



Georgia Southern University  
Digital Commons@Georgia Southern

---

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Graduate Studies, Jack N. Averitt College of

---

Spring 2014

## Chaos Theory, Theology, and Curriculum: Striving Towards the Impossibility of the Gift

Thomas B. Jones

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), and the [Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Jones, Thomas B., "Chaos Theory, Theology, and Curriculum: Striving Towards the Impossibility of the Gift" (2014). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 1115.  
<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/1115>

This dissertation (open access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies, Jack N. Averitt College of at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu).

CHAOS THEORY, THEOLOGY, AND CURRICULUM: STRIVING TOWARDS THE  
IMPOSSIBILITY OF THE GIFT

by

T. BENJAMIN JONES

(Under the Direction of John Weaver)

ABSTRACT

It was once thought that small influences could not have a large impact on a grand scale. However, in the 1960s Edward Lorenz discovered that very small disturbances in weather conditions could have a great effect on huge weather systems. With an understanding of chaos theory, which posits that everything matters, I argue that a life based on the lessons of a theology inspired by postmodernism can provide a lens through which to see and act in this chaotic world. By living by this belief, the ability to give the true gift, which is an impossibility and is always to come, becomes meaningful. Curriculum studies allows for many wide ranging topics to be discussed and because of its wide ranging influence it is the avenue through which creating positive change in the world could occur. Inspiring, or even more specifically, resacralizing education is a mission to awaken the spirit, passion, love, creativity, and imagination that has for so long been deadened to standardization, test scores, and the factory model teaching.

INDEX WORD: Chaos theory, Theology, Curriculum, Education, Gift, Impossibility,  
Resacralization

CHAOS THEORY, THEOLOGY, AND CURRICULUM: STRIVING TOWARDS THE  
IMPOSSIBILITY OF THE GIFT

by

T. Benjamin Jones

B.S., University of Georgia, 2002

M. Ed., Kennesaw State University, 2007

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

© 2014

T. BENJAMIN JONES

All Rights Reserved

CHAOS THEORY, THEOLOGY, AND CURRICULUM: STRIVING TOWARDS THE  
IMPOSSIBILITY OF THE GIFT

by

T. BENJAMIN JONES

Major Professor: John Weaver  
Committee: Marla Morris  
Dan Chapman  
Reta Whitlock

Electronic Version Approved:  
Spring 2014

## DEDICATION

To my wonderful and supporting wife. Without her, my life would have taken a very different path. She has immensely blessed my life and continues to be blessing.

To my mother, who sacrificed so much for me when it came to her own education and who always believed I could be better.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to all of my peers in the Curriculum Studies program who learned and struggled with me. Also, thank you to Dr. John Weaver. From the first class I attended and through his continual support, he inspired me to continue to reach the highest levels of thinking possible. A great big thank you to my committee members, Dr. Morris, Dr. Chapman, and Dr. Whitlock, who were willing to take me on as a candidate and who were always willing to give me inspired direction throughout this process.

## Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Acknowledgment.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chapter</b>	
<b>1 THE FIRST STEPS TOWARDS STRIVING .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2 THEOLOGY AND THE POSTMODERN: AN UNDERSTANING OF THE         SACRED LOVE AND DISTRUBANCE.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>3 EMBRACING CHAOS: THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>4 UNIFYING THEOLOGY AND CURRICULUM.....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>5 THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF THE GIFT.....</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>6 CHANGING THROUGH RESACRALIZATION AND THE JOURNEY         OF THE GIFT.....</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>175</b>



## Chapter 1

### The first steps towards striving

In the classic movie “It’s a Wonderful Life,” George Bailey gets a glimpse of what the world of Bedford Falls would be like if he did not exist. The narrative that plays out is one in which everything changes. The town is ruined due to the evil businessman Potter. George’s wife becomes an unhappy old maid who works in the library. His brother drowns as a child because George is not there to save him. This leads to the death of many men in World War II as George’s brother, who in George’s memory saved those men, is dead and therefore, so too do the men perish. What this great movie purports is that one life makes a great impact. The story plays out a scenario which we will never be able truly comprehend; what life would be like without us and what our impact is on the world.

It was once thought that a “very small influence can be neglected. There’s a convergence in the way things work, and arbitrarily small influences don’t blow up to have arbitrarily large effects” (Gleick, 2008, p. 15). A breeze here, a storm there, and a moment of oversleeping here were once seen to be meaningless events. Today, many, like William Doll (1993), understand this not to be true. “Mathematicians and theoretical scientist of the day assumed, from the prevailing metaphysics, that these ‘small errors’ were unimportant since the universe was replete with a simple, stable order. But Poincare raised the specter of what Edward Lorenz demonstrated almost three quarters of a century later-that small perturbations over time lead to major changes. Nature is not perfectly comfortable with itself nor is the universe’s order simple” (Doll, 1993, p. 90). Edward Lorenz showed that everything matters even something as small as 1/100000 of something. This means that something as small as 1/100000 is significant. This is

almost impossible to believe. 1/1000000 of a second can change everything. 1 out of every 100,000 people has an extreme effect on society. Basically, any 60,000 people at any given time in the world have a significant effect on its future path. How can this be true? Why should I care? How can I care? I will propose answers to these types of questions throughout this dissertation. However, at no point do I claim to have discovered the correct answer on how to live life. This would be contradictory to my purpose of this dissertation. My only claim is that I have found a unique vision or a different lens through which to experience my world.

This dissertation began as an explanation of what I had discovered concerning the converging points of chaos theory, postmodern theology, and curriculum. However, my journey became a life altering event. Therefore, the use of the pronouns referring to an antecedent of more than myself will be used sparingly. Declaring we should do this or we have seen this seems a gross generalization I have tried to avoid. More importantly though, this dissertation is no longer a recitation of fascinating facts and philosophical proclamation but a journey of my educational and personal soul.

Let me start with the end in mind. No matter what, we all share the same fate. No matter what, one day I will no longer be a conscious being experiencing in the world. All of our ends are the same or in other words, they are determined. Death is not something that is possible to be avoided. As Gleick stated “I might have trouble forecasting the temperature of the coffee one minute in advance, but I should have little difficulty in forecasting it an hour ahead. The equations of motion that govern a cooling cup of coffee must reflect the system’s destiny. They must be dissipative. Temperature must head for the temperature of the room and velocity must head for zero” (Gleick, 2008, p. 25). I argue that avoiding death may be the one impossibility I should not strive for because truly, there is nothing I can do about death itself. Life on the other

hand, I have some control over. I do not live a life secluded in which other elements do not affect me. I live in a symbiotic relationship with the entirety of humanity in which every action has an effect on every other action.

For example, how different would life be if I decided to stay in bed today as opposed to waking at the sound of my alarm? The answer is completely different “for small perturbations in the initial conditions are amplified over the course of time. Chaotic systems are an extreme example of unstable motion because trajectories identified by distinct initial conditions, no matter how close, diverge exponentially over time” (Prigogine, 1997, p. 30). At issue, however, is the unnerving fact that I will never know the way in which my path could have diverged. In other words, I am only conscious of one path and that the path is my present. I can look to the past for clues into how I arrived at my present but I can never look at my past and present simultaneously to make a certain judgment on where my other path would have lead. Therefore, the greater realization is that no matter how hard I try, I truly cannot predict what my life will be like a few days ahead, let alone months. Therefore, I have two options. The first involves hiding, dodging, and avoiding life. The second embrace life and live it as best I can. The first option of course is not appealing. The second option is extremely vague. This dissertation aims to clarify the vagueness of living a life the best I can. Again, I state that I am not claiming that my argument is the only argument yet it is a lens through which I can see my life and analyze my experiences.

With this I propose that a deep understanding of chaos theory is necessary. Having an in-depth understanding of chaos theory allows me to comprehend my connectivity to the world which leads me to an understanding that my actions affect the experiences of others. The next step though is to formulate a process through which I should live. My proposal is to base life

around a theology influenced by postmodern thinking, founded on the journey for the impossible and based on the love of others in which my greatest gift is unnoticed. With this understanding, a realization that my choices may have a positive effect on my world would come into being. For "...a chaotic system is one in which small differences in the present state will lead in due time to the largest differences that can occur" (Lorenz, 1993, p. 162- 163). Good or bad, small differences in chaotic systems can cause significant changes. These ideas, I believe, should be implemented within the curriculum of education because "we are not accomplishing equity of opportunities, shared meanings, and fulfilled lives through educative experiences in schools" (Fleener, 2002, p. 186). If I want to change the world, I have to change the worlds of my students. I believe with an awareness of chaos theory and an implementation of a theology based on postmodern thinking the curriculum will truly focus on the race I run and not the test students have to pass. As William Pinar wrote, "instead of employing school knowledge to complicate my understanding of myself and the society in which we live, teachers are forced to 'instruct' students to mime others' conversations, ensuring that countless classrooms are filled with forms of ventriloquism rather than intellectual exploration, wonder, and awe" (Pinar, 2004, p. 186). I argue that the wonder and awe of the impossible is what will drive students to explore a life and meaning beyond themselves. Teaching with this in mind, I foresee a future in which education is not about the simple act of gaining knowledge, but embracing the value of discovery, the importance of creativity, and the understanding that our interconnectedness and complexity is what will lead to the creation of a society changed and improved. As Dwayne Huebner stated, "The approach to the world through the intellect, through knowledge and learning, makes us more powerful. . . . But it may also lead to new enslavements . . . to the known, the abstract, and . . . the past. . . . Knowledge and learning alone lead to manipulation and control—wonder and

knowledge and learning lead to the possibility of faith and love (p. 8). Huebner's thought here elucidates the idea that knowledge alone, that is, without spirit, wonder, and hope, is just another mechanism for enslavement. My point is that a sacred approach to education will produce a result in which teaching will become less about standardization and more about exploration.

Exploring possibilities and even impossibilities that will focus on the improvement of everyone's and every other's situation is my goal for education. So often, education and educators communicate to the world that they are helping to make productive citizens, which translates to another being out for selfish profit. However, I want to prove to students that their significance in the world does not depend on the size of their bank accounts but the level of understanding that love of the other and for the other can impact the society. Interestingly, chaos theory speaks to me as it shows that even the smallest positive action has an effect on the world in which we live. Our significance in this world depends on the impossibility of a perfect gift. A gift that we give freely, unconsciously, and unconditionally. A gift founded in faith in the impossible, and producing a love that can transcend all hate, differences, and beliefs has become my focus in my educational journey. This impossibility is what I strive for. It is my belief that a vast majority of people are not out to make other people have horrible lives or out to hurt others. I think that many people become so focused on the black and white, the standardization, and the prescribed outcomes of certain events, they forget their own interconnectedness with the world. Education is no longer about bringing out that which is within but putting in that which we think is necessary for a financially viable life. I feel education has lost sight of the bigger picture. Education fears chaos, fears taking a chance, fears the darkness of the cave, and fears taking a dive off the deep end. My feeling is that I must start incorporating these situations into the everyday life of education. Without such risk-taking, philosophers' books that were written 100

years ago about the problems of education will still ring true. I find it fascinating when reading Dewey and Whitehead that their concerns are still the concerns we are facing in education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. When fear ensues, restrictions, controls, and limits are imbedded into whatever we do. Education has done exactly this. When we fear our children are not being taught, we restrict what is taught, we prescribe when it is taught, and we limit who it is taught to. Instead of eliminating the teachers who cause us the most fear and treating our exemplary teachers in an exemplary manner, we limit, we control, we standardize, and we place a rubric in the hand of our teachers and tell them we want them to be proficient. As Mary Fleener stated, “It also means we can’t solve problems of schooling without also addressing pollution, poverty, war, pestilence, hate, discrimination, and so on. To find answers to these problems requires letting go of my ideas that these problems are things or that they have simple solutions. They are networks of interrelated and interconnected events that create and support the empty spaces of schools and what I perceive as problems with schools are also reflections of these larger problems” (Fleener, 2002, p. 187).

A combination of chaos theory, theology based on postmodern thought, and curriculum will be the spark that starts a wildfire of change in which a faith “rooted in the conviction that we as humans will continue our commitment to work for a just and loving society and that we have the moral, creative, and intellectual capacity to create one” (Purpel, 1999, p. 214) will work on the periphery to create positive social change in and through mainstream education. The outcome being the possibility of an impossible gift.

### ***A brief auto-biographical moment***

To better understand the lens through which I experience the world, my life, and text that I read and interpret, I want to briefly share a brief autobiographical moment because I have

learned that “the unexamined life is not worth living” (Quinn, 2001, p. 91). To do that, I again want to start with the end in mind. My journey in curriculum studies over the past 5 years has changed me. I have been saved from the cave of shadows and have seen the light. Plato has Socrates state that “the whole picture can be fathomed, and what I hope to articulate, with the understanding that the upward path and the contemplation of the things above is the ascending journey of the soul, its education, unto the intelligible realm. Whether it’s true or not, only the god knows.” Naturally, with this unknown, I still feel I have inner battles, for Protestantism has been my main source of religion since my birth. Fluctuating between Methodist and Baptist churches, I heard very similar doctrines and creeds. Some of the churches I attend had more literal readings of the bible than others. I often questioned, personally, these literal interpretations but really had no other avenues to venture.

It’s my first December in the classroom and the phone in my classroom rings. My father is on the other line and he tells me I need to come down to Brunswick. He does not tell me over the phone why but just says that my mother needs me right now. I leave immediately and take the long, slow, and questioning trip to the coast. So many thoughts ran through my head that day and the worst of my thoughts came to being. My mother had cancer but not only cancer, a rare form of breast cancer. You learn so much when someone has cancer. You learn about stages as my mom had stage 4 cancer. You learn to fear the word metastasized. Once the word metastasized becomes a reality then you have to do three things: 1) Accept the present. 2) Take time to remember the past. It’s going to be all you have left. 3) Look to the future. How will it be different and how will I adapt to this difference?

The next October my mother was getting hospice care at her house and I was visiting. Halloween night my mother, who did not have the ability to speak at this point, saw my 9 year

old brother walk into her room with his costume on. She sat straight out of bed and said “Hey buddy, you look so good. Have fun.” Those were the last words my mother said. She died the next morning on the day some Protestants and most Catholics recognize as All Saints Day.

There are a few markers in my life in which I look back at who I am and I can see that at that moment, I changed. Obviously, one of my markers was the death of my mother. An appreciation of life on my part may not have occurred without the death of my mother. My life’s path changed forever that day and who knows if it is better or worse because that is the conundrum of life. It is also one of the reasons I fell back on my Protestant Christian faith only to question it. “All theological interpretation (at least that which recognizes itself as interpretation rather than revelation) today exposes itself to an incalculable multiplicity of influences-movements, powers, protests, doubts, cultures, desperations, expectations” (Keller, 2003, p. 5). It is why I looked for answers to the present by studying the science of chaos and it is why I have continually worked to make a better life for others through education. “The aim and intent in education, then, is liberation: It comes to set the captives free” (Quinn, 2001, p. 99). This is why I find hope in the future through education and a curriculum wrought with higher focus and higher purpose for “teachers are often blind to the moral dimension of their practice because educational language tends to call attention only to those problems that can be solved technically. Thus, the "how" questions are asked. Because discourse is dominated by discussion of means, the "why" question, requiring discussion of meanings, is not asked” (Huebner, 1996, p. 268). This lack of meaning and how to infuse meaning in curriculum and education is explored throughout this dissertation. Meaning is brought to the forefront by a theology based on postmodern thinking. Significance is secured by an understanding of chaos



theory. And the possibility of the impossible is understood through the idea of the gift. Through curriculum and education, I can attempt to create a positive change for every other.

### *Outline of Chapters*

In chapter 2, I will show how religion and theology have been used, how they are being used, and the future of both disciplines. The focus here is to show the contrast between mainstream Christianity and postmodern theology. Literalism and the narrative will be compared to show the importance of keeping theology open. Once a subject has been closed, fixed, or mastered, then the journey is over. Hence, postmodern theologians and Jacques Derrida recognize the importance of the messianic. The messianic represents the idea that the savior, the gift, etc. is always to come, *viens*. “*Viens* precedes the event structurally; it always precedes and calls for the event because, in messianic time, the event is always yet to come, struck through with non-occurrence, no matter what is presently in place” (Caputo, 1997, p. 96) In Christianity, the savior did come and then he left leaving Christians waiting for him to come again. This attitude of “to come” allows me to remain open, unfixed, and adaptable.

In chapter 3, the discussion turns to the idea of chaos. Chaos was discussed for many years before Edward Lorenz but it was Lorenz who quantified it when a mistake in the lab turned into a great discovery. Both the scientific and philosophical implications are analyzed. Also, a comparison between Derrida’s deconstruction and *differance* with chaos theory are explored. Most importantly, chaos theory shows that if anything matters, than everything matters. Lorenz’s theory helped me understand two points: 1) The true gift is more possible than ever if every one of my actions can have an effect on the world and 2) chaos theory brings forth the realization that I am significant to society. It also brought about some questions. How can I live

life if I spend most of my time thinking of every possible possibility that could occur due to my actions? How do I change my focus in life so that the best possible outcome will be had? These questions and more are explored in the following chapters.

Chapter 4 represents my attempt to contextualize the theory of chaos and theology. Through the avenue of curriculum studies, I will show how education is the perfect venue for instituting an attempt at the impossible. In what better place can I institute my new way of thinking about how I make decisions. “We teach the children how to measure, how to weigh. We fail to teach to revere, how to sense wonder and awe.... The sense of the sublime, and the sign of the inward greatness of the human soul” (Purpel, 1999, p. 158). In education, I have the great opportunity to inspire faith and love to spring forth from all students. Also, bringing the sacred back into play and back into what educators do will ground my actions so that I can combat the fear of chaos. If every action matters and if I am so significant then I should ground my decisions in this postmodern theology. Chapter 4 represents the visual for what this could look like.

With chapter 5, I will finally show the pinnacle of the journey: the impossibility of the true gift. First I will discuss a landmark writing by Marcel Mauss discussing his experiences seeing the economy of the gift at its worst. Next I will show how the impossibility of the gift written by Derrida and others shows that the messianic attitude of the gift, always to come, is what allows for the sacredness to solidify in what we do. The journey for the gift is always in motion, never stagnant and purposefully never known. For once one knows of the gift, the meaning of the gift is annulled. Annulment has been what education has become. If you learn x you will get y. If you take this test, you will go to this college. If you major in this field you will get x amount of dollars. If we begin to act in such a way as to not expect anything then we will

begin to hope that our actions have a positive effect on the world. The difficult part is we will and we must never see the outcome of our efforts. For once we see the outcome, once we feel its presence, we annul the gift. What a difficult life to lead as you work so hard to bring so much sacredness, love, faith, and hope into the world and you are forbidden to see its fruits. “The gift calls upon us for an expenditure without reserve, for a giving that wants no payback, for distribution with no expectation of retribution, reciprocity, or reappropriation” ( Caputo, 1997, p. 144). This unconditional sacrifice is what is necessary in education and the world wide society as we know it. Imagine a world in which unconditional sacrifice was the norm instead of individualistic greed. Taking the hopeless journey to the impossible gift, gives me hope for a better tomorrow.

## Chapter 2

### **Theology and the postmodern: An understanding of the sacred, love, and disturbance.**

Throughout this chapter, I will show how religion and theology are used, how they should be used, and what the future of religion could be. Also, I will focus on Jacques Derrida who claimed to pass as an atheist but still has many theological tendencies in his philosophical ideas as he stated, “she must have known the constancy of God in my life is called by other names” (Derrida, 1993, p. 155). Finally, I will discuss why literalism is what religion needs less of and why impossibility is not something I should discount or defer; impossibility may be the most important thing for religion and theology because “the very stability of such a system is a fore-runner to its own demise” (Doll, 1993, p. 103).

“Does anyone know we are here? Does anyone care? Are we on my own? Is there nothing beyond the heartless and unrelenting cosmic rhythms, nothing loving, kind, or fair” (Caputo, 2001, p. 119)? With questions like these, religions were born. How could life be so cruel? How, in this world so large, can I feel so alone? These questions are still asked today and this is what draws people to the great religions of the world. Christianity, of course, has been a major player in the affairs of the world since its creation 2000 years ago. How Christianity has played out in the world had many disastrous effects on the “others” of the world due to the mingling, both intentional and unintentional, of religion and politics. The dogmatic infiltration of religion into politics, thereby everything else in society, is what has turned people away from religion and it is what has made religion a powerful and very visible hand in society. How did religion garner so much power? They made people believe, not in their specific narratives of religious myths or stories, but that their documents, leaders, and followers had the firm answers where none existed.

### *Religion and Theology*

What is the difference between religion and theology? In my opinion, and with the help of authors like John Caputo, Jacques Derrida, Mircea Eliade, and others, I believe that religion is the outward practice of belief while theology is the study of belief. Religion has rules; go to your worship place on the Sabbath, read your holy book, follow these steps to enlightenment, say this, say that, follow me. Religion is what is finite, closed, known, literal and understandably human. Theology, on the other hand, is the thought process of religion, the challenge to religion, the infinite aspect of what you believe the open space for the creation of new beliefs, and the search for the possibility of the impossible. Over the next few pages, I will present a more in-depth look at religion and theology to elucidate the point that while both are useful and necessary, theology is where the possibility of the impossible task of discovering the truth will take place.

### *Religion*

When I was in fourth grade, there were two girls who sat in front of me who would always whisper back and forth to each other. Then, in their most sinister look and annoying giggle would look at me. What was the secret? Did I have something on my face? Did one of them have a young crush on me? Soon I found out that the joke was on me, for there was no secret, no broccoli in my teeth nor any future love to be had. They were simply talking gibberish and then turning and laughing as they knew it upset me. A similar revelation occurred in my adult life when I realized that when it comes to religion, there is no secret. John Caputo (2001), who I will refer to multiple times throughout this chapter, stated, “To be sure, as I am also arguing, religion does not have a corner on the market of pretending to Know The Secret” (p.

23). There are preachers, rabbis, soothsayers, witch doctors, and voodoo priests that claim to know the secret to life and the afterlife. Religion wants the truisms to run freely from its lips so its “truth” will run freely from yours. With this truth being known, religion then has its hold on you in the form of traditions, dogma, and its metaphysics. For example, Catherine Keller (2003) writes about the creation story in Genesis and how this religious “truth” has many flaws. She states, “Christianity established as unquestionable truth that everything is created not from some formless and bottomless something but from nothing: an omnipotent God could have created the world only as *ex nihilo*” (Keller, 2003, p. xvi). Unquestionable truths leave no room for discussion, exploring, or creating. Hence why theology, especially a post-modern theology, would allow for thinking and intellectualism to occur in religion. Faith is important but blind faith is ignorant.

Blind faith left unchecked, as it was and has been for centuries, has been the precept for the worst possible things that have happened in the world’s collective history (colonization, slavery, war, ethnic cleansing, and terrorism just to name a few). Therefore, “religion as a whole must be supervised by reason. It must be kept within the limits of reason alone, which determines that the rational content of religion is ethics” (Caputo, 2006a, p. 32). In other words, reason (or better yet theology) keeps me grounded in the impossibility of being truly ethical. If a great effort was truly put forth in cementing religion in ethics, the harm done to this world by religious dogma, traditions, and unyielding power would have either failed to occur or would have at least lessened the damage. Is it reasonable and ethical for terrorism, wars, and mass murder to occur in the name of religion? There is no reason in this and there is no reason for it.

Caputo (2006) continued on this idea of the reasonable believer: “My own view is that Enlightenment or modernity is a necessary phase, an essential course correction, in working out a

satisfactory reconciliation of the competing claims of faith and reason. Religious people hold their faith to be the most precious thing they have, and well they should, but everything depends upon understanding the faith that is in you, on thinking it through and thinking it out, in dialogue with others and with everything else that God has given me” (Caputo, 2006a, p. 35). Thankfully the Protestant Reformation occurred. Because of this theological shift, Christianity became a thinking man’s game. Augustine and Aquinas understood the thoughtfulness that Christianity necessitated but they were few and far between. Martin Luther changed the game; he made religion more about finding that which was in yourself and then coming to some kind of understanding of it. In other words, religion became personal. And until you fully understood yourself and your faith (both of which are impossible), there was nothing else for you to do. The predecessor to modernity was the reformation and without such thinking to free the world from the religious doldrums, many Christians would still be insistent on saying thoughtless prayers and in a willfully illiterate language. “The meaning of the name of God is ultimately lodged in the concrete life of religious communities where the name is deployed, in the form of life of people who use this name. The meaning of theology is to give words to this form of life, to unfold or explicate or interpret what is happening there and to try to line it up with what happens in the other forms of life. Religion constitutes an irreducible paradigm of its own, a language of its own, a perspective of its own” (Caputo, 2006a, p. 53). These terms are unassumingly intertwined and are necessary to each other. One cannot exist without the other. However, theology’s role is where the intellectual aspect of religion comes into play. Theology allows for different perspectives to come into play, for multiple explanations to be debated, and for different interpretations of religious text, beliefs, and thoughts to be taken apart.

### *The Sacred and the Profane*

Mircea Eliade (1987) believed that between the sacred and the profane, the chasm was very small. Many of the rituals, traditions, and symbols of the profane world held truly religious meaning. The non-religious man was always searching for the profane way to understand the world but Eliade suggested that it is the religious man that finds the answers. “Religious man’s desire to live in the sacred is in fact equivalent to his desire to take up his abode in objective reality, not to let himself be paralyzed by the never-ceasing relativity of purely subjective experiences, to live in a real and effective world, and not in an illusion” (Eliade, 1987, p. 28). Eliade suggested that the religious life brings peace and objectivity to the unrelenting pressures of the world. Understanding the world through religious lenses is what is missing in the profane man’s life.

“The sacred reveals absolute reality and at the same time makes orientation possible; hence it founds the world in the sense that it fixes the limits and establishes the order of the world” (Eliade, 1987, p. 30). Eliade believed that reality, real life, the truth, is revealed through the sacred and that the dizziness of the world could only subside when the sacred was embraced and employed. Although Eliade’s point is well received it seems to me that he did not give religion the theological shock it needed. My understanding of religion is not to understand reality, but a tool I use to keep me practiced in the questioning of reality. Theology helps me formulate these questions and helps me in the impossible task of discovering the answers. Religion is not the ordering of the world but the assistance I need to order my world so that I may be ready to begin, again, my search for the unanswerable questions. Eliade made religion seem too closed off and not open and infinite because I believe that religion is not theologized



enough. Caputo (2001) discussed what I believed to be a theologized religion in his book *On Religion*. “By religion, therefore, let me stipulate, I mean something simple, open-ended, and old-fashioned, namely, the love of God” (p. 1). Here is the definition of religion with some excitement. Nothing excites me about Eliade’s version of the sacred and/or the religious man. I do not want to be Eliade’s religious man for it seems too much like homework or work in general. I want to be Caputo’s religious man as he stated, “Religion is for lovers, for men and women of passion, for real people with a passion for something other than taking profits, people who believe in something, who hope like mad in something, who love something with a love that surpasses understanding” (Caputo, 2001, p. 2). This is what a non-theologized religion lacks; the love of religion that wakes you up in the morning and leads you to do great things in life. This is a love that sets up a “reality” in which the main goal is not the material, but the immateriality of the intangible; love, faith, and hope.

I believe Eliade’s point of understanding absolute reality through religion was not incorrect just incomplete. “I would rather speak of the religious in people, in all of me. I take ‘religion’ to mean the being-religious of human beings, which I put on a par with being political or being artistic. By ‘the religious,’ I mean a basic structure of human experience and even, as I hope to show, the very thing that most constitutes human experience as experience, as something that is really happening” (Caputo, 2001, p. 9). Religion does not define what I experience, religion is the experience. Religion as experience is “really happening” as I speak. Speaking of a theological religious experience this means to me that I am experiencing life in and through the lenses of love, faith, and hope and the most important of these is love. Religion is what organizes my love and what drives my experiences. “Instead of making sacrifices for the love of God, religion is inclined to make a sacrifice of the love of God” (Caputo, 2001, p. 93). The

practice of love through the practice of religion is a theologized religion and one that to practice perfectly is a near impossibility, but something I never stop attempting. My love of life and my love of God should prompt me to do things not for His love but out of His love and with no questions asked.

Furthermore, the more I love the more I have to continue to search for the possibility of the impossible. To love others is sometimes an impossible task and the more I strive for it the more difficult it becomes. However, I cannot be content with the system as it currently is. Although many are comfortable with their place in society, many people need the love of caring, kindness, and charity that many religions claim to provide but do so for often selfish reasons and they do far too little than can actually do anyone any good. John Cobb (1997) stated that “as a group and on the whole we are lukewarm. We do good things. We serve real needs of real people. But we inspire no passion” (Cobb, 1997, p. 3). In speaking to other Christians, Cobb points out that the work of churches have positive effects based on these actions but too often it has become part of what Christians do. It is almost like a chore. Meeting the needs of others has become what any other profane groups have done and will do. Our sacred affiliation should bind us to transform our every action of good to inspire change and hope. Contentment is the biggest enemy of greatness for when contentment sets in the strive for any other greatness is diminished or demolished.

My search for greatness keeps me wanting and yearning for more. “Indeed, I might even venture the thought that to be ‘religious’ in its deepest sense is to be a searcher, living in search of something, as opposed to being satisfied with the reality that sits under our noses, content with the ‘present’” (Caputo, 2007, p. 38). It deflects me to other places and allows me to look past the contentment of my world and it makes me restless. My heart is restless and I need to find

rest in the journey of the impossible. “When understood in all its rich complexity, religion does not simply provide secure foundations but destabilizes every type of religiosity by subverting the oppositional logic of either/or” (Taylor, 2007, p. 4). Not that religious leaders will tell you, but theologized religion does not provide firm answers but only, and effectively, more complications. The binaries of good and evil, love and hate, and so many others that I have become accustomed to, become blurred, redefined and complex.

There are many different definitions of religion as Mark Taylor (2007) states in his book *After God*, but only one coincides with the purpose of a postmodern theology. “Religion is an emergent, complex, adaptive network of symbols, myths and rituals that, on the one hand, figure schema of feeling, thinking, and acting in ways that lend life meaning and purpose and, on the other, disrupt, dislocate, and disfigure every stabilizing structure” (Taylor, 2007, p. 12). This profound statement is what Derrida’s work with deconstruction continues to accomplish. A postmodern theology is a theology that works to change the stringent modern philosophy of the world. A postmodern theology does not accept status quos or allow for the dominant culture to stay dominant. In this sense, practicality, traditions, and concrete binaries will be exposed as restrictions on life. With the help of deconstruction, a postmodern theology has as its purpose to negate the power of the metaphysical and show the trace of the metaphysical entity so that it may be disrupted and disfigured, but in and for the love of the other.

### ***Theology***

Theology by itself can be just as dangerous as religion by itself. “As one wag has put it, ‘philosophy means ‘unanswerable questions’, and ‘theology’ means ‘unquestionable answers’ (Caputo, 2006a, p. 8). Theologians can promote themselves in a very narcissistic way as to

attempt to show that their answers are the only right answers and right way of thinking about God. They are not to be questioned. Most progressive and contemporary theologians of my day, however, “belong to communities of faith, and their work is to think through the ‘tenets of faith’ or the ‘contents of revelation,’ both the words of the Scriptures and the common faith passed down by the faithful over the ages. That could be considered a working definition of theology, that it is the place where the community of faith does its thinking, examining, clarifying, conceptualizing, and updating the common faith over the course of its history” (Caputo, 2006a, p. 4). There are two powerful parts to this quote. The first is that theologians search not only the Scriptures but also the ideas of faith passed down over the years. Many fundamentalists in any religion only consult and accept the anchor text of their religion. Many of these texts, like the Bible for instance, are outdated, incomplete, and even incorrect. Who knows how many accidental or purposeful changes were made to the Bible? For example, “scribes who were associated with the orthodox tradition not infrequently changed their texts, sometimes in order to eliminate the possibility of their ‘misuse’ by Christians affirming heretical beliefs and sometimes to make them more amenable to the doctrines being espoused by Christians of their own persuasion” (Ehrman, 2005, p. 52). However, fundamentalists claim that the Bible is the one and only truth. However, would it be accurate to say that there have been more theological and religious happenings since the creation or the formation of the Bible? There has been at least 1500 years of theological and religious experiences. Should I not consider these events too when I am making my impossible attempt to understand God? For example, why would I believe that God, who knows every possibility, would force me to believe in an outdated rule written, not by God, but by men of God? Naturally, the most important part here is men. Men are men and even so called “godly” men have faults just like me. The men who Christians read the most,

Paul for example, had their writings altered and compiled by other men, who had faults and more importantly intentions of their own. “What is striking, once one sees them for the human beings they were, with their own beliefs, worldviews, situations, and so on, is that all these authors passed along the traditions they inherited in different words” (Ehrman, 2005, p. 212). Complete negation of Biblical text, however, is just as grave misfortune as accepting the text at face value. Ehrman’s entire belief system was shocked by his research and he turned from Christianity because of this. It seems that the complications and disruptions that arose took him down a path that closed him off to every biblical narrative and lesson.

A possible turning point for former believers like Ehrman is the fact that the central figure of the religion, Jesus, never wrote a word of the Bible. There are no writings of Jesus only interpretations of Jesus’ teachings and actions. This leads me to ask, should I accept the Bible for what it is and learn from it what I can? Unlike Ehrman, my answer is yes but, I should also do what Caputo says any good theologian should do and that is the second powerful part of the above quote: updating the common faith over the course of its history. One of theology’s most important jobs is to ensure that the religion does not become stagnate. Theology’s job is to move religion to where it needs to be and to, as I spoke to above, theologize religion. The duty of theology is not to have unquestionable answers but to have the right questions for the current and future situation. Theology can do this by using the information and lessons learned from the past and apply it to the current context of daily life so that I may explore these questions with a more heterogeneous lens. Again, Caputo stated that “the more progressive theologians want their theology to be as public and universal as possible, delivering a message to everyone” (Caputo, 2006a, p. 5). Caputo does not clarify this statement by saying everyone means every Christian or every believer in God, but everyone and every other.

Along the same lines, it is not theology's job to discover meaning within these words but should instead, instill an opportunity for creation. As Mary J. Fleener (2002) states, "while the search for certainty, security, and order may prompt the question of my youth, my more mature selves may appreciate that the search for meaning and understanding is one of creation rather than discovery. Meaning and language are not anchored in some universal actuality but are themselves avenues to abstraction" (Fleener, 2002, p. 11). When it comes to theology, I should not be held down by actualities. Instead, I should be using the teachings within religious texts to find the ideas behind the texts, through the texts, and underneath the texts. Derrida teaches me to work towards this impossibility through the complication of deconstruction. Most other's recognized the literal meaning of the "word" and chooses to accept it as certain or as fact. Fleener, Caputo, and Derrida challenge me to take theology to the next philosophical and intellectual level by reading through the heart of the religious text, hence why theology needs philosophy.

### ***Philosophy and Theology***

Therefore just as theology and religion need each other, philosophy and theology need each other. For years they have been against each other as philosophers see theologians as unthinking feelers and theologians see philosophers as unfeeling thinkers. "But if you run the philosophers out of town, the result is inevitably to weaken theology, too, and you will reduce seminary training to Bible thumping and choir practice" (Caputo, 2006a, p. 14). Theology is not just a feeling man's game but a thinking man's game. There is a great deal to ponder when it comes to religion and if you take hermeneutics and post-modernist thought out of the game of theology, for example, you are left with a literalism that does not invite the possibility of the impossible that is so important to belief. For example, "In deconstruction, the 'apophatic secret'

has a 'messianic' point. The 'messianic secret' is there is no secret and the Messiah is never going to show up" (Caputo, 1997, p. 102). Apophatically, God only is what he is not. The messianic point is that the messiah may never show up because if he did, then what? The great impossibility of religion is what makes me strive to believe. If the messiah were to return there would be nothing left to strive for and Christians would be lost and churches would lose their power and "the church is not going to see its authority threatened by anyone, not even by Jesus himself. Whoever defies the teachings of the church by definition stands accused of heresy-and that goes for Jesus. In short, was Jesus to return in the flesh, he would be executed again, not by the world but by the church" (Caputo, 2007, p. 32). Although to me, this is a very controversial statement, I see the point that Caputo is trying to make and that is, without a philosophized theology, you are left with an inaptly theologized religion which could possibly conduct the most nihilistic act ever were the messiah to return.

Also important, just as in religion, theologians have to truly accept that "the secret is that there is no Secret, no capitalized Know-it-all Breakthrough Principle or Revelation that lays things out the way they Really are and thereby lays to rest the conflict of interpretations. When we open our mouths, it is only we who are speaking, we poor existing individuals...and we would be ill advised to think that we are the Mouthpiece of Being or the Good or of the Almighty" (Caputo, 2001, p. 21). Caputo here is touching upon both theology and philosophy as he is confronting the narcissism that often invades and pervades these areas of thought. There is no right answer that any one person will have, find, create, or invent. As Prigogine states, "This requires a new formulation of the laws of nature that is no longer based on certitudes, but rather possibilities. In accepting that the future is not determined, I come to the end of certainty. Is this an admission of defeat for the human mind? On the contrary, I believe the opposite is true"

(Prigogine, 1997, p. 183). Also, Derrida, in his interviews especially, often admits he does not have all the answers just the right way to question. Caputo, Taylor, and Hart only talk about a possible way of thinking about religion. Augustine seems downright clueless in his confessions. But, the best way to come to an understanding is being conscious that you do not understand anything. At that point, your journey into and through the world as a thinking believer begins.

This is why philosophy is critical to theology as “information alone does not guarantee understanding. Information needs interpretation and the latter needs a learned method” (Sumara, 2002, p. 36). Theology needs the lessons learned from the likes of deconstruction to be its method of understanding, questioning, updating, and universalizing religion. This takes quite an event and “the event of theology is the theology of the event. By the same token, the event of theology could also be called a deconstruction of the name of God, insofar as deconstruction is the deconstruction of the conditioned name in order to release the unconditional event that is sheltered by the name” (Caputo, 2006b, p. 6). Here is the type of interpretive work that needs to be done in theology through philosophy. Releasing the potential of the sign that is God and understanding the greatness of this name by following its complicated trace is the kind of work that takes a philosophized theologian. Or as Kevin Hart (2000) writes, “‘Theological’, like ‘metaphysical’ describe a desire for totality, and so a discourse may be called ‘non-theological’ if it seeks to resist totalization, that is, if it does not attempt to reduce its heterogeneity” (Hart, 2000, p. 33). This seeking to resist totalization is what is necessary in a philosophized theology. By breaking down the signs that symbolize the totalization of theology, I begin to see that God, the church, etc., is more than what the metaphysical has forced upon me. A philosophized theology begins to break down the doors of homogeneity and begins to welcome in the heterogeneity that is truly God. Totalization brings new meaning when I start to see that a



philosophized theology does not force unquestionable answers onto the believer and non-believer but looks for the right questions that will allow for total access and openness to the thinking and updating of theology.

However, philosophized theologians have to be balanced because if they just become philosophers, then they lose the greatness of theology. Therefore, when they write of the teachings of philosophers they must be careful to truly understand the thinking behind the philosophers so they will not become trapped in their “atheistic” thinking. For example, “it is evident that Derrida’s usage of ‘theology’ is far closer to its original Greek sense, as the study of being of the ground, than to its other, more common meaning, as the study of man’s relationship in faith with God” (Hart, 2000, p. 32). It is important to understand how philosophers use theological terms and ideas. Even what theologians might call “God” can be completely different from what philosophers call “God.” This understanding will keep theologians, in the true sense of the word, grounded in their feeling, their belief, and while at the same time using the method of interpretation and thinking to further theology.

So where do I go now? What should a philosophized theology that theologizes religion look like? Something has to be done. As Hart (2000) stated, “By contrast, theology would be the working out of God’s calls and fits to men and women in a life of faith. It would never be a simple matter, for theology can never reflect on faith without involving religion. And as Paul Ricoeur argues, ‘Metaphysics makes God into a supreme being; and religion treats the sacred as a new sphere of objects, institutions, and powers within the world of immanence.’ The life of faith inexorably tends to turn signs of the sacred into sacred objects and, as Ricoeur suggests, ‘This diabolic transformation makes religion the reification and alienation of faith’ (Hart, 2000,

p. 293). The next section will discuss more specifically how theology will work as love, as a challenge/disturbance, and as a narrative.

### *As love*

In the future, I see that philosophized theology will work in and through three ways: love, challenge/disturbance, and as a narrative. None is more important than the other as all play a decisive role in furthering the development of theology into something that will not just pose great questions but will do the impossible. When it comes to love, “religion in the sense of the love of God cannot contain what it contains...The love of God is too important to leave to the religions or theologians” (Caputo, 2001, p. 137). The love of God needs more than religion and theologians. It needs believers who have the capacity, capability, and perseverance to do the hard thinking that it takes to pursue the possibility of the impossible understanding of the love of God. “God has planted a head on my shoulders and put eyes in that head, and so the full job description of a believer is to be a thinking believer or a believing thinker (Caputo, 2006a, p. 36). In other words, I should not just accept the status quo and accept the love of God but I should earnestly seek it out. Believers do not leave their intelligence at the church door nor should they accept all that they hear from the raised platform of the local preacher. A thinking believer on the basis of love and the love of God should always be looking to challenge the status quo. Obviously, many things in my today are not done through love and the love of God. The impossibility of this action should not be hopeless though as I have faith (hope against all hope) as “even the most desacralized existence still preserves traces of a religious valorization of the world” (Eliade, 1987, p. 23). A thinking believer will explore this trace and find the love in it. They will not exploit this trace but will explore this trace to understand the heterogeneity of God’s people and begin the truly loving action of acceptance and kindness. As Caputo (2001)

stated, “every historical and social structure, everything created, generated, made, formed, or forged in time-and what is not?-should be measured against the love of God. Even religion-especially religion-insofar as religion takes historical and institutional form, must be tested to see how loyal it is to itself, to its religious vocation, which is the love of God” (p. 3-4). What a lesson the thinking believers could teach just the thinkers or just the believers by exhibiting these actions expressed by Caputo. With this paradigm as a guide, everyday would be a day worth living and would give life considerably more worth. “It is even the Nietzschean sense of affirmation: to be able to repeat what one loves, to be able to live in such a way that at every moment one may say, ‘I would like to relive this eternally’ (Derrida, 1992, p. 144). Derrida states it perfectly. Here is the goal of the philosophized theology of the thinking believer. With love as your center and with love as your guide, almost every moment would be one that you would want to live for eternity.

A philosophized theology leads me to this understanding as it paints a more disturbed picture of God’s influence in the world. There have generally been two sides to God’s role in the world: the fundamentalists will tell you that God is in total control of every happening in the world. If it happens, it happens because God willed it to happen or God did it himself. The non-believer will naturally say that God had absolutely nothing to do with anything nor has He ever had anything to do with this world. The world can be explained through science and science alone. The paint cast by these two views are very black and white. I believe that the vivid paint cast by a philosophized or postmodern view is more in line with what Cobb and Griffin (1976) wrote. “Since the very meaning of actuality involves internal relatedness, God as an actuality is essentially related to the world. Since actuality as such is partially self-creative, future events are not yet determinate, so that perfect knowledge cannot know the future, and God does not wholly

control the world. Any divine creative influence may be persuasive, not coercive” (Cobb & Griffin, 1975, p. 52). I believe God knows every possible path that could have ever possibly been and could ever possibly be. This is what makes God divine. I could not possibly truly know what could have happened if I made another choice. God, in his omniscience does. More importantly, God does not want to force me into a choice that could lead to my best possible path, however, he wants me to cheerfully, faithfully, and wholeheartedly believe in him so that all my decisions and choices will be founded in the love of God and his kingdom. With this, I believe our lives will go down the best possible path. Often people state that God is unchanging but scripture, both Christian and Jewish, show a different story. From the beginning until now, God has continually revealed himself in different ways. In the beginning of God’s story, he was hyper-involved, making and creating. After Adam and Eve were banished, he no longer walked along side of humanity but ruled from above. Often times he would have to coerce the people to act appropriately. The burning bush, the plagues, or the Ten Commandments are just a few examples. Later, God continually pulls back from the world and sends signs of coercion. Jonah, for example, did not want to go to Nineveh so naturally, as Jonah was boating across the sea a violent storm thrashed and crashed. The other sea farers thought Jonah was a curse so they threw him overboard at which time Jonah was swallowed by a whale. After three days in the whale, Jonah conceded and agreed to go to Nineveh. The whale spit him out and off Jonah went to do God’s will. God’s revelation then comes in the form of the son of God. Coercion began to wain for immediate consequences led to eternal consequences when death occurs. However, Jesus seemed to me to be the last revelation and the last chance. God no longer was into the coercion method but wanted to persuade you to act. Love and faith became the focus instead of rule following and justice. Today, it seems God has really left us to our own devices. How can the

Holocaust happen when God is in complete control? How can the murder of 1<sup>st</sup> grade students at Newtown occur? How can God allow parents to starve their 10 year old daughter to death and then try to conceal her body by burning it in a trash can? These people have made their own way and gone down an evil path one which God knew could happen. However, God also knows the path towards righteousness and continually attempts to persuade me down it. For I believe God is helping us understand that "...if we truly love others we do not seek to control them" (Cobb & Griffin, 1976, p. 53).

Being aware of this persuasion and being founded strongly enough in the a postmodern theology is an impossibility but if continue to attempt to do what is within my locus of control, which is very little, my effect on others might produce the life I want for myself and others. However, there are many aspects of my world that are working against this belief. This means that philosophized theology must be ready for the challenge and ready to disturb the dogmatic, metaphysical, and even hegemonic social constructions of this world.

### *As a challenge/disturbance*

As quoted earlier, a philosophized theology produces a thinking believer who participates in a religion, which is "a complex adaptive network of symbols, myths , and rituals that both give life and meaning and purpose and disrupt, dislocate, and disfigure every stabilizing structure" (Taylor, 2007, p. 137). The latter part is what is of most importance here. Disrupt, dislocate, and disfigure sounds more like words you would use to describe the events in a car wreck not to describe religion. However, theology must wreck the status quo and must find its traces so that it may then build it back up to what a philosophized theological religion should be. This is no easy task. It is one of many challenges and trepidations during which the believer will face many hardships. But "if safe is what you want, forget religion and find yourself a conservative

investment counselor” (Caputo, 2001, p. 14). Theology and philosophy must challenge the standard religion to be better than what it has been and better than what it is. Theology and philosophy must be updated based on the secular trends of society so that religion will not become extinct. “Do I have to go to popular culture to find religion because the traditional churches have become irrelevant” (Caputo, 2001, p. 89)? The challenge is both an internal challenge and external challenge. To understand the other I must first understand myself and once I do that, the challenge becomes accepting and acceptance. I must be willing, through love, to accept others and I must have faith for acceptance as the name for which I stand is notorious as it has been used to gain power in politics and stratify those in society.

I must attempt to disturb this power in politics and I must attempt to de-stratify society into a whole people who are living a life of love in which every day is a day they would want to live eternally. Caputo stated, “I want these determinate forms of religious life to be inwardly disturbed by the secret that springs from their historical contingency, put into question by the question of what they love, and forced always to negotiate the distance between the determinate historical form in which their religious desire has taken shape in them and the open-endedness of the secret, of the equally religious confession that we do not know who we are or what we love when we love our God” (Caputo, 2001, p. 34). In this Augustine way, Caputo challenges me to break away from the societal way of selfish exaltation in which I claim to know everything but to admit that the only thing I do know is that I know nothing. Most importantly I must put myself and my religion in question to see what I love and where I have come from, where I am, and where I am going. The phrase, “you need to stir the pot” rings true here. Religion cannot be stagnating. This is when it becomes filthy and ineffective. Caputo is a little more violent in his disturbance. “I must keep a hammer handy for these idols and be ready to theologize with a

hammer-in the name of God. The idea is not to level these structures to the ground, because I need them, the way I need other structures made with human hands, but to keep them open-ended, revisable, honed, on their toes, always threatened and at risk” (Caputo, 2001, p. 93).

What a disturbing image but what an image of theology with true power in love. The idols set up in my world (money, success, ambition, power, etc) are not all evil. They must be embraced in the sense that there is something of the sacred within these idols. These idols need to be disturbed, cracked open, exposed, and put into play by the love of a philosophized theology that can then mold them for the possibility of the impossible task of de-stratifying the homogenous social stratum that has been put into place in the “name of God.”

In moving on this idea of love, breaking away from any dogmatic or declaring statements by the mainstream churches are essential to ensuring inspirational change will occur. As John Cobb stated, “does this Christian patriarchy infused by love suffice? Or must Christians also affirm the claim for full equality not only in the social and economic order, but also in shaping the cultural and intellectual patterns by which we live? If the latter, then we must, for Christian reasons, adopt ideas and ideals that are not fully expressed in the Bible” (Cobb, 1997, p. 64). There are many in the Protestant and Catholic realm of Christianity who would vehemently disagree. However, I believe they would be misreading. Cobb’s statement is not discounting the Bible but is asking for a philosophical discussion about the role of the Bible in the current social realm. Are there more voices that need to be brought into the fray? Are there adequate discussions concerning the patriarchy and misogyny that pervade this document and thereby this religion?

There are many steps in this process but what the philosophized theologian must first understand is that “the church, the archive of Jesus, in a very real sense *is* this question. It has no

other duty and no other privilege than to bear this memory of Jesus and ask itself this question. The church is not the answer. The church is the question, this question, the gathering of people who are called together by the memory of Jesus and who ask this question, who are called together and are put into question by this question, who stand accused, under the call, interrogated and unable to rescue themselves from this question, and who come to understand that there are no easy, ready-made, prepackaged answers” (Caputo, 2007, p. 34). With this understanding I am ready to proceed in disturbing, I am ready to challenge the role of the church, the role of religion, and the role of theology. More importantly, I am ready to begin my search for meaning in this sometimes seemingly meaningless life. Often times, I find meaning in places like religious narratives and it is something that theology must begin to embrace to become the philosophized theology that will be able to make change.

### *As narrative*

The power of a moving narrative is well known throughout history. Stories have moved me to tears, to laughter, and have moved me to make changes in my world. These fictional stories with purpose are very powerful. Often times, theologians attempt to objectify religion to see which is right and which is wrong but “unlike a scientific theory, there is not a reason on earth (or in heaven) why many different religious narratives cannot all be true. ‘The one true religion’ in that sense makes no more sense than ‘the one true language’ or the ‘one true poetry,’ the one true story’ or the one true culture’” (Caputo, 2001, p. 110). As you see, theologians are not going to use scientific method to further their thinking on religion. They need a grand story to further the reach of the spirit. As James K. Smith stated, “The notion of reducing Christian faith to four spiritual laws signals a deep capitulation to scientific knowledge, whereas postmodernism signals the recovery of narrative knowledge and should entail a more robust,



unapologetic proclamation of the story of God in Christ. This is why the Scriptures must remain central for the postmodern church, for it is precisely the story of the canon of Scripture that narrates my faith” (Smith, 2006, p. 75). Thank goodness for the philosophized theologian as he is one who recognizes the greatness and potential of the narrative stories in religion. There is nothing theological about knowledge because most science is out to find *the answer, the way, the method* of a certain aspect of nature and/or the world. What’s in an atom? There is answer for that. Is cancer caused more by environmental factors or your genetic code and what is the deadly combination? There could be an answer for that. But a philosophized theology is not looking for answers but the best questions on the journey of impossibility. As Keller states, “science quantifies the finitudes and the infinities of the creation, leaving it to theology to dwell upon their quality” (Keller, 2003, p. xvi). Closing doors is not the purpose of theology but opening new spaces for new possibilities through, in, and for the love of God.

The current narrative of religion has to be shared not as historical or scientific fact but as a possibility. “Story is, perhaps, imagination’s performance. Whatever the case, it seems clear that without story, no imagination is manifested, and without imagination, no stories could exist” (Quinn, 2001, p. 7). Furthermore, without imagination the idea of the spirit is not possible. The spirit, a word that has been and should be heavily deconstructed, is extremely powerful and is not moved to act through historical and scientific facts and/or rhetoric. “Is it important that this narrative should not be more than quite averagely historically plausible just so that this should not be taken as the essential, decisive thing? So that the letter should not be believed more strongly than is proper and the spirit may receive its due. i.e. what you are supposed to see cannot be communicated even by the best and most accurate historian; and therefore a mediocre account suffices, is even preferred” (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 31). As Wittgenstein suggested, an

accurate historical or scientific account of a situation might be less powerful (i.e. moving, opening, ground breaking) than a mediocre narrative. Wittgenstein recognized the power of the spirit and knew that the facts alone will not move mountains or cause the love of God to come into presence. The grand narrative, which most if not all religions are made up of, need to be taken as such. A narrative is not factual accounts but spirit moving stories that relay a spirit-filled lesson that I should learn from. Also, and maybe most importantly, “theology has never existed in a vacuum, nor has philosophy, which is the strong suit of those theologians who insist on the ‘correlation’ of theology and the surrounding culture...Theologians give words to revelation by means of the words theologians are given to speak, and these words are given by the world in which they live” (Caputo, 2006a, p. 44-45). Theologians need to address the world in the language of the world through the stories of the world. Self isolation from the world does not make one better it makes one alone and ineffective in making any great changes to the dominant homogenous culture of today.

As James K. A. Smith (2006) stated, “Nothing is more countercultural than a community serving the Suffering Servant in a world devoted to consumption and violence. But the church will have this countercultural, prophetic witness only when it jettisons its own modernity; in that respect postmodernism can be another catalyst for the church to be the church” (Smith, 2006, p. 30). For the guiding help so needed by the church, the church needs to begin to look towards postmodernism as its guide. To be even more specific, the theologian just cannot be a philosophized theologian but needs to be a postmodern theologian. The work that will be discussed further will focus on the effect of postmodernism, focusing on the work of French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who has claimed that he rightly passes as an atheist. Derrida’s work on deconstruction has been used to update the church into an organization meant to attack

the status quo not support it. “In other words, the worship in a deconstructive church is aimed at forming believers who can recognize Wall Street’s construal of happiness as an interpretation as ill as articulate the countercultural gospel’s interpretation of human flourishing. The deconstructive church, in other words, is deeply prophetic-reflecting the voice not so much of Derrida as Amos” (Smith, 2006, p. 58). Deconstruction will help theologians and the church look to the future so that life within religion can be disrupted, disturbed, disfigured, updated, and complicated. As Caputo stated, “deconstruction is a theory of truth, in which truth spells trouble. As does Jesus. That is what they have in common. The truth will make you free, but it does so by turning your life upside down” (Caputo, 2007, p. 30). I will attempt to address Derrida’s view on religion in a Caputo like fashion: 1) Discussing the idea of religion without religion and 2) Discussing the Weakness of God.

### *No religion and a Weak God; Thank God*

A postmodern theology can be maddening. It can turn your world upside down and it can take you down a disturbing and chaotic path. Postmodernism as often been seen as the anti-theological if not atheistic. However, “Religion as madness is a madness springing from irreligiousness” (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 13). The maddening of religion has a weakening effect on the dogmatic and power-filled doctrines of modern theology. Religion deserves to be understood not by doctrines but by the fantastically diverse characteristics that it contains. “‘Religion,’ in the singular, as just one thing, is nowhere to be found; it is too maddeningly polyvalent and too uncontainably diverse for me to fit all under one roof” (Caputo, 2001, p. 1). Theology and religion cannot be confined as a something. It is many things, too many people, and in many different ways. Postmodernism and deconstruction is the guide to discovering the many different forms and ways of religion.

Let me first attempt, because it is the best I can do, to describe deconstruction and why it is important to theology. First of all, “deconstruction is a matter of buts” (Caputo, 1997, p. 94). What this is insinuating is that deconstruction is never ending and is always searching. It does not allow there to be final, totalizing, homogenous answers that set up hierarchies that have for so long pervaded my world. Deconstruction works to break down these stratifying hierarchies that separate and divide by discovering the trace that lies beneath all the signs and symbols that are used to explain my world. As Derrida (1992) stated, “Deconstruction is not, should not be only an analysis of discourse, of philosophical statements or concepts, of a semantics; it has to challenge institutions, social and political structures, the most hardened traditions” (p. 213). What is a more “hardened tradition” than theology/religion/the church?

So how will deconstruction go about deconstructing theology/religion/the church? Caputo and others have done extensive work on this topic. First of all, “Deconstruction proceeds not by knowledge but by faith and by passion, by the passion of faith, impassioned by the unbelievable, by the secret that there is no secret” (Caputo, 1997, p. xxvi). Deconstruction is wary about statements that affirm correct ways and absolute truths hence why deconstruction scares the church and as well it should. The church is forced to look at itself in the mirror and face the facts of what it is made of and what its purpose is. “Sadly, the message of Jesus has been concealed and corrupted by the religiousness of many who intend to reverence him (Cobb, 2010, p. 13). For years the church has enticed others by claiming they know the secret of the end of life and the end of time. But, “in deconstruction, the “apophatic secret” has a “messianic” point. The “messianic secret” is there is no secret and the Messiah is never going to show up” (Caputo, 1997, p. 102). However, this is good news. It is good news because the priest and the preacher’s words of damnation have some more explaining to do and also, I can live my life not

waiting for the messiah to come but can fearlessly do what is necessary through love while I am here.

Second, deconstruction does not want to deal with the existence of God in an onto-theological way. “The question is never whether there is a God, or whether I should love God, but, as Derrida says in quoting Augustine, what do I love when I love my God (Caputo, 2006b, p. 115). The question is more complex than that as both Augustine and Derrida confirm. This word God, which, as Derrida stated, is written under erasure, has many different forms and fashions and Augustine and Derrida constantly sought to discover what it is they were so passionate about. Derrida stated “And supposing, which I do not believe, that someday it will be possible simply to escape metaphysics, the concept of the sign will have marked, in this sense, a simultaneous impediment and progress” (Derrida, 1981, p. 17). With the sign of God in this context I see that the sign God, with all its traces and origins, is an impediment to itself. The sign God signifies so many different things and it cannot detach from these signifiers. So if the sign God could break away from the metaphysical, then God would then become that which impedes its freedom and that which progresses it towards this same freedom. The sign of God and what it signifies has been twisted and cajoled throughout the use of the word by man who has used the sign of God for their own purpose and not for the purpose of others. This is where the sign of God begins to break and where it simultaneously has to become understood internally but also an understanding of what God truly means to others. This is how deconstruction for the church is an opening for new discussions.

Deconstruction is often looked at as the enemy of religion because “deconstruction is not a critical operation; it takes critique as its object; deconstruction, at one moment or another, always aims at the trust confided in the critical, critico-theoretical, agency, that is, the deciding

agency, the ultimate possibility of the decidable; deconstruction is a deconstruction of critical dogmatics” (Derrida, 1992, p. 54).” I see this as warning, not a threat, from Derrida. Religion using deconstruction is not simply a critique as many see it. People have been critiquing for centuries and it is still a mess because religion ends up right back at my same old heavy handed dogmatics. Deconstruction is critical of this type of critique because it does nothing but justify the status quo and this is one reason why religion fears deconstruction. As Caputo (2007) stated, “To deconstruct is on the one hand to analyze and criticize but also, on the other hand, and more importantly, to feel about for what is living and stirring within a thing, that is, feeling for the event that stirs with the deconstructible structure in order to release it, to set it free, to give it a new life, a new being, a future” (p. 68). Religion often fears this new life, new being, and new future. There is nothing scarier to the church than change. This event of change, of progress, of updating, of disturbing is terrifying and as it should be for the world is a place in need of this event and it is often not welcomed.

A philosophized theology of the event must work towards taking care of the metaphysical in theology. What this means is that theology must not allow events to just happen but it must question everything by seeking out the trace of how the metaphysics of theology is attempting to control. “What I must be wary of, I repeat, is the metaphysical concept of history...the history of meaning developing itself, producing itself, fulfilling itself” (Derrida, 1981, p. 56). The “deconstruction of theology would consist in the deconstruction of that which is metaphysical in theology, a movement which would lead to the development of a non-metaphysical theology” (Hart, 2000, p. 21). And this is what would lead to the idea of religion without religion. “The idea of a religion without religion amounts to the recommendation that I return to the medieval sense of *vera religio*, where ‘religion’ mean a virtue, not a body with institutional headquarters in

Nashville or the Vatican, so that ‘true religion’ meant the ‘virtue’ of being genuinely or truly religious, of genuinely or truly loving God, not The One True Religion, Ours-versus-yours. God is more important than religion, as the ocean is more important than the raft, the latter bearing all the marks of being constituted by human beings” (Caputo, 2001, p. 113). Here Caputo expresses the idea of stripping the metaphysical or the onto-theological concept of theology and religion. To be truly religious one must reject idea of being the best in the world and must embrace the thought of being the best to the world. Religion must be thought of as a virtue like justice, prudence, restraint, and courage. Naturally, the religious virtue would be made up of faith, hope, and love but also must be continually complicated by disruption, deferring, and differing.

Also, Caputo makes a good point when he stated in the above quote that “God is more important than religion.” For years, religion has had a stronghold on the name of God when the event of God based on love should have a stronghold on religion. The love of God needs a voice in this world and that is the church but the church has had a bad history of controlling the love of God for their political and socially stratifying purposes instead of allowing the love of God to move through them. “Here I touch upon the heart of Derrida’s religion, of the call for a justice, a democracy, just one to come, a call for peace among the concrete messianisms, issuing from neo-Auflarer looking for a (post-secular) religion within the limits of (a certain) reason alone (almost)” (Caputo, 1997, p. xxviii). What is most interesting here is the information added by the words in parenthesis. Post-secular is an interesting statement as it is a statement that is considering that there is an end to western secularism. God indeed may have died in the secular world but in a post-secular world, the name of God has been deconstructed and reconstructed into and for a specific reason (a certain one) of love which bequeaths justice and democracy.

This deconstructed name of God is not one that seeks knowledge but seeks the something that is beyond my current grasp (almost).

What is out of reach, what has not yet come, and yet what I continue to search for, in a name is God. “For Derrida, the event of the promise, the call of what is ‘to come,’ is inscribed in the name of God, but not only there, for Derrida could say whatever he has to say without the benefit of this name, because this name is endlessly translatable into other names, like justice or the gift, all of which hold out the promise of something to come” (Caputo, 2006b, p. 93). Is this a weakening of the name of God? Or of religion in general? For me, this is not a weakening but a empowering of the name of God. The deconstructed name of God is one that is powerful as it is numerous and all encompassing. It encompasses all that should be good in the world and it has the power to change the world. And Derrida (1992) gave an example of Caputo’s vision of the power in the Weakness of God: “In the case of Abraham, it is effectively God who decides. That doesn’t mean that Abraham does nothing; he does everything that has to be done, but he knows in a certain sense that he is obeying the Other; it is the Other who will decide what ‘come’ means; that is where the response is” (Derrida, 1992, p. 149). Abraham, out of love and obedience accepts the test of God and was rewarded. In love and obedience to His name, God upheld his promise and a nation of people were born. Here is the power of God’s love. It both moves and founds, challenges and creates, and all through the Weakness of humanity and through the Weakness of his love. I am held responsible to the name of God but the effects of my responsibility are boundless.

Caputo (2006b) wrote extensively about the weakness of God. His main idea was “to stop thinking about God as a massive ontological power line that provides power to the world, instead thinking of something that short-circuits such power and provides a provocation to the



world that is otherwise than power” (Caputo, 2006b, p. 13). Shifting the way of thinking from God as a great ontological power who wields and directs the world with an iron fist to that of a “Weak” power who works by short-circuiting this totalizing all encompassing power that has controlled and signified the name of God is not an easy task. But this weakening of religion is exactly what religion needs. “The power of the kingdom is the powerless power to melt hearts that have hardened, to keep hope alive when life is hopeless, to revive the spirits of the dispirited and the despairing, to pray for the possibility of something coming, in short, in a paradigmatically religious expression, the possibility of the impossible (Derrida), for with God all things are possible (Luke 1:37), one of the most fetching short circuits of all” (Caputo, 2006b, p. 16). The power in the kingdom to come is not in the overarching, top-down, transcendent power of God but the subtle, restrained, and understated powerlessness of God is what moves mountains or better yet is the possibility of the impossible. What calls me is the intoxicating journey of seeking the possibility of the impossible. The kingdom of God, here on earth, is something that is an objective impossibility, but is something I should always strive for as the kingdom is filled with love and justice and has the subtle power of making changes in the world.

Derrida also showed that the term knowledge has to be deconstructed and stripped of its metaphysical claims to absolute knowledge. “Derrida has found it necessary to delimit knowledge in order to make room for faith in what is to come” (Caputo, 1997, p. 103). Absolute knowledge impedes the power of faith in what is to come which, in a philosophized theologized religion, brings in the kingdom that will bring about changes. Deconstructed knowledge is not about objective and factual knowledge but about knowing yourself, knowing the effects of your actions, and carrying out your actions in love. In theology, pure seeing is not necessary for faith has a “knowing” all of it is own. Faith believes without needing the facts and it is just as much

work and effort to obtain this faith as it is to do copious research to find objective facts. Often times it is even more difficult to believe than it is to know. For example, to seek out the origin or the trace of the sign God is an impossible task. I can see pieces of his origin through some interpretations of facts and through mythological narratives but what the name truly represents is an impossibility that I continue to strive to understand. “Yet I know that that concept destroys its name and that, if all begins with the trace, there is above all no originary trace” (Derrida, 1974, p. 61). God is not the source of language. God is the concept, symbol, sign that I use to assist me in interpreting language and the experiences which I am attempting to explain. A deconstructed theology allows me to understand this sign of God in such a way that leads to the true purpose of God. Derrida rejects the idea of originary trace because that gives any sign, especially the sign of God, a form of primacy which equates to power. “In other words the attempt to discover the true origin is doomed. It only brings me to the boundary of my own language, to originating conditions that have themselves originated: an infinite regress, that which Derrida calls the ‘bottomless,’ open abysmally at the beginning” (Keller, 2003, p. 10). Derrida alludes to and Caputo expound on the idea that in the weakness of love, justice, hope, faith, and passion lays the true power of God and any attempt to find the true origins of being or of God, negates the purpose of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is not focused on honoring God, but focused on the impossibility of honoring all and every other. An attempt such as this must call on love, justice, hope, and faith which leads to more questions and less answers.

Lastly, when religion attempts to discover firm answers where none exist, they are attempting a power play by attesting to the truth. “And make the truth in this case that I’m not sure comes under any religion, for reason of literature, nor under any literature, for reason of religion, making truth has no doubt nothing to do with what you call truth, for in order to

confess, it is not enough to bring to knowledge, to make known what is... 'truth' then, having never given rise to avowal, to true avowal, the essential truth of avowal having therefore nothing to do with truth, but consisting, if, that is, one is concerned that it consist and that there be any, in asked-for pardon, in a request rather, asked of religion as of literature, before the one and the other which have a right only to this time, for pardoning, pardon, for nothing" (Derrida, 1993, p. 48-49). My confessing the truth, even my utmost deepest confession is nothing more than bringing forth knowledge which is not the same as truth. For bringing forth knowledge is only half the work to be done. All I can ask for is avowal which is true affirmation. This affirmation though is not a firming up of the truth but an expression, the confirmation, and the declaration that based on this knowledge I do not know the truth, the secret, the Other. This affirmation of "truth" also exhibits a hint of the apologetic. I declare, not with unquestionable answers, but with unselfish apology and sorrow for the knowledge I gain only makes me realize that I am that much farther from the true idea of what God and his kingdom should be. As I gain knowledge I am simultaneously gaining ground to God and I come to realize I have been running the other way. However the possibility of the impossible is what keeps me motivated and excited to continue to gain understanding. As Derrida stated, "This elliptical reminder is only meant to point out that the philosophical demonstration is necessary but insufficient. That demonstration must itself be dragged onto the stage, into the play of forces where it no longer holds the power to decide, where no one ever holds that power, where the undecidable forces one to release one's hold, where one can't even hold onto it-the undecidable" (Derrida, 1992, p. 23).

### ***The Problem of Literalism***

God died from the nihilistic literalism so touted by modernism. The firm answers are not what made religion powerful they are what made religion non-essential or better yet without

passion. Religion became a study of, or theology, instead of a living of, in my opinion a philosophized deconstructed theology. Why did literalism become the sole/soul foundation of religion? Mircea Eliade stated, “In short, whatever the dimensions of the space with which he is familiar and in which he regards himself as situated-his country, his city, his village, his house-religious man feels the need always to exist in total and organized world, in a cosmos” (Eliade, 1987, p. 44). Understandably, I am made to be curious and seek out answers in this complex world but religion/theology’s role was never to provide these firm answers. The role of religion/theology was to understand how to instill the love and the passion of this world through the name/sign/symbol of God. Should theologians still be thinkers and questioners of the science of this world? Of course! I am still fascinated by the greatness of nature and its complexity, but I am not using religion or theology to answer my questions of why or how, I use that what science questions as a conductor of my love and passion. The splendid-ness of this world can be understood, in the literal since, but through religion/theology the world has the love and passion that sparks the soul. As Wittgenstein, possibly too harshly put it, “It is as though everything were soluble in the aether of the world; there are no hard surfaces. What that means is that hardness and conflict do not become something splendid, but a *defect*” (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 9). I say Wittgenstein here is harsh because he considers the firm answers and the ongoing discussion concerning the firm answers as a defect. It is not a defect in the realm of science. It has its place but religion should not be focused on the hard answers, they should be focused on how the hard answers translate to love and passion for the Wholly Other of impossible understanding and the others of this world.

Why is literalism trouble, especially in religion? “Closure spells trouble, which is why differance cloaks itself in a misspelling. Closure spells exclusion, exclusiveness, closure spills

blood, doctrinal, confessional, theological, political, institutional blood, and eventually, it never fails, real blood” (Caputo, 1997, p. 6). How many more need to die based on a selective literalism where the radical religious take excerpts of convenience from holy text and claim these are the words of God I must live by? James K. A. Smith continues, “To assert that my interpretation is not an interpretation but objectively true often translates into the worst kinds of imperial and colonial agendas, even within a pluralist culture” (Smith, 2006, p. 51). I hold more faith in an author who states, this is my interpretation instead of this is what this means. There is nothing wrong with interpretation until it becomes the only interpretation and this becomes objective literalism not subjective possibility. Objective literalism leaves no room for mistakes, misunderstanding, disruption, or disfigurement. But subjective possibility leaves the door wide open. Again, this is a good thing. This is not an Awakening but an empowering, an impassioning for “if you comprehend it, Augustine said, it is not God” (Caputo, 2007, p. 44).

Mary Aswell Doll (2000) expressed this point in her book *Like Letters in Running Water*: “I argue that the problem in my culture is not illiteracy, but the literalisms that make me ill. Texts are everywhere being literalized: copied, imitated, mimicked. These ‘readings’ are pitiful attempts at creating meaning when the only meanings one seeks to find are those outside the self” (Doll, 2000, p. xiii). What does meaning mean if my writing and my text is a copy of someone else? It means it is void of passion and it takes away the exhilaration of new ideas, new thoughts, and new challenges. This is exactly what religion/theology needs to appreciate. Literalism/objectivism keeps the “I” out of interpretation. If the “I” is removed then so are the soul/spirit and therefore the love and passion that make life livable. There is openness in this, not closure. Always changing, always fluid, and always open to and ready to receive new interpretation is what makes me passionate lovers. “People who are like letters in running water

are those who do not retain their passing thoughts and whose minds are always clear. The Buddha's model of the fluid self provides an alternative mode to the other two, akin to post-structuralism conceptions of self. This is the mode of mindfulness and focused attuning, of simple coming and going. It is the mode of what Bakhtin calls 'linguistic homelessness.' No one ideal is grasped-not love, not home, certainly not purity-because to grasp is to being a hardening process" (Doll, 200, p. xix). What a powerful last line. Once you grasp, once you comprehend, you harden. The ears close up, the eyes begin to close and the mouth tires of forming the same words and phrases repetitiously. The un-grasped person, the person who is not set in any way or set in their ways is one who delights in life and is always searching for more. As Caputo stated, "...there is no one right answer to most questions. There are many different and competing beliefs and practices and I should make every reasonable effort to accommodate them, to let many flowers bloom" (Caputo, 2001, p. 63).

Naturally, what are taken most literally in religion are the holy texts. However, "What is revealed in the Scriptures is not a literal picture to hold up against the present like a mechanical template but a living Spirit whose inner force is to be brought to bear in a living and living dialogue with the circumstances of the present" (Caputo, 2007, p. 111). Caputo's analogy is that of a template but I often feel that scripture is used as a checklist. People often use scripture as a checklist and proceed to check items off as they accomplished it. Scripture however is not a to-do list. Scripture is not actions that need to be performed but a "living Spirit" to show how to love the unlovable, how to be passionate about God (justice, faith, hope, etc.) and become fodder for continual interpretation. Wittgenstein also alluded that those who are seeking literalism of things like scripture, or in his case architecture, have missed the point: "People who are constantly asking 'why' are like tourists who stand in front of a building reading Baedeker and

are so busy reading the history of its construction, etc., that they are prevented from seeing the building” (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 40). The old saying, you can’t see the forest for all the trees, correlates here. Often, theologians especially, get so focused on one or two specific details they seem to forget their purpose. Do not misunderstand, an intellectual study of specific pieces of scripture are welcomed (even Derrida wrote entire passages on a singular footnote or phrase).

Wittgenstein point is that I cannot have continual asking without the eventual reconnecting. I all get so bogged down in life that I forget to live it. I am so busy doing I forget to stop and reconnect to the excitement and love of life.

Rigid rules portray the fact that someone somewhere knew what was right and what was wrong. Laws have been passed down from generation to generation and have been followed to the letter. Other strict warnings exist through societal taboos or familial traditions. Fleener warns that “following rules does not create a state of doubt and, therefore, does not require a decision. Without having to decide on the appropriate course of action while relying on the given rules, without having to consider the consequences of my actions, I am not engaged in moral decision making. Moral action assumes the deliberation of possibilities and the consideration of others” (Fleener, 2002, p. 93). Without doubt, there are no questions. Often children are my example of how to doubt the rules and laws put into place by adults to produce order. Children test and try the rules to see just how far they can bend. Even more than rules though, I believe Fleener means how to live a life. If I assume that everything I read in religious texts was written for a literal purpose, then I have but a single path to follow. However, if I open up my world to use these readings as avenues for possibilities to relate to others, then I am taking religious texts for what it is worth: interpretation and thinking on life.

Another quote by Wittgenstein leads to my next point, which is “The insidious thing about the causal point of view is that it leads me to say: ‘Of course, it had to happen like that.’ Whereas I ought to think: it may have happened like that-and also in many other ways” (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 37). What a hard pill to swallow for the fundamentalist in my world. Theologians or religious believers who claim that “it had to happen like that “are knowers (Gnostics)who have taken themselves out of the game. They are like vacationers eager for an adventure, to set forth into the unknown-but not without an air-conditioned Hummer with four-wheel drive, an experienced guide, and reservations at a five star hotel” (Caputo, 2007, p. 41). Knowers claim to have the difficult job of holding the faith firm, but what they have really done is taken the safest route. There is no challenge, no questioning, and no searching. They have removed themselves from life (the game) and have died to literalism. Therefore, the New Testament must be treated as poetics, an art form for the way to life. It is not a system of rules and regulations but a beautiful narrative to live the beautiful life. It is an (one of many) interpretation of events that I would be lucky to live by. The question always is presented, how do I know that the events are even interpreted are true? “On the one hand, this criticism is right. I would agree that the gospel is an interpretation and that I can’t *know* the gospel is true, *if* knowledge I mean unmediated objectivity or pure access to ‘the way things are’ (a Rousseauian dream). On the other hand, it is wrong to conclude that this is antithetical to orthodox Christian faith” (Smith, 2006, p. 44). Again, knowing “the way things are” is exactly what takes you out of the game. Not knowing does not make you less of a believer but makes you a faithful thinker who strives for more.

Not having the firm answers is exactly what is needed so that your interpretation can lead you to something beyond black and white. The study of the phenomena is nothing without the



interpretation. Therefore, even if I witnessed firsthand every story or event in scripture, it would still need the process of interpretation to flesh out the love and the passion that is inside it. The writers of scripture, especially the Bible, recognized this. As Smith noted, “but isn’t it curious that God’s revelation to humanity is given not as a collection of facts but rather within a narrative—a grand sweeping story from Genesis to Revelation” (Smith, 2006, p. 74)? There are not many out there who can recite the 600 some laws of Judaism. There are not many out there who can recite every “rule” or “law” spoken of Jesus (possibly because they don’t exist). But there are not many believers who cannot tell the story of Moses, David, Job, Jesus, Paul and others. It is the narrative, not the rule book, which leaves me wanting more. It’s the subjective possibilities that make me a passionate lover of this world. It is the narrative that makes believers because hope is un-reasonable and these stories provide hope. The search is on and has been on for archaeological proof of so many biblical things. For example, a few years back, someone claimed to have found Noah’s ark. Physical evidence of God’s existence is not something I need. I do not need scientific proof that the Flood narrative is true or that actual ark existed for that which moves me to love and that which gives me the passion to live my life with affirmation, as if I would want to live each day eternally, are mine and others interpretation of the narratives. This philosophized theology focuses on the weak spark that is inside every one of me and it tries to wrestle its awesome exponential power to a sort of understanding. The first question is always, as what it has been for centuries, What do I love when I love my God? And then I continue to question. “I am one who finds his life a question, whose life is always being put in question, which is what gives life its salt” (Caputo, 2001, p. 18). Questioning is considered a weakness while answers are considering strength. In a philosophized theology, questioning is what leads me to the possibility of the impossible and requires me to not seek firm

answers but only seek more questions that can create a place for meaning and for passion and for love. A philosophized theology creates a thinking, growing, changing, disturbing religion that places itself in a place of worship where life can begin. It is a beginning, not closure or an ending

### *An impossible conclusion*

“Why bother? That student can’t be saved. He lives with his mom, who has 8 other children, each with a different father, and the new boyfriend drinks all the time and he and the mom go out for whole weeks at a time while the student has to watch his half-brothers and sisters. If the parents don’t care than why should I. That kid will never be successful. It’s impossible.” This is not a direct quote but a summation of multiple conversations that I have had with teachers over the years. It is what led me to start wondering/wandering on/in the impossible. It is what led me to get into arguments with other teachers about my calling. It is what led me to realize that the teachers I was having the arguments with, were the teachers with all the answers. That is how I was introduced to one of the teachers I would later confront and still constantly confront: Ms. Smith has been teaching for 17 years. If you have any questions, she has all the answers. Nothing was impossible for her. And this is where I learned that her learning had reached closure. Her peace had been made and she had decided to let her calling die. Yet, she is still responsible for hundreds of children every year.

So why bother with the impossible? What’s the point? Why strive for the possibility of the impossible? Why make the decision to live your life in constant searching? “The only decision possible is the impossible decision. It is when it is not possible to know what must be done, when knowledge is not and cannot be determining that a decision is possible as such. Otherwise the decision is an application: one knows what has to be done, it’s clear, there is no

more decision possible; what one has here is an effect, an application, a programming” (Derrida, 1992, p. 147-148). Here is what theology (and pedagogy and schools and politics, etc.) need: a de-programming. Knowing exactly what to do is a programmed reaction much like the computer software I am currently using. It has no difficulty in writing out my words, in fact, it often corrects my spelling as it has been programmed to do. Has religion become a “spell check” for my lives? If it has, I want none of it. A philosophized theology has to open up the space of religion to force it to search for the impossible or the possibility of the impossible. God, no matter how you form the name or what it represents, is an impossibility. “But this impossibility as regards ‘the thing which is not’ is, finally, the only thing that interest me. It’s what I call- awkwardly still- the mourning of mourning. It is a terrible thing that I do not love but that I want to love” (Derrida, 1992, p. 49). Derrida here explains that the thing that comes easy to him is not the thing that interests him. In essence, he is applying himself. What Derrida admittedly struggles with is to love. He so desperately wants to love in such a way that is impossible that it gives him great sadness and he then becomes sad for his sadness. I believe Derrida can love the way I love my family and friends but what he is talking about here is something else that is deeper and more passionate that can ever be named but possibly written under erasure. It is possible that this love he seeks is what many call God or maybe it is something else? It is impossible for me to know.

In Christianity, the struggle is even more difficult as I have the perfect example that was written about by no less than 5 followers of Jesus. “The model that Jesus sets is impossible- precisely what Derrida would call the impossible-a theo-poetics of the impossible” (Caputo, 2007, p. 100). The beautiful story of Jesus is an interpretation by men but the story of Jesus sets such a difficult example. I am not talking about Jesus’ miracles, for no son of man can do these

things and this showed the strength of Christ. I am talking of Jesus' treatment of others. Jesus did not seek celebrity and bask in his glory with a wealthy entourage. He allowed the regular men of the day become his most trusted and he allowed himself to be with the lepers, the prostitutes, the tax collectors, the fishermen, the widowed, and the children. Jesus showed his love by accepting others into his presence which is one of the first impossibilities. Take away all of Jesus' miracles and you still have a miraculous story and an amazing narrative. Jesus attempted to show the possibility of the impossible chance that the kingdom of God (love, justice, peace, acceptance, etc.) could come. It showed that "the kingdom is amazing grace, not amazing magic. Everything depends upon what may seem a bit of prestidigitation, namely, inscribing the possibility of the impossible within the horizon of the power of powerlessness, of the weakness of God. The impossible does not depend upon a metaphysical heavyweight or a theological super-power but upon the weakness of its unconditional claim upon me, the strength, not of its sovereign force, but of its unconditional call" (Caputo, 2006, p. 105). Here is where I am challenged again. That which I call God will never give up on me. There will always be that call within me for the love and passion that is so desperately needed in my life and in the lives of others. Whether I reject God completely or whether I try and fail, which I will, God will still be the spark within me that tries and tires my soul. God will not come down as he did in the narratives of Israel and speak directly. God will not send another son or maybe a daughter to teach the same lesson. God will be the call in my life to live my life like I would want to live every day eternally. God will be the call in my life to live for the others of this world and not just those close to me. God will be the call in my lives to love even when I do not know how, or what, to love. And God will be passion in my lives to keep me going, to keep me disturbed, and to keep me updated. God will be my partner in pain and partner in suffering, "hence, it is not

merely the content of God's knowledge which is dependent, but God's own emotional state. God enjoys our enjoyments, and suffers with our sufferings. This is the kind of responsiveness which is truly divine and belongs to the very nature of perfection" (Cobb & Griffin, 1976, p. 48). A philosophized theology will be used to recognize and interpret this event of the call and I will use its interpretation to assist religion in being the place of questioning and complicating, not of decision making and closure. "Having never loved anything but the impossible" (Derrida, 1993, p. 3) is the catalyst for all of the above. Love the impossible.

### *Onward to chaos*

One of the greatest impossibilities is to retract your grasp on the common place perspective. How I interpret my world is complicated by multiple outer and inner forces; people, places, thoughts, ideas, imagination, creativity, etc. As Keller states, "An engaged hermeneutics negotiates not from a fixed identity but from the slippery strength of an enlarged politics. In this way the interpretive situation multiplies its relations, its perspectives and therefore its truths logarithmically, like the fractals of chaos; or Nietzsche's infinite: 'once more I are seized by a great shudder'" (Keller, 2003, p. 104). Chaotically, my interpretations are pulled from a multitude of sources, some of which I may never consciously know. Chaotically, my choices are often limited due to the actions, the "great shudder," of others whom I may never come into contact with. Positively, I have great power in my individual actions. The following chapter will explain the complexity of chaos but also the possibilities in its impossibility.

### Chapter 3

#### **Embracing Chaos: There is nothing to fear**

One day, I was driving home from the University of Georgia. My girlfriend and I were coming home for the winter break and I had to come back early to find a job. Home is about 4 hours from Athens in a little town outside of Savannah. Needless to say, there are no major interstates from Athens to anywhere so back roads were how I had to travel. My girlfriend and I had travelled that road hundreds of times but this time I knew I had to take two cars and it was at night. I lead the way and she followed behind. We stopped once to get gas, we called each other on the cell phone every once in a while to check in and then, as I was talking to her on the phone I heard her scream. I looked back in my rearview just in time to see her headlights disappear. In a panic, I slammed on breaks, hurriedly turned my blue Ford Ranger around and raced back to her. As I get to her, the horn is blaring and there is smoke and steam billowing from the car. I jump out of the car and run to her just as she is opening the door. Relief! She's okay. A deer had run out in front of her car and she didn't have time to stop. Her car was totaled but she was okay. I apologized because it was my intent to try to prevent this from happening by driving slow enough to where she would feel safe driving at night on these back roads. I apologized because I called her to talk. I apologized because I had forgotten to get gas before I left and needed to stop.

Afterwards, I reflected on what happened and realized I was right to apologize because, although I did not cause the deer to slam into her car and roll up her windshield, my seemingly insignificant actions had unfavorable consequences. With further reflection, I concluded that maybe I should not be apologizing but maybe she should be thanking me. Maybe my actions saved her from the log truck that ran the four-way stop 10 miles down the road or from an errant

bullet during target practice taking place at the local Turkey Shoot. And maybe I had nothing to do with it at all. Whatever made that deer run in the road could be traced back to a countless number of incidents and actions of which I could never be privy to.

For years I was conflicted due to this way of thinking. If I act this way what could be the effect? If I do not act a certain way what will happen? Do I run this yellow light? Do I hold this door open for this person? This conflict continued to monopolize my thinking until I happened upon chaos theory. The continuation of this chapter is but a snippet of the research I have completed on the complex theory of chaos. Chaos theory is but one part of many (in the spirit of chaos) that I want to use to ground my thinking. The post-modernist teaching of Jacques Derrida has many correlates to chaos theory and will be interwoven into the understanding of chaos theory and simultaneously chaos theory will be used to better understand Derrida. First, I begin with a brief overview of the origin (even though there is no one beginning) of chaos theory. Then I will move past the mathematical/meteorological/physical idea of chaos to the more philosophical realm of thinking. With Derrida and chaos, I will discuss the determinism (almost) in life, the opening of space focusing on the idea of differance, deconstruction and chaos, and the idea that everything matters. As will be shown, post-modernism and chaos are not as different as originally cast for “Postmodernism...is more a state of affairs of series of events, still tied to modernism, transitioning to the unknown” (Fleener, 2002, p. 123).

### *Chaos theory: The beginnings*

In the beginning there were grand ideas and impressive experiments. Fission, fusion, quantum physics, genetics, and the list could go on and on. These distinguished and celebrated discoveries of scientific thought were and are world changing. However, with the greatness of these movements in science, there were many that were still unfounded. The common cold still

has no cure let alone cancer or AIDS. The “limits” of the universe are still out there. And the weather man is really still making an educated guess on Monday what the weekend weather will be. In all the great discoveries and in all the discoveries yet to be, it was and is still thought that “very small influence can be neglected. There’s a convergence in the way things work, and arbitrarily small influences don’t blow up to have arbitrarily large effects” (Gleick, 2008, p. 15). Seemingly trivial effects are thrown out in scientific study especially if you’re talking about predicting the massive power of tornadoes earlier and better or how to stop genetic deformations from occurring. I can relate this to real life when I do not see the clear signs of someone’s cry for help before they do something horrible because I dismissed them as insignificant or unimportant. Mathematical thinkers began to recognize that what was seemingly insignificant may not be so insignificant. Henri Poincare wrote an essay on chance in the early 1900s. “In the essay he raises the possibility that what I generally regard as chance, or randomness, may in many instances be something that has of necessity followed from some earlier condition, even though I may be unaware that it has done so. He notes that in some cases I might be completely unable to detect the relevant antecedent condition, while in others I might observe it fairly accurately, but not perfectly. In the latter case the uncertainty might amplify and eventually become dominant (Lorenz, 1993, p. 11). Although Poincare saw this in mathematical models, Edward Lorenz saw it in a model of the weather and thus chaos was born.

In the early 1960s, a meteorologist named Edward Lorenz was attempting to do what many others had attempted which was predict the weather with more accuracy and further into the future. With the introduction of computers and their use into statistical analysis, Lorenz used numbers to represent weather phenomena that could be studied and used to make predictions about weather. With some success, Lorenz was able to mimic weather phenomena as a



nonperiodic system; which was good. One day, Lorenz decided he wanted to repeat some computations to examine a previous experiment in more detail. He put in numbers that had previously been produced, started the computer, and went for a cup of coffee. When he returned, he found that the numbers being produced by the computer were nothing like the original numbers of the first experiment. His first thought was that his computer was broken. Before calling for a service technician to come fix it, he thought he would find where and when in the production of numbers the numbers started to change as it could help the technician with fixing the machine. What he found though was the numbers began to slowly change after a few different outputs, but then great changes occurred the further it went along. What Lorenz realized was that the numbers he had put into the computer were rounded off numbers of the original output. “The initial round-off errors were the culprits, they were steadily amplifying until they dominated the solution. In today’s terminology, there was chaos” (Lorenz, 1993, p. 136).

In reading another student of chaos theory, James Gleick, I learned how “insignificant” those round-off numbers were. “In the computer’s memory, six decimal places were stored: .506127 on the printout, to save space, just three appeared: .506. Lorenz had entered the shorter rounded off numbers, assuming that the difference-one part in a thousand-was inconsequential” (Gleick, 2008, p. 16). There is some major power within this insignificance. “A small numerical error was like a small puff of wind-surely the small puffs faded or canceled each other out before they could change important, large-scale features of the weather. Yet in Lorenz’s particular system of equations, small error proved catastrophic” (Gleick, 2008, p. 17). Could a small puff of wind really cause catastrophic weather to occur? If a small puff of wind could have this

massive effect, what in the world do the everyday mechanisms of my life do? In other words, how do I recognize chaos when it is chaos and then what do/can I do about/with it?

First of all, chaos can be found everywhere. “Phenomena that are supposedly chaotic include simple everyday occurrences, like the falling of a leaf or the flapping of a flag, as well as much more involved processes, like the fluctuations of climate or even the course of life itself” (Lorenz, 1993, p. 5). Drop the same leaf from the same height in a completely variable free environment (i.e. wind, rain, people, etc.) and the leaf will hardly ever fall the same way. Wind at the same speed, pointed at the same flag, at the same angle will never flap in a predictable manner. The climate is always changing and life itself is a continual guessing game. Gleick gives a good example of this in his book when he describes the hypothetical scenario of the world covered in weather sensors at one foot intervals horizontally and vertically all the way to the atmosphere. These hypothetical sensors would give perfect readings every minute of any type of data needed to make predictions. However, the data received would become flawed as the space between would “hide fluctuations that the computer will not know about, tiny deviations from the average” (Gleick, 2008, p. 21). Soon the fluctuations found in time and space would equal information that would be deemed useless past a few days of wanted prediction.

Second, sensitive dependence of initial conditions is the long and short of chaos theory. “The modern study of chaos began with the creeping realization in the 1960s that quite simple mathematical equations could model systems every bit as violent as a waterfall. Tiny difference in input could quickly become overwhelming difference in output—a phenomenon given the name ‘sensitive dependence on initial conditions’” (Gleick, 2008, p. 8). What sensitive dependence describes is the idea of standing on the top of a driveway that proceeds downhill with a golf ball

and marking a point. Then releasing the same golf ball and marking its endpoints (the longer the driveway the better). What you will see is that on most occasions the golf ball never lands in the same place more than once. There are many variables in the golf ball/driveway scenario (the dimple of the ball, the ruggedness of the driveway, the wind, the release point from the finger, etc). But take all the variables possible away (Lorenz took it down to three) and you still see this chaos. As Gleick stated, “But the repetitions were never quite exact. There was pattern, with disturbances. An orderly disorder” (Gleick, 2008, p. 15).

This leads into my third point in this introduction. Chaos is not anarchy. Chaos is an “orderly disorder.” There are patterns that can be explained through mathematical theorems but the problem/excitement is that “chaotic behaviors are values in which the output does not display any indication of an emerging pattern, for predicting what future iterated values will be is impossible” (Doll et. al., 2005, p. 156). I can explain the patterns but I cannot predict the bifurcations that occur at the best and worst of times. This is why “I shall use the term chaos to refer collectively to processes of this sort-ones that appear to proceed according to chance even though their behavior is in fact determined by precise laws” (Lorenz, 1993, p. 4). There is no chance in chaos. Things happened and are happening for a reason. The question becomes, how deep down the rabbit hole do I want to go and can I see the possibility within chaos for “to the extent that chance is operating, it is likely that a closed system that has some order will move toward disorder, which offers so many more possibilities” (Prigogine, 1997, p. 24). With chaos come possibilities.

### ***The Philosophy behind chaos***

Chaos theory beyond the math and beyond the weather has a strong role to play. First, chaos theory uncomfortably shows that life in chaos is uncertain. “This assertion presupposes

that I cannot make measurements that are completely free of uncertainty” (Lorenz, 1993, p. 12). However, this uncertainty gives me options and gives me an openness that I can use to create. I am not hindered by chaos but I am set free to search. “Precise definitions are not always convenient ones” (Lorenz, 1993, p. 16). Definitions that describe situations or ideas perfectly are not always what I need. Much of the excitement in life is not from knowing but from exploring and mistakes. “If the world were formed by stable dynamical systems, it would be radically different from the one I observe around me. It would be a static, predictable world, but I would not be here to make the predictions. In my world, I discover fluctuations, bifurcations, and instabilities at all levels” (Prigogine, 1997, p. 55). Out of chaos I am formed, out of chaos I must live, and out of chaos I have the opportunity for creation.

Chaos theory can also lead you to the right path. How is one to act if I know that everything matters? As Lorenz stated, “I can readily disturb the existing weather, perhaps violently by setting off an explosion or starting a fire, or more gently by dropping crystals of dry ice into a cloud-or perhaps even by releasing a butterfly-and I can observe what will happen, but then I shall never know what would have happened if I had left things alone” (Lorenz, 1993, p. 85). And Gleick reaffirmed, “Lorenz saw it differently. Yes, you could change the weather. You could make it do something different from what it would otherwise have done. But if you did, then you would never know what it would otherwise have done. It would be like giving an extra shuffle to an already well-shuffled pack of cards. You know it will change your luck, but you don’t know whether for better or worse” (Gleick, 2008, p. 21). How you choose to live your life will affect you and everyone around you if not the world. The path you choose to take in life whether it is religious, atheist, selfless, selfish, philanthropy or capitalism will change the course of your life. The tricky part is that you never know how it would have turned out if you had

done it differently. You can only try to do the best that you can while you can. “The Lorenzian quality of sensitive dependence on initial conditions lurks everywhere. A man leaves the house in the morning thirty seconds late, a flowerpot misses his head by a few millimeters, and then he is run over by a truck” (Gleick, 2008, p. 67).

Where does Derrida fit into all of this? “Structuralists understand the necessity of forms and patterns for creating order without which life is impossible, but they cannot explain how these structures emerge and change over time. Having recognized the fatal consequences of fixed forms, poststructuralists insist that vitality is impossible without the repeated disruption and dislocation of static structures” (Taylor, 2007, p. 12). As I will explain below in detail, Derrida created ways to do disrupt and dislocate which are essential actions in unveiling the dominant culture’s control over society.

Chaos theory is, in essence, the deconstruction and differance of the mathematical world. As M. Jayne Fleener (2005) states “chaos dynamics considers recurring patterns across layers of complexity. Patterns are explored not for their regularities but for their irregularities, bumpiness, and brokenness” (Fleener, 2005, p. 3). Chaos theory, like postmodernism, “moves beyond modernist notions of control, method, and measurement” (Fleener, 2005, p. 11). Lorenz was constantly focused on predicting the weather while others were about changing the weather. Chaos theory, like the philosophy of Derrida, is not about gaining power but understanding the power of nature, writing, etc. and then playing with power to see results. Lorenz modeled it while Derrida deconstructed it. “Postmodernism recognizes that science, as a meaning system, is more closely aligned with spirituality, relationship, and interdependence than was previously thought” (Doll et.al., 2005, p. 12). Postmodernism has a stronger connection to chaos theory than at first glance. In modernism, the focus is grand narratives, explanations for everything,

individualism, and centralized control. Postmodernism focuses on the small stories, interconnectedness, and questions more than explanations. Chaos theory and postmodernism are separate from their fields and often have trouble finding a place to call home, but this nomadic wandering allows them to appreciate the relationship they have to everyone and everything else. It also ensures that the connection between that which they are dependent on is not broken. “The Butterfly Effect was no accident; it was necessary” (Gleick, 2008, p. 22). The little things are what matter most and that is what makes living interesting. If life were predictable, I would be applying the appropriate theorems or laws at the appropriate times and I would never wonder or question, as deconstruction and differance question. What I will attempt to show throughout the rest of the chapter is that Derrida is not only founded in elements of chaos theory, he also carries it to the next level of experience which is when theory or thought or philosophy becomes action.

### *Derrida and Chaos*

There are always two things (at least) happening when people write/talk/communicate. There is what is said and there is what is meant. Admittedly, Derrida believed that he loved philosophy but at the same time hated it and could very well do without it. “What is happening in this double relation? The two things coexist; in what I write, it must be readable that the two things coexist. (Derrida, 1992, p. 138). My goal for the rest of this chapter is search for another double relation as I believe a double relation is in the interpretation of the beholder. Derrida always has a plethora to say and what he says, let me say writes in his text, has many meanings and different meanings that are often differed and deferred to other meanings. My purpose here is to show Derrida’s postmodern ideas on philosophy correlate to aspects of chaos theory. This is the double relation I wish to expound on for if chaos theory is to be “understood as postmodern inquiry it must be interpreted not from the perspective of techniques but from the

perspective of meaning” (Fleener., 2005, p. 11). In other words, chaos theory and postmodernism move past the what, who, and how of the world and focus on the why with an expansive focus on multiple meanings and connections and not easily named fixes and facts.

Please let me be honest. More than any other chapter I have written, I write this chapter apologetically and with a repentant attitude. “One always ask for pardon when one writes, so as to leave suspended the question of knowing if one is finally asking pardon in writing for some earlier crime, blasphemy, or perjury or if one is asking for pardon for the crime, blasphemy, or perjury in which consists presently the act of writing” (Derrida, 1993, p. 46). My foray into Derrida has been a tricky one and one that I have thrown myself into. I feel that once I understand him, he is gone again. It is somewhat like trying to grasp wind. You feel it and it moves you but you can never quite get a hold of it (which may be the point after all). When dealing with post-modernism “it is impossible to give one overarching definition of post-modernism (Doll, 1993. P. 5) which is both the beauty of post-modernism and that which drives one to insanity. So I ask for pardon as I am attempting to quote a seemingly unquotable author and I am seemingly trying to take him far from his ungraspable realm of philosophy into a realm of unpredictable science.

### ***The impossibility of determinism***

The grass withers and the flowers fade but chaos shows that I know that my ends are determined but I cannot predict when or how. However, this is too broad for Lorenz. He stated that “chaos” is “seemingly random and unpredictable behavior that nevertheless proceeds according to precise and often easily expressed rules” (Lorenz, 1993, p. ix). Behavior that seems random and may seem unpredictable can be expressed in rules. “A random sequence is simply one in which any one of several things can happen next, even though not necessarily anything

that can ever happen can happen next” (Lorenz, 1993, p. 7). Even randomness has its bounds. In any type of seemingly random actions in games of chance, for example, dice can only come up with numbers between 2 and 12. There are many possibilities within the combination of numbers but the numbers between 2 and 12 will occur. Where chaos comes in is that the small things keep things interesting. If someone learned how to hold and throw the dice so that 7 come up every time, then they would be banned from every casino in the country. However, the beauty of this randomness is that the slightest difference affects the results. This is why craps is a great game but why blackjack, which will come back to later, may be better for understanding of chaos.

I do have a determined end which is death. Therefore, in a broad sense my life is deterministic as Lorenz believed, “A deterministic sequence is one in which only one thing can happen next; that is, its evolution is governed by precise laws” (Lorenz, 1993, p. 7). People who discuss chaos theory may use the language of determinism but “according to chaos theory, prediction and determinism are impossible! Even though it uses the language that deterministic thinkers use, with respect to its technical details, there is only a sort of probabilistic prediction” (Sheldrake et. al, 1992, p. 28). The law of life states that I will die one way or another. But this is not what interest chaos theorist or Derrida. As Gleick stated, “I might have trouble forecasting the temperature of the coffee one minute in advance, but I should have little difficulty in forecasting it an hour ahead.’ The equations of motion that govern a cooling cup of coffee must reflect the system’s destiny. The must be dissipative. Temperature must head for the temperature of the room and velocity must head for zero” (Gleick, 2008, p. 25). I am a dissipative creature and begin dissipating the day I am born. Every day of growth equates to another moment closer to dying. What interest chaos theorist is not what happens at the end, but



what happens next. What forces are in play that affects the minute to minute, hour to hour, and day to day? “Returning to chaos, I may describe it as behavior that is deterministic, or is nearly so if it occurs in a tangible system that possesses a slight amount of randomness, but does not look deterministic. This means that the present state completely or almost completely determines the future, but does not appear to do so” (Lorenz, 1993, p. 8). Here in lies the secret: there is no secret. My present state, my current actions, my decisions will play into my future completely or almost completely, but it will “not appear to do so.” A better rewording for my part is not that it does not appear to do so but that I fail to recognize it. I have let the overarching homogenous culture hide/excuse my small misgivings to others and to myself because it’s “just the way it is.” I have closed myself off to alternate possibilities of the future and I have failed to recognize that my present actions based on the over arching common-sense philosophy take over my ability to differentiate between truly impossible and striving for the impossible. “Do not infringe on dying, do not decide the indecisive, do not say: this is done, claiming for yourself a right over this ‘not yet’; do not pretend that the last word is spoken, time completed, the Messiah come at last” (Caputo, 1997, p. 78). My lives are only determined in one way and that is at the very end. That which I can control is what I am doing in the present state as everything I do affects everything else. Therefore, I need to leave life open to some chance and randomness but be aware enough to recognize the small bifurcations that affect me and everyone. “In short, it is in these abstract relationships that patters emerge. This last sentence should be read again, for here lies one of the important changes contemporary concepts of chaos have brought to my life- to look at objections in my universe, indeed reality itself if not in terms of individual particulars or incidents or occasions but in terms of the patterned relation any grouping of particulars, incidents, or occasions has” (Doll, 1993, p. 91)

Derrida seemed to be well aware of the chaos around us and he constantly questioned and/or searched for an opening for creation. This openness is grounded in indecision, displacement, disturbance, plurality, nonlinearity, discreteness, and more. When discussing *Writing and Difference*, he stated that “In effect they form, but indeed as a displacement and as the displacement of a question, a certain system somewhere open to an undecidable resource that sets the system in motion” (Derrida, 1981, p. 3). Derrida challenged me to see the effects of the decisions I make by removing myself from the current context or present state of my life. I am to start here within this indecision as what I am displacing myself from is all around me. To start I must admit I do not know where to start. Such is chaos theory. I can work to know how things proceed but the impossibility of knowing exactly how (the trace) an event happened and the impossibility of the future is something that I can work towards using chaos theory.

What Derrida and chaos theory helps me understand is that life is not a straight line from point A to point B. There are many bumps and jumps that affect my path. Chaos theory and Derrida allows me to understand my indeterminate lives better when the shroud of linearity is slowly lifted. Derrida and chaos theory challenge the determinate linear thought process of science and even history. Even “writing in the narrow sense-and phonetic writing above all- is rooted in a past of nonlinear writing” (Derrida, 1974, p. 85). Derrida is saying that writing does not have to be closed and purposeful. Reading *Circumfessions* showed me that writing can express feeling, thinking, and genius without a linear writing style. This stream of consciousness style of writing continually showed its elliptical elements as he weaved in and out of his agony over his mother death. There was no one thing he talked about and there was no detail too small or unimportant. Derrida understood the importance of the trace and how it led him and his mother to their current situation.

Derrida also would agree with a chaotic point in that everything has small interruptions that affect a seemingly linear path. Although some phenomena are linear there are even more that claim to be linear but could be or are nothing of the sort. “The linear norm was never able to impose itself absolutely for the very reasons that intrinsically circumscribed graphic phoneticism. I now know them, these limits came into being at the same time as the possibility of what they limited, they opened what they finished and I have already named them: discreteness, differance, spacing” (Derrida, 1974, p. 86). That which delimited the process of linear writing “opened” or exposed the issues of linearization. Linearization is similar to absolute determinism as you are following a predictable path with no disruptions or displacements. There is no individuality in linear writing and/or linear living. Recognizing the limits of linearization opened up the positive possibility of discreteness, differance, and spacing. In other words, Derrida and chaos search for the individuality of that which breaks the chain of accepted linearization through the open ended questioning of the idea of the space between (think of the hypothetical weather sensors only one foot apart. A lot can happen, and actually there are an infinite amount of measurements within the space of a foot). “This elliptical reminder is only meant to point out that the philosophical demonstration is necessary but insufficient. That demonstration must itself be dragged onto the stage, into the play of forces where it no longer holds the power to decide, where no one ever holds that power, where the undecidable forces one to release one’s hold, where one can’t even hold onto it-the undecidable” (Derrida, 1992, p. 23). Chaos and Derrida take the power away from the dominant and show the power within the small and the weak. Each also takes on linearization and determinism by finding the beauty of the undecidable or even the unknowable and impossible.

Derrida gives a great example of nonlinear writing when he stated “I have a feeling there is loss when I know that things don’t repeat and the repetition I love is not possible; this is what I call loss of memory, the loss of repetition, not repletion in the mechanical sense of the term, but of resurrection, resuscitation, regeneration. So I write in order to keep. But keeping is not a dull and dead archiving. It is at bottom a question of infinite memories, of limitless memories which would not necessarily be a philosophical or literary work, simply a great repetition” (Derrida, 1992, p. 145). In chaos, there are repetitions but each repetition or seemingly repetitious action in a chaotic system has difference. This is why Derrida writes as to repeat and note the details. But even Derrida cannot write the perfect repetition, only a great one. With chaos at his back, Derrida has written in such a way as to mark the small disruptions that have occurred that might thankfully lead me astray. Derrida’s focus on the details is notorious as he has written entire essays on a footnote. Derrida wrote to remember but what I think he meant was he wrote to remember his place at that time; where he was then so he can better understand his now. This writing is important as it keeps me from being a slave to the linear. “Circumfession if I want to say and do something of an avowal without truth turning around itself, an avowal without ‘hymn’ (hymnology) and without ‘virtue’ (aretalogy), without managing to close itself on its possibility, unsealing abandoning the circle open, wandering on the periphery, (Derrida, 1993, p. 14). It is this periphery where determinism loses its power.

Derrida also saw the power of chaos in his discussions on metaphysics. It seemed that one of Derrida’s purposes (which I will discuss in detail later) was to rid the world of the acceptance of the dominant cultural norms which he called many names but most often he called it metaphysics. He saw that linear thinking would not be the end of metaphysics but something else would be. “This is why, moreover, the ‘closure of metaphysics’ cannot have the form of a

line, that is, the form in which philosophy recognizes it, in which philosophy recognizes itself...The limit has the form of always different faults, of fissures whose mark or scar is borne by all the texts of philosophy” (Derrida, 1981, p. 57). Derrida is expressing the interdependence of philosophy and I would say every other study of human thought (theology, archaeology, history, etc.). Although he does not say it, through the lens of chaos I can see the importance of the details to Derrida and the importance of every thought not just his or philosophy’s. Derrida, in a very chaotic sense, is warning me to look past the social constructs of determinism and reconstruct my life so that I am thinking about it on the periphery. Derrida is trying to get me to understand the importance of recognizing the faults and fissures that really do damage in my lives as this is the power of the trace. Understanding the past not as a two dimensional timeline but a three dimensional figure in which the third variable looks something like an EKG would be most effective. This comparison would show the effects of the human will. The third line would somehow represent the decision made, the action against, the action to, etc. “Before proceeding further, I need to consider the question of the free will of human beings, and perhaps of other animate creatures. Most of us presumably believe that the manner in which we will respond to a given set of circumstances has not been predetermined, and that I am free to make a choice. For the sake of argument, let me assume that such an opinion is correct. My behavior is then a form of randomness in the broader sense; more than one thing is possible next” (Lorenz, 1993, p. 158). More than one thing is possible next. Derrida would probably have given a quick nod of affirmation to this statement. This Reformation-esque idea of personal freedom is exactly what Derrida is looking for his philosophy to do. Derrida understood that life was made of impossibilities and often unsolvable questions. “Students also learned that nonlinear systems were usually unsolvable, which was true, and that they tended to be exceptions-which was not

true” (Gleick, 2008, p. 42). Here is the big secret: life is a mystery into and within itself.

Nonlinearity is everywhere as it is in everything I am and my life is mostly nonlinear. A determinate life is the exception not the rule and it has become a myth wound up in metaphysics and historically dominant narratives.

***Chaos: that which keeps everything at play***

Secrets are a power play. Secrets are the opportunity for someone to feel powerful over the others who do not know the secrets. “Derrida will have nothing to do with secret knowledge” (Caputo, 1997, p. 93). Chaos theory has shown me that I better be ready for most anything for most anything can happen. Chaos theory in this sense is something that is happening to me but it can also be seen as something I can control. I have been to Las Vegas a few times and I love to play blackjack. In Las Vegas casinos they typically use a 6 deck shuffle and the contraption that the dealers pull the cards from are continuously shuffling the deck. Needless to say, for a guy like me, I need something to go by. There are some guidelines you can go by in blackjack which will help your odds and before the first time I traveled to Las Vegas I learned them. For example, if the dealer is showing a 7 or higher and you have a 16 or less, you need to hit. Following these rules is sometimes difficult because you sometimes, right or wrong, have a feeling that you should, for example, hit when the rule tells you not to. After returning to Las Vegas a few times, I would find myself angry at people who would not follow the rules. For example, one day I was playing at a table with three other people. Across the table from me was a lady who had obviously been drinking too much and obviously forgot her own clothes as she must have been wearing her teenage sister’s. She obviously had no idea what she was doing but she was winning. She never lost a hand. It did not anger me until she was dealt two tens, 20. This is an easy stay but she decides to split them and subsequently is dealt

multiple cards. She wins both hands while I bust on mine. I was angry and left the table because she took my cards. She was not playing by the rules and her not playing by the rules affected the cards I received. I had to learn that “there always remains improvisation, and that is what counts here” (Derrida, 1992, p. 49). I was playing on the dominant narrative and her inebriated self was playing on the periphery. I was reeling in the system and she was relishing in her creativity and improvisation.

Chaos theory allows openness and creativity to flourish. “The creative act is to let down the net of human imagination into the ocean of chaos on which I am suspended and then to attempt to bring out of it ideas” (Sheldrake et. al, 1992, p. 47). Out of the openness of chaos come the ideas that make the experience of life worth experiencing. Through chaos I am forced to see the passages through which I have lived and the small perturbations that have affected me. “Angles do not bend and distort; they give me access” (Caputo, 2006a, p. 45). Chaos allows me to understand this. Angles protruding from the linear line of life allow me lines of sight into my own life and that the “front is always split, the paths double, the methods yet to unfolded, the strategies intersected at angles” (Derrida, 1992, p. 70). Chaos and Derrida’s philosophy, especially difference which I will discuss below, reveal the often elusive details that make up the bifurcations of my lives. Often times, I may not even be consciously aware of what the effects of my actions are especially once I break away from the dominant metaphysics. “Its stratification may thus become very complex and go beyond the empirical consciousness linked to their immediate usage. Going beyond this real consciousness, the structure of this signifier may continue to operate not only on the fringes of the potential consciousness but according to the causality of the unconscious” (Derrida, 1974, p. 89). Therefore, chaos moves me into the understanding of the causality of unconscious. How deep does my own personal rabbit hole go?

There is no rule card for life as in blackjack. “First of all because it is always difficult and I do not know how to go about it: there is no ready-made program, one has to establish or recognize the program with every gesture and it can always go wrong—to a certain degree, even, it goes wrong every time” (Derrida, 1992, p. 27). This is not very comforting but it is also not very conforming which is what I find compelling. Derrida knew that there was no linear equation that one could use to deconstruct their life and find the traces of their misgivings or their actions that lead toward success. Derrida, the founder/creator of deconstruction and differance does not even know how to go about beginning. What a shift from other founder/creator’s of philosophical, scientific, or theological ideas. Usually narcissism invades their thinking and they have closed themselves to any other possibility because their possibility is the only one that could work. Derrida also stated in this quote that I have to “recognize the program of every gesture.” Is that really possible? I believe Derrida is emphasizing the impossibility of this task by saying this but it is also something that chaos theory champions. Chaos theory states that I better perk up and pay attention to the small details, to every gesture, as they are the ones that can be responsible for change. As Prigogine states, “again, I can say that matter at equilibrium is ‘blind,’ but far from equilibrium it begins to ‘see’ (Prigogine, 1997, p. 67). Derrida elucidated this point again when he stated that, “Elsewhere: not simply in general, outside of me, which goes without saying, but also for me, in ‘me,’ or if not totally elsewhere, then at least in a place whose paths are infinitely multiplied and confused by the ‘texts.’ Hence the attention and, at the same time, the distraction with which I relate to what I write. What interests me is going on elsewhere, is not taking place where I write (but) I have to write by another route (*par ailleurs*)” (Derrida, 1992, p. 45). Here Derrida again is recognizing the openness that chaos creates. Derrida alludes to the elsewhere where things are happening but it is not happening where he is or where he writes. This leads me



to understand another level of chaos: the other. Others' actions also play a role in my lives even when I cannot see them or understand them. The text of the others' confuse my situation and my experience as they become my small perturbations and sometimes I never see them, hear them, feel them, or sense them in any way. I have to be open and welcome the text of the others and I have to be able to take what they have given me, whether I like it or not, and understand to improvise. I have to begin the impossible task of recognizing the chances for change when I have them. Chaos theory and Derrida help me do that. "I shall never know the whole of me, nor you, i.e. with whom I have lived, and primarily what self, more secret than all the secrets with which I know that I shall die without knowing if I shall know how to die" (Derrida, 1993, p. 217). Derrida appreciates the impossibility of the task and even carries it to death. Will I even know how to die properly which, in my opinion, means will I have done the business of opening spaces? This does not only mean that I have left the world a better place. It could mean that but I do not think Derrida is concerned with that. I think he was most concerned with leaving this world a place deep in chaos, disruption, displacement, etc.

How does one leave the world in this space creating disarray? I believe Derrida would point to his famous misspelling, *differance*. Let's qualify what *differance* means in Derrida's words. "First, *differance* refers to the (active and passive) movement that consists in deferring by means of delay, delegation, reprieve, referral, detour, postponement, reserving" (Derrida, 1981, p. 8). Why should I defer? What is the purpose of these synonyms of deferred? It is my belief that Derrida makes the primary action of *differance*, this deferring, to show me that I can no longer accept what meets the eye. In this deferring, I am not placing the responsibility of the meaning of words or concepts, I am just giving myself time to fully understand (if that is even possible) every aspect of the word or concept. "Second, the movement of *differance*, as that

which produces different things, that which differentiates, is the common root of all that the oppositional concepts that mark my language, such as, to take only a few examples, sensible/intelligible, intuition/signification, nature/culture, etc.” (Derrida, 1981, p. 9). Here I begin the work. Differance calls me to pause and now it calls me to move. Differance differentiates but not in the accepted binary opposite function. Differance looks for the much more complex connections which words or concepts are not. Differance looks for the different ways that they constitute being. “Third, differance is also the production, if it can still be put this way, of these differences, of the diacriticality that the linguistics generated by Saussure, and all the structural sciences modeled upon it, have recalled is the condition for any signification and any structure” (Derrida, 1981, p. 9). Differance is then the effect of the differences. What comes out of the differentiation is the product of differance but at the same time is differance. In this space is where structures begin to fall through the opening and the exploiting of the fissures that differance creates.

Chaos is somewhat subdued just as differance is. It is not the in-your-face revelation but the underlying details that produce a difference. “Doubtless it is more necessary, from within semiology, to transform concepts, to displace them, to turn them against their presuppositions, to re-inscribe them in other chains, and little by little to modify the terrain of my work and thereby produce new configurations; I do not believe in decisive ruptures, in an unequivocal epistemological break” (Derrida, 1981, p. 24). Differance is a matter of working in the locus of the system but to turn inward and “re-inscribe.” Differance is not out to get you but is out to change you from within. Chaos theory works in somewhat the same manner as chaos is not interested in the climax or the magnificent moment, but in the subtle changes that affect the whole system. In a way, differance is the changing and chaos is the discovery of the change and

the proof that even the “little by little” has power. As Derrida continued, “differance, is not astructural: it produces systematic and regulated transformations which are able, at a certain point, to leave room for a structural science. The concept of differance even develops the most legitimate principles exigencies of ‘structuralism’” (Derrida, 1981, p. 28). Again, this is very similar to chaos theory. It is not astructural or without patterns. It is simply the fact that in chaos, the patterns seem deterministic until they are not and the end is without prediction. Differance is very similar as Derrida is not claiming to know how it will turn out he is claiming that he knows how to make it change, for better (hopefully) or worse.

Others have noticed this working within the system to make change. For example, “however, ‘when systems approach the far-from-equilibrium state (on the threshold of Becoming) they are subject to spontaneous, dramatic reorganizations of matter and energy.’ In these moments of spontaneity, on the threshold of becoming, new interactions and relations emerge in this dance of coexistence” (Doll et.al., 2005, p. 169). In this example, I see a more significant and larger change but more importantly the “new interactions and relations are created.” For Derrida and chaos, the chain of interactions and relations are ever present and endless. Derrida “argued that these chains formed, not closed formalizable systems, but open-ended, uncompletable networks...in which any element could link on anywhere with some other element and in that fashion spread endlessly and ‘rhizomatically’ (like crab grass) across the surface” (Caputo, 2006b, p. 24). This very well could be a definition of chaos yet here is an author explaining the virtues of differance. As Sheldrake et al. (1992) put it, “This is all very interesting, for I’ve begun to see, through the marvel of the new mathematics, that random walks are not random at all-that a sufficiently long random walk becomes a fractal structure of extraordinary depth and beauty. Chaos is not something that degrades information and is

somehow the enemy of order, but rather it is something that is the birthplace of order” (p. 7).

Order here has to be deconstructed. In my interpretation, order is not the linear order discussed earlier put order in the sense that a justice, love, and peace brings order. The order that Sheldrake et al discussed is referring to (or at least it should) a new order, that was created in open space, that rejects the dominant cultural norms and proceeds in difference.

Difference and chaos are very close in their philosophy. Chaos and difference open up places for creativity and for the newness that is welcomed in a world that is steadfastly holding onto hegemonic traditions for the simple reason of it being a tradition or the fact that it is hegemonic. Difference and chaos show that “In the complex systems and networks that make up today’s world, uncertainty and instability can be creative. The new emerges far from equilibrium at the edge of chaos in a surprising moment of creative disruption that can be endlessly productive” (Taylor, 2007, p. xvii). I believe that difference will get me started by slowing me down, recognizing the differences, and then seeing the effects on my lives due to this recognition. Deconstruction, one of Derrida’s most famous concepts, is, at the same time, very similar to difference but also very different. But like difference it correlates nicely with chaos.

### *Deconstruction and chaos*

Derrida explained that “to deconstruct is a structuralist and anti-structuralist gesture at the same time: an edification, an artifact is taken apart in order to make the structures, the nerves, or as you say the skeleton appear, but also, simultaneously, the ruinous precariousness of a formal structure that explained nothing, since it is neither a center, a principle, a force, nor even the law of events, in the most general sense of this word” (Derrida, 1992, p. 83). Deconstruction allows me to strip away the cover of common sense and acceptance and attempt to rebuild a word, a metaphor, a story, a concept, a structure or a system. “Deconstruction concerns, first of all,

systems. This does not mean that it brings down the system but that it opens onto possibilities of arrangement or assembling, of being together if you like, that are not necessarily systematic, in the strict sense that philosophy gives to this world. It is thus a reflection on the system on the closure and opening of the system” (p. 212). Here I see that deconstruction is not only closing, finishing, stripping or even skinning but it has to do with opening up of spaces previously closed and understanding that the most accepted way is not the only way. Only in and through this deconstruction can I have the space to open up new worlds and new metaphors.

What would Derrida say about chaos? Heidegger stated that “Chaos cannot simply mean waste confusion, but the secrecy of the unsubdued domain of becoming” (Derrida, 1997, p. xxxiv). Derrida’s deconstruction allows me to reveal this secrecy as I discover the trace of structures or systems that are put in place. The role of deconstruction is to allow the possibility of finding the curves of chaos or the point or points in which everything for that system or structure changed. Deconstruction can lift the veil of this secrecy of chaos and allows me to pay closer attention to the details. Derrida (1992) stated, “there is no ready-made program, one has to establish or recognize the program with every gesture and it can always go wrong-to a certain degree, even, it goes wrong every time” (p. 27). Derrida is confronting two issues here. One is the issue of common sense or the one size fits all dilemma. You cannot go and purchase a deconstruction kit then get to work on a structure or system that needs deconstructing. There are too (or always one too) many variables that have to be considered. But he also stresses the importance of details of every gesture. This being stated, he is open to the fact it is possible that what you do can go wrong and go wrong every time. So what I must do is “not overlook certain gaps but attempt to reduce them even though it is, for essential reasons, impossible to erase them” (p. 28)

Chaos is welcomed in Derrida's deconstruction. Derrida stated "the monorhythmic and the monocode always spell immediate reappropriation. One must, then, tamper with the code; in saying that, I refer as much to the monovalence, the unicity of the dominant code, as to its character as code. One must tamper with *the* code, its homogeneity and the singularity of the system that orders and regulates languages and actions. One must tamper with the fact that there is only one code" (Derrida, 1992, p. 58). Derrida is welcoming chaos into deconstruction and using it to deconstruct. He begs me to fight against the dominant code and the dominant way of conducting my life and throw some chaos into it. Therefore, what I see is that deconstruction is not only useful to find the chaos in seemingly deterministic systems but it is also used to construct new systems in chaotic ways.

Derrida stressed that "deconstruction is not simply the decomposition of an architectural structure; it is also a question about the foundation, about the relation between foundation and what is founded; it is also a question about the closure of the structure, about a whole architecture of philosophy" (Derrida, 1992, p. 212). Here I see a continuation of deconstruction with chaotic tendencies. Derrida showed that it is not only the skeleton of the event or the system I must focus my efforts on, I must also focus my efforts on the foundation. Chaos concerns itself with sensitive dependence on initial conditions. Deconstruction also concerns itself with this. In or near the beginning, what made this person choose one path over another, what made an author choose that word over another, etc. Deconstruction is about breaking down the common sense rules of society from the inside out and from the bottom to the top.

Chaos and deconstruction also share a common bond because they are often misunderstood. Chaos, some believe, is anarchy and total disarray which is far from the truth as I have seen. Deconstruction, some believe is synonymous with destruction. Nothing could be

farther from the truth. “Deconstruction concerns, first of all, systems. This does not mean that it brings down the system, but that it opens onto possibilities of arrangement or assembling, of being together if you like, that are not necessarily systematic, in the strict sense that philosophy gives to this word. It is thus a reflection on the system, on the closure and opening of the system” (Derrida, 1992, p. 212). Deconstruction is not destruction but an opening of possibilities. Deconstruction is more synonymous, but not quite, with reconstruction, rebuilding, rethinking, and reflecting. Where difference defers, delays, and differentiates, deconstruction reflects, reopens, and rebuilds.

Deconstruction does not just open up a space for anything to happen. Chaos has similarities to this for in a chaotic event, anything cannot happen next. There are patterns and repetition but they are unpredictable. Derrida also made it clear that deconstruction is precise in its action. “The incision of deconstruction, which is not a voluntary decision or an absolute beginning, does not take place just anywhere, or in an absolute elsewhere. An incision, precisely, it can be made only according to lines of force and forces of rupture that are localizable in the discourse to be deconstructed” (Derrida, 1981, p. 82). There is a time and place for deconstruction. The system or event has to be ripe for deconstruction or it will fall on deaf ears. I believe Derrida wanted to ensure that deconstruction was not devalued by it being overused for events or systems that were not ready to be deconstructed. For example, John Caputo (2007) argued that the church was in need and ripe for deconstruction. Derrida would argue that most if not all political systems need deconstruction. I would argue, that as part of the political system, schools are ripe for deconstruction with many “lines of force and forces of rupture” available. The reason Derrida stated this as one of his positions was written very well by James K. A. Smith: “Deconstruction does not detail that one can say just anything at all about

a text: it is not a celebration of sheer indeterminacy...there are important, legitimate determinations of context; in particular, the context for understanding a text, thing, or event is established by a community of interpreters who come to an agreement about what constitutes the true interpretation of a text, thing or event. Given the goals and purposes of a given community, it establishes a consensus regarding the rules that will govern good interpretation” (Smith, 2006, p. 52). Deconstruction is not a license to critique at will about anything and come up with wildly anti-intellectual notions and claims you are deconstructing. Just as people have misused the name of religion, so to can people misuse the name of deconstruction.

Deconstruction and chaos theory focus on the details. They both show that it is not the big picture that matters the most; it is the foundation, the details, the skeleton, each bone and each fragment that affects the whole. The next section will concern the foundational idea of chaos theory which is sensitive dependence on initial conditions or in other words, everything matters.

### ***Everything matters***

The other day I overheard someone’s conversation concerning the reasons why he was getting a divorce. There was no talk of infidelity or abuse but there just was not the same feeling anymore. The friend asked where it went wrong and the man said he wasn’t sure it was just little things. To further understand the situation, the friend asked for more details. “What things?” the friend asked. The man just sat there looking down and never answered.

What was failed to realize in the above situation was the fact that every little thing he did and every little thing she did sent their relationship on a seemingly different track. The multiple times not saying thank you for dinner, the multiple times she nagged, and the date nights that never happened all affected their relationship. You could say it was chaotic in the sense that “a



chaotic system is one in which small differences in the present state will lead in due time to the largest differences that can occur” (Lorenz, 1993, p. 162- 163). Then you have another couple who are the same age, from the same place, have the same number of kids, age of kids, similar jobs, similar income, similar home, etc. Almost everything is the same except they do the little things that were not done in the first scenario and they live happily ever after. “In fact, in some dynamical systems it is normal for two almost identical states to be followed, after a sufficient time lapse, by two states bearing no more resemblance than two states chosen at random from a long sequence. Systems in which this is the case are said to be sensitively dependent on initial conditions. With a few more qualifications, to be considered presently, sensitive dependence can serve as an acceptable definition of chaos” (Lorenz, 1993, p. 8).

The above is why chaos theory is so important for a postmodern understanding of the world. Chaos theory shows that the everyday effects every other day and it is the job of the postmodernist to break down the modernist idea of reason and the structuralist idea of the acceptance of current structures. This can be done, along with the assistance of many other philosophies and theologies, with an adequate understanding of chaos theory. As Gleick (2008) stated, “in science as in life, it is ill known that a chain of events can have a point of crisis that could magnify small changes. But chaos meant that such points are everywhere” (Gleick, 2008, p. 23). Modernists do not accept the idea of this magnification of small changes. They view the world from a much larger lens and believe that small changes, small groups, small countries, do not really have an effect on the grand narrative of the world. A postmodern view of the world seeks out these small changes or these blips in the linear process of time.

Chaos theory, as I have seen, began because of a belief that very small differences could not play a role in the overall outcome of system. “Physicists assumed that very small changes

would cause only very small differences in the numbers, not qualitative changes in behavior” (Gleick, 2008, p. 47). For example, “it is why two pieces of a broken teacup can never be rejoined. Even though they appear to fit together at some gross scale. At a smaller scale, irregular bumps are failing to coincide” (Gleick, 2008, p.106). I love the analogy of the tea cup because it has happened to all of me. I break my favorite mug or in my case, one of my wife’s fine china dinner plates, and as much as you try to put it back together again it would not fit as perfectly as if it had never been broken. Even with every piece discovered, it was impossible to make it whole again because microscopic fragments had broken apart. No matter how hard you tried, it would never be the same again. Such is chaos theory. It is interesting to see the writings of some philosophers, like Wittgenstein, in some instances did not appreciate this idea. “Every tragedy could really start with the words: ‘Nothing would have happened had it not been that...’ But surely that is a one-sided view of tragedy, to think of it merely as showing that an encounter can decide one’s whole life” (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 12). If I look at this for what it is, I believe he is saying that I cannot allow one thing to send my whole life of course (i.e. A sickness, an accident, an abuse). But at the same time, this corresponds nicely with chaos theory. Chaos theory argues that a little thing and usually many little things are what affect the big picture. Maybe *an* encounter cannot decide one’s whole life but life’s many seemingly insignificant encounters can.

Chaos theory also recognizes the vast, if not impossible, complexity of the interconnectedness and interdependence on nature, life, etc. The hypothetical butterfly did not directly cause the fictional tornado in Texas. It was the interweaving and intermingling of events, actions, and inactions that possibly caused it. David Jardine (1998) in his book discusses the story/poem of the bell ringing in the empty sky: “A bell ringing in the empty sky says this:

anything requires everything else in order to exist. Each thing stands before me on behalf of all things, as the absolute center of all things, and at the periphery of all things” (Jardine, 1998, p. 88)...“without this piece of paper, everything would be changed. This is also why there is a peculiar disorientation involved in suddenly realizing that any object, even the most trivial of things, is in the center of this interdependency, with all things ordered around it” (Jardine, 1998, p. 89). Disorientation is an understatement here. This revelation is a life stopper and one that makes you want to run in the house and hide. But even this active in-action will change the world. The world is always already in a state of change because of this interdependency. What really becomes important, what really has meaning are the “small stories.” “Instead, insight is fashioned from what Jean Francois Lyotard has called ‘les petits recits’-the small stories” (Sumara, 2002, p. 4). The little things matter most and this is where difference and deconstruction come into play as they search out the small stories within the mega-structures they are trying to reconstruct.

Derrida plays the interdependency game too. “No concept is by itself, and consequently in and of itself, metaphysical, outside all the textual work in which it is inscribed” (Derrida, 1981, p. 57). Again, Derrida recognizes the interconnectedness and gives me ways, tools, principles, concepts (he would not like any of these words) to help use see this interdependency and the importance of it. “What happened in this ‘gap’ did not happen only through me, could not have depended on me alone. It depended as well on a history, the laws of a certain ‘market’ that are very difficult to delimit: the relations between what I have already written and what I am writing on a scene in transformation that constantly exceeds me, the structure of capitalization, of ellipsis, of filtering, the more or less virtual relations with those who read me or those who do not, the more or less distorted perception that I have of this, the system of exchange with a very

complex socio-politico or ideological field” (Derrida, 1992, p. 12). My guess is that he could have gone on and on but the most stirring line is that it “could not have depended on me alone.” Here, where he is defending himself concerning a question that he has been contradicting himself in concurrent writings, he has basically said that he admits to being affected by the structures of this world that he is so hard trying to break away from. He has recognized that it is not just his decisions that affect his writing ergo his life. “Whether in the order of spoken or written discourse, no element can function as a sign without referring to another element which itself is not simply present. This interweaving results in each element...” (Derrida, 1981, p. 26). Through his concept (again he would not like that word) of differance he has delayed and deferred enough to recognize this and his simultaneous writings are at work to deconstruct the structures through which he is affected. As Caputo stated, “there is nothing outside the text’ ...he was saying that there is nothing outside the context of a text and therefore nothing that happens that does not follow in someone’s steps, nothing that is not always and already inscribed within a network of tracks and traces of something or someone, known or unknown, avowed traces of something or someone, know or unknown, avowed or unadvised, remembered or misremembered, for better or for worse” (Caputo, 2007, p. 38).

Derrida also recognizes the unpredictability of life due to the ideas expressed in chaos theory. “And if something should yet happen, nothing is less certain, it must be unpredictable, the salvation of a backfire” (Derrida, 1993, p. 31). If anything should happen I would hope it to be unpredictable as I am saved by the eruptions or bifurcations of the unexpected. I am saved because it gives me something to write about, to talk about, and to be passionate about. The day I fell in love with my wife, I was 16 by the way, it was unexpected and I did not know what to do next but I was extremely passionate about her and was saved by this passion for it gave me life.

This little spark gave me a new life also because it gave me new stories, new experiences, new opportunities to live a life of Nietzschean affirmation in which every day is a day I would want to live eternally. As Derrida recognized, “Differance (at a point of almost absolute proximity to Hegel), as I have emphasized, I think, in the lecture and elsewhere: everything, what is most decisive, is played out here in what Husserl called the ‘subtle nuances,’ or Marx ‘micrology’ (Derrida, 1981, p. 44). If I have learned only one thing about Derrida, it is that he does not write or say anything that is not heavy with meaning and purpose. For him to write or say something is most decisive and should call one to perk up and pay close attention. And, in the true nature of chaos theory, he stated that the “subtle nuances and “micrology” were the most important ideas for one of his most important concepts, differance. Somewhere, Edward Lorenz is smiling for “to satisfy all of the requirements for chaos, the machine would have to be infinitely long- a possibility in a model if not in reality-or else there would have to be some other means of keeping the ball in play forever. Any change in direction, even a millionth of a millionth of a degree, would then have the opportunity to amplify beyond ten degrees” (Lorenz, 1993, p. 10) and “The definition of unstable equilibrium has much in common with that of sensitive dependence-both involve the amplification of initially small differences. The distinction between a system that merely possesses some states of unstable equilibrium and one that is chaotic is that in a system of the latter type, the future course of every state, regardless of whether it is a state of equilibrium, will differ more and more from the future course of slightly different states” (Lorenz, 1993, p. 22-23).

### ***Chaos and the deconstruction of the dominant narrative***

If everything matters then this must mean that *everyone* matters. However, the dominant narrative, the so called metaphysical narrative that has been so twisted and seemingly allusive to

deconstruction has not perpetuated this notion. Therefore, as Derrida (1974) stated, “I must learn to reread what has been thus confused for me” (p. 75). This quote has a seemingly double relation. First, the metaphysical narrative that has been construed for hundreds of years has sent me into a place of confusion that elucidates the main stream concept of chaos. I am unsure why my society is the way it is and why people suffer while I sit idly by. I am confused as into why someone can have so much and yet others can have so little. The dominant narrative is such that it keeps some elevated and others not elevated. Therefore, I better reread the story with deconstructive lenses to pull others and myself out of this self-destructive and nihilistic mindset. However, it can also mean that my current understand of the dominant text has been confused for me by people like Derrida and other postmodernists/poststructuralists. The problem is that I have glossed over these readings and have deemed them too confusing to give them merit in the real world. Derrida is challenging me to reread these confusing texts and apply them to my current situation.

When it comes to understanding the other or the tout autre, chaos theory helps me understand one major thing: any system that is sensitively dependent on initial conditions will have the impossibility of complete understanding and “perfect predictions.” “An immediate consequence of sensitive dependence in any system is the impossibility of making perfect predictions...” (Lorenz, 1993, p. 10). Because no two people are the same, let alone groups of people (by race, gender, socio-economic, etc.) it would be erroneous for education, for example, to think that just because a strategy worked with the low socio-economic Hispanic boys last year, means it will work with them this year. Or even more simplistic, a strategy that worked with one will work with another. Lorenz, naturally uses weather to explain: “Lacking the ability to change the Weather to suit my needs, I can wait for what meteorologists call an analogue-a weather

pattern that closely resembles one that has previously been observed-in order to see how closely the behavior following the second occurrence resemble that following the first. This method also fails; even though the atmosphere seems to be a compact system-one in which pairs of analogues must eventually occur-good analogues on a global scale have not been found with the few decades that global Weather condition shave been recorded” (Lorenz, 1993, p. 85). The analogue is one of the vilest attempts to prediction and understanding ever created when it is applied to humanity. There is no way humanity can ever have an analogue. There are no good analogues when I am discussing people. Everyone brings their own set of experiences and understandings that shape the lenses through which they view the world. Therefore, if something worked before, then it is just a likely to work again on similar student as it is to fail if I attempt to complete the strategy in the exact same way.

Why do I do this to myself? Why am I constantly in search of the one strategy, concept, and/or principle that I can apply to whole groups of people?

“We humans are simply too given to the habit of making sense of things by associating new or poorly understood phenomena with the more familiar, comprehensible structures- a habit that, I believe, presents me with three modes of response: one is to do nothing-which can take such forms as refusal to change, a clinging to some arbitrary set of basics or standards, or a going with the flow. Another response is deliberately reactionary: to set about to interrogate, to critique, to rebel against, and to otherwise dismantle the normative structures of language. The third way, I think, is to respond playfully: to delight in the irony of trying to do the right thing and to be reasonable, even while acknowledging the conceptual tyranny of such notions” (Doll et. al., 2005, p. 123).

Many of me are in the first mode of response discussed here. I sit back and accept “tradition.” I allow my place in society to be my place in society without ever thinking about why the phrase “place in society” even exists. The second mode sounds more like an early understanding of difference and deconstruction. You have taken a step back, you have seen the problem and the effects of these problems (difference). Then you set out to do something about it (deconstruction) by questioning, rebelling, and dismantling anything that even hints of “normative.” The third mode is probably where Derrida was. He understood the process of the second mode was important but who saw the irony and impossibility of the situation. Yet he did not falter nor did he revert to the first mode. He wrote and fought through the sharpness of his pen, “I write with a sharpened blade, if it doesn’t bleed the book will be a failure” (Derrida, 1993, p. 130), and revealed the structures that have so dominated society.

Derrida’s main focus was an overturning of this dominant narrative. “To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment” (Derrida, 1981, p. 41). The stratification of the world must be recognized and must be overturned for true being to come into presence. The suppression of being based on these hierarchies is an injustice to humanity. The homogeneity of the world is the death of being. “The monorhythmic and the monocode always spell immediate reappropriation. One must, then, tamper with the code; in saying that, I refer as much to the monovalence, the unicity of the dominant code, as to its character as code. One must tamper with *the* code, its homogeneity and the singularity of the system that orders and regulates languages and actions. One must tamper with the fact that there is only one code” (Derrida, 1992, p. 58). Naturally, Derrida’s focus has been language/text as it is the way in which I am being dominated and simultaneously freed. Derrida challenges me to look at what I accept as normal or traditional or metaphysical and see where my true allegiance lays. In most



cases, the dominant code and/or narrative has nothing do with what deconstruction and Derrida are drawn to which is justice and love. Here is that challenge in Derrida's words: "If an 'ideologue' or 'intellectual' does not attempt to transform effectively the cultural, academic, or editorial apparatuses in which he works, whether he is sleepily installed there or still claims to be free to 'wander' within it (in the 'secondary margins,' of course, according to what a friend of mine calls official nomadism), then he is always in the process of maintaining the good working order of the most sinister of machines" (Derrida, 1992, p. 63)

Naturally, this is risky. I would love to bring justice and love into my world of education but, I also like having a job in which I get a steady pay check. Derrida did not just leave this challenge up in the air as he gave me somewhat of guide to begin. "But for the risk to be worth the trouble, so to speak, and for it to be really something risky or risking, one must take this risk with all possible insurance. That is, one must multiply the assurances, have the most lucid possible consciousness of all the systems of insurance, all the norms, all that can limit the risks, one must explore the terrain of these assurances: their history, their code, their norms in order to bring them to the edge of the risk in the surest way possible. One has to be sure that the risk is taken. And to be sure that the risk is taken, one has to negotiate with the assurances" (Derrida, 1992, p. 198). In other words, be prepared. Know the trace of the force you are going up against before you begin but more importantly know its effect on you. Wrestle with the assurance you are going to leave behind and understand that it is a risk with no assurances. This risk will always be unfinished. The work will never be done but the work must be done for justice and out of love for the other.

Chaos' role in the other is obvious. "I have lost touch with chaos because it is feared by the dominant narrative of my world, the ego. The ego's existence is defined in terms of

control...The ego wants closure. It wants complete explanation” (Sheldrake et. al, 1992, p. 47). The reason the dominant narrative wants this complete explanation is so that they can be the one doing the explaining and thereby the controlling. What a task put before me. This is not a task that can be completed over a few months, years, or decades. It is an unfinished and unfinishable task for if I could finish, which Derrida would say is truly impossible and unwanted, I are really doing nothing but starting over. “It is never found, one never knows if it exists, ...to think one has found it would be not only mystified, but would right way cause one to lose it, destroy it” (Derrida, 1992, p. 351).

***Closing: The irresolvable is exciting***

This unending journey of the irresolvable leaves me excited. There is no larger fear in my life than the idea that I will have closure one day. I find great joy in the idea that my life is not predetermined and I still have a say in what happens. My joy intensifies as I know I can use the ideas of deconstruction and differance to better understand how to open spaces for creation. I also am encouraged by the idea that I have some power in the Weakness of differance which calls me first to delay and defer and then to act through deconstruction. Chaos theory and postmodernism also show me that a singular soul has the power to create change as the answers come from me not some knowledge wielding authoritarian. “Postmodernism’s attempt to reintroduce meaning, purpose, value and understanding explores the ‘why?’ and understands the answers come from me and my own way of seeing-as” (Fleener, 2005, p. 14). Then to bring justice to those who have been treated unjustly by a dominant narrative is something that not only gets me up in the morning but wakes me up at night.

I believe that chaos theory opens up the possibility of the impossible (i.e. unfinishable) task of deconstruction and differance and all the other lessons from Derrida. Without a good

understanding and/or belief in chaos theory, I am more likely to give up, to sit back and let traditions of dominance and hegemony control me. Chaos is the awareness that life is on the outskirts. As Keller states, “the ethics of becoming must articulate itself in that borderland, where the flowing potentiality of each actuality, each creature, realizes itself in limitations” (Keller, 2003, p. 6). Chaos theory gives me the strength to be Weak and the encouragement to take risks against all assurances. For I desire my life to be in the “Nietzschean sense of affirmation: to be able to repeat what one loves, to be able to live in such a way that at every moment one may say, ‘I would like to relive this eternally’ (Derrida, 1992, p. 144). A quote from Mary J. Fleener sums up my point well. She states, “Letting go of my ideas of problems as things and looking into the empty spaces for interconnections and interrelationships, however, can be consuming and depressing. There is no place to start. I have to address all of the issues, all of the problems, together at once. There are no simple causes, no single dominoes to set in motion to solve my problems.

## Chapter 4

### Unifying theology and curriculum

Society today is one of contradictions. On one hand I want full disclosure on many events and issues; what the government is doing, what celebrities are doing, what my friends and neighbors are doing. On the other hand, I just want to be left alone. There are certain areas of my life I do not want people in. Also, my life has to be on my terms. “You can know this part about me but not that part.” “I do this on Sundays but this and that on other days.” This segregation is evident in society. The examples are numerous. Let’s look at celebrities. My wife’s People magazine just came in the mail. Inside are many pictures taken by photographers and paparazzi of surprised celebrities leaving the cleaners, going to Starbucks, or relaxing on the beach. I hear these celebrities complain about the paparazzi ad nauseam. “I can’t handle all the pressure.” “I can’t even go to Starbucks without someone following me.” “There are people constantly outside my house with cameras.” While I understand their want for privacy, there are two things that are contradictory: 1) They sought out to make their fortune knowing with this came some sacrifice. 2) In the same magazine where Brad Pitt admonishes the paparazzi for taking pictures of his children is an interview with Brad Pitt in which he is promoting his new movie. Brad obviously sees the financial benefits of being in this magazine but he wants in on his own terms.

Contradiction is everywhere and for my purposes in this chapter I will focus on theology/religion and curriculum. I believe that theology and curriculum are inseparable or even further, have never been separated just renamed. Theology/religion, in my opinion, has had a bad shake and for good reasons. However, “you cannot understand the world today if you do not understand religion” (Taylor, 2007, p. xiii). Even though, some argue we live in one of the most

secular times in history, I believe that through a postmodern deconstruction and reconstruction of religion, we are discovering that our seemingly secular lives have some very religious tendencies. In this sense, I argue that curriculum and education should bring to being the idea that there is more to life than selfishly focusing on my personal life or my small world. As Cobb stated, “Also, simply believing that there is more than this life is not inherently otherworldly. It can ground the sense of the importance and dignity of each human being here and now. But this belief can direct attention away from this life to another, belittling the importance of what happens here” (Cobb, 2010, p. 6). Again I see the struggle, the balance, and the contradiction. Believing in more than this my worldly life or even my own personal life can lead to many positives, but it does not give me a license to ignore others or to ignore my actions towards others. In many Christian sects, your works directly equates to the status of your eternity. In other sects, just accepting and believing determine your eternity. And in others, your eternity is already determined. My belief is more like Cobb’s in the fact that the afterlife is not necessarily otherworldly. Actually, my belief in the afterlife grounds me, holds me accountable, and is something of the impossible. To understand that my actions play a pivotal, yet underlying, role in others lives, my significance makes my life insignificant. Once I understand that I am significant in this world then my life immediately should become one of sacrifice, for others, insignificant as it were. Of course as soon as I accept my insignificance, my life of sacrifice and for others, I become a beneficial significance in the lives of others. In fact, presented appropriately, theology within curriculum leads me to love others without conditions and to do for others out of faith of goodness.

I also believe that theology still has a lot of work to do to show people the love of God. Also, faith in God is impossible for me to comprehend yet it is necessary for me to search and

strive for *the impossible*. A quote from an atheist in an article about a movie in which the lead character/hero is an atheist stated, "This suspicion about people whose only crime is not believing in things until they're proven seems weird. To me, there is something much more terrifying about voting for someone who accepts things on faith without any evidence whatsoever." If the religious believe in anything it is the impossible. Evidence is not needed in the impossible. Sometimes even evidence tends to desacralize the world that is in desperate need of resacralization.

Education, it seems, also has this contradiction. It wants to inspire students to learn and become world creators and changers but it has taken the spirit out of a place that's purpose is inspiration. However, "nothing of faith is to be found explicitly in my discussions about education, and little of reason, in fact" (Quinn, 2001, p. 90). This is where the reconceptualized curriculum lead by William Pinar (2004) has stepped in. First, "an essential aspect of the project to understand curriculum is to understand that curriculum is also a moral and ethical project, grounded theologically" (Pinar et. al., 2004, p. 637). The theological grounding that is necessary is one that must concentrate on love, which leads to many different experiences of God, faith, and the impossible. The seemingly grounding of moral and ethics theologically is simultaneously one that un-grounds and re-grounds in a postmodern sense. This is exactly what education and curriculum need as "a network in process is a transformative network, continually emerging-one moving beyond stability to tap the creative powers inherent in instability" (Doll, 1993, p. 3). As Pinar has also recognized, "respectable academies would not incorporate theological discourse in mainstream scholarship, victims of the Enlightenment bifurcations of truth from faith, knowledge from ethics, thought from action. These polar opposites are rewoven into one whole in contemporary curriculum theory" (Pinar et. al., 2004, p. 637). This

interdependency is recognized as an opportunity for communion by many; a chance for these different groups to come together and share their viewpoints with open minds instead of retreating inwardly, egotistically, and nihilistically into their own selves.

Pinar also discussed the shaping of a theologized curriculum by referring to David Purpel. “Purpel concludes the book (*The moral and spiritual crisis in education*) with an application of this vision to the curriculum in order to facilitate ‘love, justice, community, and joy’ with compassion. He urges that these themes ‘permeate the entire spectrum of educational activities-hidden, overt, planned, implicit, or otherwise’” (Pinar et. al., 2004, p. 631). One way or the other, the true tenets of religion need to be discussed, processed, and enriched within the educational sphere. These ideas of love, justice community, and joy all center on the consideration of the gift. The idea of the true gift is that nothing is expected or given in return. Can I give my love without expecting something? Can I promote justice for all and not expect some benefit from it?

Curriculum and theology are not that far apart. They both are being challenged to use hermeneutics to look at their sacred text and they are both beginning to use the postmodern vision to create more in-depth interpretations and opportunities for change. “Just as theology is being challenged to enter in the ‘hermeneutic circle’ and to be open to new methodologies, so, too, the curriculum field faces similar challenges” (Pinar et. al., 2004, p. 642). This is an interesting challenge as it is difficult for many religions, especially Christianity, to break away from what they consider so literally. To interpret, to confuse, and to treat as a narrative is something many are not willing to do or if they are, they are not willing to do so with fidelity. What this hermeneutic challenge has done and will do for theology is begin the process of renegotiating religion for the other. As Pinar (2004) stated, “...a postmodern vision regards the

individual in relation to others, connected to a meaningful past, and an emergent future, capable of influencing not only individual transformation, but social change and global survival as well” (Pinar et. al., 2004, p. 653). The one-size-must-fit-all way of theology and religion must regard others as their purpose, it is where theology and religion should focus their love, and begin their search for the impossible. “Curriculum as postmodern theological text understands that the dogma of fundamentalist domination seeks to eliminate doubt, uncertainty, and struggle while stifling creative and social competence” (Pinar et. al., 2004, p. 659). Even more importantly I must become creators of knowledge as Doll states “educationally, I need to be trained in the art of creating and choosing, not just in ordering and following. Much of our curriculum to date has trained me to be passive receivers of preordained “truths,” not active creators of knowledge” (Doll, 1993, p. 8). The truths are easy to come by and easy to follow. Fighting the status quo and going against the grand narrative with your personal narrative or a communal narrative is where the struggle begins. Just as in theology, I see this in education. Following the status quo, the standards, and the rules of the game of education is simple. Teach certain lessons at certain times and most certainly many of the students who have participated in your class will pass a singular test. Simple. Easy. However, to be an “active creator of knowledge” is complicated, complex, chaotic, and hard to follow. I must make mistakes to become better. I must see multiple points of view. I must step away from standardization and focus on disorganization. Shaking up the status quo, breaking up the dominant narrative, and opening up the worlds of my students will surely lead me to fall from the grace of the narrative holders. A fall from grace is necessary for not only new creations but for the appreciation of creation to come to fruition.

This does not come easy though. It is my belief that I must continue to fall as I fell in the original Fall. While the story of the Fall separated me from God, I separated only to find



purpose in life by striving to become closer. This continuation of the fall is not a trip down an escalator at the local air-conditioned mall, but a slip and slide down a rocky mountain with no valley in site. As Taylor (1984) stated “bewilderment reaches monumental proportions in the perplexing postmodern world. Instead of offering comforting reassurance, writing all too often discloses a world of endless contradictions and conflict” (p. 100). Any writing that deals with the postmodern and/or the theological world is something that will bewilder and frustrate. There is no easy way to start, go about, and finish these writings or discussions because in them there is really no beginning, no way, and no end. “Just as the history of curriculum thought can be portrayed as tumultuous movements of creation, crisis, and transformation, so too can the effort to understand curriculum as theological text be characterized as a processive movement of body, mind, and spirit in the spiral of procreation, death, and resurrection” (Pinar et. al., 2004, p. 660). As I was born into sin, I was also born into the misappropriation of power that religion held. I must die to this idea of power and the church and be resurrected in the idea that power is possibly that which fuels fundamentalism. “Although all fundamentalist Christians are not prejudiced-the radicals do not represent all practitioners-Hunsberger clearly shows that they/I have the propensity to be. With the soil so very fertile, all that remains is the mobilization under authoritarian leadership of today’s political Religious Right” (Whitlock, 2007, p. 104). I also become aware of the literalism that pervades fundamentalism and these specific people are the ones with which my deconstructive actions must pounce upon. “Because of the inescapability of equivocality, there can be no such thing as proper or literal meaning. Meaning is always improper-it is more literary than literal. When proper meaning is inaccessible, the real deceivers are the literalists who say, I cannot tell a lie” (Taylor, 1984, p. 174). With this revelation my resurrection turns towards the faithful work of reappropriating my love towards the other which

is a resacralization of society, through the love and faith of the impossible, which is expressed in the gift by which I share through communion with others so I may be inspired to keep falling. Wherein is the most lucrative arena to hold the modeling of this love? Wherein can I begin to resacralize society? I believe through curriculum in schools is the preeminent site for which to begin this journey. Where else do I have the opportunity to really see what the future holds? I look into the eyes of my students and they bring with them so many different qualities. The youngest of students have the type of love which manifests itself in excitement and energy that those of us who are older only wish to obtain. As they age, the wonder and awe of learning is evident in their questioning and when fulfilling work is allowed, they produce some of the greatest and life-full exhibits.

Although I thought I knew exactly how my life would turn out, life knew better. My foray into theology is, to use a Platonic analogy, one that has called me to turn around and run from the shadows that are before me so I may see the sun. The question is how can I go back into the cave of shadows and resurrect the others? “How can one make sense out of that which upsets my entire way of thinking and being” (Hart and Wall, 2005, p. 86)?

### *Concentrating on the impossible*

I do not think I could recognize the impossible if it met me face to face in an alley. I know that the impossible often calls me but I rarely know if I reach it or was even close. For centuries people have been trying to find the answers, the truth, when what one really may need are the questions of the impossible. This is not always easy. “By the truth of the event, I mean what the event is capable of, the open-ended and unforeseeable future that the name harbors, its uncontainable possibilities, which may contain bad news” (Caputo, 2006b, p. 5). I always strive for the positive possibilities in my life but often these are positive because they are the easiest.

The bad news could be the fact that a future based on the impossible may not be as easy as I had hoped. For this impossible future is disturbing as it is never ending and disorienting. “One aspect of that reordering is a reorientation to the world, an opening that for me is impossible but that now beckons, a path that could never be discerned in advance and that, even now, does not offer itself fully to consciousness. It unfolds only when one begins to pass along it” (Hart and Wall, 2005, p. 83). As Hart proposed, often times I only realize my future once it becomes my present and then it becomes my past. The question then is how can I go down this path so that my reordering and reorientation is a call to love, to experiencing God, and to faith. Naturally, a discussion of the impossible is only possible as an attempt for it can never be an achievement. “In other words, ‘the impossible’ articulates this double bind: it engenders thought, speech, and desire that remain oriented around what, precisely, thought, speech, and desire can never attain” (Carlson, 1999, p. 226).

### *Love*

Love is used in many different ways. My love for my wife is understood and unconditional. I love her for who she is and who she will become, even though I do not know who that is as of yet. My love for my son is not understood and unconditional. He is four and has continually filled a place in my heart that I did not even know needed to be filled. Regardless of how I love, or in Augustine’s notion what I love, “If you do not love God, what good are you? You are too caught up in the meanness of self-love and self-gratification to be worth a tinker’s damn” (Caputo, 2001, p. 2). Do not interpret this as a fundamentalist statement as it is anything but. The impossibility of God moves towards an un-nameability of God which means that he, in a contradicting manner, has many names. There is something of God in how I love my wife and my son. I am not sure what it is but I know I better perk up and listen. “When the love of God

calls, I had better answer” (Caputo, 2001, p. 28). To run from the love of God is to accept the dominant idea that things are as they always have been and are not subject to change especially subjectively, open-ended and in a disruptive manner. Lovers of God accept this call. “That is because religious people are lovers; they love God, with who all things are possible. They are hyper-realists, in love with the impossible, and they will not rest until the impossible happens, which is impossible, so they get very little rest” (Caputo, 2001, p. 92). Lovers of God are all about the excessive reality manifested in their tireless love for the other, for justice, for community, for the fall, etc. It is this excessive reality that is impossible but it is also that which lovers of God must continue to work towards as it is the way to connect to the human other. “To receive the human other calls first not for conception or definition but for love” (Carlson, 2008, p. 121).

To be a lover of God means that I have to also love through God simultaneously. Many people, me included, confuse the love of their family as loving of God and through God. “It is no great feat, after all, to love the loveable, to love my friends and those who tell me I am wonderful; but to love the unlovable, to love those who do not love me, to love my enemies-that is love” (Caputo, 2001, p. 13). Here is the greatest challenge of all and one that my society has and continues to struggle with. No examples are needed but I feel that a look at this in the microcosm of my secluded worlds is important. I find it very difficult to love the teacher who does not love kids. I find it very difficult to love the parent who thinks that I am the enemy. I find it very difficult to share my love with those who hate others because of the color of their skin, their sexuality, their religious beliefs, etc. This type of other, however, needs my love of interruption and disruption. I must confidently set the stage for disruption by interruption. The interruption is the part where you confront your enemies with why they are your enemies. You

break away from the status quo and the commonplace niceties and, out of love, you state the already apparent. At this point, your love will disrupt theirs and put both of you on a path to righteousness.

The other 'other' is the one who has been othered by the dominant and dogmatic forces at hand. "The (loved) other, l'atre (aime) must remain other, must be kept safe as other, and I must lay down my arms (render les armes) and surrender. By sacrificing or giving up the assault of 'realism' on the world, I allow the thing itself to slip away-just to keep it safe and to show it my love-which is, of course, very close to Augustine saying that if you understand it, then what you understand is not God. If it is God, it eludes your grasp and always slips away" (Caputo, 2007, p. 80). The greatest part about this impossible and unarming love is that it is a beautiful thing in action as it does not assimilate others into the mainstream but keeps them safe in their otherness even when my understanding of my love for the otherness is incomprehensible. "Love-in-action, revolutionary love, inspires conversation, dialogue that effects understanding. Love without dialogue is a theoretical ideal, fruitless, and dialogue without love is talk, analogous to the Biblical syllogism in James: faith without works is dead; works without faith are barren" (Whitlock, 2007, p. 111). The old saying is that love is a verb. It is not a thing I hold onto but an action in which I do unto others as I would have them do unto me. "In this direction, I can perhaps love the anonymous mass of humanity by attending to the most local and concrete places in which I dwell, just as my care for the fabric of the heavens, earth, and sea globally construed, can become a form of love for the singular individuals with whom I live, and die, most intimately" (Carlson, 2008, p. 216). I believe that Augustine said that to find God I must look inward. This same theory applies here with Carlson. The "anonymous" love of mass humanity is nothing but theory and thought. Carlson uses a strong word here in this quote when he wrote

“attending.” This attending calls me to be present for the other. My idea of loving the other is holding the door open for them at the post office. Carlson furthers the challenge of loving the other by saying I must attend to them. In other words, this is not a one shot action that placates my guilty consciousness but a continued effort to enrich the lives of the other through the love of God. However, “then instead of making sacrifices for the love of God, religion is inclined to make a sacrifice of the love of God” (Caputo, 2001, p. 93). I have to share the wealth, in other words. My God is not *my* God. This *my* is usually understood as yours and mine that have similar characteristics, i.e. my school, my house, my car, etc. If I take this personalized “my” and apply it God I am then saying that God is mine but not someone else’s; which to some may be perfectly true and that is perfectly fine. But the understanding of *my* that I need to have is one in which the common characteristic is humanity. This is a powerful *my* that can have the best effects in searching for the impossible. Once I free myself from this selfish *my*, “liberation here entails a redirection of love from the creature to the Creator, a movement beyond the ‘river of temporal things’” (Carlson, 2008, p. 214), I then begin to have a sense of the hyper-real.

If moral and ethics are grounded in theology then theology must be grounded in love. In theology and curriculum the similarities are numerous. Nothing is more needed in curriculum than love. Curriculum has been misunderstood but I believe there is love there, especially in my current definitions of love. “If there is love, *caritas*, then the *basileia* has already taken root, and it is the triune God who has brought that about: the Son has preached the Father in and through the spirit” (Hart and Wall, 2005, p. 85). Bringing the kingdom of God into the realm of curriculum is not an attempt to subvert the policy of separation of church and state but to show the power of the kingdom of God is love. Curriculum has been constantly confused with only knowledge and knowing but “‘knowledge puffs up,’ St. Paul said, ‘but loves builds up. Anyone

who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; but anyone who loves God is known by Him.’ Love trumps knowledge and knowledge is at its best when it concedes what it does not know, whereas loving can never brag about not loving” (Caputo, 2001, p. 111). Love is that which creates. Naturally, some would agree that only knowledge can be what I depend on but love precedes knowledge and is only truly effective when it states what it does not know. Love does not gain power by negation but by creation. “But the whole idea behind the argument for a post-secular position is to avoid being drawn into the fray about what is really real and to make a leap of love into the hyper-real, to the real beyond or up ahead, which eye hath not seen or ear heard” (Caputo, 2001, p. 127). Knowledge does not create this opportunity for a leap of love. What is “really real” is of no concern to the believer because it is not what defines faith (more on this later). Knowledge actually keeps me from leaping.

One of my favorite movie trilogies is the Indian Jones series (the last movie they made does not count). In Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, Indiana has to go through a series of test to get to the cup of Christ which will save his father. In one test, there is a huge chasm in which there is no visible way to get across. Indiana knows that he who has true faith and truly believe he will make it across. He takes a deep breath and steps into the gap that will surely lead to his death until the invisible “bridge” holds him up and he walks across. What a leap of faith and all this for the love of his father who need the water from the cup of Christ to survive a gunshot wound. What lesson I learn from this is not just about faith but about what is “really real.”

To understand others, I often separate them into distinct parts. I do this often in education. I place students into demographics so I can better understand them; Socio-economic classes, special education, gifted, Hispanic, Black. I often feel if I can place them into these distinct parts, I can better help them but I think education misses the point on this one. A

curriculum grounded in theology however, would have a better tactic based on love. As Thomas Carlson (2008) stated, it "...would require that I think the indiscretion of the human as inextricably bound with the resistance of world to picture; that I think the openness of such a world and humanity, in their nature, according to the birth implied by mortality; and that I think the ongoing possibility of birth, and thus the ongoing birth of possibility, as the function of a love that remains of the world. The human as indiscrete image, I conclude, in pointing forward, would be bound by love, with a world that remains open, thanks to such love for those who dwell in it" (Carlson, 2008, p. 4). Carlson here is charging me to not close people in with useless grouping so that I may feel better about myself for doing something but bound myself, my actions, my world in the infinite possibility of love. This love is one that will open up possibilities for all people so that there is ongoing "birth of possibility" in their lives, not the death of possibility by naming, grouping, and segregating.

As Carlson continued, "the project emerging here is to think, in and through the human as indiscrete image, a love that might remain worldly while nonetheless escaping and resisting the closure of idolatry, or the habit of sin (Carlson, 2008, p. 215). Society has been sinning in and through schools by keeping the golden cow of capitalism as an idol. The mission of schools has been to create workers and buyers for this idol. Infusing love through a theologized curriculum will allow education to break the hold this idol has on me and the students I work with. "Religion is for lovers, for men and women of passion, for real people with a passion for something other than taking profits, people who believe in something, who hope like mad in something, who love something with a love that surpasses understanding" (Caputo, 2001, p. 2). How do I get past this capitalist way of schooling? This capitalist way of schooling was how I was taught and how most of the country feels the children should be taught. However, doing the



business of school, which is a phrase I despise, is simply doing a disservice to my students. If the purpose of schooling is to improve the world we must be educating to change the world. That is very cliché but it is where I have started. My next step will be to not only to improve the world but to begin the impossible tasks of saving the world. “What makes it so exhilarating is its very awesomeness, i.e., the opportunity to match human capacities with a sacred vision, to engage in a task that is grand and realizable, and to make the educational process truly redemptive, not merely profitable” (Purpel, 1999, p. 171). Keeping this sacred vision is essential in education. Our system has been standardized and we have been told what to teach. However, this is only one small part of what we do. For me, the standards are simply the what, not the how or why. My how and why are surrounded by Purpel’s sacred vision of redemption. Making students more profitable in the future is not what wakes me in the morning and gets me out of bed. The idea that I can improve the lives of my students through educative practices such as inquiry based learning, allow me to truly educate students, bring out that which is within, and allows the students the opportunity to practice sacredness I so often try to instill.

With love as my focus I have the possibility to get it right. For so long I have done things under conditions. “I’ll tutor that kid if it helps my test scores.” “I’ll answer that kids question if it will allow me to meet the federal mandates.” “I’ll mentor that kid, but if his test scores don’t go up then it must not be working, so I’ll stop.” Love is unconditional. “Love is not a bargain, but unconditional giving; it is not an investment, but a commitment come what may. Lovers are people who exceed their duty, who look around for ways to do more than is required of them. If you love your job, you don’t just do the minimum that is required; you do more” (Caputo, 2001, p. 4-5). I so often use “business-ese” in education like investment, students are my customers, etc. With love in my heart I would no longer see it as an “investment” but as a commitment no

matter the conditions that present themselves. Budget cuts, unrealistic parents, and ridiculous mandates should not replete my ability to love the kids who so badly need a theologized curriculum in which love is its foundation. “It has become more painfully clear that school reform does not a Utopia make, and even more painful is the realization that school reform has often served to strengthen and perpetuate an unjust and oppressive status quo” (Purpel, 1999, p. 2). School reform, mandates, and more do not allow for any type of individualization or commitment to others. These reforms have proven to improve the capacity of big business. One of the great reformers right now of education is Bill Gates whose business and whose legacy depends on the proper education of students. Although I believe he means well, I also believe the thought and process he is deeming acceptable are only perpetuating the factory model of education and instead of creating he is wanting education to fall into line and continue to stratify the already stratified.

Love is only the beginning. As Caputo (2001) stated, “The love of God is my north star, but it only provides me with a starting point, not a finish, a first word, not a last” (Caputo, 2001, p. 3). The Beatle’s song stated “All I need is Love” but this is not totally true. It would be better to say that where I need to start is love and then the hard part comes. For I am faced with many impossible tasks and experiences that will test my faith and thereby my commitment to the other and the Wholly Other. Therefore, I must experience God in such a way that the impossible tasks before me that test my faith will not dissuade me.

In curriculum and education, I must revitalize these experiences with love. Fleener states that “My teaching radically changed when I stopped thinking of students, learning, knowledge, teaching, and schooling as ‘things’ from a production perspective. Even ecological or growth metaphors didn’t really work for me until I started thinking of students, learning, and schooling

as relationships and contextual. This change in what I believe to be most fundamental, namely that students are complex of relationships rather than things, living with individual and social contexts, has completely affected what I feel is important in my classroom, how I approach instruction and think about teaching, and how I view assessment” (Fleener, 2002, p. 80). Love makes me who I am. I am nothing without the love of my wife and I would not be half the man I was without her. Fleener found this relationship in teaching and realized that it is essential to true education. As chaos theory really asks me to be mindful and examine the relationships between people, Fleener also sees this value. She challenges educators to ask these types of questions: “What is the child’s relationship with reading? How has he or she come to love mathematics? What are the patterns of experiences that have evolved for these children? What are their questions or concerns and how may I help them make sense of their world” (Fleener, 2002, p. 84)? With this as the foundation of education and curriculum I would begin to see true thinking, true inquiry coming to be. To understand this, I have to break away from the continued factory model of education and vessel filling that I say I disapprove of but continue to implement and support. My observation is that when someone has a choice between comfortable and incorrect and uncomfortable but possibly correct, they will always return to comfortable, no matter how incorrect. Hence, a study of postmodern theology with an understanding of chaos theory is essential to getting education off the hump of ignorance and intolerance. “By understanding the rhythm of education as fluid and dynamic rather than linear and cumulative, process philosophy is more consistent with emergence science and postmodernism” (Fleener, 2002, p. 87). Understanding complex relationships within social context, recognizing a need for change, and then actual taking action is the epitome of love in education and curriculum.

### *Experience and the impossible*

In the contradictory fashion previously stated, I see that “The death that marks the absolute impossibility of my existence at the same time opens or gives the very possibility of that existence; the absolute giving that would mark ‘the impossible’ for a subject of experience remains at the same time that around which all possible experience turns” (Carlson, 1999, p. 18). The death of being or the even the death of Being or of God, institutes the impossibility of my existence and of God. But at the same time, this death is what opens up the possibility of this impossibility. When I die to self and the dogmatic notions of God die, I basically am getting myself out of the way so that I may understand that the impossible is beyond understanding. The experience in which “absolute giving” presents or presence itself is “the impossible” but this focus on “the impossible” is what all of my experience circles around. “For God opens the space wherein love can be ventured, and the first step is always his. As absolute, God never presents himself as object in any sense, and so he comes to me not as experience but in experience; not as that which I can appropriate, render proper to my lives, a disturbance that opens my ways of being, doing, and thinking to quite other perspectives and that cannot be positively identified by introspection” (Hart and Wall, 2005, p. 81). The unnameable God again, comes by many names. God does not present himself as the narratives of the Old Testament claim (at least not anymore it seems). God does not or no longer objectifies himself in the burning bush but moves through and in experiences. However, the unnameable also means the impossible in such that I am never absolutely or positively sure that it was God who moved in that experience. But “If God is encountered, the blessed soul comes to grasp ‘experience’ differently: You are reoriented, you take your bearings from a point that transcends the world. It is not enough to say that one is now

guided by love and that love does not belong to theoretical consciousness, for the very meaning of ‘love’ has both deepened and ramified” (Hart and Wall, 2005, p. 9). Experiencing God, which is very much still up for debate, is another disturbance. I become refocused or reoriented. The shift from the profane to the sacred, this recentring of experience, is based on the impossibility of “a point that transcends the world” which is impossible for me. However, it does affect my outlook on life and love especially as my idea of experiencing love as this disturbance has given new meaning to love and created new paths that need to be ventured.

The limits of my possibilities have the potential to drive me into insanity. The ungraspable experience of God drives me to faith for faith believes without seeing. Faith is what keeps me sane. “I experience the limits, the impossibility, of my own possibilities. Then I sink to my knees in faith and hope and love, praying and weeping like mad. These are what the theologians call (somewhat chauvinistically) the ‘theological’ virtues, by which they mean that I have come up against the impossible” (Caputo, 2001, p. 12). I am constantly faced with the impossible and at that point I am faced with a choice. Retreat and hide for if it is impossible, why try. Or, love, pray, weep, strive, and create in love and faith to experience the impossibility of God. This focus will drive me to greatness and will allow me to do great things.

### ***Faith***

Without faith I can experience unnecessary frustration. Frustration is not always a negative experience in itself as people of faith use this frustration as it pushes me to go further but frustration without faith leads to a giving up on the impossible. For “with God, all things are possible, very amazing things, even things that are, I am tempted to say, ‘unbelievable’” (Caputo, 2001, p. 6). Faith has been misconstrued by the snake handlers and tongues speakers and healers that claim religion. They say, have faith and God will heal your cancer, for example.

As Caputo stated, “While my faith in the possibility of the impossible is not to be confused with giving credence to thaumaturgy or magic, still my de-literalizing reduction is not a diminution but a magnification, a releasing of the event in the full range of its genuine effects” (Caputo, 2006, p. 18). In other words, people of true faith believe that God may cure someone’s cancer but he may not. For faith is not an unthinking faith it is an impossible faith. The faithful are not blind followers of the literal reading of religious text. They are people who have faith that they will experience God in some way, somehow as long as they continue to love in and through his name. Even this is an impossibility but this is faith. “For after all, to believe what seems highly credible or even likely requires a minimum of faith, whereas to believe what seems unbelievable, what it seems impossible to believe, that is really faith” (Caputo, 2001, p. 12). Faith is not about answers but about questions and faith calls me to continue to question and give up which is what I do when I being literalizing or defining. What seems “impossible to believe” is exactly what faith simultaneously believes in and questions. Faith keeps me open for the possibility of the impossible.

This idea flies in the face of many, especially in education and their idea of curriculum. “Many voices in my current context, wanting or promising to save the human, seek to do so by removing it from just such perplexity or helplessness, by finding or at least positing in it something given or natural, and thus beyond question-a clear and definite ‘value’” (Carlson, 2008, p. 37). The current curriculum in my school does just this. It names, it makes clear, it defines everything and anything it can so that it can make a multiple choice question about it for assessment. As a teacher, one of my most powerful sayings is “I don’t know.” When I taught Social Studies, my students would ask me why people fight wars, or do not just help others like they should (the beautiful heart of children). My answer is always, “I don’t know” but I follow

that up with “Let’s think about it.” Once I start the conversation they begin to see how difficult it is and that is not as simplistic as it seems. I try to show them that it may never be possible to avoid wars and the harm people do to others or to inspire enough people to help all other people but that, if I have this continued focus on love for the other and have faith that my experiences will lead to something special (i.e. the name of God) then my work towards these impossibilities will not be in vain as they will open up new worlds in which these impossible impossibilities may come to fruition. “The name of God is a name of an event, the event of my faith in the transformability of things, in the most improbable and impossible things, so that life is never closed in, the future never closed off, the horizon never finite and confining. The name of God opens what is closed, breathes life where there is desolation, and gives hope where everything is hopeless” (Caputo, 2006, p. 88). Here is the focus of love, experience, and faith in the face of impossible; the opening of life and the future that always creates and leaves space for transformation.

### *Communion*

In the greatest of things hardly anyone has ever done it by themselves. The power of association is historically undeniable. Gandhi had his followers, Martin Luther King his, Mother Theresa hers and Jesus, of course had the disciples. What is in this power of association? First is obvious and that is conversation. “Conversation is inextricably linked to communion. When I share intimate ‘fellowship’ or rapport, I can speak of and from hearts as well as minds” (Whitlock, 2007, p. 160). This is extremely important as “belief and doubt continually contend with each other for the mind and heart of the individual” (Taylor, 1984, p. 21). Like minded people are important to surround myself with as they keep me encouraged and keep me excited. However, the call of the reconceptualist curriculum calls me to be interdisciplinary in my

approach and this cannot be ignored. Often times, I must also associate with those people who disagree with me, who are not like me for “curricular communion is disruptive, after all, and from it I expect discomfort; it only reinforces my strength to love” (Whitlock, 2007, p. 165). Often this disruption is what I need to get me back on track of my main focus which is love. While I should always be open to my own heart and mind I should also open my hearts and minds to others. The only effect of this would be a positive one. A negative effect would come from secluding myself and segregating others.

Again, these conversations may leave me somewhat uncomfortable as when I have these dialogues, my beliefs may be challenged. “Dialogue grounded in reason is supported by precepts that are undeniably embraced by Christians: faith, hope, love; and the greatest of these is love. Along with openness, reason, and love that I bring to the dialogue table, I must also, however, come with the expectation that I might leave the table in (dis)comfort” (Whitlock, 2007, p. 111). With reason in mind, I have to confront certain ideas of my beliefs that might be uncomfortable but necessary. For example, “Scripture, therefore, is always marginal. The/A word is nothing in itself; it is a play within a play, a play that is forever an interplay...This differential network of signs is ‘the functional condition, the condition of possibility, for every sign’” (Taylor, 1984, p. 107). Imagine Mark Taylor starting off dialogue this way with a room full of Christians or even better, fundamentalist. Before he could finish the word marginal half of them would have left the room. They would have missed the entire point that writing itself is not fixed but is always at play and scripture, as any other writing, needs to be treated not as canon but as text which is open to the same deconstruction as any other text. The extra effort to be a part of this type of dialogue is what I need for to “follow in his steps is to be committed to taking an extra step, to going the extra mile” (Caputo, 2007, p. 85).



Taking the extra step to commune and then to actually go and do is what is extremely important. “The interrelatedness of cosmopolitanism and ethics in a world of strangers is a secular framework from which to consider the idea of communion—a means of discussing it apart from religion without severing it from the spiritual... This leaves people poised to then *do* something. I might consider communing” (Whitlock, 2007, p. 161). Communion with others not only calls me to do but it is what I must do to even consider the possibility of experiencing God. “If I see the Trinity I see love, *caritas*, then I have experience of the *basileia*. It is limited and mediated, needless to say, but the very adventure with the other person means that we are embraced by the deity in its endless movement of self-giving. For when the Trinity communicates with me it does so as relationality, as a being with others, not only with human beings but also with the entirety of creation” (Hart and Wall, 2005, p. 86). This relationality is not only essential to any hope of experiencing God through communication with the Trinity but is also essential and congruent to the complicated conversation of curriculum studies.

“Curricular communion is significant to curriculum studies in that it offers a way to actively engage in the complicated conversation of curriculum in the twenty first-century. As communion is a most intimate component of worship, so too is curricular communion a convergence of feelings and events, a focused collection of hearts and minds” (Whitlock, 2007, p. 170). Again, I see the action involved and the interdisciplinary and interdependency on all others. Most importantly though, and in the postmodernist view, is that some form of change must occur. “Communion extends the conversation beyond the self so that curriculum, like love, may be experienced transformatively” (Whitlock, 2007, p. 170). A transformation will occur when I create opportunities to openness through the form of communion. With open hearts and

minds I further transform my feelings and thoughts to challenge the dominant culture and their impending dogmatics.

William Doll (1993) also spoke of the importance of communion and reflection. He states that “at the instructional level, the implications of chaos theory deal mostly with the concept of recursion (iteration) in which the individual looks back on him- or herself, and through this self referential experience a sense of self and value emerges. Here curriculum becomes strongly imbued with currere, more a process of experiential transformation and less one of a set product to be mastered, ‘racecourse to be run.’ Personal reflections and communal discussion of those reflections are key ingredients in this curriculum” (Doll, 1993, p. 97). Doll reveals the opening power of chaos theory and the importance and relevance of the individual. Because of the tenets of chaos theory, I see the importance of continual reflection on my experiences as I strive to improve my world through my actions.

Communion is not only important for making changes in my world but it also shows me how to survive in a world that has proven to be narcissistic, selfish, and nihilistic. James K.A. Smith (2006) stated “Community helps me appreciate the way in which postmodernity pushes me to recapture the central role of community not only for biblical interpretations but also for teaching me how to make my way in the world” (Smith, 2006, p. 56). This idea is something that both curriculum and theology must encounter head on. The inwardness and self-segregation I often times cast myself into is a detriment to my growth and understanding of others and thereby the Wholly Other. “Recoiling from meaningful engagement in the world, the privatized self atrophies. Lasch (1984) uses the term *minimal* to denote that contraction of the self narcissism necessitates-and becomes unable to distinguish between self and other, let alone participate meaningfully in the public sphere. The past and future disappear in individualistic

obsession with psychic survival in the present” (Pinar, 2004, p. 3). Pinar made a great point by using the word meaningful in his description. Often times, very public people, for example politicians, are not in “meaningful engagement in the world.” For if they were, there would be some very different conversations occurring in the political sphere. As everything seems to be political, schools cannot avoid these same criticisms. “Curriculum theory is, then, about discovering and articulating for oneself and with others, the education significance of the school subjects for self and society in the ever-changing historical moment. As a consequence, curriculum theory rejects the current ‘business-minded’ school reform, with its emphasis on test scores on standardized examinations, academic analogues to the ‘bottom line’ ...It rejects the miseducation of the American public” (Pinar, 2004, p. 16). The essential point here is that his key for curriculum studies and theology is that it has to be with others. The communion or the community cannot be exclusive. James K. A. Smith (2006) uses the example of Starbucks’ unique language. While some have seen the strange Italian words to be confusing, most have seen the mastery of the language as the initiation into the club. Smith argues that theology and “postmodern worship” could learn a lesson from this. “Postmodern worship does something of the same: orienting itself by ancient, strange practices but in a way that invites not only the faithful but also the searching into the story’s rhythms and cadences” (Smith, 2006, p. 79). Therefore, not only must I create communities of dialogue for the transformation of myself and others, I must also invite and accept more and more people into the fray.

*“What takes place between me...what is lived between people... is an intimate sharing of fellowship from whence people transgress, trespass, question, encounter crises, and generally disrupt”* (Whitlock, 2007, p. 162). Here is the most significant purpose of communion for in my postmodern condition “the human subject emerging in my technoscientific world is no longer the

self-certain or self-possessed individual subject of Descartes or Locke, but rather a thoroughly relational and interactive ‘we,’ and irreducibly collective and emergent subject whose distributed intelligence and agency make impossible its discrete or punctual location” (Carlson, 2008, p. 141). We are a “relational and interactive ‘we’” is a great statement that adequately describes our current contemporary situation. Today, more than any other day, I am hyper-connected to everyone else. It is the job of the curriculum theorist and the theologian to, if a postmodernist transformation is to occur, to use the contemporary ideal of hyper-connectivity to its advantage so that the current structures in place that keep the dominant culture in control can begin to unravel. However, most importantly and primarily I must commune with God through love. As Whitlock (2007) stated, “White Southerners wallow in the Fall, the Lost Cause, and Lost War... I crusade for Him, legislate for Him, judge for Him-do everything in the world except commune with Him. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him (I John 4:18) (Whitlock, 2007, p. 167).

### ***Calling for resacralization***

There is one significant reason why it seems that the sacred is no longer prominent in the world: religion. As Pinar (2004) noted “The ‘religiously-minded’ mangle the present by disavowing it (‘the best is yet to come’) or by employing religious rituals (such as prayer) to try to manipulate present circumstances” (Pinar, 2004, p. 206). The religiously-minded people who focus only on the issue of eternity or the usefulness of prayer epitomize what religion has done to God. His sacredness that transcends all understanding has been replaced with whatever is within my understanding. For example, my mother passed away almost 7 years ago and the major part of her death that my father could not handle was the fact that he did not know if he would know her in Heaven. All the while, he fails to deal with the present circumstance at hand which is the

well being of himself and my little 9 year old brother. His hope for this celestial reunion overshadowed the issues at hand.

Another reason why the sacred is no longer prominent is the fact that in my modern desire for complete understanding I have moved God out of control and put myself in control. “The absence of God and the gods creates the necessity for law to regulate nature and rules to provide a clear rationale for conduct. Since there is only one God in Jewish monotheism, he has the power to establish laws that are universal. Though circumstances change, the universality of laws leads to the standardization of natural processes and human behavior. The more distant God becomes, the more autonomous laws appear until God no longer seems necessary for the orderly functioning of the universe. At this point, God effectively disappears, and the world develops without divine guidance or intervention” (Taylor, 2007, p. 140). I can look towards the Reformation to see the beginnings of this autonomy from God but of course this is not what was intended by Luther. The development of the world in a desacralized manner has lead to a myriad of issues within my society today. Using Phillip Wexler’s (1996) idea of resacralization, I will show that luckily the sacred is not that far away and show that resacralization is essential to theology and curriculum studies.

In Kevin Hart’s (2000) book *The Trespass of the Sign* he wrote ““the trespass of the sign”” is “a failure to observe the proper limits assigned to man by God” (Hart, 2000, p. 3). In other words, my taking over fully of the world has created a world that is without God’s sacred divination, which is and can be powerful. Wexler stated (1996) “Moving against-but existing simultaneously with-commodification, there are multiple expressions of what I broadly call a ‘religious’ interest, a common press toward the *resacralization of everyday life*” (Wexler, 1996, p. 6). The spreading of the idea that I no longer need God has been, I believe, a subversive one in

most cases. It is not that God was purposefully run out on a rail but we were so focused on other things, we forgot about that which mattered to me the most. In a postmodernist and reconceptualist attitude, Wexler stated that “Resacralization can be a *historically transformative, creative cultural force*” (Wexler, 1996, p. 6). Wexler’s resacralization can change my present for the betterment of the future for all in a culturally creative way. The sacred can open my mind and heart to the others in my world that have been neglected by the absence of God and the take-over of the world by humanity. As Quinn states, “education is a project of faith, in this way, referential of the spiritual journey of humanity-of society, of culture, of civilization, of self” (Quinn, 2001, p. 11). A faithless philosophy of education has brought me and kept me in the current doldrums of anti-intellectual schooling with a business or factory model focus. A resacralization or a re-emergence of faith in education will bring about great change of society, of culture, and of civilization all possible through the journey of an interconnected individual.

Resacralization is very much about bringing the sacred back into play. For many philosophers and theologians, the idea of the sacred is still in play, just very quietly. “In other words, secularity and religion are coemergent and codependent. It is therefore, misleading to speak of a ‘return of’ or ‘return to religion. Religion does not return because it never goes away; to the contrary, religion haunts society, self, and culture even-perhaps especially-when it seems to be absent” (Taylor, 2007, p. 132). Religion is very much alive and well in my society and culture. Though it may be quieted, it still haunts like a specter in the night. Mircea Eliade’s (1987) famous book *The Sacred and the Profane* discussed this idea at length. He stated that “even the most desacralized existence still preserves traces of a religious valorization of the world (Eliade, 1987, p. 23). In other words, no matter how far people stray from the sacred, its values have been firmly implanted in the world. Again he stated, “Something of the religious

conception of the world still persists in the behavior of profane man, although he is not always conscious of this immemorial heritage” (Eliade, 1987, p. 50). Although profane men do very many of the same actions as the sacred man, the sacred man finds meaning and therefore being through his actions. “Emptied of religious symbolism, agricultural work becomes at once opaque and exhausting; it reveals no meaning, it makes possible no opening toward the universal, toward the world of spirit. No god, no culture hero ever revealed a profane act. Everything that the gods or the ancestors did, hence everything that the myths have to tell about their creative activity, belongs to the sphere of the sacred and therefore participates in being. In contrast, what men do on their own initiative, what they do without a mythical model, belongs to the sphere of the profane; hence, it is a vain and illusory activity, and, in the last analysis, unreal” (Eliade, 1987, p. 96). This fantastic quote sums up Eliade’s point nicely. The sacred brings action into being. All other work is “vain and illusory” and, in counter to Caputo’s hyper-real, is unreal. “Experience of sacred space makes possible the ‘founding of the world’: where the sacred manifests itself in space, the real unveils itself, the world comes into existence” (Eliade, 1987, p. 63). Once sacredness is allowed to come in the skies clear, the glass that was dark now becomes properly dimmed, and the centeredness that man desires is accomplished.

Ridding the world of God and the sacred, as it has been argued and it is argued by Eliade, has made the world into a place of narcissism and selfishness. “It is a responsibility on the cosmic plane, in a contradistinction to the moral, social, and historical responsibilities that are alone regarded as valid in modern civilizations. From the point of view of profane existence, man feels no responsibility except to himself and to society” (Eliade, 1987, p. 93). This lack of responsibility leads to unjust laws, stratification, hierarchies, dogmatics, and hegemony. However, once the sacred is (re)discovered, “when the True is finally grasped as subject, God

becomes fully embodied in nature as well as history and both self and world are completely transformed. This transformation reverses the interrelated processes of desacralization and disenchantment by revealing the sacred in the midst of what had seemed profane. With this twist, secularity appears to be the fulfillment rather than the simple negation of religion” (Taylor, 2007, p. 153). The sacred is always there and needs the secular to fulfill its reemerging destiny. I need this reversal in my life; a kind of shock so things that had no meaning, suddenly will have meaning. It is as if I need a death sentence in which I come to the reality that my days are numbered. With this, every sunrise, rainbow, laugh, and cry means just a little more. In other words, when I call for resacralization, I am simultaneously calling for passion. “We are all praying and weeping over my existence, over what gives me my lives intensity, urgency, depth, passion, the lack of which results in the superficial life” (Caputo, 2006, p. 70). The sacred gives me this passion which results, not in easy answers or even firm answers, but more questions. Sacredness does not imply that I am now mystically enabled to be healed, loved, and rich when needed. In fact, in many cases, those living in the sacred centeredness of God end up having nothing but more questions and more suffering because of a longing for being. The profane or desacralized world is “the result of turning our backs on the enigma of our lives and embracing unqualified and unambiguous clarity,...a life made artificially easy by facile answers and too easy acquisitions” (Caputo, 2006, p. 72). In curriculum studies I solve this problem by complicating the conversation. Postmodernist like Derrida might use differance or might search for the trace. Wexler solves this problem by resurrecting the sacred within the profane and secular and the locale of this emerging sacredness is the school.

The place where Wexler believed this resacralization needs to occur is within the schools. He witnessed the “religious prehistory of schooling and its transmutation into a governmental



apparatus of pastoral bureaucracy. In such a formation, the creative potentials of self-transformation and resacralization are displaced and simultaneously split into performing the postindustrial moral discipline of the school” (Wexler, 1996, p. 133). Wexler has observed the corporatization and capitalist overtaking of the communist ideal of public schooling and has seen the sacred and the life drained out of it. Because of this immense lack of the sacred, the schools and teachers are experiencing atrophy and entropy. Wexler used the word “negentropy” (p. 140) to counteract the lifeless entropy. Negentropy gives life and it creates and it grows and it builds and it fulfills. When teaching becomes focused on negentropy, resacralization is possible and it “becomes culturally and interactionally possible to the extent that the religious turn in contemporary culture, especially the renewal of esoteric traditions in all the classical world religions, functions collectively as well as individually in a useful cultural regression” (Wexler, 1996, p. 141). This religious turn allows me to return or regress back to or trace my culture’s profane and sacred history. This resacralization is again an opening for the possibility of the impossible as I am brought into a contemporary communion with others of faith and love so that as I regress I simultaneously move forward. For “resacralized, redemptive teaching then does not mean teaching religion. What it does mean is that cultural conditions exist that facilitate the sort of intersubjectivity, rationality or, simply, social interaction that is simultaneously part of a collective process of sociocultural renewal (resymbolization) and part of individual transformation and development (resubjectification) that I understand as constituting education” (Wexler, 1996, p. 142). Therefore, resacralization manifests change, transformation, and above all “resymbolization and resubjectification.” I believe Derrida would smile as “deconstruction concerns, first of all, systems. This does not mean that it brings down the system, but that it opens onto possibilities of arrangement or assembling, of being together if you like, that are not

necessarily systematic, in the strict sense that philosophy gives to this word. It is thus a reflection on the system, on the closure and opening of the system” (Derrida, 1992, p. 212).

Wexler’s idea of using the system, not necessarily brining down the system, to create an arena for change, for transformation, and for a place in which worlds can be opened, explored, and developed is the essence both of Wexler’s resacralization of education and Derrida’s deconstruction. The messianic ending of the current “system” of education only opens possibility and a striving of the impossible or the “to come” of Derrida.

Wexler showed that the schools are the place to start for but Alfred North Whitehead (1967) also showed the need for change in schools. His discussion on it did not say resacralization of schools but his discussion does have subdued undertones of Wexler’s sacred. First of all, Whitehead knew that the problems in education are not going to be fixed soon or easily. “I merely utter the warning that education is a difficult problem, to be solved by no one simple formula” (Whitehead, 1967, p. 36). What he did say was that “The students are alive, and the purpose of education is to stimulate and guide their self-development” (Whitehead, 1967, p. v). I find it interesting that he had to remind his readers that the students are alive. Whitehead saw, even in 1929, that the classrooms are filled with experts who are filling empty vessels who seemed dead to the world. Whitehead urged educators to focus on making education active for the students. “In training a child to activity of thought, above all things I must beware of what I will call ‘inert ideas’-that is to say, ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilized, or tested, or thrown into fresh combinations” (Whitehead, 1967, p. 1). William Doll, focusing on curriculum and chaos theory states that “In one sense, it is worth constructing a curriculum where students revisit with more insight and depth what they have done. In another sense curriculum-as a total package with content and instruction entwined-becomes exciting and

engaging as it spirals off into the unknown. The world's knowledge is not fixed waiting to be discovered; it is continually expanding, generated by my reflective actions" (Doll, 1993, p. 102). How often is the activity of teaching the inactive regurgitation of inert and fixed facts? Exciting and engagement stem from the unknown. Imagine if every journey has not only a known end but a known path that has freed itself from discovery? Whitehead knew that "from the very beginning of his education, the child should experience the joy of discovery" (Whitehead, 1967, p. 2). There is no joy for any student in school to listen to any adult drone on about anything for more than 10 minutes. Whitehead urged me to make them thinkers who would enjoy learning through discovery.

Whitehead did see the sacred in education. He stated that "education must essentially be a setting in order of a ferment already stirring in the mind: you cannot educate mind in vacuo" (Whitehead, 1967, p. 18). I believe what already stirs in the mind, is in the spirit of the sacred, something that has the possibility to create, grow, and open spaces for new growth. It is something beyond words but something that is being called into being. He stated that "the drop from the divine wisdom, which was the goal of the ancients, to text-book knowledge of subjects, which is achieved by the moderns, marks an educational failure, sustained through the ages" (Whitehead, 1967, p. 29). "Divine wisdom" does not mean understanding the Bible stories and being able to recite all 66 books of the Bible in order. What divine wisdom means is the ability to recognize the sacred when you see it; "...reason opts for knowledge, which has unfortunately been split from value" (Quinn, 2001, p. 89). It means that students are able to question their being based on the love of God and appropriately come into being through this sacred wisdom. "My point is that, at the dawn of my European civilization, men started with the full ideals which should inspire education, and that gradually my ideals have sunk to square with my practice. But

when ideals have sunk to the level of practice, the result is stagnation” (Whitehead, 1967, p. 29). There is not life in education if it is not based on Divine Wisdom or Wexler’s sacred. As Wexler states, “if religion once was superseded by education as the social process of shaping individuals, it now has reappeared as transformative social practice. Simultaneously, education is rationalized by corporatist practice under the banner of ‘high performance’ and dissipated in postmodern theories that no longer, profess a desire to transform consciousness” (Wexler, 1996, p. 14). If you are not changing, you are dying. Therefore, education is dead which just means that I am deadening my children when I should be revitalizing them by bringing out their inner greatness. “My aesthetic emotions provide me with vivid apprehensions of value. If you maim these, you weaken the force of the whole system of spiritual apprehensions” (Whitehead, 1967, p. 40). If I take the beauty out of school, which in almost every sense is the beauty of the sacred, then my understanding of life and my desire for inspiration are destroyed. Whitehead saw the value in artistic expression because he knew that students should be creating thoughts and ideas that could not be expressed in writing alone. When the ability to express the spiritual moving in your heart and mind is suppressed, then the spirit within you is supplanted by the profane idolatry of corporatization. Whitehead knew that “the problem of education is to make the pupil see the wood by means of the trees” (Whitehead, 1967, p. 6). In other words, the vast idea of the sacred was being suppressed so students could learn math and writing but no one was allowing the students to discover the connection these subjects had with the sacred or the divine.

In agreement with Whitehead, Quinn states, “education, as I know it or generally construe it, has become little more than schooling, divorced or at least sheltered from the larger context of living, of human existence in the world, except as preparation and hopefully insurance for economic and material survival” (Quinn, 2001, p. 90). With this continued separation from

the interconnectedness of humanity, I have continued to teach subjects in isolation as I think I am putting pieces of a puzzle together with each piece but in reality all I am doing is shuffling the pieces in the box without glancing at the visual on the front. As Keller states, “Understanding then takes place as a relational, therefore relativizing, effect of interpretation. Nietzsche called not for ignorance but for a perspectival knowledge. Such knowledge is generated by an incessant interpretive process: ‘so that one knows how to employ a variety of perspectives and affective interpretation in the service of knowledge’” (Keller, 2003, p. 105). How can I understand if I do not understand the relation of the sacred world with the secular? How can I understand if I do not see that everything matters and everything is related to every other thing not excluding my interpretive practices? The acceptance of my impotence to fully educate the child is part of my fall thereby part of my imperfection. I can only strive for perfection when I have accepted my imperfection.

Dwayne Huebner (1999) called for teachers to “‘stand at the hub of things’, making and destroying the world with others, beholding the brilliant intensity and drab monotony of nature, living life amidst the cheapness and selflessness, and the education as spiritual critique, comedy and tragedy of all life. It is this involvement which makes him an alive, exciting person; which quickens his teaching with life, with demand and compassion, enthusiasm and serenity, adventure and significant repetition (Huebner, 1999, p. 28). Imagine such a teacher who stands at the hub of things, who is the lightning rod of new and exciting information, and who teaches with life. One of the great struggles in the profession is encouraging teachers to teach with this life. Fear of reprisals, condemnation, or embarrassment forces teachers to teach to the standards and robotically project information onto their students. Often I sit with teachers who plan for upcoming lessons and most of the planning that occurs is saturated in looking through

workbooks to find worksheets or activities that match the standards they are teaching. Often times, the level of intellectualism is at such a low level that teachers cannot ask simple questions. Bottom line is that some teachers are inspired and they are inspiring their students. However for most, teaching is not about creation but about filling empty vessels. To bring about these type of changes, education has to be infused with the sacred.

The struggle with implementation is ensuring it is not just one more initiative or program. “What I am suggesting here is parallel to that approach, i.e., not a special program or course in moral education or caring (although these are not unreasonable possibilities) but a larger, deeper, and more endemic commitment to the project of nourishing and demanding the enhancement of the human capacity to love” (Purpel, 1999, p. 164). In a manner of pedagogy, this must come with scaffolding and over a period of time in which you can keep similar staff members over a few years. First, many educators do not see there is a problem but only feel there is a problem. Often times, educators are working hard to do what they believe is expected but they still feel overwhelmed, unfilled, and tired. As Purpel stated, “Why teachers are always so tired and why so many in teaching and other helping professionals burn out can indeed be explained by the frustration and despair that emerges from the realization of how wide the gap is between what we ought to do and what we are in fact doing” (Purpel, 1999, p. 181). Bringing people to this realization that it is not all the initiatives or expectations or tests or mandates that improve lives. Even more important is encouraging the teachers who are natural born teachers understand that they could do so much better. Educators have to be able to recognize those who may not want to put forth the best effort also. There are some in the profession who are just bad for kids. They may be frustrated but it may be because all of the expectations are just a lot of work. It must be shown that “if teaching is seen merely as a job, then frustration can be accepted as part of the

wear and tear of factory labor. If teaching is only a technology and method, then better methods or techniques are the answer to frustration. . . . But from the point of view of vocation . . . teaching is our life. . . . To be teachers means re-shaping our values as we ourselves are being re-shaped by the newness of this changing world (Huebner, 1999, p. 380–381). It would be the mission of the school to ensure that all educators understood this and believed in this. A dissenter to this fact would need to be reassigned or encouraged to come out of the cave because without this basic fundamental understanding then it is not possible to come to the realization that you are staring at nothing but shadows of reality.

Bringing to light the gap between what is best for kids and what is being mandated will then lead to the small steps of instituting love. “It is not a pedagogy of a particular vision but one that rejects a vision that accepts anything less than a community of justice, love, and joy for all and a pedagogy of faith in the human capacity to hope and work to create it” (Purpel, 1999, p. 214). This “non-vision” vision must be stated loudly and clearly. Accepting anything less than a focus on justice, love, and joy for all is intolerable. Discussions must be had on what justice, love and joy mean. What are going to be the tangible differences between then and now? How will we continue to encourage justice, love, and joy for all? How will we teach that in our class? How do we also, in public school, still play the game of standards and mandates? Can we? For a school, this would be a most incredible time of transition.

In reality, this is easier said than done. As we have seen in the Allegory of the Cave, some people prefer to stay tied up and looking at the wall of shadows. Others see the brightness of the sun and run back in to stare at shadows again. Still others leave the cave and never return. In a situation of transition and beyond in which we focus on justice, love, and joy, we have to carefully and strategically slide in and out of the cave. Also, educators have to be sure to remind

themselves of their why. Why they are in education and why they even exist is essential for justice, love, and joy to spread throughout the school.

B. J. MacDonald also discussed the issue of the current educational system and curriculum theory. MacDonald recognized the chasm between school life and real life. Much of experience of school is wrapped around pointless busy work that attends to an isolated standard. Much of the experience of school has nothing to do with justice, love, and joy of living life. If anything, school removes justice, love, and joy from the equation in the name of control. For example, classroom management, school wide discipline plans, and practicing routines for the first month of school instead of teaching or learning about real life are all symptoms of this control. Just yesterday, an administrator was praising a teacher for simply reviewing the routines of the classroom for 7 hours every day for one month. What did the teacher bring out of that child? What did the teacher teach the child? All in all, the teacher showed the students that they will capitulate or suffer. Fall in line, or get out. Teachers have been led to believe that this conformity will lead to mastering standards and obtaining learning goals. As MacDonald stated, "Thus, it becomes easy to keep our focus upon the achievement of learning goals and to forget the fundamental goal of freeing persons for self-responsible and self-directed fulfillment of their own emerging potential. It is easy to talk about norms, percentiles, concepts, skills, methods, and so forth; and it is equally as easy to forget about the persons involved" (Macdonald, 1995, p. 52). Often, I become so focused on educating the masses I forget about nurturing and loving the individual. So often I become so focused on mastering standards that the standard of justice and of love that could improve the world for the better are placed on the back burner instead of at the forefront of student learning. Also, instead of breaking down the children just to build them up, start them where they are and led them to self-responsibility and self-direction. I can teach no



better lesson or give no better gift than the bringing out self-responsibility and self direction as this leads to fulfilling their potential. Huebner confirms this by stating, “Teachers meet persons. Teachers encounter a uniquely formed person different from any other person in the world, a person with his or her own particular story, which is both history and promise. Talk about teaching is talk about the present and the past and the future of persons—of Ethan, Pedro, Marie, and Donna. It is also talk about a person who teaches; who, in spite of efforts to the contrary, is not a mere cog in a machine or someone who blindly follows the formulas of textbook writers, exam makers, or administrators”( Huebner, 1996, p. 269). Great teachers look and seek to find the individuality in the masses. Great teachers are ones who often do not dwell in the text book or delight themselves with worksheets. Great teachers see the beauty and pure awesomeness of the potential greatness of each student. Getting teachers to see this “uniquely formed person” comes with the journey of the teacher themselves. Coming to a point where I can see past the excuses, where I can end the blame shifting, and really get a grip on what role I play in bringing out ultimate potential is essential to my growth as an educator. It is also one of the most difficult exercises I will attempt. Before I can get real with students I must get real with myself. I must define what “real” is and then work towards an impossible goal of achieving an idealized real. Bringing out that which is within can only occur once I complete some grand reflection and put myself aside for the greatness of others.

In the sacred sense, we all are purposed and are part of someone’s plan. For example, fractals are in a real sense the beauty of chaos. In all these random events, turns, twist, repetitions, non-repetitions, iterations, etc. comes beautiful forms. In the end, the plan came together. I no more understand how it happened or when it happened but it all came together. Imagine being a small part of the fractal. Every twist and every turn in your life is all part of the

beautiful fractal that is our life and everyone's life. However, in most instances we cannot see the big picture. In the profane sense, we are just working towards a goal or an end. Bringing this sense of the sacred into the work place for teachers is essential for continuing the good fight of bringing out that which is within. I have often found myself falling back on the easy path of doing my work. So often, worksheets do not seem so bad and lecturing is easy. Teaching in isolation is like checking off your grocery list. Bananas, check. Milk, check. Industrial Revolution, check. Fractions, check. You find your product and you check it off the list. You teach the standard and you check it off the list. Thus begins the snowball effect of ineffectiveness. Thus begins the mantra of "I taught it therefore they (should have) learned it." Then we innately feel our ineffectiveness however much they may be disguised in good test scores. Then the bitterness sets in and we continue down the path of least resistance, of least effort, and the least sacred. "As a result, people become alienated from their work because the pleasure of worthwhile activity is reduced to satisfaction in the external rewards offered in the absence of justifiable standards. Everyday life loses its potential reality as persons in schools become divorced from a sense of worth in their activity" (Macdonald, 1995, p. 121). Having this sense of worth encourages teachers to meet their potential. It allows for the confidence to always be searching for the improvement of teaching methods and to see the sacred in everything. With this sense of worth, the dark film that has so covered our lenses is lifted and it makes teaching purposeful. Beyond the standards and beyond the learning goals, I see the value of educating in the real and in the "what could be" of the impossible.

### *Continuing to Fall*

"If people did not sometimes do silly things, nothing intelligent would ever get done" (Wittgenstein, 1980, p. 50). I am prone to make mistakes. It is in my very nature. As the

whimsical quote above stated, if I was perfect I would never learn anything. What kind of being is that? Many religious narratives, especially in Judaism and Christianity, focus on my separation from God. Since this separation, the religious life is spent trying to do what is right by Him so that I may one day be with Him. “The Fall from innocence to experience not only divides the world but also introduces a definite structure of value: I fall from an undifferentiated knowledge of good to a differentiated and fatal knowledge of good and evil. From God’s presence I pass to His absence; from immediacy to mediation; from the perfect congruence of sign and referent to the gap between word and object; from fullness of being to lack of being; from ease and play to strain and labor; from purity to impurity; and from life to death (Hart, 2000, p. 5). The narrative of the fall is an important one because it puts me in my place in relation to God and sets up specific boundaries between humanity and God. These boundaries are important because it is where philosophers (especially of the postmodernist affliction), theologians (especially negative theology), and curriculum theorist (the reconceptualists) work. I work towards the possibility of the impossible moment when I can transcend these borders. “Fallen, from innocence, I seek knowledge and, as Hegel tells me, ‘Philosophy is knowledge’. The philosopher can truly affirm *O felix culpa* for, in Hegel’s view, the Fall not only hastens my ascent to God but does so through the emergence of philosophy” (Hart, 200, p. 9). “*O felix culpa*” means happy fault. It is phrase often sung in a Catholic hymn during the Easter Vigil. In this reference, it is exalting the fall of man as the fall allowed me to have the Redeemer or Jesus. Hart here argued that even the philosophers can exclaim this phrase as the Fall allowed philosophy to come into being and be a way to the understanding of that which is not understandable. Quinn argues, “still the sojourn of the west has not been utter darkness, and even the ‘Fall of Man’ can be conceived as having been initiated by the human desire for light,

as Ill as my present deposing or abandonment by sincere intentions to apprehend the good”

(Quinn, 2001, p. 86). The Fall was an escape from a perceived cave and a journey to the light.

How interesting that in the narrative, once Eve eats of the fruit and offers it, that Adam does not question or scorn or even kill. In the allegory of the cave, Plato alludes to the fact that this would occur and I have seen this occur in my history. In the Fall however, the fruit is freely given and the fruit is freely if not easily accepted.

Interestingly enough, “It is only after the Fall that a theology is needed. I need an account of what God is, and of the differences between God and me, so that I can try to do what God would have me do: I need, in short, to develop a positive theology. Yet developing an explanation of God’s action in the world is only one part of the task; I need to ponder what it is to speak of this God whose ways are not my ways, I need to analyze my talk of God, and this involves me in negative theology” (Hart, 2000, p. 6). The debate between positive and negative theology is on-going. Positive theology focuses on everything God is but negative theology discounts this right off the bat because no one can know what God is as in negative theology one cannot say that he exists or he does not. “Without negative theology God talk would decay into idolatry, yet without positive theology there would be no God talk in the first place. It is a permanent task of religious thought to keep the negative and the positive in play, to demonstrate that the impossible is not in contradiction with the possible” (Hart, 2000, p. 296). In this sense I come back to the contradiction, the double bind or relation, or the paradox. God can be discussed by what he is not only if he is discussed by what he is first. This contradiction is necessary though and both negative theology and positive theology are needed to keep theology in general grounded. The complexity of the beliefs in both positive and negative theology is substantial and that is a good thing. “Simplistic and unbending faith in a complex and changing

world carries the threat of violence and destruction” (Taylor, 2007, p. 26). I have to be in a state of complexity, or complex conversations with those who I love and need to love so that when I experience God, I will recognize his sacredness when I see it. Recognizing this sacredness gives me the possibility of being but first I must think or philosophize in such a way that allows me to confront this sacredness. I must also continue to say O Felix Culpa as the happy fault that separated me, contradictorily, gave me the opportunity to be with Him again in this life and (im)possibly another. Most importantly I must be focused on love; that is where I begin. It is not all I need, but I sure cannot do without it because “it has to do with the transformability of my lives, with the possibility of a transforming future, and with serving the poorest and most defenseless people in my society, with welcoming strangers who make their way across my ill-defined borders, the homeless and the abandoned, the ill and the aging. Lord, when did I see you hungry and give you to eat (Caputo, 2001, p. 136). The breaking down of hierarchies in the postmodern sense must begin with love. The complicated conversation of curriculum studies must be filled with love. The theology of today must focus all its efforts on love. For if I am not doing these things out of love, then I am not worth a tinker’s damn.

One of my favorite books by Mark Taylor is his book *After God*. I love the title of this book for you assume it will discuss the idea of God after the death of God through modernism and it does. What it really alludes to however, is the fact that I should be continually after God which means I should be faithfully after his love and in communion with him and others so that I may work to resacralize the institutions that need it and I must above all continue to strive or as I believe continue to fall. Augustine said that to go up, you must go in. I argue that I as I climb I must fall. The mortal separateness that I have attained is necessary for my being. Once I think I have transcended the boundaries, I must at once pause, and separate again. “Religiosity and

morality, Nietzsche taught me, can be nihilistic. For many of today's neofoundationalists from different religious traditions, life in this world is not intrinsically valuable but has meaning and purpose only insofar as it prepares the way for the glory of eternal life yet to come. In the apocalyptic imagination, the kingdom of God cannot arrive until this world passes away. If, however, the divine is neither an underlying One, which dissolves differences, nor a transcendent Other, which divides more than unites, but is incarnate in the eternal restlessness of becoming, then life in this world is infinitely valuable. The figure of this infinite life is water-not water that represents chaos and disorder, which must be destroyed for the cosmos and order to be created, but water whose fluid dynamics figure the virtuality in and through which everything is figured, disfigured, and refigured" (Taylor, 2007, p. 377). With my focus transformed and transfixed on the great goodness of theology, I along with William Doll (1993) "believe a new sense of educational order will emerge, as well as new relations between teachers and students, culminating in a new concept of curriculum. The linear, sequential, easily quantifiable ordering system dominating education today-on focusing on clear beginnings and definite endings-could give way to a more complex, pluralist, unpredictable system or network" (Doll, 1993, p. 3). Only in an unpredictable system can the true gift have the possibility to emerge. Only through a system that begins to think and feel with the complexity of love and faith can givenness come to call. Only when the multitudes are seen not as other or a project to be worked on but as worthy of my love will the gift lose its economic chains and reach the impossible pinnacle of the true gift.

## Chapter 5

### The impossibility of the Gift

Throughout life we are far more likely to fall victim to unintentional effects of others' actions than purposeful actions. In this negative sense, our life is seemingly not in our control as we are subject to others' decisions, actions, and deeds. However, if we turn this on its head, we seemingly have the ability to change others' lives through our unintended decisions, actions, and deeds. If the very essence of our being is grounded in postmodern theology and we continually remind ourselves of the power of small things, we could come closer to giving a true gift than ever before. The perfect gift is an impossibility as it is often negated by selfishness or obligation. The perfect gift is an impossible gift as it is a gift that can not only be given without knowledge of being given and can only be received without knowledge of reception. It is my belief that with an understanding of chaos theory and post-modern theology, we can work steadily to achieve this true gift. We can implement these ideas through the curriculum of the schools where learning and thinking around social issues can elucidate this complex thinking. However, it is not a singular vision that one must impose on unwilling colleagues. It is a vision that rejects a vision that "accepts anything less than a community of justice, love, and joy for all and a pedagogy of faith in the human capacity to hope and work to create it" (Purpel, 1999, p. 214).

#### *Considering the gift*

My wife and I have just made friends at our local gym. We enjoy their company and go out with them a few times for dinner and drinks. As Christmas approaches and as occurs often during these times, we are receiving gifts via UPS. As we are opening another newly arrived

package, we realize this lovely collection of cookies and candies is from our new friends at the gym. My wife and I did not think our new friends considered us close friends, but we feel indebted to them now. We are bound by politeness and for want of a continuation of our relationship to reciprocate this offering.

On another note, as I was reading the paper I noticed that a children's hospital in Des Moines just received an anonymous donation of \$10 million. The hospital must be thrilled and the anonymous donor must be delighted that his or her money is going to help so many ill children.

My 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Ms. Alexander, spent her entire life in education. Not only was she in the profession, but she was a teacher her entire life even though she turned down multiple offers as an administrator. She often worked 12 hour days and only took off about 3 weeks during the summer as she was remediating for students in summer school and also getting her plans ready for her incoming students. She lived in a small house and was never quite able to buy anything, but a used car. She passed away late last year after teaching for 37 years. Approximately 1300 students' worlds have been directly affected because of her.

Which of the previous scenarios best exemplified the true gift? Here is the simplistic essence of a true gift. "The gift is given with love, even if we are not loved in return" (Caputo, 2007, p. 72). Not expecting anything in return or an unconditional gift is something that is virtually unheard of in our economy based world. If something is given then something is expected in return. Our lives are immersed in this way of thinking. Even the greatest of gift givers were somewhat selfish. Think of the selflessness of Martin Luther King, Jr. for example. Even in his "I have a dream" speech, he extols the hope of a different world for his children. As we hear or read his speech, we know he is using his children as to show his hope for our country



if not the world, but he did have something in it for himself. However, what a gift he was to our world and even in his somewhat selfish gift, he unselfishly changed the world and he even sacrificed his life for his cause. This is possibly the greatest gift.

To revert to the impossible momentarily; “When ‘gift’ is thought in terms of ‘the impossible,’ it would resist any experience implying the presence or self-presence of a thinking, speaking subject” (Carlson, 1999, p. 192). The true gift transcends objectification, literalization, and economy. “Absolution requires us to think a gift outside or beyond the circuit of exchange, a scandalous thought because it is, at heart, a thought of faith, maybe the thought of faith, the thought that only faith can give” (Hart, 2000, p. 275). In other words, a faithful giving is the only true gift and when it comes to absolution, sometimes the forgiveness we extend to someone else is not returned. Often the forgiveness we receive from God is hardly ever adequately returned. However, in faith, we know that no return is necessary nor is it expected. God’s forgiveness is a true gift. In this postmodern theological sense, God being the unseen seer or the unmoved mover is not in need of our forgiveness. His being is the ultimate being and God does not necessitate reprisals.

Therefore, the idea of the true gift, even if we do everything possible to make it a true gift, is seemingly impossible. “The basic schema of the gift would be that wherein someone gives something to someone. Derrida argues that if any of these conditions were actually met, the gift as such would be annulled by its reduction to or reinscription in, a cycle of economic exchange” (Carlson, 1999, p. 220). For example, even if we gave a gift to someone anonymously, thereby not expecting *anything*, in return, would we not still feel good about ourselves or expect to feel good about ourselves for doing it? Is that not why we did it in the first place? “For your gratitude toward a gift I give you functions as a payment in return or in

exchange, and then the gift is no longer strictly speaking a gift” (Derrida, 1993, p. 188).

Therefore, do we give a gift that makes someone else feel good but makes us feel bad? That does not seem to make much sense either. Carlson (1999) stated, “The mode of the gift, then is not being, but ‘remaining’-without recollection, without presence or subsistence, without return. This mode is not merely impossible, but *the* impossible-a subtle distinction, no doubt, but a crucial one, for only the impossible opens (or closes) ‘the secret of that about which one cannot speak, but which one can no longer silence.’ In other words, it is with respect to ‘the’ impossible that a thinking, naming, and desiring of the gift would be oriented” (Carlson, 1999, p. 226). We must come back to the impossible for the giving of the gift is a “thinking, naming, and desiring” of the impossible. Therefore, as we have seen above, insanity sets in again because all we can do is pray that we can do something or anything that will come close to this impossibility. This insanity is only multiplied with the insanity that chaos theory brings. If everything matters, how do I begin? If a true gift is impossible, what is the point? Why should I not choose selfishness or narcissism as no one else seems to be looking out for me?

Intent plays a large role. We must be mindful of our intent to give a gift. If, even in the back of our mind, we are put out or upset that we did not get something in return, we must question it so we may keep it open and improve. “There is, there ought to be, something that we do in life that is not for a return but just because what we are doing is life itself, something a little mad. That is the gift” (Caputo, 2007, p. 73). This idea flies in the face of our mainstream culture and mainstream Christianity. We are so focused on ours that we ignore theirs. We give only when it benefits us or makes us feel good and usually we only give what will not deplete us or make us sacrifice anything. “I am still looking for the text that supports the idea that ‘Christians’ means people who should be free to accumulate as much wealth for themselves as

they possibly can under the law while letting the needs of the poor be met painlessly by ‘charity’-by people of means who will voluntarily give of their overflow-so that they do not have to share any more of their wealth than is unavoidable” (Caputo, 2007, p. 93). Not only can a gift not be expecting something in return, it must be something that is a little painful. While there are not any texts that Caputo is facetiously looking for in the above quote, there are many, including in the Bible, that tell us to give it all away and we will be blessed. Some Christians have a great deal of fault in implementing certain teachings of the Gospel. Christians are very good about picking and choosing certain scriptures to fit a worldly way of life and many see the sacrifice as an example to be followed. Many see the sacrifice as an impossibility that is unattainable and therefore unworthy of pursuit. It also returns to the fact that giving it all away, sharing all we have, and being in community more than competition flies in the face of capitalism which is a seemingly founding principle on this pseudo-Christian nation.

Also, Derrida states that “The gift as such cannot be known, but it can be thought of. We can think what we cannot know” (Kearney, 1999, p. 60). I rejoiced in reading this quote by Derrida who I based my idea of the gift around. Derrida here is saying that we can be knowledgeable of what the gift should look like and what it should do but we just cannot know the gift has been given. There is a hint of messianic here as it is always to come and also a hint of the impossible in the fact that we can think of an amazing event but the event does not have to come into being. Therefore, we can focus on a life giving the impossible gift of unconditional love, of hope, and of justice and still continue to strive for this and work towards this. Knowing this is our aim does not negate the gift. Only knowing that the gift has been given would negate the gift and turn us into indebtedness. As Caputo stated, “what matters most of all for Derrida is what is neither present nor given, what is structurally never present or given, whose givenness or

presence is always to come” (Caputo, 1999, p. 199). I must always be in this mindset in my work in and through education. There is always work to be done and I can never rest in my contentment of doing a good job. The lives I work with are always coming into being and I must always be present in my understanding of what my true duty is to my students; changing their worlds for the better through intellectual undertakings and modeling love for others.

The idea of the gift remains muddled for me. The gift is not something we can objectify or something that becomes tangible. The journey and the striving towards the gift becomes the actions of our life. Caputo stated that “we can think of the gift but we cannot know it, determine it conceptually, nor does the gift present itself perceptually in the ‘manifold of experience.’ If it belongs to the ‘thought’ of the gift that we cannot ‘know’ it, then that means it is an object of ‘faith,’ and that we can only do it. A gift is something we do” (Caputo, 1999, p. 209). Nowhere is this more possible in the realm of education. Educating with the idea of the gift would forever change the face of education and the world. Actions of the teachers would change so dramatically that concerns like grades, standards, and time would no longer be concerns.

Teaching with the gift in mind would change what teachers do. Teachers would focus on justice and love of others instead of technical standards and testing. For example, I believe that educating not only as if students know nothing but also independent of the world is a fatal error. Much of education's failure stems from ego. Education, public or private, believes it is the only entity that should hold the reins of educating. Moving towards an understanding of school as but one of the many entities through which students can learn is the first step towards teaching with the gift in mind. Imagine a school in which projects are based about solving societal issues like poverty, famine, access to drinkable water, and a multitude of other widespread pandemics. Imagine a school which just does not speak of these solutions in theory but tests these theories in

the world because that is really the only place they can truly succeed or fail. And in an even more amazing possibility, what if the kids who were solving the issues of poverty were kids who were in poverty? What if the kids who were walking 10 miles a day one way, twice a day for drinking water were the ones spending one day week creating solutions of how to more easily get clean drinking water to their village? Instead of engaging students in my interests, my concerns, and my desires, we empower them in love and to love.

Education has become the antithesis of the gift. Only in the sense of economy and indebtedness has education remotely attempted the action of the gift. Extrinsic rewards have become the only motivation for participation in education. Stickers, scores, grades, GPA, test scores, gifted program, honors, scholarships, and acceptance into college are but few. Students profanely attend class, bury their interest, desires, and dreams in exchange for mastering standards or passing standardized tests. What if, “instead we try to persuade them to actualize those possibilities which they themselves find intrinsically rewarding? We do this by providing ourselves as an environment that helps open up new, intrinsically attractive possibilities” (Cobb & Griffin, 1976, p. 54). Bringing out that which is within is the true essence of education. Those of the sacred realm would call this the spirit of a person. If I can sacredly attend to the needs of my students and encourage their intrinsic or spiritual desires then I am one step closer to carrying out the impossibility of the gift. Creating an environment in education in which this is possible is one of the least impossible tasks educators can take upon. A change has to first come in spirit and mind. Then a change has to come in action as what we believe is only carried out through our actions. I must make this change and then invite my teachers into this environment by allowing them to educate in such way that is intrinsically rewarding. I am not advocating free reign in schools for students to always choose what they want to do and pick what they want

to learn but allowing them ownership by getting them more involved is essential to progressing towards the gift and acting in the gift.

Thomas Carlson (1999) discussed the impossibility of the gift in detail. “First, the absolute gift is associated in theology with an ineffable and inconceivable Good ‘beyond being’- a love of charity that opens the indisputable and definitive ‘impossibility’ of thinking God as such”(Carlson, 1999, p. 191). Carlson starts off by stating what has already been discussed; the idea that the gift is an impossibility and that the gift is also a way to consider God. God is the greatest gift and God embodies the essence of the true gift. In a postmodern sense, God goes by many names, therefore, God is the gift and the gift is God. If any traits or characteristics allude to what God is, it is the traits of the true gift. Unselfish, unconditional, loving, etc. Carlson continued, “second, the absolute gift is approached phenomenologically in terms of an unconditional givenness that appears in a call whose source and identity remains by necessity indeterminate. When the phenomenon is understood unconditionally without any a priori and according to its pure givenness alone, any theological identification of the gift or its giver would become impossible” (Carlson, 1999, p. 191). There is no possible way to identify the true gift as a recognition of a gift because a true gift would negate the “givenness” that calls. The unknown gift giver reverts back to the unseen seer or the one who is spoken to but seems to never respond. “Finally, the absolute gift can be associated with death-understood as the ‘possibility of impossibility’-insofar as death marks the limit subjective consciousness cannot return to itself or reappropriate in its self- identity” (Carlson, 1999, 192). With this death (death to self, death of God) we end the cycle of economy of the gift. We end the cycle of expectation and reappropriation and we come into being at the point of no longer being. Death is used to show that for the gift to be a true gift it has to be something unnameable, unknowable, and

incomprehensible, i.e. impossible. The true gift must be without being. What an impossibility! Not only must the gift avoid the conditional it must avoid being all together as being is unavoidably caught up in the conditional. The annulment of the gift is the only possibility and again, one that drives you mad. What kind of gift would it be if “the gift must not be recognized either by the donor or the donee, and yet it must indeed give itself” (Carlson, 1999, p. 222). What a challenge for humanity. Not only can the person or group receiving the gift not know it is a gift but even the person giving the gift cannot know it is a gift. How do we strive for this type of gift giving? I believe that we do this by living a life of love focused on a faith that seeks to experience God, who is love. We never know how we affect people and who knows how our actions have caused a chain re-action that has been an unknowable gift to someone. One model we have for this type of living is Jesus as “he kept one thing uppermost in his heart, the love of neighbor and of God, which was unconditional, the sum and substance of the Torah, and he treated everything else, however sacred it was in men’s eyes, as man-made, conditional, flexible, deconstructible” (Caputo, 2007, p. 83).

What a great calling and what a great challenge. This challenge should be met head on and we should not give up on the gift. We should though look within our own society and even others to ensure that our gifts are not based on economics but on love and goodness. Marcel Mauss (2001) looked at societies that had developed gift giving into an economy without the basis of love and goodness. Giving was out of debt and responsibility. As Mauss noted, “the form usually taken is that of the gift generously offered; but the accompanying behavior is formal pretence and social deception, while the transaction itself is based on obligation and economic self-interest” (Mauss, 2001, p. 1). Behaviors such as these are relevant in our own society. We negate the gift as soon as it is given because we are contemplating how we are to

repay the gift out of responsibility. Also, the gift givers often expect something in return and if an appropriate return on their investment is not garnered then the relationship could be broken. The societal norm was to out give for the sake of one-upmanship and not for the selfless sake of others. Cultural norms set up to create community have been abused to set up economies and obligations. The true nature of the gift has been demeaned for selfish benefit and what is seemingly owed.

How did the giving of a gift become such a self indulgent affair? Mauss stated that “the underlying motives are competition, rivalry, show, and a desire for greatness and wealth” (Mauss, 2011, p. 26). What a familiar mantra this is. Competition is the basis for the American economy. Rivalry is what has pushed America to become the policemen of the world even when countries had not reported a crime. If anyone delves into the American culture we see that in most instances, we are nothing but show. And what would America be without its greatness and wealth. The negation of gift is the product of these very American characteristics. The gift is the tangible nomenclature of these self indulgent behaviors. Sadly, our society has not seen the error of our ways for these same characteristics are used in our schools as some of our founding principles which our students are expected to exhibit.

Besides the fear of impossibility, what stands in our way of the gift? One possible answer is narcissism. Narcissism has played a tremendous role in the lives of many. Often times, we think of ourselves long before we think of others and our actions have detrimental effects. Sometimes our actions are direct and purposeful. They lack the thinking of Cobb who states, “we should never act in a way that we could not will that people in general would act” (Cobb, 2010, p. 77). Cobb takes the golden rule of do unto others and makes it more panoramic. Instead of actions *to* others he brings the general actions *of* others to the forefront. In a chaotic



mindset, this is exactly the model and frameworks with which it is necessary to form our thinking.

The story of Abraham is a great metaphor for this. Abraham selflessly acted as he wanted others act. Abraham, in an overly committed sense, trusted God so much that he believed God wanted him to sacrifice his oldest son. Also, "...by commanding Abraham to sacrifice his son, to put his son to death by offering a gift of death to God, by means of this double gift where in the gift of death consists in putting to death by raising one's knife over someone and of putting death forward by giving it as an offering, God leaves him free to refuse" (Derrida, 2008, p. 72). As Derrida so clearly stated, Abraham had a choice: act narcissistically by saving your son or act as you wanted other followers of God to act. This test of God leaves Abraham abundant opportunities to deny God's request. In the story, however, Abraham does not refuse once. With this act, Abraham becomes the father of a nation, a great believer of God, and a man who has faith that could move mountains. Since Abraham acted in this selfless way, his gift to the world was the nation of Israel. How much would the world have changed had Abraham refused? We of course can never know, but we can only know that it would be completely different.

Narcissism is not an ill that can be cured but a disability that must be accommodated for. Every being has narcissistic tendencies which often do us harm. Phillip Wexler recognizes this and sees it as a starting point for resacralization which is a prerequisite for striving towards the gift. Wexler states, "the rekindling or reenergizing occurs on a social stage already set by individualism and by alienation. Their combined effect is to instigate narcissistic self-satisfaction as an antidote to powerlessness and the absence of meaning. The wave of social recuperation begins then at the individual subject level, with what Weber called the

‘transformation from within’” (Wexler, 1996, p. 121). Before we can work towards the gift for others we must work on transforming our mind and spirit to task of resacralization. Selfishly, we must complete this task and we must save ourselves before working to save others. If the plane you are traveling in suddenly has sudden drop of pressure and there is a lack of oxygen in the cabin, oxygen masks quickly fall from the ceiling. Directions tell you to apply the mask to yourself first, before helping others with their mask. In other words, you have to right the wrongs from within before you can live an outward life of purpose.

The gift is evident in this narcissistic work. Wexler states, “resacralization of the self, despite its narcissism, becomes the lever for the emergence of a socially shared resymbolization that signifies a new, reintegrated social community and, thereby, Redemption. The self-resacralization, even in its individualized, commodified forms, finds a limit that presses toward intersubjectivity and then toward retraditionalization” (Wexler, 1996, p. 121). The focus should be working towards that limit as quickly as possible, but more importantly recognizing when it is appropriate to shift the focus on inner transformation and to outward action. However, my hope is that the transition is seamless and not purposeful. I hope that we are able to recognize the moment when we are ready to begin acting in such a way as it is not for our selfish transformation, but for the transformation of what will be. As Derrida stated, the gift “remains irreducible to presence or to presentation, it demands a temporality of the instant without ever constituting a present. It belongs to an atemporal temporality, to a duration that cannot be grasped: something one can neither stabilize, establish, grasp, apprehend, nor comprehend” (Derrida, 2008, p. 66). Chaos and the gift have much in common. For example, Lorenz wrote “...that we cannot make measurements that are completely free of uncertainty” (Lorenz, 1993, p. 12) and Derrida clearly showed that the gift is an immeasurable impossibility that thrives on

uncertainty. The life I think I am leading in the essence of the gift could be wrought in complete failure and with dire consequences. Therefore, I must have an understanding that I will never fully understand when it comes to gift just like I will never fully understand or be able to perfectly predict the weather. And thus, faith is born. Faith is believing my actions may be the best based on the love of God, but they could also be dead wrong for it is possible there is no God. Therefore, congruently philosophizing on these ideas yields great potential to make a great future for I have no power over the past and I must not dwell too long in the present. My eyes should be on the future state of our world. Education must embrace and understand these ideas. Education must use the ideas of postmodern theology based on love to create the foundation for the developmentally narcissistic students it has been called to educate. As Quinn states, “education is, then, a transcendent sojourn of the soul in which the educated moves from being predominantly ruled by the appetitive part to that divine rational one, with the faith that by the rule of reason, the good, the true, the beautiful-virtue, justice, freedom, human and divine friendship, happiness-can be obtained” (Quinn, 2001, p. 94). An understanding of chaos and a foundation of postmodern theology, allows a divine rational self to be born. This divine rational self leads to a life not only of personal justice, freedom, and divine friendship, but to a world in which these qualities are applied to everyone and every other one. For example, I recently read on a Twitter a pastor’s bio line which stated “I walk by faith, not by sight.” My first thought was, well then why did God give you eyes? This pastor is still in the appetitive part of life and of his religion. God gave us eyes to see and ears to hear. As Caputo stated, “God has planted a head on our shoulders and put eyes in that head, and so the full job description of a believer is to be a thinking believer or a believing thinker (Caputo, 2006a, p. 36). To me, Caputo has explained the divine rational self. For me, rational in this sense does not take the modern sense

of reasonable, sensible, or according to logic for the divine itself is illogical, as the is the gift. The divine rational is one that is not blinded by faith but encouraged by faith. The divine rational has space in their heart and in their head for alternate approaches to God. Caputo may have a better wording with the thinking believer however the vision of the divine rational paints a better picture for me of what I strive to be. Someone who works to love like God but it is not blinded by the necromancy of the Bible. A divine rational is one who appreciates the narrative of God at play in the world but is not bound by the Biblical words of man. A divine rational is one who seeks to learn from God not just in one portion of the world but in all elements of the world. In other words, learning to love without expecting love in return, learning to give without expecting a gift in return, and learning to seek justice for others when justice alludes you, is what a divine rational exhibits.

What an impossibility! I recognize this impossibility and do not aim to say that it will ever be possible. For as Hart (2005) states, “we start to hit a point where it is not possible to love these people, where the understanding says, ‘these people do not deserve our love,’ which of course is an eminently reasonable thing to say. But then again, must love be deserved-or is love a gift? If love must be deserved or earned, then it is something we owe to the one who earned it, and then it is more like wages for labor than a gift we give without condition” (Hart and Wall, 2005, p. 35). If love is a gift then it must be given without condition. Caring and loving every other one can be remotely possible in only a few professions. The first is the medical field. Doctors, especially those in public hospitals with emergency rooms, care for patients no matter the condition. However, love is often out of the equation as patients are often seen as simply that, patients. One of the best places where we should love without condition is in the field of education. There is no condition in which we should not love our students. Love in the

education field looks like this: doing whatever it takes to ensure lifelong happiness and success. Everyone has students we deal with who we have not loved. We have felt they are not deserving of our teaching or we allow them to avoid learning. Many factors are due this: their attitude, their socio-economics, and/or their annoying actions. The job of the educator is to spend the first few years transforming from within so that these factors will not contribute to the love that should be shared with the students. Then, the educator should find ways to love students, even the most difficult, by building a relationship and a bond with them.

Most importantly, we must see the gift for what it is and also be the instrument for the gift. As Hart states, “the experience of God is to ‘see’ the hand of God in the course that things take, to take the course of experience as guided by God, to find a loving hand, a providential care where others see chance, so that when things happen they happen as a gift, not fortuitously but gratuitously. But the gift is not a gift a chance, a bit of fortuitousness, but a gratuity that is marked by a divine graciousness” (Hart and Wall, 2005, p. 31). God and chaos are wrapped up in each other. Chaos is not about chance because not everything that could happen can happen. When something, anything, happens there is a reason. This type of reason can be complicated, and so complicated we may never be able to trace it back to the moment when the path changed. It is not chance or happenstance. As we educate our students not in theology, but through a postmodern theological sense, we will begin to create people who will be re-created in love, happiness, faith, and hope. The grace of God will shine through their thoughtful actions. The gift, therefore, is not a chance happening, but is a purposeful effort towards the divine.

Achieving the true gift is an impossibility. Doing so leaves us to hope without hope. However, doing so leaves us to choose a path because whether we are conscious of it or not, our actions have an effect. Therefore, we must start down a path not only to transform from within,

but then lead students within our educational system, to come to the same transformation. To do this we must understand chaos theory because our lives are chaotic. To do this, we must understand the teachings of postmodern theology. Only then will our future begin to shift off of its current path of narcissism. However, “there is a relatively foreseeable future, what he calls the ‘future present,’ the future that we plan for and can reasonably expect to be the outcome of the present course of things. But that is not the absolute future, a radically unforeseeable future where we hope with a hope against hope, as Saint Paul put it, in the coming of something, I do not know quite what, something for which the least bad names we have at present are names like ‘justice’ or the ‘gift’” (Caputo, 2006a, p. 65). The unforeseeable is exciting and hoping beyond hope in the impossibility that my actions will have an effect on this future is the stuff of life.

## Chapter 6

### Changing through resacralization and the journey of the gift

My desire to change the world is insatiable. My desire to change the world drives my every thought and my every action. In many instances, authors claim they write for others or in the name of others but I write for myself. Derrida wrote, “so I write in order to keep. But keeping is not a dull and dead archiving. It is at bottom a question of infinite memories, of limitless memories which would not necessarily be a philosophical or literary work, simply a great repetition” (Derrida, 1992, p. 145). In a sense, I agree here with Derrida, but my essence of what I keep may not be the same. My keeping is keeping the faith and keeping hope. I write and wrote this dissertation to keep faith in my profession and my calling. Without this infusion of faith through chaos theory which promises that small things matter, I could have given up, possibly would have given up, on education years ago. However, chaos theory gave me hope that everything matters, therefore I matter. Postmodern thinking infused with theology gave me hope that my beliefs could guide me in changing the world of others. Focusing on love, openness, questioning, narratives, and the impossible, postmodern theology is the gateway to change.

Change is where I must begin. To revert again to the Allegory of the Cave, I have seen the light and I must now dare to share. Sharing what I have intrinsically learned over these many years is nothing I can redeliver in a grade level meeting. My beliefs must be shown in my actions, but when my actions are questioned, I must be able to explain without seeming arrogant or all knowing; I must not blind them with my light. Those that have questioned and will question, students, parents, administrators, and society, will ultimately question results or demand tangible proof. My response to them will be one of a meta-cognitive nature. I will ask

them to look within and ask these questions: Are you inspired by our current state of education? In which realm of society does most of our hope for a better future lie? Have I done enough today for my tomorrow? My goal through this dissertation is to inspire, to bring spirit back into the realm of education because in education, we have hope. The future is literally in educators' hands. However, educators cannot do this alone. Society has to embrace new ways of learning not continue to count on the old ways of teaching. And I agree, the old ways did work for some and society was different 50 years ago. Now our world has changed and innovation in the most abstract form is what rules our lives. Many years ago, one person could think of one great idea and create the tangible outcome of that great idea for most of their lives and they would be considered successful. Today, one great idea may get you a few years of success and we will be asking for more. Or the great idea that you thought would change the world is not accepted. Education used to be about teaching people how to work in jobs and mostly jobs around manufacturing. I can think of a handful of students I have taught over my many years of teaching who even have parents who work in manufacturing, let alone students who aspire to be in manufacturing. Education must incorporate a more socio-cultural focus. We must learn ways to work with others not learn ways to have others work for us.

Education must spark questions and have students explore their hypothesis and then return with a defense. Problem solving should be the most important skill taught in schools. However, society is only allowing certain students to learn problem solving skills. Most students learn them through their own experiences. Do aspects of current instructional planning and strategies involve how to learn from failure or mistakes? Most of my career and even my personal life is inundated with problems that I must attempt to solve. Often I fail and have to attempt a second or third time. However, education has a "get it right or get out" culture and yet



education fails to teach students how to deal with failure so they can ever get it right. The system of education does not have a monopoly on learning. Learning does not occur just within the walls of the school building. I need to inspire my teachers to look to our world so wrought with problems, show how people failed to problem solve effectively, and then give students the opportunity to fail. This little tweak to education could have a large effect as is noted by chaos theory.

What would it look like if my teachers presented a problem to the students that did not have a right answer? What would happen if they gave a problem to students and just let them be and let them breathe for one day? Their only requirement was to come up with the best possible solution and be ready to answer questions concerning the solution. I believe that what my teachers would quickly begin to witness the effects of problem solving skills that were already in the minds of the students. Working with others, listening skills, research skills, presentation skills, understanding the audience (adults call that politics), and so many more would manifest in this exercise. The result would not so much be the solution but it would be the meta-cognitive understanding of the process. Deconstruction would be evident in this practice as students are having to really delve into the issue. They are complicating the conversation by being inspired to discuss multiple points of view, by being motivated to complete exhaustive research, and also by being made aware of the sometimes unknown atrocities of the world. For example, the human trafficking issue is a massive social issue which not many people are having conversations about let alone trying to solve. Millions of people are enslaved and one of the worst areas of the atrocity is in the area which I reside and work: Atlanta. Human trafficking is an adult problem that needs new ideas to eliminate this plague on the world. The students who I am teaching now are going to be the problem solvers of the world very soon. With post-modernist understanding

of deconstruction in which students say “yes, but” they are continually presenting new idea, new thoughts, and not ending the conversation. With an educators understanding of chaos theory, the faith or belief that what students do matters can be realized and with the theology of love what we do not only matters but becomes sacred.

Focusing on the social-cultural concerns of the world will truly provide students with the possibility of giving or even being a true gift one day. This is all precipitated from theology which asks us to love others and make our meaning and find our meaning for we are all part of someone’s journey or even more globally, everyone’s journey. If the only problem solving our students do is on a math assessment then we are truly letting our students down. How can I hope to improve society when students are given isolated and unconnected math problems? How can I hope for those that have been othered for so long to have a voice in this world if I never even allow students to branch out of the classroom walls? Not taking these risks is an injustice and a cross that is bore not only by educators but by parents, government, and society as a whole. It is my mission to jump back into the cave and to show those bound by ignorance, bound by stubbornness, and bound by idleness the work that needs to be done immediately. A small group of people can do great things. Remember, in the scheme of the world, 60,000 people can make a difference. Take our little country for example and use the same math, myself, along with 3,000 others, can change the trajectory of the current state of education and our country.

Again, the most difficult part of this effort to improve the world is to start. Some effort down the pathway of righteousness and up the road of sacredness is an effort worth applauding. Derrida discussed the gift greatly and although it seemed impossible he reminded us that we should not discount the good gift. The good gift is not all bad. The perfect gift is an impossibility, but a good gift should not be discouraged. Relating this to change, any positive

change, is positive. The results may not be as forthcoming as we would like but some of the greatest change took months, years, decades, centuries, and so on.

What does the day to day of living a life founded in postmodern theology with an understanding that everything matters materialize into? After completing my candidacy exam, I felt a bit of a hypocrite. Much of the text was meaningful, but it had no meaning to me. My words were others' words interpreted with high hopes. Soon I realized that it was necessary for me to practice what I preached. At every step I made mistakes. First, out of the three areas I have discussed, I put too much faith in chaos theory. Without a balance of postmodern theology, chaos theory cannot become qualitative in practice. For example, educators need to take a step back from the quantitative data we are so inundated with and realize in a more philosophical way that everything matters. It is not only how we react when students do not learn. With chaos theory in our minds it is how we present the information to the students to show them that not doing well is not failure but an opportunity to do better. This matters because everything matters. This matters because reacting with data tends to treat the students who produced the data into another number. Chaos theory qualitatively leads us treating our human students humanly.

After a while, I began to incorporate more of postmodern theology. Purposefully focusing on the others, purposefully deconstructing dominant theories and ideologies, and purposefully striving for the impossible became a daily focus for me. Interestingly, I truly began to see the world differently. In the movie the Matrix, when Neo finally realizes he is "the One," he sees the Matrix for what it is worth, encrypted 0s and 1s. Not that I feel I am seeing the coding of the world, but what I have felt is that the immaterial and the trivial have gone away. In

complicating my world life has simplified. Order out of complication. Naturally, these ideas, thoughts, and feelings began to merge into my life of work.

What does this look like in the “real world” of education? My goal is similar to that of Molly Quinn. She states, “what I am reaching for is education imagined in this way, which dwells in hope, carrying us beyond the limits of our own knowing, inspiring us to become more than we are, which waits expectantly for transformation” (Quinn, 2001, p. 203). Founded in postmodern theology and with a firm grasp on chaos theory, education can build up individuals to be full of hope, full of dreams, and full of creativity. Faith in something greater than anything we can comprehend and allows us to become more than what we could ever be. Teaching becomes more about bringing out that which is within instead of filling empty vessels. “Humans are not self-contained, insulated, or isolated beings, but are situated in grander social, cultural, and ecological systems” (Davis et al., 2008, p. 7). In looking toward making this type of teaching concrete, I have some visions. First, my original assessment on the first day of school for levels of students 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and up would be a challenge or a problem to solve. For example, the country of the Congo currently has over 70% of their people without fresh drinking water within 1 mile of their homes. People, usually women and children, are forced to walk miles every day to obtain water to drink and to cook with. How do we solve this problem? Many of the important skills of problem solving and of a socio-cultural understanding will come about. You can also judge the leadership potential, the research ability, and their ability to defend their opinion based on fact, and their imagination and creativity. The point of this exercise would be to really see what is in their vessel. Second, students would focus on certain societal problems throughout the year and be asked to create solutions to these problems by using the information they are learning during the school day. In this sense, the learning is connected to life. Lastly,

create an understanding that the classroom is not the only place to learn, solve problems, or to think. Students would be encouraged to go out into their society and create positive change. These are the signs or the signals of the gift of teaching. Who is not inspired to teach in this manner? What student would not want to learn in this manner? How many lives would change for the better with these practices?

Educating with the gift in mind becomes less of a business and more of a mission or a calling. All of which strives towards the impossibility of the gift, the perfect gift, or the true gift. The gift of being prepared for a job once out of the realm of education can only do so much. It is also a very selfish gift as everyone sees the benefit. The gift that is given without knowing it is given and received is the impossibility. Acting in such a way that the idea of the gift is at the same time present, but not necessarily present is my future goal for education. In other words, educators know they are doing some good but will they ever know how much good. Building relationships with students is important and can change a life but it is my calling to move past that and to change the way students learn to change the world. Understanding that if anything matters, than everything matters, is essential. This idea reverts back to chaos theory, but also that for a gift to be a true gift it must be given blindly but purposefully and knowingly unknown. Our actions and our words can only be true gifts when our entire being and our full essence ruminates the understanding that every action we commit is an action of worth and of purpose, whether we like it or not. If we are not inspired to greatness then our actions will have an effect, just not a very positive one. If we base these actions on a postmodern theology and focus on the writings of Derrida, we can know without knowing, we are doing our best. We can still do wrong and will. However, with a focus on postmodern theology and an understanding of chaos theory we can and will, at some point, come as close as we can to giving a true gift.

I see chaos theory and the gift as pair figure skaters team. Yes they are different and each has their own job to do and together they make beautiful movements on ice together. For example, “Yes, you could change the weather. You could make it do something different from what it would otherwise have done. But if you did, then you would never know what it would otherwise have done. It would be like giving an extra shuffle to an already well-shuffled pack of cards. You know it will change your luck, but you don’t know whether for better or worse” (Gleick, 2008, p. 21). With this example of chaos, I see again the montra that everything matters. For better or worse, everything matters. In the essence of the gift, this helps me understand the gift’s purpose. If I can help create a space for students to learn that their every action has an impact on the world, good or bad, then the gift of teaching founded in the love of others will hopefully and faithfully obtain some unfounded and unknowing good.

Chaos theory and the gift both throw me into responsibility. Chaos theory makes me mindful of my actions while the gift inspires me to action. To be mindful of chaos theory almost means to let go of control. As Lorenz stated, “suddenly, the strange attractors that had sometimes shown up in the earlier problems were joined by a host of others, often produced by equation that bore no obvious relation to specific physical problems, and were accepted as their own justification” (Lorenz, 1993, p. 129). We could spend a lifetime trying to figure out how in the world we were put in a situation in which our loved one was the one who got terminal cancer. We could trace it back to multiple causes and reasons; genetics, nature, location, diet, ecology, etc. Here in lies the problem with focusing only on chaos. The answer could be parts of all those things or one part of one and the whole of the other. Chaos is at play in all sicknesses but especially cancer. Look at all the cancer research being done. From my view point, it is not about curing cancer it is about treating cancer. The scientists and doctors who have studied

cancer see chaos within it and have realized, currently, that it is too chaotic of system to decipher. Any small divergence can turn good cells to bad. Hence why chaos theory needs the gift. A here and now mindset focused on the future of others and for others. A mindset that takes the goodness of theology and places it firmly in the realm of action. Yes I still look to the past and learn from the past but my actions are for the future. The only thing I can truly control are my actions and if my actions are founded on love and greatness and the power of weakness, then I have faith and I have hope that my actions will cause good.

Another trait shared by chaos and the gift is impossibility. All systems are wrapped up in chaos. For example, as Gleick stated, we may never be able to accurately predict how hot a pot of coffee is after 1 minute of being brewed but we will assuredly be able to forecast its temperature 2 hours after it is brewed. This impossibility is our humbling. It is our notification from nature that we are simply observers in an ever evolving world not controllers of a changeable world. The gift, and all of its impossibility is also humbling. I know the gift is an impossibility and still I will strive for it. Without the scientific evidence of “why” due to chaos theory, all I can focus on is how I can attempt to improve the world through my actions, most of which surround my calling in education. These impossibilities link chaos theory and the gift. The impossibility of knowing gives us the freedom to act.

My idea is not to race into my school following my defense and scream at the top of my lungs how chaos theory is truly an understanding of the law of nature and all we can do is use the foundational ideas of postmodern theology to ground us in love of others so we may resacralize society by which we are striving towards the impossibility of the gift. Who will listen? Who will understand? This dream can be related to the analogy from years past. In high school, I was in chorus. I did not sing particularly well however, I could stay on pitch with others around me

and I enjoyed the class. One day, after practicing a certain piece, our chorus teacher asked, what part has the melody? Sopranos? Tenors? Altos? The usual answers were all wrong. The piano was the melody. The voices were the supporting act. My views are like this piece of music. I am still in the system; society, public school, standards, testing etc. I am still playing my part; instructional leader, test coordinator, horizons program director, etc. However, simply because I am playing my part does not mean it is what moves me nor is it what catches my ear of inspiration, love, hope and faith. My melody is subdued, subjective, and even subliminal. The piano melody was something hard to find but in the same sense you always knew it was there. None of my peers ever stopped to ask, where is the melody? We knew it was there. We did not so much hear it as we felt it. My vision is that my impossible race to be run, my impossible goal, will be played out as a piano melody in a choral performance. Prominent, yet subdued. I still have to play the game. However, standards, testing, and all that we dislike about public education is just the blue print, the beginning, the plan. Obviously, chaos theory shows us that no matter how much we think we know, nature or God, life has a curveball just waiting for us. Theology shows us that seeing the sacred all of this, the curve balls and the straight paths is what gives us purpose.

The effect of the implementation of this philosophy would increase the well being and purpose in life exponentially. As Davis stated, “Fortunately, history has demonstrated that change is possible. But, it has also shown that change is never a matter of individual initiative and rarely a simple matter of conscious decision. Instances of social transformation/learning are complex collective processes that unfold on time scales that are different from those of individual learning, and that involve ongoing interrogations of practices, implicit associations, and so on” (Davis et al., 2008, p. 223). Education is the perfect platform for this change. In the



realm of education we still have the dreamers, the feelers, and those who love without conditions. Presenting this philosophy would enhance a child's innate goodness but more importantly sustain it through the striving of the impossible. Once students reach a certain age, they have been drained by the standardized factory system of education and their love of life is replaced with the love of money or the love of escaping this self imposed reality full of despair. This is a breeding ground for the status quo. If students learned the beauty of chaos, the lessons of theology, and the guidance of postmodernism, then the seeds of real change will blossom.

In chaos theory, it is recognized that more than one thing is always possible next. Chaos theory does not presuppose that anything is possible next. There are boundaries and limits. Education, educators, parents, society, and all the rest, have the choice and the power to begin to move society in to a state of resacralization. As was stated in chapter 4, Phillip Wexler's resacralization is characterized by "the return of cultural practices of the sacred to everyday social life, simultaneous with the continuing rationalization and commodification of profane mundanity" (Wexler, 1996, p. 8). Even in the face of the continual rationalization and acceptance of the profane in the world of education, bringing the sacred back to the heart of education could be an essential aspect of truly educating students. This starts with resacralizing education one small disturbance at a time. Any disturbance, blip, or chart off course is welcome as long as love and justice are involved. Often times in education we hear of the new changes coming to education, pedagogy, and curriculum. However, often at the core, there are repackaged old ideas that did not work the first time. The disturbances I am looking for do not have to be sweeping standards changing or the eradication of testing. Small disturbances, can create great effects. In my mind I see the snowball going down the hill. The small pebble is dislodged and as it rolls down the snowy hill it picks up snow and grows and grows. Therefore, I

am looking for a disturbance with staying power. A disturbance that will break the chains of normalcy and the status quo. I need a disturbance that will bring people out of the deep hole they have dug themselves. Recently, I was in a classroom and a teacher was in the middle of her lesson. About 10 minutes into the lesson, I realized that something was missing; students were missing foundational skills, what she asked of them was disconnected from the written directions, etc. At about 11 minutes, the teacher also knew something was wrong. More importantly, she knew what was wrong. Instead of stopping the lesson, thinking out loud a few moments with the kids, and then refocusing her work and their work, she went forward with the lesson. This look into the classroom is but one example of what non-disturbance has done to education. No matter what, we are going to keep to plan. Follow the path. Carry out our mission!

The lessons of theology teach us that love creates a space for change. An opening or a rip, as it were, into the fabric of life. For so long, especially in education, the status quo and standardization of education has been weaved into our lives of our students. The very same students that garbed their caps and gowns in the 50s and 60s are very similar to the students who put on that wardrobe today. New creations are needed for our ever evolving world. Huebner remarks that “with openness, love, and hope, new creation is possible. Old forms can be transcended. New containers for the overpowering vitality of life emerge for the time being, and the cycle begins again” (Huebner, 1999, p. 350). Huebner believes that with theology, especially theology with a Caputo like postmodern tilt, the status quo and the dominant culture in the world can be reformed. Infused with openness, love, and hope I can lead my students to become new creations, to create new creations, and to ensure they remain in the cycle. The cycle Huebner is referring to is what I consider the cycle of impossibility. When I strive for impossibility, like the

gift, I must always be aware of the path I am on. With an understanding of chaos theory and with a foundation in a theological, unconditional love, I can continue to work towards the impossibility of the gift. Through continual postmodern actions in and through deconstruction and difference, I will be able to see in and through the dominant culture to know how to work in and through it. Carlson believes that "...the creative human, imagined theologically or technologically, might be understood to enjoy the possibility of creation, and self-creation, only to the degree that it remains an open work, an ongoing creation without fixed archetype or established place, and hence in a fundamental condition of need-the need to engage in the endless multiplication of images and forms and ways of being human, within a dynamic that can never exhaust the indeterminate, or infinite, possibility that the very need opens and sustains" (Carlson, 2008, p. 23). Theologically, therefore, I must remain open, engaged, and ever evolving. Theologically, I must imagine a multitude of human possibilities in which the world and our society can improve.

In a postmodern sense, Derrida's deconstruction and difference give us an understanding of the effectiveness of disturbance. Deconstruction does not destroy but invades the inner workings or the souls of institutions like public education. "Deconstruction is a matter of buts" (Caputo, 1997, p. 94). This matter of buts is important because it implies "why" and also delivers a new possibility. The reason education needs deconstruction is because it not only questions, it also provides a revelation of new ideas. Curriculum and education are starving for new ideas and deconstruction allows me to understand why "but" is so important. Difference helps in understanding the power of deferring and differing. Disturbing the common ground and the common sense must happen next. Small disturbances can make a big difference but the disturbances must continue. Disturbances must be often enough to plague the uninspired

outcome of well organized and large system which is education. Yes, a gust of wind can change a whole weather system yet I imagine that one gust of wind spurred two gust of wind which altered the air temperature which brought moisture higher in the atmosphere which caused a thunderhead in lieu of a passing cloud. Weather systems are powerful forces. I have felt 80 mph wind in nature and it is not something I want to feel again. Imagine a hurricane that can sustain these types of winds and higher over a surface large than the state of Georgia. One gust of wind is not going to alter its course unless the next change is right behind it.

Life is made up of series of choices. My choices result in consequences. I can choose change or choose the status quo. I can choose to remain profane in my life and my career or I can choose to strive for sacredness. As Caputo maintains, “In the logic of the world, nothing is for free and nobody gets off scot-free. By the same token, in the logic of the world, everything is for sale, everything has a price, and nothing is sacred. The world will stop at nothing to get even, to settle or even a score; the world is pomp and power and ruthless reckoning (Caputo, 2006, p. 107). I am in the world and currently this is my through line. Education is in the world and it is teaching this model. Preparing kids for the real world is what a lot of my teacher friends say. My view is that is time to stop preparing them for the real world and change the meaning of real. Eliade affirms that “the sacred reveals absolute reality and at the same time makes orientation possible; hence it founds the world in the sense that it fixes the limits and establishes the order of the world” (Eliade, 1987, p. 30). When we teach through the lenses of the sacred, a worksheet is not enough. When we teach through the lenses of the sacred, lecturing is not enough. When we teach through the lenses of the sacred, the desensitized, disengaged, and segregated teaching that occurs in school is profane. With the sacred, as we resacralize society through education, the values of love, justice, and empathy will become the forefront of our

teaching. Our mission will not be test scores but will be scores of thoughtful, caring, strong, and empathetic people who will one day hold the reigns of society.

Huebner noted, “Education is the lure of the transcendent—that which we seem is not what we are for we could always be other. Education is the openness to a future that is beyond all futures. Education is the protest against present forms that may be reformed and transformed. Education is the consciousness that we live in time, pulled by the inexorable Otherness that brings judgment and hope to the forms of life which are but vessels of the present experience” (Heubner, 199, p. 360). Education is the through line, the heart beat, and the mind set of society. Education’s modern origins are post World War II in which we were preparing the country for work in factories and for ingenious ways to ward off the Soviets. The curriculum modeled society’s uneasiness and then Sputnik lit a fire under education so that more controls were placed on education by the local governments and the national governments. Those controls have continued to increase to where we are today; Common Core standards, national assessments, common text books, and robot teaching. However, the pedagogy and curricular thinking that should have died off with the end of the arms crisis, raged on. Even when the business of America changed, from production to innovation, the 50s mentality of teaching raged on. Currently, education is in the age where the neoliberal and neoclassical ideals have not only pervaded education but have defined it. Educators often discuss their duties to society in creating good citizens. However, a good citizen is defined by implementing the status quo and following the rules laid down before them. A good citizen is one that can work, make a profit, and serve the country by paying their fair share of taxes. My idea of what education should be and what education could be by implementing the philosophies presented in this dissertation is a manifestation of the following quote by Purpel (1999): “What makes it so exhilarating is its very

awesomeness, i.e., the opportunity to match human capacities with a sacred vision, to engage in a task that is grand and realizable, and to make the educational process truly redemptive, not merely profitable” (Purpel, 1999, p. 171). Also, Huebner’s education is the type of education that will attempt to manifest itself after all the small disturbances, after the resacralization, after the influx of love and justice, and after the foundation of postmodern thinking is set. Hubener’s education is in play. It is not something that will be but something that may be. This is also the impossible gift.

At the conclusion of “It’s a Wonderful Life,” George comes to realization that his life has a purpose. Even if it means jail, George came to understand that his life has meaning, purpose, and value so it is a life worth living. Upon George’s return to his life, he runs through the town appreciating his circumstances and having a new vision of what life and the life of those he loved would be without his presence. I do not have the opportunity to see a glimpse of what the world would be like without my presence. I do have the opportunity to look towards the future with the eyes of what could be. Realizing that my life does matter and that everything matters is essential to this vision. Having an understanding that a resacralization of education is important to what its intended purpose should be; improving the world. Chaos theory has shown that it only takes a small change to create grand differences and when we have a progressive understanding of theology with a foundation in postmodern thinking, I believe the world can improve and we can, improve the lives of others we will have never met. This gives me faith to know that the impossible gift is worth striving for I know that with love and hope in my heart, I can positively impact those without ever knowing. Also, looking into the future, I can hope that the path the students choose while they were in my care will be one in which students are also able to create the most positive society imaginable through the effects of the sacred vision through which they

were seen. Again, the most difficult aspect of change is to start. Fortunately and unfortunately, in an education that focuses on love and justice of the other and with the idea of the impossible, I have the opportunity and the responsibility to start and restart as I continue to strive towards the impossible gift.

## REFERENCES

- Caputo, J. D. (1997a). *The prayers and tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without religion*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Caputo, J. D. (1997b). *Deconstruction in a nutshell*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press.
- Caputo, J. D. (2001). *On religion*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Caputo, J. D. (2006a). *Philosophy and theology*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.
- Caputo, J. D. (2006b). *The Weakness of God: A theology of the event*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Caputo, J. D. (2007). *What would Jesus deconstruct? The good news of post-modernism for the church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Caputo, J. D. & Scanlon, M. J. (1999). *God, the gift, and postmodernism*. J. D. Caputo & M. J. Scanlon (Eds.). Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Carlson, T. A. (1999). *Indiscretion: Finitude and the naming of God*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Carlson, T. A. (2008). *The indiscrete image: Infinitude and creation of the human*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Cobb, J. B., (2010). *Spiritual bankruptcy: A prophetic call to action*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.
- Cobb, J. B. (1997). *Reclaiming the church*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Cobb, J. B. & Griffin, D. R., (1976). *Process theology: An introductory exposition*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press.



- Davis, B. (2009). *Inventions of teaching: A genealogy*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Davis, B., Sumara, D., & Luce-Kapler, R. (2008). *Engaging minds: Changing teaching in complex times*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Derrida, J. (1974). *Of grammatology*. Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins Press.
- Derrida, J. (1981). *Positions*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Derrida, J. (1992). *Points*. Stanford, CA: The Stanford University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1993). *Jacques Derrida*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Derrida, J. (2008). *The gift of death and literature in secret*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago press.
- Doll, M. A. (2000). *Like letters in running water: A mythopoetics of curriculum*. Mahaw, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Doll, W. E. (1993) *A post-modern perspective on curriculum*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Doll, W. E., Fleener, M. J., Trueit, D., & St. Julien, J. (2005). *Chaos, complexity, curriculum, and culture*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Ehrman, B. (2005). *Misquoting Jesus*. New York, NT: Harper Collins.
- Eliade, M. (1987). *The sacred and the profane: The nature of religion*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt.
- Fleener, M. J., (2002). *Curriculum dynamics: Recreating heart*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Gleick, J. (2008). *Chaos: Making a new science*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Hart, K. (2000). *The trespass of the sign: Deconstruction, theology and philosophy*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press.
- Hart, K., & Wall, B. (Eds.). (1997). *The experience of God: A postmodern response*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press.
- Huebner, D. E. (1996). Teaching as moral activity. *Jounral Of Curriculum & Supervision*,

11267-275.

Huebner, D. E. (1999). *The lure of the transcendent: collected essays by Dwayne E. Huebner.*

United States of America: Erlbaum.

Jardine, D. W. (1998). *To dwell with a boundless heart: Essays in curriculum theory, hermeneutics, and the ecological imagination.* New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Kearney, R (1999). *God, the gift, and postmodernism.* J. D. Caputo & M. J. Scanlon (Eds.).

Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Keller, C. (2003). *Face of the deep: A theology of becoming.* New York, NY: Routledge.

King, Jr., M. L. (2010). *Strength to love.* Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Lorenz, E. N. (1993). *The essence of chaos.* Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

Macdonald, B. J. (1995). *Theory as a prayerful act.* New York, New York: Peter Lang.

Mauss, M. (2011). *The Gift: Forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies.* Glencoe, IL:

The Free Press.

Meillassoux, Q. (2009). *After Finitude: An essay on the necessity of Contingency.* New York,

NY: Penquin Books.

Pinar, W. F. (2004). *What is curriculum theory?* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum

Associates.

Pinar, W. F., Reynolds, W. M., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P. M. (2004). *Understanding curriculum.* New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Prigogine, I. (1997). *The end of certainty: Time, chaos, and the new laws of nature.* New York, NY: The Free Press.

Purpel, D. E. (1999). *Moral outrage in education.* New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Quinn, M., (2001). *Going out, not knowing whither: Education, the upward journey and the*

- faith of reason*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Scanlon, M. J. (1999). *God, the gift, and postmodernism*. J. D. Caputo and M. J. Scanlon (Eds.)  
Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Sheldrake, R., McKenna, T., & Abraham, R. (1992). *Chaos, creativity, and cosmic consciousness*. Rochester, VT: Park Street Press.
- Smith, J. K. A. (2006). *Who's afraid of postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Taylor, M. C. (2007). *After God*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Taylor, M. C. (1984). *Erring: A postmodern a/theology*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Wexler, P. (1996). *Holy sparks: Social theory, education, and religion*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Whitehead, A. N. (1957). *The aims of education and other essays*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Whitlock, R. U. (2007). *This corner of Canaan: Curriculum studies of place & the reconstruction of the south*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1980). *Culture and value*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Zhao, G. (2012). Levinas and the Mission of Education. *Educational Theory*, 62(6), 659-675.