

The Image of Hope:

Time, History, and Hope in the Theological Aesthetics of Eberhard Jüngel

C.M. Howell

University of St Andrews

cmh26@st-andrews.ac.uk

Abstract

This article articulates the contributions of Eberhard Jüngel to the theology of hope movement. While standing in general accord with this movement, Jüngel draws on the realm of aesthetics for the basis of hope, rather than that of reason or politics. Aesthetic events—such as beauty or revelation—interrupt the world and impart freedom by establishing new possibilities for historical existence. Hope becomes practical within the spaces created by these events. Hope becomes certain, however, because the possibilities God communicates to the world are also constitutive of the divine being. The death of Jesus is the condition for possibilities of divine being. The resurrection of Jesus is thereby not just the fulfilment of God's promise, but, as an event, is the ontological basis of God's eschatological character erupting within the ontic conditions of history. In this aesthetic event, God's promise takes place. Jüngel's key contribution, then, to theologies of hope is that aesthetics offers positive content of eschatology.



Introduction

The origins of the “theology of hope” movement can be traced to debates in the journal *Evangelische Theologie* around the year 1960. The question here was how theology—specifically one grounded in a particular concept of revelation—was to understand the essence and meaning of history. A number of theologians accepted a neo-Marxist position of equating revelation with history, so that the outworking of the latter was the concrete content of the former. This provided a rather defined foundation for questions of the place and function of the church in modern society, which was, simply put, to transform the political sphere through revolutionary action until it came to resemble the kingdom of God. Hope thereby received an overtly political hermeneutic.

During much of these early debates, Eberhard Jüngel was occupied with navigating the new political situation of the German Democratic Republic. As Jüngel’s work began to appear within the debates of *Evangelische Theologie* so did a set of claims which serve as harbingers of the development of his position to come: the faith which grounds theological reflection lives in a perpetual tension to the history of the world, and this tension is both established and defined through God’s interruptive presence as this shapes the history of the world.¹ Revelation, then, becomes the hermeneutic of history, and hope lives from its eventful nature, giving the church the aesthetic task of “bringing the object of hope to life.”²

Despite Jüngel’s critical position in these debates, he stands in remarkable unity with the main aspects of theologies of hope. These include a fundamental commitment that eschatology is the horizon from which Christian theology speaks and by which it thinks based on the promises of God.³ This future situation is also, to some degree, representable by human participation in the

¹ Eberhard Jüngel, “Die Möglichkeit theologischer Anthropologie auf dem Grunde der Analogie. Eine Untersuchung zum Analogieverständnis Karl Barths,” *Evangelische Theologie (EvTh)* 22 (1962): Esp., 542-8. Eberhard Jüngel, “»Theologische Wissenschaft und Glaube« im Blick auf die Armut Jesu,” in *Unterwegs zur Sache: Theologische Erörterungen I* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1972/2000), Esp., 17.

² Eberhard Jüngel, “»Meine Theologie«—kurz gefaßt,” in *Wertlose Wahrheit: Zur Identität und Relevanz des christlichen Glaubens. Theologische Erörterungen III* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 2003), 12. “...die den Gegenstand der Hoffnung anschaulich machen...”

Unless otherwise noted, all quotations of Jüngel are my own translations from the German texts.

³ Even among Jüngel’s English interlocutors, his doctrines of eschatology and hope occupy relatively little space when compared to his doctrines of God or justification. For the select engagements with his eschatology, see: Laura-Christin Krannich, “„Erfahrung mit der Erfahrung“. Gottes Wort als Ereignis neuer Wirklichkeit,” in *Die Theologie Eberhard Jüngels: Kontexte, Themen, Perspektiven*, ed. Dirk Evers and Malte Dominik Krüger (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 2020); Bruce McCormack, “Participation in God, Yes, Deification, No: Two Modern Protestant Responses to an Ancient Question,” in *Denkwürdiges Geheimnis: Beiträge zur Gotteslehre. Festschrift für Eberhard Jüngel zum 70. Geburtstag.*, ed. Ingolf U. Dalferth, Johannes Fischer, and Hans-Peter Grosshans (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 2020); Werner G. Jeanrond, “Love and Death: Christian Eschatology in an Interreligious Context,” in *Indicative of Grace—Imperative of Freedom: Essays in Honour of Eberhard Jüngel in His Eightieth Year*, ed. R. David Nelson

present, often through some engagement with the political realm. Accompanying this participation is a serious commitment to ground eschatological reflections within concrete historical events which challenge history for the sake of new possibilities. These events include, above all else, the death and resurrection of Jesus.⁴

Jüngel's unique contributions to theologies of hope are more apparent when compared to the movement's more recognizable thinkers, such as Jürgen Moltmann. In their similarities, both secure hope in the reconciliatory acts of God in history as understood from a biblical theology. Jüngel's early trinitarian work, especially his call to unify Jesus' death with divine ontology, is even the impetus for Moltmann's initial work in this field.⁵ Moltmann also appropriates the phrase "word-history" (the Israelite tradition of stories and narratives which informs New Testament hermeneutics) from Jüngel to develop his concept of revelation.⁶ The differences, however, pertain to the historic and temporal aspects of eschatology. For Moltmann, hope is secured in "contradiction" to historic reality as it is presently experienced—which, above all, contains the reality of death.⁷ This includes the promises of God based in the historic work of Christ, which are a deposit for God's eschatological work. The horizon of the future is only known in opposition to the status of the present. In contrast, Jüngel argues that God gave the world a *positive* relationship to the future in his historic presence. Hope is secured in this framework as an ontological possibility of worldly being because of God's transformative work in the historic Jesus. God identifies with Jesus to such a degree that his presence and being are inseparable, which includes his death on the cross. Death, for Jüngel, has positive value as the condition for

(New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014); R. David Nelson, *The Interruptive Word: Eberhard Jüngel on the Sacramental Structure of God's Relation to the World*, ed. John Webster, Ian A. McFarland, and Ivor Davidson, T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology, (New York: T&T Clark, 2013); Roland D. Zimany, *Vehicle for God: The Metaphorical Theology of Eberhard Jüngel* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1994); Mark C. Mattes, *The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017); Graham J. Watts, *Revelation and the Spirit: A Comparative Study of the Relationship between the Doctrine of Revelation and Pneumatology of the Theology of Eberhard Jüngel and Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Cascade, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2007).

⁴ Cf. M. Douglas Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 1.

⁵ Eberhard Jüngel, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt. Zur Begründung der Theologie des Gekreuzigten im Streit zwischen Theismus und Atheismus*, 8. Auflage 2010 ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1977), 15n22; Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute Between Theism and Atheism*, trans. Darel L. Gruder (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2014; repr., 1983), 13n22. All following references to this English translation will appear in brackets following references to the German publication.

⁶ Eberhard Jüngel, "Das Gesetz zwischen Adam und Christus. Eine theologische Studie zu Röm 5,12-21," in *Unterwegs zur Sache: Theologische Erörterungen I* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 150; Cf., Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, trans. James W. Leitch (London: SCM Press LTD, 1967), 153.

⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 19. Cf., 118f.

eschatological possibilities. The present world is thereby a world of possibilities in so far as God's existence is the dynamic event of new possibilities.

Jüngel articulates his difference with Moltmann perhaps most succinctly in claiming that they are “astonishingly often saying the same thing *materially*, even right down to the wording, but [are] obviously thinking *formally* something completely different.”⁸ Still, the formal differences between the two directly impact the most concrete elements of theologies of hope. These include the participatory activity which offers a hermeneutical basis for eschatological reflection. In place of Moltmann's grounding of theology in practical reason, Jüngel draws upon the realm of aesthetics. The relationship between the ontic (i.e., the historically perceptible and experienced world) and ontological (i.e., the elemental structures of being and existence) in Jüngel is conceived in such a way that either dimension plays a constitutive role in the other. In accord with major trends in modern aesthetics, Jüngel argues that there are certain events in which there is no distinction between the way the world appears and the way it is in itself.

Among other things, this means that the perceptible world of historical existence reveals the underlying ontological reality of that existence at certain moments in which the two dimensions collapses into a relation of identity, rather than Moltmann's dialectical contradiction. In terms of theology, God simply *is* as he appears in Christ because his existence is formed by the historical person Jesus. This also implies that the future coming of God to the world is grounded in his historical advent because the history of Jesus is laced within God's own being. For both God and the world, the future is fundamentally linked to the possibilities innate to God's historic presence.

This article focuses on the contributions Jüngel's theological aesthetics offer to theologies of hope, primarily in conversation with Moltmann's earlier work. The core feature here for a discussion of hope is the *positive* content of eschatology, which is accessible due to the identity relationship between the ontic and ontological dimensions of both Godly and worldly being. How this positive content is gathered will be initially addressed by a discussion of perception and the role of freedom in the aesthetic realm. An articulation of how God is present within the world in the life *and* death of Jesus, and how new possibilities of historical existence relate to this presence, will follow. The implications of this relationship for human action in a particular mode of aesthetic expression are discussed in the final section, where Jüngel's theology of hope is clearly distinguished from his contemporaries.

⁸ Jüngel, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*, 299n65. [220n65].

Aesthetics as a Science

While Jüngel's unique contribution to the theology of hope movement can be traced to his aesthetics, the relation of hope to aesthetics is anything but obvious. Hope, in nearly any sense, is unseen. Even if it can be represented in history in some visual form, it is nevertheless something which reaches out for an unrealized future—often understood as a horizon that is decisively different than the present. The first task of grasping what it means to “bring the object of hope to life” is to gain some understanding on how Jüngel conceives the discipline of theological aesthetics. This can be accomplished by a brief survey of his aesthetic influences.

Historical Source of Jüngel's Aesthetics

As a modern discipline, aesthetics was substantively introduced into pre-Enlightenment philosophy by Alexander Baumgarten as a “science of perception.”⁹ The original intention was to bolster up rationalist epistemology in the Leibnizian-Wolffian tradition by accounting for the empirical realm. While modern aesthetics never forfeited its traditional concepts—beauty, sublime, taste, etc.—it took on a much broader role in this context. A clear example of this role is offered by Kant in his later writings on religion. Here, Kant explains that while rational proofs are valid, they require an aesthetic development because “the natural need of all human beings” demands “something that *the sense can hold on to*” or “some confirmation from experience” of the “highest concepts and ground of reason.”¹⁰ As it pertains to perception, aesthetics is what tethers the activity of human reason back to the world of intuitions.

When Jüngel describes the task of a theological aesthetics as “bringing the object of hope to life,” he is very much aligned with this early modern tradition. Aesthetics provides an extra-subjective point of verification of theological claims. While aesthetic experiences do have cognitive value for Jüngel, the overall importance of aesthetics for theology is that it places the meaning of hope outside of the human imagination and into the realm of historical experience. This is most directly presented in Jüngel's doctrine of revelation, which is further discussed below.

In accord with more classical reflections on the aesthetic realm, beauty becomes the center of discussion in modern aesthetics for how perceptions are achieved and rationally processed. Kant famously argues that beauty is a subjective sensation of “pleasure” derived from the innate activity of the mind attempting to synthesize intuitions and concepts in the process of a reflective judgment. Yet, in this rational attempt, the mind fails to find an adequate concept for the intuition

⁹ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Reflections on Poetry: Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, trans. Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), 67.

¹⁰ Immanuel Kant, “Religion Within the Boundaries of Pure Reason,” in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. and trans. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6:109. 142.

of beauty.¹¹ Following with the larger task of modern aesthetics, this mental “free play” seems to confirm the rationally justified freedom required for morality, in that natural beauty cannot be determinatively placed within our conceptual schemes of causality. Beauty, in a sense, is experienced as freedom from both nature and understanding.¹²

Even though Kant developed this idea to a certain extent, the relationship between beauty and freedom comes to the fore in the German Idealists, who exert a particularly important influence on Jüngel’s overall theology. Aesthetics is understood in this post-Kantian light as the realm of philosophy which could unite the conflict between the determinacy of a natural realm ruled by causality and the freedom required for human autonomy and morality. Friedrich Schiller, for example, describes the power of aesthetics as:

In the midst of the fearful kingdom of forces, and in the midst of the sacred kingdom of laws, the aesthetic impulse to form is at work, unnoticed, on the building of a third joyous kingdom of play and semblance, in which man is relieved of the shackles of circumstance, and released from all that might be called constraint, alike in the physical and in the moral sphere.¹³

Schiller’s language of “kingdom” is drawn from Kant’s idea of the “kingdom of ends” as a society where autonomous persons are governed purely by reason.¹⁴ Schiller develops the subjective “free play” of Kant’s aesthetics into what he terms a “sensuous objective” theory, that essentially reestablishes beauty as a formal property of the objects of intuition.¹⁵ The objective forms of beauty retain a formative impact on human subjectivity, however, in that humanity becomes aware of their own autonomous freedom through aesthetic experiences. Jüngel specifically highlights that the function of Schiller’s aesthetic kingdom is to “impart freedom by the means of freedom” which precedes the “freedom to act.”¹⁶ As such, aesthetics takes on a decisively historical role in the

¹¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer, ed. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5:189-90. 75-6.

¹² See, Paul Guyer, *A History of Modern Aesthetics*, vol. 1: The Eighteenth Century (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 429-31.

¹³ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man, in a Series of Letters*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 215.

¹⁴ Immanuel Kant, "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals," in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4:433. 83.

¹⁵ Friedrich Schiller, "letter to Gottfried Körner of 25 January 1793," in *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*, ed. J.M. Bernstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 146.

¹⁶ Jüngel, "»Auch das Schöne muß sterben«—Schönenheit im Lichte der Wahrheit. Theologische Bemerkungen zum ästhetischen Verhältnis," 385; Cf., Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God. The Doctrine of God*. (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1981), 213f.

becoming of human subjectivity and, consequently, social development.¹⁷ Beauty, in effect, becomes a political force itself through its impartation of freedom.¹⁸

Martin Heidegger should perhaps be mentioned as a final aesthetic influence on Jüngel, for it is through his later work that Jüngel finds an ontological interpretation of truth in aesthetic happenings.¹⁹ Heidegger understands art, in particular, as an interruptive event which allows the ontological structures of being to be exposed within the ontic dimension of historical existence. In his words, the art work “manifests something other” than itself in that it opens up “the Being of beings.”²⁰ In the power of certain interruptive events, ontic presence is, simply, ontological reality. As an event of such quality, art allows the truth of being to become perceptible. Jüngel finds value in Heidegger’s understanding of the relationship between the ontological and ontic dimensions of being, which ultimately forms the basis of his doctrines of divine ontology and revelation. In terms of aesthetics and hope, an ontological account of aesthetics allows a typically non-perceptible concept such as hope to become phenomenologically experienceable. Hope becomes an “image,” in other words, through the interruptive power of God’s presence as aesthetics (i.e., revelation) and ontology fold into each other.

Aesthetics as Perception

Jüngel’s aesthetics are not in strict allegiance to any of these theories, but this overview does articulate how the perception of the aesthetic realm can become a source of human freedom through its interruptive force in relation to them. As we will see, Jüngel distinguishes between beauty and God’s presence in that the latter is uniquely related to God’s being. They are both considered aesthetic events, however, because they expose the limits of historical existence through their appearance and perception. This is a key point, for the eventful nature of being becomes the hermeneutical locus of Jüngel’s overall theology. Through aesthetic events God is both revealed *and* constituted, and humanity is likewise freed from historical-political consequences by being drawn into participation with divine being. Freedom is experienced as

¹⁷ See, Kai Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 43-5.

¹⁸ Cf., Nicholas Martin, *Nietzsche and Schiller: Untimely Aesthetics*, Oxford Modern Languages and Literature Monographs, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 65ff.

¹⁹ The influence of the later-Heidegger is most evident in Jüngel’s work within the New Hermeneutic, which was a school of biblical criticism whose interpretation was based on a constitutive theory of language. See, James M. Robinson, “The German Discussions of the Later Heidegger,” in *Language, Hermeneutic, and History: Theology after Barth and Bultmann* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008), 1-63; Also, Zimany, *Vehicle for God*, 18-21.

²⁰ Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 19; 31.

something that lies beyond these limits. Fundamentally, freedom is the experience of new possibilities that begin with its perception.

Jüngel generally assumes a phenomenologically based relationship between human beings and their world which presupposes an encounter with the things in themselves.²¹ This means that the perception of beauty is to some degree inseparable from the object of intuition. Yet, beauty is also not reducible to the phenomenological qualities of the object itself. Jüngel speaks of beauty as “shining forth” from the phenomena which is perceived in such a way that it “gathers together” its perceptible qualities. In reference to Heidegger, Jüngel explains that this perception occurs in a “more primordial way” than a simple correspondence between subject and object.²² In its capacity to identify the ontic and ontological dimensions, beauty is an event that encompasses the entire context of its perception.

Most important for a theology of hope, this identity relationship allows for the possibility of truth to become historically manifested. Truth, for Jüngel, is a quality of presence.²³ Which means that the ontological reality of phenomena is hidden for the typical process of perception. It is not that the phenomena is void of truth, for surely it asserts some degree of presence by being given to perception. But it is present only as a “vague impression” of the elemental features of its being, and thereby requires mediation between its appearance and human understanding.²⁴ In that beauty is an event where the ontic and ontological features of an existence are in an identity relationship, it escapes the contexts of perception in such a way that references them in their totality. Beauty “gathers” the features of existence by both revealing and constituting their limits.

These limits include the temporal features of existence, which beauty negatively reveals by interrupting them. As an ontological feature which comes from beyond these limits, beauty “denies the current context of reality the status of the final and true reality.”²⁵ Its appearance in the ontic realm, as fleeting as it may be, reveals the fragility of the present context. A world of unmediated truth lies somewhere beyond this world. And beauty is “the pre-appearance [Vorschein] of the coming truth,” a “deposit of truth.”²⁶ In the same way, beauty positively gives the present a “reference to the future” by revealing the possibility of an existence which lives beyond the limitations of the present context.²⁷ As it reveals the edge of reality through its interruption it

²¹ For a brief explanation of epistemological concepts along a phenomenological logic, see: Eberhard Jüngel, *Paulus und Jesus. Eine Untersuchung zur Präzisierung der Frage nach dem Ursprung der Christologie*, 3. durchgesehene Aufl. ed., Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1962), 5.

²² Jüngel, “Auch das Schöne,” 388; Cf., Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” 33ff.

²³ Jüngel, 388.

²⁴ Jüngel, 380-1.

²⁵ Jüngel, 39

²⁶ Jüngel, 391.

²⁷ Jüngel, 382.

simultaneously establishes a space within which reality may proceed. Theologically, the reference to the future is to a context of being that is immediately in the presence of truth itself, the glory of Jesus Christ.

In the context of the present, humanity perceives beauty as if it was within the ontic manifold of objects. But the experience of beauty falls upon reality in such a way that it simultaneously points beyond it. Thus, alongside this objective “gathering” there is a corresponding anthropological gathering that offers a “wholeness” to the human mode of being. Similar to the modern tradition, this gathering occurs as beauty escapes the “frameworks of perception,” or the various schemas necessary for understanding and knowledge, in such a way that it “represents” the framework from which it escapes. These frameworks include temporal schemas, which implies that aesthetic perceptions “*form, shape, and mould*” elemental features of the human experience of the world. Beauty gives a “new quality to the process of perception” because, in its freedom from rational frameworks, it provides a reference point from which to understand and critique these frameworks. This is essentially a hermeneutical function which allows understanding to grasp positive content of the future reality which lays beyond the boundaries of the present.

Jüngel’s point in the “gathering” effect of aesthetic experiences is that beauty is true insofar as it is free. It is free in its “objective” context in that it cannot be reduced to the various conceptual schemas employed to comprehend historical phenomena. While possibly being a representative of beauty, the work of art in no way *causes* beauty. Beauty is, in a sense, liberated from the causal realm by revealing the limits of causal frameworks. This freedom is communicated to the human person in both that the perception of beauty escapes the schemas of reason and understanding, as well as in that it avoids the demand of practical action. Following Schiller, this specific relation to rational frameworks—as something from which the perception of beauty is free but is only recognized as free in that it refers to the framework from which it claims its freedom—is what communicates freedom to humanity. It is this relationship of being beyond, but in reference to, that defines how the aesthetic realm offers new possibilities for worldly existence. Beauty relates to hope in that it seeks out these possibilities. Understood as such, hope is free from the determinative features of the natural realm, the imposing constraints of rational frameworks, *and* the demands of practical action. Hope is in a very real sense secured by a freedom that lies beyond this world.

However, hope as a sort of ahistorical feature of human existence is too ambiguous to secure the future in and of itself. If only grounded as something outside of history, hope merely “drives the human person beyond themselves; but it does not explain to where.”²⁸ For an undefined future can easily become a reality far worse than the present. Or it can even not become at all. While

²⁸ Eberhard Jüngel, “Hoffnung. Bemerkungen zum christlichen Verständnis des Begriffs,” in *Das Christentum. Zweiter Teil, Edith-Stein-Jahrbuch 5*, ed. J. Sánchez de Murillo (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1999), 55.

Jüngel sees value in hope that is drawn from beauty in general, hope only gains *certainty* of its positive content when it is grounded in God's being and presence.

The Ambiguity of Hope

Jüngel argues that an ambivalence of hope can be produced by two different circumstances, both displayed in various forms of the myth of Pandora.²⁹ The first is in assuming a certain relationship between the different dimensions of history, or the so-called A-series of time divided into past, present, and future.³⁰ In Hesiod's version of the story, the ambiguity of hope is described as a possibility of a future which contains both contents of Pandora's box. As the box is opened, all its evil contents escape into the world. Amongst this chaos, the lid is slammed shut, and hope remains within. Based on the evil that has already left the box, however, Pandora resists freeing hope. It is too risky. For it might turn out that the hope contained within is as evil as the context that now exists outside of the box. In this historical logic, what is perceived in the event of opening Pandora's box is the basis for how the future is to be imagined. In such an understanding, the past rather predictably flows into the future, so what is to be expected is grounded on what has happened. Given that the past is ambiguous at best in terms of good and evil, this ambiguity is compounded in a not-yet realized future.

However, in Babrios's version of the myth, both good and evil escape when the box is opened. While the evil remained within the confines of the world, the good traveled to the gods, who alone possess knowledge of its nature. Here, hope is ambiguous because there is no point of perception, no historical ground of its presence, by which to base a certainty of a brighter future. A general disposition of faith towards the gods remains the last vestige of hope. Hope is transferred to the rather vague will of the divine realm without any concrete guarantee of its future coming to pass.

These two constitutive features of an ambivalent hope are not relegated to ancient myths, but also appear in modern philosophical musings. To the first, according to Jüngel, actuality is given an almost unchallenged primacy in ontological reflections on history and time.³¹ Typically, this is

²⁹ See, Jüngel, 58-9; Cf., Eberhard Jüngel, "Der Geist der Hoffnung und des Trostes. Zur Begründung des eschatologischen Lehrstücks vom Reich der Freiheit," in *Ganz Werden. Theologische Erörterungen V* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 2003), 308.

³⁰ See, J.M.E. McTaggart, *The Nature of Existence*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 10f.

³¹ Eberhard Jüngel, "Die Welt als Möglichkeit und Wirklichkeit. Zum ontologischen Ansatz der Rechtfertigungslehre," in *Unterwegs zur Sache: Theologische Erörterungen I* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 2000), 212-3; Cf., Richard Bauckham and Trevor Hart, "The Shape of Time," in *The Future as God's Gift: Explorations in Christian Eschatology*, ed. David Fergusson and Marcel Sarot, The Society for the Study of Theology. Explorations in Contemporary Theology (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 66-70.

understood as either that the present is a potentiality developing toward a future reality, or the future is a degradation of some past moment of greatness. Either way, the possibilities for change are entirely governed by the actualities of the world. Hope, then, is limited in its scope by some understanding of worldly being. In his words, “*hope, as a particular future actuality of the world, is, theologically understood, as the exact opposite of a hope which hopes in God and only in God for the future of the world.*”³²

To the second, a sort of generalized religious hope is criticized throughout modern thought in one way or another. Kant, for example, argues that without an eschatological “judgement”—that is, a precise sorting of intuitions under concepts which leads to knowledge—religious hope can only function as an “opiate” against the perceived evil of the world.³³ Karl Marx, of course, famously echoed this sentiment, in claiming that religion remains an opiate in so far as it removes humanity from their historical context.³⁴ And, even within the twentieth century, Ernst Bloch’s novel idea of the “Not-Yet-Conscious” still requires philosophical grounding and political action to disenchant the mythological impossibilities of future existence.³⁵

Hope therefore seems to lead to an impasse. On the one hand, it is a pure form of hope which lacks certainty. It is hope for hope’s sake, which quickly degrades into hopelessness as only the waning effects of an opiate. The antidote of which is a hope removed from an abstract purity to a specific concreteness in order to become cleared of its ambiguity. It seems, thereby, that some concrete grounding is needed for a hope of certain positive value. Hope, in some sense, needs to become experienceable. On the other hand, when hope is grounded in history, it becomes difficult to discern how the good which hope promises can be guaranteed in the face of the evil experienced within history. The historical world is in the very least a mixture of good and evil, both of which can be extrapolated into the future based on an ontology of actuality.

Jünger’s aesthetics provides a route beyond this impasse in that it combines both revelation and ontology. Under an aesthetic logic, the interruptive event of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is a constitutive feature for both God’s being and historical existence. In terms of God’s being, Jünger argues that it is an event in which God overcomes his own death through the power of love. In terms of historical existence, this overcoming is imparted to the world through new possibilities of worldly existence and to humanity as a new mode of being human. Hope becomes certain in that it is grounded in both God and history. Or, more precisely, hope is grounded in the

³² Jünger, “Die Welt als Möglichkeit,” 224.

³³ Kant, “*Religion Within the Boundaries of Pure Reason*,” 6:78.

³⁴ Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel’s ‘Philosophy Of Right’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 131-2.

³⁵ Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight, vol. I (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 7ff.

event in which God identifies as historical, and thereby creates new possibilities for both divine and worldly existence.

God's Being in Coming

As mentioned above, the contribution of Jüngel to theologies of hope is the positive content in theological claims of eschatology grounded in interruptive events within history. Beauty is one such event, but another is God's self-revelation. Regarding the latter, hope is positively substantiated by the possibilities God has created in and through his identification with the dead and resurrected Jesus. It is in "God's identification with the crucified Jesus...understood as [an] eschatological happening" which makes *promise* a feature of divine ontology.³⁶ Against Moltmann's negative relationship between the future and the presence, one of the "negation of the negation," God's positive identity means that Jesus is not merely the appearance of the promise, but he himself is the ontological condition of God's eschatological character.³⁷

God's Being in Becoming

In light of the collapse of the ontic and ontological dimensions of worldly existence that Jüngel draws from Heidegger's aesthetics, there is a similar collapse concerning God's self-revelation and ontology. In the simplest terms, God grounds his own identity in an event of becoming. This event can formally be understood as the unification of the subject and object of divine propositions. But it occurs at the ontological level, rather than at the conceptual or logical levels, and thereby represents an eternally dynamic unification of God's being.³⁸ As an ontological event, the becoming of God takes the form of an eternal process of overcoming an innate self-differentiation. This oscillation between self-differentiation and self-reconciliation means that God's being is continually expanding into new possibilities, which is ontologically communicated to worldly being through the aesthetic event of God's self-revelation. For God's ontic presence, this ontological reality is perceptible in the life of the historical Jesus, particularly as he articulates his divinity as a son to a father. The ontic and ontological dimensions of God's self-differentiation most clearly dissolve in the event of the crucifixion, where the human person Jesus, the very Son of God, hangs to death as he cries out to the Father, who is seemingly absent in his suffering. Concerning the overcoming of this self-differentiation, the ontic-ontological dissolution occurs in the event of the resurrection, where the dead Christ is brought back to life through the power of the Father and the Spirit.

Jüngel understands God as a dynamic relationality that occurs within what traditionally has been called the "persons" of his triune nature. Each person exerts an equally constitutive force on God's

³⁶ Jüngel, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*, 480. [350].

³⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 171; Cf., Zimany, *Vehicle for God*, 140-1.

³⁸ Jüngel, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*, 498-9. [363-4].

being, yet God cannot be reduced to any single one.³⁹ God's identity is thereby located in the kind and quality of a relationship that exists in-between the self-differentiation of God's being. In other words, God's *identity* is this *relationship*. The mutual imposition of the modes of God's self-differentiation on his identity can be represented (in formal terms) between the subject and object of theological propositions, where one term only possesses meaning as gained from the other, or (in trinitarian terms) between the Father and Son, where one person can only be referred to as such on the basis of their relationship with the other.⁴⁰

There is, to some extent, a parallel between Jüngel's account of God's self-revelation and Karl Barth's understanding of God as a transcendental subject.⁴¹ Jüngel certainly defends against a charge of "objectifying" God by asserting that God remains the "subject of historical predication."⁴² He likewise commandeers Barth's claim that God is the "subject, object, and predicate" of revelation.⁴³ Yet, Jüngel also goes beyond Barth in claiming that the relationship between the subject and object of historical propositions is one of identity, and not merely correspondence.⁴⁴ This claim of identity in fact makes history constitutive for God's being, and does present God as, in the least, a perceptible feature of human experience. Per the New Testament formula, Jesus is the "image of God" not merely because he makes present an absent God, but because he *is* God. But the historical events of revelation also only assume their revelatory status based on an event of identification that is grounded in God's freedom and love.⁴⁵ In Jüngel's words, the crucified Jesus "lives as the Christ from the power of God" who "*had* identified with the poverty" of death.⁴⁶ God's identity is an event in which God becomes and through which God establishes his relationship to the world.

The Event of God's Identity

³⁹ Jüngel, 508-9n9. [371n9].

⁴⁰ Jüngel explains this point in terms of a "hermeneutical necessity" of essence and existence. See, *ibid.*, 33-4. [27].

⁴¹ See, Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 50-8.

⁴² Jüngel, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*, 432. Cf., Eberhard Jüngel, *God's Being is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth: A Paraphrase*, trans. J. Webster (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2001), 63-9.

⁴³ Jüngel, *God's Being is in Becoming*, 28.

⁴⁴ Cf., Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 116. "God reveals himself as 'God' where he shows himself as the same and is thus known as the same. He becomes identifiable where he identifies himself with himself in the historic act of faithfulness."

⁴⁵ Jüngel, *God's Being is in Becoming*, 78-9; Cf., Jüngel, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*, 299. [221]; Cf., Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 117. If "revelation of God means that God confesses to God in historic faithfulness to his promises, then it can hardly be said that the historic complex of particular historic events 'itself' reveals God."

⁴⁶ Jüngel, "»Theologische Wissenschaft und Glaubek« im Blick auf die Armut Jesu," 29.

Jüngel's most lucid explication of the event nature of God's identity comes in a trinitarian form:

As God the Son, God is identical with Jesus; as God the Father, God is the ground of this identification; as the Holy spirit, God is the eternal and temporal happenings of this identity....⁴⁷

The collapse of God's ontological and ontic dimension is on full display here, in that God (i.e. divine relationship) becomes historically present in his entirety within the events of Jesus' life. God does so according to a trinitarian form, in which the three differentiated modes of God's being—the "persons" of the Trinity—perform unique functions in the presentation of God's identity. The Son is the set of historical particularities with which the Father identifies. The Father is the eternal "ground" of this identity in that he represents God's eternal freedom and the power of divine love. And the Spirit represents the sustained relationship between the Father and Son.

Several biblical scenes portray the fullness of God's relationship from a perspective within history. For instance, during Jesus' baptism, the voice of the Father sounds from above, and the Spirit descends as the dove, in which the self-differentiated relationship of God appears in the form of the human Jesus, the voice of the Father, and movement of the Spirit. Or, as mentioned above, in the resurrection, where the Jesus overcomes death in the power of the Spirit who is sent by the Father. What is important aesthetically in these scenes is that God's identity is fully present in that the entire relationality of his being is visually manifested in a single place and time.⁴⁸ God simply *is* as he historically appears in these interruptive events. As such, God becomes perceptible in his divinity within the boundaries of the world.

The perceptibility of hope, while being grounded in the revelation of God in the event of resurrection, is tied to a certain aspect of God's being and presence. God's identity is an *ongoing* event in that God's existence is not fixed by any single static set of predicates. As a certain relationship, and not a substance (even a dynamic substance existing as, or moving towards, teleological completion), God's identity is relative to the unique features of his immediate existence. This relativity is what gives God's ontology its *becoming* nature. In his words, the "depth of God's glory" is grounded in "endurance of the contradiction of life and death that is God

⁴⁷ Eberhard Jüngel, "Das Sein jesu Christi als Ereignis der Versöhnung Gottes mit einer gottlosen Welt: Die Hingabe des Gekreuzigten," in *Entsprechungen: Gott—Wahrheit—Mensch. Theologische Erörterungen II* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 2002), 276.

⁴⁸ Moltmann criticizes Jüngel's trinitarian theology on this exact point, saying Jüngel "thinks too theologically." Although Moltmann agrees that Jüngel rightly stresses "that 'God was in Christ,' God humbled himself, God himself was on the cross," he also argues that the latter "uses a simple concept of God which is not sufficiently developed in a trinitarian direction." Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 203.

himself."⁴⁹ The varying predicates of God include the historical life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but are not strictly limited to them. Per the quote above, the event of God's identification has both "eternal and temporal" modes. This implies, among other things, that while God's being is to some degree constituted by history, God's identity is not entirely contingent on the world. Jüngel argues that God retains his inner depth of love and freedom throughout his various modes of being.⁵⁰ In that God is a relationship, relational categories such as love and freedom speak directly to the heart of God's divinity. "Eternity" for Jüngel even refers to the dynamic inner-relationality of God's triune existence.⁵¹ As such, the somewhat relative nature of God's identity is not purely arbitrary, for it is the outworking of the continuous force of love. In fact, in this conception, the becoming of God possesses an innate positive value because it is the process in which God gives himself new *possibilities* for his existence in and out of his love.

The Creative Power of Love

Jüngel offers a specific definition of divine love as an inherently *creative* power. In his words, love is "full of creative possibilities" that compound with "every act of divine power."⁵² Further emphasizing the identity between God and love, the "creative act of God," performed out of love, is "nothing other than God's *being*, which as such is *creative being*."⁵³ In accordance with the unifying event of God's being and act, the statement "God is love" only has meaning and value for Jüngel if God is actively loving. He actively loves himself as the dynamic and ongoing unification of his essence and existence.⁵⁴ "Love is essentially an increase in being."⁵⁵ God, in a sense, moves beyond the immediate limits of his identity to new possibilities in and through love. This occurs within the historical world in God's identification with the human Jesus. But it also means that love cannot be a single act, such as a single decision of God to identify with a set of attributes. God is love insofar as he continually expresses love through his acts. Love, as a defining concept of God's relational identity, is ongoing. As an event in which the ontological and ontic dimensions of God's being collapse, his identification with the resurrected Christ is his eternal love playing itself out within history.

⁴⁹ Eberhard Jüngel, "Die Offenbarung der Verborgenheit Gottes. Ein Beitrag zum evangelischen Verständnis der Verborgenheit des göttlichen Wirkens.," in *Wertlose Wahrheit: Zur Identität und Relevanz des christlichen Glaubens. Theologische Erörterungen III* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Seibeck), 2003), 171.

⁵⁰ Jüngel, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*, 299. [220].

⁵¹ Jüngel, 521; 5n6. [380; 383n6].

⁵² Jüngel, 464-5. [339]. Cf., Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 334; Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 118f; Also, Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Zur Theologie des Rechts," *Zeitschrift für Evangelische Ethik* 7, no. 1 (1963): 20f.

⁵³ Jüngel, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*, 303. [223].

⁵⁴ Jüngel, 508. [371].

⁵⁵ Jüngel, 505. [368].

Perhaps a cautionary note is in order here. Jüngel is clear that the events of God's identity and becoming are not understood as a form of process theology. In his words, "The differentiation of God and God," represented historically as the differentiation of the Son and Father, "cannot be understood as an opposite forced on the being of God."⁵⁶ As an ontological event, God gives himself an identity in overcoming a self-imposed differentiation out of the creative capacity of love and the power of divine freedom.⁵⁷ Yet, at the same time, Jüngel is ardently post-metaphysical, so the event of God's identification cannot be understood in terms of an absolute substance or teleologically perfected subject becoming represented within a set of predicates. For Jüngel, God's essence is always actively unified with his existence, and his being is always unified with his actions. God only *is* within the varying forms of this identifying event.⁵⁸

The Coming of God

Jüngel attempts to clarify this rather difficult theological claim by employing a concept from biblical theology that "God's being is in *coming*," or, "God is the one coming to the world."⁵⁹ In God's identification with the human Jesus, he comes *to the world*. That is, God becomes a fact of historical existence in his humanity as he takes on humanness as part of his identity. His coming is hermeneutically communicated, however, in that he "comes in the Word." As such, faith receives its corresponding mode of God's coming as God "addresses" humanity "out of himself."⁶⁰ Thus, while God does not cease to be the subject of revelation in this identity, that he remains the "ground" of this identification, he also *comes* to the world, as in, he does not belong wholly to the world. These two aspects of God's coming represent the love and freedom of his relational identity. In love, God comes to the world, giving himself to the world to the point of "allowing himself to be pushed out of the world."⁶¹ In freedom, God retains divinity even in his death, and thus remains to be the source of the overcoming of death by eternal life.

Jüngel's intention in employing the concept of God's "coming" is to emphasize the "self-movement" of God's ontology of becoming.⁶² It is not that God only comes to the world in the sense that he has revealed his eternal nature. But, rather, that God comes to the world because he is eternally a being in coming.

God always comes from God. He is his own absolute origin. As God only comes from himself, however, he also really comes to himself. God comes to God. He is his own goal. But he does not strive for himself as his own goal in order to get away from himself as his

⁵⁶ Jüngel, 498. [363].

⁵⁷ See, *ibid.*, 46f. [36f.].

⁵⁸ Jüngel, 411. [300].

⁵⁹ Jüngel, 518; 21. [378; 80]; Cf., Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 122, 5.

⁶⁰ Jüngel, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*, 410. [300].

⁶¹ Jüngel, 80. [61].

⁶² Jüngel, 411. [300].

origin. God does not allow himself as his origin to be left behind. He always comes as God from God to God.⁶³

This eternal movement of God, Jüngel continues, is the *mysterium trinitatis*, which becomes historical in the event of God's identification with Jesus. The ontic and ontological dimensions of God collapse here as well.

The implications of Jüngel's divine ontology for hope is that the ongoing nature of God's coming gives a temporal schema to God's identity. Jüngel is clear that for that slim portion of history where the human Jesus lived, died and was resurrected on earth, God possesses a history.⁶⁴ In these specific historical events, God is subjected to the conditions of historical existence. As Jesus dies on the cross, God experiences historical finitude. As Jesus is brought forth from the tomb, God experiences the possibilities of new life. But, given that the activity of God's coming in love is not limited to God's historical identity, there is also a "historicity" within God's eternal context.⁶⁵ There is an inner reaching for the future within God's own being that is communicated to humanity in God's coming to the world. As modes of being, faith corresponds to the fact of God's existence, and hope to the manner in which God exists. "Faith gives the hopeful their certainty. Hope gives the faithful their liveliness."⁶⁶ Hope, then, is not wishing for God to come again, but a participation in the eternal coming of God which includes the anticipation for the horizon of the future and the end of the world. As discussed below, space for this participation comes through aesthetic events, in so far as Jüngel understands worship to be a work of art. First, it is important to answer a fundamental question of theologies of hope, which is the nature of history in light of the event of God's self-revelation.

History in the Light of God's Coming

The historicity of Jüngel's divine ontology, which is ontically present as God identifies with the historical Jesus, is an important contribution to theologies of hope, for it escapes Moltmann's criticism of concepts of revelation understood as "epiphanies of the eternal present." What Moltmann has in mind here is metaphysically based theologies that understand God as a static being removed from temporality. In Moltmann's words, this conception of revelation "describes the God of Parmenides rather than the God of the exodus and revelation."⁶⁷ Hope, in this view, becomes *ahistorical*, and faith becomes concerned with escaping history altogether. In lieu of "a cultic presence of the eternal," Moltmann argues for an understanding of revelation "as apocalypse

⁶³ Jüngel, 521. [380].

⁶⁴ Jüngel, 428-9. [313-4].

⁶⁵ Jüngel, 475. [347].

⁶⁶ Jüngel, "Der Geist der Hoffnung und des Trostes," 308.

⁶⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 84.

of the promised future of truth” which becomes “manifest in the promise” and through which humanity “experiences reality as history in all its possibilities and dangers.”⁶⁸ It is a view of revelation that operates within the boundaries of history, and thus a revelation subjected to the limitations and finitude of historical existence. Yet, it is also revelation rooted in the “promises of Christ.”⁶⁹

These promises, to be sure, represent future possibilities. But they are indexed only in their futurity. “The *logos* of the *eschaton* is promise of that which is not yet, and for that reason it *makes* history.”⁷⁰ Eschatological promises are “not yet” precisely because they stand in *contradiction* with the present, and thereby find their relationship to the “now.” In his words, “the promise...points away from the *appearances* in which it is uttered, into the as yet unrealized future which it announces.”⁷¹

This sounds strikingly similar to Jüngel’s understanding of beauty. But it should be recalled that God is not present in interruptions of beauty. God’s self-revelation is distinguished from beauty precisely on the basis of God’s presence, in that the former plays a constitutive role in God’s identity. Since Jesus is *the promise* of God, and not merely the appearance of the promise, he is identical to the glory toward which beauty points. Against a Christology of *kenosis*, God’s glory is on full display in Jüngel’s account.⁷² This glory appears for much of Jesus’ historical life “hidden *sub contrario* [*under its opposite*],” but erupts into a full presence in the event of his resurrection from the dead.⁷³ This means that, while beauty can offer possibilities to the world through its interruptive presence, Christian hope is certain in that it is based in God’s glory as it appears on the “face of Christ.”⁷⁴ Through this distinction, two important features of faith derive from God’s historicity and historicality. The first deals with history as an ontological concept; the second with history as an existential feature.

The Concept of History

In terms of history as an ontological concept, new possibilities of worldly existence are created when God comes to the world in the historical Jesus. In Jüngel’s words, “As a human being, God

⁶⁸ Moltmann, 84; 161.

⁶⁹ Moltmann, 139.

⁷⁰ Moltmann, 165.

⁷¹ Moltmann, 100. Emphasis added; Cf., Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope*, 103ff.

⁷² Cf., Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 118. “The divine kenosis which begins with the creation of the world reaches its perfected and completed form in the incarnation of the Son.”

For the absence of a doctrine of *kenosis* in Jüngel, see: Piotr Małysz, *Trinity, Freedom and Love: An Engagement with the Theology of Eberhard Jüngel*, ed. John Webster, Ian A. McFarland, and Ivor Davidson, T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology, (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), 89n91.

⁷³ Jüngel, “Auch das Schöne,” 394.

⁷⁴ Eberhard Jüngel, “Die Wahrheit des Christentums,” in *Beziehungsreich. Perspektiven des Glaubens*. (Stuttgart: Radius-Verlag, 2002), 129.

entered into the temporality of worldly history—changing the latter in such a way that lays beyond the capacities of history itself.”⁷⁵ Jüngel is similar to Moltmann here by arguing that a theology of hope is “realistic” in so far as it “takes seriously the possibilities with which all reality is fraught.”⁷⁶ Additionally, both thinkers agree that historical possibilities are not merely a conceptual matter, in that “the theologian is not concerned merely to supply a different *interpretation* of the world, of history and human nature,” but to participate in these new possibilities.⁷⁷

Where the two differ, however, is that Moltmann is adamant that an eschatologically based theology speaks of the world with the future as its sole point of reference. As such, revelation does not have “the character of *logos*-determined illumination of the existing reality of man and the world, but has here constitutively and basically the character of promise.”⁷⁸ The promise is rooted in Christ, but is so in that “it expects something new from him, something that has not yet happened so far.”⁷⁹ It “stands in contradiction” to the present.⁸⁰ While Moltmann speaks of a “not-yet” that opposes the present, Jüngel argues that, *theologically*, possibility/impossibility is an “incomparably more fundamental distinction” than any relation of the present to the “not-yet” of actuality.⁸¹

In other words, Moltmann understands history in terms of “mission,” while Jüngel understands it in terms of an ontology of becoming.⁸² Interruptive events, by their nature, expose the limits of the context of the present. According to Jüngel’s aesthetics, events achieve this by positing novel possibilities within the ontological framework of historical existence. In all revelatory events, therefore, from creation to the resurrection, “God is to be conceived of as the one who makes the possible be possible and the impossible be impossible.”⁸³ The possibilities of God’s becoming, which are created in and through divine love, are imparted to the world in the sense that love is a communicable attribute. The world participates in God’s love as passive recipients of its creative force.

Important for hope, worldly existence is subsequently understood in terms of ontological possibilities initiated by God, and not according to a logic of the actuality of being. “Hope, if it is true hope, is invested in the capacities of the God with whom all things are possible.”⁸⁴ History is

⁷⁵ Jüngel, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*, 411. [301].

⁷⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 25.

⁷⁷ Moltmann, 84; Cf., Jüngel, “Die Welt als Möglichkeit,” 213.

⁷⁸ Moltmann, 85.

⁷⁹ Moltman., 229.

⁸⁰ Moltmann, 224-5.

⁸¹ Jüngel, “Die Welt als Möglichkeit,” 222.

⁸² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 325; See, Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope*, 105f.

⁸³ Jüngel, “Die Welt als Möglichkeit,” 222.

⁸⁴ Bauckham and Hart, “The Shape of Time,” 69-70.

only as certain as interruptive events allow.⁸⁵ But, in that God's advent is an interruptive event as well as a feature of God's existence, a theological understanding of history finds certainty in God's being.⁸⁶ The eschatological dimension of the world speaks precisely to *this* world that constitutes God's being in his identification with Jesus. God is the author of possibilities "through the creative Word of God."⁸⁷

The Experience of History

In terms of the experience of history, Jüngel argues that the experience of perishing within history is only possible by an established present from which the past and future come and go. The present is the temporal standard for perishing. It is precisely what perishes in the change of time and is what is presented through aesthetic interruptions. The historicity of God's becoming means that God also experiences perishing in his identification with the crucified Jesus, and that he has overcome his own death by identifying with a new set of possibilities for existence. This process is the eternal coming of God. As God comes to the world, the eternal reference point is communicated through his address. "The Word is the *ontological* unification of what is historically separated: present, future and past."⁸⁸ This unification primarily takes place in terms of a spatial presence, in that the believer stands in a certain relationship to God. Faith is being in the presence of God.

The spatial connotation of presence does not obliterate temporal distinctions, but rather gives them a radically new hermeneutical grounding. Typically, humans experience time as indexed by the ego. Temporal schemas are relative to the human perspective from its place as a being in the world. This includes God's eschatological advent, in that the distance from this advent appears to be determined by the index of the ego. However, in faith, the ego is drawn out from itself and into the presence of God. In Jüngel's words: "In so far as humanity is addressed through God from God, there occurs a *total distancing* of the ego from its being-here and being-now and, accordingly, an *entirely new qualification of its presentness*" which Jüngel names an "*eschatological spiritual presence*."⁸⁹ As humanity assumes this new position in the presence of God, time undergoes a critical distinction between a chronological time indexed by the historical place of the ego and a "eventful time" that receives its "measure" from God, and thereby "gets its movement from the

⁸⁵ Jüngel rejects "history" as meaning the "entirety" or "whole" of happenings in the world, in favor of an understanding of history as "contexts" which are established by interruptive events. Jüngel, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*, 255n5. [189n5].

⁸⁶ Cf., Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 119. "The guarantee of the promise's congruity with reality lies in the credibility and faithfulness of him who gives it."

⁸⁷ Jüngel, "Die Welt als Möglichkeit," 217.

⁸⁸ Jüngel, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*, 256. [190]; Cf., Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 103ff.

⁸⁹ Jüngel, 235. [174].

end of time.”⁹⁰ In God’s coming to the world, God’s eternal coming becomes the temporal index for the hope that is grounded in faith.

As discussed above, at the cross, God addresses the world as his self-differentiation; in the resurrection, as the reconciliation of this differentiation. The two events are ontologically and hermeneutically reliant on one another for their happening and meaning. Combined as such, the two events are “together to be understood as the specific eschatological happening” of God’s promises.⁹¹ God’s address subsequently defines the “past” as the mode of worldly being in which death has the final word. It is the mode where there is no *historical* possibility of life beyond death, and thus no concrete grounding for hope. In the resurrection, God defines the “future” as the mode of being in which death has been defeated, and the possibility for eternal life becomes historically concrete.⁹² The future is concretely understood as the creative power of God’s love, which brought creation out of nothing and life out of death, becoming ontically present.

As with beauty, the interruptive presence of God establishes the boundaries of the features of worldly existence while pointing toward a future. The resurrection is the historical object of hope because, as God appears in his reconciliation, he addresses the world as a *promise*. The promise is grounded in God’s creative love, in which he overcame the death of his own being, and through which “he addresses himself to us in such a way that he *promises* himself to us.”⁹³ Hope is grounded in the event of the resurrection because in that event the promises of God became perceptibly free from the finality of death *in* his identity with Jesus. The possibility of the defeat of death’s reign, and of eternal life, walked through the streets of Jerusalem. Faith in God’s past work in the historical Jesus grounds hope, which, in turn, “is what opens up the future for Christians.”⁹⁴

Worship as Aesthetic Action

The historical distance between the events of Jesus and the contemporary moment cannot be ignored. Nor can the distance to the future. Jüngel argues that God’s identification with Jesus validates history in general.⁹⁵ Thus, while the object of hope originally became perceptible in God’s radical redirection of the world, there is a need for reiterations of this event in the present. This occurs within the space cleared by the original appearance of hope, but through the participation of those who have stepped into this space by their faith in Jesus.

⁹⁰ Jüngel, *Paulus und Jesus*, 141; Cf., Nelson, *The Interruptive Word*, 96.

⁹¹ Jüngel, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*, 480. [350].

⁹² See, Jüngel, 235n4. [175n4].

⁹³ Jüngel, 236. [175].

⁹⁴ Jüngel, 539. [393].

⁹⁵ Jüngel, 256f. [189f.]

Christian worship is, for Jüngel, the hermeneutical locus for eschatology, and is considered the most tangible example of the activity of hope. He describes the worship service as a “work of art.”⁹⁶ This is because, following Friedrich Schleiermacher, “all art has its essence in the representation, and everything, that wants to be nothing other than representation, is art.”⁹⁷ Jüngel typically uses the music of worship as concrete examples of the aesthetic expression of hope. This ranges from the “dancing and singing” of the “actors of the worship festival,” to Johann Sebastian Bach’s High Mass in B Minor.⁹⁸ His point is that through aesthetic expression, the hope which is grounded in the faith of the individual person becomes a communal activity. As an aesthetic object, hope shapes the context of the world through its power to reveal limits and impart freedom. This even extends beyond the community of believers to social and political contexts.

In light of the eschatological possibilities of God’s promise, Jüngel is emphatic that there is no further work that could possibly secure future existence. In God’s identification with Jesus, these promises are both established and communicated to the world. The goal of faith and hope is the same as their origin, and the end of the world positively corresponds to its saving moment. Yet, for Jüngel, to be is to act. This was discussed above in terms of the existence of God as love; but it also applies to human being. Jüngel sees an axiomatic correctness in Kant’s anthropological definition of pairing the question “what may I hope?” with the question “what should I do?”⁹⁹

Both Moltmann and Jüngel share the conviction that hope is an anthropological mode that participates in eschatological possibilities which were inaugurated in Jesus’ resurrection. The two also agree that theology is, in Jüngel’s words, “at its core political—or not at all.”¹⁰⁰ Yet, their differing views on the material elements of theology, on precisely how theology becomes concrete, has consequences for understanding how this participation should manifest itself in human action.

For Moltmann, Christians are called on a mission “to *transform* [the present context of the world] in expectation of a divine transformation.”¹⁰¹ While “self-redemption” is only possible in God’s work, and thus is not in the power of human labour, we wait for the consummation of salvation

⁹⁶ Eberhard Jüngel, “Der Gottesdienst als Fest der Freiheit. Der theologische Ort des Gottesdienstes nach Friedrich Schleiermacher,” in *Indikative der Gnade—Imperative der Freiheit. Theologische Erörterungen IV* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 2003), 346.

⁹⁷ F.D.E. Schleiermacher, “Die praktische Theologie nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt, aus Schleiermachers handschriftlichem Nachlasse und nachgeschriebenen Vorlesungen,” in *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. J. Frerichs (1850), 71; Quoted in: Jüngel, “Gottesdienst als Fest,” 346.

⁹⁸ Jüngel, “Gottesdienst als Fest,” 349; Jüngel, “Hoffnung,” 59-60; Cf., Jüngel, “Auch das Schöne,” 379.

⁹⁹ Jüngel, “Hoffnung,” 59.

¹⁰⁰ Eberhard Jüngel, “Zukunft und Hoffnung. Zur politischen Funktion christlicher Theologie,” in *Müssen Christen Sozialisten sein? Zwischen Glaube und Politik*, ed. Wolfgang Teichert (Hamburg: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1976), 19.

¹⁰¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 84; cf., 25.

in “creative expectation.”¹⁰² This is so, because the “political and social practice” provide the “concrete basis of theology.”¹⁰³ For, eschatology is only accessible in “a political hermeneutic of the crucified one and a theology of real liberation.”¹⁰⁴

In contrast, the aesthetic event of God’s self-revelation subsumes the role of practical reason for Jüngel. While Jüngel would agree with Moltmann’s claim that “freedom in the light of hope is the creative passion for the possible,” he would qualify what it means to be *creative*.¹⁰⁵ He draws upon a distinction Schleiermacher makes between *effective* and *representational* action to explain how the innate impulse of being to act takes on a new practical form in the aesthetic realm. He expounds that “while effective action is aimed at purposes and thus wants to achieve something, representational action is action that does not set any ends for itself and therefore does not want to achieve anything.”¹⁰⁶ In other words, representational action is akin to an expression of being, which acts based on the inertia of its inner ground. For faith, representational action is understood as an overflowing of the love of God upon which the believer finds their being. It is action based “on what it already is by virtue of the redemption accomplished through Jesus of Nazareth.”¹⁰⁷

For hope, however, the representational action corresponds to the possibilities established through God’s interruptive coming. In Jüngel’s words, hope is expressed in the activities “upon which humanity advances to itself and advances its world.” The acts of hope “advance” humanity and their world only in that humanity “recognizes, accepts and processes the *limitedness*” of its being. This involves distinguishing between the “immovable” boundaries and those which are “constantly to be expanded and changed, or, if necessary, narrowed” based on the possibilities which God has communicated to the world in his coming.¹⁰⁸ Recalling the discussion above, the limits of historical existence are exposed and defined by aesthetic interruptions. As a mode of being which acts from already secured possibilities—manifested and exposed through God’s aesthetic presence—hope thereby “brings its object to life” in reproductive action within the aesthetic realm.

Representational action finds meaning in the space opened by the possibilities of God’s eschatological work in that it is freed from the duty to secure the future by human action. Hope experiences freedom from the once unshakable limits of historical existence—the “end of being, the end of worldly time, and also of one’s own time of life”—because God has already overcome

¹⁰² Moltmann, 335.

¹⁰³ Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope*, 130.

¹⁰⁴ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 297; Cf., Jürgen Moltmann, “Toward a Political Hermeneutic of the Gospel,” in *Religion, Revolution, and the Future* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1969), 97f.

¹⁰⁵ Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 217.

¹⁰⁶ Jüngel, “Gottesdienst als Fest,” 344.

¹⁰⁷ Jüngel, 345.

¹⁰⁸ Jüngel, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*, 540. [394].

these limits within his own being through his identification with the historically crucified and resurrected Jesus. All reproductive acts of the believer work from the freedom given in God's address in their expressions of faith, hope and love.

Conclusion

Perhaps best formulated, the primary distinction between Jüngel and Moltmann is not a question of *if* God acts in the world or that an eschatological hermeneutic should be grounded in this action, but rather in *what way* God does act, and what *meaning* these acts hold. While representational actions do not seek to bring about any external end, they are, as with all actions in Jüngel's view, socially directed.¹⁰⁹ But, the acts of hope also do not attempt to secure freedom through their impact. As with Schiller, freedom is experienced through the aesthetic realm prior to its function in the political sphere. In Jüngel words, "The political relevance of the Christian hope shows itself primarily and fundamentally where it is no way at all a question of what we have to *do*. Before all activity, faith is political in that it takes seriously the person as distinct from his or her deeds."¹¹⁰

The aesthetic expression of beauty does not seek to transgress the limits of actuality through its actions. Here, beauty performs the mediatory role of revealing the already overcome limits of actuality by imitating God's eschatological return. Upon which the inaugurated possibilities will be universally revealed by the immediate presence of God's glory. The beauty of hope's aesthetic expression is a "deposit" of the immediate presence of glory.¹¹¹

The "image" of hope, then, for Jüngel, is the manifestation of freedom that lies beyond the limits and boundaries of the actuality of the world. It is perceived as it interrupts the world and transforms the entire context of perception in the process. It takes on historicity in its ontic presence, and through its ontology of becoming. As such, it becomes concretely grounded in the activities of the world. Finally, it is re-presented through expressions of hope within the aesthetic realm, for the sake of revealing and shaping socio-political boundaries, and offering the freedom from them at the same time. Although the historic resurrection is a promise for a future of God's glory, that future was visually embodied in the past, and takes on a tangible reality in the present as beauty points towards the things to come.

¹⁰⁹ Jüngel, 537. [392].

¹¹⁰ Jüngel, "Zukunft und Hoffnung. Zur politischen Funktion christlicher Theologie," 20; Cf., Derek R. Nelson, "The Cautions of Justice: Eberhard Jüngel's Engagement with Politics and State," in *Indicative of Grace—Imperative of Freedom: Essays in Honour of Eberhard Jüngel in His Eightieth Year*, ed. R. David Nelson (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 162-4.

¹¹¹ Jüngel, *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt*, 540. [394].

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