



Johannine style: some initial remarks on the functional use of repetition in the Gospel according to John

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Abstract

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Some of the ways in which John uses the stylistic feature of repetition in his Gospel are investigated. His repetitive use of the concept “eternal life” is first focused on, pointing out the stylistic changes that occur as the gospel narrative progresses. Then the way in which the word “eternal” is repetitively linked to the word “life” is explored, showing a consistent pattern throughout the Gospel. The selective use and development of the frequently used concept of “love” is then scrutinised in the first twelve chapters of the Gospel, followed by an investigation of the functional use of the concept “to follow” in this Gospel. Reasons for these repetitions are then explored.

Opsomming

Johannese styl: enkele inleidende opmerkings oor die funksionele gebruik van herhaling in die Evangelie volgens Johannes

Sommige van die maniere waarop Johannes herhaling as styl-figuur in sy Evangelie gebruik, word ondersoek. Ten eerste word gefokus op die herhaalde gebruik van “ewige lewe” in die Evangelie. Veranderinge ten opsigte van die gebruik van die konsep deur die loop van die ontwikkeling van die narratief word aangedui. Daarna word die konsekwente wyse waarop die term “ewig” herhaaldelik aan die term “lewe” verbind word, in fokus geplaas. Die selektiewe gebruik en die ontwikkeling van die woord “liefde”, wat dikwels gebruik word, word in die eerste twaalf hoofstukke ondersoek. Dit word gevolg deur ’n onder-

soek van die funksionele gebruik van die konsep van navolging in die Evangelie. Redes vir die herhaling word vervolgens behandel.

1. Introduction

The stylistic phenomenon of repetition is well known in the Gospel according to John and is often described in terms of a hermeneutical circle or spiral. In spite of this well-known phenomenon, remarkably little has been done in the past to thoroughly address this important stylistic feature in a detailed, systematic, and coherent manner. What follows here is an effort to partly address the following questions: What is the relationship between repetition and functionality in this Gospel? How did the author(s) (for convenience sake referred to simply as John from here onwards) use repetition to communicate the message effectively?

2. A theoretical remark

The narratological distinction between the implied author and implied reader provides a theoretical framework within which the functionality of repetition in the Gospel may be considered (see Tolmie 1999:5 ff. for discussions on the definitions of the terms that follow).

The *implied author* can be broadly described as an inner-textual construction (personified) that knows everything that happens and is supposed to happen in the narrative, is the planner of the narrative, and systematically unfolds the different events of the narrative, implying that all the tensions, rhetorical strategies, the movement of the narrative, et cetera are consciously planned. By gradually leading the reader through the narrative to the point he wants to make, he will provide the reader with the necessary information, creating tension, systematically and strategically making information available, et cetera. In suggesting such a conscious force of construction behind the narrative, it allows the interpreter to assume that what is presented should have some rationale and strategy behind it.

The *implied reader* on the other hand, is the inner-textual (personified) construction that systematically discovers what the implied author presents. The implied reader as inner-textual construct knows nothing at the beginning of the narrative, but is indeed constructed as the narrative develops. As the narrative unfolds, the implied reader is informed by everything the narrative has to offer and the knowledge of the implied reader increases proportionally. Within the framework of the growing knowledge the implied reader will have to

make sense of every piece of new evidence and integrate it into the existing body of knowledge this reader already has. Making sense of new, especially repetitive material will constantly challenge the implied reader with the question of functionality. New information will constantly be considered and interpreted in the light of existing information up to that point in the narrative. Stylistic issues like creating or easing tensions, redefining, and expanding existing definitions of concepts, interrelating information, et cetera will in this way be developed and enriched within the construct of the implied reader.

These are valuable analytical categories for tracking the functionality of repetitions. However, this is not a narratological study; only the analytical categories developed within narratology are utilised.

3. Repetition and functionality – some explorations

Treatment of the whole spectrum of repetitions in the Gospel is impossible in a presentation of this scope. For this reason, three examples of central themes in this Gospel will have to suffice as illustrations for the relationship between repetition and its functionality. Themes like love and life were chosen because of their absolute centrality in the Gospel, while other themes like “to follow” were added since they allow for a more comprehensive scope of illustrations.

3.1 The initial development of an idea followed by repetition in key areas: ζωή as example

The use of the central soteriological terminology in the Gospel, namely, the word group ζάω, ζωή or ζωή αἰώνιος and ζωοποιέω reveals interesting patterns of functional and logical repetition and variation. (On life in the Gospel see Smilde, 1943; Mussner, 1952; Dodd, 1978; Wind, 1956; Van Hartingsveld, 1962; Heer, 1974; Van der Watt, 1986; 2000.) Let us first take an overview of the 63 occurrences in this Gospel. It accounts for 26,7% of the usages of ζωή in the New Testament, 12% of the usages of ζάω and 27,3% of the usages of ζωοποιέω:

Figure 1

Ch. 1	Ch. 3	Ch. 4	Ch. 5	Ch. 6	Ch. 7	Ch. 8	Ch. 10	Ch. 11	Ch. 12	Ch. 14	Ch. 17	Ch. 20
v. 4	vv. 15 16 36	vv. 10 11 14 36 50 51 53	vv. 21 24 25 26 29 39 40	vv. 27 33 35 40 47 48 51 53 54 57 58 63 68	v. 38	v. 12	vv. 10 28	vv. 25 26	vv. 25 50	vv. 6 19	vv. 2, 3	v. 31

In evaluating the repetition of this word group (excluding references to earthly life – see Zimmermann 2004:268) the following should be noted:

The use of this central term, *life*, is spread evenly throughout the first 12 chapters, but is only repeated five times in the latter part of the Gospel (chs. 14, 17 and 20). By far the highest frequency of the term is found in chapters 3-6 where the ideas of eternal life and Jesus as the giver of life are developed. The idea is introduced in chapter 3, and discussed and developed in more detail in chapters 4-6. The frequency of the use of the terminology then drops sharply in the second part of the Gospel (chs. 13-21), but the uses stay semantically significant. The strategy of the implied author seems to be to introduce and develop the theme in its different dimensions at the beginning of the Gospel (chs. 3-6) and then to integrate it thematically with the material from the rest of the Gospel by simply mentioning it at strategic places¹ and thus relating it to other central

1 The concept of life is mentioned in central statements in key positions in the Gospel, for instance, in 11:25-26 before Jesus raises Lazarus. These words then interpret the raising of Lazarus theologically. In 7:39 it is linked to the

themes: in virtually all the cases apart from chapters 4-6 and perhaps 14:19, the use of this terminology functions in central and strategic positions within these particular contexts (Van der Watt, 1989:217-228).

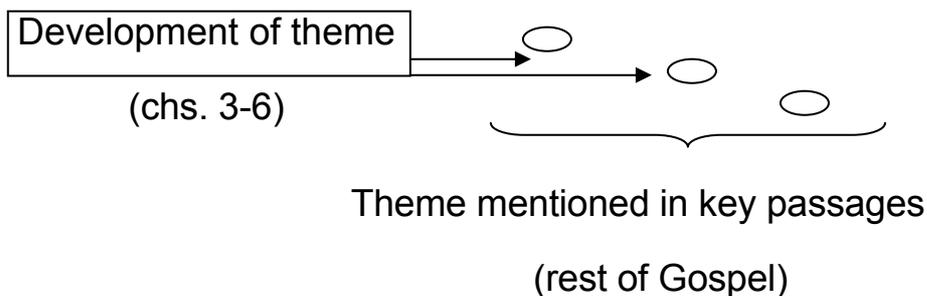
This is a natural and logical way of using material repetitively – first develop a concept (chs. 3-6) and fix the knowledge with the implied reader. With this knowledge assumed the implied author can then simply repeat the concept at strategic points in the narrative. A mention of the implied concept thus activates the complete knowledge presented earlier in the Gospel. In this way, the repetition of the term *life* throughout the Gospel constitutes a link between the different themes and sections in the Gospel, inter-relates them and binds them into a coherent semantic whole.²

Repetition of the word group related to ζωή follows a logical pattern and it can be concluded that the implied author planned it that way. Schematically it can be illustrated like this:

crucial statement about the coming of the Spirit and the eschatological abundance. The abundance of the “door” is emphasised in 10:10, while the climax of the shepherd discourse is reached in 10:28-30. In 12:25 it forms a focal point by being part of a well-structured proverb-like expression that brings together and explains not only the death of Jesus but also the implications for his followers. In 17:2-3 the mission of Jesus is summarised and the nature of eternal life defined as part of the conclusion of the farewell discourse(s). The term is repeated at the end of the Gospel where the purpose of the Gospel is stated (20:31).

2 Here are a few examples of themes that are linked to eternal life in the Gospel:

- The believer is spiritually born anew by the Father and resurrected by the only mediator of life, Jesus (*like sheep enter a gate or a new baby is born*).
- *The believer* received the revelation from and about God to have knowledge of Him and his Son (*Jesus is the Word and life is knowledge*).
- The believer’s spiritual needs are fulfilled (*as bread and water fulfill earthly needs*).
- The believer must act in obedience to the commands of the family (*like somebody who walks in the light of life*).
- The believer’s attitude must be that of self-sacrificing service and willingness to do the works of the Father with the help of the Spirit (*like a seed which dies to produce fruit to eternal life*).
- Like reapers in the fields of the Father believers must gather people who believe (*like a harvest = eternal life*).
- Believers are protected by the Son and Father (*like a sheep by his shepherd = they have life and nobody will be able to take it from them*).
- Believers do not experience the judgment of the Father who judges people who are not part of his family (*forensically God is on the side of the believer – they have life and will not perish or be judged*).



3.2 Purposeful and conscious patterns of repetition based on stylistic and semantic reasons

If it is concluded that the use of ζωή throughout the Gospel is consciously planned, could the same be said about the adjective αἰώνιος used in conjunction with it (Schnackenburg, 1972:402; Newman & Nida, 1980:80; Hendrikson, 1973:141; Bouma, 1964:111; Bernard, 1928:116; Richardson, 1959:73; Marsh, 1968:187; Meyer, 1970:62; Van der Watt, 1986:734-756)? Out of the 36 occurrences of the noun ζωή in the Gospel, nineteen are without the adjective αἰώνιος. Some scholars try to show that there is (or can be) a difference in meaning between ζωή with or without αἰώνιος. Mussner (1952:177 ff.), for instance, argues that eschatological features come more into focus when αἰώνιος is used, while Bultmann (1978:109) also allows for a possible conceptual difference: "Es kann aber auch ein Unterschied gemacht werden, insofern die durch αἰώνιος charakterisierte ζωή immer die Lebendigkeit ist, während das blosse ζωή auch die lebensschaffende Kraft ist." Other researchers argue that there is no difference and that ζωή with or without αἰώνιος are just variant forms (Pribnow, 1934:27). The problem is usually dealt with in semantic categories and is not approached from stylistic perspective. By investigating the patterns of repetition and variation of αἰώνιος with ζωή an interesting picture unfolds. Let us first get a brief overview concerning the uses of ζωή with and without αἰώνιος.

Figure 2

Usages of ζωή with or without αἰώνιος with reasons		
Verse	With (+) or without (-) αἰώνιος	Important characteristics
1:4a, b	-	With reference to the Logos
3:15, 16, 36a	+	ἔχω (= with faith expression)
3:36b	-	In immediate context where full concept is used (negative)
4:14, 36	+	εἰς + ζωή
5:24a	+	ἔχω (= with expression equivalent with faith expression)
5:24b	-	In immediate context where full concept is used
5:26a, 26b	-	With reference to the Father and the Son
5:29	-	Expression with other noun (linked via genitive construction)
5:39	+	ἔχω (= with expression of “wrong seeking”)
5:40	-	In immediate context where full concept is used
6:27	+	εἰς + ζωή
6:33	-	In immediate context where full concept is used
6:35	-	Expression with other noun (linked via genitive construction)
6:40, 47	+	ἔχω (= with faith expression)
6:48	-	Expression with other noun (linked via genitive construction)
6:51c	-	Expression with other noun (in ὑπέρ ... construction)
6:53	-	In immediate context where full concept is used (negative)
6:54	+	ἔχω (= with expression equivalent with faith expression)
6:63b	-	Expression with other noun linked with καί
6:68	+	In climactic context
8:12	-	Expression with other noun (linked via genitive construction)
10:10	-	Expression with other noun linked with καί
10:28	+	In climactic context

11:25	-	Expression with other noun linked with καί
12:25	+	Εἰς + ζωή
12:50	+	In climactic context
14:6	-	Expression with other nouns linked with καί
17:2, 3	+	In climactic context
20:31	-	Formulate purpose of the Gospel

From the above three distinctive usages of ζωή without αἰώνιος can be identified:

- **The word αἰώνιος is omitted in references to God**

The word αἰώνιος is not used when there is reference to the Father or the Son (1:4; 5:26). This could be explained semantically since the idea of eternity which αἰώνιος adds to the concept, is already implicit in the references to God or Jesus.

- **Αἰώνιος is omitted in all cases where ζωή is used in close, direct combination with other nouns or phrases**

Αἰώνιος is the only adjective that is used with ζωή. However, when ζωή is part of the noun (αἰώνιος is lacking in all the instances where the genitive form of ζωή is used with another noun – cf. 5:29; 6:35, 48; 8:12), prepositional (ζωή is also used in prepositional phrases in conjunction with other nouns – 5:24b; 6:51c), and conjunctive phrases,³ it is remarkable that αἰώνιος is not used at all. Because αἰώνιος is consistently absent where ζωή is linked to other nouns one may speak of a stylistic tendency.

- **The influence of the immediate context on the use of αἰώνιος**

The only other cases where αἰώνιος is omitted are when ζωή is used in the immediate context of the *full* expression, i.e. ζωή αἰώνιος – 3:36b; 5:24b, 40; 6:33, 53. In all these cases αἰώνιος can be supplied from the immediate context.⁴ In only two

3 In all the cases where ζωή is symmetrically linked with καί to other nouns/noun phrases αἰώνιος lacks – cf. 6:63b; 10:10; 11:25a; 14:6. It should, however, be noted that where the copulative verb (εἰμί) is used to link the concept of life alone to something else αἰώνιος is used – 12:50; 17:3 against 1:4.

4 An exception is 20:31. It should, however, be remembered that this is a summary of the purpose of the Gospel. It should be read in that light – the whole Gospel serves as framework for understanding this usage.

cases αἰώνιος is repeated where it is indeed possible to supply it from its immediate context, namely, 3:15-16, and 17:2-3. The reason for this may be found in the contexts. Excluding the reference in the Prologue (1:4) the concept of eternal life is first introduced into the narrative in 3:15-16, which explains the repetition. The idea of *eternal* life should first be established. The occurrences in 17:2-3 are part of a proverb-like description of what eternal life is, which distinguishes it from other contexts. The flow of the argument from 17:2 to 17:3 comes naturally and invites repetition; the concept of eternal life is mentioned and then picked up by means of a definition – “Jesus must give eternal life to all ... and this is what eternal life is ...”. It seems fair to conclude that except for two exceptional cases αἰώνιος is not used when it can be deduced from the immediate context.

It seems that the assumption that the use of ζωή with or without αἰώνιος is presented in an arbitrary way by the implied author, cannot be substantiated from the text of the Gospel. In conclusion it may therefore be said that the repetition of αἰώνιος is not indiscriminate but follows a clear and consistent pattern based on stylistic and semantic reasons. This points to purposeful use by the implied author. In cases where αἰώνιος is absent, good semantic or stylistic reasons can be supplied. Apart from that the uses of ζωή without αἰώνιος (referring to humans) begins to appear relatively late in the Gospel (from 5:24b). At that stage in the Gospel the full expression has occurred about six times, which means that the implied reader is already familiar with the full expression. It could therefore be assumed that ζωή, used alone, always implicitly carries the semantic dimensions that αἰώνιος adds to the full expression.

Ζωή and ζωὴ αἰώνιος are used without semantic difference in the Gospel according to John, and adhere to a specific pattern based on certain stylistic and semantic features. For our theme this illustrates that repetition and variation of words, at least in these cases, are consciously part of the strategy of the implied author in unfolding his message.

3.3 Repetition and variation as a technique to develop and contrast related themes: love (ἀγαπάω-φιλέω⁵) in John 1-12 as an example

Another central concept in the Gospel is *love* (the ἀγαπάω-φιλέω word groups; see Van der Watt, 2000; Popkes, 2005; Collins, 1990:217 ff.; Malherbe, 1995:121; Houlden, 1973:36; Brown, 1966:497; Furnish, 1973:135; Wendland, 1975:109; Dietzfelbinger, 1997:129). Since love in the Gospel as a whole is not in the scope of this article, I will only focus on the repetitive use of love as well as the variations in this use in the first section of the Gospel (chs. 1-12). A brief survey of the occurrences provides us with the following information:

Figure 3

Repetitive occurrences of ἀγαπάω and φιλέω in chapters 1-12		
Related to <i>God</i>	Related to <i>Jesus</i>	Related to unbelieving <i>humans as a group</i>
3:16 – Οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον		
		3:19 – ἠγάπησαν οἱ ἄνθρωποι μᾶλλον τὸ σκότος ἢ τὸ φῶς
3:35 – ὁ πατὴρ ἀγαπᾷ τὸν υἱόν		
5:20 – ὁ γὰρ πατὴρ φιλεῖ τὸν υἱόν		

5 The related words ἀγαπάω and φιλέω are used interchangeably without difference in meaning. See further 11:3, 5; 16:27 and the usages in chapter 21; also see 11:3, 5; 16:27 and the usages in chapter 21. The same is not true of, for instance, ζωή and ψυχή. Ζωή is consistently used to express eternal life, while ψυχή is used to refer to physical life. In other cases this consistency is not present, for instance, with the use of κόσμος that are used for a wide range of meanings, covering the whole spectrum from creation as phenomenon, to ethically bad people. The repetitive use of different sets of words does not always show the same pattern. Günther and Link (1976:542-543) point out that efforts to distinguish different nuances of meaning between these two words have mostly been abandoned.

		5:42 – ἀλλὰ ἔγνωκα ὑμᾶς ὅτι τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔχετε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς
		8:42 – Εἰ ὁ θεὸς πατὴρ ὑμῶν ἦν ἠγαπάτε ἂν ἔμε
10:17 – διὰ τοῦτό με ὁ πατὴρ ἀγαπᾷ		
	11:3 – Κύριε, ἴδε ὃν φιλεῖς ἀσθενεῖ	
	11:5 – ἠγάπα δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν Μάρθαν	
	11:36 – ἴδε πῶς ἐφίλει αὐτόν	
		12:25 – ὁ φιλῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἀπολλύει αὐτήν
		12:43 – ἠγάπησαν γὰρ τὴν δόξαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων μάλλον

There is a marked difference between the references to love in the first section of the Gospel (chs. 1-12) and the remainder thereof (chs. 13-21). In the first part of the Gospel the references are narrowed down to only three parties, namely, God, Jesus, and unbelieving humans as a group. The scope of love is also limited, for instance, it is not said that God specifically loves believers, which is a strong theme in the latter part of the Gospel; God does, however, love the world (3:16), a theme not developed in the latter part of the Gospel. Jesus' love is restricted to his love for Lazarus and his sisters in chapter 11. It is not said that he loves the Father or the believers/disciples. No mention is made of believers who love either God or Jesus. Human love is mentioned and defined as love focused on the human persons' own interests.

There are clear differences between its use in chapters 1-12 and the repetitive and reciprocal patterns we find in chapters 13-17 (Van der

Watt, 2000; Popkes, 2005). To establish the functionality of the repetitions and variations in chapters 1-12 the different occurrences must be scrutinised in more detail.

3.3.1 Love of God

The love of God (expressed interchangeably by ἀγαπάω and φιλέω) is directly focused on Jesus, except in 3:16. God, the Father, empowers his Son by giving everything into his hands (3:35 – καὶ πάντα δέδωκεν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ), shows Him everything He does in preparation for his mission (5:20 – καὶ πάντα δείκνυσιν αὐτῷ ἃ αὐτὸς ποιεῖ), and commands Him to lay down his life (10:17-18 – ὅτι ἐγὼ τίθημι τὴν ψυχὴν μου ... ταύτην τὴν ἐντολὴν ἔλαβον παρὰ τοῦ πατρός μου – Kittel, 1963:28; Zimmermann, 2004:393). The contents of these three repetitions of the Father's love for Jesus are complementary and not repetitive. It shows a semantic progression from putting everything into the hands of Jesus and showing Him what to do, progressing to a command for Him to do it. Thus, as mentioned, the function of repetition here is semantic.

Related to the love of God for his Son is the love God has for the world (3:16). His love for the world results in (ὥστε) the salvific gift of his Son, whom God in love prepared and equipped for his mission (Strecker, 1996:538; Schlier, 1970:236). Interestingly enough, no reference is made to the love for believers, a theme that is emphasised in the latter part of the Gospel.

3.3.2 The love of Jesus

All three references in the first section of the Gospel to Jesus' love (twice φιλέω – 11:3, 36 and once ἀγαπάω – 11:5) are found in chapter 11 and are focused on Lazarus and his sisters. This is love for friends (11:11 – Λάζαρος ὁ φίλος ἡμῶν) and not for believers in general.

The context provides significant help for understanding the initial remark in 11:3 (Κύριε, ἴδε ὃν φιλεῖς ἀσθενεῖ) as well as the repetition in 11:5. The events are placed within a context where social conventions dictate that Jesus should have immediately gone to the aide of the friend he loves (see 11:21, 32, 37). However, it is emphasised in the narrative that He does not go immediately, but stayed where He was two days longer (11:6). This atypical behaviour is motivated by linking this illness to God's glory (11:4 –

ὕπὲρ τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ) and to the benefit of the disciples. Jesus is actually glad that He was not present, since this event will lead the disciples to believing, a remark that is repeated in this Lazarus narrative (11:15; see also 11:42, 45). In this narrative the implied author also relates glory and faith (11:40) – by seeing what Jesus does, the bystanders will believe.

If anything, there is a conflict of interest in this narrative between Jesus' loyalty to God and his love for his friend. In this conflict Jesus' loyalty to his salvific mission (people believing) that will lead to the glory of God has priority over his love towards his friend, Lazarus, as is shown in his decision not to go immediately to the aide of Lazarus. His love for Lazarus and his sisters is described in physical terms – they run to Him (11:20), argue with Him (11:21, 32, 39), He cries (11:35-36), they remind Him of the condition of the body after three days (11:39), et cetera. These earthly relations are significant, but should stand secondary to the glory of God and the salvific mission of his Son. If there is a conflict of priorities the love of God has priority over the love of Jesus for Lazarus and his family. In the end Lazarus did not only receive his physical life back, but the bystanders believed, and this is the purpose of God's love through Jesus.

3.3.3 The love of humans (in general)

There are five references to *people* loving something (3:19; 5:42; 8:42; 12:25, 43) and all five have a negative undertone. In 3:19 people (οἱ ἄνθρωποι) love darkness more than the light and this leads to evil deeds (3:21). In 12:43 people love their own glory more than the glory of God. Their preferences are human and self-orientated over and against loyalty towards God. Two other usages imply negative choices: if God were their Father they would have loved Jesus (8:42 – Augenstein, 1993:61), but obviously they do not love Him as is stated later on (8:44). If you love your own life (τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ), you will loose it (12:25). Both the latter remarks could be understood as conditional sentences that point to choices against Jesus and for themselves. Their love is not focused on God and his Agent but on themselves and therefore they will loose everything. In two instances (3:19; 12:43) the word μάλλον is used to indicate a choice of priority. Indeed, they do not have the love of God (τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ) in them (5:42) but rather choose themselves, their honour or even darkness.

3.3.4 Conclusion

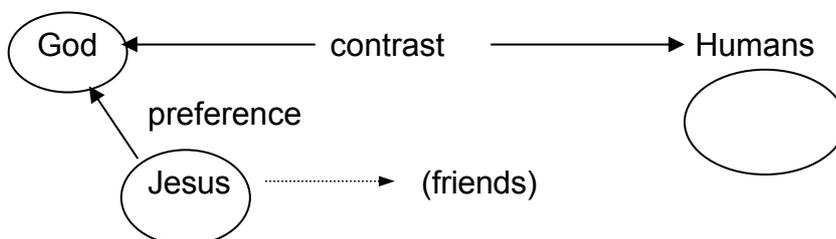
There are clear and well-definable foci in the repetitive occurrences of love in the first section of this Gospel:

- The one focus falls on God's love for the world and his Son, emphasising the salvific nature of this love.
- The second focus falls on people's love for themselves and not for God or Jesus.

This seems to represent two poles within the dualistic framework of the Gospel. Love of God has life in view, while the love preferences of humans lead to death.

- The third focus is on the love of Jesus for Lazarus and his sisters. In this narrative we find a conflict of what may be called "love interests". Priority is given to the loyalty to honour God (love for God), even in the face of the social expectations people have of the love for friends.

The repetition of love in the first section of the Gospel reveals a clear structure and functionality. Three interrelated focus points convey a specific and clear message: God's love for the world and his Son is salvific, the love of this world is self-centred and if loyalties clash, the love and honour of God should have priority over even the love for a friend. God's love is personified and exposes human love for own or earthly interests. There are therefore clear semantic reasons for repetition and variation in these cases. Schematically it may be presented as follows: three poles of love developed in specific relations to one another:



3.4 Repetition as a cohesive mechanism

In 12:24 we find the proverb-like (Morris, 1995:572) amen-amen-saying⁶ of a grain of wheat that falls into the earth, dies and bears much fruit. The saying in this context refers to the death of Jesus, but is then applied to believers through two antithetical parallelisms (12:25-26; Morris, 1995:258; Brown, 1972:475.⁷ What concerns us here is the use of the combination of three central concepts in these verses namely, ἀκολουθέω, ψυχή, and the reference to space expressed in ὄπου.

Figure 4

Occurrences of ἀκολουθέω in the Gospel									
Ch. 1	Ch. 6	Ch. 8	Ch. 10	Ch. 11	Ch. 12	Ch. 13	Ch. 18	Ch. 20	Ch. 21
37	2	12	4	31	26	36	15	6	19
38			5			37			20
40			27						22
43									

6 A survey of the approximately 25 ἀμήν ἀμήν-sayings in this Gospel (1:51; 3:3, 5, 11; 5:19, 24, 25; 6:26, 32, 47, 53; 8:34, 51, 58; 10:1, 7; 12:24; 13:16, 20, 21, 38; 14:12; 16:20, 23; 21, 18) shows that the phrase ἀμήν ἀμήν a) always introduces important information by way of a short saying; b) that in virtually all the uses the ἀμήν ἀμήν-sayings build on what was previously said, implying that the use of this phrase does not introduce a new topic or a thematic break with the preceding theme; c) that in virtually all the cases the saying is developed further by expanding on the relevant topic. BDAG notes that in the LXX ἀμήν is an “asseverative particle, *truly*, always λέγω, beginning a solemn declaration but used only by Jesus.” John follows the double form also found in Numbers 5:22; 2 Esdras 18:6; Psalm 41:13; 72:19, which is mainly, according to BDAG used to strengthen a preceding statement in John.

7 The antithetical parallelisms in 12:25-26 look like this:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, but if it dies, | it remains just a single grain
it bears much fruit |
| • Those who love their life
ὁ φιλῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ | lose it
ἀπολλύει αὐτήν, |
| • Those who hate their life in this world
ὁ μισῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ | will keep it for eternal life.
εἰς ζωὴν αἰῶνιον φυλάξει αὐτήν |
| • Whoever serves me
ἐάν τις ἐμοὶ διακονῇ | the Father will honour
τιμήσει αὐτὸν ὁ πατήρ |

A brief analysis of the use of ἀκολουθέω in the Gospel shows that it is used mainly for people following Jesus (ch. 1: his disciples; ch. 6: the crowd who saw the signs; ch. 8: those who believe; ch. 10: his sheep; ch. 12: the servant of Jesus; and from ch. 13 only Peter and the beloved disciple). The only exception is the people following Maria to Jesus (11:31).⁸

8 In all the cases except 11:31 and 20:6 the word applies to somebody *following Jesus*.

- In 11:31 the mourners follow Mary, because they think she is going to weep at the grave. She leads them to Jesus, and weeps at his feet (11:33). Jesus wept at the grave (11:35) and then raises Lazarus from the grave (11:43-44). The result was that many believed in Jesus (11:45), although some went to the Pharisees to report what Jesus has done. However, following Mary resulted in faith in Jesus.
- In 20:6 Simon followed the “other disciple” to be the first to enter the empty tomb.

In both these cases somebody leads somebody else to Jesus or to the realisation of who Jesus is.

They follow Jesus for different reasons:

- Starting to follow: because of the witness of others (1:37)
- Starting to follow: because Jesus commanded/invited them to follow Him (1:43)
- Starting to follow: because of the signs of Jesus (6:2)
- Keep on following: because they hear the voice of Jesus and He knows them (10:27) (Relationship)
- Keep on following: because He is the servant of the Lord (12:26) (Relationship)

The followers are called different names:

- Disciples follow Jesus (1:37, 38, 40)
- Philip follows Jesus (1:43)
- Sheep (disciples) follow Jesus (10:4,5,27)
- Servant follows Jesus (12:26)
- “He who follows” Jesus (8:12)
- Peter follows Jesus (13:36-37; 21:19,22)
- The other disciple follows Jesus (21:20)
- People follow Jesus (6:2)

“To follow” is basically used exclusively to signify the disciples of Jesus, following Him. It therefore describes the actions of disciples in relation to Jesus. In 12:26 it says that a person will and should be where Jesus is. This is the basic idea – be where Jesus is and experience what He experiences. In 15:18 ff. it is pregnantly stated, as well as in 12:23 ff. This is imitation. The life of Jesus should be duplicated in the disciples. What happens to Him should happen to them.

Space prohibits a full discussion of the use of ἀκολουθέω throughout the Gospel. What concerns us here is the consistent change in focus from chapter 13 on – only Peter and the beloved disciple “follow” (ἀκολουθέω) Jesus from that point on in the narrative. The idea of following Jesus is more focused and individualised from this point in the narrative. This change is heralded in 12:24-26. In 12:25-26 the idea of following Jesus is linked to serving Him, which is expressed in spatial terms as being where He is (ἐὰν ἐμοί τις διακονῆ, ἐμοὶ ἀκολουθείτω, καὶ ὅπου εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ἐκεῖ). Within the confines of the antithetical parallelism in 12:25-26 service functions as explanation of what it means to hate one’s life (ψυχὴ ; Zimmermann, 2004:117-121). The concept of life, following Jesus and spatial references are combined in this context.

The combined use of the concepts, ἀκολουθείτω and ὅπου εἰμὶ ἐγὼ, structurally related to hating one’s life (ψυχὴ), draws our attention to another passage, namely the discussion between Peter and Jesus at the table (13:36-38). There are significant linguistic as well as thematic links between these two sections based on the repetition of the above concepts in relation to one another. This is the only context where these concepts are used in direct contextual cohesion. A number of important terms overlap between these two contexts and, it must be stressed, *only* between these two contexts. In no other context in the Gospel are similar overlaps to be found. If the two contexts are considered, the following is evident:

All the references to following in chapters 13-21 are to Peter (except 21:20 that refers to the other disciple, although Peter is mentioned as seeing this disciple). As will be argued, this is significant. Peter becomes the narratological example of what it means to come to the point of laying down one’s life and being a servant. In the end he will indeed follow Jesus where He goes.

Figure 5

12:23 The hour has come that the Son of man should be <i>glorified</i> (δοξασθῆ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου).	13:31 “Now the Son of man is <i>glorified</i> (ἐδοξάσθη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου), and God is glorified in Him.”
12:25 He who loves his life (ψυχὴν) will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life	13:37 Lord ... I will lay down my life for your sake. (τὴν ψυχὴν μου ὑπὲρ σοῦ θήσω – Peter’s words)
12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow (ἀκολουθείτω) Me; and <i>where</i> (ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ) I am, <i>there</i> (ἐκεῖ) my servant will be also.	13:36 <i>Where</i> (ὅπου) I am going you cannot follow (ἀκολουθῆσαι) Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward. 13:37 Lord, why can I not follow (ἀκολουθῆσαι) You now?
12:27 “Now my soul is troubled (τετάρακται), and what shall I say?”	14:1 Let not your heart be troubled (ταρασσέσθω); you believe in God, believe also in Me.
12:26 <i>where</i> (ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ) I am, <i>there</i> (ἐκεῖ) my servant will be also.	14:3 <i>where</i> I am (ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ), <i>there</i> you may be also

The repetition in these two contexts of the concepts mentioned above cannot be overlooked.

- The immediate contexts show remarkable *linguistic* links. These two contexts are the only ones in this Gospel where the two words *life* (ψυχὴ) and *to follow* (ἀκολουθέω) are used together. There are also references to the space where Jesus is, using the same word (ὅπου). In this Gospel repetitions are contextual signals by the implied author for linking sections together, implying that different contexts should be understood in the light of one another.
- Apart from the above linguistic similarities, there are notable similarities on a *thematic* level – both 12:23 and 13:31 refer to Jesus as the Son of man and mention glorification (referring to the death of Jesus). In 12:27 and 14:1 the word *ταράσσω* is used, although referring to Jesus and his followers respectively. In both cases the topic related to this word is the departure of Jesus.

This link between contexts through these concepts is developed even further through the structural marker *ἀκολουθέω* (to follow; Zimmermann, 2004:309) that is from this point on reserved for Peter (13:36, 37; 18:15; 20:6; 21:19, 22) and the beloved disciple (18:15; 21:20) only, with the emphasis on Peter. Similar thematic links

become evident when the two contexts of 13:31-38 and 21:15-22 are compared. The thematic links are remarkable.

- The *settings* are the same – after a meal – but the times of day are not. In the one case it was after an evening meal (with Judas disappearing in the dark and Jesus leaving for the cross) and the other after a breakfast (where the day lies ahead) (13:30-31; 21:15). In both cases *love* is prominent as identification of a disciple of Jesus (13:34-35 – ἐν τούτῳ γνώσονται πάντες ὅτι ἐμοὶ μαθηταί ἐστε, ἐὰν ἀγάπην ἔχητε ἐν ἀλλήλοις; 21:15-19 – ἀγαπᾶς με πλεον τούτων;).
- In both cases Peter *confesses* his *loyalty* to Jesus (13:37; 21:15-17). The intention to be loyal is the same, but the way in which it is expressed differs. In 13:37 Peter relies on himself in questioning the Lord, while in 21:15-17 he confesses his unconditional love.
- In both cases the *superior knowledge* of Jesus about the life of Peter plays a role (13:38; 21:17-19).
- In both cases the word *to follow* (ἀκολουθέω) refers to the physical actions expected of somebody who loves Jesus. The act of following and love are intimately related (reading 13:36 and 21:15-17 together).
- In both cases reference is made to the *death* of Peter (13:37; 21:19).
- In both cases Jesus is addressed as *Lord* (Κύριε 13:37; 21:15-17).

The focus does not fall on Peter dying, but on him serving the Lord lovingly by caring for the sheep of the Lord (Quast, 1989:164). In chapter 21 his willingness to lay down his life is interpreted in terms of his loyal service. This is what is required from a servant according to 12:25. In that sense *dying* (*hating his life/serving* in terms of 12:26; Collins, 1990; 1992; 2002), reinterpreted by the implied reader in terms of 12:25-26, implies caring, tending and feeding the Lord's sheep. This will, however, eventually lead to the death of Peter (returning to the themes of 12:24 and 13:35-37): a death that will lead to glory – the glory of God.

What is the significance of all this for our understanding of repetition and variation in the Gospel? It has been illustrated how repetition can serve as cohesive mechanism throughout the Gospel, binding

different related contexts together, especially where groups of words are combined. In this way, different sections of the Gospel may legitimately be interpreted in terms of each other expanding the understanding of what the Gospel wants to communicate. A macro interpretative framework is formed. For instance, the grain of wheat (ch. 12) is not mentioned in the contexts in chapters 13 or 21, but the central motifs of this imagery are present – following, serving, hating your own life by loving Jesus more, or dying. Why is Peter's servanthood, even unto death, something positive? Why is his death not a threat but an honour? Because a grain of wheat that dies bears much fruit. The proverbial truth presented by this imagery is a defining and enlightening key moment in the development of the plot. It is implicitly and actively present and should be recognised by the implied reader. These links would have been lost if we did not pay attention to the particular repetition of specific terms and ideas that only occur in combination in these contexts.

It also became clear that John uses different techniques of repetition. In the case of eternal life he first developed the idea and then repeated it in central contexts, interrelating and binding it with other important themes. In the case of the concept of the Paraclete the structural development is the other way round. From chapter 14 onwards aspects are mentioned, but in chapter 16 a full picture is given. The addition of *eternal* to *life* showed a pattern of repetition of its own based on sound stylistic and semantic rationale. If we take the thematical development of the concept of *love*, it seems that two different aspects are treated in chapters 1-12 and 13-17 (21) respectively. The idea is developed in two contextual units, although they are related. The repetition of the word ἀκολουθέω is again used to link related contexts (a cohesive strategy) and thus developing a particular theme in the latter part of the Gospel. From these examples it became evident that we do not have extraordinary forms of repetition that are unique to John. However, what is extraordinary is the frequency of the repetitions and the way they are combined and interrelated to form a wider semantic network.

4. A pictorial reading?

From the above few examples it became clear that repetition, variation, and functionality go hand in hand. The frequent repetition of central themes (like *life*, *love*, *mission*, et cetera) prompted scholars to use terms like circular or spiral development in the argumentation. Though such a spiral development of motifs is often present (cf., for instance the references to mission in 6:29, 38, 39,

40, 44, 46 or the references to the bread in 6:31-32, 49-50, 58), it is not always the case. Spiral argumentation assumes a process of logical and progressive succession of related information where the one piece of information builds on the other to eventually present the full picture. In many cases there is no real spiral development of the relevant material itself, but the repetition seems to be for stylistic or structural reasons (see the use of *αἰώνιος* or *ζωή* as examples). On the other hand, an important purpose of repetition might be to develop specific ideas throughout the Gospel, as was the case with the example of the dying seed linked to the following of Jesus. A variety of approaches and not only a single pattern may be distinguished that forms part of the implied author's arsenal employed to unfold his message.

When dealing with repetitions in the Gospel, only one or two motifs are usually analysed, which invites a broader approach. One line of such investigation should be in the way of building arguments within a book (understood in the broad sense of the word). A logical chain-like procedure of argumentation may be used where the one argument follows on the other to systematically build up a coherent argumentation in the end. Examples of such arguments are, for instance, found in Paul's Letters to the Romans or to Colossians or even Hebrews.

The primary manner in which arguments are built in John's Gospel does not follow such a chain-like pattern. Obviously there are certain individual sections in the Gospel that follow a linear (chain-like) pattern of development like the narratives in John 13, 17, or the passion narrative in John 18-20. This manner of argumentation is complementary to the pictorial approach. The one reason is that it is a narrative that uses a wide variety of genres and stylistic features to present its arguments, for instance, *semeia*, brief narratives, images, metaphors, proverbs, monologues, et cetera. Arguments are therefore sometimes stated (e.g. in a discussion of monologue), sometimes illustrated (e.g. in a narrative event), sometimes implied (e.g. in a *semeion* or narrative event). The technique of establishing what John wants to argue therefore involves a complex interpretation and integration of these different techniques of building arguments.

One way of explaining some of John's argumentation I want to explore a little further has to do with the nature of presenting an argument. John prefers to unfold his argument in a way that became known as the circular or spiral unfolding of arguments. Why would an author constantly and repetitively return to the same topic? It is

suggested that one reason for this repetition is the expanding, re-confirming, and re-establishing of that particular theme.

Another form of argumentation should be taken into account, namely what may be called *relational argumentation*. This means an argument is not built up through the logical succession of arguments, but by developing the argument gradually through the constant interrelation of the different key elements of the argument that is being made. Gradually the different aspects of the argument are unfolded in relation to one another and in this way the total argument is constructed. This automatically requires repetition: if issue A is discussed in a relational manner, it implies that issues B and C, related to issue A, should be mentioned too. When issue B is discussed, issues A and C should be mentioned too, since the issues are developed and get their meaning in relation to one another. This requires repetition.

It may be illustrated as follows. Let us paint a mental picture of a man sitting under a tree next to a river, while the sun is rising over the mountains and plains. How would one describe the picture? Where would you start? Actually one can start anywhere. These objects in the picture are so interrelated that in the end one will cover all the aspects of the whole picture. If you start with the man, you will have to mention the tree and the river, the sun and the mountains. If you want to describe the tree, you will have to mention the man, the river and the sun also. By mentioning these objects you do not discuss them in detail, but interrelate them. By interrelating them, additional information becomes available about these objects. In other words, they make sense in terms of their interrelatedness and together they form the “picture”. The total picture is also more than its individual objects – it is more than a man, a tree, a river, et cetera. Meaning is also generated in the interrelatedness of these objects. The “logic” of this way of building an argument does not lie in the chain-like logical build up of the argument, but in the mutual relations that are determined by the relative positions and dynamics between the different objects. In such a form of argumentation repetition is a key element, since the different objects are constantly interrelated and in order for that to happen, repetition is necessary.

If we look at the way in which some central themes in this Gospel are interrelated and structured, this pictorial or relational argumentative structure could explain certain of the features of the way the arguments are developed. For instance, eternal life is developed in the first section of the Gospel and then repeated at key places in the rest of the Gospel. This repetition is not arbitrary but in relation to

other key issues, like faith (20:31), truth (14:6), light (8:12), salvation through Jesus alone (10:10), the coming of the Spirit (7:37-39), et cetera. The development of the *Paraclete motif* is gradual in chapters 14-16, but in this development through repetition, the *Paraclete* is related to the Spirit of truth, to knowledge and immanence (14:17), education and the teaching of Jesus (14:26), witnessing (15:26-27), et cetera. In this way the significance of life *in relation to* other themes is networked. The same pattern emerges with education, focused upon in 5:19 ff. and then mentioned later on in the Gospel. The repetition of the mission of Jesus may be explained in the same way (although it cannot be developed here in full). The frequent references to his mission *relate* all the different motifs in the Gospel to the mission. Many other examples could be given,⁹ but the above should suffice to illustrate what is meant.

5. Conclusion

The examples investigated showed that repetition and variation are *inter alia* functionally employed to develop a particular concept as was illustrated in reference to life. The concept is developed in the initial parts of the Gospel and afterwards used sparingly in key passages, assuming that the reader will be able to supply the necessary content to this concept in the new contexts in which it is used. Once a concept is established, the author of John tends to reduce repetition of the word, as was the case with *eternal* in “eternal life”. This is a matter of functional economy. Repetition of words also link different contexts together as is the case with words like “to follow”. All the examples that were investigated have a linguistic and grammatical functional basis. Repetition in the examples investigated shows that repetition is a stylistic tool that could be fruitfully used in analysing and interpreting the text of the Gospel according to John.

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9 Many of the names of Jesus mentioned in chapter 1 are repeated and developed and related to the other motifs in the rest of the Gospel, e.g. Messiah, Son (of God/man), Son of Joseph, Rabbi, King of Israel, et cetera. The same happens with the repetition of the “hour-” and “doxa-motif”. The repetition of motifs from chapters 1-17 in 18-20 clearly shows the way the cross-events are interrelated to the theology developed in the preceding sections of the Gospel. So one can carry on with accumulating examples, but the above will suffice to prove the point.

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Key concepts:

eternal life
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Kernbegrippe:

ewige lewe
herhaling
Johannesevangelie
liefde

