

# On the Ideology Beyond the Hapax Legomenon “Very Good” As Coined in The Christian Myth of Creation

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## Abstract

*The very goal of this study has been to highlight the use of the expression ‘very good’ in an excerpt of the biblical myth of creation as some ideological content was felt therein. So, an automated Lexicometric analysis with Lexico3 software has been executed. This analysis has primarily confirmed the main text theme or topic. Secondly, it has revealed that the superlative form of the adjective ‘good’ has been used only once on an account of seven occurrences of the same lexeme. Thus, the Lexico3 option that displays collocation has been definitely resorted to in order to understand further the linguistic context of occurrence of this target expression and the reason why it has been used as a hapax.*

**Keywords:** Ideology, Myth, Hapax, Computational Linguistics, Language Awareness

## 1. Introduction

Computational Linguistics is the broadest language discipline that has recourse to digital tools in view of enhancing language analysis research efficiency. It is an interdisciplinary field, which entails automatic language data treatment. On the one hand, linguistics can benefit from the computer’s high performance to reach new research dimensions and to give way to other new fields of research. On the other hand, with the quick development of the hardware and software tools, there has been an urgent need to have recourse to the insight coming from the knowledge of natural languages to help man-machine interaction or communication. Moreover, many fields share an overlap with computational linguistics among which computer science and theoretical linguistics are outstanding ones. Whenever one uses digital tools to examine language or treat textual data, (s)he may need to modelise concepts tackled in humanities. Such a process as modeling language data requires some degree of “language critical awareness”. This can be viewed as language critical ability. It can also be taken as the language user’s consciousness about all possible language issues. Language has to be used and analyse with circumspection. This is even a metalinguistic ability, which allows one to examine discursively and lexicometrically the text that contains the hapax legomenon “very good”. In fact, it is used in the biblical text of Genesis. The analysis in question is meant to be deep. It should display ideology beyond language [1-3].

The objective of this computational language data analysis is to make an account of the frequency of words use. As ‘hapax legomenon’ refers to the unique use of a word or expression in a text or part of text, the frequency that will attract one’s attention more than any other (but not exclusively) in the

excerpt of Genesis under study will be not a maximum but a minimum. To achieve such a lexicometric analysis, it will be necessary to go through three stages: the first one is text selection and segmentation, the second one is textual data analysis and the third one is textual data output interpretation and discussion [4,5].

### 1.1 Selection of a Text on The Web and Its Segmentation

The worldwide web offers a large range of possibilities of text selection by means of one qualitative software or another. At this stage the text to be treated can be selected automatically to one hundred percent or its selection can result from a combination of human and mechanical work. The concerned text that has been selected following the second alternative (for automatic treatment and computational analysis) is an excerpt of the bible. As it is an electronic text, it lends itself easily to a digital or, better, statistical analysis. It is a corpus in the modern sense of the term since it has been annotated, with “coding keys”. Which procedure (i.e., annotation) should inevitably help its automatic segmentation and computational analysis. The “coding keys” in question are the following: <Creation=jr1>, <Creation=jr2>, <Creation=jr3>, <Creation=jr4>, <Creation=jr5>, <Creation=jr-6>. They have been used to enable the software (Lexico3) compare sub-parts of the entire selected excerpt with one another, later on. These sub-parts should reveal how the author has gradually developed the major theme of the excerpt. The automatic text treatment (taking place during this segmentation phase) has resulted into the creation of the database (electronic textual data) hereafter [6-8].

### 1.2. The Creation (of the World)

<p>&lt;Creation=jr1&gt;</p> <p>1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep . And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. 3 And God said, “Let there be light, ” and there was light . 4 And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.</p> <p>&lt;Creation=jr2&gt;</p> <p>6 And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” 7 And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. 8 And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.</p> <p>&lt;Creation=jr3&gt;</p> <p>9 And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. 10 God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.</p> <p>11 And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth. ” And it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.</p> <p>&lt;Creation=jr4&gt;</p> <p>14 And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. 16 And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. 17 And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18 to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.</p> <p>&lt;Creation=jr5&gt;</p> <p>20 And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” 21 So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” 23 And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.</p> <p>&lt;Creation=jr6&gt;</p> <p>24 And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. 25 And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.</p> <p>26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”</p> <p>27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.</p> <p>28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” 29 And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.</p>
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**Table 1: Textual Data Segmentation Corpus Segmentation**

It should be pointed out that this elementary text treatment (segmentation) performed by the software does not necessarily highlight the same structural elements as those a human analyst would do. The perspectives for the textual

content analysis (9) can be different and complementary. So far, the digital tool has merely turned the text into a format suitable for automatic analysis.

Text Lexicometric Analysis revealing theme

**The Creation( of the World )**

**<Creation=jr1>**  
 1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.  
 3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

**<Creation=jr2>**  
 6 And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” 7 And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. 8 And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

**<Creation=jr3>**  
 9 And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. 10 God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.  
 11 And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

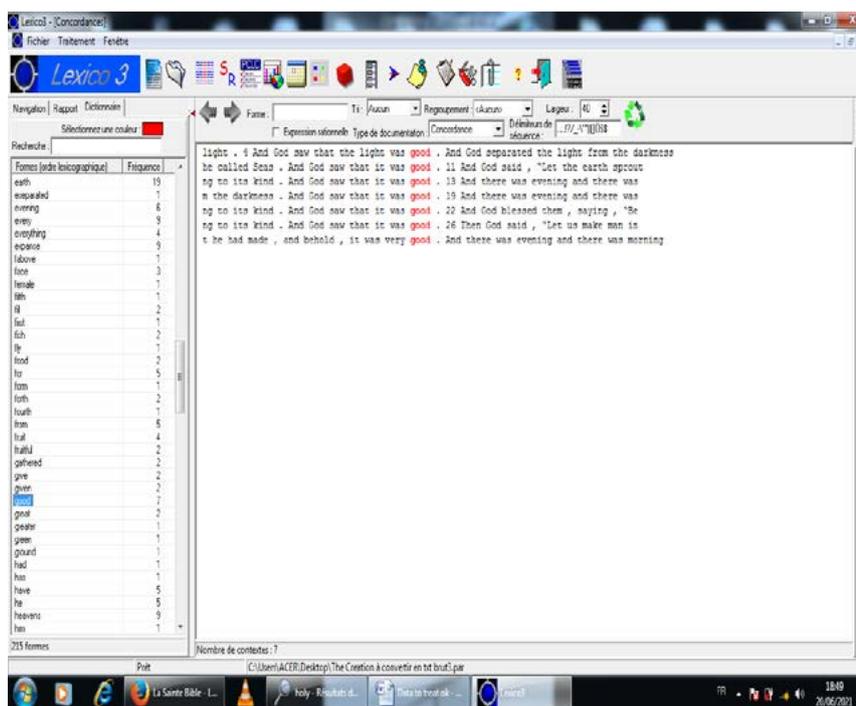
**<Creation=jr4>**  
 14 And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. 16 And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. 17 And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, 18 to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

Formes (ordre lexicométrique)	Fréquence
the	91
and	49
And	40
God	32
was	29
of	21
to	21
earth	19
that	17
there	16
it	14
over	12
in	11
waters	11
"	11
according	10
light	10
said	10
day	9
every	9
expanse	9
heavens	9
them	9
on	8
their	8
"Let	8
good	7
let	7
saw	7
be	6
evening	6
morning	6
seed	6
en	6

Table 2: Frequency of Word Use

As it can be seen from table (2) above, the word “God” (in the lexicometric box at the left side) is the content word (having meaning in itself) that has the highest score (= 32). This word discloses that the text (excerpt) under examination is mainly about God. However, the specialists of the bible have entitled the same text “the creation”. So, one may wonder whether this text ought to be entitled “God” or “The creation”. For the moment, the essential point is that both the automatic and the (previous) human analyses, which are

purposely structural, have tackled each an important aspect of the text. And the topics as suggested by either man or the machine are closely related and complementary. Thus, the digital tool (artificial intelligence) appears to be a relevant alternative to human performance (natural intelligence) or work. Now, let’s focus on the *hapax legomenon* “very good” (having coefficient “1” as score) and see what it means. This is illustrated in table (3) hereafter [8-10].



**Table 3: Collocation of The Adjective “Good”**

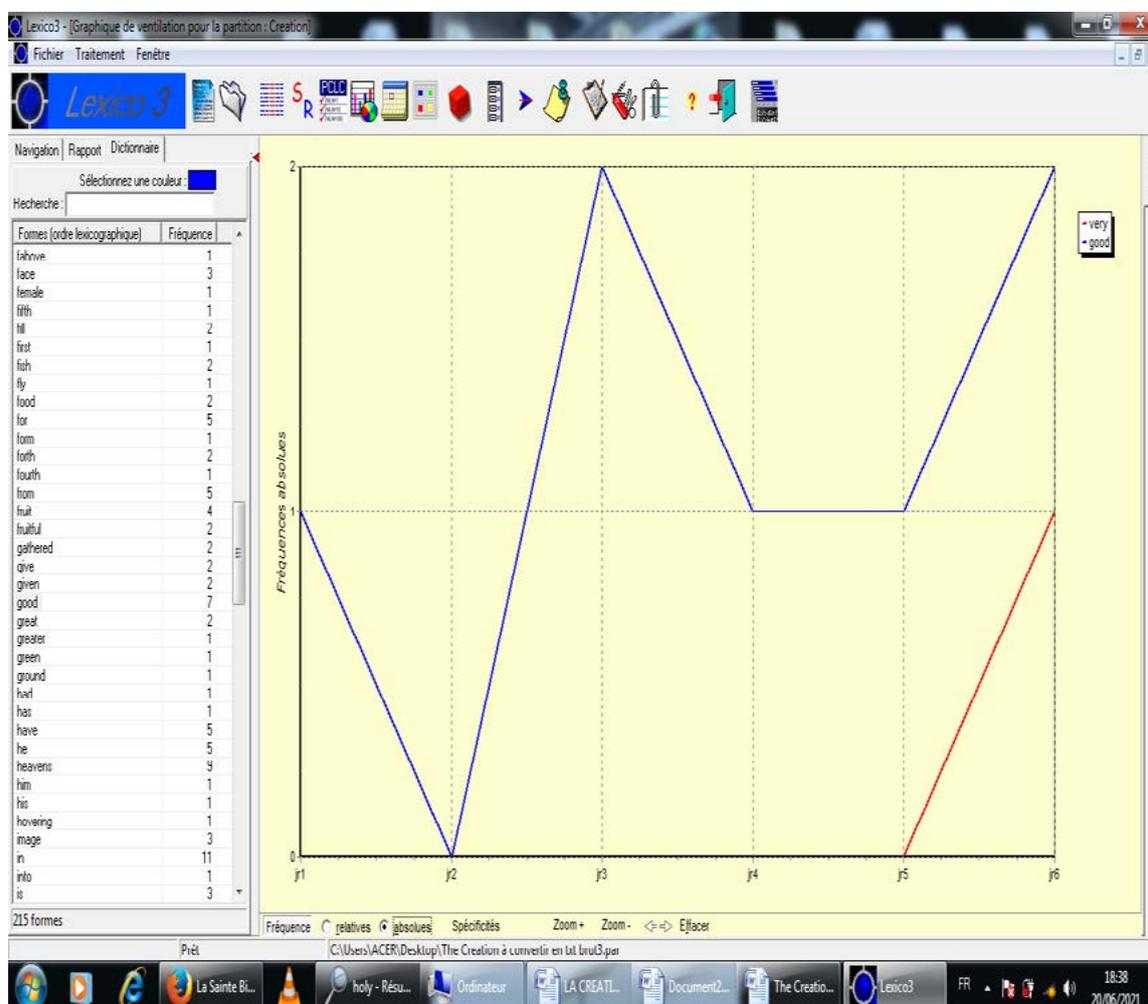
As one can notice, table (3) indicates two important points. First, it displays the collocation (linguistic context of occurrence) of the adjective “good”. This adjective is used 7 times. Second, the same adjective is used once, and only once, in the pattern “very good”. This hapax is so highlighted. Table (4) can account for it more clearly, hereafter.

light. 4 And God saw that the light was **good**. And God separated the light from the darkness he called Seas. And God saw that it was **good**. 11 And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation to its kind. And God saw that it was **good**. 13 And there was evening and there was the darkness. And God saw that it was **good**. 19 And there was evening and there was morning to its kind. And God saw that it was **good**. 22 And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” 29 And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. 31 And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. he had made, and behold, it was **very good**. And there was

**Table 4: Illustration of The Hapax “Very Good”**

It is obvious from table 4 — as it is generated automatically — that the expression “very good” at the bottom of the table has been used only once in the myth of creation. This unique use of the concerned expression can be opposed to the redundant use in the same excerpt of the term “good” when not modified by an adverb. Referring to the meaning of the adverb of degree or intensifying adverb “very”, used to modify the adjective “good”, the language analyst can apprehend

the implied importance of verse 31 of *Genesis* in which this *hapax* “very good occurs. As it has been exemplified by the adverb “very” can be counted among adverbs of degree that modify adjectives, here “good”. A graphic illustration would be useful in order to show the discrepancy in the distribution of “good” and “very” all through the text and how they both make the *hapax* once for all [11].



**Graphics 1: Distribution of The Terms “Very” And “Good” Constituting the Hapax**

It can be noticed from graphics (1) that the term “good” has been used once in segment 1 (jr1) of the text on creation, zero time in segment 2 (jr2), two times in segment 3 (jr3), once in segment 4 (jr4), once in segment 5 (jr5) and two times in segment 6 (jr6). That makes a total of seven occurrences in the whole excerpt. The lexicographic window on the left side of graphics (1) above, displays it clearly. The symbols, “jr1” through “jr6”, have been exported from table (1) and they appear on the X-axis, here, on graphics (1). Each segment corresponds to a partition of the corpus/ excerpt/ text under study. The six partitions have been generated automatically after (the aforementioned) coding keys had been inserted during text treatment. Each partition or segment refers to one day of the six (working) days of the creation as narrated in the biblical myth.

### 1.3. Interpretation and Discussion on The Results of The Text Computational Analysis

The *hapax legomenon* “very good” is an expression used only once in the biblical excerpt of *Genesis* on the creation (of the universe). Its meaning is not taken for granted. Why does the narrator point it out that the protagonist i.e., God in this myth considers his work as being very good only on the sixth and last day of all his deed? On the other days, (from the first to the fifth one) the same character (God) found out his deed as a merely good thing. This is what comes out of this narration. Without engaging into a nonscientific debate on faith, I rather embark on a metadiscourse on the religious discourse (known as myth of creation) that is founded on faith and beliefs. As puts it, « *il est désormais possible de discuter du sens des expressions bibliques d'une façon plus posée, ... plus franche que ce n'était le cas alors [auparavant]* ». Which

means that “since the early 1970’s, it has been possible, little by little, to discuss about religious statements more disinterestedly, ... more frankly than it had been the case then previously, translation mine.” Such a metadiscourse is meant to be fairly critical on ideology beyond words. Thus, it is clear that when animals and things had been (let’s say) created, the main character this mythical story considered it to be less good than the day he (himself) formed man. A scale with values varying from ‘good’ to ‘very good’ comes out of this. This is the expression of some ontological sense that praises humanity, according to which human essence or life is more valuable than that of other beings/ creatures, whether animated ones or not. Since man has got on the scene only on the sixth day, according to the course of events as related in this myth, it is quite understandable that the appreciation “very good” be used only on this occasion. Statistical records show that the lowest frequency of word occurrence is “1” like that of this superlative expression. Needless to say, there are statistical records relating to other terms or expressions having a higher coefficient than “1”. But this odd score seems to be more eloquent [12].

Apart from the top frequency (“32”) assigned to the term “God” (revealing the major theme of the text, i.e. “the creator” or “the creation”) and the lowest frequency (“1”) for any *hapax legomenon*, there is a number of other scores in the interval, which could be examined but have not kept our attention as much as these extremes. In terms of statistics, maxima and minima are particularly enlightening, especially because they can help induce a fairly good and suggestive average in any case [13-15].

## 2. Conclusion

In final analysis, it should be pointed out that the concerned *hapax legomenon* used in this christian myth of creation is a unique expression, at least in this (con)text. It probably has a particular (implied) sense coined by the narrator that cannot be totally disclosed, or revealed, by means of a computational analysis. However, this superlative form (“very good”), which has exclusively been used for man in this excerpt on the myth of creation, helps the reader definitely understand that beyond words (as they are used) there is a deep respect for mankind or self-high esteem of the human race versus other beings. Undoubtedly, the concerned textual analysis has

scrutinized how man views himself / herself. It reflects a(n) (religious) ideology according to which, among all existing things and beings, mankind is the highest. This belief has been objectively apprehended through the use of a *hapax legomenon* in the biblical myth of creation. As a *hapax* refers to the single occurrence of a word or an expression in a text, it is clear that in mathematical language the coefficient to be obtained is “1”. This was actually the case. The statistical linguistic record yielded by Lexico3 software (after the lexicometric analysis of the biblical myth on the creation has been executed) displays it through the opposition between the positive and superlative forms of the adjective “good”.

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