

The assignment is to develop these theses in a few sentences each and then write a manifesto on the importance of the study of religion. Because these were collaboratively forged, you are invited to work together on this answer. Unlike the other prompts, there is no page requirement for the manifesto – use your discretion on how long, what format, and what style you choose.

I chose to work on this question collaboratively with Greg, Nancy, Akpan, Tyler, Alana, Wenji, Amanda, Zach, and Linyan. I am sending you the sentences I wrote for two theses and my manifesto. Thank you for being such an inspiration to me. I wouldn't have been able to develop these ideas without your help. Please note that Linyan and I answered Theses 4 together, which you will see when Tyler sends our full draft on Tuesday. All the best to you this winter, McCalla

Theses 3

Hegel believes “The object of religion, like that of philosophy, is the eternal truth, God and nothing but God and the explication of God.”¹ This implies a transcendental quality to knowledge production, in which there is some sort of predication outside ourselves from which we can gain a value of capital T-true. From thinkers like Wynter, we have been shown that knowledge production is more accurately predicated on “narrative-schema specific to the origin story or cosmogony chartering of each society’s fictive modes of kind.”²

This unique cognitive tool of myth-making allowed our ancestors to make sense of the world. If all concepts are only partially understood, another portion of dependantly arising sense-making is predicated on the lived experience of being a body in a socio-participatory world. The stories we tell ourselves have deep-rooted implications in our cultural experience because they shape, at least partially, the conceptual framework by which we will narrate our lives. The other part is shaped by embodied experience. The biological function of our brains works in a mutually dependent manner with our social “autopoietic”³ institutions. The narratology of these autopoietic institutions, in turn, are informed by sensory-somatic experiences, and round and round it goes.

Wynter argues that to-be-human is a verb, not a noun⁴, as we often mistake it to be. This implies that the notions of what are to-be-human are themselves just fictions that take rigid shapes depending on the accepted socio-political divide/line. The implication is the production of feelings of Otherness in those who do not fit the mold of what is said to-be-human within the narrative of any given time and culture they exist within. Due to being subjects who experience our identities through

The assignment is to develop these theses in a few sentences each and then write a manifesto on the importance of the study of religion. Because these were collaboratively forged, you are invited to work together on this answer. Unlike the other prompts, there is no page requirement for the manifesto – use your discretion on how long, what format, and what style you choose.

the lens of whatever autopoietic institution has the deepest roots within our shared narratology, when someone sets out to come to know themselves, “she/he thereby reflexly and normally desires to realize her/himself in the lawlike terms of the discursively positively marked code of symbolic life, while at the same time to be normally aversive to, and thereby detach her/himself from, all that is made to embody the negation of that sociogenic self.”⁵ In other words, we will always seek to perform in accordance with what is predicated as life-giving by any given narratology. If one’s inner sense of being stands in negation to the accepted narratological code,⁶ it will cause a feeling as-like-unto death. The alienation of being separate from the continuity of existence within the web of relation that we all exist in as a whole.

Wynter will argue throughout the essay that Western Secular storytelling is the current *genre* of story we tell ourselves. Therefore it also becomes the genre of Being-Human we orient the symbolic life/death divide line, putting anyone who doesn’t fit into positive affirmations of what it means to be of the Western “We” as an outside other.⁷

What is hidden under the conceptual garments of our current *genre* of Western Secular story-telling are none other than Self-Othering principles carried over and projected against hidden Latin-Christian presumptions, from which secular science springs from the root.⁸ This is seen more clearly in the book *Divine Variations* by Terrence Keel. Keel’s thesis is that science did not replace Christianity as the primary mythology for Western Secular narratology. Instead, Europe’s ancestors continued to pass down presumptions to ground the Euro-centric sciences in a logic based on hidden epistemes left over from the Christian tradition. The Christian concept of a universal religion is one such assumption, given way to the idea that there is only one way to-be-human which we should all convert and orient towards, as well as the current myth of genetic science, which claims we all derive from one common ancestor. Finally, the birth of humanity must stem from one monolithic origin

The assignment is to develop these theses in a few sentences each and then write a manifesto on the importance of the study of religion. Because these were collaboratively forged, you are invited to work together on this answer. Unlike the other prompts, there is no page requirement for the manifesto – use your discretion on how long, what format, and what style you choose.

point.⁹ Neither Keel nor I are arguing that Science is Christian or that those who adhere to scientific principles are religiously Christian. Instead, the claim being made is that our conceptual systems enact Christian myths as frames that orient us towards solutions in the filling in of the necessary gaps to induce a logic claim.¹⁰ This is brought about by the very gap-filling episteme mechanisms, ala mythopoetic assumptions, generally cultivated within our cognitive framing through myths and storytelling we have been discussing.

Wynter and Keel bring our attention to the high stakes involved in our current story, one in which the grounds must be fixed so that we might orient ourselves as-like-to-God is lofty. Though we cannot escape storytelling, we have the agency to tell a better story. One in which we orient ourselves in relation to the other, practice care, and allow for the human to perform itself as verb. If we cease to predicate the self as a static thing, of knowledge as something that exists in a vacuum, we may find better ways to communicate. It is possible.

Language is essential, and while I do not particularly like the Wyntarian verse, I am calling toward a more malleable language within the academy. I want a step away from vertical language structures and toward an opening of a deeper understanding of each other as living in motion. Not as ideas I can conquer. No more talk of telos or epistemes; let language be alive and understandable to the people again. Let the people be alive to themselves again in auto/overturn.

Perhaps if we let go of our linguistic barriers, we might stop fixating on the barriers we set between self and other. To name is to conquer, after all,¹¹ and I don't dream of dominance. I dream of orienting myself compassionately with all ecological networks and communities. I dream of language that eases the affective tension in my body. I dream of orientation towards care, in which I am not static or defined by my actions, but to see myself and the other as dynamic beings. Beings with bodies, beings so sensitive to story, to trauma, to awe, to art. I dream, and I write, and I dream. - M

The assignment is to develop these theses in a few sentences each and then write a manifesto on the importance of the study of religion. Because these were collaboratively forged, you are invited to work together on this answer. Unlike the other prompts, there is no page requirement for the manifesto – use your discretion on how long, what format, and what style you choose.

4. Leaning into Liyan's advocacy for freedom from presupposed outside assumptions, I will take us to a question proposed by Saba Mahmood. In her book *Politics of Piety*, she asks, "If we recognize that the desire for Freedom from, or subversion of, Norms is not an innate desire that motivates all beings at all times but is also profoundly mediated by cultural and historical conditions, then the question arises: how do we analyze operations of power that construct different kinds of bodies, knowledge is, and subjectivities whose trajectories do not follow the entelechy of liberator politics?"¹² I believe approaching language as something malleable might hold the key. The outside and the inside are in communication with each other, and therefore concepts define themselves through changes in culture as well as within each person's emotional body. The geography of identity is messy and differs depending on context and culture. Our particular experiences create ripples across our communities in scale. Therefore, we need to understand that we are all co-authors of the narrative together. There is no outside predication; therefore, we must expand our way of knowing to encompass an ethos that orients us towards care and tenderness towards the Other. Knowledge is not just in the abstract but occurs within our cultural realities, and it will take an open imagination to clear a road toward something new.

Imagination then becomes a transformative praxis we can take up to dream something better.¹³ We can all still be free, as Kant desired, but we must remember that each culture will predicate what care and safety look like differently. Local practices of care will look different depending on the community. It is not up to us to say what each community's ethos of care looks like. Instead, we might try our hand at allowing our imagination to spark us towards suspending the conscious I towards ideas of firm predication. Only by giving others permission to express a self that is always changing and always in conversation, may we lean more towards being in conversation with our own changing selves. Insofar as we continue to predicate a firm outside, we distance ourselves from the

The assignment is to develop these theses in a few sentences each and then write a manifesto on the importance of the study of religion. Because these were collaboratively forged, you are invited to work together on this answer. Unlike the other prompts, there is no page requirement for the manifesto – use your discretion on how long, what format, and what style you choose.

shared responsibility we all carry toward dreaming of a world where we can all be safe and free.

The assignment is to develop these theses in a few sentences each and then write a manifesto on the importance of the study of religion. Because these were collaboratively forged, you are invited to work together on this answer. Unlike the other prompts, there is no page requirement for the manifesto – use your discretion on how long, what format, and what style you choose.

Manifesto

What do you dream? What stories does your body tell? How do word, song, color, and rumbling sound move through your body to create symphonic narratives of Being?

Have you ever thought about the multitude of your existence? What does your breath do when you meditate on your own infinite becoming and unbecoming, weaving and unraveling with each Now as thread?

When a part of us dies (and is reborn) in every moment, how do we continue to show up both anew and “authentically” in our relationships and communities? How can we transcend the fear of death inherent in rejection and miscommunication?

How do we present our ever-evolving Selves to ever-evolving Others, and what languages could possibly communicate between beings more vast and mysterious than we can ever imagine?

How might we speak to each other between lines, in dances, in photographic fetishes ritualizing the abstract nostalgia of Death in never-ending patterns of Hello-Goodbye-I-Love-You?

What shape do the kaleidoscope of your dreams take when you pleasure yourself with the waters of co-creation? What does the word “ecologies of care” taste like in your mouth?

Let us dream of this world together. A world in which communication and intimacy with The Other isn’t, perhaps, confusing and scary.

What deeply entrenched roots must be unearthed to facilitate this exchange, understanding, and healing through our mycelial networks and communities?

How might attempts at re-organizing the myths and metaphors we weave through our lives produce new and transformative modes of performance expression translated beyond our own fear? How might we be in conversation with the art of being seen?

What must burn down to allow for new growth, and what might be reborn once the swailing is completed? When we burn the wild lands to promote new growth, how might the process of that ritual cleansing blossom into Being?

I am inviting you to enter into the co-creation of a linguistic revolution.

If you could believe in being Witnessed by the Other in an Annihilation that germinated infinite rebirth, what would that Witnessing look like to you?

- Call for Submissions from the Zine Abscission/Release

In their book Metaphors We Live By, Mark Johnson and George Lakoff, forerunners in the field of Cognitive Linguistics, present to us the thesis that metaphors are more than poetry. Rather, they are metaphorical connections between all our concepts, producing conceptual frames we use to navigate that world.¹⁴ Concepts, both mundane and abstract, are considered to be partial, as they stand only in relation to our understanding of other concepts.¹⁵ Of course, this thesis raises the question of how we make sense of any concept, supposing they are all dependent on each other.

The assignment is to develop these theses in a few sentences each and then write a manifesto on the importance of the study of religion. Because these were collaboratively forged, you are invited to work together on this answer. Unlike the other prompts, there is no page requirement for the manifesto – use your discretion on how long, what format, and what style you choose.

The enactive and embodied theories of mind present us with a solution to the questions left behind by their academic ancestors, as they “emphasize the growing conviction that cognition is not the representation of a pre-given world by a pre-given mind but is rather the enactment of a world and a mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that a being in the world performs.”¹⁶ The result is a mind not best understood as a reference processor but as a reflective agent of enaction looking back on and organizing/reorganizing memories in a continuously dynamic fashion. Memories, transient and fluid in their recognition of bodily, emotional, and mental attitudes¹⁷ engage with all aspects of the sensory-somatic experience, producing reflective attitudes and assumptions that make up the backdrop for our critical engagement with the world.¹⁸ In other words, there is a web of representation occurring in our cognitive world-building, interacting with both inside and experience in a continual production of dynamic play.

This Janus-faced tension expressed in the cognitive current of embodiment should, for the purpose of this essay, be viewed as a form of linguistic “critical participation”¹⁹ wherein the cultural narratology²⁰ surrounding body orientation and emotional sensation lay the frames for the conceptual structures we enact our lives through and by. This occurs as a byproduct of the blending, as mentioned above, of concepts brought to our attention by Lakoff/Johnson.²¹ Our reflections and memories of lived sensory experience cloak our interactions with our selves and the other within garments²² of sense perception comingled with linguistic prepositions bequeathed to us by the social structures we collectively co-participate in.

Once appropriately clothed, we fashion ourselves as better set to interact with the World and the Other in a tangible and supposedly more safely²³ equipped way. Our conceptual systems engage across both the transcendent and material plane in a fashion that is both dynamic and placed within a

The assignment is to develop these theses in a few sentences each and then write a manifesto on the importance of the study of religion. Because these were collaboratively forged, you are invited to work together on this answer. Unlike the other prompts, there is no page requirement for the manifesto – use your discretion on how long, what format, and what style you choose.

boundary. This, should the current theory uphold²⁴, becomes the intersubjective participatory stage we dance upon with all other beings and phenomenal creation.

Religion is the very seat of our myth making. As writers like Wynter, Keel, Clark, and Masuzawa have shown, there is power in the way religious narratives shape societal thoughts and ideas. Therefore, I believe it is important for Humanities and Religious Studies scholars especially to adopt Cognitive models in their methodology, as Wynter has so brilliantly done, to help orient us toward a more porous form of storytelling. Understanding the history of ideas and knowing that Kant and Hegel had Christian Universality as a presumptive ground for their philosophical thinking is a watershed moment. Knowing that these stories then shape how we interact with each other is a watershed moment, too. The imperative to pick up is the call towards allowing our stories to be malleable. We can re-write the narrative even if we cannot escape the narrative, but, as we have learned from Foucault, to do so we must first uncover the mechanisms behind the myths that have distorted us so.

To orient anyone's mind towards a new frame, we must speak within their values and framing; this is the premise for Lakoff's 1996 publication *Moral Politics*.^C With this in mind, I do not think that we can actualize a story in which the academy orients itself towards a methodology that is *withic*²⁵ unless we convince them of the stakes. We must speak in their language, and I believe that the embodied field of cognitive science might hold that key.

With this in mind, I am making a claim not towards an "ought" insofar as I do not seek to tell the academy what they ought to do. Instead, I would ask the academy to do what they always do and allow the Hegelian process to move forward with the new theories being presented to them. By allowing those who work within the fields of science to engage side-by-side with the religious historian and the philosopher of religious ideas. That this might shatter the limits of our current frame

The assignment is to develop these theses in a few sentences each and then write a manifesto on the importance of the study of religion. Because these were collaboratively forged, you are invited to work together on this answer. Unlike the other prompts, there is no page requirement for the manifesto – use your discretion on how long, what format, and what style you choose.

of knowledge production might collapse and be rebirthed-in-motion in order that we might understand how the within and without work together to shape our inner and outer experience. To accept that our stories are shared and shaped in a co-authored sense, as opposed to based on grounds of universal individualism. Religion is a cross-disciplinary field; it touches all the realms of knowledge production because it already predicates itself in a space beyond the grounds of how we currently predicate knowing.²⁶ Working with a methodology that gives us a scientific language which urges us towards art and poetry²⁷ might usher in a wave of academic thinkers who could at least start a rumble of change across the cultural consciousness. A rumbling that might give way to a new understanding of the force which acts upon us, that force of all/no being, that which we have currently named God.

It is hard to say what the shape of a new religious mythology might look like, but, telling the story of our bodies in relation to each other might give further light to a way that allows for a shift of severance from the hierarchical and othering aspects that the religious story has so far given ground to.

Perhaps, if we embrace such a shift in our understanding of epistemes, we can all begin to work together, with those in other fields like STEM and all branches of the Humanities alike. If we cease the vertical ladder, if we cease telling stories of individualism, if we showcase through living praxis of what can be accomplished by the work done when we orient in relation to each other, perhaps new language, an air towards poetry, might blossom in the academy. Perhaps then, new ideas of knowledge production that tell stories of liminal states and infinite becomings might be born. It may not solve the force of nature that makes storytelling a part of our biology, that force will still act upon us, but it may give breath towards a space in which language blooms anew. Until then, I write, and I dream, and I weave, and I write, I reweave, and I dream. I write, then I sleep.

The assignment is to develop these theses in a few sentences each and then write a manifesto on the importance of the study of religion. Because these were collaboratively forged, you are invited to work together on this answer. Unlike the other prompts, there is no page requirement for the manifesto – use your discretion on how long, what format, and what style you choose.

Bibliography

- Anzaldúa, Gloria. 2015. *Light in the Dark - Luz En Lo Oscuro : Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.
- Hegel, Georg. 1984. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Edited by Peter Hodgson. University of California Press.
- Keel, Terence. 2020. *Divine Variations : How Christian Thought Became Racial Science*. Stanford, Ca: Stanford University Press.
- Mahmood, Saba. 2005. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Wynter, Sylvia. 2015. “The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoietic Turn/Overturn, Its Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition.” In *Black Knowledges/Black Struggles : Essays in Critical Epistemology*, edited by Jason R Ambrose and Bröck-SallahSabine. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Endnotes

- ¹ Hegel, “Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion”, 152
- ² Wynter, “Ceremony Found”, 213
- ³ A Wynter word, used to describe the way myth and story telling are the germinating points from which our social institutions spring forth.
- ⁴ Wynter, “Ceremony Found”, 195-196
- ⁵ Wynter, “Ceremony Found”, 199
- ⁶ I.e. being outside the inside/outside divide line
- ⁷ Wynter, “Ceremony Found”, 186
- ⁸ Wynter, “Ceremony Found”, 191
- ⁹ Keel, “Divine Variations: How Christian Thought Became Racial Science”, 5
- ¹⁰ Keel, “Divine Variations: How Christian Thought Became Racial Science”, 7
- ¹¹ See Genesis 2:19-20: Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.
- ¹² Mahmood, “Politics of Piety”, 14
- ¹³ Anzaldúa, “Light in the Dark - Luz En Lo Oscuro : Rewriting identity, spirituality, Reality”, 44
- ¹⁴ Lakoff and Johnson, “Metaphors We Live By”, 41
- ¹⁵ Lakoff and Johnson, “Metaphors We Live By”, 51

The assignment is to develop these theses in a few sentences each and then write a manifesto on the importance of the study of religion. Because these were collaboratively forged, you are invited to work together on this answer. Unlike the other prompts, there is no page requirement for the manifesto – use your discretion on how long, what format, and what style you choose.

¹⁶ Varela, Rosch, and Thompson, “The Embodied Mind”, 9

¹⁷ As is their very nature, insofar as, memories are the enacted process of remembering the dynamic interweavings of the remembered object’s physicalities (touch, color, sound) in the tension of expression with non-verbal emotions who color and give atmosphere to the memory’s scene.

¹⁸ Di Paolo, Cuffari, and De Jaegher, “Linguistic Bodies”, 3

¹⁹ Di Paolo, Cuffari, and De Jaegher, “Linguistic Bodies”, 3

²⁰ I am using the word narratology to be defined here and ongoing as, the narrative-schemes by which we predicate cosmological and sociogenic structures. A narratology creates the assumed “grounds” for the story we tell ourselves. It provides some shape to, yet also hides certain aspects of, the dynamic dual-headed embodiment of the social-particatory conceptual structures which inform the way allegorical connections between concepts are made. The way a narratology weaves together concepts will in turn define the way we orient ourselves towards and away from the paradoxical inside/outside experience of to-be-human.

²¹ Found in the ontological explorations of their original premise, the pair demonstrate the smallest part of a conceptual metaphor to be that of body orientation. Though, it also seems to be the case that whether UP is connected to POSITIVE or NEGATIVE emotionality is a reflection of the culture. Thus, even the smallest part of our conceptual framework are predicated on cultural understanding. See Lakoff and Johnson, “Metaphors We Live By”, pg 57

²² The MIND is VEILED. An old and outdated metaphor giving rise to the hidden assumption that there is an ideal form of that which outside myself I must attempt to declothe

²³ Safety, what does it mean to move safely through the world? Such is the very heart of philosophical pursuit within this manifesto.

²⁴ Which it likely wont, being that the very nature of such a theory predicates that as cultures and times shift, end, begin, the stories we tell ourselves will once again change.

²⁵ A term coined by my esteemed cohort Wenji Emmanuel, meaning “a way of reading, or methodology, that is neither from the outside nor from the inside perspective, but rather one that is dialogical or imply rooted in dialogue” from the class handout on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick

²⁶ For God is All things and No thing

²⁷ As opposed to away from it