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A NARRATIVE OF CHARITABLE ACKNOWLEDGMENT:
REFRAMING INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION
IN INTIMATE ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty School
of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Cory D. Williams

December 2007

A NARRATIVE OF CHARITABLE ACKNOWLEDGMENT:
REFRAMING INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION
IN INTIMATE ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

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The field of interpersonal communication conducts many descriptive studies. However, guidance for healthy communication within intimate relationships is more difficult to come by—a condition stemming in part from an emotivist ethical paradigm. MacIntyre (1984) describes “emotivism” as the current state of society where individual preference serves as the ethical decision making compass. Emerging from Enlightenment scholarship (e.g., Hobbes, Rousseau, sociobiology), individual preferences have become main tenets in intimate interpersonal research. In the interpersonal theories of social exchange and goal-orientation, emotivism is encouraged in the emphasis placed on self-interest and technique. This exposes itself metaphorically through descriptions of communication as a tool, an economic bartering system, and a means of gaining emotional satisfaction. As a result, communication phenomena such as love and trust in intimate romantic relationships are difficult to express due to the difficulties self-interested language has in moving beyond the dichotomy of egoism and altruism.

This interpretive study hopes to reinvigorate the philosophical ground for other-focused action in today's historical moment in regard to the study of interpersonal intimate romantic relationships. To do this, communication must first be interpreted in an active paradigm. Communicative praxis (Schrag, 1986) provides the texture for this shift, describing the subject as decentered, and thus interpreted as multiple, temporal, and embodied. In the embodied connection of word to deed (the act of being to, for, and with the other), ethical conduct can be determined, thus providing ground to pose an interpretive framework for healthy romantic relationships—a narrative of charitable acknowledgment as defined in the work of Hyde, Schrag, and Augustine. The connection between charity and acknowledgment focuses on rhetorical competence, the emphasis on connecting word to deed, and the importance of will and habit. Acknowledgment serves as a hermeneutic to open up charity to a postmodern society on an axiological level, explored through transversal interpretations of faith, hope, and charity. Charitable acknowledgment, then, is the enactment (within a nexus of will, habit, and ethic) of unconditionality, sacrifice, and forgiveness. This approach to romantic relationships opens the door for new research and future discussion on the ethical implications of the narrative shift.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife and son (to-be). May we continue as wonderfully as we have begun—in charity and love.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

When a person comes to the end of a project, it is nice to have the opportunity to thank those who have made it possible—in a project with “acknowledgment” in the title it takes even greater meaning. First of all I would like to thank Dr. Calvin Troup for directing this dissertation. His advice helped provide quality and clarity to the project where it might not have otherwise been. Additionally, Dr. Janie Harden Fritz and Dr. Richard Thames provided erudite comments which aided its completion. To those at Concord University who have endured my struggles I am appreciative of their patience. My friends Bryan Kampbell, Erik Garrett, Kelley Crowley, Kristen Lucas, and Sharron Hope provided a boost when morale was low and intellectual vigor when there was a stumbling block. This project was aided by their conversations. My parents also provided that shot in the arm when things were going tough. Most of all however, I want to thank my wife Amy who perhaps more than anyone has empathized with the frustrations and triumphs of these last two and a half years. Her patience and love is what, for me, makes charitable acknowledgment worth discussing.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Problem

As a Master's student interested in communication in intimate relationships (i.e., family, friends, and romances), I was frustrated with intimate interpersonal communication research because I struggled to find its relevance to laypeople, namely the students I was teaching. Because of my inexperience, I thought I was missing something that may have made situational application of the material easier, but after another four years reflecting on the subject I am still struck by how much of the literature is rather unhelpful for guiding everyday life. Take these findings on divorce for example: "Relational dissolution can be seen as a chronic strain" (Amato, 2000). "Partners who have supportive social networks tend to experience less difficulty [in divorce] than do those without such networks" (Gerstel, 1988). "An individual who suffers socioeconomic decline after a divorce is more likely to have difficulty adjusting to the separation (McLanahan & Booth, 1989). These are just a few of the numerous studies cited by Vangelisti (2002) in her chapter on "Processes in Romantic Relationships" in the *Handbook of Interpersonal Communication* that left me dissatisfied with my subject of study. How was this supposed to help someone struggling with a divorce? If I had students in such a situation, it certainly would not be very helpful to tell them their relational dissolutions likely will be a chronic strain in their life—divorce being difficult is hardly earth-shattering news. Furthermore, there seems to be little good that could

come of noting to students going through a divorce that financial difficulties would compound their difficulties in separating from their spouse or that having friends would make the situation easier. Such descriptive studies and their general observations do not provide suggestions on *what to do* if you do not have friends to lean on or have less money after a divorce. Since descriptive studies are the norm rather than the exception in interpersonal communication, professors are confronted with a rather daunting question: in light of a largely descriptive research base, what can professors in interpersonal communication intellectually offer to students searching for answers to their relational struggles? One answer is provided in the thesis of this dissertation: **A narrative of charitable acknowledgment provides rich philosophical ground from which to interpret healthy relational behaviors.**

While descriptive studies may be frustrating for someone searching for answers to relational problems, they do have an important purpose. The value of descriptive studies in interpersonal communication is in their ability to confirm or disconfirm “common sense.” It is conceivable that divorce may not really be the strain it is made out to be in common conceptions of the phenomenon. Thus studies are required (e.g., Amato, 2000; Wallerstein, Lewis, & Blakeslee, 2000; Cherlin, Chase-Landsdale, & McRae, 1998) to describe that a strain *does* exist and is in fact a serious problem within relationships. Descriptive studies provide a way to establish with a level of confidence that a given notion, common-sensical or not, is indeed reflective of reality. But such studies are not sufficient in and of themselves for relational guidance. Knowing a support system decreases divorce anxiety does not help a student find a support system and that ultimately is what is most important to a person with that specific struggle. Knowing

what is the case is only helpful to the extent it is conjoined with discussions of how it can be changed (or brought about if the condition is a positive one).

It is for this reason that descriptive studies are usually conjoined with discussions of technique. The field usually addresses this through “communication skills.” Scholars typically take various contexts and explore effective means of navigating outcomes in that given context. Examples span from broad areas of technical skill such as comforting (e.g., Burleson, 1990; Burleson, Albrecht, Goldsmith, & Sarason, 1994) and conflict (e.g., Sternberg & Beier, 1977) to the skills for navigating specific genres such as bad news delivery in health care (e.g., Ray 1996) and parenting techniques (e.g., Stafford & Bayer, 1993). What makes a given skill the “right” or more commonly the “competent” solution depends upon the criteria that are used to assess the given action.

Spitzberg and Cupach (2002) note six areas of criteria used to evaluate the helpfulness of a given skill. *Fidelity* refers to the idea that clear, concise, and accurate communication leads to competent communication. This is probably the most common conception of “good” communication in the vernacular. However, as Spitzberg and Cupach (2002) note, “Savage, mean-spirited, and even evil communication can be frighteningly clear and well understood, even though intuitively most interactants would be hesitant to consider such behavior competent” (p. 578). The second criteria base deals with *satisfaction*. Success depends upon whether or not a person is happy with the outcome. Relational satisfaction is a very common standard in intimate communication studies. This too however is flawed in that “a person who enjoys being mean-spirited, evil, and savage in his or her communication can be defined as competent under a satisfaction criterion...Such a solipsist criterion therefore relegates interpersonal skills to

the whim and subjectivity of the individual” (p. 579). *Efficiency* indicates criteria that value minimal time, effort, complexity, and investment of resources in gaining the desired outcome. The shorter or more parsimonious route is seen as better. However this can also allow objectionable behavior in that telling someone “screw you” would be efficient at rejecting an idea but would hardly be considered competent. *Effectiveness* is defined by Spitzberg and Cupach (2002) as the “extent to which an interactant accomplishes preferred outcomes through communication...Effectiveness is inclusive of satisfaction and superordinate to efficiency” (p. 580). The compliance-gaining literature today reflects this standard. Again however, those goals can be manipulative and deceptive. “It seems there is less concern over a theory of competence based on effectiveness than there is a philosophy of communication implicit in such a theory. What does it say about the human condition if a theory of competence predicated exclusively on effectiveness envisions the darker side of communication as competent?” (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2001, p. 581). *Appropriateness*, the perceived legitimacy of an act in a given context, is considered by Spitzberg and Cupach (2001) to be the most common criterion. Strongly dependent on politeness and the status quo, this model depends upon a communicatively competent individual negotiating the social norms of a given community. Problems, however, exist in that, “The rule of the mob, the distortions of peer influence, and the sometimes coercive nature of group pressures all warn against the automatic evaluation of competence in strict terms of the other” (p. 582). Evaluating the appropriateness of action between two divergent communities may not be possible without other criteria. The final criteria are based on *ethical* considerations. These are means-oriented rather than ends-oriented, and they commonly reflect a core of principles

that include equality, otherness, and freedom. Spitzberg and Cupach (2002) note, however, that these are “unabashedly ideological” which may explain their relative lack of attention in the interpersonal literature. In explanation of this, the authors suggest that the “ideological objective of moral behavior may clash with the postmodern objective of celebrating self-determination” (p. 583).

The importance of taking time to demonstrate the various criteria with which the field denotes “competent” communication is to show the overwhelmingly ethical underpinnings of the field’s understanding of skills. Regardless of which criterion is used, there is always a consideration of whether or not it is the “right” way to treat another human being. Note the common usage throughout Spitzberg and Cupach’s article of the perception of an individual or even a community as “evil” or the intuitive disdain of using “manipulation.” In each of the ends-based criteria, one of the stated objections made by the authors always concerns the inherent ethical implications of the means used. Thus, undergirding competent communication skills is ethics. However, vast swaths of interpersonal communication do not discuss the distinction between good and bad, or to use a less polarizing terminology, healthy and unhealthy relationships, instead describing intimate relationships in interpersonal communication (Vangelisti, 2002) as primarily comprised of categorizations (e.g., stages of relationships), descriptive approaches to observed phenomenon (e.g., relational dialectics), and utilitarian explanations for achieving goals (e.g., exchange models, reciprocal liking, complementary needs). Why has the field shied away from discussing how a person *should* act in a given relationship?

I argue the primary reason the field has shied away from ethical criteria is what Spitzberg and Cupach describe as the “postmodern objective of celebrating self-

determination,” which I contend is not a postmodern objective at all but rather an objective of modernity. Individualism is the central focus of a modern ethic, and is not easily generalized as a result. It is only with the move in recent times into a “postmodern” mode that an argument against self-determinism takes shape. Simply put, modernity is an ideological time period where science, progress, and rationality composed a metanarrative that dictated the bounds of truth. Ethics, notoriously difficult to control and predict yet imminently relevant, took an individualist bent, emphasizing self and individualism as an epistemological way to ethical truth. In response, the time period of postmodernity questions all metanarrative as rhetorically constructed, thus calling into question absolute dictates about society or self. Views of self in the modern period are optimistic as rationality and science provide means for “advancement” that unseat the faith-based structures modern scientists would consider unfounded. Postmodernity calls into question this optimism and lays out the rhetorical nature of modern presuppositions. Chapter Two will lay out the modern/postmodern shift in more detail especially in regard to its impact on our view of relational ethics and the subject. What is important to recognize here is that the “celebration of self” is a modern invention. As this dissertation intends to show, there is a profound shift around the time of Hobbes that prioritizes rationality and its ability to remedy the ailments of human relationships, namely “vainglory” (vanity) and our unquenchable desire to have our own needs met. An a priori centralization of self-interest is at the heart of this theory. Since this point in history, the fields of philosophy and social sciences have largely maintained a distinction between altruism and self-interest whereby self-interest has been conceived as the all-encompassing drive in the human being and altruism is viewed as a dutifully

administered yet oft-neglected chore that may or may not exist depending upon the theorist. It is this emphasis on self-interest that has shifted discussion of ethics in relationships from an emphasis on communal/relational values to an emphasis on individual preference, an ethical framework described by MacIntyre (1984) as “emotivism.”

The issue of emotivism begins Chapter Three where the prioritization of self-interest is analyzed in current interpersonal research. MacIntyre (1984) describes “emotivism” as the current state of society where individual preference reigns supreme as the ethical decision making compass. The prioritization of self-interest has led to a body of interpersonal research that is dependent on the modern philosophy of individualism for its foundation (Arnett, Fritz, & Holba, 2007). Here the broad critique of MacIntyre (1984) and Arnett, Fritz, & Holba (2007) is translated into a narrative of individualism specific to interpersonal communication. In the interpersonal communication theories of social exchange and goal-orientation, emotivism is encouraged to varying degrees in the over-emphasis these theories place on individualism. Social exchange theory (Homans, 1958; Blau, 1964; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Foa and Foa, 1974; Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1978) depicts human relationships as a bartering system for attaining one’s needs and desires. Social exchange explicitly frames communication in terms of self-interest, which, it is argued here, fosters emotivism in people who would frame their relationships within this theoretical framework (i.e., narrative). Goal orientation (Dillard, 1990; Berger, 1997; Pervin, 1989) and its correlate cognitive representations (e.g., Schank & Abelson, 1977; Green, 1984) does not necessitate an explicitly self-interested approach. Nonetheless, the literature in interpersonal communication often assumes a

self-interested model where an individual starts with self-motivated intentions and uses the “tool” of language to meet his or her goals, implying a self-interested, preference-laden ethic. One final body of literature is the skills literature. For the purpose of this dissertation, those skills explored will be those pertaining to successful communication in romantic relationships (Vangelisti, 2002). Both social exchange and goal-oriented theories are foundational for the skills literature in intimate communication, which focuses primarily on relational satisfaction (i.e., personal preference) as the criterion for what is considered competent. The technique-driven approaches that emerge make it difficult to assess features of intimacy such as trust and love, which are functions of embodiment, not technique.

Thus, I argue that this focus on self-interest misses something fundamental about the human condition, denoted by John Herman Randall (1926), one of the foremost articulators of what comprises the modern mind:

Aristotle and Thomas...read into the cause and goal of the universe that which alone justifies it for man, its service of the good...To the modern scientist, who prefers to enumerate the successive steps in this process, the goal is uncertain and the force of love smacks of magic. But this faith that the world can not only be made to serve man's purposes, but actually does so, that things can not only be perfected, but that the whole course of nature draws toward perfection, was precisely what the Middle Ages meant by faith in God. They studied the universe to discern how God moves the world by the love of his perfection; the modern physicist tries to give man God's knowledge of how to do it, but he has overlooked the knowledge of what is best to do...With ethics alone, man may love the good, but never find it; with physics alone he may gain the whole world and lose his own soul...The physicist elaborating a new poison gas, or the economist tracing the inevitable working of the law of supply and demand, may well ponder these words. (pp. 100-101).

When it comes to looking at theory, especially theory dealing with relationships, there is a question of ethics that must be conjoined with questions of physics (i.e., process) to explore the fundamentals of human-ness. Intimacy has too frequently been only a

question of process in interpersonal communication. This dissertation attempts to depict ethics vis-à-vis the metaphor of charitable acknowledgment in order to frame love as more than “magic”—it is an ethic to guide relationships.

Thus, the need to examine the initial research question has been established: How *should* a person act in a relationship? For this dissertation an even more narrow focus has been adopted concerning **how we should conduct a healthy romance**. This focus, however, is not an endeavor to provide “self-help” by describing ways to achieve goals (e.g., “how to get that perfect date,” “finding an object to love”). This would merely reiterate interpersonal models leading to an emotivist ethic. Such an approach would enter into what Lasch (1991) calls a therapeutic sensibility (p. 7) which propagates a narcissistic viewpoint—exactly the viewpoint critiqued by MacIntyre (1984) under the heading of emotivism. This focus also differs from the typical interpersonal approach to romantic relationships exemplified by Vangelisti (2002) in the *Handbook of Interpersonal Communication* where studies use “satisfaction” as the appropriate way to measure the success (health) of relationships. What is satisfying to one may not be satisfying to another (a reiteration of MacIntyre’s (1984) emotivist critique) which explains the field’s focus on descriptive issues. When individual satisfaction is the benchmark for relational success, the philosophical ground upon which to discuss the health of such actions is greatly diminished if not nonexistent.

Instead of a descriptive study, the focus here is interpretive in nature and centers on the primary question of this dissertation: **How do we reinvigorate the philosophical ground for other-focused action in today’s historical moment in regard to the study of interpersonal intimate romantic relationships?** The focus on healthy romances for

this dissertation is a quest to reestablish ground from which healthy romances can be discussed in the scholarly literature and in the classroom. To do this I hope to refocus the way we understand love, a potential answer to the above question of healthy romantic relationships. In short, I hope to provide a philosophically-grounded “why” and “how” to a field dominated by discussions of “what” by demonstrating 1) an alternative way to understand love (vis-à-vis charitable acknowledgment) so that 2) we as professors can help others in their quest for healthy romantic relationships.

Understandably, professors may hesitate at this point wondering whether the task of depicting an ethic to others begins to breach sacred boundaries by either invading someone’s privacy or taking a tone of persuasion when one should be taking a more informative stance—in short, preaching when one should be teaching. By suggesting how someone should act in their personal life, is it taking our role in interpersonal communication too far? While it is important to provide students the freedom to choose between varying viewpoints, ultimately there is a rhetorical message with ethical undertones no matter how we present the information. As Richard Weaver (1970) notes, language is sermonic. Because rhetoric is an “art of emphasis embodying an order of desire” and has a function as “advisory,” then “the honest rhetorician has two things in mind: a vision of how matters should go ideally and ethically and a consideration of the special circumstances of his auditors” (p. 211). In other words, people must consider the consequences of their words as they pertain to their actions and the actions they intend to foster on the part of the audience. This is not an uncommon dynamic. Colleges, in fact, encourage ethics in the classrooms as is evident in their mission statements. Among my alma maters, Purdue University “expects our actions to be consistent with our words, and

our words to be consistent with our intentions” (Mukerjea, 2006); Duquesne University’s mission is to serve students through “excellence in liberal and professional education” while maintaining a “profound concern for moral and spiritual values” (Duquesne, 2006); Lipscomb University strives “to integrate Christian faith and practice with academic excellence” (Mission, 2006). In each school, beliefs about truth and goodness are paired with actions in the classroom. This implies some standard of goodness and justice that goes beyond the mere “dispensing” of knowledge and enters a realm where beliefs are paired with teaching. This does not mean sacrificing choice in the classroom. It does mean acknowledging there are viewpoints being presented. The importance then is to discuss ethical perspectives while simultaneously developing critical apparatus in students for evaluating varying viewpoints, not to stifle such discussions under the pretense of neutrality.

All relational theory has a moral consequence. The moral consequence of several dominant interpersonal communication theories on intimate relationships is emotivism, which I argue (along with MacIntyre [1984]) is an unhealthy moral compass for relationships. How then do we reinvigorate the philosophical ground for other-focused action in today’s historical moment in regard to the study of interpersonal intimate romantic relationships? My answer to this and the thesis of this dissertation is: **A narrative of charitable acknowledgment provides rich philosophical ground from which to interpret healthy relational behaviors.** To defend this I will argue the following: 1) We must reframe the current understanding of other-centeredness and self-interest as dichotomous motives in interpersonal relationships. This requires understanding relationships from a dynamic rather than a static perspective and

reinterpreting the altruism/egoism dichotomy to an ethic-centered motive. 2) A narrative of charitable acknowledgment and its focus on action deemphasizes motive to help navigate between self-love (*amore de soi*) and charity (*pitie*). The works of Augustine, Hyde, and Schrag, provide foundation for this perspective.

Important to establishing this dynamic is an understanding of narrative. What seems to speak to all narrative is an ontological emphasis that characterizes our human capacity for rationality, ethics, community, and relationship. It is a “symbolic interpretation of aspects of the world occurring in time and shaped by history, culture, and character (Fisher, 1989, pp. xiii) that provides “a way of relating truth about the human condition” (p. 63). There is a spectrum of definition within which “narrative” can be understood in this regard. At the broadest level of acceptance is the metanarrative defined as “an implicitly and uniformly agreed-upon public virtue structure that functions as a universal standard” (Arnett & Arneson, 1999). The current postmodern condition is one of an incredulity toward metanarrative discussed by Lyotard (1985). On the other end of the spectrum, Bochner’s work on (2002) narrative inquiry suggests a link to theories as stories with a focus on individual narratives and “how meaning is performed and negotiated” (p. 76). As a method, this narrative inquiry involves the individual “reader who wants to enter into dialogue with the writer and the story” (p. 77). The goals of Bochner (2002) resonate with this project, in particular his take on ethics: “Most narrative research functions ontologically, practically, and existentially. As Jackson (1995) suggests, the question becomes not so much how we know as how we should live” (p. 77). However, rather than viewing narrative primarily as an method within dyads, the understanding used here is broader, in line with the philosophical narrative

understandings of Fisher (1989) and Arnett and Arneson (1999). *Homo narrans* for Fisher (1989) is the condition of humanity. Probability and fidelity are two criteria for assessing these narratives, but the broad philosophical claim is that narrative is a “root metaphor” at the heart of human being. In this same philosophical ballpark, Arnett and Arneson (1999) are expressing a specific narrative of dialogic civility—a “public interpersonal model in an era of diversity” (p. 74). They call for “a public narrative of dialogic civility” that “does not emphasize the inner workings of the psyche or attitudes of the communicators” but rather searches for “basic guidelines that can assist our interaction in the public arena” (p. 287). A narrative of charitable acknowledgment is philosophically in line with this approach, looking instead for basic guidelines to assist interaction in the *private ethos or dwelling place*. In other words a narrative of charitable acknowledgment is an attempt to open moral discussion on healthy intimate relationships as enacted within specific relationships. It is broader than the personal narrative but understands the need for a humility in a postmodern age.

Chapter Four will demonstrate the importance of shifting from a static to a dynamic view of relationships in order to create ground for an ethical metaphor. Through this dynamic view, the “therapeutic model” critiqued by Arnett and Arneson (1999) is avoided, replaced by a focus the act of being to, for, and with the other. Augustine’s view of humanity as fractured and Schrag’s (1986) self after postmodernity found this approach. This “decentered” self viewed as multiple, temporal, and embodied, provides the ground for suggesting narrative structure and ethical interpretation. When communication is active in contrast to the understanding of communication as a tool, a technique is embodied in a person and embedded in a culture. Words are interpreted in a

context and are stable only because of this context. In the act of being to, for, and with the other, ethical conduct is determined. Someone is acknowledged in a good way. How this goodness is interpreted is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Five describes a narrative of charitable acknowledgment as a lens through which we can understand intimate human relationships. Intimate relationships when understood in terms of charity and acknowledgment, necessitate faith, hope and love in order to maintain relational healthiness. By using Hyde's (2003; 2004; 2006) work on acknowledgment, Augustine's view of charity, and combining this with a view of communicative praxis as described by Schrag (1986), we can shape an understanding of love that provides a balanced expression of both other-focused and self-focused motivation as it takes place within an ethic. In short, it provides an effective navigation of self and other. When we think of a healthy romantic relationship, we commonly use the term "love," which is an indication of some level of commitment, intimacy, and passion towards each other (Sternberg, 1986). In a shift from the interpersonal communication field's focus on satisfaction, a major assumption made here is that love (when viewed as an ethic, i.e. charity) is a primary indicator of a healthy romance. This is based on a transversal rather than universal or horizontal approach to knowledge. When understood as an ethic, love's definitional boundaries include unconditionality, forgiveness, sacrifice for one's partner, and rhetorical competence, which leads to passion (i.e., in the emotional sense). This "love-as-ethic" (a.k.a. charity) often serves as a short-hand for positive characteristics looked for in a romantic relationship. A more common contrasting view for love takes a narrower approach, viewing love primarily as a passionate emotion (love-as-emotion). Rather than get caught up in a definitional or methodological debate

over the bounds of “love” itself, I will instead demonstrate two philosophical frameworks within which love can be understood—a framework of static personality where there is a possibility for a dichotomous a priori characterization of human motivation between egoism and altruism, and a framework of active personality where motivations are so mobile and fractured it is impossible to identify any a priori motive at any given time outside of a given narrative structure.

The final chapter deals with implications and conclusions drawn from this new interpretive approach. Pedagogy and research ideas are suggested. Thus we begin the critique of the fragmentation of interpersonal communication and end with a suggestion for an ethical perspective on the field using the metaphor of charitable acknowledgment. It is hoped that this reinterpretation of intimate interpersonal communication will provide new ground to explore ethics in today’s communication field.

Chapter 2

A History of Understanding the Fractured Individual

On the opening page of their interpersonal communication textbook, Galvin and Cooper (2006) profess what many have witnessed firsthand: “Relationships are messy, unpredictable, joyful, frustrating, comforting, painful, and necessary!” (p. 1). Indeed, this menagerie of messiness that is the human relationship makes life both invigorating and vexing. Those who study the individual as “impartial observers” are often frustrated along with those in the relationship as they try to make sense of something frequently non-sensical. Researchers cannot, after all, experience with their subjects’ the emotions, motivations, ideologies, and many other factors that go into their given actions in a relationship. Given that oftentimes individuals are astounded by their *own* behavior, is it any wonder observers, too, have difficulties in interpreting these same behaviors? Nonetheless we still are striving in our quest to formulate new understandings to unlock the mysteries of human relationships.

Our understanding of human relationships has been framed in different ways depending upon the assumptions laid forth in a given historical moment. As we continue the journey towards better relational understanding, it is important to gain perspective from historical experience rather than ignoring it as somehow less “enlightened.” Just as researchers today appreciate the difficulties in approaching the concept of the self and

other, so have thinkers throughout history; it has simply occurred with a different set of presuppositions catering to a given historical moment. Essentially, what follows is a historical overview of some of the overarching conceptions that have framed understandings of self and other.

The authors were chosen based on their ability to represent the intellectual spirit of their given time period in regard to their perspective on relationships navigating self-interest and other-regard. I argue there are at least three pathways, broadly placed in premodern, modern, and postmodern categories, that frame the navigation of self and other. In short, this categorization depicts a move from tradition to individualism and then back to tradition. In the premodern period, Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine represent respectively a transcendental, virtue-based, and holistic (albeit distinctively Christian) idea of the individual. Each of these ideas shows deference to non-subjective sources in establishing ideas of self. In the modern period, Hobbes, Rousseau, and sociobiologists Dawkins and Wilson, represent the subjective approaches of a time period devoted to individual rights and scientific method. The postmodern authors Derrida and Foucault have deconstructed the idea of the non-biased subjectivity through emphasis respectively on the fragility of words and the pervasiveness of power. This has undermined much of the modern idea of how to navigate understandings of self and other, yet leaves the question of reconstruction looming.

By analyzing these differing perspectives, one can appreciate the prejudices we may bring to our analysis of relationships as a result of our embeddedness in a given historical moment. To appreciate the diversity with which one can understand human interaction, it is necessary to draw forth those alternative interpretations through the

works of major thinkers of their time. Thus, a conversation is started concerning interpersonal relationships that pits Derrida and Foucault against Hobbes and sociobiologists in order to depict Augustinian ideas on relationships. In other words, it is only after a deconstruction of Enlightenment presuppositions that one is able to appreciate some of the premodern understandings of self and other which have for so long been regarded in modernist terms. Indeed, holistic ethical approaches to intimate relationships are constructed only after a deconstruction of the dichotomous understanding of self that comes with an emphasis on egoism versus altruism. While recognizing there might be alternative ways to interpret similar views, this history attempts to trace a rough line from ancient Greece to today's emphasis on self-interest in relationships.

Premodern Approaches to the Fractured Individual

The term "premodernity" here refers to a time period before the emergence of humanism around the era of the Renaissance. These approaches reflect subjectivity tied to historical, philosophically-grounded narratives. In the pre-Enlightenment West, understandings of the navigation of self and other were often tied to the works of Augustine and Aquinas. The works of these two "Doctors of the Church" (Randall, 1926) are instrumental in understanding how ethics framed the pre-modern understanding of self-interest. However, an explication of their work is by nature an explication of Greek philosophy as well. Thus, to give foundation to the "founding fathers," it is necessary to address Plato's conception of the self through the lens of *Eros* and also address Aristotle's virtue-centered notion of self as understood through the golden mean.

Plato and Eros

To understand Plato's view of relationships, it is important to understand his view of *Eros* or Love of Beauty. *Eros* establishes an aesthetic ethic for relationships founded by the Forms. While self-interest is an inherent part of this aesthetic view of relationships, there is an expectation that the wise man will be led by transcendent moderating factors to avoid a hedonist philosophy.

What holds greatest importance for Plato lies in the transcendent realm rather than the physical. The search for answers is a vertical endeavor that strives towards "Truth" rather than a "truth." With this philosophical orientation, a delineation between appropriate and inappropriate desires, the foundation of love, is drawn according to its focus on "higher" i.e. transcendent things. Love, as with all transcendent ideas, is a quest for excellence, not mere pleasure. Knowledge is the key to achieving this excellence, particularly as it pertains to Beauty. As Diotima instructs Socrates (Plato, 1984), "Love is a love for the beautiful" (p. 99) and in particular "it is a desire for good things and happiness." The goal is "to approach the things of love" (p. 101) by "beginning from these beautiful things [lovers], to mount for that beauty's sake ever upwards, as by a flight of steps, from one to two," then to "all beautiful bodies," then "beautiful pursuits and practices," then "beautiful learnings" and finally "the learning solely of that beauty itself" (1984, p. 105). Thus, love is an aesthetic ideal one is trained to recognize through romantic relationships. To learn what Beauty is is to engage in a process of personal enlightenment whereby one builds from bodies, to lovers, to actions, to knowledge, to the Form of Beauty.

Plato's concern when it comes to romantic relationships is with "a breeding in the beautiful, both of body and soul." (p.101). Beauty is not a base passion to be lusted after but must be held in awe. To do this, one should focus on the proper way to conduct relationships by recognizing the transcendent Beauty of the soul:

Now the man who is not fresh from his initiation or who has been corrupted does not quickly make the transition from beauty on earth to absolute beauty; so when he sees its namesake here he feels no reverence for it, but surrenders himself to sensuality and is eager like a four-footed beast to mate and to beget children, or in his addiction to wantonness feels no fear or shame in pursuing a pleasure which is unnatural. But the newly initiated, who has had a full sight of the celestial vision, when he beholds a god-like face...gazes upon it and worships it as if it is were a god... (*Phaedrus*, p. 57)

Plato's understanding of relationships acknowledges the need to look beyond personal desires and the object of love in order to recognize True Beauty as a transcendent feature of humanity. Relationships are thus less about the embodied person and more about the characteristics of his/her transcendent soul. Vlastos (1973) summarizes this idea by noting Plato's theory of love is not "about personal love for persons" but rather "love for place-holders of the predicates 'useful' and 'beautiful'—of the former when it is only *philia* and the latter, when it is *eros*" (pp. 107-108). Individuals search for Beauty in the individual rather than loving the individual himself/herself. The Love of Beauty, an aesthetic ethic founded on the Forms, thus encourages a journey of self-discovery, where the individual is trained to "gaze" and "worship" appropriately that object of Beauty before him.

Philosophers are the ones to lead this journey. In *Symposium*, philosophers are described as "those between Wise and ignorant" (p. 99), falling somewhere between Gods and regular men because they seek wisdom. A God is Wise and as such does not need to pursue further wisdom. An ignorant individual is "neither beautiful and good

[i.e., a cultured gentleman] nor intelligent” (p. 99) and thus “does not think he is lacking in what he does not think he needs.” Philosophers however seek wisdom and thus hold spiritual capacities, namely of insight. In this case, the insight on love is that love is “having the good for oneself always” (p. 101). This provides happiness which is the universal desire of mankind. Thus, philosophers through proper knowledge and wisdom are able to recognize *Eros* and find true happiness as they gaze at the Beauty of the soul in their lover.

But is this too solipsistic to create healthy relationships? Does looking inward and espousing the information discovered there delve into an insular bubble of subjectivism? Such questions have led to many modern expositions on and critiques of *Eros* as a relational ethic (see Grube, 1935; Nygren, 1953; Vlastos, 1973). However, Plato recognizes this danger and thus attempts to define the soul in such a way to avoid this solipsism. As Plato (1984) states in *Phaedrus*:

We must realize that in each one of us there are two ruling and impelling principles whose guidance we follow, a desire for pleasure, which is innate, and an acquired conviction which causes us to aim at excellence...The conviction which impels us towards excellence is rational and the power by which it masters us we call self-control; the desire which drags us towards pleasure is irrational, and when it gets the upper hand in us its dominion is called excess. (§ 237-238, p. 37).

Based on this dichotomy, Plato develops his famous analogy of the charioteer (*Phaedrus*). It is here we see Plato’s definition of the soul as a charioteer leading two horses, the white horse being noble and obedient and the black horse defiant and impulsive. The charioteer is rationality. Reason tries to reign in the black horse of self-interests, which is primarily struggling to pursue pleasures. Meanwhile the white horse represents the noble ethical system of the Forms which ultimately should be leading, not

personal pleasure. Rationality should be whipping self-interest into shape, forcing this willful horse to allow the other noble steed to lead. The ethics of wisdom will lead to civic and personal happiness in the soul.

This demonstrates an important difference between Plato's management of inherent self-interest and the way it is perceived in modernity—a difference important for understanding self-interest in interpersonal communication. An Enlightenment perspective notes self-interest as inherent to humanity and unabashedly adopts it as a central tenet of relational ethics (a point defended later in the work of Hobbes, Rousseau, sociobiologists, and social exchange theorists). Plato's perspective also notes humanity's (a.k.a., the soul's) inherent nature as self-interested; however, he attempts to counter such self-interest by having it submit to a transcendent ethical system. Whereas in modernity, self-interest is foundational to relational ethics, thus giving priority to Spitzberg and Cupach's (2002) criteria of satisfaction, Plato uses a criteria of ethics established in the Forms to manage self interest. Because the Forms are inherent within human souls along with self-interest, the struggle is to be led by one's relational ethics, in this case a proper understanding of Beauty, and not self-interests, which would be defined as mere pleasure. What will become apparent throughout the premodern period is that while self-interest is recognized as a dynamic in humans, it is superceded by an ethical system that guides relationships. One can take issue with Plato's idea of Beauty as being the "healthiest" relational ethic, but this is inseparable from the issue of self-interest.

Aristotle and Reason

Aristotle takes a different approach than Plato, noting that the golden mean dictates relational ethics as determined by the polis. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle

navigates relationships and “goodness in truth” by touting the virtue of the intermediate or the “golden mean.” When one strays too far from this mean the given action becomes a vice. The virtue of bravery, for example, could be a vice of excess when reckless (imprudent) or a vice of deficiency in the form of cowardice when underdeveloped. It is in regard to bravery and similar virtues regarding one’s place in the polis that one begins to understand the Aristotelian balance concerning the role of the individual. Virtue for any given individual is defined through that individual’s role as a citizen (MacIntyre, 1988). This citizen status frames the notion of self. As Aristotle (1999) states:

It is true of the virtuous man that he does many actions for the sake of his friends—and country—and if necessary dies for them. He will sacrifice money, honor, and all the goods men strive for, gaining for himself an honorable good (1169a18-22).

Honor and glory in sacrifice for country and kin drives an Aristotelian understanding of one’s relational obligations.

In addition to this public obligation, the author of the golden mean also sees the benefits of *philautoi* (self-love), which is presented as a condition of friendship (*philos*) in a more private realm. Love of self is balanced with a love of friends whom a person can benefit:

It is reasonable for the virtuous man to love himself, because in doing good he will help both himself and others. But the vicious person must not love himself, since he will harm both himself and his neighbors by following his base feelings. (1169a11-13).

Aristotle seems to indicate that a good deed by a good person helps both the self and the other. However, if a person is vicious, their deed done in self-love will be harmful. Thus, there is not an other-centered versus self-centered motive that dictates the goodness of an action but rather an overarching ethic that dictates such standards. In this case, it is the

golden mean as determined by the narrative of the Athenian polis that dictates the goodness of an action. The ethic determines whether an act is good, not its status as other-centered or self-centered.

Self-love can be regarded as blameworthy or virtuous depending on the actions and motives of the given individual in regard to their reasonableness—an epistemological standard that looks to nature and to the presuppositions of the polis for its ontological ground. In regard to activity, a good person acts in accord with reason. This reasonableness leads to a pure motive towards the absolute good. Thus, because of this reasonableness, one can be trusted to exercise self-love in a responsible, prudent matter, i.e., showing the virtue of pride rather than vanity or humility. On the other hand, a blameworthy person lives according to passion and has a motive that seeks what seems useful but is in reality harmful. That person cannot be trusted with self-love, for he has not “assigned himself to the noblest and best goods” (1168b29-30) in order to make rational, virtuous decisions. Recognize here the ethical motive dependent upon the polis. Love of self and love of other are derivatives of a focus on a higher calling—in this case reason and the polis. Thus Aristotle uses criteria of appropriateness and ethics combined to determine healthy relationships. We will find this sentiment repeated in Augustine especially concerning “love thy neighbor as thyself”—the preeminent dictum for navigating between self and other in the premodern period.

Augustine and Caritas

In comparison to Aristotle’s balance of self-interest and self-sacrifice expressed in obligation to the polis, Augustine deemphasizes self-interests in obligation to God. Pride is anything but a virtue in this approach to human relationships. Relational ethics for

Augustine are dictated by notions of charity which are determined by Christian Scripture. What I should give to others and what I should give to self are all derivatives of what should be given to God.

“Love” in an Augustinian framework is an ordered desire that indicates where one’s priorities lie. In *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine distinguishes between things to be enjoyed and things to be used. Enjoyment of something that should properly be used is to be “shackled by an inferior love” (*OCD*, 1.3.3). Distinction between the two is dictated by a focus on God. Augustine describes two loves in *City of God*: the love of self (*concupiscence*) and the love of God (*caritas*). Love of self is equated with the earthly city, a negative correlation: “When a man lives ‘according to man’ and not ‘according to God’ he is like the Devil” (*COG*, 14.4). For citizens striving towards the City of God, the self is deemphasized. This notion is expressed in *caritas* which is most widely defined as a “disinterested love” of both God and neighbor (Troup, 2001). “Disinterest” indicates the notion that all people are treated with compassion, justice, and love regardless of emotional attachment or one’s own personal stake in the matter. The same ethical obligations towards sacrificial behavior should be expressed for enemies and friends alike. Such indiscriminate love is an imitation of God’s love for humanity.

While this seems straightforward enough, it is too glib to say that an Augustinian understanding of love is one of pure self-negation, a common perception in 18th century interpretations (as we will see in the next section). Love of self must also be taken into consideration:

For when love of God is placed first and the character of that love is seen to be described so that all other loves must flow into it, it may seem that nothing has been said about the love of yourself. But when it is said, ‘Thou shalt love thy

neighbor as thyself' at the same time, it is clear that love for yourself is not omitted. (*OCD*, 1.26.27).

However, before moving too much further along this line of discussion, we must denote a greater degree of subtlety in Augustine's work—this requirement for nuance will be a common theme throughout this dissertation. There is a problem in drawing too sharp a delineation between love of others, love of self, and love of God. True, for Augustine, to act properly is to properly order the loves. But this is not a delineation of mere motives; it is an issue of the human condition. As a rhetorician, he is keenly aware of the practical difficulties of love; *Confessions* is a testimony to his own error-prone nature. Interpretations in a given rhetorical situation, thus, are attempted by people who have a nature that is limited. *On Christian Doctrine* testifies to this as multiple accurate interpretations can be reached due to the limitations of our words and the limitations of our understanding (*OCD* 3.27). The solution to this is not an escape from the body however, as in neo-Platonic thought; it is a focus on faith, hope, and love as shown in the Incarnation. Put another way, it is a turning towards, a focus upon, and an orienting in the direction of the Other. This begins a discussion of what exactly an Augustinian understanding of the self was. I argue for Augustine, the self is temporal, multiple, and embodied—a conception similar to that of Schrag (1986). Because Augustine is a central figure grounding this study, the issues of temporality, multiplicity, and embodiment will be explored in more detail. As we will see, this complicated understanding of a fractious self is very different from the confidence modernity places in the knowledge we can attain. As a result it will provide a contrast to self-interest as a driving force for ethics by reinterpreting the self as fractured and bound to a time and place. Similarly, Augustine contrasts the idea of a Platonic soul, instead understanding humans as embodied.

The temporal self. For Augustine, the idea of the self is tied to the present. The past and future have being (*Conf.* 11.17.22) but are existent only inasmuch as they exist in the present self. “My boyhood indeed, which no longer is, belongs to past time, which no longer is. However, when I recall it and talk about it, I perceive its image at the present time, because it still is in my memory” (*Conf.* 11.18.23). He speaks similarly of the future as an expectation of what is to come. All three however, are only understood in the present self through rhetorical interpretation. Thus the temporal spectrum which cannot be empirically “seen,” nevertheless can be properly expressed in the “present of things past” by memory, in the “present of things present” by intuition, and in the “present of things future” by expectation (*Conf.* 11.20.26). These three are “in the soul but elsewhere I do not see them” (*Conf.* 11.20.26).

I argue that throughout the *Confessions*, the human “soul” can be understood as a space of human subjectivity. This will be important in a postmodern time where subjectivity is deconstructed. While definitely influenced by Platonism, especially during his early years, the Augustinian soul cannot be reduced solely to Platonic thought. In a typical neo-Platonist system, the soul is a separate dimension of the human being. Through intellectual and mystical achievement the soul emanates to become greater than others around it. At the final emanation the body is left behind and the soul is merged with God, the One. For Augustine, this ideology is “puffed up with most unnatural pride” (*Conf.* 7.9.13) because it depends on one’s own knowledge, which is finite and separated from God. Additionally, emanating up and leaving behind one’s neighbor denies the second part of the greatest commandment to “Love your neighbor as yourself” in that it is essentially an individualist endeavor. Thus, neo-Platonism is a stumbling block to

Augustine, and becomes a target for critique rather than the foundation of his project (Troup, 1999).

The soul then, I argue, if not primarily neo-Platonic, is redefined for Augustine as a *space*, a location of “innermost being” (*Conf.* 7.10.16), where, to use today’s term, subjectivity lies. Metaphorically, Augustine relates:

I entered there [my innermost being], and by my soul’s eye, such as it was, I saw above that same eye of my soul, above my mind, an unchangeable light...From afar you cried to me, “I am who am.” I heard as one hears in his heart; there was no further place for doubt, for it would be easier for me to doubt that I live than that there is no truth, which is “clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.” (*Conf.* 7.10.16)

Using this metaphor, of “entering one’s innermost being” one can find several interesting dimensions to Augustine’s thought on the soul. First, the soul is that dimension whereby we can “see” and “such as it is” can see above us. When Augustine says “such as it is,” he is admitting to the shortcomings of the human soul, namely that it must interpret what is seen through imperfect lenses. Interpretation is a key dimension for fallible humans. This creates “levels of truth” (*Conf.* 12.30.41), multiple interpretive possibilities (*OCD* 3.27), and dependence upon metaphor and figurative language (*OCD* 5.3). In fact, someone who makes incorrect literal interpretations can be “the death of the soul...that condition in which the thing which distinguishes us from beasts, which is the understanding, is subjected to the flesh in the pursuit of the letter” (*OCD* 5.3). As fallible creatures who must interpret through language, the soul, then, is not a place to find *absolute* truth but rather a place from which one can *interpret* truth. One thus “sees” from this space, “such as it is” (*Conf.* 7.10.16).

Secondly, this location of the soul is a facsimile of God as the “same eye of my soul above my mind” (*Conf.* 7.10.16). The soul then is that dimension of a person that is

“made in the image of God” as referenced in Genesis 1:27. Our nature as created beings is a pivotal point made by Augustine. We are children of a God who was for Augustine “my sweetness, my honor, my trust, my God, let there be thanks to you for your gifts...for you have also given it to me that I exist” (*Conf.* 1.20.31). This belief in God as the good and perfect creator is a narrated dimension of the soul—narrated in the sense that the story of our creation becomes the belief upon which one comes to understand. Thus, we are provided an example of a narrative of faith. Belief is a necessary dimension of the soul because it is the fundamental tenet for understanding. In the space of our soul we choose beliefs upon which to build arguments and worldviews even as we are retroactively chosen, through that belief, by a personal God who cares. As Augustine puts it, this interpretive ability towards narrative is the “eye of my soul” that believes or “sees” the “eye of my soul above my mind.” We interpret and then see for the first time the reality of God. This is what Augustine realized only after the “unchangeable light” is seen. The restless nature of the soul in order to find rest must first believe in the Lord, for “how shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed” (*Conf.* 1.1.1). The narrative of faith is housed in the soul thereby allowing understanding and interpretation to take place. This is why Augustine can claim “It is easier for me to doubt that I live than that there is no truth, which is ‘clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made’ ” (*Conf.* 7.10.16). Faith leads to sight. Sight leads to truth about ethics. Truth about ethics leads to hope.

This leads to the third dimension of the soul: its guidance by an “unchangeable light” towards a narrative of hope. For Augustine, this is the place where freedom exists—where the soul is not subject to the will of the self but to the will of God, “not to

will what I willed and to will what you willed” (*Conf.* 9.1.1). There is a place of rest that lies outside this world “above the mind,” or outside the comprehension of our being. This becomes the “hope” component of “faith, hope, and love” from 1 Corinthians 13 that finds Augustine’s depiction of knowledge (*OCD* 1. 37.41). We hope to come to a place of rest, knowing by faith that this will happen, and living by love in order to enact God’s will. The narrative of hope coincides with the narrative of faith. The narrative of hope is the indicator of *telos* in the space of subjectivity or the soul. The realization that there is knowledge that guides our own knowledge and provides the “easy yoke of your Christ” (*Conf.* 8.4.9) allows a purpose and a direction for which to strive yet paradoxically never achieve in this life. Thus, the soul is the space from which we interpret and from where we hold our narratives of faith and hope that guide us in our actions.

It seems important at this point to acknowledge the non-Christian, who may feel a bit overwhelmed and even off-put by faith-driven approaches. While this approach may be a bit heavy-laden in theological terminology, there is still ground for someone who does not embrace the Christian narrative to find relevance in Augustine’s approach. Regardless of religious perspective, a person believes in something as it takes place in a narrative rooted in a given time and place (MacIntyre, 1988). This narrative is assessed in as it is lived. As Fisher (1989) demonstrates, the extent to which a community lives by a narrative (fidelity) and thus finds it convincing (probability) is the extent to which one is able to make judgments about the narrative’s worth. Based on these conditions, a person can consider Augustine as a model for narration that provides a model for ethical life. As Schultze (2002) notes, “No matter how much technology and education we acquire, we are apt sometimes to wonder if there is more to life than information and technique” (p.

71). This impulse leads us seek ethical grounding, established and explored in narratives (Bochner, 2002; Arnett & Arneson, 1999; Fisher 1989). Such grounding take place. As Wolterstoff (2002), notes it is not possible or desirable to “render inoperative during our practice of learning all our particularities of religion, gender, class, and so forth, so as to function just as generic human beings” (p. 13). What Augustine teaches is one way to operate from an ethical narrative. Augustine opens a ground for moral inquiry into the ethics of intimate relationships through his lived narrative of faith from which he makes interpretations and thus sees truth. That truth gives hope and meaning to life (Augustine, *Encl. 2.8*). Later we analyze his view of charity which is the ethical expression of his presuppositions on humanity examined here. The ethical systems formed as a result of this hope are tested out in life which should provides actions from which one can determine the “goodness” of the interpretation. Thus, Augustine demonstrates the capacity for narrative to serve in interpretive schema. Faith and hope, in the sense of a believed system in the goodness of others, is both a part of his narrative and a part of an ethical system than may help others reflect on their own narratives. This is a common ground for believer and non-believer alike.

Thus, to summarize the subject of temporality, the space from which we understand time is in the soul and not outside of it. The objective and subjective natures of time are reflected in a self—a presence—that interprets time in the soul in such a way to bring forward memories and make possible futuristic desires—absence. The soul is the place of the “present” where time is conceived. Augustine’s belief in an eternal God, whose timelessness—greater than a finite soul can comprehend—provides eternal life in the hereafter, does not preclude the understanding that we live in fallen temporal world

where time is interpreted and realized “in the soul but elsewhere I do not see it” (*Conf.* 11.20.26).

The multiple self. Despite maintaining the hope of unity in eternity, Augustine’s version of the temporal soul remains fractured and in conflict. This is a hallmark of a postmodern conception of self (e.g., Foucault, 1977; MacIntyre, 1988). However, Augustine will find this multiplicity in a completely different way. For Augustine, human beings are fallen as a result of sin and thus they have been separated from their source of stability. This creates a conflict of wills: “Thus did my two wills, the one old, the other new, the first carnal, and the second spiritual, contend with one another, and by their conflict they laid waste to my soul” (*Conf.* 8.4.10). Throughout his life, Augustine struggled within himself to understand what would give him an understanding of goodness. It was only upon his conversion that he realized the source of goodness towards which his multiple and fragmented self could find direction. As he states:

I am distracted amid times, whose order I do not know, and my thoughts, the inmost bowels of my soul, are torn asunder by tumult and change, until being purged and melted clear by the fire of your love, I may flow altogether into you. (*Conf.* 11.29.39).

God is described as the source of all goodness and “evil has no nature of its own. Rather it is the absence of good which has received the name ‘evil’” (*COG* 11.9). Thus he strives toward goodness as defined by God. Yet despite this unchanging source, there is no equanimity between God and man.

Therefore, Lord, you who are not one thing at one time and a different thing in another, but the Selfsame, and the Selfsame, and the Selfsame... You created something, and that something out of nothing... But in no way was it just that anything which was not of you should be equal to you. (*Conf.* 12.7.7).

The soul is fractured and will not in this lifetime gain unity because we are separated from the source of goodness.

It must be understood then that despite having a *telos* that strives towards goodness, there is a multiplicity of wills that undermines the process, thus requiring that we look at the soul within “the actual context of its practical concerns and discursive performances” (Schrag, 1986, p. 148). Paul’s discussion in Romans 7:14 of “doing what I do not want to do” informs Augustine at this point. The soul’s desire to do good is thwarted by habits that lead to the contrary:

When eternity above delights us and the pleasure found in a temporal good holds us fast from below, it is the same soul that wills this course or that, but not with its whole will. Therefore, it is rent asunder by grievous hurt as long as it prefers the first because of its truth but does not put away the other because of habit. (*Conf.* 8.10.24)

Justice becomes a difficult endeavor for human beings “whose hairs are easier to count than his affections and the movements of his heart” (*Conf.* 4.14.22). This requires that justice be meted out carefully and with interpretive charity, a suggestion that guides all of Augustine’s ideas. The self has desires of both *caritas*, the movement of the soul toward the enjoyment of God for his own sake and *cupiditas*, the movement of the soul toward the enjoyment of any corporal thing for the sake of something other than God (*OCD* 3.10.16). Based on this guide, there is a consideration of time and place in relation with others rather than “absolute justice” known by a complete self. “Whatever therefore, is harmonious with the customs of those among whom we live, either because of necessity or because of duty, is to be referred by good and great men to utility or to beneficence” (*OCD* 3.14.22) both of which are functions of charity. Charity is the guide for a self that is decentered, multiple, and bound by interpretation in a time and place.

The embodied self. Augustine conceives of the soul (i.e., the self) as analogous to the incarnation of Christ:

Our thought is not transformed into sounds; it remains entire in itself and assumes the form of words by means of which it may reach the ears without suffering any deterioration in itself. In the same way the Word of God was made flesh without change that He might dwell among us. (*OCD* 1.13).

To understand this passage I will look first at Augustine's consideration of language as a linguistic whole and secondly how this is understood through the incarnation.

To separate the body's production of sound from the thought that conceived it fails to realize that language is greater than the sum of its parts. Rather than focusing on the particulars, the unit must be viewed as a whole in order to avoid "deterioration." This rejection of a linguistic mind/body split—terminology admittedly anachronistic to Augustine's age—is a holistic approach that claims human language cannot be understood except as a whole. In short, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. By separating language into its particulars the symbol loses its meaning—a point poststructuralists make in their separation of the signified from the signifier. Regaining this meaning requires a consideration of time and space [i.e., a Bakhtinian (1981) chronotope]. Augustine discusses this notion of present-ness in an example of reciting a psalm:

The life of this action of mine is distended into memory by reason of the part I have spoken and into forethought by reason of the part I am about to speak. But attention is actually present and that which was to be is borne along by it so as to become past. (*Conf.* 11.28.38).

In a given linguistic moment the past, present, and future intertwine in one person so that the whole and the parts are indistinguishable. As Augustine states:

What takes place in the whole psalm takes place also in each of its parts and in each of its syllables. The same thing holds for a longer action, of which perhaps the psalm is a small part. The same thing holds for an entire man's life, the parts of which are all the man's actions. The same thing holds throughout the whole age of the sons of men, the parts of which are the lives of all men. (*Conf.* 11.28.38).

The life of a man is comprised of all the parts that came before and afterward. It is temporally tied and when a given word, text, and/or action is extruded from its context a dimension of understanding is lost.

Augustine further articulates a holistic view of language by comparison to the incarnation. Theologically, this holistic view is a response to the Platonist Gnostics who viewed Christ, a part of the triune God, as incompletely human because the impurity of the flesh would prohibit Christ from fully taking on the human form. Flesh was something that was thrown off after death, liberating the soul so it could be reunited with God. Augustine disagreed with this Platonist view. He notes in *City of God*:

Our corruptible body may be a burden on our soul; on the other hand, the cause of this encumbrance is not in the nature and substance of the body, and, therefore, aware as we are of its corruption, we do not desire to be divested of the body but rather to be clothed with its immortality...it is an error to suppose that all evils of the soul proceed from the body (14.3).

There is no rejection of the physical but rather an articulation of the intertwining of the body and soul with corruption and later immortality.

Additionally for Augustine, the incarnation is one of the fundamental features of the Christian faith. He argues that the mystery of the nature of man as a “body united with a soul” (*COG* 10.29) only makes sense in the comparison to the “Word made flesh” in John 1. For Augustine, words are embodied in us just as Christ was embodied as the Word. However, one should not mistake the temporal word for the Eternal Word. Troup notes an important distinction between “an unstable, disintegrating temporality versus a stable eternity in which we find integrity... Our stability comes via the Incarnation, through which the Word takes on flesh and thereby participates fully in temporality” (Troup, 1999, p. 102). To use terms of poststructuralism, the signifier/signified split

cannot fully deconstruct language because the trace that is left behind is revealed in the embodied event. We enact language in a given chronotope that is fleeting and deconstructable but the stability for Augustine is in incarnation of the word—the trace of authorship. As Troup states, “The incarnate Word Himself, by securing the present of the semiotic moment, stabilizes what Barthes refers to as the ‘infinite deferral of the signified’” (154-5). Thus, the Augustinian “soul” is that place where the word is given meaning in action, but that action is imperfect and forever in motion.

Summary of Augustinian self. The reason for spending so much time here is to emphasize the Augustinian notion that motives for action are embodied in a temporal and fractured human. There is no systematic approach to human relationships that can be found in such a condition. For Augustine, to even attempt such a task would be futile. To reduce our condition to that of avoiding self-interested endeavors and striving for other-centered behaviors would be too simplistic given this complicated nature. What is suggested instead is an ethical framework for understanding how one should strive to encounter the Other. One could call it a direction rather than a directive. We travel on an ethical journey in a direction towards God or away, towards love or away from it. Our dictates may need to be reinterpreted and restudied as we approach life. The question is: what should we study? Augustine emphasizes faith, hope, and love. Faith is an ontological belief in the world as created, the Incarnation, and the usability of language for understanding. Hope is an attitude where a person is expectant in the potential for human improvement on societal, interpersonal, and intrapersonal levels. Love is the “root” of action, exhibiting what is good and bringing about change for the better. As Augustine (Tr. Jo.) states:

Once for all, a short precept is given you: Love, and do what you will. If you keep silence, keep silence in love; if you speak, speak in love; if you correct, correct in love; if you forbear, forbear in love. Let love's root be within you, for from that root nothing but good can spring. (7.8)

For Augustine, love is an ethic that guides what our behavior towards self and other should be. We will assuredly fail in our attempts, but with faith and hope, we can continue to strive for improvement.

We see with the “premodern” perspectives an emphasis on ethical approaches to motive rather than subject-centered approaches. Slowly this begins to change as dictates become less fluid and are more dependent upon objective standards in nature. This starts ever so slowly with Aquinas and transforms radically with Hobbes' pessimistic view of humanity.

Aquinas and Reasonable Caritas

Simply put, Aquinas combines an Augustinian and an Aristotelian notion of self-sacrifice in a systematic approach to philosophy and theology. Aquinas was a devotee of both Aristotle and Augustine, ideologies which were considered fundamentally in opposition to one another during the 13th century. Aquinas's brilliance is in combining these two ideologies into one cohesive work thus, bringing them successfully into his historical moment. The heart of his argument lies in the notion of a rational Christian ethic, discernable through reasonableness and faith. On top of this Christian ethic is laid a modified virtue structure put forth by Aristotle. For Aquinas, the Nichomachean virtues were unable to perfect human beings because the virtues were not by nature able to perfect. Only virtues laden with *caritas* perfected by grace would be able to perfect the human condition.

Based on this notion of charity, there is an ordering that takes place amongst the recipients of this love. According to Pope (1994), the priority is “first, to God and those who are objectively nearer to God (the *meliores*); and second, to those who are nearer to the agent in particular ways (the *conjunctiores*)” (p. 59). This prioritization denotes ordering the ethics of *caritas* based on proximity.

Pope (1994) notes, “For Thomas the key distinction in this regard was not between self-love and neighbor love as such but between proper and improper self-love and proper and improper neighbor love” (p. 59). Thus begins a definitional procedure to describe what comprises proper self-love. This entails a prioritization of self-love over neighbor love in order to appropriately “love thy neighbor as thyself.” Appropriate self-love references one’s spiritual nature—one should not sin to help one’s neighbor. Yet, concerning one’s physical nature, a neighbor’s body is more important than one’s own body. Physical sacrifices of one’s time and possessions, even one’s life, should not be withheld from the other. One’s actions become ordered to fit the given situation, an ethical approach with a focus on the other. Also, because it is not physically possible to do good for all, one ought to apportion beneficence according to proximity (*Summa Theologica*, II.ii.26.6)—a practical dimension to an other-focused ethic. This combination of practicality with a rational Christian *caritas* is what drives Aquinas’s theology. However, this definition of rationality particularly in regard to faith was later questioned in a time period where science was the centerpiece of the narrative. It is to this modern time period that we now turn.

Modern Approaches to the Fractured Individual

Modernity denotes a time period beginning around 1500 and extending into the mid-twentieth century where there is a growing emphasis on empiricism and a growing optimism in the ability of humanity to overcome difficulties through scientific technological discovery (Heelas, 1998). Part of this process was a reframing of the way individuals were understood and how they related to one other. The shift that occurred reflected a growing distrust of the authority of the Church and a shift to State authority and the authority of the individual. With the emergence of several influential thinkers (see Grant, 1997) among whom Thomas Hobbes looms large, there is a shift of relational understanding away from the Medieval assumption of self-fulfillment within an ethical structure of loving God, the Lord of the Land (a king, noble, etc), and family and towards a dichotomous balance of self-interest and self-denial. In this shift, self-interest begins to be prioritized until by the 20th century, its opposite, altruism, is deemed non-existent (Dawkins, 1978). The following material attempts to describe this intellectual shift.

From Christianity to Humanism

Several influences paved the way for an egocentric conception of self, most notably that of humanism. Kolenda (1999) notes the word came into use in the nineteenth century as a perspective on the world beginning in the Renaissance where “people dared to stand up and to rise to full stature” (p. 397). It occupies a philosophical idea of human being situated between the idea of transcendent, supernatural realm and the natural scientific order (Kolenda, 1999). The possibilities of life lie in the individual’s ability to discover truth namely through science:

No longer the glory of God, but the enlarging of the bounds of human empire over nature—that is the new goal of science...It was science becoming more

humanized, less divine; it was science serving, not them that built the cathedrals to carry them to God , but the rising commercial and industrial classes. (Randall, 1926/1976, p. 223-4)

One symptom of this is the shift from community to self as certain Humanist strains moved from a centralized clergy to a newly empowered “priesthood of all believers.” As a result of the printing press and translations of the Bible into common languages, it was possible for large numbers of people to have access to scriptures. When combined with the humanist ideal, this led to a diversity of opinion, which flooded forth after the Diet of Worms. Here Luther famously noted “I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience” (Noll, 1997, p. 154). The consequence of this was noted by Johann Eck during this same council: “If it were granted that whoever contradicts the councils and the common understanding of the church must be overcome by Scripture passages, we will have nothing in Christianity that is certain or decided” (Noll, 1997, p. 155). Luther undoubtedly did not intend for an individualistic approach to religion to reign. Luther approached religion as centralized and authoritarian (see, Ekert, 1955). Nonetheless his argument with humanism lost the day. Humanists “accorded a very prominent place to the human factor in setting up the classical achievements and refinements in form and beauty of the ancient world as a cultural ideal over against less cultured native civilizations” (Ekert, 1955, p. 7). The seeds of individualism sown from humanism led to individualism beyond the communal society; as a result, division occurred.

There is debate on the extent to which Erasmus reflected this humanistic spirit in Christianity (Mansfield, 2003). However he is still largely considered a Christian

humanist (Rummel, 2004). Erasmus was not searching for schism as “consensus was not only a sociopolitical desideratum; it was an essential criterion and the touchstone of true religion (Rummel, 2004, p. 32). Nonetheless, Randall (1926) notes Erasmus’s desire to “reform the Church into a rational aid to the natural moral life that would absorb all the new learning and science into a well-rounded culture” (p. 147). As Erasmus states in the *Praise of Folly*, his approach:

...would have women read the Gospels and the Epistles of St. Paul...why should knowledge of doctrine be reserved to a few men only, theologians and monks... True theology is possessed by every man who is inspired and guided by the spirit of Christ, be he a digger or a weaver. (p. 270).

He is looking for change and rationality, and Scripture drove this process. (Rummel, 2004). Scripture should be read individually and confirmation of that reading should take place within a community. The individual reading rationally opened a door in “pre-reformation” (Rummel, 2004) that others walked through where a unified community of believers was deemphasized and the individual prioritized.

This shift from community to individual found its means of expression in Descartes. Despite his continued adherence to a Christian perspective, Descartes, as one of the most influential scholars of the time, furthered splintered the corporate human “soul” through the idea that “this self, that is to say the soul, by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body...” (Descartes, 1637/1981, p. 83). The mind/body dualism he created dominated philosophical thought and caused a self-consciousness to occur that Grant (1997) notes is “a necessary condition for the emergence of the assumption of self-interest” (p. 325). For centuries the implications of a mind/body split flexed the intellectual muscles and perplexed scholarly minds as reason attempted to sort through the human condition. These reason-driven accounts of self were complimented by

empiricists like Bacon, who pushed rationality fully into scientific discovery where empiricism ruled as the means of knowledge. As he states “the true and lawful goal of the sciences is none other than this: that human life be endowed with new discoveries and powers” (Bacon, 1854, p. 69). This Baconian spirit carried through the following centuries, empowering humanity to reach greater heights—heights that required new management of a burgeoning human confidence (or arrogance).

Hobbes and the Enlightenment

Hobbes recognized that unfettered and divergent self-interests created power struggles, violence, and chaos within a society. In a pessimistic view of human nature, he believed humans were continually in competition, distorting words for their own gain, and bound only by covenant rather than by nature (Hobbes, 1981, p. 91-92). In a stark statement on the human condition, Hobbes notes six reasons why sociable animals such as ants and bees and our species’ ability to do likewise in terms of cooperation is incomparable: 1) Humans are “continually in competition for honour and dignity” thus breeding hatred and war; 2) Social creatures see no difference in the good of the public and private where humans “can relish nothing but what is eminent;” 3) Humans think themselves “wiser, and abler to govern the public better than the rest” and thus leading to “distraction and civil war;” 4) We lie about the nature of goodness and evil; 5) While irrational creatures can be contented, man “is most troublesome when he is most at ease: for then it is that he loves to shew his wisdom;” 6) Our agreements with one another are artificial requiring a “common power, to keep them in awe, and to direct their actions to the common benefit.” Thus, the only way of containing this corrupt character was to create a “generation of that great Leviathan” or a “mortal god to which we owe under the

immortal God our peace and defence” (p. 93). Interpersonally, this does not mean that a person is *never* motivated by passions other than those that benefit their own self. As Hobbes (1651/1985) states there is a “Love of one singularly, with the desire to be singularly beloved, the passion of love.” Other-centeredness is possible—but note the split of self and other here. He emphasizes that love of others is not a natural inclination. In short, we must fight our human nature to be other-centered. Thus by nature humans are individualistic and self-interested; community and ethics are forced upon us by necessity for survival.

MacIntyre (Cambridge) here provides the fundamental question that Hobbes’s philosophy initiated that has since framed the way the social sciences and philosophy have understood the human condition:

Given that human nature is competitive and self-seeking, why and how can altruism and benevolence be treated as virtues? One’s immediate response to this brief and cryptic statement of the problem may well be to inquire why—if one does not share Hobbes’s premises—one should take it as given that human nature is essentially self-seeking? To this one replies by posing another question: How can any actual or possible object or state of affairs provide me with a motive...unless it appears to be what will satisfy some desire of mine?...And to seek only to satisfy my own desires is surely to have an entirely self-seeking nature. (p. 463)

It is in this vein of thought that the next several centuries continued. Motives are conceived as a dialectic between self-interest and self-negation. If we are self-interested creatures, how then do we understand altruism? The following is an account of the pervasiveness of this dichotomous approach to human relationships and how it has been perpetuated in the current cultural milieu.

By the seventeenth and eighteenth century, Augustine’s concepts had been translated into an antithesis of Hobbsian ideology. The corrupt body, as in Hobbes, was

completely corrupt and fallen. Thus, people should focus entirely on self-negation rather than self-interest. This pessimistic interpretation of Augustine's ideology taught man to revile the self, finding no good in the efforts of man. By radically disconnecting the love of self and love of God, pessimistic Augustinians felt people could never achieve *caritas* because of their inherent corruptness (i.e., original sin) stemming from the Fall of Man, and focused their efforts on the realm beyond. There was a sharp line of distinction between the City of God and the City of Man. Man was worthless until death. In practice, this was a rather hopeless view, at least in temporality. Thus, moderates attempted to soften the distinction through a new vocabulary distinguishing a benign and acceptable self-love (*amore de soi*) from a vicious and unacceptable self-love (*amore-propre*) (Cladis, 2000). In the public realm, authors as diverse as Raimond Sebond, Pierre Le Moyne, Rene Descartes, and Blaise Pascal argued that people should put the common good above their own and could be freed from isolating self-love through a love of God (p. 226). Essentially, this period represents a reinterpretation of the Augustinian soul to represent mankind as reprehensible to the point of self-negation, a point Augustine himself would never have touted. The "moderate" approaches to self-love were an attempt to take this straw man and tear it down.

The governmental ideas of Rousseau (e.g., *The social contract and discourses*) were an attempt to answer both radical self-negationists and radical proponents of self-interest. However, despite his overall opposition to Hobbes, he continued to emphasize self-interest. This self-interest was not *amour proper* (harmful self-love) as in a Hobbesian or a pessimistic Augustinian perspective but *amore de soi* (beneficial self-love) that permitted a healthy view of self. Cladis (2000) notes three "paths" that

Rousseau took in his understanding of self-love. In *A History of Poland* Rousseau gives an extreme public path. On this path, love is a public matter and cannot be left up to individual preferences. Education is the primary method by which passions should be directed in responsible directions. In a somewhat schizophrenic turn, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* advocates an extreme private path. On the private path of the “solitaire” true happiness can be achieved, free from the corruption and pain of other influences. Yet this path was limited by its inability to affect anyone other than one’s self. The final path from *Social Contract* is the most important and remembered of Rousseau’s treatises because it is out of this “path of mixed loves” that the modern liberal state is born. Evidence to this fact can be seen within Cladis’s (2000) contrast between the extreme public path and the path of mixed loves:

If the extreme public path is marked by an intense patriotism in which there is no conflict between public and private, then the path of mixed loves is marked by a temperate republicanism in which there is some conflict. On the extreme public path, one’s interests are shaped at birth to match those of the state; on the path of mixed loves, the state appeals to one’s interests (as defined by *amore de soi*) to live peaceably in a just nation. On the extreme public path, the self is unitary and devoted to the good of the state; on the path of mixed loves, the self is multiple and only one’s civic self is dedicated to the good of the state. On the path of mixed loves, the private self is not obliterated; diversity is permitted, indeed, guaranteed by law. (Cladis, 2000, p. 246).

It is evident that these facets of Rousseau’s path of mixed loves have carried over into the modern liberal state, especially in the United States.

However, while Rousseau was a pivotal proponent of individualism within political science, he was by no means the only founder of the concept. As Grant (1997) notes, the humanism of Freud in psychology, the conflict theory of Marx, the organization theory of Max Weber in sociology, and the theory of capitalism of Adam Smith in economics all reflect a direct assumption of an egocentric view of humanity (p.

323). Stemming from the sense of self-consciousness that was created by Cartesian dualism, the notion of self-interest became engrained in human thinking.

Scientific Maintenance of Self-Interest

The Baconian Spirit still lives on through the primacy of science (MacIntyre, 1988), and it is science that serves as one of the major lenses through which egoism and altruism have been explored and maintained. Much attention has been paid to altruism because of the threat it serves to scientific theories founded on the idea that humans are fundamentally self-interested (e.g., Dawkins, 1978; Wilson, 1975). This has led to interpretations de-emphasizing self-sacrifice and prioritizing self-interest, vis-à-vis experimental observation noting the improbability of altruism evolving. Early efforts to reframe altruism relied upon speculation about self-interested motives. For example, Hobbes suggested that altruism emanates not from genuine concern for the other but for one's own discomfort at seeing their pain (Monroe, 1996). Others who touted altruism found the concept undermined by an inherent focus on self-interest within their views. Comte (1875), the father of sociology, whose intent was to see the "ascendancy of altruism over egoism" (p. 500), ironically founded a field dominated by self-interest due to the ideal of total control that dominated his conception of positivism (Grant, 1997). Such inherent self-interest began to overtake speculation about motives to the point that sociobiology and evolutionary biological explanations avoid definitions concerning motive at all and only focus on altruism or the lack thereof within nature. Wilson and Dawkins are two of the most notable figures in this regard.

Wilson (1975) describes best the "central theoretical problem of sociobiology: how can altruism, which by definition reduces personal fitness, possibly evolve by

natural selection?” (p. 3). His own efforts towards answering this question lie in reciprocal altruism whereby one eventually gets a “return” on one’s social “investment.” Animals work together towards a social goal in order to ensure their own well-being. For example, ants cooperate with one another taking turns gathering food in order to reach a greater gain. As Ruse (2002) notes, “Animals work in an ‘altruistic’ fashion, thus ensuring that their units of heredity (the ‘genes’) are passed in higher percentages to future generations than otherwise would be the case” (p. 154). But reciprocity is not enough to explain this phenomenon as cases of genetic sacrifice (e.g., bees killing themselves to protect the hive) indicate. Kin altruism is also adopted in that such a sacrifice would save the genetic strains in the close kin who are warned or protected. Thus, all seemingly altruistic concepts are actually attempts to save one’s own genetic code. As Wilson (1975) states, “The theory of kin selection has taken most of the good will out of altruism. When altruism is conceived of as the mechanism by which DNA multiplies itself through a network of relatives, spirituality becomes just one more Darwinian enabling device” (p. 120).

Dawkins (1978) furthers this theme in his book *The Selfish Gene* where he touts the primacy of genetic self-interest. “Selfishness” is used as a metaphor to describe the impact that genetics has on the human condition and the evolutionary implausibility of altruism. This implausibility is represented in an illustration concerning three different behaviors within a bird species, who to survive, must have parasites removed from their backs. The “sucker” (a telling title) behaves altruistically, grooming indiscriminately. The “cheats” accept grooming but never return it. The “grudger” will groom anyone once but will not groom that individual again until the act is reciprocated. The theory notes that a

population entirely comprised of suckers will operate nicely until a cheat is introduced. These “cheat genes” are predisposed to survival within such a community. As the cheaters flourish, there will be less suckers grooming, causing the entire population to decline or become extinct. Grudger genes, because they discriminate between cheats and others, would cause the population to be “more fit.” This behavior would be preferred evolutionarily over the altruism of the suckers. As Dawkins (1978) states, “If there is one selfish rebel, prepared to exploit the altruism of the rest, then he, by definition, is more likely than they to survive and have children” (p. 8). The goal then, is to maximize the benefits to genetic survival through a system resembling cost-benefit analysis. Dawkins (1978) notes, “One should always ask whether it would pay in the future, to cut his losses, and abandon the project now, even through he has already invested heavily in it” (p. 162). Thus, “Altruism is largely nepotism, occurring whenever $b_r > c_a/r$ —when the benefit to the recipient exceeds the cost to the altruist divided by his or her coefficient of relatedness” (Konner, 2002, p. 195). Sacrifice is ultimately viewed in terms of genetic benefit to one’s self or to one’s future offspring. For some, that is the extent of what one might perceive as “altruism.”

Altruism “Discovered” and the Scientific Response

After Dawkins, a number of experiments were carried out by Bateson to determine whether pure altruism, giving solely for the sake of other, actually existed beyond cost-benefit analyses and genetics. Grant (1997) calls this process of experimentation the “ABC’s of altruism” as Bateson responded to the challenges from Archer and Cialdini. The initial experiment (Bateson, 1991) attempted to identify altruism at the behavioral level rather than the motivational level. Bateson defined

empathy as an expression of altruism through a number of tests and discovered that altruism, defined as a willingness to help others out of empathy, exists. In response, Archer challenged that the “altruism” found, in reality stemmed from a self-interested motive concerned with negative social evaluation. Additionally, Cialdini challenged that altruism was simply a relief of personal feelings of distress such as sadness or guilt, thus creating another egoist motive. In each case Bateson responded with new experiments that undercut these claims. Essentially Bateson created a scientific defense of altruism that severely challenges traditional notions of the primacy of self-interest. As Bateson (1991) notes, “If we are capable of altruism then virtually all of our current ideas about individual psychology, social relations, economics and politics are in an important respect wrong” (p. 3).

In light of evidence in support of altruism, there has been an attempt to reframe the argument to escape the reductionist tendencies of Wilson and Dawkins and still maintain the self-interested system. Thus, in an attempt to go beyond genetics, Burhoe (1981) indicates the need for a “culturetype” in addition to a “genotype” in describing the human condition. A culturetype includes those characteristics of an individual inherited upon birth that “shape the specific characteristics of a sociocultural organism—its specific language, technology, rituals, rites, etc.” (Burhoe, 1981, p. 213). Without this culturetype, the sociocultural organism is no different than the other creatures in the animal kingdom, unaware of their surrounding culture. Thus, human altruism can be explained as “genetically generated reciprocity” with other “sociocultural organisms” through “the framework of the symbiosis model” (Meisinger, 2000, p. 754). Genetics and culture work together to explain the dilemma.

Another way of reframing evolutionary biology to explain the presence of altruism in nature is given by Sober and Wilson (1998). By using group selection, they claim “the evolution of altruism is easily explained, genuine altruism exists in nature, and ‘the central theoretical problem of sociobiology’ has been solved” (p. 34). Group selection, which looks at evolution on a corporate level, is contrasted with individual selection, which looks at evolution on a largely genetic basis. Sober and Wilson argue that because group selection has been shunned by sociobiologists, these sociobiologists have not had the means to describe altruistic behavior and thus have dismissed it as non-existent. Sober and Wilson show that altruism exists through a statistical phenomenon known as Simpson’s paradox, which demonstrates that group level phenomena (e.g., more men than women on a college campus indicating discrimination) may not be present on the individual level (e.g., admission practices of individual departments) due to statistical percentages (e.g., one small department high in incoming females admits 30% males compared with a large department low in incoming females admitting 60% men). This leads to two premises that dictate the evolution of altruism: First, altruism evolves whenever group selection is stronger than individual selection. Second, there must be no other way to benefit others with a lesser degree of individual expense. Because of the second premise, the concept of self-interest is still inherent within the method. If someone senses they can lose less by behaving in a different, less self-sacrificial way, they will take that path. However, if Sober and Wilson are correct, group selection at least raises the possibility for altruism from within evolutionary science and thus, keeps the theory from collapsing all together.

And yet, regard for other is still problematic within the modernist paradigm inherited from Hobbes. The dichotomy between altruism (i.e., self-sacrifice) and the idea of desire being the product of a fundamentally self-interested nature easily paints other-regard as an impossibility or a genetic flaw. Even those approaches that advocate the existence of self-sacrifice continue to use a notion of self-interest inherent within the Darwinian system to approach the issue. A modern perspective would lead us to believe that our duty is towards our own self-interests with a subdued yet morally-functional option for altruism. The difficulties in finding ground for other-centered behavior just do not seem to go away. How do we navigate this dichotomy then between self and other? If a person thinks human nature is not primarily self-interested as seems evident from a person's everyday experiences, how does he or she counter claims that these actions are self-interested? Is there another way of framing the issue that may make other-centered behavior less perplexing? Postmodern approaches begin this process of opening ground to reframe the modern paradigm.

Postmodern Approaches to the Fractured Individual

Beginning roughly with Nietzsche and his deconstruction of religion and philosophy, we begin to see a "rhetorical turn" in philosophical thinking that radically undermines objectivity, metanarrative, and the metaphor of progress (Schrag, 1986). This shift has provided a new ground from which we can conceive interpersonal relationships. There are several people who are foundational to this transition, but again I will highlight only a few in order to illustrate major elements in the way the altruism/egoism dichotomy can be deconstructed in order to provide ground for the metaphor of charitable

acknowledgment. Foremost towards this end are Derrida and Foucault, two scholars who highlight the ability to deconstruct language and consequently demonstrate the fragility of subjectivity. As a result of the ideas they present, the foundation upon which we conceive being shifts from the notion of a subject-centered epistemology to one of a deconstructionist epistemology in which we find trouble establishing an ethical basis for relationships.

Plato (1984) in the *Symposium* cites Socrates as stating:

Once a thing is committed to writing it circulates equally among those who understand the subject and those who have no business with it; a writing cannot distinguish between suitable and unsuitable readers. And if it is ill-treated or unfairly abused it always needs its parent to come to its rescue; it is quite incapable of defending or helping itself. (§275, p. 97).

Indeed this ancient commentary on the fragility of texts seems to highlight the postmodern dilemma: Who is the “suitable” interpreter of a work? If that is the “parent,” what happens after a “parent” of a work has died? Why is language so helpless to “defend” itself? If it is so fragile, how is it that any “subject” can be knowable? These questions have been pivotal to Derrida and Foucault, two of the foremost critics of the over-reliance on linguistic signifiers. It is the deconstruction of language and consequently the subject that have had profound consequences for today’s understanding of self and other.

Derrida and différance

Derrida propagates deconstruction, the idea of breaking down traditional constructs through word play in order to create new meanings and understandings. Derrida (1974) takes a grammatological approach where writing takes priority over the spoken word. This as we will see has serious consequences for relationships in that the foundation for ethical behavior is radically decentered if not undermined completely.

With a prioritization of writing it is difficult to hold a perspective on the nature of the subject. Whether one takes a mechanistic approach to relationships or alternatively an idealist approach, it is quite difficult to maintain in the light of the signifier/signified split. Consequently, we begin down an ethical road to relativism or, at best, emotivism (see MacIntyre, 1984). Social scientific endeavors explore how to quantify human relational phenomena in measurable and static variables for the purpose of reliability and reproduction of results (see, Poole, McPhee, & Canary, 2002). While the reliability of social scientific studies' methodologies are impressive, there is a call for research to avoid treating individual subjects as what Poole, McPhee, and Canary (2002) describe as “nonindependent,” meaning individuals are observed outside the relationship at hand. Otherwise separation from context can lead to a mechanistic view of the variable being studied and of the relationships they are measuring. This tendency towards mechanism will be explored in more depth in the next chapter on interpersonal communication theories. Here we will look at one potential consequence of prioritizing the written over the oral—relativism. Derrida would never claim relativism to be a necessary result of his approach; nevertheless, he struggles to ground reconstructive endeavors due to his prioritization (and consequent deconstruction) of the written word.

One of the pivotal concepts in Derrida's (anti)philosophy on language and thus the subject is the concept of *différance*. A complex ideology compacts itself into this one term that refuses to submit to terminological confines. Derrida having “never ceased to write on *différance*” (Moore, 1994, p. 11) admits, himself, that “it cannot be exposed” (Derrida, 1986, p. 398). This is an initial paradox that is crucial to grasp to understand the paradigm shift toward rhetoric in postmodernity. To arrive at a definition of *différance*,

Derrida spends much of his time describing what the term is not. Derrida (1986) portrays a conception of his ideology that cannot be “elaborated simply as a philosophical discourse, operating according to principles, postulates axioms or definitions, and proceeding along the discursive lines of a linear order of reasons” (p. 399). Instead it is explored through what Derrida delineates as “strategic and adventurous” word play. (p. 399). The term *différance*, by definition, defies definition. In essence, there is no definition because “to say ‘deconstruction is X’ is precisely to miss the point.” (Moore, 1994, p. 25). *Différance* thus becomes a series of word associations and disassociations to arrive at a model for discussion.

A good starting point for understanding the roots of the concept lies within the text of Ferdinand de Saussure (1986), the famous French linguist. His work exposed clearly that “the bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary” (p. 150). The fact that “tree” corresponds to a vascular, pithy, member of the family *Plantae* that has cellulose supporting the cell walls and a cork cambium layer is nothing more than an arbitrary linguistic assignment to a physical object—in short, a sign comprised of signifier (the word “tree”) and signified (the idea of treeness) that refers to a referent (the actual physical tree). The unit that is a linguistic sign “follows no law other than that of tradition” (p. 154). As such, the definitions of words only have meaning inasmuch as the nearest arbitrary sign holds meaning. E.g., the phrase “cork cambium” only defines “tree” as effectively as one can identify the term “cork cambium.”

This leads to an important insight for Saussure (1986): in language, there are only differences. More importantly, “a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences *without positive*

terms” (167). This means there is no such thing as a “grammatical fact” when a signified and signifier are taken independently of each other. If “tree” is simply treated as an independent phonetic syllable, it means nothing and is negative. The differences between the independent words “tree” and “bark” (one fundamental aspect of what makes a tree a tree) do not create objective meaning. Independently they in fact hold negative value—negative denoting that no meaning can be established within the words in and of themselves because each is explained by other terms that hold no meaning in and of themselves.

A natural conclusion to this is that everything in language is negative having no consequential meaning. But Saussure is reluctant to carry this idea to its full fruition as noted by Moore (1994): “Alarmed at his own audacity Saussure backs away from the brink to which he has brought us . . . [saying] ‘the moment we compare one sign with another as positive combination . . . the term difference should be dropped’” (p. 17). In other words, it is fine to recognize the tentative nature of signified and signifier but when real life application is considered, there is the ability to establish positive meaning between the sign and referent. According to Saussure, once a “linguistic sign” is developed the two negatives become a positive, and meaning is established.

Derrida begins to make his claims about *différance* by taking Saussure’s notion to its apparent conclusion. For the sign to represent positive meaning from two terms founded in negative difference is a contradiction of terms according to Derrida. There is a “necessity of usurpation [of the sign] once it has been shown to be *a priori* possible” (Harvey, 1986, p. 67). *Différance* reflects the quintessential difference between not only the signified and the signifier but between the sign and the referent. No absolute meaning

can be established. Thus, “bark” is fundamentally unable adequately to describe “tree” because the terminologies at their core are ultimately unstable. Terms are forever defined by other signifiers that are defined by other signifiers *ad infinitum*, all rooted in the arbitrary world of negative differences. Thus anything based on linguistic terminology (which includes everything in public and private discourse) is subject to deconstruction.

Based on this concept, Derrida’s (anti) philosophy is able to take shape. The notion of *a priori* linguistic difference becomes a new starting place for epistemological grounding and Derrida chooses as his target none other than the entirety of Western metaphysics. Simply put for Derrida, philosophy is a kind of writing. Because “philosophy cannot transcend its medium,” it is forever subjectivized, destroying the “illusion of ‘pure’ reason” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 100). Thus, even “being” becomes a subjectivized philosophical notion. However, to approach a discussion of being without using ontological or metaphysical terms is tenuous. As Moore (1994) explains, “Derrida’s deconstruction of metaphysics can be undertaken only from within the edifice that metaphysics provides—a project requiring vigilance, stealth, and extreme cunning” (p. 20). The stealthy term that does this work is *différance*.

Derrida’s assessment of Being is a response to the delimitation of the ontology of presence, which is the ontology of beings and beingness. Being is what *différance* attempts to interrogate and dethrone. The concept of Being is constantly redefined and re-established by various philosophies (e.g., Heidegger) in order to understand the definition of what it means to be human, or more generically, being. For Derrida, because of *différance* and the impossibility of “pure” reason due to language, “Being has never had a “meaning.” (Derrida, 1986, p. 414). This means that “in a certain and very strange way

[*différance*] is “older” than the ontological difference or the truth of Being” (p. 414).

This is another way of affirming the death of God and the death of any sort of metanarrative that alludes to anything of objective nature. *Différance*, in a sense, encloses Being. “There is no maintaining, and no depth to this bottomless chessboard on which Being is put into play” (p. 415).

The importance of spending so much time on deconstruction for this study is because of the implications this approach has on relational constructs. In this conception of language, constructs of relational motivation such as altruism and egoism become inherently “playable.” That a sociobiologist is able to interpret all motivation as self-interested would not be surprising, nor particularly accurate to Derrida. If, as he states, “a written sign carries with it a force that breaks with its context” (Derrida, 2001, p. 1481), then motives represented by symbols such as “altruism” or “egoism” are not able to carry with them the meaningfulness of true “motivation.” The scholar interprets, frames, and characterizes them within their own context of a metanarrative, in this case evolution and scientific method. Given the biological need for self-preservation in an evolutionary model, sociobiologists may find it natural and indeed necessary to carry this preservationist tendency over into our ethical and social behaviors. In this biological model, we are *animals* (emphasized) with (who have evolved to have) logos. But as Derrida (1974) notes, animalness is a construct as deconstructable as our logos. The very notion of animalness is in question as a result of the tentative nature of logos, which he would also call into question from a perspective of grammatology. “Animal language—and animality in general—represents here the still living myth of fixity, of symbolic incapacity, of nonsupplementarity” (p. 242).

But Derrida does not stop here. In this quote from a discussion of the origin of languages, Derrida deconstructs how we construct our very being: “Man *calls himself* man only by drawing limits excluding his other from the play of supplementarity: the purity of nature, of animality, primitivism, childhood, madness, divinity” (p. 244). We are bound to the notion of play. When these limits are deconstructed, we see how fragile discussions of motive can be. We cannot even frame solidly our place in society; this is what Derrida calls the “game of the world” (p. 50). This is a game “within the becoming-unmotivated of the symbol” (p. 50). The game itself is always active and always deferred. Essentially this translates life into a language game in the realm of deferred meaning—that is, the realm of the written word. Thus, what Derrida accomplishes is a deconstruction of the meaning of the subject and a problematization of the way we currently look at society. “Why did I do that?” is a question that cannot be answered with the simple answers of “for me (egoism)” or “for you (altruism).” There is a “bottomless chessboard” of meaning that can be attributed to human motivation. Altruism and egoism are pawns easily sacrificed in a game that exposes their inflexibility as linguistic signifiers. We cannot simply attribute motive to self-interest. Why we do something is a chimera—an interpreted event, and thus the meaningfulness of an action is deferred indefinitely.

So what then can we “know” about human relationships? While deconstruction is useful for exposing the fragility of motivational interpretation and the inadequacy of the altruism/egoism dichotomy, there is a seemingly unconquerable difficulty in reconstructing meaning for relationships as a result of the deconstructive move. The paradox of communication created by *différance* is that it demands the usage of words in

a process that deems them inadequate for understanding. In essence, we muddle through life, valuing continual openness (i.e., play) and freedom. Is there a space for the subject given such a stark description of reality? Where do we find ground for the ethical life? Richard Rorty (1989) argues the only space for such talk is in mutually agreed upon narrative based on individual choices—in his case a liberal, capitalist state. This is accomplished without explicitly arguing for its rightness or wrongness; it simply is. It was chosen based on personal choices in life. These choices are agreed upon in society but are always contingent. However, this approach results in problems of emotivism when individual choice is the presupposition upon which an ethical system is built. These will be depicted by MacIntyre later on.

First, we will discuss the practical implication of choice and the deconstructed subject as it pertains to relationships for the next author, Michel Foucault. We see in Foucault another expression of the death of the subject. However, he approaches it from a perspective of power and more explicitly stated purposes—those of establishing freedom and beauty. After the subject has been completely torn down, we will look at the error of an aesthetic solution and a potential answer in communicative praxis.

Foucault and the Death of Man

When considering Foucault, we need to begin with an account of the postmodern condition, where death looms large. Nietzsche's "Death of God" could be considered the author of one of the first "postmodern critiques" as he deconstructs the causal relationships founded by the assumed objectivity of metaphysics in the Kantian *a priori* and religious doctrine. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, he notes "There is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed—the

deed is everything” (45). Causality, especially vis-à-vis God, is rejected, deemed a cultural creation leading to human fragility. In its place, Nietzsche claims to “discover the way that leads to a Yes and No” (*Will* 33), through subject-centered virtues of strength—e.g., our will to power. As he states, “the ripest fruit is the *sovereign individual*, like only to himself, liberated again from morality of custom...in him exists a proud consciousness, quivering in every muscle, of what has at length been achieved and become flesh in him...(OGM 59). In short, we should look inside ourselves to become the greatest we can be—a notion that is thoroughly in line with the Enlightenment project.

Foucault critiques this notion of subjectivity by noting that language frames the reference point for the subject’s “will to power” just as much as a “will of God”—collectively referenced as the “will to truth.” In a spirit Derrida would appreciate, Foucault (2001) suggests that society should “call into question our will to truth, restore to discourse its character as an event, and finally throw off the sovereignty of the signifier” (p. 1470). However, the emphasis is not explicitly on the written word as it is for Derrida, but more broadly “discourse,” which includes all linguistic forms without explicitly calling for one to take a primary position. Language is just as instable but not explicitly because it is written. This instability leads to the insignificance of the author and/or the subject. Foucault (1977) notes that in our interpretations of discourse, “We would hardly hear anything but the stirring of an indifference: What difference does it make who is speaking?” (p. 376). It is in this stroke that the “Death of Man” necessarily follows the “Death of God,” reflecting the loss of subjectivity as well as objectivity. As we call into question the very nature of language, it is impossible to also hold onto a firm

truth based on rationality and sense experiences. We are creatures of language, bound by interpretation, and thus must *create* meaning within actual discursive moments rather than *discover* meaning in metaphysical or subject-centered procedures.

This creative action is laden with power dynamics. Foucault (1978) puts forth a number of elements of power. In his *History of Sexuality*, he notes, “Power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared...power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations” (p.94). Thus, the view of power as contained by someone who is hierarchically above someone else is too narrow an approach. As Foucault (1978) notes, “There is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations” (p. 94). We are shaped by power as it is expressed in relationships. Resistance is a fundamental dynamic of this relationship. Resistances

do not derive from a few heterogeneous principles...are there no great radical ruptures, massive binary divisions? Occasionally, yes. But more often one is dealing with mobile and transitory point of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves... (Foucault, 1978, p. 96).

Power represents a complex dynamic of humanity whereby we are shaped by and are shaping others as we bring relational events into being.

Looking at this view of power, one can say of altruism and egoism as interpersonal motivations that the simplistic binary oppositions this creates are not adequate for representing the complexity of the power dynamics involved. Indeed, while self-interest explains a sub-set of our being, it does not adequately frame being, providing only two ingredients in the complicated casserole that is humanity. The limitations of this dichotomy are radically explored by Foucault (1994) as he frames the search for

subjectivity as a search for historical contingencies to answer the question “What can be played?” (p. 140)—a gesture of creativity’s import.

The potential for ethical relativity opened by this ability for “play” requires some sort of answer; this is attempted by Foucault with his notion of “care.” Within an ethical horizon he suggests through “care,” we attempt to breach the bastions of power-ridden language to arrive at a “playable” game guided by an aesthetic form for a beautiful life. As Foucault (1984) states in “On the Genealogy of Ethics,” “What strikes me is the fact that in our society, art has become something which is related only to objects and not to individuals, or to life...But couldn’t everyone’s life become a work of art?” (243).

Harmonious existence is a product of the types of power relations that shape a person’s life and the beauty that is created as a result. Schuld (2003) puts it well when she states:

For Foucault...the harmonious or discordant existence, the skilled or the unskilled life is not a matter of becoming free from all control. It concerns what kind of control and governance shapes one’s life and how this control and governance interacts with and shapes the lives of others, and vice versa. (p. 74).

A beautiful existence is the standard by which one can axiologically see to what extent this “shaping and governance” is effective. For Foucault, this comprises a largely aesthetic answer to the question of ethical purpose.

Summary

As with Derrida, we see a deconstruction of the subject in Foucault’s writing. In addition, we also see an aesthetic answer to the question of what comprises “good” power relationships. This in combination with the largely self-interested interpretations of the modern paradigm have led to some profound consequences for moral thinking. In the next section we will see the dangers of aestheticism and preference as the primary criteria

for ethical action. However, this does not demand a return to the dichotomous depiction of the human motive as altruistic and egoistic. The deconstruction of this framework is well-conceived. To where, then, shall we turn? If modern conceptions of self are insufficient and postmodernity vis-à-vis deconstruction has left us rather rudderless, what then is the ground upon which we can build our work?

Indeed, these are the issues with which the field of interpersonal communication continues to struggle today. The major influences of Hobbes, Rousseau, and sociobiology can be seen throughout the field. Interpersonal communication often feels dichotomous and stiff in its approach to intimate relationships. While deconstruction has the effect of opening ground, it often has problems reconstructing theory. Let us turn now to the state of interpersonal communication to analyze some of the major theories that adhere to a modernist approach. After this we can demonstrate a reconstruction of the space of subjectivity vis-à-vis Schrag which will provide a foundation from which to launch into the metaphor of charitable acknowledgement as a means of expressing relational ethics in intimate interpersonal communication.

Chapter 3

Interpersonal Communication and the Egoism/Altruism Dichotomy

To this point we have dealt largely with the broader humanities in our discussion of altruism, egoism, and the problem of ethical ground. This has been done to provide a review of pertinent literature so that we can now venture out into a discussion of the theories of interpersonal communication, specifically in the way they relate to intimate romantic relationships. What are those areas that interpersonal communication finds foundational to its study of relationships? With the Enlightenment philosophy of self as its primary guide, the field of interpersonal communication tends to develop descriptive theories in an effort to explore assumptions about self-interest rather than develop interpretive theories and philosophies to navigate ethical ground. While there are important exceptions to this (e.g., certain dialogic theories), the dominating theories of social exchange, goal-orientation, and interpersonal skills that undergird portions of the field perpetuate the idea of a self/other dichotomy with a prioritization of the Hobbesian idea that self-interest is fundamental to human nature. While not explicitly touting an ethic, these egoist theories nonetheless have ethical consequences, namely an overarching hyper-individualism that leads to emotivist tendencies. This prioritization of individualism creates a problematic base for fostering such bastions of intimacy as the institution of marriage, definitions of love, and the foundations of trust. Thus this chapter

begins with a discussion of emotivism and then explores how social exchange, goal-orientations, and interpersonal skill literature all perpetuate this ethical tendency through their concerns with self-interest, subjective opinion, and personal satisfaction. The broad critique of individualism [e.g., MacIntyre (1984) and Arnett, Fritz, & Holba (2007)] is thus narrowed into a narrative of individualism specific to interpersonal communication.

MacIntyre and Emotivism

MacIntyre (1984) in *After Virtue* demonstrates a fundamental problem in the way the realm of ethics is portrayed not only in philosophical circles but in the mainstream: “We have—very largely, if not entirely—lost our comprehension, both theoretical and practical, of morality” (p. 2). All we possess are “the fragments of a conceptual scheme, parts which now lack those contexts from which their significance derived. We possess indeed simulacra of morality...” (p. 2). This is not what could be called a hopeful state of affairs. Indeed, his optimism at changing this condition is not high. He continues:

It is the aim of this book to make that thought [that moral language is fragmented and ineffective] available to radicals, liberals, and conservatives alike. I cannot however expect to make it palatable; for if it is true, we are all already in a state so disastrous that there are no large remedies for it. (pp. 4-5).

His assessment reflects sensibilities and conditions of a time where individualism has caused the engagement of ethics within a community to become theoretically impoverished and intractable in application. Indeed, the argument made here is that several important interpersonal communication theories encourage such an ethical system of individual preferences based upon its Enlightenment presuppositions.

MacIntyre describes an ethical system based on preferences as emotivism.

“Emotivism is the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral

judgments are *nothing but* expressions of preference” (1984, p. 12). Moral judgment in an emotivist system comes less from an overarching value or transcendent ideal than from an individual preference for a given value or ideal. Feelings dictate moral decision-making and the language we use to justify decisions. Thus, you get MacIntyre’s concern for the state of moral language and the foundations of ethics. We are becoming a society unable to make judgments on behavior. For example, when one refers to a particular understanding of God yet couches it in language of personal taste (e.g., God does not send anyone to Hell because I just could not worship a God that was so judgmental), the focus is on the individual, not the standard. Whether the community accepts it or not is not particularly important (e.g., the Catholic Church may hold this standard but I disagree so I do not live by it). It namely depends upon individual beliefs and feelings. Thus there is little ground upon which to make overarching judgments; judgments are based overwhelmingly on personal preference.

To understand this focus on preference, we must understand the economic system upon which it is founded. Preference has become the cornerstone of today’s consumerist society. Marketing has shifted from an integrated approach to one that looks at archetypes and the experience of the consumer (e.g. Hammer & Champy, 2001). A person should gain an experience from a product, not just have it meet a basic need. This has led to a multiplication of products to reflect an individual’s differing desires. Thus we have a deodorant aisle full of different shapes, smells, and striations of products to make men musky, desirable, fresh, and appealing to women rather than merely dry and without body odor.

The consumerism of the personal care aisle has bled over into the ethical realm. MacIntyre notes that the concept of “this is good” for an emotivist translates into “I approve of this; do so as well” or “hurrah for this.” The feeling or experience of the good for the individual is what dictates it being so. Thus, in regard to emotivism, MacIntyre states, “In moral argument the apparent assertion of principles functions as a mask for expressions of personal preference” (p. 19). The good is not a function of principles but of feelings. It is easy to see how a person who is uncomfortable at a suggested ethical tenet (e.g., it is wrong to lie) could define the good such that they could get out of the tenet altogether (e.g., the truth would make me uncomfortable as well as my spouse; this is not good) and then feel they are still standing on solid ethical ground (e.g., we both still feel good so it is good).

The implications of this position follows:

What emotivism asserts is in central part that there are and can be *no* valid rational justifications for any claims that objective and impersonal moral standards exist and hence that there are no such standards...Emotivism thus rests upon a claim that every attempt, whether past or present, to provide a rational justification for an objective morality has in fact failed. (p. 19).

The phrase “true for you but not for me” could be considered emblematic of an emotivist perspective. In this view, history has little consequence and moral judgment becomes if not impossible then certainly improper—ground for judgment is impoverished.

So what has caused this ethical stance to become the dominant framework?

MacIntyre (1984) attributes emotivism to the failure of the Enlightenment project. He demonstrates this through the prioritization of self caused by the Cartesian mind/body split. Because the individual is rent asunder from non-subjective sources, there are no criteria beyond individually adopted ones upon which to found ethical argumentation. Community ceases to act as the primary source of criteria for decision-making. In fact,

there are no criteria outside those the individual chooses to adopt. This makes the individual all-encompassing in his/her judgments.

The specifically modern self, the self I have called emotivist, finds no limits set to that on which it may pass judgment for such limits could only derive from rational criteria for evaluation and, as we have seen, the emotivist self lacks any such criteria. (p. 31).

Thus, MacIntyre frames the debate as one between an aesthetic and an ethical foundation for the moral life, with the exemplar being marriage. Marriage is paradigmatic of the ethical as a “state of commitment and obligation through time” (p. 40) whereas a romantic lover is paradigmatic of aesthetic expression as one “immersed in his own passion” (p. 40). The following example from MacIntyre portrays the issue at hand:

How I live at any given moment is irrelevant to the question of how I must live. This is why marriage is the paradigm of the ethical. Bertrand Russell has described how one day in 1902 while riding a bicycle he suddenly realized that he was no longer in love with his first wife—and from this realization there followed in time the break-up of that marriage. Kierkegaard would have said, and surely rightly, that any attitude whose absence can be discovered in sudden flash while riding a bicycle is only an aesthetic reaction and that such experience has to be irrelevant to the commitment which genuine marriage involves, to the authority of the moral precepts which define marriage. But now whence does the ethical derive this kind of authority? (p. 41-42).

Indeed, emotivism is unable to provide understanding for a number of relational constructs that participate in an ethical paradigm—love, trust, and marriage being foremost on the list. Modernity’s rational approach to relationships has led to a hyper-subjective understanding of ethics and thus made it difficult to give foundation to ethical distinctions beyond preference. The freedom to choose based on the standard of rationality is not sufficient in and of itself for morality beyond emotivism. MacIntyre (1982) notes, “If the ethical has some basis, it cannot be provided by the notion of radical choice” (p. 43).

We are struck then with a significant problem. Society is based on the ability to judge between the just and unjust; legal systems would fall into decay without this basic ability. More importantly for this discussion however, relationships, the building blocks upon which society is based, also are based on such agreements. For example, consider a marriage. The overarching premise is one of commitment, fidelity, and agreement to a life together. A bride and groom are agreeing legally to the courts, socially to witnesses such as family and friends, and often religiously to God that they will (as the Catholic vows go) “Promise to be true to you in sickness and health, good times and bad; I will love and cherish you all the days of my life.” This is a judgment in essence on what comprises marriage. It overarches the individual.

Emotivism undermines this ability. When preference enters in as a moral trump card—a Right—it rescinds such authority that is vested in society, government, and religion to dictate standards and vests it instead in the individual. Even interpersonal relationships have the “we-ness” that creates a unified whole deconstructed into two “I”s negotiating personal preferences. In this ideological framework, whatever marriage is or was in society is really important only to the extent that the individual buys into it. When preferences change, the commitment could be dismissed. In this emotivist system, “I felt trapped” is an acceptable ethic for divorce as well as any other feeling that may give rise to distance in a couple. The happiness of self should not be usurped unless the individual chooses it. Whether or not one believes in marriage as an institution, it is easy to see how the relevance of marriage is significantly limited in a society where its sanctity is usurped by individual preference and where society accepts this as a standard.

This phenomenon is not limited to marriage alone. Trust, the foundation for intimacy, is at stake. According to Burgoon and Hale (1984) trust includes character dimensions such as sincerity, dependability, trustworthiness, and honesty. These are not preferences but rather issues of truthfulness—I do what I say and I say what I do. As Weber and Carter (2003) note, “Trust makes social life possible” (p. 1). In their treatise on trust, their primary argument is that trust is an orientation emerging from a relationship rather than a tool by which to achieve goals. “Modernity necessitates trust, but more often than not this trust is more systemically based than interactionally based” (p. 2). Thus they note a distinction between holism and atomism seen by Lewis and Weigert (1985) where holism looks at the trust of individuals as reflective of communal understandings of trust where as atomism looks at trust as a function of autonomous agents looking out for their own self-interests (p. 2).

Acknowledging the importance of trust to intimacy, we are led back to the problem of emotivism. To what extent can one have trust in an emotivist system? Only to the extent that an individual values it. People who prefer lying to get their way undermine the very foundation of their intimate relationships. When deceit, the intentional separation of word and deed, is the preference, there is no foundation upon which to build a relationship. This foundational decay occurs on two levels. The first is one of accuracy in knowledge: “Facility with words bespeaks a capacity to learn relations...” (Weaver, 1970, p. 162). Without accurate words, there is no true learning and thus one is living a fiction. The second level is belief in the person. Without belief in a person’s words, it is nearly impossible to appreciate their deeds. Baer (2002) notes, “A lack of faith in other people means that we remain doubtful and fearful, and that we continue to protect

ourselves. And in that condition, loving relationships are impossible” (p. 78). As such, it is fairly evident that we *cannot* lie and expect intimate relationships to be encouraged.

Thus, for professors of interpersonal communication, among the most important tasks in the classroom is to emphasize trust, integrity, and the need to avoid lying as cornerstones to healthy intimate relationships. But can a person effectively teach such values in an atmosphere where emotivism is the ethic? I would argue no. When interpersonal communication theory is predicated by modern assumptions of self-interest, it encourages emotivism and thus presents difficulties in teaching trust with any sort of relevance. Merely describing implications for the individual (instead of suggesting interpretive frameworks) is often the fullest extent to which a theory grounded in modern notions of self-interest and emotivism can go. To explore this issue, we will use trust as a lens for an ethical foundation in relationships. As we will see in the next three IPC theories, trust cannot operate effectively as a function of commodity (social exchange), as a means rather than an end (goal-orientation), or as a technique (intimacy skills). In short, trust and therefore intimacy is not solely a function of self-interest, the foundational assumption of these theories. Intimate relationships require a different philosophical ground upon which to generate moral power for a discussion of trust, intimacy, and thus healthy intimate relationships.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange is an outgrowth of an Enlightenment mentality and as we will show, exacerbates emotivist understandings. According to Homans (1958), social exchange theory is one of the oldest, most pervasive theories of social behavior. Indeed,

it is not hard to accept that “interaction between persons is an exchange of goods, material and non-material” (p. 567) considering the preponderance of everyday conversations revolving around rewards (“I got a good deal”) and needs (“I’d do anything for a bite to eat”). One might even say the problem is not that the theory inaccurately depicts human nature but perhaps that it *too* accurately portrays it—it is uncomfortable to think my life is a mere series of transactions chosen based on potential profit. It is this discomfort that needs explored in more detail.

Exchange theories depend on an economic metaphor to explain social behavior. Apart from pure economics which focuses on more innate mechanistic propensities in the market and the fledgling field of economic sociology (see Zafirovski, 2001) which emphasizes the importance of social institutions and relational networks in shaping economic behaviors, exchange theories take economic terms and attempt to explain social behavior through the lens of marketplace activity. As the basic tenet of all economic theory, the foundational equation, rewards minus costs equals profits, is used to explain human behavior. As Higgins, Grant and Shah (1999) state, “The principle that people approach pleasure and avoid pain has been and continues to be, *the* fundamental motivational principle” (p. 244). In social exchange theory, the formula denotes that a person strives for the greatest rewards with the least amount of costs. The rewards in this system are numerous. Foa and Foa (1974) list love, status, services, goods, information and money. Nye (1982) re-categorizes this list, including social approval, autonomy, ambiguity, security, money, value agreement, and equality. Weighing benefits against the costs, one can determine the profits of a given action that in turn provide a sense of happiness. Within social exchange, happiness as an end-goal is understood as a

generalized state of being indicating a perceived threshold of profits as dictated by self-determined and societal criteria. This presupposes human self-interestedness as geared towards a sense of happiness—we are predisposed to act towards our own ends on our own behalf.

These general principles of profit and self-interest are foundational to five primary approaches of social exchange, as catalogued by Roloff (1981). First, Homans (1958) uses a behaviorist approach that takes to heart the operant conditioning of Skinner. We are rewarded for behaviors that please others and are thus conditioned to repeat them. In this vein, he produces five propositions to which all interpersonal behavior can be attributed. Second, Blau (1964) continues the work of Homans but embraces emergent properties from the social environment to account for broader interpersonal contexts. Through an emphasis on the economic metaphor, he draws parallels with pure economic models to show the parallels of profit-based economic behavior to profit-based relational behavior. Third, the sociologists Thibaut and Kelley (1959) describe the necessity of interdependence for people to acquire the greatest rewards. Using a number of grids to illustrate gaming theory, they display the need for trust and dependence in order for the most people to net the greatest gain. When a person works on a solely independent basis, losses incurred to society and to self are often greater than when working together. Fourth, social psychologists Foa and Foa (1974) emphasize the role of resources within relational exchanges and the emergent patterns that can be predicted when certain variables arise. They find that we enjoy exchanges of similar resources (money for money, love for love) based on the nature of the relationship (friendships involve more exchanges of love). When a resource is denied people attempt to deny a similar resource.

Finally, the equity theory of Walster, Berscheid, and Walster (1978) notes the need for a person to perceive that gains by both participants in a relationship are equitable. People and groups try to maximize their own individual profit while equitably distributing resources to others in as much as other people can contribute to greater profits in the future. Whenever inequity occurs, it is normally corrected expeditiously, whether through changes in personal perception or through changes in societal rules or distributive practices. These five theories serve as a broad base from which one can understand the economics of relationships.

The heuristic power of exchange theories has been vast. For example, extensions to the theory made in terms of investment (Rusbult, Drigotas, & Verette 1994) and social penetration (Altman & Taylor, 1973) have provided greater explanatory power to exchange models. Attempts to provide scientific support to the theory reach even to the present day (Koper & Jaasma, 2001). Numerous social scientific studies have been conducted regarding family relationships (Gottman, Notarius, Markman, Bank Yoppi, & Rubin, 1976), intimate relationships (Hatfield, Traupmann, Sprecher, Utne, & Hay, 1985), dissolution of relationships (Levinger, 1982), risk and trust (Molm, Takahashi, & Peterson, 2000), and affection (Floyd, 2002), to name a few. Granted, there have been several critiques leveled particularly against Homans (Davis, 1962; Abrahamsson, 1970) and Blau (MacIntyre, 1967). These have led to more generalized critiques of the theory (Chadwick-Jones, 1976; Heath, 1976). Nevertheless, the pervasiveness of our own self-interests in determining social behavior based on the premise of an economic metaphor seems solidly established. Social exchange theory seems to indicate rather emphatically the foundational role of self-interest in the human condition.

And yet, there is still something off-putting in the nature of this assessment. Consider Nye's (1982) statement: "Whenever an individual or group has better alternatives (as they perceive them), the theory predicts they will leave their present relationship, position, or milieu for the alternative that offers the better reward—cost outcome" (p. 16-17). Approaching relationships in this regard seems too calculating, overly selfish, and lacking in some fundamental human element. As Planalp (2003) states, "The monetary metaphor makes us all seem so crass, mercenary, and unfeeling" (p. 80). Indeed, there is an off-putting sensibility towards this theory so heavily invested in our own selfishness.

But it is more than just a mere "sensibility" that makes exchange theories seem insufficient. Simply put, humans are composed of factors beyond economic calculation. Psychologist Kent Berridge (1999) notes, "The quality of life is not reducible to its mere quantity of pleasures and pains but includes purposeful, aesthetic, and moral considerations, too. Life is still a series of pleasures and pains, however...and hedonic states determine at least one important aspect of life's qualities" (p. 525). This seems an accurate portrayal. Pleasures and pains are obvious driving forces in human relationships, thus explaining the power of a social exchange model. However, this does not give license to cite self-interest as an exclusive explanatory factor, ignoring other important facets of humanity—namely our emotions and our ethical decisions. Planalp (2003) and Planalp and Fitness (1999) have urged the incorporation of emotions into interpersonal communication research, noting that emotion and cognition work hand in hand. She and her colleagues document the emotional capacity of humans as a driving force behind decisions beyond self-interest. I would add ethical decisions and "ontological

approaches” (Stewart, 2002) as a fundamental human capacity that drives our decisions, often contrary to social exchange paradigms.

Regardless of the approach, ethical implications are present within interpersonal communication research models. This has been shown repeatedly through the consequential ideas of Weaver (1970), the scientific rhetoric of Kuhn (1996), or the dramatism of Burke (1965; 1967). In particular, one must take to heart Weaver’s (1970) statement that “language is sermonic.” By nature, a person, regardless of his or her intent, will be implying some course of action by the very fact that they are speaking. Theories have consequences and those consequences are interpreted ethically. When we use language we are, by its very nature, demonstrating a standpoint. People must participate in an ethical realm, regardless of intent, by nature of their usage of language.

So what are the ethical consequences of social exchange? Most social exchange theories frame human relationships in terms of what Rousseau would call *amour-propre* or *amour de soi*, where *pitie* is merely a desire to reduce another person’s pain in order to gain direct or indirect rewards for ourselves. In other words, the important distinction is between “fitting” self-interest and “unfitting” self-interest. Will this action be effective or not? Will it meet my goals or not? Will I be enhanced over the long term or not? There is an assumption that all interpretation is to be grounded in these terms. Mention of *pitie* or compassion for others is an enigma at best or a fallacy at worst. When considering how emphatically scientists, social and otherwise, have worked to maintain self-interest as a sole explanatory force, it is not surprising that a theory in interpersonal communication would also advocate this approach. The work of sociobiologists has analyzed the animal kingdom to maintain our genetic predisposition. Economists have instituted a financial

model solely on our self-interests. Our government has followed with our individual rights. And philosophers of the Enlightenment such as Descartes and Hobbes began this march in their explication of our selfish natures. Social exchange is the interpersonal communication extension of this effort. Embedded in the language of self-interest and gain is the Hobbsian idea of an ontological understanding of human nature as individualistic, power-hungry, and in “continual competition.” Social exchange brings this into an interpersonal forum. Take the example of a husband caring for a sick spouse. The gaming theory of Foa and Foa (1974) would explain this man as taking an immediate loss in rewards in hopes of future reciprocation; if reciprocation occurs the result is a net gain in profits between the couple. Equity theory (Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1976) would note that raising the status of the less-fortunate individual would enhance one’s own self-image and instate a more appropriate equilibrium by which that person would have no cause to complain. In both cases, everything is framed in terms of self-love. Individual self-interest is theorized to determine action. To a large part, social exchange is responsible for interjecting the ontology of modernity concerning human nature into interpersonal communication theory. The ethical consequence of this Enlightenment approach to the individual is in fostering ground for emotivism (MacIntyre, 1984). Ontologically prioritizing subject-centeredness leads to a dismissal of criteria outside the subjective realm. This radical choice removes possibility for communal ethical standards, and the aesthetic standard enters as a substitute. Preference and the emotivist mentality become the norm, the effects of which perpetuate a “true for you, not for me” mentality and an inability to distinguish a “right” way of thinking. Thus, exchange is rife with emotivism, perpetuating aestheticism.

A critic will immediately reply that most social exchange theorists are not in the business of prescribing behavior; they are describing behavior as it exists and predicting the likelihood of it reoccurring. They are doing an analysis, not creating social change. However, this argument assumes neutrality when it comes to ethical consequences. To believe a given theoretical perspective is ethically neutral ignores Kuhn (1996), Burke (1969), and others who note that our language, indeed our very being, is anything but neutral. When subjected to deconstruction vis-à-vis Derrida, these linguistic features of partiality and imprecision are exposed even more clearly. People cannot be ethically neutral in their theories or teaching. Also problematic is the relevance question posed at the beginning of this dissertation. In regard to students, to what extent can someone help them find healthy relationships if they can only describe and not encourage? A teacher who claims to take no stand will find it difficult to maintain relevance. It is incredibly difficult to be both descriptive and relevant when it comes to human relationships. By only offering a description of what exists, a scholar cannot help guide the norms and precepts that dictate life. We are vested in the ideas through our embodied use of communication. When this fact is recognized, the goal for an interpersonal professor should be able to articulate a better idea of actions that would lead to a “good” relationship in order to retain relevance. The ability to claim this good is impaired by the emotivism encouraged by rampant individualism vis-à-vis social exchange.

Emotivism is but one of the issues emerging from adopting exchange theories in interpersonal communication ontology. Certain dynamics within human relationships are difficult to analyze when understood solely through the lens of self-interest. Trust is one example we will explore here. As one of the fundamental elements of intimacy, trust is

undermined when understood within the exchange paradigm as a means for gaining compliance. From a social exchange standpoint, trust equates to a tool much like the tool of formality (Burgoon & Hale, 1984). Formality is the use of decorum to achieve a greater likelihood of persuasion. Just like one communicates with proper titles in order to persuade through an enhancement of ethos, trust functions as a means for influencing an audience or individual through means of truthfulness, support, and belief. One garners these elements of trust as levers for motivating further compliance. Thus, in social exchange trust is considered a tool for gaining rewards.

However, in action, trust often requires genuine care for the other in order for it to operate and exist. What is special about the compliance-gaining that occurs from one's trust in another person is that it occurs as a result of belief in the speaker's sincerity and authenticity. One must actually *be* truthful—word is connected to deed—not just act truthful. In fact to just *act* truthful, defies the nature of truthfulness shown most clearly in the fact that being revealed as insincere in one's claims is to lose ethos. Thus trust, a correlate of truthfulness, is a function of embodiment, not technique. It is something someone *is* rather than something someone *does*. This makes “trust-as-a-tool” an oxymoron. Trust used as a tool, i.e. a means towards an end, is an artificial use of ethos. The artificial use of ethos as a means rather than an end indicates a *lack* of character which, if perceived, will greatly impair one's persuasiveness. For example, to make chicken soup for a sick girlfriend to elicit future favors lacks ethical character, apparent (on a strictly observational level—one could find other sources of support) in the fact that if she discovered his insincerity, the boyfriend would be regarded as less loving or at least very calculating. Realizing he did this act only so she would be available to clean the

apartment or to cook upon getting well diminishes the kindness. She is being treated as an object rather than a person which makes it difficult to foster intimacy. In short, her trust in his motives would be violated. For trust in this example to be obtained and intimacy to be fostered, one must become more than a commodity. A new vocabulary is needed here to describe what is going on. It is not mere exchange going on here, but rather a decision to treat the girlfriend as an end in herself with the motivation coming from the decision to act on behalf of the other, an ethical motive, rather than profitability. We are not exchanging—we are being spouses or intimate or loving. This is a function of being (later described in terms of acknowledgment), not a function of commodity. Discussions of intimacy are impoverished if explained as a commodity because they cannot recognize anything beyond self-interest.

This brings us back to the fact that altruism is one of the conundrums for Roloff (1981) at the end of his treatise on exchange and the main source of consternation for Wilson (1975) in sociobiology. I would argue this has less to do with other-centeredness as a construct and more to do with the division of self-interest and altruism in the first place. We must go back to the root of the problem—the modern dichotomy of self and other. It has led to the current condition and it would behoove us to put them together again. The metaphor of charitable acknowledgment attempts such a move. First however, it is important to reveal the epistemological and axiological implications stemming from social exchange, which serves as an ontological foundation to several other pervasive theories in communication. Specifically, goal-orientation and intimacy skills depend upon this view of human nature to found their research sets.

Goal-oriented Theories

Berger (2002) states, “Few would dispute the postulates that social interaction is a goal-directed activity and that various kinds of knowledge are vital to the achievement of the goals people pursue in their daily encounters with others” (p. 181). Indeed, goals play a fundamental part in relationships, and at first glance, research on the subject would seem to be neutral when it comes to the self/other dichotomy and emotivist ethics. After all, a goal is an end point, much like a telos, requiring a given set of knowledge and communication skills to make it achievable. Rawlins (1985) divides the conceptions of goals into three major dimensions, asking 1) whether people should use interpersonal communication for communal or individual objectives, 2) whether interpersonal should be used primarily to influence others or achieve understanding, and 3) what the characteristic qualities are of effective speakers (p. 110). It seems sensible that the ethicality of a given goal would be pivotal to the answering of such questions. A person could have a goal of happiness for others just as easily as a goal of gaining compliance. Within Rawlins’ criteria is basis for asking questions towards this end. However, as it is currently framed in several sets of literature, goals prioritize a social exchange mentality and thus have difficulty expressing ethical consequences beyond individualistic motives. This social exchange mentality in the goal-orientation literature begins with the assumption Berger (2002) states here: “People use social interaction to achieve goals. Like language, social interaction is simply a tool” (p. 187). It is this utilitarianism of the human relationship that advocates an exchange model and consequently brings in an emotivist ethic as a result. Research agendas bear this out in the interpersonal communication literature.

Let us start with the research itself. In his discussion of knowledge bases, Berger (2002) indicates the need to “identify types of knowledge that are important to the attainment of goals across a wide spectrum of communication contexts” (p. 183). Namely, this context is in “effectiveness,” defined as “interaction that brings about desired instrumental and communication goals” (p. 183). Efficiency and accuracy are often close correlates of this idea. However Berger notes, relational goals such as “comforting” (Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998) may not be achieved by mere accuracy or efficiency but may require different knowledge. Thus, Berger (2002) divides the classes of knowledge into five areas. Role knowledge concerns what social role you play and how you should act in that role. Person knowledge concerns knowledge as it pertains to what can be expected from a given characteristic known about an individual. Emotion knowledge regards identification of and anticipating actions based upon emotional states. Procedural knowledge concerns what actions should be done to achieve a goal. Finally context knowledge concerns the environment and how it impacts effectiveness.

In and of themselves, these knowledge bases are helpful in describing conditions by which one might construct a message or anticipate action. From a rhetorician’s perspective, one could include “role knowledge,” “emotion knowledge,” etc., into the category of invention and indicate, for example, that an employee should consider the role of his boss as well as her emotional state before asking for a raise. Cicero would not be surprised to see such knowledge bases present in a communication classroom. What becomes problematic is when the ontological assumptions brought to bear upon the use of these knowledge bases lean too heavily on processes centralized on the individual. Knowledge in communication understood namely as a function of the individual,

subjective as a Cartesian philosophy would dictate, analyzes what should be *interpersonal* goals in a very *intrapersonal* way. The issues of concern in this individualized theorizing are cognitive in nature, attempting to understand what is happening in the mind between stimulus and response—the classic black box dilemma—rather than relational in nature where the relationship is seen as a unit, indivisible, lest the meanings be changed into something different than interpersonal. Here, cognition is defined differently than interpretation. Interpretation is the contextual, embodied event of making connection to the other. Cognition is what the biological process by which this occurs. In cognition, to understand the mind translates into understanding motive which in turn provides understanding for relational actions. To find meaning, one must look *intrapersonally* to the individual to find meaning. Interpretation is the broader term taking a stance where individual cognition, context, and relationship are all necessary to accurately assess goals.

To demonstrate the inclination to rely too heavily on cognition alone in goal-orientation theories, we will turn to Hewes and Planalp's (1987) categorization of "communication science." They break communication into three categories: trait approaches focused on individual action, transindividual approaches focused on "regularities in communication as emergent, conventionalized, products of social aggregates" (p. 149), and cognitive/interpretive approaches—the favored approach—focused on the internal workings that actualize goals. The assumption in a "cognitive/interpretive" approach is that:

To be true to our claims as communication theorists, we should always contrast our assertions about the social nature of phenomena with alternative explanations, usually cognitive/interpretive explanations, that reduce the seemingly social to the individual. Thus are the viability and the parsimony of our claims put to the test. (Hewes & Planalp, 1987, p. 170)

The individual's thought processes, and in particular his goals, provide insight into how relationships are functioning. "An understanding of the individual's knowledge, cognitive capacities and emotion is the necessary point of departure for building adequate theories of communication" (p. 172). Cognition is certainly important for comprehension (Bransford & McCarrell, 1974). However, it does not seem to be the only necessary point for departure, nor is it necessarily the best. An active approach to communication (e.g., Schrag, 1986) would argue the subject is multiple, embodied, and temporal (see Chapter 4), and holistically incorporates the biological, the (fragmented) rational, and the socially embedded elements of humanity together. The human relationship is not able to be reduced to the individual because to do so would be to lose interpretive meaning. While it is important to acknowledge we do indeed "focus," "integrate," "store & retrieve," and "select & implement" information in an attempt to achieve goals, such processes can be understood beyond cognition and beyond a metaphor of a tool. There is no separating the individual from the relational context, without a loss of meaning. Thus, what is disconcerting about a cognitive approach to goal-orientation is the assertion that a) the individual is a necessary "departure point" for building "adequate" communication theory and b) the resulting ethical irrelevance for those looking for guidance in their relationships from such studies. Let us address these assertions.

Beginning with a), the focus upon individuality in communication relationships is only truly "necessary" in theories when one has so separated the individual part from the relational whole that one can analyze individual motives separately and without the need of further context in order to justify that theory. When a cognitive/interpretive approach claims the "seemingly social" should be understood via the individual motive, the

communication theory is reducing the whole to the level of the parts. One could call it a synecdoche; the part represents the whole. Such a move oversimplifies the human relationship and thus is not “adequate” as Hewes and Planalp (1987) claim in describing humanity. Premodern thinkers, Aristotle prominent among them, recognized the part cannot stand for the whole without losing meaning. In his discussion of thought, desire, and decision, while he notes that “the principle of decision is desire and goal-directed reason” (*Nich.*, vi.2.1139a), he also recognizes “The function of each of the understanding parts, then is truth. And so the virtues of each part will be the states that best direct it toward the truth” (*Nich.*, vi.2.1139a). The truth in this case is an ethic based on virtues and the polis. Cognition is only important to the extent that those goals lead to ethical consequences; this is firmly in the interpretive realm. Augustine too discusses the “doubt and darkness” of the cognitive realm where “when my mind questions itself about its own powers, it is not easy for it to decide what should be believed” (*Conf.* 10.32.48). In isolation, cognition can create no goals. The mind is “dark” without an ethical context to make sense of the relational outcomes. Thus, to study interpersonal goals with the individual as the center requires simultaneous consideration of the context of such goals. Granted such context is often present in interpersonal studies—Rawlins (1985) notes as much. However, when goals are viewed with too high an emphasis on cognition, communication begins to play the role of neurobiologist. Communication scholars, recognizing there is a whole that is bigger than the sum of its parts, are poised well to appreciate how context shapes goals in an active moment, which, in turn, is shaped by the relationship. Thus, in the case of intimate communication, the concern is what the effect

of a given action and interpretation has on the relationship. This requires that the holistic relational context be incorporated.

To further demonstrate, let us look back at the issue of trust. As we saw with social exchange, trust is more than a tool. It functions as a condition of a relationship where the other is an end, not a means. Thus, Weber & Carter (2003) note trust as an orientation: “The term orientation lies midway between the idea of trust as a structure and the idea of pure malleability found in trust a purely individualized or psychologized phenomenon” (p. 3). Here, “structure” indicates familial bonds that build trust inherently and “malleability” refers to the psychological approaches that “use” trust in multiple ways to achieve self-interests. Orientation refers to the fact that trust is not to be taken for granted or used. It is emergent. Trust cannot be atomized lest it become less than what it really is: an orientation to the other. When we use trust to get what we want, we are no longer participating in trusting behaviors. Thus, individualizing this construct by making it a goal creates too narrow an approach, atomizing the phenomenon, and missing several important relational dynamics.

The narrow “psychological” approach to trust is the way goal-orientation feeds into an exchange mentality. We communicate to get what we want. When Berger (2002) states, “Social interaction is an instrument for attaining a wide panorama of goals” (p. 205), he begins down this path, understanding interaction to be a tool of the individual. We “use” interaction rather than “participate in,” “engage in,” “generate” or otherwise manifest those conditions indicative of a joint or mutual communicative event. This is indicative of a utilitarian process for achieving a foreordained self-conceived goal.

Essentially, this continues with the assumptions of an ontological self-interest, depicted in social exchange theory. In another example, Berger (2002) notes:

Because the emergences of human intelligence, language, and technology are related, language too is a potentially important tool for improving the ease and consistency with which important goals are achieved. Thus, by extension, the ability to coordinate goal-directed actions with others through social interaction is one that potentially augments the human capacity to recognize and get beneficial results (p. 187).

When interacting with others, we look for “beneficial results,” which can be read “achieving the goals of the group or individual.” At first, this seems to open the door to ethical discussion, but there are two issues. First is the issue of effectiveness. Inherently, goal-orientation is well-suited to use the criterion of effectiveness. Unfortunately, this criterion can be ethically problematic (e.g., Nazis were very effective at achieving their goals across Europe but one could hardly call them ethical). Thus, scholars wishing to find ethical ground or “beneficial results” using goal-oriented theories find it necessary to apply another standard—a goal that is more palatable than mere effectiveness. This leads to the second issue. All too often the standard is that of satisfaction because achieving goals is easily tied to personal fulfillment of goals. The individual develops human cognitive capacities in order to achieve individual goals that are believed to be satisfying. Using others for personal gain is a natural extension of this approach. Thus we get the claim that “social interaction is a tool for achieving goals.” An exchange mentality is undeniably a part of this paradigm. Self-interest so dictates our motives that we really have no need to analyze the impact of others beyond how they can serve to make our goals realities. It is a hyper-individualism that leads to emotivism.

This leads to the issues of b) concerning the ethical relevance of goal-orientation when separated from any ontology. It is possible someone might try to separate goal-

orientation and frame it as a deontological method of knowing. However, the relevance of these studies without an ontology is severely limited. Upon getting to the issue of “beneficial results” one cannot, with any confidence, provide guidance on said “benefits” unless one adopts a given ontological assumption about human interaction. Without ontological assumptions, studies in goal-orientation adopt mere descriptive accounts (e.g., “messages will have impact to the degree that the listener’s attention is focused on them...” [Hewes & Planalp, 1987]) which are limited in their application to the field. Unfortunately, time after time it seems description is the best communication offers (Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2000; Lindsey, Greene, Parker, & Sassi, 1995; Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985).

For those who wish to avoid mere description, it is easy to adopt the individualized assumptions of social exchange. Where individualism takes center stage, emotivism is the expected ethical outcome. While goal-orientation does not necessitate this outcome, the implications of understanding relationships as a tool easily facilitate this idea. Hardin (2003) looks at this in terms of trust and gaming theory. Brehm (1992) devotes nearly her entire text on intimacy to such an exchange mentality. McCabe (2003) reflects on cognition and exchange, emphasizing biology as a predicate to relationship. It is possible for other ontologies aside from exchange to be brought to bear upon a goal-orientation (e.g., value theory, utilitarianism, Christianity), but when the assumption is “start with the individual,” we are bound by a Cartesian mentality. An individual adopts a goal based on personal beliefs and desires and there is a necessary subject/object split. The result is often an orientation that emphasizes self-interest which makes it difficult to navigate away from exchange and the road towards emotivism.

While belief is a product of individual assumptions, it is just as much a product of community narratives. This must be seen in any discussion of goals. The lessons of postmodernity explain that language provides more than a tool to achieve individual goals. Language is the channel through which we establish meaning in life. It is the substance of the goal. It is reality and that reality is pliable, unsteady, and deconstructable. Additionally, the subject is deconstructable. Social interactions (i.e. relationships) are not merely tools to get goals accomplished but rather are reasons for existence. The subject is a non-entity outside of this realm of action. This will be defended in more detail in Chapter 4. In the final section, we address how the skills literature teaches intimacy from the technique-driven basis of self-interest.

Intimacy Skills

To this point, we have discussed what essentially serves as a prevalent ontology and epistemology for an individual-centered narrative of interpersonal communication. The ontology is social exchange that assumes individual self-interest as the main human motivation driving relationships. Epistemologically, goal-orientation provides a means to this end as cognitive processes describe how our motivations work, with language serving as the tool for getting work done. Now we can discuss the skills literature which often serves as an axiology for a “narrative of individualism” in the field of interpersonal communication.

The term “skill” denotes actions valued as a result of the given presuppositions. Much like goals, skills are not inherently tied to a self-interested paradigm. What is deemed a “skill” is dependent upon a person’s notion of a “good relationship.” Thus,

differing presuppositions, theoretical backgrounds, and philosophical perspectives would lead to different understandings of what skills should be employed. The skills stemming from an individualist paradigm tend to emphasize psychological ways to foster self-esteem and self-actualization, rhetorical ways to improve persuasive arguments to change ideas, and overall ways to maintain passionate love. These approaches have valuable applications to third parties (e.g., researchers) in confirming or denying “common sense” (Cohen, 1994) or in observing problematic behaviors (e.g., Gottman, 1992). However when these skills are used as ethical guides by individuals (i.e., an axiology) two problems emerge. First, they are easily separated from their narrative structures which leads to technification (Schrag, 1986) and a cynicism about the field’s applicability. Secondly when the interpersonal skills literature uses the criteria of relational satisfaction and effectiveness to determine healthy relationships, measurements are of individual preference and goal achievement. This is essentially measuring the emotivist tendencies of society, and judging good or bad relationships based on the popularity of individual preferences. When the overarching emphasis in an individual-driven intimate relationship is on what makes the self satisfied and/or what is viewed to make the other satisfied, the primary criterion for judging between “good” skills and “bad” ones in this paradigm takes an emotivist ethic.

This leads to two questions: 1) To what extent is a skill disembodied and disembedded? 2) To what extent are satisfaction and effectiveness serving to reinforce emotivism through measuring popular preference? Discussions of interpersonal ethics will be helpful in navigating the answer to these questions.

Technification and the Disembodied, Dis-embedded Skill

What is a skill and how does that understanding serve in interpersonal communication? Skills, according to Spitzberg and Cupach (2002), are “primitive terms referring to behaviors that facilitate competence in interaction” (p. 564). Indeed, competence is an enduring legacy of rhetorical practice. How and when to speak and in what manner have been explicated by Aristotle in *Rhetoric* through ethos-pathos-logos, catalogued by Cicero in *De Inventione* into 5 canons, continued by Quintilian in his expressions of “good men speaking well,” rediscovered through the Renaissance in the works of Valla and later Vico, and has expression today in public speaking textbooks (e.g., Lucas, 2007; Zarefsky, 2007). Rhetoric has never shied away from competence, nor should it. It is fundamental to the active component of communication.

However competence can be defined in different ways. As a result of Sophism and its moral relativism, rhetorical theory has attempted to ground ethical standards in the time and place in which they are located to avoid the manipulation and degradation of society that comes with the deconstruction of language and meaning. Aristotle is functioning out of the Greek polis in his claims about the “golden mean” as a way to achieve ethos; Cicero is very Roman when it comes to describing humans with inborn virtue that is either present or absent; Italian humanist Valla takes Christianity as his moral foundation to temper manipulative tendencies. Simply put, many rhetoricians of the past embedded their theories in culture and tacitly acknowledged this fact in their writing, touting what amounts to a “narrative of faith” (described in Chapter 4).

Interpersonal communication attempts the same thing when it attempts “situational integration” (Rawlins, 1985) where competence is the “earmark of the era” (p. 115). However, interpersonal communication skills can ground themselves outside of communal efforts where rhetoric and situational approaches find moral conditions and into what Burleson and Samter (1994) call a “functional approach.” In definition, “a functional approach stresses the things that certain relationships typically *do* for people and, consequently, the things that people come to look to those relationships *for*” (p. 62). This is a personal standard of goal achievement and emotional fulfillment. While one might contest the use of satisfaction and effectiveness as its sole criteria (see next section), a functional approach *can* have valuable explanations of communication phenomena (e.g., social support; Burleson, 1990) as they pertain to individuals. However can be a tendency among those interpreting these studies (e.g., interpersonal textbook authors) to separate the technique from the person enacting it, the situation it is enacted in, and the ethical standards which dictated its use.

For example, Gottman and Levenson (1992) note the need to balance the ratio of positive to negative communication behaviors to at least 8:1 to avoid dissolution; 5:1 is recommended. This measurement can be helpful for a counselor or a researcher studying a relationship, and has been confirmed in further studies (Huston & Vangelisti, 1991). However, there is a distinction to be made between the usefulness of this standard for the researcher and the average person in an intimate relationship. For someone attempting to enact this standard, the focus on the ratio can disembodify the act from the ethical conduct it is requesting (e.g., acknowledgment of the other through positive remarks). If a spouse just says kind words to elicit the outcome suggested in the study, this separates the words

of the study from the ethical context in which the relationships were being studied. In other words, someone enacting kindnesses must *really* mean the positive comments he or she is saying, not just say them to meet a ratio. The ratio only is “real” to the extent that it fits to a given time and place, with appropriate ethical reasoning. It is embedded in a narrative and embodied in a time/place. Paradoxically, the person enacting the ratio must do so without focusing on the ratio. This is an example of what Schrag (1986) describes as “technification”:

When the production of a work of art is reduced to the techniques of its realization, that which is seen to be at work in the work of art is occluded. But the universalization of technique into a technicism is a phenomenon separate from *techne* itself, and can with equal consequence infiltrate the regions of *episteme* and *phronesis*. (p. 20).

Schrag here is referring to the three realms of knowledge described by Aristotle. In all three, “technification” or a separation of the production of a work to its mere techniques, results in reduction of the whole to its parts. In other words, the divorce “skills” described above are performances seemingly devoid of performers.

Textbooks, because of their extra distance from the research, are particularly at risk for the technification of skills because they are taking valid, well-researched ideas, useful to the third party, analyzing them, and trying to use them as guidance for relationships. If recipients of this knowledge use it as a technique outside of a narrative or ethical paradigm, then there is a risk of technification. For example, consider the very popular description of communication practices that are preludes to divorce—Gottman’s (1994) “four horsemen of the apocalypse” and “5:1 ratio” of positive to negative comments for relational health. When couples practice communication patterns of criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling, Gottman notes divorce is not far behind (p. 414). There are at least two ways to approach his work as it pertains to its

usefulness to people in conducting their intimate relationships. One would be the rhetoric-based approach where Gottman advocates an ethic that should be adopted within a community. In the case of divorce, the argument would be that divorce is bad for society and interpersonal relationships and should be avoided. Gottman (1994) points towards this by commenting on the need for “systematic research on interventions designed for divorce prevention” (p. 381). He cites a variety of negatives of divorce for society on the couple, their children, and family and then proceeds to describe those actions that lead to divorce. This research is all embedded in an implied narrative that divorce is negative for relationships and society and should be prevented—an approach that could be helpful to someone seeking guidance for their marriage and their society. However, when textbooks both lack an overarching narrative and are using skills as suggestions for healthy relationships, they take a different interpretive approach, framing divorce “de-escalation” as a technified skill. This occurs because the text is removed from the situation in which the phenomenon was embedded. The 5:1 ratio is not in and of itself the act that creates the healthy relationship. It is the ethical acknowledgment that comes with the act. However, Trenholm and Jensen (2004) cite it in terms that show it as more “firm” than it is. Consider this statement on criticism: “Frequent episodes of mutual criticism can quickly drown any desire to praise or make affirmative character statements about one’s partner, making it less likely that the couple will be able to maintain the 5:1 ratio that typifies stable relationships” (p. 317). Or consider this antidote to stonewalling: “One of the simplest methods of resisting the tendency to stonewall is to make conscious efforts to replace your blank stares with back-channeling, which is the use of head nods, brief vocalization...or other gestures to indicate that you are listening and have not

withdrawn emotionally” (p. 318). In both cases suggestions made by Gottman in the context of overarching relational health have been technified, i.e., separated from the situation they are researched, to the degree that they are missing the embedded “spirit” which brings meaning to the research. Head nods without true acknowledgment will not show positivity. Following a ratio will not bring a healthy relationship unless backed by genuine concern for the other. When a textbook shows an interpersonal phenomenon as separate from an over-arching narrative structure (i.e., an ethical reason for a given action), it risks technifying a given phenomenon rendering it less helpful for students.

This indicates a helpful necessity for communication pedagogy: skills if used must be embedded in a narrative that provides an ethical set because it is embedded in an individual who believes that narrative. When interpersonal communication is portrayed as “disembodied,” it is also dis-embedded from the ethical standards that provide meaning to a set of research. This leads to a description of techniques that ultimately are of limited use to an individual as it only generalizes the thoughts and feelings of other individuals rather than providing ethical guidance through a defense of an embodied practice. The framing of these actions as technified rather than framing them as embodied, textured events is problematic. Essentially, the ability to find two-variable correlations in human relationships without losing meaning is difficult. The mind simply is not that linear or simplistic, a point acknowledged by Burleson and Denton (1997). Gibbs (2006), who studies cognitive science notes “All human activity involves embodied correlations. It is misleading to suggest that perception and action are discrete, independent processes that are causally related in a linear way” (p. 43). The brain alone is insufficient to explain our perceptions and motives. According to Gibbs (2006),

“Evidence shows that people represent certain properties quite differently in different contexts” (p. 81). To separate a given action from its context and attempt to generalize it is to deny its embodied nature.

IPC Skills and the Criteria of Satisfaction and Effectiveness

There is a common presuppositional set that tends to be adopted by the skills literature—that of social exchange. Earlier in this dissertation, the downsides of emphasizing self-interest too heavily were discussed regarding its emotivist tendencies. Such emotivism is counter-intuitive to the nurturing of trust which is a necessary condition of intimacy, undermines long-term commitment in institutions such as marriage, and problematizes ethical judgments because of the individual relativism that comes from emotivism. The over-emphasis on satisfaction and effectiveness as criteria for determining healthy relationships tends to perpetuate this emotivist ethic.

Criteria need to be emphasized that serve an overarching ethical criterion that conjoins with appropriateness (i.e., competence). When communication emphasizes satisfaction and effectiveness as measures, the field is measuring individual preference, and thus making claims about “good” skills that may only be good in the sense that they make people feel good—the emotivist trap. To demonstrate, let us look to IPC literature and the primary criteria for establishing “good” relationships. As described in the introduction, there are primarily five criteria (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2002) used in determining what is “good” for a relationship: satisfaction, efficiency, effectiveness, appropriateness, and ethics. As Vangelisti (2002) attests, “Relational satisfaction has been the outcome variable of choice for most scholars studying interpersonal communication in romantic relationships” (p. 667). These studies have led to numerous

skill sets. To increase satisfaction, relationships should avoid high dominance and neuroticism (Thomsen & Gilbert, 1997), equalize power in the dyad (Richmond, McCrosky, & Roach, 1997), maintain “impulse control” (Kelly & Conley, 1987), have a high ratio of positive to negative comments (Gottman & Levenson, 1992), lessen “trait anxiety (Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000), use clear communication (Boyd & Roach, 1977), lessen negativity (Huston & Vangelisti, 1991), and even avoid smoking (Gilbert & Spielberger, 1987). While the list could continue suffice it to say there are several skills given to improve relationships. All the above use satisfaction or effectiveness as criteria.

Why is there this prioritization of the criteria of satisfaction? On a theoretical level the criteria of satisfaction corresponds well to a self-interested paradigm. When the health of the relationship is measured solely in terms of self-satisfaction, what are essentially being measured are degrees of preference—in short a study of emotivism. This puts ideas such as self-esteem and persuasive techniques at the heart the skills literature. Consider the study by Huston and Vangelisti (1991). They conclude that “receiving affection was positively related to satisfaction” (p. 729) and that negativity predicts future declines in satisfaction (p. 730). Implicit in this is that people should practice the communication skills of giving affection and avoiding negativity. The study does not suggest how to do this but gives the implied message that it should be done for a “healthier” marriage. This health is determined by the long-term satisfaction in the individuals. People prefer affection and prefer positive comments. When they get this they are happier with their marriage—a point that fits perfectly with a self-interested paradigm.

So why is this overemphasis on satisfaction so problematic? The self is after all a very important part of communication. One could argue at this point that IPC is inherently oriented towards the self in this regard and such studies are perfectly acceptable. Indeed the self is an important dynamic in a relationship. However, to explain the problems of using the self as the sole orientation for criteria of relational health, consider a metaphor from chemistry. Relationships are “compounds” like carbon monoxide created by individuals which are the “elements” (a carbon molecule and an oxygen molecule) composing them. To understand the compound one must understand the element. In this regard, the study of the “human element” is interesting and necessary. However, when separated out, these elements display distinct properties from the compound. Oxygen is necessary to life. Carbon is the building block of life. However, carbon monoxide is poisonous. Similarly, relationships display different properties when studied as a “compound” than when studied as “elements.” A study of the relationship as a whole takes on properties more like that of organizational communication with ethnographies, critical methodologies, and interpretive studies. As Burleson and Denton (1997) note, satisfaction alone is too simplistic and understanding of relationships; in addition to satisfaction one should also consider the function of the skill examined, the person examined, the distress of the couple, and the gender of the individual as moderating factors.

One of the relational properties that is most difficult to ascertain through studies of individual satisfaction is love. Indeed, Vangelisti and Huston (1994) separate it out from marital satisfaction in the sense that the emotion love is not predictably tied to satisfaction. I would argue the same could be said when love is considered ethically. In

an ethic of unconditional love, there is a long-term ethic that is denoted as the source of long-term relational health but it does not always correlate with short-term satisfaction. As Baer (2003) notes, “We all must be in relatively one-sided relationships at one time or other. If it’s true that we all need to be loved at times when we have little to give in return, it’s equally true that we all need the experience of loving without expectation of reward” (p. 259). In this case, satisfaction would not be the standard to which one would attribute a happy marriage but rather the standard of unconditional love.

There is a standard of “health” in a relationship. That standard often revolves around personal satisfaction when it comes to the skills literature. Yet one must often go beyond expressed personal preferences to determine what makes someone “happy.” To lean too heavily on satisfaction as the primary criterion for establishing positive relationships puts the self in the central role of determining what is “competent” communication for a given situation rather than looking more broadly to the society or the relationship for ethical guidance. The self is the judge of the good rather than a moderating factor that comes with regard to the other. As Spitzberg and Cupach (2002) note, scholars should not depend upon one criterion too heavily because each has its flaws. To depend too much on appropriateness is to become what Hart et al. (Hart & Burks, 1972; Hart, Carlson, & Eadie, 1980) define as a rhetorical reflector, always looking to the other person to determine behavior. To become too dependent on fidelity is to become a noble self, where there is little need for such outside influence. The “rhetorical sensitive” uses a mixture of society and self, determining an ethic, in order to establish what is appropriate. What this seems to be saying is that to judge the worthiness of a skill based only on its creation of self-satisfaction is an insufficient criteria set.

Interpersonal communication should look for adequacy in skills from other sources, with the overarching one being ethical consequences.

Review of the Narrative of Individualism

What has been attempted in this chapter is to depict a “narrative of individualism” as represented in the field of interpersonal communication. Social exchange is the primary theory which provides the basis for this narrative. Starting with the assumption that all human motivations are founded on self-interest, the theory depicts actions in relationships as dependent on individual satisfaction or “profits.” If “losses” are experienced and there is no potential for future gain, an individual is likely to leave the relationship. One could even say he or she *should* leave the relationship because happiness, the primary goal for individuals, will probably not be achieved. Goal-orientation in interpersonal communication, adds to the narrative of self-interest by providing a cognitive approach to how individuals make decisions. Language is a tool that allows us to construct arguments and navigate circumstances in order to achieve our goals. The criterion of effectiveness, inherent to this approach, presents moral dangers, so satisfaction serves as an easy correlate. Exchange dovetails nicely with the idea that social interaction is a tool for achieving goals. Finally, one must develop intimacy skills to achieve the goals and self-interests. Several suggestions were mentioned in studies, such as a balance of positive and negative behaviors, empathetic concern, and handling criticism.

Over the course of this chapter, the narrative of individualism presented several areas of concern. The ethical consequence of a focus on individual satisfaction or

preference is often emotivism, which provides very little ground upon which to justify standards of right and wrong. In place of a community, which provides a socially agreed-upon standard or belief, an individual's taste provides an aesthetic standard for moral decisions. As a result of this difficulty judging between aesthetic preferences, professors would have difficulty recommending one practice above another unless it is stated in terms of popularity i.e., a majority of people were satisfied as a result of this practice. While this might seem effective, it essentially amounts to an *ad populum* argument.

Additionally, social exchange is unable to provide ground to foster important elements of intimacy requiring authenticity rather than technique. Intimacy skills have a tendency to hold a posture of technique rather than embodiment as a result. Trust, a major factor in intimacy, serves as an example of such an authenticity-based concept. Self-interested individuals provide help in order to elicit future gains. Thus the partners can only foster trust to the extent that he or she can provide future gains—a risky proposition for long-term relationships. One final critique is that of relevance. When there is an inability to create standards beyond individual preference, there is an inclination to avoid prescribing behaviors of any sort so as to respect individual choice. Understandably, there is a need to refrain from absolutism; yet, it is equally bad to merely maintain a descriptive posture that has little bearing on everyday relationships (Weaver, 1970).

There may be a way to regain a posture of relevance and ethical guidance from within the narrative of individualism. However to this point, such ground has been difficult to find. Therefore, rather than continue trying to navigate through the presuppositions of this narrative, a new narrative is suggested for reinterpreting relational

literature in terms of charitable acknowledgment rather than individual self-interest. In the second half of this study, the move is made to establish relationships as sites for ethical action. To do this the self must be reframed, deconstructed even, in order to deprioritize a subject-centered perspective. But this must be done without submitting to relativism. It is hoped that through communicative praxis, ground can be established so a narrative can be constructed to provide an alternative to the narrative of self-interest with the narrative of charitable acknowledgement.

Chapter 4

Active Relationships

The goal of this chapter is to reestablish the philosophical ground from which to make ethical claims by reestablishing the ground from which to conceive of subjectivity (i.e., the individual). In other words, this is the interpretive method by which one can avoid the errors of the self/other dichotomy, and thus reinterpret interpersonal communication in terms of charitable acknowledgment. This is done in three sections. First, a review is given of the lessons of modernity and postmodernity to depict the problems to overcome. The problems of modernity for the ethical conduct of relationships are noted in the emotivist ethic and the oversimplification of relationships into a self-interest/other-centered dichotomy. The problems of the postmodern response have been noted in the impoverished ground for judgment between ethical standards, the deconstruction of the subject, and the aesthetic standard for the good. So how do we reflect both the need for complexity in dealing with human motive while maintaining a standard by which to judge relationships? In response, we turn to Schrag, Augustine, and Hyde to reestablish the subject and provide ground from which to make ethical claims.

The second part of the chapter depicts communication as a function of a decentered subject, as conceived by Schrag and Augustine, that takes place in action. We must conceive of communication in active paradigms, not static ones. As we will see, an active approach can help resolve some of the pitfalls of a technified approach.

Communication is defined as an embodied and embedded use of symbols to depict ideas. This is the philosophical framework from which one can build a view of relationships that incorporates ethics without entering into a mode of objectivism or absolutism. We will show how the active view of a relationship necessitates a focus on the ethic chosen within the relationship rather than the individuals who comprise it. As Wilmot (2002) states, the relationship comprises a “third” that exists as an entity in and of itself comprised of both people together enacting a given story but larger than either one in the sense that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Thus the focus on the ethic can be put in terms of a narrative, a story with a past, present, and future, that defines the right thing to do in a given situation. By identifying the ethical perspectives agreed upon within the relationship and studying the corresponding actions that emerge from these perspectives, one can begin to anticipate “healthy” relationships. An alternative narrative of interpersonal communication emerges focusing on relational ethics rather than individual self-interests.

A Review of the Lessons of Modernity and Postmodernity

There are several lessons to be learned from modernity as they relate to intimate relationships. As depicted throughout the preceding chapters, modern approaches to the individual primarily look at motive in terms of self-interest and the degree to which a given action is driven by subject-centered intentions. Rousseau believed that for a society to be healthy there must be a sense of *amour de soi* (beneficial self-love) that was contrasted to *amore propre* (narrow self-interest/unseemly pride) and conjoined with *charité (pitié)* (produces anguish when we see suffering). This was an attempt to provide

an appropriate balance of self and other in relationships and society at large. Today, the navigation between self-love and *pitié*, also framed as egoism and altruism, is still disputed, but today some people doubt that charity is a viable phenomenon at all. The modern attempt to simplify this “love conundrum” has resulted in a de-emphasis of altruism and a prioritization of individual power and potentiality (e.g., Nietzsche, 1967; Sartre, 1981; Rorty, 1989). The philosophical ground for altruism has disintegrated to the point that some sociobiologists even claim *pitié* does not exist (e.g., Dawkins, 1978; Wilson, 1975). Psychology, sociology, and economics all have dominant strains reflecting a direct assumption of an egocentric view of humanity (Grant, 1997, p. 323).

The notion of inherent self-interest has become so ingrained in human thinking that several ethical treatises disagree that other-centeredness can be a fundamental human characteristic and move the argument instead to how to most efficiently manage self-interests for maximum gains for both the individual and society (e.g., Bentham’s teleological arguments [1789/1948], Mill’s [1863/1993] theories of utilitarianism, Gauthier’s [1986] notion of morality and advantage, and Rawls’s [1971/1999] deontological contractual justice). Simply put, when the field of interpersonal communication focuses on romantic relationships as ways of satisfying self-interests, it is continuing in the modern trend of psychology, philosophy, ethics, economics, and biology.

But there are ethical pitfalls to looking at relationships in terms of self-interest as do social exchange, goal orientation, and intimacy skills theories in interpersonal communication studies. Emotivism is the most profound of these pitfalls. Emotivism is directly tied to a self-interested paradigm. When individual preference is the only way to

distinguish right and wrong we are left without ethical ground to establish community or relationships. To get my needs met is the top priority—self-interest reigns. Yet trust, a concept fundamental to intimacy, can be depicted as a function of an ethical commitment to the other (Weber & Carter, 2003) that stands in contrast to depictions of trust as a function of self-interest and reciprocity (see Ostrom & Walker, 2003). Trust, argued in the previous chapter, is undermined by pure self-interest. When someone's relational goals are prioritized based on personal satisfaction, there is a significant decrease in the likelihood that, for example, a man can trust a woman not to use him merely as a means to get what she wants.

So what is the alternative? Immediately one could jump to other-centeredness as a focus. Negate self through a focus on the other. In short, practice altruism over egoism. But arguments have been levied that this should not be considered a “healthy” perspective either (e.g., Dawkins, 1978). One cannot deny that individuals have needs. Should a person practice self-negation that results in his/her own pain and suffering? To sustain this practice is to deny one's own life. While philosophies such as those of 18th century French neo-Augustinians may have claimed such denial was virtuous, it certainly is not sustainable. Hobbes (1985/1651) notes our own incapacity towards sustained motives of benevolence. And thus, the whole debate has gone around and around as philosophers from Hobbes and Rousseau to Dawkins and Bateson discuss the place of egoism and altruism. Are we self-interested? Should we be self-negating? Are we capable of altruism? Are our motives pure? Here the question is asked, why must the debate be framed in terms of some over-arching motive of self versus other?

MacIntyre (1967) argues against this “a priori characterization of human motives” (p. 466). When relationships are framed in terms of a dichotomy between self-interest and other-interest it is difficult to conceive of ways to ground ethic-driven approaches to relationships. While scholars of self-interested approaches recognize from experience the need for others, it is difficult to incorporate them into self-interested theories. Thus we get Dawkins (1978) intimidated by altruism, Roloff (1981) cataloguing social exchange’s shortcomings, Planalp (2003) relaying the on-going difficulties of social exchange in explaining altruism, and a field devoted to interpersonal communication that has a hard time finding ground upon which to explain trust and love, ideas that defy self-interest. Theories that have perpetuated a priori self-interest, as seen in interpersonal communication, lead to an intellectual cul-de-sac where it is incredibly difficult to incorporate complex human motives because they are only framed in terms of self-interest or altruism. So what is the way out of this cul-de-sac? The journey begins by reframing the view of the subject.

Thus enters postmodernity. The past several decades have seen mounting questions against the modern notions about the primacy of science, the idea of progress, and, more important for this dissertation, the primacy of the “self.” In looking for philosophical ground, postmodern deconstructions provide a means to clear intellectual space. When we consider recent philosophical thinking called postmodern, we begin to recognize clearly that the subject’s ideas are dependent upon the norms of a given community as established in linguistic interaction. These rhetorical roots make the interpretation of individual action very open and “playable.” Derrida clearly showed us the fragility of words and the ability to deconstruct meaning. With words being so

“playable”, it is a short step to also question the ground upon which the subject is constructed. Cartesian logic is no longer capable of establishing an a priori subject predicated on the ability to think. Our very thoughts are rhetorical and open to interpretation. The subject is deconstructed and the conception of action being a dichotomy of self-interest and self-denial is seen to be overly simplistic as it misses the more subtle power dynamics at work in a given action (Foucault, 1978). We see that interpretation can be as broad as the rhetorical possibilities allow—in theory limitless.

But what becomes of ethics in this environment where actions take place on “a bottomless chessboard where Being comes into play” (Derrida, 1986, p. 414)? This question of ethics is the problem that emerges from the reinterpretation of the subject. It seems difficult to reinvigorate the philosophical ground for other-focused action in today’s historical moment in regard to the study of interpersonal intimate romantic relationships when the intellectual ground is “unstable” and at “infinite play.” There is no stability when rhetorical theory cannot establish strong foundations for meaning. Without ground for making ethical distinctions, there is little hope for encouraging “healthy” relationships.

Thus there are two problems here. The first deals with modernity. Stemming from rampant individualism, MacIntyre (1984) describes the dangers of “emotivism” as it prevails in ethical decision-making in today’s society. The second deals with postmodernity. One cannot deny the persuasive argument that the subject is not the center of knowing and that language is not an objective medium. Indeed, the accuracy of the postmodern critique of subjectivity and the introduction of deconstruction as an effective approach to hegemonic institutions is hard to deny. So what ground is there upon which

to make ethical distinctions? Or put another way, *what is the interpretive methodology by which one can understand interpersonal communication in intimate relationships so that the pitfalls of the self/other dichotomy can be avoided.* The restoration begins with the following: 1) To reinterpret the subject out of its central position where emotivism is rampant while avoiding deconstruction of the subject to the point of relativism, a “middle ground” is suggested here founded by Schrag’s decentered self and Augustine’s idea of the subject. This is a subject who is embodied, temporal, and multiple; this nature is established in action. 2) The prioritization of context and groundedness stresses the importance of the “third.” The third is the relationship one has with another individual, group, or community providing an over-arching ethical conception of a “fitting response.” This third often takes the structure of a narrative. This third, when expressed vis-à-vis the philosophical constructs of Hyde and Augustine, can create an interpersonal narrative that may be helpful for providing more practical ethical application in interpersonal communication—a conception that moves beyond mere description to provide guidance in healthy relationships.

Communication as a Function of Action

Victor Hugo (1987/1862) notes, “There is one spectacle greater than the sea: That is the sky; there is one spectacle greater than the sky: That is the interior of the soul” (p. 219). The self has been a source of intense study especially during the Enlightenment largely because it is such a “spectacle.” It is vast, complicated—and imperfect. Scholars who have inherited modernity, in their attempts to encapsulate intimate relationships in terms of self-interest, have been handicapped by a vocabulary that has been limited to

dichotomous motives—either egoist or altruistic. Intimate relationships are frequently judged in terms of satisfaction (e.g., Vangelisti & Huston, 1994; Vangelisti, 2002), and communication within these relationships is framed as a tool (e.g., Berger, 2002). By adopting this “tool” mentality, there are certain elements of relationships such as trust and love that cannot be “wielded” without losing their inherent nature and thus become warped or diminished. Additionally, communication as a tool understands words as neutral (Berger, 2002), which is problematic in a postmodern world. The biggest lesson of postmodernity and indeed much of rhetorical theory is that words, by their very connection to imperfect humans, do not allow such neutrality. However, this lack of neutrality does not necessitate relativism. There is ground where words can be connected to deeds, allowing experience and reality to build trust in symbols.

By understanding communication and consequently relationships in action, an attempt can be made to depict Hugo’s “spectacle” with more flexibility of interpretation. Consequently, such a framework for relationships would allow interpersonal communication theory the ability to provide more ethical guidance rather than being limited to mere description. To establish this intellectual ground, first there needs to be a solid emphasis on the importance of connecting word and deed. Augustine provides several metaphors on this account. Secondly, the subject needs to be reinterpreted such that one can avoid the pure subjectivity that gives the illusion of philosophical foundation while resisting the deconstruction that comes so easily with a purely rhetorical understanding. This falls in the realm of what Schrag describes as the “decentered self.” Finally, the subject needs to be understood in action, thus looking for valences within which the self is established (i.e., narratives, relationships) rather than relying on motives.

Word and Deed

Connecting word and deed is the fundamental metaphor of an active paradigm of communication. This approach avoids the relativism of the deconstructionist metaphor of “infinite play” while avoiding the technification of the “neutral tool” metaphor of modernity. The active impetus of connecting word and deed emphasizes the nature of symbols as embodied in a human being whose use of these symbols concurrently shapes his or her worldview as that world shapes the use of those words. This is not a process with parts parsed out, but rather is an interpretive action where words are only as understandable as the corresponding actions to which they are associated. Meaning is greater than the sum of its words—the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The words used in conversation correlate to reality around us and this must be taken seriously, i.e. enacted, in order to avoid relativism.

To make this claim, the word must be understood first not as a written symbol but as a spoken symbol. Derrida is able to advocate deconstruction as an epistemology because of his emphasis on the written word. The written symbol is static, limp, and in need of enlivenment through an interpreter, a role deconstructionists fill however they deem fit; this interpretation may or may not be the imagined interpretation of the embodied author. When used sparingly by someone within a given narrative, such unconventional interpretations are thought-provoking and can allow growth. When used liberally as the primary approach to life, these interpretations can be damaging to the fabric of community. This is the difference between the sophism of Isocrates and the sophism of Gorgias. Isocrates was a proponent of *dissoi logoi*, yet his participation in Athenian society and belief in the pan-Hellenic movement tempered his words lest the

land he loved be harmed by his actions. Gorgias was an outsider whose *dissoi logoi* was not tempered by the communal narrative, and thus felt no objection to training students to argue any side of an argument. Rhetoric was primary, not the narrative. In short, Isocrates subjected rhetoric to a narrative that connected word and deed, whereas Gorgias viewed rhetoric as all-encompassing and thus was bounded only by his own intellectual inventive capabilities. To avoid an all-encompassing deconstructionist paradigm, texture must be provided by a recognition of embodiment coming from a connection of word to deed—a lived narrative. Interpretation is done by a linguistic being who breathes life into words because they have been spoken, enacted, and thus understood. In this sense, the oral takes precedence over the written in an active paradigm.

Consider an active communication paradigm in regard to the example of “beauty” as conceived by Diatima (vis-à-vis Plato) in *Phaedrus*. Beauty is depicted as a Form to be discovered, independent of human interpretation and Sophistic manipulation. However, from an active communication paradigm, this is only a partially correct assessment. Beauty is discovered in lives lived and experienced. Plato does not acknowledge the enactment and reformation of beauty that takes place in the human dynamic world that connects word and deed. Sophists Gorgias and Protagoras acknowledge this dynamism of the word. They would likely claim beauty is not static in a transcendent realm but is living in the world around us in argumentation. Our words shape our deeds. Yet at the same time, argumentation-as-epistemology, because of its instability, fails to provide ethical ground from which the polis can remain stable and vibrant. There is no source outside individual preference from which beauty can be understood, because there is no stability in language—a popular reason for the Athenian population’s mistrust of latter-

day Sophists (Herrick, 2007). Thus actions must ground words as well. This simultaneous connection of words shaping deeds and deeds grounding words is only possible when communication is dynamic and fluid. In an active paradigm, a community together interprets what is beautiful, shares it with one another, learns through our mistaken identifications, and respectfully disagrees with community members whose interpretations are outside lived reality.

But what of errant communities? The “disagreements with community members” mentioned in the last statement is especially pertinent to a post-WWII world. “Lived reality” as determined in the community of Germany interpreted a holocaust as necessary for a “good society.” Rhetoric played a role in making this word enacted. How then can we judge communities? The tempering agent is the necessity for *respect* as a presupposition of active communication. Respect is defined here as acknowledging the value of peoples’ beliefs, actions, or at the very least their being. It is feasible that someone may not be able to respect belief or actions; but being is always to be respected. For example, if a Quaker mother fundamentally disagrees with her son’s going to war, she may not in fact be able to respect his beliefs; they are fundamentally at odds with her own beliefs. She may indeed not even respect her son’s actions, viewing them as senseless, violent, and contributing to a world of sin. Nonetheless, because she respects her son as her son, i.e. his being, all hope of communication is not lost. Indeed, as with most mothers, they never lose this unconditional love. As James Joyce states, “Whatever else is unsure in this stinking dunghill of a world a mother's love is not” (Khurana, 2007). Thus, it is on the foundation of respect that love can exist despite ideological differences. Were she to abandon respect all together, all bonds would be broken and his potential

death in a war would be met with scorn. When Bok (1999) notes violence as one of the primary actions that destroy society, this is what she is talking about. To deny a person the fundamental respect that allows them to live is to deny the ground from which healthy interpersonal communication can continue. To deny respect predicates violence whether in the microcosm of relational dysfunction or a macrocosm of communal destruction. Thus, respect serves as an important presupposition for the connection of word and deed as enacted in relationships.

Two other presuppositions for an active paradigm of communication connecting word and deed emerge in the work of Augustine—humility and a narrative of faith. Let us look first to the narrative of faith. First, the question should be answered why use Augustine here? Indeed, a chain of individuals in rhetorical theory hold ideas that advocate such a word/deed metaphor and thus an active paradigm. Isocrates has already been discussed as an advocate of the Greek ethical structure. Aristotle through the “golden mean” pursues a lived, experiential word with an emphasis on technique. Cicero continued and expanded upon this train of thought within a Roman setting. Quintilian advocated rhetoric as lived by a “good” person, namely a Roman citizen. Burke (1969) would look at the dramatic word put into action by symbol-using animals whose identification with one another and their environment gives ground for meaning. Bakhtin (1993) looks at utterances as enacted and polyphonic, emphasizing an oral understanding of the word. Each of these authors could defend the active communication paradigm. However, Augustine is chosen here as the primary subject through whom word and deed is discussed for a couple of different reasons. First, his presuppositions for the active approach give guidance in how faith in a narrative provides ethical guidance. In addition,

his Christian narrative is still adopted by millions today, thus giving an exegetical purpose (as opposed to the Greek polis or the Roman forum). Finally, his ties to rhetoric provide nuance that avoids the Platonic temptation to castigate rhetoric for its manipulative qualities, thus simultaneously avoiding the static, lifeless word that is open to deconstruction. The appreciation for an embodied narrative of faith that advocates respect and humility provides adequate presuppositional ground for an active approach to communication.

However, the use of a narrative of faith requires more defense, especially when considering a modern understanding of “rationality.” When it comes to interpreting reality, those who espouse social exchange ideologies often look at language as a neutral tool, with human rationality providing the guiding hand. Rationality in this case commonly means a modern scientific approach—translated in interpersonal communication as a “theory-method” complex (Poole, McPhee, & Canary, 2002). For those individuals, Augustine, with his emphasis on faith, might be seen as a figure who is anachronistic to today’s world due to what might be considered an “irrational” approach. For example, arguments like Augustine’s have been cited by Dawkins (2006) as “actively debauching the scientific enterprise. It teaches us not to change our minds, and not to want to know exciting things that are available to be known. It subverts science and saps the intellect” (p. 284). This “sapping of the intellect” composes a common argument against “narratives of faith” because such beliefs are deemed unreasonable in that they are unscientific. Indeed Augustine’s understanding of humanity relies upon a Christian narrative of faith. Nonetheless, it is not the Christian argument necessarily that needs to influence today’s scholar but rather the indirect appeal to a *narrative of faith* that should

be adopted and understood. “Faith” in this sense is understood as a belief system that underlies one’s ethical choices. A narrative of faith composes a public story of how that faith is chosen and expressed (i.e., Arnett & Arneson, 1999). It is argued here that the private sphere can also be approached in terms of how a narrative can establish a dwelling place for ethical action. Ethical consequences of a given narrative are of utmost importance to intimate relationships. It is this *generalized* ability to speak from a narrative that can (and I would argue should) be accepted. The specifics of the narrative are the grounds for moral debate as judged in terms in their embodied practice (e.g., vis-à-vis Fisher’s [1989] fidelity and probability). Narrative, then, is not a process but an orientation towards ethics, action, and motives.

Simply put, it must be recognized that Dawkins, too, is speaking from a narrative, in that he speaks from a “rational tradition beginning from the contingency and positivity of some set of established beliefs” (MacIntyre, 1988, p. 360). That narrative is one of modernity related in depth in Chapter 2. His sociobiological perspective is critiquing a narrative of Christianity as unreasonable based on sociobiology’s presuppositions of reasonableness. Indeed, such a discussion of presuppositions is the level on which this dissertation argues interpersonal communication could be conducted with more rigor; we tend to focus heavily on epistemological methodology rather than ontological presuppositions and axiological effects. Problems stem as much from a subject’s assumed neutrality as with the content of their argument. Communication scholars should make themselves aware of personal biases they may hold against belief systems that compose narratives. It is these belief systems that shape ethical approaches and thus shape the way relationships are understood. Thus, in addition to whether something is being measured

correctly, an equally valuable question to ask when considering human relationship is whether a belief of a narrative produces healthy or unhealthy consequences as seen in their embodied practice within a given community.

Augustine speaks to us today because he provides an example of a narrative and then defends that narrative as healthy. To do this, he admits to the errors of interpretation in humanity which may pervert a given narrative, and simultaneously defends the “reasonableness” of faith in that it is enacted in word and deed. Thus, in defense against a modern claim of “unreasonable” faith, Elshtain (1995) notes, “Augustine is sometimes seen as a being in a headlong plunge from reason into that heart of darkness the enlightened think of as faith. Wrong. He is in flight from a distorted love of reason” (p. 52). Rather than avoiding reason, Augustine searches to “order” reason in submission to a narrative of faith. As Elshtain (1995) notes:

Augustine navigated the rough waters between the extremes of a fideism that despises reason and a rationalism that excludes faith. He granted wide epistemic berth to what we would now call natural science. Whatever can be explained in this way, let it be so. The mistake lies in thinking that *everything* can fall under a singly epistemic domain. (p. 57).

Indeed, Augustine famously stated that “wherever he may find truth, it is his Lord’s” (*OCD*, II.xviii.28) indicating there is nothing to fear in truth because it cannot fall outside of the believed Christian narrative. Additionally, he states “A knowledge of inference, definition, and division aides the understanding a great deal, provided that men do not make the mistake of thinking that they have learned the truth of the blessed life when they have learned them” (*OCD*, II.xxxvii.55). What he admits here is that the world provides truth both physical and intellectual. There is, however, a realm of belief called “faith” that organizes that world and gives guidance to a “blessed life.” As he states:

I considered how countless were the things that I believed, although I had not seen them nor was I present when they took place. Such were so many events in human history, so many things about places and cities that I had not seen, so many things about my friends, so many things about physicians, so many things about countless other men. Unless we believed these things, nothing at all could be done in this life. (*Conf.* 6.5.7).

For make action possible, belief must be held in the accounts of others. For Augustine those beliefs were a part of recorded narrative that consists of the Christian God, Christ, and the Scriptures.

Adopting a narrative of faith is not an anachronism or illogical. In fact MacIntyre (1988) would call it the ordinary state of affairs for human existence. To come to a “true account of justice and of practical rationality” *requires* that one undertake “tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive” enquiry (p. 389). Augustine is presenting a narrative that orders rationality. It defines the “true” and “practical” as bounded by “humility” and “respect.”

So what in his narrative provides insight into human relationships? One of the most important lessons is that of humility, depicted by Augustine through the story of the Fall of man. To Augustine, the Fall indicates the way sin entered into the world through Adam and Eve’s enticement to sin. Here is the story as described by Augustine in the *Enchiridion*:

After his sin he [Adam] became an exile from this place [paradise] and bound also his progeny, which by his sin he had damaged within himself as though at its root, by the penalty of death and condemnation. As a result, any offspring born of him and the wife through whom he had sinned...would contract original sin, which would drag it through various errors and pains to that final punishment with the deserter angels, his corruptors, masters, and accomplices. Therefore, sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so it spread to all: in him all have sinned. (8.23)

Thus, in the root of mankind is the propensity to sin as a result of Adam. What makes this narrative element relevant to the discussion of communication is in the implications

resulting from our own error-prone will. Augustine strongly distrusted human will. In *Confessions* there are numerous instances of Augustine distrusting himself (5.2.2) and his motives (4.16.30), used as an example to show the failings of society as a whole. Thus, because of this low view of humanity, we must constantly be on guard to avoid poor interpretations and unhealthy actions.

A post-WWII society, witness to the atrocities of the scientific “reason” proffered by Nazi Germany, should be able to appreciate Augustine’s sentiment of distrust, regardless of whether one embraces his narrative of the Fall. The technologies of scientific minds led to the potential for human annihilation. The utilitarian sentiments of a rational mind resulted in a people’s mass execution. While the narrative of individualism does not rise to this level of negative consequence, one cannot ignore the fact that emotivism has negative consequences for society (MacIntyre, 1984). In interpersonal communication, this exposes itself as an inability to judge one preference as better than another, leading to an inability to foster and defend the basic building blocks of intimacy such as love, trust, and forgiveness. Reason itself, centered on scientific study, is not in itself sufficient when concerning such phenomena; that is the difficulty presented by modernity. It must be realized that rationality is centered on tradition and begins, as MacIntyre (1988) notes, “from the contingency and positivity of some set of established beliefs” (p. 360). The “intellectual maturity” of a tradition depends on its ability to “have passed through an epistemological crisis successfully” and to “rewrite its history in a more insightful way” (p. 363). In other words, tradition is based on those words passing through lived experience. Words are connected to deeds; deeds are connected to words. This is an active paradigm.

This returns us to the issue of word and deed. Augustine, whose doubt of human reason rounds out his doubts in all elements of mankind's ability as a result of the Fall, is not countering today's mindset by questioning an over-dependence on rationality. He is offering, in essence, a postmodern-like critique. Because we are saturated in error from our linguistic and existential fallibility, we are prone to hopelessness in our ability to know truth. But for Augustine, there is hope in the ability to connect word with deed. "Moreover, there is often no other way for the human soul to know itself than by trying its strength in answering not in word, but in deed, the questions posed by the experience of temptation" (*COG*, xvi.32). We look to action to see what could be in relationships. "In our present state, we believe that we possess these three things—being, knowledge, and love—not on the testimony of others, but because we ourselves are aware of their presence, and because we discern them with our most truthful inner vision" (*COG*, xi.28). There is something about humanity that is able to discern reality, rationality, and ethics. Ethics to Augustine is love. Love is not a mere word but an action. But what about the person who is putting these words into action? How should we understand the self in an active paradigm? Schrag helps in this regard.

The Decentered Self

The presuppositions of respect, humility, and narrative of faith culminate in what Schrag (1986) calls the "decentered self." Schrag (1986), coming from a philosophical perspective, recognizes the complicated situation in which philosophy finds itself as a postmodern world emerges: "Can we still maintain that philosophical discourse is about things of the world and what they are like...Or is [philosophical discourse] about 'problems' created by other philosophers?" (p. 1). In short, he asks whether philosophy is

driven by reality or some sort of articulated reality. Postmodern scholars such as Foucault and Derrida have pointed out that ideology and reality are intertwined. Reality is linguistically conceived and cannot be separated from our ability to represent it symbolically. Because of the interpretive flexibility of language, the quest for an absolutely “proper position on matters of mind, language, perception, or action” (Schrag, 1986, p. 5) is a futile quest. But is there ground for judgments beyond preference and aesthetic choice? This requires a new interpretation of the “self after postmodernity.”

The self after postmodernity is defined succinctly by Schrag (1986; 1997) as “decentered,” which implies a certain sense of instability about it without untethering it from reality completely. There is an ability to reclaim subjectivity—though not in the modernist view of the term. It is through language that humans position themselves as subjects. We are linguistic beings. We construct ourselves and our society. This is not the first time this has been expressed; Gorgias would have stated as much. So in modern times would Rorty (1989) or Derrida (1974). But does this necessitate Gorgias’ other infamous statement that “Nothing exists; If something does exist we could not know it; if we could know it we could not communicate it”? Is relativism a consequence of calling reality linguistic? Schrag in fact is trying to avoid this Sophistic pitfall that he senses from deconstructionists and even pragmatism. Rather than moving towards the “end of philosophy” (Schrag, 1989, p. 10), Schrag notes the existence of a “trace of subjectivity” that leads to a means for establishing meaning. Schrag would argue that language is not at infinite play if it is able to be grounded by action, namely communicative praxis. There may be multiple paths to understanding, but not infinite. As Augustine would note, we

are tethered to the word by the deed. The I is found in the nexus of speaking, acting, and writing.

Communicative Praxis is Schrag's seminal work that articulates his position of how, in the face of postmodern relativist, individualist, and antisubjectivist challenges, phenomenology can reclaim subjectivity as a "decentered subject" in the space of "communicative praxis." Essentially, what we find is a grammar describing the self in action through the terms "praxis," "texture," "conversation," and the "decentered self," which is broken into the elements of "temporality," "multiplicity," and "embodiment."

"Praxis" deals with the realms of the ethical and political rather than the metaphysical and epistemological. It is a break from philosophy as it is typically understood to gain a greater connection with the active, even rhetorical elements of reality. It is in line with the "rhetorical turn" in philosophy, but does not turn so sharply that it moves into relativism. Communication is understood as an act or action of imparting or transmitting, "a performance within the *topos* of human affairs" (Schrag, 1986, p. 21). Praxis is in the sphere of human action guided by *phronesis* (practical wisdom), which is a different sort of knowing than *theoria* (theory of rigorous science from *episteme*—knowledge). There is no dichotomy between theory and practice—they are united into one term which is dependent on performance. Thus praxis is contrasted with *poiesis* (artificial production). Guided by *techne* (techniques), *poiesis* indicates a state where one can separate performance from the individual context and retain both meaning and practicality. As we have already indicated in the previous chapter, much of the interpersonal skills literature in regard to intimacy depends upon *poiesis*, rather than praxis; these are performances seemingly devoid of performers. The unfortunate

consequence of the technique-driven approach to communication is a separation of word and deed that opens the door to deconstruction. What Schrag tries to do with the idea of communicative praxis is tether the word more tightly to the actions that ground it in order to render deconstruction absurd. For example, if I am running, and you try to deconstruct the word “run” to mean something else (e.g., dance), the witnessed experience will render your deconstruction worthless. Power might transform this experience—consider whether in the tale of the emperor’s new clothes, the people would have pretended to “see” clothing if he was a commoner—but the usage of power is still an issue of ethics and still remains in line with the active paradigm (e.g., the emperor was still seen as foolish). Action provides texture with which the word is provided meaning. Without action, words are at infinite play.

Communication and praxis are mediated by “texture” which is neither prioritizing the text nor prioritizing perception or action but rather “encompasses the play and display of meanings within the field of perception and the fabric of human action” (Schrag, 1986, p. 30). The metaphor of texture elicits the multifaceted nature of communicative praxis. We do not participate in a realm that is solely action—that negates transcendence. In other words, there is a “beyond-ness” to our existence, but this understanding refrains from suggesting a universal or metaphysical dimension. We also do not participate in a realm that is mere perception—that enters into emotivism. The aestheticism in culture that so frustrates MacIntyre is founded upon the over-emphasis on perception. Finally, we do not participate in a realm driven by text—that lends itself to deconstruction. Derrida’s grammatology must emphasize text to accomplish deconstruction because it is separated from an author and a reality. Were it to be tethered to reality, several of the turns taken by

someone attempting deconstruction could be avoided. What Schrag wants the metaphor of texture to accomplish is a way to exhibit the physicality of communication, and its dependence on orality as much as textuality. It is the “act of text.”

The benefit of “texture” as a metaphor over “context” for Schrag is its ability to avoid characterizing a factor as interior or exterior. Communicative praxis does not abide by the metaphor of interiority or exteriority as separate domains (p. 47). “Context” often indicates some sort of outside factor surrounding the discussion. There is a realm inside the text and a realm that impacts the text. This misses the expressive nature of communication where discourse and action are amalgamated. Texture indicates an overlap that would consider all factors of the conversation without denoting a distinction between “where” it “exists.” The factors are amalgamated in such a way that nothing is “con-textual;” it is the “act of text” or texture.

The metaphor of “foundation” is also suspect, to be replaced by the metaphor of “conversation.” There is no solid rock, no ultimate presupposition which will uphold all argument. To let a presupposition “sit still” long enough for it to become a foundation is to open it to deconstruction as it becomes “text.” As an “act of text” or “texture,” issues become more fluid and cannot be solved for all time across all peoples. The privilege of universal knowledge or even subjective knowledge is lost. Communicative praxis enters into the realm of faith-based action as opposed to the One True Faith, the realm of expressed ethics, not the Good, and the realm of humble interpretation, not Justice. A postmodern world does not allow the comforts of absolute knowledge, but, as Schrag (1986) suggests neither does it unavoidably lead to relativism. Schrag (1986) suggests “conversation” vis-à-vis Rorty as the preferred metaphor (p.110) to “foundation.” The

benefit of “conversation” is that the mobile, interactive, expressed nature of an argument is reflected. Without this plasticity, deconstruction looms. But it also avoids relativism through embodiment in the subject.

But can there be some “place” for the subject to exist such that meaning can be established? With the philosophical background emphasizing an active, expressed and conversational truth, Schrag begins to develop his claim that the subject is “decentered.” For Schrag (1986), the subject is not a foundation for communicative praxis but is an “implicate” of it (p. 138). In praxis, the subject is implied. Schrag (1986) notes “traces of subjectivity” in the work of Levi-Strauss, Heidegger, and Derrida that indicate “markings that point to an involved speaker, a situated author, and an engaged actor at work” (p. 10). From these traces, one can begin to envision the self as “decentered,” described as “temporal,” “multiple,” and “embodied” (p. 147). Schrag claims that in communicative praxis, a new sense of humanism can be found, “one that will provide a sheet anchor against the recurring tendencies toward an aestheticism of textuality which pervade the discursive strategies of the post-modern age” (p. 213).

When Schrag (1986) discusses a temporal self, he is indicating a “praxial space which presence and absence inhabit” (p. 146). Presence is the living present in which we operate. Absence enshrines those past and future occurrences that compose our actions. For Schrag, praxis is the space where all this comes together. As Schrag (1986) states:

The restoration at work in praxis is the repetition or recollection of that which has been said and done, not through a representation that facilely mirrors a state of affairs that once had reality but now is gone by, but rather through a reclamation that continues to inform the living present, without which it would have no concretion. (p. 147).

Kierkegaard informs this idea of “concretion” through his notion of “recollecting forwards” (Schrag, 1986, p. 70). Schrag (1986) gives an example in the symbol

“Napoleon” (p. 68) which is an “interpreted text of historical inscriptions” but not a representation of Napoleon himself. Representation collapses when interpretation intervenes. There is no firm representation of the actual individual able to be expressed. Yet recollection understands the hermeneutic procedure through which one reclaims knowledge. It is through recollection, the “reminiscence and reenactment of these communications and practices” (p. 69), that one is able to understand the temporality of the self. Through recollection, praxis reclaims the past to the present thus making the “deferred” subject a positive possibility for invention (p. 147). We all participate in temporality, so our recollective abilities represent a space where past is reclaimed through interpretation.

However, this interpretation will never be singular due to the second facet of the human subject, multiplicity. Multiplicity depicts the subject as having different personalities (not in the sense of a psychosis) within the same person. Schrag (1986) states, “Historically there has been an obsession with the values of unity and identity in the boldly metaphysical reflections on selfhood and subjectivity” (p. 147). Indeed, the emphasis of modernity was on the unity of the self until Freud interpreted the subject as uncontrollable (partially) and fractured (i.e., id, ego, superego). Now, in postmodernity a “multiple personae” is a common assumption: “In the hermeneutical space of communicative praxis...temporality and multiplicity are native citizens of the terrain, accepted as indigenous inhabitants of the historical life of discourse and action” (Schrag, 1986, p. 148). Thus, texture is important to an understanding of subjectivity at any given moment. The “right” belief on who one really is “set aside” in order to look at the “subject within the actual context of its practical concerns and discursive performances”

(p. 148). We are different people in different times and places. For Schrag, this stands in contrast to the “classical metaphysicians of the soul and modern philosophers of mind” who “were frightened not only by temporality but also by multiplicity” (p. 147) because of its inability to enact a given system.

Finally, the subject is embodied in the world and in social practices, not in a position but in an event (Schrag, 1986, p. 155), and thus is finite (p. 176). Schrag’s notion of the embodied self is a response to the mind/body split that positions the decentered subject as “already *at* the world and already *in* the social practices” (p. 152). As he notes, “We see the illustration of bodily presence not as an abstracted corporeal datum but as a web of polysemic descriptions of the speaker, author, and social agent within the space of communicative praxis” (p. 154). This is not, however, legitimizing certain cognitive approaches [e.g., action assembly theory (Green, 1984)] to communication where “embodiment” indicates the effort to catalog the human brain to determine both scientifically and metaphorically how we create knowledge. While scientific studies on the physical dimensions of how the brain works may be beneficial, these are certainly efforts best engaged by neurologists and not communication scholars. The physics of the brain is an encapsulated representation of our physical thinking process. “Embodiment” is indicative of human thinking on physical, rational, and ethical levels. It is thus important not to reduce “embodiment” to mere “biology”—rather, it is the corpus of humanity figuratively “in the flesh.”

The metaphors for how we create meaning in an embodied approach to the self means we cannot disconnect ideas and words too far from deeds or authors too far from their texts. “The decentered subject as embodied is already *at* the world and already *in* the

social practices” (Schrag, 1986, p. 152). Meaning is tied to an event in which the self takes part. Our self is not “still” enough to capture it exactly. To attempt to eke out a process by which the brain makes meaning is to miss the nature of the self. Meaning is embodied and embedded.

Thus here we have a grammar of the decentered self. It is multiple, embodied, and temporal. It is active in that the self is only understood in a space of praxis. One could also call this connecting word and deed. Within this understanding of self, it is important to understand texture as opposed to context. With this language we move to summarize the approach taken

Summary of Active Relationships in Interpersonal Communication

So what is the implication of this approach to interpersonal communication? Embeddedness indicates the self is found in action, and is not stable; nevertheless, there is sufficient knowledge for meaning. In other words, there is no foundational subject with firm definitions of truth, but there is a decentered subject found moving about in a “hermeneutical play of perspectival descriptions of the life of discourse and action” (Schrag, 1986, p. 214). There is no meaning without tying it to action.

Subjectivity exists much as an electron does in the atom. Electrons exist in a constant state of flux, but despite this constant movement, they maintain a consistent orbit around the nucleus as determined by their energy state. These orbits are called valences. A scientist can know in what valence an electron can be found but can never know the exact location. This theorem, known as Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle, applies to the decentered self, always in flux but situated such that it is possible to

communicate a “valence” of ethics from which one’s life is meaningful. Thus, an understanding of such a mainstay of the subject as motive should be thought of less in terms of definition and more in terms of valence when understood in terms of active communication.

Active communication stands in contrast to the idea of communication as a tool. Instead of viewing communication as a disembodied technique used to achieve goals, communication is understood as embodied and inseparable from the person and situation. Communication cannot maintain the neutrality that allows for generalized guidance. Thus, the pitfalls of technification, namely the inability to incorporate texture and relevance can be avoided by looking at communication under the metaphor of embodiment.

Active communication avoids the dichotomy of egoism and altruism as the either/or motives of human relationships. While situations do exist where my own well-being clashes with others, this is only one case out of many where incompatibility must be resolved. It is possible to understand a relationship in such a way that motive is not a dichotomy between self-interest and benevolence but one of a desire to live a certain way according to an ethic (MacIntyre, “Cambridge”). As MacIntyre notes:

If I want to lead a certain kind of life, with relationships of trust, friendship, and cooperation with others, then my wanting their good and my wanting my good are not two independent, discriminating desires. It is not even that I have two separate motives, self-interest and benevolence, for doing the same action. I have one motive, a desire to live in a certain way, which cannot be characterized as a desire for my good rather than that of others. (p. 466).

There is no real need to distinguish self-interest from other-interest. The need is to distinguish between different narratives for “living a certain way.” The good of self and

others is all wrapped up in the idea of the good as established in a narrated ethic. To parse out other-interest from self-interest is a left over conception from Descartes and Hobbes. To provide an example, consider love in the realm of romantic relationships. It is conceivable that love could be viewed in a couple of different ways. When considering love as a feeling that one desires to meet self-interests, the interests of one's significant other are navigated in order to get one's self-interests met, in this case the need for love (namely emotional in nature). Another way of framing love accepts that other-centered and self-centered motivations congeal into a desire to live life, and ideally to live life well. Love is neither about self nor other but maintaining a certain relationship, found in a valence of ethical practices (e.g., acknowledgment, forgiveness, humility) In order to find ground upon which to reinvigorate communication ethics in relationships, it is necessary to embed personal action in a narrative other than self-interest. To do this, one must escape the Enlightenment mentality of an altruist/egoist dichotomy all together. After centuries of scholars attempting to navigate these two constructs, attempting to find ways to balance them or negate one or the other, it seems no matter how it plays out, the explanation misses something. It takes too mechanistic an approach to human motives—the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Egoism and altruism, or self-interest and other-interest are two interconnected desires that cannot be isolated without sacrificing some element of human relationality. There is a “between” providing “space” for both to occur simultaneously under the motivation of “ethical action.”

Active communication also contrasts with the idea of communication as a process which would identify stages of growth through which, generally, humans pass in order to achieve intimacy (e.g., Knapp, 1999). Process is a matter of defining categories, an effort

to discover the order in which humans use particular types of communication and is depicted as ethically neutral. For example, whether or not a relationship *should* be declining or escalating is not of interest in establishing process; this effort is merely to *describe* phenomena. Thus, you have Baxter and Montgomery (1996) suggesting a non-teleological dialectic approach to communication. Process, while helpful as a starting point, still stands as a descriptive endeavor if it is not couched in an ethic. Action, in contrast, is a matter of identifying valence, an effort to identify fuzzy boundaries within which a given relationship can be considered healthy. One cannot separate ethics from communication, in an active paradigm. There are good and ill effects that are seen based on given actions. For example, a declining relationship is not a neutral state of affairs. To identify it as “stagnating” (Knapp, 1999) is only helpful to the extent that this is determined ethically. An active paradigm would note the “stage” of a relationship only if it cannot be textured by ethical actions so as to assign meaning to actions. A good question for determining valence is is this action good or not? “Valence” indicates this healthy or unhealthy active state. Is the relationship generally moving in positive directions or not?

The epistemological question obviously looms in this perspective. How does someone determine “health”? What determines what is good and ill is in fact some sort of overarching “third” such as a communal/relational perspective, narrative, and/or ethic. As Schrag (1997) states, “Community is constitutive of selfhood. It fleshes out the portrait of the self by engendering a shift of focus from the self as present to itself to the self as present *to, for, and with* the other” (p. 78). In active communication, there is a self embodying a given word connected to a deed. This connection means there is an

investment in a relationship (or in the community on an organizational level) that determines what is ethical. In the act of being to, for, and with the other, ethical conduct is determined. Relationships are formed. Life is lived. This is the level on which debate needs to be conducted in interpersonal communication—the ethical implications of action. This takes place within a narrative. Thus, active communication is dependent on the presuppositions of a narrative of faith. We believe in a set of standards that guide our actions and our relationships in healthy and unhealthy ways as determined in action. Rhetorical debate needs then to take place on the level of narrated ethics, not describing satisfaction-inducing processes.

To determine this health responsibly, active communication is dependent on a presupposition of humility. Society can witness an action, evaluate it in light of the narrative, and determine whether this falls within the boundaries of ethical conduct as interpreted by individuals. Word/deed complexes are seen in their narrative contexts and interpreted within a valence as beneficial or negative. However, because humans are so vested with differences in interpretive standpoints, this negotiation of valence requires a great deal of humility in interpretation and flexibility in understanding. One needs to be able to say, “I could be wrong,” simultaneously couching such humility in an orientation towards the other.

One final determinant of responsible assessment of healthy relationships is the requirement that active communication presuppose respect for all human beings. While one might not agree with someone’s beliefs or actions, one can still respect someone’s being. When this breaks down, the potential for interpersonal relationship breaks down with it.

Thus, the active communication paradigm contrasts with the modernist paradigm. This sets the groundwork to understand the self in a new way beyond the narrative of individualism and self-interest that currently guides the field of interpersonal communication. In the next chapter we will explore how understanding the self through active communication vis-à-vis the decentered self and a humble interpretation of a narrative of faith (see Arnett & Arneson, 1999) allows the debate to shift from one of motive to one of ethics. These two factors establish ground from which to discuss ethics without prescriptive pretense. Thus, the section addresses the narrative of charitable acknowledgment as an alternative to the narrative of individualism.

Chapter 5

A Narrative of Charitable Acknowledgment

What is a narrative of charitable acknowledgment and how does it help us understand interpersonal communication? This chapter attempts to answer this question. By framing intimate interpersonal communication in terms of the narrative of charitable acknowledgment, an example is provided for navigating healthy expressions of “love” and “trust”—two dynamics foundational to intimacy. The word “narrative” indicates that charitable acknowledgement is imbued with what Bakhtin (1981) would call “polyphonic” meanings. There are not simple one-to-one causal correlations that describe life. Creation, understanding, and guidance are intertwined. As Bochner (2002) states, “Narrative is our means of recollecting the meanings of past experiences, turning life into language, and disclosing to us the truth in our experiences” (p. 87). The goal is a “moral one of enlarging and deepening the sense of human community; building better, more satisfying relationships; and learning how to converse with people who are different from us” (Bochner, 2002, p. 75). This philosophical approach to personal narratives carries over into the broader scope conceived of here. In conjunction with Arnett and Arneson’s (1999) movement towards a narrative of dialogic civility to assist in public interactions, this narrative is an attempt to look for basic guidelines to assist interaction in a private ethos or dwelling place.

Certainly, the field has touched on ideas presented here in other ways [e.g., Burleson's (1990) comforting skills; Baxter's (1996) dialogue]. However, the difference lies in ethic over technique. While perhaps it is possible to create a means of measurement of the effects of such a narrative, the thrust here is to describe the dynamic implications of its ontological and ethical guiding factors. Hyde (2006), too, notes that while research on supportive communication would augment a study of acknowledgment, "What is revealed here about the phenomenon is thus directed toward certain of its essential (ontological) aspects whose existential robustness is too often left unacknowledged and thus unappreciated when the measurement of effects is given priority in the scientific study of the phenomenon" (p. 5). The focus then is on texturing the ethical implications of acknowledgment and the narrative framework of charitable acknowledgment that informs intimate relationships. It is to this robust texturing that we now turn.

The chapter begins with an explanation of acknowledgment as a way to avoid emotivism. First acknowledgment is defined as it relates to interpersonal communication, as an active, pluralistic ground for the ethics of trust and love in intimate relationships. Revealing the connection of acknowledgment to Schrag places interpersonal relationships in an active communication paradigm. This embodied and embedded approach to interpersonal communication avoids the main problems of the self/other dichotomy recognizing the multi-faceted motives for acknowledging others. Additionally, acknowledgment is pluralistic in that several narratives of faith can operate within its boundaries. While an exchange paradigm adopts a largely secular narrative with an emotivist ethic, acknowledgment has the capacity to envelop plural narratives of faith,

whether religious or secular. This pluralism provides broader contexts from which to discuss ethical questions so pertinent to communication. Someone who frames communication in terms of acknowledgment is able to discuss spiritual questions, ethical consequences, and “healthy” relationships in ways the field currently finds difficult without resorting to emotivism.

The second section discusses how charitable acknowledgment as a lived, embodied narrative can foster healthy interpersonal communication in romantic intimate relationships. First a connection is made between charity and acknowledgment through a focus on rhetorical competence, the emphasis on connecting word to deed, and the importance of will and habit. Rather than approaching Augustine through a Platonic or Hobbsian hermeneutic, here acknowledgment serves as the hermeneutic. This approach opens up charity to a postmodern society on an axiological level. This level is explored in depth through interpretations of faith, hope, and charity in terms of a transversal rather than vertical or horizontal approach. Charity, understood transversally and applied specifically to intimate romantic relationships, is the enactment of unconditionality, sacrifice, and the forgiveness of errors. When intimate partners choose, particularly through marriage, to commit to love one another, charitable acknowledgment indicates this as an embodied ethic, enacted as their fractured will allows. Thus love takes the form of an ethic to be unconditionally committed, willing to sacrifice, and able to forgive. This approach to romantic relationships through charitable acknowledgment opens up ground for research and future discussion on the ethical implications of the narrative shift.

Acknowledgment in Interpersonal Communication

Michael Hyde (2006), the main proponent of acknowledgment in the communication field, asks the question, “What would life be like if no one *acknowledged* your existence?” (p. 1). It is from this question that an ontology and ethic of acknowledgment is devised that can hold relevance for those being taught about interpersonal relationships. As Hyde (2006) states:

The story I have to tell about the ontological and rhetorical workings of acknowledgment speaks of creation and hope. Acknowledgment is a moral act; it functions to transform space and time, to *create* openings wherein people can dwell, deliberate, and know together what is right, good, just, and truthful. Acknowledgment thereby grants people *hope*, the opportunity for a new beginning, a second chance, whereby they might improve their lot in life. (p. 7)

In other words, one of the bedrocks of humanity is our need for others’ acknowledgment and consequently our need to provide it. Acknowledgment serves to attune our conscience to moral questions and opens space for hope—a correlate of trust. It is both creative in nature and ethically-oriented when enacted. When couched within a narrative of faith, acknowledgment becomes an alternative to the narrative of individualism suggested in social exchange theory. Thus, acknowledgment will be shown in its connection to an active understanding of communication, its connection to rhetorical competence, its ability to accept a plurality of narratives and as a philosophical perspective from which intimate constructs of trust and love can be understood in more robust ways.

Acknowledgment as Active

Acknowledgment operates as a postmodern approach to communication in contrast to the modern approach of social exchange. As a result, it finds its texture from an active understanding of communication where words cannot be separated from the

person speaking them. As seen in Chapter 4, action is inseparable from the person and situation and is interpretive rather than descriptive. The thrust of this chapter indicates how acknowledgment is an active interpretive approach and thus serves well as a philosophical foundation for intimacy because it allows for a de-technified approach to trust and love.

It seems a connection exists between praxis and acknowledgment whereby Schrag's (1986) decentered self in praxis serves as a provider of philosophical space for the ethical discourse of Hyde. One way to see this connection is through their depictions of "consciousness." Schrag is maneuvering through the intellectual gauntlet of Derridian deconstruction and Foucaultian "death of self" to find space for subjectivity. Communicative praxis provides this space. Consciousness is decentered within this understanding of communication, "repostured as 'dialogical consciousness'" (p. 169). Consciousness is "reducible neither to the textuality of discourse nor to the tissues of human action" (p.171). Rather, there is an "event of praxis, at once discursive and actional," the confluence of which composes the subject. Simply, consciousness is viewed in terms of communicative praxis. The subject under this interpretive scheme is a saying/doing person—tied to the connections of word and deed—able to build arguments and make ethical claims, albeit those claims are temporal, multiple, and embodied. Thus consciousness rooted in communicative action is "*for and toward*" (p. 179) someone, not just *to* someone. In other words, it is not neutral or static, but active and bearing ethical consequence.

This move opens space to discuss acknowledgment as the way we ought to be "for and toward" someone within relational situations. Hyde discusses this as the

“attunement of consciousness,” and he brings forward the active nature of acknowledgment as an ethical orientation and impetus. Hyde (2006) describes consciousness as:

...not primarily a cognitive and theoretical operation geared to *knowing what* something is. Rather, the intentional structure of consciousness...shows itself first and foremost as a pre-cognitive relatedness to a world of existential concerns (for example, being able to fix breakfast without giving it much thought). Here consciousness works to attune us emotionally to our environment whereby we can learn and demonstrate a competence of *knowing how* to deal with the immediacy of our everyday, goal-directed activities. (p. 37)

This is communicative praxis at work. We are connecting word and deed in such ways that we see what competence is in a given situation.

The tie to an active orientation towards communication is seen most clearly in the distinction between seeing and observing. As Hyde (2006) states, “Consciousness is what first attunes us to our surroundings so that they can be both *seen and observed with care*. The attunement of consciousness grows as seeing something evolves into observing what this something truly is” (p. 34). Hyde uses the example of Sherlock Holmes. The detective’s famed ability to observe the depth of a given situation is contrasted with Watson’s rather surface appraisals that see but do not observe. Similarly in an interpersonal example, a wife in an argument may see her husband clam up in acquiescence in a conversation, which makes her even more frustrated with him; however, she does not observe his discomfort with her disdainful attitude toward him that caused that reaction. Interpersonal communication is rife with examples of such observation challenges. Thus, the “attunement of consciousness” serves as a state of readiness, where perceptions are judged and regarded, not merely processed and glossed.

However, it is important to recognize, this should not be made into a technique. There is more to attunement than simply opening up oneself to let in more data so that

one can make a proper interpretation. It is awareness, within the perceptual filters that make up one's interpretive frameworks, that allows creative approaches to thinking. It is a perpetual "interruption" (Hyde, 2006) that "shakes a world" (p. 43) and thus holds a deconstructive ability. "The call of Being demands courage from those who remain open to it and, in doing so, stand ready to acknowledge how their ways of thinking and acting may not be as authentic and respectful as they could possibly be" (p. 51). Authenticity and respect hold important places within this observation. In phenomenological terms, it is to see what really is, to the degree that is possible from a standpoint of multiplicity and temporality.

To use an example, look to the classroom. Here, it is important for a professor to depict given interpersonal communication phenomena in authentic and respectful ways. Interpersonal discussions on listening serve as excellent examples of this differentiation. Listening is of utmost importance in acknowledging another person, but all too often it is made into process, perhaps not in the text but in the way it is presented in class. For example, Julia Wood (2004a) describes attunement in listening as mindfulness whereby one "focuses on what is happening in the moment" (p. 114). She then discusses the other various stages: hearing, selecting, interpreting, responding, and remembering. Wood excels in depicting mindfulness as more than just a step in a process but as the guiding force in that process. In this sense it rises to the level of "attunement of consciousness" and a state of Being, which in light of her work on Buddhist mindfulness, seems to be a goal of her research (Wood, 2004b). Regardless of this intent however, it is easy for a student (and a teacher for that matter) to approach these stages like the stages of photosynthesis or the Krebs Cycle—just another descriptive process of a phenomenon in

life. Listening, however, directly relates to acknowledgment, which means it relates to questions concerning the second spiritual question, ethical conduct, and thus relational health. This is certainly of consequence beyond mere process! In fact, to view listening as a process, a duty, or even an exchangeable commodity is to strip it of its ability to acknowledge. This listening-without-love is to listen as a computer might: there may be a response that is helpful or even soothing but it does not rise to the level of acknowledgment.¹ Thus, what must be understood by students is the “attunement of conscious” and “call of conscience” (discussed in the next section) that make this seemingly technical process “real.” To listen is not merely to follow a number of steps but rather a state whereby someone cares—compelled by conscience as guided by a narrative—about what the other person is saying or who the other person is. The important question becomes: Do you truly care about that person sitting across from you? As Hyde (2006) puts it, “The other’s face, in all its nudity, vulnerability, and alterity is a most revealing and fitting work of art that speaks of the importance of accountability, responsibility, and justice” (p. 141). It is this mentality that must be captured before any other steps matter. One must find a way to consider the other before one can truly observe and acknowledge.

In sum, we must strive to make communication phenomena “alive” in that they are active. Acknowledgment does this in its attunement to observation rather than seeing. But not only this, acknowledgment as an embodied phenomenon is also a function of motive and will. The above depiction of listening indicates more about will than it does about process. Observation is a matter of having the will to focus one’s attention for a

¹ Hyde (2006) nuances this point noting the “two-edged nature” of a computer in human relationships. It can advance ethical behavior by opening lines of communication in ways previously impossible, and it can distance us as a “faceless self” (p. 225).

given moment of time away from other issues of concern and find it in one's heart and mind to care for the other—a topic Augustine analyzes with great depth and insight through the lens of charity. This will be discussed in the latter half of the chapter. For Hyde, the importance of the will to act is recognized through his analysis of the “call to conscience” (Hyde, 2001). This call of conscience consists of the moral ontological evocations tied to human being. It is a “challenge-response” logic (p. 40). By this logic one is challenged by a given knowledge and then responds for the sake of significance.

The call of conscience:

...confronts us with the question of what it means to be. When hearing this call, we are concerned with the truth of our temporal existence and with the decisive challenge that comes with it—trying to determine how to live out this truth in some meaningfully significant way. (Hyde, 2001, p. 25)

In other words, acknowledgement is a life-giving that strikes at the heart of our existence.

We need others and they need us in order for significance to be achieved. The fundamental question in any given relational moment concerns whether or not we heed that call and notice—acknowledge—another person. It is attuning one's consciousness to the call of conscience. This is a function that for Hyde is centered in rhetoric.

Acknowledgment as Rhetorical

The basics of acknowledgment are addressed in terms of rhetorical competence. While acknowledgment uses appropriateness as the most general criteria for consideration, it is predicated on ethical criteria of what is “good” for that person in ultimate hopes of providing satisfaction to a given need. Thus the rhetoric of acknowledgment has multiple criteria being used. Attribution theory and rhetorical theory are both important bases of knowledge for these criteria. Hyde (2006) emphasizes rhetoric:

The goal of rhetoric is the appropriate production of a dwelling place where sound judgment can be fostered in and through collaborative deliberation. Rhetorical competence enables human beings to advance nature's law of the survival of the fittest in the sense that it reinforces the value of supporting those who are ethically best. (p. 143).

Without an understanding of appropriateness, Hyde (2006) notes that the loving parent becomes a smothering parent and the excellent teacher becomes a kooky entertainer (p. 143). These are very different situations that no one theory could cover in its specifics. This is why through history, rhetoric has been important to the liberal arts and the academy, because it enables rich analysis within a variety of situations (see Herrick, 2005).

While rhetorical theory is too vast to be put into the space provided here, there is certainly a need to delimit the horizons of theory that apply to acknowledgment and interpersonal communication. What would a professor use in a classroom to help guide someone in his or her understanding of acknowledgment? These involve conceptions of self, accuracy in interpretation, and understanding humility. The first horizon concerns how subjectivity, as depicted throughout the history of rhetorical theory, allows perspective beyond emotivism. One must gain ground for ethical discussion before one can discuss the differences in ethics. Using the theories depicted in the second chapter, one might begin to explicate such historical ground. While such depth is not a necessity, especially in an introductory course, it is important to recognize that the Ancient Greek viewpoint of a person is significantly different than that of a Rousseau, Hobbes, Dawkins, or Derrida. Two frameworks can then be presented for analysis of the subject: the one of an exchange mentality or one of an acknowledgment mentality. The subject of charitable acknowledgment takes form as it is in chapter four: decentered (and thus unpredictable), temporal (and thus embedded in a time and place), and multiple (thus with a variety of

motives for action). The subject of exchange emerges as centered (and thus predictable), discrete (and thus extractable from circumstances such as time and place), and singularly devoted to self-interest (thus with one motive).

A second horizon within which to find appropriate actions of acknowledgment would involve appropriate interpretation. Attribution theory greatly aids this process. In attribution theory, the works of Heider (1958), Kelley (1967), and Jones & Davis (1965) provide a number of important terms for helping to determine why a given action occurred. The primary dynamic is “locus” (Heider, 1958) which concerns whether the behavior is caused by the self or by the environment/other. An internal attribution means you put the locus on the individual and an external attribution puts the locus on the situation. Using this primary dynamic, there are several other factors that impact whether you attribute internally or externally such as responsibility (Heider, 1958; is the behavior controllable?), level of intention (Jones & Davis, 1965; did she mean to do it?), distinctiveness (Kelley, 1967; is there a clear situational difference), consistency (Kelley, 1967; is there a pattern of behavior over time?), and consensus (Kelley, 1967; did others have similar patterns occur?). This vocabulary gives people a means for interpretation of a given situation. Appropriateness comes with training in one’s attributive biases (see Trenholm & Jensen, 2004). The fundamental attributive bias indicates the tendency to attribute locus internally for strangers and attribute locus externally for those with whom we are familiar. The ultimate attribution bias indicates the tendency to make positive attributions based on familiarity and negative ones for strangers. The actor/observer bias is when we attribute locus internally for others but when the observer is involved the locus is attributed externally. Finally, bias towards groups indicates that people in-groups

get external attribution for locus and out-group locus is placed internally. When these biases are acknowledged, it helps individuals to recognize the limitations of their perceptions and make more appropriate interpretations concerning why a given action happened.

A third horizon, which perhaps is the most difficult to expound upon, is that of invention. What is appropriate, and more than that, *good* to say in a given situation? What will provide a life-giving gift to this person across from me? Invention is pivotal to this endeavor. To begin, one must have a healthy understanding of self and a thorough understanding of competent interpretation. This provides a background that the creative process of speaking can draw upon. It is also important that invention in interpersonal communication escape the realm of technification in order to communicate charitable acknowledgment without seeming trite or disingenuous. For example, when teaching invention in framing one's comments to the bereaved at a funeral, it is helpful to bring forward examples of words that may be trite or insensitive and words that may be more comforting. However, the education given should never be disconnected from the acknowledgment such words confer upon the bereaved. Compassion must not be lost in the process of phraseology. Invention should rise above tact, so for the student they become imagined reality. This means that one who wishes to educate others in invention must become invested in the words, embodying them in the time and place of relevance, even to the point of acting out a given role, so that through the displacement, a student's imagination may acknowledge the reality behind the words. Reality of acknowledgment is the key, then, to any inventive process in interpersonal communication whereby a narrative of charitable acknowledgment is the *modus operandi*. As Hyde summarizes,

“The ever-present issue of appropriateness, [means] discerning what is right and fitting to do and to say given the situation, the audience at hand, and one’s desire to reveal what is believed to be the truth of something in need of acknowledgment” (p. 74). Invention in this capacity is a matter of discernment in revealing believed truth.

Invention is thus guided by community, guided by an understanding of self, and intended to acknowledge the community through word and deed. The diversity of communities who might incorporate acknowledgment is the subject of the next section.

Acknowledgment as Pluralistic

There is more to humans than the physical or psychological. Humans search for answers to three spiritual questions. These questions involve those areas of the human “spirit” that provide hope and meaning to life, with the first dealing with issues of where we come from, the second dealing with issues of what we should do while we are alive, and the third dealing with what happens to us after we die. Interpersonal communication is best suited to answering the second question which is the realm within which acknowledgment (and thus charitable acknowledgment) dwells.

Acknowledgment allows people to bring in various narratives of faith to answer the first and third spiritual questions (e.g., atheism, Christianity, existentialism) while still offering a suggestion for the second question regarding ethical conduct. This placement allows for pluralism. Hyde (2006) notes, “‘good’ science and ‘good’ deconstruction presuppose the presence and vitality of acknowledgment” (p. 10). He also notes how institutional religion, particularly in the West, adopts acknowledgment into their stories of “creation and hope” (p. 10). Beginnings of existence, whether with an utterance of “Let there be light” or a Big Bang, are important to Hyde in the sense that

“acknowledgment needs a place to happen” (p. 21), and whether scientific or theistic, the explanation gives the literal ground for action. In other words, acknowledgment does not necessitate a purely secular approach to relational phenomena.

So how does this tie in to charitable acknowledgment? The desire for the good life overarches both secular and religious narratives; living faith means embodying belief structures that lie at the heart of life’s meaning which entails a search for the good life. Regardless of narrative structure, we are conscious that something real, something good, something spiritual happens when we are acknowledged. We also *believe* that in the future there will be something real, something good, and something spiritual that happens when we approach life in a given way, namely through our defined narrative. Herein lies the teachable moment for those devoted to an ethic for interpersonal communication: acknowledgment is an attempt to express a phenomenological goodness in human life. Charitable acknowledgment serves as an example of a narrative expounding upon this goodness, specifically in intimate relationships. How to live vis-à-vis acknowledgment has the potential to appeal to both the existentialist and the Christian theologian. A narrative of charitable acknowledgment expresses this in active, tangible ways for someone who adopts the narrative.

This is not to say there is some universal at play here. Acknowledgment is never depicted as a universal by Hyde, and should not be understood in this way here; we are multiple and embodied, after all, and cannot gain this overarching perspective. Rather, acknowledgment speaks to a deep human need for engagement with others that makes life meaningful. It echoes Hyde’s (2006) citation of Levinas whereby *ethics* is first philosophy, not *ontology* (p. 131). One’s narrative of faith outlines the structures within

which that acknowledgment is understood, thus keeping it from individualism and emotivism. Simultaneously, fidelity to a narrative is established through that narrative's ability to foster acknowledgment in its adherents. There is a dialogue between the narrative of faith and its ability to foster acknowledgement.

One could argue there is a circular argument at work here between the knowing of faith and the knowing of deed. If a narrative of faith is defined by good deeds, and good deeds are predicated on faith, is not the means of knowing indefinable and nebulous? Indeed, there is a difficulty here encountered when using a deductive approach. However, at work in the fabric of language is a similar structure that makes problematic any meaning when using deduction as the formal structure for truth. Derrida points this out in the "infinite play" that forever defers meaning. Deconstruction simply undoes the meaning of any foundational structure by showing the *différance* within a given word. Thus, all argument becomes circular on a linguistic level. This is why action is so important to the structures of faith, and argument by analogy/metaphor becomes more important than deduction. Only in action does a word maintain meaning. The real tree makes the symbol "tree" tangible to the other person to whom the word is expressed. Shared meaning of the tangible reality makes language effective. Our comparisons comprise our realities. Faith expresses that comparison of tangible reality in answer to the spiritual questions in our life. When understood through communicative praxis, these tangible and thus active understandings hold an aura of instability, as seen in the previous chapter. Hyde (2006) adds, "Human being thus shows itself as an opening wherein a primordial and on-going 'struggle' takes place between order (construction) and disorder (deconstruction)" (p. 49). Within these active structures, there is no foundation, per se,

whereby we have found that presupposition or tenet of faith that is beyond argument. Rather, there is texture—texture that explains *reasonably* and, to the extent that our decentered self allows, *accurately* those phenomena encountered whereby these phenomena are believable and enact-able in healthy ways for society. This is acknowledgment's gift to interpersonal communication. It gives ground for inclusion of spiritual questions within plural narratives of faith which provides ground for reinterpretations of intimacy.

Intimacy's Ground

Acknowledgment provides textural background for understanding intimacy through an understanding of the face of the other. Hyde notes (2006):

The other's face, in all its nudity, vulnerability, and alterity is a most revealing and fitting work of art that speaks of the importance of accountability, responsibility and justice. The discourse at work here commends a habit of thinking and acting that keeps us open to differences of opinion and lifestyles, invites collaborative and moral deliberation, and evokes in others a sense of wonder and awe for the matter at hand. (p. 141).

What acknowledgement does in its plural approach is provide an understanding of the subject with whom we are intimate and invite further moral deliberation to discover those "good habits of thinking and acting."

First let us discuss the face of the other. Schrag (1986) pulls subjectivity out of the morass of deconstruction through communicative praxis where the decentered self is able to find ethical truths. I believe Hyde, relying on Levinas, describes the "face" of this decentered self. Rather than understanding face as synonymous with ethos, Levinas describes it phenomenologically as "an 'epiphany' that reveals the 'vulnerability' of the human body" (Hyde, 2006, p. 128). When given our consideration, the face truly is awe-inspiring. This is an individual person with feelings and intellect, hopes and dreams,

ethical triumphs and failures, happiness and sorrow, and a remarkable potentiality. In short, the “face” is the place of human alterity where “human being” is captured. “Epiphany” captures this understanding. However, what Hyde finds most important in Levinas is the idea that the face indicates our fundamental equipment for acknowledgment beyond exchange. As Hyde (2006) states:

The social workings of community are made possible by an altruistic and thus moral impulse that lies at the heart of human being. Human existence is structured in a way that has the self move toward the other before the self can even raise the related issues of reciprocity and moral responsibility. (p. 131).

Thus, Hyde is able to make a phenomenological case that we are fundamentally capable of going beyond self-interest in our ontology. At the core of our being is an impulse toward morality that functions to foster relationships.² That impulse makes possible other-centered motives. The vulnerability of the other is our own vulnerability. We are interrupted in our own vulnerability by encounters with these others. As Hyde (2006) states, “With the presence and saying of the face there comes a call—‘Where art thou?’—in need of a response: ‘Here I am!’” (p. 131). When continued unto the point of family, friendship, and romance, this is what we call intimacy.

Such an approach opens the way for understanding intimacy beyond a social exchange mentality. We can have multiple, coinciding motives more complex than self-interest that contain a “moral impulse” to answer a call of the other. But in what ways does one approach the “vulnerability” of the other in an intimate relationship such that it produces healthy relationships? This is where moral deliberation is needed. Hyde, perhaps because of the plurality with which he engages acknowledgment, does not

² Augustine makes similar moves; we are moral beings in the sense that God is goodness and we are made in the image of God. We cannot know vertical absolutes but transversally (a concept discussed in the next section) we can assess goodness through faith and action.

develop an argument beyond appropriateness for intimate communication. This is appropriate considering Hyde's (2006) concern with establishing acknowledgment as a "more receptive and morally attuned state of consciousness" (p. 284), not with the specific applications this might take in intimacy. In implying that we practice "positive" acknowledgment (p. 2), he is establishing space for moral discussion. In fact, it leaves open texturing for a number of narratives of faith, all looking to the applications of word and deed to exemplify their claims. It is here in this space for texture that I believe charity can add to our further understanding of intimate interpersonal communication within relationships.

Summary

Schrag moves us intellectually into a space for subjectivity. Hyde further moves us into a space for interpersonal ethics. This is done in both cases in communicative praxis—an active, embodied approach to communication. Acknowledgment is not a prescriptive system because the ethical impulses upon which it is founded are active and decentered: "A moral system's call of conscience is action-oriented: even when it tells us *not* to do something, it still is telling us *not to do* something" (Hyde, 2001, p. 40). This *active ought* is thus tempered by our temporality and multiplicity as humans. Through an understanding of transversality (described in the next chapter) and narratives of faith as embodied, acknowledgment is interpreted rather than prescribed. This embodied understanding of life also avoids mere description because life is enacted. There is not neutrality to acknowledgment. It is vested. It requires vulnerability and real consideration of the other. This leaves room to put forward an ethic without requiring universality.

Thus the plurality of acknowledgment lays ground for a deeper understanding of human relationships.

Charitable Acknowledgment in Intimate Relationships

Charitable acknowledgment operates as a narrative for intimate interpersonal communication. But what is the distinction between acknowledgment and charitable acknowledgment? Think of the comparison as an analogy: Within intimate interpersonal communication, social exchange theory is to the narrative of individualism as acknowledgment is to the narrative of charitable acknowledgment. It is the philosophical entrance into the narrative—the hermeneutic from which one enters. The narrative serves as the lived story for action. Elsewhere, we have gone into depth on the different facets of the interpretive approaches that texture each theory (See Table 1).

<u>Social Exchange</u>	<u>Acknowledgment</u>
Modern	Postmodern
Self-interested	Self and Other-interested
Altruism problematic (or non-existent)	Capable of altruism
Static	Active
Context independent	Context dependent
Primarily descriptive	Primarily interpretive
Criteria of satisfaction	Criteria of ethics and appropriateness
Secular	Plural

Table 1. A comparison of social exchange and acknowledgment

We see differences in approach based on modern or postmodern understandings. Acknowledgment has the capacity to find motives beyond self-interest, incorporating altruism as an important element. It is active, contextual, and primarily dependent upon interpretive methods. The criteria used (Spitzberg & Cupach, 2002) through the

philosophical approach of acknowledgment is one of ethics and appropriateness rather than satisfaction. Finally, whereas social exchange takes a secular approach, acknowledgment can incorporate plural narrative structures.

Narrative structures are important to the lived experience of relationships. As Bochner (2002) states, “The narratives we create, discover, and apply help us maintain a sense of coherence and continuity over the course of our lives” (p. 74). Arnett and Arneson (1999) acknowledge this in a public sphere. The two narratives described here—certainly there could be others—are specific to intimate romantic relationships. Roughly, these translate into a narrative of individualism and a narrative of charitable acknowledgment. Narratives are interpretive because they are tied to people symbolically and ethically. They are believed and thus enacted. It is argued here that charity, when engaged from an experiential (i.e., axiological) hermeneutic provided by acknowledgment rather than an ontological hermeneutic (i.e., viz-a-viz Hyde or Plato) can provide guidance for the ethical conduction of intimate romantic relationships. “Individualism” serves here as a specialized term regarding as the way social exchange is lived within romantic relationships.

As we have seen, a narrative of individualism in romantic relationships fosters an ethic of emotivism. Someone adopting this “narrative” looks at the relationship in terms of how to achieve emotional fulfillment and satisfaction through interaction with his or her partner. As depicted in Chapter 3, the main tenets of interpersonal theory engage relationships through this lived lens. Trust is treated as a tool to gain compliance and ultimately satisfaction. Reciprocation is important to the functioning of intimacy because, as gaming theory (Foa & Foa, 1974) indicates, there are implicit agreements for conduct

a couple creates so that everyone achieves a net gain from relational interactions. Goals and strategies to achieve those goals serve as the practical ways one can achieve happiness within a relationship (e.g., marriage is a contract of fidelity to achieve individual happiness). Intimacy then translates as the closeness that comes as a result of a couple's agreement on these strategies, goals, and how they satisfy them together. To improve a relationship one must be willing to meet the needs (self-interests) of one's partner while explaining your own needs; communication is the conduit by which this takes place (Bagarozzi, 2001). Couples come together to achieve happiness in greater ways than they could alone. Because of emotivism, there is a danger that people might find other sources for emotional fulfillment but to the extent that a couple is willing to reciprocate and is continuing to have a net gain in satisfaction levels, they will stay together. There is sufficient verification of this narrative statistically in social exchange, goal-orientations, and intimacy skills (see Chapter 3) to make the claim for its existence.

Narrative of Individualism

Emotivist
 Self-interested (me vis-à-vis you)
 Reciprocation necessary
 Love-as-emotion
 Intimacy as commodity for happiness
 Commodification

Narrative of Charitable Acknowledgment

Unconditional love
 Relationally-oriented (us)
 Reciprocation unexpected
 Love-as-ethic
 Intimacy as state of happiness
 Acknowledgment

Table 2. A comparison of a Narrative of Individualism with a Narrative of Charitable Acknowledgment

Here an alternative is offered to this narrative. A narrative of charitable acknowledgment, based on the work of Hyde, Schrag, and Augustine, relies on the ethics of charity to guide intimate relationships. This provides contrast (see Table 2) with a

narrative of individualism. First the ties of charity to acknowledgment will be discussed to tether these together on grounds of rhetorical competence, active orientation, and will.

From this axiological ground, charitable acknowledgment is guided by a transversal interpretation of the “good and just.” With the idea of transversality established, this goodness and justness in relationships is explored in terms of unconditionality, sacrifice, humility, and forgiveness. Finally, love and trust are reinterpreted in this narrative away from mere sentiment or tool into an ethical state of being required for intimacy.

Ties to Acknowledgment

What binds Augustine and Hyde together intellectually? Augustine is a 4th century bishop from Hippo. Hyde is a 21st century rhetoric scholar at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Yet these two have significant areas of intellectual overlap, such that when charity is approached from the hermeneutic of acknowledgment a narrative emerges that can inform healthy relationships. This overlap can be witnessed in their approaches to rhetorical competence, active communication, and will.

Rhetorical competence. Hyde (2006) uses rhetoric extensively in explanation of acknowledgment because it builds a “dwelling place where sound judgment can be fostered in and through collaborative deliberation” (p 143). Augustine is arguing for a similar “dwelling place” between two extremes of interpretation. First we see Augustine, depicting words as symbolic and interpretive, not as fixed objectively used tools. He notes, “Conventional signs are those which living creatures show to one another for the purpose of conveying, in so far as they able, the motion of their spirits or something

which they have sensed or understood” (*OCD* 2.2.3). These signs can be interpreted in various ways:

Many varied obscurities and ambiguities deceive those who read casually, understanding one thing instead of another; indeed, in certain places they do not find anything to interpret erroneously, so obscurely are certain sayings covered with a most dense mist. I do not doubt that this situation was provided by God to conquer pride by work and to combat disdain in our minds, to which those things which are easily discovered may seem frequently to become worthless. (*OCD* 2.6.7)

Thus, words are ambiguous, complex, and symbolic. In interpersonal communication, the association of worth with complexity is an interesting one since love is one of the most complex concepts to understand. Indeed, interpretations of love in intimacy take on a mysterious aura, in part because of its complexity (with the remainder coming as a result of the different faces of its enactment).

As a result of this understanding, Augustine develops a two-sided approach to competent interpretation of texts (*Conf.* 12.14.17), in his case Biblical scripture, that aids in relational interpretations. On one hand there are enemies of the “wondrous depth” of the words of scripture. These are revisionists, people who in today’s society might be considered “deconstructionists” or “critics,” who allow the flexibility of language to undermine the active intent. While rhetoric is indeed symbolic and thus, deconstructable, reality and enactment provide solidity whereby ethics can be examined and held in community. Thus Augustine considers revisionists faithless because of their lack of acknowledgment of the intent of text. On the other hand there is a critique of “praisers” of scripture who decry interpretations “different from that which we say” (*Conf.* 12.14.17). These, who today would be called fundamentalists, do not recognize their own limitations and the limitations of language. As Augustine notes, “For what could God have more generously and abundantly provided in the divine writings than that the same

words might be understood in various ways which other not less divine witnesses approve” (*OCD* 3.27.39). Thus interpretation is a “double-edged sword” (*Conf.* 12.14.17) which requires one be faithful to a text while being open to multiple faithful interpretations (Troup, 1999). One should beware of attributing one case to an action where multiple causes may exist; similarly one should avoid drawing conclusions that are not faithful to the situation at large based solely on one’s own experiences.

So what summarizes interpretation so that one might practice charitable acknowledgement? I believe the phrase “meet people on their own terms” helps to encapsulate the above guidelines. By anticipating what terms the other person intended, one is guided beyond personal perceptual filters to encounter the communicative intent of the other. It allows an interpreter to interpret accurately. This does not mean that someone necessarily agrees with the terms by which a person is approaching a given situation. However, it does serve as a starting point for charitable acknowledgment. When combined with attribution theory, this double-edged interpretive scheme serves well to help those in relationships better understand what *really* is the case as opposed to what is *assumed* to be the case. Thus one’s ability to acknowledge the other is aided by better understanding the perspective from which the other comes. This understanding certainly is not the only element towards making good and just decisions, but is a very important first step in establishing actions based on truth to the degree truth can be known. Without rhetorical accuracy, there is little hope of reaching beyond self-interest. By finding what is accurate in a given situation, one can then proceed to the appropriate action. This is not merely a technique. Rather to truly meet someone on their own terms takes what is interpreted as appropriateness and unites it with ethical consideration to determine what

is truly the best way to acknowledge someone in an intimate relationship. Meeting people on their own terms is the beginning of charitable acknowledgment. It shows a willingness to really *know* another person for who they are. This knowledge is determined through an understanding of the connection of word and deed.

Active in Word and Deed. Augustine is aware of the instabilities of language as noted in Chapter 4, which makes it difficult to establish how we ethically can achieve healthy relationships. There must be some connection of reality and language to make meaning: “I name bodily health, when I am sound in body. The reality itself is present to me, but truly unless its image were also in my memory, I could in no wise recollect what the sound of this name should signify” (*Conf.* 10.15.23). We do not have truth beamed down to us in a pre-linguistic state; the mind is involved in translating this through memory and recollection. This is the process of interpretation which for Augustine is a condition of the human experience; even scripture is interpreted (*OCD* 3.27.39). This creates problems when it comes to finding truth upon which to act in intimate relationships. Language alone is not sufficient to ground truth for healthy relationships because words do not escape human multiplicity and temporality. Words are embodied in temporal, multiple subjects. Language also cannot exclusively be grounded in the physical reality around us; abstracts such as “happiness” are beyond the realms of mere logic or description. So how then can a “happy life” be recognized and understood? Augustine has an answer. Augustine notes the happy life is not understood the way one “remembers Carthage” for it is not “seen by the eyes since it is not a body” (*Conf.* 10.21.31). Also it is not in the way one remembers speech for “even those who are not skilled speakers recall the thing itself when they hear the word” (*Conf.* 10.21.31). Instead

it is like the way we remember joy for “I never saw, or heard, or smelled, or tasted, or touched joy by a bodily sense. I have experienced it in my mind, when I have rejoiced, and knowledge of it has clung to my memory” (*Conf.* 10.21.31). There is a combination of memory of deed connected to memory of word. It is a conception of truth grounded in the connection of word to deed. The stability of language in such abstract/ethical concepts as happiness or, in the case of intimate communication, love is in the connection of word to deed. Love is a symbolic truth meeting a need for acknowledgment. We experience it in actions and cling to it in memory. Does this mean then that emotion is the foundation for knowing? Such an answer is too simplistic in an active paradigm. In communicative praxis, our actions, ethics, will, motives and habits come together to form interpretations. For example, Augustine “knows” God, but through a glass, darkly (*Conf.* 12.13.16). He experiences Him in actions, interprets Him in a narrative, is guided by Him in ethical conduction, and feels joy as a result of His actions. Knowing is not purely deductive; it is not purely subjective; it is not purely emotivist. Knowledge is fuzzy, yet obtainable in praxis. Yet while emotion may be a component in knowledge, the ethical place it *should* hold in action for intimate relationships is a different subject for consideration (see next section). In same way “health” is an abstract concept we experience and define simultaneously, so too is love experienced and defined simultaneously. In this temporal realm, abstracts are given meaning by connecting word with deed in memory.

Thus, connecting word and deed must serve as the cornerstone of a narrative of charitable acknowledgment. Without this connection, there is little that can be known of those elements of the human spirit that are comprised from our narratives of faith. There

is a standard then that emerges from this perspective: mistruths must be avoided. “Every lie must be called a sin...Words were surely instituted not so that people could deceive each other with them, but so that each person could make his thoughts known to another” (*Ench.* 7.22). In a postmodern society, the argument against lying should not be approached on a purely prescriptive level; ordering this as a commandment (although it can be approached from this perspective) would seem to revert to a premodern mindset where absolute truths can be known absolutely. Similarly, this is not just a description of the state of affairs of language; there is vested decision to be made concerning the ethical consequences of one’s action that cannot be made into a technique. Approaching mistruth interpretively requires an embodied understanding of the effects of such actions. But does Augustine share this approach? I argue that based on his philosophy/theology on memory, the case could be made that Augustine sees lying as a word/deed violation that rents asunder the connection of memory to word and memory to deed for the person to whom the liar is talking. This hampers the ability to foster any relationship especially intimate ones. In this sense, Augustine enters a debate on lying from a position of phenomenological linguistic reality. There is no ability to understand reality in a relationship when there is a disconnect of word from deed. Words are made to “make thoughts known” and charity is the central purpose of these thoughts. Thus fidelity in language is of utmost importance in interpersonal relationships. This conception of communication overlaps with Hyde’s acknowledgment in this phenomenological realization of the importance of enacting truth, not just speaking it. If Augustine is viewed as Platonic, this line of reasoning will not make sense. Augustine will be viewed as founding words on some abstract, transcendent Word and a prescriptive authoritative

stance is adopted. If Augustine is viewed vis-à-vis Hobbes, humans are seen as corrupt with truth being so chimerical that we must look to the afterlife for hope. However, by understanding Augustine through a different interpretive lens, that of acknowledgment, a side more applicable for intimate interpersonal communication emerges. The word is founded on the Word (Troup, 1999) understood as an embodied, temporal, and multiple engagement of the world as based on a narrative of faith. Hope is found in temporality to the extent that charitable acknowledgment is embodied. To further demonstrate this embodiment, let us now turn to the importance of will and habit.

Will & Habit. An enacted ethic drives charitable acknowledgment beyond individual emotion. This active ethic directs itself at times internally, fighting with one's will. At times, it is directed externally, for another person's sake. But it always will be seen most clearly in action towards another person. In the narrative of individualism, intimacy is driven by satisfaction commonly expressed in emotional "love," i.e. "passion" (Sternberg, 1986). Augustine's approach to human will draws an alternative explanation away from this purely self-interested motive. However, it also avoids the opposite extreme demanding pure self-sacrifice. Because actions are embodied in a temporal and multiple subject (see Chapter 2), this is impossible. As a result of this person's fallibilities on one hand (we have problems controlling our will) and their physicality on the other (we require basic needs, acknowledgment, etc. to survive), people are incapable of pure self-sacrifice. Thus, for Augustine there are multiple motives for action; there is no pure dichotomy between self and other in this temporal space. We require acknowledgment and others require us to acknowledge them; acknowledgment has fuzzy motivational boundaries. So what is the nature of motive, will, and our call to action on behalf of

others? For Augustine, there is a “nexus of action” that when seen through the lens of Hyde’s acknowledgment becomes the horizon within which to define charitable acknowledgment. Augustine, presupposing the importance of acknowledging others, defines the important questions for how we should act within a nexus of will, habit, and charity.

Will is the intention to move in a given direction. Yet often people do what they willed not to do; this is an issue with which Augustine constantly struggles and this struggle defines the horizons of our ability to act:

Yet I did not do that which I wanted to do with an incomparably greater desire, and could have done as soon as I willed to act, for immediately, when I made that act of will, I would have willed with efficacy. In such an act the power to act and the will itself are the same, and the very act of willing is actually to do the deed. Yet it was not done: it was easier for the body to obey the soul’s most feeble command, so that its member were moved at pleasure, than for the soul to obey itself and to accomplish its own high will wholly with in the will. Whence comes this monstrous state? (*Conf.* 8.8-9.20-21).

What is being said here is that even if a person wants to perform a given action, he or she still may not do it because of the pursuit of self-interested pleasure—often taking the form of emotion. For Augustine, pleasure provides only limited encouragement to charitably acknowledge someone, because it so often is at odds with the will.

Consideration of bodily pleasures is an encumbrance to the performance of acts that the soul understands to be both “good” and within the realm of possibility.

Acknowledgment, then, is hampered by over-reliance on emotion, because this “feeling of goodness” can often be at odds with the goodness of acknowledging others. Someone prioritizing their own personal satisfaction in a narrative of individualism finds it difficult to see past this satisfaction in order to act on behalf of others; only those who can provide personal gain should be offered the hand of acknowledgment—the life-

giving gift (Hyde, 2006). Intimate partners are seen as “primary providers” of a need. However, charitable acknowledgment does not operate whereby the subject views the other as a “provider of love” but rather sees this person simply as a “person to love.” This is an ethical orientation to relationships rather than a commodification of that relationship. The focus is on an ethic of me doing for you, not on the emotion that you can stir in me. Thus, it is of utmost importance, if one values acknowledgment as a “good,” that ethics, not passions, take a central place in the narrative. When an action is within the realm of possibility (meaning the other is present, and my body is capable) then the remaining factor is one of will to act. It is action that provides the true recognition of acknowledgment, not the emotion. When one is being observant and has the will to acknowledge, emotions must be restrained sometimes—a realization that runs counter to an emotivist society, where emotion is often pumped up rather than tamped down.

Let us be clear: charity does not negate self-interests or emotion. That would be to substitute the error of pure self-interest for the error of pure other-interest. Charitable acknowledgment recognizes that someone “loves his body and wishes to have it safe and whole” (*OCD* 1.25.26). However, Augustine notes that “a man can love more than the health and soundness of his body” (*OCD* 1.25.26). There is the capacity existing to love beyond the self. Nonetheless, intimacy does not require complete self-sacrifice (although sacrifice is often called for) as such self-depravity is contrary to the natural order: “We ought not to blame our sins and defects on the nature of the flesh because this is to disparage the Creator. The flesh, in its own kind and order, is good” (*COG* 14.5). Rather, we are multiple in our motives. In temporality, life requires acknowledgment from others

for fulfillment (Hyde, 2006). Thus, it is also required that someone has the will to do something for someone, an act that may or may not entail receiving anything in return. There is a “call of the other” being given and one is asked to respond, regardless of whether reciprocation occurs. Sometimes enacting this ethic is easy and rewarding, and sometimes it is difficult and depressing. The important question is *will* a person do it as much as *why* a person does it.

The will to action is much easier when good habits of acknowledgment are formed. Habits for Augustine are previous actions that have formed one’s physical and mental pre-cognitive likelihoods for future action. Augustine states, “For the law of sin is force of habit, whereby the mind is dragged along and held fast, even against its will, but still deservedly so, since it was by its will that it had slipped into the habit” (*Conf.*, 8.5.12). One’s own actions as a result of will create habits. These habits, good or bad, make actions contrary to them more difficult. Thus putting into practice principles of charitable acknowledgment will reinforce this action.

So what are these principles? The specific elements of the ethic of charity are the final guides for this nexus of action composed of will, habit and ethic. For Augustine charity is not primarily a function of an emotional state, whereby one feels a given action would make them happy and so one does it (although emotion is often present). As Augustine states, “For the soul wishes to be and it loves to find rest in things that it loves. But in [the bodily senses] there is not a place where it may find rest, for they do not endure. They flee away, and who can follow them by fleshly sense?” (*Conf.* 4.10.15). Emotions are fleeting and a poor place to place standards of happiness. This is echoed by MacIntyre (1984) in his discussion of emotivism. In an individualistic society, emotions,

as a physical manifestation of pleasure or pain, easily may be adopted as a guiding force, but they certainly do not “endure.” In contrast with emotivism, charitable acknowledgment is understood as the nexus of will, habit, and ethic (i.e., charity), through which one acts. The quality of that ethic is determined by horizons of appropriateness (already discussed), sacrifice, unconditionality, and forgiveness. But before getting to these elements, it is important to discuss how this is understood in terms of the subject to avoid substituting Platonism for emotivism. The above terms are not Forms or prescriptions for some sort of disembodied ethic. They are embedded in a narrative which requires understanding how that narrative is engaged by a subject.

Consider the following statement by Augustine, which could be considered “ego-driven” under a narrative of individualism, but here is framed under a narrative of charitable acknowledgment:

When we are merciful to anyone and assist him, we do so for his utility, which is our goal; but in a curious way our own utility follows as a consequence when God does not leave that compassion which we expend on one who needs it without reward (*OCD*, 1.32.35).

That reward is happiness or fulfillment, what Augustine calls “enjoyment in God.” This pleasure drawn from helping others is the reward typically cited under exchange paradigms as the commodity-based motive for acknowledging others. Framing this as a reward thus emphasizes the horizontal consequences of acknowledgment. In the above quote however, Augustine emphasizes something different. Augustine does not advocate pleasure as the standard for action, and thus interprets from a different narrative. There is a fulfillment that comes as a result of a narrative of faith—God is involved, seen in the joy of mercy. The question is, is this a purely vertical orientation to truth—a sort of Platonic ideal of the Good? For those who associate Platonism with Augustine, it is easy

to see this as a vertical orientation whereby God dictates good and bad; indeed this is a common interpretation of Augustine throughout the Middle Ages and even unto today (see Brown, 1972). In this interpretation, there are specific motives that are to be “commended or reprimanded” (*OCD* 3.7.19) as dictated by God; God is the source of all good and is provides our moral guidance (*Conf.* 1.1.1; 7.5.7; 11.1.1); we have a transcendent soul that, while differing in nature from Plato’s, it still longs for completion in a Formally pure City of God transcendentally separate from the City of Man (*COG* 10.30-31). These arguments and others are commonly quoted in interpreting Augustine as having a vertical orientation to truth.

However, because of his fidelity to word and deed, his understanding of human error, his rhetorical educational background, and his commitment to the enactment of his dictates seen in his life, Augustine’s narrative can be interpreted away from the medieval vertical and instead be interpreted as a *transversal* through the lens of charitable acknowledgment. Charitable acknowledgment, as an active paradigm, could be interpreted on a transversal level—a term used by Schrag. When faith and hope are understood transversally, charitable acknowledgment takes on a new degree of importance as belief is embodied in action. These issues will occupy the next section.

Faith, Hope, and Transversals

So what is a “transversal” in contrast to a horizontal or vertical? Schrag (1997) gives an example of this directional orientation using a generic organization:

Harmony and unity cannot be achieved via a vertically ordered and hegemonic decision-making arrangement that simply subordinates the lower to the higher. Nor can, of course, decision making be left to the autonomy of horizontally serialized groups, which often disagree on matters of both style and policy. What is required is a transversal ordering and communication that is achieved through a diagonal movement across the groups, acknowledging the otherness and integrity

of each, while making the requisite accommodations and adjustments along the way. (p. 132)

Thus as Guattari states, “Transversality is a dimension that tries to overcome both the impasse of pure verticality and that of mere horizontality; it tends to be achieved when there is a maximum of communication among the different levels and, above all, in different meanings” (Schrag, 1997, p. 132). Applying this same concept to social relationships, one could say charitable acknowledgment is the interpreted response to the lived incorporation of human needs within a time and place. This will not be universal because intimacy cannot be applied in the same way for all people; it will however have general transversals that unify such actions despite the differences in application—for charitable acknowledgment these are comprised of the nexus of action (will, habit, and charity) and a nexus of belief (faith, hope, and charity), with charity comprised of sacrifice, unconditionality, and forgiveness. Note here charity is the term uniting the active belief. The transversal is “an open-textured process of unification moving beyond the constraints of the metaphysical oppositions of universality versus particularity and identity versus difference” (Schrag, 1997, p. 133). This is a melding together of constructs into one enacted narrative.

Transversality thus recognizes the interpretive and active nature of communication. It is a unification of terms in praxis. So what is it about transversality that makes it helpful to interpersonal communication and namely an understanding of intimate relationships? In short, a transversal understanding provides a means by which spiritual questions can be engaged and defended as “good” within intimate relationships without claiming something as “universal.” Vertical categories are resisted largely because people are multiple, temporal, and embodied. Thus the other is ever-shifting in

his need for acknowledgment, defying vertical absolutes. The acts we do show our faith, embody charity, and foster healthy (or unhealthy) relationships. The couple in the intimate relationships “moves” simultaneously along all these points on a “diagonal.” We interpret this action based on our hermeneutical entrance into the discussion.

The transversal also allows a professor the opportunity to engage students with practical guidance beyond the mere horizontal level. To just give a description of techniques within relationships, an approach that exemplifies a horizontal approach, denies the spiritual elements of our existence; there is more to be said about human relationships to give them relevance. To rise above technique while simultaneously avoiding platitudes that may not engage others, charitable acknowledgment is realized as an embodied practice and an orientation to regard others. We chose an entrance into the discussion somewhere on the diagonal, based on a given hermeneutic, and then texture it. When considering relationships on a transversal level, professors choose a hermeneutic entrance into the issue of relational quality and then begin to add elements such as connecting word and deed, understanding one’s narrative of faith and how that provides hope, meeting people on their own terms, forgiveness, the issue of unconditional love, the issue of emotivism, and so on. The whole relationship is under consideration here lest the parts become technified—this is the heart of a transversal approach.

I argue that faith and hope, when understood transversally, provide the space for understanding charitable acknowledgment. In a transversal approach, faith will impact interpretation and interpretation will shape faith. Faith is connected to acknowledgment as a lived ontology. Hyde (2006) states that acknowledgment is the “life-giving gift” that is “informed by an ontological impulse that points people in the direction of the ‘good

and the just” (p. 7). The interpretation of the “good and just” depends upon how the ontological impulse is understood in terms of a narrative of faith. But what is meant here by faith? Ontology overlaps with faith on many levels, and for students, faith may be the easier term to understand. While students may have encountered “faith” through religious or secular encounters, very few, assumedly, have contemplated “ontology” despite the fact that both traditionally deal with presuppositions and foundational elements of an argument. Typically ontology has dwelt in the realm of philosophy and faith in the realm of theology. However, despite faith’s religious roots, there is applicability outside a religious context, which comes from understanding faith in terms of action and texture rather than logic and foundation. A dictionary definition indicates faith as “confident belief in the truth, value, or trustworthiness of a person, idea, or thing” (*American*, 2002, p. 500). It is also “the body of dogma of a religion.” The former indicates the connotation most closely connected with acknowledgment; however, greater depth than this is required to encapsulate its perspective as the nexus of word and deed. There is a transversal element to faith which is embodied in an understanding of charity through acknowledgment. Faith is composed of the embodied beliefs that inform our answers to the spiritual questions of where we come from, what we should do while we are here, and what happens after we die. Faith is embodied and active in deep, rich ways going beyond a vertical level of understanding.

So what shape does faith take for a narrative of charitable acknowledgment?

Augustine is coming from a Christian perspective, which defines his understanding of faith. For charitable acknowledgment, this does not take form as a theological treatise but as a lived belief. As Grenz (1994) notes, “Our response cannot end with an intellectual

apologetic for faith. We must also embody our acknowledgment of the reality of God in the manner in which we live and in the way that we view ourselves. This embodiment entails participation in community...” (p. 67). Theology, often deductive in its method of reasoning, here takes on a causal reasoning. Faith in God is exposed in the way such faith is lived. This is the faith of charitable acknowledgment—the lived belief, the enactment of charity. For Augustine, charity is the outcropping of an appropriately held faith: “For one who rightly loves without doubt rightly believes and hopes, and one who does not love believes in vain, even if the things he believes are true...” (*Ench.* 31.117). Belief, hope, and love are embodied in the believer, all of which comprise the Christian life. Faith cannot be held separate from charity because, as Augustine adds, “Charity is the end of every commandment” (*Ench.* 32.121). As the active portion of the belief system, charity indicates the degree and quality of faith. This is what Augustine means when he states:

“the only thing that counts is faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6). But if faith works evil rather than good, without doubt as the apostle James says, it “is dead in itself” (James 2:17), and he also says, “if a person says he has faith, but does not have works, will faith be able to save him?” (James 2:14)” (*Ench.* 18.67).

Word is thus connected to deed in a profound way—on the level of faith. Thus, in addition to being understood as a body of doctrinal beliefs, faith is defined as a living and breathing embodiment of what is conceived as the good life. This embodied understanding is what is represented in the “charity” of charitable acknowledgment.

In addition to faith, Augustine denotes the importance of hope. Whereas “there is faith in good things and bad, for both good and bad things are believed, and both in good faith, not bad” (*Encl.* 2.8), “hope is only for good things, only for things that are in the future and concern the one who is said to have hope in them.” To be hopeless is to have

no capacity for conceiving good things in the future. Thus, by definition, it is not possible to hope for something bad for one's self, because hope believes in improvement, not destruction. Those who desire death may say they "hope for death" but here "hope" is being conflated with "wish". The very desire for death is the ultimate statement of hopelessness. Thus, while one can have faith in bad things, hope only concerns good things in the future. Therefore the premise of charitable acknowledgment is a means of giving hope to hopeless lives. By offering an answer to the second spiritual question, the act of acknowledgment provides such hope. This hope is embodied in the hope we have for mankind and the goodness of others. To the extent a person holds goodwill towards others is the extent to which one is hopeful in the future. With this hope, we can enact the elements we believe will acknowledge them, often expressed in the "golden rule" as "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." By offering an enacted embodiment of charity, acknowledgment as an action provides hope on a level applicable to interpersonal relationships.

I would argue the transversal categories of faith and hope are present in all narratives. Bochner (2002) notes "Life both anticipates telling and draws meaning from it. Narrative is both about living and part of it" (p. 86). Hope and faith, in providing meaning to life are inherent to this narrative structure. For example, the narrative of individualism finds faith in the rationality of the subject. There is belief in the inherent self-interestedness of humanity, the economic metaphor of relationships, and the capacity to find satisfaction in the goals of the individual. Hope is found in the veracity of these goals; to the extent they are fulfilled is the extent to which one finds hope.. The

commonality that faith and hope provide is neither universal nor horizontal in its orientation; it is transversal—believing in different meanings to provide depth.

One final question emerges in a discussion of transversals, faith, and hope: where does the confidence to act come from? If faith is universal, confidence comes from above. If a faith is horizontal, confidence has traditionally been found in our rationality. Someone from a transversal approach sees the error in our rationality and the inability to find universals. Then how is there confidence in interpretation? How can we know what is a loving action in an intimate relationship? To answer, it is helpful to consider C. S. Lewis' (1976/1949) exposition on "Transposition." Lewis explains that we use a poorer medium to respond to a richer medium when it comes to our spiritual understanding, a transposition where perceptual filters affect interpretation (p. 103). Lewis offers examples:

The brutal man never can by analysis find anything but lust in love; the Flatlander never can find anything but flat shapes in a picture; physiology never can find anything in thought except twitchings of the grey matter. It is no good browbeating the critic who approaches a Transposition from below. On the evidence available to him his conclusion is the only one possible. Everything is different when you approach the Transposition from above...Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. (p. 104-5).

Out of context, this seems to take a universal top-down approach to interpretation.

However in context, when Lewis (1976/1949) uses the word "above," his understanding of the temporal, multiple, embodied nature of humanity translates into a *diagonal* orientation. He is not suggesting a universal top-down interpretation but a very humble one: "But who dares to be a spiritual man? In the full sense, none of us...With what ever sense of unworthiness, with whatever sense of audacity, we must affirm that we know a little of the higher system which is being transposed." (p. 105). This is an important element of charitable acknowledgment to grasp: when it comes to our interpretations of

human spirituality (i.e., the reasons for our existence and how we should live), we are describing a transposition from a rich medium—Being, the image of God, the face of the Other—into words and actions which are impaired by the limitations of our perceptual filters. Recognition of this limitation often stymies action as people dither in thoughtful speculation or are crippled by a sense of unworthiness. However, the counter to transposition is not fearful introspection but humble action. As Lewis (1976/1949) states:

It is not only for humility's sake (that of course) that we must emphasize the dimness of our knowledge. I suspect that, save by God's direct miracle, spiritual experience can never abide introspection...The attempt to discover by introspective analysis our own spiritual condition is to me a horrible thing which reveals at best...transpositions in intellect, emotion, and imagination, and which at worst may be the quickest road to presumption or despair. (p. 107)

Simply put, there is error present in humanity, and it is pervasive, though not so much that we are incapable of making reliable interpretations (see Gertler, 2003). Word connected to deed is a powerful mode for action. A person acts based on a sense of ethic, sees the result, and re-acts accordingly. For Augustine, what made action difficult was becoming “carried away outside myself by the voices of my error, and under the weight of my pride I sank down into the depths” (*Conf.* 4.15.27). Indeed, part of the human condition is dealing with errors in interpretation and appropriateness, which lead to negative acknowledgment rather than charitable. Perhaps part of Augustine's despair at his prideful errors stems from transposition. At the point Augustine notes these “voices of error” in the *Confessions*, he holds a Manichean approach to humanity which he later decides is an impoverished view of God and humanity. He is viewing God from a position of disingenuous belief. Later, he finds joy as his belief connects word and deed in a profound way: upon being convicted by scripture “all the dark shadows of doubt fled away” (*Conf.* 8.12.28). Confidence is a matter of believing in the “good” and doing it.

To sum up, “seeing” is a result of faith and hope in a narrative. This is not seen as an ahistorical, transcendent imperative but a transversal call to act charitably. We “see” people in this narrative from the perspective of a nexus of belief—faith, hope, and ethic (in this case charity). From this “diagonal” position, we act to fulfill the needs of our intimate partners. This of course requires humility as a result of our limitations in perspective. Yet this should not be a cause for introspective inactivity. A person acts humbly but nonetheless acts. As Augustine states: “This it is then that he [John] enforces here. ‘In this we know that we are of the truth, when in deed and in truth’ we love, ‘not only in words and in tongue’” (*Tract. 1 John*, 6.3). What love looks like in charitable acknowledgment is the subject of the next section: namely it is the embodiment of a love that is unconditional, sacrificial, and forgiving.

Unconditional, Sacrificial, and Forgiving

So what do charitable acknowledging actions look like? It is here that we begin to see the nuts and bolts of the narrative and how intimate interpersonal communication, in particular, benefits from this narrative framework. Sacrifice, forgiveness, and unconditional love are the outgrowths of charitable acknowledgment in an intimate relationship. To this point the narrative elements such as connecting word and deed and meeting people on their own terms could largely be applied to a variety of relationships. But the ethical tenets of charity suggested here are difficult to apply to non-intimate relationships (when such actions do occur they typically fall into the realm of the heroic; see Hyde, 2006, p. 256). The vulnerability and openness required for sacrifice or unconditionality necessitates high levels of trust in one’s partner—a trust that comes only

with time, commitment and acknowledgment. If given too liberally then spiritual, psychological, or even physical hurt may occur.

To begin, it is important to understand that intimacy is a condition of further and further closeness between two individuals (Sternberg, 1986), expressed in friendships, family and romantic relationships. Communication is certainly one element that fosters intimacy (e.g., Altman & Taylor, 1973) but there is much more to intimacy than that. Interpersonal relational partners are building, in the metaphorical terms of Hyde, (2006) a “dwelling place,” namely a “home.” As Hyde (2006) states, “A house that is authentically a home is an abode or dwelling place whose inhabitants ought to know that, no matter how bad things become, here still exists a haven of shelter and forgiveness” (p. 98). The condition that fundamentally defines a home is safety, not just on a physical level but on psychological and spiritual levels as well. Ideally, home is the dwelling place where a person finds the potential to be exactly who he or she is in the presence of others. It should be a “place” where the couple acts together, acknowledge one another, and accept one another for who they are. To achieve this level of acceptance requires the ability to unconditionally accept the individual qua individual, often at the expense of one’s own personal being.

Unconditionality. Unconditional love is what makes “home” possible, because by loving unconditionally, one provides a space for safe expression of one’s personality. Love-as-charity epitomizes this need for unconditionality. Charity for Augustine is “the motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of God for His own sake, and the enjoyment of self and of one’s neighbor for the sake of God” (*OCD* 3.10.16). Charity, then, is unconditional because God’s love is unconditional. As Augustine states, God is:

Most high, most good, most mighty, most almighty; most merciful and most just; most hidden and most present; most beautiful and most strong; stable and incomprehensible; unchangeable, yet changing all things; never new, and never old, yet renewing all things...supporting, fulfilling, and protecting things; creating, nourishing, and perfecting them; searching them out, although nothing is lacking you. You love, but are not inflamed with passion; you are jealous, yet free from care; you repent, but do not sorrow; you grow angry, but remain tranquil. You change your works, but do not change your plan... (*Conf.* 1.4.4).

In this, God's love is unchanging. A person shows God's love to the extent that he/she loves the other as the other is. But is this not a universal, the very thing we are trying to intellectually avoid? Remember that for Augustine words dwell in memory and are functions of human interpretation. We are limited in temporality. For moral action to be tenable at all requires something profound indeed. This is the function of the Incarnation, God's direct entrance into the temporal from the eternal. "Love others as I loved you" (John 15:12) is the most succinct expression of this. The Incarnation serves as the entrance of love into this world—a transversal through which we know by example. As a result of this example, there is a nexus of action within which we find the will to enact charity and thus build habits. When Augustine cites charity as a movement of the soul toward God, one might say his hermeneutic entrance is at the level of faith. As the example of goodness did, so I will do.

Yet as Troup (1999) notes, "Few today will submit themselves to the moral rigor associated with the Incarnation, let alone that rigor in combination with the comprehensive intellectual knowledge and performative skills that Augustine calls wisdom" (p. 178). I argue by entering this discussion from a hermeneutic of acknowledgment one can make this "moral rigor" more inviting if only because it starts from the charitable acknowledgment of others and works to show faith through love. The interpreter starts with love as the nexus of action is explored. What does this mean? Let

us start at the level of experience assuming unconditionality. In showing one's intimate partner unconditional love, there is a real and tangible ability to be who one truly is. I love you for you, and because I trust you, I am who I am when you love me. This may be mimetic to God's love; but we cannot absolutely know this. We can only choose to believe (or not) and enact it (or not). But when enacted, the safety is so appealing that it may seem to participate in something bigger—Hyde would go as far as calling this something bigger “primordial” and Levinas would go further calling it “the infinite in the other” which is “closer to God than I” (Hyde, 2006, p. 141). In the shelter of charitable acknowledgment, this temporal world becomes more tolerable—even good. It demonstrates a spiritual element of humanity and points to something beyond. Thus, letting down one's guard and being allowed to be who one truly is a true life-giving gift. Charitable acknowledgment engages the question of relationship on the enacted level of love and through enactment, the transposition of spirituality may become less pronounced.

The action of unconditionality has several different elements. First, expectations for behavior should be avoided within unconditional love. Baer (2002) is an author who states this well: “Marriage is not an opportunity to dump our expectations for happiness on our partner—it's a commitment we make to stay with our partner while we learn to love him or her unconditionally” (p. 196). Charitable acknowledgment reverts into an exchange paradigm when someone uses their spouse to achieve personal happiness. Thus, one must accept the other person without qualification to open a space for a “home”. This is a difficult conception to accept in an emotivist society. Love qua charity is not a

commodity but an organic state freely emerging from a desire to acknowledge. This requires that it be unconditional, which can be difficult and often disturbingly vulnerable:

While it's true that I may *promise* to love you, the moment you *expect* me to keep that promise, you destroy the possibility of feeling *unconditionally* accepted because unconditional love can only be freely given *and* freely received. When we *expect* love, anything we receive can only feel like an order that was filled, or something we paid for. (Baer, 2002, p.53)

Thus, to demand someone change is unacceptable for someone holding to an ethic of charitable acknowledgment. Charity establishes a home and that home requires the freedom to love or not love. As Baer (2002) states, "Trying to change another person is manipulative, controlling, and arrogant, and it proves that we're primarily concerned with our own happiness, not our partner's" (p. 51). Thus, an important understanding here is: Who is the person that you have partnered with? In theory it is the person whose "face" you most want to attend to and who in turn most wants to attend to your face. The whole idea of marriage is a "becoming one" whereby individuals are both contributing towards one relationship. Expectations for change indicate a lack of acceptance and thus a lack of acknowledgment. This does not mean a spouse will never change, but such a change should occur because of charity, motivated out of the love for the other individual, not because one is manipulated or demanded to do so by the other person.

Because of the demands it requires, the expression of charitable acknowledgment is normally healthiest in the most intimate of relationships, namely marriage, immediate family, and the closest friendships. The reason for this is that unconditionality moves relationships from the physical realm of economic trade and enters the spiritual world of charity, a move that exposes one to hurt and pain. This is a shift from wielding power with and/or above others for the sake of personal comfort to understanding others for the sake for acknowledgment. A person relinquishes control over a situation by trusting

someone else with his or her own intimate levels of well-being—a level of trust that acquaintances can legitimately claim is not their responsibility (see research on self-disclosure and self-monitoring). The person operating under a narrative of charitable acknowledgment is one who emphasizes truth and trust—both of which leave a person very vulnerable. It is this vulnerability that requires careful application.

Nonetheless, unconditional love when put into practice provides stability by letting a person be who they really are and still be acknowledged. The relationship is the most genuine connection of word and deed as your best features as well as your flaws are understood and accepted. This is a relationship built on truth and thus trust is fostered. But what happens when conflict occurs? How do two people resolve disagreements that occur when, despite the acceptance of the other, the issue is fundamentally dissonant (e.g., difference in religious beliefs; difference in family upbringing)? This brings about an obligation to sacrifice.

Sacrifice. As Hyde (2006) notes, “Acknowledgment requires sacrifice” (p. 53). Augustine shows well how this sacrifice should be applied. Augustine notes “another man is to be loved more than our own bodies; for all of these things are to be loved for the sake of God” (*OCD*, 1.27.28). Sacrifice, simply put, is the state of affairs for Augustine because it is a giving of oneself—a love beyond our own bodies. We are called to give; this is also at the heart of acknowledgment. Yet for Augustine, “All other men are to be loved equally; but since you cannot be of assistance to everyone, those especially are to be cared for who are most closely bound to you by place, time, or opportunity” (*OCD* 1.28.29). As a result of his request to “love equally,” Augustine might be interpreted as drawing no distinction between intimates and non-intimates, a

point that contrasts with above statements concerning who should receive the deepest charitable acknowledgment. However Augustine, ever aware of his limitations recognizes the difference between what we ought to do and what we can. Intimacy is where such sacrifices are most demanded because this is the person with whom we share the closest proximity. Someone who is just also discerns when and what to love based on their value; “He lives in justice and sanctity who is an unprejudiced assessor of the intrinsic value of things. He is a man who has an ordinate love; he neither loves what should not be loved nor fails to love what should be loved.” (*OCD* 1.27.28). An argument could be made that on a practical level, justice, proximity, and our inability to see “clearly” (*Conf.* 12.13.16) compose a statement of the healthy applications of sacrifice. Those who would abuse us might justly be refused our sacrifice. However, while differences of interpretation of these criteria may emerge, the requirement for sacrifice is definitely applicable for those closest to us.

How should such sacrifice be conducted? Who gives to whom and when? There is no pat answer to this. It must take place within the relational situation and be worked out through unconditional love. While fearing this will be taken as a glib answer, the complexity of sacrifice requires such openness of application. The nature of sacrifice is one of personal choice to enact the ethical standard and can only be offered by the person who is doing giving. Some things are held more sacredly than others. Certain couples break apart, and rightly so, because individual differences in narratives of faith, or some other area of the relationship are too pronounced. To ignore this issue can work for a time, but ultimately the issue will have to be broached. Sacrifice may be necessary by someone. Indeed, sacrifice is the way of fostering charity and charity leads to joy. I give

to you because I want you to be happy and acknowledged; this is love. When reciprocated freely it is, as Baer (2002) describes it, a “beautiful duet” (p. 170).

Forgiveness. We all err. The response to this error in marriage is widely divergent, from implicit acceptance, to feigned ignorance, to divorce (see Waldron & Kelley, 2007). Forgiveness is the temporal response necessary to navigate beyond error so that unconditional love can be enacted. For Augustine forgiveness is a condition of charity:

A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." Whoso doeth contrary to charity and contrary to brotherly love, let him not dare to glory and say that he is born of God: but whoso is in brotherly love, there are certain sins which he cannot commit, and this above all, that he should hate his brother. And how fares it with him concerning his other sins, of which it is said, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us?" Let him hear that which shall set his mind at rest from another place of Scripture; "Charity covereth a multitude of sins.' (Tract. 1 John 5.3)

Charity exists in temporality as forgiveness. We “cover a multitude of sins” for our partner as we “move beyond” error. There are several necessary *quid pro quos*: Of course, it is better never to make such an error in the first place. Of course, this is more complex than simply “moving on,” requiring time and much contemplation. Of course, trust may be broken and require a great deal of work to repair. There may even be times when destruction of intimacy is too great to repair. But charity forgives because there is a relationship at stake, a person who needs acknowledged, and error to reconcile.

Relationships that operate from charitable acknowledgment, accept the other for who they are. Part of this is enduring when major and minor offenses are committed. It is not easy; but neither is allowing the relationship to be destroyed. Erring people should understand this position in which they put their beloved. Leaving and staying are both painful. Forgiveness is the process of recovering from error; it is letting go of the pain. As

Mark Twain stated, “Forgiveness is the fragrance a violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.” When forgiveness is offered, for Augustine this is the mimesis of receiving mercy from God. “If, therefore, God gave to thee grace, because He gave freely, love freely. Do not for the sake of reward love God; let Him be the reward” (Tract. John 3.21). Those with whom we are intimate are to be forgiven as we are forgiven. Certainly forgiveness can be abused. Augustine points again to the Creator of mercy:

But, someone will say: “How, then, is it that this divine mercy was bestowed on impious and ungrateful man?” Surely, the answer is that mercy was shown by the One who, day by day, “maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and unjust” (COG 1.8).

This is why forgiveness and justice must work in tandem. This is a difficulty dynamic to navigate. Organizationally, justice seems to be the preference (yet even here Augustine note in response to the Donatists that justice must be meted with mercy). Interpersonally, perhaps a better realization is that “Justice is the Lord’s” (COG 20.30). Charity requires forgiveness in order to practice acknowledgment. Justice postponed provides love a space to operate, infiltrate, and heal the wounds of error.

The Ethic of Love

Thus we are brought to one of the final major elements within a narrative of charitable acknowledgment—the issue of love. Through this narrative, love is reframed from a static to an active phenomenon and from emotion-driven to ethic-driven. Love becomes central within this understanding of interpersonal communication, yet can still work well with research currently conducted (e.g., Lee, 1978; Sternberg, 1986). With this new understanding of love, a narrative of charitable acknowledgment provides an alternative to a narrative of individualism. The construct of love shifts from narrow application to broad application within interpersonal communication—a view more

reflective of vernacular usage. Finally, intimacy can reflect more thoroughly a view most commonly called “agape” which has largely perplexed the field to this point because it is not easily quantified.

Love occupies a place on the periphery of interpersonal communication. Through the late seventies and early eighties several influential works by were conducted that shaped the way love was researched. Rubin (1973) formed a distinction between liking and loving where liking consists of affection and respect and love includes attachment, caring, and intimacy. Lee (1978) depicted love in terms of its different “colors” (i.e., eros, pragma, storge, mania, ludus, agape). Sternberg (1986) created a triangle of love composed of passion, intimacy, and commitment. Future studies propagated other theories (Hecht, Marston, & Larkey, 1994; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986; Davis & Todd, 1982). Each of the above largely is an attempt to categorize love to make it easier to study. While several other studies have been published in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* that have had varying degrees of influence, (Beall & Sternberg, 1995; Fehr & Russell, 1991; Kovecses, Z, 1991; Maxwell, 1996; Shaver & Hazan, 1988) there has been little attention paid to the construct of love outside this small subsection of interpersonal communication and psychology. Textbooks are further evidence of this neglect. In general, there is a lack of usage of “love” in interpersonal communication textbooks (Williams, 2003). There are several speculations on why this is the case. Perhaps it is as Buscaglia (1972) states because “[to the academic community] love is prejudicial, superstitious, unscientific bosh” (p. 8). Indeed because love is so prevalent in the common vernacular, the word may seem overused and elementary. More likely, however, is that love is difficult to analyze scientifically. Fehr and Russell (1991)

demonstrate how wide the usage of love really is from paternal to sensual to containing the meaning of life. Breaking this wide berth into variables is nearly impossible due to the sheer depth involved in the term. Nonetheless, love is incredibly relevant to the real life enactment of interpersonal communication. Terbovich (1966) states that love is “the very soul of music, poetry, and romance” (p. 12). Emily Dickinson (1924/1993) affirms this in her poetry, stating, “Love is anterior to life, / Posterior to death, / Initial of creation, and / The Exponent of breath” (XXXVII). Buscaglia (1972) even entitles a book *Love: What Life is All About*. Simply, every person who tells another person “I love you” is acknowledging love’s place in interpersonal communication. The peripheral treatment of love then is concerning for something so central. So how can love be framed to make it more meaningful?

I argue that in intimate relationships there are at least two frameworks for love operating under a narrative of individualism or charitable acknowledgment; each of these provides meaningful expression of love, but with greatly different effect. Under a narrative of individualism, love is an emotion-based commodity and thus is static. Because a person views life in an exchange mentality, love is commodified, essentially becoming an emotional good to be traded with one’s partner to garner satisfaction. Giddens (1992), who could be considered one of the clearest authors articulating love under a narrative of individualism, recognizes the commodification of intimacy in his discussion of “pure relationships:”

A pure relationship has nothing to do with sexual purity, and is a limiting concept rather than only a descriptive one. It refers to a situation where a social relation is entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with one another; and which is continued only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfactions for each individual to stay within it (p. 58).

Thus, attaining the emotional good of passionate love can be a goal to achieve from a relationship; marriage can serve as a benchmark of such achievement. From a research perspective, one measures “arousal” and “passion” in self-reports in order to assess the “love” of the couple. Of course this is not all a relationship is founded upon. One must have actions that show such passion. There must be support of the needs of the other person, while simultaneously respecting the other’s individuality, i.e., respect should be given for the other person’s alternative goals outside of that relationship. Good relationships are able to keep emotions alive in the romance while balancing life around them. As Giddens (1992) notes, “Intimacy is above all a matter of emotional communication, with others and with the self, in a context of interpersonal equality” (p. 130). Satisfaction of the individual thus reaches its culmination in this way—by providing space for the actualization of the self. The emotion shapes the actions associated with passionate love that are prioritized within the relationship. Ethics are driven by these emotions. While marriage may be claimed as a covenant for life, emotional lack of fulfillment would dictate whether marriage under this narrative should continue. There may be competing narratives that cause struggle in making this decision; someone with strong religious ties may find it difficult to navigate two opposing ethical standards. Nonetheless, a narrative of individualism, emotivist in nature, will make it hard to find validity in communal narratives. What I think/feel is what is most real and in fact what is most *right*. The emotion love must be felt to continue this feeling of *rightness*.

Models of Love Frameworks

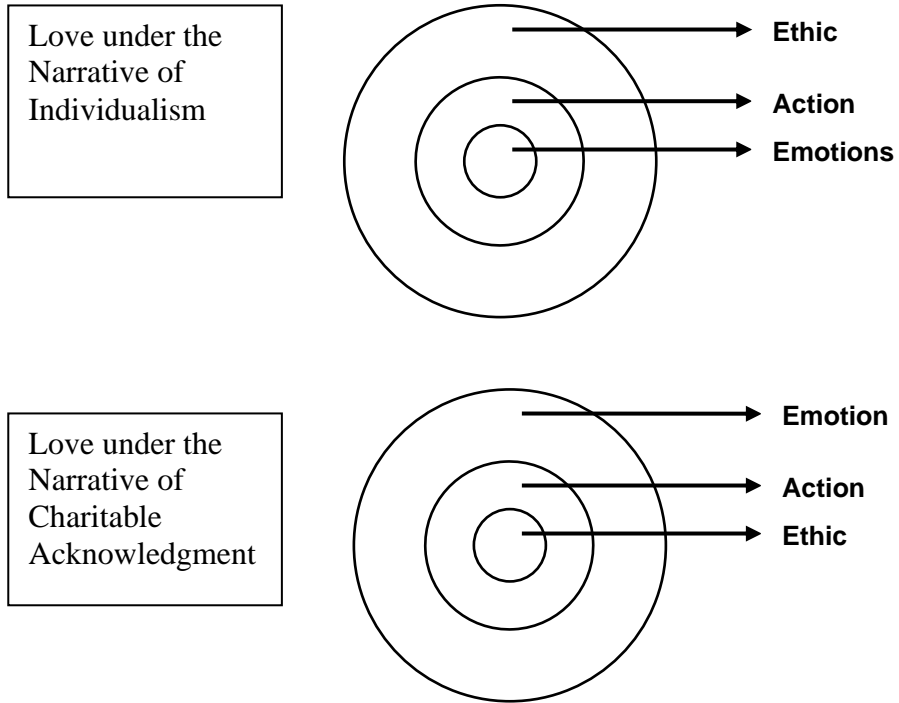


Figure 1

A narrative of charitable acknowledgment takes a different view of love as an embodied ethic and thus active in nature. This approach lends itself to philosophical study as an unconditional expression of acknowledgment. Love is first and foremost an ethic in this narrative. It is an orientation towards the other that demands appropriate enactment of sacrifice, forgiveness, unconditional love, humility, meeting people on their own terms, and rhetorical competence. Through these embodied actions, a person is oriented towards the other in such a way that trust organically emerges. Giddens (1992) in explaining pure relationships points towards this narrative:

There is a structural contradiction in the pure relationship, centering upon commitment, which many of Hite's respondents acknowledge. To generate commitment and develop a shared history, an individual must give of herself to the other. That is, she must provide, in word and deed, some kind of guarantees to the other that the relationship can be sustained for an indefinite period. (p. 137).

The pure relationship is fundamentally unable to foster long-term commitment. I argue however this goes beyond commitment but to ethical duty all-together. Embodiment in word and deed is necessary for trust which predicates commitment to the other. Thus, commitment is not just a matter of choice but a matter of intertwined ethical duty, compulsion to answer the call of the other, and passion (also compassion) for that person with whom you are intimate. The nexus of action—the will to behave in a certain way based on charity and thus establishing habits—indicates that commitment is the emergent result of someone enacting charitable acknowledgment. Trust is built because one is being loved for who they really are, not just to gain some sort of benefit. Someone who has the will to acknowledge is organically building trust, as opposed to the artificial technique required of someone in a “pure relationship.” Trust, then, is not a technique for garnering a given need but a real, embodied ethical commitment to the other. This difference between technification and embodiment makes all the difference when it comes to long-term relationships. Augustine's teaching on habit and will recognizes that only with a proper orientation, in this case an embodiment of the ethic of love, do we have a chance to enact a given behavior with any sort of regularity. Even then, “I do what I do not want to do.” This ethic then with appropriate will leads to actions which fosters emotion. Emotion is not absent in a charitable acknowledgment narrative, a point which is often lost when looking at Augustine from the standpoint of the pessimistic 18th century hermeneutic. We are not stoics who should abandon body to focus on spirit; this is a Platonic view. Emotion emanates from the actions. When viewed through the lens of

charitable acknowledgment, romance as typically depicted in society (e.g., date nights, flowers) “works” to foster emotion because it shows concern for the other. It is not a technique but a real expression (incidentally, the more a society makes such actions clichéd, the more difficult to escape the realm of technique).

Thus, love is central to the field when using a charitable acknowledgement narrative. The simplest way to demonstrate this is by answering the following question: If this is a narrative, who is telling this story and why? The answer for someone studying intimate communication from a narrative of charitable acknowledgment is that this is a story of love told by those who are loving others in order to determine who they should be loving and how. Love no longer is confined to the realm of emotion, one note in the chord of emotions one can feel. Indeed, love does have an emotional element but it is not its most important feature. Love as charity is an ethic that guides behavior. This is close to what authors like Lee (1973) describe as “agape.” In Lee’s (1973) “colors” of love, agape is described as unselfish, patient, and without need for reciprocity. In other words, the other is an end in herself rather than a means to an end. An appropriate narration then would be to describe the elements of agape as it pertains to charitable acknowledgment.

This reality in expression is different for each couple. It is transversal, not universal; one will participate in charitable acknowledgment but its expression will be temporal, multiple, and embodied. Love, then, is unique to the relational partners who are doing the narrating. The unique status comes with the uniqueness of the partners. When two unique “faces” come together to create a “home,” a unique expression of love is created. The difficulty in predicting what love will look like in various relationships stems from this unique home that is created by each couple. Some couples fight

productively, some quietly disagree. Some partners are outwardly emotional in their affection for one another; others rarely show emotion. Some marriages are religious and succeed; others are secular and succeed. The underlying narrative to a successful partnership, as theorized here, is the ability to acknowledge one another and abide by an ethic of charity, i.e., unconditionality, sacrifice, and forgiveness. The core of the narrative is the ability to acknowledge one another with more than just emotion.

The narrative of a couple is a powerful interpretive metaphor. Scholars have said as much (e.g., Bochner, 2002). Charitable acknowledgment provides a guiding force to this interpretive power by providing the lens through which one could see relationships growing and surviving. It is theorized that long-term relationships in particular would benefit from this approach. How a couple should love one another may differ in the embodied actions, but at their core it is theorized they would take similar shape. Future research could analyze the extent to which sacrifice, unconditional love, observation, hope in the other, faith in acknowledgment, and willingness to acknowledge appear as constructs within interviews.

Summary

Charitable acknowledgment is an alternative approach to intimate interpersonal relationships that further textures our interpretive capabilities in the field. The narrative operates from a position of embodied faith whereby a person believes in a given action's goodness and embodies it. It is a living faith from a transversal rather than vertical understanding of the word. There is hopefulness about mankind and our ability to better its condition through acknowledgment. There is a transversal nature to faith and hope

within this narrative that engages a level beyond senses—a spiritual level. To enact charitable acknowledgment requires not just seeing but observing. It is looking into the face of the other and acknowledging what is needed. This takes a great deal of appropriate orientation that comes with an attunement of conscious. That attunement requires a proper understanding of the ethic-driven as opposed to emotion-driven nature of the narrative and the will to act. From this good habits are formed that will make attunement of conscious easier. Appropriateness allows for situational factors to be taken into consideration. To navigate situations well requires a good understanding of self, a good understanding of interpretation, and a good understanding of invention. Within a narrative of charitable acknowledgment the self is multiple, temporal, and embodied. To guide a person in making accurate interpretations, attribution theory and the metaphor of the two-edged sword of Augustine can help orient someone in the proper balance between deconstruction and absolutism. Invention is the most complex feature, attempting to avoid technification while still guiding people to appropriate statements. Lewis' transposition and Wood's mindfulness are helpful in looking at issues of invention and technique. Humility intersects throughout all the above; humanity's error-prone nature makes it imperative to take an approach that meets people on their own terms and admits that a given interpretation could be wrong. Finally, sacrifice and unconditional love are the most intense applications of a narrative of charitable acknowledgment. Primarily geared towards those with whom a person is most intimate, sacrifice indicates the frequent need for a person in intimate relationships to consider another person's needs before their own for the sake of acknowledgment. The charity shown is unconditional, requiring that a person avoid the commodification of love that is

frequent in an emotivist society. To do this means expectations should be avoided to provide a “safe place”—a home—where a person can be who he or she truly is. When reciprocated, this love can build healthy, long-lasting relationships.

Charitable acknowledgment attempts to express a spiritual side of humanity while avoiding emotivism, hopefully providing an alternative viewpoint to the narrative of individualism so prevalent within interpersonal communication. Healthy relationships find new interpretive horizons within the fuzzy boundaries of rhetorical competence, forgiveness, unconditionality, and sacrifice. In the nexus of belief and the nexus of action, we find charity providing enacted intimate texture to our relationships. The ethical guidance this provides can guide interpersonal communication in the intimate private sphere.

Chapter 6

Implications and Conclusions

In this final chapter, a narrative of charitable acknowledgment will be analyzed for its implications and potential research opportunities within the field of interpersonal communication, including limitations and applications. These hopefully will provide an opening for further discussion of ethics within intimate relationships. Concluding summary remarks concerning charitable acknowledgment will provide closure to the project.

The Impact of Charitable Acknowledgment

A narrative of charitable acknowledgment takes the current research on intimate interpersonal communication and reinterprets it to provide an alternative explanation of intimacy and the human condition of relating. Roughly, such impact could translate into a different approach to the organization of a class in interpersonal communication. Previous textbooks have used metaphors of competence (Trenholm & Jensen, 2004), relationships (Knapp & Vangelisti, 1999), and goal-orientation (Canary, Cody, & Manasov, 2000) to guide their introduction to interpersonal communication. In the approach stemming from charitable acknowledgment, *ethics* take a central role, providing guidance on how to build healthy relationships. How to live is the primary question of importance. Thus, the impact of charitable acknowledgment on interpersonal

communication can be divided into areas regarding the ethics of self and other, the ethics of interpretation, the ethics of conflict, and the ethics of intimate relationships.

Ethics of Self and Other

Charitable acknowledgment recognizes the self as temporal, multiple, and embodied (Schrag, 1997). How does this understanding impact the way we approach our selves and others? First of all, all people need acknowledgment. Rather than looking at this state of the human condition as a lack that must be met by others through an individual's relationships, this is understood within the nexus of action—will, habit, and ethic. Acknowledgment is not a function of individual want but of communal will to act. People together make acknowledgement happen for everyone else; acknowledgment must emerge *from* someone *for* someone. This holistic approach to communication recognizes people as vastly complex networks of which the smallest unit for study is the relationship. The idea of an individual self is meaningless without relational context. Thus, acknowledgment recognizes communication as *interpersonal* more than *interpersonal* (i.e., intrapersonal). Rather than emphasizing self-actualization (an impossibility from a charitable acknowledgement perspective), the will to act on behalf of the other is the actualization of focus. We are acknowledged by acknowledging others. In fact, the instant someone seeks methods to gain acknowledgment for one's self, they often unintentionally corrupt that acknowledgment; it is not authentic but rather manipulated, coerced, or exchanged.

Charitable acknowledgment sees individuals as entrenched in relationships and inseparable from those relationships, thus making it unnecessary to parse out sharp delineations of self and other. This should be a relief to those struggling with issues of

motive as it pertains to altruism and egoism. Ultimately, the important question in charitable acknowledgment is not on some linear direction of motivation but the embodied relational ethic with which one approaches the relationship. This active interpretive approach is not an “I think therefore I am” Cartesian duality but rather a will to acknowledge others ethically. Ethics come first. If an individual hopes for “actualization” of a spiritual nature, it must come as a result of providing acknowledgment into the network in which they are embedded. Indeed, the study of interpersonal communication *cannot* separate selves out of relationships with word and deed intact. Words must be connected to actions/deeds in this active approach.

The impact of separation is significant. When word is isolated from this dyad and emphasized, a relationship is composed of individuals peering hypothetically at theories of health from what seems like a privileged position. The only way an “ideal” self can emerge is by separating the self from its context. It is a theoretical self when separated from the active, physical realm of “deed.” This was the mistake of humanism. In the more common approach in interpersonal communication where deed is emphasized alone, an individual enacts a technique in which an emotivist outcome is of primary importance. What is felt and experienced comprises the primary basis of decision-making rather than some overarching “word” or communal principle.

By connecting word and deed, charitable acknowledgment takes an embodied approach. Thus, to understand the self and others while connecting word and deed, it is pivotally important to understand charitable acknowledgment as an *enacted ethic*. Through enactment, recalcitrant reality tempers symbolic searches for the good. It is physical reality that is the buttress against abstract philosophizing, while our symbolic

nature is the buttress against mechanistic reductionism to the physical and material alone. This connection is a median of interpretive ground from which experience and symbolism unite to make meaning—including meaning in our intimate relationships.

But what of the dynamic of the reality/symbol dyad where the symbol influences our perceptions of reality? What of power's role in the dyad? Through power one can use symbols to shape reality as well—even defy it. Manipulation, propaganda, and spin all represent distortions of word that when implemented by a more powerful partner can lead to unhealthy relational situations (e.g., physical abuse, psychological abuse). People fall under the control of someone else to the detriment of their own self. Because of this danger, it is of utmost importance that someone fully embodies an understanding of human nature in a charitable acknowledgment narrative. Our multiplicity and temporality defy our power-laden ability to override reality with rhetorical “cooking.” We are imperfect because we are bound to a time and place and are multiple in our will-to-act. Only in word alone are we able to “stand” outside of time, thus indicating Schrag (1986) and Augustine's (*Confessions*) interest in temporality. Only in word alone are we able to conceive of pure acts of “freedom,” “terror,” “justice,” and “love.” Those who manipulate these words to their success find power in their ability to succeed at this disconnection (e.g., when an abusive husband continually shames a wife into staying by committing to change and demeaning her when she does not believe him). When word is connected to deed though (when our symbols are connected to our actions), this exposes the fragility and imperfection of the human condition. Healthy relationships are composed of two partners in recognition of this condition. As a result, they will be *open* to alternative interpretation within the confines of reality. For example: In what ways can

“freedom” in America, be seen similarly as “freedom” in Iraq? When is “terrorist” a stereotype and not a reality? To what extent is “justice” functioning in capital punishment? And most importantly for this dissertation, when does “love” function as a product of charitable acknowledgment? Because our limitations temper absolutism, an ethical relational partner ought to maintain openness to improvements in both word and deed, guided by charitable acknowledgment. Thus power, ever-present, should be directed towards guiding one’s will towards acknowledgment.

The relevance then of this approach to communication is in its ability to analyze ethical decisions. The focus on ethics here is pivotal. There are “good” elements and “bad” elements that are present in relational contexts to restrain relativism and emotivism. The restraints of neutrality and objectivity have been removed from the vocabulary of self, but the restraint of connecting word to deed has been added. The task becomes exploring the nature of this good. There is an active relational good striving for a micro-community (i.e., an intimate relationship), not just a good for self or other. In striving to enact charitable acknowledgment, we are suggesting a path upon which someone might plausibly struggle towards a “transversal good” commonly called love. As word is connected to deed, epistemological questions of knowing this love are answered as new questions simultaneously emerge. To achieve greater accuracy in these endeavors, one must look to the ethics of interpretation, a conversation engaged in throughout history (see Herrick, 2005).

In sum, an ethics-driven approach to interpersonal communication begins by explaining that relationships require acknowledgment. We need each other. But to achieve this is not a condition of me individually going out to get it. Acknowledgment is

a product of our will to act on behalf of others. Together we make acknowledgment work in relationships. This is a condition of a decentered self—a person who is not the center when it comes to *interpersonal* communication—acknowledging someone in relationship. Relationship is central; the smallest unit for study should be the dyad when it comes to communication in order to reflect better the nature of the human condition. In this condition, we are not objective, neutral, or without community. The decentered self is a person who is multiple, temporal, and embodied. We have many motives, cannot escape the time or place in which we entered, and are embodied in a physicality. As a result of this condition we must maintain openness to others, because we simply are not neutral. But this openness is not a call for emotivism, the idea that any individual preference is good or ethical. The individual establishes communal ethics by connecting word and deed within a relationship—an interpretive endeavor. This makes the ethics of interpretation very important.

Ethics of Interpretation

Because we are biased, symbolic beings, an important question is: how can we make accurate and ethical interpretations? Charitable acknowledgment provides valuable insight into this question. Perhaps the most valuable lesson here is that to be human is to live with mystery. We will never have absolute interpretive certainty; nonetheless we act. We experience love, we see other's happiness, we understand pain, and we recognize rational consequences. This all occurs within a decentered realm of self—embodied, multiple, and temporal. We speak as we relate to our environment. As a result of our connections with word and deed, we act and do so with ethical effects. In other words, our words and deed make good things (and bad things) happen. These actions provide a

modicum of stability for the mystery of symbolic humanity, where our words are so ethereal. The extent to which life is valuable, fulfilling, fascinating, enriching, and remarkable depends upon the extent to which our actions affirm ethical commitments, even if unsuccessful. Charitable acknowledgment provides guidance on how this might be done with some sort of adequacy and healthfulness when it comes to intimate relationships. How it does this is through encouraging accurate connections of word and deed, the embodiment of humility, and the practice of listening.

To begin, accuracy in interpretation must be attempted. In terms of charitable acknowledgment, this means word and deed must be understood in ways that are reflective of the reality of the situation. If manipulation, deceit, and coercion are actively pursued this fundamentally destroys the capacity for accurate interpretation on the part of one's intimate partner. The capacity to love unconditionally is hindered because the person to whom lies are told does not truly know who their partner is. The relationship is founded on misconception. Who then can realize the joys of intimacy when the persona being offered to the other is, in whatever capacity, a sham? There is a vital responsibility to pursue a connection of word and deed. The most basic of lies can undermine this pursuit for unconditionality, and without this standard, there is no foundation for intimacy. Thus one of the most important implications of the ethic of charitable acknowledgment is the powerful need for connecting word and deed. It is perhaps the most foundational call for human relational communication.

In addition to connecting word and deed, interpretation requires proper assessments of what really happened in a given situation, acknowledging one's biases to establish a more accurate understanding. Attribution theory plays an important role in this

interpretive assessment (e.g., Kelley, 1967; Jones & Davis, 1965; Jones & Harris, 1967). After discussing different dynamics of the theory (e.g., locus, responsibility), attributive bias can be analyzed within a person's interpretations. Everyone has different perceptual filters through which they analyze situations. These include gender, race, class, age, upbringing, and many others. In order to achieve an accurate interpretation of what the other person really intends, it is important to *meet that person on his/her own terms* rather than letting unacknowledged biases filter information incorrectly. This can be understood as coming to the situation as the other person is coming to it. Of course, there is no negating a bias; a "white Jewish male" cannot negate the circumstances into which he was born. However, one can attempt to *navigate* through it through a focus on the other. By an individual attempting to meet others on their terms, one can orient himself or herself more appropriately to navigate such biases and thus "see" where the other is coming from.

Within the field of interpersonal communication, however, accuracy is not the area where charitable acknowledgment has the greatest impact. Rather what charitable acknowledgement adds to the conversation is the extent to which ethics define how accurate interpretation is applied. Accuracy established within the bounds of a narrative of charitable acknowledgment has several important implications. Initially, one must recognize that taking the time to "meet someone on their own terms" is difficult and demanding and thus requires a great deal of willingness to acknowledge the other. In fact, it is rather irrelevant to teach a person the interpretational biases one holds without also including the mindset with which one must approach the other to avoid the negative consequences and energize the positive contributions of those biases. If someone does not

care what their spouse has to say, why bother with accuracy? When contempt is listed by Gottman (1994) as a precursor to divorce, a charitable acknowledgment approach interprets this as the unwillingness to see the other's worthiness for acknowledgment. Their very being has become devalued. In such a scenario, accuracy will not only suffer but it will become insignificant. To say communication is important to marriage (as is common in self-help books) is only true then to the extent one still finds value in their spouse. Thus, foundational to interpretation is a willingness to acknowledge charitably. Charitable acknowledgment provides a couple of important lessons to facilitate this willingness.

First is the need for *humility*. Humility has a two-fold meaning. On the one hand lies an acknowledgment of error and on the other is an acknowledgment of others. A consideration of our own error should come as a result of recognizing our multiple, temporal, embodied nature. One should never stray far from the realization that his or her interpretation could be wrong. This should be in the background of conversation and often should come to the forefront in order to show others our own interpretive charity on a given issue. To see someone else is to see a person who has a given set of circumstances that I in my difference will never completely understand. The person is a mystery (Levinas, 1961). This does not, however, mean that intimacy is a chimera and the best we can do is meet our own personal needs or worse not act at all. Rather, intimacy as charitable acknowledgment is the ethical texturing that provides us with the *willingness* to meet the other where they stand. Indeed, without this texturing a person might be inclined not to act, because they are stymied by feelings of personal inadequacy, doubt, or even relativism. Charitable acknowledgment tempers this through an additional

understanding of humility as phenomenological focus on the other. As Chesterton (1908) states, humility should be interpreted as “a spur that prevents a man from stopping; not a nail in his boot that prevents him from going on.” To prevent this “spur” from becoming a “nail” one must temper humility in interpretation with humility in our focus on others. If I have another person figured out, there is no need to listen. I assume I already know. However, by keeping humility at the ready, one is more willing to be open to information and by implication open to the other. I am not so high in my self-regard that I negate the regard of people outside my personal scope. I am, in other words, humble and thus see others as valuable.

To use a metaphor, much like a sponge, humility reveals the inherent holes in our own capacities, so that we absorb the information from others more readily. These holes represent both an openness to see the value of others and a capacity for error. Without this porous quality, we remain inflexible and often unwilling to accept others for who they are. As Hyde (2004) would note, it is an “objective uncertainty” that is forever at work” that call us to ethical responsibility. Thus, ironically, my own inadequacies and absorptive qualities make the other more understandable ethically approachable. The notion of perfection in interpretation is flipped upside down as accuracy suddenly takes on a whole new meaning. Rather than being an absolute “right,” it is an enacted connection of word and deed where I show acknowledgment in my willingness to see another person as they really are. As I “absorb” what the other communicates, I gain understanding, trust, and the capacity for closeness. This, in short, is the epistemological understanding of love. To interpret is to open one’s self, such as it is, to the mystery of

the other. Humility as the embodiment of this openness is thus a necessity for healthy interpretation in intimate relationships.

Another important facet to facilitate the willingness to interpret charitably is centralizing *listening*. Listening is not just a technique with requisite head nods, eye contact, and feedback on the order of “so what I hear you saying is...” Rather, mindful listening (Wood, 2004a) in intimate relationships is a function of love thus making it an ethical communicative action. Remember love is not merely an emotion here, but an ethic. To the extent that someone is unconditionally oriented towards accepting the other, one must be willing to listen. In this sense, listening is a gift we give to our intimate partner. More than flowers or chocolates, listening provides the context for intimacy. When it comes to a classroom, these sort of statements can sound overly sentimental and ring a trite tone. Perhaps a better way of stating this is that by not listening you fundamentally undermine your relationship. Interpretation is a one-sided affair without this willingness. The only way one can find intimacy is to listen—and care about what he/she is hearing. Charitable acknowledgment puts listening in a proper place of importance by emphasizing the centrality of the relationship above the individual. It is an ethical calling, an attunement of consciousness (Hyde, 2006), providing the impetus and the guidance on what “caring” comprises. It is an openness to acknowledge the other.

In sum, this approach provides the texture necessary to establish meaning outside the realms of emotivism and relativism. The self is not the sole source of meaning; nor is meaning indeterminable. Meaning stems from my charitable acknowledging actions that guide me and my partner as we try to understand one another. Interpretation will never be perfect but when charity founds one’s relationship, there is an understanding that

misinterpretation is not to facilitate manipulation or deceit on behalf of one's own self interests; I listen because I care what you have to say. But what about when a person really does not feel like caring? What of those times when listening fails and conflict emerges? Such scenarios impact our interpretations as well and require a more lengthy account.

Ethics of Conflict

We make mistakes. We have differences of opinion and beliefs. Our multiple, temporal, embodied nature necessitates such failures and differences. For Augustine our soul is "rent asunder by grievous hurt as long as it prefers" to continue in bad habits rather than enact change (*Conf.* 8.10.24). When there is a clash as a result of people's mistakes and differences, conflict emerges. Thus, one of the most important issues for intimate communication involves dealing with conflict. What is conflict resolution for charitable acknowledgment? I believe this is one of the areas where charitable acknowledgement can have the greatest impact on interpersonal communication namely through an understanding of respect and the importance of choice as a dynamic in the nexus of will, habit, and ethic.

First one must establish respect as an important correlate of healthy intimate relationships. Even if we could know a person is in his or her totality, we would still disagree with him or her. The die-hard Democratic father whose knows exactly his die-hard Republican son's beliefs will not find it any easier to reconcile their differences; in fact such knowledge could exacerbate conflicts. So how can differences on this fundamental level be handled as to avoid dysfunctional relationships, vindictiveness, or even violence? To begin, respect must be a precursor to basic acknowledgment. I define

respect as acknowledging the value of a person's actions, opinions, or at the very least his or her being. Even if you cannot respect a person for their actions, the least that is owed to them is respect for being human. When respect on all levels (action, opinion, and being) is lost, there is no ground from which to continue a relationship outside of manipulation. Respect thus comprises a baseline for all relationships. Conflict managed from positions of respect establishes ground from which two people can agree (possibly to disagree).

However, in intimate relationships where charitable acknowledgment is practiced, respect-of-being is a fall back position—e.g., when all else fails, this person is still my wife and I should respect her for who she is. It is a beginning rather than an end. Yes respect-of-being provides a ground for agreeing but ultimately this is only on the level of toleration—an endurance through a given set of actions. Tolerance might be acceptable with acquaintances and low level friendships. Ultimately however, toleration is not sufficient for intimacy to flourish. Trust requires something deeper than this. A man might disagree with, but respectfully tolerate in his co-workers, behavior (e.g., constant self-centered conversation) that he justifiably would not be able to tolerate indefinitely in an intimate relationship. Intimacy is building a life together—creating a home (Hyde, 2006). This cannot happen if the space created together is merely endured. Rather, home is a product of the ethic that unites the couple. Thus in a conflict among intimates, the true “fall back” for agreement should be the ethic of charitable acknowledgment. Remember charitable acknowledgment notes the need to accept a person for who they are. Therefore, it is more than just a respect for being a human. It is a transversal unity shared as a couple that is respected. It is much closer and more heavily vested in the

outcome of the conflict. A couple is united in the desire to love unconditionally, forgive wrongs, and acknowledge one another regardless of benefits to self. The beauty and vulnerability of an intimate relationship under this paradigm is that someone simultaneously is free to express their opinions and act on them, while being constrained by responsibility for the other. In conflict, I am free to express my displeasure and am bound by charity (i.e., love) for my spouse.

Within this paradigm, the ground for conducting conflict is thus “softened” somewhat; I am restrained, not by commitment, not by an emotion, not by long-term gains, but by an ethic where I am compelled to acknowledge. According to an ethic of charitable acknowledgment, a person’s will is oriented to act on the other’s behalf. Someone willing to acknowledge the other will enter a conflict armed with the respect-elevated-to-charity necessary to navigate that conflict in healthy and responsible ways. Armed thusly, it is much harder for contempt to gain hold, especially in regard to the mundanities of life.

Thus, the challenge in any conflict is encouraging the will to act within a set of fuzzy ethical boundaries. These boundaries are defined by charity, i.e., forgiveness, sacrifice, and unconditionality. Habits then are established in a relationship that fosters healthy patterns of acknowledgment. But what of those people who do not hold to similar ethical ideas of love? It is important to recognize here that both parties must understand love within these common ethical bounds upon entering into a long-term committed relationship, particularly a marriage. When someone understands love in a different paradigm [e.g., exchange; Lee’s (1973) eros or mania], the focus is not the ethic but the individual. While marriage indicates to society the similar legal and social ties of a

couple, it is not always entered under similar ethical ties. Conflict it is theorized stems from this dissimilarity of ethical narratives leading to a greater likelihood for disillusion and dissolution.

Inevitably another question emerges concerning justifiable instances where conflict *should* result in the dissolution of a relationship. In response, the importance of choice should not be overlooked in a charitable acknowledgment ethic. Unconditionality is rightly understood as a choice we make with every conflict that emerges. The will to act in this way is a constant battle, whether on issues as minor as who should wash the dishes and as major as lying about an affair. By and large, forgiveness can act as the remedy to the poison of conflict. It redeems both the minor offense and the unredeemable under a cleansing pardon from the mistake, especially when the person at fault is penitent and wills to change (see Etzioni & Carney, 1997). But are there instances where unconditionality crumbles and forgiveness is beyond one's capacities? Within the context of a multiple, temporal, and embodied humanity, it is to be expected. There are certainly reasons for the dissolution of a relationship. Large among them is a reneged repentance where a person asks for forgiveness for a major betrayal (e.g., an affair), enacts the promised change, but drastically violates the other's trust again. However, to draw a strict line here would be ridiculous; an active communication paradigm dependent on context requires a thorough specificity to the embodied and embedded circumstances (i.e., texture) to determine appropriate action. Thus, forgiveness and its corollary in repentance are intensely embedded in the specific intimate relationship.

Theoretically, the threshold for dissolution should be higher for couples practicing charitable acknowledgment. Under this ethic, splitting up is not conditioned upon an

individual's choice to pursue happiness. Rather the condition for leaving is a result of the utter negation of trust through the separation of word and deed and thus the negation of the ethic. Habits of acknowledgment, the will to act on behalf of the other, the establishment of a home are not easily abandoned. Additionally, forgiveness has the powerful ability to reinstate trust and should be liberally applied, particularly when coupled with the repentance of a partner. Nonetheless word and deed can be rent asunder irreparably. The resulting pain of this separation, both physical and mental, is real, causing words of charity to utterly lose meaning. In these cases dissolution would be expected.

In sum, conflict is addressed not by suggesting a set of techniques but by suggesting one base conflict within the bounds of charitable acknowledgment. In conflict resolution within non-intimate interpersonal relationships, respect-for-being is an important starting point, but when it comes to intimate relationships, more is expected. The ethic of charitable acknowledgment provides this "something more" by offering the dialectic of freedom of expression and responsibility to acknowledge. Unconditionality requires we attend to the other, and our appreciation for the home built together provides an impetus for a will to action. A person falls back to the ethic when conflict emerges. Nonetheless, charitable acknowledgment is a choice, and when circumstances arise where a given action separates word and deed to an irreparable level, it may require dissolution. However, the threshold is very high as a result of the capacity for forgiveness and the home built between the two individuals. Conflict is only one dynamic of intimate relationships, but a very important one. Charitable acknowledgment helps augment our

understanding of how to resolve conflicts when possible and does so without resorting to techniques or emotivism.

Ethics of Intimate Relationships

In addition to conflict, other dynamics within intimate relationships are impacted through charitable acknowledgment. Love, trust, & reciprocation are three of the most important, though there are certainly others. Love has already been discussed in some length in the previous chapter but it is worth revisiting here in terms of its impact on interpersonal communication. The shift of love from emotion-driven to ethic-driven significantly impacts the meaning of the words “I love you.” The colors of Lee (1973) have already recognized the different ways we understand love in terms of philosophical approach. Is love a game (*ludus*)? A passionate emotion (*eros*)? A friendly partnership (*storge*)? An addiction (*mania*)? A practical commitment (*pragma*)? Or is love an unconditional ethic (*agape*)? Lee’s terminology recognizes that when someone says “I love you,” they might mean something completely different than one might interpret. Hendrick & Hendrick (1986) however, could not find a measurement for *agape*, implying its lack of existence. This has been persistent (e.g., Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000). However, rather than being non-existent, under a narrative of charitable acknowledgment “*agape*” is an active communication phenomenon requiring embodiment; it must be approached holistically within the ethical narrative in which it is embedded. What charitable acknowledgment adds to the literature is a robust context for recognizing *agape* and opens new ground from which to answer how a healthy relationship can be conducted. Intimate relationships are textured in action through unconditionality, sacrifice, and forgiveness as tied to an understanding of acknowledgment. This opens doors for moral

discussion—a more rhetorical than measurable phenomenon. What are the difficulties of forgiveness? What are the bounds within which sacrifice is “good” in a relationship? How is one able to unconditionally love a partner without becoming a door mat? Love can thus be discussed in terms of its moral implications beyond emotivism and self-interest with the complexity of intimate relationships reflecting the relational coordinates of agape as well as eros. Helping people recognize the different meanings of love, helps them better navigate conflict with those whose with whom their narrative of love differs, and potentially avoid future difficulties in their long-term relationship.

Trust is another dynamic of utmost importance in relationships from a charitable acknowledgment perspective. Essentially trust is the result of connecting word and deed in ethical ways. As habits of these connections are established, a home is built where communication is fostered. As someone feels comfort with their intimate partner, they feel open to discuss more and deeper issues—a fact long acknowledged in the field (i.e., Altman & Taylor, 1973). What is added through charitable acknowledgment is an emphasis on trust as the ethical “level” to help balance power differences. As a person recognizes his or her own limitations in self, they lean on their partner and vice versa. Trust is a plunge that requires letting go of control for the sake of intimacy. Emotion and power both are factors in this “letting go.” Emotion is not central to a charitable acknowledgment, but they are present—powerfully so. The trust one feels in the other as a result of the connection of word and deed in turn connects the ethical “word” of charity to the emotional “deed” of charity. In other words, as I trust you, I cannot help but feel “loved.” Emotion is the outgrowth of trust.

Additionally, power is a function of trust. I need not use my power in the relationship to gain what I need because I trust you. You will not manipulate me and I do not need to manipulate you. Power then is shifted to personal enactment *for* the other rather than gaining compliance *from* the other. To the extent that a couple perceives one another's needs on equitable levels, one person's needs will not hold superiority over the other's. In other words, sacrifice is balanced equitably as people trust one another to take care of him or her (equality is only possible in ideology not reality). Trust is understood not as a tool but as an organic part of a healthy intimate relationship. To trust one another allows both emotion and power to function in helpful, healthy ways in a relationship. By connecting word and deed and relinquishing control, relationships grow in intimacy.

The place of reciprocation is the last dynamic explored here. Reciprocation is a requirement for healthy relationships. This has typically been interpreted within an exchange paradigm—i.e., as an agreed upon term of the relationship sought after for the purpose of meeting self-interest (e.g., McCabe, 2003). While charitable acknowledgment recognizes reciprocation as a necessity, for its occurrence to foster unconditionality it must be indirect and tangential rather than a goal to achieve. Reciprocity is a function of the will to act on behalf of the other and thus is on the periphery of charitable acknowledgment as a side effect of properly oriented action. It is not a goal but a symptom of healthy habits. Together in dyads of intimate relationships, individuals live an ethic. Needs are met through answering the call of the other (Levinas, 1961). What this means in a narrative of charitable acknowledgment is that people enact love (charity) with a focus on the love itself rather than a focus on the need. In other words, when a person calls out “I am in need,” the charitable acknowledgment response is: “Then act

with charity on behalf of your partner.” Under this ethic, lines of self and other are blurred. There is no need to explicitly delineate my needs from your needs. I act charitably on your behalf. You act charitably on mine. Each event is separately focused on the end of enacting an ethical good. That reciprocation occurs is incidental, despite its importance. Reciprocation is thus the paradox of charitable acknowledgment. To gain one must give. Together, our charity is our connection to one another and our call to reciprocity.

Enactment of charitable acknowledgment involves quality communication and the interpretive ability to negotiate what is the best response (which sometimes may include *not* meeting what the other person perceives as a need). In regards to communication, the needs, feelings, and difficulties that arise in one’s relationship and life in general should be communicated as bounded by the ethical guides of appropriateness, intimacy, and sacrifice. Appropriateness addresses factors such as time and place that dictate how, where, and when something is said. Research on self-monitoring certainly guides this process (Snyder, 1974). But self-monitoring among intimates should be less necessary than it normally is in more distanced relationships. In a healthy intimate relationship, a person *wants* to hear the struggles and desires of his or her partner. Because you are unified with me in a relationship of great importance, it is of great value to know what you are thinking. Communicating one’s feelings and thoughts should become an episode of frequency. One should not feel they have to sacrifice the expression of all needs, fears, etc.; sacrifice does play a role in what to communicate but not to the level of self-negation. As described above, trust in the other person as an equitable partner should foster communication. However, some thoughts and feelings can justifiably be purged to

the degree they fall outside the bounds of charity—a fuzzy boundary bound to specific situations. There are many things a person might want that they responsibly should refrain from pursuing. When these *are* pursued, it may even be good for a partner to address the negative consequences of the request as based on its respective health for the relationship. Such interactions are negotiated within the active embodied, and embedded situation; conflict resolution may be necessary in these episodes. Communication thus takes place within the bounds of sacrifice, intimacy, and appropriateness.

In summary, love, trust, and reciprocation are all important dynamics within romantic intimate interpersonal relationships. Charitable acknowledgment interprets these in ways that help foster ethical debate on healthy relationships. This provides an alternative to the emotivist ethical implications of exchange-based approaches to the field where love is considered as an emotion, trust is a technique, and reciprocation is a function of exchange. Here love is an ethical approach, trust is an outgrowth of this ethic, and reciprocation is a function of will to action. To be in an intimate relationship is an orientation to the other where one's emotional attachment and will to power are products of his or her will to act in charitable acknowledging ways (i.e., love). Such ways will foster trust and the reciprocation we long for. Letting go is a big part of charitable acknowledgment. Despite a will that makes this “letting go” difficult, there is credence within an active communication paradigm in navigating issues concerning the development of healthy relationships.

Future Research

When considering the potentiality for further research using a narrative of charitable acknowledgment, it seems there is much (exciting) work to be done. The interpretive study given here has tried to find philosophical ground from which to explore ethical consequences of intimate relationships. Future interviews of partners in an intimate relationship would explore how these interpretive frameworks impact a variety of phenomena from the longevity of relationships to issues of conflict management. Intimate interpersonal communication is thus opened in a number of new ways with a variety of compelling studies.

The most compelling (to me) regards the different frameworks of love surrounding a narrative of charitable acknowledgment and a narrative of individualism. What impact does an interpretation of love-as-emotion have on the longevity of relationships versus the longevity of relationships with an interpretation of love-as-ethic? It is theorized these two frameworks of love, lead to very different relationships. One operates from personal emotional satisfaction and leads to emotivist ethics. Love is conditional on feeling a given passionate emotion; this emotion leads to actions of charity, which in turn leads to emotivism (e.g., I have faith and hope in our relationship, because I feel emotion when they are around). When someone is not feeling love, this begins to fall apart. Eros, mania, and ludus (Lee, 1978) all provide different applications of this similar framework of love, with eros being the purest expression. The ethic-centered love operates as a need to acknowledge one's romantic partner and recognizes love as an orientation towards the other prior to any sort of emotional attachment. Action stems from an acknowledgment of the other person for who they are, not primarily for an

emotion they can provide. Emotion is a consequence of this ethic, not a condition for its existence (e.g., I feel emotion when they are around, because I have faith and hope in our relationship). Agape, storge, and pragma (Lee, 1978) each take this approach in different ways, with agape being the purest expression. With this interpretive background guiding the study, long-term relationships could be analyzed in order to determine the extent to which their success was a product of their ethical approach. It would be interesting to see whether longevity is positively connected to a narrative of charitable acknowledgment.

Additionally, one could examine the extent to which couples embody appropriateness, unconditionality, sacrifice, and forgiveness. Much could be learned by talking to people whose marriages have lasted for 25 years or more in regard to how these have played a role in their marriages. By asking couples how these three dynamics have affected their relationship, one could see charity's impact on communication within a marriage. What are the rhetorical methods by which couples frame arguments? How have sacrifice and forgiveness played a role in making the marriage work? To what degree does their spouse love them for who they are? What things would the spouse want to change in the other spouse? A documentary, ethnography, or other long-term study of several long-term married couples targeting these elements would give further heuristic power to this dissertation. Additionally, co-habitation could be examined to see the extent to which these dynamics are applied and maintained.

With charitable acknowledgment as the theoretical background, conflict resolution could be reexamined beyond its mere implementation. In other words, this is not a technique-driven analysis but a search for embodied practices reflective of ethical narratives that frame how people interact. By discovering ethical frameworks emerging

from narratives such as charitable acknowledgment, one can begin to connect the conflict resolution strategy with the narrative choice that produced it. By doing a framework analysis to identify the prevalence of a given set of ethical circumstances, one can determine the extent to which love is viewed in emotivist versus charitable narrative structures. Then an analysis of conflict resolution could be conducted to analyze the impact these structures have in fostering such negatives for relationships as “stonewalling” or “contempt” (Gottman, 1992). This approach comes at conflict from a different direction which hopefully can add to a debate on the ethical consequences of relational practices

Another interpretive paradigm that emerges from this study involves the interpretation of charity from a universal position versus those who view it as a transversal. It would be interesting to see how love as a transcendent or love as a horizontal plays into one’s interpretations of relationships. Several questions emerge here: Because charity-as-a-universal is impossible to achieve, does one’s focus shift to the afterlife when love is a transcendent? When love is seen from a horizontal understanding, does this impact one’s cynicism about intimate relationships? When love is transversally understood, does this lead to more volunteerism? More long-lasting relationships? Or even a greater degree of hope? In ascertaining a transversal versus universal orientation to charity, perhaps literary or other artistic forums could be used to demonstrate these differences. Characters such as Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* or the difference between Javier and Jean-Valjean in *Les Miserables* might help make this distinction. I believe couples could also provide this distinction as well, provided the interview is sufficiently robust and conducted over several sessions; transversality seems

too broad to encapsulate with a couple questions in a single interview or survey. Nonetheless, I believe it can be delineated with sufficient forethought and time. By drawing this fuzzy boundary, perhaps this “directional” orientation towards love may provide further insight into one’s intimate relationships allowing people further analytical means of critiquing the health of their interactions.

But what about the non-ideal applications of charitable acknowledgment? As an ethic, charitable acknowledgment provides an ethical orientation which indicates a direction for action. Certainly future research would be able to ascertain other directions in which relationships are orientated and the impact this has on their health. A couple might find themselves at odds due to different approaches to love. How do mixed ethical orientations in an intimate relationship (e.g., one charitable acknowledgment and one exchange) navigate that difference and overcome it? Another question might concern those who are committed to the relationship but find little emotional support from it. It is conceivable they may be overlooking the other for the sake of an overarching principle. This overemphasis on the theoretical ethic is missing the active embodied need for engaging the other. An important research agenda could discuss the re-orientation of one’s phenomenological focus “downward” wherein the enacted ethic focuses on the “good for the other” not just the “good.” One final question concerns those overcoming violations of trust, where charitable acknowledgment may be a chimera. Research could explore the “rhetoric of healing” associated with navigating through this process. In short, this is an area ripe with potentialities for future research.

Within charitable acknowledgment, one can find several interesting questions for consideration. Issues of love, trust, conflict, and ethics are reinterpreted in such a way to

maneuver beyond emotivism and thus explore ramifications with newfound relevance and possibility. It is through interpretive study that one can bring new light to bear on old questions in order to provide new and better explanations. Hopefully, interpersonal communication has been opened in new ways that can create new horizons for research into intimate relationships.

Conclusion

Charitable acknowledgment is one way of organizing intimate romantic relationships. It encourages embodiment of ethical beliefs among which are unconditional love, observation, appropriateness, humility, and sacrifice. One must have the will to live on behalf of the other. When someone else has the same will, there is something beautiful being acknowledged. People *do* need others. Our being cries out for relationship. Love is one of the best ways of describing the fulfillment of this need but sadly it is very hard to understand due to its ubiquitous and often multiple usages. The attempt here is to provide a framework for a healthy expression of this love so it easier to enter into a conversation about it in classrooms and in research. It is hoped that we have gone beyond mere description to give ethical guidance for action.

In the end it is hoped that the question of “how we should reinvigorate the philosophical ground for other-focused action in today’s historical moment in regard to the study of interpersonal intimate romantic relationships?” has been given an answer. The active perspective of charitable acknowledgment points in this direction providing a means of discussing ethics. It opens the door for future moral debate in interpersonal communication—a much needed component to achieve relevance. Further research, may

indeed indicate new dynamics for interpretation of relationships. Nevertheless, while the mystery of intimacy might always be confined to the relationships themselves, acknowledgment is certainly a portion of this mystery. This life-giving gift is central to our existence and it is hoped relationships can be bettered through the interpersonal communication field spending more time discussing and learning about this valuable part of our spiritual existence.

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