RICE UNIVERSITY

(DE)CONSTRUCTING THE (NON)BEING OF GOD:
A TRINITARIAN CRITIQUE OF POSTMODERN A/THEOLOGY

by

B. KEITH PUTT

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE

Niels C. Nielsen, Jr., Director
Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Religious Thought

Werner H. Kelber
Isla Carroll Turner and Percy E. Turner Professor of Religious Studies

Steven G. Crowell
Associate Professor of Philosophy

Houston, Texas
May, 1995
ABSTRACT

(DE) CONSTRUCTING THE (NON)BEING OF GÔD:
A TRINITARIAN CRITIQUE OF POSTMODERN A/THEOLOGY

by
B. KEITH PUTT

Langdon Gilkey maintained in 1969 that theological language was in "ferment" over whether "God" could be expressed in language. He argued that "radical theology," specifically the kenotic christology in Altizer’s "death of God" theology, best represented that ferment. Some twenty-five years later, in the postmodern context of the 1990’s, whether one can speak of God and, if so, how remain prominent issues for philosophers of religion and theologians.

One of the most provocative contemporary approaches to these questions continues to focus on the "death of God." Mark Taylor’s a/theology attempts to "do" theology after the divine demise by thinking the end of theology without ending theological thinking. Taylor’s primary thesis, predicated upon his reading of Jacques Derrida’s deconstructive philosophy, is that God gives way to the sacred and the sacred may be encountered only within the "divine milieu" of writing. God is dead, the self is dead, history has no structure, and language cannot be totalized in books; consequently, theology must be errant and textually disseminative.

Unfortunately, Taylor’s a/theology as a hermeneutic of the "death of God" fails to leave God’s existence undecidable and also fails to address substantively the ethical
implications of postmodernism. The radical hermeneutics of John Caputo offers a significant supplement to Taylor's thought and a critical reconstruction of alternative postmodern models for God. Caputo's "armed neutrality" concerning the being of God and his insistence on the incapability of ethical obligation allow for a deconstruction of ontotheology and the reconstruction of a "biblical" paradigm of a suffering God.

Caputo's focus on the ethico-religious dynamic of alterity and difference suggests a postmodern christology, since he believes that Jesus exemplifies the poetics of obligation that seeks to heal wounded flesh. Yet, scripture presents Jesus as the revelation of a suffering, heterophilic God. Contaminating Caputo's poetics of obligation with Jürgen Moltmann's theology of the crucified God results in the repetition of a "biblical" theopassional theology that accepts the undecidability inherent within history and language, but which, through fear and trembling, acknowledges that God loves alterity and difference and desires that human beings do also.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

One of the recurring issues in the following dissertation is the notion of the "self" as a communal entity. The Enlightenment idea of an autonomous cogito--one of the defining dogmas of modernity--has been seriously questioned by postmodern theorists, who recognize that no one lives in vacuo, but that human existence occurs within the context of a Mitwelt in which the "I" reciprocates with the "we" and the "them" and the "other." This central notion of alterity may well broach the corollary theme of gratitude, the realization that whatever "I" have accomplished depends upon the contributions, that is, the gifts, of others who have participated in the accomplishment.

Of course, Derrida maintains that a gift should never be acknowledged, since such acknowledgement diminishes the unconditionality of the giving; however, "I" have a different understanding of the structure of giving. "I" think that a gift does indeed obligate the gifted to reciprocate to the giver a "word of thanks." Such a "word" is not, however, an expression of a quid pro quo economic system, but is, instead, an affirmation of the other's gracious alterity and simply a matter of good manners. Consequently, "I" wish to include as an element of this work's hors-texte an enumeration of proper names, which signify the significant others who have made this dissertation a reality.
First, "I" would not be a graduate student at Rice University were it not for Drs. John Newport and Niels Nielsen. Dr. Newport, one of my mentors and colleagues at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, first encouraged me to pursue graduate work at Rice and made the initial contacts for me to begin that pursuit. He is the epitome of a Christian scholar and gentleman, and my life has been enriched intellectually and spiritually by his friendship. Dr. Nielsen, too, has been both teacher and friend for over a decade. As my major professor, he has shared his knowledge and his wisdom with me, and as my friend, he has been a model of professional dignity and Christian integrity.

"I" wish to thank Drs. James Sellers, Werner Kelber, Hans Kün, and the late Clyde Manschreck for their dedication to scholarship and their willingness to share their genius with me in doctoral seminars. "I" particularly want to thank Dr. Kelber and Dr. Steven Crowell, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Rice, who served on my thesis committee and who affirmed my work by giving it a careful and critical reading. All of these men represent the academic excellence that distinguishes Rice University as one of the nation's finest institutions. Dr. David Klemm, at the University of Iowa, also read the dissertation, and his positive responses have been professionally and psychologically affirming.
Drs. William David Kirkpatrick, Bert Dominy, and Jeff Pool have been the three faculty colleagues at Southwestern who have most directly stimulated the completion of this degree. They have engaged me in critical discussions of the content of this thesis, and they have forced me to be far more disciplined in my work than "I" would have been without their constant pestering! They can never know how necessary their friendship is for me.

The research for this project would have been a nightmare had it not been for the clerical skills and the personal commitments made by Pat Slaten, Jennifer Hood, Maureen Groebner, Kathy Lee, and Susan Regan. They adopted the thesis as their own personal project and invested themselves in its successful completion. "I" must also thank Andy Adams and Christina Tomczak, two of my research assistants at Southwestern, for their meticulous editing of the thesis, and Debra Young for her invaluable computer knowledge.

"I" thank the administrative officials at Houston Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary for their willingness to allow me to be both a full-time student and a full-time faculty member. Without their support, this work would have been impossible.

My deepest gratitude goes to Dr. John Caputo at Villanova University. Dr. Caputo has become a valued friend over the past five years, as well as a significant influence on my philosophy and theology. He has provided me with numer
ous copies of his works, both published and unpublished. He has discussed my thesis with me during countless conversations in person and by telephone. He has read and critiqued the entire thesis, offering me insights into his work that have made this project decisively better than it would have been. My "Southern Baptist" scholarship has certainly benefitted from the contamination by Caputo's "Postmodern Catholicism." "I" intend for that philosophical ecumenism to continue.

"I" cannot express in words my adoration for my family. My wife married me decades ago knowing that "I" intended to do one Ph.D.; however, she did not sign up for two. Yet, she has patiently (most of the time!) gone through the process twice, and "I" appreciate her loyalty. My sons, Jonathan and Christopher, have never had a dad who was not a student. They have accepted that reality, supported me, and periodically interrupted my studies with a hug and an "I love you, Dad," which constantly reminded me of what is truly most important in life. My mother, Era Mae, has sustained me financially and emotionally throughout the process. "I" thank her for her love and her confidence in me; she never doubted that "I" would complete this work.

My dad, Billy, died at the beginning of this thesis on 7 December 1991. He made me promise that "I" would finish, although he knew that he would not be present at the end,
and, in so doing, obligated me to him. The past three years have been very difficult. "I" miss my dad every second of every day. Sitting down to research and write on divine suffering, death, and the uncertainty of the flux has certainly not been easy, since these issues have not been merely academic but painfully existential. Yet, throughout it all, my dad has been the absent other, calling me to the responsibility of fidelity to my commitment. Dad, "I" have kept my promise--but the abyss remains.

Finally, "I" wish to express in written form my praise for the holy Trinity. Without the Father’s, Son’s, and Spirit’s grace, there would be no "I," there would be no hope, and there would be no raison d’être. Because "I" sit writing this paragraph on the Saturday between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, "I" am acutely aware of the sacrificial love that the cross event reveals. My prayer is that this thesis has been a source of motivation for me to become more like Yeshua, the empathetic and self-giving poet of obligation.
To Christopher,
my last born,
whose serendipity keeps
the carnival in town;

To Jonathan,
my first born,
whose presence convinces me
that the Gift is not
in the middle voice;

To Sherry,
my wife,
whose love indicates
that identity-in-difference
is another way of writing grace;

To Billy,
my dad,
whose death reminds me
of the misery within the flux,
and whose life reminds me
of the joy.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .......................................................... ii  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................... iv  
INTRODUCTION .................................................... 1  

Chapter

One  THE (W)RITES OF TRANSGRESSION:  
ERRANT DANCING ON THE TOMB OF GOD ............... 19  

Ontotheology and the Unthought  
Difference of the Other .................... 23  

Derrida, Logocentrism, and the  
Theology of the Sign ...................... 33  

Wandering Toward A Deconstructive  
A/theology .................. 46  

The Death of God as the Apotheosis  
of Writing .............................. 51  

The Self Disappears with a Trace .... 61  

The Ending of Beginning and Ending . 68  

Postmodernity and A/bibliographic  
Textuality ............................. 77  

Conclusion? ................................. 87  

Two  DECONSTRUCTING THEISM AND THE LANGUAGE  
OF MYSTERY ................................. 92  

Radical Hermeneutics as a Different  
Deconstructing .......................... 99  

Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Repeating  
the Flux ............................... 117  

Three  DECONSTRUCTING THEISM AND THE LANGUAGE  
OF MYSTERY: TOWARD AN ICONIC DISCOURSE . 136  

(No) Trespassing (the) Sign ............... 136  

Hermeneutics as Allegory  
and Irony ............................. 146
Negative Theology in the Economy of Mysticism  155
Mysticism, Being, and God  166

GOD AND THE ICONOGRAPHY OF AGAPE  171
Heidegger and the Double Idolatry  175
The Iconic Gift of Love  183
Distance and the Vanity of Creation  196
Eu-Charis and Agape: The Present as a Present  202

Four DECONSTRUCTING THEISM AND THE LANGUAGE OF MYSTERY: TOWARD AN ICONIC DISCOURSE OF SACRED ANARCHY  213
Religion Within the Limits of Deconstruction Alone  215
The Injustice of the Heideggerian Frame  231
The Aporetics of Ethics and the Poetics of Obligation  248
Hetero(morphic)nomism and the Religio-Tragic  275
Metanoetics and the Temporality of the Kingdom  287
Staurosophical Ethics: Dionysus vs. Yeshua  315

Five THE DIVINE TEAR: TOWARD A CRUCIFORM HERMENEUTIC OF THE TRINITY  322
Meontology and the Logic of Promise  329
Love as the Divine Wound  339
Passiones Trinitatis ad Intra et ad Extra  364
Ecce Homo! Ecce Deus!  370
Christ’s Resurrection as Promissio Inquieta  385
INTRODUCTION

Casaubon, the protagonist in Umberto Eco’s Foucault’s Pendulum, recounts the time when he discovered the embarrassment of being naively credulous. After his father revealed to him his ingenuousness, he committed himself never again to be "borne away by a passion of the mind" but purposed instead to maintain a consistent incredulity. He admits, however, that such a commitment does not disenfranchise belief, at least not necessarily. Belief and disbelief do not exhaustively set out the defining parameters for what counts as credulity and incredulity. He explains:

Not that the incredulous person doesn’t believe in anything. It’s just that he doesn’t believe in everything. Or he believes in one thing at a time. He believes a second thing only if it somehow follows from the first thing. He is nearsighted and methodical, avoiding wide horizons. If two things don’t fit, but you believe both of them, thinking that somewhere, hidden, there must be a third thing that connects them, that’s credulity.¹

Casaubon’s characterization of incredulity suggests attractive and troublesome corollaries. That credulity does not necessarily entail a total skepticism connotes that belief may include a critical edge. One need not choose between naivete and cynicism, for there is a third alternative. Such an approach ensues in a discriminating faith, a

trust that evaluates and reevaluates without ever ossifying into an idolatrous, monolithic credalism.

Notwithstanding that attractive corollary, however, his explanation must itself be approached with incredulity. By his own admission, the incredulous person is myopic and methodical. "Avoiding wide horizons" can be counterproductive to comprehending the diversity and complexity of existence. Labelling any belief in two apparently discontiguous things possibly connected by a hidden third as credulity begs the question with reference to the breadth that the incredulous will allow for consideration. Embracing the method of logical inference (one thing following from another) disallows even the inception of a belief system. If one may believe only what follows something else, how can one believe the "first thing?"

This distinction between credulity and incredulity offers interesting insights into the predicament faced by contemporary theological theorists who prosecute the topic of God—or more specifically the topic of language about God.² It questions the dipolarity of merely believing in

²Jonathan Culler argues that a new genre of literature has developed in contemporary academics, the genre "theory." He uses this term to refer to works that transcend traditional disciplinary lines, e.g., Freud, Derrida, and Gadamer (On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism After Structuralism. [Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982], 8-9). Given the multidimensional concerns of religious language—concerns reaching into theology, philosophy of religion, and literary criticism—one might consider "theory" as appropriate to refer to any exposition of the meaning and referentiality implicit in language about God. Throughout this
and talking about God or disbelieving in and not talking about God. Theism and atheism do not identify merely the oppositional poles vis-a-vis theological language. In the plurality of postmodern culture, the competing perspectives of belief and disbelief have become complicated in their respective nuances. If one wants to speak of God, one must clarify the appropriate language; if one wants to deny that one can speak of God, one must still account for the linguistic form of that denial; if one wishes to contend that the death of God leaves only the endless play of textuality, one must express that contention in a language that embodies the pressure between believing everything and believing nothing. Unless the theological theorist chooses to adhere to an anachronistic verificationist criterion, s/he must allow for some meaning and reference to be granted religious language. That meaning and referentiality, however, cannot be naively qualified as transparent. Instead, whatever thesis, therefore, "theological theorist" will be used to refer to anyone who addresses the issues of God and religious language.

"The classical expression of verificationism is A. J. Ayer's "verification principle": "A simple way to formulate [the principle] would be to say that a sentence had literal meaning if and only if the proposition it expressed was either analytic or empirically verifiable" (Language, Truth and Logic. [New York: Dover Publications, 1952], 5). Later in this thesis, it will be argued that verificationism, with its sycophancy to the adequation theory of truth, maintains quite a tenacious hold over theorists of religious language. One of this essay's primary critiques of the theological deconstructionists is their "modernist" dependence on correspondent truth.
significance religious language may manifest must arise out of the tension between the comprehensible and the incomprehensible. Given that tension, which dissimulates as well as enlightens, the best one can hope for is an increase in the translucence of language with regard to its matter.

The theological theorist always stands between credulity and incredulity, between atheism and faith. In such a position, s/he must remain a peripatetic investigator, moving constantly between suspicion and affirmation. This motion cannot be symbolized as a pendulum swing between the two extremes. As Eco so eloquently expresses it, the pendulum always hangs from a point outside the arc, its apex transcending the motion and mutability of the suspended weight. Empirically unreal and simplistically one, the


Ricoeur speaks of a hermeneutics of recollection (affirmation) and a hermeneutics of suspicion (Hermeneutics and Human Sciences. ed. and trans. John B. Thompson. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981], 34; cf. also Paul Ricoeur, Political and Social Essays. eds. David Stewart and Joseph Bien. [Athens: Ohio University Press, 1975], 132-33). The latter is represented traditionally by the critical theories of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud (Ricoeur, The Conflict of Interpretations, 150); however, one can include under this rubric any attempt to question the ostensible meaning of any text. In this case, Ricoeur's hermeneutics is a hermeneutics of suspicion, since he never moves to a recollecting or reconstructing of the tradition without first dispersing and deconstructing traditional claims.
pendulum's zenith is the Absolute.⁶ Such a reference point does not obtain for the theological theorist. Her/his reciprocating between credulity and incredulity occurs within time, relative to a culture, a tradition, and a language. Having no Archimedean position to privilege one pole over the other, the theological theorist moves within the field of the attraction and repulsion of the opposing forces. Within this historical and linguistic dynamic, one must avoid the temptations of reductive myopia and of indiscriminate eclecticism.⁷ That is, one must not succumb to the enticement of premature closure nor to the intellectual libertinism of radical cynicism.⁸

Any such recognition of the relativity of all claims about God--positive and negative--characterizes the postmod-

⁶Eco, 5. Ironically, the "Absolute" apex of the pendulum is functionally relative; that is, the point of suspension is relative to where the pendulum is hung. There can be as many "Absolutes" as there are pendulums; consequently, absolutism and relativism reciprocate in the analogy.


⁸Stephen Pepper identifies skepticism and dogmatism as the two extremes of cognitive attitude (World Hypothesis: A Study in Evidence. [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970], 3). Both of these are to be avoided. Instead, one should consider common sense, data, observations, and public consensus in developing structures that give form to various claims about reality (Ibid., 84). The significance of Pepper's theory for this thesis concerns the false dichotomy of certainty and uncertainty vis-a-vis God. One should not reduce knowledge of God to absolute certainty and reject anything less as grounds for dismissing the notion entirely. That an individual cannot know everything exhaustively does not entail that s/he cannot know anything.
ern perspective on religious language. Contemporary theologians and philosophers of religion find themselves unable to continue the modern tradition, whether that tradition is expressed in the rationalistic sense of clear and distinct ideas or in the empiricist sense of the trustworthiness of perceptual data. As a matter of fact, it appears that the modern tradition ineluctably ensues in the current crisis of religious language. In other words, God does not seem to be as clear and distinct an idea as once assumed nor to be a valid induction from tangible experience—if there are any valid inductions from experience. Whereas Anselm could presume to refute Gaunilon by attending to the apparent universality of the comprehensibility of "God," contemporary theological theorists maintain

9The former may be represented by Rene Descartes' philosophy and the latter by John Locke. Colloquially, Descartes is considered the "father of modern philosophy"; therefore, much of what goes by the epithet "postmodern" explicitly criticizes the basic tenets of his rationalism. The trust in reason and the mathematical paradigm of epistemology, the putative lucidity of the knowing subject, and the ontotheological foundations of metaphysics bear most of the brunt of the postmodern attacks.

10The contemporary crisis in religious language is another expression of the threat of nihilism in postmodernity. With the recognition of the historicity and linguistic relativity of all human knowing, contemporary theological theorists must confront the possibility that there are no bases for truth and value, certainly no bases for meaningful talk about God. David Crosby argues that this situation actually develops from the modernist paradigm of knowledge. Modernity's insistence on foundationalism as the only valid criterion for knowledge provokes the current crisis (The Specter of the Absurd: Sources and Criticisms of Modern Nihilism. [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988], 162-63).
a more humble reticence vis-a-vis the perspicuity of their language.¹¹

Modern paradigms of rationality and pragmatism seem to militate against the continuing significance of the word "God." What once served as a meaningful term, now appears to be bankrupt, thereby causing an embarrassment to theological theorists who continue to use "God" as putatively sensible and referential. Such embarrassment derives from the "verbal placelessness of God."¹² The felt necessity to begin with something of an apologia for using the word "God," a necessity apparent in a number of theological works, evidences this contemporary placelessness.¹³ Such a problematic certainly illustrates the "linguistic turn" taken in philosophy and theology; however, so facile an identification cannot diminish the somber implications of the linguistic skepticism inherent in talk about God.

Of course, this current crisis has not developed just recently within theology or philosophy. Instead, it has


been affecting language about God for centuries. The conventional loci of silence and coherent speech about God, of the *via negativa* and the *via positiva*, of the apophatic and kataphatic, of the analogical and univocal/equivocal, and of the cognitive and the non-cognitive or emotivist represent the continuing imbroglio over the capacity of human language meaningfully to mediate claims about the existence or non-existence and the characteristics or identity of God. One could agree with Qoheleth that there is nothing new under the sun with regard to the problematic of religious language. In many respects, the postmodern debate recapitulates the typical issues; however, in other respects, the postmodern *Sprachstreit* may contribute positively to regaining a clearer and more acceptable model for God. To do so, one need not return innocently to the pristine bliss of pre-modernity nor attempt to redeem the modern *in toto*. One can, instead, take seriously the problems posed by postmodern perspectives and exploit their criticisms and weaknesses in order to develop an approach to religious language that inculcates the best of the competing attitudes.

In 1969, Langdon Gilkey published what has become a modern classic in the area of theological language. *Naming the Whirlwind* attempted to address the urgency in the extant theological situation brought on by the forces of secularism and the breakdown of the Neo-orthodox attempt at salvaging
some semblance of traditional theology. In particular, it was the rise of radical theology, the so-called "death of God" theology, that focused the problematic for him. That theology codified the inexorable move away from the sacred to the secular. Although putatively accepting the secularity of the late Sixties culture, radical theology still attempted to preserve the sacred, to carve out a place within the structures of immanent reality for meaningful talk about God. Gilkey hoped to salvage the critical contributions of radical theology without accepting its negativism toward some form of transcendence.


15Ibid., 132. Gilkey acknowledges, for example, that Thomas J. J. Altizer does indeed allow for religious language to have cognitive significance, even though his talk about God is relatively queer. Since this dissertation centers on the postmodern expression communicated in deconstructive a/theology, it is logical to consider a work that deals with a significant predecessor to that movement. The "death of God" theology of the Sixties takes on a distinctive yet correlative pattern in deconstructive a/theology. Previously, Mark Taylor did find commonalities between his work and Altizer's theology; however, Altizer's insistence that the end of the radical immanence of God is a total presence contradicts the basic dynamic of Taylor's deconstructive theology with its rejection of a metaphysics of presence.

16Gilkey does desire to maintain a belief in transcendence; however, he refuses to reduce that transcendence to the orthodox understanding of God as a separated deity. He argues that the most positive endowment Altizer leaves to contemporary theology is his mediation of the nineteenth-century critiques of the traditional doctrine of God's distanciation from the world (Ibid., 139). In other words, Gilkey agrees with Ricoeur that the hermeneutics of suspicion cannot be dismissed but must be inculcated into all
In *Naming the Whirlwind*, Gilkey catalogues the upheaval in theology as "the question of the reality of God and so of the possibility of meaningful language about him." He classifies the chaos in meaning and referentiality explicit in theology as a "ferment" and delineates its three characteristics. First, the ferment resides not outside religious communities nor on the boundary between the sacred and the secular; but it may be found precisely within the communities themselves as the church struggles to overcome its own uncertainties. In other words, no longer does the church find itself in crisis because of external attacks; instead, the church finds within itself the ambiguity and apprehension evoked by the secular spirit. Second, the ferment that could take on various forms in different periods--the question of theistic proofs in a rationalistic age or the nature of religious experience in a Romantic period--takes on the unique form of debate about the "possibility or intelligibility of religious or theological language." Theology finds itself having made the linguistic turn, so that the presumed transparency of language that so often marked earlier periods no longer obtains. Language now functions as a dissimulating medium, hiding or disguising, no longer delivering reality to thought. Third, the ferment finds its clearest expression in radical theology, that is, current theological expressions. See note five above.

"death of God" theology. As stated above, Gilkey postulates that radical theology concentrates the various dimensions of secular culture into a theological approach that reveals the anachronism and futility of attempting to maintain traditional orthodoxy.¹⁸

Gilkey identifies the prevalent mood of late twentieth-century life as one of skepticism toward any "ultimate coherence or . . . ultimate meaning . . . ."¹⁹ As a result, no metaphysical or fideistic foundation may be established as grounding any objective, consistent value or truth. This skepticism manifests itself in the four elements of the contemporary Geist: (1) contingency, (2) relativism, (3) temporality, and (4) autonomy.²⁰ These four elements apparently disallow any valid talk about God, because they disenfranchise the necessary assumption for such talk. Gilkey maintains that referentiality must comprise some of the significance of theological language; however, there can be no reference to a "real" God unless there is some relationship between thought and reality.²¹ The four elements question the very foundation of rationality that traditionally posits the complementarity of thought and being. This loss of trust in rationality ensues in a rejection of

¹⁸Ibid., 9-21.
¹⁹Ibid., 24.
²⁰Ibid., 40-61.
²¹Ibid., 210-11.
metaphysics as an "inferiority complex of speculative reason."" God is dead" becomes an appropriate cipher to express this loss of ultimacy, and with the death of God comes the death of all religious language." Consequently, "the dominant motif of secularity has been the assertion that flux is king and the absolute gods are all dead." Gilkey embarks on what he terms a "hermeneutic of secular experience in order to determine what religious dimensions there may be and so what usage and meaningfulness religious discourse has in ordinary life." He insists that such a hermeneutic will disclose an inconsistency between the official mood of secularity and the real way in which secular individuals experience reality. The claims of secularism have failed to offer genuine redemption for humanity. For example, autonomy, one of the more cherished elements of modernity, has failed to conquer "either the demons of sin or of fate . . ." As a result, the religious issues of "confidence, repentance, reconciliation, and . . .

---

22 Ibid., 223.
23 Ibid., 70.
24 Ibid., 252. The word "flux" is a significant term for John Caputo, who uses it to name the continual flow of human existence, a flow that metaphysics has always attempted to deny or stop.
25 Ibid., 234.
26 Ibid., 248.
hope" continue to influence human self-understanding. These issues broach the question of the religious dimension and, thereby, suggest that religious language may still be valid and meaningful.

Gilkey recognizes that religious language does not appear as a distinctly different type of language; instead, it is rather the religious use of ordinary language. If religious language is a specific use of ordinary language, one may expect that it, like the latter, purports to make assertions about reality. For Gilkey, that referentiality indicates the sacred and holy within human experience. Language that does so differs from non-religious ordinary language at three points. First, religious language is multivalent, referring both to the finite and the ultimate within the finite. Second, it concerns the ultimate issues of life, both at the individual and corporate levels. Third, it provides models for how life should be interpreted

27 Ibid., 258.

28 Ibid., 284. William Alston agrees with Gilkey that religious language is not a different type of language but a unique usage of ordinary language. He writes, "[Religious language] has to do with uses our language is put to in religious contexts, rather than with a distinct language. This confusion may seem innocuous, but I believe that it has serious consequences, particularly in its false suggestions of a divide between religious discourse and other areas of discourse, and in the way it encourages us to ignore the enormous syntactical and semantic overlap between the religious and the nonreligious uses of language" (Divine Nature and Human Language: Essays in Philosophical Theology. [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989], 12).
and lived.\textsuperscript{29} The multivalence of religious language is primarily expressed through the symbolic, since symbol correlates the finite medium and the ultimate or sacred content. The religious use of symbol, however, must connect with lived experience if it is to have any significance. Consequently, religious symbols function ontically and not ontologically; that is, they reference the empirical meaningfulness inherent in lived experience instead of the universal, abstract structures of being.\textsuperscript{30}

Gilkey recognizes two pivotal issues relative to the functioning of religious language in the contemporary period. First, he admits that every interpretation of reality comes from a particular perspective. With reference to religion, the same idea holds, because the sacred always manifests itself in some specific form, at some time, and in some place.\textsuperscript{31} There can be no ahistorical, non-perspectival viewpoint from which to interpret reality or the sacred. Consequently, the secular emphases on temporality and contingency cannot be dismissed out of hand, for indeed there can be no resorting to an abstract, absolute metaphysical foundation for value or truth. This does not necessitate, however, an acquiescing to relativism. The reciprocity between symbols and experience offers a method

\textsuperscript{29}\textit{Ibid.}, 295.

\textsuperscript{30}\textit{Ibid.}, 275, 281.

\textsuperscript{31}\textit{Ibid.}, 419.
for adjudicating the cognitive claims of religious language. Gilkey goes so far as to suggest that one may still use the traditional language of metaphysics in contemporary theological method, albeit in a more humble fashion.

Second, Gilkey appreciates that quite often the idea of the sacred results from a sincere realization of the absence of ultimacy than from a deep sense of its presence. In the contemporary context, individuals seem to confront an interminable silence, "only a painful Void." This problem usually surfaces as the conflict between immanence and transcendence. It is precisely this issue that radical theology so critically addressed. It is quite consistent, therefore, for Gilkey to broach this issue. Whereas the immanence of God may be expressed as manifested in the

---

32 Wolfhart Pannenberg agrees with Gilkey that theology cannot divorce itself totally from metaphysics. Only if theology were to relinquish the truth question could it avoid metaphysical thinking. As long as theological language is afforded any kind of referential vector, it must account for the cogitativity of its claims through recourse to a concept of the world. If theology fails to work in tandem with some form of metaphysics, it falls "into either kerygmatic subjectivism or a thoroughgoing demythologization--and frequently into both at the same time" (Metaphysics and the Idea of God, trans. Philip Clayton. [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990], 6). Yet, Pannenberg likewise recognizes that metaphysics no longer can be granted the traditional characteristic of historical immunity. Metaphysical reflection always begins within history and is bound to a tradition and a language. As a result, metaphysics becomes "conjectural reconstruction" (Ibid., 93-94). Such an understanding has important implications for a postmodern approach to religious language.

33 Gilkey, 310.
intimations of meaningfulness and security, transcendence often takes the form of intense feelings of alienation and absence that relativize any claim to meaningfulness.\(^3^4\)

Because of its emphases on linguisticality, historicity, and absence and because of its willingness to take seriously the iconoclasm of the hermeneutics of suspicion, Gilkey's theory of religious language serves as an important prolegomenon to postmodern theories.\(^3^5\) It is interesting that he uses the analogy of fermentation to express the contemporary theological situation.\(^3^6\) "Ferment," from the Latin for "yeast," refers to the process of oxygen-free chemical decomposition, e.g., the formation of alcohol from sugar. Analogically, the word may refer to any process of agitation or unrest--most likely the significance Gilkey exploits in Naming the Whirlwind. One may, however, extrapolate from "ferment" as "unrest" other symbolic connotations. Certainly contemporary theology is in a state of unrest, as much or more so now as twenty-one years ago;

\(^3^4\)Ibid., 469.

\(^3^5\)"A prolegomenon . . . prepares for Christian theological discourse by establishing the meaningfulness of religious discourse . . . [and] by providing for the meaningful and relevant use of the specifically Christian symbols in a secular age" (Ibid., 413). As will be disclosed in Chapter Two, Mark Taylor's a/theological writing with all of its iconoclasm cannot dismiss these two characteristics of a prolegomenon: (1) religious discourse has some meaning; and (2) Christian idioms continue to have postmodern meaningfulness.

\(^3^6\)See above 8-9.
therefore, Gilkey's apparent meaning still obtains. Yet, the idea of yeast also introduces the notion of life and growth. In baking, yeast functions as a living source of fullness and flavor. The unrest of leaven is the agitation of life, of multiplication, the frenzy of fruitfulness that results in the bread's being more attractive to the eye and delectable to the tongue. Perhaps this function of yeast can symbolize the positive possibilities of the unrest within current theories of religious language. The unrest may be a necessary means to a renewed vitality, anticipating a fresh appreciation of the prospects for a recollection of God in postmodernity. The critical decomposition of inappropriate models and theories of God in religious language could serve as the compost out of which may grow a better understanding of both. The creative upheaval inherent in postmodern theology might give a renewed fullness to the significance of the suffering God who does indeed die. If so, then postmodern theology might correct the errors of orthodoxy and structure a language and conceptual framework for God that offer a new idiom for comprehending and communicating religion.

The idea of leaven also carries the notion of sin, that which defiles and must be removed. Leaven can insinuate itself throughout the dough, affecting every aspect of it. Hence, there may be identified a critical or negative dynamic to the analogy, a dynamic that might find expression
in contemporary postmodern a/theology. Consequently, it is incumbent upon any discussion of postmodern theories of God and religious language to engage the negative, the ferment that ensues not from life but from death, even the death of God. Interestingly enough, in the postmodern context, it is a "death of God" theology, specifically the deconstructive a/theology of Mark Taylor, that contributes the negative leavening, just as it did twenty-five years ago when Gilkey published his book. A quarter of a century later, theorists continue the im/possible task of "naming the whirlwind."
Foucault's Pendulum interweaves issues of semiotics, deconstruction, and hermeneutics into an overarching plot that centers on the playful creation of an esoteric conspiracy originating with the medieval Knights Templar. Although the intricacies of the conspiracy are fictive, it is a fiction that ensues in the all-too-real event of death. The incredulous Casaubon finds himself entangled within a viscous web of intrigue and danger. Interestingly enough, he himself has been one of the spiders spinning the net, pulling from his own imaginative spinnerets a world-historical plot inculcating not only the Knights Templars, but also Druidic magic, Aryan supremacists, and subterranean telluric currents. The false narrative—euphemistically christened "the Plan"—has migrated from fiction to reality through some mysterious process of gullible osmosis. That is, certain individuals who passionately desire to believe "the Plan" actually affect reality with the implications of that false (?) belief. Those implications directly involve Casaubon and his companion in sagacity, Jacapo Belbo, who is threatened with death because of others' misplaced will-to-believe.

In a moment of panic, Belbo instructs Casaubon over the phone to access his computer and read the pertinent files
relating to "the Plan." Imprinted upon the various diskettles is information integral to protecting Belbo's and Causabon's lives. Casaubon goes to Belbo's home and sits at the computer. When he turns it on, however, he reads a perplexing question: "Do you have the password?" Unfortunately, Belbo was abducted before he could pass that word on to Casaubon; therefore, he must first decipher the appropriate semiotic key that will enable him to unlock the knowledge that might save his friend.

The computer confronts him like some electronic sphinx denying anyone without the proper knowledge the right to pass. He discovers himself at the mercy of the "pugnacious proposition" that knowledge can be had only by those who already have knowledge.¹ He begins with symbolic mathematics, entering certain "mystical" numbers relating to the Rosicrucians and the Templars. They are unsuccessful. Next he tries apocalyptic math and enters 666. Perhaps the "beast" will allow entrance into the epistemological vaults. Yet, that "mark," too, fails. He turns next to God—at least to the name of God—and tries various permutations of Yahweh. Again, the question returns: "Do you have the password?" Obviously, "God" does not fulfill the question's demands. Remembering that Belbo loved a woman who called herself Sophia, Casaubon types in that sign. After a moment

of nothing but blank screen, the question returns.² Hours pass and his nerves and patience grow thin. In a moment of frustration and anger, he answers the question honestly and types in "No!" Suddenly, the question disappears and the computer begins to spill its secrets.

There is something quite Socratic in this episode from Foucault’s Pendulum.³ The computer symbolizes the storehouse of knowledge, the repository of interpretations, directions, and insights that order the whole Plan (and the Plan of the Whole). Neither mathematics (science), religion (transcendence), nor wisdom (sophia) can admit an individual into that secured space (and time?). Only the affirmation of ignorance, the confession that the answer is not known, qualifies a person for entrance into the epistemological

²Eco, 21-41.

³Edith Wyschogrod in her forward to a textual symposium on deconstruction informs her readers that the symposium "must be imagined as a banquet without Socrates, one in which the gadfly turns on himself, is stung, and lapses into stunned silence" ("On Deconstructing Theology: A Symposium on Erring: A Postmodern A/Theology," Journal of the American Academy of Religion 54 (Fall 1986): 524). Since this chapter deals with the deconstructive a/theology of Mark Taylor, it might be inconsistent to introduce the gadfly as still present; however, even if he has been poisoned by his own venom and paralyzed into some sort of silence, that silence still can signal significant implications for the dynamics of deconstruction. Deconstruction's "a/Socratic language" (Ibid.) quite possibly could remain something of a Socratic language. In an early work Taylor, himself, confesses that the "Socratic educator neither provides solutions nor offers results. Question marks, not periods, punctuate his dialogue" (Journeys to Selfhood: Hegel and Kierkegaard. [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980], 96). Certainly Socratic language and deconstructive language share an infatuation with question marks.
How ironic that a negation can be an affirmation, that within the "no" there lies a "yes," that in the not having the password one indeed has it. Only that person who deceives her/himself and insists that s/he can discover the word that opens the world, the word that functions like a skeleton key offering free passage to every aspect of some grand unifying "plan," will remain forever locked outside. S/he who admits that "[n]ot only does the magic word not exist, but [s/he does] not know that it does not exist" can encounter the secrets. Consequently, questions always remain. "Do you have the password?" "Is there a password?" "Are there only riddles with no solutions?" "Is there no password because there are no places by which to pass?" "Is there no repository of answers?" "If there is no answer to the query(ies), is the result the inevitable ingestion of all by the sphinx, the enigmatic sphincter that does not open or only opens to the Not?"

---


5 Eco, 623.

6 "Sphinx" is a variant of the Greek word "sphinkter" which means "band," specifically the band of muscles surrounding a bodily opening. Basically those muscles serve as the exit point for the waste products of human life. Only that which cannot be digested and absorbed departs through the sphincters. If one enters the body through them, one finds only excreta. Perhaps if one could indeed find the proper word that allowed passage to knowledge, one would find on the other side of the epistemological sphincters that there is nothing but the failed answers from yesterday's theoretical meals.
Perhaps no one has asked these types of questions more creatively nor more ruthlessly than Mark Taylor. In his deconstructive a/theology, he rejects the existence of passwords and argues that theorists never get past words to any "Plan" or any "whole." There are no privileged files containing truth and meaning that are protected by linguistic talismans. Instead, there are only files about files, playful combinations of texts interwoven into a tapestry with no beginning and only loose ends. All attempts to tie up those ends result in hangmen's nooses that tighten their (k)nots around the throats of the deceived. Taylor's unravelling of Western thought is an attempt to loosen those (k)nots and to praise the continuation of endless weaving and interweaving. Taylor wields both scissors and shuttle in order to unravel and reweave the philosophico-theological tapestries of the West.

Ontotheology and the Unthought Difference of the Other

Immanuel Kant determined that classical ontology and theology had fused to form a mutant, transcendentally illusive structure he called "ontotheology."\(^7\) In the twentieth century, Martin Heidegger picked up this term and used it to refer to the two-millennia-old "forgetfulness of Being" that

marks the dynamic of Western metaphysics. Ontotheology or
metaphysics has tried traditionally to "make things easy," that is, it has sought the philosophical and/or religious
adhesive that purports to bind together the different as-
pects of reality. In doing so, it attempts to remove the
difficulty involved in uncertainty and plurality. Through
various strategies, primarily rational, deductive processes,
ontotheologians have offered competing suggestions concern-
ing what founds or grounds all of reality. Each era has had
its unique (perhaps not so unique) metaphysical structures
claiming to explain without remainder the cosmetic quality
of the universe. Only recently, that is, within the past
two centuries, has serious consideration been given to
whether the process of metaphysics itself is valid. In
other words, contemporary philosophy asks not if there is a
better answer to the question of foundational principles but
whether the question itself is infected by questionable
assumptions.

Taylor admits in an early work that the "fundamental
religious, philosophical, and existential issue facing our
time is the perennial problem of the relation between one-

6Martin Heidegger, Identity and Difference, trans. Joan

7John D. Caputo, Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition,
Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project (Indianapolis:
Indiana University Press, 1987), 1. (Hereafter cited RH)
ness and manyness." These "perennial" issues surface today specifically through the vocabulary of "otherness" and "difference," and within a context of "irrevocable loss and incurable fault." Consequently, the one/many question, or the question of otherness and difference, is no longer asked optimistically. Postmodern thinkers, such as Taylor purports to be, recognize that the question has always been skewed toward the positive, in that unity and sameness have been afforded prominence in the polarities.

10 Taylor, Journeys to Selfhood, 276.


13 Nancy Murphy and James McClendon identify three primary traits of postmodernity: epistemological holism, meaning as use, and ethics as communal ("Distinguishing Modern and Postmodern Theologies," Modern Theology 5 (April 1989): 199). These characteristics offer an alternative approach to modernity, which has its own triad of primary qualities: epistemological foundationalism, language as representational/expressive, and reductive atomism (Ibid., 192). In situating various contemporary theologians into these two areas, they decide that Taylor belongs into the latter instead of the former category. Taylor, whom they call an "arch-modern," fails to break out of the modernist perspective because he insists on accepting that "without reference there is no fixed meaning" (Ibid., 211). This is, indeed, a fascinating critique of Taylor and one that does have cogency; therefore, one must not assume naively that Taylor's "postmodern a/theology is as "postmodern" as it claims to be. One must investigate seriously the relationship between truth as correspondence/certainty and Taylor's deconstructive reappraisal.

14 "In one of its earliest and most recurrent forms, the problem of the other is posed in terms of the relationship between the one and the many, or unity and plurality. From
Taylor identifies "postmodernism" as a sensitivity to difference and the corollary issue of presence. As such, it is explicitly a critique of the conventional imbalance toward unity and the traditional apotheosis of systematization.

Taylor argues that ontotheology "leaves nothing unthought," a criticism that may be read in two ways. First, ontotheology demands comprehensiveness. If unity occupies the legislating position, then metaphysics must determine the principles or reasons that gather together all facets of reality into a discernable whole. Consistent with this compulsion for integration is the notion of reason as the process of identifying grounds or fundamentals.

its inception in Greece, Western philosophy has... privileged oneness and unity at the expense of manyness and plurality" (Mark C. Taylor, ed. Deconstruction in Context: Literature and Philosophy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 4).


Taylor, Tears, 204.

Mark C. Taylor, "The Cutting Edge of Reason." Soundings 71 (Summer-Fall, 1988):320. Taylor writes that "the guiding principle of ontotheology is fundamentalist belief--belief in the fundamentals named identity and unity" (Taylor, Altarity, 256). "Fundaments" derives from "fundus" (bottom) through "fundare" (to found). A "fundament" then is a found-ation upon which some structure sits. It can also refer to the buttocks, the bottom upon which a person sits. This reference suggests the earlier topic of sphin(x)cter, since one's sphincter muscles are in one's fundament. The
"grounding presence that constitutes the reason of things" has been given various epithets, for example, logos, idea, arche, concept, principle, God. \(^{18}\) Regardless of its name, the principle of unity serves as a foundation without which the systematic structure supporting the metaphysical and/or theological edifice would crumble. Second, ontotheology refuses to think nothing as nothing, that is, difference as difference. Bearing a continual trace of Parmenides, Western philosophy has failed to think seriously about nothing, seeing it at best as only a moment within Being or the facile negation of Being, that is, Nonbeing. Ontotheology cannot think "Being as difference," since such thought remains outside the structure of identity that it has erected. \(^{19}\)

Difference, absence, otherness, and nothing have been excluded from philosophical systems because to include them would infect the systems with a malignancy that could not be impeded from metastasizing. The system must be complete, situating every topic (topos) within its proper place in the whole. If anything fails to be included in the "Plan" or fails to stay in its place, the system becomes diseased and 

fundament, therefore, is the location from which excreta, the indigestible waste, exits the body. Taylor, in criticizing the fundamentals of Western systems, pays particular attention to the waste products that the systems cannot digest.


\(^{19}\)Taylor, Altarity, xxvii.
dies, or, to use an architectural metaphor, the entire structure is weakened and threatens to collapse.\textsuperscript{20} Reason has attempted to reinforce systems by enforcing the law of the positive, allowing the otherness of absence, alterity, and non-being to be absorbed in presence, identity, and Being. Such an absorption has created a constant oscillation between dichotomies. This "dyadic foundation" rests on the bedrock of the hierarchical prejudicing of one term over the other. God/world, eternity/time, being/becoming, life/death, transcendent/immanent, truth/error, spirit/body, mind/matter, good/evil, reality/illusion, and speech/writing are just a few of the metaphysical couplets in Western philosophy and theology.\textsuperscript{21}

In a movement that could be analogized as the periodic swing of a pendulum, ontotheology has insisted on fluctuating between multiple poles but always with one term privileged over another, for example, eternity over time or Being over Nonbeing. The fluctuation, however, has not been the essential concern. Instead, the goal of ontotheology has always been to rise to the end of the pendulum, to its apex, that absolute point of unity, eternity, and immutability.

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 223. This idea is developed in a chapter on George Bataille. Bataille contends that philosophy only "works" if there is no désœuvrement--neither something that does not work within the system nor something that remains outside the working of the system. Désœuvrement names the waste products evacuated by the fundament.

\textsuperscript{21}Taylor, \textit{Erring}, 8-9.
To extend the analogy further into Taylor’s thought, one could say that he desires to jump onto the weight of the pendulum and ride in the "between." For Taylor the appropriate pendulum would be Foucault’s, the pendulum that can be suspended in an infinite number of places, thereby denying that any position is the one unchanging absolute where truth and reality are unified, and whose pendular movement inscribes the circular motion of the earth, a symbol of no beginning and no ending.

Taylor wants to think what philosophy and theology refuse to think, to "think the inescapability of the unthinkable." He wishes to think "what lies between presence and absence, identity and difference, and being and nonbeing." As a result, he does not aspire merely to

---

22Taylor, "The Cutting Edge of Reason," 323.
23Mark C. Taylor, "Masking: Domino Effect," *Journal of American Academy of Religion* 54 (Fall 1986):550. Edith Wyschogrod makes two startling claims about Taylor’s theology. First, she contends that it is a radical version of Logos theology, a version "unencumbered by ecclesiastical or historical presence or ground" ("On Deconstructing Theology: A Symposium on Erring: A Postmodern A/Theology," 529). Furthermore, she maintains that it "is also a victory of pure or disembodied thinking . . ." (Ibid.). One wonders how a theology so bent on subverting logocentrism can be called a Logos theology without undermining the dynamic of its inherent critique. One also wonders how a putatively postmodern theology can be praised for raising to an even higher level a purely modern, rationalistic theory of thinking. Traditional Western rationalism has always sought to disengage thinking from history and mutability. From Plato’s ideas, through Descartes’ *cogito*, to Husserl’s eidetic reduction, thinking has been ripped from the embodied, historical contexts that human beings always occupy. If one also considers Taylor’s own exaltation of the body and its relativistic corollaries, Wyschogrod’s "compliment"
reverse the valorizing of the various ontotheological dichotomies. Instead, he seeks to "dissolve their original identities." Such an inversion "must simultaneously be a perversion that is subversive." 24 Part of this subversion entails a critique of representational thinking. If one thinks what remains unthinkable, and if what is thinkable within ontotheology is representational (semiotic), then to think the unthinkable is to think otherwise than representationally. It is to think that which cannot be re-presented because it has never been present-ed. 25 It is to think the

of a/theology reads interestingly like an insult that threatens to collapse the entire structure. If she is correct, however, postmodern a/theology would fail to contribute much to a reconstructed theopassionism. It will be just another instance of the "Hellenistic" orthodoxy that theopassionism seeks to deconstruct.

24Taylor, Erring, 10.

25Taylor, "The Cutting Edge of Reason," 323. This critique of representational thinking can be expressed as the "primacy of the signifier" over the signified. Such primacy results in "the essential detachment of meaning from reference, of explication from denotation, of intelligibility from the rule of correspondence" (Carl Raschke, "The Deconstructive Imagination: A Response to Mark Taylor." Religion and Intellectual Life 5 [Winter 1988]: 40). Taylor, using deconstruction as his philosophical base, denies that one ever can identify a sign with the "thing" it purports to reference. Since one cannot get out of language, one cannot adequately correspond idea ostensively with an extra-linguistic reality. Susan Handelman contends that the traditional bifurcation of word (signifier) and thing (signified) developed out of the Greek Enlightenment. In the Hebraic tradition, there is no such division. The Hebrew word for "word" (davar) means "thing" as well. This double meaning reveals the "unity of word and thing, speech and thought, [and] discourse and truth . . ." (The Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982], 3-4). Taylor's collapsing of word and thing into the
other, the other that questions the status quo, the other whose questions prohibit the system from concluding. To think this (these) other (s) is to think difference, difference that cannot be synthesized or negated, since "if conclusions are inconclusive, differences cannot finally be overcome."\(^{26}\)

Taylor's subversive thinking certainly does not appear in vacuo. He stands in a definite tradition of twentieth-century thought that finds its roots in the contrasting philosophies of Hegel and Kierkegaard. For Taylor, these two men "represent the poles between which the most creative philosophical and theological thinking throughout this century has oscillated."\(^{27}\) Taylor's own thought began in dialogue with Kierkegaard, specifically with reference to the issue of the pseudonymous authorship. Soon after, self-referential linguistic medium may be a bastardization of this original Hebrew insight.


\(^{27}\)Mark C. Taylor, "The Anachronism of A/Theology." *Religion and Intellectual Life* 5 [Winter 1988]: 24. The internal inconsistencies in Taylor's position will be noted at various points throughout this chapter. Such inconsistencies betray the need for deconstructing Taylor's deconstruction. The basic character of most of the inconsistencies may be identified in the quote written above. How can Hegel and Kierkegaard "represent" anything since representation itself is supposedly subverted? Why does Taylor insist on referring (this is certainly a loaded word!) to the "oscillation" between these two? Does such language not depend on the very binary motion that he critiques? Taylor, like Derrida, finally cannot extricate himself from the very structures that he subverts. Consequently, his subversion is itself subverted.
however, he set Kierkegaard against Hegel in order to prosecute the issue of selfhood.28 He acknowledges that his thought has moved between these two geniuses, although he has inevitably grown more dissatisfied with either extreme.29

Postmodernism cannot avoid Hegel because his philosophy is the final expression of ontotheology, that is, the "metaphysics of presence," while simultaneously being "fascinated by difference and . . . irresistibly drawn to the vertiginous question of the other."30 Although Hegel "cannot tolerate . . . senseless sacrifice, meaningless loss, and profitless expenditure," 31 and although he negates every negation in order for identity to be the union of identity and difference, his philosophy still treats the issues of difference and negation with more respect than do his predecessors.32 On the other hand, Kierkegaard contributes to

---


29Taylor, Tears, 75; Taylor, "The Anachronism of A/Theology," 24; Taylor, Altarity, xxx. Altarity and Deconstruction in Context situate Taylor's work within a broader historical milieu. Both books identify the prominent thinkers with and against whom Taylor writes.

30Taylor, Deconstruction in Context, 4.

31Ibid., 27.

32Taylor, Altarity, 32.
postmodernism by anticipating some of its more crucial questions. In criticizing Hegel's "speculative notion of identity, and his analysis of the temporality of the individual," Kierkegaard, himself, seeks to subvert the systematic propensity of philosophical thought. He argues that "if the System has either a preface or a postscript, it is not really a system." Since Hegel's so-called system does indeed have a preface--a quite famous one at that--he fails to develop a system. All postmodern critiques of ontotheology, therefore, "might be reinterpreted as a lengthy p.s. to Kierkegaard's postscript to Hegel's System." 

Derrida, Logocentrism, and the Theology of the Sign

In order to situate himself between Hegel and Kierkegaard, Taylor has turned to the contemporary deconstructive philosophy of Jacques Derrida. Derrida's decon- 

---

33Taylor, Deconstruction in Context, 14.
34Taylor, Altarity, 327.
35Ibid., xxxiii.
36Taylor writes that deconstruction is "the most significant movement in contemporary philosophy..." (Taylor, Deconstructing Theology, xviii). One of the recurring issues in the various uses of deconstructive thought concerns the application of Derrida's ideas to areas outside of philosophy, for example, literary criticism or theology. When Taylor uses Derrida as a "foundation" for his postmodern a/theology, one wonders whether he has interpreted and applied him "appropriately." Robert Gall asks this question about all "representative theologians and a/theologians" who write from a Derridean perspective. He wonders whether their "performance of [Derrida's] thinking is more the
struction supplies Taylor with many of his principal themes (principles?): such as, the tension between presence and absence, the strain between speech and writing, the significance of difference, and the end of the book. Instead of merely moving between these terms—a movement choreographed by the ontotheological—deconstruction attempts to stay on the margin between, walking(dancing) on the narrow precipice that is neither one or the other term nor the synthesis of the two. Derrida seeks to maintain that marginality by further developing Heidegger’s Destruktion of Western philosophy. Although Heidegger’s criticism centers on the West’s failure to think the difference between Being and beings, Derrida shifts that focus to the question of thinking difference itself. By close readings of notable texts in the ontotheological tradition, Derrida seeks to deconstruct them and reveal that their messages never are delivered satisfactorily.


37Taylor, Deconstructing Theology, xix.

38Taylor, Erring, 10.


40One simply cannot do any sort of "deconstruction" without reference to Derrida, since in a certain way he personifies that philosophy. Robert Scharlemann, in his excellent brief introductory essay on deconstruction, characterizes the philosophy as "an exercise in 'Derridazzlement'" ("Deconstruction: What is It?" Dialogue 26 [Summer 1987]:185).
Derrida's deconstructive movements take place within the very structures of Western metaphysics. The history of ontotheology is a history of discovering various possible centers around which to group the diverse aspects of reality.\textsuperscript{41} Structures cannot exist long without focal points, foundations upon which they can find stability.\textsuperscript{42} Regardless of what putative centers have been established in the pluralism of Western philosophy, all of them share a common characteristic—they have been centers purporting to manifest presence. Derrida calls this valorizing of presence "logocentrism" or "phonologism."\textsuperscript{43} Whether expressed as the presence of the perceived object or the self-presence of the perceiver, the notion of immediacy has determined the "ethnocentric metaphysics" of the West.\textsuperscript{44}


\textsuperscript{42}Foundations, or first principles, make three important contributions to ontotheological thinking. First, they limit the possibilities of interpretations and give a sense of unity to the plurality of perspectives. This delimitation is closure. Second, they establish some sort of relationship between the various claims of reality in order to ground a process whereby one may move from one claim to another in a unified and "objectifiable" manner. This is necessity. Third, they offer criteria for confirming through some sort of public repeatability the different truth claims about reality. This is certainty (Kenneth L. Schmitz, "From Anarchy to Principles: Deconstruction and the Resources of Christian Philosophy," \textit{Communio} 16 (Spring 1989):74).


\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., 79.
Logocentrism is the notion that there is an eternal and universal logos or rationality to the universe. Through reason—the Cartesian clear and distinct ideas—the individual can have epistemic assurance that what s/he knows is transparent. The self-present subject’s knowing through reason the self-present substance rests on the hegemony of identity over difference and presence over absence. This hegemony is expressed linguistically in the prominence given to speech. Language ab initio raises the problem of absence and difference. One uses signs to refer to objects because one cannot refer to those objects immediately. In other words, one replaces an absent object—the signified—with a sign—a signifier. If the signifier is spoken, it maintains a closer relationship with the presence of the speaker and her/his idea of the signified. Consequently, speech is the highest form of re-presentation, with writing being nothing more than a subordinate derivative of the spoken sign, "the moment of the desert as the moment of Separation." 

45"The sign represents the present in its absence. It takes the place of the present. When we cannot grasp [Begriff] or show the thing, state the present . . . we go through the detour of the sign" (Jacques Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 9).

46Derrida, Of Grammatology, 11.

47Derrida, Writing and Difference, 68; Derrida, Of Grammatology, 11. Phonocentrism’s endorsement of speech over writing ensues from the "ontotheological claim that human discourse can be transparent to eternal Being, known
In order for this phono-logocentrism to be operative, there must obtain some sort of governing signified that grounds the semiotic relationship between presence and representation. Derrida calls this governing signified "the transcendental signified," and it serves as the absolute basis for the possibility of pure presence, either in the sense of an original moment of presence or an anticipated completion to the process of semiotic exchange. The transcendental signified places "a reassuring end to the reference from sign to sign," bringing closure to the interplay among signifier and signified and defeating the difference that differentiates sign from sign. Derrida argues that such a regulative signified in fact does not exist. There is no unmediated presence that is pure within itself and in no way dependent upon a conceptual network for its "presentation." Everything is already a re-presentation, an externalization of otherness and difference. Derrida uses "writing" as the cipher for this irreducibility of difference. Whereas traditionally writing has been directly through the human spirit and vented immediately through the human voice" (William Dean, "Deconstruction and Process Theology," Journal of Religion 64 (January 1984): 3).

*Derrida, Of Grammatology, 20.

*Ibid., 49.

*50"The exteriority of the signifier is the exteriority of writing in general . . . Without that exteriority, the very idea of the sign falls into decay" (Derrida, Of Grammatology, 14).
subordinated to speech, Derrida reverses the relationship and suggests that prior to spoken language, there are "written" signs.\(^{51}\) He does not mean by this that "historically speaking" spoken language was preceded by writing. He means that even spoken language is caught within the necessity of difference and otherness.\(^{52}\) "Writing" functions metaphorically as naming "whatever eludes, subverts or opposes the discourse of logocentric reason."\(^{53}\) Spoken language does not attain the pure presence that has been claimed for it.\(^{54}\)

\(^{51}\)Derrida uses "writing" to refer to "any interpretive human gesture, whether in the arts, politics, or warfare" (William Dean, "Deconstruction and Process Theology," 4). Dean argues that in reducing his attention to human gestures, Derrida seems to adhere to a Kantian distinction between nature and human history. Dean assumes that Derrida gives the first term to science and pays little or no attention to it. Furthermore he maintains that deconstructive theologians continue this avoidance of nature (Ibid., 8). In an ironic sense, one might say that a/theology bears a certain Barthian element in its refusal to do a "natural theology."


\(^{54}\)In rejecting that language has a non-linguistic reference immediately present and, consequently, representable, Derrida does not intend to suggest that there is no extra-linguistic reality but that there is no way of validating exhaustively the relationship between sign and thing; that is, that one never has "naked access to things." He does, however, shift the meaning of "meaning" away from referentiality and in doing so seeks to undermine Western philosophy. The notion of adequantio intellectus et rei as the criterion for truth and meaning is a central founding principle of that philosophy (cf. J. Wesley Robbins. "Pragmatism and the Deconstruction of Theology," Religious Studies 24 [Summer 1988]:376).
Since the conventional bifurcation of speech/writing mirrors the distinction between spirit and body—a sign for all of the Western distinctions between appearance/reality, outside/inside, or time/eternity—one might say that the entire Western network of polarities as well as the monistic attempts to overcome them are the results of this "origin¬ary" separation. Whether in Plato or Paul, writing has been censured as removed from reality or as deadening to the spirit. In religious terms, Derrida claims that writing as been understood as the "anguish of the Hebrew ruah [spirit]" and the manifestation of sin, that is, "the anger of God emerging from itself . . ." In subverting the order of speech and writing, Derrida concomitantly subverts the conventional jaundiced view of the external—matter, time, and difference—and calls into question the entire metaphysical framework of the West.


Derrida, Writing and Difference, 9.

Ibid., 68. Interestingly enough, if one investigates the Hebrew scriptures one will discover that the first recorded "writing" in the sense of "marking," leaving a mediating trace, occurs after Cain’s murder of Abel. God does the marking for the purpose of protecting Cain from the lex talionis. Consequently, writing first appears not as sin—although in the context of sin—nor as the anger of God—although in the context of judgment. Instead, it comes as a "sign" of redemption, of divine protection (Genesis 4:15).
That there is no transcendental signified to give closure to the process of re-presentation "extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely."58 The meaning of words depends on the differential relationship obtaining among the various signs in any linguistic system.59 Derrida develops two notable ideas in response to the infinite play of language. First, he classifies metaphor as the ruling trope for Western metaphysics. Metaphor, as the carrying over of meaning from one concept to another, gives the differential network its dynamic. This "carrying over" is itself carried over from language to reality, thereby establishing the notion of analogy, the movement from one being to another.60 Metaphor functions as the "white mythology," the West's explanation for Reason.61 If, however, metaphysics is metaphoric, then a "reason" for the possibility of movement from one idea to another or from

---

58Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 280. The extension of the play of signification does not mean that ad hoc closures are not attainable or desirable. Without some sense of closure, there can be no world to inhabit. Through various linguistic games and perspectives, human beings give some structure to their reality in order to make life intelligible. The temptation is always to claim that any perspective is a final description of the world. Derrida does not critique the cosmizing function so much as the propensity to finalize the function and bring it to a premature closure. Cf. Hilary Lawson, *Reflexivity: The Post-Modern Predicament* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1985), 128.

59Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 70.

60Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 27.

one entity to another must be identified. Here again the notion of a transcendental signified operates to found the system. Yet, if the system is predicated upon metaphor, what serves as the basis for the metaphor of metaphor? If metaphor is indeed "white mythology," his censuring of the metaphorical nature of Western metaphysics may be understood "as a modern form of demythologization." 

Second, if there is no pure presence or immediate identity behind the metaphoric of metaphysics, then how does one account for the reality of difference? Concepts differ from other concepts; entities differ from other entities; signs differ from other signs and from their signified. Derrida calls this process of differentiation différence, "the non-full, non-simple, structured and differentiating origin of difference." The variant spelling, the replacement of an "a" for the "e," signifies that différence cannot be spoken but only written. In French pronunciation, difference and différence sound the same. Only in writing can the one letter distinction be recognized. Consequently, through this sign Derrida emphasizes his understanding of the reversal of writing and speaking.

Since the play of differences allows for a conceptual system, différence gives the possibility for concepts and, 

---

62 Ibid., 220.
63 Schmitz, 34.
64 Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, 11.
hence, cannot be a concept itself. Consequently, différ-
ance is a non-conceptual sign for the non-originary reality
of difference; it is the possibility that cannot be under-
stood as a principle or arche. Yet, différance accounts
for the difference among signs and the infinite play of
signification by a twofold process of spatialization and
temporization. Différance both differs and defers. It
accounts for the spatial difference among signs and between
signifier and signified and for the temporal deferring of
any absolute end to meaning. Since différance disallows any
presence, all that can "be" are traces, marks that do not
fulfill the nostalgia or hope for the "ding-an-sich." Even
if one grants as a Kantian Grenz-begriff that there is a
non-linguistic reality, one never can validate that claim,
since it is impossible to get out of a linguistic structure
in order to encounter it or express it.

65Ibid., 11.
66Ibid., 6. "As the condition of the possibility of
presence and absence, differance itself is neither present
or absent. Because it is never present, it cannot be re-
represented or represented" (Taylor, Tears, 24).
67Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, 9.
68Derrida, Of Grammatology, 66.
69Hilary Lawson admits that Derrida’s position reads
like a form of Sprachidealismus. If one never can have a
non-linguistic encounter with reality, then one cannot say
that language refers to anything other than language. As he
notes, even the concept "reality" maintains a place in the
linguistic network; it is itself a concept among other
concepts (Reflexivity, 24). Lawson argues, however, that
Derrida does not embrace such a language idealism uncriti-
The refusal to accept the differing and deferring dynamics of *différance* has led Western metaphysics to collapse this undecidability into various systems of Being. As mentioned earlier, this collapse can be termed logocentrism, since reason, the logos, has traditionally been the center that has given identity and closure to the structure. It is impossible to deal with this collapse without broaching the issue of theology, because Derrida contends that "the logos as the sublimation of the trace [*différance*] is theological."\(^70\) The difference between signifier and signified depends not only on the basic metaphysics of the West but also, and perhaps more importantly, on Christian creationism.\(^71\) God as creator functions as the transcendental signified that "makes possible an absolutely pure and absolutely self-present self-knowledge."\(^72\) Since God brings an end to the differing/deferring process of *différance*, "the name of God, at least as it is pronounced within classical ra-
cally. Caputo agrees with Lawson that one cannot accuse Derrida of doing a "textual idealism." Derrida does not deny reference, he "denies reference-without-difference, a reference such that the signifier just melts away and [one is] left standing in the presence of pure presence" (personal correspondence with the author, 30 September 1991).

\(^70\)Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 71.

\(^71\)Ibid., 13.

\(^72\)Ibid., 98.
tionalism, is the name of indifference itself." A corollary of Derrida's contention that there is no end to difference, no transcendental signified, is that there is no God who acts to bring closure to the infinite play of difference. Consequently, the ontotheological tradition that identifies theos and logos must be deconstructed.

Interestingly enough, deconstruction can only occur parasitically, by inhabiting the very structures that one wishes to deconstruct. In inhabiting the structures, the deconstructive critic attempts to displace the entire differential order. Yet in inhabiting those structures, for example, ontotheology, deconstruction must use the very concepts that it wishes to overturn. Derrida contends that one cannot escape using metaphysics against metaphysics;

---

73 Ibid., 71. Herbert Schneidau denies that the philosophical notion of logos as the principle of cosmic order rooted in logic or reason parallels the biblical notion of logos as God enfleshed. He admits, however, that Derrida critiques both notions of logos. For Derrida "there is nothing 'kerygmatic'" about différence (Herbert N. Schneidau, "The Word Against the Word: Derrida on Textuality," Semeia 23 (1982):14).

74 Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, 329. Derrida's strategy of deconstruction consists of a twofold response to the differential order of Western metaphysics. First, the suppressed terms in the traditional dualities are reversed and given prominence. Second, the reversed order itself is displaced or transgressed so that the new order does not continue to function as a reticulation homeomorphic to the deconstructed one (John P. Leavey "Four Protocols: Derrida, His Deconstruction," Semeia 23 (1982):50). This twofold approach in Taylor becomes the processes of inversion and subversion.

75 Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, 281.
therefore, "the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work." In other words, deconstruction in using ontotheological structural elements as its tools against that structure "risks ceaselessly confirming, consolidating, relifting (relever) . . . that which one allegedly deconstructs." For example, Derrida admits that his language may sound similar to the standard conceptual network of negative or apophatic theology; however, he does not intend with his language to establish the identity of a God beyond the "finite categories of essence and existence" who has a "superior, inconceivable, and ineffable mode of being." Negative theology, in other words, still strives for a comprehension of presence. Yet, Derrida admits that negative theology, although an aspect of the ontotheological tradition in need of deconstruction, cannot be reduced easily to that tradition.

---

76Derrida, Of Grammatology, 24. Deconstruction cannot destroy the text without destroying itself, since it feeds parasitically off of the tradition that it seeks to critique. As Louis Mackey expresses it, deconstruction is not "bent on textual holocaust" ("Slouching Toward Bethlehem: Deconstructive Strategies in Theology," 269).

77Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, 135. Derrida recognizes here the ubiquity of reflexivity. One cannot make critical claims against a particular tradition without in some way validating the tradition itself. In criticizing metaphysics, Derrida utilizes metaphysics; in attempting to displace the conceptual network of ontotheology, Derrida uses that network. No matter how much he denies it, différence functions conceptually within the deconstructive milieu.

78Ibid., 6.
Derrida's deconstruction of ontotheology leads him to recognize that ontotheology is not as homogenized as one would think; that is, within the ontotheological traditions, there is difference!⁷⁹

Wandering Toward a Deconstructive A/theology

Taylor believes that Derridean deconstruction "harbors a radically new theology, secular, [and] post-ecclesiastical . . . which can both draw on and respond to distinctively postmodern experience."⁸⁰ Although he admits that such theological reflection might be misinterpreted as a recapitulation to the logocentrism Derrida so ruthlessly deconstructs, Taylor argues that postmodernism still bears religious traits that need to be prosecuted from the perspective


⁸⁰Taylor, *Deconstructing Theology*, xix. Taylor seeks to display the weaknesses within Western theology by using that theology against itself. Doing so moves him to a new era--postmodern a/theology. He desires to "prescribe" a cure for the dis-ease of ontotheology through a deconstructive displacement of the modern era or epoch. Edward Farley calls such a deconstructive approach an "epochalism," a term he uses to describe "efforts to discredit or establish philosophical claims by epochal contrasts" (*Good and Evil: Interpreting a Human Condition* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990], 18). Carl Raschke actually uses the term "epoch" in one of his essays when he calls foundationalist thinking a characteristic of the "Roman epoch" ("The Image of the Beast, or Theology and the Thought of Difference," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. Thematic Study 49:118). Epochalism is "not so much a way of interpreting history as a use of history to make philosophical (or theological) points" (Farley, 18). If Farley is correct, one wonders how "radically new" Taylor's a/theology really is.
of the critique of presence.\textsuperscript{81} His postmodern deconstructed religious reflection will be "neither doctrinal nor sectarian," "neither systematic nor scientific," nor will it "conform to commonly accepted stylistic criteria."\textsuperscript{82} It will be a reflective attempt to think difference by thinking differently and think nothing by learning to do "nothing with words."\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{81}Taylor, \textit{Deconstructing Theology}, xx. Taylor does leave the impression that Derrida successfully displaces logocentrism and opens the space for the development of another type of thinking. Christopher Norris insists, however, that to read Derrida as bringing an end to Western logocentric thinking "is to misread some crucial passages in Derrida's work" (Norris, 53).

\textsuperscript{82}Taylor, "The Cutting Edge of Reason," 325. That Taylor thinks he still can engage in reflection depends on Derrida's admission that deconstruction cannot escape logocentrism. Taylor, as Derrida, must engage in deconstruction within the conceptual networks of metaphysics and ontology. Even the attempt to think what remains unthought within those traditions must be thought via the language of those traditions; however, for Taylor and Derrida, one cannot think exhaustively the grounds that make thinking itself possible. In other words, absolute knowledge or total presence cannot be achieved, because thought (reflection) always leaves remainders (cf. Taylor, \textit{Tears}, 96).

\textsuperscript{83}Ibid., 206. Postmodern religious reflection must maintain a certain similarity (identity?) with premodern and modern reflection; that is, all reflection shares some common rationality. Consequently, Taylor's deconstructive reflection on atheistic religiosity in some way remains a species of rational reflection. Yet, he maintains that all rational reflection carries a decidedly religious tone (whatever that means); therefore, he concludes, one is not faced with belief or unbelief but with "different stances of belief" (Taylor, "The Cutting Edge of Reason," 319). Yet, in another text, he does claim that existentially postmodern individuals find themselves thrown between "old certainties and the discovery of new beliefs." As a result, they live on the margins separating belief and unbelief (Taylor, \textit{Erring}, 5). One wonders if in some "perverted" postmodern idiom, Taylor stands in the Kantian tradition of critiquing
Taylor proposes to develop his deconstructive theology as a renewal of theological thinking. He argues that literal deconstructing of the Western theological tradition already has occurred. What is needed now is a way of doing theology after the death of God, the death of the "primal ground of the Western intellectual and theological tradition." Such a renewal must be "post-ecclesiastical," separated from the institutionalization of the church. It must also invert, pervert, and subvert the decisive terms in the ontotheological equation. Taylor catalogs those terms as "God," "self," "history," and "book." If the ontotheological tradition is deconstructed, these four terms must be displaced together, because their alliance is such that one cannot be altered without affecting the entire structure. This structure unites four cardinal ideas: a transcendent unity (God), individual consciousness (self), a purposeful process (history), and linguistic closure (book).

---

84Taylor, *Deconstructing Theology*, xi. Theological thinking after the death of God no longer depends on its content for differentiating it from other types of thinking, since its traditional content, God, can no longer be talked about. The form or process of that type of thinking now becomes the distinguishing trait. That process is a liminal or marginal dynamic that, as Taylor says, tries to think what has been left unthought (Charles Winquist, "Theology, Deconstruction, and Ritual Process," *Zygon* 18 (September 1983):295, 297).

85Taylor, *Deconstructing Theology*, xii.

Taylor’s acceptance of the absence of a transcendental signified is itself signified by the death of God.7 Accepting the death of God, however, impeaches the entire ontotheological network. Taylor argues that all four terms in the ontotheological tradition harbor some sense of presence and closure. Consequently, the absence resulting from the death of God must be mirrored(?) in the disappearance of the self, the end of history, and the closure of the book.8

The non-theological theological thinking that Taylor proposes is a liminal exercise. The liminal mark of this exercise is the slash that separates yet joins the "a" and "theology" in "a/theology." Like the Derridean "différance," "a/theology" cannot be spoken but must be read, for what sounds like either "a theology" or "a theology of atheism" is actually neither. It is, instead, theology that is/is not theology. The a/theologian, then, traverses the margin of the slash, walking the in-between. Taylor con-

---

---

7Scharlemann disagrees with Taylor’s use of "transcendental signified" as a cipher for the death of God. Notwithstanding the theistic implications of the word "transcendence," Derrida’s terminology relates to the intralinguisticsality of all signification and not to the denial of the existence of God or the existence of extra-linguistic reality ("Deconstruction: What is It?" 186-87).

8Taylor, Erring, 17. Raschke summarizes these terms when he interprets deconstruction as the death of God put into writing and as the revolt against linguistic formalism and anthropological reductionism ("The Deconstruction of God," in Deconstruction and Theology. [New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1982]:3).
tends that such walking is actually an "erring," a roaming, or straying with no particular destination in mind. Er- ring is eccentric and aimless. Consequently, the erring a/theologian will always be viewed by the ontotheologian as a heretic, a heterodox thinker, one who strays from the "straight opinion." The erring a/theologian "neither looks back to an absolute beginning nor ahead to an ultimate end."  

Deconstruction becomes the way Taylor critiques and replaces ontotheology with an erring a/theology. In a certain way, one could say that deconstruction becomes the "password" that does not get by the sphinx but protects one from being devoured. It allows one to walk around, to

---

89 Taylor, Erring, 11.

Ibid., 13. John Caputo observes that Erring does not cohere with the aimlessness and wandering that it prescribes. Taylor, as an errant and eccentric a/theologian, writes a text that has "a very definite beginning, middle, and end" ("Review of Mark C. Taylor's Erring: A Postmodern A/theology," Man and World 21 [1988]:107). He tells his story with purpose and logic. Consequently, Erring is not a theological Finnegans Wake.

Taylor states that deconstruction "is postmodernism raised to method" (Taylor, Deconstructing Theology, xx). Yet in another text, he defines method as "the search for a way--a way through the 'middest' that at once separates and joins beginning and end, Genesis and Apocalypse. To have a method is to be underway, to be on a journey from origin to destination" (Taylor, Journeys to Selfhood, 72). One can infer from these two quotations that deconstruction as a method is itself "a journey from origin to destination"; however, such an inference raises an interesting inconsistency within Taylor's thought. How can deconstruction, which denies that there is origin or destination since those two "realities" would imply presence, be a method? How can one journey from origin to destination when putatively there...
err, to w(o)ander. Such w(o)andering takes place under the influences of Hegel's death of God, Kierkegaard's end of Christendom, Nietzsche's Dionysian reversal, and Derrida's exchange of the book with the text. The erring a/theologian attempts to think "the unthinkable oscillation of alterity [otherness/difference] and the impossible alterity of oscillation." Although "oscillation" induces a repetition of the introductory rubric of the pendulum and the earlier interpretation that Taylor seeks to ride the weight "in between," quite possibly a new allusion must be discovered. This oscillation of alterity might better be illustrated by Yeats' "widening gyre" than Foucault's pendulum.

The Death of God as the Apotheosis of Writing

Taylor accepts deconstruction as the "'hermeneutic' of the death of God." Derrida's contention that there is no transcendental signified to give unity and presence to the process of signification means for Taylor that there is no is neither? Perhaps this is an instance of the inability of deconstruction to escape what it critiques and thereby establishes it even in the "midst" of denying it. This issue suggests interesting implications for (de)constructing the (non)being of God.


God or logos in the sense of a source or ground of presence. Although all signs do not signify God directly, the semiotic structure of Western metaphysics rests on the foundation of a God ensuring the priority of signified over signifier. This ontotheological notion of a creator God eternal and omnipresent serving as the absolute judge of Being must be rejected. God cannot be a being, Being itself, or even the ground of Being, since all of these labels cooperate within the structure of presence and identity. Since a/theology apparently breaks so decidedly with onto-theology, the a/theologian will always be "utterly transgressive"; that is, s/he will constantly transgress--

94Charley Hardwick identifies the contemporary problem of God as entailing not only the problem of God’s presence but also of God’s action in the world ("William Dean’s Post-Modernist American Empirical Theology," American Journal of Theology & Philosophy 10 (May 1989):89). Even if God is not present in the sense of immediacy, could God still not be affecting reality and effecting within it certain ends? More importantly for this thesis, could God not be affected by the world?

95Taylor, Erring, 105.

96Ibid., 36. Peter Hodgson points out that Taylor always seems to narrow his understanding of God to a classical model ("Review of Erring: A Postmodern A/theology," Religious Studies Review 12 [July-October 1986]:259). If this is true, postmodern a/theology does not deny that alternative models of God, such as a theopassionist model, may not be a valid paradigm. Taylor’s critique of the classical tradition actually serves to open a space wherein one can consider different options. That there is no God in the classical sense does not necessarily entail that there is no God in the biblical sense.

97Taylor, Erring, 6.
step across—the parameters set by traditional logocentric theology. This transgression (sin) takes the form of writing, and writing becomes the Dionysian "dance of death upon the tomb of God." 98

A/theology's focus on the death of God certainly reprises the radical theologies that surfaced three decades ago. Taylor admits that postmodern a/theology owes some allegiance to the radical death of God theology best expressed in Altizer's work. Modern theology actually "reaches a certain closure in the death of God theology." Consequently, "any postmodern assumptions will have to pass through the 'fiery brook' of the death of God." 99 Yet Taylor thinks that Altizer's dead God is in fact the God of neoorthodoxy—Barth's God—and is a moment in a definitely


99 Taylor, Tears, 76. There is always the tendency to replace deconstruction as a performative approach with deconstruction as a descriptive exercise. Taylor, for example, seeks to do a deconstructive subversion of classical theology by writing the nothing left unthought instead of writing about the nothing. Such a subversion putatively differs from Altizer's radical theology. John Wall argues, however, that in many cases deconstructive theology fails to be a performative hermeneutic. He writes concerning the essays in Deconstruction and Theology, a work containing essays by Taylor, Carl Raschke, and Charles Winquist, that the volume claims to be an exercise in deconstruction but is in fact "an apologia for Thomas J. J. Altizer's neo-romantic myth of the death of God" ("Deconstruction and the Universe of Theological Discourse or, Who is Jacques Derrida and What is He Saying About the Logos?" SLJT 28 [September 1985]: 254). Louis Mackey refers to it as "the old death-of-God theology dressed in the latest Parisian fashions (Mackey, 271)."
Hegelian dialectic. As a matter of fact, Taylor pronounces Altizer to be the most Hegelian of all contemporary theologians. Altizer, like Hegel, chafes against the view of God as totaliter aliter, totally transcendent to the world. His radical Christology negates the Barthian "No" of a transcendent deity and establishes a God of extreme immanence. The end of his theology is a "total presence" of the divine. One recognizes immediately the problems Taylor has with such a death of God theology. First, the dialectical reversal of negation reveals a continued dependence on classical ontotheology and its desire to "tie up" loose ends. Second, the emphasis on presence betrays its affiliation with phono-logocentrism. Third, for all intents and

---

100Taylor, "The Anachronism of A/Theology," 25. Barth's theology and his God may not be so far different from the a/theologian's as Taylor implies. Walter Lowe offers as evidence the Barthian reservation about natural theology. The presence of a reality is questioned by Barth when he critiques the arrogant pretension inherent in any human attempt to glorify reason, specifically with reference to knowing divinity. In accentuating the otherness and difference of God, Barth in turn unsettles the traditional metaphysical marriage of reason and God ("Barth as Critic of Dualism: Re-Reading the Römerbrief," 388).

101Taylor, Tears, 59.

purposes it destroys any real sense of alterity or other-

ness. 103

Taylor's critique of Altizer should not be construed as
a complete rejection of his theology. As a matter of fact,
Taylor's more radical death of God theology shares an impor-
tant commonality with Altizer's--the symbolic notion of
incarnation. Whereas Altizer interprets the incarnation as
an ontic event realizing the total immersion of deity in
secularity, Taylor uses the idea of incarnation as the
embodiment of the divine in writing, another version of
radical Christology. 104 For Taylor, the personal God of
Christianity must die in order for there to be a return of
the sacred. 105 The Logos (Word) incarnates itself in

103 Cf. Ibid., 68-69.

104 Taylor, "Text as Victim," 70, 73. The divine in
language is not the structure of language itself but is
instead the "vital force resident in language . . ." (Robbins,
377). Carl Raschke argues that any re-presentation of
God actually kills the deity by "inhibiting the vital,
transformative process" ("The Image of the Beast, or Theol-
ogy and the Thought of Difference," 123). If one accepts
this idea, then deconstructive a/theology might be an inter-
esting way of obeying the second commandment!

105 Taylor, Altarity, 136. Taylor's insistence that a
sacred or divine aspect may remain after deconstruction may
appear inconsistent; however, one could argue that sacrality
and divinity reference the otherness always "present" in
"reality." John Dominic Crossan, for example, writes that
"sacrality is otherness, [and] divinity is different" ("Dif-
ference and Divinity," Semeia 23 [1982]:31). If so defined,
the sacred and the divine certainly may be written in errant
a/theology.
words, in writing, and this incarnation is the death of God.\textsuperscript{106} This "event" does not take place once and for all in some literally historical moment. Instead, it forever occurs in the inscription of words. The divine becomes (is) script-ure;\textsuperscript{107} writing becomes (is) the divine milieu; and "the God of writing is manifested as the writing of God."\textsuperscript{108}

Using Derrida's deconstructive interpretations of writing as his guide, Taylor argues that writing is the

\textsuperscript{106}Taylor, \textit{Erring}, 103. Mackey states that "Christianity may almost be defined as the interruption of the dream of presence" (Mackey, "Slouching Towards Bethlehem," 267). Arguing from his interpretive perspective on Kierkegaard, Mackay maintains that Christianity breaks with paganism at this very point. The idea of the mediator, the incarnate Christ, questions the notion of the immediacy of God. If Mackey is correct, then Taylor's interpretation of Christianity is questionable.

\textsuperscript{107}Taylor, \textit{Erring}, 104.

\textsuperscript{108}Ibid., 116. A couple of problems seem to arise from this last statement. First, Taylor's use of "manifested" broaches the notion of revelation or disclosure. Such a notion seems much too ontotheological for a/theology. Can the a/theologian really write about some sort of revealing? Second, the nomenclature "the God of writing" and "the writing of God" equivocates. How is one to read the genitives here? Are they subjective or objective genitives? Is the God of writing the lord over writing or writing as God? Is the writing of God God's writing or human writing about God? Taylor apparently accepts the latter of both pairs of possibilities. Writing \textit{is} God as the divine milieu, and so the writing of writing is a writing of God. In other words, God "becomes" theology. Of course, these questions and answers still adhere to an ontotheological bias; however, the referential "about" and the hermeneutical "as" are impossible to dismiss completely. Even Taylor cannot avoid them without running the risk of irrationality. Although he desires to write the nothing that remains after metaphysics is displaced, he must rely on words (\textit{logoi}) that bear a certain logic.
embodiment of différance, the celebration of differing and deferment. Released from the confines of the ontotheological prison, "writing articulates word(s) by inscribing an errant margin that simultaneously joins and separates opposites." Specifically at the point of the margin, "the word appears divine . . . divine insofar as it is the creative/destructive medium of everything that is and all that is not." In this kenotic process of inscripturation, not only is God dead, but the "eternal play of the divine milieu [means that] nothing is fully autonomous or solely sovereign."

To think the death of God in this manner allows one to think the nothing that ontotheology has left unthought. To think this nothing should not be construed as a via negativa. Taylor is not merely trying to get beyond finite categories to reference the ineffability of God. He attempts to think the nothing, the difference as difference,

109 Ibid., 108.

110 Ibid., 116. This notion of the divine reads like Tillich's second formal criterion for theology: "ultimate concern is that which determines . . . being or not-being" (Systematic Theology. 3 vols. [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963], I: 14). Of course, Taylor situates Tillich in the ontotheological tradition; however, it is interesting that both use similar ideas with reference to the divine.

111 Taylor, Erring, 118. Hodgson proclaims Taylor's identification of writing and God as "simply pre-posterous" ("Review," 258). He contends that the "true God" may be mediated through language; however, to equate the two "is a reductio ad absurdum" (Ibid.). Such a reduction ensues from Taylor's forgetting difference and dialectic.
by thinking otherwise. Since there is nothing outside of writing, the divine milieu vectors centripetally not centrifugally. This centripetal thinking thinks "the wound of time," the eternally recurring deferment of meaning and presence. This deferment implies that there can be no closure; therefore, there can be no system, no presence, no identity. Writing always "is the interplay of presence/absence and identity/difference" that acts as the "nonoriginal 'origin' of all being and nonbeing." The inscribing of the sacred within the "lacunary silence of writing" leads to the "eternal dissemination of the Word." One

---


114Hodgson accuses Taylor of caricaturizing the theological traditions of the West. Those traditions are much more subtle than Taylor implies. For example, Hodgson maintains that the traditions have admitted that divine presence is never total. God is always mediated through signs, only "'appresented' in what is historically and experientially available. . ." (Hodgson, 257). Hodgson continues, however, by announcing an "eschatological verification" of the divine reality as the conclusion to the theological process. Of course, Taylor construes such eschatological talk as an ontotheological attempt at closure.


116Taylor, "The Anachronism of A/Theology," 35. Taylor's terminology here--"lacunary silence"--startles to a certain extent. His acceptance of Derrida's critique of ontotheological phonocentrism with its inflation of speech over writing does not seem consistent with his metaphor here. Silence is an oral phenomenon; writing cannot really be silent for it does not speak. In using this phonocentric sign, Taylor undermines the radicality of his own critique by importing into writing something belonging to speech.
could say that "God the signified is interpreted and lives again in God the signifier."\textsuperscript{117}

Although willing to associate to a degree with Altizer's Christian atheism, Taylor refuses to respond in kind to humanistic atheism. The latter "denies God in the name of self by transferring the attributes of the divine Creator to the human creature."\textsuperscript{118} In doing so, s/he fails to escape the logocentric desire for a center.\textsuperscript{119} Still participating in an economy of presence, the humanistic atheist exchanges the divine center for a human one and shifts classical theology to anthropology.\textsuperscript{120} The death of God occurs at the hands of "rebellious and self-confident human beings."\textsuperscript{121} This Promethean rebellion against the divine ensues from a "psychology of mastery and [an] economy

\textsuperscript{117}Dean, "Deconstruction and Process Theology," 14.

\textsuperscript{118}Taylor, \textit{Erring}, 13-14. Ludwig Feuerbach's atheism is the classic foundation for contemporary humanistic atheism. Feuerbach maintains that God is but a projection of ideal human qualities (\textit{The Essence of Christianity}, trans. George Elliot [New York: Harper and Row, 1957], 29-30, 33-34). He holds to a functional view of religion by arguing for the maintenance of those ideals and the realization of the religious within ethical communities. In a certain way, deconstructive a/theology stands in the same tradition, since it, too, establishes its critique on the recognition that all "permanent representations of the salvific" are only projections (Raschke, "The Deconstructive Imagination: A Response to Mark Taylor," 39). The significant difference according to Taylor concerns the replacement of the sovereign deity with a sovereign humanity.

\textsuperscript{119}Taylor, \textit{Erring}, 25.

\textsuperscript{120}Ibid., 14.

\textsuperscript{121}Ibid., 20.
of domination."\(^{122}\) Using Hegel's interpretation of the master/slave relationship as a rubric, Taylor explains that humanistic atheism betrays both resentment and narcissism.\(^{123}\) Reacting against the classical theism of ontotheology with its models of God as judge and master, humanistic atheism revolts in the name of freedom; however, this revolt becomes revolting in that the individual becomes master, takes the place of God as judge, and thinks herself as sovereign over everything.\(^{124}\) This sovereignty then leads to a domineering consumerism. The psychology of mastery and the economy of consumption eventually lead to humanism's becoming inhuman.\(^{125}\) They also lead to nihilism.

\(^{122}\)Ibid., 30.

\(^{123}\)Ibid., 24. Taylor agrees with Heidegger and Derrida that ontotheology "is a metaphysics of violence [because] . . . [t]he discourse of presence . . . is incapable of respecting the other as its own finite occurrence" (Nona R. Bolin, "Deconstruction and Onto-Theological Discourse," in God in Language. eds. Robert Scharlemann and Gilbert Oguti [New York: Paragon House, 1987]:68).


\(^{125}\)Taylor, Erring, 28. Taylor makes a strong case here for the unethical repercussions of humanistic atheism. In another text, he argues that a death of God a/theology finds "its completion in . . . the resurrection of universal humanity" (Taylor, "Text as Victim," 73). Such a call for a more ethical human community, one void of the consumerism, domination, and utilitarian instrumentalism of modernity, is laudable. Interestingly enough, however, this a/theological ethic reads remarkably similar to Altizer's notion of the Kingdom as Total Presence.
in that consciousness becomes acutely aware of its nothingness when it becomes "the foundation of everything."\textsuperscript{126} Such a nihilism is a sign of weakness and not strength;\textsuperscript{127} therefore, what began apparently as an act of strength and assurance is discovered to be an act of fear and uncertainty. The humanistic atheist fails to understand, primarily because s/he remains a sycophant to ontotheology, that deicide entails suicide. The undecidability of writing not only denies the self\textbackslash presence of deity but also the self-presence of consciousness. As Taylor so poetically expresses it, "[o]n Golgotha, not only God dies; the self also disappears."\textsuperscript{128}

\textbf{The Self Disappears with a Trace}

Taylor takes seriously the biblical notion of the \textit{imago dei}; that is, he takes seriously ontotheology's preoccupation with this notion. If selfhood is iconographically related to the being of God, then the self becomes a "theological conception."\textsuperscript{129} Actually the theological conception of selfhood as developed in Christianity transfers the idea of image to a second level. This transference may be seen particularly in the philosophies of Hegel and Kierke-

\textsuperscript{126}Taylor, \textit{Erring}, 32.

\textsuperscript{127}Ibid., 33.

\textsuperscript{128}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{129}Ibid., 35.
gaard, whose different theories of selfhood develop out of a
definite Christocentrism.\textsuperscript{130} Christocentric selfhood de-
dtermines that the self must become an image of an image. In
other words, since Christ is the image of the Father, and
the Christian is to be an image of Christ, then the \textit{imago}
dei must in actuality be the \textit{imitatio Christi}. In this
extension of imaging, Taylor discerns an inchoate decon-
structive possibility. Self becomes the realization of an
imitation of imitation, an image of an image, a sign of a
sign.\textsuperscript{131} Such meta-imaging intimates the undecidability
and dissemination of writing.

Of course, as usual, the ontotheological tradition does
not exploit the latent critique in this notion; instead, it
heals the wound of reflexivity by applying the salve of
presence and unity to the concept of self. Finite subjec-
tivity mirrors infinite subjectivity in that the individual,
like God, exists in the self-presence of self-consciousness
and orders the manifold of reality from the perspective of
her/his own subjectivity. The subject becomes the standard
for reality by subsuming the difference of otherness under
the unity of her/his own thinking through the process of
reflexivity.\textsuperscript{132} Augustine’s analysis of time serves as an
interesting example of this notion of the self-presence of

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{130}Taylor, \textit{Journeys to Selfhood}, 106.
\item\textsuperscript{131}Taylor, \textit{Erring}, 40.
\item\textsuperscript{132}Ibid., 39.
\end{itemize}
self-consciousness. Augustine determines that the past and the future cannot have being, since for Augustine, a good Western logocentrist, being is presence. There can only be the present; consequently, the past is the present of things past and the future is the present of things future.\textsuperscript{133} These three "presents" exist in the mind of the individual in the forms of memory, sight, and expectation.\textsuperscript{134} As a result, the self-present, self-conscious self acts as the unifier of the three temporal ectases.

The theological conception of the self can be further extrapolated from Augustine's example with reference to the propensity to narrativize existence. Augustine's thoughts on time appear in his \textit{Confessions}, a narrative acknowledgement of his sins and God's providence. This acknowledgement takes the form of a writing (\textit{graphe}) of Augustine's life (\textit{bios}). In unifying his life by plotting the various episodes of his existence according to a certain narrative "logic," Augustine becomes a symbol for "Everybody." He does what every person does either implicitly or explicitly. The drive for unity and identity impels the self to construct through recollection and anticipation a life story, an auto-biography. Through the constructive activity of representing origin, plotting episodic development, and projecting desired conclusions, the self mediates completion


\textsuperscript{134}Taylor, \textit{Erring}, 43.
and self-centeredness through story. Although actual closure cannot take place until after death, the very desire for closure betrays the archeo-onto-teleological "foundation" of selfhood. Recognizing this fact, Taylor suggests that the centered self "is more a literary creation than a literal fact."\(^{135}\)

The self-centeredness of the theologically-conceived self is expressed further through the act of denomination, since "[t]o be a self is to possess and to be possessed by a name."\(^{136}\) The naming of the self must be a proper naming in the etymological sense of *proprius*--"that which is one's own, special, particular, peculiar, not held in common with others."\(^{137}\) This need for the proper, a proprietary need to possess, to appropriate otherness into self, serves as another basis for self-presence. An individual who "is not fully self-possessed, completely proper, and totally autonomous is not really (a) (it)self."\(^{138}\) This "proper self" eventually requires the death of God in order to be itself. This is the "self" that founds the sovereign self of humanistic atheism. With the death of the creator God, the creative subject can construct the world in its own image and

\(^{135}\)Ibid., 45. "Not only belief in God but belief in the subject seems to be intrinsically related to faith in grammar" (Ibid., 132).

\(^{136}\)Ibid., 34.

\(^{137}\)Ibid., 41.

\(^{138}\)Ibid., 130.
by its own Logos. Yet the principles of presence and identity that once rested in the idea of God, now take up residence in the self-presence of the autonomous "I." Taylor insists that the death of God as the transcendent signified without the death of the self as the self-present center of subjectivity remains a modern, classically metaphysical idea. He rejects that the death of God results in the liberation of a "Godlike" self. Postmodern a/theology must relinquish the theological notion of the absolutely transcendent and or immanent deity as well as the theological notion of the centered self. The dissemination of the word in writing denies any principle of centeredness or unity; therefore, the solitary self transcendent to other selves must be rejected.

Yet, as the death of God does not necessitate the disappearance of the divine, the death of the self does not require the total rejection of self. The "self" can

---

139Taylor, Altarity, xxii.
140Taylor, Deconstruction in Context, 3.
141Taylor, Deconstructing Theology, 89.
142Taylor, Erring, 134-37.
143Taylor, Deconstructing Theology, 102. Farley inquires into what exactly Taylor means by the disappearance of self. He assumes that Taylor cannot mean that there is no existing individual who desires, plans, and acts. He asserts that what has disappeared "is an interpretation, not the self. The self remains to be reinterpreted by Taylor himself" (Farley, 21).
be salvaged through the notion of trace, an imprint of a presence that is not really present but present in its absence. This tracing of selfhood derives from the process of interrelationship. Taylor definitely betrays his Hegelian and Kierkegaardian influences here, although those influences have been mutated by the deconstructive catalyst. In his early work on selfhood, Taylor makes the point in criticizing Kierkegaard that one cannot prosecute the idea of self without considering relationships. For him, "to be is to be related." Outside relations, "the self remains totally abstract, utterly indefinite, and completely incomprehensible." The solitary autonomous self standing atomistically over against alterity, finally asserting itself through possession and oppression, must die in order for a self-lessness to replace a self-ishness. This replacement leads to the establishment of generosity, "a psychology of sacrifice and an economy of spending that subvert the possessive psychology of mastery and the acquisitive economy of domination." Now the subject can be

144Taylor, Journeys to Selfhood, 274.

145Murphy and McClendon claim that Taylor fails to "kill" the atomistic, autonomous self. They base this critique on his negligence toward the role of community ("Distinguishing Modern and Postmodern Theologies," 211). Perhaps the problem is not so much Taylor's de-emphasizing community, since one can argue that he does sincerely wish to establish the importance of interrelationship as constituent of "self," but is instead his inability to give reasons for such community.

146Taylor, Erring, 143.
understood as "a complex matrix of ever-changing relations situated in the midst of an extensively and intensively differentiated milieu."\textsuperscript{147} In this "differentiated milieu," "the absolutely relative divine milieu,"\textsuperscript{148} the disappearance of the self is the "birth of universal selfhood in which each becomes itself by relation to all."\textsuperscript{149} This process of interrelation is a process of tracing, the marking of presence and absence. The trace is always related to other traces and involved in the temporality of becoming. Consequently, "the trace can be represented by the \textbf{cross} that marks the place where identity and difference, as well as presence and absence, repeatedly intersect."\textsuperscript{150}

The process of tracing binds the different marks of universal selfhood together in reciprocal relationships. Such reciprocity opens the possibility of suffering, since in the complementarity of the differentiated, divine milieu

\textsuperscript{147}Ibid., 133. This statement is probably an a/theological circumlocution for "community." As mentioned in the previous footnote, Taylor may be chided for failing to argue strongly enough for an ethical community of reciprocity; however, he does suggest the possibility of communal reality if in no other way than through his use of postmodernity as his primary perspective. David Ingram observes that postmodernism must at least acknowledge a community of discourse so that everyone can agree to disagree ("The Postmodern Kantianism of Arendt and Lyotard," \textit{Review of Metaphysics} 42 [September 1988]:52). Consequently, Taylor must admit that his "extensively and intensively differentiated milieu" resembles(?) the more traditional notion of community.

\textsuperscript{148}Taylor, \textit{Erring}, 137.

\textsuperscript{149}Taylor, \textit{Deconstructing Theology}, 102.

\textsuperscript{150}Taylor, \textit{Erring}, 138.
auto-affection has been replaced by hetero(theo?)-affection. The kenosis of the divine in writing affects the kenosis of the self in tracing. This mutual suffering forms an adhesive that binds all together in compassion.\textsuperscript{151} Compassion then leads to the disruption of the mastery and domination characteristic of the modern "self" and replaces it with "generous expenditure," the radical risk of self-sacrifice.\textsuperscript{152}

\textbf{The Ending of Beginning and Ending}

If one denies God as the Alpha and Omega, and one denies the narrativizing of the centered self, then one has implicitly denied history.\textsuperscript{153} This is certainly the case

\textsuperscript{151}Ibid., 142.

\textsuperscript{152}Ibid., 144. In the context of this thesis, Taylor’s emphasis on suffering is especially appropriate. Unfortunately, his postmodern theory fails to offer criteria by which to evaluate self-sacrifice as a "good." Of course, Taylor would argue that the request for criteria is an ontotheological request; however, if one is to judge ("criterion" derives from the Greek "to judge" or "to decide") that domination is to be rejected and universal concern is to be accepted, one implies that there are some "reasons" for the decision. This thesis argues that theopassionism, a theology of a suffering God who respects and loves alterity, can offer an ethical criteriology promoting tolerance, acceptance, and altruism, while concomitantly critiquing orthodox ontotheology and its problematic ethical implications. Theopassionism can accept the death of God without understanding that death in the manner given expression by Dostoyevsky: if God is dead, then everything is permitted (cf. Hayden White, \textit{Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism} [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978], 270). The death of God in Christ puts important limits on the exercise of freedom.

\textsuperscript{153}Taylor, \textit{Altarity}, 239; Taylor, \textit{Erring}, 54.
within the context of Western ontotheology. Structurally, history has been interpreted as "the domain where divine guidance and human initiative meet," not in some random pattern but in a sequenced teleological process.\textsuperscript{154} Two primary paradigms have shaped this process: history as linear or history as circular. Both paradigms—the former more Hebraic and Christian, the latter more Greek—seek to "ease the trauma of dislocation by weaving scattered events into a seamless web"\textsuperscript{155} that purports to offer "a total presence, undisturbed by difference and absence."\textsuperscript{156} Both line and circle are "forms of closure and figures of plenitude that serve as totalizing metaphors."\textsuperscript{157} Consequently, within the framework of logocentrism "[h]istory . . . is a theological notion."\textsuperscript{158}

Western views of history mirror Western views of God and self in that they attempt to found presence and identity through a structured process of existence that synthesizes

\textsuperscript{154}Taylor, Erring, 7.
\textsuperscript{155}Ibid., 70.
\textsuperscript{156}Ibid., 69.
\textsuperscript{157}Ibid., 70.
\textsuperscript{158}Ibid., 53. Schneidau distinguishes biblical models of history from Hellenistic ones with reference to the importance of time in the former. The Bible accents temporality and mutability; Greek models center on timelessness and immutability. He argues that logocentrism develops out of the latter and not the former (Schneidau, 14). Consequently, Taylor's denunciation of logocentric views of history may not actually be detrimental to accepting biblical paradigms.
the many episodes of reality into a beginning, middle, and end. As the individual self narrativizes her/his "self" in order to center identity, so also at the transpersonal level some semblance of order and purpose must obtain so as to grant a systematic plenitude to all of reality. One should not be surprised, therefore, to discover that Augustine not only writes the *Confessions* but also the *City of God*.\(^{159}\) Taylor argues that especially in monotheism the "oneness of God and the integrity of self require the unity of history."\(^{160}\) Reality has a beginning, an *arché*, and it will have an end, a *telos*. An archeology and teleology of the ontotheological historical tradition reveals a dependence,

\(^{159}\)Taylor, *Erring*, 54. For an interpretation of *City of God* as a theological narrative see Curtis Freeman, "Reading St. Augustine's *City of God* as a Narrative Theology." unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Baylor University, 1990.

\(^{160}\)Taylor, *Erring*, 65. Taylor goes on to say that for this reason monotheistic religions demand that "sacred stories . . . leave no loose ends" (Ibid.). His statement can be questioned, however, given the nature of various biblical narratives. For example, taking the sacred story in Genesis 3 concerning the "beginning" of evil, one discovers that evil's origin is never explained but simply presumed. The serpent's genealogy is short to say the least, stating only that it was one of the beasts that Yahweh created. That beast is already in Eden as the principle of temptation before there is any sinful act. One is left, therefore, with a loose end regarding the why of evil's presence. Of course, Taylor is correct in that subsequent interpreters in the logocentric tradition have tried to piece together a story that would tie up this end, specifically the story of a fallen Lucifer. Such Miltonian attempts at explanation should not, however, detract from the biblical propensity toward aporia.
as usual, on the logos as the string tying it all together. This logical knotting of the loose ends is a way of escaping temporality.

The postmodern a/theologian can no longer accept the logocentric totalizing of Western historiography. The graphing of history must be reinterpreted from the perspective of the deconstructive writing of différencé. With the death of God and the disappearance of the self, the archeoteleological inscripting of history must be displaced and subverted by the process of erring. Erring ends "all endgames by keeping openness open and showing every mark [trace] to be incurable." The errant a/theologian again transgresses the margins, strays from the straight path, and follows a purposeless serpentine route starting nowhere and leading nowhere.

The openness and aimlessness of erring need not be nihilistic. Actually, it can prescribe a response to "history" that overcomes the latent nihilism characterizing

161Ibid., 61. The "logos string" tying history together broaches the matter of language and event. If history were merely language, the events would have no meaning. If that language reduced historical events to images of the logos, those events would "add nothing to reality" (Dean, "Deconstruction and Process Theology," 4). One must preserve a dialectic between word and event in order for history to avoid a meaningless logocentrism or an incomprehensible surd of manifold incidents.

162Taylor, Erring, 151.

163Ibid., 155.

164Ibid., 157.
metaphysics. The erring a/theologian recognizes that logocentric history has always been the domain of the unhappy consciousness. The search for the "enjoyment of plenitude" and "pleromatic conformity" has been a "Faustian quest" to deny death. The unhappy consciousness is dissatisfied, always recollecting a past glory or anticipating a better future. Such a process is inchoately negative, since the individual in pursuing an unrealized (and unrealizable) satisfaction constantly strives to become what s/he is not. In a perverted sense (that is, properly errant) nostalgia and hope exhibit a nihilistic dynamic.

With reference to its religious character, this negativity results in a sense of guilt and sin. With the belief

---

165Ibid., 69.
166Ibid., 68.
167Taylor's deconstructive erring may also be interpreted as a reverberation of the unhappy consciousness. That consciousness might not express itself only in the nostalgia for the past or anticipation of a future; it might express itself also as a denial of both. Not able to discover meaning in temporality, the erring a/theologian creates meaning through its denial in aimless cavorting. What purports to be a demonstration of postmodern courage could well be another form of wounded denial. Robert Gall intimates such an understanding of an a/theological unhappiness when he claims that the future perfect is the preferred tense for postmodernity. Post-modern is always concerned with the "after just now"; that is, it yearns for the "will have been" of a future that is nowhere and no time. This yearning divulges an almost metaphysical resentment toward the imperfect, the "it was" ("Of/From Deconstruction," 425). Not being able to cope with the loss and the not yet of past and future, a/theology denies both in order to drown its sadness in a Dionysian orgy of eternal recurrence.

168Taylor, Erring, 151.
that a transcendent deity observes the actions of human beings, unhappy "selves" feel their alienated consciousnesses transform into lacerated consciousnesses.\textsuperscript{169} If one rejects the notions of origin and ending and accepts the death of the logocentric God, such a negative process of guilt and sin no longer threatens. The erring view of history allows no fall, no exile, or no sin. As Taylor writes, "[i]f primal plenitude is never present and absence is 'original,' then lack does not inevitably entail loss or deficiency."\textsuperscript{170} Consequently, one does not have to accept the absence of a center as a loss.

If one does not respond to lack with a sense of guilt or remorse, then what is the "proper" response? Taylor prescribes a twofold response: resignation and acceptance.\textsuperscript{171} Although recognizing the inevitability of a labyrinthine existence,\textsuperscript{172} the erring "self" embraces that puzzle and draws from it a sense of grace. History then becomes the arena of "mazing grace," the grace that comes from grasping the aimlessness of the maze by engaging in the gratuitousness of play.\textsuperscript{173} This acceptance of the grace-

\textsuperscript{169}\textit{Ibid.}, 152.
\textsuperscript{170}\textit{Ibid.}, 155.
\textsuperscript{171}\textit{Ibid.}, 166.
\textsuperscript{172}\textit{Ibid.}, 62.
\textsuperscript{173}\textit{Ibid.}, 168. Derrida identifies two possible interpretations of nontotalization. The first depends on the recognition that no finite perspective can view the entire
fulness of play separates a negative a/theology--reduced to mere resignation--from an affirmative a/theology--the Dionysian acceptance of the comedic implications of the frivolity of the maze. Playing denies that there are any goals or ends and, therefore, that there is any meaning or purpose. Play serves no utilitarian function; it is frivolous and useless. Yet such a playfulness contributes to the errant rejection of the psychologies of mastery and domination. Since the latter ensue from a legalistic utilitarianism, the rejection of that origin allows for the freedom to overcome the unhappy consciousness. Such gratuitous playfulness inverts the world and questions the norms of the law of the reasonable and the useful.

Like some comedic Doppelgänger of the Apostle Paul, Taylor's "good news" is that salvation comes through play field of infinite possibilities. This interpretation rests on the theory that "there are more things in heaven and earth" than dreamed of in any philosophy. Ontotheology actually could accept such an idea of nontotalization. The second interpretation states the opposite: nontotalization occurs because there is a lack, an aporia, "something missing" in the field (Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 289). Language fails to achieve closure because it infinitely substitutes signs only because it is a finite system. Derrida appears to be engaging in some sort of linguistic fractals at this point.


176Derrida claims that prior to examining the different forms of play in the world, one must understand playing "the game [of] the world . . . (Of Grammatology, 50).
The salvific playfulness of erring lends a carnivalesque quality to existence. Carnival (derived from the Latin for flesh) inverts and subverts the norms of the "straight" world and revels in the transgression of the proper. Carnival embodies the transgressive play of dissemination through aberrant language and madness/foolishness. In doing so, it replaces tragedy with comedy, tears with laughter. Laughing as resignation and acceptance repeats the "eternal recurrence of the divine milieu." In a certain way, the carnival of erring reprises the imago dei by patterning the tracing of self in the process of play according to the differ-"antial" play of

177Taylor, Erring, 160. The question arises whether a/theology does not offer a sort of perverted postmodern Calvinism. In other words, is the atonement offered by an erring a/theology open for all or limited to the "elect," those who have the luxury to play? In a certain way, a/theology could be construed as a restrictively narcissistic redemption, since it depends on the comic for its justification. Gall maintains that ultimately comic laughter imprisons "consciousness so that the mocker loses all contact with reality and takes nothing seriously but the gratification of his own pleasure (i.e., living for the laugh and doing anything to experience it)" ("Of/From Deconstruction, 422). Such an egocentric "grace" cannot ensue in any serious ethical commitment. Notwithstanding Taylor's constant chiding of ontotheology for its failure to appreciate otherness, his alternative model rejects any real consideration of the other as other. The other can only be an instrument utilized for self-gratification. Ironically, a/theology can actually lead to the kind of oppressive, domination-centered historical process that it seeks to replace.

178Taylor, Erring, 161.

179Ibid., 163-65.

180Ibid., 166.
writing as the divine milieu. Divine grace expresses itself through the "amen" uttered to the maze, the "So be it" that revels in the lack of closure.\textsuperscript{181} The divine in this sense is not only the Christ incarnate in scripture but also Dionysus, the Anti-Christ, the god of intoxication and revelry. These two "names" for the divine demonstrate that "carnival always contains a cruel element, and comedy is never simply funny."\textsuperscript{182}

The "end" of an errant view of history is that history does not end; there is no Apocalypse. Taylor argues that to think the end from a postmodern perspective is to think the end "otherwise than as the end of theology by thinking ending a/theologically."\textsuperscript{183} To think this end that is not

\begin{footnotes}
\item[181]Ibid., 167.
\item[182]Ibid., 168.
\item[183]Taylor, "Nothing Ending Nothing," 49. Derrida's attitude toward the apocalyptic may offer an interesting critique of Taylor. Derrida questions those who take on "the apocalyptic tone" and determines that whatever they may write always concerns the "truth" ("Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy," \textit{Semeia} 23 (1982):84). Their writing takes on a revelatory character, since they purport to explain what will happen at the end. Furthermore, he professes that any language about the apocalyptic is itself apocalyptic; in other words, the apocalyptic as an object of discourse can only be investigated within the apocalyptic as literary genre (Ibid., 90). From these two Derridean perspectives, it would appear that Taylor cannot avoid undermining his a/theological discourse on the end. That discourse reveals something about the end in its denial of an end. Taylor writes what he thinks to be "true" about the putative conclusion to the process of life: it will not come to any type of closure. Yet, in making such an assertion, Taylor presupposes an Archimedean posture over against the "whole" that he claims has no reality. His statement, becomes an affirmative qualification of what he denies.
\end{footnotes}
the end of theology, one must think what theology has left unthought, that which is "beyond" the end of theology. In lieu then of an apocalypse, which would bring closure to the process, the a/theologian thinks the end as disaster, "an end that is never present--an end that does not, indeed cannot arrive."  

Postmodernity and A/bibliographic Textuality

Notwithstanding its phonocentric preoccupation, logocentrism has always been a bookish metaphysics. Although the propensity to write conflicts with the veneration given to spoken language, the closure symbolized in books does cohere with the basic drive for plenitude that marks the Western desire for presence. The book symbolizes the same totality expressed in the metaphysical notions of God, self, and history. It synthesizes origin and conclusion by weaving a tight fabric of meaning and reference that communicates the unity thought to characterize reality. It achieves this synthesis by following logical rules of conjunction and teleology. Consequently, the book expresses in

---


185 Taylor, "Nothing Ending Nothing," 64. Gall reports that no matter how much theological deconstructionists may claim that there is no end but only disaster, they "share an apocalyptic vision of a brighter future for theology and religious thinking once they are invigorated by deconstructive insights" (Gall, 413).
unique form the presence of the logos. The book, then, is a theological notion, as are the notions of self and history.

The book extends its theological plenitude through the transmission process of tradition, which attempts to keep the legitimate totality of the culture intact by determining the parameters for orthodoxy and establishing an authority for subsequent generations. As a result, "tradition is authoritative [and] authority is traditional." The tradition establishes its author-ity on the presence of the author. "Author" derives from the Latin "auctor," which means "to originate" or "make grow." The author of a book not only determines its existence, but its essence, and s/he functions as the point of reference for all criteria of meaning. The author, regardless of sexual identity, acts as the patriarch or father who "tries to prevent ille-

186 Taylor, Erring, 88.

187 Ibid., 76. Derrida consociates the ideas of book and totality in such a way as to broach the issue of the "transcendental signified." He contends that the totality of book is synonymous with the totality of signifiers; however, such a totality could not obtain were it not for a preexisting totality of the signified (Of Grammatology, 18). Consequently, the implications of book include the theological cipher of "God" as totality personified.

188 Taylor, Erring, 87.

189 Ibid., 80.

190 "The author is the principle of thrift in the pro-

191 liferation of meaning" (Ibid).
gitimate thoughts and abort bastard deeds." A corollary of this notion of author is the hermeneutical canon of authorial intentionality: the meaning of a book is the intended meaning of its author. This hermeneutical rule exemplifies the logocentric notion of God as the "transcendental signified." The world becomes metaphorized into the "Book of God," and reality bifurcates into two volumes: the Book of Nature and the Book of "His"-story, the narrative of divine/human relations. When God is the legislating author, God gives authority to language and establishes its meaning. In other words, language is one of God's creations and depends upon God for its being and its function.

Language is logos, word, and this logos has been instantiated into the very nature of the universe. Taylor argues that this metaphysical interrelation between God and language results in faith in God concomitantly being faith in grammar.

The logocentric network is now complete. God creates and directs all things; in creating God leaves an image of Godself in that creation--the self; like God, the self has a

---

191Ibid., 88.

192Ibid., 81.


194Taylor, Erring, 80.
center, is present to itself in self-consciousness; the relation between God and selves takes place in history, the archeo-teleological process of plenitude; and every aspect of this network can be expressed and explained in books, logical expressions of the presence of the logos. In theology, for example, the "orthodox" expressions of this network are in books of systems; therefore, systematic theology is one of the purest expressions of Western logocentrism.\footnote{Ibid., 79.}

With the death of God, the disappearance of the self, and the end of history effected in errant a/theology, the metaphysical theory of the book must also be subverted. Taylor questions at this point whether "books are still writable," given that God, self, and history can no longer be written as they once were.\footnote{Taylor, \textit{Deconstructing Theology}, xvii.} The incarnation of word in writing makes language sovereign, but sovereign within the play of \textit{différance} and dissemination.\footnote{Ibid., 91.} The suffering of kenotic inscription manifests itself through the wounds of undecidability and nonreferentiality. The infinite play of signs within the differential(defer-ential) carnival of alterity changes the "identity" of scripture. Once the book has been shattered, the canon (stick) of scripture is broken. Scripture no longer must follow the straight opinion

\footnote{Ibid., 79.}

\footnote{Taylor, \textit{Deconstructing Theology}, xvii.}

\footnote{Ibid., 91.}
of ortho-doxy, but is freed to err endlessly.\textsuperscript{198} Instead of serving as the written authority of meaning, it now becomes an infinitely self-reflexive writing and rewriting with no discernible origin or end.\textsuperscript{199} Meaning is "context-sensitive";\textsuperscript{200} therefore, the protean shifts of errant transgression deny that any context can be absolutized as the standard for the "proper" meaning of any writing.\textsuperscript{201} Meaning becomes improper, and, like the idea of a centered self, becomes more literary than literal.\textsuperscript{202} Correlative with this a/theological inversion of meaning is the denial of language as centrifugal, that is, referring to some extra-linguistic reality. Taylor contends that the a/theologist accepts that "writing is not about something; it is

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{198}Taylor, \textit{Erring}, 179. Schneidau maintains that parables are linguistic models that do what Taylor proposes with reference to undecidability. He states that parables repudiate "the notion that 'everything that can be expressed can be expressed clearly' . . . ("The Word Against the Word," 23).
\end{footnote}

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{199}Taylor, "Text as Victim," 72.
\end{footnote}

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{200}Taylor, \textit{Erring}, 173.
\end{footnote}

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{201}David Tracy agrees with Taylor that meaning is context dependent; however, he does not agree that such dependence disenfranchises the possibility of there being decidable meaning within those contexts that may be comprehended and communicated across contextual margins (\textit{Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope} [San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987], 62).
\end{footnote}

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{202}Taylor, \textit{Erring}, 174. Handelman claims that the demise of the Book and its substitution by the critical text ensues in literary criticism becoming "a kind of substitute theology" (\textit{The Slayers of Moses}, xiii).
\end{footnote}
that something itself." Erring repudiates that any correspondence obtains between language and the world, because the well-established polarity between reality and appearance cannot stand the force of the deconstructive blow of différences. Since an infinite play of appearances constitutes the disseminating revel of writing, there is no reality behind the appearances to which to refer. The "polymorphous play of appearances" induces the denial of a unity of truth and the dynamic of reference; that is, "truth can never be pinned/penned down." The subversive dynamic of différences dissolves the book into textuality; that is, instead of there being complete, self-enclosed volumes with origins and conclusions, there are only texts. "Text" derives from the Latin "texere," "to weave." A text, therefore, is a weaving together, a spinning of different threads into a texture. Every text consequently is a fabric, fabricated out of other texts. For example, theological texts do not reveal any information about an extra-linguistic reality, either a divine being or some sort of religious experience. Instead, each text "refers" to other texts in an unending maze of intertextuality.

---

203 Taylor, Erring, 105.
204 Ibid., 175.
205 Ibid., 176.
206 Ibid., 177.
Intertextuality "mirrors" the intralinguisticality of life in the carnival. Actually, the weaving of texts mirrors the process of quilting more than that of crocheting. Remnants of other texts, scraps of different cloths, are pieced together into new patterns, which are then torn apart through the act of interpretation and reused to create

Charles Winquist states that "behind theology there is only more theology" ("Metaphor and Accession to Theological Language," in New Dimensions in Philosophical Theology. ed. Carl Raschke [Journal of the American Academy of Religion Thematic Studies 49/1]:76; cf. also Wall, 253). Only if some nontextual or nonlinguistic source can be located can there be an escape from intertextuality. As stated above, this inability to discover some extra-textual other involves not only the being of God but also the possibility of religious experience. Even if God is dead, that is, there is no divinity to which theological language refers, one could still salvage some semblance of reference by proposing that theology is language about certain types of experiences human beings have. Technically, Taylor's basic theories deny this as an appropriate tack. Since there is nothing outside of language, there can be no non-linguistic experience to which language points. For Taylor, differance precludes there being any reality outside the play of language. Consequently, so-called "human experience" can only be "experience" of language. Ironically then, Taylor's a/theology may be labelled a version of a cultural-linguistic model of religion. As George Lindbeck argues, religious language does not express a prior experience but evokes experiences in the ones who adhere to that language (cf. The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984, 33). Yet, any variant of this interpretation results in language functioning as a fundament or grounding principle. Taylor's a/theological cultural linguistics invaginates to an archeological position. What is even more interesting, however, is that Taylor contradicts his own "official" position when he claims that "[t]he cacography of many postmodern texts reflects the cacography of much contemporary experience" (Erring, 100). This certainly sounds like a "modernist" view of the relationship between language and experience. Such a statement would lead one to place Taylor in the experiential-expressive model of religious language (cf. Ibid., 16).
new material. The process of interpretation, therefore, recapitulates the transgressive and aimless nature of the writing process. As signs are signs of signs, so interpretations are interpretations of other interpretations. Interpretation no longer strives to recover an authorial intentionality behind the text or a revealed meaning within it. Instead, interpretation seeks to join the Dionysian orgy of carnival and dance upon the boundaries separating and connecting texts. This marginal activity transforms interpreters into "frontiersmen [and] pioneers . . ." Or to maintain the textile metaphor, one might say that interpreters are seamstresses that work along the interstitial threads stitching and unstitching the fabrics of textuality. Consequently, interpretation becomes part of textuality itself. In lieu of there being a text-in-itself, there are the "interpenetrating interpretations" that join the game of inscripturation. No text, therefore, "is a finished product but is an ongoing production which continuously emerges in and through the activity of interpretation."

---


209 Taylor, "Text as Victim," 64.

210 Ibid., 67.

211 Ibid., 66. Hayden White charges deconstruction with the crime of inconsistency vis-a-vis the issue of the individual self. Although deconstructionists desire to critique the notion of a self-conscious, self-present individuality,
Interpretation no longer seeks to discover a "true" meaning to texts, to explicate the proper significance of a particular work. Interpretation joins in the game of writing and in doing so attempts to contribute something to the language about the nothing, the remainder that is not thought, not by really writing about the nothing so much as writing the nothing, inscripting the limit. Taylor calls this type of writing "parapraxical" and claims that it attempts to "do nothing with words," to act performatively to incarnate what lies inside the text as what always remains outside. Consequently, parapraxical writing remains on the perimeter, not so much circumscribing it as "circus"-scribing it, writing the infinite carnival of Word made word.

Taylor quickly warns that parapraxical writing should never be interpreted as a version of negative theology.

---

they actually establish such an anthropology with their hermeneutical theory. The "critical 'I'" stands almost solipsistically over against the mystified text (White, *Tropics of Discourse*, 277). The intertextualism of post-modern experience leads to the "narcissism of the reader . . . [who] looks everywhere and finds only texts, and within the texts only himself [sic]" (Ibid., 265). If one applies this critique to Taylor, one can say that the vanished self reappears as critic, as a/theologian standing over against texts as the pioneer seeking to conquer the divine milieu through interpretation.


213 The notion of interpreting parapraxical writing broaches the accompanying question as to whether one can write parapraxically about the parapraxical. Taylor contends that parapraxis "falls between referential and self-referential discourse" (Taylor, *Tears*, 225); therefore, it
For the negative theologian, nothing is the polarity of being, one of the traditional couplets of ontotheology.  

The a/theological hermeneuticist, however, "interprets nothing as neither being nor nonbeing."  

This inter-


can be neither about something outside of language nor about itself. This "fall," therefore, might be into an Hegelian swamp of double negation. If parapraxis is the writing of the nothing, then parapraxical writing about parapraxical writing would be writing nothing in the writing the nothing. Such writing would then be a writing of something. Of course, one could take a more etymological critical perspective and ask about what could possibly be beside (para) action (praxis). Taylor's response might be "nothing." If there is nothing beside(s) action, then whatever allows praxis to occur would be a/theologically beneficial. What allows human beings to act in the world is, as a matter of fact, some sense of closure, a functional structure that grants a sense of identity, possibility, and purpose (Lawson, Reflexivity, 129). If so, then parapraxical writing would be the theoretical linguistic milieu out of which human beings exist. The critical dynamic of parapraxical writing becomes its refusal to allow apodictic closure and absolute epistemological arrogance, which always deteriorates into an oppressive ideology. The "something" that parapraxical writing writes about in the writing of "nothing" is the openness of human being-in-the-world, or freedom.

Taylor, Tears, 225. Although Taylor declares that a/theology is not a species of the genus "negative theology," not all interpreters agree. For example, Robert Gall recognizes the Kierkegaardian and Hegelian dynamics at work in Taylor's anthropology and theology, dynamics that include the importance of imagination, negativity, Geist, and the dialectic. These dynamics result in Taylor's carnivalesque inversion of selfhood and divinity into "an all-inclusive communing with/community of the divine" ("Of/From Theology and Deconstruction," 424). This community is an a/theological utopianism. which Gall argues differs little from traditional Western theological comedy. He alleges that a/theology, like apophatic theology, negates finite categories in order to "recognize some radical alterity as an ineffable mode of being that forms the constantly present basis for its world-view" (Ibid., 425).

Taylor, Tears, 225.
pretation depends on the "nonsynthetic imagination," which involves disjunction and conjunction. In other words, the nonsynthetic imagination's inducing of parapraxical writing is for the purpose(?) of maintaining the "wound of words." The wound of words is similar to the wound of time in that both continually manifest the unattainability of closure and presence. As a result, interpretation is but another reminder that "[e]rring endlessly opens the mazing grace eternally inscribed in the cross of scripture."  

Conclusion?

How does one "end" a chapter on Taylor's postmodern a/theology? According to Taylor, it cannot end, since there is no ending. What conclusions can be drawn from his writings? Again, according to Taylor, all writing is inconclusive. To conclude is "to shut," "to close," "to seal and secure." It is also "to infer," to draw out of a logical

216Ibid., 226.

217Taylor, Erring, 182. Taylor's insistence on preserving Christian language ("grace," "cross," "incarnation") and its relationship to the sacred or divine in existence seems fascinating. Even though he denies the traditional meaning and reference of this language, he continues to believe that such language still functions successfully to communicate something about the carnival of erring. Joseph Prahbu questions the validity of this ploy. Since Taylor does not intend the "death of God" to mean(?) that particular models of God are dead but that God as an existent entity is dead, why does he not dismiss with the traditional language games that certainly reject the latter notion? Although he applauds Taylor's "deconstructive legerdemain," he thinks that his a/theology is "like retrieving the bathwater after throwing out the baby" ("Blessing the Bathwater," Journal of the American Academy of Religion 54 [Fall 1986]:543).
process of deduction or induction. All of these acts betray a logocentric obsession with unity and presence, comfort and ease, certainty and power. Writing erases all possibilities of realizing that obsession. It opens and leaves open the plurality, absence, uneasiness, and relativity that postmodern people experience. Yet that experience does not necessitate the rejection of the sacred, the religious, or, interestingly enough, not even the idea of God. Postmodern individuals can be theists because they are writers and readers. Their postmodern "God" is more literary than literal.

Taylor "ends" Erring with a paraphrastic reversal of a word from Christ ("It is [un]finished"), a transliteration of a Hebrew word for "agreement" ("Amen"), a translation of that transliteration ("Sobeit"), and an abbreviation with no concluding punctuation mark following a single parenthesis ("(p.s") . One wonders whether the post-script that remains open and unpunctuated might not be a circum-scription, a writing around the carnival that Taylor has proposed in order to reexamine his pre-scriptions. Such a reexamination might lead to a different de-scription of God, self, history, and book. Perhaps one could cut out scraps from Taylor's fabric and use them to reweave a different pattern or piece together another quilt. Through this act of trans-scription Taylor's deconstructive a/theology could be

---

218Taylor, Erring, 184.
accepted and rejected, deconstructed itself in order to think what Taylor perhaps has left unthought.

What has Taylor left unthought? Notwithstanding his insistence that there can be no eschatological denouement to the process of existence and notwithstanding his critique (resentiment?) of any semblance of presence, one might still assume that Taylor would broach the issue of resurrection. After all, he persists in writing in the traditional language of Christian theology, although he certainly redefines that language according to his postmodern paradigm. Why not use the language of resurrection and redefine it? The absence of this idea is troublesome. Edith Wyschogrod designates Taylor's theology "a genuinely Christian theology, a theology centered in Incarnation and Crucifixion . . ."219 If these two ideas serve as the focus for Taylor's a/theology, then it most certainly is not Christian, at least not in the fuller meaning of that epithet. Christian theology includes a third notion, that of resurrection, as an essential element in its model for God, redemption, and humanity. Of course, to broach that issue would raise the problem of presence; however, so do the concepts "incarnation" and "crucifixion." By omitting any even heterodox interpretation of resurrection, Taylor falls far short of doing a "Christian" theology.

219 Wyschogrod, 525.
His problem seems to be an adherence to monotheism, ironically the same problem one finds in Altizer. At best, Taylor develops a linguistic binitarianism, a Father who dies in the inscripting of the Son. Yet where is the Spirit? It is not considered. As Hodgson puts it, Taylor has no third moment in his writing of God. Such a negligence seems incongruous considering Taylor's dependence on the philosophies of Hegel and Kierkegaard, both of whom developed trinitarian models. Actually, his a/theology at this point reads more like Buddhism than Christianity. Again, it is ironic that Altizer's theology reads the same.

Taylor has taken the classical theist model, criticized it, supposedly deconstructed it, and then converted it into a grammatology. He has taken the monotheistic, Hellenistic characteristics of God and applied them to writing. Writing becomes *causa sui*, eternal, and omnipresent. Yet one wonders, in a certain Heideggerian way, whether one can dance before such a god. Hodgson says no. Taylor's God is for those who do not need a God, at least not a God who redeems from sin and death. The privileged can worship Taylor's God, since they have the luxury of time and re-

---


221 Prabhu, "Blessing the Bathwater," 539; Wyschogrod, "Foreward," 526.

222 Hodgson, "Review," 257.
sources to play at the carnival of erring. In a way, their frolicking is something of a redemption, in that it "saves" them from boredom and gives them aesthetic pleasure. But what of those who suffer? What of the "others," the outcast, the disenfranchised, those who have felt the damnation of oppression, the agony of physical pain, and the emotional torment of grief and despair? Life for them is not a game, at least not a frivolous one. Ultimately, Taylor's God of writing offers these "different" individuals no more salvation than does the sovereign God of ontotheology. As the latter is impassible in its perfection so that it cannot truly have compassion, so the former as an aesthetic deity is in actuality an an-aesthetic deity anaesthetizing its worshippers. Neither God can die or suffer on behalf of the radically other, the different, the estranged. Consequently, perhaps neither God is a "proper" reading of the biblical texts.

Ibid., 258.
CHAPTER TWO

DECONSTRUCTING THEISM AND THE LANGUAGE OF MYSTERY

Causabon and Belbo eventually find themselves confronted by the inevitable inversion that occurs whenever human beings, sometime in innocent arrogance, allow their creativity to out-distance their power to control. One might call this inversion "the Frankenstein syndrome." Like the Baron in Mary Shelley's novel, Causabon and Belbo never intend to create a monster. They, too, simply seek to rearrange different parts into a new whole and give that whole some semblance of "life." Their Plan consists of suturing together different texts that in and of themselves have little, if any, world historical significance. Only when woven together by the needle-sharp wits of the protagonists do the textual scraps take on their enigmatic texture. Yet, the resulting Whole revolts against its creators and develops into a destructive Leviathan. The outcome is death--death as the wages of the sin of consorting with secrets.

In some ways, Foucault's Pendulum is a horror novel that warns against the intoxication of esotericism, specifically hermeneutical esotericism. One should take care how one interprets intra- and inter-textually, for one could fabricate a text whose siren call may be as deadly as it is beautiful.¹ Whenever an interpreter purports to have dis-

¹Eco, 532.
covered the secret meaning, the allusive pattern that gives shape and purpose to the unknown or the inadequately known—that is, whenever anyone claims to have answered the riddle of the Whole—that discovered answer might diminish the potency of the assumed totality. There is a danger that one may shame the secret by stripping it of its clothes as if it were some fairy tale emperor and, by that, disappointing its followers who expected much more. The secret becomes somewhat pedestrian once it emerges from its mystery. Of course, one could rationalize the hermeneuticist's attempt to locate the hidden connections and bring to light the darker contours of the secret's form by arguing that such an asymptotic approach contributes to the secret's mystery in that it leads inevitably to a bigger or greater secret. Causabon, himself, entertains something of this rationalization after Belbo has been murdered for not revealing the secret that in truth did not exist. Causabon determines, however, that the revealed secret is trivial compared to the unrevealed. Consequently, there can be no bigger secrets only empty ones.

His explanation of the empty secret reads like Derrida's *différance*, a continuous deferring of meaning. The hermeneutical initiate who seeks to comprehend the secret can never cease her initiation. The Whole is not like an ear of corn that can be shucked, shelled, and finally reduced to its central cob. Instead, it is like an onion
that must be peeled, layer by layer, until there remains
nothing left to peel. There is no cob, no kernel, or no
core; there is only peel and when the layers are gone,
"nothing" literally endures. As a result, Causabon main-
tains that "the most powerful secret is a secret without
content, because no enemy will be able to make [the initi¬
ate] confess it, no rival devotee will be able to take it
from [the initiate]."²

Yet another threat looms over the interpreter who
wishes to explain the riddle. In revealing a secret, one
may be creating and not discovering the solution.
Causabon's lover, Lia, recognizes this threat and scolds him
for creating such a "grotesque" Plan. She accuses him and
Belbo of faking and warns of the dangers associated with
such chicanery. The primary danger is that people will
believe, will actually desire to believe, in the fake.
Interestingly enough, she predicates her argument on a
theological position. She claims that people have "been
told that God is mysterious, unfathomable, so to them inco¬
herence is the closest thing to God. The farfetched is the
closest thing to a miracle."³

Lia is certainly correct when she admits that "mystery"
and "God" have often been joined in traditional theological
language. Given the presupposition that God is by defini-

²Ibid., 621.

³Ibid., 541.
tion ineffable, mystics and negative theologians have long felt the need to struggle with the repercussions of consorting with secrets. Searching for a "proper" way to speak of that which is unspeakable, to understand that which is unfathomable--in other words, to discover (create) a logos that can manifest a forever-hiding theos--often ensues in apophatic agnosticism. Negative theology ostensibly complements God by saying nothing about God except that limited human beings can only say nothing about God. Such a compliment putatively acknowledges God's (w)hol(1)y otherness, God's complete transcendence. God is that secret that has no content--at least no content that can be expressed in human language and grasped (begreifen) by human reason. If God could be comprehended kataphatically, then surely God would be far less a God than most people either think or wish God to be.

Does the secret of God fall victim to the same problems that Eco writes about in Foucault's Pendulum? It certainly may. Negative theology can be the attempt to bring secrets to discourse without thereby revealing them. When one talks

'Derrida recognizes this relationship between negative theology and secrets. He contends that negative theologies have "always been infortuitously associated with phenomena of secret society [sic], as if access to the most rigorous apophatic discourse demanded the sharing of a 'secret'--that is, of an ability to keep silent . . ."("How To Avoid Speaking: Denials," in Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory, eds. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser [New York: Columbia University Press, 1989]:18).
about God, one does not really talk about God, one simply peels back the multiple layers of language without reaching any core. Does this mean that no "core" exists? No, because most negative theologians are not atheists; they do believe that there is some God, only that God never emerges from out of the linguistic layers. If God could be discovered and some specific language game could be appealed (peeled) to as transparent to the deity, the resulting manifestation might disappoint the faithful and trivialize the divine reality. Perhaps it is far better not to attempt to unravel the Gordian knot of God's being. In maintaining the secret of the mystery, one simultaneously maintains the "godness" of God.

Of course, negative theology could also be interpreted as "faking" it. Conceivably, apophatic theorists could be creating secrets as did Causabon and Belbo. Those secrets may be ingenious and convincing but also empty, not because the excess of God's deity cannot be reduced to language, but because there is no deity of which to speak. The hoax arises from the emptiness of absence, the gaping space of deficiency. Since there is no reality to talk about, there are no constraints on the forms that the talk takes. Negative theology, then, would be a linguistic game that no one wins, because winning is not the issue. The raisond'être of the game is merely to keep the ball in play. Unfortunately, as Lia protests to Causabon, the naive think such
cavorting leads to the miraculous and are quick to believe the ruse.

This brief exordium on the topics of mystery, secrets, and negative theology might appear to be a non sequitur given Chapter One’s treatment of Mark Taylor’s a/theology; however, the two subjects do correlate if one considers either that Taylor’s postmodern hermeneutic of the death of God might possibly be another instantiation of the apophatic tradition or that another theological use of deconstruction is to develop a negative theology. Is Taylor’s a/theology another attempt at peeling back the layers of language in order to discover the nothing beneath them? Does his notion of language as the divine milieu suggest that the layers themselves are God and that, accordingly, language is not just the crypt of the inscribed God, but is indeed in its cryptic nature the actual obfuscation of the divine secret? Or, perhaps, is Taylor merely faking? Has he created a grand secret that is no secret? Is he guilty of hermeneutical esotericism in that he has devised the whole, concocted the holes in the whole, and gleefully watches as the naive who believe the secret keep the ball in play while trying not to fall in the holes? Finally, is his the only game in town, or are there other hermeneuticists who offer to play by different rules?

Taylor would certainly answer that his thought is indeed no negative theology. He might, however, agree to a
certain counterfeiting in his a/theology, but that would be just another instance of the play of the carnival, another manifestation of dissemination. He would have to answer the last question with a "no," because there are unquestionably other games on the carnival midway that offer alternatives to Taylor's thought. The following chapters investigate these alternatives in order to identify both the contributions Taylor makes to disrupting classical theism and the problems with his proposed replacement theology. Interestingly enough the notions of negative theology and mysticism play central roles in many of the alternative theories. Although these notions do not always offer theopassionism better options for replacing logocentric metaphysics, they do contribute critically to the necessary Destruktion that can give space to the development of a different model for God.

In moving from Taylor's a/theology closer to a theology of the weakness of God, this chapter will introduce the radical hermeneutics of John D. Caputo. Caputo's theories contribute to this thesis in a number of ways. First, since Caputo's interpretations of Derrida differ from Taylor's, he critiques a/theology as established on a faulty hermeneutic of Derridean philosophy. Second, although more a philosopher than a theologian, Caputo's reading of deconstruction punctuates the ethical and religious possibilities within that approach. His interpretations of Kierkegaard and
Heidegger emphasize the religious themes that lie in the genealogy of deconstruction, specifically the religious themes of mysticism and negative theology that figure so significantly in Heidegger. Third, because these themes have been exploited by other theologians who purport to write theologies influenced by deconstruction, but quite different from Taylor's, Caputo's thought provides a segue to an extended excursus on these other deconstructing theologies. As a matter of fact, Caputo, himself, critically engages one of these theologians in his own writing. Finally, Caputo's ethical and religious sensibilities, while certainly not promoting a theopassionism, do advance this thesis in that direction.

**Radical Hermeneutics as a Different Deconstructing**

Caputo, one of the most prolific and insightful interpreters of the continental philosophical tradition, plays a somewhat different game with Derrida and deconstruction than does Taylor. He does agree with Taylor that Derrida's deconstruction holds notable implications for understanding theology and religion. He insists that Derrida "is not an antagonist of religion but rather a powerful and novel critic of the illusions and tom-foolery to which mortals are prone; and that includes religious mortals." Derrida's questioning of the hegemony of reason certainly includes

---

reason's function within theology. As in other areas of thought, reason in theology invariably excludes something (one), claims more power than it actually has, and alleges to tie up all the loose ends. Derrida seeks to expose reason's arrogance by asking about the excluded, the different, the particular exception. Specifically with reference to the history of theology, this means that deconstruction should seek out the heretics, those whom the "powers that be" attempt to silence, and listen to their voices (or read their writings). Consequently, according to Caputo, Derridean deconstruction has affinities with Kierkegaard's religious stage of existence, which stresses the particular individual over the universal principle.

---

100


7 John D. Caputo, "Beyond Aestheticism: Derrida's Responsible Anarchy" Research in Phenomenology 18 (1988):65. Caputo did not always position Derrida at this Kierkegaardian stage of existence. In an article entitled "From the Primordiality of Absence to the Absence of Primordiality," he criticizes Derrida for lacking any "piety of thinking," for not being "in the service of anything" (199). He argues that Derrida identifies presence as the only thing that possibly could be served; therefore, given the Derridean disavowal of presence, there is nothing to be served or preserved. In other words, for Derrida "the experience of loss has become the loss of experience . . . (200). Caputo contends that such a view reflects the aesthetic stage in Kierkegaard's philosophy. In "Beyond Aestheticism," however, Caputo engages implicitly in a metacritique of his own earlier critique. He argues that Derrida is not an aesthete given over to some type of ethical nihilism but is, instead a responsible anarchist who serves the radical alterity of the other (68). Under this second reading, deconstruction becomes a liberating praxis both hermeneutically and politically. Caputo's reconsideration of the religious and ethical implications of deconstruction figures significantly
Caputo disagrees with how Taylor exploits the religious and theological implications of Derrida. Far from offering "the latest version of death of God theology... an athe¬
ism with a Saussurean twist...," Derrida exemplifies another attempt to de-Hellenize Christianity and acts as another participant in the battle between Athens and Jerusalem. For Caputo, deconstruction in theology develops a "low christology," a logos about the "anointed one" that constantly points out the undecidability of différance and textuality in which the logos remains entangled. He thinks that Taylor's errant reading of Derrida is actually an ab-errant reading, failing to cohere with Derrida's vouloir-dire. Of course, being the good deconstructionist that he is, Caputo does not fault Taylor for choosing to exploit the disseminative potential within the Derridean texts. Derrida, himself, warns against the hermeneutical bigotry of authorial intentionality. Caputo does ques¬
tion, however, whether Taylor, in his tribute to Derrida's contributions to a/theology, should attribute his inter¬pretations to Derrida.

From one perspective, the dissimilarities between Caputo and Taylor center on a basic disagreement concerning

9Ibid. Cf. also "Gadamer's Closet Essentialism," 263.
10RH, 199.
Derrida's claim that there is nothing outside the text. Specifically at this point of referentiality, Taylor and Caputo wander off in different directions. As far as Caputo is concerned, Taylor wanders (errs) away from Derrida. Derrida does not deny that there is a non-linguistic reality, only that human beings can get to that reality outside the various networks of signifying systems. He does not do a "textual idealism" but simply argues that signifiers are not atoms, they never "seize upon a referent so wholly and fully as to detach themselves from the chain of signifiers." As a result, the deconstructionist still may raise the issue of truth, as long as truth is recognized as an effect, not something dropping into the play of textuality from some transcendental beyond. Whatever "truth" an

________________________


12Caputo takes seriously Derrida's own response to the charge of non-referentiality expressed in a dialogue with Richard Kearney. Derrida states categorically that "[i]t is totally false to suggest that deconstruction is a suspension of reference. Deconstruction is always deeply concerned with the 'other' of language" (Richard Kearney, Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984], 123). He refuses to allow deconstruction to be characterized as "a sort of gratuitous chess game with a combination of signs . . . closed up in language as in a cave" (Ibid., 124.)


14RH, 145.
individual, community, or institution may espouse is always "vulnerable, alterable, [and] contingent."  

Actually, Caputo implies that the denial of referentiality, such as put forth by Taylor, exemplifies inauthentic discourse, discourse that is no longer discourse but merely words for words' sake. He rejects any reduction of language to the semiotic, language as only the infinite play of the differential network of signs. Instead, he accepts that language as discourse carries a semantic dynamic. Of course, he recognizes that dissemination opposes semantics, if semantics means some form of forced unity of meaning or transparent reference. He does not, however, reject meaning and reference outright. Discourse—that is, language being used in order to say something about something to someone—hosts the parasite of deconstruction. Derrida, and Taylor, would have nothing to do if language were merely semiotic; there would be nothing to deconstruct.

Since deconstruction does not deny that there may be various existents outside of language, it cannot be taken to

15Ibid, 144.


17RH, 149.

mean necessarily that there is no divine existent outside of the play of signifiers. Consequently, according to Caputo, Derrida's thought in no way inevitably leads to an a/theological atheism. Instead, deconstruction keeps theorists humble, reminding them constantly that no one has a privileged, extra-linguistic perspective by which to arbitrate absolutely the meaning and/or referent of any signifier. With specific reference to discourse about God, deconstruction reminds theorists that "[t]here is no talk of God which does not belong to some differential matrix, no talk which somehow seizes upon God and becomes God's own word."¹⁹ Consequently, the absence of a "transcendental signified" does not signal an atheism but only that theological language, like all discourse, may be used only with fear and trembling.

Taylor's misuse of Derrida's ideas of différance and undecidability actually prohibit him from doing a genuine postmodern "a/theology." Instead of staying on the slash as Taylor purports to do,²⁰ he makes "a reductionist decision against God" thereby diminishing the "ambiguity of a genuine a/theology . . ."²¹ If Taylor were consistent, he would

²⁰Taylor, Erring, 11.
²¹Caputo, "Mysticism and Transgression: Derrida and Meister Eckhart," 29. Caputo makes a similar critique of Thomas Sheehan, who he thinks closes "down the mystery of undecidability and [lets] God disappear into man in a gesture . . . of reduction . . . ("Radical Hermeneutics and
not make any apodictic claim concerning God's existence or non-existence; he would rather remain in between, in the midst of things, staying with the difficulty that characterizes the linguistic play of \textit{différance}. This inconsistency results in Taylor's missing the mark (the "/"), which of course is another way of writing sin or error, since one of the biblical images of sin is "missing the target," erring from the goal. In other words, Taylor errs from his erring by transgressing--stepping across--the boundary between the negative "a" and the positive "theology."\textsuperscript{22} Such an erring actually prematurely closes Taylor's a/theological writing. If God has become \textit{écriture}, the divine milieu, with nothing left over, then Taylor appears to have become the postmodern Hegel who digests everything within the system.\textsuperscript{23} Taylor is not so inebriated by the Dionysian frivolity of the

\textsuperscript{22}Caputo argues that Taylor also errs from his erring with reference to the structure of \textit{Erring}. Taylor's text, which purports to be an announcement that there can be no pattern to thought or life and that the patternless erring remaining after the death of God and self issues in the closure of the book and the openness of textuality, appears to display a definite linearity of argument and a certain bookish closure (Caputo, "Review of \textit{Erring: A Postmodern A/theology}," 107). Taylor fails, in other words, to write a erring text on erring but, instead, writes an "in"-errant book.

linguistic carnival that he cannot make a de-cision, cannot use his stylus as a knife to cut off the possibilities of a different play of theological signifiers. Caputo does not impugn decision an sich but just contests whether one can make decisions decisively. Consequently, he wishes to stay on the line, both in the sense of walking the in-between and in the sense of listening just in case someone calls. He does not think that an individual can simply deny that there is a divine Other, other than writing, who might be playing the game too.

Caputo also disputes Taylor's contentions that the "self" like God is dead. To say that there is no existing someone who speaks, writes, acts, and suffers is ludicrous. The "self" that has died, or should be killed, is the "self" of the absolute "I," the cogito, which stands as the subjective ground for truth and value.24 Derrida, himself, admits that deconstruction does not deny the existence of the subject, only that the subject is "not some meta-linguistic substance or identity, some pure cogito of self-presence; it is always inscribed in language."25 Caputo contends that Derrida's thought allows one to consider anew la condition


25 Kearney, 125.
Again the linguisticality of selfhood does not reinstate the reductionism of Taylor's rejection of subjectivity. That the self traces its being and/or is traced by the play of language, in no way implies that the person has no existence. Certainly, the Cartesian self of modernity and the autonomous self of atheistic humanism no longer can be accepted as valid models of individuality; however, the relational interplay of *différance* suggests a paradigm for writing the self, a paradigm for interpreting selfhood as a reciprocity between the differing of otherness and the deferring of a substantialistic "I."

Caputo also inchoately questions the practical implications of Taylor's a/theology. Notwithstanding all of Taylor's writing about otherness, the oppressed, the economy of domination, and the violence of metaphysics, one fails to find a real concern for the social and political ramifications of deconstruction in Taylor's theories. Caputo's whole philosophy focuses finally on the ethical, on the issues of obligation, otherness, and suffering. Since the ethical dimensions of his thought are so pivotal for understanding his views of religion and so fundamental for exploiting Caputo's thought in the service of the present

---

26RH, 97.


28Caputo eventually comes out against "ethics"; therefore, the word is used here rather naively.
thesis, his ethics of dissemination, Gelassenheit, and obligation will be given fuller treatment in Chapter Four. Suffice it to say at this point, however, there remains a latent critique of Taylor's ethical insufficiency in Caputo's philosophy. The playful "flesh" in Taylor's carnival fails to include the suffering "flesh" addressed in Caputo's ethics.

Notwithstanding the serious conflicts between the two, Caputo does agree with Taylor at salient points. Both agree that ontotheology is a bankrupt metaphysics, still offering promissory notes that it cannot cover. As Taylor wants to deconstruct the major tenets of that tradition--God, self, history, and book--so, too, Caputo assumes a critical stance vis-a-vis that tradition in order to point out its dangerous dissimulations. He agrees with Taylor that metaphysics has always been centered on the idea of presence, which supposedly offers a sense of stability, a point of reference that can found truth and values. Presence withstands the problematic implications of movement, becoming, and change by giving a sense of perspective in the midst of the vertiginous confusion that so often typifies existence. In other words, the metaphysics of presence "has sought the antidote to finitude and the cure for mortality."\(^{30}\) The metaphysics of presence...

\(^{29}\) RH, 1.

\(^{30}\) Caputo, "The Thought of Being and the Conversation of Mankind: The Case of Heidegger and Rorty," 265.
of presence offers this antidote as paradigms or grids that purport to bring order to existence, "drafts of how the Being/beings blueprint should look." The "Being/beings" dichotomy echoes the traditional tension between the One and the Many, a legislating polarity that organizes metaphysics' propensity toward dualities: becoming/being, error/truth, or body/soul. These polarities, with their privileging of the second terms, offer "to give [individuals] comfort, to soften and attenuate" the harsh anxiety of uncertainty.

Caputo, like Derrida and Taylor, recognizes that metaphysics' pharmakon finds expression in logocentrism, the endorsement of logical thinking and transcendental reasoning as the foundation upon which all the grids find their stability. Reason rules like a prince, an arché, a first principle acting as the principal determinant of what is true and good. Reason reigns as a mon-arch separated from the rabble of existence; it is ahistorical, essentialistic, and immutable. Consequently, it can be heard calling individuals to become deaf to the cacophony of the competing voices marking mutable existence. The call is comforting, soothing, almost hypnotic, ultimately becoming soporific,

---

31RH, 175.


33Caputo, "Gadamer's Closet Essentialism," 259.

34RH, 222.
lulling people into a false dream of absolute meaning and certainty. In fine, Caputo’s disgust with the siren call of metaphysics is that it always promises to make things easy. In doing so, it inevitably promises more than it can deliver, for as a matter of fact, reason cannot give reasons for its legislative position. It simply demands to be recognized and to be allowed to conscript individuals into its service, pulling them out of the very history and language that contextualizes their existence.

Like Taylor, Caputo determines that reason and its consorts, foundationalism and metaphysics, need to be subverted. This subversion may be accomplished best through the use of Derrida’s deconstructive practice. According to Caputo’s reading of Derrida, to deconstruct “is not to swing a wrecking ball at [something], but to reformulate it,

---


36RH, 225.

37Caputo, "Presidential Address," 4. Here one may find an implicit critique of the other two terms in Taylor’s "fourfold"—God, self, history, and book. From Caputo’s perspective, a/theology is guilty of the same devaluing of history and language as constitutive of facticity. A/historicity—whether expressed rationalistically in metaphysics or errantly in a/theology—must be rejected, if one wants to take seriously the finitude of human beings. The meaningfulness of language must be rejected in either its representational form in metaphysics or in its autoerotic form in a/theology. Both forms fail to respect the undecidability and difference that characterize textuality.

38RH, 220; cf. Taylor, Erring, 10.
It is a kind of "un-doing." As a result, one does not set out employing deconstruction in order to destroy, "but to shake loose from a text its essential tendencies," to dismantle "the surface apparatus of a thought in order to find its essential nerve, its animating center." By inhabiting the discourse of metaphysics, deconstruction attempts to "complicate things, to restore life to its original difficulty, to show that things . . . do not have pure and unambiguous presence."

Caputo refers to his alternative reading of deconstruction as "radical hermeneutics." With the adjective "radical hermeneutics," Caputo attempts to complicate things, to restore life to its original difficulty, to show that things . . . do not have pure and unambiguous presence.

---


40 RH, 5.

41 John D. Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 247. In responding to this chapter of the dissertation, Caputo acknowledged that his understanding of deconstruction changed after 1983 when he began a more critical reading of Derrida. Prior to this time, he had conflated deconstruction with the Heideggerian concept of "retrieval," resulting in his accepting various non-deconstructive notions such as "essential tendencies," "essential nerve," and animating center." Of course, these ideas continue to betray the metaphysics of presence that deconstruction deconstructs. Consequently, Caputo warns that care should be taken when examining his complete corpus, that one should keep his *kehre* in mind when reading works on either side of 1983 (Caputo, personal correspondence with the author, 1 February 1994). This issue will surface again in Chapter Three where Kevin Hart critiques Caputo's misunderstanding of deconstruction and mysticism.

42 RH, 9.

43 RH, 249.
ical", he hopes to distance himself from the philosophical hermeneutics practiced by Gadamer and Ricoeur, a hermeneutics that he thinks is too reactionary. Radical hermeneutics rejects the "facile transparency" of the metaphysics of presence and determines to stay with the flux, to remain in the midst of the facticity of being-in-the-world. Consequently, radical hermeneutics aims at an epistemological humility, always rebelling against every logocentric attempt to arrest the flux by some metaphysical announcement of presence. It pushes philosophy "to the brink" by denying any exclusive transcendental ground.

Interestingly enough, however, his radical hermeneutics inculcates some of the dynamics of metaphysics. Just as metaphysics attempts to "cope with the flux" by offering a

44RH, 5. One certainly could take issue with Caputo's exclusionary gesture toward Gadamer and Ricoeur. As Caputo argues that Taylor has misunderstood Derrida, so, too, one can bring a similar charge against Caputo with reference to the above two hermeneuticists.

45RH, 7. Kenneth Schmitz argues that metaphysics may be understood as "first principles," and, consequently, as foundational; however, he suggests that "foundational" carries questionable epistemic implications that disenfranchise its continued use. In its place, he calls for the use of the metaphor "roots"; that is, he contends that a metaphysics of principles should be expressed as a "radical" metaphysics. By this, he does not mean extreme but "deep and axial" ("Neither With Nor Without Foundations" Review of Metaphysics 42 (September 1988):13). Perhaps in some self-reflexive manner, Caputo's use of "radical" also points to the inability of escaping metaphysics even in the attempt to deconstruct it.

46RH, 258.

47Ibid., 3.
stance outside the flux, so, too, radical hermeneutics wishes to cope with the flux and not simply resign humanity to the chaotic play of meaninglessness. The significant difference, however, is that Caputo contends that metaphysics always tries to end the flux, not just slow it down or harness its power, but to stop it, or worse, to deny it. Radical hermeneutics would never accede to that strategy. Caputo intends on keeping the flux in play, seeking to find order not outside of it but within it, always recognizing that any order is fleeting, constituted, and cannot be privileged as foundational. He does not aspire to make life impossible, only to make it difficult, or to assent to its actual difficulty, by admitting that what humans know, do, and hope for always include difference, otherness, and mediation. \footnote{Ibid., 7. One might be surprised to hear the echoing of Kant's voice in Caputo's philosophy; however, it is obviously a part of the chorus of radical hermeneutics. Kant's three directive questions--What can I know? What ought I to do? and For what can I hope?--in a certain way structure Caputo's work. Epistemology/ontology, ethics, and religion are prominent roots in his "radical" hermeneutics.}

Caputo prefers to think that deconstruction as radical hermeneutics can manifest the "ruptures and gaps" in human existence without deteriorating into some form of nihilism. Radical hermeneutics "describes the fix [that human beings] are in" and, consequently, raises the serious "question of human existence that does not fall through the trap door of
subjectivism and humanism." In raising the question of the human condition, radical hermeneutics does not distance humanity from the world; it refuses to accept that there is nothing but the play of signifiers, or that the self is dead, or that God is dead. Instead, it admits that humans are inextricably intertwined in a knot of textuality. As a matter of fact, Caputo understands his metaphor, "radical," as implying a "knotted root system," which when applied to language means that textuality complicates referentiality. All referentiality includes "deference, deferral and inescapable delay." There is no transparent correspondence between thought and reality; there is no neat system of coherence; and there are no guaranteed consequences that can establish truth with a capital T and in the singular. As a result, human beings find themselves in the milieu of facticity, in the middle between absolute truth and absolute untruth. Between the absolute presence offered by metaphysics and the absolute absence offered by nihilism, Caputo finds that human beings experience "plenty

49 RH, 6.


51 Ibid, 7-8. Here again one discovers a plausible critique of one of Taylor's "fourfold." Textuality, which for Taylor replaces the Book, does not necessarily imply non-referentiality. Books still may be written, but they cannot be simple, transparent treatises.

52 Ibid, 9.

53 Ibid, 4.
of presence-as-given-to-us-under-historical-linguistic-constraints"--a fascinating compound synonym for the flux.\textsuperscript{54}

Caputo insists that radical hermeneutics does not deny truth, reference, God, history, or human selves. He does declare that all of these notions only come emersed in the difficulty and difference of facticity. He refuses to assassinate the prince of reason; however, he does demand that it abdicate its throne.\textsuperscript{55} Radical hermeneutics uses reason in order to "describe the fix [human beings] are in."\textsuperscript{56} Whereas logocentric rationality seeks to fix the "fix," radical hermeneutical rationality recognizes that the fix is irreparable but not hopeless. Caputo argues that deconstruction does not ensue in irrationalism or confusion, but in the desire to keep the debate open. Such openness can obtain only when exclusionary gestures are excluded, when what is other and ostracized is allowed back into the discussion. According to Caputo, Derrida wants dis-cussion to "shake apart" (dis-quatre) all the ossified, monolithic singularities of reason. In other words, Derrida wants everyone admitted to the agora, into the market place of

\textsuperscript{54}Caputo, personal correspondence with the author 30 September 1991.


\textsuperscript{56}RH, 3, 6.
ideas. Such deconstructive openness to the flux and refusal to prostrate before the powers of reason threaten metaphysics because metaphysics is basically agora-phobic, afraid to go outside and encounter genuine otherness.

Caputo insists on "going outside" to encounter the difference disseminating through the flux. He refuses to accept the comfort and warmth that metaphysics offers against the chill of uncertainty. Instead of sitting motionless in front of the warmth of reason's hearth, Caputo realizes that one exists in the cold, and, therefore, must keep moving so as not to freeze. Consequently, his archi-kinetics, remaining in the fix of the flux, is a hermeneutical moment "in which we recover, discover, retrieve the movement by which we are transfixed." The pseudo comfort

57RH, 197.

58Ibid., 200. Caputo betrays something of a metaphysical motive here in the language that he uses. Writing that radical hermeneutics as an archi-kinetics reproaches metaphysics for denying the movement of the flux by recovering and discovering the "movement by which we are transfixed" ensues in a fascinating bit of reflexivity, of taking back with one hand what the other pushes aside. "Transfix" means "to pierce through," "to impale," or "to hold motionless." In retrieving the movement that transfixes human beings, Caputo's cold hermeneutics interprets the flux as a wounding or tearing of human existence. It also understands the movement in contradictory terms--as a motion that holds individuals motion-less. In other words, the movement itself arrests the play of the flux in that in the midst of the play one may still find one's position, get some bearings, some sense of place. This notion coheres with the disseminative dynamics of "fix," one of Caputo's favorite terms for the flux. To get a "fix" means to determine one's position. So Caputo allows that within the unending flux, one does not drift aimlessly, the victim of whatever currents happen to flow, but may establish a reference point
and warmth of metaphysics give way to the fear and trembling of radical hermeneutics. As a result, Caputo calls for a "cold hermeneutics," a hermeneutics that, like Taylor's a/theology, owes much to the separate critiques developed by Kierkegaard and Heidegger.

Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Repeating the Flux

For both Taylor and Caputo, Kierkegaard models the kind of mistrust of metaphysics that typifies postmodern thought. He is suspicious of systems that ostensibly answer all the questions at the expense of real existence. In Caputo's case, Kierkegaard contributes a prominent term to the critique of ontotheology--"repetition." Caputo professes that Kierkegaard's repetition is "the first 'postmodern' attempt that can give direction and meaning and that allows one to steer and in freedom to determine possible vectors. Such a navigational ploy is the work of reason, not as the ontotheological establishment of absolute grounds, but as the playful con-figuring of the flux. Reason in Caputo's radical hermeneutics makes a "cut into the flux" (RH, 228), pierces it so as to interrupt it briefly but never stopping it. Of course, one must always take care that getting a fix on one's position does not deteriorate into the delusions of metaphysics, the false belief that one can reach a position outside the play. To "get a fix" also means to receive a shot of narcotics: logocentrism as the opium of the people.

59RH, 188-89. As mentioned a number of times above, Caputo's radical hermeneutics always maintains a vital ethical empathy. With reference to his "cold hermeneutics," Caputo declares that "there is also a Frostian sense in my cold, frosty hermeneutics--of the miles to go before we sleep, of the promises to keep" ("Towards an American Pragmammatology: A Response to Professor Sallis" Man and World 22 [June 1989]:257). The "miles to go," another way of writing Sein zum Tode, bestows a practical urgency to existence, what Caputo develops later under the rubric of "obligation."
to come to grips with the flux . . . ."\textsuperscript{60} Metaphysics has always tried to escape the flux through recollection, through a nostalgia for a prior era of stability and certainty. Plato's anamnestic theory best exemplifies this metaphysical recollection. Souls have "fallen" into the flux and must strive through the dialectic to return to the eternal. Consequently, knowing is not a process of discovery but of remembering; its temporal vector is back toward a past, not forward into a future.\textsuperscript{61} Kierkegaard asserts that the same kind of metaphysical denial of the movement of existence also may be seen in Hegel's grand system of absolute spirit. Although Hegel has more sensitivity to the historical process, he concludes by subsuming motion under logical categories.\textsuperscript{62}

In criticizing Plato and Hegel, Kierkegaard censures metaphysics from beginning to end and exchanges the repetitive nature of faith for the recollective nature of trad-

\textsuperscript{60}RH, 12.


\textsuperscript{62}RH, 12. Kierkegaard argues that in modern (i.e. Hegelian) philosophy, repetition has been confused with mediation (Aufhebung). This confusion results in philosophy's making no movement at all, either recollective or repetitive (Repetition, 148). Instead of engaging in motion, modern philosophy "makes only a commotion" (Ibid., 186). The editors of Repetition note that the Danish term Kierkegaard uses for Aufhebung, Ophaevelse, when used with gjøre (to make) means "to make a disturbance, a commotion" (Ibid., 370, n. 18).
tional philosophy. One can become a self only in relation to the source of selfhood—God; and one can enter into relationship with God only through faith, the trembling leap into the abyss where selfhood becomes something-always-being-achieved and not a substantialistic reality already established.63 One always repeats the self and never recollects it. Kierkegaard, like Caputo, does not deny the world, the self, history, or God but maintains that those realities never can be encountered immediately. They are always effects of repetition.

Although Kierkegaard first gave explicit attention to the deconstruction of metaphysics through repetition, Caputo insists that it takes "philosophy professors like Heidegger and Derrida to give his project conceptual formulation and thematic development."64 Heidegger, although critical of Kierkegaard at various points, does develop a philosophy strongly influenced by Kierkegaard's critique. Heidegger's two primary foci are the meaning of Being and the facticity of Dasein, two foci that traditional metaphysics fails to treat appropriately. Metaphysics confuses Being with beings, failing to think the difference between the two, and it functionally denies the real existence of human being-in-the-world by seeking to establish ahistorical grounds for subjectivity. This latter problem moves Heidegger to em-

63RH, 32.

64Ibid., 18.
brace the Kierkegaardian critique, specifically the notion of repetition. As Kierkegaard argued for the primacy of decision and futurity in struggling with the flux, so, too, Heidegger acknowledges the importance of resoluteness and possibility for authentic existence. The issue of possibility, however, moves Heidegger in a different direction from Kierkegaard with reference to the movement of repetition. Whereas for Kierkegaard repetition is always moving ahead, repeating forward, for Heidegger repetition has a certain circularity to it, in that moving ahead in order to constitute the self demands a certain retrieval of possibilities.

Such a circularity also characterizes Heidegger's investigation of Being. He attests to the inescapable ontological dimension of any type of self-becoming. He appreciates the necessity of questioning Being in order to

---


66 Ibid., 186.

67 RH, 91.

68 Caputo admits that Heidegger's use of "Being" has long confused his readers, especially Anglo-American readers. He argues that Heidegger actually accomplishes more when he avoids the term completely. It is in the later essays that one can gain a clearer understanding of what the term denotes. In those essays, Caputo interprets the word as referring to the world in which mortals live. It is "the place of birth and death, growth and decline, joy and pain, of the movement of the seasons, of the mysterious rhythm of human time" ("The Thought of Being and the Conversation of Mankind," 266).
understand the actuality of facticity and to proffer a proper critique of Western metaphysics. If human beings exist in the flux, always related to real existence in time, then that flux will have certain effects on who those human beings are or may become. Only if one considers the ontological contexts and traditions within which and out of which existing human beings live, can a more complete understanding of reality develop. Consequently, Heidegger contends that one must engage in a hermeneutics of Being and Dasein, an Aus-lebung or laying out of existential structures and the meaning of Being.

Heidegger's hermeneutical perspective ensues in a certain conflation of recollection and repetition. As stated above, he bends Kierkegaard's repetition around into something of a circular pattern. There is in repetition a need to recover, to re-collect, or to re-cognize something that is "already obscurely understood." One must question the preunderstanding that characterizes human existence in order to identify the possibilities awaiting actualization. The contention that one can know without presuppositions is another example of the denial of the flux, another instance of the metaphysical hoax that has been perpetrated by Western ontotheology. In order to uncover the

69RH, 81.


71RH, 54.
hoax and overcome it, Heidegger argues that interpretation must include a moment of violence, what he calls Destruktion. Dasein must recover the meanings that have been covered over by the history of ontology. The question of Being, which metaphysics has forgotten, must be raised again by retrieving that question in its originary form prior to the development of metaphysics. This hermeneutical violence is consistent with Aristotle's structure of life as movement or agitatedness. Philosophy must become "polemics," confronting the concealment and dissimulation that metaphysics has used to arrest the flux. This philosophical Kampf is the process of deconstruction, that is, the "dismantling or undoing of a surface apparatus which has been allowed to build up over an originary experience . . . ." 

Heidegger discovers when he undertakes his "destruc-tive" Seinsfrage that metaphysics not only has confused Being with beings but also has failed (or refused) to think the difference between the two. He eventually moves away from his initial program of finding the meaning of Being

72Ibid., 63. Cf. Heidegger, Being and Time, 44.
74Ibid., 65.
toward a strategy for discerning how the difference between Being and beings as a difference gets expressed in the various epochs of the process.\textsuperscript{76} Heidegger uses the German "Aus-tragen," which literally means "to carry away from" or "to bear outside of. It is a translation of the Latin "dif-ferre," differencing."\textsuperscript{77} This differentiating process moves by the dynamics of an ontological fate, a certain destiny of Being that eventuates in different ontological dispensations. These dispensations manifest different ways in which the ontological difference is expressed. The differential expression, however, is not an effect of either Being or beings, but is instead, given by something beyond the polarity, a something that is not a being or Being.

Heidegger does not turn his attention to the different epochs of Being in order to ascertain their various structures; he does not engage in that type of ontological phenomenology. Instead, he focuses on the process itself, the way in which the differing takes place. Through this process, Being plays across the epochs. No longer should Being be understood as ground, as it has throughout Western metaphysics.\textsuperscript{78} Instead, the differencing process should be

\textsuperscript{76}RH, 176, 179.

\textsuperscript{77}Caputo, \textit{Heidegger and Aquinas}, 151-52.

interpreted as a mode of playfulness.\textsuperscript{79} Being has no ground, no sufficient reason for its "being." Being plays without a "why."\textsuperscript{80} Consequently, Dasein must respond to the play by playing along with it.\textsuperscript{81} To do that, however, Dasein must understand the nature of the play and the appropriate way to respond to it.

Two key concepts configure Heidegger's interpretations of the play of Being: aletheia and Gelassenheit. The former, the Greek word for "truth," inculcates the antithetical, but complementary, forces of concealment and unconcealment. Etymologically, the word is a compound of the alpha privative and lethe, "covering"; therefore, the term means an un-covering or manifestation. Within the Heideggerian context, it means "the ongoing, historical, epochal process by which things emerge from concealment into unconcealment . . . ."\textsuperscript{82} Heidegger acknowledges that the play of Being includes both a withdrawing and a revealing. Being never purely, exhaustively "gives" itself in any epoch but always "gives" itself in concealment. Caputo argues that Heidegger's notion of aletheia comes clothed in mythological


\textsuperscript{81}Caputo, The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought, 84; Caputo, "Three Transgressions: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida," 74.

\textsuperscript{82}RH, 177.
garments that must be removed in order to uncover the uncovering of Being. A demythologization of Heidegger will lead to an appreciation of the neologistic function that aletheia plays in Heidegger's understanding of the ontological Spiel. Caputo contends that although Heidegger begins by attempting to hold on to the general definition of aletheia as "truth," he finally has to admit that in the Greek epoch, aletheia did not carry the etymological dynamic of concealing/unconcealing. Consequently, aletheia cannot be read as a Greek word; it must be understood as the "inconspicuous open space within which the history of the names of Being unfolds." Caputo, therefore, re-writes the word with a hyphen, "a-aletheia." In a certain way, it functions homeomorphically to Derrida's différance. Aletheia opens up the clearing within which Being manifests itself as that which conceals itself, the clearing within which the various epochal disclosures of the differ-ering of Being and beings take place.

Caputo emphasizes that for Heidegger the lethe at the heart of a-aletheia not only references a recondite origin but also a type of sheltering or preservation. As a result of the salutary dimensions of a-aletheia, Heidegger calls for a new way of thinking that will respect the

---


84 Ibid., 531.

85 RH, 185.
openness and hiddenness of the sheltering gift of Being. The "salutary" dimensions of a-letheia should never be interpreted as redemptive. As Caputo indicates, "[t]he saving message is that there is no saving message." Yet, Heidegger does go to great lengths to develop something of a soteriological theory of how to respond to the mystery of a-letheia. Simply stated, one would say that the proper response is not a manipulative, technocentric use of reason as a way of controlling Being but is a reverencing of the alethic process and a "letting-be" of the play. Heidegger argues that traditionally Dasein has tried to control the play through representational thinking, the willful subjectivism that presupposes the preeminence of the rational "I." Logocentric metaphysics results from just this type of calculative thinking. Heidegger recognizes, however, 

86Ibid., 186.

87Caputo broaches the "salvific" aspect of a-letheia when he confesses that for him "the only faithful way to think Being is what I call here an alethiology of Being," or . . . an "alethiological metaphysics" (emphasis added) [RH, 377].


89Heidegger makes a technical distinction between calculative thinking and meditative thinking. The former expresses an instrumentalist view of reality, calculating and planning on how to use things for specific purposes. The latter thinks reality without searching for grounds or reasons. It does not mean a "floating unaware above reality" but a resonating with what lies closest (Discourse on Thinking, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund [New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966], 46-47). In the context of investigating Caputo's "radical" hermeneutics, it is inter-
that such epistemological hubris, which he terms Gestell,\(^90\) eventuates from the epochal play of Being; it is a result or effect of the fate of Being's own a-letbic play. If left unchecked, it will continue to deteriorate into the "illusion of technology"; however, by dispossessing the willful type of thinking that underlies the Gestell, Dasein can attain Gelassenheit.\(^91\) Only by releasing willful thinking, moving past thinking as re-presentational to thinking as mediative, can Dasein respond appropriately to the play of Being.\(^92\)

The significance of Heidegger's emphases on a-letheia and Gelassenheit for this thesis concerns the source and implications of the terms. Interestingly enough, much of what Heidegger says about the proper response to the play of the flux comes mutatis mutandis from or is similar to the testing that Heidegger goes on to contend that calculative thinking has led to a loss of the sense of "rootedness" (Ibid., 49). Consequently, Caputo's summons to the radical might be construed as another species of meditative thinking.


\(^91\)Caputo, The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought, 251.

\(^92\)RH, 98-101.
mystical theology of Meister Eckhart.\textsuperscript{93} As a matter of fact, the term, \textit{Gelassenheit}, comes directly from Eckhart's theology.\textsuperscript{94} What Eckhart writes about God and the soul bears an analogical resemblance to what Heidegger writes about Being and thought.\textsuperscript{95} For example, Eckhart believes that God as the highest and purest "substance" is detached from all particularity, change, and plurality. God is not a being, not "this nor that."\textsuperscript{96} The only way whereby the individual soul can attain union with God is by a similar ascecsis. It must detach itself from every particularity and open up a clearing in which God can be God.\textsuperscript{97} By surrendering the self to God through detachment, there is a let-

\textsuperscript{93}Caputo admits that Eckhart serves as one of the "background heroes" of radical hermeneutics, primarily because Eckhart's mystical theology is already a disruption of traditional metaphysics (RH, 268).

\textsuperscript{94}Caputo, "Demythologizing Heidegger," 544; Caputo, \textit{The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought}, 174.

\textsuperscript{95}Caputo, \textit{The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought}, 143-44.

\textsuperscript{96}Caputo, Ibid., 12. According to Caputo, Eckhart disputes the Thomistic contention that God is Being, opting instead for God as Intellect. If God is intellect, God cannot be Being or a being, since for Eckhart the intellect is no-thing. It can know being but without coming under the conditions of being. Consequently, it is indeterminate; one cannot say what it "is." In other words, Eckhart uses something of a \textit{via negativa} to speak about the intellect. It is not surprising that he uses the same approach to speak about God (Caputo, "The Nothingness of the Intellect in Meister Eckhart's 'Parisian Questions,'" 85-115).

\textsuperscript{97}Caputo, \textit{The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought}, 14.
ting be of God's Godhead.\textsuperscript{98} This "letting-be" is \textit{Gelassenheit}. Heidegger borrows Eckhart's conceptual network and uses it to develop a proper tension between calculative and meditative thinking. One cannot simply dismiss calculative thinking and technology. Instead one should be sensitive to the meaning that lies concealed within technology, the meaning that is the mystery that pervades existence. Such a sensitivity is the work of mediative thinking. In mediative thinking, the individual effects the attitudes of "releasement toward things" (\textit{Gelassenheit}) and "openness to the mystery."\textsuperscript{99}

For Eckhart, the mystery is the "Godhead," which refers to the abyss, the divine nothingness, behind all revelations or representations of God.\textsuperscript{100} It lies concealed behind

\begin{quote}
\begin{footnotesize}
\\textsuperscript{98}Ibid., 120.
\end{footnotesize}
\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{99}Heidegger, Discourse on Thinking, 55.
\end{footnotesize}
\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{100}Beverly Lanzetta identifies three manifestations of nothingness in Eckhart's thought: epistemological nothingness, pragmatic nothingness, and christocentric nothingness. The first refers to the nothingness of the intellect, which has already been examined above. The second concerns the notions of detachment and \textit{Gelassenheit}, of living life without why. The proper paradigm for achieving pragmatic nothingness, however, lies in the example of Jesus Christ. Consequently, pragmatic nothingness depends upon christological nothingness, that is, the path of negation illustrated in Christ's incarnation and death. This path leaves open the reciprocity between the Godhead behind the Trinity and the fullness of divine life as expressed in the Trinity. This reciprocity is the bipolar dynamic of \textit{bullitio}, the "boiling over" of the Godhead into the Trinitarian relationships--specifically the intradivine kenosis of the birth of the son--and \textit{ebulitio}, the "flowing out" of the Trinity toward creation. Lanzetta points out that this process of \textit{exitus} and \textit{reditus} cannot be expressed in any definitive
\end{footnotesize}
\end{quote}
every manifestation as that which cannot be represented.\textsuperscript{101}
The soul can only encounter the Godhead as its ground through the relinquishing of all discursive reason. Such an encounter does depend on God's overflowing into the life of the Son both specifically in Jesus and generally within each soul. The "incarnation" of the Son reveals the relationship between God and creation; however, the difference between "God" and the Godhead comes into sharper focus through the divine manifestation in the Son/soul. God speaks his eternal Word into the soul and thereby makes the soul into God's image.\textsuperscript{102} When asked for a reason that might ground this revelation of God, Eckhart responds that there is no theological language. That is what Eckhart means when he writes of getting to the abyss or wasteland of the Godhead behind God ("Three Categories of Nothingness in Eckhart," \textit{Journal of Religion} 72 [April 1992]:248-68). Lanzetta's interpretations of Eckhart raise interesting issues relative to the notion of a suffering God. She contends that Eckhart recognizes that God participates in the process of becoming and unbecoming (Ibid., 264, 266) and that that process inculcates the conditioned reality of creation (Ibid., 268). These two aspects of his thought deconstruct ontotheology with its prejudices against movement and change. A God who cannot change or is not affected by that which is not God is a God who cannot suffer. Of course, theopassionism cannot accept Eckhart's theology uncritically. His "Godhead" behind God and call for detachment seem to display a Neo-Platonic, metaphysical discomfort with distinction and otherness. The nothingness of the abyssal God behind God cannot be entertained as just another Plotinian One. In the language of Caputo's radical hermeneutics, theopassionism accepts that God is in the flux with creation and that genuine otherness, real distinction, obtains within and without the Godhead.

\textsuperscript{101}Caputo, \textit{The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought}, 106.

\textsuperscript{102}Ibid., 113-18.
reason; it is without why.\textsuperscript{103} In like manner, the soul united with God opens a clearing for God and acts without why. It "breaks through" to the divine unity; it follows the way back from creation and incarnation to the source of divine love.\textsuperscript{104} The soul through detachment and "letting-be" breaks through to "appreciate the sheer transcendence of God . . ."\textsuperscript{105} The tension between the transcendence of the Godhead and the unveiling of God through the incarnation in a certain way parallels the polarity of a-letheia-(un)concealment. Although Eckhart does not use the concept "a-letheia," the idea still applies to his mystical theology. Consequently, both a-letheia and Gelassenheit carry certain apophatic connotations.

As Caputo points out, one should not be overly surprised that Heidegger's thought and vocabulary have been influenced by theology. He began his career as a Jesuit novice, and even after his move into philosophy, he continued to display positive attitudes toward Christian traditions. His notion that philosophy must be a struggle comes from Aristotle's idea of kinesis and the New Testament's warning against security.\textsuperscript{106} His privileging of facticity, the concrete being-in-the-world of Dasein, depends in part

\textsuperscript{103}Ibid., 212.

\textsuperscript{104}Ibid., 127-34.

\textsuperscript{105}RH, 269.

\textsuperscript{106}Caputo, "Heidegger's Kampf," 63.
on his reading of the New Testament, specifically as interpreted by Protestant tradition.\textsuperscript{107} Consequently, it seems consistent that in his later theories on thinking and Being, he should continue to draw from Christian traditions, in this case, the mystical tradition of apophatic theology. Caputo makes it clear that one will have a difficult time in trying to discount the mystical influence on Heidegger's later thought. He acknowledges that that thought sometimes is characterized as a Seinsmystik, and rightfully so, in the sense that there is an affinity between thinking and mysticism, "[a] kinship between overcoming metaphysics and the mystical leap."\textsuperscript{108} This last kinship may be seen already in the thought of Eckhart, whose theology, according to Caputo, overcomes ontotheology with his notions of the Godhead and the need to abandon representational thinking.\textsuperscript{109} Caputo singles out Heidegger's "Postscript" to \textit{What is Metaphysics} as indicative of Heidegger's direct dependence on the language of mysticism as similar to his notion of meditative thinking.\textsuperscript{110} Of course, Caputo does not mean that Heidegger himself is a

\textsuperscript{107}Caputo, \textit{The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought}, 56, 116; Caputo, "Heidegger and Theology, unpublished manuscript," 4-6.

\textsuperscript{108}Caputo, \textit{The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought}, 6.

\textsuperscript{109}Caputo, \textit{Heidegger and Aquinas}, 278.

\textsuperscript{110}Caputo, \textit{The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought}, 27.
mystic or that his later philosophy should be taken as a theology. Heidegger certainly does not write of a god in language similar to the Hebraic-Christian traditions, that is, of a sovereign lord who participates in history. Instead, he writes of a more poetic god, a kind of "pagan-poetic god" not an "ethico-religious God."\(^{111}\) Yet, Heidegger admits that his thought does not rule out a "non-metaphysical relationship to God."\(^{112}\)

With specific reference to whether Heidegger could be labeled a mystic, Caputo responds in the negative for six reasons. First, Heidegger's thinking centers on language, whereas Eckhart's mystical experience rests in silence. Eckhart adheres to a negative theology, which determines to get past language to that which cannot be expressed linguistically. Heidegger, on the other hand, never allows for an experience with the play of Being outside of language. Second, Heidegger's experience with Being is historical, dependent upon the playful unfolding of the epochs of Being. Eckhart, influenced by the Neo-Platonic tradition, seeks for the soul to enter an eternal now with God. Third, mysticism at its best does remain somewhat under the hegemony of


\(^{112}\)Ibid., 23. Such a "non-metaphysical" relationship depends on the negation of God as "first cause." This view of God as "causa efficiens" derives from representational, metaphysical thinking, another type of calculative thinking, that focuses on the notion of "making" (Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays, 26).
metaphysical polarities, such as time and eternity, outer man and inner man. Fourth, Eckhart moves within the Western historical tradition. Heidegger's thinking, however, purports to think that which gives the tradition; that is, he wants to think outside the tradition. Fifth, Heidegger's thinking moves closer to the poet than to the mystic. The poet more likely refuses to adhere to a sensible/supersensible dichotomy. Sixth, Heidegger has removed completely the ethical or moral from his thinking. Overcoming the self for Heidegger has no moral overtones, no reference to selfishness or self love.\footnote{See Caputo, \textit{The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought}, 224-38 for his discussions of these six reasons. William Lovitt agrees with Caputo that Heidegger cannot be called a mystic. Heidegger does advocate any kind of experience of unity with an absolute or infinite ("Introduction," in \textit{The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays}, xiii).}

Notwithstanding the critical caveats given with reference to the relationship between Heidegger and mysticism, one may still admit that the development of Caputo's radical hermeneutics broaches some interesting correlations among the ideas of the flux, deconstruction (\textit{Destruktion}), the critique of metaphysics, repetition, faith, mysticism, and negative theology. As will be examined in Chapter Four, Caputo does not hide his own sensitivity to the religious aspects inherent in his radical hermeneutics; however, he does not allow it to bear the epithet "negative theology," no more than does Taylor with reference to his a/theology.
The issues of mysticism and negative theology, however, have arisen within the broader context. Consequently, one naturally wonders whether any theorists have exploited the valid or invalid possibilities that a relationship may obtain between negative theology and deconstruction. One also wonders whether other theologians who attempt to correlate deconstruction and theology do not instantiate within their thought some of the themes raised by Caputo in his reading of Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Derrida. Within the context of this thesis, one may also wonder whether negative theology, deconstruction, and the Caputoan issues inform a theo-passional model for God. Consequently, an extended excursus on two theorists who do correlate deconstruction and theology differently than Taylor and who in various ways instantiate in their theologies many of the themes raised in Caputo's radical hermeneutics seems to be in order.
CHAPTER THREE

DECONSTRUCTING THEISM AND THE LANGUAGE OF MYSTERY: TOWARD AN ICONIC DISCOURSE

(No) Trespassing (the) Sign

Kevin Hart begins his work on deconstruction and theology with a reference to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, specifically the "Paradiso." Dante desires, while being shown the glories of heaven, to encounter the first human, Adam, so that he might question Adam concerning the length of his prelapsarian existence, the reason for the first sin, and the particular language that Adam spoke. When he does face Adam finally, the first man informs Dante that it is unnecessary for Dante to express his questions, because Adam knows his thoughts without the need for linguistic mediation. Adam's "hermeneutical mastery" ensues from his ability to see all things reflected in the "True Mirror" of the Divine.\(^1\) The superfluity of linguistic mediation obtains only because Adam has been redeemed, has had the curse of the original sin removed, for as he explains, the first sin was not the ingestion of fruit but the "trespass of the linguistic sign--a desire for unmediated knowledge . . ."\(^2\) In other

---


\(^2\)Hart, 3. In John Ciardi's translation of *The Divine Comedy*, Adams's exact words are:

"Know, my son, that eating from the tree was not itself the cause of such long exile, but only the violation of God's decree."
words, original sin results from a semiotic transgression.

The punishment for the arrogance of the first sin was the fall into the labyrinth of signs, the ironic recompense of the necessary mediation of knowledge through signification. As a result of that transgression, humans are cast out of the immediate presence of God into the cursed sphere of semiotics, the sphere where, instead of divine presence, one has recourse only to the signs of the divine absence. The fall into absence and mediation ensues in knowledge of God taking the form of theo-logy, or language about God. Such knowledge, then, must be a semiology, an interpretation of the signs that signify the absent deity.³ Nostalgia for the lost presence motivates this semiology to discover a ground of meaning outside of the sign system in order to establish truth. Such a ground offers redemption from the sin of "the trespass of the sign" in that it reestablishes presence and reintegrates the fragmentation of mediation. If linguistic mediation can be totalized, then one may rise above the limitation of letters to the eternal spirit of meaning to which they point.⁴


³Hart, 7.

⁴Hart, 4. He maintains that the revelation of Yahweh in Ex. 3:14 offers an example of a claim to rediscover pure presence (Ibid., 33). Christological language also betrays
Hart identifies "sign" and "presence" as the two primary foci around which the ellipse (ellipsis?) of metaphysics revolves. Metaphysics seeks full presence and totalization of meaning primarily by distinguishing between the sensual (sign) and the intelligible (meaning). This basic polarity leads to complementary dyads, such as, letter/spirit, body/soul, and text/allegory. Yet, Hart questions whether such distinctions can be so easily made and so

a similar intent. The incarnation of the divine logos offers a paradigm of signifier and signified that purports to heal the semiotic fissure. Since Christ is both God and human, he signifies himself, thereby offering a "transcendental signified" and "transcendental signifier" (Ibid., 8). Hart fails, however, to appreciate the trinitarian aspects of Christological signification, which depends on the difference between Christ and the Father.

One could interpret Derrida as actually offering a different assessment of the relationship between sin and semiotic mediation. Hart locates sin in the interstices separating immediacy as unsignified presence and any semiotic expression. Derrida, however, suggests that sin is not the trespass of the sign but is the trespass of the written sign. He states that "[t]he difference between speech and writing is sin, the anger of God emerging from itself, lost immediacy, work outside the garden" (Writing and Difference, 68).

David W. Odell-Scott agrees with Hart's characterization of metaphysics. He identifies the "distinction between a supra-sensible and a sensible world . . " as the "essence of metaphysics" (A Post-Patriarchal Christology [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991], 16). Of course, to label that distinction as an "essence" betrays Odell-Scott's own dependence upon metaphysics; however, he tacitly admits that one can never escape metaphysics, since the end of metaphysics has always been a possibility within the very marrow of metaphysics. Hence, from the beginning of metaphysics, there has been an ending of metaphysics (Ibid., 7). This admission reflects the same perspective as Derrida, who also contends that one can never entirely escape metaphysics.
quickly utilized as bases for overcoming Adam's transgression.

At this juncture, he finds Derrida's deconstruction particularly penetrating for a number of reasons. First, Derrida, himself, refers to the metaphysical network of signification as an expression of "the Fall." Derrida points out that the notions of experience, signs, and mediation always operate within a system that depends in some manner on the model of "the Fall." Second, deconstruction aims specifically at questioning any claim to closure or totalization. Generally speaking, such a claim depends on the assumption that full presence operates in some way as the guarantor of determinate meaning transcending the economy of any semiotic system. Hart interprets Derrida as attempting to subvert every economy of signs that operates on the principle that presence precedes representation. He recognizes that a primary impediment to metaphysical totalization is the dynamic of repetition that doubly affects any semiotic or textual system. On the one hand, a sign ostensibly stands in for an absent presence; it re-

6Hart claims that during the past twenty years "the writings of Jacques Derrida have acted like an intellectual yeast" (Hart, ix, emphasis added). Such a statement recalls the discussion of ferment in the Introduction.

7Hart, 4.

8Of Grammatology, 282-83.

9Hart, 11.
presents what could be but is not present. In this way, a sign repeats the presence of the signified in the signified's absence. Were there no prior presence, there could be no subsequent re-presentation or repetition. On the other hand, by virtue of the sign's "being" a sign, it can be repeated in multiple contexts. Yet, this second repetition forebodes a possible deterioration of any putative totalization. Can a sign be repeated in such a way that its meaning can metamorphose? Derrida answers, "Yes." Consequently, in any system the possibility always obtains for meaning to transgress (step across, trespass) from one reading to another.

Derrida concludes from these two repetitions that semiotics bears an "essential" alterity that cannot be voided. This alterity and the mediacy of postponed presence ensue from différance, the differing and deferring dynamic of language. As Adam trespassed the divinely-ordained limits, so, too, does the sign trespass determinate meaning.

---

10Derrida, Margins of Philosophy, 9.

11Hart, 12. Charles Winquist suggests that just this repeatability can result in the illusion of transparency between language and reality. He contends that the endless repetition of language "can tighten the weave of language, which gives the illusion of a continuous surface and prompts a literalism that sees no blemish or wound to bring us back to the scene of origination" ("Theology, Deconstruction, and Ritual Process," 303). He goes on to claim that language actually "masks" reality in the very development of meaning.

12Hart, 14.
It remains open to various instantiations. Correlatively, one cannot trespass, "go across", textuality to a non- textual reality, that is, to an immediate presence.\textsuperscript{13}

The critical question for Hart is whether Derrida's deconstruction of metaphysics necessarily entails an "odium theologiae, [and thereby] furnishes a powerful critique of the possibility of theology."\textsuperscript{14} He contends that most of the attempts to extrapolate the implications of deconstruction for theology have been misguided, primarily by a misunderstanding of what deconstruction really is.\textsuperscript{15} He does

\textsuperscript{13}Hart agrees with Caputo that Derrida's statement "there is nothing outside the text" should not be read as denying non-textual reality or any type of referentiality to language. Hart contends that Derrida does not mean by his statement "that everything is only a text but that everything is also a text" (Hart, 165).

\textsuperscript{14}Hart, 39.

\textsuperscript{15}Hart criticizes Caputo as one of those who misinterpret the real meaning of deconstruction. Referring to Caputo's work on Heidegger and Aquinas, where, according to Hart, he argues for an experience of subsistent Being as requiring a deconstruction of Thomistic metaphysics, Hart maintains that Caputo errs in confusing deconstruction with Destruktion (Hart, 68). Although Derridean deconstruction does owe something to the Heideggerian Destruktion, the two terms are not synonymous; however, Caputo allegedly reads them as such and consequently defines deconstruction as "a dismantling of the surface apparatus of a thought in order to find its essential nerve, its animating centre" (quoted on 68). Interestingly enough, in a discussion of Derrida's own understanding of the term, Hart indicates that as late as 1979 Derrida defined deconstruction as "to take apart an edifice in order to see how it is constituted or deconstituted" (quoted on 108). This particular Derridean definition certainly appears to be similar to Caputo's definition that Hart rejects. After all, is not locating an "animating centre" not possibly synonymous with discovering the "how" of constitution?
not adhere to the two common ways deconstruction and theology have been correlated, either as a death of God theology or some sort of negative or apophatic theology.\textsuperscript{16} With reference to the former, he disavows that deconstruction leads to unbelief or atheism, as in a post-Nietzschean\textsuperscript{1} a/theology.\textsuperscript{17} Certainly, if one identifies God with some sort of immediate presence, then the Derridean critique would indeed question belief in God.\textsuperscript{18} Deconstruction is not, however, so much an affirmation or negation of God as it is a critique of both theism and atheism; that is, it aims at questioning how the word "God" is used in any discourse.\textsuperscript{19} Deconstruction only shows that the concept "God" is an effect of the trace, that is, like all linguistic signs, it is a construction.\textsuperscript{20} As a result, deconstruction

As discussed in the previous chapter, Caputo does confess to having been more of an "orthodox, faithfull Heideggerian up to about 1983" (personal correspondence with the author, 1 February 1994). He agrees in the main with Hart's critique of his confusion of deconstruction with Destruktion. One, therefore, must note the change in Caputo's thought and be careful when dealing with his earlier works, specifically those that predate Radical Hermeneutics. While admitting that his thought evolves, one must also realize that a certain continuity does exist, in that, even in his later, more Derridean works, Caputo continues to define deconstruction as not necessarily swinging a wrecking ball at textual meaning.

\textsuperscript{16}Hart, x.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid, 39.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid, 93.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid, 27.

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 37.
concerns not theology so much as what is metaphysical in theology, the implicit or explicit claim made within any theological text that totalization is possible.\(^{21}\) Consequently, Hart contends that deconstruction critiques theology generally within the context of metaphysics and, therefore, leaves open the question concerning whether "all theology is 'theological'?"\(^ {22}\) Hart answers this question in the negative; all metaphysics might be ontotheological, but not all theology is ontotheological.\(^ {23}\)

Although he agrees with Derrida that deconstruction is not a negative theology, since a negative theology continues to operate within the milieu of positive ontotheology,\(^ {24}\)


\(^ {22}\)Hart, 34.

\(^ {23}\)Ibid., 75.

\(^ {24}\)Derrida states categorically in more than one text that he does not write a negative theology, specifically because he interprets negative theology as always in some way referencing an "ontological wager of hyperessentiality ...." ("How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," 7-8; Margins of Philosophy, 6-7; cf also Writing and Difference, 146). Yet, he also admits that "what is called 'negative theology' (a rich and very diverse corpus) does not let itself be easily assembled under the general category of 'onto-theology-to-be-deconstructed'" ("Letter to John Leavey," 61). What is perhaps even more surprising is his corollary declaration that some "places of 'positive' theology ...." might not fall under such a categorization either (Ibid.). Consequently, Derrida leaves open the possibility (promise) that apophatic theology and some genres of kataphatic theology
Hart does maintain that deconstruction can lead to a non-metaphysical theology, a theology in which the God of faith is no longer identified with the God of metaphysics, the *causa sui*. He does suggest that negative theology may be interpreted as a deconstruction of metaphysical theology. Specifically, negative theology deconstructs ontotheology by guaranteeing that "there is, in principle, something which [one] cannot know about God . . ." By keeping a certain

might not be ontotheological and, therefore, not characterized by metaphysical presence and totalized meaning.

Klemm supports Derrida's contentions that deconstruction is not a negative theology on the basis of the significance of *différence*, which, according to Klemm, disallows deconstruction from making any "interpretive judgments about the meaning of a text . . ." ("Open Secrets: Derrida and Negative Theology," unpublished paper, 15). If deconstruction were a negative theology and purported to make statements about negative theology, then it would cease being deconstruction (Ibid.); however, if one takes seriously Derrida's claim above that not all negative theology is deconstructible, perhaps deconstructive discourse either cannot address negative theology or can address negative theology without necessarily deconstructing it in the same manner as it would metaphysical discourse.

O'Leary understands the deconstructive element in Western theology as an issue of the "God of Abraham" over against the "God of the philosophers." He professes that theology is always striving to "escape from the rational structures imposed on it . . ." (Questioning Back: The Overcoming of Metaphysics in Christian Tradition [Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985], 24). Caputo agrees with O'Leary that the central issue with reference to deconstruction and theology concerns the traditional distinction between Athens and Jerusalem. Although he does critique O'Leary's theology, he still affirms O'Leary's book as "one of the best of the recent wave of attempts to write a 'deconstructive' theology" ("Deconstruction and Theology: A Radical Experiment" unpublished manuscript, 1-2).

Winquist would call this a manifestation of the wound that does not heal, a wound that is an important part of theological thinking. The agnostic openness of
linguistic agnosticism at work, negative theology also guarantees "that human speech about God is in fact about God and not a concept of God." Consequently, Hart sets out to examine whether negative theology can supplant the totalization and presence putatively offered by ontotheology. He posits as his basic thesis that such supplanting does indeed take place. Negative theology supplants metaphysical totalization by supplementing positive (metaphysical) theology, not merely as an addendum added later, but as functioning prior to all positive claims. As corollaries to his all knowledge of God functions as a "limit concept" and, therefore, serves as a "continual deconstruction of fixed frontiers" ("Theology, Deconstruction, and Ritual Process," 306).

27Hart, 192. Jean-Luc Marion, discussed later in this chapter, focuses his attention on this central issue. It becomes, for him, the problem of a conceptual idolatry when concepts for God take the place of God.

28Ibid., 104. O'Leary agrees with Hart that within the theological tradition a certain tension has always been at work between a language of faith and the language of metaphysics. By attending to this tension, a split might well develop that would allow the "counter-metaphysical potential" inherent in the tradition (O'Leary, 130).

Derrida raises an interesting question concerning any "positive" treatment of negative theology. If Hart and O'Leary are correct when they contend that negative theology has always been at work "deconstructing" kataphatic ontotheology, then, according to Derrida, negative theology must be coextensive with positive theology. In other words, "the apophatic movement cannot contain within itself the principle of its interruption. It can only indefinitely defer the encounter with its own limit" ("How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," 11). Derrida maintains that all discourse on negative theology is, itself, a negative theology (Ibid., 13)! This retortion, however, is not to be accepted reluctantly. Instead Derrida maintains that no text uncontaminated by a negative theological moment should be trusted ("Post-Scriptum: Aporias, Ways and Voices," in Derrida and

Hermeneutics as Allegory and Irony

Hart indicates that totalization, deconstruction's primary object of critique, may be expressed not only with reference to a content--a "transcendental signified"--but also with reference to a method--hermeneutics. He argues

Negative Theology, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992]:309). His use of the idea of "contamination" certainly is intriguing, especially when compared with his emphasis on Plato's notion of pharmakon (cf. Ibid., 312). Derrida seems to be playing out implications in the language game associated with writing as remedy and poison. Poison contaminates; therefore, if negative theology contaminates, might it not be an expression of writing as poison? If so, then, of course, any discourse on negative theology, as itself negative theology, would then be a contamination of the contaminate--in other words, pharmaco-logical, logoi on/about the pharmakon. The astonishing repercussion of all of this might be the possibility that Derrida's deconstructive texts themselves should not be trusted if they do not include a negative theological dynamic. If they do, would Hart's primary thesis that deconstruction is not a negative theology be suspect? Derrida, himself, alludes to this suspicion when he calls deconstruction an "analogy" of negative theology (Ibid., 318; cf. also "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," 4). Klemm proposes another analogical relationship involving deconstruction and apophatic theology. He recognizes an analogy of proportion between the relationships obtaining among Derrida's discourse, negative theology, and God. He states that "Derrida's discourse is to the discourse negative theology what the discourse of negative theology is to God" ("Open Secrets: Derrida and Negative Theology," 7).

Hart, 48. Carl Page offers an interesting counterpoint to Hart's reading of hermeneutics as an expression of the metaphysical tendency toward totalization. Page writes that hermeneutics has garnered so much attention from contemporary philosophers precisely because it questions the traditional rationality of substantialist thinking; that is, hermeneutics distrusts any claim to immediate understanding. Hermeneutics emphasizes that all thought in some way depends
that metaphysics and hermeneutics operate in tandem within the broader network of presence and totalization. Whereas metaphysics offers a ground or basis for ontology, so, too, does hermeneutics offer a foundation for meaning. Behind the tangible, substantial marks on paper or the phonic vibrations in the air, there is some real, definite, intelligible meaning that can be discovered. Hermeneutics offers methods by which the spirit of meaning can be detected through, within, or beneath the letter of language.  

30 This on mediation; consequently, one could argue that hermeneutics may supply a critique of any declaration of immediate presence of meaning ("Philosophical Hermeneutics and Its Meaning for Philosophy" Philosophy Today [Summer 1991]:128).

30 Hart, 60. Robert Scharlemann gives a definition of hermeneutical experience that seems to corroborate Hart's connection between hermeneutics and metaphysics. He writes that "[h]ermeneutical experience is the conscious recognition that the sense of words can be liberated from the particular signs with which they are usually connected and can be associated with other signs" (Inscriptions and Reflections: Essays in Philosophical Theology [Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989], 143). Ironically, however, Scharlemann's expression of the essential meaning/sign differential, which Hart takes as an indication of the collusion between hermeneutics and metaphysics, actually names the basic repeatability, inherent within any semiotic system, that Derrida exploits as one of the dynamics prohibiting any textual totalization. In other words, could one not understand the elemental force of dissemination as itself an expression of a quasi-metaphysics that constantly critiques metaphysics? The quasi-metaphysical dynamic ensues from the repetitive patterns that coalesce in the use of language. That is, the "endless repetition [of signs] can tighten the weave of language, which gives the illusion of a continuous surface . . ." (Winquist, "Theology, Deconstruction, and Ritual Process," 303). Beneath this surface, however, lies the instability of semiotic play.

David Klemm may offer support for such an interpretation when he insists that hermeneutics and metaphysics are not necessarily associated. He critiques Mark Taylor for writing something similar to Hart and accusing hermeneutics
hermeneutical polarity between spirit and letter takes on significant implications within the traditions of metaphysical theology. Although hermeneutics functions as a guarantor of meaning for kataphatic theories, it is an intensification of the hermeneutical dissimilarity between saying and meaning that establishes apophaticism. In other words, ontotheology, in both its positive and negative traditions, of representing "a metaphysical nostalgia" ("The Autonomous Text, the Hermeneutical Self, and Divine Rhetoric," unpublished manuscript, 12). He argues that hermeneutics does not deal in logocentric presence but, instead, references possible worlds of meaning that never objectively obtain within the structures of the text (Ibid., 13). In other words, according to Klemm, one cannot accuse hermeneutics of succumbing to the temptation to full presence or totalization. It actually capitalizes on the polysemy of language and the plurivocity of texts in order to project that which is not present into the openness of otherness.

Klemm does recognize that a notable difference separates deconstruction from hermeneutics, and it is with reference to that difference that he would come closer to agreeing with aspects of Hart's thesis; however, unlike Hart, he actually holds both in a creative tension whereby each serves to "deconstruct" the other. Whereas deconstruction focuses on the playful dissemination of signs, hermeneutics seeks the continuity of an identifiable meaning. Yet, Klemm emphasizes that the play of undecidability may pause in some configuration of meaning, and every configuration of meaning is semiotically volatile and may once again disperse into the game of différence. Or, as Klemm expresses it, "deconstruction makes the familiar strange without losing its familiarity. Hermeneutics makes the strange familiar without losing its strangeness" ("Open Secrets: Derrida and Negative Theology," 22). He calls the reciprocity between deconstruction and hermeneutics "overturning," and suggests that with reference to theological discourse, naming God is an expression of this overturning. That is, discourse that names God both establishes meaning and disperses it (Ibid., 23). Consequently, there may be a relationship between deconstruction and hermeneutics that Hart fails to appreciate fully in his critique.
has always depended upon hermeneutics; however, in apophaticism, hermeneutics as allegoresis predominates.\textsuperscript{31}

Hart identifies the hermeneutics of Philo of Alexandria as something of an Ursprung of the alliance between metaphysical theology and allegoresis.\textsuperscript{32} Committed both to the Jewish confessional belief that scripture is the inerrant revelation of God and to the Greek metaphysical interpretation of divine transcendence, Philo develops a hermeneutic that synthesizes his two commitments in such a way that biblical texts cannot always be taken at face value. Just as God's transcendence separates God from any resemblance to humanity, so, too, texts that purport to "speak" of God in some way as human must be read as separated within themselves; that is, they display a difference between saying and meaning. In other words, their spirit cannot be identical with their letters.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{31}Hart, 179. Hart accepts as his working definition of allegory "sensus spiritualis" (Ibid., 22). Consequently, the basic distinction between spirit and letter, which characterizes all hermeneutics, is founded upon the idea of allegory. Hart's acceptance of this definition allows him to use "allegory" in various ways. For example, he refers to meaning as the "allegory of the text" (Ibid., 155), because textual meaning is another species of the genus spirit and letter.

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., 52. Hart does admit that Philo cannot be singled out as the one source of allegorical interpretation. He rejects what he calls the "monogenesis of 'hermeneutics' . . ." (Ibid., 56). One of the reasons, however, why he does emphasize the Philonic material is the significance of the Alexandrian tradition in early Christianity in developing negative theology (Ibid., 179).

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., 54.
Philo accomplishes through this hermeneutic a *raprochement* between philosophy and scripture; in other words, he reads scripture from the perspective of philosophy. Hence, Philonic interpretation purports to totalize scripture. Since Derrida critiques any notion that *écriture* can ever be totalized, he simultaneously critiques allegoresis and hermeneutics as these have functioned in ontotheology. This critique, however, does not lead inevitably to the dismissal of theology *in toto* but to the deconstruction of the metaphysical element (Greek conceptuality) that for so long has characterized orthodoxy.

Allegoresis as a hermeneutical method ensues historically in the development of apophatic theology. Such a development raises interesting questions concerning just how completely one may identify theology and metaphysics, given that traditionally a hallmark of negative theology has been its insistence that God cannot be exhausted in any language. This insistence, for Hart, signals a certain deconstructive dynamic at work within the theological tradition itself that

---

34Ibid., 60.

35O’Leary makes a significant distinction between metaphysics and faith. He labels his attempt to deconstruct metaphysical theology--really an attempt to de-Hellenize the tradition--as "a hermeneutic 'from faith to faith' (Rom. 1:17)" (O’Leary, 136). He does not interpret faith so much as a noetic concern as a matter of trust in God. Whether expressed as Hart’s deconstructive negative theology or as O’Leary’s questioning back to the language of faith, "[t]he overcoming of metaphysics is only the current move or set of moves in the perpetual game of renewing the language of faith" (Ibid., 140).
results in a form of invagination, or retortion, manifesting a tear (Riss) within theology. It is here that Hart recognizes a real complementarity between deconstruction and theology.

He broaches the complementarity by deconstructing Derrida's deconstructive vocabulary. As Derrida concentrates on the polysemy of key terms within various texts (e.g. Rousseau's "le supplement"), so, too, does Hart focus on such a term within the Derridean corpus--the important term "écriture." Although generally translated "writing," the word may also mean "scripture." Hart argues that such a translation may actually help explain some of Derrida's statements about "writing" and the Jews. Whether one takes this second meaning of the term seriously or not does not change the possibility for Hart that Derrida's use of écriture could allow for "the deconstruction of

---

36 Hart, 50. John Leavey uses the polysemy of écriture in just this way in order to express deconstruction's "debunking" of any claim to wholeness. He claims that the following charge may be levelled against Derrida: "On a touché à l'écriture (sainte)" ("Four Protocols: Derrida, His Deconstruction," 48). He insists that Derrida has indeed "tampered with" language and that such tampering has implications for scripture. He states that "[d]econstruction debunks the wholeness of god's writing (Scripture in the doctrine of inspiration) and of man's writing (more recent biblical criticism)."

37 Cf., for example, "Edmond Jabes and the Question of the Book," in Writing and Difference, 64-78.
hermeneutics [to be] performed by scripture."^{38} Such an interpretation of the relationship between deconstruction and scripture intimates that one can still do theology without doing metaphysics in either its theistic or atheistic expressions. Such an interpretation does, however, advance again the significance of negative theology and its understanding of scripture, which, of course, reintroduces the influence of allegory.

Hart's deconstructive investigation of allegory places it in tension with the related trope, irony. Hart establishes a relationship between allegory and irony on the basis of their sharing a similar structural identity. Using Paul de Man's distinctions, Hart interprets both tropes as dependent upon the rift between saying and meaning.$^{39}$ In both cases, one cannot naively read a discourse as stating transparently and explicitly its *vouloir dire*. Instead, one must move through the said to the meant. Notwithstanding this structural similarity, however, the two tropes do differ at least at one notable point. Allegory is a trope of closure, because once one has allegorized a text and discovered its "hidden" meaning, that meaning no longer depends upon the particularities of the text. Instead, the discovered meaning is fixed and known. Irony, on the other hand, is a trope of non-closure, since one can never be sure

---

^{38}Hart, 63-64.
^{39}Ibid., 157.
exactly what the text is "properly" trying to convey. The ironic text does not mean what it says, but what exactly is its opposite meaning? Consequently, Hart contends that irony always interrogates allegorical closure.\textsuperscript{40} Deconstruction exploits the ironic by utilizing it in order to subvert from within the allegorical meaning of texts. Yet, Hart quickly submits that any deconstructive reading will itself be open for the ironic subversion; therefore, irony becomes, in Friedrich Schlegel's nomenclature, "'a permanent parabasis.'"\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{40}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., 158. Peter Hodgson identifies attitudes toward irony as a significant factor in distinguishing postmodernism. For example, he argues that the issue of whether one can "get 'beyond' irony" separates Hegel from postmodern interpreters (God in History: Shapes of Freedom [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989], 88). The question concerns whether one can allow irony to continue within a comic system, or whether the continuation of irony necessitates a tragic view of existence. He carries this discussion over into trinitarian speculation, specifically with reference to the idea of the divine relationship with the world (Ibid.). He speculates that the power of "redemptive, suffering love" can transfigure irony without disengaging it. Such transfiguration results in the possibility of genuine hope, which can only obtain in a tragicomic reality (Ibid., 114). Hodgson develops this notion out of his more general theory of history as a process of transformative freedom and transfigurative praxis (cf. Ibid., 49, 74).

This understanding of the interrelationship among the ironic, the comic, suffering love, the triune God, and the centrality of ethics anticipates the direction this thesis is moving as it addresses the implications of deconstruction for interpreting God as a triune, suffering deity, who cannot be exhaustively experienced or known. The fuller implications of these issues will be developed through a further investigation of Caputo’s philosophy as it considers these various themes and how that philosophy bears upon contemporary theopassionism.
Although Hart has mentioned Kierkegaard earlier as a representative of the non-metaphysical heritage within Western theology, it is here with reference to irony that Kierkegaard figures most conspicuously. According to Hart, Kierkegaard offers two proto-deconstructive claims with reference to the ironist. He contends first that the ironist must conceal her jest in seriousness and her seriousness in jest and second that the ironist must disrupt a framework from within that framework. Hart acknowledges that both of these characteristics may be found in Derrida’s writing. Consequently, Hart can agree somewhat with Taylor (as well as with Caputo) that Kierkegaard does indeed anticipate deconstruction. The significance of Kierkegaard for Hart vis-a-vis deconstruction concerns the use to which the deconstructive critique against closure can be put. Deconstruction offers the "permanent parabasis" that all irony donates to thought; however, that parabasis does not necessarily lead to atheism, for as Kierkegaard argues, irony can be "a trope of elliptical affirmation," a "negative way" to

---

42Michel Despland replaces the distinction between positive and negative theologies with the difference between didactic and literary theologies. The latter type of theology, he suggests, may be found in Kierkegaard’s writings ("On Not Solving Riddles Alone," in Derrida and Negative Theology, eds. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992], 154). This affirmation of the Kierkegaardian exemplification of literary theology comes one paragraph after Despland has briefly discussed the importance of irony in denying any real logocentrism.

43Hart, 160-61.
truth. Hart concludes the section on allegory and irony by using this Kierkegaardian understanding of irony and negativity as a segue back to the notion of apophasis and negative theology.

Negative Theology in the Economy of Mysticism

Hart's two dominant theses—that deconstruction does not necessarily entail a critique of all theology, but only what is metaphysical in theology, and that negative theology functions as a deconstruction of ontotheology—raise the issue of whether negative theology can be understood as a non-metaphysical theology. Within the Western theological tradition, negative theology has indeed been credited with the capacity to "deconstruct" metaphysical theology through various mystical texts. Specifically, negative theology working within the context of mysticism has putatively been interpreted as offering the kind of critique Hart seeks. Yet, he wants to be more careful in identifying mysticism and negative theology, especially if mysticism is understood to be some sort of immediate experience of God's presence. Such an experience would definitely disenfranchise

---

44 Ibid., 162.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., 101-102.
47 Hodgson maintains that the tradition "never entertained the illusion that divine presence was totally, immediately available" (Hodgson, 37); however, he then states that such immediacy was always an eschatological possibili-
apophaticism from having any deconstructive dynamics, since "immediate presence" is just another way of writing total-

ty, which, of course, still opens the tradition up for the Derridean critique, since Derrida’s deconstruction has both protological and eschatological implications with reference to total presence.

Not only does Hart accuse Caputo of misunderstanding deconstruction, but he also indicts him for accepting the possibility that deconstruction can ensue in uncovering a mystical kernel within a text, which communicates a genuine experience of union with God (Hart, 102). Since deconstruction aims at overturning any pretention to immediate presence, Hart argues that Caputo’s use of deconstruction is marked by blatant contradictions (Ibid.). Of course, one can give Caputo a far different reading than does Hart. For example, in his provocative essay "Mysticism and Transgression: Derrida and Meister Eckhart," Caputo actually takes a position quite similar to Hart’s. He categorically states that one cannot take deconstruction as a negative theology; however, one can discover deconstruction in negative theology ("Mysticism and Transgression," 24). This agreement with Hart does not necessarily end when the issue of a mystical experience arises. Notwithstanding that Hart confines his study to the play of language and avoids any extended treatment of experience, his interpretations do not preclude the possibility of an experience with the divine as long as that experience does not come as an immediate presence. Ironically, Caputo makes the same argument in the above essay. In discussing the mystical theology of Meister Eckhart, Caputo admits that a certain strain of Neo-Platonism may be found in Eckhart’s writings (Ibid., 32); however, Caputo contends that to limit Eckhart at that point is an inappropriate reductionism, because Eckhart goes to lengths to emphasize that one never attains a pure, immediate encounter with God. Eckhart prays for God to rid him of God and, in doing so, admits that the play of signifiers is never completely finished, that there is always more to the deity than any sign (or experience) can exhaust (Ibid., 33). As a matter of fact, in a language that sounds quite like that of Marion’s (discussed below), Caputo insists that Eckhart’s prayer to be rid of God is a prayer "against turning the latest and best creations of discourse into idols" (Ibid., 34). Caputo’s acceptance of Eckhart’s deconstructive negative theology explains his view that faith is always "the way a certain historical form of life has found to be open to the mystery which withdraws, a way of staying
Hart contends that Derrida, himself, disallows a connection between deconstruction and mysticism understood as immediate presence. A recurring theme in Western philosophy concerns mysticism as the "other" of philosophy, as that non-philosophical perspective that threatens to undermine philosophy from without. Hart refers to Kant's critique of mysticism as a classical expression of that theme. Kant holds as "epistemologically untenable" that one can have unmediated experience and as morally threatening that one could claim some divinely communicated approval to act contrary to the maxim of duty.49 Kant also disapproves of the hermeneutical tone that accompanies mysticism. Whereas philosophy depends upon the "unequivocal voice of reason," mysticism hears the voice of poetry and claims a power to reveal hidden meanings.50 Derrida, on the other hand, does not divide rationalism and mysticism so cleanly, asserting, instead, their inherent connection. In other words, al-

under-way" ("Deconstruction and Theology: A Radical Experiment," 20; emphasis added).

49Hart, 209.

50Ibid., 240. Derrida, in dealing with Kant's critique of the mystical "tone recently adopted," discusses the hermeneutical implications of mysticism whenever it acts as philosophy's other. He maintains that mystagogues are always hermeneuts, hearing a secret oracle, or privy to a cryptic meaning ("Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy," 71). In the context of Kant's critique, the hermeneutical characteristic of mysticism threatens to disrupt the metaphysics of reason; however, since Hart has already connected hermeneutics and metaphysics in a broader configuration, mysticism and rationalism express a metaphysical bias.
though Derrida agrees with Kant in desiring to limit metaphysics,\textsuperscript{51} he disagrees that mysticism is philosophy's "other."\textsuperscript{52} The mystical claim to immediate presence remains bound to a metaphysical understanding of reality.\textsuperscript{53} Consequently, philosophy and mysticism both operate within the broader structures of the totalizing claims of ontotheology.

Hart agrees with Derrida's conclusions concerning mystical experience as it has been traditionally interpreted; however, he does not want to relinquish the deconstructive potential of negative theology. He attempts to salvage the latter by distinguishing various issues within the economy of mysticism. That is, Hart differentiates among five elements: mystical experience, mystical testimony, mystical theology, the \textit{via negativa}, and mystical hermeneutics.\textsuperscript{54} He determines that there is a major dissimilarity between the \textit{via negativa} and negative theology. The former concerns the experiential process of union with God. Through various practices, one may ascend (\textit{anabasis}) to God by denying (\textit{apophasis}) everything that is not God. The goal of the \textit{via negativa}, therefore, is union with God and the

\textsuperscript{51}Hart, 229. "Between rationalism and mysticism there is . . . a certain complicity" (Of Grammatology, 80).

\textsuperscript{52}Ibid., 187.

\textsuperscript{53}Ibid., 188.

\textsuperscript{54}Ibid., 175.
dynamic at work in that process is love.\textsuperscript{55} The latter does not involve God so much as the \textit{concept} of God. In other words, negative theology appertains more to theological discourse than to any kind of theological experience.

The distinction between the \textit{via negativa} and negative theology allows Hart to insist that one does not have to ground apophatic theology in any kind of experience but can engage it as a theological grammar, more specifically a critical grammar that "deconstructs" the language of positive theology.\textsuperscript{57} As stated above, negative theology in

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., 175-76. Hart argues that the mystic is more concerned with loving God than with knowing God; however, such a division between knowing and loving cannot be strictly maintained, since one cannot really love what one does not in some way know (Ibid., 103).

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., 176. Hart agrees with Derrida's identification of negative theology as "a certain typical attitude toward language . . . ("How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," 4). This reduction of negative theology to the conceptual does allow Hart to avoid the questionable implications of the \textit{via negativa} with reference to immediate presence; however, such a reduction may not adequately prosecute the issue of deconstruction in theology. In his attempt at a deconstructive theology, O'Leary also emphasizes the linguistic implications of negative theology, but he contends that keeping negation at the level of language alone is but another example of metaphysics. Consequently, he calls for a questioning back to the "original phenomena" expressed in the "primary language of faith . . ." (O'Leary, 35). Although such a \textit{Rückfrage} itself needs to be deconstructed, O'Leary has raised the pertinent issue of the "other" of language, that is, experience. Since Hart disallows any interpretation of Derrida that precludes referentiality, he must allow for some "reference" to existence within his economy of apophaticism.

\textsuperscript{57}O'Leary admits that theology always involves textuality and that textuality has a referential vector to it. In returning to the texts from which the language of faith arises (i.e., the biblical texts), theology, in Luther's
this sense ensures that no human conceptualization of the concept of God comes to any premature closure. Consequently, Hart can conserve his premise that negative theology is a deconstruction without its being simultaneously any type of immediate experience with divinity. It also allows him to identify certain non-metaphysical theologies in the Western theological and philosophical traditions. For example, understanding negative theology in this way allows Hart to classify Kant, Hegel, and Derrida as apophatic theologians, since each in his unique way critiques the "orthodox" discourse of kataphatic ontotheology.58

words, becomes a "a grammar working on the words of the Holy Spirit" . . . (O'Leary, 40). One might say that a deconstructive theology acts as a "gramma(r)tolgy" of the languages of faith.

58Hart, 182-83. Derrida emphasizes the reflexivity inherent in the interpretation of negative theology as language. He acknowledges that negative theology is a discourse; however, it is a discourse that questions all discourse. Since it casts aspersions on the possibility of language, is it not also something beyond language, an "outside" of language? If it is, however, it remains also a language ("Post-Scriptum: Aporias, Ways and Voices," 294). Such reflexivity for Derrida results in negative theology's being a "[k]lenosis of discourse" (Ibid., 296). As such, it functions as a liminal force, always testing the boundaries of how words function (Ibid., 299). The liminal character of negative theology also has a socio-political edge to it, because it transgresses the "frontier[s]" of discourse communities and institutional reason (Ibid., 284). Here one discovers what could be the attraction of negative theology for Derrida's deconstruction: the ethical implications of its liminal critiques. If Caputo is correct (and this author thinks he is), one can never appreciate the "proper" meaning of Derrida unless the polito-ethical dynamics are recognized.
The pivotal issue for Hart with reference to the Derridean relationship to negative theology concerns the tension between a regional and a general economy. Hart constantly admits throughout his work that deconstruction is not a negative theology, and he critiques those who attempt to transform it into one. For example, he contests John Dominic Crossan's theory that Derrida offers a negative theology, because he presents a powerful philosophy of absence. Hart accuses Crossan of confusing positive and negative theologies with theologies of presence and absence respectively. As discussed above, however, Derrida's deconstruction is not a philosophy of absence, according to Hart, but a philosophy that questions the precedent of presence over representation.

Hart classifies Mark Taylor's deconstructive theology as another aborted attempt to connect deconstruction to apophatic theology. Taylor suggests that Derrida's statements about différence read much like what some theologians write about God; however, Hart reminds his readers that Derrida, himself, admits in Margins of Philosophy that his language will resemble apophatic language but is not to be identified with it. Hart attests to a significant difference between the ineffability of God as expressed in traditional negative theology and the ineffability of différence as

59 Hart, 184-85.
60 Ibid., 186.
explained by Derrida. The former reveals the "that" but not the "what" of God and still functions as a transcendental ground, while the latter "reveals" itself in the phenomenal text without concealing any kind of transcendental origin. Hart insists that Derrida's philosophy cannot be translated easily into an apophaticism, since Derrida claims that negative theology posits a God beyond beings and Being and, in doing so, remains within the legislating structure of positive ontotheology. For Derrida, negative theology is always a "part of a dialectic with positive theology."

Hart cannot agree entirely with Derrida and still preserve his basic thesis regarding negative theology as a deconstruction of positive theology. He must restructure the dynamic of apophaticism in such a way that it does not always remain in fee to the positive dynamics of ontotheology. He attempts such a reconstruction on the basis of Derrida's critique of George Bataille's critique of Hegel. Bataille primarily criticizes Hegel for subsuming the negative moment under the positive; that is, the negative for Hegel is not ultimately a loss, for it is "redeemed" through

61Ibid., 187.
62Ibid., 189.
63Ibid., 193. O'Leary agrees with Derrida that negative theology does not actually escape metaphysics, since it attempts to critique theology from the perspective of divine ineffability, which is actually a critique "from above" depending upon certain metaphysical polarities such as finite/infinite and created/uncreated (O'Leary, 160).
the dialectic and inculcated as an essential element in the process of the absolute's coming to self-consciousness.  

In Bataille's nomenclature, Hegel's philosophy of the negative remains a restricted economy, an economy restricted to a portion of a greater process. Bataille wishes to emphasize that in the negative there is "transgressive overflow which . . . [remains] negative." The negative of play, loss, and chance is not a restricted economy but a general economy, one that functions not just phenomenally but transcendentally.  

Hart relates how Derrida reads Bataille as falling victim to the very dialectic he wishes to escape. Although Bataille is correct in revealing that Hegel omits play and chance as significant and unassumable elements within reality, he includes them as supplements to the system, as structurally necessary for the stability of society. He fails to question the very structure of that structure. For Derrida, play is not just phenomenal but transcendental, transcendental as the play of différence. The play of différence is a general economy of negativity that cannot be absorbed into the dialectic of the system. Consequently, such play does

---

64 Hart, 194.  
65 Ibid., 195.  
66 Ibid.  
67 Ibid., 196.  
68 Ibid., 197.
not merely supplement metaphysics, it questions the structure of metaphysics itself.  

Hart takes Derrida's critique of Bataille and turns it against Derrida himself, with reference to how negative theology can function, not just as a restricted economy that supports positive theology, but also as a general economy that deconstructs that which is metaphysical in kataphatic theology. Using Pseudo-Dionysius' texts on the divine

---

69Ibid., 198.

70Ibid., 198. Odell-Scott discusses the etymological implications of the word "economy" and indicates an essential tension within it between concealment and unconcealment. He suggests that in the Greek colloquial usage oikonomia always carried with it a sense of dissimulation or shrewdness. It referred domestically, rhetorically, and ethically to the devising of some sort of plan or strategy by which a hidden agenda or intent could be realized (107). This basic character of the term ensues consistently from the constituent words that form it. Oikos means "house" or "shelter." It carries the meaning of designating a place within which one could be concealed and protected from what lies outside. Nomos, on the other hand, which generally means "law," actually derives from the word for pasture. It has affinities with "nomadic," one who wanders about in open places. Consequently, nomos has in its linguistic pedigree the idea of unconcealment and dispersal (Odell-Scott, 108). As a result, oikonomia, economy, synthesizes the opposing meanings: concealment/unconcealment, open/closed, gathered/dispersed (Ibid.).

If negative theology is a general economy, as Hart contends, then, first, as an economy, it also must exemplify the tension between concealment and unconcealment. In other words, it actually must extend within itself the basic polarity between kataphaticism and apophaticism, that is, the "not" of negative theology works in tandem with the "yes" of positive theology. Second, if negative theology only acts deconstructively, if it functions as a general economy, then it invariably broaches the issue of totalization or of the whole. "General" derives from "genus," which means class, group, or kind. Consequently, "general" always references the whole or the universal. Negative theology as a general economy, therefore, implies that the reciprocity
names and mystical theology, Hart argues that the supplemental role of apophatic theology in relation to kataphatic theology broaches the issue of what are proper and improper predicates for God. Interestingly enough, Pseudo-Dionysus not only accepts that negative theology ensures that concepts about God do not deteriorate into linguistic idols but also proposes that so-called proper concepts cannot be allowed to operate without negation. Consequently, negative theology constantly deconstructs metaphysical theology.

Such an interpretation is further established, according to Hart, when one realizes that Pseudo-Dionysius' use of "superessential" as a positive predicate for God, a predicate that Derrida takes as indicative of the restricted economical function of negative theology, is not in fact positive. The Greek word, hyperousious, does not mean that God is the highest being. Hart asserts that hyper is negative not positive and means that God is neither a being nor Being. God's hyperousious is God's being beyond Being and beings. The proper way to write God, assuming this predi-

between revelation and concealment applies to the whole. In other words, if, as Hart insists, negative theology deconstructs what is metaphysical in positive theology, and if the metaphysical in positive theology is its claim to totalization, then negative theology itself deconstructs totalization by offering a totalization. Considering Schmitz's idea that metaphysical discourse is always "nomadic," one can postulate that negative theology does not ever completely escape the economy of ontotheology.

71Hart, 201-202.
cate, would be sous rature, under erasure.\textsuperscript{72} Writing God this way illustrates Hart’s thesis that negative theology does indeed play a deconstructive role vis-a-vis positive theology. It constantly and vigilantly reminds theologians and all who speak or write of God that they are fallen, that they work within a context marred by the trespass of the sign.

Mysticism, Being, and God

Hart concludes \textit{The Trespass of the Sign} with a brief chapter on Heidegger and mysticism. Prior to this chapter, he discusses the importance of Heidegger’s interpretations of metaphysics, ontotheology, and \textit{Destruktion} as antecedent to Derrida’s deconstruction.\textsuperscript{73} He returns to Heidegger again at the conclusion as a way of rethinking the Kantian critique of metaphysics and mysticism. Hart characterizes Kant’s critical philosophy as a negative theology, and he examines it within the context of Kant’s critique of mysticism, the "tone" that threatens the integrity of critical thinking and the grounds for morality.\textsuperscript{74} Hart contends that Heidegger aids in identifying the central issue that structures Kant’s perspectives on philosophy and mysticism--


\textsuperscript{73}Cf. Hart, 78-88.

\textsuperscript{74}Ibid., 240.
the Leibnizian notion of "the principle of sufficient reason."

Heidegger equates the principle with metaphysics; it is indeed the primary text of philosophy.\textsuperscript{75} Heidegger summarizes the principle as stating that "Nothing is without ground"; however, there are two ways of reading this statement. Throughout the history of Western metaphysics (and hence ontotheology), the reading has been "Nothing is without ground."\textsuperscript{76} This reading results in the traditional metaphysical structure of beings being grounded in Being; consequently, metaphysics concerns beings and not Being.\textsuperscript{77} Heidegger insists that such a reading is not the only one that can be given to the principle. One could read it as "Nothing \textit{is} without ground."\textsuperscript{78} This reading allows one to hear what is unsaid in traditional metaphysics: "... Being is not a ground \textit{for} beings; rather, Being \textit{is} ground in and for itself."\textsuperscript{79}

Hart recognizes that the gap between the two readings of the principle can only be traversed by a leap.\textsuperscript{79} In Heidegger's thought, this leap functions analogously to the antinomies in Kant's first critique. It manifests the

\textsuperscript{75}Ibid., 241.
\textsuperscript{76}Ibid., 242.
\textsuperscript{77}Ibid., 243.
\textsuperscript{78}Ibid., 244.
\textsuperscript{79}Ibid., 246.
inherent contradiction within reason itself, a contradiction that leads from reason to thought. At this point, Derrida moves past Heidegger in that he accepts the Heideggerian interpretation of the reflexivity of reason but rejects that one can choose between reason and thought. Instead, according to Derrida, one constantly struggles within philosophy with the reality that in every text there will be at least one statement that forces the text back on itself and denies it totalization.\textsuperscript{80}

The significance of the above discussion for Hart's thesis is that the principle of sufficient reason not only supplies the primary text for philosophy but for theology as well, because in classical ontotheology God has been interpreted either as a being or as the ground of all beings and, therefore, as in some way synonymous with Being;\textsuperscript{81} however, Heidegger rejects both interpretations. He states quite clearly that Being and God cannot be identified, that if he were to write a theology, the word "Being" would not even appear.\textsuperscript{82} Such an approach associates Heidegger with the theology of Kart Barth, because both reject the \textit{analogia entis} that founds metaphysical theology.\textsuperscript{83} Heidegger does

\textsuperscript{80}Ibid., 251.

\textsuperscript{81}Ibid., 253.

\textsuperscript{82}Cf. Ibid., 82.

\textsuperscript{83}Ibid., 257. According to O'Leary, Barth fought metaphysics "on two fronts": in Protestant modernism and Roman Catholicism" (O'Leary, 101).
suggest that there is an analogy of proportionality between thought:Being and faith:God. Such an analogy, for Hart, is homeomorphic to Barth's analogy of faith. The two theorists also agree that there is a tension between revealing and concealing. Heidegger maintains that the truth of the voice of Being is aletheia, the revealing/withdrawing dynamic of the un-covering. Likewise, Barth claims that God

Scharlemann makes the same distinction and uses it as a way of understanding the traditional theological expression "faith seeking understanding." According to him, understanding (thinking) always aims at being as its object, whereas faith, or trusting, always has God as its goal (Inscriptions and Reflections, 224; The Reason of Following: Christology and the Ecstatic I, [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991], 63, 189). As understanding unites thinker and thought, so, too, does faith unite believer and God (Ibid., 225). Scharlemann contends that the analogical relationship between these two intentionalities leads to an inversion of ontological thinking. No longer should being and God be thought ontotheologically but as "the-ontologically," that is, according to an "afterthinking" that thinks the difference between God and being (Ibid., 4-5). To think theologically, then, is to think metanoetically (after-thinking) in such a way that one's thinking of being is not thought of as the thinking of being "but as the being of God when God is not being God" (Ibid., 10). In other words, instead of thinking of thinking as thinking, or of thinking of thinking as being (e.g. the being of Dasein), one can think of thinking as neither thinking nor as being. This is the thinking of God when God is not being God (Ibid., 20). Such a metanoetic thinking of God as neither the individual who thinks nor as the being which is thought results in a non-conceptual idea of God (Ibid., 21). Scharlemann contends that in Western theology this attention to the otherness of God has been forgotten, just as the in Western ontology the meaning of Being has been forgotten (Ibid., 38). O'Leary critiques Scharlemann's theory of metanoetic thinking as another example of a "loose 'dialectic' that replaces a metaphysics of the logos with a metaphysics of the void (O'Leary, 44).

Hart, 258.
reveals Godself as the God who is concealed. Both thinkers, therefore, in their different ways seek to deconstruct the metaphysical elements within theology and arrive at the possibility or realization of a non-metaphysical theology.

In the case of Heidegger, Hart contends that one does indeed find a negative theology at work. Heidegger has a deep appreciation for mysticism, especially its recognition of the groundlessness of God. Heidegger especially appreciates how Eckhart develops this mystical notion. In stating that *esse est deus*, Eckhart interprets God as pure essence without the possibility of any existential quality. Hart confirms that Eckhart’s mysticism leads to a general economy of negative theology, recognizing that the negative does not merely supplement the positive but supplants it. Unfortunately, he asserts that such is not the case for Heidegger. Basically, Heidegger’s negative theology remains a restricted one; however, if Derrida is grafted onto Heidegger, then indeed a general negative theology can be established, which functions as a deconstruction of positive, metaphysical theology.

---

86 Ibid., 262.

87 Ibid., 265.

88 Ibid., 255.

89 O’Leary gives an important warning with reference to the interplay between the general economy of negative theology and the broader theological tradition. He states that any critique of the tradition must adhere to the tradition’s self-critique or else it "degenerates into mere iconoclastic
The issue of love figures explicitly and implicitly in Hart’s arguments for understanding negative theology as a deconstruction of metaphysical theology. Although he, himself, does not attempt to extrapolate the experiential dynamics of apophaticism, he does mention in passing that those dynamics center on the individual’s desire for God, that is, her/his love of God. Consequently, for Hart mysticism and love reciprocate in the experiential economy of faith. Along with this more explicit recognition of the importance of love for non-metaphysical theology, there is a fascinating, more inchoate, connection between Hart’s deconstructive apophatic theology and the idea of love. As discussed above, Hart draws the title of his work from The Paradiso, specifically Canto 26. If one returns to this section of Dante’s epic, one will discover that it comes in the context of his heavenly encounters with the apostles of faith, hope, and love—Peter, James, and John respectively. At the conclusion of Canto 25, Dante is blinded by the creative tension between faith and the tradition, however, can allow one to "theologize with a hammer" and break down whatever metaphysical edifices need razing (O’Leary, 136). He contends that this lesson can be learned from the deconstructive theology of Carl Raschke. According to O’Leary, Raschke’s theology teaches that one must respect the metaphysical tradition that one seeks to critique and that one must maintain a respect for the language of faith through which the critique comes (Ibid., 47).

*Cf. Dante, cantos 24-26.*
after looking into the brilliance of the Apostle John. John informs him that Beatrice will soon restore his vision, but until she does, discourse will have to take the place of sight. John asks him, then, to give an account of his love for God, to speak about what motivates his passion. Dante responds by referring to the Good that proceeds from heaven, which manifests itself in philosophy, ecclesiastical authority, and the scriptures. Dante claims that, ultimately, God's own acts of grace and love revealed in creation (Being/beings?), the redemptive death of Jesus, and the promise of eschatological bliss lure the human heart to God. After confessing his reasons for loving God, Dante receives his sight and sees another light, the heavenly luminosity of Adam, the first human. It is at this time that he engages in the conversation with Adam from which Hart derives his notion of the "trespass of the sign."

Whereas Hart does not prosecute the idea of love's significance for apophatic theology, allowing it instead to work inherently within the textuality of his thesis, Jean-Luc Marion focuses his "deconstructive" attention on metaphysical theology through the explicit lens of love, specif-

91Ibid., canto 26, lines 1-63.
Marion wishes to develop a negative theology that does not remain trapped within the labyrinths of Western ontotheological speculation. He contends that the idea of love functions as Ariadne’s thread, redeeming the theologian from the metaphysical maze that for so long has confused Being and God. Only if God can be known without Being—not merely as no being or as beyond Being, but without, free from, the philosophical concept of Being—can ontotheology be overcome.

Actually, Marion desires to free God not only from the binding conceptuality of ontology but also from the restriction of textuality. In something of a reversal of Dante’s experience of *agapic* blindness, Marion thinks that one can "see" God without the need for mediating discourse. Consequently, he searches for an expression of *agape* that escapes the ubiquity of language. He insists that as one can encounter God *without* Being, one can encounter God *beyond* textuality, outside of the signifying domination of lan-

---

92 One might distinguish between Hart and Marion on the basis of what their works seek to accomplish. Whereas Hart writes more of an *apologia* for negative theology as a species of deconstruction, Marion attempts to write a negative theology itself. Toby Foshay, for example, refers to Marion specifically as a negative theologian ("Introduction: Denigration and Resentment," in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, eds. Howard Coward and Toby Foshay. [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992]:3). He goes on to state that Marion and Hart do agree, at least with reference to the necessity to write God *sous rature* (Ibid., 12). Notwithstanding certain salient similarities, however, one may still argue that Hart’s text does not actually present a negative or mystical theology as does Marion’s.
This transcendence of textuality occurs as the gift of love in the Eucharist. Through God’s self-giving in the celebration of the Supper, one encounters God without Being and outside of the text. Consequently, the resolution to Marion’s apophatic theorizing is a Eucharistic hermeneutic whereby he can interpret God as agape itself, giving itself outside the conceptual network of metaphysical theology. The title of the major work in which he allegedly accomplishes this non-metaphysical theology summarizes both of his crucial aims. He calls it God Without Being: Hors-Texte.  

John Caputo contends that this desire to separate God from any anterior condition marks the most dangerous and questionable aspect of Marion’s thought. Caputo argues that even a negative theology depends upon the anteriority of language, and to deny that any anteriority whatsoever obtains leads to the illusion of unconditioned immediacy. Whenever such a claim is proposed, the result is always "someone’s highly mediated Absolute: their jealous Yahweh, their righteous Allah, their infallible church, their absolute Geist which inevitably speaks German" ("How to Avoid Speaking of God: The Violence of Natural Theology," in Prospects for Natural Theology, ed. Eugene Thomas Long. [Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University Press of America, 1992]: 129). Referring to the language of his title, Caputo alleges that the "violence of theology" may be understood in either of two ways: (1) as the violence theology perpetrates on God or (2) the violence theology perpetrates in the name of God (Ibid., 130).  

Derrida qualifies this as a "magnificent title" but one that is ambiguous to translate ("How to Avoid Speaking: Denegations," 64). The ambiguity derives primarily from the 1' in Dieu sans l'être. The 1' can be translated as a definite article thereby giving the basic English title God Without Being; however, it may also be translated as a personal pronoun acting as the object of the verb Être, which could then be translated God Without Being God--"God with and without being" (Ibid). For Derrida, this ambiguity goes to the heart of his essay on how to avoid speaking.
Heidegger and the Double Idolatry

Marion accuses Western ontotheology of conceptual idolatry, replacing the "true" God with an abstract image; that is, some concept of "God" becomes God. The mystery of the real deity fades whenever thought arrogantly presumes that it can encompass the divine. All that human speculation can actually achieve is to direct its "gaze" onto a surrogate deity, which in turn reflects that gaze onto the individual. The surrogate, or idol, thereby acts to stop the gaze, the "first visible," and to mirror that gaze back to its source.  

Marion does not diminish the potency of the idol by reducing it to the merely objective representation that takes shape through human fabrication. Instead, he argues that the idol exists only when the formed object freezes the gaze of the worshipper. As a matter of fact, Marion allows for the idol to arise out of a real experience with the divine. The problem with idolatry stems from

Can one avoid speaking of Being (or of God)? Can one speak of Being (or God) otherwise?

Marion, 9-12.

Ibid., 10.

Marion emphasizes the need for a mystical experience of union with God through the gift of the Eucharist. Consequently, he does not critique the notion of an experience with the divine, nor does he deny that such an experience might actually precede a particular idolatrous expression. The problem with the idol concerns not so much whether it mediates an experience with God but whether that experience originates from God or from the human, that is, whether the experience with the divine is limited to the structures of
the propensity to fix the deity within the parameters of what the human can envisage.\textsuperscript{98}

What is true of idols formed in bronze, wood, stone, or gold is also true of idols formed in ideas. Whenever human beings purport to have grasped God in object or opinion, to have stopped the gaze in some mirror of their own capacities, an idol is created.\textsuperscript{99} For contemporary theologians and philosophers, the matrix for the most insidious idolatry develops out of metaphysics, specifically the notion of \textit{causa sui} as characterizing God.\textsuperscript{100} This notion ties God in with various ideas about Being, specifically the putative relationships between Being and beings. One can find this idolatry not only in classical theism, with its apologetic attempts at proving and portraying the divine, but also in traditional atheism, with its attempts to dis-prove God.\textsuperscript{101} In other words, the "God" proven by Anselm is no less an idol than the "God" disproven by Feuerbach.

Marion covets some way by which idolatry can be overcome, whereby discourse about God will indeed be about God and not about the "God" of metaphysics. He aspires to 


\textsuperscript{98}Marion, 14.

\textsuperscript{99}Ibid., 16.

\textsuperscript{100}Ibid., 36.

\textsuperscript{101}Ibid., 16.
remove the limitations of the quotation marks, which punctuate symbolically the limitations placed on God by the impertinence of human rationality. He searches, therefore, for a discourse that continues to function even after—better, precisely because of—the twilight of the idols. He cannot remain satisfied with mere silence, since silence may exemplify not so much respect for the mystery of God as despair over being able to know anything of God. As Marion states it, silence itself demands a discourse, if for no other reason than to give an apologia for why humans must remain silent before God. As a result, Marion seeks to

---

102 Ibid., 37. Derrida briefly addresses the issue of quotation marks in Of Spirit. He compares them both to guards standing at the threshold and to drapery pegs (Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989], 31). According to the latter analogy, quotation marks transform the word inside them into a curtain; the word becomes a veil, a barrier separating one space from another, hiding behind it something that might ostensibly be revealed. Derrida grants some sort of inchoate revelatory possibility to the linguistic curtain when he claims it remains "just slightly open" (Ibid.). Later, however, he claims that quotation marks are a "ruse"; there are "always too many or too few of them" (Ibid., 40). Of course, curtains may indeed function as a subterfuge, suggesting that something lies behind them waiting to be revealed, when, in fact, once the drapes are pulled, one "sees" only an empty stage. In Marion's case, it appears that one could interpret quotation marks as indicating the veiling that occurs whenever human beings attempt to reveal God through metaphysical concepts. One might carry Derrida's analogy further by saying that ontotheology always claims that the curtain is the play itself.

103 Marion, 54. Scharlemann makes a fascinating connection between the word "silence" and the word "God." He states that both share the characteristic of naming their referents in "exile" from them. If one uses the word "silence," then one is not being silent. Likewise, whenever
remove the quotation marks from around the conceptual idol of "God" by distancing God from metaphysics, from a conceptual network founded on the speculative discourse about the Being of beings. That is, Marion solicits a discourse about God without Being.¹⁰⁴

Marion admits that his aim has certain affinities with Heidegger's Destruktion of metaphysics and his avowal that theology should not use the term "Being." Heidegger contends that ontotheology fails to think God within the interstices between Being and beings; in other words, it does not take into consideration the ontological difference. In its "forgetting Being," metaphysics reduces every thought either to beings or Being, with the latter always understood in the sense of "ground." Theologically, such thinking leads to God's being conceived either as a being or as Being itself. If God is thought under the latter rubric, God becomes another name for the ground of all things, or the causa sui. As Heidegger remarks, however, such a God cannot be the

one uses the word "God," one is not respecting the transcendence of God (The Being of God: Theology and the Experience of Truth [New York: The Seabury Press, 1981], 130). To use Marion's symbology, one could say that "God" is not Gœd, but should one not also say that Gœd is not Gœd. The answer is, "Yes." Gœd is always something other than any cipher used for Gœd. For Derrida, the whole issue is moot from the beginning, since to question how one can avoid speaking already implies that one is speaking. As he states it, "[L]anguage has started without us, in us and before us. This is what theology calls God, and it is necessary, it will have been necessary, to speak" (How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," 29).

¹⁰⁴Marion, 60.
"object" of adoration nor of celebration. Such a God is really an idol, a metaphysical fabrication, conditioned by the anteriority of human intellect. In Marion's language, this "God" ensues from the gaze that freezes in the first visible; it becomes a conceptual idol that reflects only the capacities of the thinker.

One anticipates initially that Marion would welcome the Heideggerian critique and inculcate it into his own rebuttal of ontotheology, and, to a certain extent, he does. He recognizes, however, that still lurking within the depths of Heidegger's phenomenological ontology is another, somewhat more insidious, idolatry. Heidegger manifests this "double idolatry" in two ways. First, he calls for a "new beginning" of thinking that will indeed take into consideration the ontological difference left unthought in metaphysics. This new beginning in philosophy opens the possibility for an analogous shift in theology. As one can philosophically attempt to think Being as Being, so, too, can one attempt to think God as God. In this context, Heidegger sets up a certain pattern whereby one may move from Being to God. The truth of Being opens the space in which the holy can be thought. In turn, only after the holy is thought can the divine be thought. Then, and only then, can the referent of "God" be thought. This interwoven network plays itself out in the Geviert, with God being one of four constituents of

105Ibid., 35.
the world--heaven, earth, God (gods) and mortals.  
Marion indicates that such a situating of God within the
play of the "fourfold" expresses another attempt to think
God only from the basis, or within the milieu, of an anteri-
or pattern of conceptuality. God can be thought only in
relation to the worlding of the world and out of the alethic
dynamic of Being, which manifests the clearing within which
the world can be encountered.

This second idolatry is further evidenced by the sig-
nificance of Dasein in Heidegger's theory of Being and
world. Dasein distinguishes itself by being the being that
asks the question of Being. If there were no Dasein, there
would be no Seinsfrage; consequently, there would be no
clearing into which the fourfold could display itself.
Interestingly enough, therefore, the idea of "God" presup-
poses an idea of Being, but the idea of Being presupposes
the existential analytic of Dasein. Of course, Marion
recognizes that Heidegger separates "God" from the exist-
tential analytic, that is, suspends the "Gottesfrage" from
the Seinsfrage, because whereas philosophy is ontological,
theology is ontic. Such a distinction, however, according

106 Marion, 40. Caputo maintains that Marion's critique
of Heidegger with reference to the Geviert "is the Levinas-
ian Jewish critique that the Geviert is paganism, the imma-
nence of God on earth" (personal correspondence with the
author, 1 February 1994).

107 Marion, 41.

108 Ibid., 42.
to Marion depends upon Dasein's own philosophical decision; consequently, even the suspension of the idea of "God" issues from a prior determination made by Dasein concerning Being and, therefore, reveals yet another idolatrous perspective on God.

Marion does admit that in separating philosophy and theology, Heidegger does attempt to open the possibility for a discourse about God without Being. Heidegger makes a definite distinction between philosophy and faith, with the latter being a completely different logic that from the point of view of philosophy appears to be foolishness.\textsuperscript{109} In other words, the manifestation of Being cannot be confused or fused with the revelation of faith.\textsuperscript{110} Marion insists, however, that this Heideggerian bifurcation of philosophy and theology fails to release God from the constraints of Being for two reasons. First, Heidegger, himself, nowhere gives any positive indication as to what a theological, or faith, discourse might be. His only stated criterion is that the word "Being" should not be in the vocabulary. Second, since "Being" should not appear in a genuine theological discourse about God, and since the corruption of ontotheology specifically is that it does indeed use the term "Being" with God, there must be a

\textsuperscript{109}Ibid., 63.

\textsuperscript{110}Ibid., 62.
non-theological discourse about God, that is, a "theology." Theology concerns the thinking of Being as the divine, as the most excellent being—the "moral God" of Kant or the *causa sui* of Descartes.

In order, then, to separate the theiological from the theological, Heidegger gives a more precise definition of theology. Theology has to do with the science of faith that focuses on the belief in the Crucified. Such a science cannot ensue naturally from Dasein's own attempts to question Being or analyze itself. Such believing results from something other than Dasein. In other words, it "only occurs to Dasein in a manner not fitted to Dasein . . . ." This "otherness" of faith ostensibly separates it from any dependence on the existential analytic, since the possibility to believe is not a possibility innate within the structures of Dasein. Yet, as Marion protests, one can know what is not within the structures of Dasein only on the basis of

111 Ibid., 63.

112 Ibid., 64. O'Leary takes something of the same position when he admits that philosophical discourse must in some way take into consideration the significance of God. Unfortunately, that discourse collapses the distinction between the philosophical God and the biblical God (O'Leary, 15). This collapse ensues in the biblical models of God having to play a subservient role with reference to the metaphysical models. The latter become legislative as the proper structures within which God may be understood (Ibid., 16).

113 Marion, 65.

114 Ibid., 67.
the analytic itself; therefore, theology as an ontic science of faith still depends upon the existential analytic in order to identify its essence. Consequently, theology, although avoiding the word "Being," continues to depend on the idea of Being for its "being." As a result, God is not released from the conceptual idolatry of ontology. "God" remains the object of a gaze, an aim that stops with the conceptual idol formed by it. So, for Marion, no matter how zealously Heidegger wishes to distinguish Being and God, he ultimately fails to avoid their confederation.

The Iconic Gift of Love

Marion concludes that one cannot remain consistent with the broader intentions of Heideggerian philosophy and adequately overcome the conceptual idolatry of ontotheology. At best, Heidegger raises the pertinent questions and recognizes something of the necessary critiques that must be

115Ibid., 68. One might find corroboration for Marion's critique in Derrida's statements concerning the putative relationship between apophaticism and death. He writes that the notion of the possibility of impossibility, which may be found for example in the apophaticism of Silesius, may parallel Heidegger's discourse on the finitude of Dasein--death as the possibility of the impossibility of the existing Dasein. Derrida submits that there is a coherence "[b]etween the existential analytic of being-for-death, in Sein und Zeit, and the remarks of Heidegger on the theological, the theological, and above all on a theology in which the word 'being' would not even appear . . ." ("Post-Scriptum: Aporias, Ways and Voices," 291). Consequently, Heidegger's proposed theology without being would continue to depend upon the notion of Being and, therefore, function as another example of the idolatrous, according to Marion's criteria.
made. Yet, he still ends with God's depending upon the anterior screen of Being or upon the play of the Fourfold within the worlding of the world. As Heidegger himself allows, however, faith does not depend upon anything inherent within Dasein, but instead it comes from outside, from the revelation of the Crucified one. This allowance does broach the possibility of biblical revelation as a possible mode whereby God and Being may be separated. As Marion indicates, within biblical revelation, there is no explicit reference to Being, and there is explicit reference to the un-worldliness of the event of revelation—that this world is actually passing away (1 Cor. 7:31). Consequently, if God can be revealed outside of Dasein and the world, can one not question whether, indeed, God may not be thought without Being?

Marion answers the above question affirmatively. He does think that God can be separated from Being and, thereby, be freed from the idolatry of metaphysics. Marion makes an important distinction between idol and icon. Unlike the former, the icon does not depend upon a gaze frozen in the mirror of the first visible. Instead, the icon generates the gaze. Through the icon, the invisible makes itself visible without relinquishing its invisibility. In other words, the icon never exhausts the invisible. It reveals in

\[116\] Marion, 70-71.

\[117\] Ibid., 17.
such a way that the gaze must remain fluid, constantly penetrating the icon for another insight into the invisible.\textsuperscript{118} This insight into the invisible occurs, however, only because through the icon the invisible gazes at the individual. That is, in the icon there is a "transpiercing gaze" that looks at the person.\textsuperscript{119} In this way, the icon acts as a face gazing at the gaze of the other, subsuming the gaze of the other within its own gaze.

The legislating example of his notion of icon comes from Colossians 1:15, where Paul refers to Christ as the icon of the invisible God.\textsuperscript{120} In Christ, God reveals Godself in the manner that God chooses, not in the manner dictated by any anterior human paradigm.\textsuperscript{121} Consequently, in Christ there is no antecedent gaze dependent upon a prior experience with the divine and expressed through an intentional aim. Instead, there is the infinitely invisible God making visible in Christ through a glory that reflects in the face of the gazer only because it first looks into that face.\textsuperscript{122} Whereas the idol results from a unilateral vision

\textsuperscript{118}Ibid., 18.

\textsuperscript{119}Ibid., 19.

\textsuperscript{120}Ibid., 17.

\textsuperscript{121}O’Leary seems to be in agreement with Marion with reference to the subversive efficacy of Christ as "a divine question to the world, a question whose full implications . . . are always unfolding . . ." (O’Leary, 212).

\textsuperscript{122}Marion, 22.
that originates from the aim of the person and is reflected by the image, the icon results from a bilateral vision originating from the divine other, who allows the face of the person to reflect the visibility of the invisible without ever exhausting that gaze. As the idol may be expressed conceptually, so, too, can the icon. The conceptual icon, however, never claims to think God conditioned by any prior structure or bases. It seeks to conceive of God by respecting God's "excessiveness." The icon maintains the distance between the invisible and the visible in such a way that the "union increases in the measure of distinction, and reciprocally."

Marion draws three basic implications from the interplay between distance and the icon. First, the conceptual icon denies any claim to absolute knowledge. In the icon, one can only think that which constantly transcends all thinking. Second, the icon has an explicitly Christological focus to it. Marion insists that the iconic dynamic of the Christ event has normative value for theology. Third, the iconic gaze always results in an idoloclasm; it "open[s] the

\[123\] Ibid., 23.

\[124\] Ibid., 23. Here again Caputo questions whether such a pure iconic encounter is possible. Are not all icons in some way infected with historicity and the concreteness of particularity; that is, can one ever encounter any icon of God that does not bear the mark of some tradition, culture, language, or other antecedents? If not, then does Marion's theory of icon actually offer a theology of the "without," without Being, without conceptual idolatry, without anteriority? Cf. Caputo, "How to Avoid Speaking of God," 131.
By questioning the idolatrous, the iconic overpowers even indifference and continues to reveal the infinity of the invisible.

The possibility of discovering an iconic approach to God offers Marion a way to remove the quotation marks and write about God, not the idolatrous "God." He thinks that he can do this only if he thinks outside the ontological difference, a location that Heidegger never reaches. For Marion, to think outside the ontological difference is, indeed, to think the unthinkable, since in some way thought depends upon the difference between Being and being. This unthinkable can, itself, be expressed idolatrously, if it is defined as only the unthinkable with reference to what the person can think. Such a definition results in the unthinkable still being conditioned by the thinking of Dasein. Only if the unthinkable is unthinkable because it exceeds all thought can one truly reach an iconic position. Only if God comes in some way, reveals Godself as the unthinkable, can there be an escape from idolatry.

Marion chooses to write the distinction between the idolatrous and the iconic as "God" over against Gðd. By crossing out Gðd, Marion signifies that Gðd can function in discourse like a concept; however, conceptually, Gðd con-

---

125Marion, 24.
stantly critiques every signifier. The crossing of God is actually a crossing of Dasein and discourse, a constant reminder of the distance between the iconic gaze intended by the invisible and the face of the one who gazes upon the icon’s gaze. The crossing of God also indicates the Christological relevance of the iconic. God can only be known through the cross of Christ; this cruciform icon expresses the divine questioning of all human attempts to know God as conditioned by some anteriority. It also pre-

---

Klemm references the "crossing" of negativity when he proposes that the name "God" has the power to differentiate itself from the symbol, that is, "the meaning of the divine is always more than the manifest symbol as signifier can show" ("Theological Hermeneutics and the Divine Name: Ricoeur and the Cross of Interpretation," unpublished manuscript, 10). Although he does not utilize writing sous rature in this essay, he does contend that every symbol for God "is crossed out by the awareness of divine negativity" (Ibid., 22, emphasis mine).

Marion, 46. Caputo interprets Marion’s crossing of God as expressing "that God erases (sature) our thought by saturating (sature) and overwhelming us with his excess" ("How to Avoid Speaking of God," 135). This strategy of crossing God as a way of writing without metaphysics may not offer a genuine alternative to conceptual idolatry. In other words, the iconic God may not avoid the same problem of anteriority that Marion argues marks the idolatrous "God." Caputo does not believe that Marion’s iconic ploys actually avoid the flux of anteriority. Derrida gives corroboration to Caputo’s critique when he interprets quotation marks and crossing-out as both expressions of the desire to "avoid," "to saying without saying, writing without writing, using words without using them" (Of Spirit, 2). He includes in this list, Heidegger’s claim that he would not allow the word "Being" to appear in his theology.

Perhaps what Marion calls for here is akin to Luther’s "sapientia crucis" that expresses the power of the biblical word to interrogate all Christian discourse (O’Leary, 120-21).
cludes any genuine claim to absolute knowledge, since the cross event can never be totally conceptualized.\textsuperscript{129}

In searching for the appropriate term with which to express all of the ramifications of the crossing of G\(\times\)d, Marion decides on a Johannine concept--agape.\textsuperscript{130} He cites two reasons why love (agape) can fulfill this function. First, love is itself unconditioned. Love as gift depends upon nothing outside the giver. Love gives itself as gift in the middle voice, needing neither any prior possibility's sufficiency nor any posterior recipient's acceptance. As a result, if G\(\times\)d is conceived as love, then God does not have to be. God simply loves unconditionally.\textsuperscript{131} Second, love avoids any semblance of conceptual idolatry, since love

\textsuperscript{129}This might be a christological application of Derrida's insistence that the mode of discourse in negative theology--the inexpressible--and the mode of discourse in any interpretation and explanation of negative theology--the expressible--cross at a point that is neither of the two discourses. This crossing point is the point of the secret that must and must not be divulged. This point is actually a point of de-negation, the denial that denies itself. This is the crux of the matter with reference to the naming of God--"God"--G\(\times\)d ("How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," 24-26).

\textsuperscript{130}Marion, 47.

\textsuperscript{131}Caputo has reservations about the unconditionality of love as analogous to the unconditioned nature of God. He refers to Heidegger's borrowing from Silesius the notion of the "rose without why," which indicates a region outside the hegemony of the principle of sufficient reason. Caputo agrees with Hart here that Heidegger does allow for the groundless play of Being that transcends any attempt to establish a condition for the play. As a matter of fact, Caputo states that both Eckhart and Silesius claim that love is without why. Consequently, the play of Being might also be the play of love. Cf. "How to Avoid Speaking of God," 135.
gives rise to thought only in excess. Such excessive thinking can never be frozen, totalized into some definite metaphysical system. As a matter of fact, Marion argues that the thought that thinks love does not operate as a reception, taking what is offered in the giving, but must respond in kind to the giver and give itself to the gift. In other words, as God gives Godself in the gift of love, so the person thinks this gift by giving her/himself to the gift of love. One can only think God by starting with God's giving, and one can only start with God's giving by giving oneself to God; consequently, the only way to think God as love is to love God as thinking.\footnote{Marion, 48-49. Caputo accuses Marion of failing to reach a theology without conditions but of exchanging one condition for another. In lieu of Being as the condition for discourse about God, Marion chooses love. "Love" is, however, still a concept, albeit it more of a biblical one than a Hellenistic one. This shift from Athens to Jerusalem does not mean a shift away from all anteriority, because love functions as the anterior mediation of all thought and discourse about God. Even granting Marion's desire to privilege biblical language as inspired, one still has to question the propensity on Marion's part to treat that language as if it fell out of heaven as some foreign tongue. Even the biblical discourses about God, while they may very well be in some real way "God's Word," still have a history, come out of various cultures, and depend on certain philosophical/theological baggage for their meaning. Consequently, Caputo simply rejects that Marion has broken totally with the necessity for mediation ("How to Avoid Speaking of God," 136-37).}

The combination of God, agape, and gift offers Marion the conceptual network he needs in order to prosecute the idea that one can actually understand God without Being. He admits that in a certain way, his approach has traditional
antecedents in the argument over the primary name for Gôd—Being or the Good. He contends that Heidegger falls squarely on the side of the former, ultimately referring to Gôd as a being.\textsuperscript{133} He, however, refuses to accept that, notwithstanding Exodus 3:14, Being is the first name for Gôd.\textsuperscript{134} Instead, he finds more affinity with Pseudo-Dionysius, who contends that the preeminent name for Gôd is the Good, since the Good "inspires and fosters agape . . ."\textsuperscript{135} Marion, however, thinks that exchanging "Good" for "Being" does not suffice to free Gôd from the constraints of ontological language. He seeks to discover in biblical revelation ways by which the entire conceptual paradigm of ontology can be "deconstructed." He undertakes such a biblical revisionism by consulting three different passages, two from Paul and one from Luke. The Pauline passages come from Romans 4 and I Corinthians 1.\textsuperscript{136} Both of these passages concern the inversion and subversion of the usual understanding of Being, beings, and non-beings. Marion endeavors to show how Gôd is indifferent to the difference between being and non-being.

\textsuperscript{132}Marion, 72.

\textsuperscript{134}Ibid., 74.

\textsuperscript{135}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{136}Ibid., 86-95. Odell-Scott suggests that Heidegger's separation of philosophy and theology stems from his own reading of Paul's epistles. Specifically, he maintains that Heidegger tries to take seriously the implications in Paul that for Christianity philosophy as metaphysics is foolishness and an absurdity (Odell-Scott, 40).
and how that indifference differs from the world and its criterion of differentiation.

It is in Luke, however, that Marion discovers a fascinating critique of the ontological difference that he so much desires to avoid. In Luke 15:12-32, one reads the parable of the Prodigal Son, a story in which the "philosophical term par excellence, ousia . . ." is explicitly used." Here, the term carries the idea of disposable property, or goods. Marion contends that this non-philosophical usage does share certain traits with the technical uses of the word in Plato and Aristotle; therefore, one may certainly examine this biblical account for possible implications for re-evaluating ousia as a concept for Being. The primary issue in the story centers on the right of possession, on who owns the property not so much on who may enjoy it. Prior to receiving his inheritance, the younger son could enjoy the ousia that he eventually received; however, that enjoyment depended upon a relationship, his filiation with the father. He did not need to demand his property in order to use it. He had use of it without the demand. Yet, prior to the demand, he used the property only as gift, a gift from the father, who gave it as a tangible expression of his love for the son. What

---

137 Marion, 95.
138 Ibid., 96.
139 Ibid., 97.
the younger son desired was not so much the property as the property separated from the relationship and from the donation.\textsuperscript{140}

In getting his request, the younger son finally dissipates his property; he exhausts it by wasting it in some "distant country" (literally \textit{khora}), where he eventually finds himself with the swine with no one \textit{giving} him anything (cf. 15:16).\textsuperscript{141} After coming to himself, he decides to return to the father, not as a son but as a servant. The father, however, only receives him as a son, restores his humanity, and gives him not only more property but a pardon (\textit{pardon}).\textsuperscript{142} Marion points out that the term \textit{ousia} only appears in the sons’ discourse, never the father’s, primarily because, the father does not freeze his gaze upon the \textit{ousia}, but transpierces it in order to see through it to the giving itself.\textsuperscript{143} The father sees his property as his sons’; therefore, for the father \textit{ousia} is dispossessed of its idolatrous possessiveness. In this play of giving and

\textsuperscript{140}Ibid., 97.

\textsuperscript{141}Derrida gives an extended treatment to the idea of \textit{khora} as it used in Plato’s \textit{Timaeus}. There \textit{khora} refers to the space that receives the imprint of the Forms through the power of the Demiurge. The \textit{khora} is neither intelligible nor sensible, but it is not nothing either. Consequently, it functions as a third species of negativity beyond (other than) the Good and Being ("How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," 34-38). Interestingly enough, what Derrida writes about \textit{khora} reads comparably to what Marion writes about G\&d.

\textsuperscript{142}Marion, 99.

\textsuperscript{143}Ibid.
forgiving, ousia becomes gift; that is, in lieu of the gift’s being an expression of ontological difference—the distance between Being and being—Being/being is given as gift. As a result, "the gift crosses Being/being: it meets it, strikes it out with a mark . . . The gift delivers Being/being." Marion recognizes that this reference to gift has antecedents in Heidegger’s thought, specifically with reference to the German idiom, es gibt, "it gives" for "there is." For Heidegger, however, the gift is Being; gift is the mode in which Being manifests its opening, its aletheia. This opening takes place in the Fourfold, in which there is no giver, only the giving that plays in the inter-play among gods and mortal, earth and sky.  

144 Ibid., 101. Caputo insists that the scriptures that Marion uses as arguments against the ontological difference fail to critique the Heideggerian understanding of Being. He states that it is the ontological difference itself that allows for the very differentiation between types of Being that Marion presents Paul and Luke as revealing. In other words, Caputo declares that ontotheology has failed to appreciate the difference revealed in the biblical materials precisely because it has failed to think the ontological difference, that beings may be projected in their Being in different ways. Heidegger, himself, quotes the same passage from I Corinthians in order to argue that Being cannot be factored down to nothing more than presence but includes multiple possibilities for Being-in-the-world. As a result, Caputo charges that "Marion has not discovered an understanding without Being but the possibility of understanding Being differently" ("How to Avoid Speaking of God," 140-41).  

145 Marion, 102.  

146 Ibid., 103-104. Scharlemann offers some corroborating evidence for Marion’s contention that Heidegger’s notion of the gift fails to avoid the issue of Being. He identifies Heidegger’s theory of es gibt, "it is"/"it gives," as one of the ways that God and Being can be corre-
Marion contends that such an understanding of giving does indeed continue to worship the double idolatry of the ontological difference. He chooses to examine the notion of giving from the perspective of the distance between the gift and the giver. In the limitless play of giving, the giver and the gift reciprocate in that the giver gives itself in the gift and the gift always points back to the giver. This reciprocity ensures that the distance remains in the traversing of it. Marion insists that in thinking the giving from the perspective of the giver, one does not fall victim to the scourge of ontotheology in finally reducing the giver to a being. The distance itself inhibits such a step. The distance only allows one to term the giver Gōd. "Gōd gives." In giving, however, Gōd does not have to be. Gōd crosses Being/being through the extravagance of unconditional agape, expressed preeminently in the death and resurrection of Christ, the revelation of Gōd on the "cross." Agape, which exceeds all attempts at comprehension, gives without Being or being, and, in doing so, maintains the distance that prevents any freezing of an

---

147 Marion, 104.
148 Ibid., 105.
149 Ibid., 106.
idolatrous gaze. In *agape*, one discovers the transpiercing face of the iconic gaze infinitely expressed in the optical oscillation (pendular motion?) between the invisible and the visible. This oscillation actually becomes the giving back of praise and love. In lieu of silence before the *deus absconditus*, one should use the discourse of praise predicated upon the action of love. In other words, the proper response to Gôd's loving is to return the gift, to love Gôd back.\(^{150}\)

Distance and the Vanity of Creation

Marion concedes that his theory of the "deconstructive" dynamic of *agape* as crossing the hegemony of Being/being

\(^{150}\)Ibid., 107. In *L'Idole*, Marion indicates that Pseudo-Dionysius replaces the verb "saying" with *humnein*, that is, hymn, or praise (*L'Idole*, 232). Such a replacement signifies that only in praising can the distance be maintained, thereby allowing language to function iconically (234). Marion points out that praise does not raise the issues of truth or falsity but, instead, act performatively, finding its meaning in its use (Ibid., 240, 238). Since praising is not predicating, hymnic discourse avoids the threat of conceptual idolatry.

Derrida agrees with Marion's categorization of hymnic discourse as non-predicative and performative. He discusses the issue in the context of the relationship between prayer and praise (the encomium). Both forms of discourse share the above two characteristics; however, Derrida contends that praise differs from prayer in that the latter is an address to while the former may be language of God. In other words, hymnic discourse actually has a certain attributional dynamic ("How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," 41-42). Derrida interprets praise (the encomium) as a supplement to prayer, which, of course, in good Derridean fashion, means that it both adds to and replaces prayer (Ibid., 67). Caputo expresses something of the same viewpoint with reference to the predicative aspect of praise when he identifies praise as still a form of thinking ("How to Avoid Speaking of God," 134).
does not admit a pure experience of a non-metaphysical encounter with God sans Being.\textsuperscript{151} He realizes that only glimpses of such a crossing can obtain within the context of finitude, primarily because finitude can find expression as "sin," and "sinners" are unable to appropriate the full measure of the gift of agape.\textsuperscript{152} Such limitation ensues because human existence, in fact all existence—everything subsumed under the rubric of the ontological difference—is indeed created. The play of Being and the gaze of both idol and icon, therefore, are limited by the space of finitude. The question then arises for Marion as to how Dasein may begin to move from the idolatrous gaze of metaphysics to the iconic gaze of God. How precisely can one begin to cross Being with agape?\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{151}Scharlemann contends that "[i]t is not enough to think 'God is not being.' The task is to think that not, just the difference and nothing more" (The Being of God, 15). Only in thinking the not does one attain to a post-metaphysical thinking, or, what later he calls, metanoetic thinking. Marion's thinking of the "without" in "God without Being" is perhaps attempting to think the not and actually to name it. That is, the negative within the "without" bears the name of agape." Scharlemann's interpretation of the relationship between negation and the being God suggests an interesting reversal of Marion's theology. Scharlemann claims that God is not this or that or any other thing; consequently, the being of God may be "shown by [the] power to negate anything and everything" (Ibid., 90). If this is the case, then ironically Marion's attempt to think God without Being, that is, to think God as not related to the idea of Being, might in itself be a manifestation of the "being" of God.

\textsuperscript{152}Marion, 108.

\textsuperscript{153}Ibid., 110-11.
Marion begins the process from idol to icon with the gaze that neither gazes upon the idol nor allows itself to be gazed upon by the icon. That non-idolatrous and non-iconic gaze is the gaze of boredom. He alleges that the gaze of boredom escapes the conceptual idolatry of "God" and the double idolatry of ontological difference, predominately by diminishing all difference in the attitude of indifference.\textsuperscript{154} The gaze of boredom simply does not care (Sorge) about anything, and in this "not caring" takes no interest in Being or beings.\textsuperscript{155} Boredom does not destroy, nor is it nihilistic. Both destruction and nihilism imply some sort of concern, some aspect of interest, even if negative interest.\textsuperscript{156} Boredom, on the other hand, simply takes no interest at all. Consequently, boredom disengages the entire structure that identifies Dasein, since Dasein as the opening of Being depends upon the tension inherent in the ontological difference. Boredom, therefore, escapes the gaze of double idolatry by playing with ontological in-difference.

This boredom eventuates in an attitude of the "as if."\textsuperscript{157} It gazes upon the world as if it were nothing, nothing of interest, not nothing of non-being. For boredom, that there is something and not nothing matters not at all.

\textsuperscript{154}Ibid., 116.

\textsuperscript{155}Ibid., 118.

\textsuperscript{156}Ibid., 115-16.

\textsuperscript{157}Ibid., 119; cf. 126-32.
No wonder or amazement arises in order to pique a philosophical or even theological interest. Consequently, boredom ends in a universal sense of vanity. Here Marion appeals to the conclusions of Qoheleth in Ecclesiastes that everything, in all of its plenitude, displays nothing but vanity, a nothingness that is not nothing but is as if it were nothing. Qoheleth claims that only a superlative vanity marks existence, a vanity that does not consider Being or being. Marion emphasizes that in the Hebrew, no verb of being appears. It is not that "all is vanity," but that "all--vanity."

Qoheleth does not deny that things exist. He writes, for example, of wisdom, wealth, and human achievements; however, for Marion, Qoheleth recognizes that all of these things are created, and as created, they have no self-presence or ultimate worth. As created, they also have

\[\text{\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 121.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 127.} \text{ Marion states that Qoheleth does not broach the issue of creation in his text; however, Marion feels that the concept does certainly express the notion of vanity developed in the work (Ibid., 122). Interestingly enough, he apparently overlooks the final chapter of Ecclesiastes in which Qoheleth does expressly raise the issue of creation by prescribing the proper response to the vanity of everything: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth" (12:1 NAS). Within the broader context of Marion's thesis, such a prescription appears quite insightful, since Qoheleth accents the creator, the giver of existence. He also admits the distance that separates the giver from the gifted. In 11:5, Qoheleth informs his readers that they do not know, cannot comprehend, "the works of God who makes all." He has them think about the unthinkable, contemplating divine works that finite beings cannot completely contemplate. The conclusion to the "whole matter" for Qoheleth is to reverence God and follow God's commands (12:13). Could this not be another way of expressing what Marion has already con-}
within them the possibility of deterioration and destruction. That is, creation always threatens to break apart, to fragment, to "fall."\textsuperscript{160}

Yet, one cannot interpret reality as creation without taking a hermeneutical stance outside the whole. In other words, the epithet "creation" reveals that vanity gazes upon reality from without, or at least presumes that such a "without" obtains.\textsuperscript{161} This "without" names the distance that separates the giver and the gifted; therefore, vanity and boredom actually eventuate in a gaze that takes the perspective of God. That gaze is not the gaze of God but the gaze "by God."\textsuperscript{162} In other words, vanity leads away from the frozen gaze of the idol but not completely to the transpiercing gaze of the icon. It concedes that another gaze might look back onto the world; however, it cannot identify nor accomplish that gaze. It only appreciates the distance without traversing it.\textsuperscript{163} It cannot traverse it because it cannot rise to the level of God; that is, it cannot attain to agape, which crosses the distance and thereby gazes at the world without boredom or vanity but

---

\textsuperscript{160}Marion, 126-27.

\textsuperscript{161}Ibid., 130.

\textsuperscript{162}Ibid., 129.

\textsuperscript{163}Ibid., 131.
with the attitude of a lover who recognizes the goodness of the whole.\textsuperscript{164}

Marion states that vanity leads one to realize the gap between Being (creation) and \textit{agape} (the gaze of \textit{Gd}) and that this gap may be termed "melancholia."\textsuperscript{165} He explicates melancholia by referring to Dürer's engraving of the same name. In that engraving, melancholia is represented as a being who does not gaze at anything within the frame of the picture. Nothing inside the drawing interests the gaze. Instead, it is turned outward, not at the spectators, but at nothing, at least nothing visible or identifiable.\textsuperscript{166} Marion interprets this as melancholia gazing into the distance in which everything vanishes. Marion questions, given this symbolism, if anything could limit melancholia's non-idolatrous, non-iconic gaze into the vanity of ontological in-difference. He concludes that melancholia can be limited by advancing to \textit{agape}, the gaze that traverses the distance identified by vanity. In other words, boredom, vanity, and melancholia serve as propaedeutic to raising the issue of \textit{agape}, and, therefore, the gaze of \textit{Gd}. He prosecutes this propaedeutic in two ways. First, vanity and love coexist in the case where the beloved is absent. Without the presence of the object of love, everything takes on the disinterest-

\textsuperscript{164}Ibid., 132.

\textsuperscript{165}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{166}Ibid., 133-34.
edness of vanity. The absence of the beloved colors the entire world and diminishes it.\textsuperscript{167} This polarity of vanity and love finds ultimate expression in the willingness to sacrifice everything in order to regain the lost love. The lover gladly relinquishes the whole world if by doing so s/he might recover what s/he loves. Only in the economy of \textit{agape} does such a transaction seem logical. Second, vanity and love coexist whenever the beloved \textit{is} present, because the world takes on meaning only as the context in which love expresses itself. The world in and of itself has no attraction; its beauty, goodness, and meaning come only in that it functions as the milieu within which one encounters what one loves. Consequently, Being only escapes vanity when it is superseded by \textit{agape}. Marion concludes from this that "love does not have to be. And G\&d loves without being."\textsuperscript{168}

\textbf{Eu-Charis and Agape: The Present as a Present}

Marion finally arrives at the crux (cross) of the matter when he centers the iconic dynamic of \textit{agape} in the sacramental mediation of the Eucharist. He insists that one must engage more in \textit{theology} than in \textit{theology} by reducing one's discourse about G\&d to G\&d's own discourse about G\&dself.\textsuperscript{169} Such \textit{theology} only obtains from a Christocen-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{167}Ibid., 136.
\item \textsuperscript{168}Ibid., 138.
\item \textsuperscript{169}Ibid., 139.
\end{itemize}
tric hermeneutic, since only in the cross of Christ does God reveal the Word in its purest form. As a matter of fact, in Christ the gap between Word and words is overcome along with the gap between sign and signifier, because in the divinity of Jesus one encounters not only the speaker of the divine Word but also the content of that word. In other words, Jesus speaks God’s Word by speaking himself. Only a hermeneutic that begins with Christ as the Word can avoid

---

170 Jennings goes so far as to claim that in the Word, God does not say something about Godself but says Godself; that is, "word is the very reality . . . of God" (Beyond Theism: A Grammar of God-Language [New York: Oxford University Press, 1985], 51).

171 Marion, 140. Marion emphasizes that in Jesus the difference between sign and signifier are overcome; however, such an interpretation becomes quite problematical if one investigates the nuances of the Johannine language about Christ, the legislating language in Marion’s discourse on the Word. In the gospel of John, a definite distinction is accentuated between Jesus as the revealer of the Father and the Father. Jesus is presented most definitely as not being the Father, even to the point of a functional subordinationism in which Jesus subsumes himself under the Father with reference to authority and position. He has been sent by the Father and will return to the Father; he prays to the Father; he works the Father’s works and, as Marion stresses, speaks the words of the Father; he has seen the Father and, consequently, is best able to exegete the Father, to explain the Father and reveal the Father. Given all of this, one must question the facile identification of Jesus as both sign and signifier. Notwithstanding Jesus’ multiple statements attesting to the unity shared between Father and Son, the fact remains that Jesus does not refer to himself nor seek to reveal himself. Instead, he refers to the Father, who, thereby, functions as the signified in the revelation of the Word. Marion seems to recognize this difference when he explains the Trinitarian implications of the Father speaking the Word in Jesus through the breath of the Spirit (142-43). Unfortunately, he does not maintain the Trinitarian distinction when he extrapolates the semiotic dimensions of the revelation of the Word.
falling into idolatry and postulating a \textit{logos} anterior to the Logos.\textsuperscript{172} Consequently, the only truly \textit{theological} hermeneutic is one that begins with Jesus' own saying himself as the Word and ends with the text's being traversed as the way to the Word as the event behind the words.\textsuperscript{173}

Marion insists that only a Eucharistic hermeneutic satisfies the above two demands. Basing his theory on the biblical episode involving the disciples' journeying to Emmaus, Marion suggests that only when Christ interprets in the giving of thanks does the text reveal the Word; the eucharis, the giving thanks, is itself the hermeneutic. In the Eucharistic celebration, \textit{theology} comes to its clearest,

\textsuperscript{172}Marion, 143. Jennings asserts that Trinitarian and Christological discourses supply protocol criteria for identifying specifically Christian language, thereby supplying the conditions for that language (Jennings, 181). They also serve another role in preventing any Christian discourse from becoming totalized; that is, these discourses can function dogmatically "to prevent the stabilization or consolidation of Christian discourse" (Ibid., 183). Consequently, Trinitarian language acts as a grammar or a language about language (Ibid., 18). In other words, Trinitarian discourse functions "logo-logically," that is, it reflects "upon the antecedent condition of the use of word and language and thus upon linguistically as the antecedent condition of explanation" (Ibid., 158). Just such an explicative use of dogma falls under Marion's critical eye, because for him that usage implies that there can be language that functions as a condition for the language about Christ. The very idea of a "logo-logy" intimates that some sort of conceptual idolatry is at work.

\textsuperscript{173}Marion, 148. According to Caputo, Marion searches for a "hermeneutics that is no hermeneutic at all, because the interpretation is not an interpretation but a kind of absolute deliverance that delivers . . . from the conflict of interpretation . . ." ("How to Avoid Speaking of God," 145).
iconic expression in the thanks expressed for the gift of 
agape, the agape manifested in the giving of the Word, Gōd’s 
revelation in the sacrifice of Christ. Two corollaries 
ensue from such an iconic, donative hermeneutic. First, 
only the one who has the authority to gather the congrega-
tion into a Eucharistic community may rightfully be called a 
theologian. That one can only be the bishop, since the 
bishop functions in the celebration as the one "invested by 
the persona Christi" through the apostolic succession.174
If no theology obtains outside of a Eucharistic center, and 
if no Eucharist can be performed without the endorsement of 
the bishop, then no one can claim to be a theologian who has 
not received the imprimatur of the magisterium175. Second, 

174Marion, 153.

175Here is where Caputo claims that Marion’s theology 
becomes intrinsically dangerous. By locating the Eucharis-
tic hermeneutic specifically under the authority of the 
bishop, Marion has "baptized" the hierarchical structure of 
the Catholic church. In doing so, he implicitly limits 
every interpretation that does not adhere to the "official" 
reading. Consequently, different interpretations are sum-
marily excluded as politically dangerous to the integrity of 
the community. Marion may critique the metaphysical power 
structures of ontotheology; however, he does not critique 
the notion of authoritarian political power structures them-
selves. What is frightening in all of this is that Marion 
implies that the political organization that he accepts 
results from the unconditioned act of God; it is God’s de-
creed structure ("How to Avoid Speaking of God," 146-47).
Other voices are excluded; different explanations are re-
jected. Only what agrees with the bishopric is indeed God’s 
discourse about Godself. What Marion finally comes to in 
all of this is nothing more than "an ecclesiastical logo-
centrism" that does not admit critique (O’Leary, 86), that 
exercises its power in order to maintain it. Such power 
usually ensues in violence of some sort, violence that 
ostensibly bears the imprimatur of God.


a true theologian must have experienced the gift given through the Eucharist, that is, the divine love that crosses Being and reveals the distance between God and humanity. Such an experience, according to Marion, can only be a mystical union involving suffering, faith, and love. As Marion expresses it, "theology is celebrated before it is written . . ." Only in such a "nonverbal" experience of celebration can the theologian know the content of what s/he speaks in her/his logos of God. In fine, the theologian must be authorized by the bishop and must have encountered the divine agape as gift through a mystical experience with God.

Marion concludes his text by attempting to move through the iconic Eucharistic theology to a site beyond the text; in other words, his endeavor to develop a God without Being leads him finally to generate a theology without text. In a

Derrida points out that Marion's hierarchialism already finds expression in the earlier work L'Idole. Although there, Marion claims that his understanding of the hierarchy functioning in the Trinitarian relationships among Father, Son, and Spirit must not be confused with a vulgar, political hierarchialism, Derrida inquires as to whether the vulgar concept does not always depend upon a particular thearchy ("How to Avoid Speaking," 65). Consequently, whether or not Marion intends his theory to be interpreted as condoning a particular politico-ecclesiastical structure that claims to be unconditioned, the possibility of just that perversion remains. Anyone who does not accept the authority of the hors-texte might well be condemned as a hors la loi!

176 Marion, 155.

177 Ibid., 157.
final section entitled "Hors-Texte," Marion extrapolates from his Eucharistic, mystical hermeneutic an understanding of the gift of agape that no longer depends on discourse. The Eucharist gathers all into a spiritual body; it actually fulfills something of an incarnational role in that it incorporates human beings into the church, thereby assimilating them into Christ.\textsuperscript{178} The significant issue for Marion at this point concerns the threat of reintroducing metaphysics--and, therefore, conceptual idolatry--into his Eucharistic theology, primarily because traditionally the Eucharist has precipitated much metaphysical speculation concerning the process of transubstantiation, the metamorphosis of the body of Christ into the presence of bread and wine.\textsuperscript{179} The essential enigma in all theories of transubstantiation deals with explaining the "real presence" of Christ in the supper. Marion argues that only if one prosecutes the notion of presence with reference to how the Eucharist structures time and with reference to distance can one avoid slipping again into idolatry.

Marion ventures a reconstructed understanding of the "present" predicated upon the polysemy of the term itself and on the deconstructive temporality proposed by the Eucharist. The presence of Christ is first of all an expression of Christ as present, that is, as gift. \textsuperscript{178}Ibid., 161.

\textsuperscript{179}Ibid., 164.
in the Eucharist as a present given in and as *agape*. Rein¬
troducing the notion of gift allows Marion to accentuate
again the importance of distance, the distance that mani¬
fests the gap between the giver and the gifted and enables
the theologian to abstain from any form of idolatry. The
notion of gift also allows Marion to inquire into the tempo¬
rality of donation; if the Eucharist is the where of the
gift, what exactly is the when. Marion adamantly rejects
reducing the Eucharistic presence to the simple "here and
now."¹⁸⁰ Instead, he declares that in the Eucharist, there
is a twofold temporal dynamic at work. First, the Eucharist
is a memorial to the prior event of the giving of the Word.
This past event, however, acts as a promise given; there¬
fore, the event is not so much a completed action imprisoned
in the past, but actually transcends the past as an aggres¬
sume force determining the present as a significant mo¬
ment.¹⁸¹ Since the past continues into the present as

¹⁸⁰Ibid., 172.

¹⁸¹Ibid., 172-73. Derrida writes of the relationship
between negative theology and promise, specifically the
promise of the other. The promise of the other disallows
silence, since the promise finds expression in speech/
writing. Furthermore, all speech and writing about the
promise are in themselves promise. Unlike speech act the¬
orists, who contend that promise always takes place in the
present, Derrida contends that promise can escape the "de¬
mand of presence" and function as memory, rendering "possi¬
ble every present discourse on presence" ("How to Avoid
Speaking: Denials," 15). Taylor remarks that promise is
never a matter of a "here and now." Instead, the promise
always temporalizes in the past and future, "through a
metalepsis, a past that returns as a future in an eternally
deferred future perfect" ("nO nOt nO," in *Derrida and Nega-
promise, it naturally propels the present into the future, basically because the Eucharist continues to act as a pledge of God's continual gift. As a result of this twofold temporalization, the Eucharist leads to a theology of agape, one that gives thanks for the gift of time, time as "manna . . . one must gather . . . each day . . ." All of this means, for Marion, that the metaphysical emphasis on the present as the here and now and on God's presence as an expression of the ontological difference can be avoided in theology. The presence of Christ in the Eucharist is a trinitarian playing of the game of love; the Father, the Son, and the Spirit participate in the breathing out and breathing in of the Word, through the words of scripture, and finally in the gift of the Word itself beyond the text in the celebration of the supper and the mystical experience of assimilation.


182 Marion, 174.
183 Ibid., 175.
184 Ibid., 176.
185 Ibid., 177. Marion contends that it is specifically in the Christ event that the Trinity is revealed (*L'Idole*, 243-44). This revelation expresses in another manner the iconic dimension of the Christological manifestation of God." Interestingly enough, Marion might well offer here a response to a critique that Hart makes against certain attempts to identify deconstructive elements at work within traditional Western theology. For example, Hart censures Robert Magliola for suggesting that the Council of Nicea attempted to "deconstruct" subordinationist christology.
Such a logic of agape, which critiques metaphysical modes of thought about God, presence, and time, finally becomes expressed in the discourse of prayer and praise, in which the gift of love is given back to the giver.\footnote{Marion, 182. Jennings classifies praise, or doxological, discourse as "ascriptive" discourse, ascribing "hon- or, power, [and] mercy which [are] the basis of praise and petition" (Jennings, 187). Derrida closes his fascinating essay, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," with a rather enigmatic statement concerning the implications of prayer for doing theology. He inquires whether "a purely pure experience of prayer" would not render kataphatic and apophatic theologies obsolete. If prayer did not "bend" to writing, "would a theology be possible? Would a theology be possible" (Ibid., 62)? Here again one finds the importance of writing (écriture) for Derrida's deconstruction. It is the fact that even hymnic discourse depends on the différence inherent in the semiological network that closure cannot be achieved and the play of writing continues. Consequently, even prayer depends in}

According to Hart, if the Council indeed engaged in a deconstruction with reference to the intra-Trinitarian relationship between Father and Son, then certain corollaries unacceptable to orthodoxy would have accompanied such a deconstruction. Specifically, Hart contends that to deconstruct the Father/Son hierarchy depends upon accepting a prior dependence of both on difference; that is, that God would be conditioned by difference (Hart, 69).

Now Marion connects the notions of the iconic and of distance as coordinate terms within his theology of God without Being. The distance expressed through the iconic operates both between God and humanity and among the Father, Son, and Spirit. In the latter case, distance both separates and unites. Such distance, however, implies difference; consequently, Marion does not have to compromise the integrity of his "system" in order to develop a trinitarian understanding of God. In L'Idole et la Distance, he claims that the games played by difference and distance are comparable with reference to the indefinable definition of the ontological difference (L'Idole, 263). Could one, perhaps, extrapolate from this that if distance derives from God that difference could as well? In other words, could God not be the groundless ground of difference as God is the source of distance? Difference would then function in some way as différence, as a quasi-transcendental only expressed in the revelation of the Trinity.
a logic, however, must operate without the absolute certainty claimed by ontotheology. The distance that separates God from humanity results in an epistemological uncertainty that can never be overcome without falling into idolatry. The ultimate human expression of such a logic of agape is martyrdom, in which the individual not only testifies of Jesus but abandons her/himself out of love for the sake of that confession. The martyr gives back the gift of the presence of Christ by being willing to suffer for love even as did Jesus. Returning the gift in that manner allows some way on the trace. If one takes Hart’s translation of écriture, however, then one could say that scripture demands the non-totalization even of a discourse of praise. Instead of revealing logocentrically a "transcendental signified" that purports to end the semantic play, scripture actually presents an open discourse that allows for prayer and praise but never allows for discourse to end in any total presence, not even the total presence of some experience with God.

187Marion, 193-94.

188In a fascinating, albeit brief, treatment on Augustine’s Confessions, Derrida deals with the issues of testimony, apophasis, the desire of God, and love. He contends that negative theological discourse, although quite often aimed at God in prayer, is simultaneously addressed to a human other. Augustine knows that he need not confess himself to God, since God knows all things; therefore, the primary dynamic for writing his confession concerns the evangelical implications of such an autobiographical text. In other words, Augustine addresses his confession to God in order to address his confession to a human other, not to convey information, but to turn the other toward God. That is, Augustine writes his confession out of love for God and the human other ("Post-Scriptum: Aporias, Ways, and Voices," in Coward and Poshay, 286). As a result, negative theology and love are interconnected in a network of hymnic discourse that expresses a desire for God that is simultaneously a desire for the other’s desire for God (Ibid., 287).

189Marion, 197.
for the iconic traversing of the distance between Gød and the world. Consequently, vanity gives way to *agape*, and Gød is known without Being.\textsuperscript{190}

\textsuperscript{190}Marion provides a taxonomy of differences that includes the difference between beings and the world, the ontological difference, and the difference between Being and essence. It is the fourth dimension of difference that actually functions as the source of all of the other differences. The fourth difference is the difference between Gød and Being, or, in other words, the difference of *agape* (*L'Idole*, 307, 310). Only when Gød is known as *agape* through the gift of Christ can Gød be known iconically and not idolatrously.
CHAPTER FOUR

DECONSTRUCTING THEISM AND THE LANGUAGE OF MYSTERY: TOWARD AN ICONIC DISCOURSE OF SACRED ANARCHY

As Causabon and Belbo sink deeper and deeper into the hermeneutical abyss of their fictive plot, they find themselves returning to certain focal topics and to various significant persons. The history of their dissimulation does not move in a simple linear vector, but instead, follows the motion of Foucault’s pendulum itself and "progresses" in a more complex direction, a direction inscribed by the conflated motions of the arc and the circle. As the pendulum moves back and forth in its swing, while the earth revolves beneath it in its cycle and moves forward in its solar orbit, the pendulum actually traces out a spiral through time. Likewise, Causabon and Belbo continue to develop their "world plot" by reprising important ideas and reconfiguring them into the pattern of the plan. By coming back to the same issues but in different ways or for different reasons, they, too, find themselves spiralling ahead with their secret. Unfortunately, they finally spiral out of control and into disaster.

Chapters Two through Four of this thesis reveal a similar dynamic at work in the attempt to investigate a postmodern understanding of theology. There has been both an oscillation between various polarities, as well as a circulation among various thinkers. The various polarities
include metaphysics/non-metaphysics, Being/beings, meaning/indeterminacy, spirit/letter, semiotics/semantics, recollection/repetition, presence/representation, apophaticism/kataphaticism, and concealment/unconcealment. The various thinkers primarily have been Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida. By prosecuting all of these issues and thinkers in the similar but different theories of Taylor, Caputo, Hart, and Marion, this thesis has attempted to make some kind of progress toward an understanding of how postmodern theology and theopassionism might converge and to develop a certain fore-structure from which to move forward toward the notion of God's real suffering because of, for, and with humanity.

In order to advance the spiral, it is now necessary to reprise the work of John Caputo and follow his movement through the flux toward an understanding of the possible theological implications of postmodernity. A deeper inquiry into the religious significance of his "radical hermeneutics" will reveal that, although he writes as a philosopher and not a theologian, his insights offer unique perspectives on how to engage in a non-metaphysical theology. Consequently, as the spiral unfolds by reprising and advancing Caputo's theories, this thesis moves forward into the secret of the suffering God.
Caputo laments that deconstruction has been denied any religious or theological sensitivities by certain interpreters who have actually misread Derrida’s works. Primarily, this misinterpretation has centered on the issue of referentiality, specifically on Derrida’s somewhat obtuse epigrammatological confession that "il n'y pas de hors texte." Various "deconstructionists" have read this statement as a denial of any extra-linguistic referentiality, that Derrida proposes something of a "linguistic Berkeleyanism." This misrepresentation of Derrida’s statement ensues in deconstruction’s being reduced to a certain type of aestheticism that leads from benign frivolity to malignant perversity. Such aestheticism may be nothing more than a nuisance when confined to hermeneutical issues; that is, as a deconstructive subjective idealism, Derrida’s thought may be but one more expression of hermeneutical relativism that does little more than upset interpreters like E. D. Hirsch (Caputo would probably name Allan Bloom!). Unfortunately, the denial of linguistic reference cannot be confined to matters of textuality but overflows into the practical spheres of ethics.

---


and politics.³ In these cases, aestheticism may lead to active or passive violence, violence committed or allowed.

Caputo argues that such a linguistic idealism is not only absent from Derrida's understanding of reference but is in fact one of the primary objects of Derrida's discontent vis-a-vis traditional metaphysics. Instead, of wishing to participate in one of the more enduring logocentric strategies—the polarity between idea and reality—Derrida desires to complicate the matter and show through close readings of various texts that language and reference are always inextricably bound together in a process of mediation, mediation that results from the play of différance. When it comes to reference, Derrida maintains an "armed neutrality."⁴ Différance is the quasi-transcendental condition for all conceptuality; that is, being neither concept nor entity, différance "grounds" the possibility and impossibility of discourse. As such, it is ontologically neutral, neither

³Caputo, "Beyond Aestheticism," 59. Caputo maintains that one could possibly tolerate hermeneutical nihilism, since that is confined primarily to the academy, "[b]ut ethical and political nihilism is dangerous, for that may spill over into the streets" (Ibid.). One could add to Caputo's distinction that religious nihilism joins the latter in being potentially dangerous. Considering the significance of the topics of religion—life, death, God, responsibility, salvation—the remote possibility that religions manifest primary truths about human existence qualify religion as being exempt from the laissez-faire policy of scholarly nihilism.

affirming nor denying the reality of any being. As "non-ontic," it does not "establish the existence, or higher existence, or non-existence, of anything ontic." On the other hand, however, since différence does disclose "the constructedness of what [one calls] the 'reality' of the extra-linguistic . . .," it arms individuals with the suspicion that no discourse can be accepted as operating without limits. Consequently, deconstruction does not deny reference but claims that it always comes contaminated with linguistic conditions, that is, within the play of textuality.

Deconstruction, then, does not play within the strictures of a closed semiotics of differential signs but instead, it inhabits parasitically every form of discourse, always complicating every attempt of someone to say something about something to someone. It complicates discourse not in order to avoid referencing the other of language but in order to grant the other of language a genuine otherness. Complicated referentiality promotes renewed appreciation for alterity, an appreciation that Caputo maintains holds crucial insights for ethics and religion.

5 Caputo, "Mysticism and Transgression," 27.
6 Caputo, "Good News," 455.
7 Caputo, "Mysticism and Transgression," 29.
8 Ibid, 30.
Caputo identifies Derrida's perspective on ethics as a "responsible anarchy," a critique of metaphysical archai that, nevertheless, does not fail to lead to a responsiveness to the claim of the other. Derrida's philosophy certainly troubles the metaphysician and foundationalist who have an implicit trust in the power of reason. His impertinence in showing how reason fails to escape the play of différence, fails to escape history, tradition, and language, but instead develops out of those very conditions and in doing so excludes everything that does not neatly fit the system, leaves the rationalist and empiricist in a cold sweat or a hot anger. Interestingly, however, he also re-establishes the importance of the excluded, the alien, the ones who have been denied entry into the system because they do not fit the pattern. Derrida wishes to "let the other be . . . to leave them their otherness, to tolerate the difference, not to sublate it in a fusion of horizons." He establishes the margins of philosophy as the boundaries of the singularity and alterity of the other, of the individual who never can be exhausted in the universality of any system or any law.

Caputo verifies his interpretation of Derrida's philosophy as one of action and liberation by referring to a shocking text from Derrida's later corpus. In an article

9Caputo, "Beyond Aestheticism," 60.

10Ibid, 68.
appearing in the *Cardoza Law Review*, Derrida has admitted that there is indeed one "thing" that cannot be deconstructed--justice.\(^{11}\) Justice is the telos of deconstruction, the goal for which it strives.\(^{12}\) The primary aim behind Derrida's insistence on overturning every claim to totality and universality is to reestablish the worth of the singular, particular person. Consequently, Caputo contends that Derrida's "responsible anarchy" concerns the difference between the *archai* of reason expressed ethically in the law and the *an-archy* of the individual who never fits into the system cleanly.\(^{13}\) Caputo emphasizes that undeconstructed justice cannot be understood as some sort of presence, either as a Platonic Idea or a Kantian noumenon, but as the "radical singularity of the other to whom justice is owed."\(^{14}\) At this point, Derrida no longer continues his neutrality, for he has taken a position on the side of the disenfranchised and the excluded.

The focus on justice indicates the extent of Emmanuel Levinas' influence on Derrida's philosophy. Levinas functions as "one of the primary sources of the experience of


\(^{13}\)Ibid., 5.

\(^{14}\)Caputo, "Good News," 465.
alterity from which the philosophy of differance first took its bearings." If Caputo is correct, then Derrida's deconstruction bears a decidedly biblical character to it, since Levinas replaces Hellenistic paradigms with Hebraic ones. Caputo calls Levinas a kind of "postmodern prophet, a certain Hosea of the rive gauche, who desires not sacrifice but justice, not ontology but ethics, not identity but alterity." Caputo certainly does not wish to situate

15 Caputo, Ibid., 466. Simon Critchley agrees with Caputo that "the textual practice of deconstructive reading can and, moreover, should be understood as an ethical demand . . .‖ (The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas. [Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992], 1). He also agrees that the ethical aspect of Derrida's thought owes much to a Levinasian influence (Ibid., 4). This Levinasian influence on Derrida concerns the ethical importance of the other as s/he makes demands upon the self. As Critchley expresses it, "the paradigmatic ethical moment is that of being pre-reflectively addressed by the other person in a way that calls [the self] into question and obliges [the self] to be responsible" (Ibid., 48). Derrida's inherently ethical dynamic comes clearly into view whenever one recognizes that deconstruction focuses on "a moment of unconditional affirmation that is addressed to an alterity that can neither be excluded from nor included within logocentric conceptuality" (Ibid., 41; cf. also 74). Critchley's one major critique of Derrida's deconstructive ethics is that he fails to make the transition from ethics to politics; that is, deconstruction does not question at the empirical or factual level (Ibid., 189-90). Ironically, Critchley argues that Derrida admits his weakness vicariously through a critique of Heidegger for the same offense (Ibid., 190-200).

16 John D. Caputo, "Metanoetics: Elements of a Postmodern Christian Philosophy," unpublished manuscript, 14. G. I. Davies, in his commentary on the Old Testament prophetic book Hosea, interprets the Hebraic understanding of righteousness and justice as involving both judgment of evil and acquittal of the innocent. Consequently, God's righteousness and justice did not ensue only in punishment for sin but also in deliverance for those who suffer unjustly. When righteousness and justice are applied to human relationships, they imply "the performance of one's obligations to another
Derrida as a religious writer; however, his Levinasian ideas do indicate a more Jewish, biblical sensitivity to his work. As a result, the importance of deconstruction for postmodern ethics raises further implications of deconstruction's importance for postmodern religion.

Now that the above brief discussion of ethics has led to the topics of religion and theology, it is necessary to return (spiral back) to the initial issues of referentiality and armed neutrality with which this analysis began. Since deconstruction fixes on the inevitability of otherness and attempts to remain ontically uncommitted with reference to what that otherness might or might not be, it offers the possibility of directing alterity not only to the ethical otherness but also to religious Otherness as well. Caputo asserts that deconstruction's armed neutrality plays no favorite with either theistic or atheistic discourse; it treats both the same by emphasizing that they are caught up in the differing and deferring play of *différance*. Consequently, Derrida does not propose either a theism or an atheism; he simply identifies the indeterminacy that marks either claim.

Although remaining philosophically neutral concerning religious ontological claims, Derrida does not remain neutral with reference to the enduring enticement of a tenacious theological discourse—the negative way of apophatic theology. Throughout his work Derrida has had to address the apparent similarities between his vocabulary and that of negative theology.¹⁷ His vocabulary is particularly vulnerable at the point of *différance*, for in many ways *différance* functions in deconstruction in a manner that appears to be homeomorphic to how "God" functions in apophatic theology. Both seem to be neither this nor that, neither Being nor a being, neither effable nor ineffable.¹⁸ Derrida insists that he avoids negative theology precisely because of his deconstruction of presence, since for him negative theology always results in an ontotheology by arguing for a superessential presence beyond all Being and beings.

Caputo claims that one cannot find a negative theology in deconstruction; however, in agreement with Hart, he does maintain that one can find deconstruction in negative theology.¹⁹ That is, negative theology as a discourse does contaminate the ontotheological language of metaphysical


¹⁹Ibid., 24.
theology and constantly questions its arrogant claims to totality. Yet for Caputo, the deconstructive significance of negative theology exceeds the boundaries of just the theological language game and offers a kind of meta-discursive paradigm of indeterminacy. He contends that Derrida cannot rid himself of considering the implications of apophatic discourse precisely because of deconstruction’s concern with marginality and alterity. Derrida cannot avoid speaking of apophatic theology as a "textual practice," because in a certain manner such discourse serves as a paradigm for all discourse.

The negative theologian insists that whatever one says of God cannot be true, because God always exceeds any linguistic sign. Hence, one must constantly be negating every positive statement in order to preserve God’s transcendence. Caputo argues that such linguistic weakness is true of all discourse. In other words, Derrida would agree that whether the referent be God or some perceptible object, language never speaks the full truth; it is always already caught up in the (im)possibility of différence. It actually comes down to the impossibility of negative theology to avoid doing exactly what it wishes not to do. Negative theology wishes to keep the secret of God’s ineffability.

---

21 Ibid., 459.
22 The following discussion comes from Ibid., 459-62.
Through negating every linguistic cipher, the apophatic theologian purports to say nothing about God; however, in saying nothing about God one is still saying, that is, speaking what supposedly cannot be spoken. The only way, therefore, for the negative theologian to keep the divine secret is by divulging it. If the theologian remained silent, then there would be no secret. There is only a secret when one acknowledges that there is a secret and then refuses to tell it. Ironically, the secret of negative theology is indeed divulged in the very affirmation that there is a secret, because the secret of negative theology is that one cannot speak of God; however, when one states that God cannot be spoken of, one has already said something about God. Consequently, Derrida argues that negative theology exists as a de-negating discourse, always affirming by negating, by negating the negative. In that negation, the trace of the secret remains; therefore, negative theology attests to the unavoidability of language--one cannot not speak. Derrida, however, would say the same thing about all discourse, that human beings are promised to language and cannot avoid participating in the play of différance.

Ironically, Caputo states that Derrida’s understanding of the inescapability of différance places him more in the class of Aquinas than Heidegger, Levinas, or Marion, all of whom wish to escape the conditioned matrix out of which all theological discourse derives. Such an escape is impossi-
ble, however, since in speaking and writing language, one always plays a game involving Being and language.\(^23\)

The only way to avoid diminishing the absolute alterity of God would appear to be to remain silent.\(^24\) Yet, even in its speaking, apophatic discourse manifests something of the Otherness of God in that the discourse includes hymnic and doxological language as integral to the broader discursive practice. Prayer and praise characterize apophaticism, indicating that language often comes as a response to the call of the Other. In addressing God, one refers to God's prior revelation, an earlier call that may be traced in the hymnic response. Here again, as in ethics, Derrida recognizes the significance of Otherness, of that which putatively is as other than language but never encountered without the mediating structures of the play of \textit{diff{é}rance}.\(^25\) Apophatic discourse is just another way \textit{diff{é}rance} keeps the game open and allows the Other to leave its trace. Once

\(^{23}\text{Ibid., 460.}\)

\(^{24}\text{Caputo writes that God is "Wholly Other"--almost. The almost must be maintained, since to claim God's transcendence is a textual act, an act that depends upon a certain conceptual network that allows for one to "say" that God is "Wholly Other." The fact that one can say "Wholly Other" indicates that God cannot be completely "Wholly Other." Consequently, one vacillates between the hypernym of "Wholly Otherness" and the anonym of that which if truly "Wholly Other" cannot even be spoken. Cf. "God is Wholly Other--Almost: \textit{Diff{é}rance and the Hyperbolic Alterity of God,}" unpublished paper presented at the conference, God and Otherness, University of Virginia, 9 April 1994, 1-4.}\)

\(^{25}\text{Caputo, "Good News," 462.}\)
again, however, one should remember Derrida's armed neutrality and not assume that his "positive" statements concerning negative theology in any way includes the affirmation of the existence of God. Derrida remains consistent in trying to avoid ontological commitments, although his concern to maintain contaminated referentiality certainly does leave the existential question open.  

On the bases of the tension between referentiality and armed neutrality, of the significance of alterity for ethical and religious discourse, of the undeconstructibility of justice and the relevance of singularity, of the differential dynamics of apophaticism, and of the rather apparent Levinasian biblical influence on Derrida's thought, Caputo argues that one actually may develop out of deconstruction a new "Christian philosophy." Whereas jewgreek is greekjew, so, too, jewchristian is christianjew. In other words, the emphasis on ethical and religious alterity that comes out of the Levinasian influence suggests a new way of understanding Christianity in the postmodern context. Caputo asserts that one can engage in Christian philosophy as a radical hermeneutics of Christian existence, an investiga-

---

26 Ibid., 464. Caputo contends that Derrida's difference from Kierkegaard may be seen clearly with reference to ontological commitment. Kierkegaard takes the next step toward decision when he calls for a "leap of faith" on the part of the existential subject to believe in the ontic reality of God.

27 Caputo, "Beyond Aestheticism," 71.
tion into a certain historical relationship and a certain linguistic idiom.\(^{28}\)

If one examines the New Testament discourses, one will find a continuation of the Jewish emphases upon the singular individual, on the widow, the orphan, the sick and the lame that Levinas writes so often about.\(^{29}\) In those discourses, however, one discovers a poetics of otherness expressed in the person of Jesus Christ.\(^{30}\) In Jesus, one finds "revealed" the alterity of God, the impossibility of God's absolute alterity, and an ethics of alterity, a concern for the claim of the other individual.\(^{31}\) Caputo goes so far as to analogize Derrida's deconstruction of every philosophical and theological attempt at totalization with Jesus' constant

---

\(^{28}\)Caputo, "Metanoetics," 3-4. Caputo writes that he wishes to shock philosophical reason with the "blow of an Aramaic imagination that would let philosophy be exposed to a site outside philosophy . . ." By introducing biblical structures into the discussion, he wishes "to ferment reason with a little dash of divine madness . . ." ("Reason, History, and a Little Madness," unpublished manuscript, 1 [emphasis added]). In the Introduction of this thesis (16-18), there is a brief discussion of Gilkey's use of "ferment" as characterizing the state of theological reflection in the late 1960s. In that discussion, "ferment" is identified as referring to agitation and unrest, actions quite similar to Caputo's language about the flux and kinesis of life. These actions might well refer to a process of life and growth that lends new vitality to theology. Here, Caputo seems to offer something similar with reference to philosophy. His introduction of the fermenting dynamic of an Aramaic imagination offers to revitalize postmodern philosophy.

\(^{29}\)Caputo, "Beyond Aestheticism," 70.

\(^{30}\)Caputo, "Metanoetics," 7.

\(^{31}\)Caputo, "Good News," 467.
battle to limit the Law through acts of mercy and justice.\footnote{Caputo, "Beyond Aestheticism," 71. Caputo emphasizes that the Law is "universal, uniform, sweeping, blind, relentless." Consequently, the Law must be suspended at times specifically in the name of justice and the individual (\textit{Against Ethics} [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993], 115).} The kingdom proclaimed by Jesus is a kingdom of enfleshed individuals who are prone to weakness, to suffering, and to the oppression of the "powers that be." As a result, the narratives of Jesus' life allow for the New Testament to be approached as an ethics book, an "ethics that valorizes difference, alterity, being-out, being nothing in the eyes of the world, being of no account whatsoever."\footnote{Caputo, "Metanoetics," 13.} In calling for a postmodern Christian philosophy, Caputo actually is calling for a Christian deconstruction, and in calling for a Christian deconstruction, he also is calling for a certain dehellenization of Christian theology, a paradigm shift of sorts away from ontotheological configurations to the more Hebraic categories of scripture.\footnote{Ibid., 30. Of course, such dehellenization is an impossible possibility, if for no other reason than because the New Testament texts are written in Greek. Regardless of the significance of the Hebraic tradition for understanding the Christian structure of existence, one must always work out of the Greek linguistic tradition. Such a restriction, however, certainly does not abrogate a serious attempt to think through the play of the Greek language to the more Hebraic ideas of God, community, and ethics.}

This introduction lays out in broad terms the primary issues that obtain for Caputo when he seeks to exploit the
theological and religious ramifications of Derrida's deconstruction. Although one may find in Caputo points of agreement with Taylor, Hart, and Marion, one also discovers significant differences, specifically with reference to the ethical and religious importance of the notions of suffering and faith. These issues are certainly not new to Caputo's philosophy. One may trace them beginning with his earlier pre-deconstruction works, for example in The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought, where he emphasizes Meister Eckhart's call for the primacy of the active life over the contemplative, through his first major work of deconstruction, Radical Hermeneutics, which concludes with two chapters on ethics and religion, and to his later works, which have centered on these two topics and have sought to develop in more depth the inter-relation between ethics and faith.

The title of this section of Chapter Four purposely alludes to the traces of Kant in Caputo's radical hermeneutics of ethics and faith. As pointed out in Chapter Three, his later philosophy actually follows the direction of Kant's three legislating questions: What can I know? What ought I to do? and For what can I hope? This Kantian inclination is clearly seen in Caputo's insistence that religion and ethics must be treated in tandem. His postmodern "critique of reason" eventuates, also, in a recovery of faith

---

within the context of the ethical claims of the other. Interestingly enough, if anyone woke Caputo out of some dogmatic slumber at this point, it was Martin Heidegger. Like Taylor, Hart, and Marion, Caputo must critique Heidegger, demythologize him, in order to establish a "proper" postmodern, Derridean-influenced account of theology. Caputo must critique Heidegger in order to make room for genuine ethics, which in turn makes room for genuine faith. This critique has been developed primarily in Caputo’s two most recent works—Demythologizing Heidegger and Against Ethics. In these two books, Caputo moves closer to the basic thesis of this dissertation—that one cannot understand and speak of God outside of the biblical categories of suffering. Although he does not develop in these works any kind of explicit theopassionism, what he does accomplish contributes to the significance of that type of theological discourse. The remainder of this chapter follows the argument in these two books and attempts to "flesh" out Caputo’s incipient Christian deconstruction.\(^{36}\)

\(^{36}\)Caputo acknowledges that the two works together present a cumulative argument. What he begins in Demythologizing Heidegger, specifically with reference to the issue of obligation, he completes in Against Ethics (Demythologizing Heidegger, 8). Actually the argument remains open at the conclusion of Against Ethics, since Caputo still has not written a major treatment on deconstruction and religion. That third volume has been promised.
The Injustice of the Heideggerian Frame

Martin Heidegger is an ontotheological hypocrite! With all of his talk about the end of metaphysics, the need to think what metaphysics has left unthought, the necessity (the fate of Being) to think, to think meditatively about the ontological difference in the interstices between Being and beings and in so doing allow a clearing in the woods for the unconcealment of the latest ontological epoch, he, himself, fails to find the courage to live out the implications of the Seinsgeschichte. Instead of engaging in real deconstruction, Heidegger opts for the nostalgia of a Destruktion that pines for an earlier epoch, an originary event in some Hellenistic golden age when Being played its game of hide-and-seek with beautiful, intelligent, and healthy Greeks. In other words, Heidegger, according to Caputo, comes to engage in metaphysical recollection, in some poetic anamnesis that denies the open kinesis of the flux.37 This exercise in recollection ensues in a Heideggerian Myth of Being, a "highly dangerous metanarrative, a sweeping myth about Being's fabulous movements through Western history."38

This myth finds its dynamic primarily in Heidegger's etymological reconstruction of the Greek word aletheia, the word for "truth." Taking this word in its purely etymological sense as "un-concealment," Heidegger develops an intri-

37Caputo, Demythologizing Heidegger, 17.
38Ibid., 2.
cate story of the polar tension within the history of Being between concealment and un-concealment. Early on, he actually proposes that such an etymological meaning captures the early Greek notion of truth; that is, that prior to the metaphysizing of the term in Plato, Greek thinkers understood the term in its oscillating sense of un/concealment. He later retracts that belief and accepts that the word never meant unconcealment. Consequently, *aletheia* might be written better as *a-letheia* and read in a certain way as a quasi-transcendental on the order of the Derridean *différence*, that is, as neither name nor concept. Caputo argues, however, that Heidegger unfortunately does not allow *a-letheia* to remain in its ante-historical form but insists that one can discover the traces of some originary historical instantiation of *a-letheia* and, thereby, posit the possibility of a reverse ontogenesis. This intent on posit-ing a discernible protology of *a-letheia* constitutes the "heart of the mythological gesture" that Caputo discovers in Heidegger's thought. Heidegger actually tells "a myth of origins, of a Great Beginning, of a great founding act back at the beginning of the tradition . . . ."

---

40Ibid., 25.  
41Ibid., 27-28.  
42Ibid., 28.
The threat of Heidegger's Myth of Being becomes apparent when one realizes that the more he buys into the story the farther away from facticity and beings it leads him. Caputo grants that the story has its place and offers positive perspectives from which to question any present constellation of power and the enervating possibilities of technology. Yet, Heidegger moves the story in the direction of discerning an essence, a Wesen: the essence of technology, the essence of language, the essence of dwelling, and the essence of pain. All of this talk about essence (Wesen) results in a decontamination of Being. Being must never be what the individual or entity instantiates; therefore, to think the essence of Being is to think it as purified from any particularity. Consequently, Heidegger inevitably moves away from the existential analytic of Being and Time and forfeits the significance of the hermeneutics of facticity. In so doing, Heidegger also forfeits the ethico-political sensitivities of his earlier philosophy. His story of Being and a-letheia leaves no room for the concrete existent, for the call of the other; it shatters the ethics of the Mitwelt. Caputo identifies this deni-

43Ibid., 34-35.
44Ibid., 123.
46Ibid., 6.
47Ibid., 74.
gration of Heidegger’s thought as directly resulting from and contributing to his sympathy with the Nazis. The Myth of Being supplies the Nazi political program with a spiritual cohesiveness that functions as an apologia for the Nazi "epoch."

Caputo engages in something of a genealogy of Heidegger’s thought in order to show that he did not begin his philosophy with the Myth of Being but that the development of that myth reveals a certain deterioration in Heidegger’s development. Initially, he began with an intense interest in the facticity of life and the need for philosophy to be revolutionary, absorbed in battling (Kampf) with the difficulties of existence. Heidegger developed these ideas in dialogue with two primary traditions—the Aristotelian notion of kinesis and the Christian ideas of the struggle of faith. The Aristotelian tradition certainly affected the early Heidegger, since he began his studies with Medieval scholasticism. He was particularly influenced by Aristotle’s interpretations of phronesis, the ability of the prudent man to adjust to the changes inherent

48Ibid., 83. Wyschogrod also critiques Heidegger’s lack of ethics. Although she admits that a postmodern ethic must rely on certain aspects of Heidegger’s philosophy, his thought is too deconstructive to allow for an ethic "in any received sense" and not deconstructive enough to develop an appropriate ethic to address "the enormities peculiar to the present age" (Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy. [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990], 137).

49Caputo, Demythologizing Heidegger, 41.
in society. Such an ability to judge appropriately served as a virtue, a characteristic of excellence that distinguished the aristocratic man of good manners and good sense.\footnote{Ibid., 62-64.} Through \textit{phronesis}, the virtuous man could cope with the \textit{kinesis} of socio-political existence.

Heidegger thought that he had discovered a complementary understanding of human temporality and existential struggle in the New Testament materials dealing with the need to work out salvation through fear and trembling. Actually, Caputo thinks that the biblical influences on Heidegger were in some respects even more effectual in developing his hermeneutics of facticity than was Aristotle. Caputo goes so far as to claim that Heidegger's thought has always revealed important religious influences and that one actually can trace "the path of Heidegger's \textit{Denkweg} by following the course of his changing religious views."\footnote{Ibid., 169.} One of the more revolutionary "turns" in Heidegger's development centered on his move from Catholicism to Protestantism. This "turn" led him to shift his focus from logic to history and to come under the power of Kierkegaard, Luther, Augustine, and Paul.\footnote{Ibid., 172.} Luther, in particular, directed Heidegger toward the New Testament paradigms of existence through his critique of Aristotelian metaphysics and his emphasis on a
Unfortunately, Heidegger's Lutheran influence failed to convince him of the salient differences between Aristotle's Greek categories and the New Testament narratives. He assumed that the categories of factual existence were similar regardless of their genesis.

Caputo regards Heidegger's assumption that Aristotle and scripture could easily be conflated as "fateful" and "fatal." Heidegger failed to realize that biblical models of existence do not privilege the prudent man, the insightful thinker who through *phronesis* can adjust to the variability of socio-political life. Instead, the New Testament directs its attention to the lowly, the weak, and the outcast, the people who do not possess the status to be "citizen of the year." As Caputo states it, "[b]iblical

---

53Ibid., 61, 72. Caputo refers to John van Buren's thesis that Heidegger's eventual *Destruktion* of Western metaphysics owes a tremendous debt to Luther's attempt to critique Western theology so as to return to biblical categories. As a matter of fact, van Buren indicates that the word *Destruktion* itself is a transcription of Luther's vocabulary in the *Heidelberg Disputation* where he specifically calls for a break with Aristotle's philosophy ("Meta-noetics," 6).


55Ibid., 63. Caputo considers the issue of *phronesis* quite important with reference to the shifting circumstances of individual existence in the flux. He admits that Aristotle, with his emphasis on *phronesis*, recognizes that judgment is not always a case of applying immutable principles to different situations. Instead, many times judging is a matter of "insight (nous) on the part of practical understanding into the idiosyncrasies of the particular . . ." (Ibid., 64). In these idiosyncratic situations, new idioms have to be developed, and the ability to develop these idioms is what Aristotle called *phronesis* (Against
factual life is a world not of able-bodied being-in-the world [sic] actualizing its potentiality for Being, but of disabled beings whose potencies have been cut short."  

Heidegger's failure to recognize this critical distinction between the Greek and the biblical categories contributed to his eventual explicit repudiation of Christianity.  

What started as a jewgreek sensitivity to the difficulty of

---

**Ethics**, 99). The *phronimos* has the genius of creativity by which he can make decisions in new situations based on certain schema that arise out of the practical experience of customary existence within the *polis* (Ibid., 100). The problem with *phronesis* for the postmodern context centers on the plurality of schema that reality offers. Whereas Aristotle had to struggle with moving from certain frameworks to the singularity of changing circumstances, the postmodernist confronts the different and changing frameworks of the flux (Ibid., 102). Consequently, one now requires a "metaphronesis," a way of judging that respects the anarchy of the end of metaphysics ("Sacred Anarchy," unpublished manuscript presented to the Deconstruction and Catholic Philosophy Symposium at Conception Seminary, MO. February 1990, 38; "Installation," 11). Caputo contends that the anarchical radicality of postmodern pluralism no longer demands *phronesis*, which is *nous*, practical knowledge, but heart, *kardia*, which does not access frameworks or schema but judges on the basis of the demands of the singular individual ("Metaneotics," 17-19). Ultimately, *kardia* leads not to a way of judging but to a way of not judging; that is, as will be discussed below, *kardia* leads to repentence (*metanoia*), which in turn leads to forgiveness--the suspension of judging (Against Ethics, 107). One may find something of a similar argument against *phronesis*, specifically as it relates to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, in Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 156-59 and Bernstein, "From Hermeneutics to Praxis," in *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, ed. Robert Hollinger. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1985), 272-96.

---


57 Ibid., 175.
existence and the need to encounter it with prudence and faith ended as a "pure" Greek Myth of Being, a myth devoid of any admitted reference to biblical categories. Heidegger removed from his Myth of Being everything that he thought was not Greek, everything that was Jewish or Christian, contaminated by real facticity, flesh and blood, the outcast and the dirty. Caputo points out the irony in Heidegger's later attempts at cleansing the Seinsgeschichte of everything un-Greek. First, he argues that Heidegger never functionally broke with his earlier jewgreek beginnings. Only the most fanatical Heideggerians would deny that his history of the epochal play of Being does not recall some golden age of Greek thought but actually expresses a rival Heilsgeschichte developed through the secularization of the biblical idea of history and redemption. Although the later Heidegger replaced the God of his Catholic and Protestant periods with the gods of the Geviert--the more pagan, Greek deities that arise out of the worlding of the world--the primary structure of his thought retained the imprint of his earlier jewgreek Kampfsphilosophie. Second, his exclusionary gestures were not limited just to the biblical paradigms but included other Greek

58 Ibid., 160.
59 Ibid., 181.
60 Ibid., 177.
models as well. One does not have to infect Heidegger's thought only with the fleshly facticity of the Jewish/Christian reality of the disenfranchised, the diseased, and the dispersed in order to critique his reductionism; one may accomplish an almost complementary critique with other Greeks, "with Antigone and Oedipus, with torn flesh and gouged eyes, with unburied brothers and sisters buried alive..." Heidegger may be "exceptionally good at making the early Greek texts dance"; however, there are other texts with other tunes that need to join the band primarily because, without them, Heidegger's party deteriorates into a danse macabre.

The ethical perversity of Heidegger's Myth of Being may be seen most clearly in the following quotation:

Agriculture is now a motorized food industry—in essence, the same as the manufacturing of corpses in gas chambers and the extermination camps, the same as the blockading and starving of nations, the same as the manufacture of atom bombs.

Is Heidegger really saying that "in essence" there is little difference between agriculture and genocide, willful oppression, or the construction of weapons with the potential to destroy millions? Caputo answers, "Yes," and characterizes Heidegger's statement as obscene but very much consis-

---

61 Ibid., 216.

62 Ibid., 29.

63 Ibid., 132. This quotation is from Heidegger's unpublished lecture, "Das Gestell."
tent with the "essential" dynamics of his later phainesthetics of a-letheia. With his expulsion of everything Jew and Christian, Heidegger has also expelled any notion of "the other," the factual "other" of flesh and bone, vulnerable, able to suffer and to die. He has no room in his history for victims; he will write at length about anxiety as a mood that un-conceals being-toward-death, but refuses to accept that persons might find themselves (Befindlichkeit) in pain; he listens carefully for the call of Being but turns a deaf ear to the call of the hungry, or the lonely, or the different; he focuses on the significance of "care" (Sorge) but never discovers the necessity of "heart" (kardia).

---

64 Ibid., 131.
65 Ibid., 144-45.
66 Ibid., 70.
67 Ibid., 143.
68 Ibid., 59. Notwithstanding the strength and clarity of Caputo's critique of Heidegger's ethics, or lack thereof, in Demythologizing Heidegger, when one compares that text with the antecedent articles that compose it, one discovers at points a certain attenuation of the intensity of the evaluation. For example, Chapter Eight, entitled "Heidegger's Poets," is an edited version of Caputo's article, "Thinking, Poetry and Pain." Whereas the chapter ends somewhat benignly, the article concludes with one of Caputo's strongest denunciations of Heidegger. He writes that "Heidegger's later thinking is ethically tasteless, insensitive, scandalous--thoughtless" ("Thinking, Poetry and Pain," The Southern Journal of Philosophy 28 [1990]:179). Heidegger completely dismissed any vestige of his earlier biblical influence, an influence that would have emphasized the ethical dynamics of the jewchristian models of existence. Caputo contends that specifically in the ethics of
Caputo finds it incredible that Heidegger could have read the New Testament as he did in his early period and discovered the significance of care and difficulty without having recognized the centrality of mercy and justice. If he had read only the Gospels, he certainly must have encountered the lame, the widow, the leper, the socially alienated, and the poor that fill the narratives. How could he have overlooked or possibly ignored that "in the New Testament 'care' also meant a deep responsiveness to those who suffer . . ."? As incomprehensible as it is, the fact remains that he did miss or ignore the relationship between care and "the other." He did not appreciate that the "essence" of biblical facticity is the heart, a cardi-ology centered on the claim of flesh to flesh, the cry of embodied pain beseeching the other to respond and to heal, to show mercy and to care. In Heidegger's "world," therefore, one may find "plenty of tables, chairs, houses, tools, and instruments of all sorts . . ." but one will certainly not find "beggars, lepers, hospitals, homeless people [or] Jesus, one encounters a concern for the hungry, the wounded, the diseased, and the naked. The idea that "there is some kind of thinking which cuts through that to a more essential pain is grotesque and dangerous" (Ibid.).

69 Caputo, Demythologizing Heidegger, 57.

70 Ibid., 58.

71 Ibid., 72.
sickness..." Since ontotheology has always found biology problematic, and since pain is certainly an issue of biology, given its embodied character, Heidegger's inability to inculcate the reality of "factual pain" into his "phenomenological-aletheiological reduction" ensues in his thought's expressing just one more metaphysical gesture.

In eliminating the jewchristian from his thought, Heidegger eliminates any genuine ethical sensitivity to his notion of thinking. Thinking denies the voice of the truly other, meditates on jugs and shoes but neglects the oppressed, the depressed, and the wounded. Being only plays in a world of light and wisdom, among bodies that are strong and hard, that are willing to face the struggles of existence with excellence and virtue. Among the earth and sky,

72Ibid., 65.

73Ibid., 68.

74Ibid., 162. Although Heidegger does not wish to play the old metaphysical game of dividing reason and passion, a game which denies that emotions or moods play a significant ontological role in determining Dasein's being-in-the-world, he actually continues to play it if one understands the rules from a Kierkegaardian perspective. Kierkegaard argues that the old distinction between reason and emotion should in reality be expressed as a distinction "between the committed and the uncommitted, the engaged and the detached" (John D. Caputo, "A Phenomenology of Moral Sensibility" in Act and Agent: Philosophical Foundations for Moral Education and Character Development, eds. George F. McLean, Frederick E. Ellrod, David L. Schindler, and Jesse A. Mann. [Lantham, MD.: University Press of America, 1986]:200). Heidegger's Myth of Being leads him inevitably to remain unattached and uncommitted, thereby, leaving him with no appreciation for facticity and singularity.
the gods and the mortals, one may only find the innocence of becoming; there is no guilt, no pain, and no flesh.\textsuperscript{75}

Heidegger identifies the only "sin" as the misfortune of the Gestell, the "enframing" produced by technological thinking.\textsuperscript{76} Of course, he admits that only a god can save the world from such misfortune; however, there is no need for an ethico-religious God such as one finds in the jewchristian texts of scripture, the God of Jesus who takes mercy on the afflicted.\textsuperscript{77} Interestingly enough, Heidegger, himself, has placed life within a frame, the frame of his own ontological and aletheiological myth. Unfortunately, that frame acts as a barrier keeping out the heart, mercy, and justice. Real flesh and blood existence, therefore, has been framed, and as in all frame-ups, injustice is done.

Caputo proposes to replace Heidegger's Myths of Being and of Aletheia with another myth--the Myth of Justice.\textsuperscript{78} The Myth of Justice is a jewgreek myth, a myth of plurality and otherness, of singularity and the individual. It is, indeed, a biblical myth, a Hebraic-Christian myth of justice.

\textsuperscript{75}Caputo, Demythologizing Heidegger, 144.


\textsuperscript{77}Caputo, Demythologizing Heidegger, 184.

\textsuperscript{78}He recognizes that to demythologize always means to mythologize differently. It is never a question of doing away completely with any sort of myth; instead, it is a question of discovering a better myth (Ibid., 186).
and mercy, of righteousness and heart." Unlike the Heideggerian Myth of Being, it does not respond to some call issued from out of the epochal play of the Fourfold; it does not ensue from one's crossing the threshold of Being and setting out on some forest path toward a new ontological destiny. Instead, the Myth of Justice calls from out of the facticity of historical existence; it speaks the voices of real people who worry, who suffer, and who die. As such, "the call of/for justice, of/for mercy and compassion, maintains itself resolutely in the sphere of the possible, of radical openness and flexibility, which is to inhabit a mythic space."80

Since justice concerns the flux, the open play of the an-archic, two implications follow. First, justice must be distinguished from the Law, primarily because the Law always concerns the universal and never the particular. Laws cannot concern themselves with proper names, since to do so leads to exceptions and possible inequalities before the bar. Justice, however, must never forget proper names, those signs that differentiate individual from individu¬
al.81 The universality of law over against the particular¬ity of justice explains why Derrida identifies justice as the one undeconstructible thing. Laws are always written

---

79Ibid., 186-87, 208, 212.
80Ibid., 208.
81Ibid., 205.
and always written within some enabling context; therefore, laws may be deconstructed and shown to be a product of becoming, just like any other set of texts. Justice, however, is not textual. It cannot be written, except as a myth of otherness; consequently, it cannot be deconstructed itself but serves as the enabling motive for all deconstruction. This relationship between law and justice is another way of writing the Kierkegaardian story of Abraham and Isaac. It offers a postmodern idiom for discussing issues like teleologically suspending ethics and believing with fear and trembling.\footnote{Ibid., 196. The Kierkegaardian aspects of Caputo’s ethical critique of Heidegger become even more apparent in Against Ethics, the work that structures the following section of this chapter.}

Second, the anarchy of the Myth of Justice may only be discovered by a "radical hermeneutics," since only a radical hermeneutics can adequately investigate the fix that all human beings are in after the postmodern suspicion of metaphysics. Yet, hermeneutics implies textuality; there must be something that can be interpreted. In the case of the Myth of Justice, that something interestingly enough is the collection of scriptures that give shape to the Hebraic and Christian structures of existence. In other words, Caputo discovers the classic expression of justice in the biblical texts that "speak" of the prophets’ cry for social righ-
teousness and of Jesus' call for compassion and forgiveness. Consequently, this "postmodern" story of justice is actually a "pre-modern" story that precedes the Greeks and "old father Parmenides." It goes back all the way to "old Abraham" and the demand of individual responsibility before God.

For Caputo, the originary story is a story of ethics, not a story of Being. He agrees with Levinas that one cannot find a "first philosophy" that does not already have an ethical dynamic to it. Yet, he is uncomfortable using the concept "ethics," since "ethics" is Greek and, therefore, brings with it the baggage of "excellence" and "virtue" in the more Aristotelian sense of those terms. Caputo prefers to replace "ethics" with "obligation," the notion that from the beginning individuals are "tied toward" (ob-ligare) the other, the singular other who places a

---

83 Caputo, Demythologizing Heidegger, 206.

84 Ibid., 213. Caputo critiques Heidegger for striving to recover an originary myth in some golden age of Greek phainesthetics; however, one could argue that Caputo desires something of the same thing here with reference to the biblical model of singularity. In his biblical and Kierkegaardian moves, Caputo seeks for something originary, something that "roots" his radical hermeneutic of ethics. Of course, Caputo's response to such criticism would be to admit that one can never avoid seeking some originary moment, that originary moments are like myths--one cannot avoid them but must be circumspect in the ones chosen.

85 Ibid., 167.

86 Ibid., 211.
demand upon the self." He wants to discover what the "hermeneutics of facticity [would] look like if it started out all over again and began with the obligation that descends . . . from on high . . . [and] included everything that Heidegger sought to exclude." He contends that obligation (i.e. justice) calls from out of the flux, beckoning out of the indeterminacy with the simple command, "Come!" This command both recognizes the uncertainty of

87Ibid., 129. This citation comes from a chapter entitled "Heidegger's Essentialism: The Logic of the Mythology of Being," which was first published as "Incarnation and Essentialization: A Reading of Heidegger" Philosophy Today (Spring 1991): 32-42. If one compares the original article page 40 with pages 128-29 of the published chapter, one discovers that Caputo has literally replaced "ethics" with "obligation."

88Caputo, Demythologizing Heidegger, 214. Caputo omits from Demythologizing Heidegger the conclusion to one of its constituent articles. In that article, he uses christological language to explain the significance of facticity. Taking the Johannine notion of incarnation, Caputo contends that being made "man" consists of being "made of flesh and blood, made to enter into the rhythm of birth and maturation, sickness and health, pleasure and pain . . ." ("Incarnation and Essentialization," 41). Et homo factus est--factus and facticity belong together in incarnation, and it is precisely this issue of incarnation that Heidegger fails to appreciate. That failure ensues in the "obscenity" of Heidegger's essentialism, which preempts his ability to develop a genuine ethics out of his later thought. That Caputo would use a christological idiom in order to critique Heidegger and explain the ethical significance of facticity should not be surprising given his insistence on contaminating Greek thought with jewchristian motifs. The importance of Jesus for these motifs will be discussed below.

89Caputo, Demythologizing Heidegger, 207. The significance of ethics for this thesis arises at various points. It has already been discussed above that Caputo takes something of a Kantian perspective in relating ethics and religion. Such a relationship may be clearly seen in Radical Hermeneutics where he treats the distinction between reli-
the call and also prohibits the uncertainty from leading to inactivity. In order to understand more fully what Caputo means by all of this, one must investigate his decision to come out "against ethics."

The Aporetics of Ethics and the Poetics of Obligation

From one perspective, it appears that Caputo's trafficking with undecidability has left him somewhat schizophrenic. On the one hand, he has come out against Heidegger, because the latter's myths of aletheia and originary ethics of Being fail to translate into a genuine concern with facticity and humanity. In other words, Caputo criticizes Heidegger for not having an appropriate ethics. On the other hand, in the companion volume to Demythologizing Heidegger and tragedy with reference to the issue of suffering. It has also been mentioned above that Caputo finds in Derrida's notion of the undeconstructibility of justice a Kierkegaardian flavor. As a matter of fact, Caputo admits that although Derrida is not a religious thinker, his ideas concerning deconstruction and justice place him within Kierkegaard's religious stage of existence (Caputo, Demythologizing Heidegger, 210). Another connection may be found with reference to the "Come!" of the call of justice ("Levinas's Risk," unpublished manuscript, 17-18). Caputo maintains that a "watchword of deconstruction...is the open-ended call yéins!, come, let something new come" (Caputo, "The Good News," 457). He takes that watchword as evidence that deconstruction is far from the enemy of faith (religion) but is actually a way of approaching faith so that faith may be what it is. Deconstruction lets faith call out "Come!"; it lets it "function more ad-ventfully...gladdened by the good news of alterity by which [one is] always and already summoned" (Ibid.). The ad-vent of faith finds expression in Caputo's treatment of the "kingdom of God" and its unique temporality. He insists that one should properly respond to God's kingdom by letting it "come" ("Metanoetics," 25). This "coming" of the kingdom is dealt with in more detail below.
ing Heidegger, Caputo, himself, has come out against ethics! Does this mean that his radical hermeneutics—which is against metaphysics, against Heidegger, and, now, against ethics—offers no possibility for a positive, reconstructive stance for anything? Has Caputo finally succumbed to deconstruction's alleged temptation to end in nihilism? The answer to both questions is, "No." Indeed, Caputo's critical stance against all of these issues offers a different, more postmodern, perspective from which to prosecute the significant implications radical hermeneutics has for both ethics and religion.

Caputo attempts in Against Ethics to extrapolate more fully the religio-ethical ramifications of his earlier work Radical Hermeneutics.90 In that work, he develops a decon-

---

90 In the typescript version of Against Ethics, Caputo states that, unlike Kierkegaard, his point of view as the author of the text is "not religious" (Against Ethics, pre-publication typescript, 1993, 26). In the published work, however, this statement has been edited to read: "I am . . . no Kierkegaard, whose point of view is too religious" (Against Ethics, 15 [emphasis added]). This change indicates that Caputo cannot in good conscience maintain that his work does not reference the religious dimension of human existence. He cannot possibly put forth an ethical theory that avoids religious questions, given the centrality of the notion of suffering in his thought. One might express this inextricable bond between ethics and religion in Caputo's radical hermeneutics by using a linguistic formula that recurs throughout Against Ethics and outside it in other texts—the formula "double bind."

He first uses it "double bind" Against Ethics with reference to Abraham, who finds himself in the "double bind" between transcendence and singularity, having to break with ethics in the fear and trembling of obedience to God, which is, actually, the "double bind" between obligation and religion (Ibid). Another "double bind" concerns the imposi-

sibility of speaking about individuals, who are always
structive hermeneutic that questions the hegemony of reason
and system, reveals the undecidability and openness inherent
within any attempt to pattern the flux, and denies that
metaphysics and ontotheology keep their promises to make

uniquely singular, and the necessity of speaking about them,
since they are the only things that are real (Ibid, 73).
Then there is the "double bind" between the universality of
law and the particularity of justice, the mediate state
within which factical life transpires (Ibid., 89, cf. also
149). A fourth "double bind" is Caputo's realization that
he cannot completely avoid metaphysics, although he does not
want to establish one. Consequently, he lives on the margin
in between (Ibid., 93). There is also the "double bind" be-
tween the uniqueness of events and the need to make judg-
ments, to evaluate events with the help of some sort of
general schema (Ibid., 99). In "Sacred Anarchy," an unpub-
lished paper that is actually propadeutic to Against Ethics,
he writes of the "double bind" of mercy, the tension between
desiring to help the other in need and the inchoate humili-
ation that comes from the superiority of compassion ("Sacred
Anarchy," 34).

Such repetition of "double bind" intrigues the reader
who realizes the significance of that expression vis-a-vis
the etymological derivation of "obligation," ob-ligare, "to
bind toward." Could there be another "double bind" working
tacitly within Caputo's anti-ethical ethic? There is another
etymology that might come into play here, the meaning of
"religion," re-ligare, "to bind back." (Caputo discusses
this etymology in the context of Abraham as an example of
the one who is bound absolutely to the absolute [Against
Ethics, 18]. Abraham is the patriarch of all those who
mistrust the universal and seek to live out obligation
without ethics.) A "double bind" between being bound toward
the other and being bound back to God might express the
primary dynamic of a deconstructive anti-ethical ethic of
obligation. If so, then Caputo would be giving, in the
irony of his text, another expression of Jesus' two great
commandments: love God and love others--be bound to God and
be bound to others. If one interprets this "double bind" in
a Johannine sense, then the two bindings come bound together

Taylor also investigates the etymology of "binding."
He points out that "justice" derives from "ieuos," which
also means "to bind." Consequently, justice and religion
are "bound together by a certain binding" (Nots [Chicago:
The University of Chicago Press, 1993], 77).
life manageable and totally coherent. In his latest work, Caputo argues that one of metaphysics' tenacious attempts to make existence safe is through the development of various ethical systems. Ethics has always purported to supply universal principles and transcendental foundations with which to facilitate the decision-making process. In doing so, it has been just one more venture into full presence and one more claim to have arrested the flux. Yet, as with all claims to totality, ethics fails to inculcate everything into the pattern; that is, every ethic leaves a remainder, a detritus that cannot be digested by the system.

The reflexivity of remainder in ethics may be identified most clearly with reference to judgment. Although ethics putatively offers guidelines whereby one may evaluate various situations and actions in order to determine their ethical significance, it actually offers nothing more than a facade of determinability. Ethics fails to make judgments safe for two reasons. First, the whole notion of guiding principles cannot stand against the onslaught of deconstruction. Derrida has already argued that one can never escape textuality and the play of *différance* in order to arrive at some transcendental signified that grounds reason and judgment. Principles are always conditioned as effects of the flux. Second, even if some monarchical principle could be established, how does one move from the universal to the

---

particular, that is, bridge the distance between the *arché* and the individual person or situation? 92 This distance is a tear in the fabric of judgment that no metaphysical threads can hold together. The basic problem concerns the ineffability of the individual. Metaphysics has no idiom with which to communicate the factical existence of the singular person. 93 Since metaphysics traditionally deals in the universality of concepts and the gathering forces of species, it cannot actually "speak" about the truly unique, about the propriety of the proper name. With all its discourse about Being, metaphysics can operate only within the economy of the improper, since Being has no proper name and is literally no-thing in particular. 94 Since only particular, properly-named individuals really matter in ethics, ethics cannot ensure that principles get their messages delivered to the "proper" recipients.

Interestingly enough, traditional ethics founders at the very point where Heidegger runs aground. Ethics also fails to reference facticity, to allow for a genuine heterology to be maintained. Metaphysics cannot hear the call of the other, because metaphysics must always factor terms down to a common denominator. In doing so, it can only dominate by forcing everything into a homogenous denomination. Indi-

92Ibid., 97.
93Ibid., 74.
94Ibid., 70.
viduals must, therefore, remain unspoken and unnamed, unless they can be expressed in an improper idiom of similarity, that is, all spoken of as the same. Were metaphysics truly to allow individuals in all of their otherness to be spoken or written, there would be no end to the process. When *différance* plays ethically, it results in the necessity to write down every name and every event that occurs to everyone bearing a name.\(^9^5\) Consequently, such naming would keep the flux in motion, but motion is what metaphysics wishes to deny. Caputo is against ethics, therefore, because ethics actually fails to listen for the call of the other, the singular one who cannot be subsumed under the rule of some rational principle.

Caputo's stance against ethics recapitulates the tension he finds between justice and law. As discussed above, Caputo takes Derrida's affirmation on the undeconstructibility of justice as a pivotal statement.\(^9^6\) In this statement, Derrida has opted for the individual over against the universal; he has chosen, despite all of his protestations concerning the "proper," to stand with the proper name. Caputo joins him and wishes to privilege justice and individuality over the law and generality. His being against ethics may be re-written as his "being against the law." Laws, of course, are needed; however, they must never be

\(^9^5\)Ibid., 72.

\(^9^6\)Ibid., 86.
allowed to rule without being deconstructed. Laws are always general, trying to cover as many instances as possible, intentionally avoiding proper names so as not to result in inequality and special treatments.\textsuperscript{97} Ironically, a perfect set of laws could only result from the play of \textit{différence} in which every name was accounted for.\textsuperscript{98} The desire for justice is, therefore, a desire not for grand inclusive patterns but for fragments, for "little bits and pieces that philosophy . . . breaks up . . ."\textsuperscript{99}

The textuality of principles, the ineffability of individuality, and the undeconstructibility of justice are ethical aporia that lead Caputo eventually to develop what

\textsuperscript{97}Ibid., 87. Caputo's stance against ethics should not be construed as some type of moral relativism. Instead, it is his attempt to accent the importance of the individual and not the system in motivating genuine interpersonal concern. Something of this dynamic may be seen in his use of "against." Any good "Derridean" will recognize quickly that that word falls into the \textit{différence} of polysemy. It can mean "directly opposite," "in opposition or hostility to," "as a defense or protection from," but also "in preparation or provision for" and "in the direction of and into contact with." Consequently, Caputo's "against" ethics may mean either "a hostility toward" or "a preparation for" ethics. Of course, one could deny the disjunction and claim that it means both, which would be an undecidability consistent with Caputo's deconstructive "reference." It is, indeed, the tension between hostility and contact that best captures Caputo's relationship with ethics. Caputo agrees that what he proposes could be termed "quasi-ethics" and that he might be able to salvage the word "ethics" if it were written "\textit{sous rature}"; however, he chooses to be more recalcitrant and kick the word out (Ibid., 103).

\textsuperscript{98}Ibid., 88.

\textsuperscript{99}Ibid., 90.
he terms a "poetics of obligation." In the notion of obligation are summed up all of the dynamics inherent in his radically hermeneutical attempt to respect alterity and decide for the worth of every other person. Since he agrees with Levinas that ethics is first philosophy, he engages a "first philosophy" that privileges the call of the other who cries out of the depths of suffering. This call manifests itself in the "responsible anarchy" of obligation. This anarchy names in a different manner a postmodern, jewgreek/jewchristian view of justice, a justice that can be expressed only hyperbolically in an economy that does not result in a zero sum balance. Obligation (i.e. justice) references the proper names of individuals. It comes as a demand made upon one by another, another person who acts not as Da-sein the "there of Being," but as the "there" of obligation. In other words, one never has an obligation

100 Derrida refers to "aporia" as an "old, worn-out Greek term . . . [a] tired word of philosophy and of logic" (Aporias, trans. Thomas Dutoit [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993], 12). Notwithstanding its hoary character, "aporia" is a word that Derrida confesses he cannot avoid. He admits to having struggled with "aporetology or aporetography" throughout his writings, specifically with the various issues of undecidability (Ibid., 15). Interestingly enough, one of the examples of aporia that he mentions is the idea of the "double bind!" See above footnote 90.

101 Caputo, Against Ethics, 1.

102 Ibid., 90, 92. "Hyperbolic Justice" is the title of Chapter Ten of Demythologizing Heidegger.

103 Ibid., 245.

104 Ibid., 238.
to Being, to Spirit, to Volk, or to any universal, ahistorical concept, primarily because such "things" are not participants in the events of life nor, more importantly, do they suffer.\footnote{Ibid., 70.} 

Obligation always binds one toward (ob-licare) some particular existing person who suffers in the midst of the flux. Caputo, who loves Levinas, cannot agree with him that alterity results in the call of some Absolute Other, for an Absolute Other as ab-solute would be "loosened from" all others and, consequently, unable to call them into a relationship of obligation. One simply cannot be "tied toward" that which is "loosened from" everything.\footnote{Ibid., 80.} On the con-

\footnote{Ibid., 70.} Caputo’s contention that obligation and suffering are corollary concepts holds significant implications for the theology of the weakness of God. If obligations can be demanded only by entities that act and suffer, then only if God does both can one be obligated to the deity. The primary thesis of this dissertation is in direct agreement with Caputo at this point. Being cannot suffer, but God can and does. Consequently, one must not think God ontotheologically and identify God with Being itself or as ground of Being. Such Parmenidean ontological language denies any possibility to divine suffering (cf. Ibid., 71).

\footnote{Ibid., 80.} Caputo’s Levinasian influence surfaces throughout his ethics of obligation, especially with reference to the inescapability of obligation’s appeal. As Caputo writes, Levinas shows that "obligation is irreducible—a fact of human experience that we cannot explain away" ("Levinas’s Risk," 3); however, he does not completely accept Levinas’ notion that obligation points inevitably to the Infinite One, the God who ensures that there is some basis for obligation’s demand (Ibid., 4). Caputo wishes to maintain more of a dialectic between Levinas’ "Il" and the "il y a." Obligations may just happen without any type of insurance; they may be nothing more than "momentary flares sent up in an endless night . . ." (Ibid., 28). Of course, the flares also might illuminate the abyss and reveal a "divine presence" inhabiting the flux with humanity.
trary, obligation demands connection, actually creates connections between individuals. Obligation happens without some metaphysical theory accounting for it. It comes over a person heteronomously from who knows where.\textsuperscript{107} It happens to the person without the person’s consent. It overpowers her and binds her toward the other. Consequently, obligation scandalizes ethics, which always tries to give reasons and explanations for why one is obligated to act.\textsuperscript{108} Ethics always seeks to uncover the covering law of morality with idioms such as the Good, Virtue, Duty, or Categorical Imperative. Ethics valiantly tries to explain obligation; it truly desires to include such a heterological relationship within its theory; however, it cannot. Because of its collusion with metaphysics, ethics actually has a collision with obligation. It trips over it as if it were some stumbling-block (\textit{skandalon}).\textsuperscript{109} Instead of arising from some definite rational system, obligation just happens, just acts upon the person without why.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{107}Caputo, \textit{Against Ethics}, 24. Caputo writes that he simply is not privy to any origin at all, whether of Ethics, Being, or the work of art. He certainly has no privileged information concerning the origin of the call of obligation. As he states it, "I did not place the call... By the time the call arrives, it has already been sent out" ("Levinas’s Risk," 16).

\textsuperscript{108}Caputo, \textit{Against Ethics}, 7.

\textsuperscript{109}Ibid., 5.

\textsuperscript{110}Ibid., 10-11. Caputo does not confuse "without why" with "without because." In an article on Heidegger’s later thought, he makes a distinction between the two. In com-
Were the individual to wait until an ethical explanation could be formulated and applied to the specific circumstances of suffering and powerlessness that give rise to obligation, then the individual would never act and never respond. Metaphysics, ironically, leads to ethical paralysis, since no theory can totalize the reasons for acting. Consequently, Caputo stands against such ethics and calls for action to be based on something a bit more uncertain, something a little undecidable, on the feeling of obligation that comes not as a fact but as an interpretation out of the play of the flux, out of the minimalistic metaphysic of facticity. Obligation, then, is the ethics of radical hermeneutics, an ethics that can proceed only with fear and trembling. Yet, in the irony of reflexivity, obligation actually impedes the play for a moment. The fix that "we" are all in may be stopped in the moment by the call of the other in distress and pain. In other words, the individual "is fixed in place by an obligation." It cannot be trans-

menting on Heidegger's use of Angelius Silesius' poem in The Cherubinic Wanderer ("The rose is without why; it blossoms because it blossoms; It thinks not upon itself, nor does it ask if anyone sees it."), Caputo claims that the rose is not without a because; it "blossoms because it blossoms, out of its own ground" ("The Rose is Without Why," 7). Likewise, one can say that obligation has no "why" in the sense of some all-encompassing metaphysical theory; however, it does have a "be-cause," a cause in the being of the other who suffers.

Caputo, Against Ethics, 85.
scended, synthesized, or avoided.\textsuperscript{112} As a result, in the midst of the ongoing kinetics of the differential play of the flux, person calls to person through some obligatory appeal that cannot be explained and cannot be silenced. It is an appeal not from above but from below, from the depths of ugliness and darkness. It does not come beautifully dressed in the Greek garments of metaphysical ethics but in the rags of a jewgreek/jewchristian poetics of particularity.\textsuperscript{113}

The poetics of obligation concerns particularity primarily because obligation always cavorts with disasters, and disasters are personal, historical, and specific. The play of the flux disallows the possibility that one can plot one's position with precision. Whenever one "shoots the stars" in order to grid her location, she may find that the stars are obscured by clouds or that they simply do not provide a constant reference point. Whereas metaphysics reaches for the stars and attempts to get a fixed position, Caputo's radical hermeneutics aims a bit lower and only claims to stumble somewhat tentatively in the starlight. Caputo has viewed the stars and concluded that at best they care nothing for mortals or at worst they turn against them dis-astrously. He claims that life can indeed be a disas-

\textsuperscript{112}Ibid., 26.

\textsuperscript{113}Ibid., 12-14.
ter; it can be "cut loose from [any] lucky or guiding star." The postmodern condition of the absence of grand narratives is actually a "disastrous condition," one of accepting that there is no certain place to escape the flux, that "things are just 'decentered,' 'disseminated,' [and] 'disastered.'"

Caputo does not claim to know with certainty what disasters are; however, he knows that whatever they are, they result in irretrievable loss, in an economy in which there is no balanced system of exchange. Disasters always include suffering; however, not all suffering constitutes a disaster. Some suffering is productive; it brings

\[114\text{Ibid., 6.}\]

\[115\text{Ibid. Taylor discusses the issue of disaster with reference to the end of theology, specifically the nonontological thinking of the "unthought nothing" that theology has failed to think ("Nothing Ending Nothing," 49). He juxtaposes disaster with apocalypse, the idea that the death of God is not the possibility of a Parousia over against the possibility that it is (Ibid., 50). In other words, the death of God "affirms the impossibility of the end," and that impossibility is a disaster (Ibid., 63). In a more practical sense, this theological disaster finds expression in the impossibility of death, of death as an experience that always comes but never arrives for the person (Ibid., 65). Although Caputo nowhere replies specifically to Taylor's use of disaster, he might reproach it in a vein similar to his Heideggerian critique--specifically, that death is not just something that never arrives for the person, but that in all of its facticity, death arrives constantly as flesh and blood human beings suffer and die. Death, or dying, can mean suffering for the one afflicted and can also mean suffering for the one who suffers because of the death of the other.}\n
\[116\text{Caputo, Against Ethics, 29.}\]
out the best in people, or it prepares one for maturity. Disastrous suffering has no instrumental value and cannot be reduced to an instance of a means/end process. Disasters are irrational, without reason. Disasters always concern the other and always end in the groundlessness of a "why?". The innocent suffering of a child, for example, constitutes a disaster. It cannot be explained by some overarching ethical principle; it does not allow for a redemptive telos to give it some proleptic meaning; it must not be profaned by an asinine attempt to inculcate the event within a broader context that identifies it as a necessary step in a progressive movement toward Being, God, or the Good. The suffering of the child calls not for explanation but for action; it obligates the person to respond to the facticity of the disaster through a radical hermeneutics of responsible anarchy. The suffering child calls not for archai but for responses. The ensuing obligation demands that the "cold" truth of a radical hermeneutics be tempered with a "warm heart," a cardiology of concern and response that accepts the ligaments that tie the individual to the disaster.

---

117 Ibid., 29.
118 Ibid., 30.
119 Caputo, "Sacred Anarchy," 12. Wyschogrod would call obligation a "new altruism," which is truly needed in "an age grown cynical and hardened to catastrophe: war, genocide, the threat of worldwide ecological collapse, . . . urban violence, the use of torture, the emergence of new
The reciprocity between obligation and disaster constitutes a different way in which to prosecute the idea of subjectivity. Whereas metaphysics stumbles whenever it seeks to account for the reality of the subject or the self in its ineffability, the poetics of obligation finds a discourse through which it can account for the reality of individuality and the establishment of inter-subjectivity. Caputo contends that in lieu of an ontotheological theory of an autonomous self, one can speak of the subject instituted by the claim of obligation; that is, obligation happens to someone who becomes the subject of obligation. Conversely, the call of obligation comes from someone, someone to whom the disaster has occurred. Someone is subjected to pain, suffering, oppression, and exclusion. Consequently, the poetics of obligation is a discourse of proper names. It supplies an idiomatic network for naming both the subject and the object of obligation. Such intersubjectivity illustrates in a different way the idea that a person is the "there" of obligation, the place where obligation happens, diseases" (Saints and Postmodernism, 257).

120Caputo, Against Ethics, 96.

121Ibid., 69-70. Caputo suggests that the best monument to the victims of disasters would be to list their proper names, one by one. Of course, such a monument may be found at the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington. The idea also structures Steven Spielberg’s monumental film of the Holocaust, Schindler’s List. It is significant that the film names Schindler as well as his "Jews." Obligation demands that both be named.
"where 'someone' says 'I' to 'me' . . ." This network depends upon the recognition that suffering always takes place in space and time, in the particularity of individuality, not in the realm of universal concepts but of proper names. In other words, obligation always concerns the facticity of flesh and blood human beings, the flesh to flesh relationship of real people joined in the undecidable but responsible intercourse of a hyperbolic economy of justice.

Caputo's focus on such a hyperbolic ethic can be traced to his earlier writings. For example, although his nomenclature in Against Ethics differs somewhat from that of Radical Hermeneutics, the Sache of both are synonymous. In Radical Hermeneutics, Caputo develops what he calls an ethics of dissemination and an ethics of Gelassenheit. The former distrusts any attempt at totalization and exclusion and constantly aims at deconstructing power structures that seek to dominate individuals. It seeks to keep the community heterogeneous and to allow for many voices to join the conversation. In allowing genuine alterity, the ethics of dissemination becomes an ethics of Gelassenheit, an ethics of 'letting-be.' The term expresses the openness and freedom that should mark human community. In letting

---

122Ibid., 238.
123RH, 260.
124Ibid., 263.
things be, without forcing compliance or without asking for a definite "why," difference and otherness can continue to play in the flux. The ethics of Gelassenheit keeps a constant vigilance over the demonic powers inherent within every organization and institution. It is, according to Meister Eckhart, who first used the term, an ethics of caritas, of love, the unity that comes only from diversity.125

The ethics of dissemination and of Gelassenheit continue in Caputo's later thought in his poetics of obligation. What also continues in Against Ethics is the centrality of suffering as a focal issue for ascertaining the existential implications of radical hermeneutics. What is later referred to as "disaster" is addressed in Radical Hermeneutics under the rubric "suffering." In both works, Caputo identifies suffering as the place where the flux becomes most problematic, where any desire to acquiesce to the flux in some sort of relativism and inactivity cannot be allowed.

125Ibid., 267. Caputo raises an early critique of Heidegger here at the point of Gelassenheit, a critique that he develops further in Demythologizing Heidegger. He accuses Heidegger of being more willing to allow "jugs and bridges be and to let it go at that, and he never quite gets around to letting others be . . ." (Ibid.). It is in this context that he reminds his readers of the theological source of the term. He claims that Eckhart's notion of Gelassenheit is "a principle of love . . . with some teeth in it, a caritas put forward by a Christian which had a deconstructive kick to it" ("Mysticism and Transgression," 38). The "deconstructive kick" of Eckhart's caritas is important in Caputo's anti-ethnic of obligation, because the one "almost" principle that he will allow is the imperative dilige—love. This "almost" principle will be discussed more below.
Suffering demands response, and response demands decision regardless of the undecidability of dissemination. What is more, Caputo recognizes the irony that lives deep down in the ethics of Gelassenheit. No matter how much one desires to let things be in their alterity, there are some things that should not be! There are instances of pain and oppression that cannot be allowed to continue without critique. A genuine poetics of obligation demands that one intentionally set out to deny the "being" of disasters.

In collecting his thoughts in Radical Hermeneutics on the subject of suffering, Caputo chooses to follow Emmanuel Levinas, who centers his discussion of ethics on the significance of the "face." The face focuses the otherness of the other and demands to be respected as a limit to action and as a call for recognition. In other words, the face disallows solipsism in that it presents the reality of another who exists in mystery, the mystery revealed in the concealment of that which lies behind the face. The face communicates not only through the language brought to expression by mouth and tongue but also through the gestures and signs formed by the "looks" that the face can give. One of those "looks" that (often literally) screams out for a hearing (and a seeing) is the face of suffering, the con-

126 RH, 272.

127 Ibid., 274-75.
torted face of pain, or the expressionless face of despair.\textsuperscript{128} Sometimes the suffering is so great that one cannot "face" it and is tempted to look away. It is, however, precisely the face of suffering that "puts teeth into the mystery and prevents [one] from confusing the mystery with an object of poetic reverie . . ."\textsuperscript{129} In Against Ethics, Levinas continues to function as Caputo's rabbi, constantly reminding him to replace Heidegger's "pure" Greek phainesthetics with a more tentative and contaminated jewgreek/jewchristian paradigm. He does, however, choose to continue the Levinasian influence under a different vocabulary. Consequently, in the later work, Caputo no longer centers his discussion of suffering (disasters) on the "face" but replaces that concept with the word "flesh." He begins to develop a more "carnal" approach to the facticity of human existence by exploiting the poetic connotations of "fleshly" existence.

\textsuperscript{128}Ibid., 277.

\textsuperscript{129}Ibid. One is reminded of Caputo's statement concerning Eckhart's understanding of Gelassenheit and love mentioned above in note 125. Caputo desires that some "teeth" be put into the ethical dynamics of his radical hermeneutics. He simply refuses to accept that the inevitable conclusion to his more humble, minimalistic metaphysics is some sort of nihilistic inactivity. Interestingly enough, he constantly argues that such inactivity logically results from the arrested play of traditional ontotheology. His critique of all metaphysics of presence, therefore, is aimed at opening the possibility of acting in reality with the recognition that not every question will be answered nor every reason established.
Caputo recognizes that although traditional metaphysics cannot adequately structure the person because of her ineffable individuality, it does attempt to make certain claims about the person as body, that is as agent, as one who acts in reality—thinking, feeling, and willing. Since metaphysics is essentially Greek philosophy, it always has conceived of body as a Greek body—"an active, athletic, healthy, erect, white male body, sexually able and unambiguously gendered, well-born, well-bred and well-buried..." The philosophical body is the center of "intentional life, an active, well-organized agent that is borne into the world by the organization of its intentional operations." This conception of body finds expression in Greek art, the statues of symmetrical, solid, muscular forms, and in Greek architecture, the erect massive columns that compose the temple.

Caputo argues that there is, however, another model for understanding the individual—that of flesh. Flesh, for Caputo, is not body. The word itself derives from the Sanskrit "ker," which means "to tear." The Anglo-Saxon word "flesh" carries the connotations of "palpability, sensuousness, sensuality, concreteness, weakness, vulnera-

\[130\]Caputo, Against Ethics, 194.

\[131\]Ibid., 203.

\[132\]Ibid., 202.
bility." Caputo illustrates this distinction with the sense of smell. The body smells, but that smelling is centrifugal; it has an outward vector. The agent body can smell something—the rose, the perfume, the fragrance of early morning rain. Smell for the body becomes another way through which the world is organized, structured into some kind of unity. Flesh, too, smells; however, this smelling is "the smell of sweat; of unwashed flesh; smells which gag; the vile smell of wastes, of fecal matter; . . . the odors of disease and death." The smell of flesh offends the body's smelling, and this offense illustrates the problem that metaphysics has with flesh. Flesh cannot be structured and ordered into a principled whole. No arché can be proposed that grounds it and hierarchializes it. As a matter of fact, quite often flesh is ground under by ethical grounds and principles. As

133Ibid., 196.

134Ibid., 203. Wyschogrod critiques Nietzsche for failing to acknowledge the distinction that Caputo expresses here between body and flesh. She accuses Nietzsche of not accepting the body's vulnerability as an important aspect in the will to power. She insists that corporeality cannot deny that to be an "embodied existence, as flesh, is to be vulnerable" (Saints and Postmodernism, 103).

135Caputo, Against Ethics, 204.
flesh may lie literally crushed under Greek statues and lie literally exposed next to the coldness of temple columns, so, too, can it lie symbolically wounded and abandoned by the universal laws of ethics. While philosophers and politi¬cians, priests and social workers struggle to identify the proper regulations and/or how to apply regulations to different cases, the enfleshed individual with her proper name and all of her fleshly impropriety continues to smell, to stink up the community, to repel the sensitive noses of ethical, well-washed "Greeks!"

For Caputo, the "poetics of obligations is a poetics of flesh."¹³⁶ Obligations cling to flesh, so that when they happen, when they elicit response, they happen in the context of the suffering and pain associated with flesh.¹³⁷ Flesh may not, however, be taken to constitute another kind of arché, another attempt to provide some sort of ahistorical transcendental principle around which to build an ethics.¹³⁸ Flesh cannot be taken as the "origin" of obligations, since obligations have no "origin"; they just happen. Flesh is certainly not another expression of the Myth of Being. On the contrary, flesh reveals the loss of Being; it manifests the deprivation of "Being, world, language, and

¹³⁶Ibid., 149.
¹³⁷Ibid., 196.
¹³⁸Ibid., 208.
truth." Actually flesh can take the arché of the body and subvert it, actually metamorphose it into un-principled fleshliness. This transubstantiation of body into flesh occurs primarily through the experience of and with suffering, the radical suffering of disaster.

Disastrous suffering always ensues in loss and, consequently, cannot be explained glibly by some metaphysical systematization. It cannot be balanced by ethical casuistry or synthesized in some dialectical theodicy. Disastrous suffering is the paralogism in every logical attempt at systemizing reality. This kind of suffering cannot be contained in the Greek aesthetic model of individuality. Consequently, for Caputo, it references another model, that of the Jew, for in a certain Lyotardian manner, Caputo personifies disaster as les juifs. Jewish flesh affects Greek body in two distinct ways, both of which concern the vulnerability of flesh. First, Caputo acknowledges that flesh is the domain of pain and suffering; consequently,

139Ibid., 211.
140Ibid., 209.
141Ibid., 28. Caputo contends that his anti-ethical ethic of obligation is indeed an attempt to de-Hellenize ethics, and thereby to deconstruct ontotheology and any metaphysics of presence (Ibid., 34).
142Ibid., 158. "Flesh is pain: it is the possibility of pain. There is no pain outside the flesh" ("Sacred Anarchy," 24). There is "no pain which is truly pain . . . which is not embodied factical pain . . ." (Caputo, "Thinking, Poetry and Pain," 179).
the body does not suffer. When the body suffers, it is no longer body, but flesh. The body's experience of suffering is transformative. The body as flesh is the "jewgreek sphere of disfigured bodies, bodies in pain or laid low." Suffering contorts and distorts the erect body into the flesh of agony. It robs the body of its integrity and intentionality as centered agent and transforms it into a disintegrated and decentered disaster. It damns the body to the vengeance of Babel, confusing the word that uncovers a world and allowing only the inarticulate screams and groans of affliction and torment. Intense suffering also can silence the body's voice so that there is not even a meaningful whimper.

When disastrous suffering transforms the body of the one who suffers into infected and defective flesh, there is a second alteration that occurs. The one who has an experience with suffering, the suffering of the other, is always initially an agent body, a Greek pleroma of cognitive and conative forces. This body smells the stench of the other-as-flesh and finds itself confronted with the happening of obligation. The fragrance and groans of the wounded other are the ligaments that bind the one body to the other

---

143 Caputo, Against Ethics, 196.
144 Ibid., 206.
145 Ibid., 205.
146 Ibid., 213.
flesh. Yet, obligation always happens between two fleshly individuals, because the torn, smelly flesh of the other transfigures the agent body into flesh. Flesh touches flesh, exchanging the Greek pleroma of centered rationality for the Jewish aroma of flesh-scented madness, the madness for justice. Obligation as justice is indeed a madness; it lacks the rationality of equal return. Such a foolish commitment to the other leads to a "radical alterity," to sacrificing oneself upon the altar (alter) of obligation and thereby becoming what Edith Wyschogrod calls a "postmodern saint." 

---

147 Ibid., 217. Caputo refers to justice as "a quasi-prophetic, quasi-rabbinic, quasi-semitic imperative which belongs to the poetics of obligations" (Ibid., 90).

148 Ibid., 66. "A 'postmodern saint' is a saint of the Other, a practitioner to excess of responsibility to the Other, a virtuoso of the moral life . . ." (Ibid., 128). Wyschogrod defines a "saintly life" as "one in which compassion for the Other, irrespective of cost to the saint, is the primary trait" (Saints and Postmodernism, xxiii). Her more developed definition reads as follows: a saint is "one whose adult life in its entirety is devoted to the alleviation of sorrow (the psychological suffering) and pain (the physical suffering) that afflicts other persons without distinction of rank or group or, alternatively, that afflicts sentient beings, whatever the cost to the saint in pain or sorrow" (Ibid., 34). In other words, a postmodern saint, for Wyschogrod, is one who is willing to suffer for and with the other for the express purpose of minimizing the other's suffering. Although she wants to separate saintliness from theological belief, Wyschogrod does note the inherent paradox in suffering as redemptive and recognizes that such a paradox finds unique expression in the imitatio Christi of Christian ethics (Ibid., 38).

Caputo points out, however, that not even saints are saints. Hagiography is writing and, therefore, an effect of différencé. It never is pure and uncontaminated. When the stories of saints are told, certain events are omitted in order to make them look better than they are. Such fabulous
Why sacrifice oneself to the madness of justice? Why dirty one's hands and risk absorbing the stench of diseased flesh, of unwashed flesh, of lacerated flesh? Is it because of duty, or a categorical imperative, or some divine command, or utilitarian responsibility, or adherence to abstract theories of justice? Who knows? There may be no why; there may be no law; there may be no universal principle that grounds such action. Perhaps obligation itself is the principle, the law, and the why. Caputo responds negatively, at least if the above three terms are synonymous with "origin."\(^{149}\) He claims that he does not know the origin of obligation. He only knows that flesh is obligation's stories, however, still serve to manifest the economy of madness that obligations always demand. Wyschogrod does not disagree with Caputo; however, she does maintain that veracity with reference to hagiography has important moral implications. For the narratives of saints to have evocative force, they must manifest a certain plausibility. Since the ethical appeal of saints rests not with principles or maxims but in the biography of the saints themselves, an element of believability must accompany those biographies in order to exhort the readers to follow the saints' examples (Ibid., 27-28). Since to follow a saint very well might mean to open oneself to suffering, one will not be as quick to accept suffering if it is predicated upon a merely fictive account.

\(^{149}\) Caputo, Against Ethics, 196. "I am not trying to erect 'flesh' into some kind of arché or principium . . ." (Ibid., 209). Caputo recognizes that he cannot avoid metaphysics completely; therefore, he desires only to stay on the margin between overcoming metaphysics and doing metaphysics (Ibid., 93). He finds himself in a double bind of wanting to avoid metaphysics but being unable to avoid metaphysics. He tries, therefore, to stay on the margin between the metaphysical and non-metaphysical. Staying on the margin means not being overcome by metaphysics, not allowing any structure or system to totalize existence and arrest the flux (Ibid., 221).
domain; flesh summons obligation to come from wherever it comes. If this summons has any vestige of principle about it, it is the Augustinian principle, "dilige, et quod vis fac--love, and do what you will." Caputo interprets this as "... dilige: respond to suffering; et quod vis fac: and multiply differences."

---

150Ibid., 121. "This is the principium sine principio, the principle without principle, the principle for what is not subject to principle" (Ibid).

151Ibid., 92. Caputo "loves" this Augustinian statement and uses it quite often. Earlier in Against Ethics, he admits to having a "weak" notion of the Good, what he terms a "philosophia negativa" that appreciates the disseminative dynamics within any idea of the Good. He expresses this negative agathology with the Augustinian principle, which he defines here as "answer the call wherever you are needed and do what you will" (Ibid., 41). In Radical Hermeneutics, he utilizes it as evidence against the charge that his radical hermeneutics necessarily deteriorates into relativism or nihilism. The anarchy of love results in the non-necessity of accounting for every conceivable possibility within a totalized system. One does not need to "spell out in detail just what it is one should or should not do. Indeed, once one has to spell out obligations between lovers, the love is gone." (RH, 212). Later in the work, Caputo acknowledges that Eckhart's use of Gelassenheit centered on the notion of caritas; consequently, the concept of "letting-be" is synonymous with loving. Taking that historical connection into account, Caputo claims that an ethics of dissemination and an ethics of Gelassenheit belong together as expressions of the Augustinian formula "dilige . . ." (Ibid., 267). In his "Installation Address," he translates this statement as an expression of love as being "the measure without measure." Love's only measure "is to love without measure, sine modo, post-modally" (13). He expresses something of this particular "post-modal," post-modern translation of "dilige" with reference to justice in "Levinas's Risk," when he writes, "The only measure of responsibility is responsibility without measure" (18).

In all of the above cases, love as a non-principle principle could be construed as a way to offer a concept that does not succumb to the all-encompassing totality of metaphysics. With this "quasi-principle," Caputo establishes his poetics of obligation as something similar to
Hetero(morphic)nomism and the Religio-Tragic

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Caputo follows something of a Kantian course in developing the factical implications of his radical hermeneutics. As he moves from rationality to ethics, he discovers that he, too, must address the religious questions that never seem to dissipate. Consequently, he takes that third step into the area of religion and, in so doing, attempts to accomplish for postmodern philosophy what Kant wished to accomplish for critical philosophy—to make room for a genuine faith.\textsuperscript{152} Caputo categorically denies that deconstruction destroys the possibility of belief in God or a sense of religious faith. It does not leave human beings "worldless or selfless or godless."\textsuperscript{153} As a matter of fact, he contends that deconstruction leads inevitably to questions of religion and God, since, as Derrida has pointed out, justice is the one unconstructible "thing," and justice references the issue of the suffering individual. In other words, since the issue

Marion's non-metaphysical theology of God. In both cases, love is taken as a way to minimize the ontotheological, and in both cases, love carries with it certain religious implications.

\textsuperscript{152}Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, B:xxvi-xxx. Caputo contends that Kant's "concrete" encounters with simple persons animated his thought from the beginning. His desire to "make room for faith" was specifically motivated by the "profound and animating experience of the dignity of the human person" ("A Phenomenology of Moral Sensibility," 212).

\textsuperscript{153}Caputo, "Presidential Address: Radical Hermeneutics," 13.
of suffering cannot be avoided, so, too, the issue of religion cannot be avoided.

Caputo admits this unavoidability of religion in Radical Hermeneutics. There he devotes his final chapter to explaining how religion and suffering correlate within the differential play of the flux. He contends that in the "face of suffering," one may see reflected the impotence of traditional ontotheological systems. As his poetics of obligation reveals, suffering can never be universalized and conceptualized within the objectivity of a system. Suffering always takes place in particular events that just happen, oftentimes without why. Consequently, suffering in many ways best exemplifies the inescapability of the flux. A radical hermeneutics of suffering, however, offers a genealogy of the religious, since religion defiantly protests against the oppression, injustice, and dehumanization that produces suffering. This religious stance against suffering ensues in a certain hermeneutics of faith. As Caputo so poetically expresses it, "the religious spirit has looked down the dark well of human suffering and found there a loving power which takes the side of suffering." The faithful person can make her way in the dark, affirming that there is light without ever having to deny the darkness.

154RH, 278.
155Ibid., 280.
156Ibid., 279.
The faithful person can appreciate that God is present as absent, always encountered as withdrawing in a certain a- lethic manner. If faith ever denies the play of the flux, the darkness of suffering, and the absence of God, it degenerates into a dogmatism that stifles the very heart of its "protestant" energy. Consequently, religious faith and belief in God imply the affirmation of life and the denunciation of disasters. Caputo claims that one should not be surprised that in the West, the religious has been expressed most poignantly in the Exodus and the Crucifixion, two powerful images of injustice and suffering.

Caputo concedes that the notion of suffering may lead a theorist in either of two directions: toward the religious or toward the tragic. The former direction is one of protest and faith; the latter is one of acceptance and innocence. The play of the flux does not allow one to dis-

---

157 Ibid., 279.
158 Ibid., 272.
159 Ibid., 281.
160 Ibid., 272. Robert Gall takes Caputo to task for engaging in the traditional practice of "creating incommensurable genealogies of the religious and the tragic . . ." ("Tragedy or Religion? A Question of 'Radical Hermeneutics,'" Philosophy Today (Fall 1988):244). He accuses Caputo of holding a "parochial and provincial" understanding of religion (Ibid., 245), one that may function within a Western milieu but fails to appreciate the Eastern views. He also argues that even in the West, religion has not always been as Caputo describes it--a protest against suffering. As a matter of fact, Gall maintains that religion has been used as the basis for a lackadaisical perspective on suffering (he mentions Dante's Inferno as a literary
miss either of the possible responses. The tragic perspective very well may be the "truth" about reality. There may not be any evil, any guilt, or any need for salvation. Perhaps suffering is but another aspect of the "innocence of becoming," just another way that the game is played. Perhaps Nietzsche is correct in his assessment of life, and the only proper response to the eternal return is an exuberant "Yes" to everything.

example [Ibid., 246]). Third, he disagrees with Caputo's assertion that faith and uncertainty coexist, allowing for faith to accept the undecidability of the flux (Ibid.). Whereas such a relationship may obtain at the conceptual level, at the existential level, faith is an affirmation of God's presence and an escape from the flux through a "divine comedy" (Ibid., 247). With reference to his geneology of the tragic, Gall admits that Caputo's use of Nietzsche has merit; however, he counters that if one reads the literature of tragedy, one cannot, like Caputo, claim that tragedy overlooks the violating dynamics of suffering (Ibid., 249). Prometheus, Oedipus, and Antigone protest the injustice of their suffering. Gall also accuses Caputo of failing to recognize that tragedy is not always atheistic. Tragedy's putatively antireligious character can be maintained only if one accepts Caputo's "narrow definition of religion . . ." (Ibid., 250). In his own reconstruction of religion and tragedy, Gall's criticisms of Caputo, however, appear to falter. For example, he argues that religion as a "binding back" actually references humanity's place in the world, to the place where one can attain to one's "essence" (Ibid., 248). Of course, Caputo would take him to task for introducing "essence" into the conversation, since "essence" actually binds one back to an ontotheological structure that itself tries to escape the flux. When he does offer a "different" view of tragedy as a replacement for Caputo's weak theory, he sounds remarkably like Caputo himself. Gall contends that tragedy should evoke a response of thankfulness, an openness to the plurality of being, and the courage to embrace the risk of "making one's way" (Ibid., 253). This, however, is precisely what Caputo calls for in his radical hermeneutics!
Caputo continues his flirtation with the possibility of the tragic in *Against Ethics* by reprising the idea under two interesting symbols. The first concerns a painting, signed by Abraham of Paris, depicting Dionysus with a long beard, dressed in a talith, and reading Torah.  

This highly miscegenated picture represents the tension of the jewgreek paradigm that Caputo operates within. In this painting, his two fundamental influences—Abraham and Nietzsche—find expression and establish a basic dichotomy between Dionysus and the rabbi. Actually Nietzsche already presents Caputo with a tension between a poetics of obligation and an acceptance of the tragic. Nietzsche is both a philosopher of disasters who writes of the apathy of the stars and Zarathustra who comes down dancing to affirm the eternal play of the flux. Giles Deleuze focuses on the latter Nietzsche and argues for a complete affirmation of all that is and a refusal to accept that some aspects of life need a "No." Deleuze's affirmation is an affirmation *sans* responsibility, without any of the burdens of Being, an affirmation that inculcates the negation and in doing so affirms it. Such affirmation is the willing of willing, the

---

161 Caputo, *Against Ethics*, 42.

162 Ibid., 16.

163 Ibid., 44-45. One might say that the tragic perspective has a certain Leibnizian aspect to it in that this world with all of its joys and sorrows is the best of all possible worlds; it neither needs nor allows improvement.
willing that wills only itself as an overflow of the creative force. Deleuze, however, fails to acknowledge the "other" Nietzsche who "advocates a kind of reverse Hegelianism" that addresses the whole of life as without telos. He fails to admit that Nietzsche also adopts a merciless view of reality, a view that does not center on "the gay play of egalitarian forces tripping the light fantastic but what Nietzsche calls again and again the 'pathos of distance.'" This "second" Nietzsche may be found more in the rabbinical aspect of the painting than in the Dionysian.

The Dionysian, tragic acceptance of the innocence of reality finds a second expression in some "lyrical-philosophical discourses" serendipitously sent to Caputo anonymously. The collection of eight discourses has been edited by one Johanna de Silentio and represent a number of different attitudes toward the problems of suffering and disasters. Among these tragio-comic texts are two written by

164Ibid., 46-47.
165Ibid., 51.
166Ibid., 49.
167Ibid., 129. Obviously the pseudonymous editor's name is a feminization of Kierkegaard's Johannes de Silentio. Given the Kierkegaardian flavor of the entire argument of Against Ethics, one should not be surprised to find Caputo using such a ploy of indirect authorship. One wonders whether the editor's name might not actually be the feminine alter ego of Caputo himself. Might he not be another "John the silent one" (Johannes [Caputo] de Silentio) writing about something that he is somewhat embarrassed to write about? Yet why should he be embarrassed? Could it be because he recognizes what another Kierkegaardian "author,"
one Felix Sineculpa. He takes a perspective toward the issue of evil that perfectly instantiates the tragic sensibility. As his name expresses, Felix is a "joyful" fellow who does not accept that the universe holds any type of guilt (sine culpa) nor that one should ever speak of "evil."

There is no evil; everything that is is as it ought to be, becoming according to the dynamics of the ongoing play of the forces of Being that engage in the game of overflowing effulgence. In the first discourse (Felix supplies both the first and last discourse in the series, thereby framing the other approaches within the context of his innocence of becoming), he writes in an eclectic style reminiscent of Pre-Socratic philosophers (Anaximander), Nietzsche, and Heidegger. Through that style he theorizes that reality is a continual interchange of forces that give and take from each other in a playful rhythm without any care.\(^{168}\) In one part of the game forces dissipate and cease to play; however, that is only because their energies have been stolen by forces in other parts of the game that now play even more forcefully. This reciprocal economy betrays a certain beauty to the whole, a beauty only marred whenever one of the dissipated forces complains about the "evil" of the pro-

\[\text{Johannes Climacus, might have said about writing on suffering? Caputo contends that Climacus would think it a "viola-} \]

\[\text{tion of good taste to write about suffering instead of doing something about it. The "silent deed" far exceeds any discursive attempt at "explanation" (Ibid., 174).}\]

\(^{168}\)Ibid., 135.
The complaining force grows stronger in its resentment toward the game until it finally pronounces the entire structure unjust, guilty, and cursed.

The disparaging force cannot maintain its complaint forever, since it, too, is but another expression of the infinite game. Its fate is to go under at some time and be replaced by other forces. So does the game play out "its great, stupid swirl. It plays because It plays, without why." In his brief commentary on the discourse, Caputo acknowledges that according to Felix, obligation obtains as one of the examples of the complaining force, crying out against the evil of oppression and violence. Felix refuses, however, to accept that suffering denotes guilt; instead, suffering is but another way the game is played. It is neither unnatural nor a violation of the rules of the game. Life must be affirmed and celebrated even with its accompanying suffering. Suffering is but another way that it plays.

Felix reveals in his last discourse the seriousness with which he holds the tragic doctrine. It comes immediately after one by Rebecca Morgenstern in which she laments the degradation, dehumanization, and inexplicable evil of

\[\text{\textsuperscript{169}}\text{Ibid., 136.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{170}}\text{Ibid., 137.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{171}}\text{Ibid., 138.}\]
Auschwitz. In a piece entitled "The Lament of the Lamb," Felix states baldly that Auschwitz was not evil! It cannot function like some great moral reference point from which to make apodictic statements about the transcendental grounding of moral evil. Auschwitz is a hermeneutic, a hermeneutic of the victims, of the lambs. For the lambs, the slaughter is always evil. Slaughter, however, just happens as part of the celebration of the generosity of Being. In the case of Auschwitz, the Nazis held the stonger hand for a while, until they, too, found themselves losing out as the game continued. Certainly Auschwitz manifests cruel and base forces; however, these forces cannot be termed evil. No one is at fault or should be blamed.

When viewed sub specie aeternitatis (from the perspective of the whole), Auschwitz is but one more movement in the cycle, one more turn of the ring. In a million years, no one will care whether the event occurred or not. There will not be the silence of the lambs but just silence as the game plays merrily along.

Caputo refers to this tragic view expounded by Deleuze and Felix as heteromorphism, an affirmation of otherness (heteros) that results in "a paradigm of discharge and

---

172 Ibid., 176-81.
173 Ibid., 186.
174 Ibid., 189.
dehiscence, of the overflow of an all too great fullness." In heteromorphism, freedom is the "freedom from inhibition and blockage, freedom from the old God, from Being and Truth, from everything that weighs the will down and makes it heavy . . . and prevents it from dancing." In a strange sort of way, it offers something of a post-modern Neoplatonism, a theory of emanation, of exitus and reeditus. The going out and coming back is a cycle of the overflow of forces that play without why. Unfortunately, such a cosmology deteriorates into an amorality, a perspective that denies that any evil exists. The pure heteromorph (assuming that such could exist) could not hear the call of disastered flesh, could not comprehend the rhymes of the poetics of obligation simply because no horizon of expectation obtains in the heteromorph to open her/him to the possibility that disasters demand critique. The heteromorph does not critique "disasters," because they are just part of the play of Being.

Since the heteromorph is not open to the call of the other, s/he does not believe that s/he is able to respond, that is, s/he is not response-able. This unresponsive attitude toward the appeal of wounded flesh summarizes

\[175\text{Ibid.}, 56.\]
\[176\text{Ibid.}, 60.\]
\[177\text{Hans Robert Jauss, } \text{Toward an Aesthetic of Reception.} \text{trans. Timothy Bahti. } \text{(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 44.}\]
everything that is wrong with the tragic conviction. As Caputo states it, "[t]he tragic view assimilates suffering into a pure cosmology of forces which does not let suffering be suffering."\textsuperscript{178} It fails to resist and protest against violence. It actually betrays a kind of cowardice, the lack of the "nerve for a real fight, which means to resist the wasteful effects of suffering."\textsuperscript{179}

Although Caputo knows that he cannot dismiss the possibility of tragic heteromorphism—he admits as much when he points out that it is Felix Sineculpa whose discourses frame the other discourses that confront the happening of obligation—he cannot accept that the tragic perspective is the one to take. Caputo admits that obligations happen to him constantly, and he cannot deny the efficacy of the appeals made upon him by \textit{les juifs}\.\textsuperscript{180} Consequently, he prefers to subordinate the heteromorphic under what he terms the heteronomic. In heteromorphism, the "hetero" refers to the multiplicity of reality, the play of the many. In heteronomism, however, the "hetero" means alterity, the difference of the other. In the latter, difference does not develop \textit{ab intra} through the extravagant play of the forces but \textit{ab extra} through the other who cannot be assimilated into the

\textsuperscript{178}RH, 286.

\textsuperscript{179}Ibid., 285.

\textsuperscript{180}Caputo, \textit{Against Ethics}, 54.
The other represents another law (heteros-nomos), the "law" of obligation, a law that is no law but is the call of justice, the demand that someone respond to the proper name. Heteronomism acts as a limit to the freedom of the "I", demanding that the freedom of the "other" be allowed to expand. It ensues in a love for the other in all of the other's differences. Consequently, it most nearly approximates the rabbinic character over against the Dionysian in Caputo's painting. The heteronomic rabbi can "sober Dionysius up on the spot with his rabbinic appreciation of tragic suffering." The intellectual intoxication of the recognition that multiple energies constantly frolic in the exuberance of Being cannot stand against the austerity of the reality that disasters destroy flesh and give voice to the cries of the other in agony. Heteronomism hears those cries, because it has a heart that aches when confronted with the widow and the orphan, the diseased and the oppressed, or the excluded and the disenfranchised. In other words, heteronomism cannot turn away in the "face" of suffering nor turn a deaf ear to the cries of pain. Instead, it must be "respectful, responsive, and responsible, even religious."

\[^{181}\text{Ibid.}, 59.\]
\[^{182}\text{Ibid.}, 60.\]
\[^{183}\text{Ibid.}, 64.\]
\[^{184}\text{Ibid.}, 61.\]
Metanoetics and the Temporality of the Kingdom

The tragic heteromorphism of Deleuze and Felix Sineculpa represents an "irresponsible postmodernism." Caputo, however, chooses not to accept that perspective as the only answer. He desires, instead, to pursue a "responsible postmodernism," specifically a "responsible anarchy" that leads inevitably to a "sacred anarchy." It is precisely at this point that the subject of religion becomes so significant and offers a different hermeneutics of suffering. Actually, within the hermeneutics of suffering one discovers a "genealogy of the religious." The religious view refuses to accept the rhythm of the forces; it chooses not to play the game of Being as if it were innocent fun. It protests the outrage of suffering; it reaches out to disastered flesh and recognizes that pain should not be. It may, perhaps, agree with the tragic view that old age and death are innocent forces within the play of existence; however, it also knows that premature aging and death may result from the immoral acts of greedy industrialists or oppressive acts of the violent terrorist. As a result, it cannot rest easily with Gelassenheit, because it does not agree that everything should be left in its uniqueness and

186 RH, 60; Caputo, "Beyond Aestheticism," 60.
187 RH, 280.
188 Ibid., 286.
in its difference. The differentiation of disaster begs for a metamorphics as a response to the poetics of obligation, and religion offers that metamorphics through its affirmation of life and its protest against suffering.\(^{189}\) The religious view must "resist the wasteful effects of suffering"\(^{190}\) and, thereby, offer a radical and liberating call for justice.\(^{191}\)

The poetics of obligation as a religious phenomenon cannot remain reduced only to some abstract rubric of religion as a polar alternative to the tragic. Although Caputo's Kantian influence leads him to a certain conflation of the ethico-cal and the religious, he does not avoid the more specific issues of religious faith and God. These two issues become quite important in his defense against the charge that his "cold hermeneutics" might be too cold. Such a charge is made most convincingly by James Olthuis, who questions Caputo's insistence on the inevitability of undecidability as the only proper way to find one's direction

\(^{189}\)Ibid., 280. Caputo denounces any understanding of his radically hermeneutical ethics and religious protest as being merely quietistic. He affirms that "religion at its best [is] in the struggle of the Church in Latin America, in the work of the liberation theologians . . ." ("Hermeneutics and Faith: A Response to Professor Olthuis," Christian Scholar's Review 20 [December 1990]:169). In liberation theology, he finds a contemporary example of the biblically prophetic voice reciting the myth of justice, calling for the religious protest against all types of dehumanization and oppression (Demythologizing Heidegger, 224).

\(^{190}\)Caputo, RH, 285.

\(^{191}\)Ibid., 286.
through the flux. He fears that Caputo's adherence to undecidability results in his being unable to choose between the religious and the tragic and, thereby, in his being "ethically paralyzed."\(^{192}\) Olthuis insists that within the flux must be some sort of "inner dynamic, a spirit, a direction, a presence: God. At bottom, life is God-with-us."\(^{193}\) He identifies Caputo's acceptance of the Heideggerian myth of aletheia as revealing and withdrawing as the primary negative factor in his inability to thaw out the religious implications of radical hermeneutics.\(^{194}\) Olthuis contends that the only way to exploit a warmer hermeneutic is by recognizing the necessity of love and the need to open oneself to the mystery of God as God breaks through the flux and offers healing.\(^{195}\) Only by approaching this God with fear and trembling may human beings recognize that they are not set adrift in some endless sea, freezing in the dark without hope of landfall, but are involved in a divine game that God plays through them.\(^{196}\) For Olthuis, this divine


\(^{194}\)Ibid., 358.

\(^{195}\)Ibid., 360.

\(^{196}\)Ibid., 361.
game is the process of redemption as it is schematized within the Christian tradition. Because he admits that Caputo is not completely oblivious to this tradition, he acknowledges that Caputo is "almost" a Christian; however, "almost" is not quite good enough.  

Caputo acknowledges that he and Olthuis share a genuine concern for developing a postmodern hermeneutics that does not deteriorate into some new form of nihilism. Furthermore, he admits that they agree that postmodernism ironically may actually open the possibility of developing an ethic dependent more upon biblical categories of mercy and love than on metaphysical categories of the Good. He disagrees, however, with Olthuis' claim that radical hermeneutics fails to allow for decision and faith to be expressed in the flux of différance. He resists bearing the burdens of despair and skepticism that he contends Olthuis "heaps upon [him]." He declares, instead, that his radical hermeneutics takes seriously the possibility of faith

197Ibid., 357.


199Ibid., 165. Critchley points out that Levinas defines philosophy not as the "love of wisdom" but as the "wisdom of love" as "wisdom in the ‘service of love’" (The Ethics of Deconstruction, 234-35). Although he does not identify this definitional inversion as dependent upon biblical categories, according to Caputo's reading of Levinas, it most likely is. Consequently, one may find in Levinas a contamination of philosophy with biblical conceptuality, a contamination that Caputo also desires.

and does allow for the im/possibility of decision. It is just that faith and decision are predicated upon certain types of hermeneusis, certain ways of reading the situation that find within the abyss of suffering "a gentle hand."\textsuperscript{201} One decides to affirm God not with absolute certainty but with the fear and trembling that always accompany human existence in the flux. Such a decision is made out of faith, which "makes its way in the dark, seeing through a glass darkly."\textsuperscript{202} The "eyes of faith" that attempt to see something in the dark make out the shadows of "a loving power that takes the side of suffering," while the "ears of faith" "hear . . . the voice of God in the rumble of the flux . . ."\textsuperscript{203} In other words, Caputo insists that faith never denies the tension between God's omnipresence and God's withdrawal. Faith accepts that God always defers God's presence in the very moment of God's revelation.\textsuperscript{204}

For Caputo, such a radically hermeneutical structure of faith coheres with his determination to respect a real hermeneutics of facticity. Genuine faith must take "root in life . . . must be a living faith . . ."\textsuperscript{205} The hermeneu-

\textsuperscript{201}Ibid., 168.
\textsuperscript{202}RH, 281.
\textsuperscript{203}Ibid., 279.
\textsuperscript{204}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{205}Caputo, Against Ethics, 244.
tics of facticity that Caputo investigates serves something of a quasi-transcendental inquiry into the existential milieu out of which faith develops. That milieu is one characterized by the flux; consequently, faith should not be interpreted metaphysically, made into some type of ontological, a "dangerous dogmatism" that ostensibly offers an escape from the flux. Instead, it must be understood more humbly as a way of finding some direction within the flux, a direction that seems to depend upon the very reality that Olthuis argues for--some sort of power or inner dynamic. Caputo categorically professes that the postmodern person of faith believes that whenever s/he looks into the abyss "Someone looks back . . . a Someone who stands with those who suffer." Faith, therefore, does not offer an escape from the flux and the abyss; it offers "a way of interpreting [them] and coming to grips with [them]."

Olthuis and Caputo are not only in significant agreement with reference to the realities of faith and God, but are also intent on expressing those realities within the conceptual network of Christianity. Olthuis admits as much when he claims that Caputo is "almost" a Christian. Of course, the full extent of what "almost" means is questionable; however, clearly in Caputo's latter published and


\[207\] RH, 272.

\[208\] Caputo, Against Ethics, 245.
unpublished works, he seeks to develop an explicitly biblical idiomatic structure with which to communicate his understanding of postmodern ethics and religion. That idiomatic structure, although decidedly dependent upon the Jewish, prophetic dynamics inherent within Levinas' philosophy, centers primarily upon the New Testament's language for Christian existence, specifically upon Jesus' discourses and acts concerning the Kingdom of God.

Since Caputo claims throughout his radical hermeneutics that deconstruction offers a potent contemporary dehellenization of Christianity, it comes as no surprise that he would allow that dehellenization to open the textual space for a reconsideration of the jewchristian languages of scripture. Since these languages also offer a critical perspective on the poetics of obligation, Caputo boldly extrapolates from the biblical texts models for understanding faith, God, and ethics. He admits as much in his response to Olthuis when he writes that "faith turns on the

Dehellenization and the poetics of obligation correlate with reference to the issues of disasters, suffering, and flesh. Caputo contends that when faced with the problem of suffering "the constructs of onto-theo-logic are exposed for what they are," weak attempts to deny the flux and make life safe (RH, 278). Since exposing the weaknesses of ontotheology is precisely the work of dehellenization, Caputo's radical hermeneutics always manifests an anti-Hellenistic prejudice when dealing with faith and ethics. Of course, such a prejudice is not pure but is contaminated by an attraction toward the Hellenistic as well. It is always a matter of jewgreek, even when the focus lies on the jewchristian. The Greek can never be avoided completely (cf. "Sacred Anarchy," 13-14).
figure of Jesus stretching out his hand to the leper, or
defying the Sabbath laws in order to heal the withered
hand." Caputo does maintain throughout his works on
faith and obligation that one constantly swings in a pendu-
lar motion across the arc defined by the tragic and the
religious perspectives, that is, that one must face the
"cold truth" in his "cold hermeneutics" of the uncertainty
as to whether one believes in God or not, whether there
is a Someone who looks back out of the abyss or whether in
the innocent play of the forces the stars wink at human
suffering with stellar apathy. Yet, while recognizing the
inevitability of postmodern un/decidability, Caputo betrays
his own unwillingness to remain existentially perpendicular
to the apex of the slash (/). He does, indeed, lean toward
the right, toward decidability, especially when it comes to
the poetics of obligation. His lean is precarious, at such
an angle that he could fall very easily toward that side.
As he admits, his "cold hermeneutics" does sincerely have a
"warm heart." One should not be surprised at that con-
fession, considering his strong rebuke of Heidegger for
failing to have a heart (kardia). One should not be sur-
prised as well that the warm heart of radical hermeneutics
looks suspiciously like the heart of Jesus, since Caputo

---


211 RH, 288.

also critiques Heidegger for failing to remain faithful to Heidegger's own early influences from the New Testament. Unlike Heidegger, Caputo exploits his own biblical inheritance and ironically seeks to develop what he himself calls a postmodern Christian philosophy!  

One will recall that, among the unsolicited lyrical discourses Caputo receives in the mail, Felix Sineculpa's two texts present the tragic perspective on the problem of suffering and evil. One will recall also that these two texts frame the other six; that is, Felix begins and ends the eight discourses. Interestingly enough, he is the only man among the authors; the other six texts are all written by women—three by Magdelena de la Cruz, two by the editor Johanna de Silentio, and one by Rebecca Morgenstern. The women authors express an alternative to Felix, more of the religious perspective on suffering, what Magdelena calls the "feminine operation," which grows out of the supposition that obligation might well be a woman. She bases this supposition on the story of Antigone, whose one desire is to minister to the flesh of her brother in spite of the Law's (Creon's) prohibition, and on the story of her namesake Mary Magdalene, who as one of the women at the tomb comes to

---

213 Caputo sketches the basic blueprint of such a philosophy in "Metanoetics."

214 Caputo, Against Ethics, 166.

215 Ibid., 169.
minister to the flesh of Jesus. Both women seem bound to
the flesh of their beloved one, and this being "bound to-
ward" the other is obligation. Consequently, in the
female discourses one encounters the vitality of the poetics
of obligation.

Of the three female authors, Magdelena gives the most
significant insight into the biblical flavor of Caputo's
poetics of obligation. She introduces into the discussion
the importance of Jesus and his heteronomistic, rabbinic
approach to the other, specifically the wounded other, the
other of withered flesh and alienated spirit. Magdelena
calls Jesus "Yeshua" in order to distinguish the biblical
character from the philosophico-theological cipher,
"Christ." As Caputo states, Jesus must be understood

216 Interestingly enough, the feminine operation within
the Jewish milieu actually raises the issue of ritual un-
cleanness. According to Torah, a corpse is unclean and all
who touch a corpse take on its uncleanness.

217 Caputo, Against Ethics, 146-47.

218 Ibid., 147. Caputo wants to avoid the ontotheologi-
cal Christology that developed during the early centuries of
orthodoxy, which attempted to interpret the biblical narra-
tives about Jesus with rubrics supplied by Hellenistic
philosophy. An enduring result of that conflation of bibli-
cal and Hellenistic categories concerns Jesus' identity as a
theios aner, a divine man working supernatural miracles.
Caputo labels such a Christology just another example of
Greek aretology ("Sacred Anarchy," 27). In what he terms
his "one venture into Christology," an article entitled
"Radical Hermeneutics and Religious Truth: The Case of
Sheehan and Schillebeeckx," Caputo consistently works out
of his notion of undecidability and refuses to embrace
either Sheehan's "death of God" Christology (148) or
Schillebeeckx's "hermeneutics of trust" (149). Throughout
his critiques of these two thinkers, Caputo accepts unques-
as a liminal figure, not quite Jewish and not quite Christian, occupying the space between Jewchristian.\footnote{219} By introducing Yeshua into the conversation, Magdelena has joined Levinas in contaminating philosophy with what is other, what intentionally the findings of contemporary historical-critical interpretations of scripture (cf. 160-61). As a matter of fact, he claims that only the "traditionalists," i.e. "fundamentalists," resist accepting the "hard truths" of historical-critical research (163). These "hard truths" reject Jesus' divinity, his miraculous healings, and his resurrection. What is fascinating about Caputo's endorsement of the historical-critical methodology and its resultant judgments is the inconsistency of such a move given his own adherence to undecidability and différenciation. These ideas manifest that there is no way out of textuality and no "unreformable insight into what is happening," or for that matter, what did happen (164). Although he accuses his two subjects of "bailing out on the flux, and in the end casting anchor in a rock solid metaphysics--of morals" (165), he himself seems to take a similar leap into a metaphysics of scientific empiricism. The issue concerns not so much whether historical-critical "hard truths" (that is indeed a strangely sounding phrase coming from a radical hermeneuticist!) are true but whether one maintains an openness to the im/posibility that they are not. As Caputo himself contends, if one thinks of the world according to a kingdom mentality, reality must be understood as "prone to interruption and disruption." Being and time "are defined by their utter tranformability, their thoroughgoing vulnerability and susceptibility to transformation . . ." ("Metanoetics," 26). In other words, one must maintain a genuine recognition that God might, perhaps, do something unique, something--dare one say--different, unexpected, or undreamt of in any philosophy, even postmodernism. With reference to the fuller im/possibilities of Christology, Caputo might be a bit too modern, too much of an Enlightenment thinker!

is not Greek, and what is not logic. She suggests another idiom for interpreting a radical, postmodern poetics of obligation and, concomitantly, a postmodern understanding of religious faith.

Her contamination of the Greek with the jewchristian finds its most creative expression in her discourse entitled "Temples." In this discourse, she contrasts the Greek temple described so beautifully by Heidegger with the Jewish temple around which Yeshua ministered. For Heidegger, the temple stands as an erect magnet drawing the world around it as the world's focus. Shimmering beautifully in the sun with the statue of the god rising vertically within it, the Greek temple reveals the true ethos of the people, their virtue, their excellence, and their intelligence. Consequently, the temple serves an ethical purpose, precisely an originally ethical purpose, allowing the Greek world to world itself in concealment and unconcealment. Heidegger's temple phainesthetically reveals the play of the Greek epoch of Being through its symmetrical lines, its strong, erect pillars, and its white stone surfaces reflecting the Aegean sun. It truly represents an ethics of glory, the glory of the well-born and well-bred.

Magdelena finds Heidegger's temple aesthetically pleasing and has no intentions of calling for a wrecking crew to

---

220 Caputo, Against Ethics, 148.

221 Ibid., 150-59.
She does, however, want to address the problem of alterity as it relates to the Greek temple. Although it serves the logical function of gathering and worlding, Magdelena claims that it also repels and expels those who do not fit the worldly arete that the temple embodies. As a matter of fact, the temple's "embodying" is precisely what she critiques. It concerns itself with the structured body--the strong, fit, usually male, body. But what of flesh? What of the poor, the diseased, the outcast, the slave, the woman, or any "other" who approaches the temple? What of the one who huddles close against the cold stone seeking help, the broken one who lies by the columns staring up into the scorching sun as it burns her flesh? Heidegger and his temple do not address these others. Consequently, the "templed" ethics also fail to inculcate the singularity of these wounded, fleshly others. Flesh can be ground under by the ethical grounds and principles that Heidegger's temple imitates. In other words, the temple lithography of an ethics of glory cannot write proper names, cannot offer an idiom with which to express the silence or the screams of enfleshed suffering.

In order to offer an alternative to Heidegger's temple, Magdelena refers to the other temple, the temple at Jerusalem, where the blind, the leprous, the lame, and the outcast gather for help. It is precisely at that gathering place

\[222\] Ibid., 150.
that one encounters Yeshua, who Magdelena calls a poet, a poet who sings of a kingdom not of kings or glory but a kingdom of the heart. Yeshua does not engage in an ethics of glory but an ethics of the humiliated, an ethics of the outcast. One might, therefore, call Yeshua a poet of obligation who stands against ethics and for the singular

223Ibid., 159. Caputo understands heart (kardia) "as sensibility in the Levinasian sense, which is a deep and sensitive pathos that suffers with the suffering of the other" ("Metanoetics," 19). Caputo’s kardi-ology appears to be something of an ethical variant of Pascal’s famous dictum that the heart has reason that differs from reason.

224Caputo, "Sacred Anarchy," 25. Of course, one must not take the polarity between Heidegger’s Greek temple and Yeshua’s Jewish temple as a pure distinction with reference to the acceptance of those who do not adhere to the required criteria for inclusion in the community. As a matter of fact, in many ways the Jewish temple was as exclusionary as Heidegger’s. Torah contains strict prohibitions concerning who can and cannot worship, prohibitions predicated upon the issue of the holiness of God. David Rhodes indicates that temple worship could be engaged in only by the clean and the holy. Unclean persons and things, such as, "lepers, menstruating women, corpses, and Gentiles . . ." could not enter the temple without defiling it and resulting in the possible withdrawal of God’s presence ("Social Criticism: Crossing Boundaries," in Mark & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies. eds. Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore. [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992], 145). He actually constructs a hierarchical list of personal holiness: high priest, priest, Levites, Israelites, converts, freed slaves, disqualified priests, temple slaves, bastards, eunuchs, and the physically deformed (Ibid., 147). Given the strict Jewish purity codes and the belief that disease and deformities were often divine punishments for sin, the Pharisees were scandalized by Yeshua’s intimacy with unclean, diseased, and deformed flesh. Consequently, the Jews were not only appalled that Yeshua would heal a withered hand on the Sabbath but also that he would heal a withered hand. Considering these Jewish exclusionary gestures, the kingdom of God as proclaimed by Yeshua becomes even more a unique deconstruction of the Law and its layers of accrued tradition.
individual. As a poet of obligation, Yeshua also stands against the Law. Whereas the Pharisees use the Law in order to restrict, to separate, and to control the individual, Yeshua uses the individual to deconstruct the Law. With his ethics of mercy and love, Yeshua continually speaks of the abba, the Father(Mother), who calls people to have a heart that reaches out in tenderness toward the suffering other.\textsuperscript{225} In doing so, Yeshua does not try to destroy the Law but just to put it in its proper place \textit{vis-a-vis} the properly-named individual.\textsuperscript{226} He shocks the Pharisees by mixing with everybody and angers them by his insistence that flesh takes precedent over the Law.\textsuperscript{227} When faced with a decision between keeping Sabbath laws or healing withered hands, Yeshua never struggles with undecidability. His obligation is always to the wounded flesh not to the \textit{archê} and \textit{principia} of the Law. He is, therefore, an-archical and un-principled, but his is a sacred anarchy and an un-principled principle of \textit{dilige et quod vis fac}.

\textsuperscript{225} Caputo, "Beyond Aestheticism," 72.

\textsuperscript{226} Caputo, "Installation Address,"; Cf. also "Sacred Anarchy," 39-40.

\textsuperscript{227} Caputo, "Beyond Aestheticism," 72. One should remember that Yeshua did indeed wish to associate with everybody and illustrated that wish in relating to various individuals from Nicodemus the Pharisee to the unnamed Samaritan woman at the well (cf. John 3-4). That Yeshua did not reach everybody ensues not from his intent but from the obstinacy of those who refused to respond to him.
For Caputo, Yeshua's instantiation of the Kingdom of God revolves around two primary foci: a kerygmatics and a therapeutics, that is, a teaching and a healing, language and event.\(^{228}\) Yeshua's teaching centers on a kerygmatics of alterity. He constantly speaks to and of the other, the different, the very ones that the keepers of the Law refuse to acknowledge. His message is in the vocative case, calling out to the others, both insiders and outsiders, to have a new heart, to think in a new way, to break through the sclerotic traditions that separate and condemn and replace them with a new economy of love. Yeshua's call summons everyone to live metanoetically, in other words, to live repentantly. Caputo chafes against the traditional translation of *metanoia* as *re-poena*, repentance, "to visit pain . . . myself, again . . ." He calls this a "Baptist" translation, specifically John the Baptist's rendering of the idea, which makes of it something almost spiritually masochistic and funereal. The Christian translation--the translation more in tune with John(Caputo) the Radicalist--is "I have a new heart." This interpretation sounds more like a dance than a dirge.\(^{229}\) *Metanoia* is a cardiology and not a phrenology; it has far more to do with the heart than the head. Consequently, *metanoia* "means making a new start,

\(^{228}\) Caputo, "Metanoetics," 9.

\(^{229}\) Ibid., 21.
turning over a new leaf, getting out from under old traps and old habits."^{230}

Since Yeshua's kingdom is a kingdom of flesh, of singular human beings who in their facticity suffer disasters, the call to repentance must affect the way in which one hears the appeals of obligation. As Yeshua's instructions come in the vocative case, always with a certain prescriptive edge, so, too, do obligations address the self, call to it from who knows where. Within this kingdom milieu of a poetics of obligation, therefore, metanoia cannot remain merely a verbal phenomenon, a discursive event. It must be embodied, or better, enfleshed, in acts of mercy and healing. In other words, the kerygmatics of repentance must transpose itself into therapeutics, into events of healing. In this case, "[m]etanoia means to grieve over mercilessness and to succumb to the demands of mercy, to let oneself be touched [and] be affected by the claims of flesh laid low."^{231} Metanoia, then, leads to metamorphics, whereby the centered self, the Greek body, changes into jewchristian flesh as it listens to the call of obligation that issues forth from the fleshly other. In response to the call of obligation, the self feels itself "sucked out of itself, displaced, turned inside out, made into a substitute for the

^{230}Caputo, *Against Ethics*, 112.

other. Obligation as justice, as merciful, heart-felt *metanoia*, demands a certain type of madness, the type that willingly enters into an economy lacking the rationality of equal return. In the face of obligation, one becomes foolish, divesting oneself of the comfort of rationality and metaphysics and investing oneself in lost causes that pay no dividends. Obligation moves the fleshly investor to finance deals that simply do not smell right. The rank fragrance of flesh clings to the one who expends resources in order to comfort, bathe, heal, and feed the afflicted and the oppressed. Yet, according to Yeshua, such is the Kingdom of God. It is an anarchical kingdom of fools, with the chief jester being Yeshua himself. He goes about healing and restoring diseased and wounded flesh, changing lives, and converting hearts. Yeshua’s kingdom of flesh, then, is not only a kingdom of disasters but also a kingdom of transformation and recuperation. Yeshua’s care for others re-

---

232Caputo, "Levinas’s Risk," 9. Caputo argues that one of the interesting implications of postmodernity, at least as he interprets it from the Levinasian, Lyotardian, and Derridean perspectives, concerns the critique of the subject that it offers. The self for Caputo is not dead but reinterpreted. Subjectivity becomes more a question of the accusative case instead of the nominative case, or, better, it becomes a question of both. The fleshly other comes in the nominative case as a proper name indicating her/his real facticity. The other who hears the call of obligation comes in the accusative case, more as a "me" than an "I." The "I" is sucked out and replaced with the "me" who is addressed, "the subject that is responsible for the other, for the neighbor" (Caputo, "Metanoetics," 15). The appeal of obligation always comes to me.

sults in their flesh being cured. Consequently, in the kingdom, flesh not only means that which can suffer disasters, that which can be wounded, torn, diseased, and tortured, but it also means that which can be healed and resurrected. Consequently, the kingdom of God as proclaimed and enacted by Yeshua "is a land of wondrous change, a kind of marvelous kinesis not dreamt of in [any] ontotheologies." As a result, Yeshua’s kerygmatics and therapeutics deconstruct the Law, ethics, and any other systemic attempts at metaphysics by offering an idea of motion (kinesis) that in the madness of obligation is moved by the deprivation of the other. Whenever withered hands reach out to healing hands, it is not the time for metaphysical speculation but for answering the call of justice that gives voice to the wounded flesh of the other.

Caputo maintains that the temporality of the kingdom clearly reveals the deconstructive dynamics at work in Yeshua’s kerygmatics, therapeutics, and metamorphics. Kingdom temporality offers an alternative to the metaphysics of presence that marks ontotheology. Ironically, it does so precisely by emphasizing the present, but in a decidedly jewchristian, instead of Greek, manner. Yeshua proclaims that the Kingdom of God is now, "found in daily pleasures,

---

235 Caputo, Against Ethics, 218.
in ordinary joys" and, one might add, in the factual cries of disastered flesh.\textsuperscript{237} Kingdom time is synonymous with metanooetic time, a time of transformation and alterability, a time that metamorphoses hearts and flesh in an instant.\textsuperscript{238} Such a time does not unfold progressively, but abruptly, suddenly, evoking amazement from those who encounter its unexpected coming.\textsuperscript{239} Yeshua insists that the kingdom does not develop organically like some seed that lies dormant awaiting the proper epoch within which to germinate. That kind of temporality fits more with Plato's \textit{anamnestic} theory of recollection than with "the historicity of the biblical experience." Yeshua prays to \textit{abba}, asking that the kingdom might come, not thanking \textit{abba} that it has always already been.\textsuperscript{240}

\textsuperscript{237} Caputo, \textit{Against Ethics}, 234.

\textsuperscript{238} Caputo, "Metanoetics," 24.

\textsuperscript{239} Ibid., 25.

\textsuperscript{240} Caputo, "Reason, History, and a Little Madness," 13. Caputo argues that the jewgreek(jewchristian) model for "being and time" comes from father Abraham instead of father Parmenides. It is not "necessitarian and universalistic" but is based on the categories of "creation, annihilation, and conservation; freedom and contingency; divine interest and even divine intervention in history . . . ." (Caputo, \textit{Against Ethics}, 108). Abraham offers Caputo a symbol for the one who expects the impossible through a series of ironic reversals predicated upon a genuine struggle with God. Those reversals include "a power that is powerlessness . . . a wisdom that is foolishness . . . a hope that was madness, and . . . a love that was hatred to oneself" (Ibid., 10).
When the kingdom breaks through, it breaks through serendipitously "today," always "today"; however, the "today" denotes a present that cannot be interpreted ontotheologically as some type of metaphysics of presence. The kingdom is more "'eventualistic,' made up of happenings, events, singular constellations . . ."  

When the kingdom comes, it comes as a metamorphic world with an element of incredulity about it, not as a hylomorphic world of stable existents. The presence of the kingdom manifests a fragility and an evanescence, a certain slippage that reminds individuals that they cannot trust in the security of immutable, ahistorical archai or the heaviness of some enduring substance or in their own rationality and self-certain subjectivity. Instead, the kingdom always promotes an uncertainty, a certain un/decidability, a recognition of the reality of the flux;

---


242 Ibid.

243 Ibid., 24. "The being of time and the time of being [in the kingdom] are defined by their utter transformability, their thoroughgoing vulnerability and susceptibility to transformation; being and time are radically contingent, reformable, reworkable, remakable" (Ibid., 26).
however, the flux now appears as God's rule, "granted from day to day, like a gift, fleeting, fragile, diurnal." God's rule and gifts come daily, new each morning, almost like a pristine creation. Yeshua acknowledges the quotidian nature of God's care when he asks the Father to "give us each day our daily bread" (Matt. 5:11). Such a prayer does not presuppose metaphysical categories of Being and substance but the biblical categories of event and gift.

Events and gifts happen "today," and this "today" presents a present that offers a different perspective on both past and future, as well as a different configuration of being. Caputo prosecutes this difference by examining the temporal implications of forgiveness and anxiety. On the basis of the kingdom sayings of Yeshua found in the Sermon on the Mount, Caputo argues that in the kingdom one focuses on the present by engaging in a certain kind of amnesia, "forgetting" the past and "forgetting about" the future. With reference to the latter, Caputo maintains pace Kierkegaard and Heidegger, that not only does Yeshua stand against ethics and the Law, but he also stands against anxiety. Anxiety is an inappropriate concept or existential for those living in God's kingdom, primarily because it contradicts the rudimentary affirmation of life in the

---

245 Ibid., 22.
246 Ibid., 23.
kingdom as gift, as a present given by God. Yeshua says that one should not be anxious for the future, for what tomorrow may bring, for what one may need for tomorrow.\textsuperscript{247} Such worry results in nothing new. It cannot ensure that a stable existence will continue; however, in the kingdom, stability depends not on the individual's power or projects but on God's provision. The future, then, belongs to God, and God will give it as God chooses. If the individual insists on "remembering" the future by growing anxious over it, s/he actually loses the gift of time that s/he has. Caputo calls anxiety a "leak in time, a seepage, which drains the day of its time . . ."\textsuperscript{248} By spending time worrying about what has not yet come, one loses the only time one has been given; one allows time to waste away by refusing to live "today" and enjoying the only kingdom reality that s/he has.

Such a forgetting about the future--this leaving it up to God--manifests another example of the foolishness of the kingdom, the "mad economics" that refuses to invest today for tomorrow.\textsuperscript{249} This \textit{carpe deum} position with reference to the kingdom, however, is not some immature, hedonistic desire for immediate gratification. It is, instead, an expression of sincere faith in the promises of God; it is

\textsuperscript{247}Ibid., 8.

\textsuperscript{248}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{249}Ibid., 10.
actually a way of giving thanks to God for "today" and for the "today" that will come tomorrow. It expresses in another manner an attitude of Gelassenheit, of letting go of self-sufficiency and a letting be of God's temporal rule.\textsuperscript{250}

Along with letting God's rule over time impact the future in the kingdom, one also must allow God's rule over time to extend into the past. One must be willing to forget the past and not allow it to rob "today" of its donative character. This "forgetting the past" is the work of forgiveness as a "complementary operation, the temporal counterpart, to the alleviation of anxiety."\textsuperscript{251} In the Model Prayer, Yeshua teaches his disciples not only to ask God for daily bread but also to ask God for forgiveness and to grant the same to those who have offended or sinned against them.

\textsuperscript{250}Ibid., 20. The quotidian temporality of the kingdom takes on a different slant when one prosecutes the "today" of God's rule in tandem with the idea of promise. Promising is a performative act, according to J. L. Austin, and, therefore, has an event character to it (\textit{How To Do Things With Words}, 2nd. ed. eds. J. O Urmson and Marina SbisA. [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975], 11). It is something done with language at a particular time, which carries implications that transcend that time. In other words, if the kingdom depends upon some sort of divine promise, that promise may have been made in the past but has yet to be fully realized, thereby, moving the kingdom toward a future of actualization. If one temporalizes the kingdom with reference to promise, then the "today" actually serves as a transition between the past performative event and the future fulfillment of that event. This relationship between time and promise becomes quite important in the next chapter, since it plays a significant role in Jürgen Moltmann's theopassionism.

\textsuperscript{251}Caputo, "Reason, History, and a Little Madness," 15.
In the metanoetic time of the kingdom, the other does not only engage the self with reference to obligation, the need to have suffering alleviated, but also the other engages the self with reference to the other’s responsibility for offending, harming, or causing some sort of physical or mental suffering to the self. Forgiveness responds to the offense by forgetting it, by wiping away the past and not allowing it to fester and infect kingdom time with animosity or hatred. Forgiveness, then, redeems the past by letting it go, by accepting the metamorphic possibilities inherent within metanoia. When the other has a change of heart and asks for forgiveness, the self must accept that change and release the other from the power of the past. Even if, Yeshua says, the other sins against the self seven times seventy, the self should respond each time with "forget it--it never happened."

Forgiveness affirms that God rules the past as well as the future, and that no one should try to usurp that rule. In the Kingdom of God, the past cannot be allowed to harden, for a hardened past manifests a hardened heart. Yet, hard hearts are exactly what Yeshua abhors, whether kardiosclerosis occurs as a refusal to hear the call of obligation or as

253 Ibid., 22.
a refusal to let go of the past.255 The unwillingness to forgive and forget signals an attitude of revenge and retribution, the desire to "get even," which is, of course something of a sane economy. Usually one strives for getting "even" return for one's investment in a reasonable economy of quid pro quo; however, forgiveness rejects such sanity and seeks instead to break through the lex talionis in the "mad economy" of a foolish amnesia.256 Anything less than this foolishness is actually unchristian, a renunciation of Yeshua's redemptive kerygma.257

The madness of forgiveness not only references the social and communal implications of accepting metanoetic transformations, but also extends to the entire temporality of the kingdom. In other words, forgiveness indicates a certain temporal madness, at least in the context of a traditional "onto-theo-Greco-logic."258 Metanoetic forgiveness wipes away all traces of the past, refuses to "retrieve it," consider its "having been," or affirming its inevitable, eternal return.259 Consequently, forgiveness takes place in jewgreek, jewchristian time, a kingdom time


256Caputo, "Reason, History, and a Little Madness," 17; Against Ethics, 112.

257Caputo, "Metanoetics," 23.

258Caputo, Against Ethics, 109.

259Ibid., 110.
in which God's rule affects both past and future and, in doing so, frees individuals from both in order to live "today." Yet, this freedom for "today" continues to have past and future implications, since forgiveness "makes the future possible and denies to the past its role as fate." Here again, one recognizes that the jewgreek/jewchristian time proclaimed by Yeshua does not recapitulate a Hellenistic recollective temporality but, instead, manifests a repetitive dynamic. One ceases to recollect a past fate whenever one agrees to repeat the forgiving/forgetting gesture, even if that repetition must itself be repeated seventy times seven!

With retribution disallowed and anxiety avoided, one can live time as a present, a present now and a present gift. This "present" has nothing to do with a metaphysics of presence, a systematic structure of enduring substances and eternal principles. Kingdom time "is not ousiological time," because ousia ontotheologically understood refers to essentialism and foundationalism, both of which offer putative ways of escaping the flux. Kingdom time is, instead, "epiousiological" time, "that strange word in the New Testa-

---

ment which means what [individuals] need in order to survive today, what is addressed to life's needs."\textsuperscript{261} The jew-
christian time proclaimed by Yeshua, then, is not an abso-
lute time, but an ab-solving time; not a time loosened
(solvere) from (ab) the un/decidability and abyss of the
flux, but a time temporalized by God's grace through the
structures of facticity loosening individuals from (ab-
solvere) the remembered burdens of the past and the antici-
pated burdens of the future. This divine ab-solving gener-
ates an ab-solution, a deliverance or redemption, and this
redemption opens the space within which one can respond to
the appeals of the fleshly other. Yeshua ties forgiving the
past and avoiding anxiety over the future into his poetics
of obligation. In other words, in the Kingdom of God, one
is loosened from a logocentric paradigm of time in order to
be tied toward the suffering other. The work of the king-
dom, therefore, is to hear Yeshua's kerygma and obey its
call to be therapeutic. To whom? Everyone who suffers as
the other. When? Today, now, in the moment of encounter.
Why? Because God's rule just happens; the kingdom just
comes.

\textsuperscript{261} Caputo, "Reason, History, and a Little Madness," 21.
The word \textit{epiousios} is difficult to identify etymologically
and, consequently, to define; however, in \textit{Theological Dic-
tionary of the New Testament}, it is translated in the con-
text of the Model Prayer as "'The bread which we need, give
us to-day (day by day)'" (Gerhard Kittel, ed. \textit{Theological
Bromiley. 10 vols. [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing
Company, 1964], II:599).
Stauro sophical Ethics: Dionysus vs. Yeshua

Notwithstanding Caputo's strong inclination to follow the jew/christian narratives that relate the kingdom ontology, he continues to struggle with the possibility, however slight, that Felix might be correct, that life is but a play of amoral forces that have no concern for the wounded or oppressed. Perhaps the happening of obligation that ties one to the other in no way bears the corollary of binding back to Someone looking up from the abyss. He maintains that although drawn by the power of Levinas' notion that the "Il" is God, Caputo confesses that the "Il" might very well be only the "Il" of il y a--"Il y a. Es Gibt. It happens."\(^262\) Perhaps the kingdom comes in the middle voice, just knitting itself into "little linkages that weave [the] days and works together, that strengthen the fabric of life, that support life against the stress of events--or fail to."\(^263\) Perhaps one should speak of the kingdom with no genitive at all, leaving off the "of God," since that construction seeks to identify the kingdom too decisively. The kingdom should be understood more anonymously, with a bit more impropriety, or understood with a genitive of another proper divine name--Dionysus. Who is to say that existence might not be the rule of Dionysus, the god of the play of Being, which is actually the innocence of Becoming. Such a

\(^{262}\) Caputo, Against Ethics, 226.

\(^{263}\) Ibid., 23.
kingdom would, therefore, be one without disasters, without responsibility, and, therefore, without obligation.

Caputo does indeed attempt to give obeisance to Dionysus. Even in his treatment of Yeshua’s sacred anarchy, Caputo uses Yeshua’s disciple, Simon, as a possible cipher of the tragic. Simon contemplates Yeshua’s kerygmatics and his therapeutics; he comes to realize that he might very well be accepted and forgiven, that the Father does indeed love him. Yet, Simon is a fisherman and recognizes that his apathetic glances at the captured fish writhing in the knots of his nets might mirror the cosmic attitude toward humans. Life may well be nothing more than a game of stronger and weaker, having nothing to do with issues of good or evil, healing or suffering, forgiveness or love. Caputo asserts that the "only thing that helped Simon cope with that abysmal thought was Yeshua’s smile." ²⁶⁴

Once again, Caputo returns to Yeshua and the alternative hermeneusis that he offers against Dionysus. Interestingly enough, both Yeshua and Dionysus are victims of suffering, the former executed on the cross and the latter torn to pieces. As a result, both "gods" reference the issue of suffering; however, the meaning each attaches to suffering differs significantly. ²⁶⁵ Unlike the innocence of suffering portrayed in Dionysus, Yeshua represents suf-

²⁶⁴Caputo, "Sacred Anarchy," 44.

²⁶⁵Ibid., 29-30.
ferring as injustice, as execution, and as murder. The cross is not part of the natural cadence of existence. It does not form part of a greater harmony nor manifest the phainesthetic brilliance of a worlding world. Instead, it is cacophonous and a violent event of darkness. It is an event of abandonment, of split flesh, split rocks, and split temple veils. It is a place of humiliation, where Yeshua identifies himself with all those who are victims, who have suffered because of oppressive power structures, who have cried out for help and heard the stentorian silence.

The cross becomes the altar of Yeshua's sacrifice for alterity. There is something sacred about Yeshua's sacrifice; there is something redemptive about his pain. There is something hopeful about his death as he commends his spirit to his Father, who has not really abandoned him, but who has joined him in his affliction, hovering around

---


267 Ibid., 35.

268 Caputo deals some with the economy of sacrifice in Against Ethics, specifically as it relates to the idea of flesh. Flesh, as that which can be cut and torn, is the material of sacrifice, and sacrifice, in some way, broaches the notion of covenant. One "cuts a covenant," and in so doing requires that something literally be cut and even devoured (Against Ethics, 197). Yahweh commanded Abraham to circumcise ("to cut around") every male as a sign of the covenant. When Abraham was not required to offer Isaac to Yahweh, he still felt it necessary to wound something, so he cut into the flesh of the ram as a sign of worship. The cutting of ritual castration and of animal flesh composes what Derrida terms "carno-phallogocentrism" (Ibid., 198). Such an economy must be addressed when dealing with the biblical accounts of the sacrifice of Yeshua.
him in the abyss as a Paraclete, not of justice but of mercy. In Yeshua and in the God of Yeshua, one might find a revelation of obligation. One does not find an explanation but a summons to act. The action is to love and do what one wills. That is the ethics of obligation. It is an ethics of the cross, which is no ethics at all, but faith. Faith does not play the sycophant to universal principles nor prostrate itself before the monarchical Law. Faith lives out of the anarchy of love, always doing what it wills, always willing to do for the other. Faith recognizes that Yeshua's therapeutics include suffering for and with the other, even suffering because of the other. Faith, therefore, lives out of a different structure of rationality, an an-archical, un-principled wisdom (sophia) of the cross (stauros). Faith seeks to dehellenize theology, to break through the sclerotic categories of traditional metaphysics, by deconstructing ontotheology in order to achieve a "Christian deconstruction," which would actually be to call for a "radical allegiance to a certain rabboni who was, to the scandal of all, a teacher of alterity, who to everyone's consternation kept spreading the good news of alterity. Usque ad mortem."269 Such "good news" depends on a destruction of the "wisdom of the wise" and its replacement

269Caputo, "Good News," 468.
with a divine wisdom of the cross, which is both scandalous and foolish.  

The staurosophical faith that Caputo simply cannot avoid reveals the "warm heart" in his radical hermeneutics. He is, at this point, much closer to Olthuis than perhaps Olthuis, himself, realizes. Olthuis writes that faith is a "letting go," a Gelassenheit whereby individuals fall "into the hands of the Gracious Other who suffers with us." As discussed above, Caputo, too, understands faith as a certain hermeneutics that anticipates the possibility that divine hands may reach out within the abyss and embrace humanity. What is even more arresting, however, is the possibility that Caputo's thought might allow for a theopassionism, for the belief that in the flux there is a divine Other who through mercy and grace suffers with all flesh. Caputo raises this issue tantalizingly in his critique of Deleuze's tragic perspective on disasters. With a definite

**270** Caputo, "Metanoetics," 6. Caputo writes that the idea of destruction reminds one of Paul's position in I Corinthians 1:18-31 concerning the foolishness and weakness of God compared to the wisdom and power of humanity. In that section, Paul quotes from Isaiah 29:14, where God says that he "will destroy the wisdom of the wise . . . ." Caputo suggests on the basis of this Pauline text that deconstruction actually contributes to the development of a postmodern Christian philosophy specifically by questioning the wisdom of the ontotheological tradition in such a way as to release theology from the shackles of Hellenistic metaphysics and free it to reconsider biblical paradigms ("Metanoetics," 30).

**271** Olthuis, "Undecidability and the Impossibility of Faith," 173 (emphasis added).
bit of irony, Caputo suggests that Deleuze's theory of generosity as overflow parallels the old medieval problem of how God as "pure act" could ever respond to human prayers or needs without compromising God's active character. Medieval theologians solved the problem by reverting to the old Neoplatonic doctrine of overflowing emanation, a doctrine, as discussed above, quite homeomorphic to Deleuze's Dionysian theory. Caputo, however, mischievously asks whether a "new theology," a "new theology" of a suffering God, might not disrupt the whole notion of generosity as overflow? Although he certainly does not develop this idea, does Caputo's radical hermeneutics of faith and obligation not necessitate an investigation into the possibility of such a theology? Does Caputo's deconstructive dehellenization of ontotheology and his insistence on the postmodern implications of biblical categories not contribute to a radical rethinking of the orthodox structures of God in western metaphysical theology? Does he not, like Marion, desire to overcome the conceptual idolatry of ontotheology and develop an iconic discourse that "speaks" of God and faith but within the flux of a sacred anarchy? Does he not, like Hart, wish to salvage something of the importance of apophatic discourse? Does he not, like Taylor, recognize that if one reevaluates traditional theology, one must likewise

272 Caputo, Against Ethics, 58.
re-examine anthropology, history, and language? Yet, notwithstanding his agreement with aspects of the above thinkers, do Caputo’s theories offer an understanding of God and theology that exceed the theories of Taylor, Hart, and Marion?
CHAPTER FIVE
THE DIVINE TEAR:
TOWARD A CRUCIFORM HERMENEUTIC OF THE TRINITY

Diotallevi, Belbo’s and Causabon’s co-conspirator in the creation of the Plan, expresses concern that manipulating texts and inventing fictional connections might ensue in dangerous repercussions. His warnings do indeed prove to be prophetic when their frivolous hermeneutical diversions convince the "wrong" people that fiction actually reflects reality. Their bastardized interpretations of occultic history take on a linguistic idealism; history becomes what the three playfully think it to be, its essence resulting from their perception. Notwithstanding the Plan’s fraudulence, its being believed by certain individuals results, ultimately, in real death.

Diotallevi is, himself, one who dies because of the Plan, or, so he believes. He develops a malignancy, which he interprets as retribution for his complicity in rearranging the order of language and history. During his last visit with Belbo, he explains how their glib hermeneutical imprudence was actually a sin "against the Word, against that which created and sustains the world."¹ He claims, in good Cabalistic fashion, that Torah is inextricably intertwined with reality and with all textual expressions, that

¹Eco, 564.
"every book is interwoven with the name of God." Consequently, one cannot manipulate language without damaging Torah and blaspheming God--acts that always harm the world. The creation of the Plan was, therefore, actually an act of impiety, which explained for Diotallevi why he had contracted cancer. He argues that his cells learned from him how to create their own plan by inverting and transposing the previous order. His body no longer has meaning, because it has been subverted by the profanation of Torah's order. He points out to Belbo that "metathesis," the transposition of letters in a word, bears a direct relationship with "metastasis," the transposition of a disease in a body. His cells simply expressed in their own way what he, himself, had been expressing hermeneutically: that there is no purpose and no appropriate order. He concludes that both he and Belbo are suffering because of their foolishness in not loving the Word enough to treat it with dignity and respect. Death comes from the mockery of Torah, a mockery that involves both the world and the body.

Diotallelii nowhere explicitly relates the basic thesis of this dissertation--that God truly suffers because of God's eternal love for creation. His theory that Torah can indeed be damaged by individuals who treat linguistic and historical order with flippant disregard does rest, however,

\[2\]Ibid., 565.

\[3\]Ibid., 566-67.
upon a prior belief that the Word and, hence, God, can be affected by human action. His is no deistic conception of divinity. Since God has created and sustains the world through the power of the Word, there obtains a relationship among creation, Word, and God. As in any genuine relationship, reciprocity characterizes the dynamics operating among the various relational "terms." Consequently, as creation can be moved by the Word, so, too, can the Word be moved by creation. If individuals have the power to alter the Word, they also possibly have the power to wound it. If so, then in *Foucault's Pendulum* not only do Diotallevi, Belbo, and Causabon suffer because of their corruption of the Book, but the Word and God suffer as well.

Of course, such thinking betrays a Jewish provenance, since no respectable, intelligent Greek would ever entertain the possibility that the divine could be in any way affected by that which is not divine. The eternal Greek Word, the Logos, cannot be open to damage; perfection allows for no mutable, historical affectivity. One cannot transpose, invert, or manipulate mighty Zeus, since perfection, in the Hellenistic sense, dictates plerosis, completion, and totality. Diotallevi, however, claims to be a Jew\(^4\) and professes hatred for "the spirit of the Enlightenment,"\(^5\) a more modern expression of Greek thought. One should not be sur-

---

\(^4\)Ibid., 76.

\(^5\)Ibid., 274.
prised, therefore, that his more Hebraic notions that Torah and the divine name can be manipulated offer another theory of God, a different view of perfection, and an alternative perspective on the polarity between transcendency and immanence. One should be reminded that Matthew, Mark, and John were Jews as well, notwithstanding their writing in Greek. Luke, although Greek, was significantly influenced by Paul, another Jew. Given the Hebraic disposition of these "gospel" writers, one should not be surprised that they, too, communicate a profoundly different theory of God and the Word with respect to suffering and death. In their stories, God does open the divine self to the risk of suffering and rejection for the sake of creation. Like Diotellavi, they contend that God is in some manner not merely pure act but passive as well, passive in the sense that humanity may through a misuse of freedom subvert the divine order and thereby break the heart of God. Specifically, they focus the possibility of the divine pathos in the historically embodied agony and grief of the crucified Jesus. Their Christian kerygma proclaims that in Christ one can best understand the depth of the divine misery and divine love. They relate stories that offer critiques of the Hellenistic metaphysical paradigms of God. They reveal that the presup-

---

positions underlying ontotheology are not the only mise-en-scene for the drama of revelation and redemption. By attending to these more Jew/Christian stories, postmodern theology could deconstruct Western metaphysics and reconstruct within a premodern, Jewish, divine milieu a theory of God's acting out of love and with passion toward creation. In other words, one might argue that deconstruction and theology not only correlate with reference to apophaticism as per Kevin Hart but also that they integrate a criticism of traditional ontotheology with the development of a certain kataphatic theology of the weakness of God, a theopassionist paradigm of the divine.

In contemporary theology, the notion of a suffering God has become something of a "new orthodoxy."7 In Black theology, process thought, Asian Christianity, and liberation theology, one may find different expressions of the theory that God is not some Byzantine pantocrator sitting unapproachable on the cosmic throne of absolute power but is, instead, a loving, involved deity seeking intimacy with creation and opening the divine self to the risk of rejec-

7Ronald Goetz, "The Suffering God: The Rise of a New Orthodoxy," Christian Century 103 (April 16, 1986):385-89. Goetz, in another article, rightfully claims that if one accepts the idea of divine passibility, then all of the major doctrines of Christian theology must be rethought. One cannot simply graft the idea onto the traditional branches of ontotheology ("Karl Barth, Juergen Moltmann and the Theopaschite Revolution," in Festschrift: A Tribute to Dr. William Hordern. ed. Walter Freitag. [Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1985], 18).
tion and pain. In each of these various theologies of a possible God, there is a definite rejection of the Hellenistic metaphysics that establishes Western orthodoxy. The rejection of orthodoxy results in a critique of the metaphysics of presence, of the philosophical monism inherent in traditional Christianity, and of the fear of alterity that has marked the Hellenization of the gospel.

As a result of the perspectives taken by theopassionists, one can make a convincing case that they offer a genuine postmodern structure whereby God can be reinterpreted on this side of Nietzsche as other than the moralistic judge acting out of ressentiment toward existence. The "monotonoteistic" God is surely dead and must remain so; however, there may yet be another God who continues to live as the compassionate co-sufferer with humanity, promising not some facile totality of meaning but the hope that suffering and nothingness are not the final goal for life. One of the more creative theorists arguing for such a model of God is Jürgen Moltmann. In his "Theology of Hope," Moltmann

---

8Warren McWilliams gives an excellent introduction to a number of these theologies in his The Passion of God: Divine Suffering in Contemporary Protestant Theology (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1985). Douglas John Hall classifies the power issue as one in need of serious reevaluation as to whether the church has actually been faithful to the Jerusalem tradition. He contends that the Jew/Christian paradigm of divine power includes a direct reference to the divine/human relationship (God and Human Suffering [Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1986], 97). That is, one must comprehend divine power within the context of God's love for and identification with human communities.
develops a trinitarian motif for understanding how God can truly be involved in the world as a suffering God, one who loves and is willing to face alienation and death for the sake of the beloved. Although Moltmann nowhere claims affinity with deconstructive thought, an investigation into his theology will reveal characteristics homeomorphic to the theological implications in Caputo's radical hermeneutics. While the similarities are striking, the differences are profound; consequently, it is the differences that make Moltmann important for the development of this dissertation. Moltmann seems to supply what is lacking in Caputo's warm-hearted, cold hermeneutics and allows one to prosecute more deeply the biblical implications for postmodern theology, specifically the Christian implications. That which acts as the center of Moltmann's theology--the crucifixion of Christ--is a significant omission in Caputo's attempt to present the jewchristian God of Abraham. The centrality of the crucified Christ also broaches the issue of the Trinity, which in itself raises Caputoan concerns, such as the pertinence of difference, the inescapability of alterity, and the implications of embodiment. Moltmann's theology of the suffering Trinity, consequently, advances a supplement to Caputo's sacred anarchy.
Meontotheology and the Logic of Promise

Like Caputo, Moltmann accepts as the basic question of religion the Kantian query, "What may I hope?" He goes so far as to state, rather categorically, "Where there is hope, there is religion." Accepting the symbiosis between religion and hope immediately sets Moltmann against any Hellenistic world-structure and places him squarely within the jewchristian paradigm. The Greek myth of Pandora's box identifies hope as the final evil let loose upon the earth. Hope deludes individuals into thinking that reality can be different and that there may be release from suffering. Such an illusion actually intensifies suffering by denying the individual the rationality to accept the suffering for what it is.

In contradistinction to the negative Greek perspective on hope, the jewchristian interpretation focuses on hope as the only proper way to understand both God and reality. For ancient Israel, Yahweh was experienced as a God of hope and promise. Kierkegaard best captures this Yahwistic model


11Ibid., 16.

12Ibid., 18. Gerhard von Rad claims that the salvation history expressed in the Hexateuch centers on the polar dynamics of promise/fulfillment. Yahweh makes certain promises to individuals and to the nation of Israel as a whole and then moves history forward toward the fulfillment
of hope when he defines it as the "passion for the possible." This passion turns humanity's temporal focus away from the present, away from the way things "are," toward the future, the potentiality for things to come. In something of a Derridean nomenclature, one might say that biblical hope inculcates, within its very essence, a critique of any metaphysics of presence. Moltmann refers to "Father" Abraham as a perfect example of this Hebraic deconstructive hermeneutic of hope. Abraham leaves the presence of his family and culture and journeys to an unknown place. He hears what he thinks are promises from the nomadic God who uproots and calls individuals to a new reality that is not yet. Abraham's faith in this God who demands the "passion for the possible" directs him to travel in "the way of


Ibid., 26. Stephen Williams insists that one must distinguish Kierkegaard's definition of hope from Moltmann's. The former's "passion for the possible" cannot be synonymous with the latter's "passion for the promised," because what God promises is not always historically possible. To collapse the two definitions can lead one to despair and not to hope, since certain situations actually offer no possibility for improvement, for example, a terminal illness ("On Giving Hope in a Suffering World: Response to Moltmann," in Issues in Faith and History: Papers Presented at the Second Edinburgh Conference on Dogmatics, 1987. ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron. The Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology, Special Study 3. [Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1989], 6-7).

freedom and danger, the way of disappointment and surprise, borne along and led solely by God's hope."\textsuperscript{15} Abraham is freed from the past, liberated to live in the tension of the "nevertheless" and the "how much more" of divine grace.\textsuperscript{16}

Reality for Abraham and his descendants becomes an issue of what is not yet, the non-Being of the anticipated, hoped-for, promised future of God. A promise always "proclaims a reality which is not yet at hand", but "present" only in word, in the language of the promise itself.\textsuperscript{17} Since promise references the "not yet," the non-Being of what is not now but could be, there is always an implicit critique of every "present" configuration of being; that is, promise "must stand in contradiction to the reality which can at present be experienced."\textsuperscript{18} The truth of promise, therefore, cannot be established through some superficial \textit{adequatio intellectus et rei}. This Aristotelian theory of truth fails precisely because, for the promise, there is no reality as of yet with which to correspond the vow.\textsuperscript{19}


\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 102. Christopher Morse emphasizes that promise "is not of the same logical type as a symbol which articulates and thereby lifts to the level of conscious referentiality some prelinguistic or formerly unconscious state of being (\textit{The Logic of Promise in Moltmann's Theology} [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], 89).
The meontic interlude between the giving of the promise and its realization creates a tension that actually impels history forward, not in some eternal recurrence of the same, but in the linear direction of the repetition of something unique. In other words, Moltmann contends that God creates history for the Hebrews through the dynamics of promise. The promises of God act as the "star" that guides human existence into the open future in which God’s fidelity will be experienced. This promissory historicizing,

20Moltmann, Theology of Hope, 103-104.

21Ibid., 106. It is interesting that Moltmann uses the symbol of a "star" to describe God’s providential promises. First, such a symbol suggests a tension between variability and constancy. Stars offer fixed points of reference as guides to travellers; however, they also move through the skies according to the seasons, thereby, changing their positions. In James 1:17, the author contrasts the variations of the stars to the permanence of the God who creates them. In this scripture, stars are mentioned in the context of God’s fidelity and enduring grace. E. Lab. Cherbonnier insists that the biblical model for God’s immutability centers not on the ontotheological issue of change of being but on the personal issue of loyalty, of God’s being true to God’s promises ("Logic of Biblical Anthropomorphism," Harvard Theological Review 55 (July 1962):200). Moltmann would agree with Cherbonnier that God’s immutability must be interpreted within the context of a promising God who may be trusted to keep God’s word. Second, Moltmann’s symbol offers a complement to Caputo’s stellar symbolism. Caputo suggests that there are no guiding stars, that reality is always threatened with dis-aster (Against Ethics, 6). This dis-astral imagery refers to the reality of the flux, the movement of existence that cannot be stilled. Moltmann’s use of "star" does not contradict Caputo’s position completely, since Moltmann identifies God’s promises as the motive force that contributes movement to reality. Moltmann’s "star," however, does suggest that the flux may not be totally nihilistic, that there may be some order working in tension with the disorder (something with which Caputo would readily agree). In other words, Moltmann does not deny that disasters may occur; he simply refuses to
although predicated upon the faithfulness of God, continues to remind humanity that life is a risk and that there can be no escape from the flux created by the tension intrinsic to the meontological kinetics of promise.\textsuperscript{22}

Moltmann contends that if one takes seriously the Jewchristian discourse of divine promise, then one must extrapolate from that language a particular model of God. That is, the language of promise not only reveals something about history and humanity but also something about the being of God. Specifically, Moltmann insists that God can no longer be understood as some Hellenistic deity of eternal presence but as the God who "is" as the God who comes; that is, the biblical discourse on God presents the "future as the mode of God's existence . . ."\textsuperscript{23} Consequently, the meontic character of human existence analogizes a meontic

believe that the disasters can destroy the divine love.

\textsuperscript{22}Moltmann, \textit{The Future of Creation}, 14. Cf. also RH, 200 for an explanation of "kinetics." Morse identifies the dynamics of the language of hope and promise as presenting the future, contradicting the present, and creating experience and history (Morse, 41).

\textsuperscript{23}Moltmann, \textit{The Experiment Hope}, 50. Jüngel claims that God is present in the word as absent; that is, God comes to the world in language, as one who addresses the world and awaits a response (Jüngel, 169). Although he does not explicitly use the word "promise" in this context, Jüngel's theory seems to cohere somewhat with Moltmann's understanding of God as the coming one who engages the present through the word of promise. For both theorists, faith is the proper response to this kind of God, a trust in the fidelity of the commitments made by God through the divine promises. Jüngel states that only faith "lets God be present as the one who is absent" (Ibid., 300).
character to the be\textsuperscript{X}ng of God; however, this meontotheology cannot be distinguished as another form of the metaphysics of presence, since the future as God's be\textsuperscript{X}ng concerns movement, or flux, instead of some static eternality.\textsuperscript{24} Moltmann takes quite seriously the ironic expression in Revelation 1:8:

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (emphasis mine).

God is not the one who will be, but is the one who will come. Consequently, futurity for God must not be construed ontologically but adventfully.

Moltmann prosecutes the non-ontological character of the divine future by examining the word "future." In French, there are two words for future--futur and avenir. In German, the word is Zukunft. Avenir and Zukunft translate not the Latin futurum but adventus, which means "coming to." The Greek equivalent for adventus is parousia, which philo-

\textsuperscript{24}Moltmann, The Experiment Hope, 52. André Dumas subverts the usual order found in metaphysical discussions about divine immutability and human contingency. He makes a startling, but very postmodern, biblical claim: "Man [sic] is the 'bricoleur' of his permanence; God the creator of his contingency" ("God as Protest Against the 'Death of Man'," in New Questions on God, ed. Johannes B. Metz. [New York: Herder and Herder, 1972], 85). Human beings continue to insist on creating structures that can "ground" existence and give it stability, while God continues to pervert all such idolatrous constructions by introducing novelty into the historical process. God "intervenes but does not ground", and in doing so, constantly questions all attempts at systematic regularity (Ibid., 87). In other words, Dumas seems to profess that God is indeed the source of the flux of existence, a profession akin to Moltmann's and Caputo's theories.
sophically may mean "present" but can also mean "arrival" or "coming." Consequently, one can speak about the future either as "what is going to be [or] what is going to come." Moltmann argues that one can only speak about the future of God in the second sense of ad-vent. Consequently, one does not refer to God as be-coming but as coming. God's beXng is, therefore, an ad-venture, an anticipated arrival that factors into the beXng of God the non-being of the "not yet." In other words, God is (not) as promise.

25 Moltmann, The Future of Creation, 55. Derrida references this very verse from Revelation in his discussion of the apocalyptic tone. He interprets the statement as indicating the deferral of the coming, that the "who is to come" must be understood as "the present of a to-come [a-venir]" (Derrida, "Of An Apocalyptic Tone Newly Adopted in Philosophy," 54). This present expression of a process of coming, however, never reaches the fulfillment of the promise; that is, the coming never becomes present. Derrida argues for this future perfect dynamic of coming when he examines the passage in Rev. 22 dealing with the request of the Spirit, bride, and others for Jesus "to come." This idea of "come" cannot be addressed within the structures of any "onto-eschato-theology" (Ibid., 64); it cannot be thought of as an event, since it is the "to-come" of every event. Interestingly enough, he evidences the un/decidability and disseminative play inherent within the "come" by appealing to orality, the spoken word, specifically the issue of tone, the intonation of the "come" (Ibid., 65). It can be intoned as an imperative, a request, or even a prayer. One never really knows how the "come" is meant. The differences among the various tones of the "come" defer the final meaning of the "come." The "come," therefore, is always coming, and this coming comes to language with a promise of non-closure, of an openness to something new. Caputo contends that "the whole of deconstruction is turned towards such a future: to loosen up the present in order to prepare for something new" (personal correspondence with the author, 2 February 1995).

The coming God of promise affects reality in the present as the grounds for liberation. God calls humanity to the adventure of history and offers to free them from the constraints of "the powers that be," any present, oppressive, and exclusionary structures that inhibit individuals from embarking on the quest for authenticity.\(^27\) The biblical language about this coming God also functions as a subversive language, calling for the poor, the disenfranchised, all who seemingly have given up hope or had it wrenched from them, to revolt against the present constellations of alienation.\(^28\)

Understanding God, humanity, and reality meontologically results in a theology of hope expressed as an eschatology. This theology is "not a theology about hope, but a theology growing out of hope in God."\(^29\) It reflects upon the past faithfulness of God in the events of Israel's redemption from slavery and in Christ's sacrifice for re-

\[^{27}\text{Moltmann, The Experiment Hope, 51.}\]

\[^{28}\text{Ibid., 46.}\]

\[^{29}\text{Ibid., 45.}\]
demption and anticipates that God will continue to be the God who keeps God's promise to come. Such a theology necessarily centers on eschatology, as long as the eschaton is identified with the promises of God. For Moltmann, the jewchristian paradigm is eschatological through and through, because it revolves around hope and promise as its two foci. The eschatological character of theology can be maintained, however, only as long as eschatology is not

\[\text{30Moltmann, Theology of Hope, 16. Taylor would critique Moltmann's eschatological structure of history as another example of a metaphysics of presence. The whole schematic of fall, redemption, and future parousia totalizes reality, tying up all the loose ends (Taylor, Erring, 155). Of course, for Taylor the eschatological process is one of exitus and reditus, of a re-claiming of that which has been lost at some earlier moment. Moltmann, on the other hand, denies such a re-collective interpretation of the futurity of promise and hope. He argues that a more biblical model of eschatology centers on the notion of "new creation," of the coming God who will make something new, not merely restore what has been. The new creation as a coming event reveals a certain future perfect tense, the tension between what will have come and what is always coming. Moltmann's apocalyptic tone might cohere somewhat with Derrida's distinction between closure and end (Derrida, "Of an Apocalyptic Tone Newly Adopted in Philosophy," 49). Derrida certainly denies that there will ever be any unity of truth achieved in some future totalization of reason and reality (Ibid., 53); however, he does admit that one cannot simply dismiss apocalyptic language, since in dismissing such language one actually adopts the apocalyptic tone, one uses the language of end, the end of the end. Yet, such a language is actually "a closure without end, an end without end" (Ibid., 67). Both Moltmann and Derrida admit the possibility that the "end" is not closure, not some finality that destroys futurity, but that the end is always coming, is always end-ing. For Derrida, the end-ing ensues from the envois forever failing to reach a final destination (Ibid., 57); for Moltmann, the end-ing ensues from the openness inherent within the divine promises. Interestingly enough, for both the eschatological carries with it a definite ethical dynamic; it critiques the present and refuses to play the sycophant to the past (cf. Ibid., 59-60).}
interpreted from the Greek perspective. There can be no \textit{logos} of the \textit{eschaton}, if one means by \textit{logos} the Hellenistic notion of the abstract, ahistorical, static, eternal presence of reason. That species of eschatology recapitulates ontotheological presence. The only proper manner by which to do Christian eschatology is as a theology of the "promise which announces the \textit{eschaton} . . . [as] the mainspring, the driving force and the torture of history."\textsuperscript{31} The meonto-theology of the logic of promise and of the coming God takes seriously the flux of history and the anticipation of that which is not yet. Unlike the owl of Minerva, which only flies at twilight, the spirit of Jew/Christian eschatology anticipates the dawn of a new reality. It does not seek to dominate by maintaining the \textit{status quo} but in love awaits the Omega of the divine ad-vent.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{31}Moltmann, \textit{Theology of Hope}, 165.

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., 36. Morse accuses Moltmann of an internal inconsistency with reference to the relationship between a rejection of the Hellenistic paradigm of immutability and the Jew/Christian paradigm of promise and hope. Although Moltmann rejects the notion that the \textit{logos} is an ahistorical, unchanging rationality offering a metaphysical escape from the flux of history, he proposes a view of God’s promises as enduring throughout history and as giving stability to existence. Morse argues that such an interpretation replaces the Greek \textit{logos} with divine promise, which is itself "unchanging, always existing, and equally valid at all times" (Morse, 94-95). Although Morse does have some validity with this interpretation, he fails to distinguish between the impersonal notion of an immutable reason and the personal faithfulness inherent in the idea of promise. Consequently, one cannot compare the perdurability of promise with the immutability of a metaphysical principle.
Love as the Divine Wound

Moltmann, like Caputo, seeks to de-Hellenize the classical theism of Western orthodoxy in order to re-establish the validity of the biblical models for God. Simply stated, Moltmann can say that the Jew/Christian God of promise and hope should not be identified with the metaphysical deity of Greek philosophy, a deity best given expression in the corporeal monism of Parmenides. Parmenides characterizes Being as eternal and one, neither coming into nor going out of Being and having no division. Both the eternity and unity of Being are predicated upon the impossibility of non-being. Non-being cannot be for Parmenides precisely because it cannot be thought. Consequently, Parmenides disallows any reality to movement, history, or mutability, because these depend on some sort of tension between being and non-being. All that is, is eternal Being, and eternal Being is always present. If Being were mutable and/or temporal, then Being never truly could be, but would always "be" in the interstices between what is not yet and what is no longer. Since the philosophical tradition has equated Being with God (onto-theology), what Parmenides


posits about the former also describes the latter. Consequently, God must be eternal, immutable, and one.

The God of Parmenides can be understood only as an "epiphany of the eternal present" and, therefore, cannot possibly be a God of promise and hope. Unfortunately, the biblical paradigms of the God of hope have, from the earliest inception of Christian theology, been conflated with the Parmenidean ontotheological structures. This conflation centers uniquely on the Johannine use of _logos_ in reference to the divinity of Christ. If the Johannine _logos_ coheres with the philosophical tradition, then it offers an escape from the uncertainties and movements associated with temporal existence. As such, it functions metaphysically to

---


36Moltmann, _The Experiment Hope_, 50. Rem Edwards agrees with Moltmann that the notion of God’s eternity as a simultaneity of presence comes from what he terms "classical supernaturalism" ("The Pagan Dogma of the Absolute Unchangeableness of God," _Religious Studies_ 14 [September 1978]: 306). He cites Parmenides as a significant source of this dogma, as well as the Pythagorean school with its emphasis on oppositional polarities: the "one" as male, straight, and good and the "many" as female, crooked, and bad (Ibid., 309). The biblical models for God, however, nowhere reveal such a structure for comprehending deity. In scripture, God is often presented as temporal and as affected by the action of human beings (Ibid., 310). Unfortunately, the early patristic theologians did not separate Elea from Jerusalem and, thereby, produced, in their conflation, a "mottled Christianity" (Ibid., 313).
still the flux and deny the historicity of existence.\textsuperscript{37} Moltmann contends, however, that notwithstanding orthodoxy's propensity to attenuate the implicit motility of the God of promise, the biblical discourse does, indeed, deconstruct the Hellenistic fore-structures associated with \textit{logos} by introducing the notion of the incarnation of the \textit{logos} into history.\textsuperscript{38}

Ironically, Christianity actually exists on the belief that God is not experienced in some mystical union of immediate presence but is, instead, known through the historical mediation of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{39} One certainly does not experience Christ in an eternal moment. The \textit{Parousia} of Jesus refers not to some Parmenidean presence but to the eschatological meontotheology of the coming God. Christ's \textit{Parousia} "means not \textit{praesentia Christi} but \textit{adventus Christi}, and is not his eternal presence bringing time to a standstill, but

\textsuperscript{37}Moltmann, \textit{Theology of Hope}, 29, 89.

\textsuperscript{38}"... the \textit{promissio Dei} has always worked as a ferment of destruction of the Greek \textit{logos}--namely, in such a way that the illuminating truth of the Greek \textit{logos} has been given eschatological, and therewith historic, character" (Moltmann, \textit{Theology of Hope}, 89). Hans-Georg Gadamer claims that the Christian idea of incarnation--what he terms the "most important element in Christian thought"--deconstructs the Greek conceptualization of \textit{logos}. The "Word made flesh" symbolizes that language does not reference some ahistorical ideality of meaning but actually becomes event, entering into the scandal of particularity (\textit{Truth and Method} [New York: Crossroad, 1982], 378-79).

\textsuperscript{39}Moltmann, \textit{Theology of Hope}, 30.
his 'coming.' The Jew-Christian patterns of the promising God and the coming Christ point not to some "metaphysics of the highest being" but to an eschatology of concrete liberation ensuing from a God intimately involved in human history. This particularity of God's immanence in the flux does not destroy any sense of transcendence; it simply reinterprets transcendence. Transcendence no longer allows for a metaphysical or existential description. Instead, it must be comprehended as futurity, as the "not yet" of promise and hope. Moltmann insists that when the future becomes the paradigm of transcendence for the Christian kerygma, one must acknowledge that the coming God has promised the new future to the "dispossessed, denied and downtrodden [of] the present day . . ." If the divine future promises liberation for the disenfranchised, then how can God be immune to the suffering of those who seem to have no hope?

40Ibid., 31.
41Moltmann, The Experiment Hope, 46-47.
42Moltmann, God in Creation, 133-34.
43Moltmann, The Future of Creation, 17. Colin Gunton maintains that the problem in modern theology is not so much one of criticizing transcendence and replacing it with a theology of immanence but with failing to appreciate the importance of multiplicity, that is, of genuine alterity (The One, the Three and the Many [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 36-37). Modernism, both in philosophy and theology, preaches individualism, which is but another form of monism. It matters little if the architecture of meaning frames a monotheistic theology or an individualistic anthropology; the problem remains that otherness is rejected or worse becomes instrumental and objectified (Ibid., 32).
In other words, Moltmann’s theories about the promising God, the revealing Christ, and the futurity of hope raise the issue of whether God as immanent within the process does not experience the uncertainties and agonies so often associated with the process. Parmenides’ God most certainly cannot suffer, but can the jewchristian God of scripture?

Moltmann answers the last question with a categorical "yes." He declares that "God and suffering belong together, just as in this life the cry for God and the suffering experienced in pain belong together." One cannot separate the theodicy question from the question of God, especially not from the question of God raised in the jewchristian paradigm. The reality of radical suffering, for example, the needless suffering of an innocent child, demands that any "childish primal confidence and . . . trust in God" be called into question. How does one prosecute the notion of God in the face of the meaningless pain and evil so often associated with historical existence? That is, how can one continue to live with the idea that God

---


Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, 47.
participates in the flux, yet, seems to do nothing about the destructive forces loosed upon the world?

If one follows the Greek ideal of the God of the eternal presence, there can be no possibility of God's participating in the affliction of historical reality. The Greek God excludes "difference, diversity, movement and suffering from the divine nature." Such a deity is eternal, simple, immutable, and impassible. Only in this way can God be absolute and perfect. The primary criteriology of the divine that summarizes these characteristics includes the attribute of apatheia. From Parmenides through Plato and Aristotle, God has been interpreted as in no way capable of being affected by the negativities of existence. In perfect bliss, God remains separated from any of the imperfections associated with temporal mutable being. This theos apathes has no need for anything outside itself but exists as the Absolute in total self-sufficiency and eternal freedom.

47 Ibid., 21.

48 Marcel Sarot states that the English term "impassible" derives from the Latin "impassibilis," a direct translation of the Greek word "apathes." Originally these terms meant "incapable of being acted upon by an outside force" and, consequently, are synonymous with "immutable." In the development of Christian theology, however, the terms took on two other meanings: (1) "incapable of experiencing emotions" and (2) "incapable of suffering" ("Patripassianism, Theopaschitism and the Suffering of God: Some Historical and Systematic Considerations," Religious Studies 26 [September 1990]:365).

49 Moltmann, The Experiment Hope, 74. Lester Kuyper contends that the term "Absolute" "carries concepts and [sic] imageries of tyrannical power and of exalted detach-
Apathy, therefore, was considered throughout the Greek tradition as the "highest virtue of both gods and human beings . . ."\(^5\)

The view of God as *theos apathes* significantly influenced both Jewish and Christian thought during the Hellenistic period. God became the *actus purus*, pure causality without any potentiality for suffering.\(^5\) Apathy was the


Terrence Fretheim concurs with Pollard that one should not dismiss preemptively the validity of using anthropomorphic and anthropopathic language for God, because of the *imago dei* motif expressed in the first creation story (*The
one primary characteristic that distinguished God from humanity and was considered the only means whereby humanity could be redeemed from "this vale of tears." Only by sharing in divine apathy could humanity rise above the evil and destruction inherent in temporal, material existence. Incongruously, the early Christian theologians actually related the divine love to the divine apathy. If in divine apathy, God avoids the inconstancy of protean emotions and enjoys freedom from any external constraints, as well as from any internal egoism, then God is better able to love sine ira et studio. These same theologians, however,

Suffering God [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975], 10-11). When one investigates biblical language for God, therefore, one should not be surprised to find an emphasis on personal relationship and reciprocity between God and humanity (Ibid., 36).

52 Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, 23.

53 Moltmann, The Future of Creation, 70.

54 Ibid., 68. Although Moltmann wants to deny that God cannot genuinely risk in the economy of redemption, he does seem at times to recapitulate to classical theism and affirm that God actually transforms losses into divine gains. He claims that in the suffering of Jesus, God takes "evil, sin and rejection upon himself, and in the sacrifice of his infinite love [transforms them] into goodness, grace and election" (Jürgen Moltmann, The Spirit of Life, trans. Margaret Kohl [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992], 212). God’s suffering leads to divine bliss, a bliss that results from God’s acceptance and transmutation of pain (Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, 34). Certainly one can avow that God, in taking evil into the divine self, may bring about good that could not have been otherwise; however, that is not synonymous with contending that evil can be metamorphosed into good. Such a metamorphosis diminishes the genuine threat of evil and seems to offer an eschatological desensitization of radical suffering. Is it not far more consistent with Moltmann’s basic theology to accept that
soon found themselves in the paradoxical situation of having
to discover a complementarity between the apathetic God,
completely impassible in nature, and the Christian belief
that the passion of Christ in some manner revealed this
impassible God. Either one had to reinterpret radically
the biblical discourse on Christ, as well as the *regula
fidei* that developed in response to that discourse, or one
had to call into question the Parmenidean theology. Unfor-
tunately, orthodox theology for centuries attempted to
maintain the tension between the two incompatible models.
Moltmann argues, however, that the only logical response is
to deny the false idol of Greek metaphysics and reconstruct
an icon of God from a biblical perspective.

Specifically, Moltmann insists that the God of the Old
and New Testaments cannot be construed as some "cold, si-
lent, heavenly power that sits self-sufficiently upon [a]

some evil and suffering simply cannot be redeemed through an
alchemical process of inversion? Is it really proper, given
Moltmann’s insistence on the historical reality of the
theologia crucis, to interpret divine suffering as a philo-
sopher’s stone capable of turning evil into good? Moltmann
appears to be falling back into the ways of ontotheology by
attempting to ensure that no loose strings remain once God
has sewn everything up. Or returning to the economic dis-
course, one might say that Moltmann really refuses to em-
brace the reality of divine risk and divine loss.

---

*Moltmann, The Future of Creation, 68-69. Fiddes
reminds his readers that the Council of Chalcedon, which
developed the orthodox language for Christology, anathema-
tized anyone who believed that the Godhead was passible
(Fiddes, 1).
The biblical God is, indeed, a passionate God, sympathetic to the plight of human beings and suffering out of a genuine participation in the tragedy and guilt of historical existence. God suffers because of humanity, for humanity, and with humanity precisely because God loves humanity. Only through this divine suffering can God effect liberation and redemption, the accomplishment of the messianic deliverance. The highest virtue, therefore, for both God and humanity is not some Stoic apathy that gives consent to the status quo but the passionate commitment to

56 Moltmann, The Passion for Life, 22.

57 Moltmann, The Future of Creation, 98. One of the accusations brought against the theology of a suffering God is that it depends upon anthropomorphic language that cannot be literally applied to the deity. As Xenophanes asserted centuries ago, if horses imagined God they would imagine him as a horse (Fragment 15 in Freeman, 22). Anthropomorphic language is nothing more than the wishful projection of human qualities onto the deity.

Cherbonnier addresses this critique and considers it to be based on two fallacies: (1) even if anthropomorphism comes out of a wishful thinking, its validity is not diminished by its source and (2) no language about God can escape personal projection, not even atheistic critiques of God (Cherbonnier, 188-89). Cherbonnier argues that only if one conceives of God as in some way personal can one account for any type of genuine divine activity. Consequently, he denies any philosophical or mystical model of God that tries to avoid the "scandal of particularity." He claims that in "the biblical world-view . . . 'particularity' is, if anything, an honorific term . . . (Ibid., 194). Anthropomorphic and anthropopathic language, therefore, cannot be dismissed out of hand as necessarily inappropriate for communicating a theory of God as living and acting in personal relationships with creation.
suffering as a liberating force in reality. God's identification with suffering humanity is the "no" to the evil inchoate in every worldly present and the "yes" of the promise of a hoped-for reality that has not come. In other words, for Moltmann only a passible God can genuinely love the world and redeem it from the destruction of death.

Moltmann rejects the disjunctive reasoning that recognizes only two alternatives with reference to God's passibility. One is not limited to accepting either that God is omnipotently apathetic with no capacity for suffering or that God is impotently fated to passive suffering. The third alternative that must be entertained concerns God's voluntary suffering, that is, "the suffering of passionate

58 James Hallman indicates that the Stoics' emphasis on divine immanence actually led Plutarch and Origen to accuse them of holding to a mutable deity; however, in their ethical teachings, the notion of apatheia was so pervasive that it eventually was accepted into Christian theology and identified as a divine attribute, for example, by Clement of Alexandria (The Descent of God [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991], 11-12).

59 Moltmann, The Passion for Life, 23. F. Christiaan Beker contends that one cannot separate hope and suffering. If one does, then hope becomes false hope, a "gnostic hope" unrelated to reality, and suffering becomes "meaningless suffering, tragic despair, or bitter cynicism" (Suffering & Hope [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987], 27-28). The Bible reveals that whenever hope is destroyed by an overwhelming intensity of meaningless suffering, so, too, the motif of a "God of creation, covenant, and justice" is destroyed (Ibid., 58). A genuinely biblical understanding of hope should, according to Beker, result in a realistic disgust over "the poisonous reality of death and dying in [the] world" (Ibid., 122). In other words, one should never attempt to minimize or beautify radical suffering, not even when it is part of the order of redemption.
The latter best captures the God revealed in the biblical texts. In both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures God reveals Godself as a God of love and mercy, willing to risk the divine self for the sake of God's beloved creation. Although Moltmann's Christian prejudice surfaces when he claims that God's suffering and risk can be expressed only in trinitarian language, that is, that monotheism disallows any such discourse to take place, he does affirm that one certainly can discover theopassional language in the monotheistic traditions of Jewish studies. Consequently, theopassionism comes out of a jewchristian and

---

60 Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, 23. Geddes MacGreggor maintains that in the Hebrew scriptures, the power of God refers not to the detached notion of omnipotence but to the idea of sufficiency. He claims that the rabbinic tradition explained the Hebrew word "Almighty" (shaddai) as "the Sufficient One" or "he who suffices" ("Does Scripture Limit the Power of God?" The Hibbert Journal 53 [July 1955]:383). Peter Geach prefers "Almighty" to "omnipotent" when describing the divine power, because the former term refers more to "power over all entities" while the latter means more the idea of the "power to do all things" ("Omnipotence," in Contemporary Philosophy of Religion, eds. Steven M. Cahn and David Shatz [New York: Oxford University Press, 1982], 46-47).

61 Fiddes qualifies the divine risk as "limited." By this he means that God knows the "end" of the process of redemption but does not necessarily know every particular move that human beings will make during that process (Fiddes, 105). The "end" of the process, however, is not an "absolute end." God does indeed risk the possibility that the "end" will not turn out exactly as God desires; that is, God may indeed be disappointed by the future (Ibid., 106). One might say that Fiddes disallows an eschatological closure based on full presence and complete fulfillment. In other words, the eschaton is not the "last thing" but is an end-ing that is a "continuing consummation" (Ibid).

62 Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, 25.
not only a Christian interpretation of God. The Jewish-Christian provenance of such a theology comes to its clearest expression, according to Moltmann, in "the two great concepts" that function as transcendental "grounds" for believing in a passible God: (1) the rabbinic doctrine of Shekinah and (2) the Christian doctrine of Trinity.\textsuperscript{63}

Moltmann states that no one has contributed more significantly to the Jewish development of the theory of a suffering God than Rabbi Abraham Heschel. In the 1930's, Heschel broke with medieval Judaism, rejected the apathetic God, and interpreted the theologies of the Hebrew prophets as revealing "the pathos of God."\textsuperscript{64} The pathos of God, addressed by the prophets, finds unique expression in the concept of God's Shekinah, that is, God's "indwelling" the nation of Israel and accepting its history as God's own. Through the Shekinah, God participates in the people's experiences, both their joys and sorrows. Although God is the Almighty, God condescends in order to relate to Israel; although God's dwelling may be in heaven, God's indwelling (Shekinah) accompanies the widows and orphans; although God

\textsuperscript{63}Moltmann, \textit{God in Creation}, 15.

\textsuperscript{64}Moltmann, \textit{The Future of Creation}, 69; Moltmann, \textit{The Trinity and the Kingdom}, 25. Fiddes critiques Heschel for allowing divine suffering only with reference to God's external relationship with humanity. Divine suffering is "modal" and not "essential"; that is, God does not truly suffer in God's being (Fiddes, 111).
is the Holy One, God humiliates the divine self and "carries the people with their sins." The Skekinah, God so identifies with Israel that God goes with them even into exile. Consequently, God's redemption of Israel actually effects God's self-deliverance. This redemption, however, results only from God's willingness to suffer with and for the nation, and this willingness to suffer results from the divine love.

---

65 Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, 27; Moltmann, The Experiment Hope, 77.


67 Moltmann, The Future of Creation, 71. Michael Dodds critiques Moltmann's theory of divine deliverance as resulting in a theology of an ontologically imperfect deity who cannot truly love the other for the other's sake alone. He accuses Moltmann of positing a God who is "preoccupied" ultimately with Godself ("Thomas Aquinas, Human Suffering, and the Unchanging God of Love," Theological Studies 52 [June 1991]:332). Such a God cannot love "with a fully gratuitous love" but only loves as a means to reach a self-directed end (Ibid., 333). Dodds argues that one should not say that God suffers in Godself but that God suffers through divine compassion, through God's intimate identification with the suffering of the beloved one (Ibid., 337-38). Only by understanding divine suffering as divine compassion in relationship with the other can one maintain the essential divine disinterestedness that ensures a purely gratuitous love for the other (Ibid., 339). Of course, Dodds does not contribute an original theory of divine "quasi"-suffering. He obviously stands firmly in the tradition that predicates pure divine love on the characteristic of apathy. His extrapolation of this tradition within the context of divine compassion recapitulates the position of Anselm of Canterbury. From a Moltmannian perspective, one would have to question whether Dodds' theology really gives any significance to either genuine love or genuine suffering. Why does one have to deny that loving cannot have a centripetal vector to it, that is, that love must be disinterested? If love implies genuine reciprocity, then the fact that one gains from the loving does not diminish the act in any way. Jüngel certainly sees no contradiction between love and
In the Christian scriptures, the theology of divine suffering also depends upon the revelation of God as intimately related to humanity in the passion of love. Moltmann affirms that the "theology of the divine passion is founded on the biblical tenet, 'God is love' (1 John 4:16)."  

This metaphor emphasizes that God's being is to love; consequently, self-relatedness. As a matter of fact, he defines the divine love revealed in Christ as "the event of a still greater selflessness within a great . . . self-relatedness" (Jüngel, 317). Consequently, that God benefits from God's relationship with humanity in no way demeans divine agape. On the other hand, one must be wary of a theory of divine compassion that disallows any affect in God. Dodds argues that even human compassion is marked by a certain disinterestedness (Ibid, 339). He contends that one should not be concerned with one's own sadness at the suffering of a beloved one but should focus solely upon the other's pain. Is not the self-awareness of one's own agony over the pain of the other, however, not an expression of deep compassion, a suffering "with" the other? Moltmann certainly would answer, "Yes."

Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, 57. Warren McWilliams asserts that "'God is love' is a logically explorable proposition" and not "merely . . . an emotional ejaculation beyond the reach of conceptual analysis" ("A Kenotic God and the Problem of Evil," Encounter 42 [Winter 1981]:16). S. D. Goitein proposes that the idea of God as love is not only a New Testament notion but may be found explicitly revealed in the Old Testament, specifically in the manifestation of the divine name, the Tetragrammaton. He compares the Hebrew word YHWH with certain Arabic roots and suggests that the term denotes passionate emotion, somewhat akin to jealousy ("YHWH the Passionate: The Monotheistic Meaning and Origin of the Name YHWH," Vestus Testamentum 6 [January 1956]:2). Consequently, he translates Ex. 3:14, not as "I am that I am," but as "'I shall passionately love whom I love'" (Ibid., 4). Such an interpretation explains why the primary commandment in Hebrew scripture (Deut. 4:5), which becomes the first, great commandment for Jesus, is "You shall love YHWH, your God, with all your heart and all your soul and all your might" (Ibid., 5). Goitein's thesis certainly holds interesting implications not only for Moltmann's theologia crucis but also for Marion's Gôd without being as a Gôd of love.
quently, God cannot not love without simultaneously denying God’s very being. If God cannot avoid loving, then God also cannot avoid suffering, since loving always opens one to the possibility of having one’s "heart" broken by the beloved.

If one reinterprets God as a passionate, possible God, then a correlative reinterpretation of the divine attributes must follow. God is not omnipotent unless omnipotence is defined as "the almighty power of suffering love"; God is

69 Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, 107-108.

70 Ibid., 31. Marcel Sarot presents an interesting thesis supporting the idea that divine suffering and love must be understood in tandem. He addresses the theories that tie God’s suffering into God’s morality, that is, that only a suffering God can be understood as a moral God ("Auschwitz, Morality and God’s Suffering," Modern Theology 7 [January 1991]:142). Sarot insists that the issue of morality cannot be used as an argument for God’s passion. Certainly if God can comfort those in agony by suffering but does not do so under certain circumstances, such as at Auschwitz, then God could be considered immoral (Ibid., 144). The classical theist, however, could respond to this perspective by focussing on the "epistemic distance" between God and humanity, which does not necessarily allow an analogy between divine and human responses or by adopting an Anselmian distinction between God in se and God pro nobis. Human beings may experience God’s comfort as compassion without God actually feeling compassion internally (Ibid., 146-47). Sarot declares that the only proper argument for the suffering of God is the belief that "God is love" (Ibid., 148). If God’s love is not equivocal to human love, then there is no possibility for a loving God not to suffer and feel genuine compassion for the ones who are loved.

Jüngel also relates the divine power to divine love with reference to God’s lordship over creation. He claims that God’s power as Lord must be understood from the perspective of love, but not dialectically or subordinately; that is, God’s power is the power of God’s love. Consequently, "... God’s lordship is to be understood as the rule of his mercy and God’s law is accordingly the law of his grace" (Jüngel, 22).
not immutable if that entails the inability to create a reciprocal relationship between the divine self and humanity; God is not perfect if perfection excludes the genuine effect that humanity has upon the divine self; and God is not invulnerable, if that means unaffected by the cross of Jesus Christ. Denying the orthodox characteristics of God as developed in classical theism, however, does not eventuate in a divine deficiency. On the contrary, these characteristics must be rejected, because they limit the fullness of God by refusing to accept that God, in the

\[\text{\textsuperscript{71}}\text{Moltmann, The Future of Creation, 93. Of course not everyone agrees that one must sacrifice the classical criteriology of the divine in order to account for a relational God. Richard Muller takes a more Reformed, orthodox perspective and argues that God can incarnate Godself and suffer without losing any of the eminent attributes that "make" God God. Muller states that the "scholastic notion of God as immobile does not translate into English as 'immobile' . . . but as 'unmoved'" ("Incarnation, Immutability, and the Case for Classical Theism," Westminster Theological Journal 45 [Spring 1983]:27). God can, indeed, engage in relations with externals; God is just not made God by such relations. Muller fears that if one allows that God can become what God is not, that is, if one interprets incarnation as a genuinely unique change in God, then one has no basis for trusting that God's will and intellect will not likewise be changed (Ibid., 30). Utilizing Mal. 3:6-7, Muller takes the position that God certainly cannot change theologically or ethically (Ibid., 31). Much like the early Fathers attempted to extrapolate agape from divine apathy, Muller attempts to establish the fidelity of divine love on the grounds of an ontological immutability (Ibid., 39). Of course, Muller's theory derives from his insistence to maintain the Calvinian notion of eternal decrees, the idea that God wills, or, predestines, reality on the basis of the divine sovereignty alone, without any genuine reciprocity between God and humanity. Muller thinks that he is theologically complimenting God with his theory, when in essence he is limiting what God can will and restricting the divine power of genuine love.} \]
divine freedom, can genuinely love created individuals "to the point of suffering under their actions and of being capable of being hurt by their disobedience . . ."  

Interpreting the relationship between God and creation according to the suffering God motif offers another example of the decisive difference between the ontotheology of classical theism and the meontotheology of theopassionism. The former reduces the creator/creation relationship to that of causality, to God's being the causa prima of the universe and the causa sui of Godself. Moltmann contends that creation should not be understood mechanistically as an act of absolute power  

but as "creatio ex amore Dei," an act of

72Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, 23; Moltmann, The Future of Creation, 69. Fiddes articulates the relationship between divine freedom and divine suffering as follows: "... it is not that God must suffer, the world being what it is, but God has made the world as it is because he chooses to suffer with it" (Fiddes, 35).

Fretheim certainly agrees with Moltmann and Fiddes that scripture reveals a God who "in freedom changes for the sake of personal encounter with the creation" ("The Repentance of God: A Key to Evaluating Old Testament God-Talk," Horizons in Biblical Theology 10 [June 1988]:59). He introduces a fascinating aspect of this biblical revelation when he references 1 Kgs. 18:27-29, Ps. 115:5-7, and Jer. 10:4-5 as scriptures that manifest Israel's aversion to idolatry as predicated upon the reality that idols cannot relate and cannot change! He maintains that these passages show that Israel did not interpret idolatry as denigrating God's transcendence but as denying God's genuine love and interrelationship with creation (Ibid., 60). One could say, to speak in a Marion-based idiom, that the idolatry of metaphysical theism must be rejected for the same reasons--ontotheology denies that God truly can be affected by and related to reality.

73Moltmann, God in Creation, 14. One of the hallmarks of traditional monotheistic ontotheology is that God is the source of all being and the causa sui. The doctrine of
Consequently, in creating a world that is not God and establishing a relationship of love with it, God limits Godself and opens Godself to the possibility of divine humiliation. In other words, creation is an act of divine suffering in that God must give to creation the space in which to be, the time with which to develop, and the freedom with which it may reciprocate in the relationship. Moltmann prosecutes the idea of creation as a di-

creation, therefore, grounds a particular view of divine power and control. Geddes MacGregor refers to this view as an expression of "dynamolatry," the "idolatry of power" ([He Who Lets Us Be: A Theology of Love. [New York: Paragon House, 1987], 167). He proposes a different delineation of divine creativity. God's power, understood from the standpoint of creative love, results in a certain divine Gelas- senheit, a "letting be" of creation (Ibid., 15). Although MacGregor does not use that particular term, his explanation of how God directs creation, not through coercive manipulation, but through the infinite capacity of re-creative love, reads remarkably like Caputo's reading of Heidegger's reading of scripture!

Waite Willis defines God's becoming as "a dynamic event of self-giving to the world" ([Theism, Atheism and the Doctrine of the Trinity. [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987], 72].

Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, 59. The significance of understanding creation as involving divine limitation and the possibility of divine suffering is that it disallows the theory that God suffers only in Christ. The suffering of God cannot be reduced to the cross event alone, since such a reduction calls into question whether the Trinity as a whole can suffer or if it is only a possibility for the embodied logos. Concomitantly, however, a Christian theorist would want to discriminate with reference to the cross and understand it as a unique expression of divine pain (cf. Fiddes, 3). Fiddes questions whether Moltmann adequately accounts for the suffering of God outside of the cross event. He confesses uncertainty as to what Moltmann means when he identifies the cross as the "beginning" of the trinitarian history of God's suffering. Fiddes fears that, claims to the contrary notwithstanding,
vine self-limitation through the Cabalistic symbol of zimzum. Moltmann defines zimzum as "concentration and contraction . . . [signifying] a withdrawing of oneself into oneself." In order for God to create that which is not God, God must contract God's presence, eternity, and power in order for the creation to exist. In other words, creation demands divine limitation and risk, an emptying of Godself for the sake of the creation.

Moltmann threatens to exhaust divine suffering in Christ's crucifixion and resurrection by explaining it as "determining" and "revealing" divine suffering (Ibid., 6-7). Jeff Pool, in his recent, incisive dissertation on divine suffering, suggests that the symbol of divine suffering entails three "object-referents": God, the human, and the world ("God's Wounds: Structure and Dynamism in the Christian Symbol of Divine Suffering," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. University of Chicago Divinity School, 1994, 46-48). One cannot limit the idea of God's affectivity to just one of these terms, since God suffers because of, for, and with humanity always within the context of the entire creation (cf. Ibid., 82).

76 Moltmann, God in Creation, 87.

77 Moltmann, The Way of Jesus Christ, 328-29. Hans Jonas prosecutes this same idea but takes it even farther. He agrees with the notion of zimzum, that God freely chose to cease being absolute by an act of self-restriction, whereby the space for creation was established ("The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice," The Journal of Religion [1987]: 11-12). He takes this so far, however, as to claim that God has "emptied" Godself to the point that God has no more to give to the world. The divine limitation, in other words, is complete. God only awaits for humanity to give back to God (Ibid.) Moltmann, of course, would deny that God's self-limitation exhausts God's power to redeem. By contemplating the divine withdrawal of zimzum from the perspective of divine love, Moltmann can claim that God suffers out of the abundance of the divine mercy and not out of the deficiency of divine power.
Understanding creation from the perspective of a suffering God includes a number of implications. First, God's Shekinah cannot be isolated as related only to Israel but must be expanded to encompass all of creation. As the loving creator, God indwells creation with God's Spirit of life. As a result, in the Spirit, God and creation mutually affect each other in a relationship of love. Second, since the creation suffers tragically and culpably, God's Spirit must participate in that suffering. The history of creation becomes the history of God's suffering. As God's suffering, however, history becomes the history of divine redemption and deliverance through the promises and hope given by God. Because the suffering God of hope does not offer mere recollection of what has been, the divine emancipation of creation cannot be construed as a restoration or recapitulation of some prior "golden age." Instead, God leads creation toward a new beginning, toward the hope of a new creation through the repetition of suffering and love.

God's suffering love does not manipulate or dictate but, instead, accepts and redeems human beings so that they might accept and love each other. God's love is a "love to the non-existent, love to the unlike, the unworthy, the

---

78 Moltmann, God in Creation, 96-97.

79 Ibid., 102.

80 Ibid., 207.

worthless, to the lost, the transient and the dead . . ."  

God's suffering love for the different and the oppressed seeks to shatter closed systems that thrive on homogeneity. Such systems develop an apathy that wounds the heart of God. Such an apathy is sin and provokes God's wrath, which is actually God's wounded love. God suffers the injustice realized whenever human beings ostracize the other or commit violence against a neighbor. God also suffers the sin of the one who rejects the divine revelation of love and commits the violence. Only when human beings accept the

---

82 Moltmann, Theology of Hope, 32. Pool refuses to limit the divine love to only one of the three traditional Greek terms. He maintains that God exhibits an agapic love in the divine humility evidenced in the merciful forgiveness of guilty human beings, a forgiveness that abjures the quid pro quo of retribution. God manifests an erotic love in the desire for the good of the other without any selfish motivations on God's part. Finally God expresses a philiac love in the divine offer of relationship and unity through the Spirit. God wishes for genuine reciprocity from humanity, a reciprocity based upon the willingness to relate to God without fear and without ulterior motivations (Pool, 101-109). These three expression of divine love disclose the close association between creation (agapic and erotic) and redemption (agapic and philiac).

83 Moltmann, The Future of Creation, 122-23. Fretheim states that, according to the Old Testament, divine grief (the divine wound) "is always what the Godward side of judgment looks like" (Fretheim, The Suffering God, 112).

84 Moltmann, The Spirit of Life, 134. Robert Oakes uses the biblical assertions concerning God's wrath as another means whereby one can argue for divine affectivity. He maintains that wrath, like love, is an emotion or has emotional significance; consequently, an apathetic God can no more be angry than have compassion ("The Wrath of God," International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion 27 [June 1990]:129-30). Oakes labels the classical theistic doctrine of divine impassibility the "Theologically Sophisticated Thesis" [TST] and the theopassional doctrine of
suffering God, believe in God's promises, and hope for the promised future of deliverance do they find the courage to live out in history the divine love. Only then will humanity realize that the history of the world is actually the history of God's suffering. Only then can humanity appreciate that when God most profoundly reveals Godself, there is the revelation of divine suffering, for example, the Egyptian enslavement of Israel and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Third Moltmann insists that ultimately only trinitarian language can adequately express the intimacy God desires to create between Godself and creation. Only when God is understood as Father, Son, and Spirit can one consistently divine suffering the "Theologically Naive Thesis" [TNT] (Ibid., 131). He identifies three fundamental grounds for the TST: divine immutability, divine incorporeality, and divine infallibility. With reference to the first, Oakes claims that one cannot find valid biblical support for absolute immutability. God's unchanging character concerns God's moral constancy and fidelity (Ibid., 133). Concerning the second, Oakes takes the classical theistic position that God is, or has, intellect, as evidence against the necessity for God to have any corporeal neurophysiology in order to have affective states (Ibid., 134). Fiddes agrees with Oakes that "pain experience" is not synonymous with "pain sensation" (Fiddes, 48). In response to the third ground, Oakes simply states that affective capacity is not synonymous with affective fallibility anymore that intellectual capacity is synonymous with intellectual fallibility (Ibid., 135). Oakes continues his argument by insisting that only a God with affective capacity can be interpreted as maximally great, that is, that God's moral perfection demands that God have the ability to respond affectively to creation (Ibid., 137).

85Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, 4; Moltmann, The Experiment Hope, 35.
do justice to the tension inherent in the divine/human relationship. A fuller comprehension of the extent to which God suffers for the sake of creation demands that God no longer be interpreted monotheistically as an absolute subject, as a dominating being or the domination of Being itself. Instead, God must be understood as love, a process of self-sacrifice and a relational unity of diverse manifestations. As creator, God the Father is other than creation, transcendent to it as the merciful but holy one. As Spirit, God indwells creation, giving it life and purpose through the intimacy of an immanent attachment. It is, however, ultimately as the Son that God reveals the true depth of the divine love and care.

In Christ, creation and redemption correlate through the power of embodiment. God's creation results in the reality of matter, the existence of earth, wood, rock, and flesh. God created, in his image, existing, substantial human beings, whom God told to be fruitful and bring forth real, fleshly descendants. The Christian idea of the incarnation of God in Jesus coheres with the principle of embodied creation. God becomes flesh, the real stuff of humanity, so that, in Jesus, God may suffer not only as God but as a man. In Jesus, God takes upon Godself "sinful, sick and mortal flesh," and consequently, in Christ "exploited, sick and shattered human bodies experience their healing and

86Moltmann, God in Creation, 1-2.
their indestructible dignity." In Christ, God turns God's face toward humanity as a sign of kindness and concern. On that face, human beings not only see God's gentleness but God's tears and the divine agony. In the ultimate ironic reversal, the face of Jesus in death most genuinely reveals the face of God. Moltmann contends that it is specifically in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus that one most clearly encounters the trinitarian, suffering, redeeming God, a God much different from the metaphysical deity of Parmenides and the absolute sovereign of classical theism. Consequently, Moltmann's theology of the suffering God inevitably centers on Christology and the cross. His theologia crucis takes on the trinitarian form of a patriologia crucis, a christologia crucis, and a pneumatologia crucis.

---

87Ibid., 245-46.

88Ibid., 221. Dietrich Bonhoeffer recognizes that the idea of incarnation always shatters every rational system of thought, primarily because it places the "once-ness" of particular revelation in historical event in tension with the supposedly universal, general truths of reason. Reason cannot adequately take into account the ontological significance of history and, therefore, attempts to translate ontology into axiology, exchanging event for value ("Concerning the Christian Idea of God," The Journal of Religion 12 [April 1932]:181-82). Since suffering is existential and eventful, one cannot say that Christ's suffering is just a symbol of divine suffering. Such symbolism depreciates suffering and insults the individuals for whom suffering is not just academic. In other words, the incarnation of God in Christ must have historical validity in order for one to speak intelligently about God's genuinely experiencing human agony.
Passiones Trinitatis ad Intra et ad Extra

Notwithstanding the dual origin of a theology of the passion of God in the complementary traditions of Hebraic and Christian thought, Moltmann centers his particular contributions to this theology squarely in the Christian context. He is, after all, a professing Christian in his personal piety and a Christian theologian professionally. For Moltmann, one cannot truly undertake a Christian investigation into the suffering of God without adopting in some manner both trinitarian and christocentric perspectives on the reality of God. Of the two perspectives, however, christocentrism legislates over the process primarily because the notion of God as Trinity actually evolves out of the attempts to interpret the significance of the Christ narratives in the New Testament. Moltmann contends that one can properly comprehend the New Testament revelation of Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God only by acknowledging the trinitarian model lying inchoate within the nuances of the story of the Christ event.

There can be no Christian theology that is not centered on the "lordship of the Crucified." The history of Jesus as the herald of the Kingdom of God, proclaiming God’s rule

---

89 Moltmann, The Way of Jesus Christ, 53.

90 Moltmann, The Gospel of Liberation, 84. "For responsible Christian usage of the word 'God', the Crucified One is virtually the real definition of what is meant with the word 'God'" (Jüngel, 13).
not only in language but in acts of forgiveness and healing, supplies the focus around which Christian theology must revolve.\textsuperscript{91} Jesus comes to the rich and poor announcing the love of God, whom he uniquely calls Father, and embodies the Father's kingdom in his sacrificial life of service and mercy. The sovereignty of God, then, finds expression, not in acts of absolute cosmic power or in displays of divine pyrotechnics, but in the gentleness and grace of Christ, which he reveals in his willingness to suffer with and for human beings.\textsuperscript{92} Consequently, the history of Jesus is the history of his passionate suffering, a suffering that reaches full concentration at the cross.\textsuperscript{93}

Moltmann categorically claims that the theology of hope must be interpreted as a \textit{theologia crucis}, since God's promises in Christ cannot be fulfilled without passing through the negative experience of the final act of suffer-

\textsuperscript{91}Moltmann, \textit{The Experiment Hope}, 70. Jüngel asserts that the failure of Christian theology to maintain a staurocentric (cross-centered) focus has resulted in its falling victim to the "dictatorship of metaphysics," a dictatorship that denied any discourse about God's perfection as including the potentiality to suffer (Jüngel, 38-39).

\textsuperscript{92}Moltmann, \textit{The Trinity and the Kingdom}, 70-71. Although Moltmann does not give extensive treatment to the relationship between divine suffering and divine forgiveness, the two ideas do correlate. Jean Galot relates them specifically with reference to how the necessity for forgiveness arises out of the actuality of divine wounding. He states that if God's love has not been wounded by the "offense" of human sin, then there is no need for forgiveness ("La révélation de la souffrance de Dieu," \textit{Science et Esprit} 31 [May-September 1979]:161).

\textsuperscript{93}Moltmann, \textit{The Way of Jesus Christ}, 151.
ing--death. Hope, founded in the historical death of Christ, therefore, separates faith from superstition and from progressive optimism. This separation obtains, however, only if Christ's death transcends the sphere of the merely human and holds definite implications for identifying the true God who implicitly participates in the pain of creation. If the death of Jesus represents just another innocent person falsely executed by the oppressive power of Rome, then the cross becomes one more example of the tragic character of life and holds no theological significance whatsoever. The uniqueness and power of Christ's sufferings ensue from the possibility that, in Jesus, God intensifies the divine self-humiliation and reveals divine power in weakness. Of course, if God cannot suffer, then one cannot accept the possibility of incarnation, and without a

---

94 Moltmann, *The Experiment Hope*, 57-58; Moltmann, *Man*, trans. John Sturdy (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 20. Bonhoeffer claims that faith in the crucified Christ as the Christ of God also critiques the idea of God as some type of working hypothesis in science, morality, philosophy, and even religion. In other words, he agrees with the process of secularization that has been developing since the Middle Ages, a process that eventuates in the theory that human beings can and must live in the world "etsi deus non dare-tur," as if there were no God. Bonhoeffer insists that only such an attitude allows humanity to encounter the true God revealed in Christ, the God who, as powerless in the world, offers the power of transforming love. Consequently, followers of God are "summoned to share in God's sufferings at the hands of a godless world" (*Letters and Papers From Prison*, ed, Eberhard Bethge [New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1972], 360-61).

suffering God, Christian faith comes to an end. If, however, God can indeed suffer, then there arises the possibility that the "divine kenosis which begins with the creation of the world reaches its perfected and completed form in the incarnation of the Son." When the Son of God takes on human flesh, he enters the flux of existence and opens the divine to the disasters that threaten all people.

Of course, Moltmann recognizes that he cannot avoid the difficulties that accompany a theory of God that includes the possibility of a genuine enfleshing of the Son, but he does want to circumvent the metaphysical problems evoked by traditional attempts to account for how Jesus can be both divine and human. He maintains that the conventional approaches to Christology have focused either on Jesus' divinity, usually explained by some sort of "two-nature" metaphysic, or on Jesus' humanity, usually identifying him as some great apocalyptic teacher. Moltmann intends to develop what he terms a "social" Christology, understanding Christ's

---

96Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 22.

97Ibid., 118. Küng rejects any theory of the incarnation that posits a divine necessity. The incarnation cannot be understood *de jure* but only *de facto*. As he states it, "... God is under no obligation to become anything" (Küng, 455). This use of obligation certainly raises interesting implications, however, if one were to understand obligation from a Caputoan perspective. Could God truly be said to be love, and, yet, not find Godself with an obligation? While not denying the reality of divine freedom, can one not still maintain that God does, indeed, discover that obligations "happen," even to the deity? This issue will be further developed in the concluding chapter of this thesis.
divinity and humanity within the context of his intimate fellowship with the Father and with the disenfranchised, the oppressed, and the sick. Moltmann reinterprets the "two-nature" Christology of orthodoxy by relating the notion of "Christ's divinity" to the biblical formula "only begotten Son" as an expression of Christ's uniqueness and the notion of "Christ's humanity" to the biblical language "the first-born among many brethren" as an expression of his solidarity with humanity. A social Christology would understand all of the above as symbols for communicating the intimacy of the relationship between Jesus and the Father and between Jesus and suffering humanity.

The New Testament narratives do present Jesus as a theos aner, a divine miracle worker who reveals God's power over creation. His many miracles evidence his being both

---

98 Moltmann, The Way of Jesus Christ, 71.

99 Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, 120. D. G. Attfield attempts to explain how Jesus could be divine and human by postulating a certain type of modalism whereby the infinite God can attend to various roles simultaneously without being directly conscious of each ("Can God be Crucified? A Discussion of J. Moltmann," Scottish Journal of Theology 30 [1977]:51-52). As a result, the Logos in Christ can maintain the traditional attributes of classical theism without, however, the incarnate Jesus' being aware of them (Ibid., 55). Consequently, Jesus did not know that he was being crucified as God the Son and could, therefore, come down from the cross (Ibid., 57). Only in this way can Jesus be said to suffer truly as a human. Of course, Moltmann will have nothing to do with such an interpretation, since it denies the conscious suffering of God, the only kind of suffering that genuinely expresses divine love. Christ's suffering as human is not diminished simply because it is voluntary suffering; Christ's suffering as divine is exalted for that very reason.
Messiah and Son of God. One must recognize, however, that Jesus' miraculous works are consistent with his revelation of the Kingdom of God. When interpreted within the context of God's new creation, sickness, demonic possession, and death are symbols of the unnatural "powers of destruction" that have usurped God's position as lord of creation and attempt to undermine God's compassion for humanity. In this sense, then, Christ's miracles are not unnatural or supernatural acts of divine omnipotence; they are, instead, "the only truly 'natural' thing in a world that is unnatural, demonized and wounded."\(^{100}\) With the appearance of the suffering God in Jesus of Nazareth, "the sick and the possessed emerge from the darkness into which they had been banished . . ."\(^ {101}\) Given the reality of God's compassion for the fallen creation and the embodiment of the compassionate God in Christ, one should not be surprised that Jesus does not offer only "the consolation of the beyond" but seeks to heal the pain and wounds that characterize this earthly, fleshly existence.\(^ {102}\) Jesus's most powerful miracle of healing takes place at the cross, where, through his sufferings, God offers the healing and comfort that not only affect existence in the flux of history but also offer the

\(^{100}\) Moltmann, The Way of Jesus Christ, 99.

\(^{101}\) Ibid., 105.

hope of the promise that the flux does not necessarily end in the abyss. Consequently, Jesus does not heal "only through 'power' and 'authority' but also through his suffering and helplessness."  

Ecce Homo! Ecce Deus!  

Jesus' salvific healing through suffering cannot be construed as merely another human tragedy but must be received as an act of God. In his suffering, therefore, Jesus actually reveals both humanity and divinity. The life and death of Christ not only reveals who God is and what the kingdom should be, but in doing so, actually reveals what the world is--godless and disastrous. Jesus discloses the powers of destruction and gives them names: law, sin, and death. Christ also acknowledges the freedom and righteousness that God effects through the voluntary sacrificial suffering of Christ.

---

103 Moltmann, The Way of Jesus Christ, 110. Fiddes suggests two corollaries that attend any comprehension of God's suffering as psychologically comforting to the person in pain. First, God must be in some manner victorious over the suffering. In human experience, one usually finds that comfort comes most powerfully from the other who has suffered but has not been overwhelmed or destroyed by the pain. Second, God must be said to suffer universally and not only in the cross event. If the cross represents the sum total of God's pain, then God has a restricted range of sympathy (Fiddes, 32).

104 Moltmann, The Crucified God, 205.


106 Ibid.
 Office of the Son whereby law, sin, and death are overcome. Through his fellowship with suffering, sinful humanity, he establishes humanity's fellowship with his Father, because the intimacy between the Father and Son cannot exist without that intimacy's being extended to all creation. The extension of that intimacy is nothing less than the love of God, which willingly suffers on behalf of the beloved. God gives Godself in Jesus and does not withdraw that gift even in the face of the cross. The donation that God makes of Godself to humanity in Christ liberates humanity from the curse of the law, the alienation of sin, and the hopelessness of death. The irony in this soteriology stems from God's taking the very forces that destroy humanity and using them against themselves. In other words, only through suffering does God overcome suffering and only through death does God offer eternal life. This irony of the cross demands a trinitarian discourse in order to give it any semblance of intelligibility. Consequently, Moltmann seeks to plumb the depths of the mystery.

107Ibid., 54.

108Moltmann, The Way of Jesus Christ, 175. Fiddes maintains that Moltmann's "great contribution" to the theology of a suffering God is his insistence that God reveals Godself most fully at the cross. The being of God cannot be other than that manifested in the Christ event, a being that graciously accepts human suffering and, in doing so, offers comfort and redemption (Fiddes, 135).

of the cross by examining how Jesus' death involves the Father and the Spirit in the economy of redemption.

A "meditatio crucis" cannot take place without a meditatio trinitatis, primarily because "the doctrine of the Trinity is the conceptual framework that is necessary [in order] to understand [the] history of Christ as being the history of God."\textsuperscript{110} Adopting a Kantian idiom, Moltmann proclaims that the concept necessary for perceiving the cross event is the idea of Trinity, and the perception of God as Trinity comes mediated through the cross event.\textsuperscript{111} He recognizes, of course, that traditionally the doctrine of the Trinity has been given over to inflated speculation. It certainly has evidenced everything questionable in the history of ontotheology; however, Moltmann denies that one simply can put an end to metaphysical speculation within the context of Christian theology without offering something in its place.\textsuperscript{112} A cruciform understanding of Trinity offers both a critique of metaphysical theology while simultaneously avoiding the fall into total nihilism. Such an understanding introduces a radically new perspective, the truly


\textsuperscript{111}Moltmann, \textit{The Crucified God}, 241; Moltmann, \textit{The Future of Creation}, 75. According to Morse, Moltmann designates four main descriptions of God: God as future, as person, as crucified, and as triune (Morse, 110-11).

\textsuperscript{112}Moltmann, \textit{The Crucified God}, 216.
"radical theology" of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ as an expression of the real suffering of God.\textsuperscript{113} Moltmann refuses to conceive of the Trinity as "a closed circle of perfect being in heaven."\textsuperscript{114} He seeks to replace such a "trinity of substance" with "a social doctrine of the Trinity,"\textsuperscript{115} a doctrine complementary to the "social" Christology addressed above. A social Trinity implies that God as Father, Son, and Spirit share a unity of relationship, a fellowship that can only be termed "love." "God is love," therefore, should be interpreted as God's trinitarian history brought to unique expression at the cross. If God is love, then God must be active; God must be an event, the event of open fellowship among the three "persons" of the Trinity realized historically in order to include the other of creation within that unity. In opening the divine self to fellowship with the otherness of creation, however, God concomitantly opens the divine self to suffering. Consequently, the history of the suffering of Christ reveals the history of the suffering of God as Trinity.\textsuperscript{116} In the crucified Christ, one encounters the "image of the invisible God." The suffering Jesus "is God, and God

\textsuperscript{113}Ibid., 39, 218.

\textsuperscript{114}Ibid., 255.

\textsuperscript{115}Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, 19. Cf. Jüngel, 382.

\textsuperscript{116}Moltmann, The Future of Creation, 81.
is like this";\textsuperscript{117} consequently, discourse on the Trinity, predicated upon the dialectical nature of the crucified Christ, prohibits theology from deteriorating into mere speculation upon "heavenly riddles."\textsuperscript{118} In other words, "the Trinity is no self-contained group in heaven, but an eschatological process open for [humanity] on earth . . ."\textsuperscript{119} Language about the trinitarian history of God, therefore, remains concrete language, language seeking understanding about the historical death of Jesus the Christ as the revelation of "the history of [God's] love and liberation," a history inculcated into the eschatological dynamics of divine promise and hope.\textsuperscript{120}

According to Moltmann's theory of Trinity, one cannot diminish the divine love by interpreting it as an ahistorical ideal but must comprehend it as "an event in a loveless, legalistic world . . ."\textsuperscript{121} Through the trinitarian love exemplified in the suffering and death of Christ, God absorbs the guilt, death, and abandonment of human history and makes it part of the divine history. One should not, therefore, think of "God in history" so much as one should

\textsuperscript{117}Moltmann, \textit{The Crucified God}, 205.

\textsuperscript{118}Ibid., 207.

\textsuperscript{119}Ibid., 249.

\textsuperscript{120}Ibid., 255.

\textsuperscript{121}Ibid., 248.
think of "history in God." One may, however, think of the event of divine love in Christ as a "history of God," specifically history as mission, as the sending of the Son in order to suffer with creation. Through his surrender to the Father's will, Christ sacrifices himself for the sake of the godless and the guilty. The Father gives the Son up to death, literally betraying him and abandoning him to suffering. Yet, this betrayal is not passively accepted by the Son; instead, the Son actively betrays himself and agrees with the Father that only through divine participation in death can the divine love be revealed. Through the history of the divine betrayal, therefore, God experiences the suffering and death of Jesus. The death of Jesus, while not being the "death of God," results in "death in God"; that is, the cross symbolizes that God can accept the non-being of death as a divine potentiality and, thereby, genuinely risk the powerlessness of divine pathos without ceasing to be God.


123Moltmann, The Way of Jesus Christ, 172-73; Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, 7, 81; Moltmann, The Future of Creation, 94.

124Moltmann, The Crucified God, 207. Waclaw Hryniewicz agrees that God's love and power are most clearly, albeit paradoxically, conspicuous at the cross. He claims that the gospel of John does not "by chance" unite the glorification of Christ with his death on the cross ("Le Dieu souffrant? Réflexions sur la notion chrétienne de Dieu," Eglise et Théologie 12 [October 1981]:345). That God would be willing to suffer for and with God's beloved ones indicates the
Moltmann categorically rejects any form of patripassianism. The Father does not suffer and die on the cross; only the son experiences that pain. The Father, however, does suffer grief over the death of his Son; he actually suffers the death of his Fatherhood in the death of Christ. The cross, therefore, is an event within God, between the Father and the Son. This event of divine suffering and betrayal reveals the tear in the Trinity that opens a wound through which humanity may enter into the fellowship of God. The tear in the Trinity produced by depth of divine power and divine freedom. He does not, however, limit God's suffering love to the cross event. Instead, he sees the cross as a unique intensification of the divine love that "penetrates all of the history of creation" (Ibid., 346).

125 Moltmann, The Crucified God, 243. Galot disagrees with Moltmann at this point. He does not believe that God's fatherhood is lost in any way. On the contrary, he holds that at the cross the father and son are intimately united, perhaps in their most poignant unity (Galot, 169).


One of the weaknesses of Moltmann's Trinitarian theologia crucis concerns his propensity to overemphasize the intra-trinitarian nature of the cross event. He tends to limit the cross to a bipolar transaction involving only the Father and the Son, leading to a functional binitarianism. Not only does the Spirit appear to take a subordinate role in Jesus' death, but also creation as a whole and, certainly, humanity seem to have little, if any, significance for the death of Christ. Fiddes critiques Moltmann at this very point, accusing him of limiting the unique suffering of the cross to an intradivine economy (Fiddes, 63, 137). Fiddes argues that one must factor into the equation of divine
the cruciform suffering of Christ results not only from the pain and rejection that Jesus undergoes out of love for humanity. Certainly, Jesus' sufferings on the cross are amplified by the human circumstances evoking them. Jesus comes in love to heal the grief and guilt of godforsaken individuals. He identifies with the oppressed, the diseased, the impure, the liminal, and the rejected. He, himself, comes to humanity as one of these people; he is himself oppressed, ostracized, and rejected by the religious and political powers. His is not a natural death, the logical end to a finite existence. Instead, he dies as one "despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3).

Yet, Jesus is not only rejected by human beings; he is also rejected by the Father whom he loves and obeys even unto death. Jesus' cry of dereliction--"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"--is the "open wound" in every Christian theology. Moltmann finds it significant that Jesus' exclamation of divine rejection is the only utterance

---

suffering the variables of human influence and response. God as love cannot only suffer specifically by choice, out of the divine freedom, but must also choose to risk the divine self in potential suffering not explicitly chosen. That is, God as love must be passive to injury inflicted by the beloved other (Ibid., 61). Consequently, the cross involves not just the Father and the Son but all of humanity, symbolized in the incarnation of the Son as human.

---

127Moltmann, The Crucified God, 63.

128Moltmann, The Way of Jesus Christ, 166.
directed to God in which Jesus does not call God "Father." In the death on the cross, Jesus suffers the loss of the intimate father/son relationship that has grounded the fellowship of the Trinity. The love that binds them together becomes a curse, transforming love "into infinite pain and into the suffering and endurance of death."  

The godforsaken character of Jesus' death manifests two enigmas about the trinitarian history of God’s love. First, it reveals that the cross is an event between God and God: "there God disputes with God; there God cries out to God; there God dies in God." The cross, therefore, discloses that otherness and differentiation cannot be excluded from deity. The Trinity has within itself otherness and difference that establish the basis for the love of Father, Son, and Spirit but that also establish the potentiality for that love to be injured. As a result, the trinitarian love metamorphosed into a curse by the abandonment of Christ continues to demonstrate the intimacy of the Father and the Son. Since God voluntarily forsakes Jesus out of love for humanity, and since Jesus, also out of love for humanity, voluntarily sacrifices himself to the curse of divine rejection, the relationship between Father and Son is "most

129 Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, 78.
130 Ibid., 80.
inwardly united through the Spirit of sacrifice."  

The Father, Son, and Spirit, in other words, are not united in some eternal bliss of apathy but are one in their willingness to suffer because of, for, and with their suffering creation. The event-ful otherness of God, eventuating in the redemptive suffering of the Trinity, may be expressed "in the simple formula which contradicts all possible metaphysical and historical ideas of God: 'God is love.'"

The cross event, consequently, reveals that God is not immutable, existing in some static perfection beyond the flux of history. In the trinitarian event of divine suffering, God changes; God cannot remain unaffected by the pain of Christ and the loss of the Son. The Trinity allows itself to be affected by pain and death and, in doing so, creates the possibility for "all the godless and the godforsaken [to] experience communion with [God]." Through the cross, then, the Trinity extends the divine fellowship to everyone, drawing all people to the suffering God who loves with passion and forgives with mercy, and, in doing so, "creates a new covenant for those who . . . are Godless

---

132Moltmann, The Experiment Hope, 81.


135Moltmann, The Crucified God, 276.
and Godforsaken."\(^{136}\) Moltmann adamantly denies any attempt to explain the divine transaction at the cross as Christ's attempt to propitiate an angry Father according to some *quid pro quo* theory of retribution. The cross reveals the "compassionate God," a God willing to endure the pain of the violence and injustice perpetrated by God's beloved creation.\(^ {137}\) The cross manifests God's faithfulness to an unfaithful humanity and his willingness to suffer the contradiction of a world opposed to God's desire.\(^ {138}\) The eternal love through which the Father, Son, and Spirit love each other is the same love that motivates the Trinity to transform evil, sin and rejection "into goodness, grace and election."\(^ {139}\) As a result, "the guilty are not called to

\(^{136}\) Moltmann, *The Experiment Hope*, 78.


\(^{138}\) Ibid., 136.

\(^{139}\) Ibid., 137, 212. Moltmann sometimes adopts too optimistic an eschatology. Here is one of those times. The notion that God will "transform" evil into goodness fails to appreciate the difference between bringing good into reality in spite of evil and the actual metamorphosis of evil into good. The eschaton will not be a transformation but a new creation; Moltmann, himself, insists on that distinction elsewhere. In other words, God will not be able to bring the process to conclusion without there being loss. Sin can be forgiven and forgotten; however, not all suffering depends upon moral rebellion. As John Barbour professes, there is suffering that ensues from the tragic element of existence, an element that he accuses Christians of denying by reducing suffering to sin ("Tragedy and Ethical Reflection," *The Journal of Religion* 63 [January 1983]:12). He claims that a better Christian response emphasizes that the disasters of tragedy are not final; however, they are real and cannot be synthesized or justified (Ibid). Tragedy questions every attempt to systematize an ethic, because it
account and penalized... [but] are drawn to love and liberated"; in other words, sinful humanity is forgiven. Not only is humanity forgiven, however, humanity is also healed through the suffering of Christ on the cross. In Christ, God takes humanity into the Trinity and in doing so heals humanity of its wounds. In Christ, "God has assumed sick, weak, helpless and disabled human life and made it a part of [God's] own eternal life." As Isaiah, the prophet, states it, "... by His scourging [humans] are healed" (Isa. 53:5).

The second enigma ensuing from the crucifixion of Jesus as the Christ of God concerns the epistemological implications of divine suffering and death. Ontotheology has always posited a God causally related to creation in such a way that knowledge of and language about that God could be established on an analogical relationship between God and creation. Traditionally, this analogy has been ontologized reveals that responsibility and moral culpability are not synonymous (Ibid., 4). This moral ambiguity suggests that suffering sometimes occurs because existence itself is imperfect, not necessarily immoral, but structurally fallible (Ibid., 10). There is even a tragic dimension to the cross, when one considers that Jesus dies an innocent victim of the political and religious structures of the First Century. That kind of suffering cannot be transformed into anything else. It is and will always remain tragic suffering, a sign that all is not right with creation.

140 Moltmann, The Gospel of Liberation, 86.

141 Moltmann, The Spirit of Life, 191. Jüngel claims that in the divine freedom God has chosen not to be God without being human (Jüngel, 37).
as the analogia entis. If such an approach exhausts the possibilities of knowing God, then only a theologia gloriae obtains, a theology of glory that purports to have full and direct knowledge of the deity. If, however, the biblical categories of a theologia crucis are allowed to legislate over theology, then a more dialectical structure of epistemology develops.

Moltmann contends, in something of a Hegelian manner, that the cross reveals that God must primarily be known through that which is God's opposite. God may be known only in godlessness; his righteousness may be known only in that which is unjust; and his will may be known only "as grace

\footnotesize{142Moltmann, The Crucified God, 28. Eckardt accuses Moltmann of developing a "theology of glory" himself, at least in the Lutheran sense of that term. According to Eckardt, Moltmann fails to consider seriously the issue of atonement, which is the focus of Luther's "theology of the cross" (Eckardt, 22). This lack of a theory of atonement results in two questionable aspects in Moltmann's theology. First, he limits Christ's death to an event involving only God. Second, he does not interpret suffering as motivating faith but works (Ibid., 26). For Luther any theology of works is actually a theology of glory. Although one can agree with Eckardt concerning Moltmann's disallowing the cross event to be more inclusive of creation, especially humanity--an inclusivity that would be more consistent with a traditional understanding of incarnation--one must question the critique that Moltmann fails to allow adequately for faith. Moltmann certainly does not interpret faith precisely as Luther does within the context of substitutionary atonement; however, Moltmann does predicate his call for political and social action by the church upon the belief in and commitment to a God who genuinely participates in human suffering. Moltmann does not want faith to deteriorate into nothing more than an acquiescence to a set of propositional truths.}
among the damned." The cross betrays an alethic dynam-
ic, un-covering the God in a blasphemer, in a sinner accord-
ing to the law, in a rebel revolting against the injustice of the political \textit{status quo}, in one abandoned by God, and in an event in history and creation in which God is present as absent. Consequently, the cross destroys all human ar-
rogance in claiming to be able to know and speak about God. The crucified Christ, as the revelation of the Trinity, con-
tradicts "everything [humans] have ever conceived, desired and sought to be assured of by the term 'God'." One might say, that the language of a biblical \textit{theologia crucis} deconstructs every attempt to construct a metaphysics of presence through an ontotheological, transcendental signi-
fied. No theology can be totalized without remainder; the suffering of God at the cross is God's participation in the flux of human existence and, therefore, is God's contri-
bution to keeping the play in play.

\begin{itemize}
\item[143] Moltmann, The Future of Creation, 78.
\item[145] Ibid., 37. Richard Bauckham interprets Moltmann's dialectical principle "as the epistemological corollary of the nature of God's love" (Bauckham, "Moltmann's Eschatology of the Cross" \textit{Scottish Journal of Theology} 30 [1977]:306). It cannot be normatized into a general criterion of knowledge but must be applied uniquely to the manifestation of divine love through God's willingness to reveal Godself in that which is alien and other to God.
\item[146] Although a \textit{theologia crucis} does critique traditional ontotheology, it does not deny completely the real presence of God in relationship with humanity. As Fiddes asserts, there can be no genuine suffering without some form of
Since "suffering is overcome in suffering, and wounds are healed by wounds", the negative can never totally be synthesized by the positive. The Nothingness of being may be mitigated by the negation of the cross; however, that "Nothingness . . . is never entirely identical with the negation that has been drawn into the process." The difference and alterity inherent in the negative can never be overcome in some Promethean Aufhebung, since God as Trinity never destroys difference and alterity in some sort of metaphysical monism. The suffering and death in God at the cross always respect the reality of Nothingness even in the redemptive process of overpowering that Nothingness through the pain of love. As long as there is a divine remembrance of the cross, there can be no total defeat of the negative. The salvation offered, then, by the crucified God is a meontology of the "not yet," the non-being of the outstanding promises for which wounded humanity continues to hope. The issue of hope, however, moves one from the death of Jesus to resurrection; therefore, Moltmann cannot avoid addressing the significance of the belief that the same Christ, crucified and abandoned by God, is brought back to life by the God who abandoned him.

147Moltmann, The Experiment Hope, 34.
Moltmann insists that Christian faith necessitates a belief in resurrection, or it is "neither Christian nor faith." The "starting point" for Christian faith is the bipolar event of cross and resurrection, the belief that the same Jesus that was crucified as an outcast outside of Jerusalem is the same Jesus who is restored to life through the power of the divine Spirit. If Christianity expresses a "messianic theology," that is, truly has eschatological implications as a theology of promise and hope, then the resurrection as an eschatological event occurring within the context of the transient process of history becomes significantly important in understanding the results of the divine suffering. The tension between cross and resurrection keeps christology open and in constant need of revision as human beings attempt to understand the "restless promise" (promissio inquieta) disclosed in the new creation begun in Christ's reversal of death. God's claim to "make all things new" (Rev. 21:5) is inextricably tied into the christocentric hope: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20). On the basis of the inter-relationship among cross, resurrection...
tion, promise, hope, and new creation, the *theologia crucis* always includes a *christologia viae*, specifically the way into the future (*ad-ventus*) of Christ.\(^\text{153}\)

The resurrection as an eschatological event and advent addresses the future of Christ as the future of the Trinity and of redeemed humanity. The goal of this eschatological history is the annihilation of death and the creation of a new reality in which the conflict between being and non-being is overcome.\(^\text{154}\) In order to achieve this *annihilationem nihili*, the Trinity takes history into itself and through divine vulnerability heals and liberates humanity not only from the arrogance of narcissism and the evil of godlessness but also from the suffering and injustice that mark creation.\(^\text{155}\) Since God has opened the divine self to the negativities of the flux, God's deliverance of wounded and guilty humanity is correspondingly God's self-deliverance. Since God in the Shekinah glory went into exile with Israel and was delivered in their restoration, so, too, God in the glory of Christ's death and resurrection suffers the injustice and sin of godless humanity but also awaits divine self-liberation in the promised victory over the law.


\(^{155}\)Moltmann, *The Future of Creation*, 95, 164.
sin, and death.\textsuperscript{156} For God, as for humanity, however, deliverance does not disengage the necessity of suffering in the interim between the resurrection of Christ as the promise of freedom and the final fulfillment of that promise in the eschaton.\textsuperscript{157}

\textsuperscript{156}Moltmann, \textit{The Trinity and the Kingdom}, 60. The notion that God actually benefits in some way from divine redemption runs contrary to the essence of classical theism. Such a notion suggests that God changes and that the world is necessary for God to be God. The basic characteristics of immutability, aseity, and eternity deny that God can in any way depend upon creation for God's divinity or can in any way be genuinely affected by it. Fiddes attempts to answer this problem by distinguishing between self-existence and self-sufficiency. God does not require creation in order to be God; however, God may well choose to need creation in order to be the God that God desires to be (Fiddes, 67). Since God has chosen to love humanity, God has chosen to need humanity and has opened the divine self to genuine reciprocity with the world. Consequently, God has chosen not to be immutable or timeless. Instead, God has established a relationship with beloved humanity through which God enters into temporality and has accepted a divine future in the sense of having "unrealized possibilities" (Ibid., 77). God opens Godself to being changed by the action of the beloved and to awaiting the beloved's response to the divine love. Divine suffering requires temporality in two respects. First, God's suffering involves an expectation of the actualization of possible injurious responses made to the divine love. Second, God's suffering involves the expectation of divine liberation from suffering through the redemption of human suffering (Ibid., 78). Fiddes agrees here with Moltmann's theory that the divine Shekinah participates in salvation from suffering. As a matter of fact, Fiddes, himself, writes of the significance of divine "glory" as involving the futurity of God. He references the biblical idea that God "comes" to God's glory (Ibid). Since he contends that "glory" signifies both God's revealed character and God's real character, he confesses that one can say that through suffering God comes to fulfillment; that is, God becomes the God that God desires to be (Ibid., 79-80). To put this in Caputoan language, one might say that God chooses to place God's being into the flux of history.

\textsuperscript{157}Moltmann, \textit{The Future of Creation}, 39.
Of course, Moltmann recognizes that any language about resurrection poses immediate epistemological problems concerning whether there can truly be any genuine referent to such discourse. Christology does in fact raise perplexing questions with reference to the believability of incarnation and resurrection given the critical historiographical presuppositions that characterize the modern and even postmodern milieux. Moltmann asserts that the fore-structures of contemporary philosophy of history depend eminently upon the notion of analogy, the idea that every historical claim must be determined by its analogy to present experience.\textsuperscript{158} This "belief by analogy" betrays an Enlightenment modernism that relies upon an empiricism and an existentialism that prejudice the "absolutism of the present subject."\textsuperscript{159} In other words, no event can be accepted as historical that does not cohere with the experiences of the individual in her/his contemporary, that is, present experience with reality. Consequently, this modernist historicism is another example of the metaphysics of presence and another instance of the prejudicing of identity over alterity, a prejudice operating most powerfully in historical and scientific positivism.\textsuperscript{160} Christ's resurrection, therefore, is rejected precisely because it is not the "same" as the

\textsuperscript{158}Moltmann, \textit{Theology of Hope}, 175.

\textsuperscript{159}Ibid., 173-74; Moltmann, \textit{God in Creation}, 131.

\textsuperscript{160}Moltmann, \textit{The Way of Jesus Christ}, 228.
historical events experienced in everyday reality. The alterity, or radical otherness, of the resurrection must be rejected and excluded, since it contradicts the "cultural imperialism" of contemporary historical metaphysics.\footnote{Ibid., 244.}

Moltmann maintains that the resurrection of Christ can never be understood historically, if history is defined by the metaphysics of presence. Christ's resurrection can never be construed as one more historical possibility in the world; it is, instead, something new, something alien to the rational process of history. It is, indeed, an event announcing God's new creation; therefore, it must be comprehended within the structures of divine promise and hope.\footnote{Moltmann, \textit{Theology of Hope}, 179.} Christ's resurrection cannot be interpreted by analogy with other historical events but is, itself, an analogy for the meontic dimension of God's promised eschaton. Consequently, the resurrection contradicts "all rigid substantio-metaphysical definitions of the common core of similarity in world events . . ."\footnote{Ibid., 180.}

Moltmann seeks to overcome the positivism of modernist (and, perhaps, postmodernist?) metaphysics by refusing to separate epistemological concerns from ethical and eschatological ones. In other words, he returns to Kant's three questions and insists that the resurrection of Christ de-
mands that the issue of knowing always accompanies the issues of doing and hoping.\textsuperscript{164} Within the broader context of these questions, the issue is "not whether or not resurrection is possible but rather whether the just God could have raised this blasphemer and agitator from the dead."\textsuperscript{165} If God raised Jesus, who was condemned by the law, cursed as a sinner, and abandoned to suffering and death by the Father, then this event exhibits the genuine righteousness of God, "the right of unconditional grace which makes righteous the unrighteous and those without rights."\textsuperscript{166} Through the resurrection of the godforsaken Jesus, God announces to all godforsaken human beings that they have been accepted and will themselves experience a future resurrection into the new creation promised by the Father in the Spirit.\textsuperscript{167}

The resurrection of Christ proleptically instantiates in history the final realization of the Kingdom of God. The God who is love takes into the divine self suffering, sin, death, abandonment, rejection, guilt, tragedy, and the curse of the law and negates them on the cross. Then, through the resurrection, God proclaims that liberation awaits all who hope in the promises given by the God of love. These prom-

\textsuperscript{164}Moltmann, \textit{The Way of Jesus Christ}, 237, 242; Moltmann, \textit{Theology of Hope}, 166.

\textsuperscript{165}Moltmann, \textit{The Experiment Hope}, 57.

\textsuperscript{166}Moltmann, \textit{The Crucified God}, 176.

\textsuperscript{167}Moltmann, \textit{The Experiment Hope}, 57.
ises come to every individual as individual and guarantee a continued existence in the uniqueness of "somatic identity," that is, the real embodied existence of human person.\textsuperscript{168} Moltmann refuses to allow resurrection to be spiritualized in some Bultmannian demythologized manner, which denies the genuine "fleshiness" of human existence. Since individuals are embodied, flesh and blood beings, the resurrection cannot be a destruction of that being, but a re-creating of it in the Spirit of love.\textsuperscript{169} If Jesus' death and resurrection reveal that God is love, that the event of Trinity is the acceptance of genuine otherness in its uniqueness and its quotidian reality, then the eschatological kingdom of God must be populated by entities who retain their alterity, entities whose names are known by God.\textsuperscript{170}

One should not think that the individuality of resurrection results in a kingdom of isolated individuals. On the contrary, the Kingdom of God bears resemblance to the being of God as Trinity. Just as God is Father, Son, and Spirit in eternal relationship, so, too, the new creation of resurrected humanity will be a community of intimacy. Just as Moltmann insists on a social christology and a social Trinity, he, also, insists on a social eschatology. Ultimately, eschatological resurrection results in the recre-

\textsuperscript{168}Moltmann, \textit{The Way of Jesus Christ}, 261.

\textsuperscript{169}Ibid., 256-57, 259-60.

\textsuperscript{170}Ibid., 261.
ation of human beings in relationship. In other words, through divine suffering, the God who is love will recreate a humanity expressive of divine love.\footnote{Ibid., 268.} The trinitarian history of God will reach fulfillment and history will end when sorrow is replaced with the joy of love and hope becomes reality.\footnote{Moltmann, The Crucified God, 278.}

\textit{Ubi Caritas et Amor, Ibi Spiritus Est}\footnote{According to Moltmann, an old Benedictine hymn contains the line "Ubi caritas et amor, ibi Deus est" (Moltmann, The Spirit of Life, 260). The line has been modified a bit in the title to this section in order to emphasize Moltmann's pneumatology as a \textit{pneumatologia crucis} and, therefore, a pneumatology of love (Ibid., 62).}

The recreation of humanity into a Kingdom of God, both in the historical approximations of the kingdom and ultimately in the eschatological fulfillment, results from the action of God's Spirit mediating the love of the Trinity to all people. The Spirit is the agent of recreation, the power of resurrection, the presence of the divine in the flux, and the eschatological adhesive that binds together the Trinity and humanity into a fellowship of love.\footnote{Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, 89.} The Spirit integrates human beings into the history of the Trinity and, thereby, gives them life and hope on the basis of the redemptive irony of divine suffering.\footnote{Ibid., 90.}

\footnote{Ibid., 268.}

\footnote{Moltmann, The Crucified God, 278.}
ipating in human suffering and death, the Spirit regenerates justice and mercy and, thereby, serves as "God's 'yes' in justice to the life of each and all . . . and the life of each with all . . . ."\(^{176}\)

The life-giving power of the Spirit finds its unique manifestation in the Spirit's union with Jesus on the cross. The Spirit suffers with and in Jesus just as the Father does. Whereas the Father suffers the loss of the father/son relationship in the divine abandonment, the Spirit suffers the ek-spiration associated with Jesus' death. At his death, Jesus "gave up his spirit" (John 19:30); that is, the Spirit, who gave Jesus life and empowered him for his ministry of healing and suffering, suffered the pain of the separation of Jesus from the Spirit at death.\(^{177}\) The suffering Spirit accompanies Jesus much like the Shekinah accompanied Israel. Consequently, the Spirit by necessity joins Christ in his sufferings as the "divine subject of Jesus' passion history."\(^{178}\)

Moltmann summarizes this trinitarian dynamics of suffering with something of an Augustinian vestigium trinitatis: God is love; therefore, God is the lover (Father), the beloved (Son), and the love (Spirit). This theology of love is, for Moltmann, a theology of the Shekinah, which is

\(^{176}\)Moltmann, The Spirit of Life, 143.

\(^{177}\)Ibid., 64.

itself a theology of the maternal aspect of the Trinity.\textsuperscript{179} One of the personal symbols used for how God involves humanity in the trinitarian history of love is the process of birth. Individuals are "born from the Spirit" as God's children. Consequently, the Spirit is the divine mother of the children of the kingdom, creating life and sustaining it through the Spirit's comfort and protection.\textsuperscript{180} The sufferings of the Spirit, then, may be compared with labor pains, the travail of the woman who, through suffering, brings forth new life.\textsuperscript{181} Once individuals have been born again after the Spirit, they experience the love and grace of the Trinity by being made an intimate participant in the familial dynamic of the Trinity. Where love is, therefore, there is the divine Spirit.\textsuperscript{182}

Carrying the maternal symbolism further, one can interpret the divine Spirit as providing the womb wherein God's new creation can live. Moltmann refers to the Spirit as the space within which life develops. The presence of God's Spirit should not, therefore, be distinguished as a temporal term denoting "nowness" but as a spatial term denoting "thereness."\textsuperscript{183} He refers to a Cabalistic tradition in

\textsuperscript{179}Moltmann, \textit{The Trinity and the Kingdom}, 57.

\textsuperscript{180}Moltmann, \textit{The Way of Jesus Christ}, 83.

\textsuperscript{181}Ibid., 179.

\textsuperscript{182}Cf. Moltmann, \textit{The Future of Creation}, 85, 108.

which one of God's secret names is "Makom, the wide space." If understood in this spatial sense, the presence of God's Spirit is the there where love, life and freedom exist as the power of community among God and individuals. One lives one's life in the Spirit; one prays in the Spirit; one loves in the Spirit. As a result, the Spirit acts not as an object of experience but as the medium through which experience occurs.

As the medium of experience, the Spirit provides the love and freedom needed in order to form genuine community. The community offered by the Spirit must exist in the interstices between the love that binds together into a unity and

---

184Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 43. Taylor refers to this secret name for God in his discussion of Barnett Newman's sculpture "Zimzum I." According to Taylor, Makom is a place that is no place, like the place defined in Newman's work (*Disfiguring: Art, Architecture, Religion* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992], 91).

185Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life*, 157. Pool writes of the divine anguish that characterizes God's suffering for humanity. He indicates that the word "anguish" derives from the Latin noun "angustiae" meaning "narrowness," with its verbal form "angusto" meaning "to make narrow." Divine suffering as anguish, therefore, could be understood as a divine restriction, a tightening or confining of the divine self brought on by the pain of rejection caused by rebellious humanity (Pool, 302). The irony of this linguistic genealogy when applied to Moltmann's theory of the Spirit is that through the restriction and narrowing of the divine grief God gives the Spirit as the "wide place" within which humanity may live and discover meaning. To a certain extent, this might be another expression of God's zimzum, the restricting of the divine self in order to allow for the space within which God's beloved creation can find space and time to be. Although he does not reference Moltmann's connection between Spirit and space, Pool does indeed refer to a new spatiality resulting from God's revelation through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Ibid., 485).
the freedom that respects the diversity of individuals comprising the community.\textsuperscript{186} The fellowship of the Spirit is always a unity-in-diversity, an intimacy that never seeks to homogenize the alterity and difference that ensue from the variety of existents that make up God’s kingdom. The Spirit seeks to establish a community of friends, of individuals who through the divine power of love may develop genuine relationships of mutual respect and self-giving. The Kingdom of God has as its basic law the "acceptance of others in their difference, for it is this experience of [one’s] neighbors . . . which is in line with the Christian experience of God."\textsuperscript{187} One might express the kingdom law another way, taking a cue from Augustine: "Ama et fac quod

\textsuperscript{186}Moltmann, \textit{The Spirit of Life}, 220.

\textsuperscript{187}Ibid., 258. Bonhoeffer classifies Jesus’ "being there for others" as the "ground of his omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence." One who follows Christ in faith participates in this being of Christ, which means, therefore, that followers of Christ must also "be there for others" (Bonhoeffer, \textit{Letters and Papers From Prison}, 381). Jesus clearly calls for a genuine "being there for others" in his second great commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mk. 12:31). As Pool indicates in his treatment of this commandment, Jesus does not say that one should love the other as if the other were oneself. To do so would be to denigrate the otherness of the other and collapse it into the sameness of the self. Such a collapse ensues from the false actualization of the erotic, whereby the other is absorbed into the self, resulting in oppression, manipulation, and the instrumentalization of the other (Pool, 247-49). Jesus’ calls for the other to be accepted as an-other self, a different self. Consequently, self-love cannot be the basis for loving the other (Ibid., 192-94). The basis for loving the other is the otherness of the other, the otherness of the other that results from the creation of otherness by the God who willingly risks the differences of creation in order to realize genuine reciprocity.
vis"; love and do what you like.\textsuperscript{188} Only this spiritual principle adequately instantiates the trinitarian vitality.

As Moltmann writes

The perichoretic unity of the divine Persons who exist with one another, for one another and in one another, finds its correspondence in the true human communities which we can experience--experience in love, in friendship, in the community of Christ’s people which is filled by the Spirit, and in the just society.\textsuperscript{189}

\textbf{Pro-Missio as Transformatio Mundi}\textsuperscript{190}

Moltmann resists turning theology into mere speculation or into some type of mental calisthenics that give intellectual pleasure but fail to impinge upon the real world of suffering and hopelessness. A suffering God theory that

\textsuperscript{188}Moltmann, \textit{The Spirit of Life}, 173. For some unknown reason, Moltmann actually misquotes Augustine’s statement. Augustine uses "\textit{delige}" not "\textit{amas}". As a matter of fact, "\textit{amas}" is generally used for a lower type of love, more in line with "\textit{eros}" or "\textit{cupiditas}".

\textsuperscript{189}Moltmann, \textit{The Spirit of Life}, 309. Although Gunton refuses to treat the Trinity as a transcendental, that is, as a model for all of reality (Gunton, 144), he does admit that trinitarian discourse offers a meaningful analogy for understanding all of reality. The notion of \textit{perichoresis}, the idea that the different persons of the Trinity share characteristics, might well function transcendentally in order to communicate the "dynamism of relatedness" that distinguishes every aspect of existence (Ibid., 165). He thinks that the personal, material, and cultural aspects of existence can only be properly understood if understood as inter-related (Ibid., 168). The inter-relatedness of the Father, Son, and Spirit symbolizes the unity-in-alterity that qualifies all divine creation (Ibid., 177, 211). As the Spirit seems to be the adhesive holding the unity of the Trinity together, so, too, spirit is the openness to God, other, and the world that can hold existence together, giving it integrity without homogeneity (Ibid., 187).

\textsuperscript{190}Moltmann, \textit{God in Creation}, 93.
offers only a language, a particular grammar for speaking and writing about the sacred or the holy, insults the dignity of existing human beings for whom suffering and death are not merely conceptual but existentially, real possibilities of living in the flux. Moltmann insists that the theologian of the cross can never be content with simply interpreting the world but must attempt to transform it according to the divine intent revealed in the trinitarian history of the suffering God.\textsuperscript{191} The \textit{theologia crucis}, then, should function iconoclastically, striking down every idol that usurps the power and love of God; in other words, a theology of the cross leads inevitably to a "politics of liberation," because the "liberating memory of the crucified Jesus compels Christians to a critical political theology."\textsuperscript{192} If God has truly taken human history into the divine process of

\textsuperscript{191}Moltmann, \textit{Theology of Hope}, 84. Hall declares that a theology of suffering must actually be a "theology as suffering" (Hall, 23). The Christian community cannot adequately do theology without confronting the world in all of its darkness. In other words, Christian theology cannot be merely an intellectual exercise or a promise of "cheap hope" (Ibid., 27). Willis makes the same point when he denies that trinitarian theology is speculative and affirms that it is actually a "theoretical reflection of the concrete, sensuous praxis of God," specifically the praxis revealed at the cross (Willis, 117).

\textsuperscript{192}Moltmann, \textit{The Experiment Hope}, 118. Fiddes agrees with Moltmann that a theology of the suffering God leads inevitably to a critique of all oppressive and dehumanizing structures (Fiddes, 89). Since God has identified with the suffering Jesus, God has revealed that God is not the source of suffering nor apathetic to suffering (Ibid., 90). The revelation of God in Christ, therefore, should lead followers of this God to protest against every \textit{status quo} that fails to alleviate human misery.
trinitarian suffering and redemption, then God must intend for members of the kingdom created through that suffering and love to instantiate the love and liberation promised in the Spirit within the real structures of society and culture.\textsuperscript{193}

The theology of the suffering God should never be interpreted as an acquiescence to human pain; that is, it cannot lead to a political and social apathy in the face of the intense misery experienced by human beings. The cross of Christ has been used as an opiate to desensitize human beings into accepting their oppression and grief and not rebelling against them.\textsuperscript{194} Christ’s example on the cross can never be perverted into an excuse for passively bearing one’s afflictions or inactively accepting the afflictions of others, awaiting the consummation of the ages in some "invisible world in the beyond . . ."\textsuperscript{195} The example of Christ should motivate his followers to chafe against the evil and suffering that subvert God’s love and to seek ways

\textsuperscript{193}Moltmann, \textit{The Experiment Hope}, 40. Willis concurs with Moltmann that the trinitarian God levels a "protest against human suffering by entering concrete historical practice against it" (Willis, 103).

\textsuperscript{194}Moltmann, \textit{The Crucified God}, 49.

\textsuperscript{195}Jürgen Moltmann, \textit{Hope for the Church}, ed. and trans. Theodore Runyon (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), 22. "A faith in God which justifies suffering and injustice in the world and does not protest against it is inhuman and even satanic in its effects" (Moltmann, "The 'Crucified God': God and the Trinity Today," 27).
to protest that evil and ensure liberation from it.\textsuperscript{196} Moltmann goes so far as to identify the Christian protest against suffering and oppression with Albert Camus' "atheistic" philosophy of rebellion.\textsuperscript{197} Since Jesus did not go

\textsuperscript{196}Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, 48. Walter Brueggemann discovers in the Hebraic tradition a similar movement of protest against evil and suffering. He maintains that Israel shared with other ancient Near Eastern religions a certain "common theology" built around the notions of God as creator, as covenant maker, and as the basis for order ("A Shape for old Testament Theology, II: Embrace of Pain," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly 47 (1985):395-96). Israel, however, moved past this "common theology" with reference to the issue of pain, specifically with reference to how God and Israel should respond to pain and suffering in creation. A tension develops, then, between acknowledging the "structure-legitimation" of the "common theology" and the need to complain about and censor the experiences of suffering (Ibid., 399). Brueggemann locates the explicit protest against misery in the Hebrew practice of lament, the intentional expression of an unwillingness to accept the status quo when it has become illegitimate and destructive (Ibid., 401). In the lament, an individual, such as Job, lays the problem of sin and suffering at God's feet and expects that God is to deal with the problem (Ibid., 403). The lament, therefore, reveals that Israel does not consent to the will of God regarding suffering and demands that God participate in the process of overcoming suffering (Ibid., 406). Israel requires its God to be different from other Gods, just as its God expects it to be different from other nations. Yahweh shows that difference by joining Israel in the ambiguities of suffering (Ibid., 415).

\textsuperscript{197}Moltmann, The Crucified God, 222. Bauckham points out in his article on Moltmann's contribution to theodicy that Camus' critique of Christianity centers on its acceptance of suffering as a means of redemption. Camus argues that the notion of a suffering God does not contribute to an attitude of revolt against meaningless pain ("Theodicy from Ivan Karamazov to Moltmann," Modern Theology 4 [1987]:89). As Bauckham notes, however, Moltmann's theology emphasizes the dialectic between cross and resurrection, a dialectic that motivates identification with suffering for the purpose of resisting it (Ibid., 92-93). Jan Lochman accepts the traditional atheistic protest against God as a necessary accompaniment to the protest against meaningless suffering.
gentle into that good night, neither should Jesus' followers. Yet, as Jesus went into that good night in order to overcome death through the irony of the divine reversal of resurrection, Jesus' disciples should also be willing to take upon themselves the suffering and agony of the world so as to realize in history genuine approximations of God's promised liberation.

If one truly lives in the community created by the Spirit of love and liberation, then one of necessity becomes more and more indignant over the injustice, the dehumanization, and the oppression that characterize human society.\textsuperscript{198} One who exists in the love of God "finds the suffering of others insufferable,"\textsuperscript{199} primarily because living out of the suffering love of the Trinity results in a "passionate devotion to life" that rejects all structures of destructive power.\textsuperscript{200} In other words, experiencing the

\begin{quote}
He contends, however, that traditional anti-theism concerns the apathetic God of classical orthodoxy, a God that does nothing to alleviate suffering and is unaffected by it. Yet such a protest does not "really reach the living God" who takes suffering into the divine self and seeks to overcome it through the processes of history ("The Hope: God's Suffering in Man's Struggle," \textit{Reformed World} 36 [1980]:8). Believing in the suffering God of love naturally leads individuals to say no to "'principalities and powers' of sinful destruction and oppression" (Ibid.).
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{198}Moltmann, \textit{The Passion for Life}, 42-43.

\textsuperscript{199}Moltmann, \textit{Hope for the Church}, 30.

\textsuperscript{200}Moltmann, \textit{The Passion for Life}, 22. Gunton recognizes that one of the reasons why Christianity has not always been at the vanguard of social critique and political change is its failure to accept rigorously the trinitarian nature
hope and promise mediated through the suffering love of the Trinity leads Christians to feel acutely the contradictions created by the hopelessness inherent in unjust and apathetic constellations of power.\textsuperscript{201} Christ's cross reveals that there can indeed be a new creation, a redemption of this world through the power of God's creative love, and that revelation ensues in a dissatisfaction with anything less than that new creation. Christian hope, arising from the cross of Christ and the love of the Spirit, always incites\textit{resistance to violence}\textsuperscript{202} and resolves "to free [the earth] from exploitation, oppression and alienation."\textsuperscript{203}

For Moltmann, one can encounter this type of Christian rebellion in the political activism of Liberation Theology. Liberation Theology appreciates the significance of history for encountering God and calls for the church to take an active role in history, specifically through political resistance and the social criticism of dehumanizing, demonic constellations of power. Historical knowledge of God de-

\textsuperscript{201}Moltmann, \textit{God in Creation}, 268.
\textsuperscript{202}Moltmann, \textit{The Spirit of Life}, 155.
\textsuperscript{203}Ibid., 112. Cf. also, Moltmann, \textit{The Future of Creation}, 167 and Moltmann, \textit{The Way of Jesus Christ}, 193.
pends essentially on "the praxis of justice," which finds expression in the struggle for economic equality, in the desire for human dignity, in the seeking after peace, and in the overcoming of hopelessness. All of these attempts, taken together, comprise a genuine desire for "the justice of compassion," a justice that centers on identifying with widows and orphans and working toward the realization of restoring rights to the poor and the disenfranchised who have been denied their basic human integrity.

For Moltmann, Liberation Theology recaptures the social dynamics inherent in Christ's proclamation and manifestation of the Kingdom of God. Jesus directs his message to everyone, for the love of God is universal; however, his message finds more willing hearers among the poor, the outcast, the sick, and the "non-persons" in Jewish society. Jesus has compassion upon the sufferings of these liminal people and heals them physically as well as spiritually. He touches their wounded flesh and restores it; he comforts their anxious spirits and gives them courage; he blesses bread and distributes it to them in order to fill their empty bellies. Such "christopraxis" reveals the messianic

\[204\] Moltmann, The Spirit of Life, 110.
\[205\] Ibid., 142.
\[206\] Moltmann, The Way of Jesus Christ, 99, 148; Moltmann, The Experiment Hope, 55.
\[207\] Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom, 70.
ministry of divine love and conveys to Jesus' disciples that they, too, are "sent first of all to unimportant people, people of 'no account.'"^208 He commands his disciples to follow his example and participate in the sufferings of rejected, unclean, and forgotten people, to take into account those of "no account." Being a disciple of Jesus, therefore, requires that one go forth without provisions as a barefoot beggar depending completely upon God for food and shelter, proclaiming the good news to the poor and the oppressed.^209

The good news of Christ's messianic message informs the disenfranchised that they have a dignity given to them by a loving and passionate God. They no longer must accept the oppressive system that denies them meaning and a hopeful future. They may stand and reject oppression and resist violence as children of God.^210 They can realize that the gospel that "justifies the godless and the God-forsaken, the poor and the despised . . . [is] directed against all the self-righteous, the self-assured and the great."^211 They can also, however, in love and with grace realize that the kingdom is inclusive, embracing everyone from the oppressor to the oppressed. The kingdom offers everyone hope through

---


^209Ibid., 100.

^210Ibid., 101.

the promises of the faithful loving God, and those promises must be communicated in word and deed throughout all cultures. In other words, the "pro-missio of the kingdom is the ground of the missio of love to the world." The missio of the kingdom, however, is the political and social realization of the resurrection shown in the "freedom of faith," which "urges [humanity] on towards liberating actions, because it makes [humanity] painfully aware of suffering in situations of exploitation, oppression, alienation and captivity." 

If one were to express Moltmann's theologia crucis and its trinitarian structure of love and liberation in more postmodern terminology, one would have to say that Moltmann develops a Christian ethic of alterity, a christocentric and christopractic lifestyle in which love is directed not only toward those who are similar but also to those who are different. God has accepted each individual in her/his difference through the atoning suffering of Jesus Christ for the express purpose of each individual's learning to accept the other in her/his difference. Moltmann contends that one of the most threatening problems facing Christianity

---

212 Moltmann, Theology of Hope, 224. Morse contends that Moltmann's theology presents a "promissio quarens missionem," promise seeking a mission (Morse, x).


214 Moltmann, The Way of Jesus Christ, 118.

today concerns the apparent inability of followers of Jesus to adhere to his example and respect the person who is "alien and contradictory" to themselves.\textsuperscript{216} Such an un-Christian Christianity has contributed to the development of "an 'apartheid' society."\textsuperscript{217} It contributes to the continuation of xenophobia, sectarianism, and oppression, all of which ensue from a lack of genuine "Godly" love that will suffer the difference of the other.

Christ, himself, admits in Matthew 5:43 that it is no achievement whatsoever to love one's neighbor, the individual who is similar, for whom loving means no sacrifice and very little possibility of suffering. Such love of neighbor is just a veneer layered over the real object of devotion—oneself. In other words, to love the same is nothing more than loving the self that one finds in the other. It is not genuine love for the other in her/his otherness. It is quite another thing to love one's enemies, however, to open oneself to the other whose difference may be threatening to the status quo or the comfortable conformity of the homogenized community.\textsuperscript{218} Yet, if one lived out of the trinitarian revelation of love, one must follow Christ's example and embrace all people. Christ's love for the other, even the other who does not return love, is a creative love, a love

\textsuperscript{216}Moltmann, \textit{The Crucified God}, 25.
\textsuperscript{217}Moltmann, \textit{The Passion for Life}, 21.
\textsuperscript{218}Moltmann, \textit{The Future of Creation}, 79.
centered not in *quid pro quo* but in the unilateral dynamics of sacrifice intended to effect reconciliation.\(^{219}\) Had God limited the divine love only to that which was other but same, God’s love would be forever trapped within the relationships among Father, Son, and Spirit. God did not choose to limit the divine love in such a way but willingly suffered the risks associated with the dilation of divine grace in order to cultivate fellowship with the godless and the guilty.\(^{220}\)

For Moltmann, only when one responds to God’s call for community can one fully discover one’s own individuality. Human existence does not take place *in vacuo*; consequently, the development of the individual self cannot occur outside the reciprocity of significant relationships with others. Only when one is willing to confront the other, to seek solidarity with other in the midst of the contradiction of alterity, can one gain self-knowledge.\(^{221}\) Moltmann predi-cates this social view of self on the biblical idea of the *imago dei*. The image of God on earth cannot be reduced to the individual person but must be extended to embrace corporate humanity, best illustrated in the unity-in-diversity of the sexual relationship between man and woman. Consequently, God cannot be known on earth through some type of theo-


\(^{221}\)Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 244.
logical, philosophical, or mystical introspection. Instead, God, who as Trinity is relational, must be known in the "social experience of the self and the personal experience of sociality." Sociality, therefore, becomes the operative term in Moltmann's theology, since he moves from a social christology to a social Trinity and finally to a social humanity. Throughout this social theology, Moltmann insists that difference, alterity, suffering, love, and liberation are terms that cannot be avoided when speaking of God, humanity, or redemption. Only a suffering God can heal a suffering humanity and establish a community of love that respects otherness and instantiates that respect in politico-ethical resistance against every force that seeks to enslave the individual.

"The Veil of Tears": A Parable of Forgiveness

In Mark's account of Christ's passion, the narrator relates how at Jesus' death the temple veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was split from top to bottom (Mark 15:38). This curtain formed a barrier between the people of Israel and the redemptive presence of God. Only one person once a year was allowed to cross that boundary. On Yom Kippur, the High Priest stepped behind that cloth partition and sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice onto the "mercy seat" of God. No one else at any other time

\[^{223}\text{Moltmann, The Spirit of Life, 94.}\]
could breach that barrier, and, therefore, a distance constantly remained between God and humanity.

One of the traditional ways by which Jews express deep, negative emotions is by tearing their garments. The ripping of clothes symbolizes that the person’s heart and soul have been lacerated by intense pain and piercing sorrow. The temple veil could be considered the divine garment, the cloak of God, so that its shredding can be interpreted as the Father’s expression of infinite grief over the death of the Son. The tear in the veil signifies the tear in the being of God, the divine wounding that exposes God’s heart and, uniquely, allows everyone access to the trinitarian compassion. In taking upon the divine self the sufferings of the God-forsaken, the Trinity invites the God-forsaken to forsake their God-forsakenness, to enter through the divine tear, and find fellowship with the God who is love. The God without being, as a God of suffering love, is a God beyond the veil, who promises to all that they can avail themselves of the hope and healing that only come from a God who is no longer cloaked but who has carried the burden of non-being and made being the bearable lightness of grace.
CHAPTER SIX

THE BINDING (OF) GOD: THEOPASSIONISM AND DIVINE HETEROPHILIA

Foucault's Pendulum ends with Diotallevi dead, Belbo dead, and Causabon awaiting what he knows is his inevitable death. Diotellevi eventually succumbs to the cancer that he interpreted as his punishment for playing games with God's Word. Belbo dies suspended from Foucault's Pendulum, having been hanged as a human sacrifice by the Diabolicals, who demanded from him what he could not give--the final answer to the secret of the Plan. Causabon witnesses Belbo's demise, and although he escapes immediate danger, he knows that it is but a matter of time before the Diabolicals track him down and demand from him what he, too, cannot give. Even if he, unlike Belbo, were willing to confess that the Plan was fabricated, that it resulted from the too-arrogant hermeneutical play of interpretive jesters, he knows that such an admission would only convince them of the "reality" of the Plan and of his possession of the secret. After all, the declaration that there really is no secret is always the best "proof" that there is.

As he awaits his anticipated destiny, Causabon reflects on the entire sordid affair. He realizes that he and his friends, through their "nasty game,"¹ had offered a plot to

¹Eco, 618.
people who were frustrated because they could not discover one. When people need a plot, they will accept one even if it is non-existent, and in accepting it make it real by actually participating in its dynamics.² Causabon theorizes that such naivete ensues from a desire to excuse oneself, to cleanse oneself from the guilt of whatever failure one feels. If there really is a plot, then the way reality develops is not anyone's fault; no one is actually responsible. Things happen because they happen or because they were scripted to happen a certain way.

The best plots, however, are the ones that can never be fully known, the secret plots that forever remain enigmatic. Consequently, human beings so often find themselves rejecting secrets that upon revelation seem to be lacking, disappointing in their clarity, or trite in their offer of salvation. Causabon suggests that such a rejected secret was the Christian claim to redemption predicated upon the incarnation. In the midst of the first-century's "yearning for mystery," a man came proclaiming himself to be the Son of God enfleshed, teaching a redemption based on suffering and love, and evoking theological speculation into the nature of God as a Trinity and not as a simple monism.³ Yet, most rejected that secret, thinking it finally to be too superficial, lacking in genuine mystery. In the end, there simply

²Ibid., 619.

³Ibid., 620.
had to be more, another secret, a more secretive secret beyond that one.

What is so intriguing about the "plot" of Foucault's Pendulum is that the process of plotting is unavoidable and ubiquitous. Although not everyone consciously sets out to contrive an admittedly false schematic of world history as the three friends in the novel do, all human beings individually and communally spend their lives constructing, discovering, and longing for plots, configurations of existence that offer meaning, purpose, salvation, and, perhaps as Causabon contends, some rationalization whereby one may be excused from responsibility. Such has been the motivation behind metaphysics. Human beings have the innate need to put the world together, to connect the different pieces of existence according to some structure or principle(s) that can lend identity to persons and groups, give direction for living, and offer plausibility and legitimacy to "reality." Such a need may be called a "blessed rage for order," the human refusal to accept that finally there is no pattern to existence, the unavoidable im/possibility of always uncovering or inventing some grid, map, or story that offers security from the chaos that forever seems to infect reality.

_________________________

Individuals simply cannot live without some "system," some means whereby they can plot their position in what is so often an anxiety-inducing journey. Consequently, everyone has a plot, a world structure that serves as the primary architecture for her/his life. The question can never be, therefore, whether one will have a world structure or not, but what world structure(s) one will accept as legislative for existence. To express it in Caputoan terms, one never faces the possibility of destroying muthoi, that is, plots or stories, but one faces the constant in/decision as to which myths to accept, for myths are overcome only by other myths or structures of reality. These structures inculcate every aspect of existence from economics to psychology, politics to aesthetics, and jurisprudence to theology. They are the attempt to totalize, to find a whole, to weave together out of the diverse threads of the flux some type of pattern. This process reveals what David Hall terms the erotic drive--the drive for ultimate meaning, a meaning that depends explicitly on the realization of fullness, completion, and totality.\(^5\) To know the meaning, the true meaning, of anything is to know that thing in its fullness. If there is any remainder, any lack or possibility unrealized, then one cannot presume to have the true, i. e. final, meaning of anything. For example, one cannot write the

definitive biography of one's life as long as one lives, since every attempt to emplot one's story, to glue together the episodes of one's life into some coherent narrative, must leave open the possibility that some future episode will occur that might irrevocably transform the interconnections of previous experiences. Only after death, when there are no more possibilities for life, could one genuinely hope to compose a proper story of one's life. Of course, the whole issue becomes moot, considering that at death one loses the possibility of reflecting on and writing about one's life. Consequently, one realizes that meaning is evanescent, volatile, always subject to the kinetics of the flux, to the uncertain mutations that the process might promote.

Hall recognizes that reality disallows the realization of the erotic intent, that fullness and totality cannot be attained within the mutable process of temporal existence. He insists that one can never weave together a complete pattern or configure a perfect plot, because there are always gaps in the texture, loose ends unfit to be tied, and episodes that contradict the narrative logic of any story. He calls such aporias "ironies" and sets them against the erotic drive for totality. In other words, Hall interprets life as a tension between eros and irony, between the desire on the one hand for the completion and the unity of

---

meaning and on the other hand the realization that life remains incomplete and meaning plurivocal. The tension between eros and irony should lead to the recognition that there are always holes in every whole, that meaning is always a task to be accomplished and not an accomplishment upon which to rest.

The tension between eros and irony contaminates every attempt at creating/discovering structures, even theological structures. What has been written above concerning the basic human drive for unity and meaning applies equally to every human attempt to comprehend and communicate any type of transcendent reality or sense of significant Alterity, be it God, the Holy, or the Sacred. In other words, as theorists always traffic in models of and for human existence, so, too, theorists who purport to "do theology" must manipulate various models of and for God. God does not impinge upon reality immediately but through various media conditioned by the linguistic, historical, and social contexts in

7I have chosen to utilize Marion's affectation concerning how to refer to the deity as the deity and not as conceptualized through some semiotic system. Writing sous rature, as Caputo has correctly pointed out, still involves one in the differential play of dissemination; however, it does offer an idiom, at least, for attempting to rethink the relationships among various conceptual ciphers. Consequently, I will use this approach in order to make something of a Kantian differentiation between the "phenomenon" and the "noumenon." I, of course, do so only with fear and trembling.

and through which they come. Contrary to Hart's assertion that linguistic mediation—the trespass of the sign—is itself a sign of fallenness, one should recognize that if G̃d is characterized by "real" alterity, then all encounters with G̃d must involve some third term (word and/or event) that acts as a conduit through which G̃d reveals G̃d's difference. As there is no "theory-less" reality, so, too, there is no "theory-less" theology. As a result, any reference to G̃d must depend upon a certain network or idiomatic milieu that alleges to reveal something about G̃d.

Even for the atheistic theorist who seeks to deny any reality to G̃d, her/his denials must be made through language, from a particular historical perspective, and out of a definite cultural situation. When one claims that "God is dead," one must "flesh out" that claim by identifying which "God" is being referenced, that is, what model of G̃d is being critiqued. Since modeling G̃d is analogous to modeling any aspect of existence, the tension between eros and irony obtains, and one must admit that there is always a remainder, something in the model that fails to come to completion, a lacuna that might or might not ever be filled. Consequently, in every theism and every atheism, there are holes that restrict any erotic claims to absolute certainty. In every plot, therefore, there is irony, some detritus that the system cannot digest. As Hart maintains, irony is always the trope of openness, the "way" (tropos) the flux...
moves in order to ensure against the premature closure of any structure. Consequently, there lies tacit within the structuring of every structure of Gëd or world something that cannot be voiced or written, something that escapes the logic of the system, leaving the system with a certain tacit-urnity. As Caputo would say, this tension between eros and irony results in the im/possibility of decision, the un/decidability inherent within every attempt to plot the flux, an un/decidability predicated upon the recognition that not everything has been re-cognized.

Mark Taylor offers in his deconstructive a/theology one of the most provocative postmodern reminders of the indeterminacy that marks every structure, specifically every theological structure. He is correct when he contends that traditional ontotheology has refused to admit the impossi-

bility of totalization, that there can never truly be a "systematic" theology. His immanent critique of Western metaphysics reveals the shadows that have lurked always in the corners of the systems, the places where the light of reason fails to shine, those dark alleys that ontotheolo-

gians try to avoid out of embarrassment and fear. He en-
courages postmodern theologians to seek out those shadows, to inhabit them, and to attempt to think the "nots" that have lain there unthought. To think theology by thinking not but by not not thinking offers another perspective from
which to engage the ironies of incompleteness that demand epistemological humility on the part of all theorists.

Taylor desires to develop what he calls a "nonnegative negative theology that seeks to think what Western onto-theology leaves unthought."\(^8\) Ironically, one could say that Western ontotheology leaves nothing unthought, not even the thought of nothing. Indeed, in the most positive of positive theologies and the most negative of negative theologies, God as Being, as a being, as neither Being nor a being, as beyond Being, as Nothing, and as beyond Being and Non-Being have already been thought or thought as unthinkable. In other words, Taylor does not offer a theological novelty, but as he admits, his a/theology "explores the space between the alternatives that define the Western ontotheological tradition."\(^9\) A/theology, therefore, is neither theistic nor atheistic; it cannot be expressed as a kataphatic nor an apophatic theology; and ultimately it swings like a pendulum between the two twentieth-century theological extremes--Karl Barth and Thomas J. J. Altizer.\(^10\) Barth and Altizer, however, personify for contemporary theology the two extremes of God's being a totaliter aliter, wholly other in God's transcendence, or of

---


\(^9\)Taylor, Disfiguring, 316.

\(^10\)Ibid., 316-17.
God's being totally present, radically incarnate and immanent within the very stuff of secular, historical existence. Taylor's continual struggle between Kierkegaard and Hegel represents philosophically the same dynamic. Consequently, when he admonishes postmodern theorists to think that which has been left unthought but which cannot be thought without simultaneously not being thought, he expresses through a different and decidedly enigmatic conceptual framework the perennial problem of the tension between transcendence and immanence (hereafter abbreviated as "transim").

Taylor desires to avoid Hegelian syntheses as well as Kierkegaardian bifurcations, since neither both/and nor either/or suffices to affirm the postmodern experience of "transim." For Taylor, this experience is predominately linguistic and relatively esoteric. Since it takes place after the "death of God," it is an experience of the unending semiotic play of dissemination, an experience of the immanence of signs and the transcendence of difféance, transcendence as differing and deferring. He, like Derrida, argues that the transcendence of difféance cannot be construed in religious or theological terms, and that although the language of difféance appears homeomorphic to apophatic theology, it is not a negative theology; however, Taylor insists on understanding language as the "divine milieu," as

---

11Taylor, Denegating God, 601.
the incarnation of the Word in word. Furthermore, he con-
fesses that although he thought he could do away with Gød, he cannot.\textsuperscript{12} In typical Taylor fashion, he writes:\textsuperscript{13}

While I no longer believe in God, I can no longer avoid believing in the sacred. Belief in God becomes impos-
sible and belief in the impossible unavoidable when a certain piety of thinking brings one to the edge of the unthinkable where the sacred approaches by withdrawing then withdraws by approaching. The sacred "is" the denegation of "God," and God is the denegation of the sacred.

"Transim" here comes to expression as the withdrawal and the approach of the sacred, which functions as the condition for the in/effability of the concept "God." The sacred allows the concept "God" by denegation, a negation that negates without ceasing to be a negation, a negation that ostensibly avoids the "higher affirmation" of an Hegelian reconcilia-
tion of opposites.\textsuperscript{14} Yet, Taylor calls denegation "radi-
cally affirmative."\textsuperscript{15} But radically affirmative of what?\textsuperscript{16}

Notwithstanding Taylor's dependence upon Derrida and his "armed neutrality" when it comes to questions about the existence or non-existence of Gød, I think that finally

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12}Taylor, "Denegating God," 592.
  \item \textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 594-95.
  \item \textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 595.
  \item \textsuperscript{15}Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{16}Caputo maintains that, for Derrida, denegation is "radically affirmative of what is to come, of the im/possible, the absolute surprise--which also implies the unending translatability of the name of God" (personal correspondence with the author, 9 February 1995).
\end{itemize}
Taylor cannot deny that "transim" actually references some type of divinity. In other words, although a/theology is indeed a per-version, sub-version, and con-version of Western ontotheological structures, it ends up itself being another version of the world and of God. Taylor develops another and different plot; he rearranges the old stories into new configurations; he offers to postmodern thinkers an alternative worldview that nonetheless continues to traffic in the same issues. Jeffrey Dudiak agrees that Taylor's deconstructive a/theology is indeed another worldview that seeks to make sense, to bring order, to reality. He states that Taylor actually believes that the old world structures have lost their power, that they have failed to accomplish what they promised, and that, therefore, they must be replaced with new "paradigms" that might be more successful. Taylor's a/theology seeks to contribute a new paradigm, a new architecture of meaning and purpose, a new framework around which to build a different understanding of world and God.

Although Taylor contends that "the death of God signals the exhaustion of the theoretical and practical possibilities inherent in the ontotheological tradition," his reconstructed paradigm of theology actually continues to use those possibilities as the raw material out of which to

---

build an alternative model of/for the world and God.\textsuperscript{18} He agrees with Derrida that the language of metaphysics is all that any theorist has to work with, that deconstruction actually feeds parasitically off of the ontotheological tradition it critiques. Consequently, whatever paradigm the a/theologian develops, it always will be contaminated with the very tradition it seeks to deconstruct. That explains, for example, why Taylor insists on using christological language for his notion of linguistic incarnation. He writes like a postmodern John, who instead of enfleshing the logos, inscripts it. Reducing the incarnation of the Word to the divine milieu of language and narrowing "divine suffering" to the wound of the loss of self-presence in the dissemination of the word only re-writes the tradition; it does not break with it. Taylor remains caught within the web of Western thought, a web woven out of the polarities that he, himself, so wants to avoid; however, he cannot, as evidenced by the above reference to "transim." Taylor remains caught in the bi-polarity between transcendence and immanence, between the opposing forces of eros and irony, of fullness and emptiness.

As Dudiak argues, Taylor continues to operate according to the basic schemas of dialectical thinking, oscillating between, always between.\textsuperscript{19} Although Taylor claims that one

\textsuperscript{18}Taylor, "Denegating God," 596.

\textsuperscript{19}Dudiak, 20-23.
cannot continue to map reality in a genuinely linear fashion, that is, that discourse about origin and goal, about creation and consummation, about beginning, middle, and end is no longer acceptable on this side of the "death of God," he, himself, cannot avoid using that discourse. Taylor indeed writes in media res, in the middle of things. He identifies deconstruction as "postmodernism raised to method"; yet, he understands method as meta-hodos, as being on the way between beginning and ending, as a journey from one point to another. He claims that writing as the incarnation of the Word is the "divine milieu"; however, "milieu" derives from medhi, meaning "middle" or "between," and leu meaning "place," "locus," or "stead." One of the Greek derivatives of medhi is "meta," meaning "between," "beside," or "beyond." Consequently, writing as the "divine milieu" cannot be reduced just to the self-referentiality of the middle voice, as Taylor contends when he claims that writing is not about anything but is the thing itself. Instead, writing is always mediational, the place in the middle between other places, the time in the middle between other times, a meta-place or meta-time, or, perhaps, even a meta-physic! If one considers that "physics" derives from bheu, meaning "to grow," "to be," or "to dwell," then one

---

could easily argue that Taylor understands writing as "be-
ing" in the middle, "dwelling" in between.

The beauty of Taylor's mediational view of language is that it does emphasize that totalization does not exist, that the "between" always points to the lack of closure. Since everything is mediated, there is no immediacy, that is, no total presence. That human beings cannot encounter reality or God or other selves without some mediating structure or outside of some milieu--the most significant one being language--offers a genuine criticism of the metaphysics of presence, the ontotheological presumption that one indeed can escape the limitations of history and culture and achieve the unity and absolutism of clear and distinct ideas or totally transparent experience. Actually some of Taylor's best arguments on this subject come from his earlier deconstructive writings rather than from his later ones. If one reconsiders the articles comprising Deconstructing Theology, one will encounter Taylor's "dialogical relation-
ality," which does not deny truth and meaning but merely contextualizes both within the relative constructs of cultural facticity. Truth and meaning precipitate out of the continual process of relationships among individuals, contexts, cultures, eras, and texts. Through relationships

21Taylor, nOts, 71.

22Cf. Taylor, "Toward an Ontology of Relativism" in Deconstructing Theology, 48.
of dialogue--that is, through sharing logoi--individuals can come to knowledge about self, world, and even Gödel.

Actually what Taylor exemplifies in his earlier essays, as well as through his later works in which, explicitly and implicitly, he continues to work out his earlier dynamics, is an expression of the tension between eros and irony that one might discover in Gödel’s Theorem or Heisenberg’s Indeterminacy Principle. Interestingly enough, Hart refers to the significance of Gödel’s Theorem for understanding what Derrida seeks to accomplish through his deconstruction.23 According to Gödel’s Theorem, it is impossible for an axiomatic system to be both complete and consistent, since there always will be at least one element in the system that the system cannot account for and still maintain its logical integrity. In other words, in every system, there will be at least one item left out, or else everything will be brought in at the expense of disintegrating the system’s coherence.

Gödel’s theorem certainly does not claim that systems cannot be developed; it only states that no system can be totalized. I think that one also could add to this Theorem the Indeterminacy Principle in quantum physics, which states that at the microcosmic level of reality, one cannot know both the velocity and the location of subatomic particles. One may know one or the other bit of information, but not

23Hart, 83-84, 154-55.
both simultaneously. Both of these contemporary principles, then, manifest the same "truth" about human knowledge: one can know something without having to know everything. The fact that I cannot include everything in my system or that I cannot tell you everything about a particular experience or phenomenon does not mean that I cannot develop incomplete systems nor that I cannot communicate something about reality. Since I am, dwell, and grow in the middle of things and since my language always structures reality from limited perspectives, I can never come to absolute knowledge; however, asymptotically I can make certain claims that purport to be rational and referential.

What I think happens to Taylor as he moves from his earlier essays to his later ones, is that he betrays a certain melancholia over the loss of the very pretensions to presence and certainty that he so vehemently critiques. In other words, I read in some of Taylor's works a kind of Cartesian Disappointment in the inability to reach clear and distinct ideas that make truth and certainty synonymous.  

I think he also manifests what might be termed a Positivistic Longing, the desire for a more precise correspondence between language and reality, between signifier and signi-

24This phrase comes from Caputo, given in personal conversation about Taylor's a/theology and Richard Bernstein's notion of Cartesian Anxiety.
fied, between concept and existence. That one cannot reach final certainty and cannot live out a naive realism between sign and thing seem at times to lead Taylor to a skepticism that depends too much on the traditional weaknesses of rationalism and empiricism. Just because one can never end the semiotic carnival of différence, the play of differing and deferring, does not mean that one cannot in that playing un-cover something genuine about world, self, or Gd. It is just that whatever one un-covers always remains in some way covered. The best one can hope for is to increase the translucence of one's world structures, to avoid total opacity, and to be content never to attain total transparency.

What Taylor needs to make more explicit in his work is that his criticisms are aimed at plots, structures of Gd, self, and world and not necessarily at those realities themselves. In other words, certain models of Gd are dead and should remain dead. As Marion writes, the conceptual idols crafted throughout the history of Western metaphysics should be exposed for what they may possibly be--lifeless.

25"Consciousness, therefore, deals only with signs and never reaches the thing itself. More precisely, the thing itself is not an independent entity (be it 'real' or 'ideal') to which all signs refer but is itself a sign" (Taylor, Erring, 105). This quote illustrates that Taylor still operates in the context of a traditional empiricism. This is his a/theological version of the "two-world" view between mental ideas and reality. The same difficulty Taylor wrestles with here drove Berkeley to subjective idealism and Hume to skepticism.
re-presentations of a God who has never presented Godself as that kind of God. Taylor’s a/theology then could be understood as an idoloclastic theology, as an expression of a protestant principle, always protesting against every image of the divine. Likewise, certain images of self, history, and language also need re-vision; they demand to be looked at from other perspectives. The autonomous self of the Enlightenment, the paradigms of history as nice, neat configurations of temporal episodes, and the notions that absolute meaning and intellectual closure can be linguistically attained all need to be re-examined in the light of alternative plots or worldviews. It is when Taylor moves from the critical, iconoclastic aspects of his a/theology to the more prescriptive and reconstructive aspects of that thought that I begin to feel the need to deconstruct Taylor’s deconstruction. It is then that his particular world structures become untenable, that his referential claims about reality and God seem to become problematic. It is at those points that Taylor’s plot seems to thicken, to lose some of its play of elasticity, and to harden into some type of postmodern orthodoxy.

Of course, Taylor does recognize some of the implications of the above critique. He acknowledges, for example, that the death of the Enlightenment view of self does not ensue in the death of the self but in the reconfiguration of the self as a relational being, something akin to Moltmann’s
social view of self. As discussed above, Taylor has also recently confessed that he cannot do away with "God" or Găd. When Taylor contends that he finds belief in Găd impossible and then admits that the impossible is unavoidable, does he not intimate that he does indeed still "believe" in Găd, that a/theology does not finally walk the line between theism and atheism but eventually transgresses that line and opts for a particular structure of Găd? That eventuality seems to be consistent with Taylor's unavoidance of "transim." With all of his discourse about the "not" that is not thought, about the denegation that negates itself and thereby affirms itself as negative, about "mazing grace" that remains in flux, "pursued by an alterity that neither exists nor does not exist but is beyond both Being and nonbeing,"26 about the "terrifyingly ancient" that never was and the future perfect that can never be, and about the lack inherent in language that always demands that one think otherwise, that one thinks not by not not thinking, does Taylor not ride the pendulum of "transim?" Does he not continue to play with something else, something other, perhaps Someone other that will not let him go? Ultimately for Taylor, then, the "death of God" may always be the "death of "God," and never the "death of Găd."

Notwithstanding his claims of noncommitment to either theism or atheism, Taylor, in some manner, must purport to

26Taylor, Disfiguring, 316.
get outside of his theological discourse, engage the Other of language, and make cognitively significant statements about who or what that Other may be. If he fails to do so, he betrays the Cartesian Disappointment and Positivistic Longing discussed above. If the only Other of language that he will allow is language itself, then he has collapsed alterity into sameness, since if language is all there is, then there can be nothing else. If, therefore, the referent of a/theological language is not something outside that language, then Taylor offers but another plot prejudicing identity. Consequently, I refuse to believe the rhetorical devices that Taylor employs in order to remain faithful to his plotless plotting of theology. I choose to believe that Taylor does indeed believe in Ḡd, and that is why he can never be done with Ḡd. Whether he calls Ḡd the "sacred," the "terrifyingly ancient," or "alterity," Taylor does theology just like everyone else—he offers structures and images of Ḡd, and the question remains whether those images are "proper" and what they imply for human being-in-the-world. As a result, as he, himself, concedes, he continu¬ually is haunted by a Ḡd in whom he no longer believes but in whom he cannot not believe.

Taylor’s image of the Ḡd who will not let him be contributes something quite significant to the thesis of this dissertation, specifically by calling into question the ontotheological patterns that have for too long perverted
the biblical models for God. In deconstructing the metaphysics of presence, Taylor razes the structures of classical theism with their prejudices toward totality, absolutism, monism, and immutability. Taylor's models for God reveal the inconsistencies between orthodox theology and the biblical paradigms of God. As Hart argues, one can interpret scripture (écriture) as deconstructive of the "metaphysical element within theology," that is, as critical of any presumption to totalization. The jew/christian paradigms for God contribute significantly altered views compared to the Hellenistic models adopted and adapted by orthodox ontotheology. Those paradigms, to use Pauline language, appear to the Greek as "foolishness," as illogical and, therefore, as what must be excluded from the system. Specifically, as argued by Moltmann, the jew/christian stories of a suffering deity, a deity who restricts the divine self in order to create, who enters into the flux of existence in order to relate to humanity, who suffers the pain of abandonment on behalf of the beloved, who refuses to remain static and unchanged in the face of disastrous suffering, plots against the homogeneity, immutability, and apathy of the Hellenistic "deity" and, thereby, disallows any systematic pretensions to total presence, to absolute knowledge, and to a complete rapprochement between theology and ontology.

27 Hart, 60.
When Taylor calls for theology to think what has been left unthought, to discover what has been excluded, banished, even anathematized from the legislating theological systems, Taylor opens the possibility of considering the theopassionism expressed in the biblical discourses. The thought that G\textit{d} genuinely could suffer, could become in G\textit{d}'s transcendence so intimately related to the immanence of creaturely existence as to be affected by it is an-other model of G\textit{d} that orthodoxy has refused to think, or has thought only in order to label it unthinkable. If Taylor desires for theology to think what has been left unthought, then the unthinkable suffering of G\textit{d} might offer his deconstructive a/theology an interesting alterity to contemplate. Although at times he does use the biblical languages about divine suffering as idioms for expressing his understanding of the linguistic wounds that always remain open during the disseminative play of the errant process of semiotics, he does not give any attention to the possible interpretation of those languages as revealing something about G\textit{d}. He does, however, address issues relevant to the theory that G\textit{d} does suffer out of love for the creation. Unfortunately, and somewhat ironically, when he does prosecute these corollary issues his thought exhibits some of the same weaknesses as classical theism and ontotheology, and he fails to generate an appropriate ethical application of his love of alterity.
First, Taylor's statements about the not that cannot be thought and the otherness that forever wounds language bear striking similarities to the discourses of mysticism and negative theology. This thesis has discussed in some detail in Chapters Three and Four particularly, that deconstruction in its Derridean or its Taylorian senses bears resemblances to apophatic theology without actually "being" a negative theology; however, as Caputo suggests, negative theology does illustrate a general economy of the aporias inherent within all uses of language. Consequently, deconstruction in all of its manifestations struggles to avoid apophaticism. This is certainly the case with Taylor. When he writes of that which serves as the non-original origin of discourse, of the alterity of language that traces a presence that never was, of the secret of the "death of God" as the "crypt of the sacred," or of the sacred as transcendently "grounding" the possibility of God, his language bears a striking resemblance to the mystical discourse of Meister Eckhart, who writes of the God beyond God, of the Godhead behind all re-presentations of God, and of the ineffable secret of divinity that can never truly come to expression. Is Taylor not, in a somewhat different nomenclature not asking God to rid him of "God?"  

---


29Taylor states categorically that the sacred cannot be understood as a "God beyond God"; therefore, he would reject any interpretation of his thought that attempted to make it
Taylor's "apophatic" discourse appears to inculcate the notion of the hyperousious, not in the sense of a "superessentiality," but in the sense that Hart identifies as the negative beyond beings and Being. The other of language, for Taylor, neither exists nor exists not, but is not nothing. Consequently, to "write" of this epekeina, is to write not, to denegate every conceptualism in order to affirm something but only by confirming nothing. Is this not, however, a negative theology? Has Taylor not embraced an apophaticism, a "going up" that never reaches the goal, predicated upon a process of negation? Does he not illustrate something of Causabon's theory that people always seek a more secret secret, a greater mystery, for fear that if they embrace the mystery already revealed, that it will fall woefully short of satisfying the basic desire for enigmatic plots? Is the mystery of a suffering God not cryptic enough? Does the notion of a personal divine incarnation for the purpose of entering the facticity of human existence and identifying with the tensions of being-in-the-world not satisfy the longing for mystery? Does one really need a more ironic notion than the death of an incarnate God, executed at the hands of the very ones he came to love? I fear that inchoate in Taylor's a/theology is a certain postmodern negative theology (Taylor, "Denegating God," 604).

\[30\text{Hart, 202.}\]
gnosticism, a belief that redemption depends on the intellect, on knowing the secret, the empty secret that the only knowledge is the knowledge that there is nothing to know.

Like Meister Eckhart, Taylor recognizes the danger implicit in apophaticism—the danger of getting lost in the strange loop of endless reflection and becoming ethically paralyzed, seduced by the contemplation of mystery and unable or unwilling to act responsibly in the community. As Eckhart sets the vita activa over against the vita contemplativa, that is, allowing the unity with God to motivate a return to human community and a living out of the divine love, so, too, Taylor desires for his a/theology to precipitate an ethics of resistance, specifically resistance to the economy of domination that derives from traditional metaphysics. He agrees with Caputo that postmodernism raises the question as to whether ethics is possible or impossible. The only possibility he sees is for an ethic of resistance, resistance that responds to the "the call (l'appel) of an other that 'arrives' by infinite deferral." This resistance seeks "to minimize repression" through constant vigilance, by adopting a critical stance toward every structure of existence that threatens to oppress, to dominate, and to disrespect the significance of other-

---

31Taylor, nOts, 73.

32Ibid., 75, 93.
Consequently, Taylor desires to escape the temptation to remain in Kierkegaard's aesthetic stage of existence where there is nothing but endless reflection and deferred decisions and to enter the ethical stage of responsibility to the other in community.

Notwithstanding his desire for a genuine ethical sensibility, Taylor fails to give content to his call for resistance. There is always the danger that his errant comedy could lead to the irresponsible postmodernism of the tragic view of existence. There may be no room for guilt in Taylor's plot, no acceptance of the possibility that things are not as they should be. Since the play of "mazing grace" ends once it "becomes" teleological, one wonders whether the goal of resistance does not in some way subvert the process of erring and attempt to close the carnival down. Perhaps the lack of content to Taylor's theology results in the lack of content to his ethics; the ineffability of the Other that forever approaches by withdrawing leads inevitably to an ineffable ethics, an ethics that is always being deferred. Certainly Taylor's ethical thought lacks the depth of content found in Caputo's etKic of obligation; it fails to flesh out what resistance means, unlike the way Caputo gives meaning to the call of suffering flesh.

---

33Taylor, Disfiguring, 318.
34Taylor, Erring, 155.
35Ibid., 158.
Perhaps Taylor errs, as does Heidegger, by failing to appreciate genuine facticity, the suffering of disasters by real individuals for whom existence is no game and the question of meaning is not merely an aesthetic diversion of differing and deferring. Perhaps Taylor needs to reconsider that death is not some abstract possibility always approaching yet never arriving but is, instead, a concrete cessation of life, an event that is all too real, provoking suffering that makes the play of existence too serious. An element of jew/christian contamination, of a Levinasian recognition of the "widows and orphans," or better, a biblical notion of a suffering God who exemplifies an ethic of sacrifice, rebellion, and healing might teleologically suspend Taylor's aestheticism.

Of course, Taylor cannot accept the theology of theopassionism, since it certainly maintains something of a logocentric, metaphysical position. After all, the discussion of Moltmann's version of that theology indicates that notions of Trinity, of divine presence in history, of eschatological promises, of the revelation of divine compassion, and of the hope of salvation recapitulate themes inherent in a metaphysics of presence, notwithstanding that theopassionism also does deny, as does Taylor, the prejudicing of monism over pluralism, identity over alterity, ontology over meontology, and the static over the flux. Ironi-

cally, however, when Taylor does address more specifically issues relevant to a biblical model of a suffering God, he adopts an a/theological perspective that is surprisingly similar to the very ontotheological, classical theism that he seeks to deconstruct. In other words, when it comes to understanding the dynamics of love and gift as they relate to human existence and the subject of the sacred, Taylor reads remarkably like a traditional Hellenistic, orthodox ontotheologian!

Most recently, Taylor has broached the topics of gift, guilt, incarnation, and *agape* and has attempted to redefine these so as to fit his postmodern deconstructive structure. He has contrasted his economy of the sacred with one of the usual economic myths of the divine/human relationship. Traditionally, he claims, human beings have lived on credit as creatures of G&D. Unfortunately, they have spent more than allowable (sinned) and, consequently, find themselves in debt to G&D without the ability to pay. Such debt is actually guilt, a guilt (debt) that must be erased through the payment of what is owed. Since G&D has invested too much in human beings to write them off, G&D decides to repay the debt for them, to release them from their guilt through the incarnation in which G&D becomes human and repays the financial obligation. Of course, since G&D repays G&D, G&D actually invests G&Dself without any possible expectation of receiving interest from the investment. G&D willingly takes
a loss by speculating foolishly in a transaction that pays no dividends. Only if God acts dis-interestedly can God receive credit for the sacrifice. This divine loss, this desire to give without expecting returns, constitutes agape, the unconditional self-giving of the deity.\textsuperscript{37}

Taylor understands the divine economy as an economy revelatory of an economic Trinity, in which the Father invests (sacrifices) the Son but only in a short term venture, a venture with very little risk, since the Father already knows that the Son will return, that they will become one again. Since God needs such an investment in order to be Godself, however, God's investment cannot be genuinely dis-interested.\textsuperscript{38} Death, therefore, as a moment in the trinitarian realization of divinity, does not dis¬credit God, since the resurrection negates the negation of death and, thereby, ensures that nothing is really lost.\textsuperscript{39} If nothing is really lost, if "everything is always already redeemed," there is really no sacrifice.\textsuperscript{40} Since "the deck is stacked in his [sic] favor," that is, since God determines that the process will turn out as God intends, God does not in actuality risk anything. Consequently, God

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., 619.
\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., 620.
\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., 621.
does seem to receive something in return for the investment: God realizes the divine plan and to God's credit, the books close with all of the columns balanced.

Taylor argues that the traditional economic plotting of the divine/human story exemplifies the metaphysical propensity to subordinate negation to affirmation. The only way to overcome this metaphysics of affirmation and presence is to conceive of an economy that does not depend upon any reciprocity, that is, one in which there truly is no possibility of return, interest, or response. He claims, therefore, that one should consider a structure of giving whereby the gift must be "prodigal, extravagant, excessive; it must, in other words, be an expenditure without return." The "folly of the gift" is that a genuine gift cannot be accepted as a gift and must never evoke a sense of gratitude. If one receives the gift and expresses thanks for it, then one has perverted the gift by placing it into a system of quid pro quo.42

But what if the gift is the gift of the sacred? Can that gift be received not and not provoke a gratitude? Taylor contends that the gift of the sacred can, indeed, only be received by being received not; the nonacceptance of the gift is its acceptance, while its acceptance is its non-

41Taylor, "Discrediting God," 621.
acceptance.43 The gift of the sacred occurs **ohne warum**, and Taylor cites this sacred giving as loving--specifically **agapic** loving, an unconditional loving without why. In **agape**, there is no lover or beloved; there is no bilateralitiy to it at all.44 The gratuitousness of **agape** opens an abyss, a non-rational abyss, that leads not to nihilism and despair but to a radical affirmation of negation, a total willingness to "letting be." Such an **agapic Gelassenheit** must be "indistinguishable from indifference," a willingness to adopt a certain apathy whereby one willingly lets things go and abandons them.45 When the gift of the sacred comes as **agape**, it cannot result in any semblance of debt or guilt, since there is no economy of reciprocity. Since the sacred is given always as a trace that never was, is, nor will be, the gift is always a "for(e)giving of the sacred [which] opens the gap of for(e)getting through which agape leaves the self agape."46 In this for(e)giving and for(e)-getting, the self is opened to the responsibility of responding. This opening, or gap, is suffering, the suffering of the "I" that leads to action. Yet, action is always a

43Ibid., 607.
44Ibid.
45Ibid., 608.
46Ibid., 609.
responding that cannot, but must, respond, a "double bind" that can be lived out only in a "responding not." 47

The irony in Taylor’s account of the gift of the sacred as agape is overwhelming. His notion that only a disinterested giving can truly be named love parallels too closely the traditional interpretation of divine agape as predicated upon apathy. As discussed above in Chapter Five, one of the ways whereby classical ontotheologians have tried to utilize the biblical discourse about GOD but maintain the Hellenistic notions of perfection, immutability, and impassibility is through the legislating model of a theos apathes. If, indeed, GOD could suffer, could be genuinely affected by human beings, if GOD actually desired reciprocity, opened the divine self to the alterity of the creature in order to build a factual relationship, then there could be no agape, since agape must be disinterested, unilateral, and apathetic. Just as metaphysical theology denies both that GOD can desire benefit from loving humanity and that GOD can love humanity to such a degree as to be willing to suffer with and for the beloved, so, too, does Taylor’s postmodern a/theology deny that there can be any reciprocity between the sacred and those gifted by and with the sacred. Although he no longer believes in GOD by his own admission, it appears that the GOD that Taylor no longer believes in through the denegation of the sacred is identical— that is, 47Ibid.
not very "other"—than the static, apathetic God of classical theism. On the basis of the biblical discourse on God, one would have to say that Taylor's a/theology is as bankrupt at this point as is any ontotheological kataphatic or apophatic theology. Consequently, I suggest that one must move past ontotheology and onto-a/theology by the repetition of a biblical model of God as loving, suffering, and redeeming.

To understand God as a loving and compassionate deity who seeks to build intimate community with human beings does not necessitate a total abrogation of an economic nomenclature. As a matter of fact, Taylor, himself, cannot avoid remaining within the paradigm of a reciprocal economy. When he states that the sacred gives disinterestedly and thereby demands a disinterested (non)reception of that gift, he adheres to the very linguistic model against which he reacts. The expenditure of the gift requires a return that is no return but that is a return in being a returning not. In other words, a reciprocal prodigality is established whereby giving is disinterested and receiving is disinterested. When the sacred gives, therefore, one is obligated to receive that giving by receiving not. One owes a certain (non)reception, a certain apathetic responding not, which parallels the impersonal non-committal giving of a sacred agape. Consequently, Taylor does not offer a way out of reciprocity; he merely offers another example of how to plot
reciprocity, an example that, as I argue above, is not much different from certain ontotheological interpretations of the "transim" of divine love.

Contrary to Taylor's contentions that agape demands dis-interestedness and abandonment, the biblical discourse on divine love indicates that God works within an economy of reciprocity that does, indeed, seek to overcome the mercantile relationship of debt and guilt but only by replacing that economy with an economy of gratitude and mutual sacrifice, the reciprocal giving of oneself to another and to God. That that economy of sacrifice results in mutual benefit, that is, benefit for the giver and the gifted, in no way diminishes God's graciousness nor transforms the obligation to respond to that grace into a legalistic condition for that grace. God loves unconditionally, but that love becomes the condition for humans to respond to that love. God's love is ohne warum, but that love can be the warum for human community. In other words, in the agapic dynamics of "transim" as revealed in scripture, God's love is always other, transcendent to, human love, but is immanent within the flux of human existence acting as the transcendental ground for the creation of a similar love between God and humanity and among human beings. God seeks to establish an economy of covenant, an inter-relationship founded upon the non-principle principle of agape in which
life becomes a living out of promises that build an intimacy that is always willing to risk for the sake of the other.

Marion illustrates what I take to be an economy of *agape* that far exceeds that of Taylor's. In his provocative interpretation of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, discussed above in Chapter Three, he presents a biblical understanding of how gift and love should correlate.\(^4^8\) As the story goes, the younger son squanders his inheritance, finds himself forced into the usual economic system of earning wages, being a "hired hand," and realizes quite ironically while lying in the swine pit that no one "was giving anything to him" (Luke 15:16, emphasis added). After coming to himself, he realizes that he must return to his father, not as a son, since he had given up that relationship, but as a servant. Interestingly enough, he still insists upon relating to the father according to the economy of *quid pro quo*, something for something, receiving only what he earned or deserved because of services rendered. Of course the father refused to accept his son back under those conditions. Instead, he receives him as a son not as a servant. He runs to meet him, embraces him, and kisses him. The son repents of his sin, confesses to the father that he is no longer worthy, that is, he does not deserve, to be the father's son. The father, however, does not hesitate in his response. There never is for him a question of his son's

\(^{4^8}\)Marion, 95-102.
worth. He immediately calls for his servants to give his son new clothes, to give his son new shoes, to give his son new jewelry, and to give his son a welcome home feast. These are the agapic acts of a father who loves unconditionally, who gives even when the giving provokes no response of gratitude. But these are the acts of a father who does not love disinterestedly but loves with the hope of receiving back the love of his son.

The father makes his desire for reciprocity clear when he responds to the older son, who insists on living out of the same investment/return economy as his younger brother. The older son is incensed that his father has received the prodigal back and has once again given of his possessions to the boy. The older son reminds the father that he, the elder, has served him, worked for him diligently for years, yet has never been given a party. In response, the father reminds his older son that everything the father owns belongs to him. It is his, not by virtue of his service, but simply because he is a beloved son. The father admonishes the boy to overcome his selfishness and rejoice that his younger brother, who was lost, has been found and that the family community has been restored. That is the quid pro quo of a loving father, not the disposition of property but the maintenance of a loving mutuality binding father and sons into an intimacy of reciprocal giving and forgiving.
Marion's "God without being" comes closer at this point to the biblical idea of a loving God who seeks to keep God's children home, who receives joy and fulfillment from the play of compassion, and who suffers when that play is disrupted, than does Taylor's "sacred giving without interest."
The parable that Marion interprets is a story, a plot, that offers a different model for understanding God, gift, humanity, redemption, and forgiveness. It is a story that purports to un/conceal the Kingdom of God, to give insight into God's intended structure for how God wants the world to be. It is a story told by Jesus, who comes proclaiming that he, himself, models what that kingdom should look like. He personifies the gift that God offers all human beings, and that if individuals would only hear his words, then they would find entry into that kingdom promised by a loving divine Father.

I think that it is John Caputo, more than any other theorist writing on postmodern religion, who develops the most creative and provocative perspective from which to prosecute anew the nuances of Jesus' revelation of the Kingdom and how that revelation relates to the issue of a suffering, loving God. His dehellenization of metaphysical theology opens the space for the repetition of a theology that makes seriously the Jew/Christian economy of salvation, a salvation that does come through the flux and that certainly takes seriously the issue of real suffering and how
one can continue to hold open the possibility of a loving God in the midst of radical pain and meaningless evil. His christocentricity, above all, qualifies him as an important "Christian deconstructionist," one who does not merely use Jesus as some type of theoretical cipher, but genuinely engages the Jesus revealed in the Gospels as one who in some way manifests the true meaning of God’s kingdom on earth. Of course, Caputo does not explicitly prosecute the notion of a suffering God; he does not accept the more traditional view of incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection; and he nowhere actually addresses the idea of Trinity. Yet, what he does write about love, gift, forgiveness, suffering, and the Kingdom of God and his explicit focus upon the subversive teachings of Jesus (Yeshua) do indeed offer interesting possibilities for (de)constructing the (non)being of God, for considering what a God of suffering love must be like and how that God must confront the negation of genuine suffering. By contaminating Caputo with Moltmann, perhaps one can move past classical theism and postmodern a/theology by the repetition of biblical ideas of divine differentiation, divine immanence, and divine compassion.

There can be no question that Caputo’s radical hermeneutics do not preempt the possibility of there being a suffering God. He states quite candidly in a number of different works that the issue of suffering necessarily broaches questions of religion and faith. One seems obli-
gated(!) to raise the question as to whether there is in the midst of the flux a loving power that does indeed take the side of the oppressed, the dehumanized, the diseased, and the disenfranchised. Caputo identifies faith as the hermeneneia that interprets the flux as possibly the divine milieu of a personal presence, not a total presence by any means, but a presence in which one can trust and "know" that one does not make the journey alone. He admits that at times one cannot know whether one believes in God or not; however, he also implies that one does not succumb to a sacrificium intellectus if one does believe that there is some One, some Other, who participates in the ongoing kinetics of history. I contend that if pressed to concede the reality of God, Caputo would concede the reality of the biblical God of love and suffering, for only such a God would be consistent with the broader parameters of Caputo's sacred anarchy, centered as it is on the teachings of Jesus.

What would the Caputoan icon of a suffering God be like? Most definitely, that God would not be the static God of Western ontotheology. Caputo's God cannot be immutable, eternal, impassible, the actus purus, or the total simul. God must be open to the flux, be willing to enter the abyss of potential and real suffering and be affected by the reality of disasters. Such a God, therefore, must be temporal, or at least have temporality, since suffering and loving are not static acts that can be completed in some
Eternal Now. If Gôd truly takes the side of suffering, if Gôd in some analogical manner actually does love human beings, then Gôd cannot remain above the flux, stay outside the movement of history, be unwilling to open the divine self to the other, or "exist" as some blissful, sanitary Wholly Other. Caputo’s Gôd cannot be Aristotle’s Gôd, perfect thought thinking only itself, void of any potentiality, and acting as some deistic final cause that, like the Gnostic One, is untouched by evil or negativity. Caputo’s Gôd, in other words, must be a Gôd of obligation, a Gôd to whom obligation happens, who finds Gôdself bound to the other and transformed in some significant way by that other.

Yet, how can Gôd be obligated? What kind of Gôd would Gôd be if by some inexplicable necessity Gôd finds Gôdself required to respond to the suffering of flesh? Here is where a bit of Moltmannian corruption acts as a pharmakon for Caputo’s thought. If Gôd is a loving Gôd, or as scripture states, if "Gôd is love," then Gôd is not obligated by necessity, nor does Gôd’s obligation just happen in the middle voice. Instead, Gôd in the divine freedom chooses to obligate Gôdself in the very choice to love. If Gôd chooses to love that which is not Gôd, that which is heterological, then Gôd must create that other. If Gôd creates that other, then Gôd has a certain responsibility to that other by virtue of Gôd’s creative activity. A loving God cannot create the other and then abandon it or ignore it; there-
fore, in creating the other, Gād obligates Gādself to care for that other. If the creation carries with it the idea of zim zum, as Moltmann contends, then Gād’s decision to create directly affects Gād as a wounding, as a divine contraction through which Gād gives "birth" to reality. In opening up the space and time within which creation may exist, Gād has relinquished something; it has cost Gād something for there to be an-other for Gād to love. Does not giving birth to a being in some way obligate the parent to accept some responsibility for that being’s being? Of course, it does. Consequently, in creating the other that is not Gād and granting significant freedom to that other, Gād simultaneously creates the potentiality for that other to affect Gād, to reciprocate the divine love or to respond with hatred or apathy. With that potentiality, Gād takes on an obligation, an obligation to respond to the response of the creature. Yet, one must remember that the obligation that happens to Gād as creator, is an obligation that Gād chooses to have; it is an expression of Gād’s agape. Or, to state it in a Levinasian sense, the "il" in the "illeity" of obligation is indeed Gād.

There is another explanation for the es gibt of Gād’s obligation--the reality of divine promise. If Moltmann--and scripture--are correct, Gād’s intimacy with humanity comes to unique expression in the act of promising. Gād promises to individuals and to communities divine guidance, divine
protection, divine healing, divine presence, and, most importantly, divine fidelity. The giving of a promise is in a real sense a giving of oneself, a revelation of one’s character. If one gives one’s word, one commits one’s whole being as that gift. To break a promise, therefore, is to take back the gift, to prostitute one’s character; in a certain manner, it is to inflict suffering on the other by disappointing the other, by implying that the other is not worthy of one’s fidelity. Consequently, in the divine promises, God actually gives Godself to those God loves, thereby obligating God to remain faithful to that gift. Promises are obligations; they tie the one who promises to the one who has been promised. As a result, the God of promise obligates Godself to human beings, actually places a divine necessity upon Godself. Obligations happen to God, therefore, because God chooses to make promises, and God chooses to make promises because God is love, and love always comes with a promise.

The notion of promise not only advances the possibility of God’s being obligated to human beings, it also introduces the temporality of futurity and the possibility of the meontological. God promises what is not yet, what does not yet "be." Consequently, there is a certain non-being inherent within the divine/human relationship, the non-being of potentiality. This non-being cuts to the very heart of one of Caputo’s central themes--the issue of hope, specifically
as it relates to the temporality of the Kingdom as revealed by Jesus. For Caputo, Jesus teaches that, in the Kingdom of God, the future should not be referenced negatively as inducing anxiety. Interestingly enough, however, the "epi-ousiological" dynamic of kingdom time depends particularly upon God's obligation to care for God's creation. The primary reason Jesus gives for overcoming anxiety and allowing the meontology of the future to remain God's concern is that God has promised to love and care for individuals. If God has promised to meet my needs, there is no reason for me to worry about what is not yet, since what is not yet will be according to God's faithfulness. Consequently, my hope in God gives me the "courage to be" in the present. Unlike Taylor, who appears to maintain the Greek interpretation of hope as damaging, as an impossible anticipation of cure and healing, Caputo adopts a more Hebraic stance, interpreting hope as the proper response to a God who loves and promises to care for the beloved. The God of Caputo, then, is a God who "loves and does what God wills," but what God wills is to care for the being of the other. Consequently, I, as the other, can hope for what is not yet, because the basis for my hope is the present acceptance that I journey toward the non-being of the future accompanied by a God who is with me in the flux sharing my joys and my suffering and giving me in each instant "my daily bread."
I contend that a Caputoan God who experiences obligation and opens the flux toward the meontology of a hoped-for future is expressed best through a trinitarian paradigm. Although the metaphysical tradition has tried to subsume the plurality of God under a legislating unity or monism, whether through heretical attempts such as modalism, more orthodox models such as "three persons in one substance," or more mystical models such as Eckhart's Godhead beyond God, one can argue that the scriptures do not aspire to minimize the real difference and otherness that seem to characterize the God revealed as Father, Son, and Spirit. If one is willing to relinquish the ontotheological desire for monism, for seeking a single archê or principle in order to account for the diversity and plurality of existence, and to entertain the notion of a genuine Trinity, then one can say consistently that God is characterized by genuine difference and alterity. In other words, otherness is not something outside God that must be created in order to be. Instead, if God is Trinity, there is no need for there to be anything other than God for there to be otherness. If the Father is other to the Son, who is other to the Spirit, who is other to the Father, then alterity is not initiated at creation nor does it lie outside of or beyond God as a quasi-transcendental condition for God's being God. Instead, a relational Trinity explicitly includes otherness within the very being of God. Furthermore, real alterity in God implies
real negation; that is, the Father is not the Son, who is not the Spirit, who is not the Father. As Ricoeur argues, all language about negation is at its inception language about otherness, the differentiation of one thing from another. Consequently, if the Trinity includes genuine otherness, then it also includes genuine negation. As a result, difference, alterity, and negation are "equiprimordial" with God as Trinity, which implies that even if there were nothing other than God, there would still be otherness and negation.

The unity of the Trinity cannot be understood, therefore, as a simple mathematical oneness nor as some substantialistic self-sameness. Instead, one must interpret the trinitarian unity of God as does Moltmann; it is a relational unity, a social community established in the diversity of alterity. Such a social configuration of the unity of God best explains the Johannine affirmation that "God is love." The adhesive that binds the Father, Son, and Spirit together is the reciprocal economy of loving, of the giving of one to the other and the receiving of the other by the one. God is love, because God is relational; God is relational, because God is love. One could speculate, therefore, that God loves alterity, otherness, and differentiation and desires to multiply them in order to extend the

---

play of mutuality. In other words, it is quite consistent with this view of God to accept the divine decision to create an otherness that is other than the otherness inherent within the Trinity. That is, God as love yearns to love that which is other than the otherness of Father, Son, and Spirit, to open Godself to the love that can come from that which is not God, that which is different from God. This could be one way of explaining the idea of zim zum. The sacrifice of time and space that God makes in withdrawing the divine self so as to clear out a nothingness into which the creation can be extended is in itself an act of love.

The love that is the Trinity may be expressed as a heterophilia, a love for the other who is different. This heterophilia comes to expression in ways similar to Caputo's heteromorphism and heteronomism. Although he uses the former term for the irresponsible postmodernity of the play of the tragic, the term itself references the desire for a plenitude of multiplicity. He utilizes the Neoplatonic vocabulary of exitus and reitus, of the overflowing emanation of diversity, to explain the Dionysian revelry of overflowing forces that forever play in the carnival that is the innocence of becoming. One does not, however, have to interpret the idea of an overflowing diversity as necessarily pejorative. Although I do not think that the language of emanation is a proper idiom for understanding the relationship between God and reality, I do think that the inherent
notion of a fullness to alterity, a saturation of otherness and difference, is quite consistent with a trinitarian model of a God who is in Godself difference and otherness. God’s love for the other does result in the creation of a pleroma of variation. Such an interpretation fits well one of Caputo’s definitions of Deile, et quod fis vac: respond to suffering and multiply differences. God’s love refuses to diminish difference by uniting all things in a simple unity, into some mediocre totality. Instead, the heterophilic Trinity creates and sustains heteromorphic reality through the kinetics of the reciprocal dynamics of relationship.

God’s heterophilia also leads to the establishment of heteronomism, a heteronomism that binds God to persons and persons to persons. The law of the other, which Caputo identifies as the happening of obligation, places God and humanity in a double bind. The Trinity is bound within itself by the relationships obtaining among Father, Son, and Spirit, a binding that establishes a relational unity to which Jesus refers in John 17. The Trinity is bound also to humanity, is obligated as a loving creator and as one who makes promises. As creatures and the beloved of God, humans find themselves bound to God as the loving presence who accompanies them through the flux. Yet, in this binding

---

50 Caputo, Against Ethics, 92. The first part of this definition further explains the discussion earlier in this chapter concerning God’s obligation to the other.
back toward Gd, human beings find themselves bound toward each other. One cannot say that one loves Gd and hates what Gd loves; therefore, since Gd loves human beings, human beings have an obligation to love each other. As stated earlier in this chapter, Gd’s love may be without why, but that love can be a why. If Gd has indeed in some way created humanity in Gd’s image, then each person has a responsibility to build relationships with the other through a shared heterophilia, an acceptance of the other as other and a willingness to respond to the call of the other through the event of obligation.

The divine heterophilia accounts for the possibility of divine suffering in two specific ways. First, if Gd’s heterophilia motivates Gd to create genuine otherness so as to relate to that other and have that other relate to Gd, then of necessity Gd must create that other with significant freedom. Only a free response has meaning for the lover, since love desires not just the other but the desire of the other. Love is not love without that intent of complementarity. At this point, one indeed can refer to divine agape as an expression of Gelassenheit, of a "letting be" of the other, of a letting the other be what the other wants to be. This divine Gelassenheit actually ensues from an entlassen, a "releasing" of the other so as to allow the other to choose how to respond to the divine lure of
agape\textsuperscript{51}. In this sense, G\textsuperscript{2}d is an "ab-solving" G\textsuperscript{3}d, loosening the other from any compulsory reciprocity. In other words, G\textsuperscript{2}d creates the other with the freedom and power to will what G\textsuperscript{2}d does not will, to act contrary to G\textsuperscript{2}d's desire, and, ultimately, to refuse the Trinity's offer to include the other in a fellowship of grace. Only when the other has the freedom to say "no" to G\textsuperscript{2}d does the other's "yes" have meaning within the context of agape.

Jüngel asserts that the biblical discourse reveals that G\textsuperscript{2}d chooses not to be G\textsuperscript{2}d without a relationship with humanity. Consequently, in the divine choice as to the future of the Trinity, there is created a divine need for the other, specifically for the other's freely chosen decision to reciprocate the divine love. This divine need for the other disallows any interpretation of agape as dependent upon a divine apathy or disinterestedness. As a matter of fact, "disinterested love" is an oxymoron. The lover who loves unconditionally certainly will continue to love even if that love is unrequited; however, the lover desires for love to be returned. The lover celebrates the joy of the loving, a joy that fulfills the lover and grants meaning and satisfaction. If G\textsuperscript{2}d loves humanity, then G\textsuperscript{2}d, likewise, desires for humanity to love G\textsuperscript{2}d, but humanity cannot love G\textsuperscript{2}d if it does not have the freedom not to love G\textsuperscript{2}d. Consequently, the divine heterophilia must create the potentiality of that

\textsuperscript{51}Cf. Hodgson, God in History, 62.
not, to invest the divine self in an economy that might not pay the dividends that G&d anticipates. Pace Taylor, one must say that the heterophilic G&d indeed does establish an economy that does not guarantee that G&d will have the agapic speculation pay off. Every human being has the freedom to say "no" to G&d's love, to live as if there were no G&d, to refuse to participate in the intimate relationship G&d desires to have with creation. The no to G&d's love is like a knife shoved deep into the divine heart. When the wound is made, G&d suffers the pains of rejection, the loneliness of the destroyed fellowship, and the grief over the damage such rejection inflicts upon the one who has played the prodigal.

The second source of divine suffering centers on the suffering undergone by the others whom G&d loves. This is the wounding of compassion, a suffering for and with those who suffer either tragically or culpably. G&d cannot look upon the disasters that befall human beings and not feel a sympathy with them in their pain. Since Caputo claims that the heart is a "pathos that suffers with the suffering of the other," one might say that G&d's heart goes out to everyone who feels oppression, disease, grief, anxiety, and fear. The suffering of the beloved other breaks G&d's heart

---

and causes divine grief. Again, as stated above, the agape of the Trinity cannot be interpreted as an aloofness, as some type of unilateral economy. Instead, one must recognize that Gōd is affected by the misery that so often overwhelms individuals and communities. Gōd is touched by human affliction and does, indeed, hear the call of obligation to respond to that affliction and offer comfort and healing. Yet, Gōd is no panacea for the world's ills; Gōd does not preempt the process of the flux that Gōd has created in order to ensure that no evil or trouble can occur. Faith holds to the interpretation, however, that Gōd asks humanity to experience nothing that Gōd is not willing to experience, that Gōd does not exist above the flux, immune to the terrors that stalk individuals, but that like the Shekinah in Israel, the Father, Son, and Spirit accompany humanity through the flux, offering not escape but strength, comfort, and the divine promise of faithfulness. Because of Gōd's suffering with humanity, individuals never suffer alone. The wealthy woman who sits comfortably in her expensive home mourning over the problems she has with her children and the homeless man who huddles close against the doorway trying to avoid the winter's chill unsure as to when his next meal will be do not suffer alone; neither has been

---

53 In his personal response to this chapter, Caputo states that he believes that Gōd "is the 'heart' of the world, what gives the world 'heart,' that the name of God is the name of 'heart.'"
forsaken by G\(\ddot{o}\)d. G\(\ddot{o}\)d never hides G\(\ddot{o}\)d's face from them but in some way that transcends the human ability to comprehend, G\(\ddot{o}\)d's agape encompasses them both in the mystery of divine empathy that bears some of their sorrow.

G\(\ddot{o}\)d's suffering with humanity happens because of the tragic dimension of existence. There is suffering that just happens, without why, that just seems to occur in the play of the flux. Cancer eats away the dignity and strength of a father, depression destroys the gentle personality of a daughter, and broken dreams threaten to lead a husband to despair. These instances of agony have no moral dimension to them. They just seem to evolve out of the innocence of becoming. The Bible actually admits that some suffering has no purpose or reason behind it; that it happens and the losses it inflicts can never be recovered. The narrative of Job uniquely illustrates this tragic dimension of human and divine suffering. In spite of the prologue's depiction of Yahweh and "the satan" as engaging in some sort of sadistic wager over the fidelity of Job, Yahweh makes a startling statement that deconstructs the broader text. In the second encounter with "the satan," Yahweh addresses "the satan" and admits the meaninglessness of Job's suffering:

And he [Job] still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to ruin him without cause (Job 2:3b emphasis added).

By G\(\ddot{o}\)d's own admission, Job suffers without cause, for no reason. Job certainly did not suffer for the reasons
that his friends suppose, that he was being punished for his sins. The book of Job deconstructs the *lex talionis* and reveals that not all suffering is deserved, that sometimes the righteous suffer without explanation, meaninglessly; pain just happens. Job reveals that there is suffering that is absurd. "Absurd" derives from the root "*surdus*" meaning "mute" or "deaf." The ab-surd, therefore, is what cannot be voiced or heard, cannot be brought to language or *logos*, is, in other words, il-logical. Interestingly enough, the Indo-European root for "*surdus*" is "*suer*" from which also comes the Greek word "*eiron*." 54 Suffering, then, to use Hall’s nomenclature, may be an irony, a remainder, a *detritus*, that which cannot be digested by any system of theology or philosophy, an aporia that forever remains like a gadfly buzzing around all pretensions to totalization. Yet, Job further reveals that that kind of meaningless, ironic suffering does not escape the compassion of Gâd. Although Job receives no answer from Gâd--since there was no answer to be given--he does encounter Gâd’s presence in the midst of the suffering. Of course, it is a mediated presence, not a total, immediate encounter; however, it does comfort Job and reminds him that in the flux disasters occur to both Gâd and humanity.

I think the significance of Job for this thesis concerns the implication that Gâd takes the divine risk to

---

54 Shipley, 397.
suffer with humanity a pain that may never be overcome or explained. Contrary to Taylor’s contentions that God eventually restores everything to the way it should be and contrary to Moltmann’s claims that God converts evil and suffering into good and joy, there appears to be suffering that cannot be redeemed, if redemption means transformed or explained. Some misery will result in an everlasting loss, a loss that cannot be overcome even in the eschaton of God’s promises. In other words, there is a negativity of tribulation that can never be negated and, thereby, affirmed. In allowing for that contingency, the Trinity risks an open wound that agape demands to be endured everlastingly.

The divine compassion for the other becomes even more problematic when that suffering is provoked by intentional acts of immorality, when an individual or individuals pervert the gift of freedom and act contrary to God’s designs for a loving world. Culpable suffering wounds God twice. God suffers because guilty individuals choose to respond to divine love with the "no" of rejection, and God suffers when that rejection leads to the infliction of pain and/or death upon others whom God loves. Consequently, God suffers God’s own misery over the destroyed fellowship and simultaneously participates in the suffering of the ones who are the object of violence, oppression, torment, and/or loss. Here is where the entlassen and Gelassenheit of divine agape become troubling and sometimes untenable. This is where the tradi-
tional question of theodicy becomes more acute. Some things should not be allowed to happen; some people should not be allowed to act. How can Gd "let be" murder, rape, industrial pollution, political violence, sexism, racism, child abuse, spousal abuse, emotional degradation, forced poverty, drug dealers, and economic fraud? Why does Gd not stop such acts and withdraw the freedom given to those individuals who do not deserve to have such a gift? Unfortunately, such questions seem never to be answered. Even scripture does not give a final response to these questions. Instead, it presents a Gd who opens Gdself to the anguish of sin, of immorality and injustice, and who through suffering because of immorality and with the victims of immorality demands that human beings join the Trinity in rebelling against culpable suffering, to resist the powers that threaten to destroy Gd's good creation.

Divine heterophilia cannot be an irresponsible loving of the other that fails to confront the other when s/he sins against Gd and humanity. If Gd did not express the divine wrath against every destructive force, against every constellation of abusive power, or against the individual who disobeys Gd's one command to love one an-other, then an additional type of theos apathes would arise. It would be difficult to argue for the moral character of a God who insensitively or insouciantly looked on while one individual preyed upon another, destroying her/his dignity, inflicting
emotional and/or physical harm, or even depriving her/him of the right to exist with freedom and justice. God’s suffering because of and with the executioner and the victim must in some real way, then, be the divine rebellion against evil. God’s suffering must be understood as teleologically promising some possible overcoming of evil, some hope for relief and justice. As Abel’s blood cried out to God from the ground, so, too, must the pain, sorrow, and blood of all victims of human sin cry out to God for recognition and help. God cannot ignore the disasters that happen, not innocently, not as a result of the es gibt or the il y a of the flux, but that ensue from sources with proper names, individuals who choose to inflict others with suffering. Within the flux, therefore, divine suffering must accomplish the alleviation of suffering, perhaps not exhaustively or totally, since there is always the possibility of loss, but with genuine compassion and strength. Through divine sympathy God must let justice flow through the flux like a river; consequently, God must express the passion of divine heterophilia as divine wrath, as God’s wounded love.

For the Christian theopassionist, all of the above issues come into clear focus in the revelation of the Trinity through the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. The themes of agape, promise, hope, suffering, rebellion, and obligation have a direct bearing on the biblical model of Jesus as the unique revelation of God. These are, indeed,
the biblical claims about the person, work, and message of Christ that provoke a serious reconsideration of metaphysical theology, with its Hellenistic paradigms, and a possible postmodern repetition of theology as a *theologia crucis*, a theology of the cross that investigates the secret of a loving God who will remain faithful to God's promises and passion even to the final event of suffering, which is death.

Of course, as mentioned above, Caputo does not accept the more traditional christology that attempts to communicate the divine/human reality of Jesus. He believes that Jesus was a good man not a God/man.⁵⁵ For him, the doctrines of the divinity of Christ and the resurrection betray a confusion of Hellenistic categories with the gospel narratives concerning Jesus. He claims, in a manner similar to Bultmann, that one must demythologize the New Testament, specifically by differentiating the truly historical material about Jesus and his teaching from the later accretions added by the early church community. As discussed in Chapter Four, however, I think that Caputo at this point falls back into a modernist paradigm that is somewhat inconsistent with his broader claims to do a radical hermeneutics. As Moltmann indicates, the preemption of the possibility of incarnation and resurrection is predicated upon an analogi-

⁵⁵Caputo, personal correspondence with the author, 2 February 1995.
cal perspective of history, that is, the belief that one's own historical experience and/or scientific theories are analogically normative for all of history and reality. Such a perspective actually exposes a prejudicing of the present, of one's present experience; it develops out of a certain interpretation of rationality and a particular sycophancy to scientific empiricism. In the case of christology, such a perspective also persists in adhering to another metaphysical polarity: the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.

I do not insist that Caputo should accept the idea that Jesus of Nazareth was historically and ontically the Son of God enfleshed, although that is my particular interpretation; however, I do believe that that possibility is not incongruous with Caputo's postmodern structure. His emphases upon the flux, upon undecidability, upon the serendipitous nature of Kingdom time, and upon the im/possibility of metamorphoses within the context of factical existence leave open the possibility that indeed God could enter the process, that the "loving power" accepted by the hermeneusis of faith might actually be a loving person.

The theory of Jesus as the incarnate God actually coheres in a certain manner to the inner logic of Caputo's system. He focuses his stance against ethics specifically on the issues of obligation and flesh. Obligation always encounters flesh, always results from the cry of wounded flesh, of disastered flesh. When flesh summons through
obligation, it transforms the agent body of the other into flesh, so that obligation invariably takes place in the relationship between flesh and flesh. Caputo also contends that the pain of flesh is a unique suffering, that genuine pain can occur only in the facticity of flesh. Even when he engages Yeshua’s sacred anarchy, he emphasizes how Yeshua reaches out to the flesh of the leper, the blind, and the oppressed. He goes so far, in fact, to claim that Gd’s kingdom as proclaimed and revealed by Yeshua is a kingdom of flesh, of torn flesh and of healed flesh. Is there not, then, a certain logic to the notion that Gd might not choose to become flesh, to be enfleshed so as to relate more personally and more intimately to the ones that Gd loves? Could Gd’s intense love for the alterity of humanity not motivate Gd to take on that alterity so as to identify with the suffering other, to risk the divine self in the contingency of the flux?

By becoming flesh, Gd enters into history in order to actualize in a unique way the divine obligation. As flesh, Jesus hears the call of wounded flesh and responds with "me voici." He reaches out in compassion to those who suffer and offers to heal them, without preoccupation as to why suffering happens or why he is obligated to respond. An example of this may be found in John 9, an episode concerning Jesus’ healing of a blind man. Upon encountering the man, the disciples immediately begin to question why the man
suffers from the loss of sight. They are convinced that the suffering is a result of sin, retribution for some act of disobedience. What they do not know, however, is whether the guilty party is the man or his parents. Jesus informs them that the suffering has nothing to do with sin, that the lex talionis does not apply in any way. Instead of engaging in theological or philosophical discussion, Jesus gives the man his sight and in doing so claims to glorify Gəd. Jesus needs no metaphysical speculation; he searches for no universal principles of ethics in order to ground his action; and he does not consent willingly to the tragedy of the man’s condition. On the contrary, Jesus hears the call of disastered flesh and answers that call with the power of healing. Jesus found himself obligated to the man, responsible for acknowledging the other’s pain and alleviating it. In doing so, Jesus gives but one example of Gəd’s feeling of obligation toward the suffering other. For a compassionate Gəd, the issue is not so much the "why" but the "how," not "why is there suffering" but "how can it be redeemed?"

Of course, incarnation, although an idea consistent with certain Greek myths, cannot be accepted if one clings to the Hellenistic models of Gəd. A Gəd who is immutable and impassible could not undergo the metamorphics of enfleshment and actually suffer for and with humanity in the particularity of factual existence. The problems associated with all of the orthodox, ontotheological attempts to
comprehend how the Son of God literally could be a human being stem one way or another from the insistence of traditional metaphysicians to maintain the contradictory positions that Christ was God but that God could neither change nor suffer. The biblical discourse on God and Christ has no such difficulties, since throughout the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, God is revealed to be a deity who seeks new and surprising ways by which to relate to humanity. If one reads Caputo back into that discourse, one might say that God has a certain obligation to incarnate Godself, so as to relate to flesh as flesh, so that God might respond as a fellow sufferer to the cries of those who suffer, as one who knows grief and is acquainted with sorrow. In other words, God’s heterophilia is the formal (non)principle of incarnation, while the incarnation is the material (non)principle of God’s heterophilia. What more compassionate expression of a genuine agape could there be than the divine risk to become flesh, to open the divine self to the unique suffering of fleshly existence.

If one understands the incarnation from a Johannine position, one must admit that the enfleshing of the logos deconstructs the ontotheological tradition that had accrued around the concept of logos. If Yeshua is the Word of God (that is, God’s promise of Godself) in flesh, then the Word no longer can be interpreted as a transcendental signified, an abstract rational criterion outside of history and expe-
rience. Instead, in Yeshua the Word has become particular, has entered into the flux, has risked playing in the carni-
val of facticity, has actually taken on the potentiality of death. The notion that the logos can and does die forever subverts every model of Gôd. It introduces into theology another expression of non-being as it relates to Gôd. Along with the non-being of the differences among Father, Son, and Spirit and the non-being of the not yet revealed in Gôd's promises, the incarnation forces one to contemplate the non-
being of divine becoming and of the death of Gôd. If the logos can become flesh, then the logos always has had the potentiality for enfleshment; that is, although the Son of Gôd was not enfleshed eternally, there came a time when he did become what he was not. In his incarnate reality, he was not what he once had been. As Hegel would express it, in the incarnation Gôd negates Gôdself by becoming what Gôd was not, by taking on alterity, by becoming the other. Although the Son of Gôd became the other yet remained the logos, the genuine otherness of incarnation is not diminish-
ished. Jesus does not make humanity divine through the incarnation but makes the divine human. Consequently, the incarnation does not ensue in identity but in real alterity, not in the facade of change but in genuine mutability. In other words, Jesus as the incarnate logos reveals a Gôd who loves so foolishly and so deeply as to accept the non-being of alterity in order to obligate Gôdself to flesh as flesh.
Obviously, my belief that the biblical paradigms for Jesus concentrate on the ontic mystery of God/man and that Jesus not only reveals God in his message about the kingdom but also embodies that revelation in his own being, fails to break completely with the ontotheological tradition; however, I do think that the biblical discourse does demand that one not prematurely close christology, systematize it into a totalized account of the total presence of God. The Apostle Paul, for example, seems to struggle with the tensions inherent in the belief that one of the Trinity becomes flesh. In writing of the incarnation, he uses opposing polarities to communicate the mystery of that enfleshment. In Colossians 2:9, Paul writes, "For in Him [Christ] all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form..." Here the incarnation is an expression of fulness. Although the Son is not the Father or the Spirit, the Son does reveal who the Father and Spirit are. One need not worry as to whether Jesus errs in his message about God or whether there is a hidden side to deity that contradicts Jesus' revelation. In this expression, there does not seem to be any loss suffered by God in the event of enfleshment; however, such is not the case in another Pauline passage on incarnation.

In the great Christ hymn of Philippians 2, Paul takes an alternative perspective with reference to the effect of enfleshment upon Jesus. In 2:7, he claims that Jesus "emptied Himself" in order to become human. The act of entering
the flux did indeed require a loss or sacrifice of something. Paul does not state explicitly what Jesus emptied himself of, except to say that Jesus did not grasp the equality he had with the Father but let go of that equality and humbled himself by becoming that which God is not. These passages present a fascinating dichotomy, an unsettled tension between *plerōsis* (fulness) and *kenōsis* (emptiness). The incarnate God is both complete and incomplete, a being and a not-being, a having and a not-having, a revelation and an obfuscation—an un/decidable, im/possible present absence and absent presence of God. One should not be surprised that Paul can write of the otherness of incarnation only by writing one thing and then the other or only by writing the not of the other. How else could one write of the mutability of God, the metamorphosis of the Son into flesh, the becoming Christ who comes into the flux in order to speak God’s words of love and embody the divine compassion?

The non-being of divine mutability with its tension between *plerōsis* and *kenōsis* is accompanied by the ultimate expression of non-being—the death of the incarnate God. It is at the cross that the ultimate act of divine suffering takes place; it is at the cross that Yeshua’s own faith in the promises of God are most severely tested. One only has to remember that the same Yeshua, who admonished his hearers on the mountain to avoid anxiety over the future, to trust in the daily providence of the heavenly Father, and to leave
the not yet of tomorrow to God, when facing death, goes into the garden troubled, anxious, and suffering so intensely that he sweats blood as he wrestles with his painful future. It is at the cross that Yeshua experiences the abandonment of God, where he knows that one always dies alone, that the final act of fleshly suffering cannot be shared. Yet, ironically, scripture teaches that it is through his death that Yeshua effects redemption, that his death is salvific for all who would receive his gift.

But why? Why did Yeshua have to die? Why does the incarnate God have to experience the ultimate non-being of death? Perhaps there is no why beyond the realm of agape. By undergoing the death on the cross, Yeshua experiences every aspect of human suffering. By dying as an outcast and as a sinner, Yeshua’s death offers the redemptive comfort of God’s faithful presence to those who suffer tragically but also, and most importantly, to those who suffer culpably. At the cross, God reveals Godself as one who loves passionately, not disinterestedly, as one who in the folly of love embraces humanity in the midst of the flux and allows Godself to become a victim of its violence.

If one affirms that the death and resurrection of Christ are in some way salvific for humanity—an affirmation that I make predicated upon the radical notion that Jesus’ death was indeed the death of the Son of God—then the question arises as to how these miraculous acts actually
accomplish that salvation. It is at this point that Caputo finds the ontotheological tradition completely untenable and actually destructive of the biblical model of Jesus. He reacts strongly against the notion of penal substitutionary atonement, the theory that explains the death of Christ as divine punishment meted out by the Father upon an innocent victim. According to this economy, human beings have sinned against God, thereby incurring a debt against the divine honor. In order to remove that debt, a payment must be made, the books must be balanced, God’s honor must be restored, God’s wrath must be appeased, and divine justice must be satisfied. Since the debt is in actuality an infinite debt, no human being can repay it; consequently, God demands that the guilty debtors should be punished forever. The justice of God, however, comes into conflict with God’s mercy; therefore, God offers to pay the debt Godself, specifically, the Father allows the Son to repay the debt on behalf of those unable to pay. As a result, Jesus becomes human so as to suffer the punishment but remains divine in order to erase the infinite deficit. The cross illustrates a bit of divine child abuse, the Father taking out "his" anger on "his" Son in order that "he" might "forgive" human beings of their sin.

Caputo simply rejects this penal model of atonement outright, primarily because he argues that the retributitional structure that supports it contradicts the teachings of
forgiveness that one finds in Yeshua’s message of the Kingdom. There is no forgiveness according to the penal model, because the debt has been paid; the accounts are audited and found to balance. The Father has received "his" pound of flesh. For Caputo, divine forgiveness results not from a quid pro quo arrangement in which nothing is really lost but from God's willingness to cancel the liability. Divine forgiveness declares that nothing has happened; nothing is owed. Everything is forgiven and forgotten; the past is overcome in the present gift of "letting it go." Forgiveness, therefore, is another example of entlassen, or releasing the other, freeing the other from the consequence of past misdeeds.

Such a postmodern hermeneutic of forgiveness, I believe, coheres directly with the biblical revelation of a suffering God. Caputo is correct when he claims that forgiveness cannot be established upon a foundation of revenge and repayment. To forgive is to take a loss, not to have the debt repaid, to be willing to sacrifice whatever has been taken away, damaged, or wounded by the offending act. God's forgiveness, consequently, is another expression of the divine willingness to forfeit something for the sake of loving the other. In this context, the suffering of the Trinity at the cross reveals the lengths to which God will go in order to reveal the divine agape. At the cross, Jesus allows the very ones he came to love and heal to inflict
violence and hatred upon him. Jesus not only suffers the 
compassion he felt for the poor, the sick, the widows and 
orphans, the politically and socially oppressed, the lonely 
and discarded, but also suffers the pain of culpable evil. 
Jesus does not die a tragic death, but a death that pro-
claims his executioners guilty. He is beaten, tortured, and 
murdered unjustly with malice and with apathy. The Father 
and Spirit not only suffer with him out of the intimacy of 
the divine compassion that each feels for the other, but 
they also suffer with him over the realization that his 
physical torments are inflicted by the hands of people whom 
he came to heal, to whom he proclaimed the divine agape. 
What the cross reveals, then, about the divine love is that 
Gôd is powerful enough to sacrifice the divine self to the 
forces of evil and hatred that diametrically oppose Gôd's 
agape. In the midst of the most acute experience of trini-
tarian agony, the Son speaks the heart of Gôd: "Father, 
forgive them for they know not what they do."

In no way does the resurrection diminish the intensity 
of the divine affliction. The resurrected Christ bears the 
scars of the divine anguish, a semiotics of the madness of 
love. In the resurrection of Jesus, the Trinity reveals 
that there is no suffering of human beings to which Gôd 
cannot and does not relate and in which Gôd cannot and does 
not participate. Such a revelation offers strength and 
comfort to those who suffer both tragically and culpably.
The resurrection also reveals that the divine love knows no boundary, that there is no evil that humans can inflict upon God or each other that can destroy the divine power to heal or the divine commitment to forgive. Such is the redemption from sin offered by God in Christ. Sin must not be understood as an affront to the Law, as a transgressing of cosmic parameters of justice, or as offending the divine dignity, although in some ways sin always does all three. More importantly, sin must be understood as wounding the heart of God, as inflicting pain upon the Father, Son, and Spirit, as destroying the relational unity that God desires to have with the others whom God has created to love, either by rejecting God's grace or by inflicting harm on others whom God loves. Sin is the rejection of divine love, the refusal to reciprocate the gift of God with the gift of self to God and to others. To say, therefore, that Jesus carries the sin of humanity to the cross is to say that on the cross the extent of the divine grief is revealed. To say that Jesus suffered the divine wrath is to say that his fleshly wounds are symbols of the wounded love of the Trinity.

As Caputo indicates, forgiveness must always be accompanied by repentance, a meta-noia that changes the heart and the mind and that exhibits that change in acts of mercy and healing. He dislikes the "Baptist" (i.e. John the Baptist) interpretation of repentance as re-poena, which he trans-

56Galot, 161.
lates as "to visit pain . . . myself, again . . ."\textsuperscript{57} Such an interpretation is a bit too "funereal" and contrary to Yeshua's call to repentance as a celebration of obligation through the development of a new heart. While I think that Caputo's definition is consistent with the biblical explanation of repentance, I think that it is somewhat reductionistic. He fails to consider the broader implications of what a true change of heart entails. For indeed, I think that one cannot avoid the "Baptist" interpretation, that repentance does require a suffering, and a re-visiting of pain. Specifically, within the theopassional context of this discussion, to repent is to acknowledge that one has wounded G\textsuperscript{d} and/or others. If one has inflicted suffering on another, one has transformed the other into "flesh" and, consequently, one becomes obligated to the call of that fleshly other who suffers. The obligation should lead to a genuine sorrow and a genuine compassion, a suffering with the other who suffers because of one's own act. In other words, there is no repentance, no real change of heart, if one has not first suffered because of one's action. This is not the suffering of retribution but the suffering of obligation, of responsibility, of guilt. When one has wronged another, one has an obligation to suffer that wrong, to respond to that suffering with suffering, the suffering of compassion and regret. The suffering of the one wronged

\textsuperscript{57}Caputo, "Metanoetics," 21.
calls to the guilty other and demands the response of obligation, while the suffering of the guilty one calls to the other and asks for the response of forgiveness. Although forgiveness is not conditioned by the suffering of repentance, the guilty one will never experience forgiveness or the restoration of community without that suffering.

Throughout my attempts at constructing a theopassional theology that remains consistent with the jew/christian categories of scripture and that reflects a Caputoan radical hermeneutics--which I think succeeds in deconstructing classical theism and ontotheology more successfully than Taylor's a/theology--I have focused explicitly and implicitly on the significance of love. I accept both David Tracy's contention that "God is love" is the legislating Christian metaphor and John Caputo's non-principle principle that one should "delige, et quod vis fac." There is a natural relationship between these two when one considers that Caputo's principle comes from Augustine's commentary on I John, specifically his note on the "God is love" (I John 4:8).²⁸

²⁸Augustine, Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of John. trans. H. Browne in A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. ed. Philip Schaff. vol. VII (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 7:8. In his comments on "GΧδ is love," Augustine maintains a traditional view of an impassible GΧδ. He claims that if GΧδ is love, then there can be no proficiency or deficiency in GΧδ (Ibid., 9:2). In other words, GΧδ can neither increase in love nor decrease in love, but sustains a consistent fullness. Of course, increase and decrease are not the only possibilities of mutability in a loving relationship. One may experience the different expressions, different joys, and different sorrows that can come in
If one comprehends G misd from the perspective of these two an-
archical archaev, one finds oneself constantly moving among
theism and atheism, premodernity, modernity and postmodern-
ity, ontotheology and deconstruction, apophatic theology and
kataphatic theology. In other words, one cannot escape
doing theology within the flux, the interminable flow of
existence that preempts any final claim to having found
absolute knowledge or truth. The thought experiment that I
have offered in this thesis might be termed, therefore, a
"paraphatic" theology. "Paraphatic" relates to "parabasis,"
a word that Hart discusses in the context of de Man's theory
of irony.\textsuperscript{59} It derives from "parabaino," which means,
among other things, "to go around" or "to trespass." A
paraphatic theology, then, is one that constantly moves
around among various perspectives. It is and is not a
negative theology; it is and is not a deconstruction; it is
and is not an ontotheology. It seems to wander back and
forth, moving like a pendulum between what appear to be two
points but which are actually numerous points inscribed by
the confusion of linear and circular motion. It fixes
boundaries and then transgresses them, never allowing for

\textsuperscript{59}Hart, 158.
the movement to cease. It is faith seeking understanding but understanding that the seeking will never end, for there is no end. At the "end," there will remain aporias, the kenosis that suffering brings to the divine process. There can be no total knowledge because ultimately evil and suffering are absurd, and God must suffer that everlasting wound of loss—the loss of millions at Auschwitz, the loss of two children at the bottom of a Carolina lake, or the loss of any disastered flesh, even that of the incarnate Son.

Paraphatic theology has a center, however; it is christocentric, which means that it is agapic and heterophilic. One simply cannot consider the being and the non-being of God outside of the incarnation. The incarnation reveals that God must in some way "be." If God did not "be," then God could not love, God could not risk relationships with humanity, and God could not be the subject of an obligation. Although one can accept Marion's thesis that love is a far better rubric than Being for comprehending God iconically and not idolatrously, one finally cannot remain faithful to the biblical discourse and not accept that God somehow "is," that God exists as capable of loving the other. Again, I think that such a biblical model agrees somewhat with Caputo's contentions that suffering, obligation, and love reference facticity and the particularity of the flux. In the life and death of Yeshua, God reveals Godself to be a
personal Gd very much involved in the kinetics of existence, even to the extreme of non-existence. Consequently, the wounding of the Word is not the inscription of language and the "reality" of Gd in postmodern life is not in the "divine milieu" of textuality. Instead, Gd must be encountered in postmodernity just as Gd had to be encountered in modernity and pre-modernity, in the contingency of the process, in the experiences of a mysterious loving power who never leaves one to suffer alone, and ultimately as an enfleshed person investing Gdself in the lives of those whom Gd loves.

The heterophilic Trinity calls human beings to participate in the divine love, to love Gd with all their hearts and minds and to love others as other selves. It is divine love that gives existence, that as creative is constantly "making something out of nothing," forever calling things and people into being. It is divine love that heals and obligates, that as forgiveness is constantly "making nothing out of something," and, thereby, offering redemption from the past.\(^60\) It is love, therefore, that empowers the kinetics of the flux, that keeps the play in play. Yet, it is love that within the play gives stability and purpose to the flux, that prohibits it from ever deteriorating into a nihilistic, irresponsible chaos.

Interestingly enough, there is actually something of an etymological relationship between "flux" and "love." This central Caputoan term--"flux"--comes from "beu," "bhel," and "bhleu," which mean "swelling," "flowing," and "flowering." It has associations with the Greek "Phillis ("flowering maiden)," which in turn is related to "philos," meaning, of course, "love." One of its Latin forms is "follis," from which derives "folly" and "fool." It also produces the Latin roots "fluere" and "fluctum," meaning "to flow." These roots produce "fluid," "flux," and "influence." In its basic meaning, "flux" refers to a flowing, a constant movement, change, or fluctuation. It serves Caputo well, therefore, as a cipher for the kinetics of existence that metaphysics always tries to deny or destroy. In a paraphatic theopassional reading of Caputo, one could say that the movement of the flux is produced by the divine agape creating differences and releasing creation to develop in freedom. Love keeps the movement going and revels in the play of the forces. Yet, simultaneously with releasing the flux, love also gives it direction and meaning by connecting the constituent parts of the process into a community, by motivating a relational unity-in-diversity. This binding (back [religion] and toward [obligation]) function of love references a technical use of "flux," a use made by welders and plumbers who must join or fuse materials together.

\textsuperscript{61}Shipley, 24-25.
Connections are made between pieces of pipe or plates of metal with the use of some flux, some substance needed to promote the fusion of the different sections. In an analogical manner, one could say that divine agape is the flux that ties together the various segments of creation, that fuses persons to nature, persons to persons, and persons to Gād. As Caputo contends, sometimes these fusions break apart, division and exclusions are made, and something or someone gets torn out, left out, discarded. Suffering rips the person and the community apart and fragments Gād’s process. To restore integrity to the disintegration of the relational unity, love can call for obligation, metanoia, and forgiveness—all of which are expressions of folly, of the foolishness of acting without why, of changing one’s heart, of absorbing the loss in order to make nothing of the past. It is the influence of the flux of divine love that gives freedom over anxiety, that forgets the past, and that promises a different future, all through the con-fluence, the flowing together, of Gād and humanity, the joining of each to the other through joy and sorrow. The only proper (non)principle to follow in this flowing and fusion is simply this: Love Gād and others—be heterophilic—and do what you will.


Block, Ed. "Radical Hermeneutics as Radical Homelessness." *Philosophy Today* 35 (Fall 1991): 269-76.


Caputo, John D. "Deconstruction and Theology: A Radical Experiment." Unpublished paper.


Caputo, John D. "Installation Address." Unpublished paper presented at the inauguration as the David R. Cook Professor of Philosophy at Villanova University, 1993.


Dodds, Michael J. "Thomas Aquinas, Human Suffering, and the Unchanging God of Love." Theological Studies 52 (June 1991):330-44.


Wall, John. "Deconstruction and the Universe of Theological Discourse or, Who is Jacques Derrida and What is He Saying About the Logos?" SLJT 28 (September 1985):251-65.


