Methodology underlying the presentation of visual texture in the Gospel of John

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Introduction

Specialists in rhetoric -- especially those who deliver addresses, even more than those who analyze them -- have long recognized the power of the image to get a point across.

One of the first extant examples of sophistic practice, Gorgias's *Encomium of Helen*, uses words to set before the audience's eyes beautiful Helen but also her case.[1] Aristotle's second book of his *Rhetoric* is devoted to the means of picturing and presenting character, primarily that of the speaker.[2] Examples of the power of imagery in contemporary rhetorical practice also abound, especially in the realm of advertising[3] and preaching.[4]

1. See the section on "Gorgias", which includes the *Encomium of Helen*, in Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, eds., *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, second ed. (Boston: Bedford Books, 2001), 42–46.
2. Grimaldi makes an excellent point that Book II is almost always overlooked in favour of Book I, which deals with λόγος, and thus with logical argumentation. See William M.A. Grimaldi, *Aristotle: Rhetoric II* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1988), ix. This intentional or unintentional diminishment of classical rhetoric's own attention to imagery by modern scholars is consonant with Vernon Robbins's assertion that modern rhetorical analysis and biblical study have been intentionally or unintentionally oblivious to important, even crucial elements of the rhetorical employment of imagery in biblical materials.
3. Linda M. Scott, "Images in Advertising: The Need for a Theory of Visual Rhetoric," *Journal of Consumer Research* 21 (September 1994): 252–73.
4. See the classic work of Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching*, originally published 1985, new foreward 2010 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010). Craddock pleads for greater reliance on imagery in preaching than on propositional (logical) proofs.

Preaching is especially interesting to me, since it works with imagery drawn from our contemporary world, as does advertising, but blends that imagery with imagery from the Bible, written centuries and even millennia before our own time. The blending of two worlds -- the contemporary with the ancient Biblical world -- has been a challenge for Christian preaching since the beginning, but since the 2nd century Christian scholars have also sought to give hermeneutical rigour to how this blending occurs. This rigour was achieved in a magisterial way in Saint Augustine's *De doctrina cristiana*, in which Augustine provided an alternative to classical rhetoric both in its content and in its form.[5]

As a theologian involved in rhetorical analysis, I envision my task in continuity with Saint Augustine, though I also recognize my significantly inferior contribution. Furthermore, I envision my task all the while aware of significant changes to the rhetorical models that are now available in the world around us but even more so aware of the unique scientific insights that are available to us since the 18th century. My task is not entirely dissimilar from that of St. Augustine, in spite of the millennium and a half that separates us, because the Bible and extra-biblical materials that I am using remain for the most part the same ones that were available to St. Augustine. In fact, St. Augustine devoted much of his Christian scholarly life to the study and preaching of the very same Gospel of John, including especially a focus on its imagery,[6] which is also my subject matter.

In following in St. Augustine's massive footsteps, I am also following the lead of Vernon Robbins, whose sociorhetorical project intends also to find a way to blend contemporary and ancient tools.[7] My modest contribution here is to show how the sciences of the brain and the mind enable us to

5. Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography: A New Edition with an Epilogue* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 256–66 See also Robin M. Jensen, "Early Christian Images and Exegesis," in *Picturing the Bible: The Earliest Christian Art*, ed. Jeffrey Spier (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 76, according to whom Augustine provided a "holistic" approach to the presentation of Scripture.
6. See, for example, Craig S. Farmer, "Early Reformed Commentaries on John," *Church History* 65, no. 3 (September 1996): 367–68.
7. The origins of Robbins's project can be dated to the 80s and 90s with the appearance of the notion of "sociorhetorical interpretation" in Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark, with a New Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), followed by his two landmark works Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996); Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996). These have now

use Robbins's insights for their maximum value.

The primary insight that has begun to shape sociorhetorical interpretation (SRI) is that rhetoric privileges visual texture used for argumentative purposes, rather than logical argumentation. While there is no doubt that rhetorical analysis had imagery as a dominant concern in its classical, medieval, and many contemporary forms, it is also true that as a result of certain currents in modern rhetoric, currents that were influential on Protestant biblical scholarship, logic became a preeminent concern in both modern rhetoric and in modern biblical reflection.[8] It is is this primacy that Robbins has sought to challenge through sociorhetorical interpretation. Recognizing that rhetoric is primarily about words used for the purpose of argumentation, Robbins has proposed that visual texture, not logical argumentation, is primary and that the latter is more often than not in the service of the former. He has thus proposed that, in commentary on Scripture, we should first of all consider *rhetography*, by which he means "the features of a spoken or written communication that evoke a picture (graphic image) in the mind of a hearer or reader",[9] or, as he later elaborated, "the progressive, sensory-aesthetic, and/or argumentative texture of a text (...) that invites a hearer/reader to create a graphic image or picture in the mind that implies a certain kind of truth and/or reality".[10] *Rhetography*, which is about getting at "the picture an argument evokes,"[11] recovers its traditional place through SRI.

This is not, however, simply a return to the pre-modern past or an embrace of a contemporary trend. Rather, as I hope to show, the stress on *rhetography* picks up on important ideas that are in discussion in the larger scientific community about how minds work and how they both communicate and receive information. To show how this is so, I want to present some reflections on how I get at the visual

been followed by the first volume of his *magnum opus* Vernon K. Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse: Volume 1*, Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity (Blandford Forum: Deo, 2009).

8. In rhetoric, this is perhaps most clearly seen in the writings of Thomas Campbell. See Bizzell and Herzberg, *Rhetorical Tradition*, 807–9. In exegesis the tendency is seen most clearly in the Reformed traditions.

9. Vernon K. Robbins, "Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text," paper presented at the University of Stellenbosch (2006).

10. Robbins, *Invention I*, xxvii.

11. Robbins, *Invention I*, 17.

texture in the Gospel of John in its argumentative use, i.e., in its *rhetography*. There are four methodological spheres that I have considered:

- The physiological process of visualization
- Images and memory
- How the mind works with visual imagery to create meaning through narrative
- The power of rhetorical imagery

It is important to note that I am looking at these four spheres in the service of assisting the SRI community in refining sociorhetorical interpretation. Thus, my interest is not primarily in physiology or neurology, in the science of memory, in cognitive psychology, nor even in narrative or art.

Visualization

"[V]ision is the main way we collect information from the world".[12] Visual perception gives us some raw data about the world. This raw data is, however, quite minimal, which means that our brain does a maximal amount of work on the minimal data given to it.[13]

This minimalist approach to visual perception, allows either for a basic computational understanding of human cognition or for a more elaborate understanding of the human mind.[14] The

12. Benjamin K. Bergen, *Louder Than Words: The New Science of How the Mind Makes Meaning* (New York: Basic Books, 2012), 49.

13. "Although we experience the illusion of receiving high-resolution images from our eyes, what the optic nerve actually sends to the brain is just a series of outlines and clues about points of interest in our visual field. We then essentially hallucinate the world from cortical memories that interpret a series of movies with very low data rates that arrive in parallel channels. [According to Roska and Werblin]... the optic nerve carries ten to twelve output channels, each of which carries only a small amount of information about a given scene. One group of what are called ganglion cells sends information only about edges (changes in contrast). Another group detects only large areas of uniform color, whereas a third group is sensitive only to the backgrounds behind figures of interest. 'Even though we think we see the world so fully, what we are receiving is really just hints, edges in space and time,' says Werblin. 'These 12 pictures of the world constitute all the information we will ever have about what's out there, and from these 12 pictures, which are so sparse, we reconstruct the richness of the visual world." Ray Kurzweil, *How to Create a Mind: The Secret of Human Thought Revealed* (New York: Viking, 2012), 94, citing the work of B Roska and F. Werblin, "Vertical Interactions Across Ten Parallel, Stacked Representations in the Mammalian Retina," *Nature* 410, no. 6828 (29 March 2001): 583–87.

14. Steven Pinker details the outlines of the basic computational understanding:

> The computational theory of mind... says that beliefs and desires are *information*, incarnated as configurations of symbols. The symbols are the physical states of bits of matter, like chips in a

computational theory continues to ground "the copy theory" of visualization, by which we think that our vision provides us simply with a copy of the real world.

There are, however, several problems with the copy theory, not least of which is that we actually already have complex imagery in the mind when we either see something or when we hear something named but do not see it.[15] For example, no one doubts that two people walking down a street together and who see a dog will, according to the computational theory, see an animal that we can call a "dog" in whatever language we identify it and with some room for assessing whether it is a dog or a coyote, or whether a Newfoundland dog is a dog in the same way, say, that a chihuahua is. If, however, one of those walking along is a North American, she might see the dog as a possible pet, while the other, say, a Nicaraguan, would see the dog as a threat.[16]

The complexity is magnified in speech. Hearing the word "dog", but not seeing a dog, conjures up even more possibilities, since in English the word can be a noun or a verb, and, depending on the cultural context, might even refer to a person. But additionally that person might be someone who is not of my religion -- perhaps even an enemy of my religion (cf. Phil 3:2a)[17] -- or someone might be a hero of that very same religion (e.g. "Caleb", i.e. "dog", Num 13-14).

> computer or neurons in the brain. They symbolize things in the world because they are triggered by those things via our sense organs and because of what they do once they are triggered. If the bits of matter constituting another symbol are arranged to bump into the bits of matter constituting another symbol in just the right way, the symbols corresponding to one belief can give rise to new symbols corresponding to another belief logically related to it, which can giver rise to symbols corresponding to other beliefs, and so on. Eventually the bits of matter constituting a symbol bump into bits of matter connected to the muscles, and behavior happens. The computational theory of mind thus allows us to keep beliefs and desires in our explanations of behavior while planting them squarely in the physical universe. It allows meaning to cause and be caused." Steven Pinker, *How the Mind Works* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 25.

15. "[R]eliance on the analogy between computer processing and human thought has led to a limited conceptualization of symbolic material in which discrete unities -- like alphanumeric characters -- are read and manipulated" Scott, "Images in Advertising: The Need for a Theory of Visual Rhetoric," 269. But, as Scott goes on to note, they are not discrete, but neither are they simply strung together. They are contextualized or, as she says, "convention based".

16. My daughter, who lives in Nicaragua, knows this from personal experience. The dog that she had in Nicaragua as a pet was always a target for Nicaraguans, who would throw stones at it, or chase it with brooms, or kick at it, even when my daughter was walking along with the dog and would try to stop them.

17. See also Hadith Sahih Bukhari 4.54.539 Narrated Abu Talha: The Prophet said, "Angels do not enter a house which has either a dog or a picture in it."

So, while the computational theory is an "indispensable" explanation of elements of the mind,[18] how the mind uses visual imagery will likely require other variants than physiology or neurology for a fuller explanation of imagery in the mind. Nor is this a new idea. Some years ago, Benjamin Whorf had already noted that "the world is presented in a kaleidoscope flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds".[19] In other words, while our visual perceptions provide us with the fundamental data with which we work, it is our mind that constructs what we see. And, in fact, this is true not only of our visual perception, but also of sensory perception *per se*: "Each of us lives within the universe -- the prison -- of his own brain. Projecting from it are millions of fragile sensory nerve fibers, in groups uniquely adapted to sample the energetic states of the world around us: heat, light, force, and chemical composition. That is all we ever know of it directly; all else is logical inference,"[20] or perhaps more accurately 'inference by the mind'.

When it comes to rhetorical material that is as complex as John's Gospel it becomes very clear that neurological approaches to vision alone will not satisfy our desire for meaning and interpretation concerning imagery in the text. Nevertheless, it is the case that somehow the mental image of "lamb" or "birth" or "bread" will be used by the author and that these images will be drawn from things that characters in the text are narrated as seeing or hearing about. Specifically, we shall see that these visualizable or imaginable realities will be used by the author to set up counterfactual realities for the mind to grapple with: yes, a lamb, which you can see, but not just a lamb; yes, birth, which you can see and visusalize, but not that birth; yes, bread, which you can see, but not that bread which hardens and dries out and decays, or even bread that you heard about that mysteriously appears and decays with the sun the next day; etc. In other words, the author of the Gospel of John will use immediate, sensory

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18. So Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, 25.

19. Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought, and Reality*, ed. John B. Carroll, foreword by Stuart Chase, reprint, 1956 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1973). Whorf's 1956 work is cited by Bergen, *Louder Than Words*, 188.

20. Vernon B. Mounctcastle, "The View from Within: Pathways to the Study of Perception," *Johns Hopkins Medical Journal* 136 (1975): 109–31; Kurzweil, *How to Create a Mind*, 94.

appearances of things just as they appear to the eye (e.g., bread, water, light, etc.) but he will do so to show how misguided the hearer or seer is if s/he remains only at the level where that is all that s/he sees.

Before we can see how this happens, however, it is important to note how the Gospel of John uses what else is in the brain in order to move the audience beyond the computational connection between external thing, external stimuli, and mental image, namely, how John uses what is in memory.

Images and memory: How culture shapes visual imagery

Eric Kandel has given us a remarkably lucid presentation of the scientific discovery of the physiological processes involved in memory and memory creation.[21] His work is highly significant for us because it is memory that provides the mind with images to be compared with other images, including images from external stimuli and those already in the brain. His work is also important because he has shown that it is memory that begins to provide a narrative, both individual and corporate, and memory that allows for a structured blending of all the various images we have of our world.

To start with, memory is crucial for any kind of ongoing human experience, rather than just moment-to-moment lived experience. "Without the binding force of memory, experience would be splintered into as many fragments as there are moments in life".[22] Through memory the mind creates an extensive individual history that draws on an individual's own memory and, as we shall see, on cultural memory, that is, the memory of others.[23] That this is the case seems clear because, while brain activity is obviously fed by direct stimuli, it also functions in its absence. In other words, brain activity does not cease with the absence of external stimulus. Where external stimuli are available, they are blended with imagery from memory; where external stimuli are absent, images from memory are still blended.[24] I do

21. Eric R. Kandel, *In Search of Memory: The Emergence of a New Science of Mind* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006).
22. Ibid., 10.
23. This history almost certainly begins during the prenatal period. David B. Chamberlain, "The Fetal Senses: A Classical View," http://birthpsychology.com/free-article/fetal-senses-classical-view.
24. According to Bergen "Visual imagery works much like actual perception because when you recall objects, locations, events, and so on, you are re-experiencing sights you've seen and actions you've performed, using the same brain systems that were responsible for seeing those sights and performing those actions in the first place" Bergen, *Louder Than Words*, 41. As we shall see, I will nuance Bergen's assertion slightly but significantly: we don't actually re-experience the sights, we reconfigure the initial experience based on other stimuli and blends that have entered the cognitive process subsequently.

not, for example, need to see a man to visualize a man in my mind; hearing the word "man" suffices to picture the man.[25]

For the purposes of highlighting the importance of memory in relation to the rhetorical use of imagery, Steven Pinker's observation is crucial: any picturing that we do necessarily draws on memory recall, whether external stimuli are present or not.[26] Therefore, it is indeed likely that "visual thinking is often driven more strongly by the conceptual knowledge we use to organize our images than by the contents of the images themselves".[27] Though it may be true that "a picture is worth a thousand words, ... that is not always such a good thing. At some point between gazing and thinking, images must give way

25. The physiological (neurological) process that explains why this happens is well understood: "The brain does not simply gather and stockpile information as a computer's hard drive does. Facts are stored first in the hippocampus, a structure deep in the brain about the size and shape of a fat man's curled pinkie finger. But the information does not rest there. Every time we recall it, our brain writes it down again, and during this re-storage, it is also reprocessed. In time, the fact is gradually transferred to the cerebral cortex and is separated from the context in which it was originally learned. For example, you know that the capital of California is Sacramento, but you probably don't remember how you learned it." Sam Wang and Sandra Aamodt, "Your Brain Lies to You," *New York Times*, 27 June 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/27/opinion/27aamodt.html Bergen proposes that the physiological explanation actually suggests that in these cases we are "immersed experiencers", that is, that hearing the word "man" and understanding it " is "in some way akin to actually being there" Bergen, *Louder Than Words*, 66. "[T]he immersed experiencer view claims that when you're understanding language, you simulate what it would be like to experience the scene that's described" Bergen, *Louder Than Words*, 68–69. Bergen acknowledges his indebtedness to R. A. Zwaan, "The Immersed Experiencer: Toward an Embodied Theory of Language Comprehension," in *The Psychology of Learning and Motivation*, vol. 43, B. H. Ross (New York: Academic, 2004), 38, according to whom "comprehension is the vicarious experience of the described events through the integration and sequencing of traces from actual experience cued by the linguistic input".
26. Pinker, *How the Mind Works* in his chapter "The Mind's Eye". Benjamin Bergen gives a helpful example of how this memory recall functions physiologically when he discusses how brain activity evidences the brain filling in the blanks in periods of silence when one would otherwise expect external stimuli, be it visual or auditory. Describing brain scans on such periods of silence, Bergen writes:

> If you've ever driven through a tunnel while listening to the radio, you know that when you're listening to a song you know, as soon as the music cuts out, you spontaneously 'hear' the music in your mind's ear over the crackling of your radio. The brain activity measurements that the experiments took from the periods of silence showed ...activation in the brain areas responsible for audition ... The exact parts of the auditory system that were active during the periods of silence depended upon how familiar the music was to the participant and whether it had lyrics -- just as you use different but closely related brain regions to hear different types of sound, so you use different brain regions to imagine sound. Bergen, *Louder Than Words*, 35.

27. Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, 295.

to ideas,"[28] and these ideas are essentially shaped by memory.[29]

Memory, however, is not exclusively an individual creation, though for a long time it was viewed that way.[30] Recently, however, and on the basis of the study of the individual brain, the social dimension of memory has become clearer.[31] In other words, the individual does not create abstract, context-less mental representations; rather, s/he "processes and stores information to be later activated (either automatically or consciously), in order to act in the real world" with other people who are equally socially and culturally contextualized.[32] Individual memory creation is thus designed to accommodate others, and as such is designed to incorporate social knowledge into the creation of memory and narratives based on memory.[33] This is no less true of picturing, which, as we have seen, is dependent on memory, and thus,

28. Ibid., 298.

29. Why this should be so is explained by Pinker: because "people cannot reconstruct an image of an entire visual scene" but "only the surfaces visible from one vantage point, distorted by perspective", images are "slaves to the organization of memory" Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, 294.

30. Until recently, the two "basic principles" that have usually informed "scientific psychology's approach to the study of cognition" have been (1) the presupposition of "a subject endowed with universal cognitive properties and, simultaneously, of objects possessing intrinsic properties" and (2) the presupposition that "individual cognitive productions and constructions are the result of the individual's application of his/her universal properties to the object's intrinsic characteristics". Unfortunately, this has led to a situation in which "the possible social dimension of the processing under observation is either totally neglected, or understood solely from the standpoint of the object's characteristics", from the Introduction to Jean-Marc Monteil and Pascal Huguet, eds., *Social Context and Cognitive Performance: Towards a Social Psychology of Cognition*, European Monographs in Social Psychology (Hove, East Sussex, UK: Psychology Press, 1999).

31. For example, the discovery of neural epigenesis, i.e., the flexible execution of the activities of the human brain depending on individual circumstances rather than on mere evolutionary determinism of the human species, has suggested to at least some social psychologists that "every human being has inscribed in the very structure of his brain through particular neural networks, the special affective, social and cultural history that is his". In fact, "the higher up the evolutionary ladder one moves, the more the epigenetic component gains importance in the construction of individuals." The conclusion appears inescapable that "if physical matter bears the mark of the individual's social history, it becomes conceivable that a symbolic 'engram' of the social dimension might exist in long-term memory and might play a part in the development and the cognitive functioning of the human being." See chapter 1 of Monteil and Huguet, *Social Context and Cognitive Performance* here quoting Lecourt, 1989, p. 142, translation by Monteil and Huguet. For example, it appears that the bicameral structure of the Japanese brain shows hemispherical specialization for the use of the two different writing systems. "The alphabetical system, the Kana, relies on the left hemisphere, while the ideogrammatic system, the Kanji, relies on the right hemisphere." Such studies have led Monteil and Huguet to talk about the human individual as "a *socially inserted neurophysiological and psychological system*". Monteil and Huguet, *Social Context and Cognitive Performance*, from chapter 1, their emphasis.

32. Monteil and Huguet, *Social Context and Cognitive Performance*, from chapter 1.

33. If memories are encoded in the brain, they may easily be "activated and implemented in the form of a system of responses found in the individual's behavioural repertoire. For this to happen, the individuals need only to find themselves in the presence of certain inputs or certain sociopsychological configurations acting as retrieval cues for knowledge related to previous social insertions." Monteil and Huguet, *Social Context and Cognitive Performance*, from chapter 1. Monteil and Huguet conclude that, as a result, "more of our attention should thus be directed towards contextual information of an episodic nature".

as we see here, is dependent on social memory as much as on individual memory.

Robbins intuited this point early on in SRI by grounding SRI's understanding of *intertexture* in relation to the work of his colleague, Bradd Shore.[34] Following Shore, Robbins insists on the cultural, i.e., local, nature of rhetorical appeals to knowledge about the world around us. This knowledge is social in that it is more than individual, but it is not simply universal, that is, true for all humans. For the knowledge that humans draw on first of all is local, i.e., cultural. Or, as Shore noted, while it is true that "brain-culture interactions ... reveal ... the general cognitive processes of information", it is also true that these interactions are not universally human but rather locally human, "the culturally diverse manifestations of those processes in action".[35] As we shall see, any understanding of rhetorical discourse must address the fact that the audience in mind is the local audience rather than the universal audience of logical or scientific discourse.[36]

What is the significance of this understanding of memory for our understanding of the imagery of the Gospel of John? As I note in my paper on John, the audience of John's Gospel understands itself, through identification with narrative characters in John, to be bereft of any reliance on external stimuli -- especially visual stimuli -- for understanding the world that Jesus speaks about. They are not, however, left without some clues. These clues derive from cultural memory, particularly, the memory of first century Judaism that is imbued with the cultural memory of the Jewish Scriptures and their recitative contexts (e.g., the Temple, the assembly, etc.). As such, throughout John we find abundant *echoes* drawn from the Jewish canon of Scripture and their imagery in the form of Scriptural titles ("lamb of God", "Son of God", "king of Israel", etc.), persons ("Elijah", "the one who is to come", "Jacob", "Moses", etc.), places, etc. In fact, it is impossible to understand John without access to that same cultural memory. This

34. Bradd Shore, *Culture in Mind: Cognition, Culture, and the Problem of Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

35. Ibid., 40.

36. This insight will unfortunately also dramatically curtail the applicability of Robbins's notion of *rhetorolects*.

cultural memory provides an important set of clues for understanding a world that, in light of that same memory, cannot be pictured, namely, the invisible God and that God's invisible realm.

Strikingly, though, and again counterfactually, those most skilled at knowing these clues, the Jewish scribes and priestly class, appear least able to make sense of them in light of the subsequent clue that appears to them in the person of Jesus. It is this tension that the author sets up as the rhetorical situation addressed by the Gospel. To analyze this situation, SRI's notion of *rhetography* is very useful because it brings us from the level of images, both visualized and visualizable through memory, to the level of narrative in which these images are employed to make meaning.

The mental construction of story-lines and their rhetorical purposes

The process of the creation of communicable images for rhetorical purposes by drawing on conventional memory is, I believe, what Robbins is pointing to in *rhetography* when he speaks of *rhetography* as "picturing based on seeing places and spaces through social and cultural experiences". Such picturing takes place within "cultural frames" that "evoke story-lines containing a sequence of pictures in the context of pictorial narration".[37] For the individual brain is not only able to navigate the social world that has shaped it, but, because "the brain is a creativity machine, which obtains incomplete information from the outside world and completes it", we can also communicate new ideas by imagining new possibilities and we can create "illusions and ambiguous figures that trick our brain into thinking that we see things that are not there."[38]

Robbins has also helped to envision how this happens through rhetorical invention of story-lines. Crucial to Robbins's understanding of how visual imagery is used in story-lines is "conceptual blending".[39] To summarize how that blending works, the mind works with "input spaces" or "mental

37. Vernon K. Robbins, "Conceptual Blending and Early Christian Imagination," in *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions from Cognitive and Social Science*, ed. Petri Luomanen, Ilkka Pyysiäinen, and Risto Uro, Biblical Interpretation Series, vol. 89 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 162.

38. E. R. Kandel, "What the Brain Can Tell Us About Art," *New York Times Sunday Review*, 14 April 2013, 12 " In this sense, a task of figurative painting is to convince the beholder that an illusion is true."

39. Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's*

spaces, "small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action. They are very partial assemblies containing elements, structured by frames and cognitive models",[40] all of which are easily able to pictured. The "linking" of two or more conceptual packets results in a new picture or "blend". The "links" that allow these conceptual packets or "input spaces" to be connected are "vital relations" to thought and communication.[41] They include such mental relations as "change", "identity", "time", "space", etc. The new "blended space" that results from packets being vitally linked contains the framed elements of the input spaces that are brought together in such a way as to present to the mind something that had not to that point existed in the mind , or at least could not exist without the blending of the original "input spaces".

Elaborate blending requires "compression" and "decompression" by which a "blend" becomes more visualizable by being brought to "human scale" or less visualizable by becoming more abstract (e.g., "justice").[42] Such a process results in "elaborate integration networks".[43] This is the "stuff" of sophisticated human communication, i.e., conceptual blends and conceptual packets containing many spaces and many mappings creating "elaborate integration networks constructed by means of overarching general principles".[44] The mind composes these elaborate networks into memorable narratives, which themselves gain power through regular and consistent use, and which, by their memorable quality, are able to conjure up automatically (as it were) still other memorable networks that have some relationship to them.[45]

Hidden Complexities (NY: Basic Books, 2003); Robbins, "Conceptual Blending and Early Christian Imagination."

40. Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 102.

41. Ibid., 92.

42. Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, "Compression and Global Insight," *Cognitive Linguistics* 11, no. 3–4 (2000): 291.

43. Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, "Rethinking Metaphor," originally published in *Cambridge handbook of metaphor and thought* (New York: Cambridge University, 2008), available through the Social Science Research Network http://ssrn.com/abstract=1275662, ed. Ray Gibbs (New York: Cambridge University, 2008).

44. Ibid.

45. Steven Pinker notes how these narratives and the process of connectivity are key elements of neural networks. See Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, 104–9 Such networks are necessary for human communication to happen without having to re-write scripts each time, in the same way that memory is required so that one does not always have to recreate the world on the basis of external stimuli.

Some of these networks are profoundly conventional, while others are dramatically new. The reason for the variety is that humans are capable of creating networks of meaning in several, different contexts for similar or different purposes. The result may be conventionally structured or dramatically reconfigured and novel cognitive networks with "conventional parts, conventionally-structured parts", or with new perspectives and shapings of these parts.[46] Nevertheless, the fact is that, while the frames are cognitive networks that "cultures build ... over long periods of time that get transmitted over generations,"[47] the networks themselves are most often "novel" in some way, too.

Robbins's *rhetorolects* are essentially coventional, elaborate integration networks that are found throughout the Mediterranean world and that are used to address particular rhetorical situations and particular exigences as warranted. Unfortunately, while we can presuppose *a priori* pristine examples of *rhetorolect*s, as Robbins has done, we don't actually find the *rhetorolects* themselves in their pristine form in human discourse. What we find are only elements of *rhetorolects* which can themselves only be envisaged in outline form and which have some relatively consistent features.

As a result, I have found *rhetorolects* very difficult to work with. I can understand the value of them: they are similar to Aristotle's three genres of rhetorical discourse (epideictic, deliberative, and forensic), and they do provide a heuristic that some scholars have found helpful when talking about texts.[48] For my part, though, I have found it more valuable to explore "topical fields" in identifying rhetorical cognitive networks. Following the example of the convention of "semantic fields" in linguistics,[49] I consider "topical fields" to be conventional constellations of *topoi*, the essential building blocks of rhetorical discourse. Their use suggests an array of conventionally structured cognitive blends in conventional, cultural contexts within local frames that have their structure, in part at least, because of

46. As we shall see, Fauconnier and Turner call these reconfigurations "novel mappings and compressions". See Fauconnier and Turner, "Rethinking Metaphor."
47. Fauconnier and Turner add that the very "techniques for building particular networks are also transmitted." See Fauconnier and Turner, "Rethinking Metaphor."
48. For example, they appear to have been very helpful for the work of Prof. Fred Long and Prof. Roy Jeal in their commentaries on Ephesians and Colossians respectively.
49. An excellent example of this approach for Indo-European semantic fields can be found at http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/lrc/iedocctr/ie-ling/ie-sem/

these blends.[50] Emphasizing "topical fields" has the great virtue of allowing for any number of combinations of these conventional blends to take shape and also of allowing for a stronger empirical basis on which to identify rhetorical cognitive networks.[51] If this approach has validity, then "topical fields" may be our clues for rhetorical integration networks that will indeed have some recurring shape as (such as Robbins's *rhetorolects*) but that will also have a shape that will be quite varied and will be formally content-dependent rather having an *a priori* form. This will help exegesis to avoid having to lock texts into *a priori* rhetorical discourse forms. It will also encourage and welcome the discovery of dramatically new integration networks as we explore unique, rhetorical reconfigurations of such "fields".

Independently, I believe that the discussion of "topical fields" within the realm of "conceptual blending" also promises to help us move the discussion on "metaphor" forward.[52] There is no doubt about the centrality of metaphor in human thinking.[53] According to Kurzweil, "a key aspect of creativity is the process of finding great metaphors -- symbols that represent something else. The neocortex is a great metaphor machine... Finding a metaphor is the process of recognizing a pattern despite differences in detail and context -- an activity we undertake trivially every moment of our lives".[54]

However, I agree with Alonso, according to whom in the field of human thought and communication, conceptual blending promises to move our understanding forward and beyond where conceptual metaphor thinking had left us, namely, understanding "metaphorical thinking as an inherent

50. The phrase "topical fields" has been used for a similar purpose, though with an emphasis on *topos* as the dynamic rule governing rhetorical argumentation, by Sylvie Bruxelles, Oswald Ducrot, and Pierre-Yves Raccah, "Argumentation and the Lexical Topical Fields," *Journal of Pragmatics* 24 (1995): 99–114.
51. I initially explored the differences between elements within regionally based rhetorical dialects such as Mediterranean and non-Mediterranean rhetorical practice (in the form of Asian rhetorical practice) and the implications of these differences for our understanding of *rhetorolects* in L. Gregory Bloomquist, "The Role of the Audience in the Determination of Argumentation: The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles," in *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts*, ed. Anders Eriksson, Thomas H. Olbricht, and Walter Übelacker, Emory Studies in Early Christianity, 8 (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2002), 157–73.
52. Kurzweil, *How to Create a Mind*, 113, 115.
53. Pilar Alonso, "The Conceptual Integration Network Model as a Paradigm for Analysis of Complex Narrative Discourse," *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 37, no. 2 (2004): 161–82.
54. Kurzweil, *How to Create a Mind*, 113, 115.

component of human cognition".[55] The reason she can assert this is, as Fauconnier and Turner themselves note: "We need to face squarely the far greater complexity of integrations that lie behind observable metaphorical conceptual systems, we need to take into account their cultural history, and we need to account explicitly for the emergent structures they produce, both over cultural time and over individual time".[56] As Fauconnier and Turner note, "double-scope integration, which typically exploits clashes, is the hallmark of cognitively modern human beings. And metaphor is one of its most powerful products, one that often drives key aspects of art, science, religion, and technology."[57]

Conceptual blending moves us beyond the realm of metaphor in part at least because it accounts for emergent structure that arises from the very "clashes" that Fauconnier and Turner mention here briefly but that are actually at the root of conceptual blending. For even more important than metaphor for explaining integration is the notion of "counterfactual thinking".[58] "Counterfactuals" reflect the cognitive mechanism that provides humans with the ability to imagine things other than "as they are".[59] They give humans the ability to "pretend, imitate, lie, fantasize, deceive, delude, consider alternatives, simulate, make models, and propose hypotheses".[60] As such, they provide the very emphasis <u>for</u> blending itself, and for blending as the basis of rhetoric.

Counterfactuals do not achieve this result in any causal way. A counterfactual is not a logical statement: "if I were to do this, then this would be the result". There is instead an element of wonder:

55. Alonso, "The Conceptual Integration Network Model as a Paradigm for Analysis of Complex Narrative Discourse."
56. Fauconnier and Turner, "Rethinking Metaphor."
57. Ibid.
58. "Counterfactuality is forced incompatibility between spaces", Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 230. "Counterfactuals" are at the very heart of human creativity because they are the crucial mechanism by which "advanced conceptual integration happens".
59. According to Fauconnier and Turner, evolution provided humans with the ability to "run off-line cognitive simulations so that evolution did not have to undertake the tedious process of natural selection every time a choice was to be made," Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 217.
60. Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 217.

"were I to do this, I wonder what would happen?" or "were I to think this, what would it mean?"[61] Counterfactuals allow for a full range of mechanisms of "important aspects of understanding, reason, judgment, and decision".[62] "Counterfactual scenarios are assembled mentally not by taking full representations of the world and making discrete, finite, known changes to deliver full possible worlds but, by conceptual integration, which can compose schematic blends that suit the conceptual purposes at hand".[63] In other words, "counterfactuals" are an essential part of the dynamics of the creation of story-lines, too.

Conceptual blending, elaborate integration networks, topical fields, and counterfactuals are all significant features of how humans make meaning and communicate that meaning to others. I will show how each of these is significant for helping us understanding John's world of meaning and his rhetoric. Before doing so, however, one last methodological element remains, namely, the power of rhetorical imagery even when it is not seen or explicitly enunciated and has a determinative role in the blended network of meaning.

The power of rhetorical imagery

While rhetoric is primarily about the explicit use of words,[64] used both *rhetologically* and *rhetographically*, we now know that visual imagery is so powerful that it may covertly bias our thinking. And if this is so, it is possible that rhetors have used this knowledge in their discourse strategy, including how they display and draw on or do not display but may still draw on visual imagery.

61. As such, "counterfactuals" touch on an element of logical thinking that was the subject of reflection by C. S. Peirce, namely, "abduction". On attempts to introduce "abductive" thinking into SRI, see L. Gregory Bloomquist, "A Possible Direction for Providing Programmatic Correlation of Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Analysis," in *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps, JSNTSS, vol. 195 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 61–96.
62. Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 219. Fauconnier and Turner here are objecting primarily to assertions such as those found in the work of Neal J. Roese and James M. Olson, *What Might Have Been: The Social Psychology of Counterfactual Thinking*, ed. Neal J. Roese (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995).
63. Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 218.
64. Wilhelm H. Wuellner, "Reconceiving a Rhetoric of Religion: A Rhetorics of Power and the Power of the Sublime," in *Rhetorics and Hermeneutics: Essays in Honor of Wilhelm Wuellner*, ed. James Hester and J. David Hester (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2004), 23–77.

As social and cognitive psychology has shown, a predisposition to biasing is already present in the structure of the brain, possibly for evolutionary purposes. Daniel Kahneman's presentation of human cognition in terms of "system 1" thinking and "system 2" thinking is a helpful entrance point to this discussion:[65] system 1 thinking is the primary human approach to life, used by an expert to make "judgements and decisions ... guided directly by feelings of liking and disliking, with little deliberation or reasoning", as well as by common people to come to immediate and often the right decisions in matters as banal as avoiding something while driving;[66] system 2 thinking kicks in when "neither an expert solution nor a heuristic answer comes to mind" and we are forced to switch "to a slower, more deliberate and effortful form of thinking".[67] System 1 thinking is quick thinking, intuitive thought that leads to rapid responses. We incline to this form of thinking that will help us survive. As Steven Quartz (California Institute of Technology) has said: "Our brain is computing value at every fraction of a second. Everything that we look at, we form an implicit preference. Some of those make it into our awareness; some of them remain at the level of our unconscious, but ... what our brain is for, what our brain has evolved for, is to find what is of value in our environment."[68] When we cannot immediately discover a response for the problem we find in our environment, we move to system 2 thinking, a slower, logical, analytical way of thinking that may not only provide answers to our need but also reveal that we were wrong about some other concolusions that we had reached in other cases on the basis of system 1 thought.

From what we know thus far about how the brain works and how the mind makes sense of stimuli and memory, it is likely the case that human communication will most often employ *rhetography*, that is, the use of imagery for argumentative purposes, precisely because of the mind's reliance on "system 1" thinking. After all, the display of imagery requires little logical calculation to convince someone when their own survival or well-being is at stake.[69] Thus, understanding system 1 and system 2 thinking may

65. Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).
66. Ibid., 10–13.
67. Ibid., 13.
68. Cited in David Brooks, "The End of Philosophy," *New York Times*, 7 April 2009, A29 http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/07/opinion/07Brooks.html.
69. Building on the same kind of insights as found in Kahneman's studies, David Brooks provided a helpful example: "Think of what happens when you put a new food into your mouth. You don't have to decide if it's disgusting. You just know. You don't have to decide if a landscape is beautiful. You just know. Moral judgments are like that. They are rapid intuitive decisions and involve the emotion-processing parts of the brain. Most of us make snap moral judgments about what feels fair or not, or what feels good or not. We start doing this when we are babies, before we have language. And even as adults, we often can't explain to ourselves why something feels wrong. In other words, reasoning comes later and is often guided by the emotions that preceded it. Or as Jonathan Haidt of the University of Virginia memorably wrote, "The emotions are, in fact, in charge of the temple of morality..." Brooks, "The End of Philosophy". In terms of Kahneman's work, we would say: 'System 2 thinking comes later and is often guided by system 1 thinking that preceded it'.
70. Herbert A. Simon, *Models of Man, Social and Rational: Mathematical Essays on Rational Human Behavior in a Social Setting*, Continuity in Administrative Science (New York: Wiley, 1957).
71. Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 127 Kahneman has shown how powerful an anchor can be even -- or especially -- when it has no clearly direct bearing on the subject that it eventually anchors. See Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 119–28.

help explain the primacy of visual imagery in rhetorical materials and the subordinated role of logical thinking. If so it is another confirmation of Robbins's initial intuition regarding the primacy of *rhetography*.

But, there is also a dark side to this conclusion. As Kahneman has deftly shown, "system 1" thinking actually biases us in ways that we are not fully aware of. As Kahneman learned from the work of Herbert Simon,[70] people's estimate of a situation and thus what to do in a situation, is influenced often unwittingly by "anchors". An anchor can, for example, unwittingly, even on the basis of apparently unrelated visual stimuli, sway what I presume to be my unbiased consideration of a subject and lead me to draw a conclusion or to assess a situation based not on the evidence but on the way in which the anchor itself has unwittingly influenced my thinking conclusion.[71]

While "anchoring" has been empirically demonstrated by Kahneman and others, such a notion is not new to rhetoric. In a court room setting, a lawyer's strategy for presenting her client in the most favourable light possible will almost assuredly include dressing him in his best suit. This fashion statement will have nothing to do with the charges against the man but it can easily have a positive effect on a jury that might otherwise have been pre-disposed against the defendant based on the charges against him.

And, once one's perspective on a situation is successfully anchored, that anchoring can be maintained by means of confirmation biases. Confirmation biases re-anchor the anchor in someone's

mind. They may be self-generated -- as is the case in a person who thinks he's no good at anything but continually engaging in activities that are beyond his abilities -- or used by others to add image to image or proof to proof to provide an inescapable conclusion, not necessarily on the basis of the evidence but on the basis of the "anchor".[72] For example, in the court-room setting, the defense attorney might seek to anchor her client's already positive reception by the jury -- anchored by his clean-shaven, well-dressed appearance -- with regular references to his behaviour, e.g., his religious spirit, his family connections, etc.

Analysis of "anchors" and "confirmation biases" are important for illuminating tacit clues in rhetorical discourse, clues that would otherwise be overlooked but that, once revealed, help us to see the rhetorical "frame" within which a rhetorical address operates, making the conclusion ineluctable. Anchors feed simplifying and convincing frames, allowing the rhetor to present a simple, sensible, and appealing version of what would otherwise be a very complex reality.[73] The rhetorical use of imagery -- i.e., *rhetography* -- is crucial in this process, for, while "human beings have only a weak ability to process logic, [they have] a very deep core capability of recognizing patterns,"[74] and a predisposition to go with their "gut-feeling". Additionally, because of that predisposition to "system 1" thinking, the patterns they choose to recognize and their "gut-feelings" usually remain unanalyzed.

What the methodological underpinnings point to in the Gospel of John

Analysis of the Gospel of John suggests that there is a "rhetorical situation" that occasions the Gospel.[75] The exigence in John's Gospel, namely, the "situation" that can only be addressed rhetorically,

72. Excellent examples of the use of "confirmation bias" can be found in careful analyses of the O. J. Simpson murder trial. See, for example, Devon W. Carbado, "The Construction of O. J. Simpson as a Racial Victim," *Harvard Civil Rights - Civil Liberties Law Review* 32 (1997): 49–103.

73. Framing is a crucial notion for rhetography and builds on "the metaphor of a cropping frame around a picture. Thus, the elements within the frame are emphasized upon, while the border highlights and holds together certain aspects of reality. In this way, a frame "simplifies and condenses the world out there" Aurora Iorgoveanu and Nicoleta Corbu, "No Consensus on Framing? Towards an Integrative Approach to Define Frames Both as Text and Visuals," *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations* 14, no. 3 (2012): 92.

74. Kurzweil, *How to Create a Mind*, 38.

75. The term "rhetorical situation" is taken from the seminal article by Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical

is the situation of a "world" that must be reconfigured from its present "form of life" to one in which the "world's" inhabitants recognize ("believe in") the one whose true home is localized at the Father's breast (cf. 1:18), which is where true life is to be found for all (cf. chapter 17 *passim*).[76] The drama of John takes place within the context of this highly elaborate cognitive network. Within this network the narrative character of the Johannine Jesus is squared off against his narrative antagonists -- "his own" -- in the context of the Jerusalem Temple. Other narrative characters -- e.g., the followers of Jesus, the Samaritan woman, Mary, Martha and Lazarus, etc. -- flesh out the meaning of how that new household -- those new children -- might begin to be visualized.[77]

In this rhetorical situation, the Temple is the visual image for the rhetorical exigence. It functions as the visual representation and *locus* of the Father's breast, whence traditionally both his heart-beat and his speech, but which has now been co-opted. Jesus' words and actions consist in showing that the Temple personnel and the Temple's adherents -- "crowds", "people", "Jews" theoretically all of Israel but potentially also the whole "world" -- are actually in a framework of death, rather than of life, and that only by breaking free through Jesus will they find life in a new way with the Father. Textually it is true that John begins with the Word, but rhetorically the audience is anchored in and to the Temple, which provides the rhetorical frame within which the drama of the Word will be understood.[78] Strikingly, the

Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 1–14. In that article, Bitzer indicates clearly that he wants to address "the context in which speakers or writers create rhetorical discourse". The "rhetorical situation", Bitzer notes, must have a rhetorical "exigence", that is, a situation that can only be resolved rhetorically. In this essay, as in my commentary, I am dealing with the Gospel of John as a unity of chapters 1-20, with chapter 21 as an epilogue. I recognize that it is possible to identify strata and even separate "books" within John 1-20.

76. That this is the exigence of the Gospel of John understood as John 1-20 is clear from the last verses of the book, 20:30-31. The phrase "form of life" is associated with the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein. On the phrase, see now Lynne Rudder Baker, "III. On the Very Idea of a Form of Life," *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* 27, no. 1–4 (2008): 277–89.

77. A link between the new household and the old one imaged by the Temple may be found in some of these other narrative characters. For example, the suggestion that the narrative character "Lazarus" was drawn from the historical personnage Eleazar, one of the last Sadducean high-priests before the Roman-appointment of priests -- a suggestion made in part in light of this priest having two sisters, one named Mary and one named Martha --, may provide a link between the Temple authorities and Jesus' followers.

78. Were we working with Robbins's notion of *rhetorolects*, we would have to say that John is thus lesls a *pre-creation* discourse than it is a *prophetic* one.

Temple then is both frame as context for rhetorical meaning of the drama and exigence as that from which the audience must be set free rhetorically in order to be free.

As the visual representation of the Father's "house" (2:16), the Temple holds within its sphere those who are most closely associated with it, specifically the priests and scribes. They should necessarily be the members of the household of the Father, the Father's closest children; however, in the Gospel, they are viewed in ways that suggest something far less than "children" of the Father living in this house. Negatively, the present occupants of the Temple are viewed at one point as no better than "hired hands" (10:12) or thieves and robbers (10:1, 8), a position not that different from the way that leaders of the Jewish community are viewed in some Synoptic passages (e.g., Matt 21:33-46 concerning the senior priests and the Pharisees, as in John). Judas, when in their sphere, then their employ, is himself branded a thief (12:4-6). Neutrally, they are sometimes viewed as inquisitive, as for example, when they appeal to John the Witnesser concerning his mission (1:19-28) or to Jesus himself (3:1-2). This inquisition, however, which may appear neutral at the start, escalates quickly in John to a formal trial and a defence by Jesus (chapter 5), with Temple personnel going only ever as far as to question the legal proceedings (7:50-51), and ultimately engaged in an inquisition that leads to death (chapter 18). Even those who are within the sway of the Temple are depicted as those who walk in darkness.

All of these, both personnel and adherents, witting and not, humans all and thus clearly born once, seem best understood in John as unborn or first-born who are in need of a second-birth in order to be fully born (3:3, 5). It is for this reason that they are in darkness (3:19-21), the darkness of a womb that confines them and within which they find themselves both alive for a time but also unknowingly trapped (8:33). After all, it is a womb! Once they are born a second-time (chapter 3), however, they will be free (8:32) and will live as members of the family of God (3:3, 5).

We can propose this conceptual metaphor as being a significant core image within the elaborate integration network with which John works because of the "topical fields" at play in the Gospel of John. These are repetitively significant and include prominently "birth" (including the cultural context of "marriage" as the context for "birth", which is the rationale behind the inclusion of the stories found in 2:1-12 and 4:1-42) and its cognate field "family" (especially "father" and "son" and the *vital relations*

that are employed as lexical indications of how the two are united, but also "house" and a special kind of household, namely, "kingdom"), as well as keys to what we understand to be essentials of full human existence, namely, sense perception (especially "seeing", "hearing", "light", and their absences "darkness", "night", etc.) and material sustenance (especially "water" and "bread"). The presence of these "topical fields" and the *rhetographical* and *rhetological* employment of the *topoi* themselves, often in ironic contexts -- e.g., birth, but also other than human birth, food but also other than apparent food, father but also other than a human father, etc. -- suggest a "compression" being used to create a "human scale" cognitive metaphor of birth leading to family life and full human existence.

But, there is a twist, given the counterfactual rhetorical strategy in the Gospel. Specifically, the "topical fields" are being integrated to present the world or κόσμος, -- or "a world" -- as a womb in which people -- or "some people" -- are not yet born; rather, they find themselves waiting to be born. Given that these are not fetuses but full-grown humans, it seems that counterfactually what is being presented is some humans in some kind of womb, as it were, waiting to be born a second time, this time as an "offspring of God" (1:12-13). They seem to be told that once they are second-born they will find themselves in "the kingdom of God" (3:3, 5), a phrase in John's Gospel, that perhaps should best be translated as "the royal household or family of God". Presently, in this womb, these humans can only see in a very limited way, if at all; however, once second-born, they will be able to see (particularly, to see the "family" into which they have been born, 3:3). Presently, they feed on and desire material realities like bread and water (chapters 4, 6); once twice-born, they, like Jesus (4:32), will "feed" only on the Word that comes from the Father and will find that that will sustain them (the Word is the living bread that gives life, 6:63). They will come to this second-birth through faith (1:12), believing in the words that they have heard from one who has joined them in the "fleshly" womb (1:14). The death of Jesus, evidenced in water and blood (19:34), will open the birth canal, through which those who believe him can follow the Word (a process that is alluded to in the explicit birth imagery found in 16:19-21).

The lack of belief in the first-born is highlighted by regular references to their inability to see, which may be a cause of their unbelief or a manifestation of their unbelief. Seeing as reception of visual stimuli is cautioned against by Jesus who tells them not to trust in appearances (John 7:24). Jesus does not

appear to be saying that seeing itself is wrong in an of itself, for it is through sensory perception that they have "witnesses" (so chapter 5) and "signs as clues that will lead them to belief. Still, belief itself resides in that which cannot be seen with the human eye or heard with human ear. (For this reason, even belief through "signs" is cautioned against (4:48).)

The reason for this caution is that the Gospel also insists on the invisibility, even inaccessibility of this realm. The Gospel opens in a way that allows no visual imagery, that is, imagery of which the first-born are capable. The canonical Jewish Scriptures open the Gospel in such a way as to both reveal and hide. These are the same Scriptures to which the Fourth Gospel will regularly return in identifying who the one is who has joined the first-born in the womb and who bears witness to this realm. In fact, this significant but only allusive *oral-scribal intertexture* in the Fourth Gospel, together with the testimony of a man named John and the words of this first-born-in-form Jesus, are the primary sources by which belief (faith) can be grounded (5:31-47).

Yet, the specialists in this literature, who have inquired directly of John, and have tried Jesus are the ones whom the Gospel asserts are most blind. And this leads us to the question: But, what is this womb -- this half-world -- in which they find themselves? The answer seems to be: It is the Temple. But, the Temple was to be a place of illumination (chaps. 7-8), a place in which the invisible God would be heard and known. How, then, can this be? I believe that the author has anchored this drama socio-culturally in the historical setting that would likely be known to his audience, namely, the 'occupation' of the Temple by the appointment by the Roman governor of Syria, Quirinius, of Annas as High Priest in AD 6, whose family ruled the Temple through most of the Roman period, including through the period during which his son-in-law Caiaphas was High Priest (AD 18-36). While previous High Priesthoods were also controversial, that of Annas, whose dynasty was vituperated even by contemporaries, effectively spelled the end of the post-exilic hopes for the Temple as the font of law and justice (covenant and order) through the chief priest (Zech 3:7), of the purity of the high priest and the ability to remove all iniquity (Zech 3:3), and of the prosperity and fecundity resulting from the deity's presence in the Temple (especially Zech 2:8-9; 8:9-13 and Hag 2:10-19).

It is this counterfactual reality concerning the darkness that pervades the Temple and blinds its adherents that leads the Gospel to its profound rhetorical irony. While that rhetorical irony is employed throughout the Gospel, it reaches its height -- or its nadir? -- in the final chapter. There in a dramatic inversion of the visual imagery that Temple personnel, including especially scribes, would have known as the visual imagery at the core of the Temple in the Holy of Holies, the rhetorical reader sees through the eyes of Mary of Magdala a slab of stone. But, what makes it a significant echo of a similar stone that lies in the Holy of Holies is that, through her eyes, not those of a priest who is permitted to enter therein, we see that slab guarded by two angelic figures, one at each end. These figures are, however, not dead cherubim of stone but living, divine beings. In the Holy of Holies that slab, with its angelic guardians, marked the spot where the Ark, which held the Torah given through Moses (cf. 1:17), once lay, and on which the invisible God was understood to take his seat and speak to Moses and his successors by his word.[79] Mary gives no hint of recognition of this sight. The rhetorical audience of John, however, primed to see the Temple as the rhetorical frame within which the whole drama must be viewed, can only see this empty tomb, the slab on which the lifeless body of Jesus had lain, overseen by two watching angelic figures, as the most profound counterfactual echo of the Holy of Holies, the innermost part of the Temple, the *debir* דְּבִיר (1 Kgs 8:1-12) known because there the Word of God was "at home". Even as the Ark had been taken from the Holy of Holies by Gentiles, so now the body of Jesus, which had been handed over to Gentiles by the High Priests and whose life had been taken by them, is found to have fulfilled his word that he was not taken by them nor has he been taken from the tomb but rather he has raised himself up, since he had been given authority to lay his body down in death and to take it back again in life (2:19). The birthing out of the womb has begun.

In John's elaborate rhetorical configuration of the integration network represented by Second Temple Judaism's belief in the power of the Temple to purify and cleanse, the hold that this now-deathly

79. God had commanded the making of an Ark (Exod 25:8-16) that would hold the stone tablets of the Law and would be placed in the innermost part of the Tent hidden by a veil. Only Aaron or his successor could enter the innermost part of the Tent, and he was to do so daily to offer incense and once a year on the Day of Atonement with a blood offering (Exod 30:7-10). The Jewish canonical record suggests that, when the Tabernacle was dedicated, God spoke to Moses from between the cherubim (Num 7:89).

womb had on those within its sway has been broken. The rhetorical exigence has been met, but only for those who believe the Gospel's message (20:30-31). They alone have been freed to be born a second time, this time to true and full life.

Conclusions

The above methodological discussion is a first step in attempting to ground *rhetography* more fully within the broader conversation that is now taking place between neuroscience and cognitive psychology, a conversation that has already begun to draw in the broader discussions taking place in the humanities. This discussion is already well under way in the arts.[80] However, while it is no doubt coming, the discussion lags in the field of rhetoric, and even more so biblical studies. This is, however, not surprising, given the reception within these disciplines of Robbins's not-so-radical contention regarding *rhetography* as foundational to rhetorical discourse.

If I have been even partially successful, much now needs to be done.

In terms of *rhetorolects,* it should be clear from the above that I have not found the present state of the discussion of *rhetorolects* useful. None of the *rhetorolects* that are presently proposed has been able helpfully to give me entrance to the complexity of *rhetography* in John's Gospel.[81] In fact, the *rhetography* of John's Gospel is so complex that I can actually identify throughout almost all of the

80. See among other recent entries into this field the work of Eric R. Kandel, *The Age of Insight: The Quest to Understand the Unconscious in Art, Mind, and Brain: From Vienna 1900 to the Present* (New York, NY: Random House, 2012); E. R. Kandel, "What the Brain Can Tell Us About Art"; G. Gabrielle Starr, *Feeling Beauty: The Neuroscience of Aesthetic Experience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013).

81. There was a point where RRA discussions regularly pointed to John, or at least the opening verses, as a classic example of "precreation discourse". When Robbins first described this discourse, he talked of it as "cosmic discourse", which "is fully epideictic in nature, exhibiting the authority of Jesus by placing him in a position of power alongside God in the cosmic order". Now, however, Robbins speaks of "pre-creation discourse" in much more sophisticated terms as a cognitive blend of imagery of a "deified emperor (like the Roman emperor) and his household" together with "a philosophically conceptualized cosmos (...) with the presupposition that God has the status in non-time and non-space of a loving heavenly emperor with a household populated by loving people," Robbins, "Conceptual Blending and Early Christian Imagination," 169. While Robbins's description of "pre-creation discourse" fits John's Gospel 'like a glove', I fear that the reason is in part at least that the description of pre-creation discourse is drawn largely <u>from</u> John's Gospel as a primary example for Robbins of what "pre-creation discourse" looks like.

rhetorolects that Robbins has identified to date as operative in the 1st century Mediterranean world. But, this is really not helpful. It just tells me that John is a very complex rhetorical discourse in its use of imagery, not exactly how it is or why.

This does not, however, mean that I find the notion of *rhetorolect* useless; in fact, I have stated the contrary. Hopefully, what I have proposed in terms of "topical fields" within "conceptual blending" will enable us to have a more supple view of *rhetorolects* that, in the end, will prove more useful to writers in the RRA series.

To cite only one example, what kind of discourse is John? From what I have said, it is unlikely that pre-creation discourse alone explains it. But, neither does prophetic or apocalyptic. In John there is no need for the Temple to be destroyed, something that seems likely in Synoptic accounts. This could mean that the Temple still was standing when John wrote, but that John's rhetorical address shows its passing importance; or it could mean that the Temple had been destroyed and John's Gospel is a tacit explanation for why it was destroyed and of how little importance is its passing.

Whatever the case, what we do find in John is a rhetorically constructed mental image of the Temple's emptiness, an emptiness that is eloquently and paradoxically displayed in the empty tomb: in both Temple and tomb the Word had once found his abode but from both he had now been freed and was to free those who still remained within the former because he was free from the latter, an image that is visualized in "human scope" thanks to cultural memory. The "topical fields" suggest a violent birthing from the Temple, even as Jesus' death was violent, but not a destruction of the womb, only its being rendered used (to give birth) and no longer required. It would be hard to imagine a more different eschatological presentation and hope from that which we find in the Synoptics.

Secondly, I have not yet engaged *ideological texture* fully in this presentation. Have I found meaning in John, or have I used John to find meaning in my own theological, mental reflection? If, as I suspect, it is the former, it would be helpful to explore more fully to what extent there is something like a conceptual metaphor, or an elaborate network framing that picks up on some sort of anthropological reflection on those in the sway of the Temple being like unborn children in a womb. Yes, there is some

evidence in antiquity that notions similar to this were already well grounded in antiquity.[82] And, yes, explorations of ancient medical understandings of the fetus might help to clarify how widespread such notions and reflection on them might be.[83] True, there is a long discussion of the place of knowledge in the unborn child, arising in those intellectual spheres that were influenced by Platonism, Middle Platonism, and Neo-Platonism, including the early church and its discussion of, among other things, the debate over creationism and traducianism.[84]

But, it is also possible that my interpretation of John is my rendering of imagery in my brain regarding my own prenatal experiences. To what extent is my interpretation of John a reflection of my own cerebral memory processes finding meaning in this text? Or perhaps I have in fact discovered an elaborate integration network in John and that network has already embedded itself deeply in my own Christian, theological mind through the centuries-long reflection on the same texts by others, including St. Augustine.

These and many, many other question are now, it seems to me, possible and even necessary, given the *rhetography* that seems to be quite clearly present in my reading of John. And if one can find such fruits in this world of darkness-poised-for-light, how many more will we find in other texts where visual imagery abounds? On the other hand, perhaps the darkness-poised-for-light is indeed the best place to look for those mental configurations and networks in which the blind see best and the deaf hear the voice that Moses heard.

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82. The question of the relationship between Plato's allegory of the cave in *Republic* 7 and the womb has been noted by the feminist scholar, Luce Irrigaray. See Alice Adams, "Out of the Womb: The Future of the Uterine Metaphor," *Feminist Studies* 19, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 269–89.

83. Enzo Nardi, *Procurato aborto nel mondo greco romano* (Milano: A. Giuffrè, 1971).

84. On this debate, see D. J. Billy, "Traducianism as a Theological Model in the Problem of Ensoulment," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (1989): 18–38.

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