *ḥesedh* will never cease."[1237] Still, the people should not think they can continue sinning without consequence, for God is righteous. Violations of the covenant will reap a bitter harvest. God's justice demands that sin be dealt with; however, this is done in love – not vindictively – for sin is humanity's greatest enemy. Sin must be dealt with because of God's great love. Morris writes, "Sin must be punished because God is loving."[1238]

Ḥesedh is a quality of God, not a human characteristic. It remains an ideal for which people must reach. But God is *ḥesedh*. The writers of the Old Testament are absorbed with the fact that God is a God of *ḥesedh*, for the word appears 245 times in the Old Testament, of which 186 occurrences concern God. In the majority of the 59 times *ḥesedh* refers to people, it is short-lived or simply not present.[1239] God does not love the children of Israel because of any attractiveness found in them, as their story in scripture makes evident. Indeed, God's love extends beyond the people of Israel, for even the Moabites may receive God's *ḥesedh*, as Naomi expects when she anticipates Ruth's and Orpah's return to Moab (Ru 1,8). Jonah expects God's love to be poured out on Nineveh, as well, since God overflows "in steadfast love" (Jon 4,2). Precisely for this reason Jonah fled in the opposite direction from that great city.[1240] The consistently recurring message of the Old Testament is this: "God loves men [*sic*] with a love that is constant, and there is nothing that men can do to destroy it."[1241]

[1234] Ibid., 69.
[1235] Ibid., 73.
[1236] Ibid., 72.
[1237] Ibid., 73.
[1238] Ibid., 83.
[1239] Ibid., 81.
[1240] Ibid., 79.
[1241] Ibid., 83-84.

5.3.5 Love in the Septuagint

The early Christian read the Septuagint as their Bible, since it "was for the most people the most accessible form of Scripture."[1242] Thus, the Septuagint gives us a glimpse into the way people then understood the Old Testament idea of love. Here two principal words appear: *agapaō* and *phileō* (along with their cognates). Both words are used to translate the Hebrew root *'hb*; however, of the two, *agapaō* occurs far more frequently.[1243] Morris also points out the fact that the *agapaō* words occur more frequently than do the *'hb* words in connection with God's love (seventy-eight compared to thirty-nine times). He sees this shift as an indication of the Septuagint translators' confidence in God's love and goodness.

Strikingly, the word *agapē* does not occur with reference to God's love in the Septuagint, especially in view of its usage in the New Testament. *Agapē* commonly refers to sexual love in the Septuagint.[1244] Of course, *agapē* can refer to other loves – such as the love of friends –, but the word is rarely used for anything other than sexual love.[1245] Perhaps this indicates the translators' wish to avoid using the word *erōs*; however, as Morris says, "Clearly, the use of the term in the Septuagint is a far cry from that in the New Testament."[1246]

Agapaō is certainly used more frequently than *phileō* by the translators of the Septuagint. Apparently, they took a rather nondescript word for love and began to fill it with content. Here we see the beginning of the development of an idea of love which expressed something the pagan world had no means of articulating. At the same time, Morris argues that we should not make too great a distinction between these two words, since they are sometimes used as synonyms of each other.[1247] Still, *agapē* is used for the first time in a translation, although its use is confined primarily to sexual love. The word provided the Church with a way of speaking about love which was free of connotations attached to other commonly used Greek words. Morris writes, "This was to have important consequences when the New Testament came to be written."[1248]

[1242] Ibid., 101.

[1243] Morris counts 196 times that the Hebrew root *'hb* is translated, of which, *agapaō* or a cognate is used 78 times. Every other word appears 10 or fewer times. Morris comments, "It is plain that the translators regarded *agapaō* and its cognates as the best equivalent." See ibid., 102.

[1244] *Agapē* refers to sexual love 14 times in the Old Testament. Of these occurrences, 11 appear in the Song of Songs. Morris notes that in 2 other occasions the word indicates "love for wisdom," and twice more the word is used "in a general sense." See ibid., 102, including footnote 5.

[1245] Ibid.

[1246] Ibid., 103.

[1247] In the statements about Jacob's preferential love for Joseph and the brothers' understanding of the situation (Gn 37,3-4), the Hebrew verb *'hb* is used four separate times. *Agapaō* is used three times in verse three, while *phileō* appears once in verse four to translate the same verb. Morris comments, "The variation appears to be purely stylistic." See ibid., 111.

[1248] Ibid., 113.

5.3.6 Greek Words for Love

The Greeks used a number of words to describe various nuances of love, whereas, in English, we use just one. Morris calls this a "variety of loves," but he notes that the accompanying richness of Greek vocabulary contains a limitation. Since Greek words can describe a plurality of loves, it tends to obscure the connection between these various expressions of love.[1249]

5.3.6.1 Natural Affection

Storgē is the word the Greeks used to describe the natural affection which occurs between people, as well as between species. It's the cord that unites people within a close-knit group. Often the affection shared among family members is expressed through *storgē*, and this emotion extends to aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, and other extended family members. *Storgē*, or affection, can be shown to anyone – even to those who are physically repulsive. Familiarity is important for this kind of love, so much so that the word "old" – as in old friend – is often an integral part of affection.[1250] However, the New Testament writers never use the word *storgē*; it doesn't appear in any of their writings. Certainly, this is a natural and good form of love, but it does not describe the New Testament idea of love. Christian love is not a natural affection that binds people into a "natural grouping."[1251]

5.3.6.2 Friendship

The love of friendship is denoted through the word *philia*. Friendship was extremely important to the ancients; however, Lewis argues that it is unnecessary biologically. Without *philia*, however, life would be so much poorer.[1252] Friendship is a public love often built around commonalities, in contrast to the private love of eros. Since *philia* does not play a central role in the New Testament – appearing only once in the warning against friendship with the world (Jas 4,4) –, Morris argues that we can disregard this word. "The term is not used to refer to God's attitude toward men, or to Christians' attitudes toward God, other Christians, or outsiders. In short, it does not indicate Christian love."[1253]

[1249] Ibid., 114.

[1250] "The objects of this kind of love must be familiar ... This love often combines with other loves that 'would not perhaps wear very well without it'." See ibid., 115. As cited from Clive Staples Lewis, *The Four Loves* (London: Bles, 1960), 45.

[1251] Morris, *Testaments of Love*, 117.

[1252] Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 70, 84. As cited in, Morris, *Testaments of Love*, 118. For a contrasting view, however, see 5.4.7.1 below.

[1253] Morris, *Testaments of Love*, 119.

5.3.6.3 Eros

Erōs is possessive love – a longing after the attractive. The object of one's erotic love must be valuable, or worthy, to the one who wants to possess the object of his or her love. Falling in love involves seeing the other as attractive and wanting to acquire that person. Our current cultural idea of love often involves a heavy dose of romantic love. Here *erōs* is the Greek god whose arrows come from nowhere and strike us down in the dizziness of love.

Although *erōs* refers to a range of loves, Morris does not see it contributing to the Christian idea of love. But he views the explicitly religious form of erotic love as praiseworthy, since it indicates a strong desire to ascend to God. To define Christian love in such terms, though, is "harmful." For the heart of Christian love is revealed in the descent of God towards humanity, rather than in the latter's ascent to the former.

5.3.6.4 Agapē

Morris notes that the early Christians took an uncommon Greek word for love and filled it with their own idea of love. He also suggests that the Septuagint translators chose *agapē* as a way of avoiding the erotic overtones present in the normal meaning of *erōs*.[1254] Prior to the New Testament *agapē* is almost entirely absent from Greek literature; thus, its use as practically the only word to describe "love" is noteworthy. Morris argues that Christians had a radically new idea of love and they needed a new vehicle for conveying this thought. This they found in the seldom used noun – *agapē*. On the other hand, the verb *agapaō* was frequently used in secular Greek, although Stauffer thinks it generally meant "to prefer."[1255] *Agapaō* denotes a love that distinguishes (and thus prefers) through a decision of the subject. It also lacks the "warmth" expressed by *philein*, according to Stauffer. Prior to its usage in the New Testament, *agapaō* has an uncertain and alterable meaning; but in the New Testament this changes.[1256] New adherents to Christianity would have immediately understood that *agapaō* was speaking about love. The exact meaning of *agapē* would have been unknown, but this would have been filled in for them as they learned more about the faith. In contrast to *erōs*, *agapē* does not love based on a person's worthiness or attractiveness. Rather, it gives of itself, without taking into account the merit of the one loved.

[1254] Ibid., 124.
[1255] Ethelbert Stauffer, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 37. As cited in ibid., 127.
[1256] Ibid.

5.3.7 The God of Love and the Love of God

Morris thinks that we should not start with human love in order to understand God's love, for human love is based on *erōs* – on that which is worthy and desirable.[1257] But this is not the understanding of love put forth in the New Testament. As John wrote, "Herein is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn 4,10).[1258] The New Testament view of love begins with the Cross of Christ; there Jesus dealt with sin and appeased the wrath of God. The Cross reveals God's abhorrent hatred of sin and God's love for humanity. Our sin makes us objects of wrath, but Jesus died as the spotless Lamb of God and turned divine wrath away.

5.3.7.1 Love for Sinners

Paul says that God's love is demonstrated precisely in the fact that Christ died for us when we were absolutely helpless (Rom 5,5-8). We who are weak, ungodly, and sinful have earned nothing but punishment. But God loves sinners, though our sin is repulsive to God.[1259] Divine love is shown through wood and nails. We who are unlovely are loved because "God is love" (1 Jn 4,8). Precisely in the Cross is the Christian view of love distinguished from what the Old Testament understands.[1260] God does not love us sentimentally, but deals head-on with our sin. And God disciplines us precisely because He loves His children (Heb 12,6).

5.3.7.2 Love Gives

Erōs remains unsatisfied until it obtains what it desires; *agapē* gives. Need cries out for satisfaction, but God does not love us so. There is nothing we have that God needs, and all that we can give God is already given to us. "For all things come from thee, and of thy own have we given thee" (1 Chr 29,14).[1261] Even our repentance from sin puts us in a place where God can bless us, with the "good gifts" God wanted to give us all along.[1262] *Agapē* is creative; it makes us more valuable people, not because God benefits from our presence, but because

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[1257] Yet, as Morris shows, some do precisely this. He quotes, for example, J. A. Baker, who writes, "If God's world makes sense only from the standpoint of this commitment which we call love, then *this must be the standpoint of God as well*." Since God created "an environment for love," and since humans "love by natural inclination," love must therefore be God's "inner reality," as well. See John Austin Baker, *The Foolishness of God* (London: Collins, 1970), 132-133 (emphasis mine). As cited in Morris, *Testaments of Love*, 129 (footnote 1).

[1258] Morris' translation. See Morris, *Testaments of Love*, 129.

[1259] Morris notes that some sins are repulsive to us, while others are not. As sinners, we have a hard time understanding the odiousness of sin before God. See ibid., 133.

[1260] Morris cites Walter Harrelson here in making this point. See ibid., 133 (footnote 14).

[1261] Ibid., 142.

[1262] Ibid.

we become a place where the love of God dwells. Many things can be said about God – regarding God's justice, holiness, patience, etc. –, but what is essential is God's love. God gives, because God is love.

5.3.7.3 The Perfecting of Love

Paul describes the triumph God's love brings about in the believers' lives, when he says that nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8,39).[1263] And God's love works in us to perfect our love, for John writes, "Truly the love of God is perfected in anyone who keeps his word" (1 Jn 2,5).[1264] God's love changes people; it affects how they see others around them. One who previously ignored her neighbor's need can no longer do so, for God's love lives in her (1 Jn 3,17). Not only does God's love live in us, but "his love is perfected in us" (1 Jn 4,12 RSV). Morris comments, "Our love for one another is the perfecting of love in us."[1265] Love achieves its goal in a co-abiding of God and believer together, which banishes fear of the judgment day (1 Jn 4,17).

5.3.8 Love Is Creative

Agapē confronts a person with a choice; in view of God's unexpected love, displayed at the Cross, s/he can accept it with an open heart or turn away in rejection. What one cannot do is ignore this love, for *agapē* invites one to faith and a loving reply. To do otherwise – to take no stand – is already to reject this love. In this sense, *agapē* is different than *erōs*, since the erotic desires and prefers. Someone worthy and interesting is gladly embraced in a passionate surrender of being. But the unworthy and uninteresting can be panned, since it's not worth one's embrace. The Cross, however, changes everything; for there we see God's love given in an act of self-sacrifice. That love (*agapē*) calls for a response: either one opens one's heart and gratefully receives love, or one walks away. As Morris says, neutrality is impossible. "Attempting to remain neutral in the face of such love is itself a rejection, for love like this cries out to be received."[1266]

"God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him should not perish but have life eternal" (Jn 3,16).[1267] The good news is that God loves sinners; however, this love brings separation as well. God's Son was not sent to condemn the

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[1263] Morris' translations, see Morris, *Testaments of Love*, 160.
[1264] Morris comments succinctly, "Love inevitably leads to obedience; obedience is evidence of the presence of love." See ibid., 162.
[1265] Ibid., 161.
[1266] Ibid., 165.
[1267] Morris' translation, see ibid.

world, but the way people respond to him separates them immediately. For "he who believes in him is not condemned;[1268] he who does not believe has been condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (Jn 3,18).[1269] Although God never withdraws "the love of the cross" from the world, some will refuse this love, choosing rather sin and selfishness. Morris says that "love guarantees judgment, because it points up the ugliness of sin like nothing else does."[1270] To reject this love, therefore, is to condemn oneself – in a very real sense, to write one's own judgment.

5.3.8.1 Practical Love in 1 John

Just as God's love is demonstrated practically – through the sending of the Son "as the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn 4,10), so we are called to "love one another" (1 Jn 4,11).[1271] Morris argues that *agapē* is no "quasi-spiritual emotionalism," which flees from the realities of this world, in quest of finding God through mysticism. Since no one has seen God, the evidence of divine love in our lives is the fact that "we love one another" (1 Jn 4,12). Morris could not be clearer: "We find God not through mysticism but through love."[1272] God's love fills our lives "when we cease seeking some beatific vision and concentrate on the business of loving our brothers."[1273]

The stakes are very high, for the one who does not love has no life: s/he is dead. "He who does not love abides in death" (1 Jn 3,14).[1274] Eternal life and divine love are linked in John's thought. *Agapē* calls for a strong love of one's neighbor, which places us under obligation to love sacrificially. "In this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers" (1 Jn 3,16).[1275] Morris comments, "Love's demand is total."[1276]

5.3.8.2 The Command to Love

Love is the distinguishing mark of a Christian. Jesus commands his disciples: "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another, that you love one another as I have

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[1268] Morris chooses to translate *krinō* as "condemn," rather than as "judge." He does this because the context seems to suggest it. Morris points out the fact that John never uses the verb *katakrinō*; therefore, he concludes, "We must expect accordingly that *krinō* will sometimes have the meaning 'condemn'." See ibid., 166 (footnote 2).
[1269] Morris' translation, see ibid., 166.
[1270] Ibid., 167.
[1271] Morris' translations, see ibid., 175.
[1272] Ibid., 177.
[1273] Ibid., 178.
[1274] Morris' translation, see ibid.
[1275] Morris' translation, see ibid., 179.
[1276] Ibid.

loved you. All men will know that you are my disciples by this, that you have love for one another" (Jn 13,34f).[1277] While this command is not new – for Moses gave this command centuries earlier (Lv 19,18) –, there is in fact something entirely new about this love. For at the Cross a new aspect or "quality of love" is revealed in the obedient, suffering death of Christ. This kind of love can be commanded of us, because it involves the will, rather than our sentiments or passion.

5.3.9 Love for Other People

Jesus adds the command to love one's neighbor from Leviticus 19 (Mk 12,30f; Mt 22,39) to the great commandment to love God found in the Shema. This came in response to a question posed concerning which was the greatest of God's commands. After giving answer, Jesus commented further, "On these two commandments hang the entire law and the prophets."[1278] In so doing, Jesus expanded the conversation from a question of law to a discussion about the entire corpus of the Old Testament. The command to love one's neighbor was important to Jesus, for he mentions it as well in response to the rich young ruler's question regarding eternal life (Mt 19,19). Morris says we might think it sufficient for Jesus to quote the Law – regarding theft, bearing false witness, honoring one's parents –, but he adds the command to love one's neighbor. This "was so important that it had to be added in such a case."[1279]

Christian love for the neighbor is to be both merciful (Mt 18,33) and able to rebuke when necessary (Lk 17,3). Since we have received mercy from God, we should show mercy to others who are also absolutely undeserving of God's kindness. Like Jesus, Paul summarizes the whole Law in the command to love (Gal 5,14). One's duty to the neighbor is fulfilled by love, and this is the only debt we should have – the debt of love (Rom 13,8). This debt, however, can never be paid in full. Believers constantly owe the debt of loving others.[1280]

5.3.9.1 Self-Love

A debate rages over self-love as mentioned in the command to love one's neighbor (Lv 19,18). Some scholars utterly reject any form of self-love as selfishness, while others argue that love of neighbor *requires* self-love. As we have seen, Andres Nygren argues strongly for

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[1277] Morris' translation, see ibid., 185.
[1278] Morris' translation, see ibid., 193.
[1279] Ibid., 193-194.
[1280] Ibid.

the former view.[1281] Nygren follows Luther whom he cites with approval: "To love is the same as to hate oneself."[1282] James Moffatt holds the opposite view, seeing self-love as essential. "One must never neglect one's capacities, nor fail to live up to the full measure of one's powers," Moffatt claims.[1283] Indeed, for Moffatt, "the love of self is praiseworthy."[1284]

Morris notes that in the general debate people apply different definitions to the notion of "self-love." Some apparently use "self-love" with the sense of self-respect. Morris acknowledges that a healthy respect for oneself is important, since the opposite – a warped image of oneself – can paralyze life. But Morris questions whether self-respect can be considered a form of love.[1285] He notes that love of self is something that is taken for granted in life – people love themselves. Love for oneself is never commanded in the New Testament, even though the command to love the neighbor is repeated a number of times.[1286] Morris argues that the imperatives apply to love for God and neighbor, not to the self. Therefore, in the debate, Morris takes a practical stance. "It would seem that the best position to hold is that a genuine self-respect is praiseworthy, but love for the self is another matter. People do love themselves, but nothing in Scripture leads us to regard this as something Christians should seek."[1287]

5.3.9.2 Brotherly Love

Clearly, the brothers and sisters in the early Church loved one another. Evidence of such love abounds throughout the New Testament. Morris provides a number of examples, such as Peter's injunction to "love the brotherhood" (1 Pe 2,17).[1288] Paul instructs the Galatians, saying, "through love serve one another" (Gal 5,13), while the Corinthians are exhorted to prove "the sincerity of your love" (2 Cor 8,8). [1289] Not only did Paul encourage love for believers, but he lived this himself, as his messages to friends indicate.[1290] Paul describes the Colossians as "knit together in love," in their affection for each other and for

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[1281] See 5.1.1.2 above. Nygren notes approvingly that Luther "knows no justifiable self-love." Rather, "the Commandment of Love involves rejection and condemnation of all self-love whatsoever." See Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 710.

[1282] Ibid., 711. As cited in Morris, *Testaments of Love*, 198-199.

[1283] Moffatt, *Love*, 98. Valuing life for comfort or happiness is still love, but vices destroy the very soul which God has entrusted to us. So we are to live for God's "greater ends." See ibid.

[1284] Ibid. As cited in Morris, *Testaments of Love*, 199.

[1285] Ibid., 201.

[1286] Morris lists the occurrences: Mt 5,43; 19,19; 22,39; Mk 12,31.33; Lk 10,27; Rom 13,9; Gal 5,14; Jas 2,8. See ibid., 203.

[1287] Ibid.

[1288] Morris' translation, see ibid.

[1289] Morris' translations, see ibid., 204.

[1290] Morris lists a number of these greetings: to Epaenetus, Amplias, Stachys, Persis, Timothy, Tychicus, and Luke (Rom 16,5.8.9.12; 1 Cor 4,17; and Col 4,7.14, respectively). These were individuals with whom he worked. See ibid., 204-205.

Christ (Col 2,2). John expresses his "love in the truth" for "the elect lady and her children" (2 Jn 1,1 RSV), as well as for "the beloved Ga'ius" (3 Jn 1 RSV). James speaks to "my beloved brothers" (Jas 1,16.19; 2,5).[1291] And Jude mentions the "love feasts" celebrated by the early Church (Jd 12). Certainly then the early Christians practiced Jesus' command to "love one another" (Jn 13,34).

5.3.10 The Love of Friendship

At the end of his book, Morris gives a brief discussion of the *phileō* group of words. His argument centers primarily on the uniqueness of Christian love as revealed in the New Testament, but Morris also acknowledges the importance of friendship in Jesus' teaching and in the early Church.

The noun *philos* was used to deride Jesus for associating with undesirable people; he was "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Mt 11,19; Lk 7,34).[1292] Such people were generally regarded as unworthy of a rabbi's time, but not by Jesus. He called his disciples "my friends" (Lk 12,4) and referred to Lazarus as "our friend" (Jn 11,11). According to John, Jesus distinguished the disciples from slaves, saying, "But I have called you friends, because all the things I heard from my Father I have made known to you" (Jn 15,15).[1293] In the New Testament, the word *philos* as "friend" is normally used in regard to a relationship which is mutually beneficial to both parties (*e.g.* the centurion's friends Lk 7,6, or of Herod and Pilate when they stopped feuding Lk 23,12).

This is also the case with the verb *phileō*, which more commonly refers to human love than to divine love.[1294] The infrequent use of this verb indicates that the New Testament idea of love is something other than what the verb *phileō* expresses. Morris argues that "the striking use of *agapaō* for God's love for the unworthy is simply not found when we turn to *phileō*."[1295] Key to the New Testament's understanding of love is what God does inside a person's life. The evidence of the Father's work in the disciples' lives is their love for Christ. This is "a divine work in them."[1296] Paul's conclusion to his first letter to the Corinthians expresses the importance of the believers' love for Christ: "If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be anathema" (1 Cor 16,22).[1297] The central question of a person's life is whether or

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[1291] Morris' translation for *adelphoi mou agapētoi*. Apparently James is the originator of this description of Christian believers, since no examples are known prior to his letter. See ibid., 206.

[1292] Morris' translation, see ibid., 260.

[1293] Morris' translation, see ibid., 261.

[1294] Only six of the twenty-five occurrences of *phileō* refer either to God's love (twice) or Jesus' love (four times). See ibid., 263.

[1295] Ibid.

[1296] Ibid., 264.

[1297] Morris' translation, see ibid.

not s/he will love the Lord. Everything turns on that decision – a decision of the will, rather than an overwhelming erotic emotion.[1298]

5.3.11 Conclusion

The New Testament reveals God's love for those who are absolutely undeserving of love. However, God is love; there is no other reason for God to love people. We are neither attractive nor wonderful enough to merit God's love. This is good news, for we are sinners. But God demonstrates God's love at the Cross. "That love means the cross, for God will do whatever is needed – even make a supreme sacrifice – to save the sinners he loves."[1299] We are not told why Jesus had to die upon a cross, but we learn that there God's wrath was propitiated, there we are justified and redeemed. Love paid a terrible price; and "the cross is the measure of this love."[1300] The greatest of loves willingly lays its life down for its friends (Jn 15,13). God willingly pays whatever price is needed to rescue those God loves. Morris writes, "That is the great truth on which the Bible insists. God's love is not merely a distant truth – it is the reality on the cross."[1301] Therefore, Morris is surprised by the neglect of love in so many theologies of the Old or New Testaments. His book is a protest against this oversight.

Morris also protests against those who read romantic ideas of love back into the biblical idea of love.[1302] For the Cross stands at the center of the Bible's revelation of God's love. On the other hand, he sees romantic love as un-Christian ideas which originated in the Middle Ages, among those who praised "courtly love." The bards acclaimed adulterous passion, while disparaging the idea that love could exist within marriage. However, Morris notes that this romantic idea of love – although ubiquitous in the West – was not held by the Hebrews, Greeks, or Romans. In these cultures, marriages were arranged by parents. "Love was not so much an overmastering passion as it was a feeling that developed from responsibility and respect."[1303] Rather than enlarging one's world passion, tends to focus the world down upon two individuals caught within the force of desire. However, Morris doesn't exclude passion from a Christian's life; he says that passion "is an emotion important in a full, satisfying

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[1298] Morris argues that love is primarily understood as sexual passion in contemporary Western culture. His book is a protest against those who mix romantic and Christian ideas of love. See ibid., 274.
[1299] Ibid., 271.
[1300] Ibid.
[1301] Ibid.
[1302] For example, George H. Tavard who understands the mutual giving of oneself in the man-woman relationship as the archetype of Christian *agapē*. Morris responds that Tavard's idea of love is simply not biblical. See ibid., 273.
[1303] Ibid., 275.

life."[1304] But he insists on the distinction of sacrificial Christian love, which is governed by the will, from a passion which directs itself towards obtaining an attractive and worthy object of love.

God's "love begets love." It transforms those who hear, understand, and receive it. One cannot hear about Jesus' love, which sent him to the Cross, without seeing oneself differently. Love replaces self-centeredness – a miracle which only God can perform. "For this reason Scripture relates love to the activity of God's Spirit. Love is a sheer miracle, not the crowning human achievement," Morris insists.[1305] One who experiences God's sheer love and forgiveness cannot but see the world different; love creatively makes the one who receives divine love into a lover who cares deeply about sinners. That is the meaning of love.[1306]

5.3.12 Assessment of Morris' Study

What Morris offers is a study of the most important words used to describe the biblical idea of love. His analysis concentrates on the '*hb* and *agapē* word groups, which convey God's self-giving love for people. This love is a spontaneous, unmotivated love, which expresses frustration when the beloved refuses to respond in kind (*e.g.* Hosea); however, God's love willingly sacrifices itself for the sake of the other. Morris repeatedly argues that love is found throughout the Old Testament, whether or not the word is actually used. In the New Testament, divine love is revealed preeminently in the Cross of Christ. We can know God's love only when we consider what was done there for us. Christ's self-giving, self-sacrificing love calls for a response of love. If we respond favorably, we place ourselves in a position where God can bless us. But if we refuse God's love, we write our own condemnation before heaven.

Morris does not reject self-love out of hand – as Nygren does –, but views it as a simple fact of life. In contrast to Moffatt – who argues that self-love is praiseworthy or obligatory –, Morris considers self-love as good so long as we are thinking in terms of a "genuine self-respect."[1307] Self-respect is important for human psychological health, but the Bible does not command self-love. Morris sees no imperative, therefore, for loving oneself. This focusing of oneself on the self is counter to Christian love, according to Morris. *Agapē* is an outgoing love that seeks to meet the other's needs – regardless of the cost to the self. The pattern is set by God, who gives His Son, and by Jesus, who lays his life down for his friends (Jn 15,13). Thus, Christian love seeks to love the brothers, the sojourner, and the enemy as a reflection of

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[1304] Ibid., 276.
[1305] Ibid., 277.
[1306] Ibid., 278.
[1307] Ibid., 203.

God's love. Believers are commanded to reflect the Father's character by loving others in just such a way. Love seeks to love and serve others; it is not focused on the attractiveness or worth of the object of one's love. For this reason, Morris rejects mysticism as a means of knowing God.[1308]

Love is a decision and an act of the will. It is something learned through perceiving the love God displayed on the Cross. As a believer loves and imitates the Father, love grows, matures, and reaches perfection. That *telos* is the pattern of love, which is the will of God for each of our lives: namely, that we reflect God's character. Morris clearly understands Christian love from a Protestant perspective. He begins and ends his reflection of Christian love at the Cross. God's love is demonstrated throughout the history of Israel through divine encounters with people and nations, but we come to know and understand God's love at the Cross. Morris insists on the centrality of love to both Old and New Testaments. He rightly claims that the Bible can only be properly understood through carefully considering how it presents God's love.

Morris grounds his theological reflection on love in redemption, rather than in creation; however, he also acknowledges the human capacity to love. In contrast to Nygren, Morris does not argue that all forms of human love are selfish and sinful. Morris recognizes the place and value of erotic love, and he speaks of friendship as enriching our lives. However, these loves are not Christian love, which is something altogether different. For the benefits attained and the attractions found in *eros* and *philia* are not a part of *agapē*. Rather, this latter form of love pours itself out for the other in a spontaneous, unmotivated manner. Since Morris focuses his study on Christian love, he does not develop a theological reflection on human capacities to love. For that we turn to our next theologian: Werner Jeanrond.

5.4 JEANROND: A THEOLOGY OF LOVE

Werner Jeanrond was born in 1955 in Saarbrücken, Germany, which was in Saarland at the time of his birth. As a young man, Jeanrond attended the universities of Saarbrücken, Regensburg, and Chicago, where he pursued studies in theology, German language and literature, and educational science.[1309] He earned a Masters Degree in 1979 after successfully completing the *Staatsexamen* in Saarbrucken, and then pursued doctoral studies at the

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[1308] Morris acknowledges that people throughout Church history have attempted to find God through visions. However, he points to the verse that says that no one has seen God (1 Jn 4,12). Mystical love for Christ is a form of "quasi-spiritual emotionalism," which shows "a deep piety" for another realm of existence. But Morris argues that it is in the act of loving our neighbors that we encounter God's love and are filled therewith. See ibid., 177-178.

[1309] "New Master News Release: Top Theologian Appointed to Benedictine Hall", St. Benet's Hall, University of Oxford http://www.st-benets.ox.ac.uk/images/New%20Master%20News%20Release, %202012-03-14.pdf [accessed August 2, 2013].

University of Chicago, where he worked under David Tracy and Paul Ricoeur. In 1984, Jeanrond was awarded a Ph.D. from Chicago, and a year later he was awarded a Master of Arts from the University of Dublin.[1310]

Jeanrond has held a number of professorships beginning at the University of Dublin, from 1981 to 1994. Then in 1995 he began his work at the University of Lund as the first Catholic to teach systematic theology. This was the same professorship Anders Nygren held at the beginning of the twentieth century. Jeanrond taught at Lund from 1995 to 2007. In 2008, Jeanrond was appointed to the Chair of Divinity at the University of Glasgow, as the first layperson to hold this senior chair.[1311] He was appointed Master of St. Benet's Hall at the University of Oxford in September 2012 – the first layperson to hold this post.[1312]

5.4.1 A Theology of Love

Our attention will focus on Jeanrond's book, *A Theology of Love*, published in 2010. In this work, Jeanrond attempts to think the human capacity for love beginning from creation, rather than from redemption, in contrast to the Protestants considered above. Noteworthy is the fact that Jeanrond held the same chair as Nygren, but their approaches to human love could not be more different. Jeanrond points to a dichotomy that emerges in Protestant theological thought, between "God's love manifest in creation and God's love in Christ and the Church," whenever divine love becomes "the measure through which human love is assessed."[1313] In this dichotomy, human love is selfish and sinful, while Christian love is the standard for good, pure love. Jeanrond argues that this dichotomy is misguided and unnecessary. He attempts, therefore, to think human love first from the perspective of creation, in order to see the "connection between creation and redemption – both integrated aspects of God's loving action."[1314] He begins with love as praxis in order to open up as many potential avenues of perspective as possible.[1315] Ultimately, Jeanrond rejects the radical distinction made between Christian love and other kinds of human love.[1316]

[1310] "The Master," St. Benet's Hall http://www.st-benets.ox.ac.uk/master.htm [accessed August 2, 2013].

[1311] "New Master of St. Benet's Hall Appointed", University of Oxford http://www.ox.ac.uk/media/news_stories/2012/120322_1.html [accessed August 2, 2013].

[1312] See *The Master*.

[1313] Jeanrond, *Theology*, 132.

[1314] Jeanrond says this in conjunction with Pope Benedict XVI's reasoning in *Deus Caritas Est*. But this is clearly also Jeanrond's point of view. See ibid., 164.

[1315] Jeanrond writes, "Approaching love as praxis is my attempt to open all alleys of attention, experience, reflection, and critical research on the way towards a multifaceted understanding of this mysterious and dynamic phenomenon in our lives – of its nature, history, development and potential." See ibid., 6.

[1316] For example, in considering Christian marriage and "other forms of marriage," Jeanrond sees a difference not in love but "in a difference of love's basic orientation or horizon." See ibid., 192.

5.4.2 Horizons of Love

The common consensus is that love is necessary for human life. Love is important for an individual's personal development, relational ability, and perspective on existence. It is a desire common to people from many different cultural, linguistic, and historical spheres of life. While we share different levels of relationships with immediate family members, friends, and casual acquaintances, and although love operates on various levels of intimacy, "yet [it] seems to be one."[1317] What then is love? Jeanrond answers: love is desire. Here his thought contrasts with theological reflections on love as a "pure Christian love," set over and against an impure, erotic love.[1318]

5.4.2.1 Love and Difference

Jeanrond begins his theological reflection on love with desire. "Love seeks the other. Love desires to relate to the other, to get to know the other, to admire the other, to experience the other's life, to spend time with the other."[1319] Love requires a subject (who loves) and an object, for "love needs the other."[1320] Difference empowers love as it propels us towards community with others, including God. Jeanrond continually stresses that "love is not a principle, but praxis."[1321] He emphasizes the praxis of love in order to avoid the problems of treating love as a *theory* or *doctrine*, which run the risk of missing the actuality of experiencing love, while submitting love encounters "to preconceived notions, prejudices and ideologies."[1322]

5.4.2.2 Love as Embodied

Jeanrond questions the theological tendency to see the erotic almost exclusively as "impure love." Rather, he argues that one should "appreciate the erotic dimension in *all* forms of love," since this sensitizes us once more to the work of desire present "in all forms of love."[1323] So he pays particular attention to the embodied nature of love: as gendered and expressed in space, time and culture. In so doing, Jeanrond wants to undo earlier theological reflections which view *eros* and *agape* as antithetical, thereby diminishing desire in love. For human love can only occur within human bodies.

[1317] Ibid., 2.
[1318] Ibid., 7.
[1319] Ibid., 2.
[1320] Ibid., 3.
[1321] Ibid., 5.
[1322] Ibid.
[1323] Ibid., 7.

5.4.2.3 Love Is Erotic

Jeanrond places particular importance on desire in his analysis of love, and he begins his theology with a discussion of the erotic. He notes that *eros* has a long history from Plato to the present. Two strong currents flow throughout the erotic tradition: (1) as sexual desire, or (2) as yearning for union with God. Those who concentrate on the former condemn the erotic as sinful and destructive of divine human relationships; while others contemplate the latter and see it as constitutive for those same relationships. Unlike Nygren, Jeanrond does not view *agape* and *eros* as competitors, nor does he make a hard distinction between the two. Rather, Jeanrond points to the mystical traditions as receiving the erotic positively, as helpful for achieving unity in love. However, he still sees ambiguities within mysticism, since embracing the erotic "does not necessarily lead to an affirmation of an embodied self."[1324]

5.4.2.4 Networks of Love

When we arrive into this world we are born into a network of love relationships. Starting with our own mother's love, the web of networks of love continues to expand, which help us develop from childhood into mature lovers. These networks include relatives, friends, teachers, etc., in ever more distant forms of relatedness. Thus, "an experience of love is always prior to my loving."[1325] In the Christian tradition, some have argued that God is an infinite giver of love, who neither longs for nor receives love. This resulted in downplaying the reception of love in view of the more virtuous act of giving love. Jeanrond argues, however, that "love demands mutuality, ... not symmetry."[1326] Although the relation between God and human can never be symmetrical, it must be mutual. Thus, we find ourselves within a horizon of love which demands "commitment and responsibility," where we are called to live up to the commitments such a relationship entails.[1327]

5.4.3 Biblical Challenges to a Theology of Love

Jeanrond acknowledges the centrality of love for Christian faith in God; however, concepts of love should be approached with suspicion, since love is not an exclusive Christian experience. We cannot forget that "love" condemned heretics, persecuted non-believers, and burned women as witches.[1328] Rather than arguing for the superiority of Christian love in

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[1324] Ibid.
[1325] Ibid., 20.
[1326] Ibid.
[1327] Ibid., 21.
[1328] Theology should be "attentive to the shadows of *Christian* love." See ibid., 26.

contrast to other forms of love, we should be mindful of the development of Christian conceptions of love, which occurred in (sometimes) disputative, combative, and ambiguous discussions throughout Church history.

5.4.3.1 Love of God and Love of Neighbor

God is the originator of love, as the Bible clearly and repeatedly states. God both enables and demands human love, as we read in the Shema (Dt 6,4-6). While the Hebrew uses many words for the proper relationship between Israel and God – words which expressed close and sometimes sexual intimacy –, the plethora of Hebrew words was reduced to the one word *agape* in the Septuagint. This translation narrowed the Hebrew imagination to one that largely excluded the erotic from any understanding of religious love, with long-term consequences for later Christian readers. In the Hebrew Bible love involves respecting God, while loving others "and one's emerging self."[1329] The various forms of love may be distinguished, but they belong together within God's creative project of love.

5.4.3.2 The Changing Horizon of Love

Jeanrond argues that a change of focus occurs between the Johannine corpus and approaches found in Paul's letters. In the former, emphasis is placed on caring for those within a specific group as an avoidance strategy for dealing with "difference, conflict and otherness."[1330] However, in Paul the hymn of love (1 Cor 13) outlines a praxis for love, which avoids presenting love as a theory or idea. Love is eternal, and nothing can separate us from the love of God (Rom 8,37-39). Jeanrond, therefore, argues that God offers us a relation in Christ which is respectful both of divinity and humanity, without annihilating the one into the other. He believes that theology needs to consider both Jewish and Christian praxises of love which developed in history, noting where they tended to include or exclude others. Jeanrond insists that the poetics of love found in the Song of Songs point to a needed integration of "human sexuality and erotic desire" into any theological reflection on the divine – human network of love.[1331]

5.4.4 Augustine's Theology of God's Love

[1329] Ibid., 32.
[1330] Ibid., 37.
[1331] Ibid., 41.

Although Augustine spent only five years in Europe (383-8), he influenced Western thought on love, sin, and salvation like no other theologian. Jeanrond begins his theological investigation with this "once highly influential Church Father."[1332] Augustine presents us with a very different way of thinking about love, which starkly contrasts with current thought. The African bishop argues that humans can only love God. When we genuinely love our neighbor we are in fact loving God as our *summum bonum*. Augustine radically severs love from sexuality and marriage, seeing sexual desire in terms of the Fall in the Garden. Sexuality is forever tinted by "sin and death."[1333] Today, we find that we no longer can think love as Augustine does; however, Jeanrond believes we can still benefit from studying Augustine's thought in two ways. First, it helps us see how Augustine's theology affected subsequent theologies of love. Second, it can make us suspicious of assumptions we hold as we reflect on love.

5.4.4.1 Augustine's Approach to Sexuality and Marriage

According to Augustine, the Fall of Adam and Eve brought disruption between the desires of flesh and spirit. The resulting disorder among our desires is only resolved by faith through the healing offered by Jesus Christ.[1334] Christ's presence provides grace that enables individuals to discern the difference between good and evil desires. However, chaos always potentially looms around sexual desire (*concupiscentia carnis*), which is perhaps the most disruptive of all desires, for sexual desire can no longer be controlled by the will – being linked to "the curse of death."[1335] Marriage, however, provides an outlet for carnal desire, while allowing for the orderly (and honorable) birth of children. But, as Jeanrond comments, "Love does not really enter into Augustine's discourse on marriage and sexuality."[1336]

5.4.4.2 The Logic of Augustine's Theology of Love

Desire for God as one's *summum bonum* is the most constructive force in human existence, according to Augustine. God is the highest good, the goal of desire, and ultimately the only object of love. Augustine calls such love a *concupiscentia caritatis*, and he argues that the enjoyment of God is the true goal of human life. Here the bishop differentiates between two kinds of love: to enjoy (*frui*) and to use (*uti*). Only God can be loved in the former sense, while the rest of created existence is loved (*uti*) with the aim of loving God.

[1332] Ibid., 45.
[1333] Ibid.
[1334] Ibid., 47.
[1335] Ibid., 48.
[1336] Ibid., 49.

Here the true relationship between human love and all other beings comes into focus. For the neighbor is only loved as "an occasion for a relationship with God."[1337] Only the immutable God is ultimately loved.

Jeanrond concludes that Augustine, despite his *Confessions*, is not interested in emerging subjectivity. Nor is the latter concerned with "embodiment, gender, [the] human subject, relational choice, [or] the desire for and acknowledgement of otherness."[1338] Today we assume a prior subjectivity to the one loving another, but for Augustine this is reversed. For one only becomes a subject when God loves him or her. Nor can one build human community based on Augustine's theology, since society as a group of people results from procreation – both a biological necessity and stamped with death through original sin –, rather than emerges out of love.

5.4.4.3 Insights Gained from Augustine's Theology of Love

Four insights may be gleaned from Augustine's theology of love which can assist a contemporary theology of love. First, we learn that "love has a history."[1339] His reflections emerged from Neo-Platonic categories and his own personal struggle to master his body through reason. Secondly, Augustine's concept of love developed out of a Johannine concept of love, sifted through a Neo-Platonist anthropology, and developed within a Greek tradition that radically separated sexual practice from conceptions of love. Thirdly, his thought strongly affected the way that he understood human subjectivity. The body is seen as severely impacted by original sin, careening towards chaos, while the soul seeks mastery over the body from within, on its way towards finding love. The soul must control the body to the latter's detriment: including preferring celibacy to ordered marital intercourse.[1340] Finally, for Augustine "love lives in heaven and not on earth."[1341]

While Jeanrond agrees with Augustine concerning the unity and eschatological nature of love, he believes we must think about both of these characteristics in other terms today. Jeanrond asks if we can think of love as a power capable of transforming people into "genuine subjects and agents of love."[1342] Particularly, he wants to know if sexed subjects can be given a new heart, through baptism, so as to love God, neighbor, and self in "imaginative ways" under the leading of God's Spirit. Clearly Jeanrond thinks this is possible. But first he turns to

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[1337] Ibid., 53.
[1338] Ibid., 54-55.
[1339] Ibid.
[1340] Ibid., 62-63. The body is clearly the loser in this logic of love. See ibid., 63.
[1341] Ibid., 64.
[1342] Ibid.

consider the impact Augustine's theology of love has had on Christian ideas and practices related to love, sexuality, and marriage.

5.4.5 Rediscovering the Loving Subject

New winds blew across Europe in the twelfth century, where a radical renewal of the Augustinian tradition was afoot. For Medieval theologians began to see humans as being *capable* of love – as a gift of God to those who bear God's image. At the same time, a sudden blooming of thought and creativity occurred around the world regarding love.[1343] An awareness of humans as loving subjects first emerged within the monastic movement and percolated out to other groups within society: *e.g.* academic, courtly, and mystic.

5.4.5.1 Bernard of Clairvaux

Bernard of Clairvaux, a Cistercian monk, accepted the responsibilities of abbot of the monastery at Clairvaux in 1115. Together with other members of the Cistercian movement, Bernard engaged in "a theological rediscovery" that incorporated biblical interpretation along with "a reassessment of the potential of human knowledge and experience."[1344] For Bernard the spiritual life is a way leading from carnal to spiritual love. Christ resurrected and ascended shows believers the way to ascend to God through love. Carnal knowledge is an immature love, but as a form of knowledge it points the way to maturity. Knowledge of Christ and the mystery of His grace brings enlightenment to the soul, allowing it to see its depraved state. Confession of the soul's condition leads to a further illumination of the intellect, until knowledge is eventually elevated into love. Bernard agreed with Augustine that only love can arise to God, but they disagreed over the body. The abbot did not believe that the body was destroyed by the Fall; rather, corruption affects the body. Thus, Bernard did not radically separate the body from love.

For Bernard the body is a good partner for the spirit. Both soul and body long to be glorified together as they move towards union with God. The body is the soul's necessary companion, since human love and desire are first experienced in the flesh. Still, the abbot longs for the completion of the journey when earthly flesh and its needs "will be absorbed in the love of the spirit, and the weak affections we now have will be changed into divine affections."[1345] Jeanrond notes that "in this monastic theology of love, subject and

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[1343] Jeanrond mentions a number of major religious works written in the twelfth century in countries from Spain to Japan. See ibid., 67.

[1344] Ibid., 71.

[1345] Bernard of Clairvaux, "On Loving God," in *Selected Works*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 205. As cited in Jeanrond, *Theology*, 75.

embodiment are rediscovered ... [and] human beings are invited to love God, each other and their own divinely transfigured selves."[1346]

5.4.5.2 Thomas Aquinas

Aquinas' theology of love, developed in the *Summa Theologiae*, presents us with some similarities to Bernard's view of love. For Aquinas "shares the abbot's overall conviction that any form of genuine love must relate to God, who is the ultimate origin and aim of love."[1347] Both consider humans as capable of love, since we bear God's image, but Aquinas exceeds Bernard by distinguishing between various forms of love.

Love (*amor*) is a passion which propels an individual to unity with the object of desire. Aquinas further distinguishes three other kinds of similar passions: *dilectio*, *caritas*, and *amicitia*. *Amor* is the most general sense of love; it is a somewhat passive love, which allows for love's receptivity to God. *Dilectio* and *caritas* are episodic manifestations of *amor*. *Dilectio* is a love of the will – located in the rational appetite, involving the judgment of reason; while *caritas* achieves "a certain perfection of love" through the noble nature of what it prizes.[1348] These latter two loves should not be confused with each other, although they are both related to the more general *amor*. While *dilectio* entails a prior choice – and thus a human act –, *amor* is passively drawn to God through no act of the will. Therefore, *amor* is more like God than *dilectio*. Finally, *amicitia* is love for friends.

Aquinas manifests a more positive view of the human capacity to love, since God creates human beings in order to love them as friends. Charity is only possible through participation in God's essence, which is love (*caritas*). While Aquinas distinguishes between the passions, he also stresses the unity of love; therefore, charity (*caritas*) involves both friendship (*amicitia*) and love (*amor*). In Aquinas' theology of love, "friendship with God and our neighbor is the goal of love."[1349] We should also love ourselves, including our bodies, which accompany us on the path to glory.

Jeanrond says that Aquinas retrieves and reinterprets the Augustinian tradition to include human agency, while recognizing God as the source of love. Indeed, Aquinas argues that God increases charity, allowing it to take a deeper hold on the soul. However, Jeanrond notes a presumption of a patriarchal, highly hierarchical order dominated by the Church, along with a lack of erotic thought in Aquinas. But new conceptions of love were developing at the same time within the courts in Southern France, which included erotic love.

[1346] Jeanrond, *Theology*, 77.
[1347] Ibid.
[1348] Jeanrond's summary of Aquinas' definitions of love comes from the first part of the second part of the *Summa Theologica*: specifically from 26, 3. See ibid., 78.
[1349] Ibid., 79.

5.4.5.3 Courtly Love

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, new poetic ideas about love spread throughout the European courts – at a time when love was increasingly the topic of reflections in monasteries, academies, and among mystics. Troubadours began to sing new songs, and thereby undermined the Church's regulation of desire to spiritualized devotion. Their earlier songs delighted in love's "joys and disappointments," along with erotic intercourse itself. But later songs exulted in the feelings of unrequited or delayed love.[1350] Thus, erotic desire became the source for new ways of thinking poetically about love. The woman began to rule over men's hearts, becoming one who stirs the passions of love. An equality, therefore, developed between men and women in the realm of amorous passion. Love was now firmly ensconced on earth, as woman received the new status of "object of male desire."[1351]

5.4.5.4 Martin Luther

Martin Luther (1483-1546) developed his understanding of love at a time when new ideas about human subjectivity were appearing. Formed as an Augustinian friar, trained in scholastics, and working with the Bible, Luther came to see the Christian life as a direct response to the calling of grace in one's life. He made a distinction between loves which deeply impacted theology, for he distinguished between human love (*amor hominis*) and God's love (*amor Dei*).

Luther taught that God's love is perfect, while human love always remains somewhat egotistical. God's love is creative, making sinners beautiful simply by loving them. Human love, on the other hand, loves what benefits the individual. People love whatever will fulfill their desire. Thus, as Jeanrond notes, Luther affirms the human capacity to love, even though this ability is imperiled by sin. "Human love is deficient."[1352] However, for Luther the presence of God living in the believer makes up for this deficiency. In contrast to our natural egoism, Christ's presence in the believer brings a mystical union with God. The aim of this union is a life of conformity to Christ (*conformitas cum Christo*), which is expressed in humility (*humilitas*).[1353] Union results from a process of deification, which is initiated by faith, itself being a gift of God. Through participating in Christ, the believer participates with God was well. According to Luther, faith shapes love, and "Christ is the form of faith (*Christus forma fidei*).[1354]

[1350] Ibid., 84.
[1351] Ibid., 89.
[1352] Ibid., 97.
[1353] Ibid., 98.
[1354] Ibid., 99.

Jeanrond notes that Luther separated the unity of love which Aquinas emphasized. Aquinas considered love as one of the virtues God infuses into peoples' lives, but Luther viewed human love as compromised by sin. Luther, therefore, divided love into human and divine loves. Human love is ego-based and only becomes properly ordered through justification, which, according to Luther, is by faith. As Jeanrond notes, there is an "interdependence of love and faith" in Luther's theology."[1355]

By making a radical division between pagan love (*heidnische Liebe*) and Christian love (*Christliche Liebe*), Luther turns love into a Christian possession, rather than a gift given to everyone by God.[1356] For Luther, genuine love is only possible following salvation. Jeanrond writes, "Luther's understanding of Christian love thus is fully soteriological."[1357]

5.4.5.5 Medieval Trends

Jeanrond sees a narrowing of the horizon of love from a general human capacity – as part of the *imago Dei* which we bear – to a specific Christian possession received during salvation. "In Luther love is essentially linked to the work of Christ and the cross."[1358] At the same time, women are acknowledged as loving agents equally involved in romantic love, while receiving a new object status as their subjectivity is celebrated in courtly love. Ideas produced in courtly love would challenge Christian ideas of love. A new duality between human and Christian loves becomes the object of reflection for theologians as we now consider reflections offered by Protestant theologians.

5.4.6 Love as Agape

Jeanrond addresses reflections on love made in the Protestant theological tradition through the work of four theologians. However, in the interest of space we will consider only two: Anders Nygren, and Karl Barth. Each of these theologians view human love "from above." God is love (1 Jn 4,8.16) and the standard against which human love is assessed. Forms of human love are found lacking, and any attempt to legitimize such love is controverted. Thus, divine love is proper, while human expressions of love are improper. While each of these theologians belong within the Protestant line of thought, they differ from each other as well. Anders Nygren makes a radical separation between (human) eros and

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[1355] Ibid.
[1356] Luther made this distinction in a sermon preached in 1522. See ibid., 100-101.
[1357] Ibid., 102.
[1358] Ibid.

(divine) agape. On the other hand, Karl Barth receives Nygren's dual approach to divine and human love, while making important modifications.

5.4.6.1 Anders Nygren

As Nygren's theology of love was considered above, we will restrict our discussion here to Jeanrond's assessment of this extremely influential treatment of love. Jeanrond notices what Nygren refuses or forgets in his treatment of love. Nygren deprecates both the Greek idea of love (*eros*) and Jewish expressions of love for the law (*nomos*); and he fails to mention the debate then raging in Europe concerning love and marriage at the beginning of the twentieth century.[1359] Clearly Nygren has a theological project: specifically, to reinstate Luther's doctrine of justification by faith as the only true model for thinking Christian love.[1360] Nygren also makes a hard division between two absolutely incompatible ideas of love: Platonic (*eros*) and Christian (*agape*). He then asserts that a problem developed in the history of Christian theology when these two contradictory loves were mixed to form caritas in an Augustinian view of love.

Jeanrond identifies an eclipsing of subjectivity in Nygren's system, for "self-love is the chief enemy of agape."[1361] Nygren leaves no room for human agency in his theology of love, for the human individual simply functions as a conduit for the divine love. Self-love is annihilated, and all forms of human love are deprecated. As Jeanrond notes, Nygren instrumentalizes Luther's theology of love.[1362] Although Nygren offers a blistering attack on Augustine's mixing of agape and eros in caritas, he continues to think within the Augustinian tradition. We are so damaged by original sin that we can only function, at best, as a conduit for divine love. Of course, Jeanrond takes issue with Nygren's overwhelmingly negative anthropology. When one's theological focus begins and ends with "original sin, guilt and damnation," it greatly affects one's theology of love. Jeanrond rightly says that Nygren has forgotten the human being as being a part of "God's good creation."[1363]

5.4.6.2 Karl Barth

[1359] Jeanrond says that Nygren "chose to present a theological discussion apart from any such context, although his work was, of course, received against the background of such developments." See ibid., 114.

[1360] Ibid., 120.

[1361] Ibid., 116.

[1362] Indeed, Nygren uses this very conceptual language when he claims that "the Divine love employs man [*sic*] as its instrument and organ." See Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 733-734.

[1363] See Jeanrond, *Theology*, 120.

Karl Barth (1886-1986) begins his theology of love from the doctrine of reconciliation, in his *Church Dogmatics* (Vol. IV). Starting from a different context than Nygren (justification), Barth produces a theology that supports the human capacity to love and promotes the communal aspects of love.[1364] Barth grounds his theology of love in creation and election; thus, people are viewed as subjects able to love God and neighbor, through the new liberty won by Jesus Christ.[1365]

For Barth, Christian love is a human *response* to God's love. Jesus Christ demonstrates God's desire to live with each person in the world, as well as every individual's need for God. Fellowship with God demarcates the horizon of love for both Barth and Nygren. For Barth, love functions vertically in one's love for God in Christ and horizontally in love between Christians and one's neighbor. Christian love is a gift of God made available through Christ, which operates in the believer through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Thus, for Barth, the individual is an agent able to respond in love to God's love, which has been declared in Christ. Of course, this completely contradicts Nygren's view of the human as merely a pipeline conveying God's love from above. As Jeanrond writes, "Barth affirms the human potential to love," which is expressed in the tangible Church.[1366]

Like Nygren, Barth makes a hard distinction between eros and agape. But Barth sees agape as a self-giving, self-sacrificing love, rather than an exclusively divine love. Eros desires what it finds attractive as a self-seeking, grasping love. Thus, these two loves are opposites, and only agape reflects God's purpose for humanity. One lives as God intends through sacrificing oneself; therefore, all forms of loving oneself are ruled out as an attempt to achieve autonomy and self-glory. Jeanrond notices that self-love is seen through an extremely limited and negative lens.

For Barth, the individual is a genuine subject who can respond to God by loving one's neighbor in a concrete manner. Because of the materiality of love, this love distinguishes and prefers. Barth understands the human person to be a loving subject who experiences a mixture of loves: erotic and agapeic. He thereby affirms human subjectivity and capacity to love, but Barth also "acknowledges the ambiguity of Christian love."[1367] What is of import for Jeanrond is Barth's parting of ways with Nygren over God as the exclusive loving agent. We can love, as well, through the empowerment of God's Spirit.[1368]

5.4.6.3 Christian Doctrines of Love

[1364] Nygren cannot build a community, since only divine love is genuine. See ibid., 121-122.
[1365] Ibid., 121, 123.
[1366] Ibid., 121.
[1367] Ibid., 122.
[1368] Ibid., 127.

These two theologians fit within the doctrinal tradition Martin Luther established, where human love is measured against divine love and found wanting. Love is not related to Creation; rather, the Cross is the yardstick by which all loves are measured. Jeanrond writes,

> Christian love is right; romantic love, self-love, human desire and longings are wrong. All human forms of love need to be submitted to and properly purified by Christian doctrine. The human being is a sinner, and thus requires first salvation before his or her love can flourish.[1369]

The search for a pure Christian love separates love from any connection with God's dealings with the Jews in the Old Testament for Nygren. Barth alone sees a connection between the two traditions, although his theology of love is highly christological. Nygren thinks that the human person cannot love, since only God loves. At best we function as pipes through which God's love flows. Barth disagrees; he insists that love is action. Thus, Barth supports the idea of the human capacity to love, but this subjectivity is "given away in perfect sacrificial *Hingabe*."[1370]

5.4.7 The Unity of Love and Desire

In contrast with what we have just seen, other theologians think the relation between love and desire in terms of unity. Rather than understanding love and desire as radically distinct from each other, these theologians see the potential of human love as a divine gift. Therefore, desire enables us to build loving relationships. Although the divine origin of love is recognized, these theologians speak of the human capacity to love others and thus of the responsibility to build loving relationships with others. As they see it, desire is an important catalyst for moving us constantly closer towards the mystery of love.

5.4.7.1 Paul Tillich

For the German-American theologian, Paul Tillich (1886-1965), love is understood as that which seeks unity with whom it is separated. Love moves towards reunion with the other, growing as it seeks to love God and do justice to his or her neighbor. Tillich thinks of love as both an emotion and an action.[1371] As an emotion, love anticipates reuniting once more with the beloved; as an action, love completes this longing through the union itself.

[1369] Ibid., 133.
[1370] Ibid.
[1371] Ibid., 136.

In Tillich's theology, the love of God involves the whole person, along with the various forms of human love. Rejection of the erotic in a person's love of God makes love "an impossible concept." In such cases obedience substitutes for love, and, as Tillich notes, "Obedience is not love. It can be the opposite of love."[1372] For Tillich, the various forms of human love coincide with each other. Desire (*epithymia*) is present in both *eros* and *philia*,[1373] while each of these different forms of love are related to *agape*.[1374] Indeed, *eros* and *philia* find their profundity of love in *agape*, for there "ultimate reality manifests itself and transforms life and love."[1375] Tillich takes the human dimensions of love seriously, and he argues that one's vocation is to love God and neighbor, while growing in love. This growth in the capacity to love is facilitated by the Spirit of God, who guides the person towards deeper expressions of the possibilities of human love. Thus, Tillich is highly critical of systems which deny the human capacity to love, instrumentalize love, or deny the mystical dimensions of love.[1376]

Tillich believes that justice needs to be a part of any love, including doing justice to the self in any love relationship. *Agape* is unique from the other forms of love, since it cannot do injustice to others. Although *agape* is akin to these loves and can interact with them, *agape* "judges all of them."[1377]

Jeanrond approves of Tillich's theology of love, saying that it demonstrates an ability within the Protestant tradition to think of Christian love without needing to radically separate divine and human love or to denigrate *eros*.[1378] Tillich appreciates the human forms of love, including friendship, desire, and the erotic, without requiring their annihilation under *agape* love. Here human love is perfectable. However, Jeanrond critiques Tillich for not fully seeing love's potential for relating to otherness, since his thoughts "remain restricte to a Christian orbit."

5.4.7.2 Karl Rahner

One of the most influential Roman Catholic theologians of the last century was Karl Rahner (1904-84) – a German Jesuit whose thought profoundly influenced the Second Vatican Council (1962-5). Rahner was not a systematic theologian, who worked out a tight

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[1372] Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice: Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 31. As cited in Jeanrond, *Theology*, 136.

[1373] According to Tillich, these two forms of love intersect in desire. See Jeanrond, *Theology*, 136.

[1374] Ibid.

[1375] See Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 33. As cited in Jeanrond, *Theology*, 136.

[1376] Ibid., 136.

[1377] Paul Tillich, *My Search for Absolutes* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967), 108. As cited in Jeanrond, *Theology*, 141.

[1378] Jeanrond, *Theology*, 138.

system of thought, but one who addressed problems confronting Christians at the time in which he lived.

Rahner thinks love from the perspective of his transcendental theology. He argues that the human person reaches his or her self-realization in love, through a process of growth that occurs in time. As a person moves in love, s/he journeys towards fullness as a human being. To act in love is to participate in love, for God's love is present at the core of everything. According to Rahner, love "is never simply present but is always on the way to itself."[1379] Through this process the individual transcends him or herself and travels towards his or her individual (and currently) hidden reality.[1380] Love is not intentionality, *per se*, but the risking of oneself "without assurances, without guarantees."[1381]

For Rahner, the love of God always comes prior to human love, as a gift. To love both God and neighbor, we must give ourselves; but we can only give ourselves *after* God has already given Godself to us. Thus, the only thing we can give in love "is a pure gift from God."[1382] As Jeanrond summarizes, for Rahner, "love is always already divine gift and grace."[1383] Love is "the fullness of God and of man [*sic*]."[1384] I am able to love my neighbor – to really love that person; therefore, my love is genuine for the person I call "neighbor" and not simply a case of my love for God. Rahner thinks that this indicates an *a priori* opening in the individual which is part of his or her "most basic constitution." By loving the other, we find fulfillment in our transcendental nature as human beings, and an opening is created for experiencing God's own personal, gracious communication.

Rahner thought of love as a dialogue in which the other person's "goodness and dignity" are recognized in their totality.[1385] The particularity of the neighbor is respected; whereas, in Tillich's understanding of love as the union of lovers, protection of the other's alterity is neglected. Likewise, Rahner's reflections strongly contrast with Nygren's, for the former values many kinds of human love (including the erotic) in stark contrast to the latter.[1386] For Rahner, grace is an integral part of all genuine love. Therefore, there can be no selfishness in genuine love, since such a love is always already a grace given by the God who has given the Son in history, thereby communicating God's love to human beings.

[1379] Karl Rahner, "The 'Commandment' of Love in Relation to the Other Commandments," in *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966), 451. As cited in Jeanrond, *Theology*, 144.

[1380] So Jeanrond writes that for Rahner "the decision to love God in the future is [already] love, since it is already on its way to love." See Jeanrond, *Theology*, 144.

[1381] Ibid.

[1382] Rahner, 456. As cited in Jeanrond, *Theology*, 144.

[1383] Jeanrond, *Theology*, 144.

[1384] Rahner, 459. As cited in Jeanrond, *Theology*, 145.

[1385] Jeanrond, *Theology*, 147-148.

[1386] Ibid., 148.

Acts of genuine personal love always participate within the love of God, for God grounds every expression of genuine human love through God's gift of love and grace. In this way, Jeanrond notes that God is the "mysterious partner in any genuine love of neighbor."[1387] Here Rahner's understanding of the interconnectedness of all loves comes to the fore. Ultimately love of God and love of neighbor are one – as Rahner writes, "without separation, without confusion."[1388]

Jeanrond is impressed with Rahner's reflections on Christian love; however, he faults the latter for not situating it in relation to Jewish traditions of love.[1389] The reader is thus given the impression that the love Jesus taught is something entirely new, thus obscuring how his praxis coheres with and further develops the Jewish tradition. But Jeanrond is pleased with Rahner's positive consideration of the body and his stress on the eternal connection we share with one another and with God through love.

5.4.7.3 Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical Letter

The last theologian Jeanrond engages, in his overview of theological reflections on love, is the encyclical letter written by Pope Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger, 1927-) in 2005 entitled "*Caritas Deus Est*." This encyclical addresses Christian love from the perspective of God's love, then broadens into a call for loving social action. Jeanrond is pleased with the tone of this letter – addressing the central point of Christian faith, without any hint of moralizing or polemicizing.[1390] Indeed, Jeanrond appreciates the "ecumenical and inclusive horizon" of the former Pope's reflections. He especially approves of Benedict's "reflection on how the loving God invites all human beings to participate in his creative and reconciling project of love."[1391]

Jeanrond sees this letter opening up possibilities for new reflections on love, and he certainly reads the Pope's letter in the broadest possible sense, in order to open up possibilities for thinking new expressions of human love. For Jeanrond, theology's task is to ponder the idea of God and the sorts of relationships God wants people to enjoy. Therefore, a theology of love begins in space and time with God's self-revelation. From this context "appropriate forms of love" may be developed which pay attention to recent developments in our understanding of the body, gender theory, and the self.[1392]

[1387] Ibid., 149.

[1388] Karl Rahner, "Liebe," in *Sacramentum Mundi: Theologisches Lexikon für die Praxis*, 3 (Freiburg: Herder, 1969), 250. As cited in ibid., 148.

[1389] Jeanrond, *Theology*, 151.

[1390] Ibid., 161.

[1391] Ibid.

[1392] Ibid., 162.

Pope Benedict clearly differs with theologians following Nygren's lead, for he sees eros as being part of God's love and of all other forms of love.[1393] Desire is, in fact, a part of our creation; for erotic desire moves us towards marriage. However, in human love eros needs purification and growth. This occurs as human eros passes "through the path of renunciation," which brings healing to this form of love.[1394] At the same time, desire is a part of God's agapeic love for human individuals.[1395] God's desire for humanity is displayed in God's works of creation and redemption. All forms of human love share, in some way, in the divine love – whether or not the participants are aware of this connection. Love thereby reveals God's presence to people who are often unconscious of its origin.

Jeanrond criticizes the Pope, though, for not addressing love's potential for shaping the loving self and for ignoring developments pertinent to the understanding of the self made by Scholastic and Reformation theological and philosophical thinkers. The encyclical passes over a thousand years of thought as it leaps from Greek philosophy and the Church Fathers to modern intellectuals and the Marxist movement. In place of these developments, the encyclical dwells on the Church's responsibility to show social love. Pope Benedict calls for the Church to "practise love,"[1396] but Jeanrond if it is possible for the Church to be an *agent* of love. "Can entire communities and institutions be said to be loving subjects?"[1397] Jeanrond rather suspects that such statements, as well as the encyclical's emphasis on a Johannine theology, indicate the wish to control the Church's charitable organizations.[1398]

While Jeanrond warmly welcomes this encyclical, his critiques are rather pointed. The Pope neglects to elaborate on self-love other than as an imperative to give oneself to others as a gift.[1399] Here there is no reflection on love's potential to produce and form a loving self. Jeanrond also questions the writer's preference for a Johannine theology, over a Pauline theology, noting this is "a more natural choice for any theology of love that wishes to defend a given church order."[1400] Finally, Jeanrond criticizes the Pope for connecting the nature of God with "a particular view of marriage": specifically, with monogamy.[1401] Current debates regarding gender theory are not mentioned and the document fails to use inclusive language;

[1393] See paragraph 7 of Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005). As cited in Jeanrond, *Theology*, 163.

[1394] See paragraph 5 of Benedict XVI. As cited in Jeanrond, *Theology*, 163.

[1395] Pope Benedict writes, "God's *eros* for man [*sic*] is also totally *agape*." See Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, par. 10. As cited in Jeanrond, *Theology*, 163.

[1396] See Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, par. 20.

[1397] Ibid., 166.

[1398] Jeanrond, *Theology*, 166.

[1399] Ibid., 167.

[1400] Jeanrond notes that the Pope could have used Luke and Paul as resources for his theological reflection, which would have produced a more open perspective to otherness in love. See ibid., 169.

[1401] The Pope's "readiness to conclude that the Jewish and Christian understanding of God demanded a particular view of marriage seems less supported by the biblical tradition than his insistence that all love comes from God and that love between human beings must therefore always be faithful and open to God's eternity," writes Jeanrond. See ibid.

these are all indications for Jeanrond that further theological reflection is warranted. Jeanrond also approves of Benedict's insight that "love is not a principle, but praxis." The point of any theology of love is to encourage people "to become responsible agents of love," Jeanrond says.[1402]

5.4.7.4 Approaching Love as Praxis

The last three theologians considered stress the unity of love. Tillich, Rahner, and Pope Benedict XVI all understand eros and agape to be different forms of God's one gift of love to human persons. These thinkers see eros as a good, creative force, in contrast to those theologians who follow Nygren. For Tillich, agape is the very depth of human love, rather than its antithesis. With Rahner, every act of love participates in an existential openness between God, self, and the loved neighbor. Pope Benedict's call for "social love" encourages the practice of love. This latter aspect Jeanrond discusses as the "praxis character of love," to which we now turn.

5.4.8 Institutions of Love

For Jeanrond, love is a learned praxis rather than an instinctual behavior.[1403] This praxis is learned in particular institutions of love which exist within a comprehensive horizon of love. The family is one of the most primary and important of these institutions, for there one learns subjective, social and conventional ways of love.[1404] The various conventions and forms which convey love to others are first learned in the family. These expressions follow "particular conventions, rules and expressions," and thus they have a specific history.[1405] Therefore, Jeanrond discusses the conducts and practices of love as passed down by such institutions of love. He begins with the family as an institution of love, before moving on to the Christian family, Christian marriage, and chastity.

5.4.8.1 A New Christian Concept of the Family

The Christian movement produced a radically new idea of the family which revolutionized this institution of love in the ancient world. Believers were denounced for undermining both traditional Jewish and Roman forms of patriarchal family structures. By

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[1402] Ibid.
[1403] Jeanrond writes, "Love is not instinctual behaviour ... it requires learning." See ibid., 173.
[1404] Ibid., 174.
[1405] Ibid.

inviting individuals to discipleship, the early Church challenged the borders of the traditional family, making it "more porous."[1406] In place of the *pater familias*, who ruled over the family through power, people were included into God's family, under Christ as its head, where children received central importance, and where the Christian God of love, compassion, and mercy did not automatically foster models of patriarchal authority. This new Christian family "represented a massive challenge to traditional family values and patterns of household organization."[1407]

5.4.8.2 The Ambiguous Heritage of Christian Marriage

In the Middle Ages, marriage functioned as a means of securing property rights and establishing children's legal status. Love had very little to do with marriage. During the high Middle Ages, marriage became a genuine option to the celibate life for most Christians. Marriage was championed as a way to promote procreation, learn love, and prevent fornication.[1408] Then, during the Reformation, marriage was viewed as the way most Christians should live – as a gift of God given for the procreation of children. However, Martin Luther thought that "bridal love" needed purification, since each lover seeks to satisfy his or her own desires in and through the other. Thus, he saw marriage as a hospital which helped incurably sick patients from committing even more grievous sins. Once again, the concept of marriage changed during the Enlightenment to a common contract for the propagating of the species (David Hume) or for the possession of each other's genitals (Immanuel Kant).[1409] Today, however, couples marry primarily for love. Jeanrond writes, "In a legal sense, marriage has today become dispensable;"[1410] although, for Roman Catholics, marriage remains a sacrament in which the gift of love is expressed physically, visibly, and creatively.

5.4.8.3 A Future for Christian Marriage?

Only relatively recently has love become the focus of marriage. Jeanrond argues that a radical transformation has taken place of the way Christians view marriage. Marriage is no

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[1406] Ibid., 175.
[1407] Ibid., 178.
[1408] This occurred as part of the Church's move to dominate all aspects of European culture, beginning in the thirteenth century, which included a "deprivatization" of the marital bed. See ibid., 185.
[1409] Ibid., 190.
[1410] Ibid., 180.

longer seen – ala Augustine – as a way to manage human lust in a necessarily "sinful human sexuality."[1411] Today Christians understand marriage as an institution based on love.

Jeanrond hopes for a greater opening towards God's creative project of love, and he protests against any radical distinction between common human and Christian forms of love.[1412] Rather, Christian love uniquely participates in an openness "to God and God's emerging reign in this universe."[1413] From an ecclesial perspective, marriage and Christian love open the couple up to the larger, emerging body of Christ – involving them in what Jeanrond calls "body-building." Here, then, he calls for rethinking "a broadening of the concept of marriage beyond the traditionally heterosexual framework," to include the possibility of Christian marriage for homosexual couples.[1414] Jeanrond questions whether a mere blessing given by local churches to such lifelong partnerships does justice "to the depth of the ecclesial interconnectedness between all forms and institutions of love in Christ or to stress the obligation to relate a couple's praxis of love intimately to the mystery of Christ's emerging body."[1415]

Naturally, as a Roman Catholic theologian, Jeanrond must consider how such a practice would fit within the Church's teaching regarding the sacrament of marriage. Here Jeanrond makes a very strong statement: "Neither God nor the Church administers the sacrament of marriage; rather the partners themselves administer this sacrament to each other in the presence of the Christian community, represented by the priest and the witnesses."[1416] It should be noted that this reduces the clergy and the laity to the function of mere witnesses. However, Jeanrond sees such a view of the marriage sacrament as liberating for the lovers: for "against the power and interest of families, dynasties and clans, the free choice of partners is thus confirmed."[1417] Through their vows, the couple involve themselves in the eternal presence of God's love and participate in the radical plurality of God's project of uniting those who are radically particular and unique.[1418] Jeanrond says that Christian marriage "implies a radicalization of love," for "in getting married I open up a pathway ... to be transformed by God's grace."[1419] To participate in the sacrament of marriage is to indicate

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[1411] Ibid., 192.

[1412] Jeanrond comments, "I consider such an approach wrong and dangerous." Such approaches are wrong because they deny genuine human love as being a gift from God. See ibid., 192-193.

[1413] Ibid.

[1414] Jeanrond writes, "In Christian homosexual and lesbian partnership, as in heterosexual partnership, the point is the faithful and committed opening towards God's gift of love." See ibid., 193.

[1415] Ibid., 193-194.

[1416] Ibid., 194.

[1417] Ibid.

[1418] Ibid., 195.

[1419] Ibid.

one's willingness to take "greater responsibility for the ecclesial climate in which human love projects are becoming open to God's eternal horizon of love."[1420]

5.4.8.4 Love and Chastity

Chastity can be seen as one of two extremes: either as antithetical to love, or as a superior form of love. Chastity was associated with celibacy and virginity, rather than with marital fidelity, from the early Church Fathers to the Council of Trent (1563).[1421] Jeanrond notes that the Catholic Church continues to maintain a "hierarchy of perfection" through a celibate priesthood, where virgins are viewed as elite lovers of Christ. Still, he wants to consider chastity in a way which gives due honor to it as a form of embodied love, without elevating it to a superior form of human love.

In church history chastity was seen as a renunciation which moves one along the path to perfection. Such perfection is achieved through self-control. As Jeanrond writes, "In all epochs of church history we can observe attempts to reach, or even to force, holiness through different forms of castigating the body, asceticism, renunciation, and even maltreatment of or contempt for the body."[1422] The pursuit of holiness through sexual renunciation was taken up in the West by the Catholic Church under the influence of a Gnostic depreciation of the body, which sought to keep oneself uncontaminated from physical reality in order to reach the realm of the true. Such thinking influenced Augustine, for whom sexuality was impurity, which infects each successive generation with original sin through intercourse.[1423]

Attitudes towards sexuality and the human body changed during the Reformation and Enlightenment. Yet, Jeanrond recognizes that his body remains problematic in the current culture. Bodily ideals promulgated by the mass media seem unattainable, and he questions whether his body is attractive enough to be loved. Ultimately, "neither body nor chastity offers me sufficient perspectives on love."[1424] However, Jeanrond locates such a perspective in God's invitation to love: "to love God, our neighbours, and ourselves."[1425] One involves oneself in God's program of body-building by accepting this invitation, where all of one's relations and institutions of love interconnect within God's larger horizon of love. The person makes a decision to belong to Christ (1 Cor 3,23) and to participate in love's extensive horizon. Jeanrond writes, "All manifestations of love are interconnected. Notwithstanding

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[1420] Ibid., 198.
[1421] Ibid., 195.
[1422] Ibid., 200.
[1423] Ibid., 201.
[1424] Ibid., 202.
[1425] Ibid.

which of the loves I desire, the others will also be present within love's horizon. Love is one, it embraces all, but its forms are many."[1426] This, then, is the network of love.

Chastity, therefore, is not the pursuit of God or holiness through an elite pathway.[1427] Rather, it is a way of assessing "the body's love potential in depth."[1428] Is my vocation in life to be married or to live as a celibate? Do I instrumentalize my relationships with others for bodily or erotic needs? Chastity then helps me to see myself, others, and God within the horizon of love. As such, chastity "is the true conscience of Christian love," for it helps me test my true intentions. Therefore, chastity is needed by all Christians, whether married or sexually continent.[1429]

5.4.9 The Politics of Love

Marriage, family, partnership, and chastity are the main institutions of love which form and shape us as loving subjects, as we have seen. But there are other institutions, as well, in which we interact and grow as loving individuals, as we meet other forms of love. The gift of love matures within community. One of the most important forms of such love is friendship, to which we now turn.

5.4.9.1 Friendship

The personal and public sides of life come into contact with friendship. This form of love does not demand intimate forms of expression or symmetrical relationships, since, for instance, teachers can befriend their pupils. But friendship can be dangerous, as it was for Jesus with Judas (Mk 14,43-46), or for Jesus' disciples whom he called "friends" (Jn 15,12-17). Friendship as a Christian praxis can be a demanding form of love. Jeanrond points to the long-forgotten writings of an English Cistercian monk, Aelred of Rievaulx (c. 1110-67), where he understands love as a gift from God which enables the recovery of our full humanity lost due to the Fall.[1430] For Aelred, perfect love (*amor perfectus*) is comprised of both feeling (*affectus*) and reason (*ratio*). Love can only mature when it incorporates our bodies, reason, and emotions. Sometimes our emotions oppose a necessary action. In such cases reason must

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[1426] Ibid., 203.

[1427] Jeanrond writes, "Chastity understood as a hunt for holiness has nothing whatsoever to do with love." See ibid.

[1428] Ibid.

[1429] "When I am uncertain about my real intentions in my relations and relational networks, I need chastity. When I am uncertain about my partner's intentions, I need chastity. Chastity thus is an opportunity for me to test the depth of my love – and, of course, the degree of my openness to the divine dynamics of love." See ibid., 204.

[1430] Ibid., 210.

impel the decision: *e.g.* to love our neighbors and enemies as people with whom we may converse in the age to come. Jeanrond says that "Aelred's monastic praxis of love begins where human beings factually are. He does not regret or look down on either the bodily and affective condition of human beings or the human enjoyment of close relationship."[1431]

5.4.9.2 The Church as Institution of Love

The Church plays a pivotal role in the Christian's praxis of love. For the Church proclaims the kingdom of God, while helping "to establish God's reign of love here and now."[1432] While the Church should not be confused with the kingdom of God – i.e. the reign of God –, it is involved in God's larger project of love. For God wishes to promote a state of interrelatedness – a proper relationship between God and God's creation. God promotes this through the gift of love, and the Church involves itself in God's project "through the pluriform praxis of love."[1433] Since God's plan is for the transformation of creation, the Church's role should not be reduced simply to the salvation of individual souls. According to Jeanrond, the Christian faith involves "the emerging body of Christ."[1434] Thus, a narrow focusing upon individual salvation runs the risk of forgetting both "God's emerging reign of love" and "God's creative and healing project."[1435]

5.4.10 The Love of God

The first epistle of John says simply, "God is love" (1 Jn 4,8.16), which is the source of much theological reflection. Augustine offered one of the most influential of these reflections, which Jeanrond faults as doing much damage to subsequent theological reflections.[1436] Augustine's neo-Platonic interpretation of this text leads to a denial of the person as an agent of love. In the story Jeanrond tells, everything starts to go wrong with Augustine. His neo-Platonic interpretation of human nature "has not been good news for a theology of love."[1437] For Augustine's doctrine of original sin impeded reflections on love as a gift from God, and brought about its attendant results: a sinful nature, corrupted body, and perverted affections. Within the monastic movement in the Middle Ages, a rediscovery is made of people's ability to love. The Augustinian legacy also retarded reflection on love's potential for creativity and the transformation of individuals within the institutions of love.

[1431] Ibid.
[1432] Ibid., 216.
[1433] Ibid., 215.
[1434] Ibid.
[1435] Ibid., 216.
[1436] Ibid., 239.
[1437] Ibid., 240.

The plurality of loves and their interdependency within God's larger horizon of love was left unconsidered, once again, when love was reduced to a doctrinal idea during the Reformation. Jeanrond says that both Roman Catholics and Protestants made love a confessional concept when the idea of "Christian" love was invented.[1438] Then Anders Nygren split agape apart from eros as two separate loves: divine and human. For Nygren human love is irretrievably corrupt. Therefore, God must pour divine love into the human heart as through a drain pipe. Thus, God alone loves properly. In this way, Nygren rejects all human longing after the fulfillment of the self as selfish and evil. Jeanrond questions the Platonic heritage, as well, which sees the human quest for love as a search for union with its lost other half. Such an approach tends to annihilate otherness in the quest for sameness. Thus, Jeanrond questions whether theology can appropriate Augustine's desire for union with God, without losing human agency or embracing a vision of restoring a lost perfect state known previously only in paradise.

Jeanrond thinks that it is dangerous for us to take any idea of God's perfect love and apply it as a standard for human love. For, as Jeanrond argues, "God loves divinely, and we human beings are invited to love humanly."[1439] To do otherwise, is to run the risk of not respecting the difference. Therefore, "human love needs to be assessed as human love."[1440] Jeanrond proposes that theologians reflect upon the network of loves, which God has given to us, and their potential for bringing transcendence and transformation into our lives.

5.4.10.1 Divine and Human Love

God's love constantly invites us to a deeper engagement with God, our neighbor, and ourselves in the network of interconnected loves. To love another –to even open ourselves up to the possibility of loving another – is to find ourselves involved in God's network of love. For Jeanrond says that love is "a gift that always draws us more deeply into the entire network of loving relations."[1441] Love is one – it is united –, however, it is expressed in a plurality of forms. We are invited to participate in God's larger love story, but we are not compelled to do so. When we agree to take part in the dynamics of love, God humanizes us through love.[1442]

How a theology of love deals with the question of divine and human agency in regard to the praxis of love is crucial. To what extent is the human subject an agent capable of love? Jeanrond also notes that love can be corrupted. Love disintegrates at times into sinfulness and selfishness. However, Jeanrond argues that love is the best standard by which one can

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[1438] Ibid.
[1439] Ibid., 241.
[1440] Ibid., 242.
[1441] Ibid.
[1442] Ibid., 243.

measure one's praxis of love. For love "wishes to explore, respect and relate to the other subject's subjectivity and otherness as well as to the self's subjectivity and otherness."[1443] Therefore, the question of the human person's capability to love is of upmost importance for a theology of love. Do we begin with the presupposition that one must first make preparations before one can love, or can one begin to love another person at any time or place? For Jeanrond, this is the crucial choice. The decision made here determines all that will follow. For the imagination is crippled when theology begins considering love from the doctrine of original sin. All we see is human finitude and an "ontology of failure," which "blocks eros, spontaneity and community development."[1444] But if one begins with love we are freed to "live more fully in the larger network of interconnected relations." Such a perspective gives us the tools for "assessing our failures and those of our ancestors," while placing us "in the presence of God's forgiveness, reconciliation, transformation and new creation in the Body of Christ."[1445]

5.4.10.2 Love and Salvation

The choice offered above – either to begin theologizing about love from the position of an ideal past followed by corruption through the fall, or to start from creation and God's program of love leading into the eschatological future – has serious consequences for any theology of love. For to begin from the doctrine of original sin is to long to *leave* this world. Salvation, therefore, is deliverance from this universe.[1446] Whereas, to begin from love and God's larger program of love involves one in *this* world as well as in the age to come. The point of Jeanrond's book is to urge the reader to take the second choice: i.e. to begin theologizing about love from creation and God's program of love.

According to Jeanrond, "the story of the Fall and the doctrine of original sin must be reinterpreted," to make room for the human capacity to love, which is something that Jesus took for granted.[1447] Jesus did not proclaim a new "Christian" love, but he directed people to obey what the Torah commanded. Thus, "his powerful call [was] to everybody to enter into this multidirectional praxis of love without delay and without conditions."[1448] Jeanrond's disagreement with Nygren cannot be more practically said than this: "God's love is not to be funnelled into human souls, but human beings are invited to become responsible agents of

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[1443] Ibid.

[1444] Ibid., 245.

[1445] Ibid.

[1446] Jeanrond says that in this instance "this world and this universe are not part of the horizon of salvation." See ibid., 247.

[1447] This is the reason for "Jesus' insistence on love as praxis," when he pointed people to the double commandment to love God and one's neighbor. See ibid., 246.

[1448] Ibid.

love in the network of loving relationships."[1449] In fact, to love God and others, to participate in God's project, is to become a full and mature subject capable of loving others. This Jeanrond sees as a vital part of the process of one's salvation.

5.4.10.3 Love and Sexuality

Sexuality has an ambivalent history in the Christian tradition, with a long history of denigrating the body and repressing sexual desire. Today people are caught between prophets of a secular sexual revolution who promote a utopia of sexual fulfillment and clerical administrators who attempt to control people's personal sexual behavior. A vacuum exists between these two extremes which is confusing for young people. In this situation, Jeanrond suggests that we approach sexuality from the perspective of love. This affirms human desire for "physical, emotional, and spiritual pleasure," and sees these as "a force for human development in love."[1450]

Jeanrond freely admits that his theology of love does not address the questions of ethics or sexual morality.[1451] He is concerned with the development of individuals into persons who responsibly express their sexuality through love. The institutions of love ("family, marriage, chastity, church, friendship and monastic life") can help people deal with the ambiguities of love so long as they don't attempt to police people's "sexual orientation and expression."[1452] Jeanrond argues that people would truly be set free if the acts of sexual expression were decoupled from having but one true goal: i.e. procreation. Rather, sexual acts are dignified through their openness to transcendence through participation in a network of relationships. In fact, he pushes this to its extreme when he writes, "All sexual acts can be assessed in the light of love. If love is the home in which sexuality can flourish, all sexual acts taking place within this matrix of love are blessed by grace."[1453] At the same time, Jeanrond acknowledges that not all sexual acts occur within loving relationships, while at the same time there are groups attempting to control human sexuality. Neither demonization of sex nor idolization of the same is helpful. Rather, Jeanrond calls for an analysis and cultivation of "the intimate connection between sexuality and love."[1454]

5.4.10.4 Love in Creation

[1449] Ibid.
[1450] Ibid., 250.
[1451] "In this book I am not pursuing questions of ethics or sexual morality; rather I am interested in the theological reflection on the connection between love and sexuality." See ibid., 251.
[1452] Ibid.
[1453] Ibid.
[1454] Ibid.

Deprived of a total concept of ourselves (physically, emotionally, and spiritually), love opens up new ways of understanding ourselves. The dynamics of love are involved in our experience of otherness, and they creatively enlarge our capacity for love. There is a mystery to love. Through love we come to learn more about ourselves and the others we love, as we participate in the larger horizon of God's love. But the ends of love remain unknown. "To some extent love remains uncharted territory."[1455] Still, love is learned, and it must be practiced. It is a power that is able to transform ourselves, others, and human structures in this world. "Love knows no presuppositions other than our will to encounter otherness, even radical otherness, and our readiness to be transformed in the process."[1456]

5.4.11 Assessment of Jeanrond's Thought

Jeanrond makes a valuable contribution to theology by stressing the unity of love. In contrast with theologians who follow Nygren's lead, Jeanrond emphasizes love as God's gift to human beings. This love originates in God and is given as a capacity which we continue to share. Jeanrond insists that humans love as human beings, and he recognizes that this does not always go well. While recognizing the consequences of human sin, Jeanrond insists on human subjectivity and agency as lovers. To say it succinctly: the Fall did not destroy or obliterate the *imago Dei* in us. We are still able to love as image bearers of the one who is love (1 Jn 4,8.16). However, that capacity needs development. We need to grow as subjects who love. Jeanrond speaks of this as a process whereby we emerge as lovers, who discover ourselves as agents able to love ourselves, others, God, and the universe. This is an important correction to much theological reflection on love which sees human beings as so corrupt as to be completely incapable of love.

Another important contribution is Jeanrond's insistence on God's creative project of transformative love. Jeanrond rightly sees the radical openness of God's love to God's creation, and he critiques theologies of love which limit the breadth and scope of love's work based on ideological or philosophical presuppositions. Certainly love comes to us. We find ourselves already embedded in networks of love from our first moments of conscious awareness. That love calls for more love – for a deeper involvement in love. Jeanrond's appeal to Rahner is also helpful: specifically the latter's intuition that to decide to love God in the future is already to be involved in the work of love. But Jeanrond goes further and insists that love is praxis. Love must be made concrete. His emphasis on the practicalities of love, in all its pluriform expressions, leads to caring for the poor, the disenfranchised, and the neighbor. Love seeks for the good of the other. Forgiveness and justice are expressions of

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[1455] Ibid., 255.
[1456] Ibid.

one's involvement practically in God's creative project of transforming the loving subject, the family, our cultures, and the world. Thus, Jeanrond rightly emphasizes relations, networks, and the institutions of love.

But Jeanrond should also be challenged on what he forgets, or what he leaves unmentioned. Jeanrond tells us that he wants to open up every pathway that can help us understand a phenomenon we experience but which remains a mystery in our lives.[1457] His goal is a "multifaceted understanding" of love; the goal, therefore, is to explore as widely and freely as possible the frontiers of love – what love is, how it develops, how we understand it, and what its capacities are. However, what is forgotten is the question of what love won't do. If love is radically open – and we will argue that it is –, is there a border to love? If so, what would that border be? When God's love reveals itself, does it come with a particular character? These are questions Jeanrond does not address: in fact he acknowledges as much. In *A Theology of Love*, Jeanrond does not reflect on ethics or morality, specifically on sexual morality.[1458] He does briefly touch, now and then, on the pain that sinful expressions of love can cause; but this is not his focus, for Jeanrond is intent on the question of love's potential. Still, it should be pointed out that in his work of exploring all avenues of love he forgets holiness. When the word "holy" appears, Jeanrond uses it to refer to the Holy Spirit. Otherwise he tends to mention holiness only in a negative sense.[1459] This is curious, for the Old Testament constantly emphasizes holiness in God's self-revelation. It is doubly puzzling especially in light of his obvious awareness and sensitivity to the connection between Jewish faith traditions and Christian theological developments. Whether we take creation, the Johannine declaration that "God is love," or redemption as our starting point, it is important to note how that love reveals itself to people in history. For on one such occasion God told Moses to take off his sandals, "for the place where you are standing is holy ground" (Ex 3,5).

5.5 CONCLUSIONS

The Bible calls believers to live according to the two great commands – of loving God and neighbor. Each of the four main theologians considered in this chapter acknowledge this duty, but they disagree on what this entails. For Nygren, human persons cannot love with

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[1457] Ibid., 6.

[1458] Ibid., 251.

[1459] I count 20 occurrences of the word "holy" in Jeanrond's text. 18 times it is used in appellations: 17 times for the "Holy Spirit" and once for the "Holy Trinity." The word "holy" refers once to an idea – "Holy Wedding" (180), and it is used twice as an adjective in a negative form – as an "unholy mixture" or "unholy alliance" (120, 222). Of the six references to "holiness," 5 occurrences refer either to repression or an unhealthy asceticism (200, 203), while only once is the word used as a positive description of the Beguines lifestyle, in reference to the way they were perceived in the Church (91). Thus, in this book, "holy" is primarily a name, while "holiness" appears as a quest for perfection that neglects or abuses the body. For the pertinent references, see the pages noted above in brackets in ibid.

agape love, since we only love in a selfish, motivated way. Agape love is only expressed as God pours God's love into our human hearts as through a funnel. Our love for God is only a motivated love which responds to God's prior love. Human love for God is, in fact, the very opposite of agape love. Moffatt and Morris disagree with Nygren, even though they both indicate appreciation for his work. They think that a person has a capacity to love God, neighbor, and him or herself. In fact, Moffatt argues that it is our *duty* to love ourselves: namely, to develop the God-given abilities we have received. But he doesn't think we should take joy, *per se*, in our status as creatures created by God. Rather, love is a muscular, moral activity of the intellect and will. Morris suggests that self-love be seen as having a proper self-image, saying that the Bible takes it for granted that people love themselves – although this is not necessarily recommended. However, in the end, Morris says the Bible requires the believer to sacrifice him or herself for others – an attitude which negates any kind of "love" we could call self-love.

All three of these theologians work within a Protestant tradition and begin reflecting on love from the Cross (i.e. from redemption). In one way or another, people are seen as damaged by sin. Human love is viewed, therefore, as either inherently sinful (Nygren), in need of moral discipline (Moffatt), or requiring transformation (Morris). Thus, they all stress self-denial, although Moffatt puts this under the stricture of moral seriousness, as a way of developing a "true love of self." On the other hand, as a Catholic theologian, Jeanrond insists that we begin theologizing from creation. He argues that the human capacity to love is a part of our creation, as those who bear the *imago Dei*. For Jeanrond, original sin did not obliterate our ability to love properly, contra Nygren. His theology turns on relationships and networks of love. Jeanrond argues for the particularity of human and divine loves, saying that we are invited to participate in God's project of love. Those who live a life of loving praxis find themselves drawn ever deeper into the depths of love.

Each of these theologians also reflect, as well, on the relationship between love and desire. For Nygren, any attraction for the other is a motivated, unspontaneous love – the very opposite of agape love. He, of course, rules out the *erotic* in any form as relating to Christian love. Moffatt views desire primarily in the sense of an affectionate response to God – which involves one's intellect and will – for the divine love disclosed at the Cross. But Moffatt does not say much about desire as longing for another human person. Morris, on the other hand, makes a dramatic turn here – away from Nygren and Moffatt –, for he places immense importance on God's passionate love for Israel. Hosea's broken heart clearly reveals God's love for a wayward and adulterous people. The Song of Songs also expresses God's love for people in a graphic way, which often embarrasses Christian readers. Jeanrond also speaks for the importance of desire in love, insisting on the unity of these two in all forms of divine and human love. According to Jeanrond, love has suffered greatly from notions arising from

Augustine – recently renewed by Nygren – which deny the longings and embodied nature of human love.

It is interesting to see how these theologians deal with love's relationship to holiness in the scriptures. Nygren sees holiness only pejoratively in regard to human beings. God is majestically holy in an "unyielding austerity," but Jesus calls sinners to follow him.[1460] Any striving after holiness is seen as an attempt to establish a relationship with God on one's own terms. This is an abomination, since humans can only claim to be sinners before God. Moffatt, however, argues that God shows God's love to human beings with a purpose in mind – their holiness. God is busy forming a people who love God and each other in a fellowship of holy love. But in the scripture the emphasis falls on obedience rather than on love language, since the latter could obscure the vast difference between creature and Creator. While Paul infrequently uses the word "holiness," he does speak of a love which loves blamelessly in holiness (1 Thes 3,12). Moffatt argues that holiness is the mature outcome of love, expressing itself in moral purity. Morris notes that the idea of fearing God often appears in the Wisdom literature. One must fear God for God's incredible greatness and holiness. Although Morris recognizes references to God's holiness in scripture, he heavily emphasizes God's love. For the one thing "that really matters," according to Morris, is God's love.[1461] Morris takes it for granted that Christians should be holy,[1462] and that "it is not possible to be really holy apart from love."[1463] But he does not dwell on holiness, *per se*. His work is a word study on love in the two testaments. Similarly, Jeanrond does not address the theme of holiness in his book; when holiness does appear it is primarily seen as a negative. His focus is on a phenomenology of human love and its capacities, rather then on a moral or ethical reflection on love. Jeanrond seems to miss the relationship between holiness and love – a theme which we will explore in the following chapter.

These four theologians also differ regarding Christian love's potential for growth or perfection. Of course, Nygren sees no possibility for growth. All human love is selfish and tainted by sin. Christian love – i.e. agape love – instrumentalizes the human individual, who becomes a conduit for God's expression of love to those in the world. However, for Moffatt human love should grow. Believers are expected to develop morally, including in their ability to reflect the love of their loving Father in heaven. Morris argues for the human capacity to grow, as well, and he refers to Paul's description of Christian love as something that never gives up and grows through life's struggles (1 Cor 13,7). Finally, Jeanrond also thinks human persons can grow in love. As we involve ourselves in the praxis of love our capacity for love

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[1460] Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 85.
[1461] Morris, *Testaments of Love*, 144.
[1462] Ibid., 208.
[1463] Ibid., 238.

enlarges through this creative, dynamic force. Love has a power to transform us as we allow ourselves to be opened radically to those who are other to us. By practicing love we involve ourselves in God's project of transforming ourselves, others, and the world.

5.6 TOWARDS A CHRISTIAN OPEN, HOLY LOVE

Christianity is rightly considered a religion of love; however, it is a religion with a sometimes troubled past. As a philosopher, Lyotard correctly identifies "love" as the rule governing the linking of phrases and gestures in the Christian narrative. As we have seen, Lyotard critiques Christianity as a hegemonic master narrative that dominated Western culture for almost two millennia, through its rule of love. And we have looked at Boeve's response to this critique: such an oppressive Christian grand narrative of love is a *degenerated* discourse of the Idea of love. In fact, the Christian story *is* all about love. Therefore, when the Christian narrative threatens to close in upon itself, God interrupts the automatic linking of phrases in order to open up the narrative, once again, to that which is other to it. A theological story necessarily (re)presents God's activity in time and space – i.e. in history. Everything therefore turns on one's *idea* of love.

Theologians have reflected rather differently on the idea of love. Some theologians begin their reflection with redemption, setting their attention on the verse that says, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us." (1 Jn 3:16 NIV). Often, however, they paint such a dark picture of humanity that any human capacity for genuine love of God, neighbor, and self is denigrated or denied. On the other hand, Jeanrond begins reflecting on love from the perspective of creation. This allows him to think far and wide about the human potential to love as bearers of the *imago Dei*. There is much to appreciate about Jeanrond's theology of love; however, he does not pay close enough attention to ethics, so that he can declare that *whatever* sexual acts are performed within a matrix of love "are blessed by grace."[1464] This is a very radical reinterpretation of sexual ethics, of which no doubt Jeanrond is fully aware.[1465]

A theology of love should hold creation and redemption together. Forgetting either aspect of God's self-revelation and work creates problems. We were created in the beginning to bear the *imago Dei*, and thus we are called to live up to our potential for loving relationships with God, neighbor, and self. However, God also reveals God's abhorrence of

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[1464] The only qualification he offers is for those sexual acts which do not take "place within a framework of love." Otherwise, "sexual acts receive their dignity from love and its network of relationships that are open to transcendence." See Jeanrond, *Theology*, 251.

[1465] Jeanrond visited KU Leuven in 2011 and held a question and answer session with the participants in a seminar on his book, *A Theology of Love*. I asked him why the word "holy" only appeared as an appellation for the Spirit, and why the word "holiness" was used in a primarily negative sense. Without really answering my question, he responded, "You are the second Methodist to point that out."

sin at the Cross. It is pre-eminently at the Cross where we understand this gift of love God has given us. Both truths must hold together: our capacity to love, and God's holy love. In order to do so, we will now consider John Wesley's theology of Christian perfection as inspiration towards a radically open, holy-love.

6. A RADICAL HOLY LOVE

6.0 HOLY LOVE

It is striking that so much can be written about God as love, while saying so little about God's holiness. If Morris is surprised by the lack of attention paid to love in Old Testament theologizing, one should also notice the dearth of reflection on God's holiness in hundreds of pages on love written by three of the theologians considered in the previous chapter. Only Moffatt spends time discussing God's holiness and the moral demands that flow there from.[1466] On the other hand, we argue that holiness should be included in any discussion of love – that creation and redemption should be held together in any consideration of Christian love. In this chapter, we maintain that a theology which pursues a Christian open narrative of love should take love's relation to holiness seriously. To this end, we will briefly consider John Wesley's theology of Christian perfection for inspiration towards constructing an open theology of love. We will glean insights from Lyotard, Boeve, Rahner, Jeanrond, and Wesley in arguing for a love that is radically open to the other, while remaining radically closed to sin. Such a love interrupts our lives, through encounters with divine alterity, inviting us into an ever deeper relationship with a loving God, while remaining respectful towards irreducible alterity. In conclusion, we will offer a model for thinking how a holy tempered love functions in a Christian open narrative of love.

6.1 GOD'S FORGOTTEN ATTRIBUTE

Surely God reveals Godself throughout the Old Testament as holy. Over and over again, the first testament bears witness to God's awesome holiness. Indeed, Israel's history would be a tragedy were it not for God's unfailing love. For, time after time, the nation disregards God's holy demands as reflected in the Mosaic Law and voiced by the prophets. All the while, God continues to reveal Godself as holy. Moses encounters a burning bush and removes his sandals (Ex 3,1-5), Isaiah sees the Lord in the Temple and hears seraphs declare God's holiness (Is 6,1-3), while Habakkuk declares that the Lord's presence is "in His holy temple" (Hab 2,20). However, along with the revelation of divine holiness, a steadfast message sounds of God's love for people.

[1466] Although, as noted above, Morris assumes the necessity for holiness in a Christian's life and love (5.6 above). He does not, however, expound upon this theme.

Moses declares God's choice to love the patriarchs (Dt 10,15), while the nation enjoys favor based on an oath sworn to their fathers (Dt 7,7). This theme of love runs throughout the Old Testament to an oracle given through Malachi: "'I have loved you,' says the Lord'" (Mal 1,2).[1467] In Leviticus 19 these two themes of love and holiness come together. There the people are told, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lv 19,2). God's holiness is the context for this chapter, and it's precisely against this background that God commands the Israelites not to "take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people," but to "love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord" (Lv 19,18). The covenant people are to love their neighbors *because* God is holy.

Perhaps the shifted emphasis in the Gospels towards God's Fatherhood (i.e. towards divine love) causes Nygren's and Jeanrond's neglect of God's holiness. God's parental love is certainly emphasized in the Gospels, but we should also remember how Jesus taught his disciples to pray. He instructs them first to address God as "Father" and then immediately to hallow the divine name (Mt 6,9). We should also notice how the theme of holiness returns in the New Testament epistles. There the Church is repeatedly called to holiness. For example, Paul encourages the Corinthians, in view of God's promises, to cleanse themselves "from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor 7,1). The author of Hebrews, as well, writes that God disciplines us so "that we may share in his holiness" (Heb 12,10). We are corrected as sons whom God loves (Heb 12,6). Therefore, we are warned to "make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; [for] without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Heb 12,14). Peter encourages Christians dispersed from Pontus to Bithynia to imitate God: "But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pe 1,15f). Finally, the Revelation unveils a heavenly scene where four living creatures continually cry before the throne, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come" (Rev 4,5-9).

Too often this double revelation is forgotten: God reveals Godself as *both* holy (Rev 4,8) and love (1 Jn 4,8,16). Any theology of love should keep both characteristics in mind. Theology should question Nygren's argument that all attempts towards holiness on the human level are perverse actions attempting "to order our relationship to God ourselves."[1468] For such

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[1467] All scriptural quotations in this chapter are from the New International Version, unless otherwise noted.

[1468] God justifies sinners; therefore, any attempt towards holiness is "a false Way of salvation." Nygren confidently asserts that God "will have nothing at all to do with holy men [*sic*]. A holy man is purely and simply a fiction, a make-believe human god." Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 686. Any fellowship with God "on the level of holiness" is "doubly sinful ... It is to take the false Way of salvation, which simply leads man [*sic*] still further away from God and makes him still more unsusceptible to His grace. Before God we may not claim to be anything else but sinners." See ibid., 690. Nygren compresses

an argument too easily abandons Scripture's exhortations towards holy living. At the same time, theologians would do well to listen to Jeanrond's call to think love from Creation, while also questioning his general characterization of holiness and seeming avoidance of moral theology. Nygren, of course, begins theologizing from Redemption, while Jeanrond starts with Creation. Neither makes room, however, for a perfection of what could be called a holy love. This thesis argues that a theology of love must do precisely that.

6.2 LOVE WITHIN LIMITS

Sometimes parishioners in the pews and theologians in their study carrels are troubled by love as desire. Certainly Augustine struggled with the temptations of carnal love. Bible interpreters are tempted to allegorize away frank descriptions of erotic love expressed in the Song of Songs. Cupid's arrows rain down on us, and we find ourselves swept away by the "madness" of love. Raw, passionate desire disturbs Nygren, who sees it as a motivated and thus sinful attraction. Moffatt tames love's desire by translating it into moral duty. Neither Morris or Jeanrond, however, show reticence towards (or rejection of) desire; for Morris discusses the Song of Songs, and Jeanrond equates love and desire in the unity of love. Perhaps desire unsettles us because human love needs purification in regards to God, neighbor, and self. To say this another way, love needs limits.

Love needs boundaries and form, for love desires the other – sometimes insanely. Eros enkindles warmth and passion in romance, but it can also be greedy. Eros often opens itself to the other as an *object* of its love, i.e. for its own *use*. Lyotard gives us an example through fictional characters (i.e. Octave and Roberte). There a husband manipulates his wife for his own erotic desire. Clearly eros needs a brake, a border, something to restrain its sometimes erratic, insane behavior. Concurrently, borders protect friends, lovers, and spouses from the potential violence of objectification. Healthy relationships require a border – to protect us from people who use others, and to save us from consuming others.

At the same time, too rigid a border may deprive people of the love and help they need. The Pharisees were known for their acts of righteousness, but they hardened their hearts against the neediest in society. Luke tells us that they sneered at Jesus for associating with tax collectors and sinners (Lk 15:1f). Here "holiness" became a wall to keep "undesirables" at bay. However, Jesus gives his critics three parables illustrating God's longing for the lost.[1469]

Luther's revolt against Medieval theology into a formula: "Fellowship with God on the basis of sin, not of holiness." See ibid., 684.

[1469] The parables of "The Lost Sheep" (Lk 15,4-7), "The Lost Coin" (Lk 15,8-10), and "The Prodigal Son" (Lk 15,11-32) are Jesus' reply to the Pharisees' and scribes' grumbling.

Jesus makes it clear that the Pharisees were pursuing a holiness without love or mercy. In contrast to their praxis, he replies with the joy of finding what was lost.

Human love needs purifying. The sinful and selfish need a strong dose of holiness; while the "holy" but merciless need a hefty infusion of love. Here the twin aspects of God's self-revelation are helpful, for love can be both merciful *and* holy.[1470] This should be kept in mind as theology ponders how to construct a Christian open narrative of love. Our thesis is that holiness forms the border for any Christian open narrative of love, even as it functions within and alongside of God's revealed love. But such a holy border must remain porous – constantly and intentionally attempting to remain open to those outside of its own narrative boundaries. In such a way, a Christian open narrative of love reflects a God who continues to show love and mercy to those who are currently outside of the Christian faith. God's love is holy. A holy border, therefore, sets up boundaries not primarily to exclude others but in an attempt to respect oneself and the otherness of the O/other. For inspiration towards such an open narrative, we now turn to John Wesley's theology of Christian perfection, or what we will call holy love.

6.3 JOHN WESLEY'S THEOLOGY OF HOLY LOVE

John Wesley (1703-1791) was a highly influential Anglican priest who strove to reform the Anglican Church in England. The son of an Anglican clergyman, Wesley studied at Oxford, where his academic talents were recognized. In 1726, Wesley was unanimously elected as a fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford.[1471] A year later Wesley graduated with a Master of Arts degree and began a two-year-stint as his father's curate in Lincolnshire at Wroote. Returning in 1729 to Oxford to fulfill his duties as fellow, Wesley was chosen to lead a group which became known derisively as "The Holy Club."[1472] This "club" eventually included his brother Charles, George Whitfield, and other persons, who encouraged each other towards personal piety through methodical spiritual practices. Notoriety turned to mocking and they were called "Methodists," because of their diligent pursuit of a serious Christian life.

[1470] Mildred Bangs Wynkoop writes, "Neither holiness nor love is Christian without the other. They are logically distinct but only one thing in life. It is the division of one from the other in life that distorts both. Love without holiness disintegrates into sentimentality. Personal integrity is lost. But holiness without love is not holiness at all. In spite of its label, it displays harshness, judgmentalism, a critical spirit, and all its capacity for discrimination ends in nit-picking and divisiveness." See Mildred B. Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1972), 29-30.

[1471] See John Pudney, *John Wesley and His World* (Norwich, GB: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 20.

[1472] This group was formed by Charles Wesley and originally consisted of himself, Robert Kirkham and William Morgan until John Wesley returned from Wroote and was made leader. See ibid., 32.

Six years later, on October 14, 1735, John and Charles Wesley sailed for the new world to work as missionaries among the native Americans in Georgia.[1473] During the voyage a violent storm arose and assaulted the ship. Pounding waves shattered the mainsail, and John Wesley feared for his life. But a group of twenty-six Moravian missionaries continued to calmly sing hymns in the ship's hull while the storm raged outside. The Moravians' demeanor made a lasting impression on Wesley, for they appeared to be unafraid of dying. The storm subsided and the ship arrived safely in Georgia. There the Wesleys began to work, but their mission ended badly. Neither settlers nor inhabitants were receptive to their efforts. So in 1738 John and Charles returned to England. John was deeply shaken by the whole affair. He wrote, "I went to America to convert the Indians! But, oh! who shall convert me? Who, what is he that will deliver *me* from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well – nay, and believe myself, while no danger is near, but let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled."[1474]

Returning to London, Wesley met Peter Boehler, a Moravian pastor, who encouraged him to "Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith."[1475] Wesley took his counsel and began preaching justification by faith alone.[1476] Three months later, on May 24, 1738, Wesley went "unwillingly" to an evening society meeting in Aldersgate Street, where he received his assurance of faith, during the reading of Luther's preface to Romans. Wesley wrote, "About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me the He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."[1477]

Almost a year later, George Whitfield invited Wesley to come and preach at an open-air meeting in Bristol. Revival had broken out among the coal miners at Kingswood and around Bristol under Whitfield's preaching. Whitfield was planning on moving to America to do evangelistic work there, and he wanted his friend to tend the movement. Thus, on April 2, 1739 Wesley launched his own career as an evangelist by preaching to 3,000 people in a brickyard. That career would have an enormous impact. For under Wesley's care the revival begun under Whitfield's ministry would continue to roar for decades to come. Wesley was a

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[1473] Writing to the scholar Dr. John Burton, Wesley said: "My chief motive is the hope of saving my own soul. I hope to learn the true sense of the gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen. They have no comments to construe away the text ... By these, therefore, I hope to learn the purity of that faith which was once delivered to the saints ..." See ibid., 42.

[1474] See the entry for January 24, 1738 in John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley*, 3rd ed., The Works of the Rev. John Wesley: With the Last Corrections of the Author, vol. 1 (London: John Mason, 1829), 74.

[1475] Pudney, *Wesley*, 55.

[1476] Wesley first preached this "new doctrine" to a prisoner named Clifford on March 6, 1738. Thereafter, he began preaching his new message in Anglican churches, often being told that he was no longer welcome to speak in those churches. See ibid., 55-56.

[1477] See the entry for May 28, 1738 in Wesley, 103.

tireless evangelist and organizer. He brought structure to the revival, organizing groups of converts into classes, and encouraging converts to continue in fellowship with the Church of England.[1478] Wesley resisted attempts to separate the Methodists from the Church of England, while he methodically worked, wrote, and preached his message of heart holiness. However, decades later, after the American colonies revolted and achieved their independence from England, Wesley wanted to provide for this burgeoning work. So he ordained Dr. Thomas Coke in September 1784 and sent him to America as "Superintendent of the Societies in America."[1479] This action contributed greatly to the eventual split between Methodists and the Church of England after Wesley's death, but it also permitted Methodism's growth around the world. The fruits of Wesley's labors are remarkable indeed. Stephen Tomkins writes, "At fairly sober estimates, he rode 250,000 miles, gave away £30,000 (an amount that could have kept a gentleman for a decade), and preached more than 40,000 sermons."[1480] Many societal changes are credited to Wesley including the re-Christianization of England. He continued to travel and preach well into his eighties. As death approached, Wesley clearly said, "The best of all is – God is with us!"[1481] He passed away on March 2nd 1791. The day before his funeral 10,000 people paid their respects as they filed by his open casket.

Wesley's ministry had a global impact. Today there are an estimated 70 million Methodists around the world,[1482] and Wesley's concept of Christian perfection inspired the formation of both the Holiness and some Pentecostal movements.

6.3.1 Why Wesley?

A reasonable question would be, "Why Wesley?" After all, he was an evangelist working during the height of the Enlightenment. Wesley was familiar with David Hume's writings and conversant with other thinkers of the time. Why bring such a theologian into conversation with a postmodern reflection on Christian love? There are a number of reasons for doing so. First, D. Stephen Long argues that Wesley's inability to enter into modernism

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[1478] Wesley viewed his movement "as an evangelical order within a catholic Church," according to Albert Outler. "It was his plain intention that his followers should depend on the Church, not only for the sacraments themselves but also for their doctrinal interpretation. He deliberately designed the Methodist preaching services so that they would not be taken as substitutes for Holy Communion in the parish church, and he expressly forbade their being scheduled in direct competition with stated church hours." See John Wesley and Albert C. Outler, *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 332.

[1479] Wesley intended that Coke would ordain Francis Asbury, who would serve together with Coke as co-leaders over the American Methodist work. However, Asbury gained ascendancy over Coke at the Baltimore Conference. For more information, see Pudney, *Wesley*, 106-111.

[1480] Stephen Tomkins, *John Wesley: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 199.

[1481] Pudney, *Wesley*, 114.

[1482] "Methodist Church," BBC Religions http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/subdivisions/methodist_1.shtml [accessed November 11, 2013].

makes his thought interesting for a theological reflection *after* modernism. Wesley's concept of a "spiritual sense" functions within a virtue tradition, drawing inspiration from Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.[1483] Wesley's insistence on *experiencing* God's grace, as the means of entering into communion with God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit,[1484] overcomes Hume's skepticism with a form of "irrationalism" which his contemporaries viewed as enthusiasm. Thus, according to Harald Lindström, Wesley "both supersedes and conforms to the Enlightenment."[1485] Secondly, in contrast with other theologies of love which tend to forget the call to personal holiness, Wesley develops a theology of love with sanctification at its core. An important aspect of Wesley's theological reflection is the Holy Spirit's work in the believer's life. This stands in contrast with theologians who generally forget the third Person of Deity, concentrating rather upon the Father and the Son.[1486] Wesley argues that the intended *telos* for each individual human person is a complete surrender of the heart to love for God, neighbor, and self. Thus, a close harmony exists between love and sanctification in Wesley's theology. Finally, Wesley belongs firmly within the Anglican tradition which sought to find a middle way between Catholic and Reformed theologies after the split with Rome. Here we find a fruitful ground for a theological reflection which attempts to hold creation and redemption together – i.e., to maintain both human capacity and failure in tension.

6.3.2 A Practical Theologian

[1483] Long writes, "The progenitors for Wesley's doctrine of a 'spiritual sense' with its metaphysics of participation and doctrine of illumination are Augustine's theory of illumination, and Aquinas's notion of the eternal ideas as developed in a certain Cartesian tradition and (related to this) Christian Platonism. This doctrine of illumination is one reason Wesley's work cannot make the passage to modernity well. His inability to make this transition is precisely why his theology should interest us again at the end of modernity." See D. Stephen Long, *John Wesley's Moral Theology: The Quest for God and Goodness*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2005), 10-11.

[1484] As Wesley understands it, grace is the Spirit's "personal presence ... in our lives." See Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), 162.

[1485] Harald Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation* (Nappanee, IN: Francis Asbury Press, 1980), 2.

[1486] For example, the Holy Spirit tends towards an inspirational role in Jeanrond's theology (202). In a quote from Liz Carmichael mention is made of Christians practicing love "in the power of the holy Spirit" (208). Again, he notes that the Church's response to "God's gift of love ... in the Holy Spirit" (215). The Spirit enables Christian unity (220), which is related to the founding and praxis of the Christian community (229). While the Spirit is understood to be a divine gift that unfolds "the Christian praxis of love," Jeanrond does not develop *how* the third Person of deity accomplishes this (243). His pneumatology is therefore not very well developed, at least as presented in his theology of love. See the pages indicated in Jeanrond, *A Theology of Love*. A similar lack of theological development is also seen in Morris' work. The Holy Spirit is the gift of God promised by Isaiah (14), the One who enables Christian fellowship in the Pauline benediction (139), and gives love in Romans 5,5, or enables believers to bear the fruit of love (189). Rather, Morris spends far more time discussing the Father and the Son in contrast with the Spirit. See, as well, the noted pages in Morris.

Wesley was a practical theologian who answered problems for his followers as they arose in the context of a flourishing revival movement.[1487] He sought to shape the worldview of those involved in the Methodist movement, rather than attempt to produce an air-tight scholastic argument. His theology therefore exhibits a pastoral emphasis on the healing of the soul.[1488] For example, Wesley's view of the original state of humanity more closely aligns with the position held by Eastern Orthodoxy than with the Western Church.[1489] Western theologians think that humans were created in a state of perfection – a perfection subsequently lost in the Adamic Fall.[1490] The Orthodox, on the other hand, view humans as created incomplete but with the *potential* for growth in perfection.[1491] Western theologians tend to view justification as a change of legal status, in which guilt is replaced with righteousness. However, Wesley differs here by arguing for a complete restoration of the human soul – the fall from perfection is reversible.[1492] Although "the life of God was extinguished" in Adam, "the glory departed from him," and "his soul [was] utterly dead to God,"[1493] the Son of God appeared in order "to destroy the devil's work" (1 Jn 3,8). These devilish works are dismantled by a "yet farther manifestation of the Son of God," who comes to dwell in the Christian. For Wesley claims that Christ "by thus manifesting himself in our hearts ... effectually 'destroys the works of the devil'."[1494] The result of Christ's manifestation is a restoration of "the guilty outcast from God to his favour, to pardon and peace; the sinner in whom dwelleth no good thing, to love and holiness; the burdened, miserable sinner, to joy

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[1487] Wesley did not set out to establish a systematic theology based upon a dominant idea. However, he was a trained theologian and fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford. For Maddox's defense of Wesley's credentials against those who devalue him as a theologian, see Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 15-17.

[1488] Ibid., 17.

[1489] Ibid., 67. Kenneth Collins offers a strong rebuttal to this claim. Indeed, he maintains that Maddox goes astray specifically at this point. For Maddox places Wesley's theological concerns regarding justification and sanctification within an "Eastern therapeutic schema," which eventually falls apart, according to Collins. He asserts contrary to Maddox's portrayal of God as Physician that "Wesley clearly held a Western Augustinian view of original sin and ... employed such language as 'wholly fallen' and 'totally corrupted' in this setting." See Kenneth J. Collins, "The State of Wesley Studies in North America: A Theological Journey," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 44, no. 2 (2009): 15-16.

[1490] Ibid., 65-66.

[1491] Ibid., 66.

[1492] For Wesley, salvation entails "a present deliverance from sin, a restoration of the soul to its primitive health, its original purity; a recovery of the divine nature; the renewal of our souls after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness, in justice, mercy, and truth." See Wesley's sermon "A Farther Appeal," in John Wesley, *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A.M.*, 7 vols., vol. 5 (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831), 35.

[1493] See Wesley's sermon, "The End of Christ's Coming," in *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 445. This sermon is an exposition on 1 John 3,8. Wesley further elaborates on Adam's condition after his fall: "He lost the whole moral image of God, righteousness and true holiness. He was unholy; he was unhappy; he was full of sin, full of guilt and tormenting fears. Being broke off from God, and looking upon him as an angry judge, 'he was afraid'." See ibid.

[1494] Ibid., 447. The phrase cited refers to 1 Jn 3,8.

unspeakable, to real, substantial happiness."[1495] Since sin is the devil's work, Christ was revealed "to destroy [sin] in this present life.[1496] At the same time, Wesley's anthropology is profoundly influenced by an Eastern understanding, for he argues that the goal of salvation is the healing of the soul through participation in the life of God.[1497]

Wesley's view of Christian perfection is most clearly expounded in a pamphlet he published entitled *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, as believed and taught by the Reverend Mr. John Wesley, from the year 1725 to the year 1777*. This tract is a defense against charges that his teaching changed over time. Wesley contends that his teaching, regarding Christian perfection, remains consistent from his early days at Oxford until the later years of his ministry. Throughout his ministry Wesley teaches that Christians can continue to grow in love unto perfection in this lifetime. In *A Plain Account*, Wesley defines Christian perfection as "loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. This implies, that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions, are governed by **pure love**."[1498] Wesley's claim of the perfectibility of love was a target his opponents continually attacked.

6.3.3 Sin as Disease

A good place to begin reflecting on Wesley's theology is with his anthropology. For Wesley, every human person faces the problem of a diseased nature, which is infected and corrupted by sin. Adam's rebellion against God's law sowed corruption into human nature resulting in his separation from the divine presence. As a result of this original sin, humans lost the likeness of God in which they were created. But, as the Physician of souls, Christ comes to heal our corrupted faculties and restore our likeness to God. Wesley, therefore, understands salvation as a *via salutis* and emphasizes the human potential for growth in holiness. He views salvation's end as the recovery of the *imago Dei* in the individual

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[1495] Ibid., 448. Still, Wesley argues that Christ "does not destroy the whole work of the devil in man [*sic*], as long as he remains in this life. He does not yet destroy bodily weakness, sickness, pain, and a thousand infirmities incident to flesh and blood." Nor does he take away all "weakness[es] of understanding," such as "ignorance and error." Christ allows us to continue to struggle with these weaknesses throughout our lives in order to remove "all temptation to pride, and all thought of independency." They are only taken away by death. See ibid.

[1496] Wesley writes, "He is able, he is willing, to destroy it now in all that believe in him." See ibid., 449.

[1497] Collins strongly disagrees with Maddox's co-operant theological program. He notes that for Maddox salvation is gradual, and "the healing of a sin-sick soul is a life-long process." Maddox's reading of Wesley's soteriology as occurring *gradually*, wherein sanctification occurs "after a *lengthy* process," is a repudiating of "the victory motif in Wesley's soteriology." See Collins, "The State of Wesley Studies," 18, 22.

[1498] See John Wesley, *John Wesley's 'A Plain Account of Christian Perfection': The Annotated Edition*, ed. Mark K. Olson, 5 vols., The John Wesley Christian Perfection Library, vol. 1 (Fenwick, MI: Alethea in Heart, 2005), 114 (bolded text by Olson).

believer.[1499] As Wesley wrote, the "great end of religion" is "to renew our hearts in the image of God, to repair that total loss of righteousness and true holiness which we sustained by the sin of our first parent."[1500] The Christian faith is seen as a θεραπεία ψυχῆς for the healing of a diseased soul.[1501]

As stated above, Wesley drew inspiration from Eastern Christian thought – particularly from the early Church Fathers. They supposed that humans "were originally innocent, but not complete."[1502] Humans bear the "image of God" and thus have "the potential for life in God." This potential for an ever deeper communion with God is realized in one's "likeness of God."[1503] But one realizes this potential only through "participation" in the life of God, i.e. through using the means of grace (*e.g.* sacraments, prayer, worship, etc.). The process of realizing one's potential is called "deification." Randy Maddox notes this perspective's influence on Wesley's anthropology: "Wesley's understanding of human nature and the human problem gives primacy of place to therapeutic concerns, like those characteristic of Eastern Christianity, and integrates the more typically Western juridical concerns into this orientation."[1504] To say it simply, Wesley's view of justification is read through his view of sanctification more so than the other way around. The *telos* of salvation is sanctification: i.e. holiness, or a pure love. Justification is a step along the *via salutis* towards the therapeutic goal of Christian perfection, or the recovery of the likeness of God in the soul.

Wesley writes that Adam "was created free from any defect, either in his understanding or his affections."[1505] Adam's natural faculties, therefore, responded automatically – doing right service to God in all that he thought, spoke, and did. He was able to perfectly fulfill the Adamic law which God required. Adam enjoyed divine favor and his *imago Dei* was perfectly intact in its three aspects: (1) in his *natural aspect* he enjoyed immortality, freedom, and understanding; (2) in his *political image* he ruled peacefully over the animal kingdom; and (3) in his *moral image* he was imbued with a perfect love for God. Through his creation, Adam was given a spirit and understanding, and thus he reflected God in his own particular *natural image*. Wesley says that understanding appears "to be the most essential property of a spirit," and that Adam was able to discern "truth by intuition," although his knowledge was limited

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[1499] Maddox argues that Wesley's soteriology is more accurately described as a Way of Salvation than an Order of Salvation. See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 157-158.

[1500] Cited from Wesley's Sermon entitled "Original Sin." See *Wesley's Sermons*, 334.

[1501] Ibid., 333. Collins is not swayed by Maddox's appeal to an Eastern view of God as Physician. He argues that Maddox's approach equates entire sanctification with mature adulthood reached only after a lengthy process in a believer's life. Maddox's "gradualism" "deprecates the instantaneous motif in Wesley and in the works of others." See Kenneth J. Collins, "Recent Trends in Wesley Studies and Wesleyan/Holiness Scholarship," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35, no. 1 (2000): 67.

[1502] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 66.

[1503] Ibid. Maddox writes, "The Image of God necessarily included the aspect of human freedom, though it centered in the larger human capacity for communion with God." See ibid.

[1504] Ibid., 68.

[1505] Wesley, *A Plain Account*, 177.

by the fact of his creation.[1506] Adam also received a will so that "he might love, desire, and delight in that which is good."[1507] Along with understanding and a will that desires and chooses, Adam was made a free agent – he was given "a measure of *liberty*."[1508] Wesley defines "liberty" as "a power of choosing what was good, and refusing what was not so."[1509] Adam could choose good and refuse evil. Wesley also maintains that Adam bore his own particular *moral image*. This included knowledge, righteousness, and "true holiness." Since Adam's understanding and affections were "without blemish, ... he steadily chose whatever was good, according to the direction of his understanding."[1510] This brought about unspeakable happiness and "uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and the Son through the eternal Spirit," along with "the continual testimony of his conscience that all his ways were good and acceptable to God."[1511] Just as God is love, so Adam's entire character was marked by love. Lindström summarizes Wesley's teaching as follows: "Like the Creator, the creature was righteous, merciful, true, and pure. He was innocent of all sin. The image of God embraced the intellectual function of man [*sic*] as well. He had true knowledge of God and His work and lived on the intellectual plane proper to him..."[1512]

However, the Fall brought about a complete corruption of human nature. Primitive perfection was lost through Adam's abuse of his free will. Humanity has completely lost the moral image. Although we retain the natural and political images, these are now corrupted and incline towards sin. Sin spreads throughout Adam's progeny as the result of his sin. The incorruptible body is now made corruptible, functioning as "a clog to the soul" and hindering its ability to "apprehend clearly, or judge truly."[1513] After his fall, Adam was no longer able to fulfill the Adamic law which required perfection in all his affections, tempers, and actions.[1514] Wesley calls this corruption of the soul – this infection – "inbred sin." He likens it, among

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[1506] See Wesley's sermon, "The End of Christ's Coming," in *Wesley's Sermons*, 443-444. On the limitation of Adam's knowledge, Wesley writes, "Yet his knowledge was limited, as he was a creature; ignorance therefore was inseparable from him. But error was not it does not appear that he was mistaken in anything. But he was capable of mistaking, of being deceived, although not necessitated to it." See ibid., 444.

[1507] Ibid.

[1508] Ibid., 444 (Wesley's emphasis).

[1509] Ibid., 444. Wesley comments, "There is no virtue but where an intelligent being knows, loves, and chooses what is good; nor is there any vice but where such a being knows, loves, and chooses what is evil." See ibid.

[1510] Ibid.

[1511] Ibid.

[1512] Lindström, *Sanctification*, 25-26.

[1513] Wesley, *A Plain Account*, 178.

[1514] Affections are the dispositions which motivate each person. These involve both the person's emotions and reason. Such affections can be disciplined through habit, which is the eighteenth-century meaning for the word "temper." Maddox explains that emotions are properly a part of the *imago Dei*. When these are habitually and properly oriented towards holiness such Christian tempers become the likeness of God. See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 69. Olson also gives an explanation in Wesley, *A Plain Account*, 31 (footnote 2).

other things, to a "strange fire"[1515] in the heart, an "evil root" bearing wicked tempers,[1516] or a "sour yeast" permeating the entire soul.[1517] For Wesley total depravity of the human soul means that sin has corrupted – but not destroyed – every aspect of human life and character.[1518] Lindström summarizes Wesley's thought as follows: Adam lost "his knowledge of God and his love for Him, becoming unholy and unhappy. Once the image of God, he was now stamped with the image of the devil: with pride and self-will."[1519]

But the process of sanctification restores health to the human soul, as a result of God's prior love. A phrase which Wesley repeatedly uses is this: "We love Him, because He first loved us."[1520] Wesley sees love as originating from above, which is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. People are enabled to love by the Holy Spirit who is given to them. Since one of the fruits of the Spirit's presence is love, it is crucial for people to receive the Spirit. Wesley pictures love to God "as a fire descending on his [*sic*] heart, a divine fire of love, coming to man from above."[1521] Since corruption came as a result of Adam's distance from his Creator, one recovers spiritual health through *participation* in the Maker's life – an idea which Wesley shares with Eastern Christianity. As Maddox writes, "Humans are creaturely beings who can develop spiritual wholeness only through dynamic relationship with God's empowering grace."[1522]

6.3.4 God's Prevenient Grace

[1515] Wesley, *A Plain Account*, 36.

[1516] See Wesley's "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, I," section 1, par. 4. As cited in John Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions*, 3rd ed., The Works of the Rev. John Wesley: With the Last Corrections of the Author, vol. 5 (London: John Mason, 1829), 253.

[1517] See Wesley's "Sermon on the Mount, XI," section 1, par. 3. As cited in ibid., 406.

[1518] Wesley affirmed the concept of total depravity, by which he means that "Inbred Sin's corruption pervades every human faculty and power, leaving us utterly unable to save ourselves. Fortunately, however, God the Great Physician can heal our diseased nature." See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 82. Of course, this idea of total depravity "was broadly rejected outside of Protestant circles." See ibid.

[1519] Lindström, *Sanctification*, 25.

[1520] See for example Wesley's "The Witness of the Spirit," I., 8, as cited in Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions*, 115. Lindström lists five other sermons where this exact phrase also appears. See Lindström, *Sanctification*, 177 (footnote 1).

[1521] Lindström, *Sanctification*, 177.

[1522] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 81. Here Collins retorts that Maddox's participatory theology undercuts Wesley's *via salutis*, which claims that "it is God, not humanity, who both forgives sins and makes holy." Collins argues that "the instantaneous elements of Wesley's *via salutis* are his principal vehicles for underscoring the crucial truth that it is God, not humanity, who both forgives sins and who makes holy." See Collins, "Recent Trends," 80. Maddox replies that Collins provides "the most nuanced reading yet of Wesley from a foundationally Western perspective." However, he doubts that Collins treats Eastern emphases as fairly, rather than subsuming them under Western theological concerns which he clearly prefers, within an ideological conjunctive synthesis. See Randy Maddox, "Prelude to a Dialogue: A Response to Kenneth Collins," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 35, no. 1 (2000): 91.

While Wesley affirms the doctrine of total depravity, he distances himself from conclusions theologians draw from such a concept in Western Christianity. Reformed theologians, for example, argue from total depravity to the ideas of limited atonement and irresistible grace – ideas which Wesley finds contradicting the general offer of salvation found in Scripture (*e.g.* in Jn 3,16). Roman Catholics – and some Eastern Christians – resist these conclusions by rejecting the idea of a total depravity of the human soul, rather maintaining that some ability to respond to God, given in Creation, is preserved after the Fall. Maddox writes that "for Wesley, this both underestimated the impact of Inbeing Sin and endangered the unmerited nature of God's restoring *grace*."[1523] Therefore, Wesley argues that salvation depends at every moment on God's initiating grace, while, at the same time, allowing for a human response for which we are held responsible.

According to Maddox, Wesley attempts to achieve this balance through an approach the former calls "responsible grace." Throughout Wesley's practical theological works, Maddox sees a concern for preserving

> the vital tension between two truths that he viewed as co-definitive of Christianity: without God's grace, we *cannot* be saved; while without our (grace-empowered, but uncoerced) participation, God's grace *will not* save. I have chosen to designate this as a concern about "responsible grace." The formulation of this is quite specific. It focuses Wesley's distinctive concern on the nature of God and God's actions, rather than on humanity. It makes clear that God's indispensable gift of gracious forgiveness and empowerment is fundamental, while capturing Wesley's characteristic qualification of such empowerment as enabling rather than overriding human responsibility.[1524]

Maddox nicely summarizes Wesley's theological method, for Wesley clearly maintains that God's grace pre-vents: i.e., grace goes before us, enabling any movement of the human soul towards an ever deeper love for God, neighbor, and self. Wesley calls "preventing grace" the "drawings of the Father" which invite us to yield ever more of ourselves to God. These drawings are commonly called "natural conscience," but Wesley rather insists that God is the One who shows every person "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his [*sic*] God" [with reference to Mi 6,8].[1525] What people perceive as the leadings of their conscience Wesley understands as "convictions" from the Holy Spirit. God's prevenient grace leads individuals towards restoration by empowering them to respond to and participate in the divine life. The Spirit's work in the conscience Wesley calls "convicting grace," which

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[1523] Ibid., 83.
[1524] Ibid., 19.
[1525] See Wesley's sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," in Wesley and Outler, *John Wesley*, 273.

includes one's initial desire to please God and the first understanding that one has in fact sinned against God. Wesley also identifies "convincing grace" as the Spirit's work of providing "overwhelming evidence" of a person's "sin and guilt" before God, leading to a greater humility before God and a faith response to the Gospel.[1526] Both "convicting grace" and "convincing grace" are particular aspects of the Spirit's general work of prevenient grace.[1527]

Wesley parts company with Reformed theologians who contend that the Fall brought about a *tota depravatio*. In 1784 Wesley published his abridgment of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Anglican Church, which is very instructive regarding his view of human nature.[1528] For the edited Article on original sin reads,

> Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man [*sic*], that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.[1529]

Of particular importance are the words "very far gone from original righteousness." Here Wesley makes room for human response so as to preserve human responsibility for one's response to God's offer of salvation. For this reason, Wesley distinguishes between humanity's *loss* of the moral image (holiness) through the Adamic Fall and the resulting *corruption* of the natural image (freedom). If we had lost the natural image as well, salvation would be determined entirely by Sovereign decree, as Reformed theology maintains. At the same time, Wesley safeguards the merciful activity of God's grace in saving people, through his formulation of the Article on free will – for people are incapable of making the first move towards God without preventing grace.

> The condition of man [*sic*] after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.[1530]

[1526] Lindström, *Sanctification*, 113-114.

[1527] I am thankful to Clarence Bence, Professor Emmeritus of Church History at Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion, IN for stressing this distinction to me.

[1528] Lindström notes that Wesley condensed the Thirty-nine Articles from the Book of Common Prayer to twenty-four in his abridgment published in 1784. See Lindström, *Sanctification*, 50 (footnote 9).

[1529] As cited in ibid., 51.

[1530] See ibid.

Lindström writes that this "obviously can be taken as a departure from the Reformed outlook. It can be understood as an expression of the view by which the Fall, while bringing a *depravatio naturae*, did not involve a *tota depravatio*."[1531] Here we see Wesley's attempt to find a *via media* between Reformed and Catholic theological positions. Wesley's solution is that God's prior love for us is a *cause* of our love for God, neighbor, and self,[1532] which, at the same time, makes us responsible to obey God's revealed will. According to Wesley, God's love is the source of love, while human love is a response to God's prior love. Thus, Lindström says that human love is "a reciprocated love."[1533] As Albert Outler notes, we can only love after we know that God first loves us; but, in order to know this, it must first be witnessed to our spirit by the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Jn 4,19). Thereafter, "we must love God before we can be holy at all, this being the root of all holiness."[1534]

6.3.5 Justification as Restoration

In his view of justification, Wesley is clearly conversant with the Western theological discussions regarding Christ's atonement for human sin. Due to Wesley's anthropology, we might expect to see him stress the resurrected Christ – as do Orthodox theologians – rather than the crucified Christ. However, precisely at this point Wesley joins the Western Church in discussing the meaning of Christ's death on the cross, as Maddox points out.[1535] Wesley thinks sin within the context of a criminal act committed against God's expressed will.[1536] Thus, an individual is damned for his or her deliberate actions of rebellion against God's rule – not because of original sin. A person is personally responsible for his or her sin. Thus, under the concept of an "age of accountability," small children, who are too young to understand the consequences of their actions, are not held accountable for their actions. For Wesley, as well as for the Reformers, justification is a forensic restoration of a person's relationship with God. Justification cancels the guilt of one's willful defiance.

In the West the question of *how* God justifies the sinner is governed by the idea of a legal pardon. God pardons sinners based upon the merits of Christ, who represents the human race and bears our sins. Following Wesley's Aldersgate experience in 1738, Wesley begins[1537]

[1531] Ibid., 51-52.
[1532] Wesley recognizes the place of a proper love for self. Lindström writes that Wesley "is not concerned only with love to God and one's neighbour, self-love also has a place." See ibid., 184.
[1533] Ibid. Wesley is clearly influenced by Augustine's conception of love, and in a letter written in 1731 Wesley discusses the difference between *frui* and *uti*. While people may enjoy things in the world, this pleasure must be subordinated to love to God. See ibid., 185.
[1534] Wesley and Outler, *John Wesley*, 214.
[1535] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 95-96.
[1536] For Wesley's definition of sin, see below (6.3.6).
[1537] Current Wesleyan scholarship tends to divide Wesley's thought into three periods: early (1733-38), middle (1738-65), and late (1765-91). This is done in order to distinguish emphases and developments

to view Christ's work of atonement "as the sole basis of justification and regeneration."[1538] As Wesley writes in 1765, in one of his later sermons, "Justification is another word for pardon. It is the forgiveness of all our sins and, what is necessarily implied therein, our acceptance with God."[1539] Christ's works and death are the price paid for our acceptance before God. The merits of Christ are the "meritorious cause" for our salvation. Like the Reformers, Wesley argues that there is nothing we can do to earn or merit justification through human achievement.[1540] As Outler notes, for Wesley, "it is not a *saint* but a *sinner* that is *forgiven*, and under the notion of a sinner. God *justifieth* not the godly but the *ungodly*, not those that are holy already but the unholy."[1541] The only acceptable response a person can make to God's offer of salvation is faith; and such a move of one's soul is only possible through the prior work of God's prevenient grace. Wesley, therefore, follows the Protestant slogans of *sola fide* and *sola Scriptura*, but he understands *solus* in the sense of "primarily," rather than "exclusively," as Outler points out.[1542] Faith, in fact, is simply love's handmaid. Faith is a means towards the goal of holiness, which is "the *fullness* of faith."

Wesley sides with the Reformers regarding depravity and justification, but he rejects the notion of a mere imputation of righteousness, for the end of salvation is a righteous and holy person. Here the influence of Eastern Christian thought comes to the fore in Wesley's theology. Orthodoxy tends to view justification not from the perspective of *pardon* but from *power*: specifically, God's power to renew God's likeness in the human soul. In a similar fashion, Wesley distinguishes between a *real* and *relative* change brought about through justification. The relative change denotes a change in one's relation to God, where the penitent gains peace with God, secured through the atonement of Christ. This is an objective (legal) change, which deals with the guilt of sin. But Wesley also argues for a subjective change, which he calls the "New Birth" (or Regeneration). For Wesley, this is a real change involving salvation from the power of sin, wherein one's tempers and actions are transformed. Faith must evidence itself in a growth towards perfection, as one participates in the life of

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in Wesley's teaching. For a discussion of this threefold model, see Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 19-21. A full discussion of the history of Wesley's thought and his rebuttal of charges that his doctrine showed inconsistencies over time lies outside the scope of this thesis.

[1538] Lindström, *Sanctification*, 58. Previous to this experience, Wesley was deeply influenced by William Law's view, which emphasized sanctification as religious experience: i.e. equating mortification with religious piety. Believers are to conform their lives to the way of Christ, by taking up one's cross and following Jesus. Religion is the fulfillment of one's duty. For a discussion of Law's view on religion, sanctification, and atonement, in contrast with Wesley's understanding after 1738, see ibid., 55-59.

[1539] See Wesley's sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," in Wesley and Outler, *John Wesley*, 273.

[1540] Lindström writes, "Consequently man [*sic*] has nothing to offer to God but the merits of Christ. Because of their inward and outward evil all that men deserve is the wrath of God and eternal damnation ... Thus their only hope is the vicarious suffering of Christ." See Lindström, *Sanctification*, 65.

[1541] Wesley and Outler, *John Wesley*, 203.

[1542] Ibid., 28.

God. As Lindström writes, "Saving faith necessarily produces good works and holiness. Otherwise it is dead."[1543]

As the years went by, Wesley placed greater stress upon inherited guilt as a *consequence* for Adam's sin, rather than as a *punishment*. Sin is seen as the result of Adam's loss of participation in God's life, resulting in the loss of the *imago Dei* and corruption of humanity's basic faculties – what Wesley deems the natural image of God.[1544] This has serious consequences for Wesley's epistemology. In explaining his understanding of the source of human knowledge concerning spiritual things, Wesley quotes from Ephesians 5,14: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (KJV). Wesley notes that this verse describes what he calls the "natural man" [*sic*] as being in a state of "deep sleep." Wesley writes, "His [*sic*] spiritual senses are not awake; they discern neither spiritual good nor evil. The eyes of his understanding are closed; they are sealed together, and see not." Such a condition places the natural person in a state of sheer ignorance of God.[1545] But Wesley does not think that many are in a natural state; for the prevenient grace of God continues to appeal to their conscience.[1546] As Don Thorsen argues,

> In one sense, we may say that for Wesley there existed theoretically the concept of a 'natural man,' but empirically no purely 'natural' person existed. This is because all people experience the presence of God's divine grace – for example, a conscience whether or not they have become Christians. Wesley still made a distinction between: a 'natural man" and a 'spiritual man,' but the 'natural' person was not considered to have completely lost the work of God's grace in his or her life.[1547]

God's divine grace presents itself in the work of the Holy Spirit, who opens the eyes of the sinner's understanding to discern his or her real state before God. Such a person sees that "the loving, the merciful God is also 'a consuming fire,'" as the Spirit opens the conscience, showing the "inward, spiritual meaning of the law of God."[1548] This shakes the person awake, as the Spirit restores the person's spiritual senses. The effects of the Spirit's inspiration are

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[1543] Lindström, *Sanctification*, 100.

[1544] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 80-81.

[1545] See Wesley's sermon, "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption," (sermon 9 - 1746), as cited from *Wesley's Sermons*, 134. Don Thorsen also references this sermon in Don Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2005), 123-124.

[1546] Thorsen notes that "Wesley's use of the analogy of senses indicates that he generally wanted to stay in the British empirical camp, at least the kind of Lockean empiricism that allowed a prominent place for Christian belief." However, Thorsen maintains that Wesley "never satisfactorily resolved whether such a feeling or sense was something supernaturally bestowed by God or whether is was naturally or innately present in all people but inoperable due to human sinfulness." See Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral*, 123.

[1547] Ibid., 123-124.

[1548] "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption," as cited in *Wesley's Sermons*, 137.

internal, allowing one to "see" the eternal realm, which exists all around us, but which remains undetectable by the physical senses. However, these "graciously restored spiritual senses," Maddox notes, "enable us to be sensible of Divinely-fostered peace, joy, and love."[1549] And it is this perception of God's love that leads one to faith. For Wesley, faith is "an evidence" of things which cannot be perceived through physical senses, but which God gives one the ability to recognize. In his sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," Wesley appeals to 2 Cor 4,6 to point out the Holy Spirit's twofold work in restoring our spiritual senses: (1) God commands light to "shine out of darkness," (2) while shining "in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."[1550] The opening of the "eyes" of one's "understanding" (Eph 1,18) brings about the knowledge of God's love for the individual: as Wesley writes, that "Christ loved *me* and gave himself for *me*."[1551] The Spirit witnesses to the person's spirit "that we are children of God," and this testimony is immediately buttressed by "'the fruit of the Spirit': namely, 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness'."[1552] Faith functions, therefore, not simply as evidence of God's love, but also as a gift from the Spirit, which evokes a trust and confidence in God's specific gracious forgiveness and acceptance. Maddox summarizes Wesley's teaching on the Holy Spirit's witness when he writes, Wesley's

> central claim is that the authentic basis for anyone's assurance of God's pardon is a direct activity of the Holy Spirit that inwardly impresses upon them that they are children of God ... he did not construe the Spirit's witness to be an ethereal verbal communication, but an inward awareness of merciful love that evidences our restored relationship to God.[1553]

As we have seen, Wesley sees justification from both an objective/relational and a subjective/real change perspective. From the perspective of the objective change, Christ's atonement is the sole basis for our justification; while from the point of view of the subjective change, it is the first step in the healing of a human soul, leading towards holiness, and glorification as its eventual goal. The new birth (or regeneration) is that "first step of healing," which takes place at the same moment as justification. However, theologically speaking,

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[1549] Because of Wesley's "empiricist epistemology," God's love must be experienced in some fashion. See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 129.
[1550] See Wesley and Outler, *John Wesley*, 275.
[1551] See Wesley's sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," as cited in ibid., 276.
[1552] A quote from Wesley's sermon. See ibid.
[1553] Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 129.

justification (the objective/relational change) occurs prior to one's initial steps in sanctification (the subjective/real change).[1554]

6.3.6 Sanctification as Love

For Wesley, sanctification is a process, which begins through saving faith – that faith itself being a gift from God –, and finds its fulfillment in the restored likeness of God in the human soul. As Lindström points out, the "relative change" of justification brings "liberation from the guilt of sin," whereas the "real change" gives "liberation from the inherent power of sin."[1555] God's wrath is replaced by favor, and the love of God flows through the believer's heart as s/he starts to know an "inward religion."[1556] At that moment a process of growth begins, where the Christian begins to love as God loves. The believer is aware of possessing the fruits of the Spirit, among which is love.[1557] Knowledge of God's personal love for oneself enables a person to love God.[1558] The individual's love for God "is the source of all sanctity in heart and life, and such sanctity must exist before it is felt."[1559] Once felt, love should grow in an analogy to organic growth – i.e. from infancy to maturity. For holiness and love are closely linked in Wesley's theology,[1560] and holiness of heart is the goal of salvation.

As indicated above, sin-diseased humans recover their spiritual health and the likeness of God through participation in the divine life. A person who experiences God's love poured into their heart begins to love as God loves.[1561] The Moravians, who so powerfully influenced

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[1554] See Lindström, *Sanctification*, 91-92 and 115. Again, I am grateful to Prof. Clarence Bence for stressing this distinction.

[1555] Ibid., 114.

[1556] John Wesley, *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (London: W. Strahan, 1745), 84. As cited in Lindström, *Sanctification*, 115.

[1557] Along with the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit, the individual's own spirit testifies to being a child of God. This individual testimony is a "consciousness of possessing the fruits of the Spirit and the deduction that one is a child of God. This latter testimony must be preceded by the former." See Lindström, *Sanctification*, 115.

[1558] Love has a causal function for Wesley. Lindström writes, "Love acquires a causal character. Man [*sic*] loves God because God has loved him. His love is a natural result of God's. It is a reciprocated love, the immediate outcome of God's love." See ibid., 184.

[1559] Ibid., 115.

[1560] Wynkoop notes that for Wesley "love is the essential inner character of holiness, and holiness does not exist apart from love. That is how close they are, and in a certain sense they can be said to be the same thing. At least Wesley consistently defined holiness, as well as perfection, as love." See Wynkoop, *Theology*, 24.

[1561] Wesley writes, "Above all, remembering that God is love, he [*sic*] is conformed to the same likeness. He is full of love to his neighbour: of universal love, not confined to one sect or party, not restrained to those who agree with him in opinions, or in outward modes of worship, or to those who are allied to him by blood or recommended by nearness of place. Neither does he love those only that love him, or that are endeared to him by intimacy of acquaintance. But his love resembles that of him whose mercy is over all his works [*cf.* Ps. 145:9, B.C.P.]. It soars above all these scanty bounds, embracing neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies; yea not only the good and gentle but also the froward, the evil and unthankful. For he loves every soul that God has made, every child of man, of

the young Wesley, maintained that one must be sanctified *before* justification.[1562] However, following Aldersgate, Wesley contends that justification is only the beginning of one's spiritual growth in sanctification. Wesley teaches that this inward sanctification begins "in the moment a man [*sic*] is justified. (Yet sin remains in him, yea, the seed of all sin, till he is *sanctified throughout*.) From that time a believer gradually dies to sin, and grows in grace."[1563] Thus, Wesley argues for a repentance before and *after* justification. Repentance remains necessary after the New Birth because sin remains in the heart; its reign is now contested, however. For a struggle erupts in the believer between the spirit and the flesh. Therefore, the Christian repents, recognizing that sin remains in his or her heart. Lindström writes that this repentance after justification involves an "awareness of remaining sin and of one's utter inability to do good on the basis of one's own resources or to deliver oneself by one's own strength from sin and guilt."[1564] In order to stay on the path of sanctification, repentance is necessary.[1565]

Those who begin the process of sanctification demonstrate their love by doing God's will (Jn 14,15). According to Wesley, God's character is reflected in the law; therefore, this law is holy, just, and good (cf. Rom 7,12). Wesley distinguishes the moral law from the Mosaic institutional law; Christians are freed from the latter and enabled to obey the former. As the believer repents of sin and participates in the life of God, s/he is cleansed and empowered in order to be able to obey the moral law. Since the law is holy, it unmasks and reveals the hideousness of sin in a person's life. Like the holy God, the law itself is pure and without any trace of sin. The law is also good, for it renders to each person precisely what is fair and needful. In contrast to Luther, Wesley refuses to make a radical distinction between law and grace.[1566] Rather, as the Christian is healed from the disease of sin, s/he receives the

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whatever place or nation." See Wesley's *A Plain Account of Genuine Christianity*, as cited in Wesley and Outler, *John Wesley*, 184.

[1562] Maddox writes that "Wesley was encouraged by the English Moravians to consider conversion an instantaneous and complete deliverance from all sin, fear, and doubt. His own experience, and consultation with other theological sources, soon persuaded him that full spiritual transformation was not instantaneously provided. However, he remained convinced of the importance of an instantaneous beginning of the Christian life." See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 153.

[1563] Wesley, *A Plain Account*, 93.

[1564] Lindström, *Sanctification*, 116.

[1565] Wesley strongly reacted against those who claimed that the Christian did not need his or her own righteousness, since Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer. He called such a doctrine "'a blow at the root' ... of all holiness, all true religion. Hereby Christ is 'stabbed in the house of his friends' [*cf.* Zech. 13:6], of those who make the largest professions of loving and honouring him, the whole design of his death – namely 'to destroy the works of the devil' [1 Jn. 3:8] – being overthrown at a stroke. For wherever this doctrine is cordially received, it leaves no place for holiness. It demolishes it from top to bottom; it destroys both root and branch [*cf.* Mal. 4:1]. It effectively tears up all desire of it, all endeavour after it." See Wesley's *A Blow at the Root, or Christ Stabb'd in the House of His Friends*, as cited in Wesley and Outler, *John Wesley*, 380.

[1566] "Wesley's view was, in fact, the opposite of the traditional Lutheran (and anti-Hebraic) notion that the law was an evil power that Christ overcame for us in the Atonement." See Timothy Smith's

ability to obey the law, to do the Father's will. The law, therefore, serves a healing function. Lindström comments, "The more the Christian sees himself [*sic*] in the mirror of the perfect law, the more he feels the need of Christ's atoning blood and of His purifying spirit. The law drives man [*sic*] to Christ, and Christ drives him to the law."[1567] Because the Christian loves God, s/he falls in love with God's law, which expresses the divine character. According to Wesley, sanctification expresses itself both in the practice of love and the fulfillment of the law. For, as Lindström notes, "by faith the law shall be established in the heart and life of man [*sic*]."[1568] Wesley sees our ability to obey God's law promised in the Old Testament: "From all your filthiness I will cleanse you; a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you" (Ez 36,25f).[1569] Wesley maintains that faith and love free the Christian to obey God's moral law by cleansing the human heart; therefore, law becomes promise as well as requirement. As Lindström notes, Wesley "regarded all God's demands and commandments as at the same time promises. God gives what he commands."[1570]

Wesley contends that faith and love free the Christian to obey God's moral law, as fruit and evidence of one's reciprocal love for God. The law is established in a person's life through faith, and s/he learns to love and obey God as a part of the maturation process. "Salvation is seen as a process by which man [*sic*] passes through a series of successive stages, each stage representing a different and higher level."[1571] To illustrate the stages of spiritual growth, Wesley appeals to 1 John 2:12-14: "I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one." He references these verses four times in his *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*.[1572] Mark Olson characterizes these levels as follows: (1) children are immature Christians, who have experienced God's love, but who are fearful that they may not persevere in their faith; (2) young men are those whose peace with God is no longer interrupted by the fears of childhood, for they have the Word of God, which makes

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introductory comments to Lindström's book, on the fourth page of his foreword (unnumbered), in Lindström.

[1567] Ibid., 82.

[1568] Ibid.

[1569] Olson notes that Ezekiel 36,24-29 is the most often quoted Old Testament scripture in Wesley's *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. See Wesley and Outler, *John Wesley*, 202 (footnote 85).

[1570] Lindström, *Sanctification*, 135.

[1571] Ibid., 105. In the minutes of the Third Annual Conference in 1746, Wesley provides a brief summary of his understanding of salvation by faith.

"A. In asserting salvation by faith we mean this:
    1. That pardon (salvation begun) is received by faith producing works;
    2. That holiness (salvation continued) is faith working by love;
    3. That heaven (salvation finished) is the reward of this faith ..."

See Wesley and Outler, *John Wesley*, 159.

[1572] See Wesley, *A Plain Account*, 56, 61, 196, and 197.

them strong, so that they do not commit sin; and (3) fathers are mature believers who are "spiritually perfect" and "advanced in the grace of God," so as to "love God with all their heart and have good dispositions."[1573] However, Wesley understands this process of spiritual maturity as being dynamic, rather than static; for he can even say that newborn Christians are "so far perfect as not to commit sin," in conjunction with John's words, "He that is born of God sinneth not" (1 Jn 5,18).[1574] Wesley conceives of sanctification as a process, which, on the one hand, only God's grace can bring about, but which also requires the Christian's participation by appropriating the grace given, as noted above.

To properly understand Wesley's view of sanctification, though, one needs to keep in mind a distinction he makes in using the word "sin." For Wesley distinguishes between what he designates as "sin, properly so called," or "a voluntary transgression of a known law," and "sin, improperly so called," or "an involuntary transgression of a divine law, known or unknown," which nevertheless "needs the atoning blood."[1575] The former is rebellion against God's rule, while the latter is classed as a mistake. However, both need cleansing by the blood of Christ, since they fall short of perfect obedience to God's declared will in God's law. Still Wesley claims, based on 1 John, that the child of God does not sin, since s/he is "born of God." "Whoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God" (1 Jn 3,9 KJV).[1576] Wesley summarizes: "In conformity, therefore, both to the doctrine of St. John, and to the whole tenor of the New Testament, we fix this conclusion: *a Christian is so far perfect as not to commit sin.*"[1577]

6.3.7 Entire Sanctification

As stated above, according to Wesley, the goal of salvation is a holy heart. This he calls "perfection," or "entire sanctification." A perfect or mature Christian is one whose heart is wholly love. Christian perfection is perfect love; the latter of which is "the essence of perfection."[1578] Wesley himself defines Christian perfection in these words: "It is love excluding sin, love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul. It is love

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[1573] Ibid., 56-57 (footnote 9). Lindström notes that the difference between children, young men, and fathers is "in the degree of love." The natural difference between child and father in the natural realm is paralleled in the spiritual, although the difference is "only one of degree," since the same life is given to both. See Lindström, *Sanctification*, 142.

[1574] Wesley, *A Plain Account*, 56-58. Maddox offers a helpful clarification: Wesley's "central claim," in his sermon entitled "Christian Perfection" (1741), "was that even newborn Christians are perfect in the sense of being free from the necessity of committing any outward sin, while only mature Christians are perfect in the further sense of being free from evil thoughts and tempers." See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 181.

[1575] Wesley, *A Plain Account*, 119.

[1576] See Wesley's sermon, "Christian Perfection," as cited in Wesley and Outler, *John Wesley*, 267.

[1577] Ibid., 267 (Wesley's italics).

[1578] Lindström, *Sanctification*, 139.

'rejoicing ever more, praying without ceasing, in everything giving thanks' [*cf.* 1 Thess. 5:16-18]."[1579] He gives a more succinct definition as "pure love reigning alone in our heart and life. This is the whole of scriptural perfection."[1580] Wesley received much grief from his opponents over the word "perfect," but he finds the word to be scriptural. For Jesus commands his disciples to "be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect," in loving one's enemies (Mt 5,48 NIV). Perfection, therefore, is synonymous with maturity and with love. For God is love (1 Jn 4,8.16), and the God of love commands people to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Dt 6,5 NIV).

Christian maturity is reached, Wesley argues, when a believer attains "perfect love." This is understood to be typically the result of a gradual process of spiritual growth,[1581] which is accomplished in a moment.[1582] Although the Christian must believe in the possibility of entire sanctification, the change in the human soul is wrought by God. In the experience of entire sanctification, God removes the "root of sin," or "indwelling sin," and cleanses the Christian "from all sin."[1583] Regarding the work of entire sanctification, Wesley writes,

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[1579] Wesley and Outler, *John Wesley*, 275. Outler says that Wesley was "fond of dilating on the Christian ideal," frequently enumerating "the character of the perfect Christian – without, however, claiming this character for himself or ascribing it to other living persons." See ibid., 181. While it is true that Wesley himself never personally testified to the experience of entire sanctification, Outler must be aware of the fact that Wesley uses the testimony of Jane Cooper – a young woman whose life and death are recorded in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* – to do precisely that. See Wesley, *A Plain Account*, 161-168.

[1580] See Wesley's "Thoughts on Christian Perfection," as cited in Wesley and Outler, *John Wesley*, 293.

[1581] Collins criticizes Maddox precisely at this point, saying that the latter's participatory, gradual interpretation shifts the moment of entire sanctification (i.e. God's gracious freeing of an individual from the guilt, power, and being of sin) into the future as the result of a long process. Collins charges Maddox with "re-defining" Wesley's soteriology. See Collins, "The State," 22. Maddox responds that Collins has written "the most nuanced reading yet of Wesley from a foundationally Western perspective." But Maddox questions whether Collins has fairly treated the typically Eastern emphases found in Wesley's writings. For Collins subsumes Wesley's Eastern emphases under the former's favored Western understandings in his model of conjunction. Collins' conjunction model assumes that items of difference are "counter-balancing poles of a continuum between which one can gravitate to an ideally-balanced synthesis." Maddox uses rather a model of perspectival interweaving, arguing that the "most important differences between Eastern and Western Christian soteriology are perspectival in nature." Maddox claims that for Collins Wesley's soteriology forms a "well-crafted and intentional synthesis." Maddox, on the other hand, doubts that Wesley's interweaving of scriptural emphases is best represented "by the model of an ideally balanced conjunction of divergent elements." Maddox claims that his disagreement with Collins revolves around which element of faith is seen as ultimately fundamental for Wesley's soteriology. See Randy Maddox, "Prelude," 89-91.

[1582] There is a rich theological discussion in Wesleyan-Arminian theological circles regarding the time-span within which the work of entire sanctification is accomplished. Chris Bounds gives four different views regarding whether full spiritual maturity is reached gradually or instantaneously. He coins the instantaneous view "the shorter way," but notes that others have argued for a "middle way" ("entire sanctification by seeking until you receive"), a "longer way" ("entire sanctification by long process of growth"), and the "Keswick way" ("sanctification from willful sin with momentary lapses"). See Chris Bounds, "Personal Holiness: Grace for Transformed Lives," in *Holiness for the Real World* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2009), 11. Bounds notes that "The Wesleyan Church's Articles of Religion embrace the shorter way and can be interpreted as allowing a middle way, while clearly distinguishing themselves from the longer way and Keswick teaching." See ibid., 16.

[1583] See Wesley, *A Plain Account*, 156-157.

> This great gift of God, the salvation of our souls, is no other than the **image of God**
> fresh stamped on our hearts. It is a "*renewal of believers in the spirit of their minds,
> after the likeness of Him that created them.*" God hath now laid "*the ax unto the root
> of the tree, purifying their hearts by faith,*" and "*cleansing all the thoughts of their
> hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit.*" Having this hope, that they shall see God
> as he is, they "*purify themselves even as he is pure,*" and are "*holy, as he that hath
> called them is holy, in all manner of conversation.*" Not that they have already
> attained all that they shall attain, either are already in this sense perfect. But they
> daily "*go on from strength to strength; beholding*" now, "*as in a glass, the glory of
> the Lord, they are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of
> the Lord.*"[1584]

God purifies the heart in entire sanctification– in fulfillment of Ezekiel 36,24-29 –,[1585] bringing freedom from inward and outward sin, and enabling the believer to fully obey God's will. One whose heart is cleansed does not cease growing in love. Rather, Wesley writes that s/he who "lives the full life of love," continues to grow "'in grace and in the knowledge of Christ' [*cf.* 2 pet. 3:18], in the love and image of God, and will do so not only till death, but to all eternity."[1586]

Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection continues to draw opposition, and Mildred Bangs Wynkoop argues that this results from differences in the way the word "perfect" is used.[1587] She points out the ring of absolutism which English speakers hear in the word; however, this one word sits in for a number of Greek words, thus tending to conflate their meanings into one absolute state.[1588] Wynkoop also says that Wesley himself adds to the confusion. "Where Wesley identified full sanctification and Christian perfection he had the most difficulty. All the *practical* advice he gave weakens his own position at this point."[1589] Wesley's emphasis on growth in a person's life gets lost, and the "perfection" of sanctification is no longer "absolute." At the same time, when Wesley underscores grace, perfection is no longer viewed logically and tends to be reinterpreted.[1590] What should be kept in mind, however, is Wesley's argument that people can be freed from sin in this life so that

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[1584] Ibid., 67-68 (bolded text by Olson).
[1585] See ibid., 81, 97, and 202.
[1586] See Wesley's "Thoughts on Christian Perfection," as cited in Wesley and Outler, *John Wesley*, 294.
[1587] Wynkoop notes that there is a tension between "theology/logic and life/experience," which creates difficulties for those who engage with Wesley's use of the word "perfection." See Wynkoop, *Theology*, 269. This, of course, is the problem of representation and presentation in regards to love with which this thesis deals.
[1588] Wynkoop discusses *akribós* (diligent or accurate), *artios* (fitted or qualified), *pleróo* (complete or made full), *katartízo* (properly adjusted or comfortably fitted together), *télos* (maturity or completion), and *téleios* (perfect). See ibid., 283-294.
[1589] Ibid., 270.
[1590] Ibid.

they fully love God and neighbor with their whole hearts. This he describes as Christian perfection.

Wynkoop distinguishes between Christian perfection and "perfectionism." The latter is a philosophical representation of an absolute ideal state, in which no further growth is possible; but such is not a biblical understanding of perfection. She writes, "New Testament writers knew nothing of this kind of thinking. Biblical writers uniformly refer to man [*sic*] as well as nature in personal and dynamic terms."[1591] However, the New Testament understanding of perfection as "outgoing love" was later replaced by a pursuit after holiness through severe treatment of the body. Renunciation became the path to holiness through a form of perfectionism.[1592] Heresies emerged centered around the pursuit of holiness through either (1) pursuit of philosophy as the path to salvation, (2) rejection of the material body and its needs, or (3) ecstatic, emotional, mystical experience. Wynkoop identifies the problem with "perfectionism" as lying in the designation of an ideal static state or philosophical absolutism, where no further development is possible. This is not Wesley's understanding of Christian perfection. Those who experience entire sanctification may lose the grace they received through negligence or willful sin, or they can continue to grow in grace and holiness. Christian perfection does not free believers from their capacity to make human mistakes and thereby unwillingly break God's law. Everything depends on how one understands the word "perfect": either absolutely (as an ideal), or subjectively (as growth). This distinction should be kept in mind, for Wesley appeals to both uses of the word, but his overall emphasis falls on salvation as growth towards a restored likeness of God. Wesley argues strongly that people can be saved from sin in this life, which he calls the "fullness of faith." Wesley contends for Christian perfection because he finds such promised – and people thus exhorted – in the Scriptures.

6.3.8 Wesley's Theological Program: Love

Wesley's theology centers on and revolves around love. As Lindström points out, love is both the "*point de départ*" and the "final goal of this life in the ethical perfection on earth which constitutes the condition for glorification." Justification and the New Birth begin a process wherein love grows, develops, and matures. This perfection of love is the *telos* of salvation.[1593] Love determines Wesley's conceptions of both sin and holiness. Wynkoop writes,

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[1591] Ibid., 274.
[1592] Ibid., 275-276.
[1593] Lindström, *Sanctification*, 178.

> Sin is love, but love gone astray. Man [*sic*] is a creature who is not free not to love something. He is a committed person. Every conscious act reaffirms that commitment – or challenges it. Love is the most powerful drive of the human person; the deepest fact about rational man. But it is exactly in this drive where he is most free and most responsible. 'Coerced' love is not love at all. At no point is the human person more responsible, therefore more 'free,' than the ordering of his love. He is not the slave of his love unless he surrenders his humanity to impersonal drives. He may abdicate his humanity but he is not thereby absolved from responsibility for doing so.[1594]

According to Wesley, the goal of salvation is the healing of the human soul, the recovery of the *imago Dei*, and the restoration of one's likeness to God. In an early sermon preached at Oxford in 1733, Wesley describes the true Christian as a person with a circumcised heart (cf. Rom 2,29).[1595] Such a person is "in a state of acceptance with God," enjoys "a mind and spirit renewed after the image of him that created it," demonstrates "that habitual disposition of soul which in the Sacred Writings is termed 'holiness'."[1596] This circumcision wrought by God endues the believer with virtues which Christ exemplifies: humility, faith, hope, and love. Humility teaches the Christian that we are helpless without the Holy Spirit, that all we can do on our own is to "add sin to sin."[1597] Faith "is the one medicine given under heaven" which can heal our sickness, since through God it is powerful enough to tear down "all the prejudices of corrupt reason."[1598] By faith the eyes of our understanding are enlightened so that we can perceive that our calling is "to 'glorify God,'" and we receive assurance "that 'Jesus Christ the righteous is' my Lord, and 'the propitiation for *my* sins'."[1599] Hope consoles those who have been "born of God" by faith with the assurance that we are "children of God," that we do now "the things acceptable in his sight," that we "are now in the path which leadeth to life, and shall, by the mercy of God, endure therein to the end."[1600] Such hope braces us to renounce wickedness and to purify ourselves "even as he is pure" (1 Jn 3,3).[1601] But the crowning virtue of all is love, for as Wesley writes, "It is the essence, the spirit, the life of all virtue. It is not only the first and great command, but it is all the

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[1594] Wynkoop, *Theology*, 157.
[1595] See Wesley's sermon, "The Circumcision of the Heart," in *Wesley's Sermons*, 24. Wesley published this sermon in 1748 and placed it as the first sermon in the second volume of a four volume edition of his sermons. This sermon is considered one of the key expressions of his understanding of the gospel.
[1596] Ibid.
[1597] Ibid., 25. Wesley defines "humility" as "a right judgment of ourselves, [that] cleanses our minds from those high conceits of our own perfections, from the undue opinions of our own abilities and attainments which are the genuine fruit of a corrupted nature." See ibid.
[1598] Ibid., 25-26.
[1599] Ibid., 26.
[1600] Ibid.
[1601] Ibid., 27.

commandments in one."[1602] For the one whose heart is circumcised is not only ruled by love but "governs all his [*sic*] desires, designs, and thoughts, all his actions and conversations, as one who is entered in within the veil, where Jesus sits at the right hand of God."[1603] A heart thus infused with these virtues, and governed by love, epitomizes spiritual health. As Wesley understands Christianity, personal holiness (i.e. freedom from sin) and love for God, neighbor, and self are the ends of God's great salvation for human beings. People who exemplify these virtues reflect a God who is both holy and love.

6.3.9 An Open Theologian?

We may ask how well Wesley fits within an "open theology of love." For this could influence how helpful his approach may be for a contemporary theological reflection. However, in asking this question, we do not intend on turning Wesley into a twenty-first century postmodern theologian. To do so would be to do an injustice to him; to translate his words and thus to link him into our narrative might be to silence him. Still, Wesley does apparently demonstrate some of the qualities of an open theologian.

Wesley is willing to be corrected, since he realizes that knowledge is gained and demonstrated by experience. He leaves room in his thinking for opinion. Wesley writes,

> But some say I have mistaken the way myself, although I take upon me to teach it to others. It is probable many will think this; and it is very possible that I have. But I trust, whereinsoever I have mistaken, my mind is open to conviction. I sincerely desire to be better informed. I say to God and man, "What I know not, teach thou me!"[1604]

However, it should be acknowledged that Wesley has very strong convictions about the essentials of Christian faith. He demonstrates a genuinely particular understanding of Christian theology. For example, he writes extremely sharp words about Luther: "Who has wrote more ably than Martin Luther on justification by faith alone? And who was more ignorant of the doctrine of sanctification, or more confused in his conceptions of it?" Wesley maintains that a fair reading of Luther's commentary on Galatians would prove "his total

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[1602] Ibid. Wesley discusses love of the neighbor and self in the context of the distinctions drawn by Augustine between *frui* and *uti*. Creatures are to be loved (*uti*), although ultimately only one thing is to be desired "for its own sake – the fruition of him that is all in all." Wesley summarizes his position succinctly: "One design ye are to pursue to the end of time – the enjoyment of God in time and in eternity. Desire other things so far as they tend to this. Love the creature – as it leads to the Creator." See ibid., 28.

[1603] Ibid., 29.

[1604] See the preface to Wesley's *Sermons on Several Occasions*, as cited in Wesley and Outler, *John Wesley*, 90.

ignorance with regard to sanctification."[1605] In a similar fashion, Wesley praises Roman Catholic authors, like Francis Sales and Juan de Castaniza, for their scripturally astute writings on sanctification, while critiquing them for being "entirely unacquainted with the nature of justification."[1606] Certainly Wesley has strong views concerning the faith, but he also demonstrates a deep reverence for Christian tradition, which involves a wide-ranging interaction with the writings of the Church fathers, as well as of Western and Orthodox theologians.

Wesley's clear and particular understanding of Christian faith attempts to find a *via media* between the aporias which developed between Catholic and Reformed theologies. Still, he engages with people who hold differing opinions and extends a hand of fellowship. In 1747, Wesley wrote "A Letter to a Roman Catholic," wherein he attempts to open a conversation with Catholics, for the purpose of "softening our hearts towards each other."[1607] Wesley acknowledges the pain experienced by both sides, saying, "I do not suppose all the bitterness is on your side. I know there is too much on our side also."[1608] He attempts to explain "as mildly and inoffensively" as possible Methodist practice and belief with a short text that follows the outline of the Apostle's Creed. After his brief explanation, Wesley writes,

> My dear friend, consider: I am not persuading you to leave or change your religion, but to follow after that fear and love of God without which all religion is vain. I say not a word to you about your opinions or outward manner of worship ... Use whatever outward observances you please, but put your whole trust in him, but honour his holy Name and his Word, and serve him truly all the days of your life.[1609]

[1605] See Wesley's sermon, "On God's Vineyard," as cited in ibid., 107.

[1606] Ibid., 107-108. His critique can be very pointed indeed. In his sermon, "Of the Church," Wesley argues that congregations which teach "the pure Word of God" and "duly" administer the sacraments are a part of the Church catholic. But he finds these conditions unmet in the Church of Rome. He writes, "Certainly if these things are so, the Church of Rome is not so much as a part of the catholic Church ..." Still, Wesley remains open to those with whom he differs over opinions and practices. "Whoever they are that have 'one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of all,' I can easily bear with their holding wrong opinions, yea, and superstitious modes of worship." As cited in ibid., 313-314. At the same time, one should also note his openness to others, including Catholics, exemplified in his sermon "Catholic Spirit," where he asks, "Though we can't think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion?" Wesley's sermon revolves around the question: "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?" To the affirmative, he replies, "If it be, give me thine hand." See Wesley's sermon, "Catholic Spirit," in *Wesley's Sermons*, 300, 302 and 305.

[1607] See Wesley and Outler, *John Wesley*, 493.

[1608] Ibid.

[1609] Ibid., 496.

Wesley hopes that Christians of the Roman tradition can agree with Methodists regarding "true, primitive Christianity" (i.e. the basics of Christian faith). Based on this hope, Wesley encourages himself and his reader with these words:

> Let us thank God for this, and receive it as a fresh token of his love. But if God still loveth us, we ought also to love one another. We ought, without this endless jangling about opinions, to provoke one another to love and to good works. Let the points wherein we differ stand aside: here are enough wherein we agree, enough to be the ground of every Christian temper and of every Christian action.[1610]

Therefore, it seems obvious that Wesley does not construct a Christian grand narrative of love. Although he passionately holds to his particular understanding of Christian faith – that heart holiness expressing itself in love is the goal of salvation –, Wesley remains open to engaging with others who differed with him on points of theology. He also allows his understanding of the Christian narrative to be interrupted by others' narratives, as his encounter with the Moravians demonstrates, which results in an internal critique that brings forth his own unique synthesis from different aspects of the Christian tradition (*e.g.* the early Church fathers, the mystics, and scholastics like Aquinas).[1611]

Certainly, Wesley is not a postmodern theologian; but his way of thinking fits well within a theology that tries to work within an open narrative. Wesley clearly demonstrates some of the characteristics of an "open theologian:" *e.g.* an ability to allow his theological reflection to be interrupted by that which lies outside of his theological narrative and the performance of an internal critique of his narrative while remaining open to those who differed in matters of opinion. He also offers theology a way of thinking that holds both creation and redemption in a creative tension, maintaining a human capacity to love while acknowledging sin's destructive power and God's saving grace, without nullifying human responsibility.

6.3.10 Wesley in Conversation with Jeanrond

We might ask ourselves how Wesley and Jeanrond would view each other's theologies. Recognizing the danger of speaking in another's name, we will attempt to assess how they might interact over the question of love. Jeanrond speaks as a Catholic layman who reached the pinnacle of academic recognition for his theological scholarship. Wesley speaks as an

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[1610] Ibid., 498.
[1611] We only briefly touched upon Wesley's inability to fully enter into modernity above. For a discussion of Wesley's relation to the scholastic virtue tradition and, in particular, to Thomas Aquinas, see Long, *Wesley's Moral Theology*.

Anglican clergyman, an Oxford academic, whose lifelong work focused on evangelism and shepherding a growing evangelical movement. Their theologies of love reflect these differing life situations. Still, both men present theologies which call for greater openness in love between God and people, while differing in the presuppositions from which they begin theologizing.

Jeanrond would critique Wesley's anthropology as too negative. For the Wesleyan view of human depravity undervalues the human potential for love granted in Creation. This results in an insufficient emphasis on love's potential for relating human beings together in ever larger networks of love. On the other hand, Wesley would think that Jeanrond's appraisal of human potential minimizes the tragedy and scope of original sin. Here the classic difference between Catholic and Protestant theologies emerges, but with a twist. For Wesley contends that God's prevenient grace enables a positive human response in a person's life towards God's work, leading ultimately to a mature love for God, neighbor, and self. From a Wesleyan perspective, this allows for an understanding both of the utter tragedy of original sin and the possibility for true human love. One suspects, however, that Jeanrond would find this solution unsatisfying – as a denigration of the human capacity for love.

From Jeanrond's perspective, Wesley emphasizes attitude over relation in his conception of love. And to some extent this is true; for Wesley gives great importance to the tempers. Wesley concerns himself with the habitual training of one's emotions and reason. He aims at developing the character, for a person with holy tempers will love God and neighbor properly. This love expresses itself through obedience to God's law in daily life. Wesley develops his theology as one who cares for young believers, who need to grow in faith and character. Jeanrond, on the other hand, approaches love as a professional academic whose lifework is spent in the academy. Thus, Jeanrond thinks about the relationships involved in human love. He approaches love as praxis, considering how different actions and expressions convey love. And Jeanrond sees love involving people in ever larger networks of love. So Jeanrond would view Wesley's approach to love as being highly pietistic – engaged in the perfecting of an individual's attitude. However, Wesley would argue that maturation of the tempers enables one to love as Jesus commanded. One should probably approach Wesley's praxis of love through his teaching regarding charitable giving and the Wesleyan movement's social services.[1612] Wesley would appreciate Jeanrond's call for justice: regarding

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[1612] Wesley could have amassed a fortune from his publications, but chose to give almost everything away before he died. He counseled his followers to "Gain *all you can*, ... save *all you can*, ... give *all you can*." See Wesley's sermon, "The Use of Money," in *Wesley's Sermons*, 356. A contemporary describes how Wesley attended to his own advice: "His liberality to the poor, knew no bounds but an empty pocket. He gave away, not merely a certain part of his income, but all that he had: his own wants provided for, he devoted all the rest to the necessities of others." See John Whitehead, *The Life of Rev. John Wesley, M.A.: Some Time Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, Collected from His Private Papers and Printed Works, and Written at the Request of His Executors, to Which Is Prefixed Some Account of*

reconciliation, ministry to the poor, inclusion of the outcast, etc. But he would question Jeanrond's inattention towards developing holy tempers. Perhaps Wesley's greatest concern would be the lack of a developed view of sanctification in Jeanrond's theology of love. Jeanrond's exploration of the human capacity to love takes insufficient account of God's view of virtue. At the same time, Jeanrond would critique Wesley for not exploring further the human capacity for love offered by God's gift of creation.

Jeanrond does not offer many tools for thinking about the limits of love. He mentions love's capacity to do harm, but does not further develop the theme. Nor does a Catholic reflection on sanctification figure highly in his theology of love. Here Wesley offers theology a way to see the limits of love, which is important for the construction of a theological model of how love functions in a Christian open narrative of love.

In what follows, we will incorporate Wesley's theological insights into the conversation about the Christian narrative of love. First we begin with Lyotard's observations regarding love as presentation and representation as we consider divine and human ways of loving the other. We then turn to Boeve's analysis of the Christian narrative as an open narrative and his concept of the "event of grace," before offering a model for considering how divine love operates in relation to others. Thereafter, we discuss how holiness functions to delineate a love that is radically open to the other, while remaining radically closed to sin. Finally, we suggest that Boeve's concept of interruption be thought both as God's prevenient work of grace and as an invitation to enter into a love relationship with the divine.

6.4 Love as Presentation and Representation

One of the insights gained through an encounter with Lyotard's philosophical critique is the distinction he makes between love as presentation and representation. As we have seen, Lyotard abhors love as representation, since the other is too quickly consumed through a need to understand, to *know*. For love as representation too easily reduces a person's incredibly enigmatic, hidden, inexpressible sentiment to an easily understood idea or phrase. Indeed, Lyotard argues that such a cold, calculating, objective, rational love always claims power over the object of its love. Love as representation demands that everything be clear, distinct, and correct. At the other end of the spectrum, Lyotard identifies love as presentation as that which conceals, reveals, and struggles to express its inexpressible sentiment in terms that the beloved may understand. Lovers find themselves bereft of representation, babbling away at

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His Ancestors and Relations, with the Life of Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A., Collected from His Private Journal, and Never before Published. The Whole Forming a History of Methodism, in Which the Principles and Economy of the Methodists Are Unfolded. (London: Stephen Couchman, 1793), 552. His concern for the poor also led to the establishment in London of a dispensary in 1746. See Pudney, *Wesley*, 91.

each other, as they struggle to express the inexpressible. Love as presentation respects the alterity of the other, while seeking to find a phrase whereby the beloved may be able to express his or her own irreducibly particular secret. Lyotard's insightful analysis of love can be made fruitful for a theology attempting to build a Christian open narrative of love, for he makes us aware of the tendency people and stories have of consuming the beloved through ideas which pretend that they can express the differend. His focus on love as presentation also helps us see the importance of love as praxis in the "now," although he expresses this philosophically as getting lost in Scapeland, among other similes.

6.4.1 God Loves Through Presentation

The entire created realm remains uniquely present before God. As a result, God enjoys the god's-eye view, while all things stay intimately present to God, who watches over creation. Regarding God's omnipresence Wesley writes, "In condescension, indeed, to our weak understanding, he is said to 'dwell in heaven'; but strictly speaking the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, but he is in every part of his dominion."[1613] Consequently, God cannot be bound by the procedures for establishing reality, since creation stands continually present before its Creator. There is no place to which one can flee in order to escape from God (Ps 139,7-8). God's knowledge of creation extends even to the places of the human heart which continue to elude us. In stark contrast to David's limited self-understanding, God both searches and retains a complete knowledge of the king's heart (Ps 139,1-4). Scripture witnesses to a God who is always present – continually present, sustaining, searching, and loving creation. Thus, God loves creation through presentation. No idea or symbol is needed to stand in for a removed and distant creation. Nor does God need to distance Godself in order to objectively (i.e. scientifically) observe and *know* the creature.

6.4.2 God's Love and Representation

According to Lyotard's epistemology, two phrases are needed in order to know or determine something. A second phrase (i.e. a cognitive phrase) represents the event of the prior phrase (i.e. a phrase of presentation to sensibility) in the process of understanding what is happening.[1614] However, God has the "god's-eye-view." God is already present in the absolute "now" of the event, along with all other possible "nows" which could be referred to through the subsequent linking of any phrase. Nor does God need to master or consume the beloved, since God already rules over creation as Creator. Rather than consuming creation,

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[1613] See Wesley's sermon, "On the Omnipresence of God," in *Wesley's Sermons*, 525.
[1614] See the "Aristotle Notice" in Lyotard, *The Differend*, 72-75.

God gives Godself to it. God requires no distance in order to gain an objective, rational, logical understanding of the individual. The beloved, like David, may ask God to search and know their heart, but this is for the human person's benefit: i.e. the revelation of what currently remains unknown within his or her own heart. However, God seems to love us through an *open* representation, for God has thoughts (Ps 139,17-18) and plans (Jr 29,11-14) about the beloved. God resists linking automatically to our phrases and gestures, even though God already knows the end from the beginning. God's love remains open even while loving through representation – allowing time for the beloved to express the inexpressible (i.e. their heart, their love) through obedience.

6.4.3 God's Love and "Interesting"

While God does not need to *know* – i.e. to play the game of cognition –, God allows time for the beloved to respond to God's first move of gracious love (what Wesley calls prevenient grace). Despite God's omniscience, God often seems to wait and see how we respond or behave before choosing how to link to our phrase or gesture. This delay appears to correspond to Lyotard's "interesting."[1615] The deepest things of the human heart remain hidden, unless time and space are given so that it can express itself. "Interesting" opens up such a space, while fending off the linking of the phrase which must follow – at least for a moment. As we have seen, the New Testament authors hesitate to use love language in expressing human love to God, preferring instead to use the language of obedience. This avoids a too-easily assumed familiarity between the Almighty and the human. Love to God is expressed through human obedience. Perhaps no other story in the Old Testament illustrates the struggle for obedience and the extension of time so well as the account of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. An excruciating command is given for Abraham to sacrifice his own son, the son of the promise.[1616] In response, Abraham travels three days and arrives at Mariah with his son and servants (Gen 22,4). Leaving the servants behind, Abraham prepares the altar, binds his son, and lifts his hand to slaughter his son. Precisely at that moment an angel appears and stops the sacrifice with these words: "'Do not lay a hand on the boy ... Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son'" (Gen 22,12). In view of God's omniscience and omnipresence, God clearly knew in advance what Abraham would do. But God leaves space for Abraham to

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[1615] For Lyotard's thoughts on "interesting," see 3.5.3 above.

[1616] Of course, Lyotard argues that this command coming from an unknown addressor brings the terror of obligation. How does one differentiate between "God's" command and that given by the S.S. or that heard by an insane President Schreber? One should keep in mind that for Lyotard God is a Zero, the Kastrator, an oppressive idea for the linking of phrases. Theology, however, bears witness to another possibility: that God reveals Godself to human beings (cf. Jr 29,13 and Rev 3,20).

wrestle with his love. God does not determine the linking of phrases by imposing a rule, thereby robbing the man of the chance to wrestle over how he will express the event. Rather, God guards the man's ability to choose to obey a horrible command and thus to love his God.

The divine reluctance to dictate a rule for the linking of phrases can also be seen in God's self-revelation to Moses. During a conversation about God's continued presence on the journey, Moses asks God to "show me your glory" (Ex 33,18). Hidden in the cleft of a rock, Moses hears God's name declared with the words "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Ex 33,19). For the sake of mercy and compassion, God refuses to automatically link to human gestures and phrases according to a rule. Rather, God gives space, deprives Godself of representation, and allows time for the beloved to search for a way to express the event of his or her love to God. God persistently treats us as particular individuals – never as symbols or ideas. In fact, according to Wesley, God *assists* the beloved by providing grace necessary for such a struggle. Here we see the patience and love of God; for "love is patient, love is kind" (1 Cor 13,4). This delay, this refusal to automatically link to the presented phrase, speaks of grace. In place of imposing, God often delays and suffers with us. God's patience and desire manifest themselves most clearly in the Cross of Christ – God's gesture of love. Grace refuses to dominate the other or rush to link every phrase or gesture according to its rule. Love waits – for a while – to see what the other will do. And thus love respects the other's alterity, while knowing that a phrase must follow, that a link must be made.

6.4.4 Human Love and Representation

Since human knowledge is limited, we constantly use representation to learn about the world around us. Therefore, representation is involved on some level in most human experiences, including love. Lyotard says that two phrases are involved in any act of apprehension. A first phrase signals that something is happening, when an object is given to the mind through sensation, through the feeling *that* something wants to communicate something. *What* attempts to phrase itself is not currently known, since it cannot successfully phrase itself in the idiom of space-time. The subject only understands forms expressed in space-time, so the *that* must be translated into a *what*. A second phrase links to the prior sentence, translating the event into a *what*, in a phrase that necessarily betrays the event. The unstable moment of the inexpressible phrase passes, and the event is "known" by the subject.[1617] Because we lack the god's-eye-perspective, human beings must interpret the sense data which presentation delivers to the mind.

[1617] See especially 3.1 of the "Aristotle Notice" in Lyotard, *The Differend*, 74-75.

Lovers who proceed through life together learn to "know" each other through the windings of courtship and the experiences of life. Men and women are sometimes surprised by the different languages each sex speaks, but their limited knowledge eventually fills in as couples link phrases and gestures together over a lifetime into a very personal story of love. Lyotard is aware, of course, that lovers sometimes love each other through representation, although he recoils at the thought. For representation can lead to terror when one, or both, of the parties demands absolute clarity and knowledge of the other. Still, even a gentle, courteous lover thinks about his or her beloved – using ideas or symbols to stand in for what remains as yet unknown. A certain level of ambiguity is always present in every human relationship.

6.4.5 Human Love and Presentation

What Lyotard urges, of course, is that we love each other through presentation. That is, that we give the other time and space to express their uniquely irreducible particularity, and that together we revel in the wonder of each other, knowing that some things will remain inexpressible. Such is the vertigo, wonder, and desolation of encountering another who is truly other to ourselves. This awareness requires being in the "now" of presentation, i.e. of the event, rather than being wrapped up in "the now" of representation, i.e. busy with ideas rather than with the lover in front of us. Like the Jew who reads and rereads the scriptures, the author who searches to find the next sentence, or the artist working to see what will emerge from canvas or stone, the lover is "interested" in what is happening in the "now" moment with his or her beloved. "Interesting" in this case implies a hesitation that provides space for rumination, along with a real sympathy and concern for what's happening in the beloved. Love as presentation implies the exposing of oneself to another. This love opens itself radically to the other, delighting in what might occur, and giving hours to conversations and silences in order to discover the wonder that is its beloved. Naturally, young lovers cooing away at each other, sharing "sweet nothings," offer the most obvious example of lovers immersed in presentation, of those being "deprived of representation," precisely because no words can possibly express the rapture of their love. The time will come, however, when that love must be expressed if only with the words "Will you marry me?" or "I do!"

6.4.6 Thinking about Love

When love presents itself (i.e. when love happens), it comes as a person – an irreducibly particular, incalculably valuable, unique individual. Love – or another's "interest" – arrives as a surprise in a glance, a word, or a touch. When love appears a person enters a

labyrinth of emotions, where a question arises, "*What* is happening?" A new friend, a chance conversation, a newborn's cry; these and countless other events open the door to love. And love *will* tear our hearts apart (*mainmise*), for we find ourselves opened and vulnerable to another who calls us to open ourselves, for love calls for a response. Someone urges us to expose the hidden things about ourselves. We experience this bond at poignant moments of life: when a friend moves away, a grown child leaves home, or a lover dies. Separation and the attendant pain announce the hold others have on us. For when love arrives, when longing interrupts, it asks us to open ourselves to another.

Love, of course, lies on a spectrum between presentation and representation; therefore, we must engage ourselves in the praxis of love, while also *thinking* about our love relationships. We must listen to people, show them patience and kindness as we try to understand them, without consuming, dominating, or controlling them. An open love, which takes presentation seriously will take time to allow love to emerge and express itself somehow, precisely because of our knowledge is limited. And it will express itself eventually, if through no other means than silence. In a similar way, theologians must think about the most important and personal experiences of our lives, including those with God. We will inevitably fill in the gaps in our knowledge with ideas and signs. That is unavoidable. But this can also be helpful, so long as we remember that they are ideas.

6.5 THEOLOGY AND LOVE

Theologians who think about love necessarily deal with love as an idea. For theology reflects on God's actions among people in time and space and how this impinges on the Christian faith. Peoples' experiences of God's interruptive grace and the theological reflections which follow influence the Christian narrative as believers work to recontextualize the faith for the current context. Therefore, we would do well to listen to Lyotard's analysis of the narrative genre of discourse: how stories tend to close in upon themselves thereby excluding whatever lies outside of their narrative borders; and how narratives based on an idea, which present a project for humanity, become oppressive master narratives. The Church has oppressed too many people in the name of love when its leaders, theologians, and laity forgot precisely this. Boeve correctly notes that the Christian grand narrative is a degenerated narrative ruled over by an idea of love. Surely the Christian narrative is a story of love: which begins before time with a love shared among the persons of the triune God, moves through creation and redemption, and culminates in the wedding feast of the Lamb, when all God's people will revel forever in a kingdom of love. Love expresses itself through caring, saving, and celebrating. Therefore, Jeanrond correctly stresses the praxis of love: i.e. love expressed in deeds.

Boeve reminds us that theological ideas are simply conceptual tools. The Christian narrative degenerates precisely when we mistake an idea for reality. Lyotard rightly stresses that ideas and names stand in for the concrete and the material. Theology constructs an idol when it forgets the idea as idea. Although perhaps more sophisticated than an idol of wood or stone, a conceptual image continues to stand in for that to which it refers. An idol of love is not love. And idolatry is always destructive – forgetting love even as something stands there representing love in its place. Thus, love as a conceptual idol can legitimate torturing infidels or burning witches. However, we still must think about love. What to do? As Boeve argues, theology must allow itself to be interrupted by that which is other to its own narrative. Encounters with alterity enrich theological reflection, for they encourage a self-critique of our own story in connection with what may have been forgotten, through contact with that which lies outside our narrative. Theology needs to allow itself to be questioned, before it too quickly represents the O/other L/lover. Here Wesley's appeal to accept Christians who hold other opinions is helpful, for theologians need to remain humble in as much as their reflections stand in place of real experiences with A/alterity, which we only latter attempt to understand. As Outler says, "The important thing is that reflection upon reality not be confused with reality itself."[1618]

Theology bears witness in its own particular way to the experience of love, to the interruptive presentation of a self-giving love encountered in any experience of God's mercy and grace. Boeve challenges theology to see divine encounters as interruptions which subvert and challenge traditional retellings of the narrative when these two easily revert to an automatic linking of phrases. He calls such interruptive events of the in-breaking of divine love "the event of grace."[1619] In such an event, God's grace calls for a response, as the prophet calls for love and obedience from the individual and nation. An "event of grace" reveals something about God's encounter with the human, functioning as a revelation of divine love. The happening of an event of God's interruptive grace challenges theology to reflect upon the intersection between the received Christian narrative and God's interruptive activity. In this way, the interruptive event spurs reflection and self-critique both internally and externally. As Boeve argues, God interrupts history to break open the Christian narrative when it threatens to close in upon itself. A theology attempting to remain open to radically irreducible alterity needs to remain open simultaneously (1) to scripture as the account of God's revelation in space and time, (2) to the faith as received through the tradition, and (3) to peoples' personal experiences of God's interruptive grace.

Naturally we should ask how far a narrative can open itself without ceasing to be a narrative. For stories require borders which define an inside from an outside. In the pages
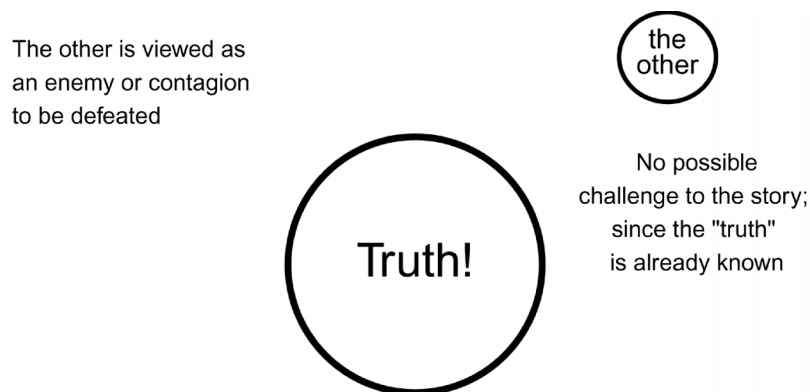

[1618] Wesley and Outler, *John Wesley*, 92.
[1619] See Boeve, *Lyotard and Theology*, 73.

which follow, we present a model for thinking a Christian narrative of love, specifically related to the question of its borders. The model suggests that holiness forms the border of Christian love. Since the Christian narrative is a story of love, we argue as well that holiness frames the border of a Christian open narrative of love. God's love will be seen at the same time as radically open to the other while remaining radically closed to sin. In conclusion, we will propose that Boeve's category of interruption should be thought in terms of "invitation."

6.6 HOLINESS AS A POROUS BORDER

Theology must address the question of the nature of the border of the Christian narrative, for a too rigid and hardened border resists any encounter coming from the outside. Those on the outside – the outsiders – as seen as threatening the purity of the narrative. The truth is already known, and nothing can be allowed to challenge the story, since the "truth" has already been determined. When an already clearly (and rigidly) defined conception of truth governs the Christian narrative, any person disrupting the quiet, pacific, automatic linking of phrases within said narrative is immediately rejected.

The other is viewed as an enemy or contagion to be defeated

the other

No possible challenge to the story; since the "truth" is already known

Truth!

6.6.1 The Problem of Rigidity

A rigid border is especially dangerous when love is the idea at play. For this makes self-deception particularly easy, since one views the narrative as being open and accepting, when in fact it remains closed to any challenge arriving from outside its border. As Lyotard points out, when a challenge or interruption comes to the Christian narrative, the protectors of orthodoxy – or, as he calls them, the "authorized interpreters of the Scriptures" – view such as a threat to the truth (D234). But the scriptures witness to a prophetic tradition that continues to call the people of God back to the heart of the law – i.e. to loving God with one's whole being and loving the neighbor as oneself. Speaking within this prophetic tradition, Jesus tells the parable of the good Samaritan and asks a penetrating question: "Which of these three do

you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" A lawyer correctly answers, "The one who had mercy on him;" to which Jesus replies, "Go and do likewise" (Lk 10,36-37). Jesus' interpretation of the law and his accompanying exhortation come right out of the heart of Micah's declaration: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Mi 6,8). A merciful person must reach out and care for another person's needs as they become apparent. The love which Jesus manifests cannot secret itself behind a wall, remaining oblivious to the neighbor's needs. Love must act, transcending borders, in order to love the other. Any closed narrative which has hardened itself against outsiders – whether Jewish or Christian – must first be interrupted and broken open before love can flow.

6.6.2 Holiness Protects Alterity

At the same time, love must set up a border to protect alterity. For love can easily overrun the other in its desire for unity with the beloved. Love sometimes consumes the object of its affection. Some Protestant theologians seems to be concerned precisely about this: namely, that love can simply turn into selfishness. Therefore, love establishes a border. This border is not intended primarily to exclude others from the orbit of one's love. Rather, the border protects the individuality of each person in the love relationship. Indeed, without such a border, love can terrorize the other, especially in the case of God, since God sees, knows, and observes everything. But in place of surveilling us, God aids, empowers, and respects *our* alterity. Concurrently, *God's* alterity must be protected as well. God reveals Godself as wholly Other; a God completely distant from sin. Since God is holy, those who wish to participate in God's great project of love must respect God's character; they must turn away from human pride, sin, and rebellion. Therefore, virtue matters. God treats us as responsible beings and gives us the ability to choose to be perfect in love as is our heavenly Father (Mt 5,48). We must purge our lives and purify our hearts in love in order to be capable of standing in God's presence, for "without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Heb 12,14). The Catholic Church teaches that this purging may occur in Purgatory after this life, whereas Wesley teaches that it must occur here in one's own lifetime. Wesley argues for Christ's role as the Great Physician who comes to bring healing and restoration. As a result, the rebel or patient becomes actually righteous and holy in his or her life. The border of holiness, therefore, must be porous, allowing the sin-sick-soul to enter into the Christian narrative of love.

The other is viewed as a friend or person needing healing and restoration

the other

Christian Narrative

Possible encounter with alterity and self-critique
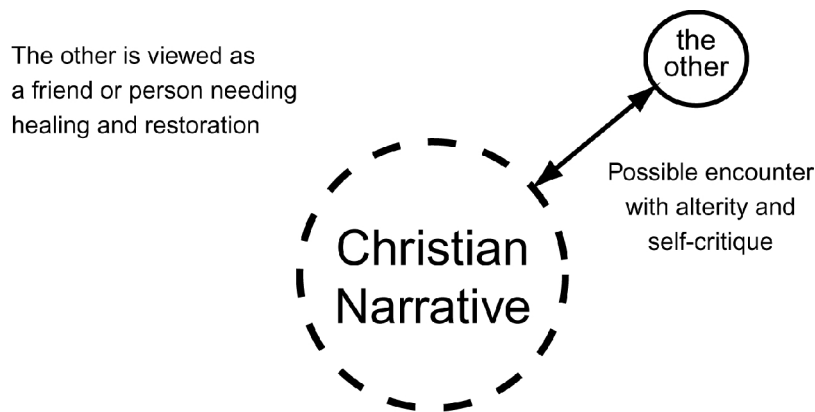
In order to prevent the Christian narrative from degenerating into an oppressive master narrative, the human individual must have the ability to enter or exit that narrative. We then as lovers remain responsible for our love lives, which includes showing respect for the radically, irreducible alterity of the O/other. Such a border also implies something about God's love: namely, that it is both radically open and closed at the same time.

6.6.3 God's Love Is Radically Open to the Other

The Cross displays preeminently God's radically open love for the other. There we encounter God's deep desire and longing for us. There the extravagant love of God shows the lengths to which it will go to rescue and redeem people. The apostle Paul is so convinced by this offering of the Son (Rom 8,32) that he writes, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8,38f). To say it differently, God longs for us. This is expressed as God's "Yes" in preventing grace. God initiates encounters with people, so that we may respond to God's initiative. And the Cross demonstrates how radically open God's reach and appeal is. God willingly descends from heaven and suffers, for love necessarily involves suffering. Lyotard's concept of *mainmise* clarifies the fact that we find ourselves cast into this world *already* loved (Jn 3,16). As Jeanrond argues, we grow up already involved in various networks of love. But theology's difference with Lyotard on the point of *mainmise* is that, while God chooses to "set God's hand on us," surprisingly this same God *suffers* for us. This breaks open the medieval lord/serf relationship, for here the lord suffers for the serf. Such suffering is implicit in participating in the life of love. For to love someone as he or she presents him or herself to us is to make ourselves vulnerable to suffering. As Rahner argues, to decide to love another is to already be involved in love. And love seeks to return to itself. Thus, when God creates and loves us, God opens Godself up to

suffering, which ultimately leads the Son to a Cross. The scriptures also express God's suffering for love through the prophets' and Jesus' mourning over the peoples' hardened response to God's declarations of love. This grief expresses the reality of the pain of rejected love and also the consequences of an invitation extended for a definite and limited period of time. Those who receive the wedding invitation but refuse to come will be replaced by others who are compelled to enter into the wedding feast of the Lamb (Lk 14,16-24). This then points to a second aspect of God's love.

6.6.4 God's Love Is Radically Closed to Sin

God's love is radically closed to sin, rejecting whatever maims and destroys the human soul. Too often Protestant theologians engage in antinomianism by opposing the law to grace, in a tradition running from Luther to Nygren. On the other hand, Wesley contends that the law helps to recreate the *imago Dei* in those who pursue Christian perfection. Indeed, he argues that God's law functions as a promise, reflecting God's holy character, which the Spirit wishes to restore in us. Wesley maintains that God never demands from us anything which is impossible to attain in this life. Thus, the law works not only as a corrector and guide but also as an invitation towards a holy character and life. On the other hand, Lyotard can only see a divine command as an obligation issued from an unknown addressor, which reduces the one addressed to an object, i.e. to a *what*. For Lyotard God is a zero – a non-existent governing idea. When God is thus perceived, the law can only be heard as obligation – not as invitation. However, theology bears witness to a God who makes Godself known through the shattering event of grace, in a revealing act of grace, wherein something is always forgotten, betrayed, left inexpressible. For God always exceeds our narrative; God never corresponds with any of the instances in our story. Still, theology bears witness to a God who calls – to a God who invites people to participate in God's work of love. But there is ambiguity in the call. As a young boy, Samuel heard the voice of the Lord at night but needed Eli's help to discern that God was addressing him (1 Sm 3,1-10). God as an addressor can be known through relationship – although we will never completely understand God –, for the Spirit of God testifies that we are God's children (Rom 8,16). Wesley contends that God communicates to the individual through "spiritual senses," or what is commonly called one's conscious. Such an address differs from the Nazi statement (i.e. "You must die"), because God both reveals Godself and respects the person's identity (in contrast to the Nazi who issues the prisoner a number in a death camp), while continually eluding our grasp. While Lyotard wants to move beyond the subject, Christianity confesses a Creator in relationship with a particular, responsible subject. Thus, the law functions in a sense as a plea from One making Oneself known, to love that Person with the whole heart, mind, strength, and soul; but it also sets

limits, revealing God's character to humanity and moving people to become righteous in their relationships with God, neighbor, and self.

6.6.5 A Proposed Model

God's interrupting actions lead to an increasingly radical expression of love. As Jeanrond argues, love calls us to an ever deeper involvement in God's project of love, and like Rahner says, by acting in love we participate in love, since love is on the way to itself. Wesley teaches that holiness is the character of a loving God who resists and rejects sin – a character which is restored to believers through the process of sanctification. Thus, the model we propose can be diagramed as follows.
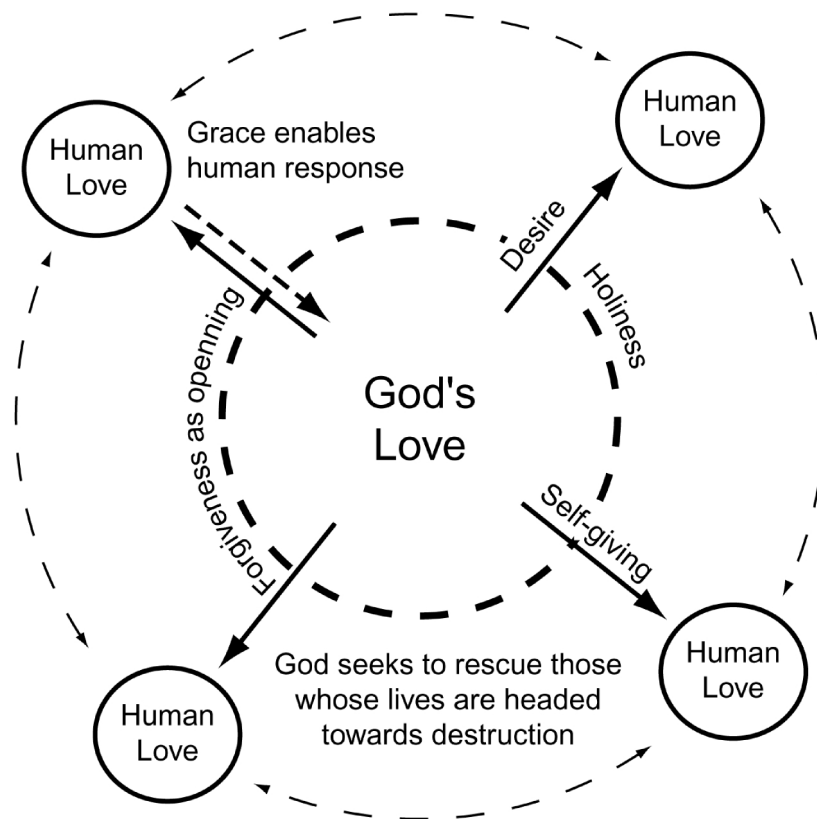
According to this model, God's desire for human beings expresses itself as a radical openness to those who do not deserve love, but who nevertheless find themselves loved by a self-giving, merciful God. At the same time, God reveals God's radical opposition to anything sinful through holiness. However, God makes a way for people to be included in God's project of love through redemption and the process of sanctification, whereby a sinner is forgiven and made holy. God's love provides a way for those who wish to repent and choose to love God through holy obedience.

For Wesley a holy heart is a heart consumed with a love for God, wherein the *imago Dei* has been restored. Holiness not only protects the human person's radically, irreducible particularity from absorption by divine desire, but it also safeguards God's radical alterity. It calls us to also respect God's radically particular Alterity. For God reveals Godself as both holy and love. Those who wish to live in a love relationship with God must respect, therefore, the divine abhorrence to sin.

6.7 INTERRUPTION AS INVITATION

Boeve describes God's intervention into human affairs in terms of interruption, and we would propose that this be thought of in terms of invitation. Interruption serves as a powerful category for thinking about how divine activity imposes itself to break the automatic linking of phrases within the Christian narrative when it degenerates into a closed narrative. As a theological idea this nicely represents God's interruptive love which seeks both to liberate and to engage human persons. From the concept of interruption one easily moves to that of the "event of grace" which expresses the moment of presentation/revelation wherein God interrupts a hegemonic system out of love for those who are oppressed by its story. But moments of divine interruptive grace flow from a divine purpose, which is love. From the garden, through the exile, to a boat on the Sea of Galilee, until the marriage supper of the Lamb, God continually expresses a desire to be with people who love God with their whole being.

God certainly works to keep the narrative of love open; however, the invitation comes with a warning. God is holy, and those who consistently reject God's character of holiness and love may find themselves excluded from entry into the feast (Mt 22,1-14). We are told that "many are called, but few are chosen" (Mt 22,14). Those who wish to attend the king's banquet must take God's character seriously and walk in God's love. God's invitation comes as a promised son and a future nation to an infertile couple (Gen 12,1-3; 18,10), as a summons to stand before Pharaoh (Ex 3,7-10), through the voice of a Baptist (Lk 12,15-17), and in the person of Christ. Each of these jarring, unexpected, gracious events invite their recipients to participate in a narrative of love, which they may freely reject. An invitation can be accepted or refused. This also protects the other's alterity.

6.8 THOUGHTS TOWARD A WESLEYAN THEOLOGY OF LOVE

Wesleyan theologians can benefit from an engagement with Lyotard's difference thinking. For Lyotard points to the danger of a Wesleyan view of love becoming a master narrative, while offering a way of thinking about love which avoids this trap. The Wesleyan

doctrine of entire sanctification can degenerate into a variation of the Christian master narrative of love, since Wesleyans so closely connect sanctification and love in their theology. When the idea of holiness is "set too high," it functions as a rule governing the linking of all phrases and gestures.

The Wesleyan master narrative of entire sanctification follows a circular pattern of telling typical of narratives, which is authorized by a command – issued by an evangelist or pastor – that we are to love one another perfectly as God does. The master narrative encompasses all other stories as the command circulates among each of the (now universalized) phrase instances. One must love, since the decree is made transitive: "if you are loved perfectly, you ought to love perfectly; and you shall be perfectly loved only if you love perfectly" (to paraphrase Lyotard). This master narrative demands that believers "pray through" and gain entire sanctification, or risk exclusion outside of the narrative's borders. Historically the feeling of oppression manifested itself in a number of responses among Wesleyan faithful. Some witnessed to an experience which they apparently never had – i.e. to a cleansing of their carnal nature. A younger generation saw their hypocrisy and rejected the doctrine: "If that's what holiness is, I don't want to have anything to do with it." While others sought after but despaired of the teaching – becoming incredulous to the idea that God would cleanse one's sin nature in this life.

The Wesleyan story of love degenerates when people are confronted with an *idea* of holiness rather than an encounter with the sinless, loving character of God. Problems emerge when holiness (as love) is made into an ideal – i.e. an idea governing all phrases and gestures in one's community. People draw up lists of behavior which purport to define holy character. When this happens, holy-love collapses into an idea that *closes* the Christian narrative. Clothes, books, and movies become the standards for determining one's character, rather than holy tempers. Entire sanctification can become an idea of an incorruptible state or absolute freedom from temptation – two variants not taught by Wesley. As we have seen, the problem derives in part from connotations adhering to the English word "perfect." The end result of this degenerated narrative, however, is clear: confusion, depression, and incredulity.

But a prophetic tradition exists in the Christian tradition, as both Lyotard and Boeve point out. These prophetic voices bear witness to the event of grace, to the *Is it happening?* A Wesleyan open narrative of entire sanctification expects and longs for the shattering interruption of the event of grace. It bears witness to God's cleansing of the sinful nature when this occurs. But in bearing witness, in phrasing the event of grace, the event is always betrayed, for one attempts to somehow express the inexpressible. Still an attempt must be made. Wesleyan theology could benefit from reflecting on the work of God's grace in terms of Boeve's concept of interruption: the event of grace as encounters with the Spirit leading a

person from prevenient to sanctifying grace; each act of grace inviting the person into a deeper, more mature experience of love.

Wesleyans should heed Lyotard's warning against overly defining or describing the event (of grace). Room should be left for God's surprising, interrupting activity. God is amazingly creative. Attempts to over-define entire sanctification run the risk of putting God in a box, constructing a representational theatre, or building a closed narrative. It should not surprise us when God interrupts such stories, breaking them wide open once again. At the same time, theology should express the doctrine of Christian perfection in forms suitable for the current critical context. Recontextualization is needed whenever the context shifts, as Boeve argues. New words should be found for historical terms such as "eradication," "entire sanctification," "deeper life," and etc. Unfortunately such a project exceeds the limits of this thesis.

6.8 HEAVENLY GATES

A Christian open narrative of love attempts to bear witness to God's grace – working to establish a kingdom of love. God desires people who reflect God's nature, who walk in holiness and love. Holy people manifest God's character – a God who is love. Thus, holy people love God with their whole being, walking in obedience before their Maker. But love requires freedom: the ability to reject the O/other in indifference or hate. Since we are free to love, we are responsible for how we love, for what we love.

God desires us in a radically open way. The three persons of deity alone can fully understand the cost of such love. At the same time, however, God remains radically opposed to sin. A Christian theology of love should address both aspects (openness and closure) in faithfully conveying God's character as revealed in scripture. Perhaps, in closing, we can find an analogy for a Christian open narrative of love in John's vision of the holy city. There we catch a glimpse of the New Jerusalem, where the nations find healing in God's presence. A wall encloses this city, with twelve gates which always remain open. John writes, "On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there" (Rev 21,25). Peace and safety pervade this scene, for those not written in the book of life were cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20,15). However, those who serve the Lamb will "reign for ever and ever" in the heavenly city (Rev 22,5). Here perhaps we see an image of love and the Christian open narrative. Those who reject love are excluded from the city,[1620] while those who embrace love are permitted to stream in and out of its gates. Like those gates, God remains openly hopeful that we will respond in love to God's divine interruption/invitation. But the wall and its gates also clearly

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[1620] "Outside [the city] are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood" (Rev 22,15).

define the outline of an open narrative of love. Those wishing to enter into God's story will find that such is possible only through the mercy and grace of God's radically open love.

7. CONCLUSION

7.0 FINDINGS

In these last few pages we will summarize the key findings made in this research. These will involve Lyotard's phrase pragmatics, his insight into hegemonic narratives, and the dangers of love; Boeve's model of the "open narrative;" theological reflections on love; and Wesley's concept of "holy love." We will conclude with suggestions for further research.

7.1 PHRASE PRAGMATICS

Lyotard offers theology a glimpse into one form of the current critical consciousness. He alerts theology to the differend that emerges at occurrence of any event (whether a phrase, gesture, or silence). For Lyotard calls for the expression of the inexpressible in order to do justice to the event. Thus, he pleads for time and consideration, for a discourse that seeks to search rather than to describe (as with philosophic and Jewish discourses). And yet at phrase must follow; the presented phrase must be linked to. Precisely in linking to the presented phrase, its eventness is forgotten along with the differend that erupted upon its presentation. As a result, no phrase is able to fully express that which calls for its phrasing. Something is always forgotten. The event is always betrayed. Yet a phrase will follow, for even silence is a phrase.

7.2 HEGEMONIC NARRATIVES

The phrase pragmatics which Lyotard develops demonstrates the radical heterogeneity which exists between phrase regimens and discourse genres. In this way, Lyotard helps theology to see the language games which play out in any expression of the event. While something is always forgotten, the narrative genre of discourse most efficiently forgets the event, since it links whatever happens in a chronological order whose end is to come to "the good end." This is an important insight for theology, since theologians reflect upon a very particular Christian narrative. Lyotard's insights into master narratives, therefore, are helpful for theology. For Lyotard correctly identifies hegemonic master narratives as those which make the cognitive claim of being able to describe reality, while linking every phrase according to a rule. Thus, Lyotard alerts theology to the Christian grand narrative of love. Since theologians reflect upon and speak about the faith, we should heed his warnings about reducing the event through our writing and teaching.

7.3 DANGEROUS LOVE

A danger for Christian theology is forgetting that we often deal with love as an idea. For the Christian grand narrative of love links phrases according to a rule of love. Love here is an idea – a representation of love. Lyotard also helps theology by conceiving love as functioning in a continuum between presentation and representation. He writes that those lovers who find themselves in the throes of love experience love as presentation. These individuals are deprived of language, but still they babble away at each other in an attempt to express the event of their love. However, there are those who love the other through representation. Here the beloved is reduced to an idea – with the goal of understanding and consuming the other. Hence, Lyotard argues that love can be dangerous, for it demands sharing that which is most private in the individual. Indeed, simply the experience of love can be dangerous, for we are place in the hands of another (*mainmise*). We make ourselves vulnerable to another. Because God loves creation, a Cross will follow. Similarly, those who love Christ must take up their crosses.

Surely Lyotard is correct in his analysis of the Christian grand narrative. In this thesis we have put forward examples to demonstrate his case. The execution of a saint in the name of love (i.e. Joan of Arc) and the rending of a nation through biblical interpretation (i.e. the American Civil War) are two such examples given. Thus, theologians would do well to perform a self-critique, in view of Lyotard's criticism, to see how and to what extent their reflections on Christianity function as closed, hegemonic narratives, which claim to accurately describe reality.

7.4 OPEN NARRATIVES

In view of Lyotard's critique, Boeve's theological work helps theology engage with Lyotard's critique. Boeve agrees with Lyotard a narrative tends to close itself to otherness by incorporating whatever happens through a diachronic operator (i.e. the before/after scheme), thereby capturing and using the event's interruptive power. Thus, narratives tend to forget the event; it becomes one more occurrence in the story's chronological flow. However, Boeve notes that Lyotard uses language – a highly specialized language – to bear witness to the event. Lyotard's discourse is, in fact, a philosophical discourse striving to remain open to radical alterity. And Boeve notes that Lyotard identifies at least one other discourse which strives to remain open: Jewish discourse. This leads Boeve to ask if there are other "open narratives."

Boeve develops his model of an "open narrative" in response to Lyotard's difference thinking. As a result, Boeve identifies an "open narrative" as one that (1) maintains the basic

attitude of openness to otherness, (2) "attempts to express its interruption" as it encounters radical alterity, and (3) allows confrontation to stimulate a self-critical and world-critical response. Such a narrative attempts to witness to the otherness of the other, while testing the openness of its own particular narrative. Thus, Boeve argues that theology can benefit through encounters with cultural and philosophical difference to better understand and explain its own faith claim.

While Boeve accepts Lyotard's critique of the Christian narrative, he identifies the Christian grand narrative as a degenerated discourse of the Idea. Here one forgets that the idea of love *is* an idea. Once this is forgotten, the narrative makes a claim that it describes and encompasses reality. This results in a refusal to allow the other to interrupt the Christian narrative, for whatever is said or done is already known. Rather, the other is already loved, as a gift from God, and an idea of love circulates around the phrase instances in the manner common for grand narratives. However, Boeve argues that the Christian narrative is naturally an open narrative, and he puts Jesus story forward as an open narrative *par excellence*. For Jesus resolutely breaks open narratives whenever they threaten to exclude or crush people. In Boeve's terms, Jesus *interrupts* the automatic linking of phrases inherent in hegemonic narratives to free individuals caught therein. In fact when men try to end Jesus' story – through arrest, trial, crucifixion, and burial – God breaks his story open again through resurrection.

However, as we noted, Boeve does not offer a border for his model of the "open narrative." Narratives need borders. In this case, we propose that such a border should be porous. A border which allows the other to challenge our claim from without; but a border which also allows one to enter our story of love should s/he choose to do so. A story which permanently excludes is monstrous (e.g. Nazis excluding Jews), but a narrative without borders can also be hegemonic, since it does not respect the other's irreducible alterity.

7.5 REFLECTIONS ON LOVE

Lyotard properly identifies the Christian narrative as a story of love. Since theologians speak about that narrative, their conception of love becomes crucial for the reflections theology offers about Christianity. Nygren argues for a conception of love that is clearly fixed and determined. Agape is a spontaneous and unmotivated love. Such a love is impossible for humans, according to Nygren, since we always love in a deliberate and motivated manner. In contrast to God's love (i.e. *agape*), Nygren mentions eros, nomos, and caritas – human forms of motivated love. So hopeless is the human condition that God must pour agape love into our hearts as through a pipe. In the end, Nygren presents a Lutheran grand narrative of love, because he takes his *idea* of love as a description of the reality of love. Moffatt, on the other

hand, argues for the development of love towards its perfection. Christians are duty bound to love God, the neighbor, and themselves. Moffatt understands Christian love through the lens of morality and redemption. As a contemporary of Nygren, who is familiar with his work, Moffatt provides an interesting contrast to Nygren's closed theological narrative. Morris provides theology with a study of the various ways love the Bible expresses love. Through an engagement with a biblical vocabulary, Morris avoids reducing the biblical expression of love to one or two ideas (i.e. names). Rather, he portrays love in the plurality of its divine and human expressions. Like Moffatt, Morris assumes that humans are capable of loving God and neighbor – this in contrast to Nygren. However, these three Protestant theologians begin theologizing from redemption. One begins to understand what love is at the Cross.

Jeanrond provides a stark contrast to the former three theologians, in that he thinks about the phenomenology of love. He wants to consider the possibilities of love. Therefore, Jeanrond argues that theology should begin reflecting on love from Creation. Love is a gift, and those who love participate in God's project of love. Indeed, we are all born into networks of love and learn to love in institutions of love. However, Jeanrond pays insufficient attention to the limits of love. He either ignores holiness or typically denigrates it as a human form of abusing the body. The holy is largely portrayed as negative. This is surprising, since Jeanrond continuously appeals for Christian theologians to consider the Jewish witness to love. He readily admits that his theology is not a moral theology, but Jeanrond neglects to bring love into conversation with holiness.

7.6 HOLY LOVE

Wesley provides a theology of love which puts sanctification at the heart of its thought. For Wesley contends that the end of salvation is a true love for God and neighbor. Sanctification proceeds towards the restoration of the *imago Dei* in the human soul. And Wesley believes that human individuals are able to love God, neighbor, and self through the prevenient grace given by the Holy Spirit. Thus, Wesley brings love and holiness together. Holiness is understood as the expression of God's character written in the human heart. God is love, and those who are perfected in love (i.e. entirely sanctified) are mature Christians whose hearts are wholly love. Thus, salvation leads to the restoration of the likeness of God in the individual believer.

Wesley's theological program allows us to conceive of a border for a Christian open narrative of love. We propose, therefore, a model for thinking love within a Christian open narrative of love. God's love is understood to be radically open to sinners – to those who do not deserve love. God's redemptive activity – experienced humanly as grace – invites individuals to participate in God's narrative of love. At the same time, God's holiness forms a

porous border to this narrative. This expresses God's radical opposition to the sinful – as that which destroys God's beloved. Redemptive grace provides a way for those who choose to repent and enter into God's project of love. According to this model, holiness protects human irreducible alterity while simultaneously safeguarding God's radical otherness. God respects the creature, while the human must respect God's abhorrence of sin.

A Wesleyan open narrative of love must bear witness to the event of God's prevenient grace. It anticipates and witnesses to the event of grace – to the loving interruption of prevenient love. Wesleyan theologians who choose to reflect within Boeve's model of an "open narrative" will maintain an open stance towards that which happens at the border of their narrative. Interruptions which disturb the linking of our theological phrases may then be seen as opportunities to perform a self-critique as well as to take a fresh look at the world in which we currently live. We maintain that those who receive the heritage of John Wesley will do well to practice an openness of heart which he himself demonstrated.

7.7 AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A couple areas for further research emerge out of this study. These relate to two topics. First, the question of deceptive events comes to the fore. And secondly, the question of Wesley's later thoughts regarding grace may provide additional fuel for a Wesleyan open narrative of love.

In regards to Boeve's work, we criticized him for not considering negative interruptions to the Christian narrative – i.e. interruptions which attempt to deceive us. For Boeve deals with *positive* experiences of otherness. Thus, theologians need to reflect on encounters where the other cloaks itself in order to trap its victim. The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness is a prime example of a negative interruption. There Satan offers the whole world in exchange for worship, in an attempt to derail God's narrative of salvation. How does theology deal, therefore, with the deceptive? Since theologians lack the "god's-eye-perspective," how do we interpret events coming from the other side of our narratival border? The other is never fully known, and border experiences are never fully perspicuous. A second problem regards hearing the other. How do we hear the extraordinary in the seemingly "ordinary" contacts with otherness (e.g. Greeks who want to see Jesus)? To say this otherwise, how do we hear the prophet's voice or see the hand of God behind events in space and time?

Finally, further work needs to be done in relation to Wesley's later thinking regarding God's grace in relation to people in other religions.[1621] Specifically in regards to God's offer of prevenient grace to Jews and Muslims, towards who Wesley was willing to remain open to

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[1621] I am particularly grateful to Prof. Chris Bounds for pointing this out to me.

the possibility that they might be saved.[1622] Such an investigation may strengthen the argument presented in this thesis of Wesley as a theologian who theologizes in a method sympathetic to that of an "open theologian." Although relating more specifically to inter-religious studies, this line of pursuit might well strengthen the argument presented here.

[1622] See for example John Wesley, Sermon 130, "On Living Without God," §14, *Works*, 4:174.

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